

ASIAN CITIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL LEGAL ORDER WORKSHOP

Yong Pung How School of Law, Singapore Management University, July 10- July 11, 2025



Centre for Commercial Law









Program

	Day 1 - July 10
8:30 am	Arrival and Registration
9:00 am	Opening Keynote Roundtable Chair: Associate Professor Nengye Liu (Singapore Management University) Panellists: Professor Cai Congyan (Fudan University), Professor Helmut Aust (Free University Berlin), Professor Yukari Takamura (The University of Tokyo), Professor Orlando Woods (Singapore Management University)
10:00 am	Panel 1: Asian Cities Navigating and Shaping Geopolitics Chair: Professor Cai Congyan, Fudan University
	The Geopolitics of International Law and Asian World Cities
	Professor Kasim Balarabe, Professor & Associate Dean, Jindal Global Law School, O P Jindal Global University, India
	From Megacities to Global Players: How Vietnam's Urban Hubs Navigate Geopolitics through Urban Growth, Transnational Networks, and Legal Innovation
	Dr Le Thi Ngoc Mai, Lecturer, Hanoi Law University, Vietnam
	Beyond the Archipelago: Jakarta's Influence on Global Legal and Institutional Trends
	Professor Arie Afriansyah, Faculty of Law, Universitas Indonesia (presenting online)
11:30 am	Short Break
11:45 am	Panel 2: Asian Cities and the Law of the Sea Chair: Associate Professor Liu Nengye, SMU

4:00pm	Panel 4: TWAIL and Human Rights: Critical Approaches to the Role of Asian Cities
	Chair: Associate Professor Lowell Bautista, Western Sydney University
	Transnational Law and Colonial Legacies in the Context of ASEAN's Sustainable Cities Programme and the UN's New Urban Agenda
	Dr Andreas Kotsakis, Senior Lecturer in Law, Kent Law School, University of Kent, United Kingdom
	One City, One Dream – or Just a Dream? A TWAIL Critique on the Evaluation of Asian Cities in International Arbitration
	Huang Fan, PhD Candidate, Faculty of Law, National University of Singapore
	Rapid Urbanization and Advancing the Human Right to Housing in Asian Cities
	Dr Kaara Martinez, Counsel, World Bank Administrative Tribunal (presenting online)
5:30 pm	End of Day 1
6:30pm	Conference Dinner for Speakers

Day 2 – July 11	
9:00 am	Panel 5: The Rise of Chinese Cities as Global Actors
	Chair: Professor Orlando Woods, Director, Urban Institute, SMU
	"Belt and Road cities" and the International Legal Order
	Professor Helmut Aust, Free University Berlin, Germany / Co-Chair, ILA Committee on Urbanization and International Law
	From Semi-Colonial "Treaty Port" to International Legal Capital: Shanghai in a Changing World
	Professor Cai Congyan, School of Law, Fudan University, China & Dr Yifei Wang, Lecturer, East China University of Political Science and Law
	From Imperial Capital to Global Node: Beijing's Engagement with International Law under Centralise Governance
	Dr Lai Huaxia, Assistant Professor, School of International Relations, Peking University, China
	Hong Kong's Potential to Rise to Become Asia's Legal Capital
	Associate Professor Gu Weixia, Faculty of Law, University of Hong Kong, China
10:50 am	Short Break
11:05 am	Panel 6: Asian Cities as Essential Nodes for Global Trade
	Chair: Dr Ethan Beringen, Yong Pung How Research Fellow, SMU
	Impact of emerging port-led cities of Gujarat, India on the International legal and Economic Order: A Case Study
	Sonali Mukherje, Project Consultant, Ernst & Young, India
	State Power, Corporate Sovereignty, and the International Legal Order: the Asian transshipment hub as 'hyperroute'

