

Australia as a Southern Hemisphere power

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Abstract

Australia's key economic, foreign and security relations are overwhelmingly focused to our north—in Asia, North America and Europe. But our 'soft' power in the realms of aid, trade, science, sport and education is increasingly manifested in the Southern Hemisphere regions of Africa, South America, the Indonesian archipelago and the Southwest Pacific, as well as Antarctica. Our developmental, scientific, business and people-to-people linkages with the emerging states of sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America are growing rapidly. At the same time, new forms of peacemaking have distinguished Australia's cooperative interventions in our fragile island neighbourhood. This paper looks at these different ways Australian power is being projected across the Southern Hemisphere, particularly in relation to new links with Africa and South America. Rapid growth in our southern engagement has implications for the future, but also harks back to Australia's past as 'Mistress of the Southern Seas'.

Introduction

The Australian Government's *Australia in the Asian century* White Paper, published in October 2012, was the latest in a long line of reviews emphasising the importance of countries to our north—in this case, the major economies of East Asia—for Australia's future. Such a focus, while valid, risks overlooking rapid developments in Australia's relations in our own hemisphere. While Asia is clearly the main game for our hard economic and security interests, Southern Hemisphere regions such as Africa, Latin America and the Southern Ocean are becoming increasingly important to us across a range of other 'softer' dimensions of power.

To understand this shift, it makes sense to start with the different conceptions of Australia's place in the world. There are various ways to do this. One of the simplest is to think about our relative capacity in three distinct spatial arenas—the global, the regional and the hemispheric.

The first sees Australia as a global player, emphasising our role not just within international bodies such as the United Nations and the World Trade Organization but also in new global forums such as the G20 and, most recently, as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council.

The second theme, and the dominant one of our era, sees Australia as a key player in the Asia-Pacific (or, increasingly, the Indo-Pacific) region. This has been the focus of much of our foreign policy thinking over the past few decades, and is epitomised by Australia's efforts over many years both to shape Asia's regional architecture

and to gain membership of emerging regional bodies, such as the Asia–Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum and the East Asia Summit.

This paper suggests that there's a third spatial realm in which Australia is becoming increasingly active across a range of key interests—strategic, scientific, sporting, educational and people-to-people. That's Australia as a *Southern Hemisphere power*—an idea that was once fundamental to our conception of ourselves but that's been largely forgotten.

The Southern Hemisphere comprises four continents (Australia, most of Africa, South America, Antarctica) and four great oceans, three of which (the Pacific, Indian and Southern oceans) border Australia (Figure 1). It contains two of the world's emerging giants (Brazil and Indonesia), several influential middle powers (Australia, as well as other G20 members such as Argentina and South Africa), two innovative smaller states (Chile and New Zealand), some resource-rich 'fragile states' (Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique, Papua New Guinea, Peru), the odd economic disaster (Zimbabwe), and a host of small island states in the Pacific and Indian oceans.

The region has always been peripheral in the global distribution of demographic, economic and political power. Part of the reason is simple demographics: only a quarter of the world's people live in the Southern Hemisphere—390 million in South America, 875 million in sub-Saharan Africa, 240 million in Indonesia and 36 million in Oceania. Over 80% live in either Africa or South America, two continents with which Australia has maintained limited and fairly superficial relationships.

Figure 1: Map of the Southern Hemisphere



This will have to change. With a total population of 1.54 billion, the Southern Hemisphere is today economically and strategically more important than ever before. Australia's increasing engagement with the countries of our own hemisphere highlights some important and often overlooked aspects of international relations, particularly in terms of Australia's 'soft' power.

