



## Synthesis Report

# Australia and Southeast Asia: Shaping a Shared Future

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## Asia-Pacific Development, Diplomacy & Defence Dialogue

 [Secretariat@asiapacific4d.com](mailto:Secretariat@asiapacific4d.com)

 [www.asiapacific4d.com](http://www.asiapacific4d.com)

 [@AsiaPacific4D](https://twitter.com/AsiaPacific4D)

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You can cite this paper as: Asia-Pacific Development, Diplomacy & Defence Dialogue, *Australia and Southeast Asia: Shaping a Shared Future* (Canberra 2022): [www.asiapacific4d.com](http://www.asiapacific4d.com)

First published February 2022

ISBN: 978-0-6454377-0-6 (online)

ISBN: 978-0-6454377-1-3 (print)

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# Why it Matters

Southeast Asia has been considered one of Australia's highest foreign policy priorities since at least the 1940s.<sup>1</sup> But it has been difficult to achieve the sustained attention the region deserves.

Current geopolitical and geoeconomic trends provide a window of opportunity, with Southeast Asia a focus of attention for Australian decision-makers. Right now, there is the potential for a step-change in relations.

Australia needs a new vision for its engagement with Southeast Asia that extends across government and society. For Australia to influence and shape the region, it needs to use all tools of statecraft to achieve its foreign policy objectives, bringing together development, diplomacy and defence to achieve maximum effect. Beyond government, Australia needs a whole-of-nation approach that builds a common vision across Australian society with a narrative that galvanises and inspires.<sup>2</sup>

## RISKS

On the one hand Australia should be motivated by risk. Southeast Asia faces many challenges that could indirectly or directly impact Australia:

- Many of the traditional and non-traditional security threats to Australia either emanate from or transit through Southeast Asia, part of the immediate region prioritised for the Australia Defence Force's geographical focus.<sup>3</sup>
- The region is highly susceptible to the effects of climate change,<sup>4</sup> including climate migration and refugee flows. Climate change has profound implications for emergency services, community resilience and food security across the region,<sup>5</sup> and will potentially lead to the Australia Defence Force being called on more often as a first responder in disaster relief operations.<sup>6</sup>
- Rising authoritarianism is challenging governance across the region, causing increased civil unrest and instability.<sup>7</sup>
- There is a danger that Southeast Asia's pandemic recovery will be uneven and protracted. The region remains vulnerable to the medium and long-term impacts of the pandemic that will continue to exacerbate issues of poverty, climate resilience and inequality.<sup>8</sup>
- A sustained economic downturn will have far-reaching consequences for social cohesion. Countries riven by income inequality are vulnerable to social unrest, ethnic tensions and extremist movements. A region that is pandemic-ridden and unstable is detrimental to Australia's national security.<sup>9</sup>
- Individually these challenges are formidable, and they also interreact.

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<sup>1</sup> Allan Gyngell, *Fear of Abandonment: Australia in the World since 1942* (La Trobe University Press, updated edition, 2021).

<sup>2</sup> Michael Wesley, *Finding Australia's New Asia Narrative* (Asialink 2021): <https://asialink.unimelb.edu.au/stories/finding-australias-new-asia-narrative>

<sup>3</sup> Department of Defence, *2020 Defence Strategic Update*, 1 July 2020, p. 25:

<https://www.defence.gov.au/about/publications/2020-defence-strategic-update>

<sup>4</sup> ASEAN Secretariat, *ASEAN State of Climate Change Report*, October 2021, <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/ASCCR-e-publication-Final-12-Oct-2021.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Robert Glasser, *The Rapidly Emerging Crisis on our Doorstep*, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, April 2021: <https://www.aspi.org.au/index.php/report/rapidly-emerging-crisis-our-doorstep>

<sup>6</sup> Department of Defence, *2020 Defence Strategic Update*, 1 July 2020, p. 16:

<https://www.defence.gov.au/about/publications/2020-defence-strategic-update>

<sup>7</sup> Asia Centre, *COVID-19 and Democracy in Southeast Asia: Building Resilience, Fighting Authoritarianism*, December 2020: <https://asiacentre.org/covid-19-and-democracy-in-southeast-asia/>

<sup>8</sup> Richard Maude, *COVID-19 and Southeast Asia's Long Road to Economic Recovery*, November 2020,

<https://southeastasiacovid.asiasociety.org/covid-19-and-southeast-asias-long-road-to-economic-recovery/>

<sup>9</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Partnerships for Recovery: Australia's COVID-19 Development Response*, 29 May 2020: <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/partnerships-for-recovery-australias-covid-19-development-response.pdf>

## OPPORTUNITIES

At the same time, Australia has real opportunities to benefit from Southeast Asia's success.

