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Introduction

This chapter examines the development of the EU-Australia relationship from a focus on one country (the United Kingdom) and policy (agriculture) to a broadening of engagement. Engagement has long been characterised by conflict and mutual misunderstandings, underpinned by a sense of distance. For some decades, neither interlocutor featured significantly on the other’s radar screen. Increasingly, however, as this chapter illustrates, there has been a rapprochement based on common concerns relating to climate change, development cooperation, the WTO, counter-terrorism, security, police cooperation, people movement and education. There is now a shared interest in cooperation in the Asia Pacific region. The chapter examines how and why the relationship has moved from a bilateral state-to-state engagement in the early debates to an increasingly regionalised and multilateralised common agenda. It commences with an overview of the single-country emphasis of Australia in its dealings with the European Union (EU) and the single-policy focus on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). It then examines the development of agreements and dialogues as the EU broadened its policy scope and reach and as Australia increasingly perceived advantages in engaging in a multidimensional relationship with the EU, its institutions and member states.

Limited Engagement: Trade and Agriculture as a problem in the development of Australia-EU relations (1957-93)

Relations between Australia and the European Union and its predecessors during the early decades of the European integration process were, on the whole, low key and essentially driven by mutual disagreements over agricultural trade. Chiefly preoccupied with its internal consolidation, the EU showed only little time for developing a close partnership with Australia, which was generally perceived as ‘geographically distant, relatively prosperous and lacking in great political clout’ (Ludlow 2001: 268). As for Australia, its interests in Western Europe were initially confined, almost exclusively, to the United Kingdom (UK), with whom Canberra maintained close (if declining) political, economic and defence ties. Its main stake in the European integration process focussed, essentially, on the prospect of British participation in the European integration process. With its international outlook still predicated on a close identification with the British Commonwealth, and with its economic
prosperity regarded as still dependent upon its ability to retain the UK as a substantial export market, Australia maintained a markedly ambivalent attitude towards the EU.

In general, Canberra supported its political objectives, viewing integration as an important contribution to Western European stability. Yet, in spite of this, Canberra soon grew apprehensive of its possible negative consequences for Australian trade. In the late 1950s, Australian anxieties concentrated on the inclusion of potentially protectionist agricultural provisions in the Treaty of Rome and the possible imposition of a high common external tariff on third countries. Although the EU initially avoided providing much detail for the integrated agricultural regime it had in mind, the Australian government doubted that Brussels would adopt relatively liberal agricultural policies. (Benvenuti 2011: 308-313).

Australian concerns over the agricultural policies of the EU manifested themselves in full force in 1961, in connection with the British decision to seek EU membership. In August 1961 Australian Minister for Trade John McEwen (quoted in Burnett 1983: 1-2) warned Parliament that if the UK joined the EU, ‘that major market could be greatly reduced for outside suppliers … The displaced supplies of outside countries would be then in bitter competition for the remaining markets of the world … [T]his competition would be still further intensified if the agricultural policies of the new, enlarged Common Market tended to thrust added export surpluses on the remaining markets of the outside world’. In 1961 the Australian government estimated that, without proper safeguards, some 55–60 per cent of Australia’s agricultural exports to the British market was at risk. (Benvenuti 2008: ch. 2).

In the end, British attempts to join the EU came to a crushing end when France blocked the British application in 1963. The French veto gave Australian producers time to diversify their export markets and when London renewed its efforts to join in 1970-72, Canberra put a brave face on it, welcoming British entry and endeavouring to put Australia-EU relations on a sounder footing. In particular, it sought to defuse the thorny issue of European agricultural protectionism by engaging in comprehensive diplomatic talks with the European Commission in the hope that a more constructive approach would bring results. Its accommodating approach notwithstanding, Australia made no impact on EU policy (Benvenuti 1997: ch. 2).
The trend had been set: Australia did not feature on the European radar screen and, as a result, Canberra returned to more critical stance towards the EU and its CAP.

