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**The foundations for regional architecture in the Indo-Pacific:
Establishing a multilateral youth forum through digital diplomacy**

Acknowledgments

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- Jon Lim — Chair, Model United Nations
- Rory Brown — President, Australia-Indonesia Youth Association (Yogyakarta)
- Theo Stapleton — New Colombo Plan Scholar (China)

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Executive Summary

Australia's strategic geography has changed in such a way that the Indian Ocean region can no longer be ignored and that the term 'Indo-Pacific' will be useful in the discussion of Australian foreign policy.

The Indo-Pacific provides Australia with opportunities and threats. Australia should seek to maximise opportunities in the region while minimising the threats.

To that end, Australia should strive to develop regional architecture in the Indo-Pacific that makes accommodations for different strategic cultures in the region.

One proposal would be to use the web of bilateral and multilateral youth organisations in conjunction with the New Colombo Plan to develop a digital diplomacy strategy that engages young Australians in a forum for developing regional architecture in the Indo-Pacific.

Using non-traditional modes of digital communication would be an effective way of overcoming the different strategic cultures in the Indo-Pacific so that any youth forum for the development of regional architecture is sustainable.

1.0 The rise of the Indo-Pacific

Towards the end of the twentieth century, an important economic story began to be written in the Asia-Pacific.

After the devastation of the Second World War, Japan began to grow at startling rates. By 1979, Japan's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) had reached US\$1.037 trillion.¹ In doing so, Japan had become the only country other than the United States to join the 'one trillion dollar club'.

After Japan came the 'Asian tigers' of Hong Kong, Singapore and South Korea.² Between 1990 and 1996, these economies grew consistently about 2 per cent each year. While the Asian Financial of 1997 affected these economies adversely, most have managed to continue to be productive and innovate.

Then came the economic event that has influenced the course of the twenty first century: the growth of China. When China began liberalising its economy in 1978, it was a country that struggled with food, energy and water security as well as poor infrastructure. Since 1990, China's annual GDP growth rate has never dipped below 5 per cent and tended to enjoy growth rates above 8 per cent each year.³ These are figures that most industrialised economies have not seen for a long time.

The next growth story for the Asia-Pacific took place in Indonesia. After recovering from the Asian Financial Crisis by 1999, Indonesia began to maintain a GDP growth rate above 3.5 per cent each year.⁴ After years of these growth rates, Indonesia reached

¹ 'Japan GDP,' *World Bank* <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=JP> (Accessed: 25 Feb 2017).

² 'Hong Kong, Singapore and South Korea GDP growth,' *World Bank* <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=HK-SG-KR> (Accessed: 25 Feb 2017).

³ 'China GDP growth,' *World Bank* <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=CN> (Accessed: 25 Feb 2017).

⁴ 'Indonesia GDP growth,' *World Bank* <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=ID> (Accessed: 25 Feb 2017).

a GDP that amounted to US\$861.9 billion in 2015.⁵ As a country with a population above 250 million, a growth story like that would be ignored at the peril of industrialised countries in the region.

In recent years, the economies of the Asia-Pacific have started to convert the stellar growth rates of the twentieth century into economic development and high living standards. Through multilateral institutions like the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the economies of the Asia-Pacific that continue to struggle with poor infrastructure and low living standards now have the financial architecture needed to support their economic development. Hence economic growth has spread to Asia's west.

India's economic growth could prove to be an event that will alter the course of the twenty first century. Since 1992, India's rate of economic growth has never fallen below 3.8 per cent and even reached 10.3 per cent in 2010.⁶ At present, India is sustaining an economic growth rate of roughly 7.6 per cent and boast one of the world's most innovative workforces.⁷ The creation of new technologies and products in India could well be the driving force for development in the region.

With a great deal of economic development being achieved in the Asia-Pacific and a fast-growing India, Australia has started to think closely about the economies of the Indian Ocean. Sri Lanka has enjoyed similar rates of economic growth to India and is home to a number of strategic ports for Australian exporters. While Madagascar struggled with the Global Financial Crisis of 2009, the country has enjoyed numerous years of

⁵ 'Indonesia GDP,' *World Bank* <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=ID> (Accessed 25 Feb 2017).

⁶ 'India GDP growth,' *World Bank* <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=IN> (Accessed 25 Feb 2017).

