Conference Reports

Dynamic Alignments and Dealignments
in Global Southeast Asia

Freiburg, 24–26 June 2015

Southeast Asia is a region of vibrant economies, cultural diversity, and volatile polities. It is a region characterized by multiple forms of alignments and dealignments that influence its societies. The analysis of alignments, meaning cooperation and coalition-building, and dealignments, which include processes of fragmentation, disintegration and conflict, is therefore of great significance to understanding past, present, and future developments in the region.

On 24–26 June 2015, the interdisciplinary research group "Dynamic Alignments and Dealignments in Global Southeast Asia" at the Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies (FRIAS) organized a conference on the topic of Southeast Asia's cooperation cultures. The conference presented the work in progress of the institute's fellows, which centered on (1) the changing nature of political cooperation; (2) the repositioning of alterity and identity; (3) the politico-economic consequences of alignment and dealignment in the local settings of Indonesia and the Philippines; and (4) transcultural historical interactions in Southeast Asia. Around twenty speakers examined these questions from the disciplinary perspectives of political science, cultural anthropology, economics, and history.

In his keynote lecture Hal Hill (Australian National University) argued that the Southeast Asian economy is currently on the rise, as evidenced by high economic growth rates, rising living standards, and its growing share of global trade. Besides mentioning the diversity of political systems and the region's economic disparities, Hill highlighted the policy areas in which Southeast Asia has performed well. These include export-oriented industrialization, resilience in coping with economic crises, successful transitions to democracy in Indonesia and the Philippines, and progress in regional integration. However, there are still issues of concern, such as educational reforms, demographic transition, rising inequalities, and environmental sustainability. Hill also asked whether Asia is ready for global leadership and if there will be a cohesive group of nations able to exert such leadership. For the rest of the world this coincides with the question of whether the rise of Asia will be a zero sum game, something Hill denied.

The first session on "The Changing Nature of Political Cooperation in Southeast Asia", convened by Jürgen Rüland (University of Freiburg) and chaired by Mikko Huotari (MERICS), concentrated on the changing patterns of political cooperation in the region from a political science perspective.

Addressing what turned out to be one of the central concerns of the conference, namely, Southeast Asia's relations with China, Mark Beeson (University of Western Australia) stated that the key problem that ASEAN needs to overcome in order to respond to China's growing importance is the ineffectiveness of its institutions, such as, the ASEAN Regional Forum. For Beeson, the crucial obstacle to more effective regional cooperation lies in ASEAN's recalcitrant retention of sovereignty norms.

Stefan Rother (University of Freiburg) highlighted a major dealignment between the discourse of an elite-driven ASEAN and people's concerns as voiced by civil society organizations. However, he identified dynamic alignments among these organizations potentially able to rectify ASEAN's democratic deficits. By applying his approach of "alternative regionalism", Rother explained how democratic spaces can be "carved out from below." Yet his case study on the ASEAN Civil Society Conference and the ASEAN Youth Forum demonstrated the limited political space available for civil society in democratizing ASEAN. Rother thus raised the crucial question of whether and how a region can become democratic if its member states are not.

In the second panel, chaired by Muhadi Sugiono (Gadjah Mada University), Pavin Chachavalpongpun (University of Kyoto) explained how a domestic crisis had led to more intense rivalry between China and the US in Thailand and the wider region. According to him, the responses of the two competitors to the latest coup in Thailand on 22 May 2014 may be categorized as interventionism versus pragmatism. The Chinese pragmatic approach could lead to shifting power relations in China's favor and could markedly affect ASEAN's cohesion. However, Pavin suggested that competition between China and the US could also have positive effects. It might, for example, encourage other powerful actors such as Japan, India, or Australia to play a more active role in the region.

Jürgen Rüland addressed in his presentation the interplay between domestic and foreign policy and its consequences at the regional level. Applying a role theoretical model, he focused on the question of whether Indonesian democratization has changed the country's foreign policy role conceptions and thereby influenced policymaking at the regional level. Rüland demonstrated the diversification of Indonesia's role concept and the growing significance of democracy. Concerning the complex yet important question of the effects of Indonesia's foreign policy role on ASEAN, Rüland pointed to various democracy-enhancing developments in ASEAN prom-

inently promoted by the Indonesian government. Among these are the ASEAN Charter, the ASEAN Security Community, the Bali Concord II, and the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights. Still, the meaning of democracy in Indonesian role concepts appears to be ambiguous, as it is a localized vision of democracy which owes its specific form to the deeply entrenched influence in society of anti-liberal organicist concepts of state and society.

Salvador Santino Regilme (Northern Illinois University) took the opposite perspective when discussing the impact of foreign policy on domestic policy. He queried whether foreign aid could undermine human rights and examined this question in the context of the cooperation between the United States and the Philippines on counter-terrorism measures. Regilme argued that the convergence of political interests and the policy preferences of donor and recipient governments crucially influence human rights outcomes.