- If Australia is strongly integrated with the region it will benefit from Southeast Asia's dynamism and growth, with a material impact on Australia's economy, job creation and welfare.
- In particular, Australia can be part of the region's green economy transition as a renewable energy superpower.<sup>10</sup> Australia has a major competitive advantage due to its significant renewable energy resources that positions it well to continue to support Southeast Asia's energy needs.<sup>11</sup>
- As Southeast Asian economies continue to grow, the region will have increased diplomatic influence, making regional countries attractive and useful international partners. Australia wants to be integrated with a part of the world that is growing in its influence.

Both risks and opportunities mean that Australia has a stake in the future of Southeast Asia. It is in Australia's national interest to have safe and prosperous countries in its immediate region. Australia should focus on how to contribute to Southeast Asia's success.

Because Australia is not a dominant actor in Southeast Asia it needs to identify the best avenues to maximise its influence to shape trends in the region. Thoughtful investments can act as a catalyst or provide a nudge in a positive direction.

In engaging with Southeast Asia, Australia does not wish to be perceived as being primarily self-serving. It needs to present itself as a real partner working together on shared interests.

### Australia in Southeast Asia:

- The overall vision is of Australia as an active and engaged partner, deeply integrated with a growing and dynamic part of the world.
- Australia recognises the necessity of applying all arms of statecraft in engaging with the region, ensuring both sufficient investment across development, diplomacy and defence and the effective coordination of the activities of each in support of common strategic objectives.
- Australia frames its engagement with Southeast Asia as valuable in its own right, not through the lens of geostrategic competition. Australia de-emphasises the focus on Southeast Asia as a stage for great power contestation in its foreign policy approach.
- Australia is an active and engaged partner in a mutually beneficial partnership of equals where Australia leverages its expertise and experience to add value to existing local and regional initiatives and bodies.
- Australia anchors its Southeast Asian development, diplomacy and defence engagement in a strategy of shared interests. It positions itself as an invested insider rather than a helpful but somewhat detached outsider. Australia focuses on being an effective partner by aligning with Southeast Asia's priorities.
- Australia is willing to invest in the necessary resources to maintain its status as a trusted and influential partner to governments, civil society and business in the region.

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<sup>10</sup> Ross Garnaut, *Superpower: Australia's Low-Carbon Opportunity* (La Trobe University Press, 2019)

<sup>11</sup> WWF, *Making Australia a renewables export powerhouse policy*, October 2021: <https://www.wwf.org.au/what-we-do/climate/renewables/resources/making-australia-a-renewables-export-powerhouse-policy#gs.n1vgha>

# The Vision in Practice

This report investigates five areas to illustrate what it looks like for Australia to shape a shared future with Southeast Asia.

## What does it look like for Australia to be a...



## ...in Southeast Asia

First, being a partner for Southeast Asian recovery and growth connects Australia with one of the region's most important priorities, with Southeast Asian leaders focused on growth in all of its facets. Growth is a goal with diplomatic, defence and development cooperation implications and should not be understood as only about development cooperation. Australia can partner with Southeast Asia on recovery and growth with a focus on health, education and economic cooperation. Through a new model of development cooperation, Australia can focus on areas where it can have outsized effect, including in systems, regulation and technology and as a pivotal education partner contributing to skills development across the region. Australia has a stake not just in the economic trajectory of the region, but in ensuring that growth is sustainable and inclusive.

Second, Australia can be a partner with Southeast Asia in climate leadership. It can help build the region's ability to manage the impacts of climate change, such as through regional risk assessments and disaster preparedness. Australia can be part of the region's green economy transition.<sup>12</sup> Australian renewable energy resources can be exported via cable from northern Australia or via green hydrogen shipped from elsewhere in the country.<sup>13</sup> Australia's natural endowment of minerals such as nickel, copper, lithium and cobalt – critical to the development of solar panels and electric vehicles – positions it well to support the region's needs. This will lead to job creation in raw materials, technological development and service delivery.

Third, in the security realm, Australia's focus should be on finding common ground with Southeast Asian leaders across a broad spectrum of cooperation, in particular with respect to shared interests in human security and effective governance. Australia's national security and international engagement strategy should see investing in human security and state security as complementary and mutually reinforcing endeavours, not

<sup>12</sup> Ursula Fuentes, Tania Urmeo & Anna Chapman, South East Asia's Transition to Renewable Energy: Opportunities for cooperation between Australia and South East Asia, *Transition Hub*, April 2020, [https://www.energy-transition-hub.org/files/resource/attachment/sea\\_transition\\_to\\_renewables\\_-\\_summary\\_paper\\_may2020.pdf](https://www.energy-transition-hub.org/files/resource/attachment/sea_transition_to_renewables_-_summary_paper_may2020.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> James Bowen, *Fuelling Cooperation: The Indo-Pacific Hydrogen Transformation*, Perth USAsia Centre, August 2021: <https://perthusasia.edu.au/our-work/fuelling-cooperation-the-indo-pacific-hydrogen-tr>

competing paradigms. The pursuit of gender equality and addressing gender-based violence is vital to the concept of human security as a driver of peace and security.<sup>14</sup> Defence has an important role to play in championing human security. Defence will also play a leadership role in advocating for development and diplomacy as important elements of foreign policy, recognising that it is in Defence's self-interest for Australia to use a range of tools to shape its international environment.

