

# PERSPECTIVE

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## **‘Global Britain’ and Southeast Asia: Progress and Prospects**

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Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab attends the UK-ASEAN Foreign Ministers meeting at the International Convention Centre in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei. Picture by Simon Dawson, No 10 Downing Street.

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- Southeast Asia is crucial to the United Kingdom's (UK) 'tilt' to the Indo-Pacific. By mid-2021 it had achieved notable progress in strengthening its diplomatic, economic and security engagement with the region.
- Becoming an ASEAN Dialogue Partner provides an anchor for the UK to deepen its engagement with the region, but does not automatically lead to British membership of ASEAN-led mechanisms such as the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) and the East Asian Summit (EAS).
- Rather than pursuing a regional free trade agreement (FTA) with ASEAN or joining the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), the UK prioritises bilateral trade deals with key Southeast Asian partners, and focuses on facilitation and standard harmonisation with ASEAN in a number of core sectors.
- A Royal Navy (RN) aircraft carrier strike group is currently in Asian waters and, together with announcements of future naval deployments, sends a strong signal that the UK intends to establish a permanent military presence in the Indo-Pacific.
- The UK's positive agenda for its engagement with the region should include, among others, emergency COVID-19 vaccine support for Southeast Asian countries in need.

## INTRODUCTION

In March 2021 – nearly five years after the Brexit referendum, and 15 months after the UK formally left the European Union (EU) – the British government published a landmark policy paper aimed at resetting the country’s foreign and defence posture: *Global Britain in a Competitive Age: The Integrated Review (IR) of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy*.<sup>1</sup>

While the IR acknowledged the continued primacy of the Euro-Atlantic region for the UK – and its alliance with the United States and NATO – it emphasised that the country’s future prosperity and security increasingly depended on developments in the Indo-Pacific. Accordingly, the IR announced a ‘tilt’ to the region with the ambitious goal of establishing a “greater and more persistent presence than any other European country” by 2030.<sup>2</sup>

Southeast Asia plays a critical role in realising Britain’s ambitions. The region is at the confluence of the salient trends identified in the IR: the shift in the world’s economic centre of gravity to the Indo-Pacific; the rise of China and the opportunities and “systemic challenges” it poses; the escalation of Great Power competition, especially between the United States and China; the fragmentation of the rules-based international order; rising maritime insecurity; rapid technological change; and the existential threat posed by climate change.

By mid-2021, the UK had made good progress towards achieving some of the goals outlined in the IR: it became ASEAN’s 11<sup>th</sup> Dialogue Partner in August; its application to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for a Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) was successful; and in July a British aircraft carrier strike group transited through the South China Sea and conducted manoeuvres with several Southeast Asian navies. The announcement on 15 September of the Australia-UK-US (AUKUS) security arrangement in which Washington and London will help Canberra acquire nuclear-powered submarines also strengthens Britain’s defence credentials in the Indo-Pacific.

This *Perspective* reviews the progress the UK has made in deepening its engagement with Southeast Asia and assesses the prospects for its participation in the region’s multilateral forums and future trading arrangements, and of it establishing a more permanent military presence.

### **ASEAN-UK DIALOGUE RELATIONS: WHAT LIES AHEAD?**

A formal relationship with ASEAN is seen as key to the UK’s ambitions in Southeast Asia. London applied for ASEAN Dialogue Partner status in June 2020, and ASEAN-UK dialogue relations were formalised at the 54<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting (AMM) in August 2021.<sup>3</sup> Becoming the 11<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Dialogue Partner despite the grouping’s 25-year moratorium on new dialogue partnership is arguably one of the UK’s most important post-Brexit diplomatic achievements. It provides multiple avenues of regional cooperation for the UK to anchor its presence and deepen its engagement with Southeast Asia and beyond.