Convened by Judith Schlehe (University of Freiburg), the second session, entitled "Repositioning Alterity and Identity: Anthropological Perspectives" focused on the intersubjective level of transcultural encounters reflected in social imaginaries. In a panel chaired by Anna Maria Wattie (Gadjah Mada University), Martin Slama (Austrian Academy of Sciences) studied the multiple positioning of Hadramis in Indonesia and their entanglement with alignments and dealignments with the Middle East. The representation of Hadramis as a social group with roots in the Arabian Peninsula is reflected in the various terms applied to them. For example, in colonial times Hadramis were categorized as "foreign orientals", which implied a social position "in between society" as opposed to "in the middle of society". After 9/11, they became increasingly associated with terrorist attacks and were represented as "extremists in the land of moderate Islam", as Slama put it.

Examining the situation of Iranian students in Malaysia, Olivia Killias (University of Zurich) reflected on their feelings of belonging with respect to their Muslim identity. She found that the distinction between different strands of Islam has major repercussions on the identity of Iranian students. However, exclusion from Malaysian Sunni mainstream Islam as reflected in anti-Shia stereotypes does not necessarily facilitate intra-ethnic solidarity. In fact, Killias encountered wide-ranging suspicion among Iranian students, which she explained with reference to their prior experiences in Iran, where they learned to have "two faces".

In the panel chaired by Ariel Heryanto (Australian National University), Eva F. Nisa (Universitas Negeri) and Judith Schlehe (University of Freiburg) asked what imaginaries of alterity and identity Indonesian students of Al-Azhar University in Cairo derived from encounters with the Middle East. Combining Nisa's insider view and Schlehe's outsider perspective, the

presenters showed that transcultural encounters do not automatically create boundary transgressions and transnational alignment. While Nisa emphasized the role of Azharites in promoting moderate Islam in Indonesia, Schlehe stressed the limits of religious education, which she explained with reference to lackluster class attendance and the segregated everyday life of Indonesian students in Cairo. Schlehe and Nisa suggested that the cultural and religious orientations mediated by Indonesian Azharites should be understood as related to a new positioning of the religious in the context of middle-class spiritual economy and new subjectivities.

By combining on- and off-screen perspectives, Evi Eliyanah (Australian National University) and Mirjam Lücking (University of Freiburg) showed how the Arab "other" is contrasted against the Indonesian "self", working as a reference point for the identification of good and evil and as evidence of the moral superiority of Indonesians. Lücking explored how pilgrims and labor migrants who have visited the Middle East distinguish themselves from Arab men and women. In addition, Eliyanah illustrated how gendered representations of the "Arab World" are displayed in a range of Indonesian movies.

"Political-Economic Consequences of Alignment and Dealignment in Localized Indonesia and the Philippines" was the title of the third session. Convened by Günther G. Schulze (University of Freiburg) and chaired by Hal Hill, the main objective of this section was to identify the consequences of political alignment and its antipode, political rivalry, on political and economic outcomes in Indonesia and the Philippines from an economic perspective.

A paper presented by Joseph Capuno (University of the Philippines) studied the effects of political competition on fiscal and economic outcomes in subnational Philippine jurisdictions. Past studies on the Philippines found an ambiguous relationship between political dynasties (a proxy for political competition) and local development. Capuno showed that provinces with higher numbers of officials belonging to the same political clan receive higher per capita transfers for public services. However, these transfers do not seem to have a significant effect on provincial development.

The paper by Gerrit Gonschorek (University of Freiburg) and Günther G. Schulze analyzed how the political (non)alignment of districts and the president's party affect discretionary central government spending in Indonesia. Preliminary empirical evidence suggests that a district's political alignment with the president and its geographic proximity to the president's home district significantly increase central spending for infrastructure. The socio-economic development of a district, on the other hand, seems to play only a minor role in the distribution.

In a panel chaired by Krisztina Kis-Katos (University of Freiburg), Antonio Farfán-Vallespín (University of Freiburg) showed that incumbency is far more important for the re-election of local politicians in the Philippines than membership in a political dynasty. As political dynasties are usually considered a main obstacle to good governance, this has important implications for political reform efforts. If the high incumbency rate is responsible for the perpetuation of dynasties, according to Farfán-Vallespin, reforms trying to increase electoral competition should focus on incumbency advantages.

In another paper, Capuno, Farfán-Vallespín and Schulze examined the killings of journalists in the Philippines. They indicated that the probability of the murder of journalists can be predicted by institutional and economic factors. Particularly interesting are the correlations between the probability of the murder of journalists and the level of local corruption, the quality of local institutions, and characteristics of the media in the province.

Joseph Capuno and Christian von Lübke (Arnold Bergstraesser Institute) showed that good governance may be facilitated by elite competition. By comparing two Philippine cities with similar backgrounds, but distinctly different elite constellations, they demonstrated that more intense elite contests are accompanied by better governance outcomes. These findings confirm that, in the absence of credible judicial and societal controls, public performance remains contingent on the extent to which established elites keep each other in check.

