

CENTRE FOR DIALOGUE  
LA TROBE UNIVERSITY



TOWARD THE  
DEVELOPMENT OF A  
STRATEGIC PLAN FOSTERING  
INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH  
COLLABORATION IN THE  
SOCIAL SCIENCES

A SUBMISSION TO THE HOUSE OF  
REPRESENTATIVE STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

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# Toward the Development of a Strategic Plan Fostering International Research Collaboration in the Social Sciences

A SUBMISSION TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVE STANDING  
COMMITTEE ON INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Interdependence is now so deeply rooted in the organisation of human affairs that no business, no economy, no research team, no organisation, no society can operate independently of the needs, priorities, resources, and policies of its counterparts elsewhere in the world. In our present interconnected world, it is no longer possible to pursue one's interests without due regard to the interests of others. This fundamental insight must inform innovation policy and research collaboration.

Innovation cannot be adequately understood, much less put to effective use, unless it is placed within a wider cultural framework. Cultural, linguistic, religious and civilisational influences play a pivotal role in how societies plan and organise, and how they interact with each other. In ways that are not always appreciated, culture has far-reaching implications for virtually every facet of policy, and at all levels of governance – local, national, regional and global.

In Australia's case, this broadening and deepening of capital must take advantage of two valuable assets: the multicultural fabric of Australian society and the cultural diversity of the regions with which we are closely engaged (Europe and North America on the one hand and Asia Pacific on the other). Put simply, our innovation policies must internalise the rapidly changing demographic profile of the country and the converging influences of our history and geography.

Given that we are not just dealing with products and technologies, but also with cultures, languages, religions, and social, ethical and political systems, *the emphasis has to be the on understanding as well as knowledge*, on their development, application and diffusion.

To make this possible three things are needed:

- a) Strategically selected forms of national and international networking and collaboration that effectively mobilise intercultural knowledge and understanding;
- b) Careful identification of research and training priorities around themes that give due prominence to notions of interdependence, cultural knowledge and negotiation of cultural diversity (including diversity of languages);
- c) A more systematic attempt to identify international best practice in these areas of study, research and educational organisation.

Below are listed a few key issues which have assumed increasing importance in international life, and to which significant international research institutions are beginning to devote considerable intellectual and financial resources. All these issues will play a crucial role in Australia's understanding of its region and the world, hence in its capacity to respond in timely and constructive fashion. They provide the focus for urgently needed international research collaboration.

## **1. THE ROLE OF RELIGION AND CULTURE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

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Technological and economic innovation is one of the key drivers of global interdependence. But such innovation cannot be adequately understood, much less put to effective use, unless it is placed within a wider cultural framework. Cultural, linguistic, religious and civilisational influences play a pivotal role in how societies plan and organise and how they interact with each other. In ways that are not always appreciated, culture has far-reaching implications for virtually every facet of policy, and at all levels of governance – local, national, regional and global.

In the age of globalisation identity is still largely shaped by culture. Our world remains profoundly diverse, in its cultures, religions, languages and political systems. An effective strategy requires therefore a broadening and deepening of intellectual capital, capable of harnessing the best possible research and educational skills to bear on the interaction of different cultures, traditions and civilizations.

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## **2. INTERNATIONAL GOVERNANCE (GLOBAL AND REGIONAL)**

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In an environment of steadily rising technological, economic and ecological interconnectedness, states, large and small, buffeted by pressures which they cannot effectively control, are seeking with varying degrees of skill and success to pool their efforts and resources and create collaborative frameworks and mechanisms. These attempts at institutional innovation, often referred to as multilateralism, assumed different forms in different places.

Global multilateralism is perhaps the clearest manifestation of the phenomenon, and, in the minds of many, the primary vehicle for developing legitimate and effective institutional responses that can complement the flagging governance capabilities of the national state. Institutional innovation is taking place on an unprecedented scale and is relevant to every facet of human activity. Much of this innovation involves formal institutions, but just as frequently it spawns a great many informal and ad hoc institutional responses to deal with any number of challenges – from epidemics to population movements, and from climate change to the global financial crisis.

Regional multilateralism is just as significant – not just in Europe, but in various parts of Asia, Africa and Latin America. The emerging complex interconnections between national, regional and global governance are still only dimly understood, but they are central to the evolving organizational and policy landscape.

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## **3. THE RISE OF NEW CENTRES OF POWER, INFLUENCE AND CONTESTATION**

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There is now a general understanding that the geopolitical, geoeconomic and geocultural landscape is undergoing profound transformation, with far-reaching implications for Australia.

These transformations have yet to receive the close research attention they deserve in the Australian academy. Yet Australia is uniquely placed by virtue of its history, geography and demography to contribute, in collaboration with international centres of research excellence, to a deeper analysis of the origins, nature and impact of these changes – not just globally, but in the regions, countries and even localities that have particular relevance to Australian interests (broadly defined).

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#### 4. THE ROLE OF DIALOGUE AND NEGOTIATION

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Given economic and technological interdependence on the one hand and cultural, religious and political diversity on the other, there is an urgent need to research the scope, limitations, philosophy and methodologies of dialogue. How is difference (in values, interests and perceptions) being negotiated, by what social actors, in what contexts and with what outcomes? What are emerging trends in dialogical and negotiating strategies and processes?

##### **Relevant Overseas Institutions and Leading Scholars**

At La Trobe University (most recently through our Centre), we have developed connections with a large number of institutions (universities, research centres and think tanks) which are pursuing innovative research on the key issues listed above. Some of these connections are well established, others are in the early stages of discussion. All, however, are deserving of systematic consolidation and development. Here again, they are listed in no particular order of importance.

##### ***Europe***

- London School of Economics and Political Science (Department of International Relations, Institute of Cold War Studies – Prof Michael Cox)
- Institute of International Relations, University of Warsaw
- Department of International Relations, Sussex University (Dr Fabio Petito)
- L'Orientale: Università degli Studi di Napoli (Naples) (Prof Franco Mazzei)
- International Progress Association, Vienna (Prof Hans Koechler)

##### ***Asia***

- Institute of Social Ethics, Nanzan University (Nagoya)
- The Toda Institute for Global Policy and Peace Research (Tokyo, Honolulu)
- East China Normal University (Shanghai) – Center for Asia-European Studies (Prof Feng Shaolei); Centre for Asia-Pacific Studies (Prof Hou Minyue)
- Shanghai Academy of social Sciences, Institute of European and Asian Studies (Prof Pan Guang)
- Institute of World Economics and Politics, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (Prof Wang Yizhou)
- Shanghai Institute for International Studies (Prof Yang Jiemian)
- Ateneo de Manila University (Prof Christina Montiel)
- Center for Strategy and International Security Studies (Prof Deng-Ker Lee, University of Taiwan)