

Engaging Culturally with Many Asias

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Introduction

The terms of reference for this study were principally to summarize the cultural diplomacy theory and practice of China, India, Japan and Korea and relate this theory and practice to how cultural actors in these four countries perceive Australian culture and assess the quality of cultural cooperation with counterparts in Australia. The summarizing process was to be based on material already collected in the framework of the European Union's 'Culture in EU External Relations' inquiry, of which the author was the Scientific Coordinator and Team Leader, while the second part of the task was to be carried out through further reading and a limited number of focused interviews.¹ Additionally, the author was asked to obtain and analyse to the extent possible, on the basis of desk research, similar information pertaining to Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. Finally, on the basis of this analysis, the author was asked to set out some lessons for future Australian cultural engagement with these countries.

These specifics have meant that the study can be little more than a context-setting exercise for the pursuit of 'Asia Literacy'. Its limited scope, depth and duration have precluded any pretensions to producing a fully-fledged set of policy recommendations. The findings presented below should therefore be considered to be only very preliminary. In addition to this caveat, several further prefatory remarks would be in order.

First, 'culture' as it is referred to in this study will pertain to the arts and heritage, not the broader 'ways of life' understanding. The focus is on cooperation in the field of arts and heritage – as it takes place amongst individual artists as well as arts producing and arts delivery organizations, including museums and other custodians of cultural heritage. It can be observed, however, that nowadays, with increasing frequency, the 'arts and heritage' understandings are conflated with the 'ways of life' readings of the 'culture' concept. The former are thus often promoted in the name of the latter. In other words, artistic flourishing in and for itself, or heritage preservation and presentation, are seen as the privileged vehicles for better appreciation and/or protection and promotion of distinct (generally 'national') ways of life. This conflation is particularly salient in the rhetoric of diplomacy and international relations; it has also become naturalized in popular usage.

¹The report of this EU 'Preparatory Action' was published on 12 June, 2014 and is available at: <http://cultureinexternalrelations.eu/>

Second, a few words are needed on the terms ‘cultural diplomacy’ and its more recent companion, ‘soft power’. Although countries such as France have used the term since the nineteenth century, ‘cultural diplomacy’ entered common parlance in most other countries only in the 1990s. It was originally used to refer to the processes occurring when diplomats *servicing national governments* took recourse to cultural exchanges and flows or sought to channel them for the advancement of their perceived national interests. Today, while these instrumental purposes remain essential for many, equally important are the non-instrumental objectives of promoting mutual understanding and cooperation, or sharing ideas for the sake of the common good, defined in global terms. This ‘relational’ reading of the notion of cultural diplomacy has been fostered by the growing recognition that work done on the ground and in a true spirit of reciprocity is bound to lead to more robust and lasting relationships and results than top-down politically driven image-projection can.

The term ‘soft power’ was coined by the Harvard political scientist Joseph Nye in 1990, who distinguished between the command power – economic carrots and military sticks – that the United States of America possessed in ample measure and the co-optive or ‘soft’ power of ‘getting others to want what you want’ (Nye 1990). This soft power rests on the attraction of one’s ideas or on the ability to set the political agenda in a way that shapes the *preferences* that others are led to express. The soft power Nye was advocating that the USA deploy alongside – not instead of – its hard power was the *universal appeal* of its popular culture, as embodied in cultural goods and services, as well as the *international influence* of what he called the ‘ethnic openness’ of its way of life, as well as the *political appeal* of the American *values* of democracy and human rights.

It should be understood, therefore, that cultural attractiveness per se is *not* soft power. Instead, it can be a soft power resource, when it is deployed to achieve clearly defined policy objectives under a thought-out strategy. Soft power is not intended to replace ‘hard’ power, but rather to complement it. Also of particular relevance to the present study is Nye’s later idea of ‘meta-soft power’, which is a group’s capacity and introspective ability to criticise itself that contributes to its international attractiveness, legitimacy and credibility (Nye 2002). Soft power thinking is linked to the notion of ‘public diplomacy’, advocated as a more citizen-oriented form of diplomacy than the standard model, that is to say a form of intercultural dialogue based on mutuality and reciprocal listening stances and where the ‘targets’ are no longer other governments so much as diverse national and global audiences and publics.

Both ‘cultural diplomacy’ and ‘soft power’ have considerable purchase in the Asian countries concerned and are widely deployed in Australia. In the Asian settings, the notions serve both as engines and as justifications for injecting culture into the country’s diplomacy; they are also deployed by many other actors, including artists and their organizations, who have come to realize that tactical use of the currently fashionable term opens up avenues of funding and support for their activities, in other words the flourishing of fruitful artistic exchange and cooperation for their own sake. For artists, then, diplomacy as such is not among their core purposes and if it figures, it tends to occupy only a rather minor role in their self-image and self-presentation (Isar 2010; Otmagin 2012).

A third preliminary observation is that the author was *not* asked to examine the policy and practice of the many Australian governmental entities (notably those operating under the aegis of DFAT) or non-governmental arts exchange organizations already working actively with these countries. These activities have been mapped by Phillip Mar in his study for the present project (i.e. Asia Literacy – Language and Beyond) entitled ‘Australian approaches to cultural diplomacy and engagement’. Yet right from the outset of the present inquiry, it became obvious that the policy discourse and activities of these existing bodies provide the context and/or basis for the efforts and aspirations of the arts practitioners who were informants from the study. What is more, a number of existing policy documents already articulate a coherent and robust set of ideas for successful cultural engagement, despite the fact that the Australian Government’s overall geo-political orientations have shifted markedly since these papers were written. For example, the finding of the 2012 White Paper *Australia in the Asian Century* that Australians need to build ‘Asia-relevant capabilities’ that ‘include adaptability, flexibility, resilience, creative and design thinking and the confidence and readiness to interact with and operate in Asia’ (162) remains fully valid. So too, the need it identifies for Australians to possess ‘advisory, decision-making, cultural and representational skills to make informed decisions in an increasingly complex environment’ (163). Other documents such as *Our Place in the Asian Century. Southeast Asia as ‘The Third Way’, a report of the Asialink Commission* edited for Asialink/The University of Melbourne by Anthony Milner and Sally Percival Wood, reinforce this idea, as does an essay by Carroll and Gantner written the same year.² Yet in much

² Other key issues pinpointed by Carroll and Gantner have been confirmed by our informants, notably the following set of observations: It is not easy for people in Asia to access our arts by themselves: distance and expense get in the way. And what reason do people from Asia have to search out our arts when we can be perceived as having a largely derivative culture? We have to take the initiative, to invite and encourage, to knock on doors and “be out there”. We are fortunate that we have the capacity to do so: a robust economy

Australian official thinking, as is the case elsewhere in the world, less attention is paid to the forging of lasting partnerships with others than to the projection and promotion of a nation's cultural image abroad. The previous government's *Creative Australia*, for example, envisaged giving Australia 'a world renowned reputation as a sophisticated, innovative, creative and culturally diverse nation producing internationally acclaimed artists and creators' or, in the Asia-Pacific region, ensuring that 'Australia's voice will be heard across the region.' This still reflects a somewhat unilateral, or monological vision of international cultural relations.

The need for more dialogical perspectives was one of the key lessons that emerged from the European Union inquiry referred to above. It is also contained in the existing rhetoric of Australian cultural cooperation bodies, whether public or private. Hence in terms of guidelines for future engagement, many of the essential understandings appear to be available in Australia already. But whether this rhetoric is matched by practice on the ground and whether this practice is adequate in relation to real needs is another matter. The question cannot be resolved here. More importantly, however, as the inquiry proceeded, it became clear that many of the attitudes of non-Europeans towards European state and non-state actors revealed by the EU project are duplicated in regard to Australia – in adapted form to be sure – by people in Asia, who continue to view Australia as essentially a 'Western' country.

Fourthly, although a 'historical overview' was requested, the page length stipulated in the terms of reference rules out a level of detail that goes further back than the last few decades, although of course many of the relationships and attitudes originated much earlier in the past.

The final and probably most important preliminary remark on the substance of the issues is that the issue cannot be simply a question of Australians being ignorant of the cultures of these Asian countries but of the people in those countries being as ignorant of Australians and Australian culture and society. The challenge in this encounter – or clash, to borrow from Edward Said – is one of mutual ignorance.³ In this sense a key lesson, to be mentioned almost as an *a priori*, is that *the*

and a vibrant arts sector strongly supported by government... Some of the lessons drawn from those who do work with Asia are clear: the commitment to developing real partnerships; the exciting and often unpredictable outcomes of shared creative inputs across cultural difference; and the value of long-term commitments in order to build real legacies.

³ Edward Said, 'The Clash of Ignorance', *The Nation*, October 22, 2001.

forging of 'literacy' has to be mutual. In order to begin generating new and better knowledge of the cultural life and aspirations of the Asian countries in Australia and for Australians, it will be indispensable to understand how these countries represent themselves and how they would like to be represented. Do they feel that they and their cultures have been and continue to be inaccurately stereotyped? Is the reverse also true? And, perhaps even more importantly, if better 'Asian literacy' is to be the cognitive and affective foundation for broader and deeper cultural relations, then what are the expectations of actors in those countries?

This emphasis on mutuality is now embedded in much public diplomacy thinking. On the cultural plane, this relates to the manner in which the place of culture in international relations has grown in tandem with the increasing centrality of culture in many different spheres of life and in all sectors of society. The production, distribution and consumption of cultural goods and services have become significant components of the world economy, constituting a major productive sector in their own right. Yet beyond the economic sphere alone, culture and cultural expression are recognised as key elements in the social and interpersonal realms. They are enablers of dialogue between and among groups and nations, of peace building and conflict resolution, for the empowerment of civil society or the sharing of democratic values and human rights. Cultural practice is also a driver of innovation in many social, political and technological arenas, just as it has become a key to the development of cities and regions.⁴ In negative terms, culture clashes and conflicts over identity have also come to the forefront as security issues. For all these reasons, culture has entered into the heart of international relations thinking everywhere as a major public policy issue. It is often invoked today in all kinds of dealings between States. In this context, many actors other than governments are building 'a mass of connections between individuals, civil society, businesses, pressure groups and charitable organisations which are also part of the relations between nations.'⁵

Referring to Australia's geo-political position as one of the medium sized powers that are allies of the USA, Michael Wesley points out that in the Asia-Pacific region Australia in the years ahead 'will no longer be too small to make a difference' and that in this context, not only will its relations with China and India be important in themselves but also the way in which it can share

⁴ See *UN Creative Economy Report 2013. Widening Local Development Pathways.*

⁵ The Right Hon. William Hague, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, United Kingdom. (2013) Foreword. *Influence and Attraction. Culture and the race for soft power in the 21st century.* London, Demos and the British Council.

insights and perspectives on China and India that are held by Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand and Vietnam. These countries will become increasingly important to Australia and 'their choices about China, India and America will become as crucial to Australia's security and prosperity as Australia's choices are to them' (Wesley 2011: 213-214).

