



## Burma's elections designed to achieve more of the same

*Burma's first elections for 20 years have no prospect of conferring political legitimacy to an incoming government, even if they result in a substantial transfer of power to 'civilian' rule, says TREVOR WILSON.*

**B**urma's military regime has scheduled Burma's first elections for 20 years for 7 November. Ever since the elections were first announced for 2010, they have been overwhelmingly the centre of attention for political hopefuls, ethnic organisers, democracy defenders and Burma watchers inside as well as outside the country.

Although the elections are being held because political activists and the international community have demanded that they be held, they have already been dismissed as a 'sham', and a trick to enable the military regime to retain power while going through a charade of holding elections. Officially, the military regime committed itself to creating a multi-party democracy, but in reality it has used all the control mechanisms at its disposal—from tight press censorship, restrictions on public meetings and use of electoral paraphernalia to produce the desired outcome for the Myanmar Army.

These are only Burma's fifth elections since it became independent in 1947. Previous elections—in 1952, 1956, 1960, and 1990—were either chaotic and poorly organised or thoroughly controlled under military rule. So although the 20-year gap between 1990 and 2010 is long, it is not as long as the gap between those held in 1960 and 1990.

The forthcoming elections are being held under the 2008 constitution adopted in a referendum but drawn up without extensive consultation or popular input.

Already the 2010 elections have an air of unreality, in that campaigning has been heavily constrained by official press censorship, by restrictions on the holding of public meetings, and by the government's reluctance to allow public debate about the process or about the issues. So there has been next to no debate about policies, and precious little coverage of the elections permitted in the domestic media.



National League for Democracy headquarters in Yangon. The sign says 'National League For Democracy, 62nd anniversary, Union Day, 12.02.09 Photo: Irrawaddy News, 14 September 2010.

Not surprisingly, there are only two large political parties contesting the elections, the Union Solidarity and Development Party and the National Unity Party, both of which are government-

organised parties which will be standing candidates across the country in 1000 or more of the 1187 (or 1163) elected more

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## Burma's elections

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of the 1187 (or 1163) elected seats. No other party is expecting to run more than 200 candidates, with anecdotal reports stressing how poorly financed the smaller parties are, most of whom are concentrating their efforts on their regional support base.

More than 75 per cent of the candidates come from the two government-aligned parties, so the prospects of non-government parties winning a large number of seats is most unlikely. Equally unlikely is the possibility that so many small parties might form a coalition to prevail against the government-aligned parties. With one-third of all parliamentary seats reserved for members of the military, and many candidates resigning from the army to contest non-reserved seats, pro-government parties have a stranglehold on the election outcome. The weakness of the individual parties and their highly fragmented political structures is striking.



Kachin students poster (from a blog) with 'vote no sign before the May 2008 constitutional referendum vote.

The 'political space' in which the elections take place is noticeably more constricted than ever before. The Election Commission has announced that campaign-like activities, such as

public meetings, press statements and so on, will only be permitted under the existing Press Scrutiny regulations. One result is that so far there has been almost no official campaigning, even though the elections were announced in August and the deadline for screening of party candidates was 30 August. The official campaign period will be limited to seven days. This compares unfavourably with the 1990 elections when campaigning, including access to the media, was permitted three months before polling day.

Some political parties have dared to criticise this situation—so far without retribution being meted out—and one party has even withdrawn from the elections in protest. But other political aspirants are undaunted by the array of

obstructions and are actively engaging in public comment on the situation. Some media outlets inside the country, such as the Australian-owned *Myanmar Times*, are promoting discussion of the elections. As a result, there has been more open discussion of politics, albeit under tight censorship, than at any time in the last 20 years.

However, participation in the elections is still highly problematic. These elections are being boycotted by some of the leading opposition parties for the first time in Burma (although they also asked their supporters to abstain from voting in the 2008 referendum on the new constitution). The boycotts are by the two parties that won the most seats in the 1990 elections, Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy and the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy, both of whose leaders are in detention.

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**The regime has ignored calls from all sides, including the UN Secretary-General and ASEAN, to make the elections as 'inclusive' as possible.**

Yet some 42 political parties have been approved by the Election Commission to contest the elections, including parties representing all major ethnic groups. Only 10 parties seem to have been denied permission to participate, including, significantly, the main Kachin party, the Kachin State Progressive Party set up by the important Kachin Independence Organisation. This raises serious questions about the inclusiveness of the election process and the representative character of the election outcome.

The regime has ignored calls from all sides, including the UN Secretary-General and ASEAN, to make the elections as 'inclusive' as possible, inter alia by freeing all 2100 political prisoners, which represents more political prisoners than at any other time in Burma's history. Worse, the elections will take place before Aung San Suu Kyi is expected to be released from house arrest. So the elections are destined to be seen as falling short of international criteria and public aspirations

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in Burma, and can have no prospect of conferring political legitimacy to an incoming government, even if they were to result in a substantial transfer of power to 'civilian' rule. As expected, the election has polarised opinion inside and outside Burma. Internationally, a vigorous campaign to discredit the elections has been launched by the pro-democracy movement, winning considerable support from Western governments, but not others. Moreover, new demands for a UN Commission of Inquiry into human rights abuses by the military have tried to shift attention from the elections and sought to escalate international political pressure against the regime, even though the rationale for holding such an inquiry right now is not apparent.