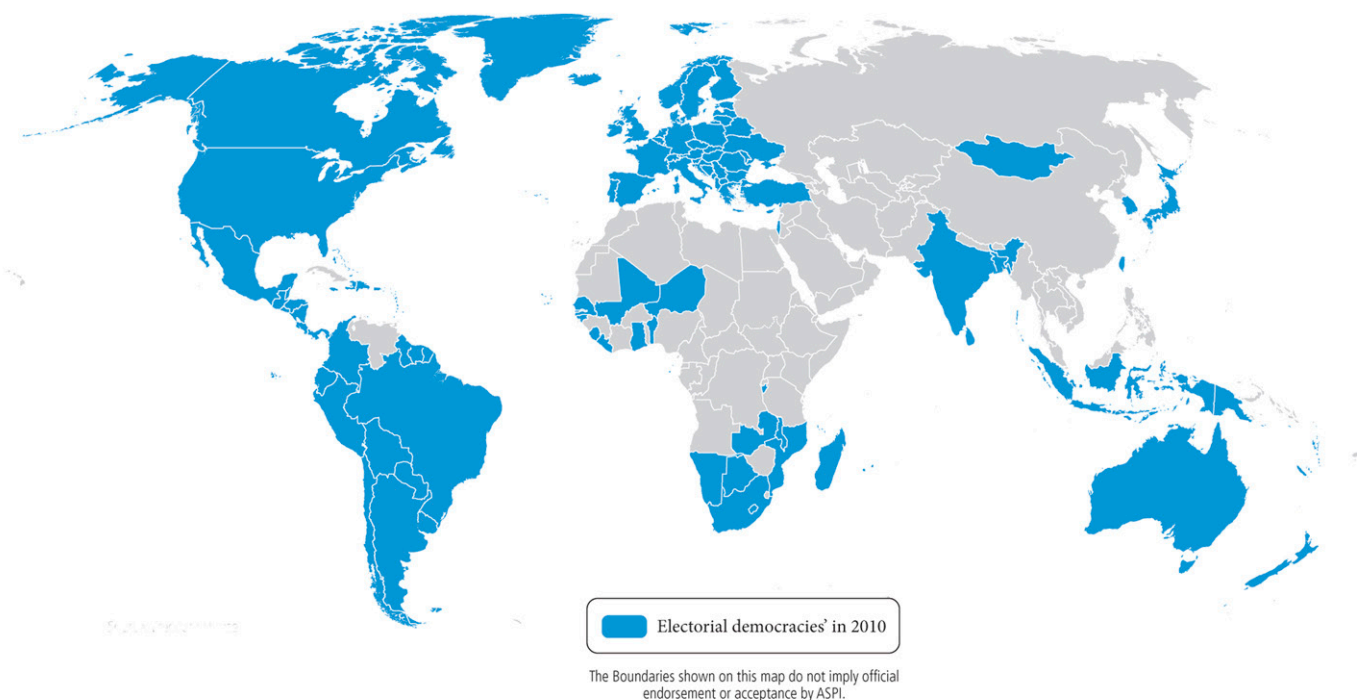
Soft power and foreign policy

Geographical isolation has traditionally limited Australians' appreciation of the role of power in international affairs.¹ As a country that moved from close alignments with first Britain and then the US as the major maritime powers, we've been on the winning side in shifts of the global power balance. At the regional level, similarly, we've given little thought to our own power relative to others: until the late 1980s, for instance, the Australian economy was larger than all of Southeast Asia's combined, with a military superiority to match. And, within our limited sphere of influence in the Southwest Pacific, Australia has always been the largest power by a considerable margin.

This situation is starting to change. In the core dimensions of power, our military alliance with the US remains key to Australia's security, but the US is less dominant today than at any time since the end of World War II. Similarly, our size in demographic terms is also diminishing in comparison to the rising economies of Asia. We're dwarfed not only by China, Japan and India but also by rising economies such as Korea and Thailand and, of course, Indonesia.

At the same time, the weight of Africa and Latin America is growing in world affairs. This is partly a result of political developments: almost all the major states of sub-Saharan Africa and South America are today genuine electoral democracies—a far cry from earlier decades, when one-party autocracies or military juntas dominated. Partly, it's a result of demographics: after Asia, these are the world's two most populous continents, with some of the youngest and fastest-growing populations. And partly it's a result of economics and the growth trajectories of what are relatively young

Figure 2: Map showing 'Electoral democracies' in 2010



Source: Freedom House.

economies. The combination of political stability, a large and youthful population, and fast-growing economies is key to the emergence of countries like Brazil and Indonesia as major powers-to-be of the 21st century.

But what of Australia's 'soft' power? As defined by Joseph Nye, soft power 'is the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion' and relies on 'the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies.'² As Nye noted in his original formulation of the concept, a country's soft power resources include not just culture and diplomacy but also factors of technology, education, aid and trade, all of which are becoming more significant aspects of international influence. It's these kinds of soft-power resources that lie at the heart of Australia's role as a Southern Hemisphere power.

Discussions of soft power typically contrast it with classic 'hard' power resources, such as economic and military force. For Australia, those resources have long been focused north:

- In most economic areas, our ties to the Northern Hemisphere are dominant. Of our top 10 trade partners, only one country (New Zealand) lies in our own hemisphere. China, Japan and other Northeast Asian countries are at the top of the list.
- Similarly, our hard security relationships are dominated by the US alliance and the US-led military coalitions that we've regularly participated in, in Asia and the Middle East.
- Culturally, we're a European-origin country with a significant attachment to American cultural exports. And our increasingly diverse immigrant intake also comes overwhelmingly from the Northern Hemisphere.

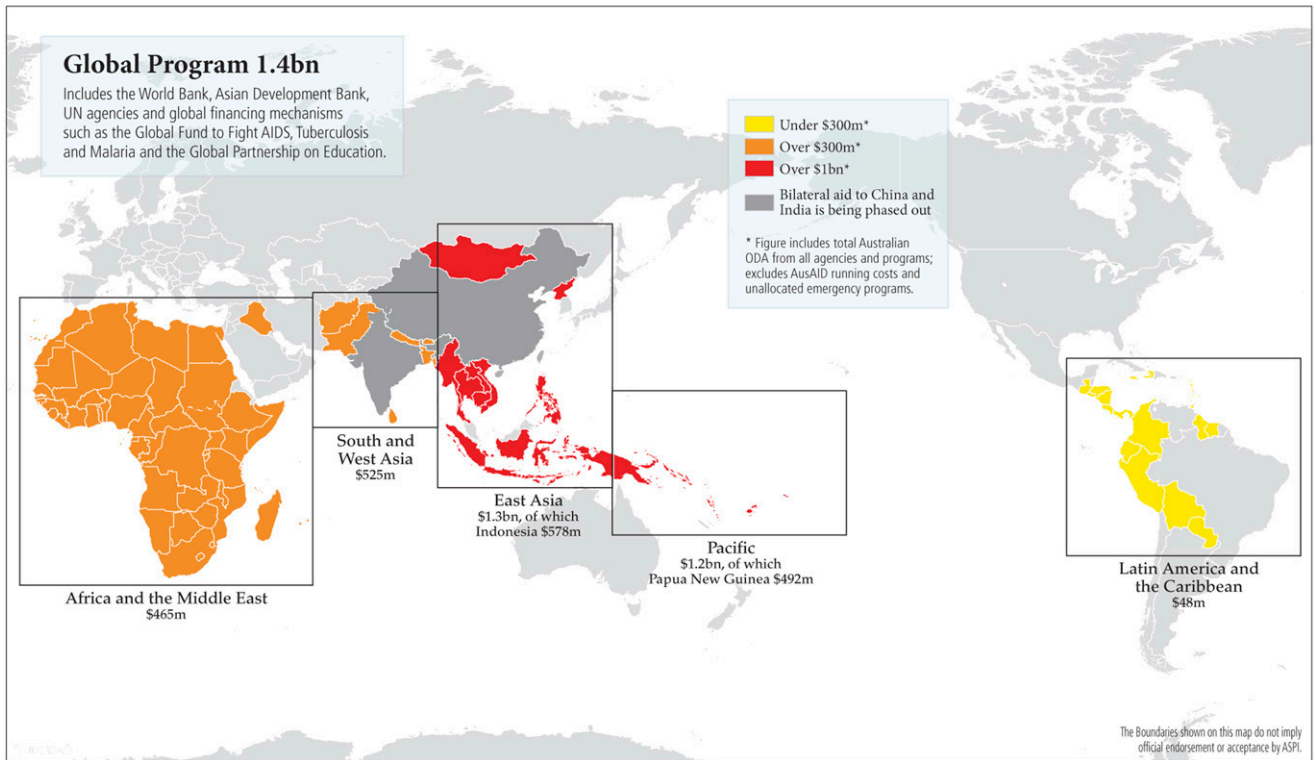
Ten years ago, in a stimulating series of public lectures, Paul Kelly bemoaned our lack of understanding of soft power resources, calling it 'a powerful idea [which] is undervalued as a tool for Australian policy' and arguing that 'Australia's singular recent failure lies in its inability to conceptualize its soft power as a national strategic asset.'³ This may be starting to change. Recent years have seen a marked shift in emphasis towards our own hemisphere in the application of Australian soft power in science, education, sport and other areas of intra-hemispheric collaboration.