The UK's current priority is to give form and content to dialogue relations.<sup>4</sup> This will entail: (i) setting up ASEAN-UK regular consultations at the ambassadorial, senior officials and ministerial levels, first in the diplomatic and economic-trade sectors to later be expanded to other select sectors across the three ASEAN community pillars; (ii) developing a comprehensive framework/plan of action with a focus on several priority areas of mutual interests; and (iii) implementing concrete projects, preferably with commitment of UK funding support.

As a Dialogue Partner, Britain can engage ASEAN leaders at the summit level, although the frequency of ASEAN-UK summits will be decided by mutual agreement. Among the current ASEAN Dialogue Partners, only China, Japan, South Korea, India, the United States and most recently Australia, have annual summit meetings with ASEAN. The leaders of Russia, New Zealand, Canada and the EU meet their ASEAN counterparts only on an *ad hoc* basis at special or commemorative summits.

Moreover, ASEAN Dialogue Partner status does not automatically guarantee UK membership of ASEAN-led mechanisms, including the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ADMM-Plus and EAS. Being a Dialogue Partner is merely one criterion for admission to the ADMM-Plus and EAS, and membership applications will be subject to approval by all ASEAN member states (see Table 1). Moreover, these mechanisms continue their long-held moratorium on new members as ASEAN's focus remains on their consolidation instead of expansion. The organisation learned the hard way from the ARF's rapid enlargement in the 1990s and early 2000s, well beyond its original geographical footprint—East Asia and Oceania—which then diluted its focus and effectiveness.

Table 1:

**Criteria for Membership at ASEAN-led Mechanisms**

<b>ASEAN-led Mechanism</b>	<b>Membership Criteria</b>	<b>Moratorium on New Members</b>	<b>Decision on Membership Application</b>
ARF <sup>5</sup>	1. Sovereign states. 2. Subscribing to and working cooperatively to achieve ARF goals. 3. Demonstrating that it has an impact on peace and security within the ARF's geographical footprint (i.e. Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, Oceania).	On	Consensus required among all ARF members.
ADMM-Plus <sup>6</sup>	1. An ASEAN Dialogue Partner. 2. Having significant interactions and relations with ASEAN defence establishments. 3. Being able to work with the ADMM to enhance regional security.	On <sup>7</sup>	Consensus required among all ASEAN member states.
EAS <sup>8</sup>	1. A sovereign state that is an ASEAN Dialogue Partner. 2. A High Contracting Party to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC). 3. Having substantive relations with ASEAN.	On	Consensus required among all ASEAN member states.

In 2018, well before becoming an ASEAN Dialogue Partner, the UK had applied for observer status to several of the ADMM-Plus Experts Working Groups (EWGs). Its application, together with those of Canada, France and the EU, was met with opposition from Russia and China, who exercised the veto power bestowed on them by the concept paper on observership at the ADMM-Plus EWGs' activities.<sup>9</sup> Acknowledging that this situation had undermined the principle of ASEAN Centrality, in June 2021 the ADMM adopted a comprehensive concept paper in which ASEAN exercises control over the ADMM's external engagements.<sup>10</sup> The prerogative to decide on new ADMM-Plus members or observers to the ADMM-Plus EWGs now rests solely with the ADMM. As such, the obstruction by some Plus countries no longer stands in the way of the UK's pursuit of formal defence relations with ASEAN.

The question going forward is whether London will upgrade its application from observership at ADMM-Plus EWGs' activities to ADMM-Plus membership. Having a front seat at the table is much more attractive than just observing from the sidelines, especially given that defence cooperation has been a key pillar of the UK's Indo-Pacific 'tilt' and its outreach to ASEAN following the Brexit referendum. Now that it has become a Dialogue Partner, the UK holds clear advantages compared to the EU and Canada's pending

applications in terms of having “significant interactions and relations with ASEAN defence establishments” and “being able to work with the ADMM to build capacity to enhance regional security” – the two other criteria of ADMM-Plus membership. The EU is not considered a full-fledged security actor and does not possess military personnel and assets within its jurisdiction to participate in many of the ADMM-Plus’ practical activities. Meanwhile, Canada’s defence engagement with Southeast Asian countries is very limited compared to the UK.