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**There is no sign of the military leadership preparing to transfer power to elected, non-military representatives; rather the elections could have the effect of confirming a formal role for retired military officers in national politics and administration.**

None of these factors is likely to dissuade the regime from proceeding with the elections which it has decided on partly to assuage long-expressed international opinion. Regrettably, however, the military regime has refused to have international observers present for the elections, on the grounds that Burma does not need help to hold elections. Yet Burma has had fewer elections than any other Southeast Asian nations other than Brunei; even Vietnam and Laos with their Communist Party-controlled elections, have had more elections than Burma.

Whether or not the election process is seriously flawed, the official outcome is likely initially to produce very little change from the present situation. Indeed, 'more of the same' is what the whole process is carefully designed to achieve. Many of the elected representatives, including those who are designated chief ministers in regional assemblies, will be former members of the military who resigned from

the army before the elections to stand for the regime's political front organisation, the Union Solidarity and Development Party; most of the ministers in the new government will be familiar figures from the current government; and finally, senior administrators and practitioners from the military will probably be appointed to the 25 per cent of seats reserved for the military.



The new parliament building under construction in Naypyitaw: September 2010. Photo: [The Irrawaddy online Journal](#).

There is, moreover, no sign of the military leadership preparing to transfer power to elected, non-military representatives; rather the elections could

have the effect of confirming a formal role for retired military officers in national politics and administration. A reshuffle of some senior military positions in August 2010, making way for a younger cohort of military leaders ahead of the elections, will not make the ongoing dominant role of the military any more acceptable to the Burmese people or internationally.

A worst case scenario is perhaps that the new parliamentary bodies will be ceremonial rather than substantive in their roles, much as elected bodies in communist states such as China. Policies are really determined elsewhere, in Burma's case in the army itself, where officers are already trained and work in administration and enterprise management, duties that are far from national security tasks normally assigned to the military. In such circumstances, power and authority are not with the elected representatives but with people who are not accountable or identified as responsible.

However, the very existence of regional assemblies represents a new dynamic for Myanmar, and will be seen by ethnic groups as an advance in terms of their aspirations for a greater say in running their affairs. All of this means that the populace is likely to view the outcome of the elections cynically, as representing the result of a

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controlled and contrived process, rather than a reflection of the public will. Some activists will 'maintain their rage' at the blatant denial of democratic process, even though very little groundwork has been done over the years to prepare the country for 'democracy'. Nevertheless, ordinary Myanmar citizens, inside and outside the political process, will make the most of what they confront after the elections. They will welcome the slightly reduced direct military role in the non-military affairs of state; they will quickly and creatively determine the extent the new 'system' can work to their advantage; and they will patiently focus on seeking improvements for the future.

Internationally, the elections will probably be roundly condemned, but this will not necessarily reflect the diversity of reactions by the Burmese people themselves. Nor will such rhetorical condemnation contribute meaningfully to achieving a better outcome next time around.

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## Building demand for Asia Literacy

*A landmark initiative aims to build demand for Asia literacy in the community and highlight the diverse career and life opportunities available to those who are Asia literate. LUCY CARROLL reports.*

**B**usinesses and schools have joined forces to boost the interest of Australian secondary students in Asia and their understanding of the region.

The [Asia Literacy Ambassadors—Partnering Businesses & Schools](#) project is establishing and supporting partnerships between businesses and school communities to stimulate and increase student and school community demand for Asia literacy.

Professionals from the business sector—or Asia Literacy Ambassadors—are being matched to secondary schools across Australia. By sharing their own story, ambassadors are assisting school



communities to better understand the opportunities available to employees who are

knowledgeable about Asia, who speak an Asian language and who have the skills and dispositions needed to effectively engage with the people and cultures of Asia, off-shore and domestically.

The program is an initiative of the Australian Government and is managed by the [Asia Education Foundation](#) with the support of the [Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry](#) (ACCI), the [Australian Industry Group](#) (AiG), the [Business Council of Australia](#) (BCA), education jurisdictions, schools and careers educators nationally.

Ambassadors are required to participate in at least three face-to-face interactions in the school, workplace or other contexts with students, school leaders, teachers, career practitioners, parents and/or school

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councils over a six-to-eight month period. Project partners have the flexibility to establish a partnership that best suits the specific interests, expertise and availability of the ambassador and the needs of the school community. By encouraging staff to become ambassadors, businesses enable employees to connect with students and the schools community to make a difference. Businesses benefit through the additional skills their employees develop and the opportunity to increase their profile in the community.

This project brings opportunities to share expertise, work and life experiences with Australian secondary school students and communities and to mentor students and influence their career prospects and aspirations. It is also increasing the links between businesses and local school communities and contributing to an Australian workforce that is well-equipped to maximise the positive work and life opportunities that the Asian region and Asian-Australian communities offer.

Furthermore, the initiative is helping to raise the profile of business with young Australians and enabling business to connect with and identify young talent, while allowing students ambassadors to network with members of the [Business Alliance for Asia Literacy](#).

The initiative arose from the [Business Alliance for Asia Literacy](#), which comprises major corporations; peak bodies, including the [Australian Council for Trade Unions](#) and ACCI, AiG; and BCA. Representing over 400 000 Australian businesses, the alliance is committed to supporting the development of Asia literacy in schools.

These representatives of leading Australian businesses and industry organisations have called on school communities, education systems and governments to ensure that Asia skills and Asian languages are a core part of the Australian curriculum. Signatories to the alliance were encouraged to provide feedback on the [Australian Curriculum](#) during the consultation phase from February to May 2010. This was an

opportunity to give business a voice in shaping national policy, ensuring that young Australians are prepared for the workforce of the Asia century. The Australian Curriculum grew out of the [Melbourne Declaration on the Educational Goals for Young Australians \(2008\)](#). Australia has never had a national curriculum and eight different arrangements currently exist.

