

**Association of South East Asian Studies in the UK (ASEASUK)
Committee for South East Asian Studies (CSEAS)
(formerly the British Academy CSEAS)**

STRATEGIC RESEARCH PLAN

INTEGRATION AND INTERACTION IN THE SOUTHEAST ASIAN REGION

1.0 SUMMARY

The proposed research programme will examine the evolving contact, interaction and integration of South East Asia and the wider Asian region. Three project components are identified. The first examines cross-border interaction; the second, flows and circuits of culture, capital and commodities; and the third, security issues and trans-regional threats and cooperation. Each has identified sub-themes (see Table 1). The remit of the project spans the social sciences and the humanities. In particular, we are looking to cut across the research and funding domains of the AHRB and the ESRC to map out a distinctive contribution to our understanding of the South East Asian region.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

South East Asia has long been a region 'on the move'. Flows of people, commodities, ideas and capital have moulded the human and economic landscapes. There were significant trade flows and tributary relationships between China and South East Asia prior to the colonial period, as well as important cultural and trading links between South East Asia and the Indian sub-continent. These, however, were interrupted in the 19th century as the region was forced to look West. Consequently, trading links with the world beyond China and South Asia expanded rapidly and by the latter part of the 1930s, South East Asia accounted for almost one third of all commodity exports from the tropical world. Partly as a result of the rapid growth of the export economies, South East Asia also attracted increasing flows of migrants, mainly from China and the Indian sub-continent. Singapore, as a result, is effectively a Chinese city state while most of the countries of the region – and Malaysia particularly – have significant and economically influential Chinese minorities. Since the conclusion of the colonial era following the Second World War, exports from most parts of the region have continued to grow rapidly, and inflows of foreign direct investment have been larger than most other parts of the developing world. Thus the economic dynamism of the region has continued to be based on a deepening integration into the regional and global economies.

Moreover, several of the economies of the region, defying the conventional economic wisdom of the 1950s, have industrialised and now agriculture and primary produce exports play a much smaller part in their trading profiles. In the 1960s Hla Myint wrote of 'inward looking' and 'outward looking' economies in the region, contrasting those economies such as Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore where governments facilitated such integration with those such as Indonesia and Burma, where the post-independence regimes were more wary of perpetuating 'colonial' economic patterns. Today the whole region, including the former command economies of Indochina (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam), can be generally regarded as 'outward looking'. Moreover, the broadening and maturing of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) has strengthened intra-regional links as well as associations between South East Asia and neighbouring regions and countries. In particular, following China's opening its economy to the world from the 1980s, trade and investment flows have resumed between South East Asia and its giant neighbour. Once seen as a competitor for inward foreign investment and a rival in the production of low cost goods, China's role in the future of South East Asia has resumed the prominence that it had before the colonial era. Now it is apparent that there is a process of integration taking place between China and South East Asia.

South East Asia's dynamic and evolving integration into the wider regional and global contexts is recognized, but usually only in the context of particular economies and periods. There has been little systematic attempt to identify, in detail, the components and processes of integration in an historical context. Equally, there has been no attempt to see these components – which cross disciplinary divides – as interrelated and part of a wider narrative of change, encompassing social, political and environmental transitions, as well as economic change.

The proposed research programme aims to examine this process of integration by focusing on the evolving links within South East Asia and between the region and the wider Asian realm. China seems to be making progress towards becoming a regional hegemon. Its political and strategic significance, rapidly expanding economic influence, diplomatic confidence and emergence as a military power have manifold implications for South East Asia's future. However, the multiple ways in which China and South East Asia's futures are being progressively enmeshed, and the manner in which China is insinuating itself into the region are often only hazily understood. While South Asia's role in contemporary change in the region is less pronounced, historically it has been very great indeed. Moreover, the presence, for example, of Bangladeshi migrant workers in Malaysia and of India's recent emergence as an economic power have implications for South East Asia.

The research aims to fill this gap by commissioning a series of linked, inter-disciplinary research projects. Each will have its own identified research aims that will have independent validity, but they will also contribute to a broader understanding of South East Asia's dynamic economic integration and political engagement with China. This latter aspect of the proposed initiative is seen as critical in distinguishing it from much of the existing work. A particular feature of the initiative is its broad, inter-disciplinary approach.

2.1 Structure and integration of the research programme

The programme of research consists of three components with ten sub-themes (Table 1). While these are framed below as separate project components, the proposed research constitutes an integrated research programme. This integration will be achieved in three ways:

- By sponsoring workshops and conferences that will bring together individual researchers working across these themes leading to comparative publications;
- through building upon the research commissioned in 2005/06 to structure the 2006/07 and later bids;
- through encouraging and, where appropriate, commissioning applications from scholars working across the themes identified.