One example of the shift is Australia's emergence as a major provider of international development assistance. Over the past five years, Australian aid has increased by about a third in real terms. Most of this aid, as has long been the historical pattern, goes to our near neighbours in Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific. But in recent years this has been complemented by the growth of new aid initiatives in Africa and Latin America. In combination with our continued focus on Indonesia and Papua New Guinea, the two largest recipients of Australian aid, this has resulted in a much greater concentration than previously on the global 'South', geographically defined, which now receives 60% of Australian aid (Figure 3).

As Figure 4 highlights, this reorientation of Australia's international development assistance has led to exceptional growth in our aid disbursements in the Southern Hemisphere. Over the past three years, our development assistance to Africa has more than doubled, while our aid to Latin America and the Caribbean rose by an even larger amount (although from a very small base, from \$2 million to \$48 million a year).⁴

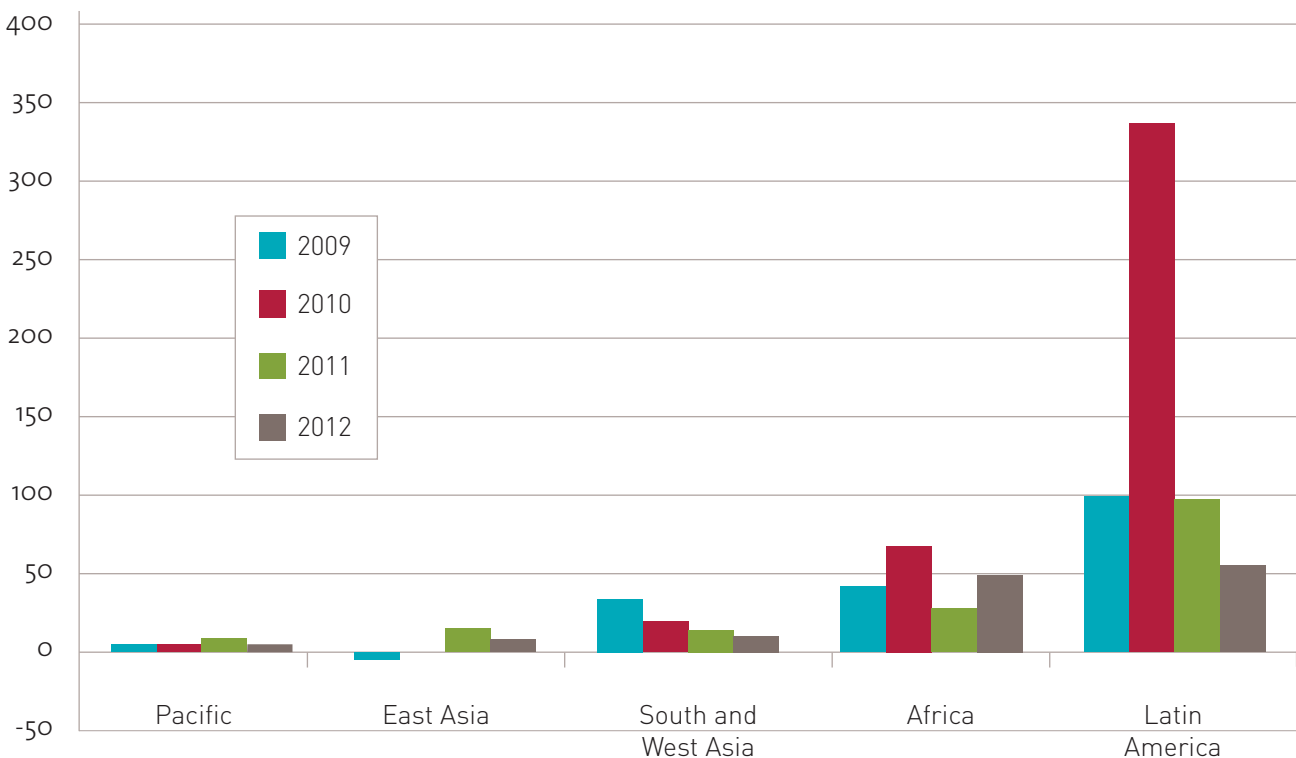
This increase is notable for several reasons. It's a significant shift in the patterns of Australia's aid delivery away from the Asia-Pacific region. It also appears to be less transient than many have assumed. There's a widespread belief that aid to Africa and Latin America was being driven by Australia's ultimately successful bid for a rotating seat on the UN Security Council. But that ignores the new reality of Australia as the world's 10th largest aid donor at a time when a declining number of East Asian states are aid recipients. This, along with commitments by both sides of politics for Australia to increase its official development assistance to 0.5% of GDP, is pushing AusAID to expand into new areas to maintain its relevance.⁵

Figure 3: Map showing geographical distribution of Australian official development assistance, 2012–13



Source: AusAid

Figure 4: Changes in regional distribution of Australian aid, 2009 to 2012 (% growth)



Trade and investment

Trade and investment is another area where Australia's role as a Southern Hemisphere power is increasingly apparent.

