

Introduction

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THIS INTRODUCTION FIRST PRESENTS a summary of the principal themes pursued in Volume 1 of *Facing North*. It then foreshadows the major concerns of the second volume.

Engagement with Asia: From Federation to the 1970s

In 1901, when Australia embarked upon its national and international life as a federal state, almost all of the Asia-Pacific region was ruled or controlled by imperial powers: Britain in South Asia, parts of Southeast Asia, Hong Kong and the Pacific; France in Indochina, the Pacific and Pondicherry in India; the Netherlands in the East Indies; Germany in the Pacific; Portugal in Timor, Goa and Macau; and the United States in the Philippines and the Pacific. Only China, Japan, Korea and Siam stood independent of imperial rule. The fledgling Australian Commonwealth was itself dependent upon Britain for the conduct of its foreign relations. Hence it understood its regional role largely in terms of supporting Britain's Far Eastern policy, while seeking to influence that policy in ways favourable to Australian interests.

Direct Australian contacts with the countries of Asia were few. Nevertheless, within Australian political circles there was at least an embryonic sense of Asia's potential significance for Australia. Even before Federation Asia had figured in Australian political discourse on three issues in particular: immigration, security and trade. The need to formulate coherent policies on these issues was prominent among the factors that led to the creation of the Australian Commonwealth. Among the first departments of the new government were the Department of External Affairs and the Department of Trade and Customs, which with their successor departments were to be the agencies most involved in Australia's engagement with Asia through the century.

The early development of Australian policy in the fields of immigration, defence and trade required Australia to consider the attitudes and interests of Asia's leading power, Japan. Unlike the other independent states in Asia, Japan was internally united, free from external interference, and indeed a major regional power both economically and militarily. Its annexation of Formosa in 1895 and Korea in 1910 brought it into the ranks of the imperial powers. All these attributes made Japan important to Australia.

Yet Australian attitudes towards Japan were deeply ambivalent. On one hand, Australian governments were reassured to a degree by the alliance between Japan and Britain. On the other, apprehension about Japan's possible regional ambitions in the longer term was felt by many Australians. At different times Alfred Deakin and Billy Hughes sought to assert versions of a Monroe Doctrine intended to minimise Japanese influence in the Pacific. There was also the matter of race. Australia pursued a restrictive immigration policy, which aggrieved the Japanese, and at Versailles in 1919 Hughes argued strongly against Japan's proposed racial equality clause in the League of Nations covenant. Nevertheless, Australian official opinion was not monolithic. E. L. Piesse, head of the Pacific Branch in the Prime Minister's Department, criticised Hughes's anti-Japanese posture and argued for modification of the White Australia policy. The contrast between these two men's positions encapsulated the range of Australian responses to the problem of dealing with Asia, or at least Asia's most important country, in the early decades of the twentieth century.

In 1923 Hughes was succeeded as Prime Minister by S. M. Bruce. For Australia the remainder of the 1920s was a stable and relatively prosperous period in which ministers and officials focused upon reinforcing Australia's position in the British Empire through their trade, defence and immigration policies. The affairs of Asia and the Pacific seemed remote from Australia's concerns. But the Great Depression brought a change of attitude. From the early 1930s governments pursued a policy of encouraging Pacific trade to help lead Australia out of the Depression, a policy highlighted by John Latham's East Asian tour and the re-establishment of a trade commissioner service in the region. Through the 1930s these official initiatives were complemented by the beginnings of unofficial people-to-people contacts through such pursuits as travel, the arts and sport. Meanwhile the case for more substantial engagement with the region was being pressed by a number of concerned individuals, people such as Latham, Frederic Eggleston and Ian Clunies Ross, who were few in number but politically influential.

