

# forum

Centre for Citizenship, Development and Human Rights

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## **Forthcoming Conference - CALL FOR PAPERS**

### **“What do we want for our Head of State?”**

a conference on the role of the Australian Head of State, both now and into the future

Deakin University Melbourne City Centre, Level 3, 550 Bourke Street, **MELBOURNE**

**4th February 2012**

Main Aim:

- Improve the present level of knowledge and understanding of the role of the Head of state discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the present system.
- Identify common aspirations for the Head of State's role in future, including engaging with the younger and rural demographic to help foster an interest in our HOS and change to a republic.

#### **Keynote Speaker: The Honourable Kate Ellis M.P. (TBC)**

The Australian Labor Party's Minister for Employment Participation and Childcare; Minister for the Status of Women, Kate is the youngest woman ever elected to the Australian House of Representatives. Kate was elevated to the Labor Government's frontbench as the Minister for Youth and Sport in 2007. In June 2008 Kate was given extra ministerial responsibilities, becoming Minister for Early Childhood Education, Childcare and Youth; and Minister for Sport. Following the re-election of the Gillard Labor Government in 2010 Kate became the Minister for Employment Participation and Child Care and the Minister for the Status of Women. Kate's number one priority is being a strong representative for the residents of Adelaide. She is active in the community and hosts regular street corner meetings, mobile offices and community events to ensure that she keeps in close contact and takes up the issues of the residents she represents.

**\* for further details: see included flier**

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# RESEARCH

## Researcher of the Month – Professor Sue Kenny

I am sometimes asked about what factors I consider to be important for the development of leading edge research. The conventional answer to such a question usually identifies rigour, sound methodology and exemplary scholarship as the key criteria. These, of course, are the starting points for undertaking good research. However research that is leading edge in the sense that it shifts our thinking, provides new insights, makes a difference and captures our imagination, requires more, and indeed, it might even challenge accepted thinking. From my perspective there are several additional factors which are critical for leading edge research. These are curiosity, passion, a research agenda or profile, and risk taking.

Underpinning much of my research has been a desire to make sense of the ways in which people organise collectively to control their own destinies through collective empowerment.

My experiences of working with local people on community development projects, in Australia and internationally, have meant that I have never forgotten the importance of understanding local issues from the point of view of the people affected at the grassroots level.

All my research has been driven by a questioning of the way our social and political world might appear to be operating and a passion for identifying ways in which the world might be different. My early passion for research gained momentum in the heady days of the 1970s social movements, a time when 'new Left' ideas held sway in universities and much of social science was dominated by Marxist theory. The quest for identifying how the world could be changed for the better meant pursuing research that 'could make a difference'. This has also meant working with activists, government officials and community organisations, as well as academic colleagues.

The final factor that I want to highlight as a feature of leading edge research is the importance of risk taking. In the context of the increasing demands of reporting and auditing research we often forget how so many new insights and analyses come from offering unconventional ideas and unpopular viewpoints. Rejecting the well established formula, pursuing the unpredictable and seizing new opportunities are not easy paths to take. Developing new understandings requires a lot of hard work, and persistent examination and re-examination of theories and data. But often it is the surprises that come out of persistent re-examination of established interpretations that make research such an exciting and worthwhile endeavour.

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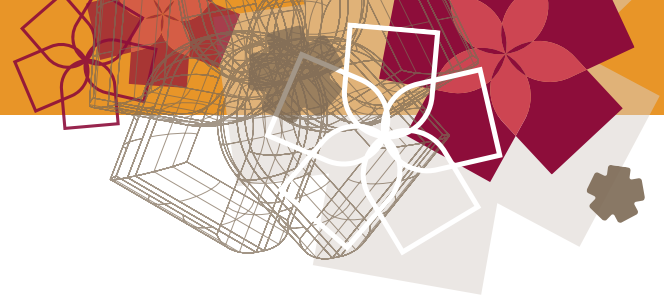
## Teacher of the Month - Dr Phil Connors

My current teaching is with post-graduate students in International and Community Development who generally come to the course with a wealth of knowledge and practical experience. I incorporate a problem-based learning approach to my teaching, integrating my research and encouraging students in a critically reflective approach to their community and social development practice. I see my role as a facilitator, mentor and resource person in a learning environment which encourages dialogue and the respectful sharing of ideas and issues, validating existing knowledge and building this into an informed, contextualised and dynamic theory base.