In the mid-1970s, however, as a result of the CAP’s high internal price support granted to its farmers, the EU began to produce more than it could sell, and was thus obliged to stockpile large quantities of unsold agricultural produce at significant cost for its budget. In order to reduce the cost of its expensive agricultural policies, the EU began to dump its oversupply on the international markets at highly subsidised prices. For Australia, 40% of whose export earnings derived from agriculture, European dumping represented a difficult challenge, for it not only squeezed Australian agricultural produce out of third markets, but it also drove down agricultural commodity prices internationally. Coming on top of an almost total exclusion of Australian agricultural exports from European markets, the EU’s dumping led to trenchant criticism by successive Australian governments. The stage was now set for a period of serious misunderstandings between Brussels and Canberra. In 1978 and 1980 the Fraser government (1975-83) even went as far as to threaten retaliatory trade measures against the EU (Benvenuti 1997: chs 1-3).

With the EU-Australia relationship at an impasse over agriculture, progress could only come from an exogenous circuit-breaker. This was provided by the launch of a new General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) round of international trade negotiations at Punta del Este (Uruguay) in September 1986. Australia’s contribution to the launch of the so-called Uruguay Round (1986-93) and the role Canberra played in the creation of the Cairns Group — a broad-based coalition of fourteen farm exporting countries — signalled a major change in Australia’s approach to farm trade and the EU (Benvenuti 1997: ch. 4). The Hawke government (1983-91)’s readiness to pursue multilateral solutions to the CAP and to rely on coalition-building as a means of persuading the EU to reform its agricultural policies formed ‘part of a serious process of self-criticism and re-evaluation’ (Cooper et al. 1993: 65). Frustrated at the lack of progress in negotiations with the Commission, Canberra came to realise that efforts to push the EU to reform could only succeed through collective action and multilateral diplomacy. The Uruguay Round and the Cairns Group became, therefore, the central element of Hawke’s new strategy towards the EU: from 1986 to 1992 differences over agriculture were primarily addressed in the context of the GATT negotiating process, where
Canberra exploited every opportunity to convey its opposition to European agricultural protectionism and to draw international attention to this problem. Through its diplomatic initiatives, Australia made a significant contribution to the creation of a political environment in which the EU felt besieged. In so doing, it ensured that agricultural reforms did not lose momentum and that the US was not left alone in its diplomatic offensive against the CAP (Benvenuti 1997: ch. 4). Under strong international and internal pressure, the EU finally gave in by agreeing to important farm reforms (Murray and Zolin 2012). More specifically, it committed not only to substantial farm support reductions in areas such as domestic support, market access and export competition, but also to the incorporation of agriculture into the GATT system, the creation of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and provisions for a future round of multilateral trade negotiations.

The broadening of engagement: trade, norms and values, political dialogue, and multilateral cooperation since the 1990s.

In the aftermath of the Uruguay Round, Australia-EU relations witnessed a perceptible improvement, in spite of some continuing misunderstandings on trade and a major diplomatic setback in 1996-7, which resulted in the stalling of negotiations on a proposed Framework Agreement due to the Agreement’s inclusion of a human rights clause (Murray 2005: 135-152). This divergence of views on norms and values in international agreements led eventually the abandonment of the Framework Agreement in favour of a non-treaty status Joint Declaration, signed on 26 June 1997. This Joint Declaration was succeeded in April 2003 by an Agenda for Cooperation, which identified practical measures to advance top priorities in the partnership over the next five years. Although appearing at the time as a significant complication in the development of closer Australia-EU relations, the failure to bring about a treaty-level agreement did not, in the end, prevent the bilateral relationship from recovering and then maturing. This was due to a number of factors. The first was the fact that, with the ‘agricultural problem’ contained, Australia saw the potential removal of this major stumbling block as an opportunity to bring a clean slate to the bilateral relationship by making the EU a key market for its goods and by seeking to negotiate agreements regarding market access. The most successful of these was the Wine Agreement of 1994 (subsequently revised in 2008), which resulted in a considerable increase in wine exports to Europe. Trade and market access were also at the basis of the Mutual Recognition Agreement of 1999, which meant that Australian standards were recognised by the EU and vice versa. By the early
1990s, 2000s, the EU had become Australia’s major trading partner. Australian officials under successive governments and businesses recognised the value of the EU as a stable market, and negative perceptions of the EU as a ‘fortress’ to all Australian goods gradually faded. A second driver of closer engagement was the EU’s growing international stature. As the EU had increased influence on international trade negotiations and attempted to establish itself as a putative normative power, its impact and scope were increasingly recognised by the Australian government – somewhat reluctantly by the Howard administration but more positively by those of Rudd (2007-10) and Gillard (2010-). Australia began to engage with the EU as a normative actor in two ways – the EU’s role as a regulatory norms-setter in trade (by signing Wine and Mutual Recognition Agreements) and the EU’s attempts to influence and shape international norms in democracy promotion and good governance (as it held common stances with the EU on governance issues). Successive Australian governments came to regard the EU as a like-minded partner on non-agricultural trade issues, increasingly sharing similar concerns regarding stability and democracy in the Asian region.