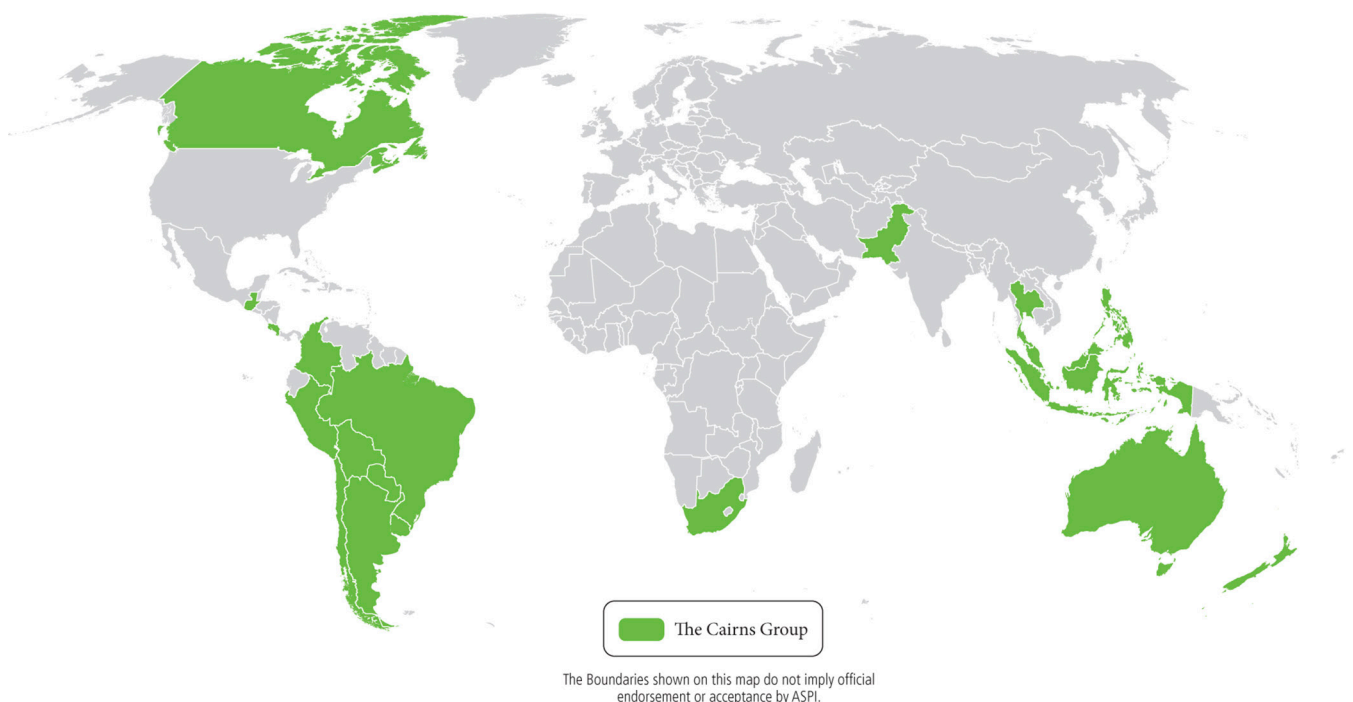
This is most conspicuous in relation to Australia's leadership role in the Cairns Group, a coalition of 19 agricultural exporting countries that was set up explicitly to counter the agricultural subsidies levied by the Northern Hemisphere powerhouses of the US, Europe and Japan (Figure 5). As a diverse coalition bringing together developed and developing countries from the Americas, Africa, Asia and the Pacific, the Cairns Group has been the core agricultural reform lobby within the World Trade Organization since its formation in 1986.

Chaired by Australia, the group is overwhelmingly drawn from the Southern Hemisphere (the main exception is Canada), with core representation from Oceania, Southeast Asia, southern Africa and Latin America.⁶ Half of all Cairns Group members are South American countries, which tend to share Australia's objective of global agricultural trade liberalisation. This gives the group a strategic role as a rare body in which Southern Hemisphere views dominate: for instance, its expansion to include South Africa was praised at the time by then Trade Minister Tim Fischer as reinforcing the group's 'Southern Hemisphere axis'.⁷

Similarly, with the exception of the US, most of Australia's current or pending free trade deals are with other southern (New Zealand, Chile) or Southeast Asian (Indonesia, Singapore, Brunei) states. This also applies to free trade groupings such as the ASEAN–Australia–New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (AANZFTA), the Trans-Pacific Partnership (Australia, New Zealand, Brunei, Chile, Peru, Singapore, Vietnam + the US), and the new Pacific Alliance (Peru, Chile, Mexico and Colombia), to which Australia has been granted observer status.⁸ APEC, too, while based around Asia, also includes Mexico, Chile and Peru among its members.

However, to focus solely on the composition of such trans-hemispherical trade groupings is to miss the main story. Far more important is the huge boom in investment in mining and other resource projects currently occurring in sub-Saharan

Figure 5: Map showing the Cairns Group



Africa and Latin America, which has led to a massive increase in engagement by Australian companies and multinationals in both regions.