The national curriculum is being developed by the [Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority](#). It represents a new commitment from the states, territories and the Commonwealth to achieve a national curriculum, and assessment and reporting of the curriculum standards.

A quality education for all young Australians is critical to maintaining Australia's productivity and quality of life. There is already a commitment to including in the new curriculum intercultural knowledge, skills and understandings related to Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia. These must be high priorities in the further development of the Australian Curriculum, along with the investment required to ensure that Australia's teachers can deliver on the curriculum promise.

The imperative for Australian students to become Asia literate has never been greater. Employment and lifestyle opportunities for Australians are increasingly influenced by the economies and societies of the Asian region, while immigrants from Asia play an active role in communities across Australia. Students leaving school with knowledge and understandings about Asia and strong intercultural skills will be best placed to maximise these opportunities.

To register your interest and learn about becoming an Asia Literacy Ambassador, visit [ambassador.asiaeducation.edu.au](http://ambassador.asiaeducation.edu.au) or contact Lucy Carroll, Project Manager at [l.carroll@asialink.unimelb.edu.au](mailto:l.carroll@asialink.unimelb.edu.au) or on 03 9035 5264)



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## Network gives voice to Asian Australian studies

*Formally established with a grant from the ARC's International Centre of Excellence in Asia-Pacific Studies in 2006, the Asian Australian Studies Research Network connects academic, community and other institutional groups working in this field. TSEEN KHOO reports.*

**A**sian Australian studies is a growing academic field that examines the diasporic cultures, politics and histories of those of Asian descent in Australia. Members' research areas cover a broad range of disciplines, including sociology, the creative arts, anthropology, cultural studies, history, political science, literature and education.

The [Asian Australian Studies Research Network](#) (AASRN) represents Asian Australian studies internationally, and currently has 140 members (20 per cent of whom are located overseas, the majority being in China, India and North America). Through its events and publications and other activities, the AASRN has facilitated extensive intra-national collaboration and forged new links for Asian Australian studies globally.

In particular, a current ARC [Discovery project](#), 'Being Asian in Australia and the United States,' connects Asian Australian studies with its Asian American counterpart. Looking at diasporic Asian communities in these countries, the other chief investigators ([Jacqueline Lo](#) [ANU], [Dean Chan](#) [Edith Cowan]) and I focus on areas of academic development, visual cultures, community celebration and popular culture.

Other ARC Discovery projects focusing on diasporic Asian content and the 'Asia-Pacific' region and involving AASRN members include: The history of Asian Pacific: regional culture in a modern global context; The rise of new cultural networks in Asia in the twenty-first century ;and Globalising Australian literature: Asian–Australian writing/Australian writing in Asia. As with most interdisciplinary

'studies' streams, members often work between academic fields, with Asian Australian studies just one among other, usually more established, areas. In [Diaspora: negotiating Asian Australia](#) (2000), Helen Gilbert, Jacqueline Lo and I claimed that Asian Australian studies was a productive hinge between Asian studies and Australian studies.<sup>1</sup> This remains the case, and there has been significant interest in (and engagement from) both of these established academic fields.



The research network has had badged panels and topic streams at peak national association conferences, including those for Asian studies, cultural studies, Australian literature and Chinese studies. The network aims to build research capacity and sustain momentum in Asian Australian studies, and has a clear agenda to encourage connections and discussions among those from academia, various community groups, and arts/creative cultures networks.

The following brief but by no means definitive list reflects the wide-ranging research areas our membership covers: Asian Australian cultural identities (examining, for example, the representations and sociocultural positionings of Filipino Australians, Japanese Australians, 'Eurasians' and Vietnamese Australians); Asian Australian media consumption; Chinese Australian heritage and cultural history; Indigenous-Asian connections in Australia; Asian New Zealand Studies; Asian Australian visual cultures; and Asian Australian gender studies.

The network also includes a significant number of cultural producers such as authors, performance/theatre practitioners, filmmakers and artists of Asian descent. Its events have supported creative work and fostered academic–community connections where possible. The research network is an umbrella under which a broad range of activities takes place, and AASRN's major event is its biennial 'Asian Australian Identities' (AAI) conferences. The next conference is planned for late

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2011. In the past, these key two-day events have had plenary speakers such as [len Ang](#), [William Yang](#), [Suvendrini Perera](#) and [Penny Wong](#). AAI conferences aim to have strong representation from creative communities and cultural workers, and their participation is often a highlight of each AAI event. In addition to the conferences, the network has convened early-career researcher master classes, public lectures, symposiums and film screenings.



A significant upcoming event is an [Asian Australian forum](#) and launch for the special 'Asian Australian' issue of *Amerasia* to be held in Melbourne on 4 October 2010. This forum, which is part

of the 'Being Asian in Australia and the United States' project, involves emerging and established academics, artists, community writers and editors. They will be chatting about their work and how it engages specifically with Asian American cultures and politics. A special guest at the event is Professor Don Nakanishi, who was Director of the UCLA Asian American Studies Centre for many years.

From its earlier days when the emphasis in research and membership was on cultural production, Asian Australian studies has become increasingly multidisciplinary, with a clear ability to develop innovative interdisciplinary work. Its capacity to produce scholarship that considers both local environment and global resonance allows it to function across a range of intellectual and public contexts.

At a time when the field of Australian studies is arguably on the wane (given the demise of major centres at the University of Queensland and Curtin University) and Asian studies is still facing challenges to its traditionally 'regionalist' perspectives from diasporic and transnational theoretical shifts, Asian Australian studies continues to grow and find contingent, strategic disciplinary 'homes' within academia.

