



THINK GLOBAL
With David Thomas

THE BIGGEST
OPPORTUNITY OF OUR
TIME RUNS BETWEEN
DEVELOPED MARKETS
AND EMERGING ASIA.

MOST LEADERS
ARE LOOKING THE
WRONG WAY.



SOME INSIGHTS ARE LEARNED. OTHERS ARE LIVED.

When you book David Thomas, you are not booking a speaker who studied Asia from the outside.

You are inviting your audience into a perspective shaped by more than 30 years of building from inside the markets that are reshaping the world.

From Hong Kong in the 1980s — when the city was at the very centre of the most consequential geopolitical negotiations of the late 20th century — to closing cross-border transactions in Southeast Asia in real time, David's insights are not drawn from research.

They are drawn from experience.

His keynotes challenge leaders to stop watching what is happening in Asia — and start understanding what it means for them.

DAVID THOMAS

SOME PEOPLE READ ABOUT HISTORY. OTHERS GROW UP INSIDE IT.

David Thomas lived in Hong Kong through the 1980s and 1990s, during the years when Britain and China were negotiating the future of the territory and the six million people who called it home.

This was not something he observed from a distance.

His father, Michael Thomas QC CMG, served as Attorney General for Hong Kong during that period, playing a role in the settlement of the Sino-British Joint Declaration — the foundational agreement that determined the future of the territory. His stepmother, Baroness Lydia Dunn, was among Hong Kong's most senior political leaders, working at the highest levels of those negotiations with both governments.

David watched from close quarters as power, culture and sovereignty were negotiated across the table in real time.

What he took from that — and has spent 30 years applying — was something no classroom could teach.

That relationships precede outcomes.

That cultural fluency is not a courtesy — it is a strategic asset.

That the leaders who navigate complexity best are those who understand the room they are actually in.

This is where his reading of Asia began.

He went on to run his own wealth management firm in Hong Kong. His first visit to Beijing was in 1989. His friends there gave him a Chinese name — 唐明达, Tang Ming Da — meaning astute, wise, insightful. It was a signal that he had earned his place at the table.

What followed was three decades of building from inside it.

DAVID THOMAS

WHAT BEING INSIDE HISTORY TEACHES YOU ABOUT BUSINESS

The same dynamics David watched play out between London and Beijing in the 1980s are reshaping global commerce today.

Sovereignty is back on the table.

Supply chains are being weaponised.

Capital is following new corridors.

Trust between nations is being renegotiated.

And most Western business leaders are trying to navigate this using frameworks built for a world that no longer exists.

What David learned — watching negotiations unfold at the highest levels, building a business in Hong Kong, travelling through China in the years when everything was changing — was this:

Power does not move the way the textbooks say it does.

Relationships precede transactions.

Cultural fluency is not a soft skill. It is a commercial advantage.

The leaders who thrive are those who understand the room they are actually in.

He eventually distilled all of this into a book.

It was a rainy weekend in Guangzhou. He sat down and the words came easily — because they were not theory. They were everything he had learned about how trust actually works in Asia, drawn from three decades of doing it. He called it *Three Cups of Tea*. It remains the work he is most proud of.

The framework is simple. In Asian markets, you begin as a Stranger. Over time, with patience, consistency and genuine curiosity, you become a Friend. And eventually — if you stay, if you show up, if you invest in the relationship rather than rushing to the transaction — you become Family. Only then does the real business begin.

It is a philosophy David has lived, not invented.

DAVID THOMAS



*“Geopolitics is not background noise.
It is the terrain your business is
moving through.”*

This is not intelligence gathered from airports and conference hotels. David lives in Cebu with his Filipino wife Dottie and her family. He plays golf with locals. He attends community events. He is embedded in the rhythms of Southeast Asian life in a way that no visiting analyst can replicate. When the ASEAN Summit came to Cebu, David was not watching from afar — he was in the room, reading the signals, before they became headlines.

THE NORTH-SOUTH CORRIDOR

The world's attention is fixed on the US-China tension.

On tariffs. On technology wars. On the escalating tensions in the Middle East.

But the most important commercial shift of the next two decades is happening somewhere else entirely.

It runs along the corridor that connects the world's most dynamic markets — from Mainland China and the Greater Bay Area, through Hong Kong, down through Southeast Asia's fast-growing economies — the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, and broader ASEAN — and on to Australia and New Zealand.

This is the North-South Corridor. And most leaders are looking the wrong way.