A third factor was the multifaceted regional context. There developed a shared Asia Pacific agenda and a multilateral context for policy engagement. The EU recognised, and sought to tap into, Australia’s growing expertise on the Asia Pacific and to adopt common approaches. This was complemented by increased involvement in multilateral fora, with shared policy perspectives regarding the Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM), which Australia joined in 2010, and other international councils, such as the G20 (established in 2008). The G20, in particular, has witnessed an increasing Australian interest in seeking a long-term multilateral solution to the sovereign debt crisis that has been engulfing the EU since 2009 and that is now threatening to undermine not only the eurozone’s very existence, but also the international economic system’s overall stability. On the regional level, there is a common interest in developing an Asia Pacific dimension: there is a recognition of common concerns regarding development assistance, humanitarian assistance, counter-terrorism, the promotion of good governance, and a shared interest in regional architecture in East Asia in particular, as seen in the 2008 Partnership Framework and recent agreements regarding Australian backing for civilian crisis management support for EU activities; the sharing of counter-terrorist and other intelligence in the Europol-Australian Federal Police agreement and EU assistance to the Australian-Indonesian led Jakarta Centre for Law Enforcement Cooperation.
Fourthly, normative and ideational factors also played a role in driving the relationship forward, as common values became more evident. Australia is regarded by EU decision-makers as a fellow democratic nation, which seeks to promote democracy and good governance in its own region. For its part, the Australian government views the EU as a reliable partner in Asia and the Pacific. Australia is no longer ‘too far away too rich too stable’ in Piers Ludlow’s terms (Ludlow 2001), but rather a stable democracy and a valuable ally in a region that is in flux. There is a close identification of normative objectives evident in the joint agreements and statements. The preamble (Chapeau) to the 2008/9 Framework Agreement refers to ‘shared values and close historical, political, economic and cultural ties’ and ‘shared commitment to the respect for and promotion of human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law’ (DFAT/EC 2009).

Fifthly, high-level political leadership was also a key driver of engagement, with the EU receiving clear signals of a new approach from recent leaders with the Rudd government signing the Kyoto Protocol and the visit by current Prime Minister Julia Gillard to Brussels in 2010. Gillard stated in October 2010 that ‘as a nation we are seeking to have a treaty which would detail very important elements of what is a very comprehensive and strong relationship.’ She likened the current relationship ‘to an engagement’ with the aim of ‘looking to get married’ (Gillard 2010). Indeed, the number of high-level diplomatic contacts between Canberra and Brussels has increased incrementally over the last decade, most recently with the visits to Australia of Commission President José Manuel Barroso and Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security/Vice-President of the Commission in 2011, complementing the trips to Brussels of Prime Ministers Rudd in 2008 and Gillard in 2010. There is no doubt that leadership socialisation and summitry have been effective and productive in recent years and this has involved initiatives to advance from the current Partnership Framework agreement to a treaty-based Framework Agreement, currently under negotiation.