Table 1

Research components and sub-themes
1. Spaces of cross-border interaction: networks and borderlands
(1.1) Borderlands and cross-border interaction and integration
(1.2) Borders and borderland cultural landscapes
(1.3) Networks and the integration of South East Asia and the Greater Asian region
2. Flows and circuits: culture, capital and commodities
(2.1) Cultural contact: assimilation, representation and resistance/domination
(2.2) The composition and direction of trade and investment flows over the 20th century
(2.3) Networks and the integration of South East Asia and the Greater Asian region
3. Security: trans-regional threats and cooperation
(3.1) Historiographies of colonization and resistance
(3.2) South East Asian perceptions of security threats
(3.3) Security cooperation in South East Asia and with the Greater Asian region
(3.4) Environmental security in South East Asian

2.2 Summary of the research programme elements

1. Spaces of cross-border interaction: networks and borderlands

1.1 Borderlands and cross-border integration: The borderlands marking the frontiers between China and the three South East Asian countries Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam are taking on a character of their own as increasingly open borders intensify social, cultural and economic links creating distinctive trans-boundary zones where complementarities and competitive advantages are exploited in economic terms and where new social and cultural interactions arise. This research component will examine the re-orientation of economic activity and re-working of societies in border areas and the implications for local social and economic development trajectories.

1.2 Borders and borderland cultural landscapes: Borderlands have a distinctive social and cultural character reflecting contemporary and historic patterns of contact and interaction. There are significant implications of economic contact for social and cultural change, and vice versa. These sometimes build on long-established associations that may even pre-date the colonial era. This sub-theme will engage not only with contemporary social and cultural process but will also take a longer historical view, tracing contact back to the early historical period thus contextualising the present in terms of the past.

1.3 Networks and the integration of South East Asia and the Greater Asian region: The role of networks is central to an understanding of the integration of South East Asia and the wider Asian region. These span varying geographical scales and embody different commodities from human labour to disease, capital and knowledge. Tracking, mapping and interpreting these networks is central to any understanding of how the systems operate. Networks of interaction are also important in unpicking the geographical scope and temporal development of diseases like HIV-AIDS and SARS. Finally, cultural exchanges and influences, whether in terms of mass media such as the export of Chinese television or international tourism, can also be seen as linked to networks and flows.

2. Flows and circuits: culture, capital and commodities

2.1 Cultural contact: assimilation, representation and resistance/domination: Cultural contact is never a process that is not infused with issues of power, domination and acquiescence. South East Asia has long been recognised and studied as a region with a history of cross-cultural relations and this programme sub-theme will aim to link this history and experience – current and past – with the new approaches, methods and theoretical positions emerging from the social sciences.

2.2 The composition and direction of trade and investment flows over the 20th century: This project will examine the growth and changing patterns of commodity trade, within South East Asia, and between the region and the rest of Asia, with particular reference to China, and between South East Asia/China and the rest of the world over the 20th century. Emphasis will be on quantifying both the changing composition of commodity trade and changing direction of trade. The project will also investigate the relationship between trade and economic growth in countries and regions, and processes of convergence and divergence in per capita GDP both within the countries of South East Asia and China, and between those countries and the OECD economies. A third dimension of the project will look into the role of government in both the colonial and the post-colonial periods in facilitating the growth of trade, in taxing the profits from trade, and in using government revenues for the development of infrastructure and human capital.

2.3 The institutional architecture of regional and international integration: Although closer economic integration has been a declared goal of ASEAN, at least since the Bali Declaration of 1976, progress has been slow, even after the ASEAN Free Trade Area was initiated in 1993. Barriers to trade in both goods and services are still considerable in the ASEAN region, and between ASEAN and China. But with the development of the ASEAN plus 3 initiatives, as well as the growing importance of the WTO, pressures to remove remaining barriers will certainly increase. The implications of freer trade in goods and services both between the ASEAN economies and China, and between the region and the wider world economy will be examined.

3. Security: trans-regional threats and cooperation

3.1 Historiographies of colonization and resistance: Perceptions of security threats today have an important historical dimension. Unravelling the historiographies of colonization and resistance must be part of building an understanding of the contemporary landscape of security threats and the perceptions of those threats. This sub-project envisages using historical research as not only valuable in itself but also as a window onto the present.

3.2 South East Asian perceptions of security threats: Most South East Asian governments' security concerns in relation to China have changed significantly over the last 20-25 years. The proposed research will investigate the nature and extent of the contemporary influence of security concerns related to China on the security and defence policies of South East Asian governments.