David Thomas has spent 30 years building from inside every part of this corridor. He ran a wealth management firm in Hong Kong in the late 1980s and made his first visit to Beijing in 1989. He has led missions and study tours into Mainland China for two decades. Long before the BRIC economies became mainstream boardroom conversation, David was leading investment delegations inside them — designing and running five years of immersive investment study tours across Brazil, Russia, India and China, giving senior financial advisers direct access to markets most were only reading about. He holds a Cyberport Global Ambassadorship connecting Hong Kong's innovation ecosystem to ANZ markets. And today he lives and operates on the ground in the Philippines, working with Mabuhay Capital on active cross-border transactions across the region.

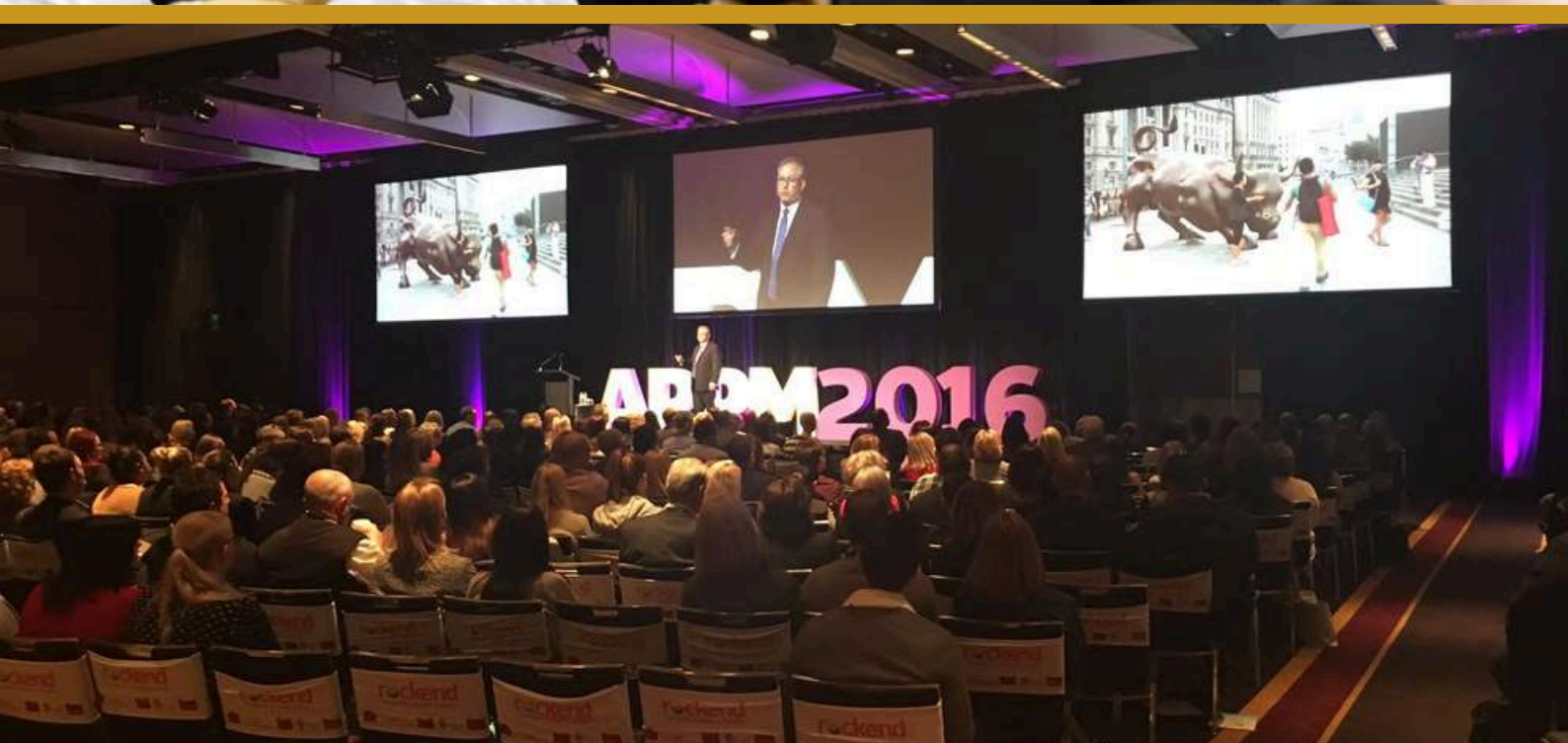
This is not a corridor he observes.

It is one he has navigated — from end to end, for three decades.

The organisations that will define the next era of global commerce are not the ones waiting for certainty. They are the ones who understand how capital moves in markets where relationships come before contracts. Where trust is built over years, not quarters. Where cultural fluency is the difference between a deal that closes and one that never begins.

The corridor is open. The question is whether your organisation is positioned to move through it.

DAVID THOMAS



KEYNOTE PRESENTATIONS

From the moment David Thomas steps on stage, he does something most speakers cannot — he makes geopolitics personal. His audiences leave not with a sense of the world's complexity, but with a clearer understanding of what it means for them, and what to do about it.