Fourth, Australia can be a catalyst for civil-military cooperation by modelling positive behaviour and building civil society links with Southeast Asia. While Australia has sometimes been cautious about emphasising liberal values of democracy and human rights in its foreign policy, its strong civil-military collaboration and governance framework represents an avenue through which it can enhance and expand its engagement in Southeast Asia. This is particularly relevant against the backdrop of rising authoritarianism in the region. Australia has an important role in promoting civil-military collaboration to strengthen effective whole-of-nation responses to humanitarian and security issues. Connections at the community level can be leveraged to pursue Australian policy objectives in Southeast Asia. A policy approach focusing on civil society collaborations will enable Australia to more effectively engage in the region.

Finally, to achieve these aims, Australia needs to become more strategically coherent in terms of its planning, structures and culture. A roadmap for deeper relations with Southeast Asia is essential, but Australia also needs to develop a more creative, contestable strategic culture. The combination of planning and culture will allow Australia to clarify its strategic objectives and align its policies, strategies, people and budgets into a strategically coherent whole. To achieve its objectives in Southeast Asia, Australia needs to ensure alignment and coordination of each arm of statecraft to maximise impact. For example, defence cooperation that supports stability, resilience and sovereignty in the region contributes to economic growth and development, meaning that Defence has a place at the table when it comes to recovery and growth in the region.

None of this will happen without ambition and political will. This report sets out some indicative pathways for Australia to shape a shared future with Southeast Asia.

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<sup>14</sup> Mary Kaldor, *Human Security* (Blackwell, 2007).

# Pathways

It would be wrong to think that Australia is not active in its Southeast Asia engagement. The region is currently receiving significant focus and attention.

In the last year, Australia has added Comprehensive Strategic Partnerships between Australia and ASEAN<sup>15</sup> and Australia and Malaysia<sup>16</sup> to existing ones with Singapore and Indonesia. Australia and ASEAN leaders now hold an annual summit.<sup>17</sup>

In response to COVID-19, Australia has made its largest investment in the region since the 2004 tsunami.<sup>18</sup> Australia has demonstrated a renewed focus on Southeast Asia through a new package of economic, development and security measures to support the region's recovery from COVID-19 including a regional vaccine initiative.<sup>19</sup> A new ASEAN Centre for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases is being established with Australian and Japanese funding.<sup>20</sup>

The pandemic has highlighted the need to strengthen regional economies against future economic shocks. The recent \$1.5-billion loan to Indonesia for budgetary support during the pandemic is an example of Australia as a stronger partner for recovery and growth in the Southeast Asian region.<sup>21</sup>

Australia recently announced \$65 million for regional maritime states for enhanced training, technical advice and cooperation that will significantly contribute to strengthening relationships across the region.<sup>22</sup> A Statement on Climate Action pledged \$500 million to support Southeast Asian countries through better management of forests, land and agriculture,<sup>23</sup> while the Prime Ministers of Vietnam and Australia signed the Joint Statement on Commitment to Practical Climate Action in November 2021.<sup>24</sup>

There are examples already in action that exemplify an approach based on partnership, shared interests and applying all arms of statecraft in engaging with the region. It is important to recognise these and encourage further investment in similar activities.

Initiative	Description
<b>The Indo-Pacific Centre for Health Security</b>	The Centre is the implementation body for the Australian Government's Vaccine Access and Health Security Initiative. It brings together global investments, collaboration with regional organisations and bilateral health cooperation to deliver both strategic direction and practical, timely assistance for regional government partners. The Centre's mix of DFAT staff, secondees from six Departments and specialist contractors provides in-house expertise in areas including the veterinary sciences, regulation, immunology, microbiology, epidemiology and anthropology. <a href="https://indopacifichealthsecurity.dfat.gov.au/">https://indopacifichealthsecurity.dfat.gov.au/</a>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/australia-asean-leaders-summit-and-east-asia-summit>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/malaysia/joint-statement-comprehensive-strategic-partnership-between-australia-and-malaysia>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/remarks-asean-australia-virtual-summit>

<sup>18</sup> Melissa Conley Tyler, "Can 2021 still be Australia's year of Southeast Asia?", *The Strategist*, February 2021:

<https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/can-2021-still-be-australias-year-of-southeast-asia/>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/southeast-asia/investing-our-southeast-asian-partnerships>

<sup>20</sup> <https://jaif.asean.org>

<sup>21</sup> <https://ministers.treasury.gov.au/ministers/josh-frydenberg-2018/media-releases/bilateral-loan-indonesia>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/investing-our-southeast-asian-partnerships>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.foreignminister.gov.au/minister/marise-payne/media-release/climate-action-mobilising-private-finance-sustainable-land-use-across-southeast-asia>;