	Dr Dhiraj Nainani, Postdoctoral Fellow, Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore	
12:05 pm	ILA Committee on Urbanisation and International Law Side Meeting (Open to all speakers) and Lunch	
1:45 pm	Panel 7: Emerging Trends for Asian Cities in the International Legal Order	
	Chair: Assistant Professor Aidan Wong, Urban Institute, SMU	
	Central Asia's International Law Hubs: Almaty and Tashkent Professor Sergey Sayapin, Professor and Research Director at KIMEP University's School of Law, Kazakhstan	
	Hong Kong as the Home of the International Organization for Mediation (IOMed): A New Chapter in Global Dispute Resolution Dr Yang Suhong, Global Academic Fellow & Ms Wu Xianshu, Faculty of Law, University of Hong Kong	
	Korean Cities and International Legal Order, A Limited but Expanding Role Hyunkyu Kim, Ph.D. candidate in international law, School of Law, Korea University, Seoul, Republic of Korea	
3:15pm	Final remarks and farewell	

Speaker Profiles

Panel 1: Asian Cities Navigating and Shaping Geopolitics

Professor Kasim Balarabe

Kasim Balarabe is a Professor of Law and Associate Dean at O.P. Jindal Global University, India, with over 17 years of experience spanning teaching, research, legal practice, and public service. He specialises in public international law, international humanitarian law, human rights, international criminal law, and the intersection of law and technology. He holds a PhD in Law from Maastricht University and advanced law degrees from Geneva and Amsterdam. Dr Balarabe has authored multiple peer-reviewed articles and books and regularly presents at leading international conferences. He serves as a faculty member with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research and has delivered training globally on refugee protection, human rights, and post-conflict reconstruction. A recipient of numerous teaching and research awards, his current work explores emerging legal challenges posed by artificial intelligence, digital sovereignty, and environmental protection in armed conflict. He is an active member of several international legal associations, including the American Society of International Law and the European Society of International Law.

Dr Le Thi Ngoc Mai

Dr. Le Thi Ngoc Mai is a lecturer in the Economic Law
Department at Hanoi Law University in Vietnam, specializing
in Economic Law, Real Estate Law, and Investment Law. She
holds a PhD in Law from Zhejiang University in China.
Additionally, she studied and researched the Japanese
language and law for four years under the training program of
Nagoya University, Japan. Dr Mai has extensive research
experience, focusing on cross-border investments, real estate
law, and environmental governance. She has published in
prestigious journals such as the Journal of East Asia and
International Law. Furthermore, she has actively contributed
to international conferences and collaborative projects,
including the Asian Development Bank's faculty training
program. Her work bridges theoretical insights and practical
solutions within legal frameworks across Asia.

Professor Arie Afriansyah

Arie Afriansyah is a Professor at the Faculty of Law Universitas Indonesia. Besides teaching duties, he is currently the Chairman of the Center for Sustainable Ocean Policy, Faculty of Law Universitas Indonesia; the Editor in Chief of the Indonesian Journal of International Law (IJIL); and the Editor in Chief of the Indonesia Yearbook of International Law (IndoYBIL). He is also the President of the Indonesian Society of International Law Lecturers (ISILL) (2024-2027) and an Executive Council Member of the Asian Society of International Law (AsianSIL). His work areas are mostly on the law of the sea, maritime security, migration, and refugees. Arie obtained his Bachelor's in law (Sarjana Hukum/SH) in August 2003 from the Faculty of Law Universitas Indonesia. In December 2006, he received a Master of International Law (MIL) degree from the University of Sydney Law School, Australia. Finally, Arie obtained his Doctorate Degree in Law (PhD) at the Faculty of Law, University of Otago, New Zealand, in August 2013.

Panel 2: Asian Cities and the Law of the Sea

Dr Ethan Beringen

Ethan Beringen is a Yong Pung How Research Fellow at the Centre for Commercial Law in Asia (CCLA) at Singapore Management University. He is also a part of the Singapore Sustainable Futures Initiative team within the CCLA. Ethan completed his PhD with the Centre for Environmental Law at Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia. He has also been a guest PhD Researcher at the Norwegian Centre for the Law of the Sea at UiT the Arctic University of Norway. Ethan's research is focused on international environmental law and law of the sea. Specifically, he is interested in the protection of marine biodiversity and the prevention of marine plastic pollution. He has published research on topics such as the negotiations for a new treaty instrument for conserving marine biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction, international fisheries law, Australia's ocean governance, regime interaction and middle power theory.