I endeavour to develop a learning environment that is built on respect for the diverse contexts from which students come. The experience and knowledge students bring to my units ensures that a quality and depth of learning is achieved which goes beyond simply learning about theoretical concepts and applying them to practice.

As the course is fully off campus and students are located around the world, I am keen to use technology to enhance the learning experience, as tools to encourage participation rather than simply as portals to information. Being aware of the different life and information technology contexts in which the students find themselves, an integral part of the process is encouraging them to take responsibility for their own learning and to link the unit material to their own life, work and community context.

Reflecting on my teaching it is important for me to develop a learning community that is empowering, recognising values and respecting difference as key factors in transformative learning. I am constantly excited by working with committed people who love to learn through sharing and respect. I believe this is understood by the people who undertake the learning journey with me in my units.



## Education of 'scheduled tribes' at the Crossroads

*"If you say you have a clear conscience, then you have a short memory" Anonymous*

People, in general, and development workers in particular, are no longer outraged by things before their very eyes. In the majority world, many children die before they reach one year of age, many women die at childbirth due to reasons easily avoided, many children are part of workforce when they should be enjoying their childhood and attending school, many women and children are victims of violence and are trafficked, and yet we go ahead with our everyday lives as if nothing mattered. This also makes a mockery of the millennium development goals.

Indigenous people and other marginalized communities outnumber other sections of the population in the above stated categories. They are further subject to manifold impacts of 'development'<sup>1</sup>, such as, being removed from their land, cultures, languages and families and/ or displaced due to 'development' projects. We are aware that indigenous communities the world over have higher unemployment, rates of crime and incarceration, substance abuse, health problems, lower levels of education and higher levels of poverty. High suicide rates characterize these groups when compared to non-indigenous populations.

India in its pursuit of the spoils in the global marketplace, is also party to the subjection of the marginalized communities and the violation of their rights. Although, many progressive legislations (the most important one being the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights Act, 2006) have been put in place, there is much to be desired. I would like to bring to the readers' consciousness the issue of education amongst the scheduled tribes<sup>2</sup> of India. The jurisdiction for education lies with both the Central and the State Governments in India, and this is not without its problems. Of course the mantra these days is one of 'private sector engagement' and/ or 'public private partnerships'. The nuances in these positions are often not considered when public policy pursues these objectives; they become ends in themselves. Oftentimes, I have experienced the baby being discarded with the bathwater when private sector seems to have supposedly failed in its endeavours, never considering for a moment that the state may have abdicated in its responsibilities.

Education in the private sector, especially elementary education, has led to the loss of language, cultures and community of scheduled tribe populations. Recently, several

entrepreneurs have taken to bringing several thousand scheduled tribe children from remote parts of one of the Indian States with a high concentration of scheduled tribes, to residential schools in the capital city (reminiscent of the stolen generation), to provide education from prep to post graduation<sup>3</sup>. While their intentions may be honorable - to provide opportunities to children of marginalized communities, the path pursued is not informed by any research or theoretical positions. There is also a failure to learn from past mistakes and there is a need to rush into something as a grand idea, rather than an idea that has been carefully and contextually considered and discussed with both the investors as well as the communities likely to be impacted. In the name of teaching children livelihood skills, they are imparted with skills most unsuited to their age groups; in so much as these are promoted as earn while you work schemes, they border on child labour. The medium of instruction is the State language, while there is increasing emphasis on English, thus alienating these children from their families and communities while at the same time diminishing the value of their lifeworlds.

There is ample evidence now which indicates that the academic/ intellectual performance of children is better when they are taught in their mother tongue in the early years and then transition to other languages. While I recognize that it should not be an 'either-or' situation (whether to study in the State Language/ English or the mother tongue; whether children should live in communities and not have access to schools or come to residential schools), unless inclusive policies that are nurturing of the ways of being of these communities are pursued, both at the State and National levels, we will be responsible for the death of several languages, cultures, communities and lifeworlds, that is, linguistic and cultural genocide.

