

## Contemporary Southeast Asia

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### Abstrak

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By the 1990s, Australia stood at the crossroads of history and geography. Where in previous centuries Asia-Pacific propinquity was a curse to be avoided through exclusionary immigration, security, and trade policies, today it is an opportunity to be exploited through co-operative enmeshment. Australia's fortunes are determined by broader political, economic and social forces at work around Asia and the world. It's involvement with the Asia-Pacific is inevitable, irreversible and probably even desirable. Yet the transition from a Eurocentric to an Asia-Pacific identity will be neither uncontroversial nor smooth. Australia's challenge for regional engagement is how to reconcile the preparedness, capability and credibility for dealing with Asia with the need to protect and nurture its own humanist, pluralist and democratic traditions.