In the middle and late 1930s, however, the Pacific skies began to darken. The trade dispute between Australia and Japan in 1936 severely damaged the bilateral relationship. In addition Japan's expansionism and growing military power, demonstrated by aggression against Manchuria and China, fuelled Australian worries about regional security. In a response to these concerns the Lyons government decided in 1939—belatedly by the standards of other dominions of the British Empire—to establish its own diplomatic missions in Northeast Asia. In this area

indirect representation through British diplomatic missions no longer seemed adequate. Latham and Eggleston were appointed to head the legations in Tokyo and Chungking respectively, with Latham presenting his credentials in December 1940 and Eggleston his in October 1941.

For the eight years from 1941 to 1949 the Curtin and Chifley Labor governments held office with H. V. Evatt as Minister for External Affairs. John Curtin, Ben Chifley, Evatt and their close advisers oversaw important changes in Australian governmental attitudes and policies towards Asia. Until 1945 the government was overwhelmingly preoccupied with the war effort, but even in the years of greatest peril ministers and officials were drawing up plans for dealing with postwar Asia. After 1945 the government soon appreciated the strength of Asian nationalism and made plain its belief that the age of the empires in Asia could not last much longer. Australia welcomed the granting of independence to the Philippines, India, Pakistan, Burma and Ceylon. Most notably it provided significant diplomatic support for the Indonesian nationalists in their struggle against the Dutch. To support an Asian protagonist against a European power was unprecedented in Australian external policy. But Australia did not uniformly support independence for all European colonies. Largely for strategic reasons, the government generally supported the British and French colonial authorities in Southeast Asia, while urging those authorities to implement progressive policies.

Chifley agreed to provide limited quantities of military equipment to the British in Malaya for use in combating the communist insurgency there, but would not countenance direct Australian military involvement in this or any other Asian conflict. In dealing with the ferment of change in postwar Asia, Chifley and Evatt generally placed great faith in the prospects for international co-operation symbolised by the establishment of the United Nations and resisted the pressures from the Western powers to adopt Cold War perspectives. In their last year in office, however, Chifley and Evatt were compelled increasingly to take Cold War considerations into account.

In the broader Australian community, public attitudes towards Asia were greatly affected by wartime experiences. While relations with Asian allies had been generally positive, encounters with the Asian foe had left a bitter legacy. Many Australians had experienced the fear of invasion by Japan. Although a few voices began to be heard after 1945 challenging the White Australia policy, most of the population continued to support it. The Labor government implemented the policy with a doctrinaire rigidity that reduced the goodwill that Australia's other external policies had been garnering among the new Asian governments. Australia was notably slower than some of its allies to seek reconciliation with the former enemy.

In the 1950s and early 1960s the intensification of the Cold War, and especially the involvement of the People's Republic of China, meant that defence and security issues became Australia's overriding (though not sole) concern in Asia. The Liberal–Country Party coalition government, led by Robert Menzies, concerted its regional diplomacy with Australia's major Western allies, seeking to construct a set

of security arrangements that would contain China and help to combat communism throughout the region. By the mid-1950s the Australia–New Zealand–United States security treaty (ANZUS), the Japanese Peace Treaty and the South-East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) were all in place. So was the Colombo Plan, a scheme for technical co-operation of which Percy Spender, Australia’s Minister for External Affairs from 1949 to 1951, was a principal architect and which was based on both humanitarian and Cold War concerns.

The years from 1950 to 1963 witnessed military conflicts and political crises that provided major tests of Australian, and more generally Western, policy. They included the Malayan Emergency, the Korean War, the collapse of the French Empire in Indochina, the Quemoy–Matsu disputes, the crises in Laos, and the Indonesian campaign to incorporate West New Guinea. Australia was involved diplomatically in all these issues and twice became involved militarily, sending combat forces to Korea in 1950 and to Malaya in 1955. The latter commitment reflected the government’s policy of forward defence, of which the two essential components were that Australia should defend itself against any perceived threat as far forward of Australia as possible and that it should do so in concert with one or both of its great power allies, Britain and the United States. But despite this close political and military collaboration, neither of these allies took Australia’s side in the dispute over West New Guinea, which was resolved in Indonesia’s favour in 1962–63.