⁷ 'India GDP growth,' *World Bank* <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=IN> (Accessed 25 Feb 2017).

economic growth above 3 per cent.⁸ The Indian Ocean region is the Asia-Pacific's next economic frontier.

These developments have changed Australia's strategic geography. No longer can Australia only be focussed on Asia, the Pacific or even the Asia-Pacific. The growth stories of economies in the Indian Ocean region are too important for Australia to ignore. The Indian Ocean region is the next frontier in Australian foreign policy.

1.1 The idea of the Indo-Pacific

The growth stories of economies in both the Asia-Pacific and the Indian Ocean have pushed the idea of the Indo-Pacific into Australia's strategic consciousness.

Since the *2013 Australian Defence White Paper*, the Australian Government has seen its region as the Indo-Pacific and has defended it in international security fora like the Shangri-La Dialogue.⁹

The idea of the Indo-Pacific has since received robust academic support from the likes of Rory Medcalf and numerous commentators at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) and the Lowy Institute for International Policy.¹⁰

As Medcalf notes, the "Indo-Pacific can best be understood as an expansive definition of a maritime super-region centred on South-East Asia, arising principally from the emergence of China and India as outward-looking trading states and strategic actors."¹¹

⁸ 'Madagascar GDP growth,' *World Bank* <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=MG> (Accessed 25 Feb 2017).

⁹ Graeme Dobell, 'Australia's Indo-Pacific understanding,' *Australian Strategic Policy Institute* <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/australias-indo-pacific-understanding/> (Accessed: 18 Feb 2017).

¹⁰ See Rory Medcalf, 'In defence of the Indo-Pacific: Australia's new strategic map,' *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, (2014) Vol. 68, No. 4, 470–483.

¹¹ See Rory Medcalf, 'In defence of the Indo-Pacific: Australia's new strategic map,' *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, (2014) Vol. 68, No. 4, 470–483.

As a country with two major oceans beside it, the Indo-Pacific as an idea serves as a practical definition of Australia's region of immediate strategic interest.

Combine the Indo-Pacific region as an idea with the growth stories of countries within the region and Australia has found a useful term that should guide its foreign policy in the twenty first century.

Nevertheless, some commentators have noted the difficulties Australia might have in popularising the term. As Rod Lyon from ASPI has noted, the Indian Ocean and the Asia-Pacific have two distinct strategic cultures. Hence the Australian Government might run the risk of "talking an Indo-Pacific strategic order into existence."¹²

While there may be that risk, the Indo-Pacific has since received great support from the Indian foreign policy community.¹³ This shows that one of the region's most important actors is in favour of the Indo-Pacific region as an idea for regional order. Similarly, the Indian Ocean is an important part of China's 'One Belt, One Road' initiative which demonstrates that the region is at the core of the Chinese Government's grand strategy. Furthermore, under the leadership of Admiral Harry Harris, the United States Pacific Command has defined its region of interest as the Indo-Asia-Pacific. Therefore, given that three of the region's most important strategic actors are in support of the idea, Australia has an opportunity to promote the 'Indo-Pacific' in pursuit of regional order.

The popularisation of the Indo-Pacific by Australia, India, China and the United States hasn't come about artificially, but organically. These four powers have seen the growth stories of economies within the region and have decided to advance their inter-

¹² Rod Lyon, 'The Indo-Pacific and the nature of conjunction,' *Australian Strategic Policy Institute* <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/indo-pacific-nature-conjunction/> (Accessed 18 Feb 2017).

¹³ See Priya Chacko, 'The rise of the Indo-Pacific: understanding ideational change and continuity in India's foreign policy,' *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, (2014) Vol. 68, No. 4, 433–452

ests accordingly. In this sense, the Indo-Pacific hasn't been 'talked into existence' but has developed in response to changes in the strategic geographies of four powers.

1.2 The Indo-Pacific's economic opportunities

Australia has been the first country to respond to changes in the Indo-Pacific and should continue to lead the region's development. In order to lead this development, Australia must remain responsive to economic opportunities in the Indo-Pacific.

Section 1.1 of this submission outlined the macro-economic changes that brought about the Indo-Pacific as an idea for regional order. While histories of economic growth and macro-economic projections for the region might be useful in developing a foreign policy, it will be important to ensure that the Australian Government supports our businesses looking to engage with the Indo-Pacific. This task requires a look at the region from a microeconomic perspective.

