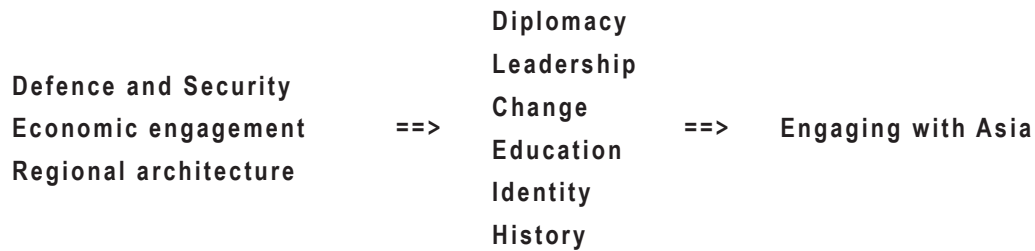


Asia Policy Issues: Summarising the 2009 Canberra Leaders Retreat



The **2009 Asialink Retreat** brought together 42 individuals from diverse professional sectors with the common goal of increasing their understanding and ability to effectively engage with Asia. The week covered three key themes: **Defence, Economic Engagement and Regional Architecture**, which were punctuated with country focussed dinners including **Japan, India, and Malaysia**. This document is a response to the presentations made to Leaders Program Fellows in Canberra by Ministers, Ambassadors, academics and journalists. Australians must become **more aware of our history and the diverse histories of the wider Asian region**. Without a comprehensive appreciation of history and culture Australians risk being viewed as neo-colonialist and patronising. **There is an urgent need for greater Asian literacy in Australia** that requires significant increases in government support. Given the current security, economic and political situation in the region, **Australia can be optimistic about its future as an increasingly important player in the Asia Pacific Century**.

Engagement

To be a regional leader Australia must gain a deeper understanding, across government and business, of what is required to engage with Asia

Do we need to work a little harder on getting Australia's views on Asia in order before we approach the region with the vigour of the APC proposal?

History matters. What can we learn from our previous engagements with Asia?

The building blocks of cultural competence will be established within the Australian education system; generational change is needed throughout

No more mixed messages; clarity is key

Trade in Asia is dynamic and transcends borders; it's oversimplistic to consider the rise of China will be at the expense of other nations

There is an opportunity in the region for Australia to export within the services sector

The challenge will be to overcome the idea that Australia is predominantly a natural resource provider

It's important for Australia to remember old and emerging partnerships as well as look to newer relationships such as the one with China

Australia needs to be sensitive regarding balancing domestic and international agendas

There is a disconnect between Australia's defence aspirations and the reality of any regional threat.

Asia. Australia. Identity.

We reflect on our Australian-ness as much as we attempt to understand Asia

Why not truly listen to what Asian voices are saying about 'us'?

Let's move on the 30-year debate as to whether Australia is or isn't part of Asia

Asian countries are not focused on Australian issues of identity - perhaps it isn't appropriate that we still are?

A consistent approach to regional issues is important

There is scepticism within Asia of Australia's intentions and role in the region and Australia needs to engage with its region in a manner that reflects and promotes mutual acceptance

Australia's role in existing regional architecture is critical to securing Australia's interest in the region

A firm commitment to the East Asia Summit is needed; integration of trade and people-to-people relations with ASEAN is very important

ASEAN is a central and Asian-initiated structure and it was hugely significant for Australia to be invited to the East Asia Summit - it took 10-15 years for Australia to get there

Mutual respect: collaboration, cooperation and communication are of utmost importance; the sudden announcement of the 2020 vision for an APC shows a failure of this process, whereas the successful relationship between the AFP and Indonesian Police in counter-terrorism supports this idea.