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/vietnam-australia-joint-statement-commitment-practical-climate-action-and-enhanced-economic>

<b>ASEAN-Australia Women, Peace and Security Dialogue</b>	<p>This is an example of Australia collaborating to strengthening security partnerships with Southeast Asian countries. It acknowledges the importance of women’s full and meaningful participation in creating lasting peace and security.</p> <p><a href="https://acmc.gov.au/resources/publications/asean-australian-women-peace-and-security-dialogue">https://acmc.gov.au/resources/publications/asean-australian-women-peace-and-security-dialogue</a></p>
<b>Prospera</b>	<p>A program in which experienced Australian public servants are seconded to Indonesian government departments. This capitalises on Australia’s knowledge base to help partners meet their own diverse challenges, as well as building a wider regional network of officials and advisers who can better tackle shared future problems. <a href="https://prospera.or.id/">https://prospera.or.id/</a></p>
<b>Cyber and Critical Technology Cooperation Program</b>	<p>This includes \$20.5 million to strengthen cyber and critical technology resilience in Southeast Asia and working with other partners to support the region - such as recent announcement of memorandum of understanding with Republic of Korea on a Digital Cooperation Initiative in Southeast Asia. <a href="https://www.internationalcybertech.gov.au/">https://www.internationalcybertech.gov.au/</a></p>
<b>Katalis</b>	<p>A government-backed business development program designed to maximise benefits from the Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (IA-CEPA). It is a business-first program aiming to build commercial partnerships between businesses in Australia and Indonesia. Mutual business interest is key to the delivery model. <a href="https://www.iacepa-katalis.org/">https://www.iacepa-katalis.org/</a></p>
<b>Mekong-Australia Partnership on Transnational Crime</b>	<p>An example of Australia’s forward-leaning practical collaboration to strengthen partner engagement in Mekong countries and to reinforce a collective response to transnational crime and border security. The program is implemented by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and co-ordinated out of the Australian Embassy in Thailand to maximise the availability and sharing of technical expertise by the Australia Public Sector agencies working to disrupt and prevent transnational crime offshore. <a href="https://www.foreignminister.gov.au/minister/marise-payne/media-release/combating-transnational-crime-southeast-asia">https://www.foreignminister.gov.au/minister/marise-payne/media-release/combating-transnational-crime-southeast-asia</a></p>
<b>Autonomous Sanctions Regulations 2021</b>	<p>This provides Australia a way to promote good governance and disincentivise democratic backsliding regionally by targeting regime figures guilty of corruption and human rights abuses while sparing citizens from the negative impacts of uniform sanctions. <a href="https://www.dfat.gov.au/news/news/autonomous-sanctions-amendment-magnitsky-style-and-other-thematic-sanctions-regulations-2021">https://www.dfat.gov.au/news/news/autonomous-sanctions-amendment-magnitsky-style-and-other-thematic-sanctions-regulations-2021</a></p>
<b>Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction</b>	<p>In Brisbane in the second half of 2022, Australia will host a range of ministerial meetings, thematic sessions and partner-led public forums to promote coordination and cooperation and assess regional progress made in the implementation of the Sendai Framework, the global blueprint to reduce disaster risk and losses. <a href="http://www.undrr.org/event/asia-pacific-ministerial-conference-disaster-risk-reduction-apmcdrr-2022">www.undrr.org/event/asia-pacific-ministerial-conference-disaster-risk-reduction-apmcdrr-2022</a></p>



## FURTHER PATHWAYS

AP4D Options Papers have identified further pathways towards this vision including:

Focus	Need	Possible pathway
Recovery and growth	Enhanced cooperation with Southeast Asian states to improve the quality and complexity of engagement	Australia can continue to develop pathways to be a strong partner for <b>skills development and knowledge transfer</b> to increase access to education in the region at an affordable scale. This should be aligned with regional development priorities. For example, the field of <b>infectious disease research</b> can boost infectious disease intelligence cooperation and support pandemic preparedness. <b>Digital health</b> is another example of a practical way of building deeper collaboration between Australia and the region in this area, bringing together infrastructure, research and technical cooperation.
Climate leadership	Develop an understanding of the changing nature of disasters	Work with ASEAN on a <b>climate risk assessment</b> for the region. Australia can be a partner in developing an assessment of climate risk, building on initiatives like Australia's National Recovery and Resilience Agency. <sup>25</sup>
	Develop better forward strategies for disaster preparedness	Engage with Southeast Asian states to build <b>capacity for disaster preparedness</b> , working with existing mechanisms and guidelines as a pathway.
	Build practical cooperation on climate issues	Develop an <b>Australia-Southeast Asia Climate Partnership</b> bringing together existing and new initiatives for practical action including in technology, water, energy and infrastructure.
	Support Southeast Asian energy security	Assist with development of a region-wide <b>ASEAN electricity market</b> , leveraging Australia's expertise around energy market design.
	Promote Australia as a renewable energy superpower	<b>Promote green exports</b> , including compiling and promoting up-to-date assessments of regional needs and Australia's opportunity to supply these (including in critical minerals, green steel, green aluminium and hydrogen) and working with regional bodies on related policy issues, including standards, certification and regulation.
	Build critical technology value chains	Support ASEAN efforts to position itself at the core of <b>critical technology value chains</b> , for example in electric vehicle manufacturing where Australia could secure a key supply chain and help expand export markets for Australian lithium.
Effective security	Prevent transnational organised crime from undermining development objectives and systems of governance in the region	Strengthen domestic action to <b>tackle international corruption</b> by closing bank accounts and disrupting flows of money-laundering.