For this reason, it will be worth understanding Australia's own capabilities. The services industry is one such capability that can support a variety of businesses looking to trade with or enter markets of economies in the Indo-Pacific. Therefore Australia is well-placed to ensure that our businesses do successfully engage with the economies of the Indo-Pacific.

Although Australia might have the services industry needed to help Australian companies do business with the economies of the Indo-Pacific, identifying the industries driving the growth of these economies will be important for the success of Australia's commercial engagement with the region.

The Australian Trade and Investment Commission has identified the following industries as important in driving the growth of economies in the Indo-Pacific.¹⁴

Country	Growth industry	Opportunities for Australian businesses?
China	Agribusiness, aged care, water, infrastructure, energy, mining, food and beverages, architecture, design and startups	Yes
India	Agriculture, sustainable fisheries, mining and infrastructure	Yes
Indonesia	Aerospace, agribusiness, energy, information technology, infrastructure and mining	Yes
Japan	Financial services, food and beverage and music	Yes

Capitalising on the commercial opportunities in the region will be important for the long term health of the Australian economy. In this sense, Australian businesses have to be at the forefront of Australia's engagement with the Indo-Pacific.

1.3 The Indo-Pacific's strategic threats

The role of the Australian Government and the Australian Defence Force (ADF) should be to ensure that Indo-Pacific remains secure so that Australia's economic interests can be advanced in the region for the indefinite future.

To that end, the Australian Government should remain aware of any developments that might threaten Australia's access to important shipping lanes or its right to exercise freedom of navigation in the Indo-Pacific. The Australian Government should also be vigilant in defending freedom of navigation as a right to be exercised by all nations in the Indo-Pacific.

¹⁴ See 'For Exporters: Export Markets,' *Australian Trade and Investment Commission* <http://www.austrade.gov.au/Australian/Export/Export-markets/Countries> (Accessed: 25 Feb 2017).

The Australian Government should reiterate its commitment to freedom of the high seas as defined by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the Permanent Court of Arbitration at the Hague.

Any threat to this principle or to the ability of Australia or other allied nations to exercise freedom of navigation should be dealt firmly and in line with the relevant diplomatic or military channels.

China's building of islands in the international waters of the South China Sea is a threat to the principle of freedom of navigation and the Australian Government should make clear that it this threat is unacceptable.

As a result of China's threat to freedom of navigation, Australia could see its economic interests harmed because sixty per cent of Australia's exports pass through the South China Sea each year.

The Australian Government should make clear that China's continual violation of international maritime law is neither in the interests of Australia nor China.

Another threat to Australia's interests in the Indo-Pacific is the development of a regional blocs that serve to weaken the region's pre-existing architecture in ASEAN, APEC and the Indian Ocean Rim Association. The Australian Government should monitor the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) so that the bloc does not weaken pre-existing multilateral institutions in the Indo-Pacific that serve Australia's interests.

India's push to be accepted as a member of the SCO should be discouraged. Any further weakening of multilateral organisations in the Indo-Pacific that have served Australia well should be avoided.

Piracy in the Indian Ocean should be deterred in every way available to the ADF so as to secure the trade routes that run through the ocean. Continuing Australia's successful anti-piracy operations should be a priority of the ADF going into the next stage of the twenty first century.

Co-operation with our partners in the Indian Ocean should be encouraged so that the region can strengthen military-to-military ties. Furthering this aim should be done through multilateral channels such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association.

1.4 Maximising opportunities and minimising threats in the Indo-Pacific

The Australian Government should look to establish strong security architecture in the Indo-Pacific as a way of ensuring the region's economic prosperity.

Strong regional security architecture through multilateralism will be in the interests of Australia and the region as a whole, for it will provide a forum in which strategic threats can be dealt with and economic opportunities taken.

2.0 Multilateralism in the Indo-Pacific

In the Indo-Pacific, multilateralisation has attempted to be achieved through the development of comprehensive trade deals most notably, the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) deal and Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). Creating an overarching Asian identity may in fact be a feat too hard too difficult to achieve, despite the promotion of 'ASEAN Vision 2020'. Creating an Indo-Pacific identity through a multi-lateral institution would be even harder, given the differing strategic cultures in the Indian Ocean and in the Asia-Pacific.

For these reasons, being able to navigate and understand cultural and social barriers between nations in the Indo-Pacific has become increasingly important. Indeed countries in the Indo-Pacific each have different ways of conducting business and alternative development agendas.

