

# Department of Political Science Department Seminar

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Dr Selina Ho

## "China's (Infra)Structural Power: Railway Projects in Southeast Asia"

**Moderator: Dr Subhasish Ray**

**Thursday, 16th Nov 2017**

**3.00pm to 4.30pm**

**PS Staff Meeting Room, AS1, #04-01  
National University of Singapore**

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### ABSTRACT

In late 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping launched the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Maritime Silk Road in Kazakhstan and Indonesia, respectively. These came to be collectively known as "One Belt, One Road," which was subsequently renamed the "Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)." Regional connectivity through the construction of a network of transportation infrastructure forms a critical component of the BRI. In Southeast Asia, the construction of a pan-Asia railway (both high-speed and medium-speed) forms the centerpiece of the regional connectivity plan.

Based on Susan Strange's concept of structural power and using empirical evidence from China's railway projects in Indonesia, Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam, this paper examines the extent and limits of China's (infra)structural power in Southeast Asia. What are the formal and informal institutions China is promoting in the region? Does China have (infra)structural power? Is China effective in projecting its structural power? If so, under what conditions? If not, why not?

### BIO

Selina Ho is Assistant Professor at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore. She specializes in Chinese politics and foreign policy, with a focus on resources and infrastructures. Her book, *Thirsty Cities: Social Contracts and Public Goods Provision in China and India*, is under contract with Cambridge University Press and is expected to be published in Sep/Oct 2018. She is simultaneously working on a book project funded by the Smith Richardson Foundation on China's construction of a high-speed railway from Kunming to Singapore. She has also published several peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters on China's international rivers. Selina received her Ph.D. from The Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), Johns Hopkins University. She did her undergraduate studies at the National University of Singapore, graduating with a B.A. in History (Honours). She was a Singapore public servant before joining academia.