<sup>25</sup> <https://recovery.gov.au/>

	Recognise that state and human security are underpinned by gender equality	Work with Southeast Asia to co-create a <b>feminist foreign policy</b> agenda that identifies common goals and priorities that are relevant to the region.
	Promote open, secure platforms that enable the exchange of social, political and economic information, including by citizens about their governments	Deepen Australia's partnership with Southeast Asia on <b>cyber security</b> , including working together to agree on and build regional systems, standards and protection mechanisms.
<b>Civil-military relations</b>	Enhanced crisis coordination and whole-of-government management of security challenges	Develop a flagship <b>civil-military-focused short course program</b> designed for participants from military, security, civil society organisations and civilian agencies.
	Prepare the ADF and regional military partners for future operations while promoting a model and culture for regional militaries within their societies	Implement a <b>Regional Military/Civil Society (RMCS)</b> framework to manage Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) across the region.
<b>Strategic coherence</b>	A single international engagement strategy	Institute an <b>integrated strategic review</b> <sup>26</sup> to provide a rigorous process to surface and test alternative architecture, strategies, policies and programs.
	A common vision for Southeast Asia	Develop a <b>roadmap</b> that frames a clear regional objective for Australia in Southeast Asia.
	Significantly expanded program activity	Launch a <b>substantial increase</b> in Southeast Asia development, diplomatic and defence programs.
	A unified strategic culture	Promote cultural change, including more interchange of senior personnel and whole-of-government processes for setting and assessing <b>international strategies</b> .
	Increased economic cooperation	Develop a substantial new <b>Southeast Asia Economic Cooperation Program</b> driven by a new and professional economic cooperation agency within the foreign affairs portfolio.

<sup>26</sup> As recently conducted by the United Kingdom: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/global-britain-in-a-competitive-age-the-integrated-review-of-security-defence-development-and-foreign-policy>

## THE IMPORTANCE OF PROCESS

Building a shared future with Southeast Asia is not only about what Australia does, it is also about how it does it. Australia must build confidence within the region that it views Southeast Asia as a priority across government and across society.

For decades Australia has been blessed with a relatively stable environment that afforded security and underpinned prosperity. In times when crises have arisen, it has generally been able to mobilise quick, decisive and coordinated responses to weather them. But the global outlook is no longer so benign. Many of Australia's longstanding international assets and advantages are eroding, and positive trends have stalled or are in reverse.<sup>27</sup> The 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper recognised a need to forge new relationships, tackle new problems and build new forms of international governance in a more contested and competitive world.

In this context, how Australia institutes and institutionalises its Southeast Asia policy is important. The initiatives in this report outline logical places where Australia can build, enhance and elevate regional relationships within Southeast Asia. To have the best chance of success, these should be backed up by system level coordination of each arm of statecraft. A roadmap for deeper relations is essential, but Australia also needs a more creative, contestable strategic culture. What is required is absolute clarity about what Australia's objectives are, a tight focus in pursuing them and well-tested strategies that are continually sharpened and reshaped.

While Australia's overarching strategic objectives ought to guide all of its international work, the role of each actor in achieving these objectives may be distinctly different. A comprehensive integrated framework provides Australia with a strategic grand narrative and a unified approach to Australia's international relations. It brings together the different parts of government – and potentially, wider society – in a way that aligns strategies, people and budgets behind shared priorities to maximise impact and achieve shared goals.

And it recognises the necessity of applying all arms of statecraft and ensuring that investment in one is not at the expense of another. When successfully coordinated, statecraft as a whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Defence cooperation that supports stability, resilience and sovereignty in Southeast Asia also contributes to regional economic growth and development.

A strategically coherent approach has in-built feedback mechanisms to continually evaluate and refine policies against national objective metrics and recalibrate strategic planning as required in real time. The strategic culture and the strategic system support each other in constantly drawing attention back to Australia's priority interests.

Institutionalising strategic coherence requires new resources, long-term commitments and a cultural shift in the way Australia identifies and pursues its strategic objectives. Novel grand strategy mechanisms and bureaucratic processes will take time to establish. In the interim, ensuring Australia's overarching policies, big programs and key agencies are pulling broadly in the same directions in Southeast Asia is vital.

