3. Australian Engagement with Asia: Towards closer political, economic and cultural ties

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This chapter reports on the results of a series of questions the survey asked Australians about engagement with Asia. Australia's relationship with Asia has commanded much interest from observers both within Australia and within Asia, given geographic nearness and cultural differences. Historically Australia has had an indifferent and uneasy relationship with Asia, yet since the postwar period Australia and Asia have embarked upon greater interaction and cooperation through increased trade, immigration, security concerns, travel, leisure and cultural exchange. Seminal in the evolution of this relationship have been the various Australian federal government policy agendas and contemporary movements and processes such as globalisation that have set the tone of the relationship between Australia and Asia. Recent federal governments have sought to connect Australia to Asia more meaningfully through a variety of measures, yet little is known about how ordinary Australians think and feel about Asia or how and to what extent they might have connected or not to Asia through lifestyle, work or cultural pursuits. Data of this kind enable us to assess the extent that Australia is cosmopolitan, open and embracing of aspects of multiculturalism.

While few systematic survey data exist to ascertain popular Australian perceptions of Asia as a whole over time, much has been written by historians and political scientists to reveal Australian attitudes towards Asia through foreign policy, trade unions and other organisations involved in nation-building and governance. Australia, through its policy outlook, has evolved in its relationship to Asia from an inward-looking, Anglocentric and culturally narrow society, to a more engaged, open and interactive entity within the Asia-Pacific region; however, has this change in policy and governance facilitated by trade, security, cultural and travel relationships with Asia translated to how ordinary Australians engage with Asia? Through a set of unique measures, this chapter offers a first glimpse of how close Australians feel to Asia and the level of engagement with Asia Australians currently practice. We prefigure the exploration of the engagement with Asia by individual Australians with a brief review of Australia's recent political engagement with Asia, with the aim of informing the reader about the broader systemic connections between Australia and Asia that might influence the level of engagement of individual Australians.

Political engagement since 1990

Since the 1990s successive governments have held different viewpoints on the extent to which Australia should develop closer economic, political and cultural ties with the Asian region. In the early 1990s, Labor Prime Minister Paul Keating focused Australia's foreign policies on Asia. The previous Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, had established the groundwork for closer economic ties through the founding of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) group, which apart from Australia included Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Indonesia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and the United States. While the original aims of APEC were focused on economic cooperation, Keating acknowledged that it was in Australia's security interests to foster a deeper engagement with Asia (see Milner 1997). Keating also promoted the importance of an Australian identity and Australian values as needing to shift closer to Asia. For example, Keating often talked about a new 'Asian vision' or strategies for an Asian Australia (Milner 1997).

The Keating Labor Government made a number of initiatives to raise awareness among Australia's youth of Australia's future economic, political and cultural engagement with Asia. One of the most important initiatives for deepening Australian cultural engagement in Asia included the National Asian Languages Study in Australian Schools (NALSAS) program. The focus of this program was to build a future generation of Australians with a level of expertise and awareness of the Asian region. The overall focus of this program included Asian literacy, with a priority in Japanese, bahasa Indonesia and Mandarin. Another part of this initiative included the foundation in 1990 of the Asia-Australia Institute, an independent policy think tank based at the University of New South Wales. The aim of the institute was to build on ideas for a future East Asian regional political grouping.

Not only was Australia establishing closer economic, political and cultural ties with the Asian region, but also accepting large numbers of immigrants from Asia, gradually shifting the demographic landscape in Australia. For example, the Labor government supported an immigration policy that accepted refugees and applicants from Asian countries under its family reunion, skilled labour and business programs. During this period the largest populations of Asian-born arrivals were from Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines, Hong Kong, India and Mainland China (Jupp 1995). By 1996, Asian migrants living in Australia exceeded one million, of whom the largest numbers were from Vietnam (169 600) and China, Hong Kong and Macao (204 700) (Jupp 2001, 74).

During this time, public opinion was not necessarily in tune with Keating's ideas of a national culture that was to be shaped by the surrounding Asian

region (McAllister and Ravenhill 1998). Public opinion showed that there was some resistance to the notion of a closer engagement with Asia (McAllister and Ravenhill 1998). In fact, findings from public opinion research suggest that Keating was well ahead of his time. Furthermore, the large number of Asian migrants reactivated the appeal of new parties that formed during the 1990s: Australia First and One Nation (Jupp 2001).