According to government estimates, there are now more than 200 Australian mining companies exploring or producing in Africa, and more than 450 projects with combined investments of over \$25 billion.⁹ In Latin America, too, Australian trade and investment is growing strongly, albeit off a relatively low base. In 2010–11, our exports to the region grew by over 50%, more than twice the rate of growth in our total exports.¹⁰

Our two-way trade with Africa and Latin America is currently worth some \$6 billion in each case—a small total, but growing fast (12% a year for Latin America)—but with substantially higher levels of investment, much of which is commercially valuable and thus not widely publicised. In Chile, for example, Australia is one of the largest direct investors in the mining sector, and the CSIRO is a major co-investor. This pattern is even more pronounced in Africa, which contains some of the world's fastest growing economies—including resource-rich southern African states such as Angola and Mozambique. In response, Australian business interests in Africa have gone from negligible just a generation ago to now account for over 40% of all international Australian mining projects. The \$25 billion of current Australian mining investment is likely to double as new projects come on stream.¹¹

This is a massive investment over a relatively short period. To quote Greg Sheridan:

[M]ore than 200 Australian resource companies are involved in \$20 billion of investment in Africa across 600 projects in more than 40 countries. The importance of this economic link, which because it is investment-based doesn't show up in the more frequently quoted trade figures, cries out for greater engagement and broader diplomatic representation in Africa. Nonetheless, even at \$6bn the trade is significant. The stress on Asia during the past 25 years has been absolutely right for Australia. But Africa and Latin America are now crucial growth opportunities which we will only ignore if we are complacent, short-sighted or stupid.¹²

The key issue here is one of scale and size. While Asia is the world's most populous continent, Africa is the second largest, with more than a billion people, and Latin America the third largest. With their economic influence growing rapidly, both can be expected to be much more assertive in international affairs in coming decades. Indeed, the fastest-growing continent today is not Asia but Africa, which is home to six of the world's 10 fastest growing economies.¹³

Cooperative interventions

Another example of Australia's Southern Hemisphere soft power can be seen in our peacekeeping and peace enforcement interventions in the Southwest Pacific. We have a long record of joining conflicts with our northern allies as a belligerent, but also of participating in peacekeeping and other forms of cooperative interventions. A hemispherical focus helps clarify the demarcation between these very different kinds of missions. While our role as a subordinate partner in 'hot' military coalitions of the willing has been in the Middle East (Iraq, Afghanistan) and before that in East Asia (Malaya, Korea, Vietnam), our role in peacekeeping over recent decades has been quite different.

All of Australia's 'cooperative intervention' peace enforcement operations have occurred in our own immediate neighbourhood—via the International Force in East Timor (INTERFET), the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) and peace monitoring missions in Papua New Guinea's Bougainville Province, as well as in Tonga (with New Zealand playing the leading role) following the burning of Nuku'alofa.¹⁴ With the partial exception of East Timor, all these interventions were characterised by a non-coercive, multifaceted approach to peacebuilding underpinned by the soft power of development assistance and people-to-people links, rather than conventional military muscle. Moreover, in many of these missions, much of the on-the-ground work was done through policing rather than outright military means: the Australian Federal Police have played a significant stabilisation and capacity-building role in all these missions, as well as in the short-lived Enhanced Cooperation Program in Papua New Guinea.

The two Australian-led multinational operations in the South Pacific are good examples of this distinctive velvet-gloved application of power in our own region. RAMSI was created in 2003 in response to a request for international assistance from Solomon Islands following years of internal conflict. The mission initially comprised more than 2,000 military, police and civilians from Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Fiji and Tonga, with Australia and New Zealand providing the bulk of the personnel and logistical support. Headed by a civilian Special Coordinator, RAMSI's main task was to restore law and order and to help stabilise Solomon Islands' finances. Both aims were achieved in relatively short order. With RAMSI now looking at wrapping up operations, the longer-term challenge continues to be in the areas of law and justice, machinery of government, and economic viability.

A second example in the South Pacific was the 1998–2003 Peace Monitoring Group, which replaced the New Zealand-led Truce Monitoring Group in Bougainville. The group comprised around 300 civilians and unarmed military personnel from Australia, New Zealand, Vanuatu and Fiji. Its role, in collaboration with the UN, was to monitor the restive province's ceasefire agreement and provide information on and build confidence in the peace process. The fact that all personnel were unarmed was a distinctive and ultimately successful aspect of this mission. This 'light footprint' model of intervention has been lauded as a useful lesson for other cases of post-conflict peacebuilding.¹⁵ Importantly, both the Bougainville and the RAMSI missions remained broadly popular with the bulk of their islands' populations—a vital factor in the success of any such cooperative intervention.

In sum, in contrast to our active combat role in a succession of conflicts in Asia and the Middle East, Australia's interventions within our own hemisphere have been distinctive for their lack of an overt military character. This soft-power approach to hemispheric issues even extends to Australia's power projection into the Southern Ocean and Antarctica. As another ASPI paper has noted, 'Most strategic thinking in Australia is locked into hard power, but the oceans offer us great potential to apply soft power and creative diplomacy.'¹⁶ Nowhere is this more true than in the Australian Antarctic Territory—our claim to some 42% of the Antarctic landmass. While this claim is contested or unrecognised by other major powers, our activities in Antarctica are entirely focused on scientific research—unlike those of most other claimants, they have no military component.¹⁷

Geography makes Australia's interests in the Southern Ocean and Antarctica perennial, unlike those of some other players. The future of our Antarctic role will depend in large part on how much we're prepared to build on our scientific investment there.¹⁸ Australia already works with New Zealand, South America and South Africa on scientific cooperation in Antarctica, in a natural extension of the Antarctic Treaty (which usefully brings together all the Southern Ocean littoral states with major powers from the Northern Hemisphere). In the same vein, the increasing importance of Africa and Latin America to Australia only really becomes clear when we turn away from the economic statistics and look at the areas of scientific research, education, sport and other informal areas of cooperation. It's in these areas that the development of Southern Hemisphere regionalism has been strongest.