3.3 Security cooperation in South East Asia and with the Greater Asian region: Looking at the security equation from a Chinese viewpoint, Beijing has always felt threatened by South East Asian states' relations with hostile powers. With the aim of reducing such perceived threats, China has developed bilateral security cooperation with a range of South East Asian partners over the last 50 years. At the same time, China has used multilateral forums (such as the ASEAN Regional Forum) and defence diplomacy (in the form of naval visits, for example) to soften South East Asian states' threat perceptions. The research will focus on China's contemporary drive to enhance security cooperation with South East Asian states, looking particularly at factors which assist and impede these efforts.

3.4 Environmental security in South East Asia: Environmental change and environmental challenges, whether framed in terms of hydropolitics (the politics of water), cooperation over the management of the sea and other common resources, or trans-boundary pollution (e.g. the 'haze'), all require a degree of political cooperation. The strong links between environmental resilience and both livelihoods and economic vitality in broader terms often makes the environment an intensely political arena where local groups and nation states find their 'security' (broadly defined) challenges in different ways. This project aims to unpick the trans-national elements of environmental security.

3.0 APPLICATIONS

There will be two funding rounds each year, with deadlines for applications on August 31st and December 31st. CSEAS will consider applications at meetings in the autumn and spring and would normally expect to let applicants know the outcome by the end of November (for the 31st August deadline) and the end of March (for the 31st December deadline).

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THE PROGRAMME OF RESEARCH

Component Projects

1. Spaces of cross-border interaction: networks and borderlands

1.1 Borderlands and cross-border integration

The borderlands marking the frontiers between China and the three South East Asian countries Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam are taking on a character of their own as increasingly open borders intensify social, cultural and economic links creating distinctive trans-boundary zones where complementarities and competitive advantages are exploited in economic terms and where new social and cultural interactions arise. This research component will examine the re-orientation of economic activity and re-working of societies in border areas and the implications for local social and economic development trajectories. Communities in some border areas are reorienting their economies as cross-border opportunities present themselves. Enclave economies are emerging that exploit the economic complementarities across borders, creating new economic spaces that are distinct in terms of both content and process. New or intensified patterns of human mobility are emerging as people, as well as commodities and capital, find new niches in these cross-border areas.

1.2 Borders and borderland cultural landscapes

As well as constituting important and distinctive economic spheres, borderlands also often have a distinctive social and cultural character reflecting contemporary and historic patterns of contact and interaction. There are significant implications of economic contact for social and cultural change, and vice versa. These sometimes build on long-established associations that may even pre-date the colonial era. Such changes have important implications for local agrarian transitions, and also often have significant gender and generational impacts as people selectively engage in international labour migration. This sub-theme will engage not only with contemporary social and cultural process but will also take a longer historical view, tracing contact back to the early historical period thus contextualising the present in terms of the past.

1.3 Networks and the integration of South East Asia and the Greater Asian region

The role of networks is central to an understanding of the integration of South East Asia and the wider Asian region. These span varying geographical scales and embody different commodities from human labour to disease, capital and knowledge. Discrete networks are critical, for example, in understanding patterns of labour recruitment. Domestic workers from the Philippines working in Hong Kong, or Thais engaged in the entertainment business in Taiwan are embedded in networked systems of recruitment and control as are the brides sought in South East Asian countries as a result of the shortage of women as a consequence of China's one-child policy. Tracking, mapping and interpreting these networks is central to any understanding of how the systems operate. Networks of interaction are also important in unpicking the geographical scope and temporal development of diseases like HIV-AIDS and SARS. Patterns and flows of investment between South East Asia and East and South Asia are also informed by networks based on familial and other relationships. The presence of significant Chinese and South Asian populations in all the countries of the region add a further dimension to the networks that exist. Finally, cultural exchanges and influences, whether in terms of mass media such as the export of Chinese television or international tourism, can also be seen as linked to networks and flows.

2. Flows and circuits: culture, capital and commodities

2.1 Cultural contact: assimilation, representation and resistance/ domination

Cultural contact is never a process that is not infused with issues of power, domination and acquiescence. South East Asia has long been recognised and studied as a region with a history of cross-cultural relations and this programme sub-theme will aim to link this history and experience – current and past – with the new approaches, methods and theoretical positions emerging from the social sciences.

2.2 The composition and direction of trade and investment flows over the 20th century

This project will examine the growth and changing patterns of commodity trade, within South East Asia, and between the region and the rest of Asia, with particular reference to China, and between South East Asia/China and the rest of the world over the 20th century. Emphasis will be on quantifying both the changing composition of commodity trade and changing direction of trade, within South East Asia, between South East Asia and China, and between these regions and the rest of the world. The project will also investigate the relationship between trade and economic growth in countries and regions, and processes of convergence and divergence in per capita GDP both within the countries of South East Asia and China, and between those countries and the OECD economies. A third dimension of the project will look into the role of government in both the colonial and the post-colonial periods in facilitating the growth of trade, in taxing the profits from trade, and in using government revenues for the development of infrastructure and human capital.