The current Partnership Framework signed by Australia and the EU in 2008, and revised in 2009, is a significant agreement that commences with a detailed statement of shared norms and values, and moves on to cooperation on trade, political dialogue and cooperation in multilateral fora and the Asia Pacific region. The Partnership Framework encompasses a
number of policy areas for cooperation, based on five objectives. These are, firstly, to strengthen bilateral and multilateral dialogue and cooperation in support of shared foreign policy and global security interests; secondly, to promote and support the multilateral rules-based trading system, and consolidate and expand the bilateral trade and investment relationship; thirdly, to enhance regional and bilateral cooperation and coordination in relation to the Asia and Pacific regions; fourthly, to seek opportunities to cooperate on climate change, environment, energy security, fisheries and forestry; and, finally, to strengthen cooperation in science, research, technology and innovation, education and culture and facilitate the movement of people. The first formal review of the Partnership Framework was conducted at an EU-Australia Troika meeting in October 2009 to reflect developments over the first year of the Framework – a noteworthy set of achievements in a short period of time.

Sixthly, in power politics, Australia and the EU share an increasing commonality of views. Both, for instance, regard the US as a key partner and recognise its important role in the region, especially under the presidency of Barack Obama. Both have concerns about China’s rise in terms of economic growth, competitive potential, security alliances and territorial disputes. Prime Minister Gillard (2011) referred to the challenge as having China, Australia’s largest export market and largest trading partner, as ‘neither a democracy nor part of our alliance system, a nation whose economic transformation is in turn transforming the economic and strategic balance of our world’. Certainly, the shifting great power stances and power balances in the Asia Pacific are of key concern to Australia and the EU. In the case of Australia, the decision by the Australian government to have a US base in Darwin reinforces Australia’s position as being firmly in the US geopolitical sphere, despite calls for Australia not to privilege the US over China in the region (White 2011). In the case of the EU, it seeks to be part of the security dialogues in the region and to be a full member of the East Asia Summit, alongside its Asian partners, the US and Russia. The post Cold War and post 9/11 scenario sees an international agenda relating to security threats that encompass food security, energy security, counter-terrorism, people movements and terrorism, and increasingly, as the EU and Asia work together on these (see Weber chapter in this volume), so too Australia and the EU perceive commonality of views as they work together in the Jakarta Centre of Law Enforcement Cooperation.
Australia-EU engagement, therefore, is also based on changing geopolitical and security contexts. Such an engagement has been made possible because there has been a rapprochement between the two interlocutors, as well as a broader multidimensional engagement. This places the relationship between Australia and the EU on an innovative, largely co-operative plane, where trade, wine and agriculture take a back seat and terrorism, security and societal issues feature. This newer engagement is bilateral, multilateral and, more recently, regional, with discussion on Asia Pacific security concerns, in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11 2001 and the Bali, Jakarta, Madrid and London bombings, which have radically altered the nature of diplomatic interaction on security dialogue between the Australian government and its federal police on the one hand, and the EU and Europol on the other.

In the area of trade relations, Australia and the EU, separately, seek increased access to Asian markets, particularly through a policy of negotiating Free Trade Agreements. Australia has signed FTAs with ASEAN, Singapore and Thailand and is currently negotiating FTAs with China, India, Japan, Korea and Malaysia as well as a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement with Indonesia and the development of the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement. The EU has signed an FTA with Korea (see Wissenbach’s chapter) and the negotiations on an FTA with ASEAN stalled in 2009 (see Manea’s chapter). To date this has not resulted in any serious rivalry, although there certainly is potential for trade competition between Australia and the EU, in the Asian region. Finally, the improvement in Australia–EU engagement, as it has broadened from agricultural tensions to comprehend a broad range of policy issues became evident in policy community engagement, patterns of cooperative relationships and collaborative language. Firstly, the language of the joint communiqués after Ministerial Consultations and other high-level meetings gradually became more nuanced and cooperative than in the earlier decades, due in part to CAP reforms and the settlement of some aspects of agriculture at WTO fora and the broadening of the dialogue beyond trade and agriculture, in multilateral agendas.