Alongside its involvement in conflicts and crises, Australia actively sought good relations with the new states of Asia, whether they were pro-Western such as Malaya or non-aligned such as Indonesia and India. Spender, and especially his successor, Richard Casey, worked hard to establish personal friendships with Asian leaders, as did such able diplomats as Tom Critchley in Malaya and Mick Shann in Indonesia. The presence of Asian students in Australia and the beginnings of regional tourism encouraged a steady expansion of people-to-people contacts in the 1950s and early 1960s.

Progress was also made in the development of Australian trade with East Asia, above all with Japan. In 1956 a major reorganisation of the government departments dealing with trade and commerce enabled a powerful trade minister, John McEwen, and his departmental secretary, J. G. Crawford, to pursue the new trade opportunities emerging in Asia, replacing Australia’s traditional preference for trade with Britain. This fundamental transformation in the direction of Australian trade proved vitally important when Britain moved during the 1960s towards membership of the European Economic Community. The 1957 commerce agreement between Australia and Japan was the first major trade agreement to be concluded between Australia and any Asian country, and the most important commercial manifestation of Australia’s postwar engagement with Asia.

In the 1960s Australian exports to Japan, driven by the growing Japanese demand for minerals, not only increased greatly in volume but also became increasingly diversified. In the same period Australian wheat sales to China became

significant, but strategic constraints prevented the development of more diversified trade with the Chinese. Trade with Southeast Asia grew only slowly in the 1950s and 1960s, mainly because the region provided only a small market for Australian foodstuffs. Nevertheless, having built up a strong trade relationship with Japan, Australia was well placed to broaden its regional trade once the major military conflicts of the region had come to an end.

In the 1960s, anxious as it was to maintain Australia’s strategic alliances in the region, the Australian government sought both to prolong Britain’s military involvement in its former Southeast Asian colonial empire and to encourage United States military intervention in Indochina. Each of Australia’s two involvements in military conflict took place in association with one of these allies—with Britain during Indonesia’s confrontation of Malaysia in the years 1963–66, and with the United States during the bitter struggle in Vietnam from 1965 to 1972.

By the mid-1970s, with these conflicts over, Southeast Asia was very different from the region on which Australian policy-makers had focused for a quarter of a century. The withdrawal of British and American forces had reduced the regional influence of external powers. The Indochinese states had come under communist rule, but the non-communist governments in the rest of the region appeared secure. Singapore had separated from Malaysia, but both the small city state and the geographically extended federation were stable and increasingly prosperous. A new regional association committed to neutrality and non-intervention, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), had emerged, providing Indonesia with a vehicle for the peaceful exercise of its regional influence. These changes in the regional order contributed to the considerable reorientation in Australia’s attitudes and policies towards Asia that took place in the 1960s and 1970s.

But this reorientation was not just a matter of pragmatic adjustment to regional political change. It also entailed far-reaching changes in the ideas, perceptions and policy assumptions upon which the main lines of Australia’s approaches to Asia had been predicated. A new discourse on ‘living with Asia’ took shape during the 1960s. Its thrust was clearly in the direction of closer engagement. Public exhortations for Australians to respond to the proximity of their country to Asia were hardly novel, but they gained new meanings, new forms and new emphasis. Most importantly, Australians began to replace attitudes based on a faith in European superiority with a willingness to build relationships directly with Asian countries and peoples on a basis of equality. An Australian society and identity, conceived as insular and homogenous, began to give way to one that was culturally and racially pluralist, open and dynamic. These changes in basic attitudes interacted with developments in national and international politics to shape the reorientation of Australian external policies by the Whitlam and Fraser governments in the 1970s.

