



**Nahdlatul Ulama General Secretary  
helps shape British grand strategy for the emerging “Eurasian century”**

**Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison:**

**“In 1941 Europe was certainly in the cockpit of history. Now in the 21st century the Indo-Pacific will shape the destiny of the world.”**

**Former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan:**

**“I warmly welcome today’s report from the Policy Exchange Indo-Pacific Commission”  
which “chart[s] out a path of renewed British engagement in the region [and] points  
the way towards a truly globally co-operative era”**

LONDON, United Kingdom and CANBERRA, Australia, November 23, 2020: Current and former Prime Ministers from four of the world’s most economically powerful countries have endorsed recommendations contained within a landmark report on the future of the Indo-Pacific Region (IPR). Kyai Haji Yahya Cholil Staquf, General Secretary of Indonesia’s Nahdlatul Ulama, helped shape key elements of the 52-page strategic plan, which was warmly received by 10 Downing Street, the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and Britain’s Parliament. Mr. Staquf serves as one of 16 members of the Indo-Pacific Commission, which is chaired by former Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

In a major foreign policy speech that accompanied the launch of the Commission’s report, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison welcomed “the UK’s acknowledgment of the strategic significance of the Indo-Pacific Region” and said: “I endorse the report’s vision for a reinvigorated community of free and independent nations with a single overriding goal, namely: to reinforce a sustainable rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific that is resilient but adaptable to the great power realities of the 21st century.”

One of the report’s primary recommendations is the creation of an Indo-Pacific Charter, whose text may include the following key principles:

***First***, that no country in the Indo-Pacific seek territorial or other aggrandisement;

***Second***, that no territorial changes occur in the Indo-Pacific without the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned, nor by the use of force;

***Third***, that no nation be prevented by any other from free and full access to the high seas/global commons of the Indo-Pacific, for any peaceful purposes, including trade;

***Fourth***, that no nation utilise technological means to interfere with the domestic political, social, or economic order of any other nation;

***Fifth***, that no nation by overt or covert means unlawfully take digital IP information, whether public or private, from the government, businesses, or citizens of any other nation;

*Sixth*, that the use of telecommunications technology such as the internet and submarine cables remain free and open between Indo-Pacific nations and to all their citizens;

*Seventh*, that all economic agreements, including financial aid and trade, between nations of the Indo-Pacific adhere to the highest global standards of transparency and fair lending practices, so as to secure the economic and political sovereignty, advancement and well-being of nations and peoples of the Indo-Pacific.

Additional recommendations influenced by Mr. Staquf include:

- Establish a formal **Indo-Pacific Public Integrity Forum** to promote and strengthen democratic values in the IPR and uphold the clear, concise and rigorously defined principles articulated in the thirty articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- Establish a **Conference on Strong Societies** to engage mass, grassroots organizations across the IPR and foster consensus regarding shared values essential to sustaining a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific;

The full text of the recommendation to establish a Conference on Strong Societies reads as follows:

The Indo-Pacific region enjoys strong, locally derived traditions of religious pluralism, tolerance and respect for human dignity. Of the three most populous nations in the IPR—China, India and Indonesia—two are democracies. Consequently, policy programs that do not reflect the interests, values and beliefs of electorates will face rejection at the ballot box and cannot achieve region-wide support.

Building stable, sustainable geostrategic coalitions in the IPR will require, in the long term, working towards higher degrees of societal consensus within and between the nations of the Indo-Pacific regarding shared values that enjoy mass support and are, consequently, strong enough to withstand electoral cycles and survive the vicissitudes of domestic politics.

To facilitate the emergence of societal consensus, the UK should help establish a **Conference on Strong Societies**: a dialogue mechanism that would engage mass, grassroots organizations across the IPR in a process to determine the “highest common denominator” regarding shared values upon which regional agreement can be found. This, in turn, will mobilize public support for a sustainable rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific that is resilient and adaptable to the great power realities of the 21st century.

By consulting widely with deeply rooted mass organizations and aiding in the emergence of a regional consensus that truly represents the beliefs, interests and values of the IPR’s diverse peoples, Britain may come to be perceived as a welcome, legitimate and vital regional partner.