### *Academic colleague in India*

### References

1. Needless to say 'development' means different things to different people.
2. The term "Scheduled Tribes" refers to specific indigenous peoples whose status is acknowledged to some formal degree by national legislation. They are historically disadvantaged groups that are given recognition by the Constitution of India.
3. Incidentally, this is a policy also being pursued by several state governments, to ensure access (because of the poor physical infrastructure in these districts), although the government residential schools are located in the scheduled tribe dominated districts.

# BOOK REVIEWS

**Politics of Globalization**, edited by Samir Dasgupta & Jan Nederveen Pieterse. London: Sage (2009). 439pp. ISBN 9788178299471, hardback (\$101.00)

This volume fills a gap in the literature on globalisation, by providing a series of theoretical and empirical explorations of the politics of globalisation –defined, depending on the author, as project, process and/or discourse. The book discusses trends in trade, finance, international institutions, hegemony and inequality, and social struggles, and what these trends mean for global order in general, and for the emerging international division of labour in particular. The volume contains original and insightful forays into a wide range of areas, including very specific ones such as: the politics of global agro-industries, state responses to anti-globalisation protests, the politics of a global language, community libraries as sites of globalisation, the politics of dual citizenship, and the globalisation of empowerment. The authors also attend to the theory-practice dilemma, providing concepts, strategies and suggestions driven by the urge to develop a practical sociology that can serve humanity. The suggestion is that we need a moral compass to navigate the new globalisation, or risk creating an unnecessary and unjustifiable number of victims.

The humanism that underpins the volume is matched by a sophisticated understanding as well as a strong critique of the capitalist politics of globalisation –or, to be precise, of the network of capitalisms that, according to the authors, frames the politics of the new globalisation, the one which began in the 1990s. Despite the emphasis on the political dimension of globalisation, the volume is shaped by a strong economic framework. Most essays focus on the intimate relation between capitalism and globalisation –with a strong critique of neoliberalism underpinning the analysis. The underlying argument is that the new globalisation does not signal a crisis but a proliferation of capitalism, which produces not one but many capitalisms.

The volume offers a critical approach to the politics of globalisation, ranging from radical critiques of globalisation as a capitalist and imperialist project, to more measured explorations of the ambivalences and contradictions inherent in the current process of globalisation. The strongest critiques come from the identification of globalisation with rampant capitalism and American imperialism –a view captured by Ander Gunder Frank in one of the most memorable sentences of the book, when he writes that ‘the US has replaced existing international law by new Law *in* the West on the model of its own old Law *of* the West’ (p. 51). Yet the most radical and idiosyncratic critique is offered by Steven Best, in his chapter

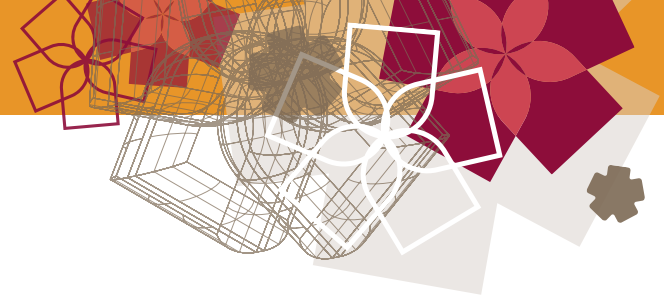
“Globalization and the Human Empire”. He portrays humans as a global colonising species out of control, and argues that the current politics of globalisation needs a radical change guided by a new moral compass, based on ethics and compassion rather than profit and power.

Another highlight of the volume is Samir Dasgupta’s “Introduction: A Reflection on Politics of Gender and Textual Entrails”. Dasgupta’s reflections and “textual entrails” provide an excellent introduction to the volume. However, the fact that this is often done reproducing (without quotations) large chunks of text from the different chapters is somewhat problematic. Thus, for example, the introduction reproduces a whole paragraph from Chapter 3 (by Leslie Sklair) that contains the expression ‘in my view’. Thus, Sklair’s view (in page 83) is literally presented as Dasgupta’s (in page 9). The use of textual entrails in the introduction is an interesting idea, but should be done in a more appropriate fashion. Still, due to this approach, the reader can actually get the basic arguments and insights from the different contributions simply by reading the introduction. Having said that, the chapter that provides the best theoretical backdrop to the overall position of this volume regarding globalisation is Douglas Kellner’s “Dialectics of Globalization: From Theory to Practice”.