In immigration policy, the period from 1966 to 1974 was notable for the termination of the White Australia policy. Although popular images and perceptions of White Australia, both within and outside Australia, would not disappear overnight, the change in policy removed a major obstacle to good relations with

Asian countries. In defence policy, Australia responded to Britain's military withdrawal from east of Suez, which had been announced in January 1968, and America's Guam Doctrine, announced in July 1969, by foreshadowing the development of a more self-reliant defence posture. The end of Australia's Vietnam involvement in 1972 confirmed the demise of the doctrine of forward defence. In diplomacy, governments of both major parties sought new ways to foster closer relations with Australia's neighbours and to develop forms of regional community. The Whitlam government was determined to modernise attitudes and policies towards Asia, emphasising its opposition to racism and colonialism, and Malcolm Fraser took a strong personal interest in maintaining this stance. Whitlam opened diplomatic relations with China and then initiated negotiations on a basic treaty of friendship and co-operation with Japan, a treaty that the Fraser government concluded in 1976—the first such regional treaty entered into by Australia. In the immediate neighbourhood Australia sought much closer engagement with the ASEAN states, above all Indonesia, a diplomatic priority that led governments of both major parties in 1975–76 to acquiesce in Indonesia's forceful incorporation of East Timor. In economic affairs, Australia's trade with Asia became both more diverse and larger in volume, with the strong trade relationship with Japan being supplemented in the course of the 1970s by increasing trade with China, South Korea, Taiwan and Southeast Asia. The first few years of Fraser's prime ministership were also notable for his attention to North–South relations, intersecting with his concern with East–West relations, and for his willingness to involve Australia very directly in helping to solve the regional refugee problem. Australia's absorption of substantial numbers of Indochinese 'boat people' provided an emphatic confirmation of the demise of White Australia.

In broad outline, these were some of the principal elements of Australia's engagement with Asia that had emerged by about the end of the 1970s. Attitudes and policies were changing markedly, even if many of the basic concepts—including 'engagement' and 'Asia'—had still to be precisely defined.

Themes in Asian Engagement: From the 1970s to 2000

In the relatively short period with which this second volume deals, a distinct stream of thinking on engagement with Asia (sometimes called 'enmeshment' or 'integration') assumed a central place in Australian political and social debate and public policy. Australia's geographic proximity to Asia had been frequently observed throughout the century, and many differing evaluations of the consequences of that proximity—of the perceived opportunities, challenges and threats it presented, and the responses it required—shaped the policies of Australian governments and the lives of Australian people long before the 1980s. But the voices proclaiming that Australia's future lay in Asia became louder, more insistent and more urgent through the 1980s and into the 1990s.

This new emphasis was in part a response to Australia's changing geopolitical environment. To many in Australia, the decline of the American and British interest (and military presence) in Southeast Asia made it seem all the more evident that Australia must look directly to its neighbourhood, at least as much as it looked to Washington and London, as it sought to define its national future. Alongside this consideration was a growing belief, evident in Australia since at least the 1960s, that the people of Asia had a powerful moral claim to self-determination, economic development and an independent role in international affairs. But by far the most important force driving engagement was economic opportunity. The rise of East Asian economies (often referred to as Asian 'dynamism'), accompanied by a decline in Australian economic vitality in the 1970s and 1980s, encouraged the perception of trade and investment with rapidly growing Asian economies as a tremendous opportunity. In the early 1990s the end of the Cold War helped to accelerate the transition in perceptions of Asia 'from battlefield to marketplace'.

Interweaving with these factors was a sense that in a world of emerging regional associations and blocs, Australia was disadvantaged by having no region to call its own. The notion that Australia was 'a country in search of a region' was expounded by the foreign policy analyst Hugh Collins in an Australian Institute of International Affairs (AIIA) publication in 1986:

In the arenas where the terms of financial, trade, scientific and cultural exchanges are hammered out, many states of comparable weight to Australia will be bargaining as members of regional blocs. Australia, however, has no region in this sense. We have to create the links, the coalitions, the solidarities on particular issues and in different settings. That is why influence matters so much to us. In economists' terms, we have few if any opportunities to be a free rider; life is more expensive this way and—in contrast with the most celebrated aspects of our national character—it puts you on the side of law enforcement.¹

The same point was made in the same publication by the then Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), Stuart Harris. As Harris put it, 'we are an isolated country in the sense that there is a lack of regional links—there is no region or grouping to which we belong naturally—and no easy alliances that are immediately of use to us'.² This kind of perception of Australia's international situation added momentum to the growth of a belief in the need for regional co-operation.³

