

SUMMARY

**Australian Security and Regional Cooperation in the Era of the
British Withdrawal 1967-1974:
Enhancing Defence Cooperation with Regional Countries of Southeast Asia**

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This article aims to examine Australia's response to the changes in the regional security environment that was caused by the 1967 British decision to withdraw its forces from Southeast Asia. This article pays particular attention to Australia's effort to undertake and enhance a variety of cooperative defence activities with its regional countries of Southeast Asia on bilateral basis.

One of the most fundamental concerns for Australia about its regional security after the British withdrawal was the possibility of reheating the regional conflict between Malaysia/Singapore and Indonesia. Faced by the limit of persuading Britain to maintain its forces and asking the United States to provide further assurance, Australia came to seek a way of enhancing regional security based on its sounder relations with regional countries. In this course, Australia decided to undertake defence cooperation program with both Malaysia/Singapore and Indonesia.

From 1968, Australia reorganized its defence aid program towards Malaysia and Singapore to promote their self-reliance after the British withdrawal while making a constant effort of informing Indonesia on its non-provocative nature. Australia also established a new framework to enhance defence cooperation with Indonesia while keeping its scale and nature modest enough not to make Malaysia and Singapore feel uneasy. The fundamental motivation behind the defence cooperation program was to reassure both parties that still harbored suspicions as a result of their involvement in the regional conflict in the early 1960s. Australia tried to find an appropriate balance between maintaining confidence of Malaysia/Singapore and mitigating resentment of Indonesia.

In the early 1970s, Australia sensed movement towards modest defence cooperation and political/security consultation within regional countries themselves, which seemed to be closely interconnected with the establishment of ASEAN and the improving relations between Malaysia and Indonesia. Australia attached importance to this informal practice and pursued closer association with it. In this course, Australia's defence cooperation program was gradually expanded and strengthened.

Considering these developments of Australia's defence cooperation program and Australian security policy that shaped the program, it could be concluded that Australia sought to adapt itself to the changing regional security environment by consciously building up its sounder relations with regional countries of Southeast Asia.