



AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IN MALAYSIA AND SOUTH AFRICA: PREFERENCE FOR PARITY

Malaysia and South Africa maintain the most extensive and ambitious affirmative action regimes in the world, utilizing preferential selection to promote the disadvantaged and politically dominant majority group's representation, upward mobility and capability. This study compares the contexts, programs and outcomes of affirmative action. I draw out contrasts in the constitutional underpinnings, political-economic dynamics of ethnicity and governance, and the magnitude of minority power. Affirmative action in Malaysia is characterized by discretionary decision-making, and quota-based, centralized programs, whereas South Africa has followed a legislative route involving negotiation and enforcement of target-based, statutory requirements, under less centralized oversight.

**WEDNESDAY
JANUARY 27
5.15 - 6.30 PM
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On policy outcomes, both countries have made quantitative gains in broadening participation and facilitating upward mobility of Bumiputeras in Malaysia and blacks in South Africa. However, evidence also points to continuing shortfalls, in terms of capability and competitiveness, dependence on public institutions, and persistent difficulty in cultivating independent, private enterprise. Affirmative action must be systematic, focused and effective, in order to achieve its ultimate goal of rolling back overt preferential treatment.

GUEST SPEAKER



Hwok-Aun Lee is Senior Fellow at the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore. He is a graduate of UBC (BA economics), and subsequently completed postgraduate and doctoral studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies and the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. He has researched and published works on affirmative action, discrimination, inequality, social protection, labour and education, with a focus on Malaysia, as well as comparative study vis-à-vis South Africa and Southeast Asia. His recent articles have been published in the Journal of Contemporary Asia, Journal of Asian and African Studies, Journal of the Asia Pacific Economy, and Journal of Southeast Asian Economies, and in books published by ISEAS, Oxford University Press, Edward Elgar and Routledge. This webinar is based on his recent book of the same title, published by Routledge.

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