

FOREWORD

The economic, political, strategic and cultural dynamism in Southeast Asia has gained added relevance in recent years with the spectacular rise of giant economies in East and South Asia. This has drawn greater attention to the region and to the enhanced role it now plays in international relations and global economics.

The sustained effort made by Southeast Asian nations since 1967 towards a peaceful and gradual integration of their economies has had indubitable success, and perhaps as a consequence of this, most of these countries are undergoing deep political and social changes domestically and are constructing innovative solutions to meet new international challenges. Big Power tensions continue to be played out in the neighbourhood despite the tradition of neutrality exercised by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

The **Trends in Southeast Asia** series acts as a platform for serious analyses by selected authors who are experts in their fields. It is aimed at encouraging policymakers and scholars to contemplate the diversity and dynamism of this exciting region.

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Urban Transition in Hanoi: Huge Challenges Ahead

By Danielle Labbé

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Vietnam is in the midst of one of the world's most rapid and intensive rural-to-urban transitions.
- In Hanoi, heritage preservation has gained significant policy attention over the last decades, but efforts continue to focus on the Old Quarter and Colonial City to the exclusion of collective socialist housing complexes and former village areas, and natural features such as canals and urban lakes.
- Parks and public spaces are urgently needed to offset the high residential densities and to improve the quality of life of residents.
- Motor vehicles continue to fuel the growth in transportation. Significant efforts were recently made to establish a mass transit system, but progress there is slow. More attention should be paid to improving the existing transportation system and to reduce dependence on fossil fuels.
- Investments in new housing estates have fuelled a speculative real estate market but failed to address adequately the needs of the vulnerable segments of the population.
- Regional integration is a challenge as the city expands and swallows the peri-urban areas around the city.