In 1996, Pauline Hanson expressed the following concerns about Asian immigration in her maiden speech in Federal Parliament:

> I and most Australians want our immigration policy radically reviewed and that of multiculturalism abolished. I believe we are in danger of being swamped by Asians. Between 1984 and 1995, 40 percent of all migrants coming into this country were of Asian origin. They have their own culture and religion, form ghettos and do not assimilate. (Hanson 1996)

This view of Australia being 'swamped by Asians' was, according to Stokes, an account of the people and their vulnerabilities and a call for a return of power to the people and away from the elites (Stokes 2000, 23–4). For Hanson, a unified, stable and homogenous nation was undermined by multiculturalism (Leach 2000, 42). The view that Australia was becoming too multicultural and losing its core national identity was also supported by a number of academics and public opinion leaders. For example, historian John Hirst criticised the term 'multiculturalism' because of the way it conveyed diversity but not the unity of commitment to core values and institutions (Hirst 1996, 15). Former Ambassador to Indonesia and Japan Rawdon Dalrymple also observed that in terms of Asian social and cultural attitudes and values, 'the average Australian is less "Asian" than almost anyone on earth' (quoted in Milner 1997, 40).

Not only was public opinion resistant to Australia being part of Asia but leaders in Asia also argued that Australia could not become an integral member of Asia because of its long association with Britain and close military ties with the United States. For example, former Malaysian Prime Minister Dr Mahathir was most outspoken on Australia's position in Asia, stating that Australia should not be part of any future East Asia Economic Caucus (EAEC) grouping. As further evidence of Australia's exclusion from the region, in 1996, Australia was excluded from the Asia–Europe summit meeting including the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) members as well as China, Korea and Japan (see Milner 1997). Non-acceptance of Australia in regional groupings was partly due to the fact that Australia had different views on human rights and democracy that were more closely aligned with the values of the United States.

It was against this backdrop of public resistance to Australian attempts to more fully integrate with Asia that John Howard was elected Prime Minister of Australia. In line with Australian popular opinion and criticisms from Asia, the Howard Government unravelled many of the Hawke and Keating Labor Government initiatives of closer political and cultural engagement with Asia. It wasn't long, however, before the Howard Government was faced with the need to confront the realities of instability in the region with the 1999 crisis in East Timor. According to Cotton (2004), East Timor functioned as a test for Australia's engagement with the Asian region.

Following the vote for independence from Indonesia in a UN-supervised referendum, the Indonesian military and militias instigated a campaign of fear, intimidation and violence aimed at those who contested Indonesian sovereignty (Cotton 2004, 5). In contrast with the previous, Labor government's policy of engagement with Indonesian elites, the Howard Government lobbied for a 'coalition of the willing' prepared to support an intervention force in East Timor. The first parts of the International Force for East Timor (INTERFET) operation landed in East Timor on 20 September 1999. While Australia had the largest group in INTERFET, there were also smaller detachments from South Korea, Thailand, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. The presence of INTERFET generated resentment in Indonesia about Australia's motives and posed a major challenge for future engagement within the region (Cotton 2004).

The terrorist attacks in New York (2001), Bali (2002) and Jakarta (2004) and the following chaos in Iraq led to a closer alignment of the government's foreign and security policies with the Bush Administration. Australia's support of a pre-emptive strike in Iraq, preoccupation with terrorism in the region and our support for the American missile defence system further distanced Australia from the Asian region (see Woolcott 2005). The collective policies towards Asia based on fear and policies towards the United States based on compliance have filtered into other aspects of Australian life. For example, Australia's close alignment with the United States and the West more generally was reflected in a shift in domestic education policies, which began to focus less on Asia and more on establishing an education curriculum firmly rooted in Western values, civic belonging and Australian history.

In 2002 the Howard Government abandoned the NALSAS program, which was largely viewed among Asian studies academics as a backward step. The loss of Asian languages in the curriculum also had an indirect affect on the teaching of Asian studies and languages in the higher education sector. Student enrolments in Asian languages and cultures declined significantly, resulting in a loss of cultural and political expertise in Asian studies. Other factors that contributed to this loss of expertise in the higher education sector included the 2002 terrorist bombings in Bali, which had an enormous impact on the numbers of students

wanting to enrol in Indonesian and Malay studies. On the flipside, the rise of China as a growing presence in the region has encouraged a growth in numbers in Chinese studies (see Rudd 2009b).