The Indo-Pacific Commission report's launch was held in conjunction with a formal ceremony awarding the Inaugural Grotius Prize to Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison, with remarks by UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

The foreword to the report was authored by former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and appeared in the *Times of London* on the day of its official release:

**Britain has a major role to play as the Indo-Pacific enters a new era**

Shinzo Abe

Monday November 23 2020, 12.01am, The Times

The pace of modernisation in the Indo-Pacific region continues to increase, bringing both opportunities and challenges to the countries of Asia. Indeed, when I first began discussing the concept of the “Indo-Pacific,” in 2007, the region was far less integrated than today.

Over the past generation, millions of ordinary Asians have been lifted out of poverty while the nations of the region increasingly have taken their place in the global economic and political order. As we enter the third decade of the 21st century, the Indo-Pacific is now truly part of the wider world, as well as a region that more and more shares a common identity at the “confluence of the two seas,” as I put it over a decade ago.

Stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific will only be assured when all nations seek to work together, sharing common aims, and enjoying the fruits of common efforts. Capitals from Tokyo to New Delhi, and from Beijing to Canberra have great opportunities to resolve common challenges, so as to ensure a bright future.

It is vital that we defend the rules and norms that have helped enrich the countries of the Indo-Pacific over the past two generations. In doing so, we should not only build on the efforts of all Asians over the past several decades, but welcome new partners to this cause.

That is why I warmly welcome today's report from the Policy Exchange Indo-Pacific Commission. In charting out a path of renewed British engagement in the region, this report points the way towards a truly globally co-operative era. As a leading global power, Britain has a major role to play in the Indo-Pacific.

As the world's sixth-largest economy, increased trade between the UK and Indo-Pacific nations will contribute to overall economic growth. Britain can also work with countries throughout the region on upholding democratic values and supporting the multinational institutions that have developed in recent years. On the security front, the British military, and the Royal Navy in particular, will be a welcome presence in the seas of the Indo-Pacific.

The partnerships between the UK and Indo-Pacific nations envisioned in the report will help usher in a new era of innovative thinking, expansion of economic opportunity, and

strengthening of stability. I strongly endorse its findings and proposals and look forward to their adoption by Britain and its new partners.

### **Shinzo Abe was prime minister of Japan 2006-7 and 2012-20**

Alexander Downer — the longest-serving Foreign Minister in Australia’s history and its former High Commissioner to the UK — analyzed the report in an [article](#) published by *Conservative Home*, which has close ties to Britain’s governing party:

#### **A forward-thinking UK should shift the weight of its strategic policy towards the Indo-Pacific region**

[T]here has been far too much focus in foreign policy circles over the last 30 years on the economic and military might of China, at the expense of the rest of the Indo-Pacific region...

Of course, Britain cannot overplay its hand in the region as it seeks to play a greater role in what used to be called “east of Suez” in colonial times. Wisely, the emphasis in the Commission’s report – contributed to by key political and diplomatic thinkers in countries from New Zealand to Sri Lanka – is not on the UK acting as a “leader” in the Indo-Pacific, but rather as an “enabler” and facilitator for others in the region, which should take the lead.

This will apply in particular to one of the most attractive ideas in the report – a new Indo-Pacific Charter, which would in effect be a clear set of mutually shared aspirations for the future of Indo-Pacific relations that other major global players like the UK, and the US – which has a greater military and diplomatic presence there than any other foreign power – can support.

This charter could be as significant in the 21st century as the Atlantic Charter, signed by Churchill and Roosevelt in 1941, was in the 20th century...

There can be no forcing or co-opting of independent sovereign nations into submitting to such principles. But the idea, as Morrison observed in his [brilliant speech](#) accepting the Grotius Prize, is instead nations “freely submitting to such rules” around economic, security and global environmental issues “because it is in their broader national interest to do so.”

Click [here](#) to read a copy of the full report.

Click [here](#) to view Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison’s speech and the launch of the Indo-Pacific Commission report.