

Occasional Address
Royal Exhibition Building, Thursday 14 December 2017, 5.00pm

Professor Vedi Hadiz
Deputy Director, Asia Institute Asian Studies (Convenor)

Chancellor, Acting Vice Chancellor, Presiding Dean, distinguished members of the academic procession, graduates, friends and families:

It is my pleasure to speak on this momentous occasion in the lives of our graduates. Whether you are departing with an undergraduate or postgraduate degree, it is fair to say that you are all at an important crossroads of your journey. Tonight, you are all the same: whether you are a student who came to study in Australia from elsewhere (like I did many, many years ago) or someone who was born and raised in this country; whether your contribution to the world will be made mainly in Africa or Southeast Asia or here in the state of Victoria.

For most of you what occurs after tonight will be exciting, but also a time of new questions and worries about what comes next. This is all perfectly natural – in truth we are all always a bit worried about what’s around the corner in this increasingly fast-changing world. No matter how we try to be ready for it, the world has a way of surprising us, hopefully in ways that are at least as often good as bad.

So, take pride in your achievements and enjoy the moment – for in all honesty it will be all too fleeting. Yet this does not mean that it cannot be savoured while it lasts. In fact, an important skill to master is **not** to take moments like these for granted – but to use them as a chance to step back, take a deep breath – and yes, congratulate yourselves for what you have achieved – for there is nothing wrong with that at all.

In this way, occasions such as tonight may become more meaningful than the mere hours for which they last. Think of the moments of self-doubt that many of you would have experienced in the last couple of years. The times when you weren’t sure that you would make it; when finishing the next task seemed like a bridge too far. Yet here you all are, like all the many who came before you. Remember this night when – in the future – you experience such moments again, for they are inevitable if you are a mere mortal like me. It may just provide you with a mental tool to deal with whatever the world cares to throw at you next. And there are many kinds of things the world will throw at you. Of this you can be sure.

Some of you will already have a clear idea of where your next challenge lies. Others are still pondering. Either way, I think it is fine. All power to those with a strong sense of purpose and knowledge of where they want to go. For those of you who don’t – please be patient with yourselves – if it’s any solace, few things ever go according to plan anyway! In truth, it may not be possible to chart your life’s journey as if using GPS technology – because the terrain you go through will keep shifting even while you are making your travel plans.

I usually hate offering myself as an example to others, but I’ll break a rule tonight and do it. On many crossroads that I had encountered while pursuing my own education, I honestly had no idea where I was going next. Even after completing a PhD, I wasn’t sure that I even

wanted to be an academic. But here I am, a respectable full professor now in a distinguished university, addressing you on this very auspicious occasion. Looking back now, I may have not got here **if I had planned it** carefully – it took many twists and turns of fate to arrive here in front of you.

You will have your own twists and turns of fate. As an educator, what I wish for you all is that the experience of studying at the University of Melbourne will help you to navigate through these twists and turns in the best way possible. That your final destination, even if not exactly what you imagine it to be sitting here tonight, is one that will be worth making the journey for.

But before all that – sit back, relax, smile and take as many photographs that your parents and families will demand. May the knowledge of successfully undertaking what is required to be at this graduation spur you on wherever life takes you next.

Vice-Chancellor's Introduction

Chancellor

Today we are delighted to welcome as guest speaker Professor of Asian Studies at the University of Melbourne's Asia Institute, Vedi Hadiz.

Before joining the Asia Institute in 2016, Professor Hadiz was Professor of Asian Societies and Politics at Murdoch University's Asia Research Centre and Director of its Indonesia Research Programme. An Indonesian national, he was an Australian Research Council Future Fellow in 2010-2014.

Professor Hadiz's research interests revolve around political sociology and political economy issues, especially those related to the contradictions of development in Indonesia and Southeast Asia more broadly, and more recently, in the Middle East.

His latest book is entitled Islamic Populism in Indonesia and the Middle East. His other books include Localising Power in Post-Authoritarian Indonesia: A Southeast Asia Perspective, Workers and the State in New Order Indonesia, and (with Richard Robison) Reorganising Power in Indonesia: The Politics of Oligarchy in an Age of Markets.

Professor Hadiz has been a visiting scholar in the School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences in France, the International Institute of Social Studies in the Netherlands, the Centre of Southeast Asian Studies in the University of Kyoto and the Department of Sociology in the University of Indonesia, where he is also an Adjunct Professor.

It is a pleasure to call on him to speak today. Please welcome Professor Vedi Hadiz.