Associate Professor Liu Nengye

Prof LIU Nengye teaches and conducts research on international law and sustainability at SMU. Prof LIU has taken the lead to edit three books: "The European Union and the Arctic" (Brill, 2017), "Governing Marine Living Resources in the Polar Regions" (Edward Elgar, 2019); "The Law of the Sea and the Planetary Crisis" (Routledge, 2025); published 50+ refereed journal articles and book chapters in the fields of the law of the sea and international environmental law; and delivered 100+ presentations about his research findings across five continents. He sits on the editorial board of Marine Policy, Ocean Development and International Law and Polar Record. Prof Liu is the Founding Chair of Steering Committee, Asia Pacific Research Alliance on Law and

Sustainability and the Founding Director of Singapore	
Sustainable Futures Initiative.	

Associate Professor Lowell Bautista

Lowell Bautista is Associate Professor and Director of Academic Program at the School of Law, Western Sydney University and a Honorary Fellow at the Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources and Security (ANCORS), University of Wollongong. Dr Bautista is a scholar of international standing with a recognised reputation for his expertise in the law of the sea, particularly for his contributions in the area of territorial and maritime disputes in the Asia-Pacific, especially the South China Sea. His research expertise primarily involves multi-faceted aspects of international law, law of the sea, ocean governance, maritime security, and comparative law. Dr Bautista holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and a Bachelor of Laws degrees from the University of the Philippines, a Master of Laws degree from Dalhousie University in Canada and a Doctor of Philosophy degree from the University of Wollongong.

Dr Laely Nurhidayah

Laely Nurhidayah is currently a visiting scholar at College of Law the National University of Kaohsiung and the National Taipei University (NTPU). She is a researcher at the Research Center for Law, National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN) Jakarta Indonesia. She leads the law, environment, climate change, society, and natural resources research portfolios in her research center. She was awarded her PhD in Law from Macquarie University, Australia in 2015. Her PhD thesis was entitled "Transboundary Haze Pollution in the ASEAN Region: An Assessment on the Adequacy of the Legal and Policy Framework in Indonesia". In addition, she was obtained her Master of Laws (Advanced) from TC Beirne School of Law, the University of Queensland Australia and received Bachelor of Law from Jenderal Soedirman University in Indonesia.

Panel 3: Asian Cities Practicing Sustainability

Professor Yukari Takamura

Yukari Takamura is Professor at the Institute for Future Initiatives, The University of Tokyo. After receiving Master of Laws (Public International Law) from Hitotsubashi University, Tokyo, she was appointed Associate Professor at Shizuoka University. Before joining the University of Tokyo in 2018, she worked as Professor at Ryukoku University, Kyoto, and Professor at Nagoya University, Japan. She also studied at Graduate School of University of Paris II (Panthéon-Assas),

France and was Visiting Researcher at University of London, U.K.

She is member of the Editorial Board of Journal Sustainability Science and of the Editorial Advisory Board of Journal Climate Policy. She is member of Board of Directors of the Japanese Society for Environmental Economics and Policy Studies as well as member of the Board of Executive Directors of the Japanese Society for Environmental Law and Policy Studies. She serves as member of governmental advisory bodies, among others, Central Environmental Council as President, and Procurement Price Calculation Committee for Feed-in Tariff Scheme for Renewable Energy as Chair. She is also member of the Advisory Group on Climate Change and Sustainable Development of the Asian Development Bank (ADB). She is member of Science Council of Japan and serves as Vice President since October 2020, and received Environmental Conservation Merit's Minister of the Environment Award in 2018.