As regards the methods used to carry out this inquiry, several observations are also in order. First, as regards the core countries for the study, China, India, Japan and the Republic of Korea, the author drew on the data gathered under the European Union project he coordinated in 2013-14 and was able to supplement this information by consulting the limited quantity of literature available that pertains to cultural relations between these countries and Australia. He also carried out interviews with arts practitioners and cultural sector officials from or connected with these countries; most of the interviews were conducted during a short stay in Sydney, several others took place in Paris and Beijing.⁶ As regards the other countries, the cultural policy/cultural diplomacy fields of only Singapore and Vietnam have been addressed in the literature (in the sociology of culture, cultural policy studies, cultural and media studies) and for this reason desk research has yielded scant results. Significantly, only Vietnam has a profile published on the Asia-Europe Foundation's '*culture360*' online portal, while a similar profile on Singapore is nearing completion.⁷ There is no such profile for Indonesia, Malaysia or Thailand. As regards the attitudes and expectations of actors from these five countries in relation to Australia, only a few could be interviewed. On the other hand, a number of Australian cultural actors deeply involved and/or committed to cultural relations with partners in these countries were interviewed. Their testimony is obviously coloured by who they are; yet as this testimony is that of sincere and committed actors, it deserves to be seen as relevant and valid.

The results of the inquiry will be presented as follows. In Part I, for each of the four 'core' countries, a) a 'cultural diplomacy profile' and b) the 'cultural interface' with Australia, will be provided. Part II will consist of similar presentations for Singapore and Vietnam, while for Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia, the two segments will perforce be rather limited. Part III of the present document will consist of lessons learned – these must be considered tentative at this stage.

⁶ The interviews were carried out in Sydney between 20 April and 10 May 2014; subsequently in Paris and Beijing.

⁷ <http://culture360.asef.org/>

I. The core countries: China, India, Japan and the Republic of Korea

China⁸

A. *The Cultural Diplomacy Profile*

As in several other domains, China's cultural relations with the rest of the world are placed under the seal of a certain novelty. China's recent rise as a major economic and geopolitical player has made it increasingly attractive to other countries principally for economic and political reasons, without dispelling either negative perceptions of Communist Party rule or more long-standing anxieties summed up by the 'Yellow Peril' trope. The Chinese government itself, aware of the discrepancy, has stepped up its use of cultural tools in order to improve the image of China and expand its international influence. In the process, the authorities have adopted the 'soft power' discourse and engaged upon what one scholar has termed a 'charm offensive' (Kurlantzick 2007). In 2007, President Hu Jintao announced at the Communist Party Congress that culture – understood as the cultural/creative industries – was of strategic importance for the image of China and notably for its economic development; this prompted a shift in focus from cultural exchange to cultural trade. Governments at the provincial and city levels have integrated the cultural and creative industries discourse into their framing of cultural policy and, by the same token, into their image projection abroad. Hence culture not only for a better image and mutual understanding, but also as a revenue earner. In this context, China is now emphasizing the international sharing of experience and knowhow in the field of the cultural and creative industries, principally for the purpose of affording Chinese producers and distributors a better knowledge of foreign markets, better understanding of the tastes of foreign audiences/consumers, and better interactions with foreign cultural operators with a view to boosting the export of Chinese cultural goods and services. The National Bureau of Statistics of China reports that these industries (CCIs) have grown rapidly in recent years. Its figures for 2012 indicated that their added value was €208 billion (1.8 trillion RMB) – an increase of 16.5 % from 2011. The sector accounted for 3.48 % of gross domestic product (GDP), an increase of 0.2 % from 2011. The current Minister of Culture expects the value-added output of the cultural industry to

⁸ Based on the report prepared in 2014 by Yolanda Smits for the EU Preparatory Action 'Culture in EU External Relations' (<http://cultureinexternalrelations.eu/>).

contribute 5% to the country's GDP in 2016.⁹ The authorities have also set up 600,000 rural reading rooms; 370,000 books were published in 2011 - more than any other country; it produced 745 feature films in 2012 compared to 140 feature films in 2003; it had 2,838 museums and 3,286 culture centres in 2012 compared to 1,519 museums and 2,892 culture centres in 2003.

The country has also developed giant Internet companies such as Alibaba, Baidu and Tencent that now range among the global top 10 Internet sites next to Google, Facebook, Amazon and Ebay. According to Anne Stevenson-Yang of J Capital Research the political importance of these private companies cannot be underestimated: 'When companies are this big in China, the difference between public and private is not that important. For all intents and purposes these companies have become the Ministry of the Internet.'¹⁰ It is expected that these companies will also expand internationally and interact increasingly with as well as influence public opinion outside China.

Concomitantly, the Chinese government has begun to invest more heavily in both the educational and the communicational arenas. An emblematic example is the establishment of the Confucius Institutes around the world to promote Chinese language and culture. The Haban/Confucius Institute is a public institution affiliated with the Chinese Ministry of Education. There are currently 456 Confucius Institutes and the authorities plan to have 1000 in place by 2020. In order to expand the number of institutes as quickly as possible, the Chinese government is establishing joint ventures with foreign universities. There are no geographical priorities with regard to where these entities should be located and many are in fact being created in response to demand from foreign universities, rather than supply side pressure from China. Currently there are more applications from universities in other countries than China has the means to meet them. As noted by Hartig, the Chinese have adopted an approach that is 'strategically very smart: by using the current global demand for and fascination with Chinese language and culture, the Chinese government has found interested and willing international partners to co-finance the teaching of Chinese language and the introduction of Chinese culture' (2012: 269).

⁹ China Daily Online. 2011. Cultural industry set to be a pillar of Chinese economy by 2016. 22 October 2011. http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/indepth/2011-10/22/c_131206627.htm

¹⁰ Ibid.

In Australia there are currently nine Confucius Institutes.¹¹ The Chinese government has chosen to work with universities around the world and use their premises; this in the Chinese view would create a win-win situation for universities facing budget cuts due to the economic crisis. It is seen as a problem by many inside China that the Haban/Confucius Institutes are not part of the Ministry of Culture and/or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Better coordination would allow China to better expand its cultural sector in their view. A number of scholars in Australia and elsewhere are troubled by the idea of a university accepting funds from a foreign country to set up a cultural institute on its campus: in their view this could affect academic freedom adversely.

The Ministry of Culture has also set up its own Culture Centres. There are 14 of them around the world (the plan is to open 50 by 2020), but they do not function as well as the Confucius Institutes (due to the lack of cooperation with local partners, according to some European experts).

In order to provide a Chinese perspective on world events the government has set up a 24-hour news channel (a collaboration between the official press agency Xinhua and the public television broadcaster CCTV) and an international newspaper (*China Daily*). The purpose is also to promote China as: 1) a harmonious society 2) a stable economic system 3) a trustworthy peaceful power and 4) a culture and civilisation to be respected. The 'Media Going Global' strategy has a US\$6 billion budget. Wanning Sun sees a certain naiveté in Chinese official circles regarding the effects of these programmes; since these tend to be evaluated principally in quantitative output terms alone it is difficult to assess their qualitative impact.¹² Another issue is that 'high culture' focused events showcasing Chinese culture find an audience consisting mainly of diasporic Chinese and a smattering of interested Australians. Some work is also being carried out with diasporic media enterprises. One such Australian partnership is with the entrepreneur Tommy Jiang, whose interests are in Chinese radio in Australia, New Zealand and Sri Lanka. Diasporic communities are 'both target and means' and a way to 'borrow the boat to go overseas.'

¹¹ The Confucius Institute in Adelaide; then at the Queensland University of Technology, the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, the University of Melbourne, the University of New South Wales, the University of Newcastle, the University of Queensland, the University of Sydney and the University of Western Australia. <http://confuciusinstitute.unl.edu/institutes.shtml#Australia> accessed 18 June, 2014.

¹² Observation made on 17 October 2013 at the symposium organized by the Institute for Culture and Society at the University of Western Sydney 'Cultural Diplomacy. Beyond the National Interest?'

In effect, with a diaspora population that has grown to more than 50 million, Beijing has over the last several decades turned systematically to the steadily increasing worldwide Chinese diaspora so as to both appeal to and protect overseas Chinese. Since 1989, it has actively pursued policies to connect culturally and politically with and harness the economic and political benefits of the Chinese diaspora, using tools that include overseas recruitment and incentive programs and government entities that deal specifically with overseas Chinese populations. As Amy Chang has observed, the government also seeks to get Chinese abroad to represent the country's interests through commercial, cultural, and political engagement. In addition to highlighting the economic benefits of a relationship with China, Beijing has attempted to exert strategic influence on the diaspora through soft-power inducements. Despite mixed results, Beijing understands the strategic importance of the diaspora in economic and political affairs and is expected to continue consideration of the diaspora in its foreign policy planning (Chang 2013).

At the central government level, the Ministries of Culture, Foreign Affairs, Education and Commerce have the competence to deal with international cultural relations. Regional and local governments are also entitled to engage in cultural cooperation with foreign authorities and cultural institutions. They have taken an active role in setting up culture-orientated development strategies and developed their own policies for cultural cooperation with foreign countries. Major cities have embraced the 'creative cities' concept and have adopted plans to enhance local culture and creativity, e.g. Beijing, Guangzhou, Hangzhou, Nanjing, Shanghai, Shenzhen, Tianjin and Qingdao. Local authorities are also involved in the financing and selection of international projects and cooperate with state-owned companies to set up large-scale projects. China's priority countries for culture in external relations correspond to its foreign policy strategies (both political and economic). Its first priority is the US and its second is the EU. Japan comes a somewhat distant third. China is also beginning to show more interest in its other Asian neighbours, as well as countries on the African continent. Michael Wesley has opined that 'China seems unsure about how to wield its gravitational power for positive ends. It often leads to considerable frustration that, amidst all of the attention and acknowledgement, China is treated suspiciously and often denied what it asks for.' (Wesley 2011: 191). Thus there has been scepticism across the Asia-Pacific region as regards the Chinese government's 'peaceful rise' rhetoric (presented in

2003). Jocelyn Chey cites Rumi Aoyama, a Japanese Chinese scholar, who has noted that the government no longer exerts monopoly control over external public relations activities and observes that 'there is now a kind of tension between the government and the mass media due to the reform and open policy since 1978 which provides, to some extent, checks and balances.'¹³ This tension is particularly evident in the electronic media. Chey also mentions the case of the misunderstanding that arose when the 2009 Melbourne Film Festival included *Ten Conditions of Love*, a documentary about the Uighur independence leader Rebiya Kadeer: Chinese government representatives saw this as an unfriendly act, assuming that the Australian government was in a position to ban material that was offensive in Chinese official eyes. In effect, the government's use of culture and communication tools is significantly challenged. The assumption that these are tools for governments simply to convey the 'right' message is viewed negatively elsewhere as a form of censorship and/or propaganda. Hence there are limits to the effectiveness of the Chinese 'charm offensive' and to the degree to which it can actually change China's image for the better. As Holyk observes, 'China has a long way to go in building its image with publics in democratic-capitalist countries and major world powers... the key challenge to China will be to increase its soft-power resources among these liberal democracies (2011: 245). Writing about the impact of the Confucius Institutes in Australia, Falk Hartig concludes: 'As long as the Chinese government is still arresting human rights lawyers, is censoring journalists and is covering up disasters and the like, all efforts by CIs to shape China's image can only hit the wall' (2012: 270).

