"Dialogue in Asia and the West: Interreligious Relations in A World of Conflict and Violence"

Saturday, 22 September 2018
Grand Copthorne Waterfront, Singapore
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SRP DISTINGUISHED LECTURE AND SYMPOSIUM

ABOUT S. RAJARATNAM SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES (RSIS)

ABOUT STUDIES IN INTER-RELIGIOUS RELATIONS IN PLURAL SOCIETIES (SRP)

PROGRAMME

PROFILES
• Ambassador Ong Keng Yong
• Professor Alwi Abdurrahman Shihab
• Professor Gavin Flood
• Professor Lai Pan-Chiu
• Ambassador Barry Desker
• Dr Lee Foong Ming
• Mr Gerald Kong
• Associate Professor Rajesh Rai
• Dr Mohammad Hannan Hassan
• Associate Professor Paul Hedges

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
The Distinguished Lecture and Symposium are both centred on the theme “Dialogue in Asia and the West.” Concertedly, they will explore the prospects and challenges for dialogue to help establish positive interreligious relations in South East Asia. In the coming years, what global trends and regional dynamics are likely to emerge that would bear upon Singapore and the region? While the Distinguished Lecture looks at establishing “Positive Interreligious Relations in Plural Societies through Dialogue”, the Keynote Lectures on Asian and Western experiences are intended to raise themes to be discussed throughout the symposium from the global, regional, and local perspectives. These include, but are not limited to, the relationship between religion and politics. Overall, religious resources, interpretations, and traditions that may enhance or impede prospects for harmonious living in our world of conflict and violence will be examined. Participants are expected to be imbued with new-found insights on how interreligious dialogue may shape the future of plural societies such as Singapore.
ABOUT S. RAJARATNAM SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES (RSIS)

The S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) is a think tank and professional graduate school of international affairs at the Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. An autonomous school, RSIS’ mission is to be a leading research and graduate teaching institution in strategic and international affairs in the Asia Pacific. With the core functions of research, graduate education and networking, it produces cutting-edge research on Asia Pacific Security, Multilateralism and Regionalism, Conflict Studies, Non-traditional Security, Cybersecurity, Maritime Security and Terrorism Studies.


ABOUT STUDIES IN INTER-RELIGIOUS RELATIONS IN PLURAL SOCIETIES (SRP) PROGRAMME

The Studies in Inter-Religious Relations in Plural Societies (SRP) Programme aims to study various models of how religious communities develop their teachings to meet the contemporary challenges of living in plural societies. It will also deepen the study of inter-religious relations, formulate models for the positive role of religions in peace-building and produce knowledge to strengthen social ties between communities. The Programme seeks to be at the forefront in the development of scholarship and applied knowledge on the roles of religion and inter-religious relations in plural societies today.

For more details, please visit https://www.rsis.edu.sg/research/srp/, or follow us at https://www.facebook.com/srp programme/.
SECRETARIAT AND MEDIA ENQUIRY

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PROGRAMME

SATURDAY, 22 SEPTEMBER 2019

8.15 a.m. – 8.45 a.m.  REGISTRATION

8.45 a.m.  Guests to be seated

9.00 a.m. – 9.10 a.m.  WELCOME REMARKS
Ambassador Ong Keng Yong,
Executive Deputy Chairman, S. Rajaratnam
School of International Studies, Singapore

9.10 a.m. – 10.10 a.m.  4TH SRP DISTINGUISHED LECTURE
“Establishing Positive Interreligious Relations in Plural Societies through Dialogue”
Professor Alwi Shihab
Indonesian President’s Special Envoy to the Middle East and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation

10.10 a.m. – 10.40 a.m.  TEA BREAK

10.40 a.m. – 11.20 a.m.  KEYNOTE LECTURE 1
“Western Perspectives on Dialogue in a World of Conflict and Violence”
Professor Gavin Flood
Professor of Hindu Studies and Comparative Religion, Oxford University & Yap Kim Hao Visiting Professor of Comparative Religious Studies, Yale-NUS College

11.20 a.m. – 12.00 p.m.  KEYNOTE LECTURE 2
“Chinese Perspectives on Dialogue in a World of Conflict and Violence”
Professor Lai Pan-Chiu
Dean of Arts Faculty, The Chinese University of Hong Kong

12.00 p.m. – 1.30 p.m.  LUNCH

1.30 p.m. – 2.50 p.m.  ROUNDTABLE AND Q&A SESSION
Moderated by Ambassador Barry Desker
Distinguished Fellow, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore
2.50 p.m. – 3.50 p.m.  
SINGAPOREAN PERSPECTIVES ON THE FUTURE OF INTERRELIGIOUS RELATIONS IN PLURAL SOCIETIES

A Buddhist Perspective
Dr Lee Foong Ming  
*Assistant Professor, Buddhist College of Singapore*

A Catholic Perspective
Mr Gerald Kong  
*Executive Secretary of the Archdiocesan Catholic Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the Archdiocesan Catholic Council for Ecumenical Dialogue*

A Hindu Perspective
Associate Professor Rajesh Rai  
*Head of the South Asian Studies Programme, National University of Singapore*