In 2004, results from the Australian Election Study survey showed that more than 70 per cent of the Australian public believed that it was either 'fairly likely' or 'very likely' that Indonesia posed a threat to Australia's security (see McAllister and Clark 2008). The increased fear of Asia and in particular Indonesia reflected a broader trend of attempts to strengthen the US relationship and the importance of bilateral relationships over multilateral forums in the region; however, between 2004 and 2007, the Australian public started to become more in tune with non-traditional security issues such as the environment, world poverty and Indigenous affairs. The Iraq war was also losing domestic support in Australia and the United States due to its protracted nature and large numbers of casualties. There was an increased awareness of global environmental problems and in particular support for the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol. Domestic concerns such as WorkChoices legislation and the increased awareness of global and interconnected security problems contributed to a change in public attitudes and a change in government in 2007.

In a more conservative manner than the previous Labor governments of Hawke and Keating, the newly elected 2007 Rudd Labor Government began a mission to develop closer regional integration and cooperation with the Asian region. In 1980, Kevin Rudd graduated with a Bachelor of Arts (Asian studies) degree with First Class Honours. The title of Rudd's honours thesis was 'Human rights in China: the case of Wei Jingsheng' (see Rudd 2009a). Rudd's studies prepared him for a career as a diplomat in China and later domestic politics, shaping his outlook and support for multilateralism in the Asia-Pacific region. In 2004, Rudd said that

> Australians should…develop an appropriate form of national modesty, which enables us in our dealings with people in East Asian Societies to avoid being over the top or grossly humble. Only by doing so can we hope to undo the damage that has recently been done to perceptions of Australia in the region. (Quoted in Broinowski 2003, 13)

At the sixteenth APEC meeting in Peru (in 2008), political leaders discussed a new commitment to Asia-Pacific development, which focused on the importance of reducing the gap between developed and developing member countries. A significant part of APEC's new agenda involved working on new strategies that helped member countries tackle the current economic, food, energy and counter-terrorism security challenges affecting the region (Economic Leaders of the APEC Forum 2008). These new human security challenges, which transcend

national borders, are what provide a significant motivation for closer cooperation and integration among member countries and in particular between Australia and Asia.

On 4 December 2008, Prime Minister Rudd announced new national security policies that would incorporate transnational issues affecting the Asia-Pacific region such as climate change, pandemic diseases and people smuggling (see Coorey 2008). A response to the new security challenges would involve strengthening regional security cooperation with Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia and strengthening diplomatic ties with India and China (Dodd 2008). While the Rudd Government was moving forward with a new vision of Australia involving closer cooperation with Asia, we knew relatively little about the Australian public and whether they felt more closely connected with Asia compared with the 1990s, when Australia witnessed a public backlash against the idea of Asia in Australia.

The next section examines the extent to which Australian political engagement with Asia has a broader influence on Australia's cultural relationship with Asia. The findings to this section may provide answers as to whether the Labor Government will achieve widespread support for closer engagement with Asia. Australia's political engagement with Asia has an important influence on Australia's level of cultural and economic engagement with the region. This is reflected in a number of different ways. First, Australia's political interests in the region are often followed through in the education system. For example, during the early 1990s, Australian interest in Japanese language and culture studies at Australian schools and universities boomed because of our closer political and economic ties with Japan. More recently, as previously mentioned, student numbers for Indonesian studies have declined because of the increased fear of terrorism in Indonesia; however, student numbers have dramatically increased for students interested in China at universities because of the rising economic and political presence of China in the region.

A second reason explaining the influence of Australia's political engagement with Asia on levels of cultural and economic engagement can be found in Australia's immigration patterns. As new groups of immigrants arrive in Australia, they bring their cultural heritage with them. Some of this cultural heritage is shared with the Australian-born population through business, entertainment and sporting opportunities. Over time, a growing proportion of the Australian-born population and migrant communities absorbs hybrid Asian–Australian cultural practices as part of their own identity and lifestyle. A third and final reason that demonstrates the influence of politics on cultural and economic engagement is the growth of business relationships. As the government encourages

international trade through a number of policy instruments, this opens the way for new business opportunities and industry partnerships between Australia and Asia.