B. The China-Australia cultural interface

Australia is perceived geopolitically in China as a 'Western' ally of the US, yet it occupies a distinctly lower place in the hierarchy of the Chinese imaginary in search of cultural distinction than either the UK or the USA. The stereotypes of Australians as a relaxed, informal and hedonistic people living in splendid natural settings surrounded by koalas and kangaroos still have purchase, making the country a relatively attractive destination. Hence the 'people-to-people' links vaunted by public

¹³ Jocelyn Chey, 'Cultural Diplomacy and Australia-China Cultural Relations', AIIA NSW Branch Charteris Lecture, 20 July, 2010.

diplomacy are developing apace; DFAT reports that China is Australia's second largest source of visitor arrivals (709,000 in 2013). The country is also recognized in China as an important trading partner and a middle-range power. Australians for their part are not immune to the ambiguous worldwide fascination with the surging giant that is China – on the one hand a certain dread of its new found power and on the other the lure of Chinese markets and the other lucrative opportunities the country offers. They reports that a 2009 Lowy Institute public opinion poll showed that a high number of Australians still regarded China as a potential threat to Australia. 'In view of the importance of our economic and political relationship with China', she observes, 'this is a worrying sign that the government has not convinced the general public that China represents neither an economic nor a strategic threat.'¹⁴ DFAT's country brief on China tries its best, however, in the following sober terms: 'The Australia-China bilateral relationship is extensive and continues to grow in breadth and depth. It is based on strong economic and trade complementarities and assisted by a comprehensive program of high level visits and wide-ranging cooperation activities.'¹⁵

Cultural initiatives of various kinds form part of this increasingly diversified panoply. There is some scope for collaboration in the cultural and creative industries although to take a significant example, the Shanghai Media Group's principal reference remains London and Paris. Contemporary Chinese Art is being sponsored by private galleries: the White Rabbit in Sydney, for example, holds one of the world's largest and most significant collections.¹⁶ Official attention in China focuses upon transfer of knowledge for the development of innovative products; access to markets in Australia; management of cultural institutions, notably the CCIs; cooperation in the field of intangible cultural heritage (China has 34 inscriptions, for example, on UNESCO's 'Representative List of the Intangible Heritage of Humanity') and a larger number of exchanges in the contemporary, performing and visual arts. Non-governmental cultural actors in China clearly prefer a less instrumentalizing approach, though for the foreseeable future, apart from the contemporary visual arts, it is difficult to see much independent exchange initiative emerging from the country's cultural sector. Yet as is the case with cultural relations between China and Europe, activities in the arts and culture could be ideal mediators between very different value systems, through their capacity to express and convey

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 21.

¹⁵ http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/china/china_brief.html

¹⁶ <http://www.whiterabbitcollection.org/> accessed 12 June, 2014.

mind-sets and concepts beyond preconceived positions. Australia's accent on cultural diversity would also trigger more exploration of ethnic diversity in China. People-to-people based artistic exchanges, creative hubs, intercultural training, management training, residency programmes and co-production activities are seen as essential tools by private Chinese stakeholders to improve China-Australia cultural cooperation.

Chinese make up the largest non-white immigrant group in Australia: as of June 2011 they led the way at 6.5 per cent (391,060 people) of the total immigrant population.¹⁷ They are the third largest migrant group in Australia (after the UK and New Zealand), representing 6.5 per cent of Australia's overseas-born population and 1.8 per cent of its total population. In the year 2011-12, China was the second largest provider of permanent migrants to Australia. Some 185 000 China-born people work in Australia as professionals (24 per cent), technicians and trades workers (14 per cent) and clerical and administrative workers (14 per cent); they are also currently the largest provider of students and make up 20 per cent of all international enrolments in Australia, primarily in higher education or post-graduate research.¹⁸ DFAT also reports that China has agreed to be involved in the New Colombo Plan from 2015 and believes that this will encourage a more genuine two-way flow of students, 'help to lift knowledge of China in Australia and strengthen people-to-people and institutional relationships, through study and internships undertaken by Australian undergraduate students in the region.' Yet despite this major presence of both a Chinese diaspora in the strict sense of the word and of large numbers of Chinese who stay in the country temporarily, notably students, there appears to be little systematic or imaginative recourse on either side to this population of a now insider 'Other' with a view to breaking down the mutual veils of ignorance. A good deal of exported Chinese culture, particularly in the performing arts, caters to expatriate Chinese audiences rather than to white Australians. There appears to be little demand expressed on the Australian side. This under-utilization of a potential for mutual awareness building and understanding – literacy as

¹⁷ At 30 June 2011, 27 per cent of the estimated resident population of Australia was born overseas (6.0 million). The countries representing the highest overseas-born populations are the United Kingdom (1,180,160, 19.6 per cent of overseas-born), New Zealand (564,920, 9.4 per cent), the People's Republic of China (391,060, 6.5 per cent), India (343,070, 5.7 per cent) and Vietnam (212,070, 3.5 per cent). Overall, the proportion of overseas-born residents from European countries of birth is declining, while the proportion of migrants coming from Asia and Africa is increasing. See: <https://www.immi.gov.au/media/factsheets/15population.htm#e> accessed 12 June, 2014.

¹⁸ John West, Director, Asian Century Institute, 26 March 2014 'Asian Migration to Australia'. <http://asiancenturyinstitute.com/migration/214-asian-migration-to-australia>, accessed 11 July, 2014

regards the other culture – is a lacuna that comes up in the case of most of the Asian countries dealt with here and will be referred to in the Conclusion.

India

A. *The Cultural Diplomacy Profile*

The diverse peoples of India, who number almost 1.3 billion (17.3 per cent of the world's population), have interacted culturally with others for millennia. In 1950 already, the year in which the Constitution of the Republic of India was adopted, the government established a dedicated nodal agency for international cultural relations, the eponymous Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR). Created by the federal Ministry of Education, but placed under the control of the Ministry of External Affairs in 1970, the ICCR has always been a key component of the apparatus of state patronage for cultural affairs and it is the official 'face' of Indian cultural representation overseas. Over the same period, the country's cultural and intellectual circles have interacted extensively with their counterparts throughout the world; these cultural exchanges have grown steadily, intensifying considerably in the current period of accelerated globalization and economic liberalization.

The ICCR is a rarity in having been conceived and launched under the direct supervision of India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, who attached great importance to international cultural relations. India's civilization was for him a product of Indian 'toleration of other ways than theirs, their capacity to absorb other peoples and their cultural accomplishments, to synthesize them and develop a varied and mixed culture' (Nehru 2008: 674). Indeed the Constitution of India, which adopted the slogan of 'unity in diversity' in 1950, recognizes 22 Indian languages (in addition to English), spoken in the 29 federal states and 7 centrally administered 'Union Territories'. This intrinsic pluralism is one of the main reasons why Indian cultural actors both governmental and non-governmental display an attachment to *the practice of international cultural relations principally as an end in itself*. They place instrumental considerations decidedly in second place. The section of the Ministry of Culture's 2012-2013 annual report devoted to 'international cultural relations' opens with the following definition: 'Ministry of Culture aims at disseminating Indian culture in new territories and further develop the cultural relations between India and various countries of the world¹⁹.' The

¹⁹ [http://indiaculture.nic.in/indiaculture/pdf/Culture-Annual%20Report-2012-13\(English\).pdf](http://indiaculture.nic.in/indiaculture/pdf/Culture-Annual%20Report-2012-13(English).pdf) (p.36)

terms mainly used in the country are ‘international cultural relations’ and ‘cultural exchange’; in recent years, the notions of ‘public diplomacy’ and ‘cultural diplomacy’ have begun to be deployed as well.

Hence the instrumental language of ‘soft power’ has also begun to be used, notably by the Public Diplomacy Division in the Ministry of External Affairs and by a few prominent figures such as the writer, columnist and Member of Parliament, Shashi Tharoor, who observes that India’s global soft power resources are not systematically deployed in official practice and concludes that ‘such strategic advantages as have accrued from India’s soft power... have been a largely unplanned by-product of the normal emanations of Indian culture’ (Tharoor, 2012: 289).²⁰

Indian society is well versed historically in international cultural relations, while the country’s open and democratic political system facilitates their development today. India’s special approach is also shaped by the existence of a huge Indian diaspora, estimated by the Indian government to consist of over 20 million people. They are in fact a key ‘target’ of the government’s overseas cultural relations efforts: as in the case of China, but far less systematically, it is as if the nation feels obliged to reach out to a segment of itself that is at once a co-producer and a co-beneficiary of the global sharing of Indian culture.²¹

Indian artists, cultural operators and cultural activists in the major cities (Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Bangalore), interact today with their counterparts throughout the world, mainly in the global North. These interactions have intensified in recent years, as social demand for cultural activities, both traditional and contemporary, has been fuelled and diversified by the cultural aspirations of an increasingly wealthy urban bourgeoisie. In the judgement of civil society stakeholders, the Indian State has done little more over the years than dispense patronage. While

²⁰ As Tharoor also put it in a 2010 Ted talk ‘Why Indians Should Pursue Soft Power’: ‘India is, and must remain, in my view, the land of the better story. Stereotypes are changing... We’ve gone from the image of India as land of fakirs lying on beds of nails, and snake charmers doing the Indian rope trick, to the image of India as a land of mathematical geniuses, computer wizards, software gurus. But that too is transforming the Indian story around the world. But, there is something more substantive to that. The story rests on a fundamental platform of political pluralism. It’s a civilizational story to begin with. Because India has been an open society for millennia.’ http://www.ted.com/talks/shashi_tharoor.html

²¹ There is in fact a Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, with a website ‘dedicated to the vast global community of People of Indian Origin’. <http://moia.gov.in/>

this patronage has no doubt enriched cultural life in the major cities, it does not constitute a thought-out cultural policy with clearly defined goals. The country's high economic growth rate and urban affluence have in no wise increased governmental spending; in some instances outlays on culture have even declined. The heightened demand for cultural provision is being met more and more by civil society and private initiatives; thus the cultural scene today is far more extensive and diverse than before. As a corollary, there is greater interest than ever before in relations with peers in the rest of the world. Conversely, the perception of the country as an 'emerging' economic and geopolitical power has increased interest among cultural actors elsewhere for collaborations with Indian counterparts. Indian companies support the arts in a limited manner, primarily for promotional purposes, drawing on their advertising budgets for ad hoc, one-off commitments to cultural presentations and products. International cultural relations have little or no place in this scheme of things.²² Thus Indian cultural operators have benefited little from the country's rising affluence; economic growth has not resulted in increased funding for international artistic or educational exchanges. Nevertheless, Indian artists and cultural workers are confident that they can relate to the West with far less inequality of position than was the case previously. Yet this also leads them to seek partnerships elsewhere, notably in the neighbouring countries of Asia. In other words, there is a growing South-South axis of cultural relations, bolstered by India's place in the world's emerging multi-polarity.²³