Scientific research

Scientific research is one field in which pan-hemispheric collaboration has long been important. In some fields, it's essential. Perhaps the most prominent example is in astronomy, where studies of the universe depend on a network of trans-hemisphere telescopic facilities aimed at the southern sky. Australia's most recent Nobel prizewinner, Professor Brian Schmidt of the Australian National University, came to Australia for precisely that reason as part of a cross-country research project involving the SkyMapper telescope (based in Siding Springs, New South Wales) and the Giant Magellan Telescope (to be constructed in Chile).¹⁹

The most recent example of southern astronomical collaboration is the decision for Australia and South Africa to share what will be the world's largest radio telescope—the Square Kilometre Array—in what's potentially one of the great scientific projects of the 21st century. After an intense six-year battle between the two bidding nations, a split-site solution

will create a mega-telescope with a square kilometre of collecting area. More than 3,000 individual antennas are to be built in both countries.²⁰

Like the southern skies, the southern seas engage the interests of every regional country. Antarctica and the Southern Ocean are thus a shared concern of all the major littoral states of the Southern Hemisphere. This has stimulated various attempts at Southern Ocean rim cooperation over the years in areas relating to the protection of the ocean. The so-called Antarctic 'gateway states' of Argentina, Chile, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand have sought to collaborate more closely on the protection of living resources such as toothfish in the Southern Ocean and the environmental protection of the Antarctic.

One attempt to institutionalise these shared interests is the Valdivia Group, established with some fanfare in 1995 to take these common interests to a more formal level. Named after the southern Chilean city where it first met, the group eventually brought together all the key Southern Hemisphere states—Australia, New Zealand, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay and South Africa—to address their common scientific interests in environmental issues such as protecting the ozone layer and biodiversity.

The identification of the Southern Ocean rim as a shared region engaging the interests of all member countries was an important geopolitical step, reflecting a growing interest in the possibility of regional cooperation in economic, environmental, resource and political affairs.²¹ Former Foreign Minister Alexander Downer made this argument explicitly in 1996 when he said:

As countries of the Southern hemisphere, we should devote greater attention to collaborative structures with each other. The purpose of the Valdivia Group is to ensure that our ties with the northern hemisphere do not cause us to overlook our links to the east and west; links which stretch across the South Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans ... we Southern Hemispheric countries share a very strong mutual interest in ensuring the success of international efforts to understand and preserve this vital part of our environment.²²

While the group has struggled to deliver clear outcomes, such an alliance is relevant not just in relation to international environmental issues, but also in disarmament and arms control forums. It also remains an indicator of the kinds of coalitions that may increasingly be needed in the future as changing geopolitical circumstances encourage countries such as Australia to re-imagine their international relationships.²³ One example was the call in 2012 for Australia to establish a federated space agency in cooperation with fellow Southern Hemisphere players to take advantage of this shared locational advantage and maximise the commercial return from space research and technology.²⁴

People to people

Another aspect of this story is the changing composition of Australian society. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, over one-quarter of all migrants to Australia over the past 20 years have hailed from the Southern Hemisphere (mainly from Oceania, but also with strong representation from Southern Africa). While the Closer Economic Relations treaty, which guarantees freedom of movement between Australia and New Zealand, is the major part of this story, also important is the long wave of post-apartheid immigration from South Africa, which is now the fifth-largest source of permanent migrants in Australia (behind New Zealand, Britain, China and India).²⁵ By contrast, permanent migration from the Americas has been negligible.

When it comes to the other big driver of long-term arrivals in Australia—education—the picture is reversed. Among the Southern Hemisphere regions, today it's Latin America that's the booming market for Australian higher education providers. As our higher education export market is in many ways the *sine qua non* of Australia's soft power, engaging and influencing international audiences can contribute mightily to our international image and through that to our national interests.²⁶

As then Foreign Minister Stephen Smith noted in a 2010 speech to the Council on Australia – Latin America Relations:

Education has also been an area of significant growth and potential in our relationship. Thousands of students, particularly from Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Mexico, travel to Australia each year to access our world class programs, including those that focus on English language skills ... The number of Latin American student enrolments has grown fourfold since 2004, which represents annual growth of more than 34 per cent. This makes Latin America one of the fastest growing sources of foreign students for Australia.²⁷

The reasons behind Australia's emergence as an education provider to Latin America aren't immediately obvious, but need to be seen in a global context. The China boom is affecting countries like Brazil every bit as much as Australia. Latin American elites are scrambling to get to know Asia better, and Australia offers one way to do this. We offer a relatively flexible regime allowing work while studying (at least in comparison with the US), lower fees, proximity to Asia and, of course, an English-speaking environment. As one indication of this, Brazil is now second only to China as a source of international students for ELICOS (English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students) programs in Australia, and other Latin American states such as Mexico and Colombia are also well represented.²⁸

Professional sport is a final, and perhaps the most symbolic, example of increasing people-to-people links between Australia and the other Southern Hemisphere countries. As Nye noted in his original conceptualisation of soft power, new forms of communications and transportation have a revolutionary effect on economic interdependence. For Southern Hemisphere regionalism, nowhere is this intertwining more apparent than in the new international Rugby Championship, the very existence of which depends on the telecommunications revolution and reliable long-haul intercontinental air travel. Both have enabled a kind of high-level sporting competition that would have been impossible only a few years ago.

This four-nations tournament brings together the major Southern Hemisphere rugby-playing countries of South Africa, New Zealand and Australia (SANZAR) with Argentina, thus knitting together four of the key Southern Hemisphere states (which, New Zealand aside, are also G20 members). An elite round-robin tournament, the championship started in 2012 and is, by some margin, the most geographically dispersed major sporting competition in the world today (even more so than its sister competition, the Super 15, which doesn't yet include Argentina).

Several factors have made professional transcontinental competition between such far-flung countries possible: technological advances in satellite television, the global reach of News Limited (which bankrolled the initial Super 12 competition) and the advent of direct commercial air links between the main countries involved. However, those same factors also make such a competition unusually dependent on reliable long-haul aviation links. Just as the Valdivia Group lapsed in part due to the lack of direct and regular opportunities for professional connections, the fate of the Super Rugby tournaments (as they're called) is intimately dependent on the existence of reliable flight and telecommunications connections between the regions.