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<sup>27</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper, November 2017: <https://www.dfat.gov.au/publications/minisite/2017-foreign-policy-white-paper/fpwhitepaper/index.html>

# Imagine if...

**Dateline: July 2025, Jakarta**

**Speech by the Australian Prime Minister at the Fifth Annual ASEAN-Australia Summit<sup>28</sup>**

**Working together for peace, prosperity and a resilient regional community**

**Australia's shared future with Southeast Asia**

**\*\*Check against delivery\*\***

Australia shares ASEAN's vision of success: a stable, integrating, prosperous region, where rights and freedoms are observed and differences resolved peacefully, based on the rule of law.

It is increasingly important to the world – and especially to Australia – that this diverse, dynamic region remain strong, open and engaged on its own terms with other countries and regions.

That is why my government commissioned the development of a funded roadmap for enhanced Australia-Southeast Asian relations in parallel with our new Integrated Strategic Framework, which brings together and more tightly focuses all aspects of our international relations.

In working up the Southeast Asian roadmap I'd like to recognise the extensive consultations we have had across the region with states, citizens and civil society. We have been actively listening to understand regional thinking more fully and harmonise our responses wherever possible.

On our side, I particularly recognise the leadership of Ambassador Birmingham, here in Jakarta. The bipartisan Australian support for his nomination is indicative of the heightened political priority Australia is according the region.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs and I have increased our own engagement and this has been complemented by an expanded program of parliamentary visits, including by members of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade, assisted by a permanent secretariat.

The further expansion of our diplomatic network in the region – especially in Malaysia, the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia and Singapore – will institutionally equip us both to hear local voices and views and to lift our engagement on issues and pursue joint opportunities.

If deep engagement is to be achieved it can not only be a government process.

We want to see much greater two-way tourism, cultural exchange and institutional links. Our new national language learning policy looks to greatly expand the teaching of Southeast Asian languages, in particular Indonesian.

New programs have been introduced to support and reward university study in Southeast Asia and to encourage mid-career business leaders to undertake regional assignments.

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<sup>28</sup> From the desk of AP4D founding co-convenor Richard Moore.

One indicator of how seriously we intend to engage, is the role that my department now plays in coordinating international relations across all other Australian government departments.

We have significantly expanded the International Division of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to undertake this work and to drive implementation of our new Integrated Strategic Framework. Southeast Asia is unambiguously a top tier priority within that framework.

To keep us on track, the National Security Committee of Cabinet will annually review an independent strategic performance assessment to determine whether we are achieving our international goals, especially in Southeast Asia. As part of that process, the Australian National Audit Office will report on an expanded range of assessments of the effectiveness of our diplomatic, defence and development efforts.

I know that growth and development are amongst Southeast Asia's highest priorities so that your citizens can have better lives and I commit to work with you more intensively to this end. Maintaining peace – regionally and globally – is essential for the economic expansion we seek. This requires resilience and resolve as well as a commitment to common rules, norms and values that we are collectively willing to defend.

No country wants to be bullied. The best way of avoiding being bullied is to make it clear that we will not give in to it. We are stronger together and where attempted coercion occurs, we need to support each other in resisting it. In negotiations, in dialogue, in legal processes and, where necessary, through military means.

Increasingly we need to be wary of decisions that unintentionally surrender sovereignty.

Cyber security is a major part of our new Strategic Framework because it is so integral to continued economic expansion, the exchange of information and ideas and the security of our nations. Malign actors are increasingly targeting our critical infrastructure, our electoral rolls, our political debate and our commercial dealings.

Defence against direct attacks is critical, but so too is defence against insidious infiltration including through new electronic communications and financing platforms that put citizens' data and commercial information in the hands of those who might misuse it.

That is why we have proposed a digital "rules of the road" summit next month to establish common principles and regulatory standards.

No set of circumstances challenge the ASEAN vision more than Myanmar. We know that it is unlikely that there will be rapid progress, but all the more important that we stay the course.

Over more than 50 years Myanmar's leaders have repeatedly made choices that have led to conflict, instability, poverty and human rights abuse. ASEAN must continue to deal resolutely with Myanmar, never normalising its behaviour and patiently searching for ways forward. We pledge to assist you as we have done in the past.

Indonesia provides a global example of how civil-military relations can be reformed. The role of the Indonesian military was modernised more than a decade ago, focussing it on defence tasks and creating additional space for civilian democratic participation.

As always, there is still work to do and remaining challenges, but the Indonesian example shows that big, hard reforms are possible with vision and leadership.

Civil-military relations can be strained when there is a lack of knowledge and understanding between these critical institutions. Differences will not magically disappear through dialogue, but by working together where

there are shared interests and responsibilities, for example in disaster preparedness and response, a degree of mutual respect can be created and misunderstandings reduced.