An Islamic Perspective
Dr Mohammad Hannan Hassan  
*Vice Dean and Deputy Director, Capacity Building & Interfaith Engagement, MUIS Academy*

3.50 p.m. – 4.20 p.m.  
PANEL DISCUSSION AND Q&A SESSION  
Moderated by Associate Professor Paul Hedges  
*Associate Professor, Studies in Inter-Religious Relations in Plural Societies Programme, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore*

4.20 p.m. – 4.30 p.m.  
CLOSING REMARKS  
Associate Professor Paul Hedges  
*Associate Professor, Studies in Inter-Religious Relations in Plural Societies Programme, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore*

4.30 p.m. – 5.00 p.m.  
TEA RECEPTION
Ambassador Ong Keng Yong is the Executive Deputy Chairman of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) at the Nanyang Technological University (NTU) in Singapore. Concurrently, he is the Ambassador-at-Large at the Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs, non-resident High Commissioner to Pakistan and non-resident Ambassador to Iran. Mr Ong also serves as Chairman of the Singapore International Foundation (SIF).

Mr Ong was High Commissioner of Singapore to Malaysia from 2011 to 2014. He served as Secretary-General of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), based in Jakarta, Indonesia from January 2003 to January 2008.

Mr Ong started his diplomatic career in 1979 and was posted to the Singapore Embassies in Saudi Arabia, Malaysia and the United States of America. He was Singapore’s High Commissioner to India and concurrently Ambassador to Nepal from 1996 to 1998. From September 1998 to December 2002, he was Press Secretary to the then Prime Minister of Singapore, Mr Goh Chok Tong. At the same time, Mr Ong held senior appointments in the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts, and the People’s Association in Singapore. From 2008 to 2011, he served as Director of the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) in the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore.

Mr Ong graduated from the then University of Singapore with a LLB (Hons) and the Georgetown University (Washington DC, USA) with an MA in Arab Studies.
Professor Alwi Abdurrahman Shihab is the Indonesian President’s Special Envoy to the Middle East and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. He was educated in the traditional Islamic sciences at the Al-Azhar University, Egypt (Bachelors and Masters Degrees), and took a first PhD at the University of Ain Shams, Egypt, before undertaking a second Masters Degree and PhD at Temple University, USA.

A member on the Board of Directors of the Dialogue Institute, Temple University, USA, Professor Shihab also held a post-doctoral position at the Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard University, and lectured at Hartford Seminary, USA, specialising in Muslim-Christian relations. Formerly a professor at both Harvard Divinity School, USA, and the University of Indonesia, Jakarta, he has written half a dozen books which include Islam Inklusif (Inclusive Islam, 1997), Membendung Arus (Muhammadiyah Movement and Its Controversy with Christian Mission, 1998), Islam Sufistik (Sufistic Islam, 2001), and Membedah Islam di Barat (Examining Islam in the West, 2011).

Amongst other political roles, Professor Shihab served as Indonesia’s Minister for Foreign Affairs from 1999 to 2001 and as Coordinating Minister for People’s Welfare of the Republic of Indonesia from 2004 to 2005. In 2002, he was named the President of the National Awakening Party (Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa) and was conferred the highest civilian honour of the Republic of Indonesia in 2014, the Bintang Mahaputera Adipradana medal. Professor Shihab’s accomplishments in the business sector include having been Secretary General of the Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Indonesia. He is currently the Special Advisor to several Indonesian corporations, both state-owned as well as private.
**Professor Gavin Flood** FBA is Professor of Hindu Studies and Comparative Religion at Oxford University, Senior Research Fellow of Campion Hall, and Yap Kim Hao Visiting Professor of Comparative Religious Studies in Yale-NUS, Singapore.

Professor Gavin read Religious Studies and Social Anthropology at Lancaster University and taught at the universities of Wales (Lampeter) and Stirling before coming to Oxford in 2005. He was elected to membership of the British Academy in 2014. His research interests are in medieval Hindu texts (especially from the traditions of Shiva), comparative religion, and phenomenology.

Two of his recent books are *The Importance of Religion: Meaning and Action in Our Strange World* (2013) and *The Truth Within: A History of Inwardness in Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism* (2013). He has just completed *Religion and the Philosophy of Life*, which will be published by Oxford University Press in 2019 and is currently working on an edition and translation of a Sanskrit text called the Netra Tantra. He is general series editor of the Oxford History of Hinduism.
Professor Lai Pan-Chiu (Ph.D., King’s College London, 1991) is the Professor of Religious Studies and Dean of Arts Faculty, The Chinese University of Hong Kong. His research interests span inter-religious dialogue, Christianity and Chinese culture, as well as modern Christian thought (including Chinese Christian theology).


**Ambassador Barry Desker** is a Distinguished Fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University. He formerly headed RSIS and the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies from October 2000 to November 2014.

He is Singapore’s Representative to the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR), a Member of the Presidential Council for Minority Rights, Singapore, and a Member of the Board of Directors of the Lee Kuan Yew Exchange Fellowship.