In terms of the implications of these trends for international politics, the volume suggests that the overall trend is a shift towards multipolarity, and from West to East. This double shift is driven, according to the authors, by the decline of American hegemony, underpinned by a new geography of trade centred around China and India. The authors suggest that all this represents not a crisis but a reorganisation of capitalism. In other words, capitalism is saved by its resilience, flexibility, plurality, ingenuity and biodiversity, that is, by capitalisms –i.e. the different forms of organising the relations between markets, governments and society. The new globalisation that comes out of this process is partly a form of reversal –with the old globalisation being something the rich countries did to the rest of the world, and the new globalisation something someone else (the rest of the world) is doing to the rich countries. The other reversal that is taking place is the centre of the world economy, which is reverting to its historical location in the East.

The volume offers an overall positive outlook or assessment of these trends; but, at the same time, there are calls to ‘reject capitalist globalization in favour of other more humane and communal forms of globalization’ (Leslie Sklair, p. 95).

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**China and India – Prospects for Peace.** Jonathan Holslag, Columbia University Press. 2010. 234 pages. ISBN 978-0-

Jonathan Holslag's book, *China and India: Prospects for Peace*, offers a thorough background to this increasingly important relationship in world affairs. Holslag argues these are two countries bound to continue clashing despite their growing economic cooperation. What strength and direction this clash will take is unclear. Pointing to a wide gap in rhetoric and action, he challenges the assumption trading partners are less prone to war. On the contrary, Holslag states the commercial partnership has not prevented but fuelled 'power plays' in this relationship; asserting 'trading states remain conquering states'. Any existing interdependence is diminished by inevitable competition as the countries grow stronger economically and appetite for power on the international stage develops.

The book begins with a condensed but succinct version of China's and India's histories from the time they became 'free' nations in the late 1940s. It is a narrative of their similar economic and political struggles to achieve nationhood. Nation building, maintaining independence and national unity were objectives for both countries. After establishing independence, China and India were reluctant to engage with the international market and pursued a socialist path to development. The ideologies of Mao and Jawaharlal Nehru, respective founding fathers of China and India guided this approach. Following the great economic failures of the 1950s, however, their policies came under intense criticism. This decline of the Nehruvian and Maoist models precipitated the embrace of international capitalism and the emergence of

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*(continued from page 4)*

All in all, the most salient message of the book is arguably one of caution and uncertainty, encapsulated in the title of Nico Stehr's contribution: "Nothing has been Decided". This expression encapsulates the sentiment that the future is open-ended. This the-future-is-ours-to-be-written approach is what sustains the cautious optimism that informs most of the contributions. To the extent that nothing has been decided, this volume offers interesting analyses of the politics of the new globalisation that can guide us in making decisions about the future direction(s) of the constructed and contested process of globalisation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Benito Cao**

*School of Social Work and Social Policy  
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constructive nationalism in the two young states by the 1970s. Holslag questions whether that constructive nationalism could lead to a more cooperative posture in foreign affairs. The section then examines the big economic transition that occurred over the subsequent twenty years.

Introduced by an extensive literature review, Holslag's historical account continues on to chart the trajectory of the China-India relationship. By the 1980s, both China and India had replaced their isolationist and idealist stance with 'Realpolitik' as the basis of their involvement with the outside world. This radical departure marked both an economic entente and intensification of the 'protracted contest' between the two. Examined are key issues such as the highly symbolic border dispute, the military-security dilemma, the energy crisis and both countries active political and economic engagements with surrounding countries as evidence of simmering rivalry. Holslag believes the enormous trade and economic relations between the two which have been labelled as 'Chindia' have not mitigated deep distrust and negative perceptions in both camps. China and India have much to gain from working in unison. In an era of globalisation and with huge populations to take care of, portions of which live in poverty, they cannot afford not to take advantage of the economic benefits. China excels in industry, India is a leader in services and both have vast amounts of cheap labour. Moreover, together they are able to challenge more forcefully Western dominance in the international arena. Holslag, however, puts forward a compelling series of reasons to be sceptical about the extent and strength of an economic partnership entered out of necessity rather than choice. Despite converging interests, deeply ingrained nationalism and a history of tension make the concept of a Chinese and Indian led 'pan-Asian' order an unlikely prospect.