That said, momentum in this critical field has always depended on a high number of early career and postgraduate scholars, with the attendant future uncertainty that this entails. Also, for an emerging field, there are inevitable gaps and slippages within Asian Australian studies itself. Many areas remain under-represented in the research literature and our membership, and this is an aspect that the network executive strives to address through targeted membership approaches and selective publicity.

The opportunities afforded by a peak representational body such as AASRN aimed to become cannot be overstated. Politically and institutionally it has given Asian Australian studies a 'voice' and affirms the field's valency in contemporary Australian scholarship. Its membership, a small but important number of whom do not focus on Australian material per se, reflects the increasing interest and research momentum in diasporic Asian communities and their cultures.

At only four years old, the AASRN is still very much in a consolidation phase and continues to build its profile and membership. For more information about the AASRN, including membership information and listings, visit the [website](#).

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[Dr Tseen Khoo](#) is the Founding Convenor of the AASRN and a Monash University Research Fellow, based in Sociology. She has published on Asian Australian cultural production and politics, diasporic Asian cultures, and race issues in Australia.

# The China question and the evolution of rising Asia

*China will have a large hand in the evolution of rising Asia, says TAN SRI DR MUNIR MAJID—but whether as a positive influence or as a spurned outsider will depend on the conduct of diplomacy in the next few years for a new regional architecture.*

It would be more than just an irony if the outline of the new Asia and its regional architecture were to be determined by American and Australasian predisposition. Already Japan's East Asian Community idea is seen to be a stalking horse for the Americans, and is said to have ignited 'conceptual competition between China and Japan'.

The most important consideration must be that the engagement of contiguous powers in the future of the region is not perceived as intended to ring-fence its most powerful nation, China, either by old style divide-and-rule or by the politics of isolation.



There is no gainsaying there is rivalry within the region, as between China and Japan or Korea (who have alliances with the United States), between China and India or even China with Vietnam and Indonesia. If these rivalries become the instrument of division in the region, any reference to an Asian century in the geo-political sense would be a fiction. While Asia may be rising in economic terms, it will also have to grow up in international politics to determine its own destiny and to ensure a variant of colonial history does not repeat itself.

For the sake of regional stability, if nothing else, it is critical that China is not made to feel proposals for the regional architecture are intended to contain it. China must not be treated like Germany or the Soviet Union at the end of the Second World War. Then America was the only one left standing, which is not the case today. Indeed it is weakened, by financial crisis and recession, with its values at risk because of excesses in its system,

including the weight of debt. Of course the United States cannot be counted out as it is still standing—but not standing alone!

While it might be quite in order to ask how China will lead the evolution of Asia, even in comparison with how Germany did in Europe, it is clear China will not march to any drum-beat—especially by external powers.

Containment of China, as was played out against the Soviet Union in the Cold War years following the Second World War, would bring about an even worse outcome, not just for rising Asia but also for global security. It would rekindle a past well left behind. It would negate all that has taken place with China to bring it into the international community since the 1970s.

On balance it would seem such a retrogressive intention is not being envisaged and the greater tendency is to hold the future of Asia against the 'China Question'. Nonetheless, as regional issues are addressed, they must not undermine the prospect of arriving at a stable and workable regional architecture.

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One common area of agreement that appears to exist between the United States and China with respect to the regional architecture is the use of ASEAN as the platform for an inclusive Asia-Pacific economic, even security,

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cooperation. The ASEAN+3 (China, Japan and Korea) has already stepped up to the East Asia Summit, adding on India, Australia and New Zealand, and now there appears to be a consensus, with only China expressing some doubt on this, to welcome the United States and Russia. The critical factor clearly is the relationship between the United States and China in the diplomacy of discovering the optimal regional architecture. Get this wrong and Asian geo-political fragmentation will be the outcome.

In terms of impact on the global political economy too rising Asia's full weight might not be realised if the regional integration work is not, or is not done well. The G20 has six Asian members (if Australia is included) and ASEAN has observer status, but can Asia collectively strengthen its voice? There are actually more questions than answers at this stage.



ASEAN—spoken as the fulcrum or the platform for Asian integration—does not provide the lead from its secretariat, which is needed on a consistent basis to pursue the issues of importance to the region, let alone drive a truly inclusive-minded 'Asian way', as against the often-decried present-day exclusive arrangements.

All this requires hard thinking and preparatory work to push forward issues of Asian interest to become matters of global concern. The Europeans are excellent at this thoroughness and hard grind, resulting not surprisingly in their issues and predispositions disproportionately becoming global concerns. Asia and Asians are not leading the thought process in addressing the global issues of the day in a similarly integrated and incisive way.

A good example of what are deemed to be the major issues and the determination of the best way forward is the manner in which the Western financial crisis of 2008 has been presented and thought through. Fundamentally it has been driven in a way to secure the Anglo-Saxon financial tradition and hence the continued

domination of American (and British) institutions in global financial markets.

The concentration of thought on the crisis has been on management issues (primarily risk management) and not on control failures (governance, regulation, market activities, the bonus/reward system). Those who achieved failure in the metropolitan centres are still being invited to Asia to give lectures and to conduct workshops on how to manage success in its financial markets. The intellectual hold of the ideas on financial market management continues to be strong, despite evident failures dramatised by the 2008 crisis.



New York Stock Exchange: American (and British) institutions continue to dominate global financial markets.

At these lectures what is largely emphasised is continued exercise of the power of the market by those who

control that power: countries, institutions and individuals. This intellectual hold has come to the point that, even in the metropolitan home countries, the state is attacked after it had saved that market when it tried to control bank bonuses. Actually, the hold of banks over the distribution of credit is a powerful tool that causes even governments to pause.

