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This week, they explore the complexities of political labels in modern politics, the challenges surrounding UN sanctions in a divided Security Council, and the strategic importance of maritime security and sustainability for Australia’s international presence. *Disclaimer: The views expressed below by councillors and interns are their own. The Australian Institute of International Affairs New South Wales does not take policy positions.* | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | | [**Left, right, left, right**](https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/futuretense/21-century-political-left-right-ideology/104151720?utm_content=link&utm_medium=content_shared)  Be careful of your language! Labelling particular people or parties Left or Right may not make sense in today’s world. American political scientist Verlan Lewis unpicks the history and application of these terms for ABC Radio National’s [**Future Tense**](https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/futuretense/21-century-political-left-right-ideology/104151720?utm_content=link&utm_medium=content_shared), first broadcast on 23 August. This is a useful primer for all who are interested in domestic and international politics.  Politics is no longer, if it ever was, defined by a binary running from Far Left to Far Right. Gregory Millard recounts the origin of these terms in the time of the French Revolution. This linked Left with emphasis on equality and Right treasures hierarchy and command. Lewis analyses the American political system and finds that Right and Left do not correspond with the present situation. His findings apply also to Australia and other countries. Politics consists of many different issues, so the spectrum of political policies is not unidimensional.  Simon Otjes [**discusses**](https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/futuretense/21-century-political-left-right-ideology/104151720?utm_content=link&utm_medium=content_shared) the Right and Left of European politics, concluding that the interpretation of these terms depends on their political history. Post-authoritarian countries formerly part of the Soviet Union continue to use the terms Left and Right as they were defined in the past while in others such as Spain that have come out of dictatorships people hesitate to make these distinctions.  Image credit: **[Rawpixel](https://www.freemennewsletter.com/p/yes-there-is-a-left-and-a-right" \t "_blank)** | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | *This piece was selected by Jocelyn Chey AM. Jocelyn is an Adjunct Professor at the Australia-China Relations Institute, University of Technology Sydney, Visiting Professor at the University of Sydney and an Adjunct Professor at the Australia-China Institute for Arts and Culture at Western Sydney University. She was previously a senior officer in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Jocelyn is a Fellow of Australian Institute of International Affairs.* | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | | [**Reassessing UN Sanctions**](https://www.crisisgroup.org/global/political-divides-drive-reassessment-un-sanctions)  Heightened tensions among UN Security Council (UNSC) member states has increased scrutiny on UN sanctions. Writing for *Crisis Group*, Maya Ungar [**explains**](https://www.crisisgroup.org/global/political-divides-drive-reassessment-un-sanctions) why some governments are pushing to scale back sanctions while others fight to preserve their core elements. Eleven sanctions regimes were established in the 1990s, but Ungar highlights that this momentum has since stalled with only four new sanctions regimes in the last decade. This, she theorises, is due to the increasing rivalry between veto-wielding members of the UNSC. It is likely to be increasingly difficult to introduce fresh sanctions with the composition of the elected members of the Council set to change in 2025, particularly as Pakistan takes the seat vacated by Japan.   While political realities are prohibitive to passing sanctions, sanctions experts suggest that the variety of sanctions regimes are rarely effective consistently. The surge in sanction scepticism Ungar puts down to three main criticisms. First, influential states like Russia and China decry UN sanctions as instruments of Western power. Secondly, economic sanctions may complicate efforts to reduce tensions and result in collateral harm to civilians. Finally, there is a perception of sanctions as an infringement upon the all-important state sovereignty. Her article outlines several interesting contemporary examples of criticism of sanction regimes and their applicability in modern conflicts. Ungar assesses the effectiveness of reforms, including the ground-breaking UNSC resolution that established humanitarian carve-outs in sanctions regimes and the 'new standard practice' of benchmarks. Her article concludes that while sanctions are not consistently effective, their disintegration without a better alternative will be a blow to the UNSC’s ability to maintain peace and security.  