Convened by Sabine Dabringhaus (University of Freiburg), the last session "Historical Perspectives on Transcultural Interactions in Southeast Asia" concentrated on transcultural processes of (de)alignment in Southeast Asia from a historical perspective. In a panel chaired by Nurul Ilmi Idrus (Hassanuddin University), Agus Suwignyo (Gadjah Mada University) discussed *gotong royong* as a social, non-state institution of welfare and citizenship and elaborated on its changing role in the process of Indonesian state formation. The introduction of the *gotong royong* by the Javanese changed the nature of communal service cooperation in Indonesia from an externally imposed mechanism for lower class people to a unifying point of identification. Hereby the institutionalization of *gotong royong* not only strengthened communal service cooperation, but also stimulated consciousness of the individual's position vis-à-vis the state.

In her presentation, Katja Rangsivek (University of Copenhagen) explained the importance of the return of King Prajadhipok's ashes for the reinvention of the Thai Monarchy. King Prajadhipok was the first Thai monarch to abdicate and go into exile, where he died in 1941. By the time his ashes

were returned to Bangkok, the monarchy had regained some of its stature in Thai politics and was about to establish its present omnipotence.

The last panel chaired by Kiyoshi Fujikawa (University of Nagoya), focused on "Chineseness" in Southeast Asia. A presentation by Sai Siew Min (National University of Singapore) looked at a Chinese association in today's Indonesia, known locally as the Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan (THHK). The THHK was founded in 1900 and tried to establish modern schools to teach Tjia-Im, or Mandarin to Chinese children. The THHK offers a significant example of how diasporic Chinese nationalism developed in a fully colonized setting and responded to events and dynamics different from those unfolding in semi-colonial China. Its development can therefore be situated within what Rebecca Karl has described as the "global moment" of Chinese nationalism, as opposed to the archaic model of "overseas Chinese nationalism".

Han Xiaorong (Lingnan University) showed that state and non-state agents played significant roles in the cultural exchange between China and Vietnam in the pre-modern period. Whereas the actions of Chinese state agents in Vietnam in the pre-modern period were similar to the civilizing missions of modern colonialists, today the Chinese and Vietnamese states have become much more powerful than their pre-modern predecessors in regulating cultural interaction between the two countries. Although Sino-Vietnamese cultural interaction was bi-directional, it was asymmetric: Chinese influence on Vietnam was much stronger than Vietnamese influence on China.

The conference contributions portrayed a region whose institutions and social fabric are in a state of accelerated flux. Established cultures of co-operation have come under strain from an increasingly tense contest between a largely Western form of modernization and a strong backlash by forces seeking alternative responses to globalization. Each of these approaches to modernity results in divergent alignments of social forces, different forms of cooperation and inevitable dealignments with erstwhile coalition and co-operation partners. The result is a deep insecurity about the direction cultural change should take in order to cope with the largely external challenges facing the region. This holds true for the institutional setting at the regional level, where ASEAN navigates between a more EU-inspired model of re-gional cooperation and the informal norms propagated by the ASEAN Way, the region's long-established repository of cooperation norms. The same holds true at the local level, where economic growth seems to be impeded by clientelist networks, which in many cases still prevail over more legalistic approaches to the allotment of central state resources. Alongside this contest over cultural orientations and alignments lies increased interest in the Middle East, the Arab world and Middle Eastern Islam, even though – as the anthropological contributions suggest – when directly exposed to these cul-

tures during the *hajj* or tertiary education, such new alignments are often seen in a critical light. In a region characterized by a high degree of structural diversity from the outset, this obvious lack of cohesion may also impede attempts to keep external forces at bay and to strengthen its global position.

Anna Fünfgeld / Gerrit Gonschorek

Scales of Knowledge: Zooming In and Zooming Out

7th Annual Conference of the Cluster of Excellence "Asia and Europe in a Global Context"

Heidelberg, 7–9 October 2015

The Cluster of Excellence "Asia and Europe in a Global Context" held its seventh Annual Conference *Scales of Knowledge: Zooming In and Zooming Out* at Heidelberg University from 7 to 9 October 2015. The conference was organised by the Cluster's Research Area C "Knowledge Systems" and revolved around the much discussed phenomenon of scales of knowledge. In an opening keynote lecture, four morning and nine afternoon sessions, 13 panels comprising 48 senior and junior researchers considered knowledge observation and production from multitudinous vantage points. Convinced of scales' importance and versatility, the participants explored their use in the analysis and narration of history, anthropology, medicine, geography and other fields.

Framed by the Taiwanese ensemble *3peoplemusic*'s journey through musical scales of East and West, past and present, indigenous and global, George Marcus (Irvine) opened the conference with a challenging keynote lecture. A noteworthy suggestion was to not only zoom in and zoom out, but to dare and stop in the middle of a zoom. This idea resonated well with the conference's outspoken goal to scrutinise scales' potential to overcome lingering dualisms such as "global and local" and "macro and micro". While not all elements of his speech found a strong echo, he certainly set one recurring theme of the conference by stressing the importance of zooms into the micro level.

On the second day, Pablo Blitstein (Heidelberg) showed how important insights into argumentative practices were to be gained by zooming in on specific discursive moments. By investigating the writings of Kāng Yǒuwéi,