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# ASIA RISING

Strengthening engagement and partnerships in Asia



**Excavations  
in Nepal**  
uncovering  
the birthplace  
of Buddha

# CONTENTS

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Message from the Executive Director	1
Buddhism, uncovered	2
Taking audiological aid to Cambodia	4
Rescuing the red crabs of Christmas Island	6
The importance of trust in trade	8
Judicial reform in China	9
Timor-Leste's troubled waters	10
Our role in Asia in the Trump era	12

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# A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Welcome to fourth issue of *Asia Rising*, La Trobe Asia's little slice of propaganda giving you insight into some of the Asia related research from La Trobe University.

I am sure you will agree that the stories in this issue are impressively diverse. La Trobe University is influencing what we know and how we live in a range of fields from science through to humanities, and across all of Asia, from Indonesia to Tibet. The tiniest animals on a small island in the Indian Ocean get attention, as does one of the world's oldest religions in the peaks of Tibet.

La Trobe University has been celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2017, and I am pleased to say that La Trobe Asia has been doing our part to help out with the celebrations. We co-hosted a major public event with the Ideas and Society Program featuring former Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating, which gave a powerful and thoughtful argument on Australia's place in the world in relation to Asia and the United States.

We have hosted the launch of the first publications from La Trobe University Press: *China Matters: Getting It Right For Australia* by Bates Gill and Linda Jakobson, and *Fear of Abandonment: Australia in the World since 1942* by Allan Gyngell.

In the future we will be playing our part in a few major conferences, and are continuing to administer grant programs and encourage Asia directed research and activities amongst the La Trobe University community.

Finally, I am pleased to let you know that La Trobe Asia now has a voice on Twitter. Please follow @latrobeasia to hear all about our events, opinions, podcasts and the odd piece of agit prop.

Thank you for your interest in the work of La Trobe Asia and do not hesitate to get in contact if there is anything we can help you with in relation to La Trobe's engagement with Asia.

*Nick Bisley*

## Listen to the podcast

*Asia Rising* is also the name of the podcast from La Trobe Asia, with news, views and general happenings in Asia's states and societies. Subscribe now on iTunes or SoundCloud to hear interviews with La Trobe University academics and guests on a wide range of Asian countries and topics.



Professor Nick Bisley (Executive Director, La Trobe Asia) interviews Professor Daniel Bell (Dean of the Faculty of Politics and Public Administration at Shandong University (Qingdao)) about China's political future.



# BUDDHISM, UNCOVERED

South of the Himalayas in Nepal's Terai, just a few kilometres from the border with neighbouring India, lies the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Lumbini. It is one of the holiest sites of one of the world's largest religions – the birthplace of Siddhartha Gautama, the historic Buddha.

Buddhist chronicles record that the Buddha's mother, Queen Maya Devi, was travelling from visiting her family at Devadaha to her husband's home of Kapilvastu when she began to go into labour. Stopping to bathe in a pool in the gardens of Lumbini village, she gave birth to Prince Siddhartha Gautama – the future Buddha – in the shade of a Pipal tree.

Today, the site is one of the four key Buddhist pilgrimage destinations associated with the life of the Buddha, and the only one to lie in Nepal – with Kushinagar, Sarnath, and Bodghaya all located further south in India.

However, until recently the antiquity of the site was poorly understood. "For many years the earliest evidence we had of religious

activity at Lumbini dated back to the 3rd century BCE," says Dr Keir Strickland, a lecturer in Archaeology at La Trobe University.

"At this time the site was visited by the Emperor Ashoka, who ordered a temple built on the site of Buddha's birth, and erected a pillar of Indian sandstone bearing an inscription recording his visit."

It was this Ashokan pillar, and its inscription, that helped identify the site in the late 19th century, as the location of Lumbini had been lost for centuries. Since its re-discovery the site has seen rapid development, and a huge increase in visitor numbers, both tourists and pilgrims, which pose threats to the site.

Strickland first travelled to Nepal in 2001 as an undergraduate on an internship with UNESCO. His task was to monitor the number of visitors and their activities to the World Heritage Site – and for six months he lived in a nearby Buddhist monastery run by South Korean monks.