However, through gearing multilateral efforts towards achieving social outcomes and pushing issues of development through the promotion of mutually advantageous business to business links has been the agenda of most nations in the region in an effort to free trade restrictions and thus move towards multilateralising the region.

As participation in forums that allow for the promotion of mutual business opportunities has become increasingly common, the exchange of cultural differences and necessity for meaningful people to people links being established has only intensified.

Stakeholders in politics, business and civil society of both current and future generations are required to have a more nuanced understanding of the limitations they must work within and the different cultural factors that may act to hamper multilateralisation through an economic framework on a large-scale.

Through assessing and understanding how different regions have approached multilateral efforts, the Australian government will be better placed to understand how it can meaningfully engage in such forums to achieve its strategic goals and promote large-scale multilateralisation through an economic framework.

2.1 South East Asia's approach to Multilateralism

The primary forum for producing multilateral outcomes in Southeast Asia since 1967 has been ASEAN. A meeting between the then primary foreign dignitaries of Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and Philippines led to the signing of the Bangkok Treaty and ultimate formation of ASEAN. The initial ASEAN Declaration,

named the Bangkok Declaration had great emphasis on developing a cooperative framework that promoted areas of mutual interest.

Since then, ASEAN has been instrumental in accelerating the multilateralisation of the South East Asian region with numerous other forums and organisations being able to be established as a result of its initiative.

ASEAN + 3 and ASEAN + 6 have evolved as forums that have been able to include the likes of China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand and India in discussions about how to achieve meaningful development throughout the region.

Importantly, other countries, which do not have membership or are not participants of these forums have been allowed to observe and contribute to dialogue through forums such as the East Asia Summit and ASEAN regional forum.

The East Asia Summit has been forum for strategic dialogue centred on achieving closer regional integration in order to tackle the key challenges facing the region. Australia has been working with its partners in the region to advocate for better integration of members in the East Asia Summit. This is a policy that should be continued, as it will strengthen the ties between nations in the Indo-Pacific.

The ASEAN regional forum which comprises of 27 different members has been geared towards discussing security issues and preventative diplomacy capacity. Much like Australia's position on the East Asia Summit, a productive ASEAN regional forum is in the interests of Australia and for the Indo-Pacific more generally.

2.2 The Pacific's approach to Multilateralism

The Pacific's approach to multilateralism has been defined by the history of the region. After Japan's rapid industrialisation after World War II, there were fears that the country would come to dominate trade in the Pacific. Along with these fears came the

rise of multilateral trade blocs throughout the world and a growing interdependence amongst the economies of the Pacific. So, in an attempt to strengthen co-operation by liberalising trade in the region, Prime Minister Bob Hawke's Australian Government held the first APEC Summit in November 1989. In large part, of multilateral institutions like APEC have been created by the historical and economic conditions of the Pacific which is why the member states share a loose affiliation with the institution.

2.3 The Indian Ocean's approach to Multilateralism

Formally launched in March 1997, the Indian Ocean Rim Association has twenty members, including Australia, that strive to liberalise trade and ensure the free flow of goods, services and investment in the Indian Ocean rim's 'blue economy'. A draft of the IOR-ARC Preferential Trade Agreement was written in August 2010 so as to codify these values amongst the member states.

Recently, co-operation amongst the member states has become stronger with the reach of the organisation expanding to: maritime security, disaster management, scientific collaboration, cultural exchange and gender empowerment.

While these developments are promising, the Indian Ocean Rim Association has yet to acquire the same status as other multilateral institutions, like APEC or ASEAN. In the coming decades, the Australian Government should work hard at ensuring the Indian Ocean Rim Association does achieve this status of a powerful multilateral institution for it could help ensure that principles like freedom of navigation are upheld in the Indian Ocean Rim. This will be vital to the economic future of the Indo-Pacific.

2.4 Australia's approach to Multilateralism

Australia has a long history of involvement in multilateral institutions and has long advocated for better integration of the member states in these institutions. Australia has seen this as a vital part of the rules-based international order that has served the country so well.

Australia has been an integral part of the United Nations and has been a strong proponent of international law. Australia was a founding member of the United Nations, that has signed major international treaties such as the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea and the Rome Statute. More recently, Australia has served a successful term on the United Nations Security Council and is campaigning to serve on the United Nations Human Rights Council. All these examples underscore Australia's belief in multilateralism as a way of upholding international law and the rules-based international order.