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**An astute and sensitive management of geo-political change, with genuine recognition of the rise of Asia and China, would spare the world the grief and threat of dangerous tension that characterised the immediate post Second World War years.**

The ideas on the right and space for the market are very strong in mind and they are pushed through to be strong in fact. Thus far the Anglo-Saxon financial tradition continues to reign supreme because this crisis in western capitalism is still a crisis within, not yet a crisis against a countervailing system.

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Would the rise of Asia be the beginning of change in the realm of ideas and the thought process—resulting in their various expressions and realisation in important fields of human endeavour such as in lifestyle, fashions, politics, economy and finance? Judging from relative absence of presentation of alternative ideas and thought process in the great debate on the Western financial crisis of 2008, it would seem Asia is well behind in the competition of ideas. Until it begins to make an impact on the thought process, can it be said that this, or whenever it may be, is the Asian century? Indeed, without this elemental intellectual hold, is it likely that we can arrive at any such point?

Asia is no doubt on the ascendant economically. But Asia is by no means dominant and the prime mover of the world economy. It will, however, progressively become more significant and will play an important role in global economic management, a process which has already started with the G20.

Major Asian economies are now part of the Concert of Powers in the world economy, but their effectiveness in that role still remains to be seen. So far, not so good, as observable from the inferior way ASEAN, for instance, prepares position papers and conducts professional consultation in the policy-making and policy-coordination process, compared to the EU.

Expression of power and influence in the geo-political sense is anticipated, but Asia is not united in this, and interested parties not strictly part of Asia will still play a significant role in the determination of the contours and purposes of regional architecture and institutions. There are dangers of power-play against China, not least in its being self-fulfilling. An astute and sensitive management of geo-political change, with genuine recognition of the rise of Asia and China, would spare the world the grief and threat of dangerous tension that characterised the immediate post-Second World War years.

There is a disparity of growth and interests among Asian countries which could be exploited, but there is a chance for Asian countries to show the way to better consultation in the management of world affairs.

There is a disparity of growth and interests among Asian countries which could be exploited, but there is a chance for Asian countries to show the way to better consultation in the management of world affairs. Not only this, the often proclaimed Asian values could also inform discussion and offer solution to many global problems, especially those in finance and the economy, even if it is not likely there will be any seismic shift in the intellectual ground in intercourse in international society. Unless, of course, China comes to rule the world in a kind of unilateral fashion which even America has not done. Nevertheless, there will be a new gravitational pull of China, against which the world's other major power during this century will have to compete.



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*the Southeast Asia Programme. This is an edited version of his keynote address to the 18th Biennial Conference of the Asian Studies Association of Australia, held in July 2010.*

### 2010 Emerging Leaders' Dialogue

China's rise and its implications for Asia will be the focus of Griffith University's 2010 [Emerging Leaders Dialogue](#).

The forum will be held in Brisbane (see [Diary Notes](#), p. 27) on 27-29 September 2010.

It will focus on three issue areas: China's motives and aims in Asia; its strengths and vulnerabilities as a regional actor; and the sorts of policies and approaches other countries—including Australia—should be pursuing in their interactions with China.

## China's inequitable growth risks social harmony

*China's achievement in reducing world absolute poverty over such a short period is without historical precedent—but the uneven spread of benefits is leading to rising social disharmony, says JANE GOLLEY.*

The economic transformation that has taken place in China since the late 1970s is now regarded as one of the most significant social changes in human history.



Deng Xiaoping—reforms unleashed entrepreneurial energy.

Within just three decades, China has succeeded in transforming itself from a centrally planned, closed economy to a market-oriented, open economy delivering sustained and high economic growth along the way. The dynamics unleashed by

Deng Xiaoping's reforms, open-door policies and institutional changes have unleashed enormous entrepreneurial energy and propelled continuous capital accumulation, productivity gains, trade and income growth on a scale the world has never seen before.

Over this period, China's total GDP, industrial output, foreign trade and, importantly, its per capita income increased respectively by factors of 8, 27, 124 and 12. As a result, the incidence, depth and severity of poverty have declined dramatically in China.

According to a recent World Bank Report<sup>1</sup>, between 1981 and 2004, the fraction of China's population consuming less than a dollar a day fell from 65 per cent to 10 per cent and about half a billion people were lifted out of poverty. The contribution this

has made to reducing world absolute poverty over such a short period is without historical precedent. Yet the benefits of China's rapid growth have not been evenly spread across the country or among the people. The primary focus on efficiency and rapid growth since the late 1970s justified the promotion of the more-developed coastal region, with Deng Xiaoping famously arguing that 'since conditions for the country as a whole are not ripe, we can have some areas become rich first. Egalitarianism will not work'.

However, it was also Deng's intention that 'the purpose of allowing some regions and some people to become prosperous before others is to enable all of them to prosper eventually'. Deng justified these apparently contradictory comments as a necessary trade-off between the short run and the long run, predicting that the latter would arrive around the turn of the 21st century.

