Inducement and Smaller States’ Triple Trade-offs:
Southeast Asian Responses to China’s Belt and Road Initiative

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Policy is about trade-offs, more so in the realm of external affairs. This is especially true for weaker and smaller states faced with material inducement from big power, as their inherent limitations and vulnerabilities mean that they are more exposed to the mixed effects of power-centred inducement than stronger states. This seminar focuses on Southeast Asian states’ responses to China’s Belt and Road Initiative, using the observable commonalities and variations across the region thus far to illustrate nuances of the “triple trade-offs” – across domains, time and levels – in driving, shaping and limiting weaker states’ reactions to the range of returns and risks surrounding the BRI. The speaker will argue that the trade-offs are weighted primarily along the ruling elites’ respective pathways of legitimation, for the ultimate end of boosting their own authority at home. This presentation is based on the speaker's ongoing research project (with Lee Jones as Co-Investigator) under the Newton Advanced Fellowship, supported by the British Academy and the Academy of Sciences, Malaysia.

Cheng-Chwee Kuik is an Associate Professor at the Strategic Studies and International Relations Program at the National University of Malaysia (UKM) and concurrently an associate member at the Institute of China Studies at the University of Malaya (UM). He is the founder and co-convener of the East Asian International Relations (EAIR) Caucus. Dr. Kuik’s research concentrates on weaker states’ foreign policy behaviour, regional multilateralism, East Asian security, China-ASEAN relations, and Malaysia’s external policy. He is a co-editor (with Alice Ba and Sueo Sudo) of Institutionalizing East Asia: Mapping and Reconfiguring Regional Cooperation (Routledge 2016). Cheng-Chwee serves on the editorial boards of Contemporary Southeast Asia, Australian Journal of International Affairs, Asian Perspective, and Routledge’s “IR Theory and Practice in Asia” Book Series.

All are welcome

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