Cultural and economic engagement with Asia

Culture and economics are key dimensions of the concept of globalisation, which social scientists use to explain the links, connections and processes of engagement and interaction between societies and cultures across the world (Giddens 1990). Though a near neighbour, Asia of course has not figured prominently in Australian cultural history given the nature of Australia's cultural, ethnic and political ties with Britain and Europe; however, the transfer of ideas, people and objects between Australia and Asia as a result of globalisation and social and political change has intensified since the 1970s. Signs of Australian connections, influences and engagement with Asia are quite visible in Australian cities and in Australian homes. The increasing ease and decreased cost of travel, the increased volume of trade with Asia and the settling of Asians in Australia have brought greater familiarity of Asian cultures and possibly an increased Australian engagement compared with previous eras of Australian history.

Before turning to the data the present section introduces a broad collection of conceptual material that might typify Australian engagement with Asia, with the main focus on engagement with Asian culture, and a lesser focus on economic engagement with Asia. Australian engagement with Asia is possible on at least two fronts: the first is engagement *in* Australia with Asian cultural, economic and social phenomena, people and institutions. The second is *outside* Australia and in Asia,[1] and pertains to place, however experienced but usually through travel.

In Australia, then, Asia, through people, culture and institutions, is a visible presence. In 2007, the Australian Bureau of Statistics calculated that of the estimated resident population of Australia (21 million people), one-quarter (5.3 million people) was born overseas (ABS 2007). In 2007 just more than 41 per cent of immigrants who arrived in Australia for permanent settlement were born in South-East Asia, North-East Asia or Central Asia (ABS 2007). These changing demographic trends indicate a marked Asian presence in Australian cities and towns. Like many other migrant groups, Asian Australian communities have brought a range of cultural and economic accoutrements such as businesses, cuisine, religion and community organisations that have produced a visible geographic and architectural change to Australian urban settings.

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1   Indeed, a third is easily considered: engagement through the Internet.

Education has also made its mark in Asian–Australian relations. An increasing number of foreign students studying at Australian universities are from Asia. Australian schools have to some extent in recent times refocused foreign language education to emphasise offerings of Asian languages in place of the traditional European language curricula in recognition of the deeper links Australia has developed with Asia. Australian cities have also hosted Asian or, more specifically, Chinese quarters such as the various 'Chinatowns' that have housed Asian food, film, art and literature through a variety of businesses and cultural organisations. Other forms of Asian cultural engagement by Australians include involvement in Asian religions, spiritualities and agents to wellbeing such as Buddhism, yoga, Tai Chi and Chinese medicine (Phillips and Aarons 2005, 2007). Australians are also quite familiar with and keen consumers of selections of Asian popular culture including film, literature and music. Manga comics and anime films from Japan have a devoted following in Australia as they do in other non-Asian countries (Sugimoto 2003). Martial arts such as karate and Tae Kwon Do are also more familiar forms of Asian cultural engagement that Australians have embraced.

Perhaps the most visible and tangible Australian engagement with Asia, however, is through food, and while some Asian cultures (for example, Nepal and Sri Lanka) have only recently enabled Australians to taste their culinary offerings, Chinese restaurants of all sorts have been a feature of Australian cities and country towns for many decades. Asian food, cuisine and restaurants of a broad variety are a key feature of the contemporary 'foodscape' of Australian cities and some larger towns.

Turning to the data, the Australian Survey of Social Attitudes 2007 carried a succinct but important set of measures tapping Australian engagement in Asian culture within a broader set of measures seeking to ascertain general Australian engagement with Asia. Respondents were asked how often they spent time with Asian friends; participated in an Asian cultural event; visited Asian restaurants; studied an Asian language or culture; engaged in Eastern spiritualities; volunteered services or finances to developing Asian countries; travelled to an Asian country; travelled with an Asian airline; and conducted business negotiations with Asia.