As Nye noted in his original formulation of the soft power idea, 'Ocean resources, money, space, shipping, and airlines have somewhat different distributions of power.'²⁹ Figure 6 shows some of the non-stop commercial flight routes established over the past decade from Sydney to other Southern Hemisphere airports. They include new connections to southern Africa (chiefly via Johannesburg, but also the islands of Mauritius and, for a while, Réunion), Latin America (with competing direct services to both Santiago and Buenos Aires), and Polynesian cities such as Apia, Nuku'alofa and Papeete (which have supplemented other longstanding non-stop routes to New Zealand, Fiji and other Pacific islands).

Figure 6: Map of non-stop commercial air services from Sydney launched since 2000



Conclusion: the geopolitics of Australia's soft power

One reason for thinking about Australia as a Southern Hemisphere power is that it helps distinguish our enduring interests from our passing preoccupations.

For instance, Australia is currently supporting major international commitments in both Afghanistan and Antarctica. The former receives far more attention than the latter, but our national interest in Afghanistan is ultimately likely to be utterly transitory, while our interests in the Antarctic are permanent, dictated by geography and a shared environmental and spatial realm.

Thinking about shared space in this way is useful, as it helps knit together a series of regions that are often treated as separate—Antarctica, Oceania, Latin America and southern Africa—but that actually have common and unchanging spatial contexts, and thus many common and unchanging interests.

This isn't a new insight. In the 19th century, our role as a Southern Hemisphere power was eagerly embraced. As captured by William Charles Wentworth in his florid poem *Australasia*, Australia was hailed as 'Empress of the Southern Wave', a kind of America of the Southern Hemisphere— 'Mistress of the Southern Seas', as Sir Henry Parkes told the 1890 Federation Conference.³⁰

In the same way, Australia's historical connections with both southern Africa and Latin America are also more complex than many contemporary writers assume.³¹ These have comprised a wide range of contacts, from military involvement to migration to diplomatic, cultural and economic interaction, from Australia's eager participation in the Boer War in South Africa to the failed attempt to found a utopian socialist settlement in Paraguay, *Colonia Nueva Australia*.³²

The imperial phase was most evident in relation to the South Pacific, beginning with Queensland's annexation of Papua in 1884, followed by the capture of German New Guinea and Samoa in World War I. The preamble to the initial draft of the Australian Constitution included provision not just for New Zealand but also Fiji to join the Commonwealth. Australia's own version of the Monroe Doctrine, as applied to the South Pacific, is another part of this story.³³

Over the course of the 20th century, the focus of Australia's foreign affairs shifted, as our participation in two world wars, Korea, Vietnam and a long Cold War all focused our attention north, in the context of our military alliances first with Britain and then the US. More recently, the emergence of Asia as Australia's (and the world's) economic epicentre has only deepened this trend.

Today, our economic sights are set firmly north, as are our hard security interests and most of our diplomatic attention. The Southern Hemisphere is not and probably never will be the main game for Australia. But it deserves to be seen as part of the game, especially when so many key elements of our soft power—development assistance, international peacekeeping, trade alliances and some of our most important scientific, educational and sporting initiatives—are now converging hemispherically.

One telling indication of this is the way Australia is conceived of and perceived by others. In contrast to much of the world, in which Australia is often overlooked or ignored, three key Southern Hemisphere states—New Zealand, South Africa and Argentina—routinely compare themselves to us and their experience to ours. In New Zealand, such comparisons (both positive and negative) are widespread and appear to be embedded in popular consciousness. In South Africa, they've traditionally been the preserve of the white, English-speaking population and their relatives who have emigrated here, but also arise in the area of public policy, where Australian experience in governance and regulation is often cited. In Argentina, the comparisons are more historical, usually bewailing the very different economic and political trajectories of what were the world's two richest countries per capita a century ago.³⁴ The experience of such 'settler societies' influenced the work of historians such as Donald Denoon, who noted that the history and geography of settler colonialism in the 'temperate' Southern Hemisphere followed strikingly similar patterns.³⁵

The tension between historical and contemporary interpretations suggests that the time is right for a re-evaluation of Australia as a Southern Hemisphere power. In sum, we need to start thinking of the Southern Hemisphere less as a peripheral region of marginal importance, and more as our forebears did—as a key arena for Australia's engagement with the world, and for Australian soft power in particular.

Policy recommendations

- Australia needs to be more flexible and creative in its approach to regionalism. Explicit recognition of our identity as a Southern Hemisphere power would strengthen, not detract from, our other regional identities in the Asia–Pacific and Indo-Pacific regions, and offer new communities of interest in which to pursue our international priorities.
- Despite the crucial importance of the Southern Hemisphere to many pressing international issues (climate change, ocean health, food security), southern views and voices are currently marginal in many international forums. To address this, Australia should take the lead in championing a new Southern Hemisphere community based on shared interests in the environmental and scientific realms.
- Such a grouping could act as an important force-multiplier for Australia’s international interests. An Australian-led Southern Hemisphere community could also be a useful platform to push issues of importance to Australia and its partners up the global agenda. It would strengthen and add weight to key bilateral relationships with emerging powers such as Brazil, Indonesia and South Africa.
- As part of this process, the Valdivia Group should be revitalised, not as a meeting of environmental officials but as a bottom-up and explicitly science-led process of trans-hemispheric scientific collaboration to harness shared interests on Southern Ocean and Southern Hemisphere science, ocean, environmental and sustainable development matters, and broader trans-hemispheric cooperation on geoscientific challenges. This would build on our already extensive bilateral cooperation with states such as Brazil, Chile, New Zealand and South Africa on these issues, and highlight the stewardship role in championing and coordinating Southern Hemisphere research that these countries share with Australia.
- As another part of this process, Australia should convene a sideline meeting of Southern Hemisphere leaders at the 2014 G20 meeting, taking advantage of the uncommon presence of all the key Southern Hemisphere states (Australia, Brazil, Indonesia, South Africa and Argentina) in Australia. A focus on the importance of the Southern Hemisphere for major global challenges such as food security, ocean health and climate change would also harness the interests of Northern Hemisphere powers such as the US, China, India and the European Union.
- More broadly, Australia needs a soft power strategy which recognises that our national and international interests are often best advanced through science, education, sport and other people-to-people links. Leveraging our status as a key Southern Hemisphere state would be an important part of this process. In areas of scientific research (ranging from astronomy and meteorology to oceanography and climate science), Australia’s Southern Hemisphere location gives us a global role far larger than our population and economic size would suggest.