It is against this backdrop that cultural entrepreneurship has developed rapidly in both the not-for-profit and for-profit cultural sectors. The contemporary visual arts are thriving commercially, with many galleries in the major cities catering to the demands of an expanding new stratum of extremely affluent Indian patrons. New Delhi's India Art Fair is a private initiative, organized under the aegis of the auction house Sotheby's since 2008; its 5th edition in 2013 presented the work of 104

²² As another astute Indian observer puts it, such support 'tends to go out to art that needs it the least... the arts are defined for corporate leaders and marketing executives by the elite social circles in which they move. As long as product promotion remains their principal justification for supporting the arts, business houses will continue to give no attention to creative processes, constraints and innovation.' See Anmol Vellani, 'The Case for Independent Arts Philanthropy', website of the India Foundation for the Arts, accessed 10 March, 2012. http://www.indiaifa.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=20&Itemid=17

²³ See Yudhishtir Raj Isar, 'The Wealth of a Multipolar World: New Horizons for Cultural Exchange?' <http://www.salzburgglobal.org/mediafiles/MEDIA68970.pdf>

galleries from 24 countries, including many in Europe. It is estimated to have attracted over 300,000 visitors so far, from India, other Asian countries and the rest of the world. Late 2012 also saw the launch of the country's first art biennial, the 'Kochi-Muziris Biennale 2012', which was financed through a mix of public and private sector support.²⁴ The Jaipur Literature Festival is another such enterprise that has gained worldwide notoriety and recognition; its producer is Teamwork, which is the leader among a range of private entertainment companies that now operate in the country. Teamwork organizes festivals and produces films as well as other cultural goods and services, primarily in India but also in many other countries, for a range of clients, governmental, non-governmental and corporate.²⁵

Although the Indian government formally gives priority to relations with neighbouring countries in South, Central and East Asia in the context of its 'Look East Policy', the legacies of history, as well as prevailing societal preferences, have lent prominence to cultural relations with Europe.

B. The India-Australia cultural interface

Indian-born people are now the fourth largest migrant community in Australia: 343 070 at end-June 2011, 90 per cent more than five years before, accounting for 5.7 per cent of Australia's overseas born population and 1.5 per cent of the total population. Some 225 000 Indian-born people work in Australia, with 29 per cent of them employed as professionals. Clerical and administrative workers as well as technicians and trades workers are also common occupations at 12 per cent each. India provides half the number of students as China, with 69 per cent of them concentrated in vocational education and training.²⁶

Shared membership of the British Commonwealth, cricket, as well as the common use of the English language have bred a certain degree of ease and familiarity in relationships at all levels. Yet Indian attitudes are not as complimentary towards Australia as might be expected. The effect of the attacks on Indian students in 2011 and 2012 has been to equate the country today with resurgent racist attitudes, while educated Indians are fully aware of the historical treatment of Australia's

²⁴ www.kochimuzirisbiennale.org

²⁵ <http://teamworkproductions.in/>

²⁶ West, *Ibid.*

Aboriginal people. In regard to the latter, although Indian society itself is ambivalent as regards its own Indigenous Peoples (the Indian Government does not recognize this category at all), there is sustained curiosity about the cultural distinctiveness of those in Australia and as regards their forms of cultural expression.

But a great deal of cross-cultural distance and mutual ignorance is observed by cultural actors on both sides. Indians tend to see Australians as fully western and uniformly affluent; they envision Australia primarily as a land of opportunity (despite its high cost of living) for those whose horizons are blocked within the country and/or belong to groups with limited rights, who appreciate Australia's attachment to the rule of law and the principle of the 'fair go'.

In the arts world, several informants saw Australians as rather more transactional or coolly business-like than their European counterparts, looking for good buys rather than to build mutual relationships. For more sophisticated Indian observers, there is an ambivalent mix of worldliness and isolationism in what they generalize to be the Australian character, one that is not highly intellectual in their eyes and lacking the resonance of relationships with say, Britons. They also see more of an Australian interest in the arts as 'creative industries', which may appear paradoxical. For some, Australian directness is tantamount to uncouthness. More generally, there is only limited understanding of Australia as a land of settlers and migrants; its 'multiculturalism' is not an attribute that impresses Indians, given the plurality of the Indian nation itself. Indian observers consider that mutual interest and interaction operate at a rather low level, with very few genuine attempts to achieve deeper cultural understanding.

There are regular visits to Australia of Indian performing artists and musicians, principally in the traditions of South India, but their audiences in the country actually consist overwhelmingly of diasporic Indians (mainly those from South India). Cultured Indians in Australia all find that Australians have only a limited understanding of the range and diversity of India's many cultures. With the growing popularity of 'Bollywood', interest in India has veered towards what in their eyes is the trivial and meretricious. Once again, as in the case of China, the potential of this 'diaspora' to build better mutual cultural awareness and education is not being seized.

There exist a number of highly successful collaborations of long standing between Australian and Indian arts practitioners, notably in the performing arts. These are still but a drop in the bucket, however. For Indian cultural actors, while breaking down barriers of mutual ignorance is important,

even more valuable are the empowering, international networking and capacity-building outcomes of cooperation with countries such as Australia that are perceived essentially as belonging to the ‘advanced’ West. Hence if cultural exchange is to truly flourish it needs to go beyond the mere representation of Australian culture in India and Indian culture in Australia. Instead, it ought to cultivate the above sorts of outcomes through cultural encounters at many levels. Indian cultural actors are struck by the way in which the approach of some European cultural partners is less focused on cultural projection than on skill-sharing and catalytic local impact: Indians contrast this approach with that of China, Japan, or South Korea, whose cultural centres tend to focus single-mindedly on promoting their own cultural forms and agents. Indians value collaborative ventures in which mutual learning occurs systematically across continents. Support for small-scale activities that facilitate cultural engagement are particularly needed in the view of Indian cultural actors.

Japan

A. The Cultural Diplomacy Profile²⁷

Japan’s cultural diplomacy has been moulded by its changing geopolitical positions in Asia at different historical moments, first as an expansionist empire, then after its Second World War defeat through its efforts to dispel negative perceptions, and more recently to promote Japan as a culturally-exciting country. As Koichi Iwabuchi has observed, these efforts also aimed at instilling a certain kind of ‘national outlook’ within the country.²⁸ From the 1970s to the 1990s, cultural diplomacy focused largely on the East Asian neighbourhood; since then it has become global.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has established a Public Diplomacy Strategy Division. It also provides much of the funding for the quasi-independent Japan Foundation to support cultural and intellectual exchange. Also active is the Agency for Cultural Affairs, which is the main instrument of

²⁷ Based on the country report prepared by Rod Fisher and Carla Figueira for the EU Preparatory Action ‘Culture in EU External Relations’ (<http://cultureinexternalrelations.eu/>).

²⁸ Observation made on 17 October 2013 at the symposium organized by the Institute for Culture and Society at the University of Western Sydney ‘Cultural Diplomacy. Beyond the National Interest?’

government support for Japan's domestic cultural sector. 'Cultural exchange' in the Japanese context focuses more on providing overseas opportunities for Japanese arts and artists than it does on reciprocity. Nevertheless, some funding for visits to Japan by overseas artists, academics and cultural organisations is provided by the government and a number of private foundations.

Currently, much of the government's interest and financial resources are focused upon a major branding initiative, 'Cool Japan', which is designed to promote interest in selected creative industries, aspects of Japanese culture and lifestyles as part of efforts to increase international opportunities for the export of Japanese cultural goods, enhance awareness of the 'uniqueness' of Japan, increase tourism and, in the process, to stimulate the domestic economy. Some see this as direct emulation of the Korean example (see below). The Ministry of Economy, Trade & Industry has an important role here, while the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) considers that this contributes significantly to promoting the nation's distinctiveness. Strategy for this purpose has been the focus of a number of reports, for example in 2008, *Measures and Structures to Strengthen Japan's Voice – Policies and Organizational Structures for Achieving Strengthened Public Diplomacy in Japan*, based on contributions from 17 representatives of academia, business and other key sectors. The report took up the challenge of effective governmental outreach, what was lacking in Japan's existing system, and what corrective policies and measures might be needed. Partnerships and strategic co-ordination were also at the heart of a *Public Diplomacy in the Aftermath of 3.11 – A Report on The Future of Public Diplomacy in Japan*, a report issued in July 2012 in the context of the Earthquake/Tsunami disaster of March 2011. Compiled by six prominent opinion leaders from outside government, this examined the growing role of public diplomacy as part of Japan's diplomatic policies, strategies and activities by clarifying areas that needed to be strengthened, as well as how public diplomacy should be designed institutionally. The report identified future directions for MOFA's strategic public diplomacy, notably follow-up as regards people-to-people exchange by continuing to engage with previous participants in such programmes.

The country's geographical priorities are said to be (in no specific order): USA, China, South Korea, ASEAN states, Europe, India and South Asia, and Australasia. However, it is increasingly evident that particular attention is being given to the Asia/Pacific region, as was demonstrated by Prime Minister Abe's visit to Indonesia in May 2013 when he observed that culture was one of the five priorities for Japanese-Indonesian co-operation.

A significant part of the public diplomacy budget is allocated to the quasi-independent Japan Foundation, whose mission is ‘to contribute to the improvement of a good international environment, and to the maintenance and development of the harmonious foreign relationships with Japan, by the efficient and comprehensive implementation of activities for international cultural exchange’.²⁹ The Foundation has 22 offices in 21 countries (including an office in Sydney). The focus of the Foundation’s work is arts and cultural exchange, Japanese-language education overseas, and Japanese studies and intellectual exchange. The Foundation’s arts and culture programmes are designed to encourage understanding of Japanese culture and values through promoting links internationally in four principal sectors: visual arts, performing arts, films and publications, and culture and society.

B. The Japan-Australia cultural interface

This cultural interface plays out against the backdrop of what one academic informant calls a ‘mature’ relationship regarding Australia. Australia’s alliance with the US is not perceived as a problem. Japan also sees itself as somehow, if not actually, ‘Western’, then very much a First World country; Australia in turn is seen as ‘white’, hence clearly to be respected, and Japanese do not raise the issue of racism in Australia at all. Australia is a choice tourism destination, but is not seen as one with much to offer in cultural terms. But to the extent that Japanese are devoted to and proficient in Western classical forms, notably music, Australia’s musical scene is of a certain interest, together with its culinary traditions and produce. An exception is made for Australia’s Indigenous Peoples, however, and their cultural forms are exoticized in some cult circles and niches (such as a didgeridoo club in Tokyo). With the coming of diversity to Japanese society as well, there is a growing interest in Australian multiculturalism. The Australian musician and composer Riley Lee reports that his interlocutors were highly flattered that an Australian has become a high-level exponent of the Japanese *shakuhachi* (according to him, the Chinese would take such an approach on the part of a Westerner for granted). He also considers that his own career evolved in the way it did largely because of the generous support he received from DFAT many years ago, as well as from the Australia-Japan Foundation. He does not think, however, that work of this nature would be supported to any comparable degree today. The ‘turn’ towards China, of which the Japanese are fully aware, is part of this picture.