However, ASEAN’s consideration of the UK’s potential applications for admission into the ADMM-Plus—and the EAS—will not be guided only by the UK’s own merits. Another key consideration is how to position the UK in the overall context of ASEAN’s relations with other powers. First, ASEAN tries to maintain pretensions of balanced and equal treatment of all of its Dialogue Partners. Some member states who are reluctant to see the UK engage too far and too fast in ASEAN-led mechanisms may use this as an excuse to link the UK with the pending applications by the more longstanding Dialogue Partners, Canada and the EU. Second, as the US-China contest increasingly manifests itself in ASEAN-led platforms, the admission of the UK is seen as tipping the balance in favour of the US and its allies and partners within these mechanisms. At this, the establishment of AUKUS will further complicate ASEAN member states’ consideration. Given their different concerns and perspectives on AUKUS, reaching consensus on admitting the UK to ASEAN-led mechanisms would not be easy or straightforward.

So far, the UK has not expressed its intention to apply for membership of any ASEAN-led mechanisms. It has exercised caution, saying that it would like to focus on building up the foundations of the relationship first.<sup>11</sup> London, however, needs to start strategising its future participation in the ASEAN-led multilateral architecture, and laying the groundwork towards achieving its goals.

## **EXPANDING BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL TRADE LINKS**

Strengthening the UK’s “prosperity links” with countries around the world through bilateral and regional FTAs is central to Britain’s post-Brexit ambitions.<sup>12</sup> Progress in this respect with various Indo-Pacific partners has been encouraging (see Table 2). FTAs with the US and China, however, are not forthcoming as the Biden administration is wary about trade deals and because Sino-British relations have deteriorated sharply over human rights issues in Hong Kong and Xinjiang.

Table 2:

**The UK’s FTA Negotiations/Conclusion with Indo-Pacific Partners**

<b>Partner</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
Japan	FTA concluded (2020)	These FTAs are roll-over agreements from FTAs with the EU.
Vietnam	FTA concluded (2020)	
Singapore	FTA concluded (2020)	
Australia	FTA concluded (2021)	First FTA from scratch <sup>13</sup>
South Korea	FTA continuity agreement (2019)	
New Zealand	Negotiations underway	
India	Negotiations to start before end-2021 <sup>14</sup>	
CPTPP	Negotiations underway	

In February 2021, the UK applied for membership of the CPTPP and, in June, its 11 members agreed to induct Britain. Negotiations are currently underway with each of the CPTPP parties and the UK is likely to formally join the CPTPP in the first half of 2022.<sup>15</sup> The trade pact accounts for 13 per cent of global GDP and the UK’s trade with CPTPP members accounts for 9 per cent of its total trade, far lower than trade with the EU at 43 per cent. However, Britain’s trade with CPTPP members is growing more quickly than with the EU.<sup>16</sup> Beyond trade numbers, joining the CPTPP would enable the UK’s participation in shaping the region’s economic architecture based on high-standard, rules-based, free and fair trade.<sup>17</sup>

Four Southeast Asian countries—Brunei, Malaysia, Singapore and Vietnam—are members of the CPTPP, and Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines have expressed an interest in joining. Although these latter countries may currently be reluctant to enact significant economic reforms to qualify for CPTPP membership, their accession to the trade pact in the future cannot be ruled out. It is also assessed that the UK’s prospective CPTPP membership, as well as its FTAs with Japan and Australia and the forthcoming one with India, will drive further Southeast Asia-UK trade integration since these economies are closely networked with Southeast Asian countries.<sup>18</sup>

In contrast, there is little to suggest the UK’s interest in joining the RCEP agreement which was concluded last year between ten ASEAN countries, Australia, China, South Korea, Japan and New Zealand. London’s disinterest is mainly attributed to the RCEP’s limited scope and low ambition in labour and environmental standards, state-owned enterprise reforms and government procurement. The RCEP is also considered “too regional and not deep enough to accommodate the UK’s strength in the services sector”.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, London’s condemnation of the February 2021 coup in Myanmar and criticism of the junta’s human rights abuses make it politically challenging for the UK to be in trade talks with any grouping that includes Myanmar.