Notes

- 1 Hugh White, *Indonesia and Australia: the great power next door*, East Asia Forum, 8 July 2012, www.eastasiaforum.org.
- 2 Joseph Nye, ‘Soft power’, *Foreign Policy*, 80 (1990), 153–171 at 154.
- 3 Paul Kelly, ‘Shipwrecked in Arcadia: the Australian experiment’, lecture at Harvard University, 2004, p. 42.
- 4 Of which the majority now goes to South America as Caribbean aid is scaled back.
- 5 This process has led to some odd debates in Canberra. For example, in 2011 the government-sponsored Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness recommended no further scaling up of aid to Africa beyond the already budgeted \$200 million, and for an end to country program aid to Latin America and the Caribbean. Both recommendations were ignored by the Gillard government, which increased the total Latin America and Caribbean program from \$40 million to \$48 million. Inexplicably, AusAID then publicly denied that this represented an increase in the rate of Australian contributions to this region. See <http://www.lowyinterpreter.org/post/2012/04/02/Reader-riposte-Where-our-aid-goes.aspx>.

- 6 The Cairns Group currently comprises Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Paraguay, Peru, the Philippines, South Africa, Thailand and Uruguay.
- 7 Media release, 'Australia leads new free trade push', 3 April 1998.
- 8 The Australian Government sees the alliance as a means 'to position Australia as a connecting rod between Latin America and Asia in pursuit of a free trade area of the Asia-Pacific'. See media release, 'Australia to pursue free trade area of the Asia-Pacific', 29 October 2012.
- 9 Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade (JSCFADT), *Inquiry into Australia's relationship with the countries of Africa*, June 2011, Canberra.
- 10 JSCFADT, *Inquiry into Australia's relationship with the countries of Africa*.
- 11 Kevin Rudd, 'Africa provides a rich seam for resources sector', *The Australian*, 24 October 2011.
- 12 Greg Sheridan, 'Rudd bringing Africa into focus', *The Australian*, 27 January 2011.
- 13 For an extended discussion, see the *Economist* special reports 'Africa rising' (3 December 2011) and 'Aspiring Africa' (2 March 2013).
- 14 New Zealand's role in the South Pacific has been similar to but in some ways more extensive than Australia's, given its strong Polynesian ties. Chile, which makes similar claims via Rapa Nui (Easter Island), is also attempting to play more of a role in the region, as evidenced by Chile's Vice Minister of Defence attending the inaugural South Pacific Defence Minister's Meeting in Tonga in 2013.
- 15 Anthony Regan, *Light Intervention: Lessons from Bougainville*, United States Institute of Peace Press (USIP), Washington DC, 2010.
- 16 Sam Bateman and Anthony Bergin 2009, *Sea change: advancing Australia's ocean interests*, ASPI, Canberra, 2009, p. 4.
- 17 For one recent analysis, see Ellie Fogerty, *Antarctica: assessing and protecting Australia's national interests*, policy brief, Lowy Institute, Sydney, 2011.
- 18 Anthony Bergin and Tony Press, 'Action needed to cement role in Antarctica', *The Age*, 1 September 2011.
- 19 'A Nobel endeavour', *ANU Reporter*, Summer 2011.
- 20 'Australia and South Africa to share world's biggest telescope', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 May 2012.
- 21 Klaus Dodds, 'The geopolitics of regionalism: the Valdivia Group and Southern Hemispheric environmental cooperation', *Third World Quarterly*, 1998, 19(4):725-743.
- 22 Quoted in Dodds, 'The geopolitics of regionalism'.
- 23 Howard Bamsey, 'Protecting the environment: a trans-Tasman synergy', *New Zealand International Review*, January-February 2003.
- 24 'Call for southern hemisphere space agency', *Campus Review*, 8 October 2012. See also Mark Matthews, 'Australia is in the southern hemisphere!', *Australian R&D Review*, June 2008, p. 11.
- 25 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), *Overseas arrivals and departures, Australia*, cat. no. 3401.0, ABS, Canberra, July 2011.
- 26 See Caitlin Byrne and Rebecca Hall, *Australia's international education as public diplomacy: soft power potential*, discussion paper, Clingendael, 2011, available from http://www.clingendael.nl/publications/2011/20110700_cdsp_discussion_paper_cbyrne_rhall.pdf.
- 27 Stephen Smith, 'Australia and Latin America: charting the course ahead', paper presented to the Council on Australia Latin America Relations, Perth, 8 April 2010.
- 28 Data from the website of Australian Education International, www.aei.gov.au.

29 Nye, 'Soft power', pp. 158–159.

30 An excerpt:

Proud Queen of Isles! Thou sittest vast, alone,
A host of vassals bending round thy throne ...
Salutes thee "Empress of the Southern Wave.

Australasia, William Charles Wentworth, 1823

31 For instance, Gareth Evans and Bruce Grant, *Australia's foreign relations in the wider world of the 1990s*, 2nd ed., Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1995.

32 Craig Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War: the war in South Africa, 1899–1902*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 2002; Anne Whitehead, *Paradise mislaid: in search of the Australian tribe of Paraguay*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1997.

33 See Neville Meaney, *The search for security in the Pacific, 1901–1914*, vol. 1, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1976.

34 For more on the parallels with Argentina, see Tim Duncan and John Fogarty, *Australia and Argentina: on similar paths*, Melbourne University Press, 1984.

35 Donald Denoon, 'Understanding settler societies', *Historical Studies*, 18(73), 1979; Donald Denoon, *Settler capitalism: the dynamics of dependent development in the Southern Hemisphere*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1983.

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