Holslag offers an interesting economic analysis that intertwines with discussion of the security and strategic aspects of the relationship. Contrary to many observers, several times in the book he makes it clear he does not believe military or territorial security has been replaced by economic security as the core principle of China's and India's strategic planning. In fact, in the late 1990s, he asserts there was an increase in friction between constructive engagement when it came to the economy and 'negative nationalism' based on military strength in both nations. The issues listed earlier feature in some length as contributing factors including China's close

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relationship with Pakistan. He studies the extent to which military deterrence still plays a critical role in the relationship. There is discussion of the evolution of capabilities and their possible ramifications. Throughout the 1980s the Chinese aided the Pakistanis with development of nuclear technology. India's shock 1998 nuclear tests were in the words of its leaders, a direct warning aimed towards the 'Pakistani and Chinese threats' to the country. This served as the catalyst for a 'cold war in its purest form' between China and India. The two nations are embroiled in an ongoing cold war style battle for influence in almost all neighbouring developing countries especially in Nepal and Burma. The impact of these proxy conflicts on the China-India economic relationship appears to be minimal. In such an unstable region, however, any escalation of hostilities would have very serious security consequences as Holslag ably demonstrates in his work.

Jonathan Holslag's book provides valuable new insight to the existing body of research. It is well researched and very detailed but Holslag's economic thesis could have been served better by incorporating other case studies. Even so, the argument that commerce and conquest are not mutually exclusive remains to be considered in light of China's and India's actions during the past decade. In the introduction, Holslag explains his intention is to provide more of a fact based assessment than a theoretically based one. A greater theoretical framework would have helped explain even further the behind the surface hedging and engaging tactics of the China-India relationship and thereby improve the depth of his work. Nonetheless, it is clear Holslag successfully grapples with the complexity of the subject by extrapolating wider themes such as the Asian 'concert of power'. Economic interdependence and shared challenges, Holslag writes, have not 'neutralised' conflict between the two countries. China and India continue to be locked in a 'great power contest', making prospects for peace rather bleak.

**Gauri Kapoor**  
Honours student  
Deakin University



**Theories of International Politics and Zombies**, by Daniel W. Drezner. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press (2011). 136pp. ISBN 9780691147833, paperback (\$19.95)

If there were a list of International Relations (IR) books you must read before you die, Daniel Drezner's *Theories of International Politics and Zombies* would have to be in the Top 10, not least because of its insights regarding how to survive the threat posed by the undead. This is a great little volume inspired by the enthusiastic response to a blog post Drezner wrote in 2009, in *Foreign Policy*, entitled "Theory of International Politics and Zombies". The post and the responses are worth reading, preferably after reading the book – something that can be done in one sitting, given that this is a very short volume. The content (excluding references and bibliography) is only 114 pages.

The book provides succinct introductions to a selection of international relations theories and then proceeds to explore how they would predict the response to a zombie attack. The author draws the behaviour of the zombies from the zombie canon i.e. popular films and books. Drezner dedicates the first chapters to introduce the reader to the zombie genre, and reports some amusing figures about the increasing (popular and academic) interest in the topic of zombies. He then explores the response to the zombie threat provided by four systemic IR theories: the two major theories i.e. realism and international liberalism; and two emerging and influential theories i.e. constructivism and neoconservatism. The following two chapters explore how domestic politics and bureaucratic politics would influence and articulate the response to the zombie threat. Finally, there is a chapter on the psychological responses to the threat posed by the undead. The conclusion provides a neat summary of the different contributions and responses to the zombie crisis.