The UK will likely follow in the EU’s footsteps by prioritising bilateral FTAs with key Southeast Asian partners. After concluding FTAs with Singapore and Vietnam, a trade deal

with Indonesia – the region’s largest economy – was high on the agenda during UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab’s visit to Jakarta in April 2021.<sup>20</sup> Instead of pursuing a wide-ranging FTA with ASEAN as a group, the UK is taking a pragmatic, building-block approach, focusing on facilitation and standard harmonisation in its core sectors such as digital economy, financial services, green technologies, regulatory excellence, skills and education. These priority areas are reflected in the Joint Declaration on Future Economic Cooperation adopted at the first ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM)-UK Consultations on 15 September 2021.<sup>21</sup> The UK’s development assistance to Southeast Asia has also centred around these target sectors, including the ASEAN Economic Reform Programme, ASEAN-UK Digital Innovation Partnership, ASEAN-UK Cooperation on COP26, and UK support for the ASEAN Low Carbon Energy Programme.<sup>22</sup>

## **TOWARDS A PERSISTENT UK MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE INDO-PACIFIC**

According to the IR—and the defence command plan published a few weeks later<sup>23</sup>—Britain’s armed forces are being modernised and restructured to allow for deployment overseas more often and for longer periods of time. Britain’s refocused military strategy brings to a close its two-decade involvement in land wars in the Middle East and Central Asia, and places a strong emphasis on it playing a more proactive role in the maritime domain, including maintaining freedom of navigation, upholding the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and protecting shipping lanes.

In Southeast Asia, the UK plans to enhance its security ties with regional states. This includes increased participation in military exercises undertaken by the Five Powers Defence Arrangements (FPDA) — a defence grouping linking Britain with Singapore, Malaysia, Australia and New Zealand — as well as upgrading its defence garrison in Brunei and a naval logistics facility in Singapore that the UK maintains in support of the FPDA. However, the UK is conscious of the sensitivities surrounding its colonial legacy, and the need to avoid giving the appearance of inflaming regional tensions. Accordingly, its presence will be mainly focused on helping regional armed forces improve their ability to counter non-state threats at sea.

### *Carrier Strike Group-21*

The deployment of Carrier Strike Group-21 (CSG-21) to Asia has sent a strong message to the region that the UK is serious about increasing its defence diplomacy engagements in the Indo-Pacific. CSG-21 is the UK’s largest operational naval deployment since the 1982 Falklands War and its biggest to Asia since the 1997 handover of Hong Kong. The strike group comprises ten warships (including a US destroyer and Dutch frigate) led by the 65,000-tonne aircraft carrier HMS *Queen Elizabeth* (embarking both UK and US F-35B joint strike fighters). During its 28-week deployment, CSG-21 will sail 26,000 nautical miles (nm), visit 40 countries and take part in over 70 defence diplomacy activities including training exercises and port visits.

Having departed the UK in early May, the strike group arrived in Asia in late July. It held separate exercises with warships from India and Japan in the Indian Ocean before entering

Southeast Asia through the Straits of Malacca. In Southeast Asian waters, ships belonging to CSG-21 conducted manoeuvres with naval vessels from Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei.

