In a reversal of previous protectionist policies, Indonesia's recently reshuffled cabinet has begun to push for membership of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) as well as a trade agreement with the EU.

The American backed TPP, which was ratified by 12 nations within the Asia-Pacific region, is expected to shift trade away from Indonesia to Vietnam and Malaysia; alongside Indonesia’s pursuit of membership of the TPP, would be the Chinese backed Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which has also been highlighted as a high priority item on Indonesia’s trade agenda.

Amongst the priorities of Indonesia’s economic agenda would be a comprehensive trade agreement with the EU which has been in the works since 2012; the agreement, which spans tariff reductions, service liberalisation, and foreign ownership restrictions has met little to no progress in recent times.

In the recent past, Indonesia has overseen the hike of import duties across certain consumer goods, whilst more stringent requirements for expatriate workers have been implemented only to be reversed; the policies pushed have often been odds at the free trade rhetoric espoused by Indonesia’s government.
MALAYSIA

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- The US$2.3 billion, which president of 1MDB Arul Kanda claims to have been redeemed and accounted for, was originally invested in a joint venture with the energy company PetroSaudi; following a complex chain of deals and 1MDB’s divestment of debt and equity from the.

1Malaysia Development Berhad

Sells PetroSaudi joint venture assets

Bridge Partner International Investment Issues 6 promissory notes (IOUs) worth a total of $2.3bn

Avestra Asset Management (Australia)
In provisional liquidation; being probed by Australian regulator

Bridge Global Absolute Return Fund (Cayman Islands)

Bridge Partners (Hong Kong)
Does not respond to questions

The Philippines, which has seen a wave of consolidations within its banking industry over the past decade, may very well see an uptake in M&A and new entrants in more recent times.

- Relationally within the region, the Philippines maintains one of the highest number of banks within its nation with the lowest level of asset backing, as 638 banks own just over US$250 billion in assets as last measured in 2014; in comparison, Singapore’s DBS bank was valued to have US$301 billion in assets in the past year alone.
- As the central bank continues to tighten “prudential regulation”, requiring greater controls of risk and capital requirements, the regulatory environment has managed to facilitate mergers in order for more banks to fulfill new requirements.
- Furthermore, the liberalisation of foreign ownership caps in the banking industry, coupled with a strong economy with a low total of non-performing loans, has begun to attract the potential of international entrants into the nation.

Konhoo, a little known 10 month old start up has raised US$250 million and plans to unite taxi services in London, New York, and Singapore through the provision of a taxi comparison app.

- The company believes it has an edge over ride sharing incumbents due to a number of key reasons; firstly, due to its high profile partnerships, secondly, due to the lack of regulatory issues faced by peer-to-peer ride services, and lastly due to changing landscape of the ride-sharing market.
- The service, which has already secured a network of over 200,000 cars by striking deals with local taxi and minicab fleet owners, seeks to raise US$300 million in the short term, and US$1 billion in 18 months time to substantiate growth.
- Whilst the integrated market entry of Konhoo and its success in raising funds may seem promising, it should be noted that its competitors such as Uber managed to raise over US$10 billion for global expansion, whilst Lyft raised US$1 billion, and Hailo raised US$100 million, thus placing the newest service in a market with considerable competition.

Australian Securities and Investments Commission

Financial Times (30 October 2015)

Financial Times (29 October 2015)

Financial Times (25 October 2015)
PM Prayut also denounced dissidents who were willing to bring people out onto the streets, stringently stating that movement leaders would be dealt with first with a firm hand; after years of political turmoil and more recently, an economic slowdown, Thailand has experienced a period of political and civil unrest unmatched within the region.

Over the course of PM Prayut’s 20 month term, the National Council for Peace and order has managed to lay out a plan to draft a new constitution, get it approved by the people, reform several economic and legislative issues, and hold a general election.