Dr Rong Zhenzhen

Dr. Zhenzhen Rong is a postdoctoral researcher at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (Shenzhen), and a volunteer postdoctoral researcher at Ghent University, where she got her PhD in 2023. Her research covers international and Chinese environmental law, with a focus on restoration law, as well as general public international law.

Associate Professor Jakkrit Sangkhamanee

Jakkrit Sangkhamanee is Associate Professor of Anthropology at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, Thailand. His research bridges anthropology, science and technology studies (STS), and urban studies, with a focus on environmental infrastructure, hydrosocial relations, and the ontological politics of climate adaptation. Working across deltaic cities, coastal zones, and underwater environments, he investigates how infrastructures—both material and speculative—reshape human-nonhuman entanglements and urban futures in Southeast Asia. His concept-driven ethnographic work explores how amphibious ecologies, state megaprojects, and atmospheric phenomena co-produce social and technical imaginaries in times of planetary crisis. Drawing from his long-standing engagement with posthumanist thought, he brings a distinctive methodological and conceptual lens to fluid urbanism and environmental governance. He is an active contributor to regional and international scholarly networks on cities, infrastructures, and STS.

Panel 4: TWAIL and Human Rights: Critical Approaches to the Role of Asian Cities

Dr Andreas Kotsakis	Dr. Andreas Kotsakis is a Senior Lecturer in Law at Kent Law School, the University of Kent. He works in the fields of environmental, energy and land use law, with a transnational focus on the regulation and governance of nonstate actors, such as international institutions, multinational corporations and global cities. He is the author of The Use of Biodiversity in International Law: A Genealogy of Genetic Gold (2021), which examines the incorporation of ecological and conservation concerns into international law. His current research focuses on how the environment agenda is adapted to recent rapid geopolitical and technological change.
Huang Fan	Huang Fan is a PhD student of Public International Law at the Faculty of Law, National University of Singapore. His research focuses on the First-Third World division in international dispute settlement. Prior to academia, he worked as an assistant legal counsel at a major arbitral institution in China.
Dr Kaara Martinez	Kaara Martinez is a Counsel with the World Bank Administrative Tribunal in Washington, D.C. She holds a PhD in Law from the University of Cambridge and her thesis – The Right to Housing in the City – argued for a human right to housing in the city and examined contemporary global challenges concerning housing, particularly in relation to affordability, city competition, displacement, space, and belonging. Dr. Martinez also holds a Juris Doctor and a Certificate in Refugees and Humanitarian Emergencies from the Georgetown University Law Center, and a Master of Studies in International Human Rights Law, with distinction, from the University of Oxford. She is a member of the International Law Association's 'Urbanisation and International Law' Committee and previously served as a commercial litigation associate with a large law firm in Miami, Florida, and taught International Human Rights Law, Cities and Inclusion, and Urban Planning Ethics, among other courses, at Georgetown University.

Panel 5: The Rise of Chinese Cities as Global Actors

Professor Helmut	Helmut Philipp Aust, Dr. iur., is a Professor of Public and
Aust	International Law at Freie Universität Berlin. He is also an

Associate Fellow of the German Council of Foreign Relations (DGAP) and Co-Chair of the ILA Committee on Urbanisation and International Law - Potentials and Pitfalls. His scholarship deals with questions of general international law, the use of force and the relationship between international law and domestic law. A special focus of his work lies on the role of cities in international law. His publications include "The Globalisation of Urban Governance - Legal Perspectives on Sustainable Development Goal 11" (co-edited with Anél du Plessis, Routledge 2019) as well as the "Research Handbook on International Law and Cities" (co-edited with Janne E. Nijman, Edward Elgar 2021) which was awarded the Collaborative Book Prize of the European Society of International Law 2022.