In his first major speech following his election in November 2002, Hu Jintao stressed the need for the Communist Party to 'keep firmly in mind Chairman Mao's instruction to "serve the people" with their heart and soul'. Commenting that China's standard of living had only reached a level of 'small comfort' and that the level of development was 'extremely unbalanced', he went on to say:

*It is especially important to be concerned about those of the masses who encounter difficulties in their livelihood and production, to enter into impoverished areas and to go to the enterprises that are in difficulty. It is especially important to go among the poor masses, including the workers who have lost their jobs, the poor population in the villages, the poor residents in the cities. We should leave no stone unturned in order to help them resolve their difficulties. Through work which is concrete and effective, we should work with the utmost care for the masses' interests, and lead the masses to construct their own happy life.*

Ensuring that the benefits of growth reach the vast majority of China's vast population is imperative for the Chinese Communist Party, whose legitimacy rests at least partly on 'serving the people' in an egalitarian way. A number of chapters in

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## China's growth risks social disharmony

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this year's China Update book, *China: The next twenty years of reform and development*<sup>1</sup>, reveal some of the ways in which growth needs to be rebalanced in order for

this imperative to be met. As I discuss in my chapter, there is no doubt that the central government has its work cut out for it in terms of 'considerably reducing' the disparities that exist between western China and the rest of the country, particularly the most developed east. This is the overriding policy objective of the Western Region Development Program (WDRP), which has been in place since the turn of this century

The Western region comprises 12 of China's 31 provincial-level units and is home to the least urbanised, least educated, poorest people with the lowest life expectancy. It is also the region most dominated by state ownership in industry, producing a minuscule share of national exports and receiving a tiny share of foreign direct investment—three indicators that reveal it to be the least reformed of China's regions.

The per capita GDP of China's richest province, Shanghai in the east, is close to 10 times that of the poorest province, Guizhou in the west, giving some indication of just how far the west needs to travel to catch up with the east. While most of the provinces in the Western region have recorded reasonably high rates of economic growth during the WDRP period, it remains to be seen whether these will be sustainable in the longer term, and high enough to actually narrow the gap with the rest of the country. It also remains to be seen whether those most in need of assistance—in particular, the non-Han ethnic minorities such as the indigenous Tibetans in Tibet and elsewhere in Western China, and the Uighurs in Xinjiang—will be included in the beneficiaries of central government policies. Recent unrest among both of these ethnic groups suggests that this is not yet perceived to be the case.

Another divide in China's development story is between its urban and rural residents. Cai Fang and Meiyang Wang from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences argue that institutional barriers in China's labour markets—exemplified by the hukou system of household registration—restrict the process of rural-to-urban migration and hence the potential benefits accruing to China's vast pool of rural migrants.

While acknowledging progress in reforming the hukou system to date, Cai and Wang explain that impediments in the system have resulted in the transformation of farmers into migrant workers without entitlement to crucial public services and social protection in their urban



Hu Jintao—need to serve the people.

destinations, resulting in a unique pattern of 'urbanisation with Chinese characteristics'. Further hukou reforms are seen as critical for transforming these farmers-turned-

migrant workers into migrants-turned-urban residents in the decades ahead, to ensure that migrants and their children can have access to the same social and economic benefits as their urban counterparts.

Sherry Tao Kong, Xin Meng and Dandan Zhang from the Australian National University reveal another aspect of the urban-rural divide that deserves attention. They examine the impact of the global financial crisis on employment and wage outcomes in China, observing that millions of laid-off migrants lamented their lost jobs and protested over closed factories as China's export sector contracted in late 2008.

While the export contraction mainly occurred in urban-based sectors, the real effects were felt mainly in the rural sector, to which close to 15 million rural migrants returned in 2009, with 80 per cent of those taking up jobs in the rural agricultural sector. This not only impacted negatively on wages on the farms, but also reduced income in the rural off-farm sector, which is highly dependent on income remittances from migrants. Unfortunately, this analysis shows that negative shocks in China's urban sector have the biggest negative

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## China's growth risks social disharmony

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impact on its poorer rural population, and will continue to do so until a universal welfare system and property rights over rural land are established. Regional and urban-rural disparities are reflected in an increasingly inequitable public health system in China, as discussed by Ryan Manuel from Oxford University. He describes a system that has become increasingly costly, ineffective and inequitable, in which both demand and supply factors ensure that richer citizens—in urban areas and the wealthier coastal regions—are more likely to visit doctors when sick and more likely to receive high-quality treatment at that time.

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**Inequitable development is undoubtedly contributing to the rising social disharmony in China, with the incidence of public disorder—labelled 'social incidents'—rising steadily.**

The shift in demand has caused an enormous shortage in secondary- and tertiary-level medical professionals in rural areas. Because larger and better-equipped facilities can generate more profits and thus pay out more bonuses, there is a strong financial incentive for qualified personnel in district hospitals to leave for larger city hospitals, and for trained health workers in rural areas to seek employment in county or city hospitals.

The negative impact of this on the skills of doctors in rural areas is marked. And this in turn is clearly a bad thing for rural patients. The infant mortality rate in rural areas is around 2.4 times higher than in urban areas, and the maternal mortality ratio in rural areas is 2.5 times that of the urban population.

Another study of health outcomes showed that in poorer areas, life expectancy was four years shorter than the country's average. Yet again, those most in need of protection and assistance seem to be

those bearing the brunt of incomplete reforms. These and other examples of inequitable development are undoubtedly contributing to the rising social disharmony in China, with the incidence of public disorder—labelled 'social incidents'—rising steadily from 8700 in 1993 to 32 500 in 1999, and then to 74 000 in 2004.

China is not alone in experiencing a development path that is accompanied by rising inequalities across many dimensions of its economic landscape. It is alone in being run by a Communist Party that has continuously pledged to 'serve the people' and to ensure that all of its citizens 'prosper eventually'. For its own survival, as well as for the welfare of the hundreds of millions of less fortunate Chinese citizens, it is time the Party took this commitment extremely seriously.