This is a fun text to read for academics and anyone vaguely familiar with international relations theory, but it is also a useful resource for teaching and learning IR theories. However, the systematic use of the book to teach IR theory – at least in its present form – has some limitations. The most important is the nature of the threat posed by zombies, which cannot be properly conceptualised as an actor. Zombies resemble more a 'natural threat' than a 'human actor' (or a human-driven entity, like a state). The fact that zombies are only interested in eating human brains, have no capacity to reason and no identity beyond their desire to consume brains, means that there is no room to treat them (and their actions) as human, as agents with whom one can engage and negotiate. Yet, when put in these terms, it is apparent that zombies resemble the

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picture that neoconservatives paint of terrorists, in particular of Al Qaeda. The fact that neoconservatism comes across in the text as the most effective theory to handle the zombie threat might give credit to neoconservatives (if one agrees with their conceptualisation of terrorism) or expose the simplistic level with which it operates (to the extent that it is the ideal theory to handle threats with no brains). In other words, the tight fit between neoconservatism and the zombie threat could suggest that neoconservatism is the IR theory of the brain-dead.

However, if we take survival rather than the eating of brains as the defining trait of zombies, their behaviour suddenly resembles the behaviour of states as conceptualised by realist theorists. Whether this says something about realism or about the nature of the state is something worth exploring with our students. Further, the fact that zombies have no agency can be useful to conceptualise responses to non-human threats e.g. epidemics and natural disasters. The fact that IR theories overlook these threats is a point worth exploring –and one for which this volume is particularly helpful.

The other major limitation of this volume –in its present form- is the lack of proper engagement with feminism and Marxism. Drezner makes a point, in a footnote, of justifying the exclusion of these theories. He writes: “To be blunt, this project is explicitly prohuman, whereas Marxists and feminists would likely sympathise more with the zombies. To Marxists, the undead symbolise the oppressed proletariat. Unless the zombies are all undead white males, feminists would likely welcome the posthuman smashing of existing patriarchal structures” (17). This quote is a perfect illustration of the notion that “theory is for someone and for some purpose”, and thus useful to the point made by critical theorists such as Robert Cox. But exclusion of these theories is a missed opportunity, not least because the zombie threat offers plenty of potential to explore feminist and Marxist contributions to IR and to our understanding of International Politics.

I would be surprised (and disappointed) if Drezner did not include these theories in the next edition of the book. In a recent blog post, he has indicated that he will be working on a new edition in 2012, and he has asked for feedback on how to improve the book as a pedagogical tool. Given the difficulties teachers often encounter in getting students to engage with and apply theories, the possibility of contributing to develop the pedagogical value of this book is an offer that anyone teaching IR should embrace. With that in mind, I urge you to read, use and abuse this text, and get back to Drezner on the inspired and inspiring project that is *Theories of International Politics and Zombies*.  
**Dr Benito Cao, The University of Adelaide**

## New Releases

### **Sri Lanka and the Responsibility to Protect : Politics, Ethnicity and Genocide**

By **Damien Kingsbury**

Published 24th November 2011 by Routledge

<http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9780415588843/>

This book provides a study of the war by Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to create a separate state in Sri Lanka. It examines the ways in which this war should, in principle, have invoked ‘Responsibility to Protect’ principles, as well as the political, legal and practical problems involved and, ultimately, why the international community failed to act.

Over the years there have been several events, including those in Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Timor-Leste, Darfur, and Kosovo, that have led the international community to accept a responsibility to protect. However, despite its overwhelming preliminary endorsement, the principles of this concept are still not universally sanctioned and there are some strong international opponents, including some countries that were initial signatories of the convention.

By considering the example of Sri Lanka, the text focuses on what conditions could satisfy or demand the application of responsibility to protect. It further presents a case as to why this conflict was, and may still be, the normative responsibility of the international community.

Sri Lanka and the Responsibility to Protect will be of great interest to students of South-East Asian politics, human rights, international law, ethnic conflict, security studies and IR in general.