Australian government bodies and agencies at both federal and state level are now more accustomed to dealing with the EU and this has now become, to a certain extent, normalised within the work of government departments. The EU institutions recognise the importance of
having Australia as a partner in many of their endeavours both in Asia and in the Pacific. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT 2011: 7) reported on the EU as a ‘longstanding partner’ in negotiating ‘a treaty level Framework Agreement with the European Union (EU), which would strengthen broad based cooperation with new institutions established under the Lisbon Treaty’. Australia is also closely monitoring the structural changes to its relationship and engagement with the EU in the aftermath of the Lisbon Treaty.

Institutional adaption in Australia is a whole-of-government approach, as is the approach to the negotiation of the Framework Agreement, which commenced negotiations on 8-9 December 2011 in Brussels. This demonstrates how seriously the Labor government of Australia and the EU take each other. By late 2012 or early 2013, it is anticipated that these negotiations will be successfully completed, encompassing a reorientation from trade to security issues, foreign policy, development aid, humanitarian assistance and climate change. There are similar views held by Australia and the EU regarding on how to ensure aid effectiveness and how development aid can be best delivered to where it is most needed as well as an emphasis on the reduction of poverty. This commitment fits within the development portfolio of both interlocutors but also within the Framework Agreement.

Socialisation, norms sharing and patterns of engagement have increased, with regular meetings at the levels of senior official, prime minister and European Commission president and High Representative and Commissioners. There developed over the last decade or so cooperation on the response to the global financial crisis, as seen within the membership of the G20; regarding North Africa and the Middle East, with Australia a member of the Contact Group; counter-terrorism and on Pakistan with Australia and the EU members of the Jakarta Centre for Law Enforcement Cooperation, as well as agreements on police cooperation and the exchange of security information. There is significant sharing of objectives and values relating to development assistance in the Pacific in the Cairns Compact (Ausaid 2009) Australia and the EU have established a delegated cooperation agreement for aid delivery, which enable Australia and the EU to deliver programs on each other’s behalf. This means that Australia and the EU take advantages of each others’ expertise in areas such as the Pacific, Asia and Africa. During High Representative Ashton’s visit to Australia in October
2011, Australia and the EU opened negotiations on delegated aid projects in South Sudan and Fiji.

The relationship has also been deepened in the areas of cooperation and funding for science and technology and education (Murray 2012). The number and configuration of two-way visits featured, for example, climate change, education and trade – a remarkable change from the single and very brief visit by then Prime Minister John Howard to Brussels in 2002 (Murray 2005).

**Assessing the current relationship**

The Partnership Framework of 2008/9 set the relationship on a more productive footing, reflecting the positive relationship under Rudd and Gillard. Many EU and Australian officials have commented that the openness of the relationship can be viewed through two important events which took place after Kevin Rudd became Prime Minister, because they served to change the tone of the relationship. The first is the fact that Australia signed the Kyoto protocol on 3 December 2007. No longer did EU officials refer to the differences with Australia about Kyoto as a type of ‘cold war’ – it was as if the EU welcomed Australia into the fold of like-minded leaders rather than laggards on climate change issues. The second, and perhaps far more symbolically important in terms of societal values, is the apology to the stolen generation on 13 February 2008, which was received with considerable respect within EU official circles.

In 2010, the EU became Australia’s third largest trading partner, its fourth-largest market for exports and its second source of imports. Total two-way trade in goods and services was valued at $78 billion in 2010, accounting for 14.1 per cent of Australia’s total trade. It represented a 0.9% increase from 2009, when total two-way trade amounted to $77.2 billion. Services continued to make up an important proportion of total trade with the EU, at 31.4 per cent in 2010. So trade continues to be an important element of the relationship for Australia. It is true that within this the UK constitutes the most important trade partner in goods as it accounts for over 50% of all of Australian exports. In trade there are now few major problems in dealing with the EU although Australia is still urging the EU to do more to reduce its level of agricultural support within the CAP. In addition Australia is keen to get increased access
into the professional services market in the EU. Within the WTO, Australia recognises that it is increasingly important to work with the European Commission.