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*editor of China: The next twenty years of reform and development.*

## Does India matter?

*The West's assumption that the implications of India's rise are untroubling could be misplaced, warns IAN HALL.*

**B**ack in 1999, in a now famous article published in the journal *Foreign Affairs*, the late British strategist Gerald Segal asked 'Does China Matter?' The question was not intended as frivolous or facetious. As Segal rightly argued, framing the right policies to address a rising China required an accurate understanding of its capacities, beliefs and intentions.

Too many commentators, he complained, overrated China—exaggerating its economic potential, overstating its military capabilities and overinflating its political influence. In Segal's view, China was a far less significant player in international relations than the most vocal Sinophiles and Sinophobes would have us believe: China matters, but not as much as we sometimes think. His conclusion was clear: 'until China is cut down to size in Western imaginations and treated more like a Brazil or an India, the West stands little chance of sustaining a coherent and long-term policy towards it'.<sup>1</sup>

To ask 'does India matter?' is not frivolous or facetious either, but the reasons for asking the question are a bit different. India does not loom as large in the contemporary Western imagination as China, though interest in India's foreign policy has been growing—slowly—over the last decade. Instead, India's rise has generally been met with quiet acceptance, punctuated occasionally by outbursts of enthusiasm, especially in the United States.

For many, India's destiny is clear and the implications are untroubling: it will simply become 'The Ally' to the West, to use Fareed Zakaria's term, counterbalancing the Chinese 'Challenger'.<sup>2</sup> There are two problems with these assumptions. The first is that they implicitly overstate India's capabilities. The second is that they often disregard or set aside what India's leaders

and diplomats say about the principles and objectives of their foreign policy. The view from outside India seems to be that, regardless of the beliefs of Indians themselves, India will come to behave in international relations as other great powers tend to behave, as pragmatic accumulators of power.



So what of India's capabilities? Its economy is unquestionably booming. When Goldman Sachs predicted in their BRICs Report that India's GDP would

likely grow by 5–6 per cent a year from the mid-2000s onwards, many commentators were sceptical. In the event, India's performance has been even better, despite the global financial crisis, with GDP growth closer to 7–8 per cent. If this rate is maintained—and this is a big 'if'—then India will overtake Japan to be the third-largest economy in the world in the late 2020s.

The problem is that the rate of growth does not tell the whole story about India's economy. The first thing to note is that India is starting from a very low base. Its per capita GDP remains on a par with some of the poorest economies in the world at around US\$1000, reminding us that India is still home to 40 per cent of the world's poorest people.

This figure looks a bit better if one adjusts for purchasing power, but this is being eroded at a rapid rate by inflation running at well over 10 per cent for wholesale prices, which is driving up the cost of basic foodstuffs and fuel even faster than the rate of economic growth. The overarching point is that despite the impressive growth recorded during the 2000s, India has not

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succeeded in improving the lot of ordinary people at anything like the pace of change that China has achieved. Inflation, underinvestment in infrastructure and education, as well as variable levels of governance have together slowed economic progress. The fact that India has failed to improve its ranking on the UN's Human Development Index—in 1999 it came 132nd and in 2009 it came 134<sup>th</sup>—illustrates this point well. India's economic performance has improved in absolute terms, but no faster than other developing nations have improved their performance, apart, of course, from China.



The story of India's military capabilities is similarly mixed. India has very large armed forces, numbering some 1.3 million personnel. It

has nuclear weapons and delivery systems capable of striking at its immediate neighbours. It has the only aircraft carrier in Asia and nuclear-powered submarines, but its tanks and combat aircraft are mostly old—only about 300 modern T90S tanks out of a total of 4000 and only 180 modern aircraft out of perhaps 650. India's defence spending is rising fast—US\$32 billion is budgeted for 2009-10—but expenditure on the military has actually declined over the past 20 years as a percentage of GDP, down from 3.6 per cent in 1988 to 2.5 per cent in 2008.

India is not a negligible military power, in other words, but nor is it near to being anything like a 'great power'. To put things in context: its defence budget is 5 per cent of the United States' and 30 per cent of China's. India spends about the same as Australia, but whereas India has to divide about US\$30 billion between 1.3 million personnel, Australia lavishes that amount of money on only 55 000.

For most Indophiles, of course, India's greatest assets are not economic or military, but rather political. India is the world's biggest democracy, is home to

adherents of two major religions, and is the birthplace of a third. Its reserves of what Joseph P Nye calls 'soft power' are extensive: Indian food is eaten worldwide, Bollywood movies also have global appeal, as do Indian novels, art and music.

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**India's reputation among global elites remains high, but its standing in foreign public opinion more generally is not so good.**

In the past decade, however, Indian governments have struggled to leverage this soft power for diplomatic advantage. India's reputation among global elites remains high—the Indian 'brand' consistently polls well as a luxury or backpacker tourist destination and is seen as 'authentic'—but its standing in foreign public opinion more generally is not so good. In one recent cross-country poll, only in Australia did a majority express the view that India could be trusted 'to act responsibly in the world'.<sup>3</sup> In the United States, China, Japan and South Korea, India was mistrusted by most. Its reputation is undermined by many factors: by the perception that India's politicians and businesspeople are corrupt, the belief that caste still dominates social relations, and by images of inter-communal violence.

India's economic, military and political capabilities are thus limited, or at least constrained by major problems. This ought to mean that India will remain somewhat marginal to international relations for some time to come, but this is not actually what has happened. In the past decade, India has instead been drawn to the centre of world politics. Today, India is rapidly being integrated into the highest levels of global governance.