Ten years later, and having completed a PhD in South Asian archaeology, Dr Strickland returned to Lumbini as part of a major international project, funded by Japanese Funds-in-Trust to UNESCO. He worked with Professor Robin Coningham (Durham University, UK) and Mr Kosh Acharya (UNESCO consultant, Nepal) to assess the extent and condition of the archaeology at the site in order to advise the ongoing management and development.

Part of the team's work focussed upon the Ashokan Maya Devi temple at the heart of the site, and it was here that they made their most significant discovery – evidence of an earlier shrine, something that predates the accepted birth of Siddhartha Gautama Buddha, and represents the earliest shrine ever found.



Dr Keir Strickland, Lecturer in Archaeology



“Cutting back some of the in-situ material left by earlier excavations, we discovered the remains of a much earlier shrine, dating to the 6th century BCE,” says Dr Strickland. “This earlier shrine was very simple, and consisted of a large wooden railing surrounding a tree – most likely, based on leaf-wax residues, a Pipal tree. A pathway appears to have surrounded the outside of this railing, and this was later modified by a kerbed pavement of monumental clay bricks before finally being enshrined below the Ashokan temple in the 3rd century.”

“Archaeological interpretations always come with caution, but we potentially found the first shrine built around the tree that the historic Buddha was born under,” says Strickland.

Since concluding their work at Lumbini, the team have now moved 10km west to the neighbouring site of Tilaurakot – a well preserved early historic walled citadel. The site is believed by many to be Kapilavastu, the ancient capital of the Sakya kingdom and the childhood home of Siddhartha Gautama Buddha.

However, Tilaurakot has a rival to this claim – 16 kilometres south, just over the Indian border, is the archaeological site of Piprahwa, which many believe to be the “true” Kapilavastu.

There’s a lot at stake – establishing Tilaurakot as Kapilavastu would greatly increase the number of Buddhist pilgrims to the area, and encourage economic development in a largely impoverished region.

Nepal aims to boost the number of international tourists to two million annually by 2020, and there are efforts to develop an entire precinct with Lumbini as a major centre of peace, as well as plans to develop the region as a pilgrimage landscape – the natal landscape of the Buddha.

Geophysical scans of Tilaurakot carried out by Durham University have made it possible to map out the plan of the citadel in its Early Historic form (dating to between the 3rd century BCE – 1st century CE), while Strickland’s excavations in 2015 were able to identify a number of timber structures below the citadel dating to around the 7th century BCE – evidence of an earlier village contemporary with the early tree-shrine at Lumbini.

For Keir Strickland, digging in an archaeological pit while being surrounded by chanting monks, nuns or pilgrims has become commonplace. Rather than let the politics and religion distract him, he just focuses on what the site can tell him.

“There is pressure to ‘prove’ the location of Kapilavastu, but you can’t let that dictate how you work, or how you interpret the archaeology,” says Strickland. “Kapilavastu or not, it’s one of the best preserved Early Historic Citadels in South Asia, and was undoubtedly part of Siddhartha Gautama’s world. As an archaeologist you do your best to be objective, to disregard political pressures and to focus on the site. The archaeology has its own story to tell you.” ●







# TAKING AUDIOLOGICAL AID TO CAMBODIA

In October 2016 Dr Chyrisse Heine led a group of four students and two volunteer specialists to Pursat in Cambodia, to provide speech and hearing services in a free clinic. The trip, attached to a program with Vision Cambodia, lasted a week, and provided a chance to assist the local Khmer people who otherwise would not have access to these specialist services.

“Taking students to Cambodia to be a part of these clinics is very rewarding for all involved,” says Heine, a speech pathologist and audiologist from La Trobe University. “It’s important for students to experience a practical application of their studies, and for the Khmer people we treat it provides much needed care they might otherwise not access.”

In just a few days the Cambodia Vision group collectively saw more than 3,000 patients. Ear infections, insects in ears and excessive cleaning of ears causing inflammation were common complaints, and most people needed to be educated on basic ear care.

“Most of the people we treated had access to only the most basic medical services, and we always had a large crowd of people waiting to see us,” says Dr Heine. “They lived in poor remote or rural settings and there was a basic lack of knowledge of how to properly take care of one’s ears. Much of the work that we did was of the preventative nature.”

The Speech and Hearing team fitted more than 600 patients with basic listening systems. These systems amplify sounds through in-ear headphones, in some cases allowing users to hear the voices of loved ones for the first time.