The current negotiations of a treaty-level framework agreement represent a new phase in the maturing relationship. Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd and High Representative Catherine Ashton announced its negotiation in October 2011. This framework agreement is regarded in many ways as an agreement of substance that puts flesh on previous dialogues. It places Australia on a more level playing field with the EU, similar to other interlocutors with the EU. Australia is, in fact, the only G20 country not to have signed some form of framework agreement or similar agreement with the EU.

The multidimensional aspect of the relationship is not only reflected in the fact that it covers many different policies. It is also characterised by the fact that Australia now engages on EU matters in a multi-level and multi-actor manner with the European External Action Service, the Council of the EU, the European Commission, the European Parliament and the 27 member states. The relationship is increasingly multi-level, multi-process and multi-policy in scope, reach and impact. The relatively few current difficulties (such as recent Australian criticism of the eurozone countries’ handling of the sovereign debt crisis) have effectively been bracketed off from the broader relationship. That relationship is based on mutual respect, common norms and values and an appreciation that each has a role to play in world politics and trade, the EU as a putative normative power and global actor and Australian governments as a middle power. This is particularly the case since 2008, where Australia is flexing their muscles in the Asia-Pacific region and in selected international fora such as the G20, where it has sought to work alongside its EU counterparts to minimise, initially, the fallout of the 2008 financial crisis and, subsequently, that of the sovereign debt emergency.

The relationship within the Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM) has presented a new perspective as it brings together Australian and the EU in a large forum which represents over 60% of the world’s population and an opportunity for minilateral collaboration, that is, small coalitions of a few countries from each side, and issue based leadership. The Australian government regards ASEM as part of a ‘very strong commitment to deepen and broaden our [Australian ] engagement both in Asia and in Europe’ (Smith 2009), reflecting ‘the modern basis of our
relationship and engagement with Europe, just as it does our strongest possible commitment to our friends and colleagues in Asia’.

Despite its many travails with the eurozone crisis, the EU is actively engaged in many aspects of policy both internally and internationally. The EU matters in ways that it is not in the past, for Australian government policymakers. On the Australian side, there has been a desire to increase high-level engagement and this has been important to complement the regular ministerial meetings and meetings of senior officials. These are accompanied by meetings between the European Parliament and the Australian Parliament delegations. The agreement under negotiation is regarded in Australian circles as an important relationship between two reliable partners and Australia is regarded as reliable partner by the EU, which does in many ways punch above its weight in multilateral fora and has shared common goals and values regarding governance and other issues. This agreement provides the opportunity to maximise the possibility of cooperation and the number of issues which is expanding all the time. The increased EU interest and engagement with Asia and the Pacific has provided Australia with a useful partner in Asia. Australia has been able to provide advice on its perspectives on different aspects of the Asia Pacific, ranging from trade relations with China to development assistance in the Pacific. The particular British prism that drew on euro-scepticism and an unwillingness to trust the Europeans will remain evident in some parts of government of any political hue and, indeed, in many parts of the Australian media. Nevertheless few would have predicted this level of engagement even in the last decade or so.

Concluding Remarks

Australia no longer presents itself as primarily an agricultural producer, although it will continue to raise remaining concerns regarding the CAP, as it engages with the EU on many aspects of trade diversification, services and investment in the economic relationship. It is no longer the case that every major meeting between European and Australian officials is dominated by agricultural trade. Rather, there has been a multilateralising of the relationship as agricultural trade is discussed particularly within the WTO. Australia and the EU fully support the WTO and see common ground there. They will continue to share a commitment to the provision of duty-free access to their markets for less developed countries.
The relationship is now characterised by a commonality of norms and values to an extent that would never have been anticipated in the past. Engagement is no longer characterised by the implications of British accession to the EU, the need for diversification of the Australian export market, and trenchant critique of the CAP. The relationship is now more regional, more multidimensional and more multilateral – and each interlocutor has a keen interest in Asia.

Despite very distinctive negotiating styles and approaches – and the persistence of very different and often critical media perceptions and government perceptions – the relationship has matured. The EU is recognised as an important trading and investment partner by Australia, while at the same time Australia vigorously pursues its economic interests in Asia. The relationship has become more positive and there is more discussion now of shared histories and common values than ever before, a theme that was evident during the Rudd visit to Brussels in 2008.