In recent years, the UK has taken a stronger stand on the South China Sea dispute. Five Royal Navy (RN) warships conducted presence missions in the South China Sea between 2018 and 2020, and in August 2018 one of them conducted a US-style freedom of navigation operation (FONOP) by sailing within 12 nm of the disputed Paracel Islands. In 2020, the UK endorsed the 2016 arbitral tribunal award which ruled that China's nine-dash line claims in the South China Sea are incompatible with UNCLOS.<sup>24</sup>

Prior to CSG-21's arrival in the region, there was speculation – as well as warnings in China's state-controlled media<sup>25</sup> – over whether any of its warships would conduct a FONOP in the disputed Spratly Islands, as one of the fleet's warships had done in the Black Sea en route to Asia.<sup>26</sup> However, prior to CSG-21's departure from Britain, Defence Secretary Wallace stressed that “We are not going to go to the other side of the world to be provocative. We will be confident, but not confrontational.”<sup>27</sup> Accordingly, no CSG-21 warships conducted a FONOP in the South China Sea, traversed through the Taiwan Straits en route to Japan, or participated in the Malabar naval exercises undertaken by the Quad (America, Japan, India and Australia) off Guam in late August. However, on 27 September, the frigate HMS *Richmond* passed through the Taiwan Straits on its way to Vietnam, resulting in condemnation from China.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, a FONOP by one of the other CSG-21 warships cannot be ruled out as the strike group re-enters the South China Sea in October on its way back to the UK.

#### *Forthcoming and Future Naval Deployments*

The UK is likely to deploy a CSG—led either by HMS *Queen Elizabeth* or her sister ship HMS *Prince of Wales*—to the Indo-Pacific periodically, perhaps every few years. To establish a more permanent presence, the RN plans to deploy a variety of other vessels to the region out to the end of decade. This mix of vessels will enable the UK to increase its defence engagement with regional states across a spectrum of activities: from training and capacity-building exercises, to constabulary duties such as fishery protection to Humanitarian and Disaster Relief (HADR) operations and, if need be, power projection.

First to be deployed will be two 2,000-tonne River-class Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPVs), HMS *Tamar* and HMS *Spey*. The two OPVs are expected to arrive in the region in October, and will be deployed for at least five years in an area stretching from the Indian Ocean to the west coast of the United States.<sup>29</sup> Relatively small and lightly armed, the OPVs will be less controversial than larger warships and can assist regional states to improve their capacity to address persistent non-state maritime security threats, including people, drugs and arms smuggling, piracy and illegal fishing. The OPVs are also better suited for working with the navies of Southeast Asia which mostly operate similar-sized vessels or frigates. Their small size will enable them to visit a larger number of regional ports. Crucially, *Tamar* and *Spey* will be forward-deployed but not forward-based: they will undergo maintenance, resupply and crew rotations at various ports around the region (a model the RN currently

uses in the Caribbean and Mediterranean).<sup>30</sup> In an era of great power competition, this arrangement avoids the political sensitivities associated with permanently hosting foreign warships.

In 2023, the RN plans to deploy one of two Littoral Response Groups (LRGs) to the Indo-Pacific, probably based at Duqm, Oman. LRGs consist of an amphibious landing ship, a supply vessel and a destroyer or frigate. The LRGs can undertake a range of maritime tasks including HADR operations, training exercises and other defence diplomacy activities.<sup>31</sup> Future plans call for the permanent deployment of a RN frigate to the Indo-Pacific by 2030. Whether this vessel will replace the OPVs, and operate without a nominated base or be home-ported in the region, has yet to be decided.

## OUTLOOK

2021 has been a high-water mark for ‘Global Britain’ in Southeast Asia. London has made efforts to integrate diplomacy, development and defence in its outreach to the region. On their part, ASEAN and its member countries have been generally welcoming of the UK’s overtures and initiatives.