All these factors gave impetus both to the discourse on 'engagement' and to government policy-making. The Australian governments of the 1980s, both Coalition and Labor, directed their diplomacy towards the goal of an interdependent, open and inclusive Asia compatible with Australian economic and strategic interests, while seeking to transform Australia into an outward-looking and competitive country with growing ties to Asia. The two foreign ministers of the Hawke government, Bill Hayden and Gareth Evans, considerably expanded the scope of Asian engagement while applying its prescriptions to foreign policy. Evans, in

particular, developed an intellectual framework for Australia's engagement with Asia that grounded government policy and action in a series of analytical assessments and judgements about Australia's future in Asia. By the early 1990s engagement with Asia had become the organising principle for a range of policies. These included diplomatic efforts to improve and deepen bilateral relations with Asian countries, attempts to create regional structures for co-operation on economic and strategic matters, and efforts to boost knowledge of Asia and skills for engagement among the Australian population. Paul Keating, as Prime Minister, tied this agenda to his vision for a cosmopolitan Australian republic, thus imbuing engagement with even greater weight.

His aim, he declared in 1994, was for Australia 'to be a country which is deeply integrated into the region around us' in broader ways, by clarifying Australia's national identity and making 'full use of the great resource of the growing number of Australians of Asian background'. He looked forward, by the centenary of Federation, to a new national culture, 'shaped by' and helping to shape 'the cultures around us'.⁴

In the later 1990s the Liberal–National Party government led by John Howard retained a commitment to Asian engagement, while rejecting what it regarded as Labor's excessive rhetoric and supplicant diplomacy. Howard characterised his predecessor's policy as 'Asia only', and argued that it was more appropriate to pursue a policy of 'Asia first'. His position on engagement was summarised in his view that Australia did not in fact need to choose between its history and its geography. He argued that Australia, 'as a Western nation next to Asia with strong links to the United States', occupied 'a unique intersection' and could deploy its 'unique assets' in its relationships in the Asian region.⁵ His Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer, supplemented this argument by maintaining that the Coalition's Asia policy was practical, realistic and based on actions rather than words, as was evident, for example, in Australia's response to the East Asian financial crisis of 1997. This kind of approach was serving to cement Australia's place as 'a real regional contributor'.⁶

By the 1990s, in short, the importance of Australia's engagement with Asia had become a central strand of thinking on Australia's place in the world. This discourse was not limited to government, as ideas proliferated in media commentary, academic research, business dialogue and elsewhere. Nor was Australian thinking monolithic. Policy-makers and advocates varied a good deal in their enthusiasms and emphases. Sometimes the push for engagement lost impetus or was overtaken by other policy priorities; at the very end of the century, for example, some commentators felt that this had become the case, if only temporarily.⁷ Moreover, as engagement was pushed more strongly so the issues sharpened, and some aspects became controversial.

One fundamental question became a matter of dispute: what exactly was the region with which Australia wished to engage? The pressure for engagement assumed that Australia belonged (or ought to belong) to a region, that it shared interests with other states in that region, and that it should therefore work within

regional frameworks to realise those interests. But several conceptualisations of Australia's region circulated during the 1980s and 1990s. 'Asia' and 'the Asia-Pacific' were the most important, while Evans briefly advocated the idea of an 'East Asian hemisphere', and others sometimes spoke of 'the Pacific rim'.