On her last morning on the way to the clinic, Heine saw a Khmer lady wearing one of the listening systems while riding a bicycle through the market. Seeing it in use like this made it clear that their work was having a life-changing effect on the locals.

“Being able to hear the world around you and the voices of those close to us is something we take for granted, and the reaction we see from these people is a reminder of how important it is,” says Heine.

“Many of them were hearing for the first time, and the experience of being able to hear the voice of their loved ones could be overwhelming. It was humbling to be a part of it.”

For the past three years Dr Chyrisse Heine has been travelling to Cambodia to work with the community, and has been involved in capacity building training and educational programs. She has also developed strong ties with the Cambodian community in Melbourne, and has been part of the signing of three Memorandums of Understanding between La Trobe University and organisations assisting Cambodian people.

She sees her work as all part of helping the people of Cambodia, at the same time aiding the health system to develop their own services and resources in providing Speech and Hearing Therapy.

“Health services across Cambodia, especially in regional and remote areas are limited, and audiology and speech pathology are sparse or nonexistent in some areas,” says Dr Heine. “Much of my work has involved training community workers and students in basic speech and hearing therapy, which can be a long process. Language barriers have to be worked around, and we’ve needed to develop resources that are culturally and linguistically appropriate.”

In 2017 Dr Heine will return to Cambodia for a few weeks. The free clinic will be repeated in November with the assistance of four students. Another group of ten speech pathology students will travel to Cambodia under the Australian Government’s New Colombo Plan and work in hospitals. Dr Heine will also teach part of a new short speech therapy course at The Paññāsāstra University of Cambodia – the first in the country.

“Ultimately, it’s helping people that matters,” she says. “Every country needs to have a health and education system that can meet the demands of its own people, and this is about aiding Cambodia in further development of the Speech and Hearing Therapy professions.” ●

Dr Chyrisse Heine, Senior Lecturer, School of Allied Health, facing page top right





# RESCUING THE RED OF CHRISTMAS



The Christmas Island red crabs are known for both their great size and swarming numbers, and every year migrate en masse from the forest to the cliffs to spawn. Dr Peter Green has been studying the ecosystem of Christmas Island since undertaking his doctoral research there in 1989, and has always had a fond fascination with the crabs.

“Seeing these crabs migrate in waves across the island is an amazing experience,” says Dr Green. “They’re not only a wonder of the natural world, they’re a crucial part of the ecology. They keep the understorey open by eating seeds and seedlings, they clean up leaf litter on the forest floor, and they keep the population of invasive species like the giant African land snail in check.”

This all changed in the late 1990s when the yellow crazy ant, an introduced species, started forming supercolonies and putting the Christmas Island red crab at risk. Since that time the number of red crabs has been reduced by a third, to around 20 million crabs.

Now the Head of the Department of Ecology, Environment and Evolution at La Trobe University, Dr Green has been working with Christmas Island National Park staff to save the red crab population before it becomes an ecological disaster.

“When we noticed the number of crabs fall and saw large groups of them lying dead on the forest floor covered in ants it wasn’t hard to establish the connection,” says Dr Green. “These ants tear through everything, and they’ve rapidly changed the island ecosystem for the worse.”

While efforts to bait the ant populations have been effective, it takes constant monitoring and surveillance, and large amounts of bait. Looking for a more long-term, sustainable solution, Dr Green looked at the food supply that fuels the ant supercolonies and found they were feeding on the sugary substance – honeydew – produced by an introduced scale insect. Dealing with these scale insects could solve the problem of the ants, and in turn, help the red crab population.

“We looked at the scale insect in its native range in Southeast Asia, and found that there was a certain kind of parasitoid wasp which use them as a host to



# CRABS ISLAND



incubate eggs,” says Dr Green. “This is what Christmas Island was missing. The wasp could be the ideal biological control agent for the scale insects on the island, and limit the food source available to the crazy yellow ants.”

One of the biggest concerns was the unintentional environmental impact the wasp could bring to the island, but after extensive testing Dr Green is confident that the only species they would target is the introduced scale insect. The Department of Environment and Agriculture granted permission for the project, and he has now been working closely with collaborators at the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM) to establish a population of wasps on Christmas Island.

“The arrival of the wasps on Christmas Island has been a long time coming, and was the culmination of years of dedicated research and planning,” says Dr Green.

“There was a definite feeling of celebration and achievement when it happened. We even rolled out some red carpet as they were carried down from the plane.”