A *The New Trade Map*

How the weaponisation of supply chains, maritime chokepoints and currency corridors is redrawing the rules of global commerce — and what it means for your organisation. Drawing on current intelligence from the ground in Southeast Asia, David connects macro geopolitical shifts to real board-level decisions, helping senior leaders separate signal from noise and act with confidence when the environment is moving fast.

Audience Outcomes

- Understand the geopolitical forces actively reshaping their industry
- Identify the risks embedded in their current supply chain and market assumptions
- Make better strategic decisions with incomplete and fast-moving information
- Lead with confidence in conditions of genuine uncertainty

B *The North-South Corridor*

The biggest commercial opportunity of our time is not where most leaders are looking. This keynote reframes how executives think about emerging Asia — and what it actually takes to move capital, founders and companies intelligently along the North-South Corridor. Practical, urgent and grounded in active deal experience across the Philippines, Vietnam and broader ASEAN.

Audience Outcomes

- Understand why most Western approaches to Asian markets fail before they start
- Build the relationship architecture that precedes successful cross-border transactions
- Develop genuine cultural fluency as a commercial advantage
- Position their organisation for the growth corridor that will define the next decade

DAVID THOMAS

KEYNOTE PRESENTATIONS

C *Leadership in Geopolitical Times*

Drawing on his extraordinary personal history and three decades of operating across the world's most dynamic markets, David explores what it means to lead when the rules are being rewritten in real time. This is not a session about geopolitical theory. It is about the practical leadership required to navigate complexity, build trust across cultures and make consequential decisions when certainty is not available.

Audience Outcomes

- Think differently about how geopolitical shifts create commercial risk and opportunity
 - Understand how power, trust, and relationships actually operate across cultures
 - Lead with greater clarity when certainty is unavailable
 - Act decisively in fast-moving, high-stakes environments
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D *Three Cups of Tea: Relationship Capital in Asian Markets*

In Asian markets, the relationship always precedes the transaction. This keynote – drawn from David's most celebrated book, written on a rainy weekend in Guangzhou after three decades of living the principle – shows leaders what it actually takes to build trust in cultures where patience, consistency and genuine curiosity are the real entry requirements. Most Western organisations arrive in Asia with a product and a pitch. They leave wondering why it didn't work.

Audience Outcomes

- Understand why transactional approaches consistently fail in Asian markets
- Apply the Stranger → Friend → Family framework to real cross-border relationships
- Build the cultural fluency that turns introductions into partnerships
- Develop a relationship architecture that creates commercial advantage over time

BEYOND THE KEYNOTE

For organisations seeking more than a keynote, David Thomas offers formats designed to move from insight to action.

O1 *Executive Briefings & Board Sessions*

David brings his geopolitical and commercial intelligence directly into the boardroom. These closed sessions are designed for senior leadership teams navigating cross-border strategy, market entry, geopolitical risk or major transactions. Drawing on active deal flow and on-the-ground intelligence from Southeast Asia, they are intimate, practical and confidential.

Ideal for:

- Boards and executive committees
- Investment committees
- Senior leadership offsites

O2 *Crisis & Disruption Workshops*

Based on his acclaimed session for 26 senior freight forwarding executives from 14 countries in Ho Chi Minh City, David's crisis workshop places your leadership team inside a live scenario where decisions must be made, information is incomplete and the environment is shifting in real time.

Participants leave with a clearer understanding of how they think, communicate and lead when conditions change without warning.

Ideal for:

- Executive teams
- Leadership development programs
- Industry conferences seeking deeper engagement

BEYOND THE KEYNOTE

03 *Market Immersion Experiences*

For organisations seeking deeper impact, David designs and leads bespoke immersive experiences across Southeast Asia — drawing on his on-the-ground networks, local relationships and intimate knowledge of the markets, communities and cultures shaping the region's future.

These are not study tours.

They are guided immersions into the real commercial and cultural fabric of emerging Asia — led by someone who lives there, is married into the community, and knows which rooms matter and how to get into them.

04 *Asia-Pacific Capital Access*

In partnership with Peter Dingle (New Zealand), David works directly with ANZ founders at Pre-Series A through Series B who are ready to access Asia-Pacific capital. The offering provides curated introductions into venture capital firms, family offices and strategic investors across Hong Kong, Singapore, SE Asia, Australia and New Zealand — through relationships built over decades, not pitch deck distribution.

Every introduction goes through a name investors can place.

TRUSTED IN THE ROOMS THAT MATTER



INVITED TO SPEAK ACROSS AUSTRALIA, ASIA, EUROPE AND THE UNITED KINGDOM FOR CORPORATE CONFERENCES, EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAMS AND BOARD STRATEGY SESSIONS.