Australia's position with respect to 'Asia' was conceived in several ways. Political leaders rarely claimed that Australia was part of Asia, although some Labor politicians came close to doing so. It was more common for Australia to be described as being 'alongside' or 'next to' Asia, and to speak about Asia as Australia's region without suggesting that Australia actually 'belonged to' or was 'part of' Asia. The approach of the Labor government in power from 1983 to 1996 was usually to identify Australia's region as 'the Asia-Pacific'. Liberal and National Party leaders also employed the term 'Asia-Pacific', but less frequently. The term seems to have entered common usage in the early 1970s, when speakers on Australia's Asian future combined a well-established definition of Australia's region as the Pacific with a new emphasis on Asia. It could also be read as a reference to the countries and maritime states of Asia touching the Pacific, from Japan to Australia, similar to what was implied by the term sometimes used in European discussions of the area, 'Pacific Asia'. Australian definitions customarily took in the United States and Canada as well.⁸ The 'Asia-Pacific' so defined was regarded as a more comforting region than Asia alone, since Australia had the company of culturally similar countries in the United States, New Zealand and Canada, and there was less doubt over Australia's right and ability to participate in such a wide and inclusive entity. Australia's regional diplomacy in the 1980s and 1990s worked mostly within the concept of the Asia-Pacific, contributing to the definition and development of that region as it went.

Regional bodies such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) group later included Russia and the countries of the Pacific coast of South America in their scope, but Australia was ambivalent about their inclusion, as it was about proposals to include South Asia. Even so, 'Asia-Pacific' was by no means universally endorsed as an appropriate conceptualisation of Australia's region. Stephen FitzGerald was prominent among the critics who saw it as lacking in meaning, as an idea having little significance outside Australia, and indeed as representing an overambitious attempt by Australia to combine its interests and relationships with Asian countries, with the island states of the South Pacific and with the United States into a single framework.⁹

For almost all participants in debates over engagement and Australia's regional identity in the 1980s and 1990s, irrespective of their position, the real issue was undoubtedly East Asia. This was evident in Evans's 1995 experiment to define an 'East Asian hemisphere' that grouped Australia with the countries to its north. While he normally worked, as did Keating, with the notion of 'Asia-Pacific', he proposed an East Asian hemisphere identity in order to give resonance to the Asian component of Asia-Pacific similar to that which, for longstanding historical reasons, already applied to the Pacific part.¹⁰ Although a regional definition remained somewhat

amorphous (and in fact an object of Australian diplomacy as much as a precept of it), and different formulations of Australia's geographical and regional position were inconsistently applied, engagement with East Asia was the vital issue.

Australian politics was littered with references to the 'opportunities' and 'challenges' posed by Asia, which would be 'seized' or 'harnessed'. This emphasis in the rhetoric of Asian engagement on opportunities created by new realities was pronounced, and contributed towards casting engagement as a progressive, optimistic, reformist and forward-looking political programme. By contrast, rejection of engagement was portrayed as stagnant, unrealistic and backward. As the 1980s and 1990s progressed, engagement was increasingly presented as inevitable. Policy choices were seen more and more as being about the form of response to the Asian challenge, rather than as whether to respond at all. Evans, who frequently spoke of the inevitability of Australia's engaging its Asian environment, said in 1988 that

What matters is whether we do in fact choose to adopt a cast of mind that recognises that our future lies, inevitably, in Australia becoming more and more closely integrated with the region of which we are geographically so inescapably a part; or whether rather we maintain a cast of mind that sees ourselves as first and foremost a transplanted European nation. My point is essentially that we have no choice, and the faster that any lingering nostalgia for the 'European outpost' model is dropped the better.¹¹

By 1997 FitzGerald could write that a decision was forced on Australia and that the choice had been 'more or less' made, even if people tried to 'skirt around the commitment . . . to contain and condition it semantically'.¹² There was a good deal of force in the argument that a substantial measure of engagement was inevitable, in Australia's self-interest. To the end of the century, however, there remained scope for debate on just how substantial that measure should be.

Against the background of these shifting ideas, this volume sets out to elucidate the main policy elements of Australia's drive to engage with Asia in the last part of the century. It seeks to combine the discussion of broad policy themes with analysis of particular episodes in regional, subregional and bilateral policy-making. The early part of the volume is thematic in emphasis. It begins by addressing the fundamental questions of economic and security relationships. In economic affairs a range of new policies was put in train. From the early 1980s Australia undertook a programme of economic reforms designed to encourage, among other things, a more competitive and export-oriented trading profile. Abroad, Australia pressed for liberalisation of both trade and investment regimes, especially in the Asia-Pacific region. Efforts were made to achieve greater economic integration through the creation of regional multilateral institutions. These activities, especially the effort to build institutions, are discussed in the first chapter.