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### **The Responsibility to Protect: The Promise of Stopping Mass Atrocities in Our Time**

Editors: Jared Genser and Irwin Cotler. Oxford Univ Press

In *The Responsibility to Protect: The Promise of Stopping Mass Atrocities in Our Time*, Jared Genser and Irwin Cotler provide a comprehensive overview on how this contemporary principle of international law has developed and analyse how best to apply it to current and future humanitarian crises. The “responsibility to protect” is a doctrine unanimously adopted by the UN World Summit in 2005, which says that all states have an obligation to protect their own citizens from mass atrocities, which includes genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing. Its adoption and application has generated a passionate debate in law schools, professional organisations, media and within the U.N. system.

## Reflection on 2011 from CCDHR Director

Looking back over 2012, it seems that the world has not moved very far over the last few years. The Global Financial Crisis that appeared to bring western economies to the brink of disaster only a few short years ago has not gone away, even we in Australia have been fortunate enough to escape most of its impact. For this we can thank Keynesian-style economic policies, regardless of how hurriedly and therefore ineptly they might have been implemented, and the country's massive minerals boom courtesy of China becoming the workshop of the world.

An emissions trading scheme was pushed through parliament, which at least signified that Australia takes climate change fairly seriously. It also strengthens Australia's position in global debates about climate change. As the world's second worst per capita contributor to greenhouse gases, it would have been difficult for Australia not to act and to do other than sit quietly up the back and hoped that no-one noticed.

Contrary to much popular commentary, too, actions on climate change are being taken in the United States, if mostly at a state level, and in Europe. The question is not whether the problem is real but whether the severity of the damage done to our planet – our home – can be contained in ways which allow our children and our children's children to have a viable future.

Poverty still continues to blight too large a proportion of the world's now seven billion people. The pressures of population on finite resources are at the far edge of sustainable development. To date, the best solutions have been but tinkering. And radical population decrease plans, which are generally widely unpopular, have the in-built problem of creating a 'mushroom' population, where a less productive older generation is supported by an impossibly small younger generation.

In countries undergoing a natural decline in fertility rates – most OECD countries – this is addressed by importing labor. Yet in Australia, where imported labor holds together much of the economy, we continue to penalise people who are so desperate to come here they risk their lives for it.

Wars and other forms of violent conflict continue apace; Iraq has disappeared from even the back pages of newspapers, yet that unhappy country is only sustained by a coalition of 'elected' warlords. The 'Arab Spring' has been, like most clichés, useful only for disguising a wide range of circumstances, agendas and other problems.

Libya is free of Gaddafi but winning the post-Gaddafi peace which be much more difficult than winning that particular war. Egypt, meanwhile, is still ruled by the army, while Tunisia has shown signs that its future is likely to be much less secular than earlier anticipated. In Syria, widespread protests led to thousands of deaths, but no sustained rebellion against the dictatorial, inherited regime of Bashar al Asad and with other Arab states trying to broker an end to hostilities that would reinforce the status quo. And how little was heard of Yemen, despite its own attempted 'Spring'.

One might mention the hopeless cause that is the war in Afghanistan, except that its lack of clear purpose following the death of Osama bin Laden has only served to obscure conflicts in dozens of other places around the globe. The Burmese junta, for example, has tried to reinvent itself over the year, but waged new offensives against Karen separatists.

There are, of course, no simple answers and certainly not any complete ones to any of this. But dialogue, through books, articles, lectures, the media and just over a hot drink continue to show us that, while we can think and talk, not all is lost. Social movement has challenged problems in the past and may yet do so again. If enough people push in a common direction, hard enough and long enough ....

To reprise a call from my predecessor in this role, Professor Sue Kenny, what we need, now more than ever, is an active citizenship who take control of their own fate – who are empowered because they empower themselves. We in the Centre for Citizenship, Development and Human Rights have a deep commitment to each of these interwoven themes, for ourselves, for our community and for the world. Our research agenda for the coming year – workshops, publications and with communities – will ensure we continue to remain actively engaged .

With these and other somewhat sobering matters in mind, we wish our readers a happy festive season. We thank you for your previous support of the Centre and look forward to your continuing support throughout 2012. As always, contributions to Forum are welcome and can be emailed to: [ccdhr@deakin.edu.au](mailto:ccdhr@deakin.edu.au).

**Professor Damien Kingsbury**

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