The wasps have been released on test sites as part of a controlled field trial, and FRIM staff are training rangers from the Christmas Island National Park to monitor wasp numbers and build the population on the Island ahead of a wider release. Regular counting over the next year will establish if there is a change to the number of crazy yellow ants.

“Once these wasps have the scale insect population under control the yellow crazy ant won’t have anything to feed on,” says Dr Green. “This will hopefully improve the outlook for the red crab, and return the Christmas Island ecosystem to something close to what it originally was.” ●

**Dr Peter Green, Head of Department, Ecology, Environment and Evolution, above right**

China is Australia's largest trading partner by a wide margin. With a trade relationship worth \$138 billion in 2014/15, \$81 billion of which was Australian exports, Australia puts a lot of emphasis on this economic partnership.

# THE IMPORTANCE OF TRUST IN TRADE

While much of this trade success can be put down to demand for Australian commodities such as iron ore and coal, trust in the quality and standards of goods from Australia is also an important factor.

"High trust means that the Chinese market will push for more imports, and the increased demand means Australian products can command a higher price," says Dr Andrew Gilmore, a lecturer at the La Trobe Business School. "Maintaining a healthy level of trust with Asian partners should be an industry priority."

Dr Gilmore's research examines the international market trust in Australian institutions and goods. By surveying food importers and distributors in China, Japan, and India, he hopes to highlight strengths and weaknesses in how Australian products, and those of rival supplier countries, perform in Asian marketplaces.

While competition in the Asian market is crowded by American and European brands, Gilmore believes the resilient performance of Australian products is, at least partly, a result of consumer trust and desire.

"China has a lot of domestic problems with the manufacture of food," he says. "In 2008 they had a milk safety scare, so demand for imported dairy was high. The same happened to the production of baby formula, and they looked to Australia to fulfil those needs. China strongly associates Australian products with safety and quality."

Streamlining of quarantine agreements in 2014 reduced the time it takes to get milk from Australia to the Chinese consumer to seven days – dairy exports alone to China are now worth \$424 million annually. Free Trade Agreements with China, Japan, Korea, and numerous other Asia-Pacific

countries is also credited with increasing the attractiveness of Australian products.

Recently, an Australian manufacturer of fresh milk (Made Group) has developed a product with a 90 day shelf life, opening up the entire Asian region to fresh milk shipped by low-cost sea freight, thereby undercutting the prices of air-freighted fresh milk from European and American suppliers. In combination with the high trust levels ascribed to Australian dairy products, this augurs well for Australian milk exports.

"Trust is an under-researched aspect of international business, but it is crucial to the success of export sales," Gilmore says. "My research will set an important benchmark for tracking our performance in the future in the increasingly competitive Asian markets." •







It was in the late 1970s when Jianfu Chen entered university, and studying law was still an emerging field in China. The judicial system had suffered during the years of the Cultural Revolution, and was just beginning to re-establish itself in the People's Republic.

"In those early days many judges were unqualified and there were less than 200 lawyers in China," says Chen. "Studying law at this time gave me the opportunity to see its development first-hand and watch the institution grow from scratch."

China functions with a Civil Law system, the basis for which had originated in continental Europe. It had earlier been established in Japan with much success, and it was seen as the best fit for China when legal reforms started at the turn of the 20th Century, although it went to take on what Chen calls 'an added flavour of socialism'.

Chen is now a Professor in the La Trobe Law School at La Trobe University, where he researches and teaches Chinese law and international business law. While acknowledging huge progress since the 1970s, he sees some major problems in China's legal system.

"There's a fundamental flaw in its basic structure, and that is the lack of a separation of powers, and hence the checks and balances" says Chen. "In the western understanding of law the courts are independent, and no man is above the law. In China the Communist Party is yet to learn to operate under the law, and judges don't have the independence they need."

"In most cases this has only limited bearing and everyday justice is, by and large, met. But it makes challenging the state difficult, and many politically sensitive cases will not even make it to the courts."

As a fellow of the Australian Academy of Law, Professor Chen is one of only a few senior academics studying Chinese law, and sees any current reform as mainly addressing technicalities and efficiencies.