Australia is closely observing the implications of the current eurozone sovereign debt crisis. Despite the occasional temptation on the part of Prime Minister Gillard and her Treasurer (finance minister), Wayne Swan, to criticise European policymakers for their apparent inability thus far to develop a clear and credible response to the crisis (Australian 2011a), the Australian government has nonetheless adopted a reasonably constructive attitude towards the eurozone predicament. In late 2011, it indicated its support, in principle, for a concerted G20 initiative aimed at increasing IMF resources designed to deal with the European and other emergencies (Australian 2011a, 2001b). And, while Treasurer Swan made it clear in November 2011 that Australia’s financial contribution would be dependent upon the ability of the eurozone countries to take effective measures to address the debt crisis (Australian 2011c), the Australian government appeared more forthcoming than other G20 members about IMF-sponsored financial assistance to the embattled eurozone.

Finally, a large number of relationships has developed and been cultivated across the institutions and the member states by Australia in a manner that has been useful and profitable for the promotion and protection of its interests. Australia’s perception of the EU and its
predecessors from the 1950s until the 1980s was primarily based on single-country (the UK) and single-policy (agricultural trade) prisms. This is no longer the case.

The relationship has moved from one that is largely dominated by a burden of memory to one that is mature and multidimensional. This relationship reflects considerable accord within multilateral contexts and councils such as the United Nations and its related agencies, and within the WTO. There is a commonality of interests within the G20 and the various East Asian and Asia Pacific fora. Australia and the EU, within these settings and in their bilateral engagement, will continue to have considerable interest in the Asia-Pacific, in trade, soft security issues, in the promotion of democracy, humanitarian assistance, development aid, good governance and collaboration on climate change.

It is no longer the case that trade has led diplomacy, with the trade officials of DFAT leading negotiations – a characteristic of the relationship in much of the early decades. Rather, diplomacy is now leading the relationship. The recognition that perceiving the EU through a single-issue, single-country and single-policy prism has not been constructive for Australia is now widely acknowledged. There is a multilevel engagement with Europe, an engagement that has intensified across the EU institutions and within each of these institutions. A quiet transformation has taken place, as interlocutors are working on security, immigration, terrorism, foreign policy, education, culture and trade. Globalisation presents a challenge which each interlocutor regards as an opportunity to work together. Finally it appears that the intellectual baggage of past conceptions of the relationship is being cast aside (Groom 1992). The Australian policy community is adapting to the EU and increasingly assertive in its relationship. There is an increased willingness on the part of the Australian government to engage with the EU. The dramatic growth taking place within different parts of Asia may well overshadow this relationship for both interlocutors. Yet the fact remains that it is characterised by increases in summitry, common values and agendas, shared interests in the Asia Pacific. There is a commitment to redress the mutual neglect, which had so characterised the relationship in the past and which is, in fact, now relegated to the past. There is a more pro-active approach to engagement with sharing of common values as encapsulated in the preamble to the Partnership Framework, as we have seen. The relationship is driven by norms-sharing, political dialogue – and this is increasingly on hard and soft security concerns.
and agreements – and a desire for stability in the Asia Pacific region, still based on special relationships with the US and a shared concern about Chinese regional dominance in territorial disputes and trade. Both support the US presence and even pre-eminence in the Asia Pacific region and this is likely to continue.

The commitment by each interlocutor to a treaty-based agreement signifies that they share bilateral and normative interests; security strategies and humanitarian and development concerns – as well as threat perceptions in the region regarding the role of China and it is conceivable that this concern will feature prominently in continued dialogue between the EU and Australia. Both interlocutors will seek collaboration in the promotion of shared values relating to governance, human rights and counter-terrorism, while simultaneously providing development assistance to the Pacific region.

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i Murray’s interview with EU official, 2006.

ii Kevin Rudd made an apology to Australia’s Indigenous Peoples to Parliament on 13 February 2008. As part of a long and detailed speech, he stated: ‘We apologise especially for the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, their communities and their country. For the pain, suffering and hurt of these Stolen Generations, their descendants and for their families

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