The second chapter deals with issues of security and defence, for which the accepted prescription was that Australia should find its security in, rather than against, Asia. This required a good deal of rethinking of Australian defence doctrine,

as a series of defence reports and White Papers during the period attest. Other developments were the establishment of the ASEAN Regional Forum as a venue for dialogue on regional security issues, and the significant, if short-lived, innovation of an agreement on maintaining security between Australia and Indonesia.

An important issue for both the proponents and critics of engagement in the last part of the century was the question of difference between 'Australian values' and 'Asian values' in political, social and economic life. Even as the Australian government worked to consolidate economic and security links, a political and public debate took place in Australia on the issue of whether the government should seek not just to advance Australia's material interests in Asia, but also to promote its liberal, democratic and individualist values—especially when dealing with autocratic regimes. Chapter 3 takes up this issue. It concentrates in particular on matters of human rights, for these became a significant concern of Australia's regional diplomacy after the 1970s. The chapter discusses general human rights doctrine and also includes a number of case studies that illustrate the working of human rights diplomacy in practice.

Following these three broadly thematic chapters, the next three chapters follow a more geographical logic. Their primary aim is to provide descriptive and analytical accounts of Australia's relationships with the major Asian subregions and states through the period, with particular reference to 'turning points' and times of heightened political challenge for Australia's policy-makers. The focus becomes progressively tighter through these chapters. Chapter 4 outlines the evolution of Australia's relations with the three great subregions, with most of the emphasis falling on the major states—Japan, China and Korea in Northeast Asia, Indonesia in Southeast Asia and India in South Asia. With much ground to cover, the discussion in this chapter is fairly broad-brush in style; but certain episodes of signal importance are treated in more detail. Chapter 5 turns to Indochina. Over the twenty years from the middle 1970s to the middle 1990s, the complex and shifting political and strategic landscape of Indochina put Australian diplomacy to a considerable test, culminating in Australia's involvement in the Cambodian peace settlement of 1991. Since this involvement constituted Australia's most ambitious effort to help resolve a political dispute in mainland Asia, it is discussed in some detail. Chapter 6 then focuses even more closely on the most sensitive and demanding of all the tests of Australian regional diplomacy in the period: the East Timor crisis of the late 1990s.

The last two chapters bring the analysis of engagement home to Australia itself. Chapter 7 considers the issue of society-to-society linkages, with particular reference to the role of knowledge, language, travel and cross-cultural activities for successful engagement. From the 1960s through the 1990s it was often contended that Australians knew too little about Asia. Relatively few had travelled in the region, and even fewer spoke Asian languages. In an attempt to remedy these deficiencies, programmes were established to encourage students at every level to undertake studies of Asia. These were supplemented by other initiatives, such as training

courses for business people. Social and cultural contact also took other forms, such as arts exchanges and cultural diplomacy, and the chapter considers these as well. Collectively, such activities were sometimes described as the acquisition of 'Asia literacy'. Disagreements existed over the ways in which society-to-society linkages might best be fostered but, as with economic and security linkages, their general desirability in principle was seldom challenged.

By contrast, certain other policy prescriptions were matters of some contention within Australian society. These prescriptions concerned immigration and multiculturalism, and they suggested that much more was at stake in engagement than adjustments to economic and security arrangements and the extension of Asia literacy. They raised questions about Australian cultural practices, values and institutions, and about the composition of the Australian population, and hence touched on the fundamental issue of national identity. How far should Australian society change in order to engage Asia successfully? How far was it already changing? What were the positive and negative features of social change, in the view of the host society? These questions gave rise to intermittent, and occasionally heated, debate in Australia during the period, sometimes in response to the articulation by public figures of qualms about the rate of social change. Chapter 8 takes up these matters.

The concluding chapter draws out the main themes of the volume, offers some general reflections on the idea and practice of engagement through the twentieth century, and looks speculatively ahead to the twenty-first.