The UK’s ‘tilt’ to the region, however, cannot escape the geopolitics of US-China competition and may even compound it further. This has and will deepen the existing internal incoherence among Southeast Asian countries, as demonstrated in their very different reactions to AUKUS. While some of them welcome the UK’s forward-deployed presence in the Indo-Pacific, others may look at it warily, which is not helped by the narrative that invokes the region’s colonial past with the UK’s increased presence. Going forward, the region will watch carefully the nexus between the UK, US, EU and Australia in dealing with China’s “systemic challenge”, and how it will play out in Southeast Asia and ASEAN. ISEAS’ *State of Southeast Asia 2021* survey findings<sup>32</sup> suggest that Southeast Asians’ trust in the UK to champion the global free trade agenda, to maintain the rules-based order, and to hedge against US-China rivalry, trails far behind key Dialogue Partners such as Japan, the EU, China and the US.

The UK nevertheless holds strong appeal as a destination for tertiary education, ranking second after the US. Another area where the UK’s “soft power” can immediately make positive impact is COVID-19 vaccine support. The UK is the third largest donor to the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) in terms of doses (80 million) and financing (US\$733 million), after the US and Team Europe.<sup>33</sup> With the UK government’s support, the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine has also been supplied to the world on a not-for-profit basis.<sup>34</sup> However, outside of the COVAX facility, the UK’s bilateral vaccine donations have been underwhelming,<sup>35</sup> and no priority is given to Southeast Asia compared to other parts of the world. In June, Foreign Secretary Raab criticised China and Russia for using vaccines as a geopolitical tool.<sup>36</sup> Geopolitics, however, is not the overriding concern of most Southeast Asian countries at this moment as they are scrambling for vaccine supplies to cope with the spread of the deadlier Delta variant. Vaccine support as part of the UK’s positive agenda for the region would go a long way towards winning hearts and minds in Southeast Asia.

<sup>1</sup> *Global Britain in a competitive age: The Integrated Review (IR) of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy* (London: HM Government, March 2021), [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/975077/Global\\_Britain\\_in\\_a\\_Competitive\\_Age\\_the\\_Integrated\\_Review\\_of\\_Security\\_Defence\\_Development\\_and\\_Foreign\\_Policy.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/975077/Global_Britain_in_a_Competitive_Age_the_Integrated_Review_of_Security_Defence_Development_and_Foreign_Policy.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 62.

<sup>3</sup> Joint Communiqué of the 54th ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting, 2 August 2021, <https://asean.org/joint-communication-54-th-asean-foreign-ministers-meeting/>.

<sup>4</sup> Dian Septiari, "Discourse: UK seeks to deepen cooperation with ASEAN following dialogue partner status: Envoy", *Jakarta Post*, 24 August 2021, <https://www.thejakartapost.com/seasia/2021/08/24/discourse-uk-seeks-to-deepen-cooperation-with-asean-following-dialogue-partner-status-envoy.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Criteria for participation in the ASEAN Regional Forum, adopted in July 1996, ASEAN Regional Forum website, <https://aseanregionalforum.asean.org/about-arf/>.

<sup>6</sup> Concept Paper on ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM) External Engagements, June 2021, <https://admm.asean.org/index.php/2012-12-05-19-05-19/admm1/concept-papers.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Although no formal decision on moratorium has been made, the ADMM is technically imposing moratorium on admission of ADMM-Plus new members since it has agreed to focus on consolidating the ADMM-Plus first and hold in abeyance any application for membership.

<sup>8</sup> Report 68 Treaties tabled on 7 December 2004 (5) and 9 August 2005, on Chapter 3 of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, website of the Parliament of Australia, [https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Joint/Completed\\_Inquiries/jsct/9august2005/chapter3](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Completed_Inquiries/jsct/9august2005/chapter3).

<sup>9</sup> Hoang Thi Ha, "Repositioning the ADMM-Plus in a Contested Region", *ISEAS Perspective* 2021/13, <https://www.iseas.edu.sg/articles-commentaries/iseas-perspective/iseas-2021-13-repositioning-the-admm-plus-in-a-contested-region-hoang-by-thi-ha/>.

<sup>10</sup> Concept Paper on ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM) External Engagements.

<sup>11</sup> Dian Septiari, "Discourse".