Key Events Since the 2014 Coup

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 2014</td>
<td>Coup led by General Prayut Chan-o-cha occurs after seven months of protests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2014</td>
<td>National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) orders all protests to disperse, curfew imposed under martial law, media becomes heavily censored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2014</td>
<td>General Prayut gets royal endorsement from king</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2014</td>
<td>Curfew lifted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2015</td>
<td>Martial law ends</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 2015</td>
<td>Military government to hold referendum on new constitution in early 2016, Ex prime minister Yingluck Shinawatra pleads not guilty to trial on negligence over subsidy scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2015</td>
<td>Terrorist bomb at Erawan Shrine kills 20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**POLITICS**

- Myanmar’s general election ended peacefully on 8 November with about 33.5 million eligible voters casting votes at more than 46,000 polling stations across the country. The Union Election Commission said it will officially release the election results starting on 9 November stage by stage. A total of 6,038 candidates involving 91 political parties and 310 Independents contested for more than 1,000 seats at three levels of parliament in the elections.

  - The Times of India (8 November 2015)

- Supporters of Myanmar’s Aung San Suu Kyi burst into boisterous celebration on 8 November after the country held its first free nationwide election in 25 years. Although the outcome of the poll will not be clear for at least 36 hours, a densely packed crowd cheered and waved red flags outside the NLD headquarters.

  - Reuters (8 November 2015)

- Observers have expressed concerns that major political parties, including the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD), did not field a Muslim candidate in the 8 November elections. Muslims in Myanmar make up at least five% of the country’s 52 million people.

  - Channel NewsAsia (8 November 2015)

- Suu Kyi vowed before the general elections, that if the NLD would win that she would run the country “above the president,” filling the position with a proxy she has chosen but not disclosed. Likely choices could be former general Shwe Mann, now the speaker of the lower house, or the party’s ageing patron, Tin Oo. That proxy president would step down as soon as the constitution was amended to allow Suu Kyi to rule, said Win Htein, a top NLD leader.

  - The Irrawaddy (7 November 2015)

**ECONOMY**

- India’s central bank has put an end to so-called barter trade across the country’s border with Myanmar. The Reserve Bank of India has issued a statement saying that the system will come to an end from 1 December due to improved access to banking in the border region.

  - The Irrawaddy (7 November 2015)

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**VIETNAM**

Vietnam held meetings with officials from Venezuela and Cuba in discussions spanning both domestic development and international military relations.

- The meetings, which began on the 26th of October, oversaw the Venezuelan minister of habitat and housing Manuel Quevedo meet with the Vietnamese ambassador Ngo Tien Dung in Caracas; the agenda for discussion included bilateral housing, industrialisation, and socially oriented projects.

- Following the meeting, minister Quevedo affirmed the development of future commercial ties between the two nations, stating that the technological expertise of Vietnam would lend Venezuela great benefits in the development of its industrial sectors.

- Furthermore, Deputy Minister and Chief the Vietnam People’s Army, Gen. Do Ba Ty, and a small delegation from Hanoi were received in Havana Monday by the chief of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Cuba, General Alvaro Lopez Miera; the meeting was stated to be in the efforts of strengthening mutual military relations.

  - Telesurtv (27 October 2015)

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**PHILIPPINES**

In a ruling on the right to exploit the South China Sea concerning Manila’s 200-nautical-mile exclusive economic Zone (EEZ), the Permanent Court of Arbitration in Hague ruled that the jurisdiction to hear maritime claims the Philippines has filed against China.

- The tribunal, which is based in Hague, claims its right to do so as set out under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which China has decided both not to participate in nor recognize.

- According to Solicitor General Florin Hilbay, the ruling represented a “significant step forward in the Philippines’ quest for a peaceful, impartial resolution of the disputes between the parties and the clarification of their rights under UNCLOS.”

- President Aquino has welcomed the ruling, stating that he expects China to respect the decision of the tribunal, furthermore claiming that an independent tribunal would help to put an end to the dispute; however, China has continued to not take part in the proceedings, objecting to the Tribunal’s jurisdiction.

  - Philstar (30 October 2015)

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**LATIN AMERICA**

**VIETNAM STRENGTHENS RELATIONS WITH LATIN AMERICA**

![Vietnamese-Venezuelan Relations](image1)


Most recent agreement was signed on August 31, 2015 which was a cooperation agreement for projects spanning across gas, oil, energy, finance, technology, and agriculture.

![Vietnamese-Cuban Relations](image2)

Bilateral trade was up to US$207 million in 2014, drastic increase of 45% from 2013.

A heavy focus on military technology sharing between the two nations has created close ties in recent times.

Furthermore, Cuba has long since based economic reform on Vietnamese advice.

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**CHINA EXPERIENCES SETBACK IN MARITIME CLAIMS**

**PHILIPPINES**

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