Table 3.1 reports that Australians are quite connected personally with Asians through personal friendship, with well more than half the sample (62 per cent) spending at least some time with friends with an Asian heritage. Travelling to Asia, travelling via an Asian airline and participation in Asian cultural festivals are activities that Australians do less frequently but are by their nature predictably infrequent activities. Notwithstanding the practical barriers to this form of engagement, about one in four Australians engages in these activities at least once a year. There is a significant minority of Australians who participate

in religions and spiritualities that are widely practised in Asia with variable frequency (23 per cent). Considered against the percentage of Australians who participate regularly in the more traditional religious faiths of Australia, such as Christianity (20 per cent who frequently attend religious services; AuSSA 2007), this level of engagement is comparatively high and suggests that the Australian engagement with Asian religions and spiritualities apart from, or even in addition to, Christianity, offers Australians a meaningful form of religious and spiritual identity.

Financial and other aid is crucial to ensuring the continued economic and social progress of countries in the Asian region. Some developing Asian countries have also experienced natural disasters and other catastrophes that have devastated these societies and economies in recent years. Giving in response to these situations represents a meaningful measure of how attuned Australians are to the difficulties experienced by some of their Asian neighbours. Australians do contribute to the redevelopment and recovery of some Asian countries through financial or other aid, although not in great numbers (17 per cent) or very frequently, yet appeals for aid from the public are usually reserved for severe natural disasters that are fortunately less frequent in occurrence, such as the tsunami that wreaked havoc in many developing Asian nations in 2004.

Table 3.1 Australian Engagement with Asian Cultures, AuSSA 2007 (per cent)

	At least once a week	At least once a month	Several times a year	At least once a year	Never
Spend time with Asian friends	16.8	12.5	19.4	13.6	37.7
Visit Asian restaurants	11.1	30.3	36.1	11.4	11.0
Study an Asian language or culture	2.0	1.5	3.4	9.5	83.5
Travel to an Asian country	0.3	0.2	1.4	23.8	74.3
Travel with an Asian airline	0.2	0.0	1.4	22.1	76.3
Participate in an Asian cultural event	0.4	0.8	3.7	19.4	75.8
Engage in Eastern spiritualities	4.3	3.3	5.3	10.3	76.8
Volunteer services or finances to developing Asian countries	0.5	3.0	2.7	10.3	83.4
Conduct business negotiations in Asia	0.7	0.3	1.5	2.6	94.9

Note: Total number = 2583.

Source: Australian Survey of Social Attitudes 2007.

A significant minority of Australians have showed an interest in learning an Asian language or culture. Table 3.1 confirms this by revealing that 16 per cent of Australians have participated in learning an Asian language or studied an Asian culture. By far the most frequent means of Australian engagement with Asia is,

however, through food. A minority of only 11 per cent of Australians claim to never eat at an Asian restaurant. Conversely nearly four in five Australians claim to eat at Asian restaurants at least 'several times a year'. Food is a key indicator of cultural traffic; the impact that Asian food has made on Australian culinary tastes is substantial.

The distinct ways in which Australians engaged with Asia are recorded in Table 3.2. The data in Table 3.2 suggest that Australian engagement with Asia is essentially dichotomous with a focus on participation in Asian culture combined with an association with Asian people, and engagement with the Asian economy, reflective of the two dimensions of globalisation posited earlier. The measures of Asian cultural and economic engagement formed a coherent and robust scale of indicators against which Australian engagement can be further investigated and assessed. Factor 1 in Table 3.2 indicates that Australians engaged with Asia through a set of cultural means that has become more familiar to Australians since the 1970s due to Asian immigration and cultural traffic. Table 3.2 reports that education, religious and spiritual traditions, culinary traditions, voluntary services and Asian friendships combine to reveal the contours of Australia's cultural engagement with Asia. Factor 2 in Table 3.2 indicates a more direct economic involvement with Asia involving travel and business in Asia or in-Asia experience.

Table 3.2 Factor Analysis of Australian Engagement with Asian Cultures

| | Factor matrix (Varimax rotation) | |
	Factor 1	Factor 2
Spend time with Asian friends	0.70	0.14
Participate in an Asian cultural event	0.69	0.29
Visit Asian restaurants	0.62	0.20
Study an Asian language or culture	0.62	0.34
Engage in Eastern spiritualities	0.61	−0.09
Volunteer services or finances to developing Asian countries	0.46	0.12
Travel to an Asian country	0.25	0.85
Travel with an Asian airline	0.21	0.85
Conduct business negotiations in Asia	0.05	0.59
Eigenvale	2.44	2.09
Percentage of variance	27.07	23.22
Alpha	0.68	0.72

Note: Total number = 2583.