"The state needs the judicial system as it provides their legitimacy, but there is little hope of serious reform at the moment," he says. "The judges hope it is something that can improve, and see it as an evolving system they can work with." ●

# TIMOR-LESTE'S TROUBLED WATERS



Dr Rebecca Strating  
LECTURER, DEPARTMENT OF  
POLITICS AND PHILOSOPHY

On 10 April 2017, the 2006 Certain Maritime Agreement on the Timor Sea (CMATS) was terminated. CMATS was an agreement between Australia and Timor-Leste designed to facilitate development of the contested Greater Sunrise gas field, a 5.1 trillion cubic foot gas field in the Timor Sea.





In January, as part of the ongoing UN Compulsory Conciliation (UNCC) maritime dispute resolution proceedings, Timor-Leste notified Australia of its wish to dissolve CMATS. Australia accepted without threatening the terms of the 2002 Timor Sea Treaty. As a quid pro quo, Timor-Leste abandoned two legal proceedings against Australia.

While this move has revived Australia's obligation to negotiate permanent maritime boundaries, it also exposes Timor-Leste to the risk of losing a considerable share of Greater Sunrise. With the CMATS dissolution, agreement on Greater Sunrise now reverts back to the Timor Sea Treaty and a 2003 International Unitisation agreement. According to an Australian Parliament Joint Standing Committee on Treaties (JSCOT) report, this reversion:

*...amends the allocation of Greater Sunrise between Australia and Timor-Leste. With the termination of CMATS, 80 per cent of the Greater*

*Sunrise unit area falls within Australia's maritime boundary. Of the remaining 20 per cent, Timor-Leste is apportioned 90 per cent, or 18 per cent of the Greater Sunrise complex in total. This is in contrast to the 50 per cent of the total Greater Sunrise Unit Area Timor-Leste had negotiated under the CMATS Treaty.*

Ownership of Greater Sunrise is contested, and the arguments about who owns it are legally ambiguous, largely due to the fact that the lateral line that splits Greater Sunrise is drawn to simple equidistance. Maritime boundary expert Professor Clive Schofield told the JSCOT hearing that:

*We now, potentially, have a long negotiation ahead of us until we can reach an agreement. To*

*achieve anything better than that fifty-fifty split, to put the whole of Greater Sunrise on the Timorese side of the line, is drawing a long bow. It is very difficult to think of the factors in maritime delimitation that would lead to that level of shift in that lateral boundary.*

It is impossible to divorce the issue of maritime boundaries from Timor-Leste's economic realities and policies, for three reasons.

First, Dili's economic ambitions have driven its policy approach to the Timor Sea, culminating in the CMATS dissolution. Successive Timorese governments have viewed Timor Sea oil and gas reserves as providing the basis for developing local petrochemical refining industries. Dili's Timor Sea policy has been driven by its need to secure permanent maritime boundaries (and ostensibly 'complete sovereignty'), to take possession of Sunrise, and to establish an export pipeline for the purposes of building a petroleum processing industry on the south coast.

Since 2012, Timor-Leste has reactivated its pursuit of maritime boundaries after failing to secure a pipeline. But rather than abandon industrialisation plans in the absence of an agreement with Australia, Timor-Leste's leaders have continued to develop an oil mega-project, Tasi Mane, which has been promoted as one of the Timorese government's highest priorities.

The likelihood of Timor-Leste gaining all or most of Sunrise is slim, so it is unlikely to get a deal unless it compromises on some of its goals. The question, then, is what goals will be sacrificed. Recent reporting casts doubt on how wedded Timor-Leste's leaders are to Tasi Mane, though this report was subsequently denied.

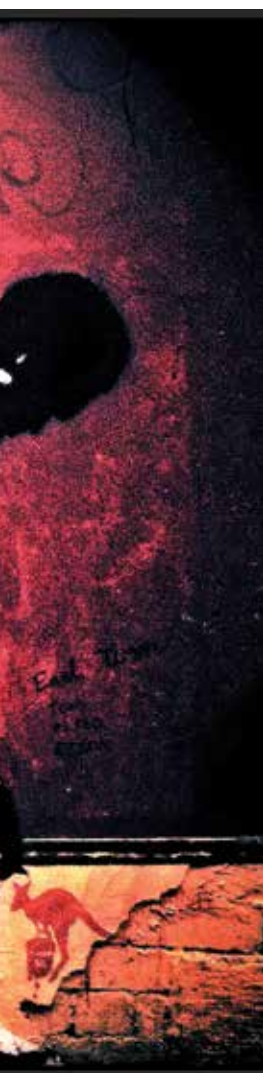
Second, Timor-Leste's capacity to ensure it remains an independent, sovereign, economically viable state relies on its Timor Sea policy. Timor-Leste's formal economy is currently almost entirely dependent on petroleum exports. Timor Sea oil revenues have been crucial for Timor-Leste's independence and