He was the Chief Executive Officer of the Singapore Trade Development Board from 1994 to 2000 and was Singapore’s Ambassador to Indonesia from 1986 to 1993. He was awarded the Public Administration Medal (Gold) in 1992 and the Long Service Award in 1995.

Mr Desker is currently also the Non-Resident Ambassador of Singapore to the Holy See and Spain, and Chairman of Singapore Technologies Marine.

A President’s Scholar, he was educated at the University of Singapore, University of London and Cornell University. He was awarded an honorary doctorate by Warwick University in 2012 and by the University of Exeter in 2013.
Dr Lee Foong Ming graduated from the National University of Singapore (NUS) in 1994 with a Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communication and Chinese Studies. She began her postgraduate studies in Buddhism at the University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka in 1995 and obtained her PhD in 2003, specializing in Sarvastivada Abhidharma. Beyond an exposure to the Pali and Sanskrit languages, her studies led Dr Lee to acquiring insight on the major Abhidharma systems in the ‘nikaya period’ of Indian Buddhism.

Having spent a good part of her adult life studying with the support and kindness of many people, she is now actively paying back to the Buddhist community. She joined the Buddhist College of Singapore (BCS) in 2013 and teaches subjects on the history and philosophy of Indian Buddhism at the College. She also conducts short meditation courses and shares Dhamma at Buddhist organizations.

In recent years, through her exposure to the SRP-BCS collaboration, Dr Lee directs her academic interest to exploring interreligious learning as a means to alleviating suffering (dukkha) that springs from religious bigotry.
Mr Gerald Kong is the Executive Secretary of the Archdiocesan Catholic Council for Interreligious Dialogue (ACCIRD) and the Archdiocesan Catholic Council for Ecumenical Dialogue (ACCED). He also serves at St. Gabriel's Primary and St. Gabriel's Secondary as their spiritual advisor.

Having graduated from the Nanyang Business School, Nanyang Technological University with a Bachelor of Accountancy in 1999, Gerald worked in the financial planning industry for a few years before pursuing a Bachelor of Sacred Theology at the St. John Vianney Theological Seminary in Cagayan De Oro, Mindanao, Philippines in 2006.

He furthered his studies in Catholicism at the Loyola School of Theology in Manila and obtained a Licentiate in Sacred Theology (Systematic Theology) with a particular focus on Missiology in 2012. In 2013, Gerald was awarded a Master of Arts in Theological Studies by the Ateneo de Manila University.
**Associate Professor Rajesh Rai** is Head of the South Asian Studies Programme (SASP), National University of Singapore (NUS). His research interests are in the areas of: Diaspora Studies; South Asian Nationalisms; and the Postcolonial History and Politics of South Asia.

Author of *Indians in Singapore, 1819-1945: Diaspora in the Colonial Port City* (Oxford University Press, 2014), Associate Professor Rai has edited and co-edited several major volumes including *Singapore Indian Heritage* (National Heritage Board, 2017); *Religion and Identity in the South Asian Diaspora* (Routledge: 2013); *South Asian Diaspora: Transnational Networks and Changing Identities* (Routledge: 2009); and the *Encyclopedia of the Indian Diaspora* (Editions Didier Millet, 2006). Associate Professor Rai’s articles have been published in premier academic journals such as *Modern Asian Studies, South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies, Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* and *South Asian Diaspora*.

He is currently also the President and Life Trustee of Arya Samaj Singapore and DAV Hindi School and serves on the Executive Board of the Indian Heritage Centre.
Dr Mohammad Hannan Hassan is the Vice Dean and Deputy Director, Capacity Building and Interfaith Engagement at MUIS Academy. His research interests are in philosophy and the history of ideas and civilizations, with a particular focus on Islamic education. A specialist in Muslim-Jewish and interfaith relations, as well as the history and philosophy of Islamic law in the Malay Archipelago, Dr Hannan had received his PhD from the Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, Canada.

A recipient of the Amir of Kuwait Award, Dr Hannan has a Master of Arts in Islamic Civilization from the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), Kuala Lumpur. He also holds a B.Ed (Hons), First Class with Distinction, majoring in Arabic Language and Islamic education.

In fulfilling his various capacities at MUIS Academy and through contributions made at other non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as the Singapore Islamic Scholars and Religious Teachers Association (Pergas), Dr Hannan is actively involved in Islamic discourse and intellectual development. His primary responsibilities at MUIS Academy include the promotion of a progressive Islamic learning and discourse, capacity development of religious intelligentsia, and interfaith relations. He is also a member of the Steering Committee of the International Abrahamic Forum (IAF), and regularly contributes to international interfaith committees and initiatives.
Associate Professor Paul Hedges is Associate Professor in Interreligious Studies at the Studies in Inter-Religious Relations in Plural Societies Programme, RSIS, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. He has previously worked for, or lectured at, other universities in Asia, Europe, and North America.

He researches, teaches, and publishes widely in such areas as Interreligious Studies, theory and method in the study of religion, contemporary global religious ideologies, and interreligious hermeneutics. He has engaged in work beyond academia with the media, NGOs, faith groups, and governments.

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