Source: Australian Survey of Social Attitudes 2007.

Social background can have a considerable influence on the likelihood of cultural and economic engagement with Asia. The findings in Table 3.3 show a number of significant predictors of engagement with Asia both within Australia and within Asia. For example, the university educated are more likely than those without a university education to be involved in cultural engagement with Asia within Australia. The younger age groups are also more likely to be involved with Asia within Australia than older age groups. This is partly because they have had greater exposure to Asian cultures and languages throughout their education. Professionals, those who live in urban areas and those with a left political orientation are also more likely to be culturally engaged with Asia within Australia compared with non-professionals, those living in rural and regional areas and those with a political orientation leaning towards the right. Those who are born overseas, live in urban areas, earn a relatively high income and work in professional occupations are also more likely to have lived, travelled or worked in Asia compared with those born in Australia, those living in rural areas, on lower incomes and working in non-professional occupations. Interestingly, gender, age and political orientation are not associated with in-country experience in Asia.

Table 3.3 Effects of Background Experiences on Engagement with Asia (OLS estimates), AuSSA 2007

	Cultural engagement		In-country engagement	
	(b)	(beta)	(b)	(beta)
(Constant)	145.83		18.23	
Gender (male)	−0.70	−0.93	0.00	0.00
Education (university educated)	1.32	0.17***	0.19	0.07*
Location (urban)	1.32	0.16***	0.24	0.09***
Age (in single years)	0.6	0.25***	0.00	0.03
Income (over $36 400 per year)	0.28	0.04	0.36	0.14***
Occupation (professional)	0.52	0.07**	0.19	0.08*
Birthplace (Australia)	−0.99	−0.11***	−0.46	−0.16***
Political orientation (left orientation)	0.17	0.10***	0.02	0.03
Adjusted R²	**0.22**		**0.11**	

* $p < 0.05$

** $p < 0.01$

*** $p < 0.001$

Note: Total number = 2583.

Source: Australian Survey of Social Attitudes 2007.

Conclusion

The results from this study suggest that Australia's political engagement with Asia is followed by closer cultural and economic ties with Asia among particular groups in Australian society. In general, the university educated, professional, young people and urban dwellers are the ones who tend to engage with Asia through both cultural practices and economic relations within Australia and throughout Asia. A key finding from our data on these points is that despite particular negative reactions to government policy concerning Asian immigration in the 1990s, today there is a significant population of Australians who are very much engaged with Asia within both Australia and Asia more broadly. Overall, the findings suggest that Australians are generally embracing of a selection of Asian culture within Australia and have personal connections with Australians of Asian ancestry, as well as economic links to Asia.

While the results can and do stand alone to be considered as a benchmark of Asian cultural engagement, of further interest here are the links between the broader or macro-level of engagement that is pursued by recent federal government policy agendas and ideologies and how they translate to the everyday lives of Australians more generally. These links, properly studied, provide a systematic framework for the analysis and evaluation of such processes and can assist in further policy design. Cultural engagement can be seen as an indicator of how open and perhaps how cosmopolitan Australians are in conditions of late modernity and globalisation, which are characterised by change through the mass movement of peoples, capital, labour and culture. Cultural engagement also stands as one important test of how the policies of multiculturalism and diversity operate at the level of individual Australians through habits associated with everyday living and the association of people normally differentiated through culture, ethnicity and experience.

In conclusion, our findings also have a number of specific policy implications for the Australian Government. First, it would seem that the promotion of Asian languages in schools may receive widespread support in urban, middle-class areas but more resistance in rural and regional areas where there is less openness towards engaging with the Asian region. Second, at the regional level, these findings show a possible glance into the future of a new generation of young people interested in closer engagement with Asia and the rest of the world more generally. This will become increasingly important given that the current Gillard Government is seeking to strengthen multilateralism throughout Asia and will need the support of a significant proportion of the nation on a range of transnational policy issues involving both Australia and Asia. A greater level of cross-cultural understanding between Australia and Asia can only be advantageous for future dialogue on important international policy issues such as the environment and the economic crisis.

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