economic viability (furnishing 90-95% of state budgets), and enabled Timor-Leste to build a Petroleum Wealth Fund worth US\$16 billion. The oil in the JPDA will run dry around 2020-2022. Projections by independent economic monitor La'o Hamutuk suggest that on current spending the wealth fund will last until 2026-2028.

Timor-Leste's capacity to be self-determining depends in part on its economic viability. Heavy loan or aid dependency in the future would compromise its decision-making autonomy. Ensuring future economic viability, and sharing oil and gas wealth across the community in ways that promote political order and human development, is central to securing Timor-Leste's hard fought sovereignty. This will depend on the timely resolution of the Greater Sunrise dispute.

Third, since 2012 Timor-Leste has employed an 'activist' foreign policy strategy characterised by a concerted public relations campaign designed to change Australia's Timor Sea policies through grassroots public pressure. Yet Australia's Timor Sea history provides little basis for optimism for a policy shift from Canberra. While public diplomacy has influenced public narratives in Australia, it has not been enough to shift Canberra into a position inimical to its key interests. Crucially, despite the Timor Sea being cast as a bilateral issue, it is actually a trilateral one, with Indonesia also involved. And Australia's first-order foreign policy priority is not Dili but Jakarta.

It is in the interests of both Australia and Timor-Leste to find a compromise in their negotiations, yet this need is undeniably more intense and urgent for Timor-Leste. Severe oil dependency exacerbates Dili's negotiating vulnerabilities with Australia. Without an agreement, Timor-Leste will be left with very few sources of revenue outside its \$16 billion petroleum sovereign wealth fund. An eventual return to aid dependence would undermine political independence and Dili's capacity to advance development goals. ●



# Our role in Asia in the Trump era

THE ELECTION of Trump and the victory of the Brexit movement are the most obvious examples of the populism driving countries to become more insular. This combined with China's return to a power of the first order means that Australia faces an increasingly uncertain world.

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of La Trobe University, La Trobe Asia collaborated with the Ideas and Society program to present a public conversation with former Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating about the path Australia should forge in this rapidly changing world. Keating has long argued a greater independence in Australian foreign policy could be beneficial and allow more focus on our immediate neighbours: the Asian countries to our north.

Here are a few excerpts from Paul Keating.

"China is returning to the place it was at the top of the system before the Industrial Revolution. The world is returning to the basic shape it was."

"We're going to return into a 'great power' political world. Multilateralism is becoming much less important. We've always been, in a sense, internationalists, but the rules have been written by our friends. Now the rules have been written by a whole lot of people. You know the old saying 'when the going get's tough, the tough gets going'? That's what we should be doing."

"Whenever you hear Xi Jinping speak he always speaks about a new system of global governance, which is code for saying 'not an American one'. This is not a rejection of globalisation. It's a rejection of the one-size-fits-all policy."

"Whether we are comfortable with it or not, a 'China-centric Asia' is happening. What's happening in China knows no precedent in world economic history, and it will never happen again. We won't ever have one and a quarter billion people so competently directed by a single authority state as we now have."

"The idea that the great massive economy of China is going to be a strategic client of the United States is of course a nonsense, but this is what 'the pivot' was all about. If we try and remain party to that piece of nonsense we must have troubles."

"I'm just hoping that this new relationship between Trump and Xi Jinping is one where the U.S. starts to wake up to the whole thing about scale and power. The reality of that power is there, and we would be well advised to start accommodating it and to adjust ourselves to it, instead of trying to hide behind the American flag."

"We should be going to Asia as a new Australian people, as a continent which has turned a leaf. The two ingredients in leadership are imagination and courage, seeing the big vista and having the wherewithal to go towards it."

Watch the complete lecture: [latrobe.edu.au/keating](http://latrobe.edu.au/keating) •







China

Nepal

Cambodia

Malaysia

Timor-Leste

Christmas Island

Australia

This issue features  
La Trobe Asia work  
from...



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