A further purpose of the project will be to examine the role of both foreign and domestic investment in the economies of South East Asia and China over the twentieth century, emphasising the post-1960 era when data sources are more abundant than in the colonial era. The research will try to establish the relative importance of both foreign and domestic investment in key sectors of the economies of China and the larger ASEAN economies, such as manufacturing industry and financial services. Where data sources permit, the role of the overseas Chinese as domestic investors in South East Asia will also be examined. In addition, it is proposed to examine outward investment flows, especially from Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand to China, and from these countries and China to other parts of the world.

2.3 The institutional architecture of regional and international integration

Although closer economic integration has been a declared goal of ASEAN, at least since the Bali Declaration of 1976, progress has been slow, even after the ASEAN Free Trade Area was initiated in 1993. Barriers to trade in both goods and services are still considerable in the ASEAN region, and between ASEAN and China. But with the development of the ASEAN plus 3 initiatives, as well as the growing importance of the WTO, pressures to remove remaining barriers will certainly increase. The implications of freer trade in goods and services both between the ASEAN economies and China, and

between the region and the wider world economy will be examined. There is potential for combining research under this project component with aspects of 1.1.

3. Security: trans-regional threats and cooperation

3.1 Historiographies of colonization and resistance

Perceptions of security threats today have an important historical dimension. Unravelling the historiographies of colonization and resistance must be part of building an understanding of the contemporary landscape of security threats and the perceptions of those threats. This sub-project envisages using historical research as not only valuable in itself but also as a window onto the present.

3.2 South East Asian perceptions of security threats

Most South East Asian governments' security concerns in relation to China have changed significantly over the last 20-25 years. During the 1980s long-standing Cold War worries on the part of the original five ASEAN members over Beijing's relations with local communist parties and ethnic Chinese populations dissipated. China and Vietnam, though, were locked in conflict as a result of Vietnam's occupation of Beijing's former ally, Cambodia, and China's subsequent punitive border war against Vietnam. After it withdrew from Cambodia in 1989, allowing a diplomatic settlement there, Vietnam's relations with China improved, however. By the 1990s there were new anxieties over the impact of Beijing's growing military power and political assertiveness in relation to South East Asia, and particularly in the South China Sea where territorial claims by Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam to some or all of the Spratly Islands conflict with China's. In addition, Jakarta was concerned over China's apparent claim to part of Indonesia's exclusive economic zone to the north of the Natuna Islands. At the beginning of the present decade, though, China's economic influence and increasingly sophisticated diplomacy had helped to relax tensions over these conflicting maritime claims. The proposed research will investigate the nature and extent of the contemporary influence of security concerns related to China on the security and defence policies of South East Asian governments.

3.3 Security cooperation in South East Asia and with the Greater Asian region

Looking at the security equation from a Chinese viewpoint, Beijing has always felt threatened by South East Asian states' relations with hostile powers (which during the Cold War included the Soviet Union as well as the United States). With the aim of reducing such perceived threats, China has developed bilateral security cooperation with a range of South East Asian partners over the last 50 years. Beijing provided extensive military support for North Vietnam during the 1950s and '60s, and subsequently for Democratic Kampuchea during the 1970s. In the early 1960s, Beijing also attempted to develop security relations with Sukarno's Indonesia. During the 1980s, China took advantage of concerns over Vietnam to become Bangkok's strategic partner, despite Thailand's continuing alliance relations with the United States. Particularly since 1989, Beijing has also developed close military and security relations with Myanmar. At the same time, China has used multilateral forums (such as the ASEAN Regional Forum) and defence diplomacy (in the form of naval visits, for example) to soften South East Asian states' threat perceptions. The war against terrorism has provided a new and relatively uncontroversial avenue for China to develop security cooperation with the region. There is circumstantial evidence that growing anti-Westernism in South East Asia has facilitated these Chinese efforts since the late 1990s. The research will focus on China's contemporary drive to enhance security cooperation with South East Asian states, looking particularly at factors which assist and impede these efforts.

3.4 Environmental security in South East Asia

Environmental change and environmental challenges, whether framed in terms of hydropolitics (the politics of water), cooperation over the management of the sea and other common resources, or trans-boundary pollution (e.g. the 'haze'), all require a degree of political cooperation. The strong links between environmental resilience and both livelihoods and economic vitality in broader terms often makes the environment an intensely political arena where local groups and nation states find their 'security' (broadly defined) challenges in different ways. This project aims to unpick the trans-national elements of environmental security.