Professor Cai Congyan

Prof. CAI Congyan teaches and researches international legal theory, foreign relations law, international investment law, and Chinese international law policy and practice. He published with American Journal of International Law, German Yearbook of International Law, Journal of International Economic Law, etc. His recent books mainly include the Cambridge Handbook of China and International Law (coeditor, CUP, 2024), the UN Security and the Maintenance of Peace in a Changing World (co-author, CUP, 2024), the BRICS and the New International Legal Order on Investment (coeditor, Brill, 2020), the Rise of China and International Law (OUP, 2019), and On "International Law-Based International Order" (Social Sciences in China, Vol.44(3), 2023).

Dr Yifei Wang

Dr. Yifei Wang is a Lecturer at East China University of Political Science and Law and currently on full-time secondment (2024-2025) as Legal Assistant to the Fourth Civil Division of the Supreme People's Court. She previously completed a six-month secondment at the Shanghai Municipal Government Development Research Center (in 2024) and served as a Judicial Fellow to Judge Nolte at the International Court of Justice (2021-2022). Her research focuses on two interconnected areas: the judicial practice of international courts, and foreign relations law-particularly China's transnational judicial dialogues, the expert roles of judges, and the engagement of local governments in foreign relations. Dr. Wang holds an LL.B. and a J.M. from China University of Political Science and Law, an LL.M. in Maritime Law from Erasmus University Rotterdam, and a Ph.D. in International Law from Xiamen University.

Dr Lai Huaxia

Dr. LAI Huaxia is Assistant Professor at Peking University School of International Studies. Trained in both international law and political science, she is well versed in the methods and theories of both law and politics and specializes in international economic law and international organizations. A frequent speaker at both international law and international relations conferences home and abroad, she is currently working on projects that examine the embeddedness of politics and law at international organizations. She has published on various topics including investor-state dispute settlement, renewable energy subsidies under international trade law, and applying quantitative methods to the study of international law. She received her PhD in international law and MA in political science from University of Washington, MA in international relations from Peking University, and BA in international relations from University of International Relations (summa cum laude).

Associate Professor Gu Weixia

Dr. Weixia Gu is a tenured Associate Professor at the University of Hong Kong Faculty of Law, and formerly a Fulbright Scholar at the New York University School of Law. Gu is an award-winning scholar in the field of international arbitration and private international law. She was the recipient of the Outstanding Young Researcher Award at the University of Hong Kong in 2019. Her research and teaching interests also extend to the areas of international commercial courts, cross-border legal issues, transnational and international legal order, with a focus on Hong Kong SAR, China, and Asia. Her works are published in leading international law journals. Gu served as the Co-Chair of the American Society of International Law (ASIL) Asia Pacific Interest Group (2018 to 2021). She now sits on the Academic Council of the Institute of Transnational Arbitration (ITA), which is composed of world's top academics in the field of international commercial and investment arbitration.

Panel 6: Asian Cities as Essential Nodes for Global Trade

Sonali Mukherje

Sonali Mukherjee a qualified Advocate in India with a strong academic and professional background in maritime law. She holds a BBA LLB from Symbiosis International University, Pune—ranked among the top three law schools in India—and an LLM in Maritime Law from the National University of Singapore, one of Asia's premier legal institutions. With over five years of specialized experience in the maritime industry, Sonali has worked extensively at on claims handling at CMA CGM, contract review and negotiation for transshipment and logistics related to bulk cargo in western Africa, as well as

admiralty litigation, arbitration, and policy development. Currently, she is engaged as a Project Consultant with Ernst & Young for the Gujarat Maritime Board, where she contributes to forward-looking policy frameworks, particularly in ship recycling. Sonali has authored several articles on both public and private maritime law and is fluent in English, Hindi, Bengali, and Japanese. She is deeply passionate about maritime affairs and is committed to becoming an industry thought leader.

Dr Dhiraj Nainani

Dr Dhiraj Nainani is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore. He completed his LLB and LLM at the London School of Economics and Political Science before earning his doctorate in law at the University of Hong Kong. As a critical legal geographer interested in urban Asia, Dhiraj's current research focuses on interrogating the relationship between the law and the Asian city. He is especially interested in exploring the legal concept of 'sanctuary' in ethnic enclaves, the aesthetics of the law in urban space, the law as it applies to multi-species urbanism, and the spatio-legality of international law.