<sup>12</sup> *Global Britain in a competitive age*, p. 5.

<sup>13</sup> Department of International Trade, *UK-Australia FTA negotiations: agreement in principle*, GOV.UK, 17 June 2021, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-australia-free-trade-agreement-negotiations-agreement-in-principle/uk-australia-fta-negotiations-agreement-in-principle>.

<sup>14</sup> Kanishka Singh, "UK aims to start trade talks with India this year", Reuters, 18 August 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-aims-start-trade-talks-with-india-this-year-2021-08-17/>.

<sup>15</sup> Stefan Boscia, "Liz Truss aims for UK to join CPTPP trading bloc in the next 12 months", *City A.M.*, 25 April 2021, <https://www.cityam.com/liz-truss-aims-for-uk-to-join-cptpp-trading-bloc-in-the-next-12-months/>.

<sup>16</sup> Vikram Khanna, "Britain's entry into the CPTPP spells win-win all around", *Straits Times*, 9 June 2021, <https://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/britains-entry-into-the-cptpp-spells-win-win-all-around>.

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- <sup>18</sup> Anita Prakash, Alicia Garcia Herrero and David Martínez Turégano, “UK–ASEAN Trade: Strengthening the Supply Chain Linkages”, *ERIA*, July 2021, <https://www.eria.org/publications/uk-asean-trade-strengthening-the-supply-chain-linkages/>.
- <sup>19</sup> Prakash, Herrero and Turégano, “UK–ASEAN Trade”.
- <sup>20</sup> Resty Woro Yuniar, “Indonesia, Britain agree to deepen security, trade partnership ahead of warship’s visit to Indo-Pacific”, *South China Morning Post*, 7 April 2021, <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3128662/indonesia-britain-agree-deepen-security-trade-partnership-ahead>.
- <sup>21</sup> Joint Declaration on Future Economic Cooperation between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK), 15 September 2021.
- <sup>22</sup> Policy paper: ASEAN Economic Reform Programme, *GOV.UK*, 21 June 2019, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/asean-economic-reform-programme>; Official Launch: ASEAN-UK Digital Innovation Partnership, *Website of the UK-ASEAN Business Council*, 01 September 2021, <https://ukabc.org.uk/event/official-launch-asean-uk-digital-innovation-partnership/>; “UK convenes ASEAN-COP26 Climate Dialogue”, *GOV.UK*, 01 October 2020, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-convenes-asean-cop26-climate-dialogue>.
- <sup>23</sup> *Defence in a competitive age* (London: Ministry of Defence, March 2021), [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/974661/CP411\\_-\\_Defence\\_Command\\_Plan.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974661/CP411_-_Defence_Command_Plan.pdf).
- <sup>24</sup> “South China Sea: Freedom of Navigation, UK Parliament”, House of Commons Hansard, 3 September 2020, Vol. 679, <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-09-03/debates/99D50BD9-8C8A-4835-9C70-6E9A38585BC4/SouthChinaSeaFreedomOfNavigation>
- <sup>25</sup> See, for example, “UK shouldn’t tempt own fate in South China Sea: Global Times editorial”, *Global Times*, 29 July 2021, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202107/1230053.shtml>.
- <sup>26</sup> Ian Storey, “Royal Navy Freedom of Navigation Operation in South China Sea: After Events in the Black Sea it’s Quite Possible”, *Fulcrum*, 2 July 2021, <https://fulcrum.sg/after-black-sea-encounter-british-ronop-in-the-south-china-sea-quite-possible/>
- <sup>27</sup> David Sabbagh and Helen Davidson, “UK says it has no plans for South China Sea confrontation after Beijing warning”, *The Guardian*, 30 July 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jul/30/china-royal-navy-south-china-sea-warning-beijing>.
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<sup>31</sup> Nick Childs, “UK Littoral Response Group: the shape of things to come”, International Institute for Strategic Studies, Military Balance Blog, 25 June 2021,

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