²⁹ As cited Fisher, p. 7.

Japanese policy-makers at all levels are future-oriented, hence they attach a great deal of importance on working ahead, with and for the younger generation, despite of a lack of confidence and language skills, and the somewhat introverted mind-set of many Japanese cultural professionals.

The following areas are suggested by Japanese informants as possible avenues for cultural engagement with countries such as Australia: co-production in the audio-visual sector and the performing arts and co-curation in the visual arts and design, as well as artist residencies and intellectual exchange in general; schemes that increase opportunities for the mobility of artists/performers and encourage young creative entrepreneurs to develop their skills and network with Australian partners; the sharing of Australian experience in the management of multiculturalism and the sharing of expertise in the field of digital arts. The 'creative cities' avenue is also favoured. How the cultural sector internationalizes itself is a big issue in Japan; while there is still a far greater emphasis on Europe and the USA, together with the other countries of East and Southeast Asia, there is also a role for Australia.

Republic of Korea (South Korea)³⁰

A. The Cultural Diplomacy Profile

South Korea has asserted itself culturally as well as in other ways since its economic take-off of the 1970s (till the 1960s it was a very poor nation – but always already culturally rich) and its spectacular growth since then. It is deeply motivated to tell its distinctive story to the world. As observed in a history of the Australia-Korea Foundation (AKF), 'when the AKF was first established in 1992, Korea had already risen to be Australia's fourth largest trading partner (soon to become the third largest), but remained little known to the public' (Hall 2010). Today, a plethora of organisations and mechanisms are involved in cultural diplomacy and international exchange. This is partly the result of the desire to project the country internationally but also of bureaucratic fragmentation and inter-departmental competition and has contributed to an absence of cohesive strategic goals. Recent

³⁰ Based on the country report prepared by Rod Fisher for the EU Preparatory Action 'Culture in EU External Relations' (<http://cultureinexternalrelations.eu/>).

studies have recommended new policies and structures to enhance and develop new ways of engaging in cultural exchange.

The Ministry of Culture, Sport & Tourism has the lead role in cultural diplomacy and exchange both directly and via its support of the international presence of 25 Korean Cultural Centres and more than 90 Sejong Institutes offering instruction in the Korean language. It has plans to considerably expand the numbers of both. The Ministry also supports the Korea Arts Management Service (which provides mobility grants, partnership with international festivals and cultural organisations, and associated international services for performing arts) and the Arts Council Korea (which funds Korean input into international cultural events, as well as arts residency opportunities).

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs promotes public and cultural diplomacy initiatives and is responsible for its chief instrument of academic, cultural and intellectual exchange, the Korea Foundation. The key priorities are the pursuit of greater international recognition of South Korea through the projection of its traditional cultural forms of expression as well as its cultural and creative industries, in other words to capitalize on the remarkable interest shown in the Asian neighbourhood and elsewhere of the so-called *Hallyu* (or 'Korean Wave') – Korean TV dramas, pop music, films, fashion and video games. Sustaining and increasing this export income is a goal that remains central and the power of the creative industries tends to dominate government rhetoric on international cultural policy. A number of cities are actively engaged internationally and have branded themselves through specific art forms. A certain ambiguity may be noted here, for as the media scholar Youna Kim observes, many Koreans are surprised by this success, which they fear is ephemeral, while others believe that it is projecting a 'wrong' image of Korean culture.³¹

Yet they do recognize that the 'Korean Wave' has also helped change perceptions of South Korean goods more generally. A decade or so ago, products of the Samsung and LG conglomerates were prepared (though not happy) to be mistaken as Japanese in Europe, as this was an indicator of quality in consumer electronics/communications hardware. This was sometimes referred to as the Korean discount. Today, these global brands have no need to hide their Korean origins. However, the government is concerned that South Korea's economic strength (it is Asia's third largest economy

³¹ Interviewed in Paris on 23 July, 2014.

after China and Japan, and the world's 13th largest) is not sufficiently reflected in its international image and seeks to address this in its international relations.

South Korea appears open to international engagement with a wide range of countries, mainly the USA and in Western Europe. However, in recent years Korea's focus has increasingly turned towards its immediate neighbours and other countries in the Asia-Pacific region. In common with China, South Korea has a delicate relationship with Japan, as a result of years of occupation and ill-treatment and is unsettled by incidents such as the controversial visit in December 2013 of Japanese Prime Minister Abe to the Yasukuni Shrine (where about 2.5 million war dead and others are enshrined, including the instigators and leaders of Japan's colonial expansion and World War II aggression).³² Sensitivities extend to the cultural sector, e.g. the retention by the Tokyo National Museum of more than 1,000 artefacts from the last years of Korea's Josean Dynasty, that were allegedly looted by wealthy Japanese businessmen during Japan's occupation of Korea. Yet, the considerable success in Japan of Korean TV dramas, film and pop music has helped bridge the gulf in understanding between the two countries, especially among younger generations.

In her inaugural address on 25 February 2013, President Park Geun-Hye indicated that her new government's three priorities would be economic renewal, the happiness of the people and a cultural renaissance. The focus of the latter was to be the Korean Hallyu, cultural heritage and cultural life. Her goal was for the value of culture to permeate every facet of society. These policy aims, while laudable, appeared to be rather short on specifics about how they were to be delivered. Nevertheless, the Government intended to increase expenditure on culture and sport from about 1.2% to 2% of government spending over the lifetime of this administration, and it is anticipated that this will benefit cultural and public diplomacy programmes.

In September 2013, South Korea, Mexico, Indonesia, Turkey and Australia launched themselves as a new consultative international body of middle-power countries that seek to act as a

³² The Korean peninsula had a troubled history for much of the twentieth century. Korea was colonised by Japan from 1910-1945. This was followed by the catastrophic Korean War between 1950-1953, which led to conflict stalemate and the partition of North and South Korea (with continuing tensions to this day). In South Korea the War was followed by three decades of dictatorship, years of poverty and then rapid economic development and urbanisation. The country has been transformed from being an aid recipient to being an aid donor.

bridge between developed and developing countries. Through MIKTA (the acronym these countries have adopted) the current South Korean administration seeks to deploy 'middle-power diplomacy' as part of a new international order. In South Korea, government officials tend to view this term as a way to implement industrial change, to encourage the export and consumption of Korean consumer products, like electronics and automobiles, and to establish South Korea's global position as a middle power. 'Cultural diplomacy', 'cultural exchange' and 'public diplomacy' are terms in common use in government policy. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs uses all three terms, increasingly emphasising 'public diplomacy', while the Ministry of Culture, Sport & Tourism tends to emphasise 'cultural exchange', but also refers to the other terms. However, the tools employed by South Korea for cultural diplomacy and cultural exchange are very similar to each other.

The Korea Foundation was established in 1991 and supports academic, cultural and intellectual co-operation exchange programmes, promotes public diplomacy initiatives and publishes journals to increase a better understanding about South Korea in the world. It provides support to universities in 50 countries to advance Korean studies and assists museums to establish or renovate Korean gallery spaces, The Foundation has seven overseas offices, only one of which (Berlin) is in the EU; others are in China, Japan, Russia, Vietnam and the USA (Washington DC and Los Angeles). The Foundation also has its own Cultural Centre in Seoul, where it programmes exhibitions, music performances in a wide range of genres, and mounts festivals to introduce Koreans to different aspects of global culture. Exhibitions cover visual arts, crafts, design, architecture and photography, and may be curated by the Foundation or jointly with national and international organisations. Although its funds are channelled through MOFA, the Foundation obtains its financial resources via an ingenious tax on passport income collected by the Ministry. In addition, the Foundation has an endowment fund provided by government and the income generated from this increased significantly in 2012. Nevertheless, it has also been drawing down funds from its capital to supplement income. Much of the focus of the Foundation's overseas programme is on museums. In 2012, five museums (four in the USA and one in Sweden) opened new Korean galleries with Foundation support. By 2013, 27 Korean galleries in 10 countries had been established or renovated with financial assistance. Programme assistance was made in 2012 to enable eight museums abroad to hold exhibitions and associated events on Korean art. The Foundation has established a Global Museum Internship Programme to enable promising Korean students in museum-related fields and junior level curators to gain work experience at world-renowned museums (in 2012 all were located in the USA). There is also a Foundation Think Tank Fellowship/Internship designed to train the next

generation of Korean leaders, facilitate intellectual exchange and expand international connections by arranging internships at world renowned research institutes, such as the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. Annually, the Foundation organises a Korean Festival to introduce overseas audiences to Korean culture (in four Brazilian cities in 2012, and in 2013 in six ASEAN countries).

Cultural events are organised in co-operation with Korean embassies to introduce local publics to Korean culture (e.g. in 2012 ballet performances were arranged to mark the 20th anniversary of relations with South Africa and the 50th anniversary of relations with Israel). Its budget for cultural exchange in 2011 was KRW 5.5 billion (Euros 3.6 million). Other activities supported are aligned with MOFA's diplomatic initiatives, as was the case with the Korea-Japan Festival. Cultural events are also organised by the Korea Foundation's overseas offices.

B. The Korea-Australia cultural interface

While Korean officials deny it, the country's cultural diplomacy in Australia, even more than in other 'Western' countries, is driven by a need to both vie with and distinguish the country's effort from those of the Japanese. The stereotypes of Australia and Australian-ness held by people in other Asian countries apply to Koreans as well. They are aware of iconic objects such as the Sydney Opera House, rather than of the Australians as distinctive people. Australia is a very distant 'Other'. There is a lack of any historical connection; for some informants this is perhaps more of an asset than anything else.

While the Japanese do not foreground it, Koreans are more concerned by perceived Australian 'whiteness' and racism, recently invoked by Korean media, as some young Korean women (travellers, students studying in Australia) were murdered in obscure circumstances. There is also a special interest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art, whereas not much demand exists for contemporary Australian art in the 'international' style. There are no Korean websites concerning Australia, nor any TV content. The percussionist and composer Simon Barker, who has worked extensively there, reports that he has never been asked about Australia or about what Australians think of Korea. Yet Australia is also 'non-threatening', compared to China and Japan (for some this would include USA).

Koreans themselves are also aware of the amplitude of educational migration to Australia

and consider that more and more educated people are migrating there. ‘We don’t need to attract them; they need us to keep their universities going’, was the observation of one informant. Koreans are only Australia's twelfth largest migrant community, however, with 97 600 Korean-born people living in Australia at end-June 2011, 62 per cent more than in 2006.³³ There has been a recent surge of Korean educational migration (not only university students, but also middle/high school students) to Australia and the growing size of the Korean community there might have drawn attention in terms of Korean culture and cultural cooperation. Educational migration is therefore a potential vector of improved cultural literacy, together with cooperation in the domain of digital technologies.