TRUSTED BY LEADERS

"David is, without question, one of the most engaging and commercially relevant speakers we've had across our network in recent years. What sets him apart is his ability to cut through noise and deliver clear, practical insights that actually land. He doesn't deal in theory for the sake of it — he connects global macro trends, geopolitics, and real-world business decisions in a way that makes you stop, think, and adjust how you operate. In a room full of experienced operators, David had people leaning in — not an easy thing to do."

— Aaron Poole, Co-Founder, My Network — Executive Conference, Ho Chi Minh City (2026)

"David Thomas is one of those rare individuals who bridges worlds — geographic, cultural, and commercial. His insights into Asia and the opportunities it presents are timely, practical, and deeply informed by lived experience. In an era defined by global complexity and the rise of the Asian Century, David's work couldn't be more relevant. He opens doors — and minds."

— Matt Church, Founder, Thought Leaders

"Possibly no-one he doesn't know across the Asia Pacific. Trust, reputation, integrity — that is what David is recognised for."

— Boyd Peters, CEO, InvComs, Singapore

"David is a highly informed Asia specialist. His presentation had a very sound conceptual base, to which he built very pragmatic examples of where we need to focus in the coming years. His candour and up-to-date comments really added value."

— Richard Gilbert, Executive Director, RMA Australia

"Your presentation was well-prepared and ideally geared to our audience. Judging from the attentiveness of both the Prime Minister and the Governor, it wouldn't surprise me if you have another invitation to visit PNG before too long."

— Andrew Wilkins, Publishing Director, Business Advantage International — PNG Advantage Summit (2014)

DAVID THOMAS



BACKGROUND & EXPERIENCE

David Thomas is an international keynote speaker, geopolitical strategist and author of 12 books on the Asian Century, cross-border commerce and the North-South Corridor.

He has spent more than 30 years operating from inside the markets he speaks about — London, Hong Kong, Sydney and now Cebu in the Philippines — building genuine cultural fluency and on-the-ground intelligence that most advisers cannot offer from the outside.

FORMATIVE EXPERIENCE

- Account Manager, Sedgwick Employee Benefits Consultants (late 1970s–early 1980s) — early training in the management and administration of some of the UK's largest pension funds
- Lived and worked in Hong Kong through the 1980s and 1990s, during the Sino-British handover negotiations; his father, Michael Thomas QC CMG, served as Attorney General for Hong Kong (1983–88), playing a role in the settlement of the Sino-British Joint Declaration — the foundational agreement that determined the future of the territory, and his stepmother, Baroness Lydia Dunn, was a senior political leader engaged in those negotiations at the highest level
- Ran his own wealth management firm in Hong Kong (1988–95)
- First visited Beijing in 1989 – the year that showed the world how power actually works in China.

BACKGROUND & EXPERIENCE

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- Co-Founder, BRIC+ Program (2006–2010) — designed and led investment study tours into Brazil, Russia, India and China across five consecutive years, providing financial advisers and fund managers with on-the-ground immersion across all four major emerging markets. One of the first programs of its kind globally to offer structured access across the full BRIC bloc simultaneously
- Consultant, Mabuhay Capital Corporation — cross-border investment and deal infrastructure across the Philippines and ASEAN; transactions advised include a ₱690M HMO acquisition (Singapore → Philippines), a 6x mining exit (Malaysia/HK → Philippines) and a 15x EBITDA hospitality exit (HK → Philippines)
- Managing Director, APAC Financial Services (AFSL 540418) — regulated Australian infrastructure for cross-border capital flows between Asia and ANZ markets
- Cyberport Global Ambassador (Australia) — bridging Hong Kong's digital innovation ecosystem with ANZ markets
- Senior Manager, Commonwealth Bank of Australia (1998–2000)
- Asia-Pacific Capital Partner — in partnership with Peter Dingle (NZ), providing curated investor introductions across Hong Kong, Singapore, SE Asia, Australia and New Zealand for ANZ founders raising US\$1M–\$10M
- Author of 12 books on Asia, trade and geopolitical strategy, including Three Cups of Tea and Year of the Rat
- Based in Cebu, Philippines – living and operating from inside the region, not advising it from a distance.

EDUCATION

- Stowe School, UK
- Cheung Kong Graduate School of Business — CEO Program, China (2019)



THINK GLOBAL
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*The biggest opportunity of our time runs
between developed markets and emerging Asia.
Most leaders are looking the wrong way.*

Your audience doesn't need
another overview of global
trends.

They need perspective built
from inside the markets that
are reshaping the world — from
someone who doesn't fly in
with a briefing pack, but lives
where the story is unfolding.

David Thomas delivers
geopolitical and commercial
insight that holds when
conditions don't.



BOOKING ENQUIRIES

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