Australia was also instrumental in the creation and success of APEC. In fact, the idea was propounded by the former Prime Minister Bob Hawke on the 31st of January 1989 during an address he gave in Seoul, South Korea. Since then, Australia has hosted the APEC Summit on numerous occasions and has used the institution as a way of liberalising trade in the Asia-Pacific.

Australia's advocacy for multilateral engagement has not been restricted to global governance and economic liberalisation, but has also been directed at greater regional security co-operation. Through the East Asia Summit, Australia has called for adherence to the rules-based international order in the region as a way of resolving disputes between member states. This advocacy is expected to continue.

3.0 Youth engagement in international affairs

Engaging young people in international affairs is the key to ensuring that the next generation of leaders in global politics are astute and sensitive to a number of cultures. In the long run, youth engagement helps ensure that the business of diplomacy will continue to be the bedrock for global peace and stability. The Australian Government should make a priority of maintaining its support for youth engagement in international affairs into the future.

3.1 Australia's multilateral youth engagement

The rise of multilateralism in the twentieth century has been a great contributor to global peace, stability and the rules-based international order. For this reason, youth engagement in multilateralism is important in ensuring that this continues and improves in the future. Australia has been a leader in engaging its young people in multilateralism.

Australia's most successful forum in which young people can engage in international affairs is Model UN. Model UN provides young people with the opportunity to familiarise themselves with multilateral institutions by taking part in meetings that are identical to processes at the United Nations. Meetings of the United Nations Security Council are simulated, as are meeting at the United Nations Human Rights Council. Such activities are vital in ensuring that young Australians are familiar with the processes of multilateralism, especially at the United Nations.

The former Chair of Model UN, Jon Lim, says that "participation ... has helped me to meet with talented youth leaders from various cultural backgrounds all around the world, gain knowledge on international diplomacy and address common global issues through multilateral co-operation. It has educated me in the value of peaceful negotiation as a means of overcoming adversaries and transforming them into allies."

Such a story shows that the Australian Government should continue to support organisations like Model UN so that the next generation of leaders in global politics are familiar with multilateral processes.

The success of Model UN demonstrates that young Australians are keen to engage in multilateral institutions. However there are no multilateral youth organisations that foster co-operation between young people in the Indo-Pacific. Therefore the Australian Government should look to ensure that young Australians are familiar with multilateral institutions in the region like APEC, the East Asia Summit and the Indian Ocean Rim Association.

3.2 Australia's bilateral youth engagement

Australia has been at the forefront of bilateral youth engagement in international affairs. Young Australians have had the opportunity to familiarise themselves with foreign cultures and bilateral relationships that are important to Australia's future.

Organisations like the Australia-China Youth Association, the Australia-India Youth Dialogue and the Australia-Japan Youth Dialogue have provided young Australians with the opportunity to engage in high-level bilateral forums that are similar to those held between governments.

Rory Brown served as President of the Australia-Indonesia Youth Association's (AIYA) chapter in Yogyakarta. According to Rory, the AIYA helped him not only advance the Australia-Indonesia bilateral relationship but also helped him both personally and professionally.

According to Rory, AIYA helped him "identify a personal leadership style that not only suited a professional work environment in Australia but also in Indonesia. It was the perfect platform to trial working with people of different cultural backgrounds to achieve

collective outcomes and goals. Collectively we were able to strengthen the bilateral relationship and create stronger institutional links amongst university students, young professionals, government, business, NGOs and educational institutions. Overall, we were able to create opportunities for young people in both countries that would not of existed had we not taken the initiative to create them ourselves.”

The Australian Government should make a priority of continuing support to organisations like AIYA which ensure that Australia’s bilateral relationships will be served well into the future.

3.3 The New Colombo Plan

The New Colombo Plan is a flagship program of the Australian Government that provides young Australians with the funding needed to study and gain professional experience in the Indo-Pacific. The success of the program has been to network the next generation of Australian leaders with those from the countries of the Indo-Pacific.

Theo Stapleton was a New Colombo Plan Scholar who studied at Tsinghua University in China and interned at a leading think-tank called China Policy. Theo says that “the New Colombo Plan scholarship gave me the opportunity to come to a new country, learn its culture and language ... with the support of the government’s network, improved my professional experience. The scholarship definitely equips young people with the tools they need to be effective contributors to the discussion on international affairs.”