The Regional Military/Civil Society Framework and the common training programs we have jointly developed promise not only enhanced humanitarian effectiveness, but also, potentially, more productive dialogue on other issues, including human rights.

Both COVID and climate change have helped us bring human security more to the fore in our thinking and policies. This is a welcome development that challenges all of us to think and work differently, but of course it does not mean that conventional security challenges have gone away.

I acknowledge that Australia's emphasis on hard security has sometimes been misunderstood in the region. Our aim is to deter aggression through strength, clarity in our intentions and consistency in what we do.

I note that, like Australia, many of you are acquiring new military capability as a key means of preserving your sovereignty and strategic room to manoeuvre. This is understandable, though none of us want to see an intensifying arms race and all of us must be wary of miscalculation.

It is critical, especially now, that international tensions are reduced wherever possible through proactive diplomacy, that nations make their future intentions clear and that destabilising actions are avoided.

Australia's regional security cooperation will continue to contribute to all of these goals.

Of course, security dialogue and defence cooperation are only part of much broader relations. To underline that, and the importance we give to human security, our new regional roadmap greatly expands engagement in several fields.

We have taken the ASEAN 2025 vision of a thriving regional community as our starting point – and our end point. An economic community that is "highly integrated, cohesive and competitive", but also one that is "people-centred, tolerant and cooperative".

From this base we have set our own overarching strategic objective for the region:

"A stable, peaceful, rules-based region of fast-growing countries that enlarge equity and opportunity, confidently and openly engage with Australia and the world and that are increasingly able to manage domestic and international challenges, defend their interests and resist coercion."

This will be the fundamental goal of our international efforts in the region.

A centrepiece is continuing to tackle the immediate and long-term legacies of COVID.

It is not surprising that countries focused on themselves during the pandemic, but COVID is not a problem for a single country, or even a region, but a global one. It is clear that our machinery for dealing with it was inadequate.

To protect ourselves, as well as for ethical reasons, we need a much more reliable, equitable system to get vaccines into the arms of everyone in the world during a pandemic. Vaccine charity is a wholly inadequate response, as is a focus only on vaccine production and allocation with inadequate attention to logistics, administration and personnel requirements.

Consequently, Australia will work with ASEAN to increase regional manufacturing capability both of traditional and mRNA vaccines and to develop the systems and workforce for their delivery.

We need reliable, open supply lines that are linked to major international producers, but that can also operate separately if need be. Ramping up sovereign manufacturing capability in every nation would be a mistake that would continue to turn the world inward towards costly, inefficient solutions.

Beyond vaccines, there is much else to do to promote greater readiness for emerging infectious diseases which we know are likely to recur. In particular, stronger surveillance and reporting is required so that we can respond faster to outbreaks.

We understand the sensitivities of outside intervention in disease surveillance and that is why we have proposed the formation of an ASEAN-wide surveillance capability with the authority both to support local efforts, but also to undertake rapid investigations when outbreaks are detected.

I commend ASEAN Health and Finance Ministers for commencing a joint dialogue on regional and global health system reform. I expect global health reform to consume a very large amount of time and money over the next decade

Strengthening health security will involve many years of negotiations, institution-building and the design of new governance and financial instruments.

Reform of the World Health Organization – especially ensuring Regional Directors are appointed on merit – will be a high priority for Australia, but by no means the only one.

An expanded, expert, whole-of-government team is now working in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade on this agenda, including through the enlarged Indo-Pacific Centre for Health Security.

A fast-growing Southeast Asia will be in the best position to manage health, climate and other threats. This is why Australia is putting renewed emphasis on helping the region deal with growth bottlenecks, infrastructure shortfalls and related policy and financing challenges.

Our new, 10 year, \$15bn Southeast Asia Economic Cooperation Program recognises our shared interests in regional economic expansion and the need for countries to avoid the 'middle income trap'.

It is a multi-faceted, expert-led program that will allow us to interact intensively both with national policy makers and also with international institutions such as the Asian Development Bank. To ensure the program is effective we are creating a new professional agency within the foreign affairs portfolio to manage it.

The Program will provide direct technical advice and will also gear to enhancing support to countries undertaking major multilateral lending projects. Clean energy financing will be a major focus to address climate change in practical ways. It will also work on revenue and budgetary policy and the design and implementation of effective and affordable social infrastructure and policies.

A key component will involve knowledge-based cooperation. Skills development and training, certainly, but also intra-regional collaboration to create knowledge and solve problems, using the capabilities of our best institutions, both public and private.

Encouraging women's economic, social and political participation has been an ongoing theme of Australian foreign policy for many years. We see it as a major means by which various ASEAN objectives can be realised, including economic growth, peace building and human rights observance.

Australia will more consistently integrate gender into international policy and program design, including where opportunities have been missed in the past, for example in trade negotiations.

Some of you may be wondering why I have said relatively little about climate change. It is because I wanted to end on an issue where cooperation has turned threat to opportunity.

