

# Optimised Study Guide — Australia as a Peacekeeping Nation (Cambodia & East Timor)

Optimised, exam-focused study guide for Australia as a peacekeeping nation in Asia — Cambodia and East Timor (Unit 4, Elective 2, Component C05-U4E2). Grounded in the 2020–2025 SCSA exams and marking keys, especially the 2024 Q16 on the role of peacekeeping in Australia's engagement with Asia. Covers the post-war Occupation of Japan as precursor, the Cambodian peace process and Gareth Evans's leadership, the long and troubled East Timor case (1975 inaction, the Balibo Five, the Timor Gap Treaty, Habibie-Howard and INTERFET), and Australia's emergence as a regional leader. Leads with exam priorities and marking-key expectations.

In the second half of the period, Australia's role in Asia shifted from *fighting* to *peacekeeping* — and from junior ally to regional leader. As the fear of communism faded, Australia worked for regional security through the UN, most notably in Cambodia and East Timor. This topic showcases a more independent, constructive engagement with Asia.

**The marking-key steer.** The 2024 essay — "*Examine the role of peacekeeping on Australia's engagement with Asia*" — says the most comprehensive answers draw on three case studies: the **post-war Occupation of Japan, Cambodia and East Timor**. The key theme: peacekeeping mattered more in the *second half* of the period, "as communism and powerful friends were less dominant, and Australia emerged as a regional leader working for regional security."

## How this content is examined

- **Essays.** The role of peacekeeping in Australia's engagement with Asia; Australia's evolution into a regional leader.
- **Source analysis.** Sources on Cambodia, East Timor or the Balibo Five require precise case knowledge.

**Answer the verb. Examine the role of peacekeeping** = investigate it across the period (or via one case study) and judge its significance for Australia's regional standing. Use the three case studies as evidence.

## 1. Post-war Occupation of Japan (the precursor)

- Australia commanded the **British Commonwealth Occupation Force** (~16,000 troops) — positioning Australia **alongside the US rather than subordinate**, and building confidence to act independently.
- It deepened understanding of Asia and even pushed immigration policy to admit some Japanese families — an early softening of the White Australia Policy.

## 2. Cambodia (leadership through the peace process)

- After the **Khmer Rouge** genocide (from 1975) and Vietnam's 1978 invasion, Australia first applied trade sanctions, then — as relations normalised and the genocide became understood — **autonomously recognised the Vietnamese-backed government**, breaking from the US/ASEAN line.
- Australia showed **leadership** in campaigning for the UN seat and crafting a peace plan; **Foreign Minister Gareth Evans** drove the **Cambodian Peace Process**, and Australian troops led UN forces during the elections.
- **Significance:** a defining example of Australia acting as an independent **regional leader**, improving regional perceptions of Australia.

## 3. East Timor (the long, troubled case)

- **1975:** when Indonesia invaded East Timor, Australia — under geopolitical pressure and the precedent of West Papua — **took no action to defend it**, and was silent even after the **Balibo Five** (Australian-based journalists) were killed.
- Australia then pursued the **Timor Gap Treaty** with Indonesia over Timor Sea oil — later found problematic when the International Court of Justice ruled Indonesia had no sovereign right to negotiate.
- **The turning point:** after **Habibie** succeeded Suharto, he and Australian PM **Howard** moved to resolve independence; Australia eventually **led the INTERFET intervention** securing East Timor's path to independence.
- **Significance:** shows the tension between principle (self-determination) and pragmatism (the Indonesia relationship, oil) — and Australia's eventual emergence as regional leader.

## 4. The significant ideas

- **Humanitarianism, regional security, decolonisation and nationalism** — the values increasingly framing Australia's engagement.

## 5. Historical perspectives

- **Principled leader or pragmatic actor?** East Timor especially exposes the gap between Australia's humanitarian rhetoric and its strategic/economic interests.
- **From follower to leader:** peacekeeping marks Australia's shift from a junior partner in others' wars to an independent regional leader working for security.

## 6. Recurring exam question patterns & what high answers do

- **"Examine the role of peacekeeping in Australia's engagement with Asia."** High answers: use Japan, Cambodia and East Timor as case studies; show peacekeeping rising in the later period and Australia emerging as a regional leader, while weighing the principle-vs-pragmatism tension (East Timor).

### **Recall self-test.** Can you:

- Explain the BCOF Occupation of Japan and why it positioned Australia alongside the US?
- Explain Australia's role in the Cambodian peace process (Gareth Evans, the UN seat, leading UN forces)?
- Explain Australia's response to East Timor (1975 inaction, the Balibo Five, the Timor Gap Treaty, then Habibie–Howard and INTERFET)?
- Identify the significant ideas (humanitarianism, regional security, decolonisation, nationalism)?
- Argue the "principled leader vs pragmatic actor" debate, especially over East Timor?
- Explain how peacekeeping marks Australia's shift from follower to regional leader?