Image credit: [**Flickr**](https://www.flickr.com/photos/norwayun/5860616990) | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | *This article was selected by Isabel Freudenstein. Isabel is Vice-President of AIIA NSW and has been a councillor since 2022. She graduated from a Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Advanced Studies at the University of Sydney with a First Class Honours in International Relations. Isabel is currently studying a Juris Doctor at the University of Sydney, works as a paralegal and chairs the Australian Red Cross Rising Women Leaders.* | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | | [**Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources & Security (ANCORS) - University of Wollongong**](https://www.uow.edu.au/ancors/)  The Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources & Security at the University of Wollongong undertakes research and teaching in a number of maritime fields relevant to Australian international affairs. Among them are: maritime strategic thought; the context of geopolitical traditions; the development of national maritime strategy and sea power; naval and joint maritime concepts; and naval and strategic history.  Another major focus is maritime security covering: maritime border protection; the safety and security of shipping and global supply chains; security of offshore industries and infrastructure; maritime domain awareness (MDA) and vessel tracking; national systems for the coordination of surveillance, enforcement and information sharing; maritime security concepts; and national maritime security policy and strategy.  One interesting aspect is fishing sustainability as illustrated in one of the ANCORS-supported development topics: [**Troubled waters: telling the story of fish in Vanuatu**](https://www.theguardian.com/world/gallery/2019/sep/15/troubled-waters-telling-the-story-of-fish-in-vanuatu-theatre-in-pictures).  Image credit: [**Flickr**](https://www.flickr.com/photos/usnavy/32138001648) | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | *This article was selected by Chris Skinner. Chris served thirty years in the Royal Australian Navy in warships that participated in the South East Asian Treaty Organisation, the Vietnam War and surveillance of the North-West Indian Ocean. He joined the AIIA NSW Council in 2019.* | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | **From the Interns** | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | In addition to our Councillors' recommendations, we invite our interns to share with you what they have found insightful or interesting in the world of international affairs. This week Jacob Sukiennik shares an analysis of education as a tool for soft power, while Paloma Hawkins discusses South-East Asia's pivot to China.  *Disclaimer: The views expressed below by councillors and interns are their own. The Australian Institute of International Affairs New South Wales does not take policy positions.* | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | [**Australia's 'hidden superpower': Education as a vessel for soft power or domestic concern?**](https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/international-students-show-our-statecraft-missing-action)  In the wake of [**last week’s announcement**](https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/the-government-has-revealed-international-student-caps-from-2025-whats-been-announced/lu4rn9059) to cap international student visas in 2025 to 270 000, ensuing debates have revealed a notable dichotomy: the Australian government is tasked with striking a balance between advancing our place within international affairs and responding to legitimate domestic concerns.   Writing for the [**Lowy Institute**](https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/international-students-show-our-statecraft-missing-action), Susannah Patton argues that education has played a significant role in advancing Australia’s soft power on the international stage. International students who return home after studying here take with them the prestige of an Australian education and form tangible connections to Australia that promote bilateral cooperation. This “hidden superpower” is an investment that allows us to maintain a strong presence in both our immediate region and beyond.   However, others -- like the federal government -- suggest that unfettered international student visas increase the strain on our housing market, dilute the quality of Australian tertiary education, and contribute to widespread concerns about Australia’s net migration levels, as revealed in this year’s [**Lowy Institute Poll**](https://poll.lowyinstitute.org/report/2024/societal-issues/#immigration).   Ultimately Patton contends that the Albanese government has made its choice; domestic concerns about net migration levels and skyrocketing housing prices have been given priority at the expense of Australia’s capacity to exercise soft power on the international stage.  Image credit: [**University of Sydney**](https://insiderguides.com.au/what-does-a-university-employability-ranking-actually-mean/) | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | *This article was selected by Jacob Sukiennik. Jacob recently graduated from the University of New South Wales with a double degree in International Studies (Distinction) and Media (Distinction).* | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | | [**Shifting Allegiances: Southeast Asia's Pivot Towards China**](http://https/www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/america-losing-southeast-asia)  Southeast Asia is increasingly favouring China, confronting the US with a new reality: the strategic ties that once anchored its influence in the region are fraying. Lynn Kuok incisively [**analyses**](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/america-losing-southeast-asia)this shift in *Foreign Affairs*, revealing through the latest ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute survey that, for the first time since 2020, a majority of Southeast Asians prefer China over the US.   Several factors drive this regional realignment. China’s deepening economic integration with the region through initiatives like the Belt and Road, combined with proactive diplomacy efforts, plus dissatisfaction with recent US diplomatic positions, has made China a more attractive partner. Notably, the Israel-Hamas war ranks top among the respondents' biggest geopolitical concerns, a potential further influence on their alignment. Respondents from countries like Laos, Malaysia, and Indonesia also increasingly view economic ties with China as more beneficial, with 65% identifying China as the most influential economic power, compared to just 14% for the US.  The region's growing preference for China signals a critical challenge for the US. Kuok [**suggests**](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/america-losing-southeast-asia) that this shift underscores broader changing global dynamics that the US must navigate, including addressing breaches of international law, countering disinformation, and maintaining strong engagement. After all, the stakes are high, as the outcome will determine not only the US's future engagement in Southeast Asia but also its influence over the global South and the Indo-Pacific's future strategic landscape.  Image credit: [**NARA & DVIDS Public Domain Archive**](http://https/nara.getarchive.net/media/flags-from-various-asean-regional-forum-arf-nations-937cc1) | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | *This article was selected by Paloma Hawkins. Paloma is in her final-year of a Bachelor of Arts/Advanced Studies at the University of Sydney where she specialises in International Relations, Political Economy and French language.* | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | **What else we're reading** | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | * Hervé Lemahieu for *The Lowy Institute*[**assesses**](https://interactives.lowyinstitute.org/features/trump-redux/) the possible global policy implications of a second Trump presidency. * Bethan McKernan for *The Guardian* [**suggests**](https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/sep/01/hostage-deaths-pressure-netanyahu-agree-gaza-ceasefire) that the recent deaths of six Israeli hostages in Gaza could put pressure on Netanyahu to accept a ceasefire deal. * Heloise Vyas and Nelli Saarinen for *ABC News* [**outline**](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-09-02/far-right-party-wins-german-regional-election/104299430) the context and implications of AfD's recent state election win in Germany, the first far-right party to win a German election since Nazi rule. * Salam Fayyad, former Palestinian Authority Prime Minister, on the *Foreign Policy Live* podcast [**discusses**](https://foreignpolicy.com/live/salam-fayyad-israel-gaza-palestinian-statehood/) pathways to peace and Gaza’s future. * Bhaso Ndzendze for *The Conversation* [**explains**](https://theconversation.com/china-reaps-most-of-the-benefits-of-its-relationship-with-africa-whats-behind-the-imbalance-237949) how China benefits from its aid to Africa more than the recipients, due to the continent’s lack of a unified strategy. * Euan Graham for *The Strategist* [**discusses**](https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/australia-indonesia-defence-relations-ascend-the-house-of-stairs/) how Australia's new Defence Cooperation Agreement with Indonesia may be more symbolic than significant due to Jakarta’s historically cautious approach. | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | **Upcoming Events** | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | **In-person events!**  We're committed to keeping debate about international affairs going, so get involved by attending our in-person events at Glover Cottages on Tuesday nights. Our next event is the highly anticipated bi-annual Intern Debate, set to take place on September 10th. This time, our interns will debate the topic: “It is in Australia’s best interest to prioritise "offensive" cyber-technology measures over "defensive" measures in the current threat environment.”  As cyber threats continue to evolve, so do the strategies that nations like Australia must adopt to protect our interests. This debate will explore whether an assertive approach in cyber-technology should take priority over defensive measures, considering the current global threat landscape. Our interns will present well-researched and thought-provoking arguments on both sides of this issue.  The affirmative case will be put by speakers Singithi Herath, Matthew McKelvie and Numan Mousa; the negative by Paloma Hawkins, Jacob Sukiennik and Ethan Pooley.  For further information please email [**nswexec@internationalaffairs.org.au.**](http://nswexec@internationalaffairs.org.au/) | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | | | | |  |  | | --- | |  | | | | |