Continued funding for the New Colombo Plan that the future of Australian diplomacy is in safe hands. In saying this, the Australian Government should look to enhance the program by providing a multilateral forum in which scholars can engage with their counterparts in the Indo-Pacific.

4.0 Digital Diplomacy

Digital technologies have changed the means by which people communicate and businesses operate. The disruption experienced by people and businesses will be felt next in government and its ability to influence the global economy. As the 'digital economy' draws near, it will be important for the government to harness the power of digital technology in its diplomacy.

The manner in which businesses and diplomats harness digital technologies does not have to be mutually exclusive. Rather, through focusing on mutual benefits such as, globalisation of Australian supply chains or establishment of international partnering in business, Australia's diplomatic missions will be able to leverage Australian business objectives to achieve desirable outcomes for the people of Australia.

It is and should be, a clear focus of the Australian Government to play a role in supporting the development of digital platforms, channels and technologies that achieve such objectives.

4.1 Australia's Digital Diplomacy

The Australian government has been consistent at applying the latest digital technologies in order to achieve Australia's strategic objectives.

The use of traditional digital communications like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter LinkedIn has been instrumental in describing to the Australian people as well as the wider world the important work the Australian government does as well as providing a human element to diplomacy.

Online multimedia has also been used effectively by the Australian Government. The DFAT and Austrade websites are kept up to date with important records and information for all those that are interested as well as to help Australian business take their

services overseas. Most recently, the launch of the DFAT blog has enabled the wider Australian community to share important stories that are instrumental in illustrating the great work Australians partake in overseas.

As new developments occur in digital technologies, the Australian Government should continue to embrace these technologies and assess how best to use these in order to strengthen Australia's strategic reach.

4.2 Multilateral youth engagement through digital diplomacy

Numerous bilateral and multilateral organisations have been established targeting youth involvement in international affairs. Such programs provide a meaningful and unique opportunity for young people of different cultures, backgrounds and countries to discuss the important issues influencing Australia's future.

Initiatives such as the Asia-Pacific Youth Organisation and Young Australians in International Affairs currently harness and utilise traditional digital communications such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn to provide constant updates to their respective members and help to facilitate discussion on Australian foreign policy.

4.3 The New Colombo Plan and prospects for multilateral youth engagement in the Indo-Pacific

The New Colombo Plan initiative has been instrumental in increasing the mobility of Australia students throughout the wider Indo-Pacific. The diverse amount of grants provided has provided Australian undergraduate students the opportunity to study in a different country and experience a different culture.

Furthermore, the New Colombo has additionally provided opportunities for Australian students to work in different types of workplaces. Through harnessing digital

diplomacy, relationships can be maintained, mutual ideas discussed and ultimately a more robust dialogue can be produced.

Providing opportunities for multilateral youth engagement through the New Colombo Plan should remain a priority of the Australian Government.

4.4 Digital Diplomacy and the foundations for youth-led regional architecture in the Indo-Pacific

Digital communication has the power to grow meaningful ecosystems for dialogue, especially for today's youth. However Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn all serve a narrow purpose in digital communication that does not necessarily meet the needs of a comprehensive strategy for digital diplomacy.

The Australian Government should invest in non-traditional modes of digital communication between the youth of the Indo-Pacific. A potential investment could be into developing an application for digital communication that connects the youth of the Indo-Pacific for the purposes of diplomacy.

The building blocks are there. With the growing number of young Australians who are studying in the Indo-Pacific through the New Colombo Plan, the Australian Government could help these emerging diplomatic partnerships flourish by thinking about non-traditional modes of digital communication.

The Australian Government also enables mobility for young, aspiring entrepreneurs to establish and run a growing number of projects through diverse range of grants. Developing non-traditional modes of digital communications will help ensure young, innovative Australians can connect with aspiring entrepreneurs in the Indo-Pacific. This will help future-proof Australia's economy for the age digital disruption.

An effective digital diplomacy that focusses on developing non-traditional modes of communication across borders will support the Australian Government's objectives for the New Colombo Plan and the National Innovation and Science Agenda. It will also build on top of the existing bilateral and multilateral youth organisations that serve to improve young Australians' engagement with the world.

Therefore making an investment investment into non-traditional modes of digital communication for young people will bring the countries of the Indo-Pacific closer together in a way that would help the Australian Government lay the foundations for regional architecture that accommodates for different strategic cultures. This will be vital for ensuring peace and stability in increasing volatile times.