Fossil fuels gave the world cheap energy for over a hundred years and billions benefitted from that, especially in the West, but the cost was passed to future generations and now the bill is due.

We all now aspire to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, but we know if we're to limit the costs of storms and floods, disrupted food supplies and water scarcity we cannot leave progress until the last minute. We must act now and act decisively.

Fortunately, major advances in technology – for example in cheap reliable solar, in green hydrogen and in battery storage – have made renewable energy, not just more sustainable, but also economically efficient.

And so, the conflicts between the short term and the long, between acting or not acting, between OECD countries that got rich on fossil fuels and developing countries that understandably want the same opportunity, have all receded.

The task now is to look after those communities that are dependent on coal and gas and make sure they do not bear the brunt of the transition. And to organise the needed finance and technology to accelerate regional and global progress.

That is where ASEAN-Australia cooperation on clean energy is such an inspiring symbol of our shared interests.

Together – public and private, regional and non-regional, old industries and new – we are delivering on a plan to bring Australian renewable energy to the region as a key plank of an emerging ASEAN electricity market.

This could not have happened without ASEAN and Australian eagerness; without commercial know-how, drawn from across the globe; and without both private and multilateral development bank financing.

It came at just the right moment, reminding us of what can be gained, not just through open trade and investment - but through international cooperation in multiple forms.

It is a beacon for a world in need of renewable hope as well as renewable power.

A fitting symbol of what we can achieve together when we commit to a common cause and see it through.

For Southeast Asia and Australia, our geography makes us neighbours, but our actions determine how productive our relations are.

Australia is redoubling its efforts to be a supportive partner and a creative, proactive contributor to our shared future.

Thank you.



# The AP4D Approach

The Asia-Pacific Development, Diplomacy & Defence Dialogue (AP4D) is a platform for collaboration between the development, diplomacy and defence communities that brings together individuals and organisations united by a mission to reimagine Australia's international relations.

Funded by the Australian Civil-Military Centre, AP4D's inaugural program commenced in mid-2021 with the aim of generating more effective approaches to advancing Australia's influence in Southeast Asia and the Pacific through the integrated application of development, diplomacy and defence perspectives.

The Southeast Asia component began with a series of online diagnostics discussions in which experts surfaced problems and raised questions about Australia's approach to Southeast Asia. A compendium of research was prepared covering Australia's Southeast Asia policy foundations as well as commentary and analysis from Australia and perspectives from the region.

Three dialogue events were then held in August and September 2021 in which over 120 experts and practitioners from the development, diplomacy and defence communities determined priority areas of focus. A stand-alone dialogue was held to ensure input from Southeast Asian experts.

This formed the basis for the five topics selected for Options Papers. Working Groups comprising more than 40 experts collaborated on draft papers from September to December. Draft papers were presented for feedback to senior representatives of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Department of Defence at a roundtable in November. Throughout the process AP4D also held private briefings and consultations with dozens of senior bureaucrats and political advisors.

The key findings and common themes from the Options Papers form the basis for this Synthesis Report, which in conjunction outline a vision for how Australia can put an integrated approach to foreign policy into practice in Southeast Asia.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

AP4D acknowledges the Australian Civil-Military Centre for its generous support in funding this inaugural program.

AP4D is extremely grateful to everyone involved in the Southeast Asia component. Thanks are due to Options Papers Working Group members, to all who attended diagnostic and dialogue sessions, to those who made time for consultations, to editorial panel and staff, and to AP4D Advisory Group members for their feedback and oversight.

## ADVISORY GROUP

### **Professor Michael Wesley FAIA**

*Co-chair*

Deputy Vice Chancellor International,  
University of Melbourne

### **Marc Purcell**

*Co-chair*

CEO, Australian Council for  
International Development

### **Bridi Rice**

*Founding Co-convenor*

CEO, Development Intelligence Lab

### **Richard Moore**

*Founding Co-convenor*

### **Angela Fitzsimons**

*Funding Partner*

Acting Executive Director, Australia  
Civil-Military Centre

### **Allan Gyngell AO FAIA**

President, Australian Institute of  
International Affairs

### **Professor Caitlin Byrne FAIA**

Director, Griffith Asia Institute

### **Dr Huong Le Thu**

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Policy Institute

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Head, Strategic and Defence Studies  
Centre, ANU

### **Chris Gardiner**

CEO, Institute for Regional Security

### **Richard Maude**

Inaugural Executive Director, Policy,  
The Asia Society

### **Therese Faulkner**

Chair, International Development  
Contractors Community

## AP4D STAFF

### **Melissa Conley Tyler FAIA**

Program Lead

### **Tom Barber**

Program Officer

## ACFID STAFF

### **Jessica Mackenzie**

Director, Policy and Advocacy Team

### **Tim Watkin**

Head of Government Relations and  
Communications

### **Cameron Hill**

Policy and Advocacy Advisor

## EDITORIAL PANEL

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