Panel 7: Emerging Trends for Asian Cities in the International Legal Order

Professor Sergey Sayapin

Sergey Sayapin is Professor of International Law and Research Director at the School of Law, KIMEP University in Almaty, Kazakhstan. He is also the Founding Director of the Centre for International Law at KIMEP and holds visiting appointments at the OSCE Academy, SDU University, and other institutions in Europe and Asia. A graduate of Humboldt University of Berlin and the University of Essex, Dr Sayapin previously served as Legal Adviser at the ICRC Regional Delegation in Central Asia (Tashkent, Uzbekistan). His research focuses on international peace and security, the history and theory of international law, and comparative public law, with a particular emphasis on Eurasia.

Dr Yang Suhong

Dr. Suhong Yang is a Global Academic Fellow at the University of Hong Kong (HKU) Faculty of Law. She is also a Lecturer at HKU Department of Politics and Public Administration and the Research Manager of HKU Centre for Comparative and Public Law. Suhong was a Judicial Fellow at the International Court of Justice (2023-24). She obtained her SJD and LL.M. at Georgetown University Law Center and LL.B. at Renmin University of China. Her academic interests include public

	international law, international criminal law, international courts and tribunals, and human rights. Suhong has published with the Chinese Journal of International Law, Denver Journal of International Law & Policy, European Papers, George Mason International Law Journal, International Legal Materials, and Proceedings of the ASIL Annual Meeting. She is Vice-Chair of the American Society of International Law (ASIL) International Criminal Law Interest Group and Secretary of ASIL Women in International Law Interest Group.
Xianshu Wu	Ms. Wu is a Chinese-qualified lawyer and has also been admitted as a solicitor in England and Wales. Before joining HKU, Ms. Wu worked in various international law firms, in which she worked on several high-profile cases and accumulated considerable professional experience in corporate transactions as well as commercial and investment disputes. Ms. Wu graduated from the University of Oxford (MSc in Law and Finance), as a recipient of a prestigious full scholarship, and the China University of Political Science and Law (LL.B). She is interested in international law, international investment law, dispute resolution, and law and economics.
Hyunkyu Kim	Hyunkyu Kim is a Ph.D. candidate in international law at the School of Law, Korea University, Seoul, Republic of Korea
Chairs	
Associate Professor Michelle Lim	Dr Michelle Lim is an Associate Professor in Law, School of Law, Singapore Management University. A/Prof Lim is Co-Editor-in-Chief of the Review of European, Comparative and International Environmental Law. She was a fellow on the Global Assessment of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) and an author of the IPBES/IPCC joint workshop report. A/Prof Lim was awarded the 2016/2017 Law Council of Australia Mahla Pearlman Australian Young Environmental Lawyer of the Year Award and the 2021 Law and Society Association of Australia and New Zealand publication prize for a published scholarly article or book chapter for the paper: "Extinction: hidden in plain sight—Can stories of 'the last' unearth environmental law's unspeakable truth?." Griffith Law Review. 1-32.
Professor Orlando Woods	Orlando Woods is Professor of Geography, Director of the SMU Urban Institute, and Associate Dean (Research & Postgraduate Partnerships) at the College of Integrative

	Studies, Singapore Management University. His interdisciplinary research agenda spans social, cultural and political geography; urban studies; critical infrastructure studies; and communications and new media. He holds BA and PhD degrees in geography from University College London and the National University of Singapore respectively.
Dr Aidan Wong	Aidan M Wong is Assistant Professor of Urban Studies (Education), College of Integrative Studies, and Urban Fellow, SMU Urban Institute, Singapore Management University. Trained as an economic geographer, Aidan's teaching interests span urban cultures, Singapore studies, and food cultures. His research interests are diverse and include urban waste management, circular economy and environmental citizenship; urban heritage and active citizenship; and labour geographies, particularly the informal economy, the gig economy, and youth entrepreneurship.