The mission of the Korean Cultural Office in Sydney is ‘to enlighten and entertain through quality contemporary and traditional cultural content, in order to strengthen the emotional bond between Australia and Korea’. Established in April 2011, the Year of Friendship between Australia and Korea, the Korean Cultural Office aims to bring Australia and Korea even closer. As stated by its Director, ‘in what marks the 50th anniversary of relations between the countries, the importance of the KCO’s establishment cannot be stressed enough. I believe that cultural exchange is the best way for people of differing backgrounds to become friends, and that is the same for our two nations.’

³³ West, *Ibid.*

II. Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam

Indonesia

A. The Cultural Diplomacy Profile

Made up of literally hundreds of diverse ethnic groups, Indonesia has always been conscious of its plural cultural and religious history and has always projected, albeit not to a very great extent, its artistic and cultural pluralism on the international stage. It began to capitalize right from the first years of independence under Sukarno (who put the country on the world stage with his leadership role in the Non-Aligned Movement) on elements of attractiveness such as gamelan music or the charms of Bali. UNESCO's International Campaign for the Safeguard of Borobudur in the mid-1970s enabled the Suharto administration to position the country effectively amongst potential donor countries in Western Europe and North America. The government has long been recognized as a careful guardian of the country's rich archaeological and architectural heritage. As spokesmen for 'Asian culture', the country's diplomats have taken visible positions in many international fora; they have also worked energetically to ensure good Indonesian representation on UNESCO's World Heritage List and Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (the country hosted the annual meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee for the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in Bali in 2011).

But, until recently, there has been little practice of self-conscious cultural diplomacy on a more broad-based and systematic level. The country began deploying the 'soft power' discourse more recently than the four 'core countries' discussed already above. In 2011, however, the government announced that it would open cultural centres abroad, starting in Japan and The Netherlands. The then Deputy Minister of National Education and Culture, Wiendu Nuryanti, stated that 'there are many foreign cultural centers in Indonesia such as Germany's Goethe Institute, France's *Centre Culturel Français* or the Dutch Erasmus Huis, so Indonesia must also have similar centers abroad to promote Indonesia and its culture.'³⁴ She announced that this move was still only

³⁴ <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2011/10/31/govt-open-cultural-centers-abroad.html> accessed 20 June, 2014. It does not appear that these centres have actually been established, however. They may have been replaced by a new 'houses of culture' formula, recently announced in Australia (see below).

at the planning stage and that this initiative accompanied the reuniting of the Directorate General of Culture and the Directorate General of Education after 11 years of separation. She also said ‘we will also certify our artists such as *dalang* [puppeteers], *sinden* [gamelan orchestra singers] and movie censorship agencies to help give them the opportunity to improve their creative efforts.’ Cultural diplomacy would be one of the five principles included in a blueprint for cultural development that was being prepared by the ministry, along with different stakeholders such as sociologists and artists (the other principles were character building; history, heritage and cultural innovation; human resources and institutional building in culture; and cultural infrastructure). These measures appeared to be linked to the creation of a Ministry of Education and Culture, but today there is a Ministry of Culture and Tourism once again (and at one time in the recent past there was a Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy). In the current set up, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism formulates and implements policies relating to the culture and tourism sector and its mission is ‘for the conservation and development of Indonesia, promote tourism and to establish an ethic of transparency in the government and its policies.’³⁵ It is not yet clear what directions might be taken by the new government to be under the presidency of Joko Widodo.

Regardless of the ministries’ names, however, a recently developed public diplomacy programme is spreading Indonesian dance, music, and art with a focus on the Islamic world. In September 2013 the country partnered with the Islamic Republic of Iran to mount an ‘Indonesia Cultural Festival: 1000 Years of Indonesia-Iran relations’ in Tehran. As the country’s economic clout increases, together with its political standing, its proximity to Australia makes it an even more important partner. The moment needs to be seized as the country goes through a process of reform that although it is uneven and challenged from various quarters, allows Indonesian democracy to be ‘more stable, more advanced and more deeply rooted in society than most observers would have expected in 1998.’³⁶

³⁵ <http://culture360.asef.org/organisation/the-ministry-of-culture-and-tourism-republic-of-indonesia/#sthash.3iOfodA8.dpuf> accessed 20 June, 2014.

³⁶ <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2014/02/10/political-evolution-indonesias-strong-base-for-democratic-development/> accessed 20 June, 2014.

B. *The Indonesia-Australia cultural interface*

In June 2011 there were 73 940 Indonesian-born people living in Australia, in fact a surprisingly small number, given that Indonesia is the closest Asian neighbour and its population is close to 250 million.³⁷ Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Korea and Sri Lanka have much smaller populations than Indonesia but there are more immigrants from these countries in Australia. As West has also noted, Indonesia is a labour surplus country that exports large numbers of its citizens to the Middle East and elsewhere in Asia, but not as much to Australia. Also, while the number of Indonesians in Australia in 2011 was 25 per cent more than at 30 June 2006, this growth rate was also behind that of all the Asian countries mentioned above, except for Vietnam.

The cultural scene is comparable. There are many small-scale projects of cooperation being carried out by individual artists and practitioners but not surprisingly this has not led to much of an awareness of Indonesian distinctiveness – and diversity – among the Australian general public, nor interest for that matter. Deeper and more knowledge-based interaction and engagement is not being pursued. Support for cultural exchange with Indonesia is said to be more difficult to obtain than for other countries in the region. Australian ideas of Indonesia are fossilized, consisting largely of stereotypes (the beaches and nightclubs of Bali – and the Islamic terrorist bombings). As for Indonesian stereotypes of Australia, there appears to be a great deal of similarity with the views expressed by Indian informants. Indonesians tend to be more aware overall, no doubt because of the geographical proximity and the intensity of diplomatic dealings (often tense, as in the last few months) of Australia as a cultural reality and as a country which has discovered cultural diversity. There is considerable interest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art, whereas not much demand exists for contemporary Australian art in the ‘international’ style.

There are some encouraging developments, however. Significantly, these revolve around the diaspora and transient students. A recent article in *The Australian* reported on how, on graduation day at Flinders University, ‘Indonesian students in batik and beanies file into a symposium on soft power and education links between the two countries, and Adelaide is housing Australia’s biggest Indonesian festival with a contemporary edge. These are some of the elements that explain Flinders’ hope to be a candidate for a *rumah budaya*, or a house of culture, as Indonesia pursues the kind of

³⁷ West, *Ibid.*

soft diplomacy that the French pioneered with the Alliance Française.³⁸ Yet but a week later, another article described ‘the gradual downward trend in the number of students at Flinders taking Indonesian as a subject.’ Hearteningly, it also announced the appointment of a new part-time lecturer in the language; it quoted the Dean of Humanities as saying that this appointment would help build up the Indonesian language programme, and connect it to Adelaide’s INDOfest as well as to a possible *rumah budaya*: ‘the students need an understanding of the cultural context of the language that they’re learning.’³⁹

Malaysia

A. The Cultural Diplomacy Profile

The international projection of Malaysian culture as ‘unity in diversity’ is more fraught than in the case of Indonesia, given the ongoing tensions between the Malay majority and the Chinese and Indian cultural minorities. Less endowed with spectacular heritage than Indonesia, the country has been even less active on the cultural diplomacy circuit. In more recent years its nation-branding has been clearly seeking to instrumentalize cultural diversity in the service of tourism development. Here too there is a Ministry of Culture and Tourism, whose discourse places greater emphasis on cultural assets as tourism *resources* than on tourism as a factor for the flourishing of culture (or damage to it). The ministry’s website also states the mission empowering the arts, culture and heritage-based national cultural policy to strengthen national unity, before going on to mention increasing synergy and collaboration between the tourism sector and cultural actors so as ‘to make Malaysia as a destination of choice’ or to ‘strengthening the tourism and cultural sectors to boost the economy, promote the unique art, culture and heritage of Malaysia as a major catalyst for the growth of tourism and culture’.

³⁸ <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/higher-education/flinders-eyes-house-of-culture/story-e6fgrcjx-1226885540967#mm-premium> accessed 21 June, 2014.

³⁹ <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/higher-education/flinders-eyes-house-of-culture/story-e6fgrcjx-1226885540967#mm-premium> accessed 21 June, 2014.

B. The Malaysia-Australia cultural interface

It is significant that a recent article on Australia-Malaysia relations stating that Australia has more people-to-people ties with Malaysia than with another other Asian neighbour (as well as more bilateral difficulties over political and social issues), analyses these contacts purely in terms of tourism flows, Malaysian-born Australian residents and the status of Australia as ‘the most important international destination for Malaysian students’ (and the most important foreign source for Australian universities).⁴⁰ Significantly, in citing the people-to-people efforts of the Australia-Malaysia Institute, the article cites a grants programme with a particular focus on visits by young leaders, journalists and interfaith groups. Cultural practitioners do not figure in this list. In point of fact, the cultural component of the Institute’s activities is limited, certainly more so than in the case of the DFAT bodies dealing with the other countries concerned here.

Singapore⁴¹

A. The Cultural Diplomacy Profile

This unique city-state presents in microcosm the policy challenge of ‘unity in diversity’, while deliberately placing its attractiveness to the world – that it now likes to refer to as ‘soft power’ – at the centre of its concerns. Singapore has had a Ministry of Culture since its independence in 1959, whose mandate then was to create a sense of national identity and ‘eliminate communal divisions and attitudes’. Right from the start, the island-state had a vibrant arts and culture sector and by the 1990s had developed a western-inspired policy model, with a National Arts Council that would provide grants, incentives and assistance schemes for local artists and arts professionals. It also oversaw the development of a ‘world-class performing arts venue’ that was to later become the Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay. Early in the present century policy discourse began to focus on the ‘remaking’ of Singapore as a globalised economy and a creative, entrepreneurial nation driven

⁴⁰ <http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/newmandala/2013/06/24/australia-malaysia-relations-are-the-difficulties-over/> accessed 22 June, 2014.

⁴¹ Information has been taken from an advance (but not yet final) copy of a cultural profile of Singapore made available by the secretariat of the Asia-Europe Foundation.

by knowledge and innovation. The Ministry of Information and the Arts became the Ministry of Information, Communication and the Arts. A Creative Industries Working Group was also set up to boost the creative industries as a new growth sector and make Singapore a vibrant and exciting New Asia Creative Hub – a balanced society which offers our people abundant opportunities to fulfil their diverse aspirations, enhanced lifestyle and entertainment options and an attractive work, live, play, and learn ‘ecosystem for local and global creative talent’. From the Creative Industries Development Strategy blueprint, three core sectors were identified for development: i) Renaissance City Plan for the arts and heritage sector; ii) Design Singapore for the design sector, and iii) Media21 for the media sector.

These rebranding foci are also the priorities in external relations. The mission of the Ministry of Information, Communication and the Arts is ‘to develop Singapore as a global city for information, communication and the arts, so as to build a creative economy, gracious community, and connected society with a Singaporean identity rooted in our multicultural heritage.’ The Ministry commissioned The Arts and Culture Review (ACSR) Committee in March 2010 to look at Singapore’s cultural strategies 2025 and beyond, had invited the public and members of the arts and culture community to drive Singapore’s arts and cultural scene. Its report of 100-odd recommendations was officially released on 31 January 2012. The following paragraph is particularly significant for our purposes:

Against this backdrop, our traditional strengths, such as health, education, public safety and a clean, green environment, continue to be relevant in the global war for talent, investments and international attention. However, a differentiating factor for ensuring that talent, investment and attention stay for the long-haul is a distinctive and thriving arts and culture scene that will endear Singapore to citizens old and new. As a city in the Asian region, we must also capitalise on Asia’s growing presence in the global economy and consciousness, and on our own multicultural heritage and cosmopolitan outlook, to brand and position Singapore strategically. Singapore is not just the crossroads within Asia, but also the crossroads between Asia and the rest of the world.⁴²

There are many international programmes in the cultural sector based on bringing people to Singapore rather than projecting out, which is perfectly in line with the stated objectives. But local artists are also sent overseas; the Overseas Promotion Partnership Programme is supported by a grant provided by the DesignSingapore Council for Singapore-based designers and design companies

⁴² Government of Singapore, The Report of the Arts and Culture Strategic Review Committee, 2012, p. 11. http://www.nac.gov.sg/docs/resources/acsr_final_report.pdf, accessed 11 July, 2014.

to showcase their products/designs in international trade events. For example, the Singapore Season, a multi-agency collaboration to showcase Singapore artistes, art, music, food, fashion and lifestyle to create awareness about Singapore overseas in was first presented in London in 2005, followed by other cities such as Beijing, Shanghai and Washington. At the same time, the event also functions as a marketing tool to attract businesses and professionals to live and work in Singapore by providing a window for them to connect with the vibrancy of the country's culture. Singapore Day, an almost similarly styled event filled with performances and food, uses culture to create opportunities for Singaporeans working overseas to stay connected to Singapore has been held in New York, Melbourne, London and Shanghai. Besides these national initiatives, the country's embassies and high commissions overseas do not have a specific portfolio on Singapore Arts. Individual artists or arts-related organisations wishing to stage their works overseas usually identify and seek out partners independently. However, institutions such as the Singapore International Foundation has an arts and culture portfolio with the aim to 'imagine a world where dialogue and creative expression advance mutual understanding, bringing people together'. For example, the Foundation's Art Associates programme helps to connect Southeast Asian art professionals with Singapore art institutions through professional attachment while the 'Singapore Internationale' grant supports the presentation of Singapore creative works overseas. Singapore participates in the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Action Plan. One of the objectives of this plan is to build a network of observatories in the region that would collect, analyze, repackage and disseminate research about arts education. A UNESCO-National Institute of Education Centre for Arts Research in Education (CARE) was set up to function as a clearing-house of research on the instrumental benefits of arts in education in Singapore and the Asia-Pacific region.

B. The Singapore-Australia cultural interface

The affluence of Singapore, its prominence in global trade and the nature of its international ambitions, including in the cultural field, place a stamp on its real and potential cultural relations with Australia that distinguishes it from other Southeast Asian countries. Already the bilateral relationship with Singapore is considered by DFAT to be one of Australia's closest and most comprehensive in Southeast Asia; these close ties are based on long-standing Commonwealth, defence, education, political, trade and tourism links, as well as on the two countries' similar strategic outlook. This positive attitude is replicated by the Singaporean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which goes on to state that cultural cooperation between the two is active 'and includes the

performing, visual and literary arts as well as heritage projects and library exchanges. Bilateral exchanges in the media sector have also been very productive. Key media industry collaborations are in the areas of Australian media investments in Singapore film and TV co-productions, and animation.⁴³ Singapore is also participating actively in the pilot phase of the New Colombo Plan and the forging of people-to-people and institutional relationships, notably through study and internships undertaken by Australian undergraduate students.

Given its standard of living and the fact that of its total population in 2013 of 5.4 million, close to 2 million are foreign expatriates, there is no significant Singaporean diaspora in Australia (apart from a small number of individual migrants) around which, as in the case of other South and Southeast Asian countries, flows of cultural expression, notably through the performing arts, are an already acting or potential force for building cultural awareness. Moreover, Singapore's policy preference, as mentioned above, is to bring people to Singapore in order to showcase the cultural mix of contemporary and diverse tradition. In effect, the city-state is a special case also as a result of the ethnic plurality of its endogenous population (74 per cent Chinese, 13 per cent Malay and 9 per cent Indian), a plurality that is nowadays strongly affirmed as a key element of the Singapore 'brand'. This may well be fertile ground for relationship building around the two different versions of multiculturalism, Australian and Singaporean.

Thailand

A. The Cultural Diplomacy Profile

Thailand's sense of national selfhood is both similar and different from that of its ASEAN neighbours, similar because of a strong political awareness of cultural identity (albeit with lower recognition of internal cultural diversity), different essentially because the country was never colonised and culturally has had no relationship – for better or for worse – with an erstwhile colonial power. Witness the vision statement of the Thai Foreign Ministry of 'enhancing Thailand's capacity to have a dignified international status, by playing an honourable and active role, in the field of political stability and security, economic and social development, and ensuring that Thai society can best benefit from globalization.' There is also an emphasis on 'People Diplomacy' to safeguard the interests of Thai nationals, as well as protect Thai nationals and Thai workers abroad, in addition to

⁴³ http://www.mfa.gov.sg/content/mfa/countries_and_region/oceania/australia.html

strengthening and promoting the role of Thai communities in preserving their Thai identity. Thailand is very active in the ASEAN context, emphasizing its cultural and educational relations with its neighbours very seriously, notably in the framework of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), whose Secretariat is hosted in Bangkok, and through the creation and maintenance of the latter's Regional Centre for Archaeology and Fine Arts (SPAFA). The country's cultural relations with its neighbours as well as with countries in the rest of the world in fact tend to foreground education, notably through scholarship schemes of various kinds, both for foreign students to come to Thailand and for Thais to be exposed to other cultures – in this case the preference appears to be both regional and for destinations in Western Europe and/or the USA. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has a dedicated cultural diplomacy unit and describes the activities it carries out as consisting of religious events (notably in Buddhist countries but including Australia), the export of Thai films and television dramas and the provision of shooting facilities in Thailand, sport (through *Muay Thai*, or Thai boxing), the regular organization of tours of cultural performances-cum- cultural events such as festivals (but none organized in Australia so far).⁴⁴

*B. The Thailand-Australia cultural interface*⁴⁵

There is distinctly less to report as regards Thailand-Australia cultural relations, as there appears to be less cultural 'traffic' taking place. The Thai-born population in Australia is relatively small, 45000, consisting of more (single) women than men, while Australia is said to be home to more than 3000 Thai restaurants (three times as many as in the USA). The Thai population heretofore has been far less visible than other Asian-origin communities because it has not been concentrated in particular urban areas to the same extent as the Vietnamese and others.⁴⁶ Yet there are two domains that foreground Thai culture, apart from the culinary, namely Thai boxing and massage, both of which are ubiquitous, as *Thailand in Australia* points out, and have become an integral part

⁴⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Thailand 2013 *Annual Report*.

⁴⁵ No Australian Thai informants could be interviewed.

⁴⁶ See *Thailand in Australia*, brochure prepared and published by the Sydney Southeast Asia Centre at The University of Sydney for the twelfth International Conference on Thai Studies organized by the Centre in April 2014. While many papers on Thai issues were presented, Australia-Thai cultural relations were not among the topics. Yet the publication also observes: 'As the Thai presence in Australia has grown, so have the complexities associated with an understudied diaspora, an underestimated economic relationship and other little-known aspects of Thailand's engagement with its neighbour "down under".'

of the Australian way of life. The Thai language media, established by well-settled Thai immigrants, have become a flourishing field. The community has also established a number of temples that apart from building awareness of Thai Buddhism, also serve the spiritual needs of immigrants from Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. There are flourishing annual Thai culture, crafts and food festivals in Melbourne and Sydney, to which the Thai Consulate contributes significantly, thereby taking a more ‘people-to-people’ route of cultural diplomacy than through the fine arts as is the case with other countries.

Vietnam⁴⁷

A. The Cultural Diplomacy Profile

Vietnam has a clearly thought-out policy model, of which the five guidelines merit citation *expressis verbis*:

- Culture is the spiritual foundation of the society, serving as both the objective and the momentum of socio-economic development.
- The culture which we are building is an advanced one deeply imbued with national identity.
- The Vietnamese culture is a culture which is uniform but diversified in the community of nationalities.
- Building and developing the culture is the entire people’s cause under the leadership of the Party, in which the intelligentsia plays an important role.
- Culture is a front; building and developing the culture is a long-term revolutionary cause requiring a revolutionary will, perseverance, and caution.

Cultural diplomacy, managed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is linked here as well to ‘soft power’ and along with economic and political diplomacy is one of the three pillars of Vietnam’s international positioning. The main trends in this international positioning include a strengthening of bilateral relations with neighbouring countries and sharpening relations with major partners (Australia not yet being quite one of these); active membership of ASEAN; active multilateralism,

⁴⁷ Information taken from the Vietnam Cultural Profile posted by the Asia-Europe Foundation on its ‘culture360’ portal. culture360.asef.org/organisation/vietnam-cultural-profile/

especially with regard to the United Nations; an emphasis on developing relations with communist parties, working class, left-wing parties, ruling parties and other parties and enhancing public diplomacy. Among the key purposes of international cultural co-operation, the following may be singled out: to deepen existing cultural relations; to disseminate the products of arts and literature imbued with Vietnamese identity and spirit abroad; to cooperate with others in fields such as cinema, performing arts, museums and exhibitions, painting and professional skills and to enhance the capacity to use modern techniques in performing arts, cinema, museum, library science, printing, etc.; to serve the cultural needs and raise the patriotism of the Vietnamese diaspora. The country has two cultural centres abroad, in France and in Laos.

In 2011, the topic of cultural diplomacy was, for the first time, included in the documents of the eleventh National Party Congress and the Prime Minister approved the Cultural Diplomacy Strategy until 2020. Various activities were held on the theme of building a shared awareness of cultural integration and combining cultural diplomacy with political and economic diplomacy. The government mentions active Vietnamese membership of international NGOs without it being clear whether this concerns officially approved representatives (this is likely to be the case).

B. The Vietnam-Australia cultural interface

According to one Australian informant, the stereotype of Australia as a place with ‘practically no culture’ is stronger in Vietnam than it is elsewhere in Asia. Australia is seen as a ‘frontier’ country marked by egalitarianism, casual manners and easy-going attitudes, a place also of equal opportunity and tolerance of difference. Although articulated most clearly by the Vietnamese, this is clearly *a leitmotif that runs through the attitudes expressed by informants in all the countries concerned*. One Vietnamese attitude that was also duplicated in some cases, but not all, was the vision of Australia as a place that could be accessed for practical or instrumental reasons (acquiring a degree, earning more money, enhancing one’s aura back home, etc.) with little being paid to the cultural dimensions of the relationship. Given cultural diversity in Vietnam itself (and the relatively low status of Indigenous Peoples there), there is also distinct interest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art, whereas not much demand for contemporary Australian art in the ‘international’ style. The Vietnam-born are the fifth largest migrant community in Australia, with 212 070 in June 2011, 14 per cent

more than 30 June 2006.⁴⁸ This is equivalent to 3.5 per cent of Australia's overseas-born population and 0.9 per cent of Australia's total population. They are a visible addition to the major Australian cities, notably on the culinary plane, but to a lesser extent than the Thais, and have tended to settle in their own ethnic enclaves there. As West observes, the first major wave of Vietnamese migration to Australia started in the mid-1970s, with the arrival of large numbers of refugees following the end of the Vietnam War. In more recent years the vast majority of Vietnamese migrants have come to Australia through the Family Stream although there are growing numbers of skilled migrants.

⁴⁸ West, *Ibid.*

III. Lessons Learned

Preliminary findings of the kind that have been presented above permit only preliminary conclusions. Yet despite the limitations of the exercise, it is possible to draw out some tentative lessons for Australia's future cultural engagement with the peoples of Asia. The inquiry has echoed results obtained through similar exercises elsewhere, notably the European Union study referred to in the Introduction. Hence it has been possible to extrapolate from those European findings, adapting them to the specificities of the Australian setting. It must be said also, and this is often the case, that judging from the material perused, many of the key issues have been correctly identified already by Australian analysts or institutions. The guidelines contained existing DFAT policy documents and recent reports of academic and other bodies in Australia are sound. To be sure, these guidelines need to be given more focus and adapted to a variety of particular contexts. But more importantly, they need to be implemented. So if there is no need to reinvent the wheel, even to get the wheel to turn is going to require considerable political will, institutional commitment and effective advocacy. The following principal observations may be made.

- First, the level of mutual ignorance between Australia and the eight Asian countries concerned is high. Apart from some exceptions, relations are comparatively thin, often instrumental and informed by a whole range of casual stereotypes that have been expressed by so many informants, mainly those on the Asian side (or Australian informants explaining how they thought Australians are seen). Any cultural strategy has to start by cutting through the homogenized ideas of the other's 'national culture' on both sides, precisely because the existence of so many stereotypes across the board prevents the articulation of accurate and meaningful images of the 'Other'. The question arises of what can be done to overcome the veils of ignorance, in particular, the very limited knowledge people in the Asian countries have of Australian contemporary culture. There is no single recipe for success in this regard, but it is possible to extrapolate here from Jocelyn Chey's observations concerning relations with China:

Chinese students, tourists and business people are now spending more time overseas, seeing and sharing in foreign cultures at first hand. Their impressions are taken back to China. The stories that they share with family and friends and that they post on blogs carry far more weight than official statements and promotions

either by the Chinese or other governments. In the future these networks should be further studied and developed by Australia.⁴⁹

- Much stronger foundations need to be built for the relationships between Australians and Asians to deepen. On the Australian side, the 'literacy' involved should start with language skills and include a much fuller appreciation of all aspects of the Asian partner countries, in particular their cultural histories and the nature of their contemporary cultural scenes. But this needs to be reciprocated. Some attitudes among Australian actors, even the most well-meaning, are perceived as being paternalistic and out of date in a globalized world, ignorant of diverse and rapidly changing Asian realities as well as of the increasingly sophisticated trans-national and trans-continental frameworks in which artists and other creative people operate.
- Such initiatives need to go beyond the mere representation of Australian-ness in Asia and Asian cultures in Australia and instead cultivate the catalytic, capacity-building and mutual learning that can take place through cultural encounters at many levels.
- Some building blocks of an approach that would help forge flourishing cultural relations with different stakeholders in Asia are the following:
 - A first set concerns principles of both value and method. The value-based principles include reciprocity and mutuality, notably mutual listening and learning; respect for open expression, critical reflection and free debate, notably regarding the ways in which artists and cultural operators in Asia appropriate and adapt European motifs, memes and references in their own diverse ways.
 - On the methodological plane, the need to balance governmental responsibility with autonomous cultural practice. By the same token, the planning and implementation of cultural relations activities should involve all the stakeholders right from the outset, for the co-creation or co-curation of new projects is the bedrock of deep and lasting ties.
 - Moreover, since meaningful cultural relations unfold in the long term, there can be no 'quick fixes'. Nor can one size fit all: patterns of cultural relations will have to be modulated on a case-by-case basis.

⁴⁹Jocelyn Chey, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-19.

- Many good practices already exist. They simply need to be built upon, complemented in some cases, adapted in others.
- Such a strategy would harvest added value only if and when it is driven by political commitment, vision and a sense of mission.
- New combinations of actors (varying from project to project) will be needed for cohesive interventions that could be triggered by the selection of leading themes of common interest; through calls for action in key sectors such the cultural and creative industries that are based on the complementary comparative advantages of each partner; through much greater use of the new media.
- Much scope exists for deepening cultural relations by reaching out more systematically to civil society in general, especially outside the major cities, as well as by adapting Australian cultural offers to the needs and aspirations of a growing number of autonomous entrepreneurs in the socio-cultural sectors of the Asian countries concerned.
- Cultural diplomacy efforts need to seek a better fit with the cultures of young people. Most cultural relations as they are practiced today, particularly at the official level, are far removed from the interests and practices of young people; they are 'out of synch' with the ways young people communicate across borders to create communities of interest and practice, notably through digital tools and the social media. By the same token, it will be essential to launch more exchange programmes for young people in both the educational and cultural domains. Conversely, it is also at the elementary school level that the seeds should be sown of building knowledge and awareness of *other cultures* among Australians.
- There is often a lack of adequate professionalism in the cultural scenes of many of the countries studied, whereas Australian cultural management is known to be well developed. Many Asian cultural actors would be glad to benefit from the empowerment, international networking and capacity-building brought about through cooperation with Australian cultural experts and institutions.
- A certain number of clusters or domains could be prioritized for future work. One aspect of Australia that would have considerable promise in the countries concerned is the cultural expression of Australia's Indigenous Peoples. Hence the first goal set out in *Creative Australia* is certainly of relevance: 'Recognise, respect and celebrate the centrality of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures to the uniqueness of Australian identity'. Yet appreciation overseas, including in Asia, of these cultures is already an old story. The question arises of what more Australia could do to benefit from this interest. One possible

pathway is suggested by those informants who see a certain ‘tokenism’ in the way official Australia exports Indigenous cultural expression as a stand-alone, enclaved phenomenon. It would be useful, therefore, to find more ways (as perhaps the Bangarra Dance Company is already doing), of presenting cultural forms in which Indigenous elements co-exist or fuse with other traditions, including Australia’s dominant culture.

- In addition, the following domains may be cited:
 - *The cultural economy*: Joint work on creative industries, creative hubs, business models and alternative funding models.
 - *Cultural policy development*: joint programmes for sharing experience, modes of building and sustaining capacities, training, information and exchange platforms using new technologies.
 - *Culture and development*: Projects that aim to enhance empowerment through culture, as well as its economic growth potential and the development of the *common good*.
 - *Culture and social transformation*: Projects that share knowledge and knowhow related to change making through artistic practice, the strengthening of civic participation and voice and the role of new media.

- Last but not least, the inquiry has yielded a set of guiding methodological principles for international relations programming (applicable to the cultural arena as well as to many other domains) that are the following:
 - Coordination between non-governmental and governmental objectives: there needs to be a recognition of and alignment with economic and trade agreements and policies
 - More focused research and planning, which can be partly achieved by travel to the country concerned before the initiation of the programme design
 - Acceptance of the mutuality principle: no country or organization has a monopoly on meaningful art forms and/or cultural knowledge
 - Emphasis on longevity: the most fruitful partnerships evolve over time, enabling gradual deepening of mutual understanding, flexibility to respond to strategic opportunities and the ability to make significant contributions to a shared long-term vision

- Partnerships with academia: collaboration between cultural activists and higher education would enrich all stakeholders and help foster a new generation of enlightened leadership in cultural diplomacy
- Reflexivity and evaluation: both principles should be infused throughout any programme right from its inception.

Finally, an overarching priority: the need to capitalize imaginatively and systematically on the growing presence in Australia of significant diasporic as well as (temporary) student populations from all the Asian countries concerned except Japan. Policy-makers and activists everywhere (notably in contemporary Europe) have woken up to the fact that these diasporic and transient communities are potential vectors of better intercultural communication and understanding. This was not so in the past, under historical conditions of migration. Today, however, the ways in which people move trans-nationally and trans-continentially have been transformed by the drivers of globalization, notably technology. Emigration is no longer a form of cultural exile but enables existence in the 'third', liminal space. People who have moved, temporarily or for good, to other cultural settings have done so without necessarily abandoning their own cultural practices, loyalties and senses of belonging, while adapting through acculturation to the cultural environment in which they find themselves. Thus in Europe's cities and towns, for instance, there are already a number of projects and programmes carried out through the intermediation of people from Eastern and Southern Europe, Africa, the Arab world and Asia, and with the participation of institutions and groups in the 'home' countries, that are building new forms and networks of cultural conviviality. The same potential exists in Australia, through the mobilization and empowerment of the country's Asian-origin communities. Building on this potential should not be a one-sided affair, however. It is a responsibility not just of Australian society and officialdom but equally of key institutions in the countries of origin as well. The growing interest in Asian capitals for the strengthening of links with their respective diasporic populations augurs well in this regard.

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Appendix: Informants

Ms Duriya Amatavivat, Deputy Permanent Delegate of Thailand to UNESCO, Paris
Simon Barker, musician, Sydney
Margaret Bradley, Australian civil society activist of cultural relations with Indonesia
Prof. Ashley Carruthers, Australian National University
Prof. David Carter, University of Queensland
Prof. Mridula Chakraborty, University of Western Sydney
Prof. Jocelyn Chey, University of Sydney
Tim Curtis, Regional Cultural Advisor, UNESCO, Bangkok
Prof. Kate Darian-Smith, University of Melbourne
Sandy Evans, composer, music educator and saxophonist, Sydney
Nao Hayashi-Denis, archaeologist; Coordinator of the Museums Programme, UNESCO
Om Prakash Jain, Founder of the Sanskriti Foundation, New Delhi
Sumathi Krishnan, music organizer, founder of Sydhwaney, Sydney
Dong-ok Lee, Director, Korean Cultural Office, Sydney
Riley Lee, musician, Sydney
Prof. David Lowe, Deakin University, Melbourne
Vicki McConville, visual artist, Melbourne
Prof. John Napier, musician and ethnomusicologist, Sydney
Yamini Narayanan, Deakin University
Alex Oliver, Lowy Institute, Sydney
Tara Rajkumar, dancer, Melbourne
Shanti Raman, music enthusiast, Sydney
Prof. Huib Schippers, musicologist, Griffith University, Brisbane
Julianne Schultz, founding editor, *Griffith Review*, Sydney
Bobby Singh, musician, Sydney
Prof. Chung-Sok Suh, Executive Director, Korea Research Institute, UNSW
Prof. Wanning Sun, University of Technology Sydney
Philip Taylor, Australian National University, Canberra
Prof. Yasushi Watanabe, Keio University, Japan
Prof. Chongzheng Wu, University of International Business and Economics, Beijing
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