Why has this happened? The answer is that India has come to matter because America has made it matter. Under George W Bush, US policy towards India underwent a revolution. Its status as a nuclear power was given de facto recognition and its civil nuclear industry given American assistance under a 2005 US-India deal. America created a

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strategic partnership with India that entailed aiding its rise to the standing of a near-great power, giving India unprecedented access to US military technology, engaging in joint exercises, and allowing India greater say in the global economic order through its inclusion in the G20 process. Indian negativity in multilateral negotiations—once a matter of great frustration to US diplomats—was now overlooked, allowing India to lead the way in stymieing the Doha round of world trade talks and to collude with China at Copenhagen to block a global climate deal.



Power rivalry: Smash American imperialism—poster outside International Studies department at Jawaharlal Nehru University.

India matters, in other words, not so much because of its own capabilities, but because America has made it matter. What does this imply? Above all, I think it means that American assumptions about India need to be

examined. The biggest is that India will cast off its Nehruvian scruples—its commitment to nonalignment, to an independent foreign policy, to ‘Third-Worldism’, to moralism rather than to realism—and act as a great power should.

The problem is the evidence that India is moving in that direction is patchy. India is showing little willingness to become a counter-balancer to China. Its commitment to ‘independence’ is apparent too in its staunch support of Iran and Myanmar. And its Third Worldism is being given more than rhetorical effect in India’s efforts to bolster ‘South–South’ trade and knowledge-transfer, in schemes such as the Pan-Africa E-Network, designed to support tele-education and healthcare services delivered over the internet.

India matters and is going to matter more and more in the years to come. But as with China, we need to know how much it matters—and why it matters—if we are going to respond properly to a rising India.

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shortened version of a paper delivered at the Oceanic Conference on International Studies in Auckland in July 2010.

## New books on Indonesia show ‘warts and all’

The [Indonesia Project](#) at the Australian National University hosted the launch of two books on Indonesia recently, including the edited volume based on the project’s Indonesia Update Conference in 2009.

The books—Harold Crouch’s, *Political reform in Indonesia after Soeharto* and Edward Aspinall and Marcus Mietzner’s (eds) *Problems of democratisation in Indonesia*—were launched by ANU Chancellor and former Foreign Minister Professor Gareth Evans.

‘Both books cover the democratisation and political reform process as it has evolved—triumphs, warts and all—since the late 1990s,’ Professor Evans said.

‘One of the many enduring mysteries of Australian public policy to me is why Indonesia simply hasn’t—with only a few honourable exceptions—attracted the same level of attention, understanding, and sustained high level commitment from our political leaders that other Asian countries have received, and which it so manifestly deserves.’

See the [Indonesia Project blog](#) for a full report of Senator Evans’s comments.



## The economic costs of Pakistan's floods

*Pakistan's full recovery from the devastating floods will demand focused regional and global attention, says PETER DRYSDALE.*

The enormity of the human tragedy visited upon the people of Pakistan by the massive flooding that has affected a huge part of the country is only now beginning to sink into the international community. The stories coming out of the disaster zone provide daily witness to the scale of the human crisis that Pakistan confronts.



UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon—among first to send out plea for international help.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon was among the first to send out a plea for international help. Perhaps it has taken longer to comprehend the scale and impact of what has taken place in Pakistan than it did after

the Indonesian tsunami or the Haiti earthquake, but the wellsprings of human compassion and generosity seem to have responded more slowly than in the case of these earlier disasters. That is bound to change as people around the world begin to understand. Certainly in Australia there is at least a huge elevation in public awareness, sympathy and response to what has happened.

Adil Khan Miankhal and Shahbaz Nasir make the point in [East Asia Forum](#) that, although the estimated damage to the Pakistani economy may run into billions of dollars, the immediate worry is delivery of relief for food, medicine and potable water for 20 million people who do not have access to them. For the international

community, altruism aside, failure to respond to these needs up front, they argue, would constitute surrender on the battleground in the struggle to win the hearts and minds and the trust of the

Pakistani people. According to Miankhal and Nasir: 'With the passing of time, the battle may shift to a harder and more unforgiving battleground, consuming far more resources. A dollar spent now is likely to be equivalent to thousands spent later'.



Enormity of tragedy now sinking in. Photo: Redcross.org.uk

The assessment of the economic and political effects of the floods on Pakistan, the region and the rest of the world will take longer. The

floods have affected over one-fifth of the country (an area roughly the size of England) and engulfed large parts of all four provinces—Punjab, Balochistan, Sindh and Khyber–Pakhtunkhwa (formerly the North West Frontier Province). The vast scope of the damage makes this a truly national disaster with long-term economic and political consequences beyond Pakistan itself.

Mohsin Khan and Shuja Nawaz make an important beginning with their sobering assessment. With waters still rising as they wrote, they point out it is still too early to assess the economic costs; a proper assessment will be made in time by the Government of Pakistan, assisted by the UN and the World Bank. But they provide a forensic analysis of what the scale of those costs might be.

As Khan and Nawaz observe: 'The immediate impact on the population is truly staggering—20 million people affected with 8 million in need of water, food and shelter; 1500–2000 killed; 4 million left homeless; and 15 million all sectors of the economy. The Pakistan government estimates total economic damage to be near US\$15 billion, or about 10 per cent of GDP. Damage to infrastructure alone (roads, power plants, telecommunications, dams and irrigation systems, and schools and health clinics) amounts to around US\$10 billion.' Agriculture, which accounts for 25 per cent of Pakistan's GDP and provides employment for 50 per cent of

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## Economic costs of Pakistan's floods

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the workforce, has suffered badly. At least 30 per cent of the cotton crop has been washed away. This has flow-through effects on the textile industry, which is the mainstay of Pakistani manufacturing and exports.

There has been devastating loss of wheat, rice and maize crops. On top of this there has been loss of about 10 million head of livestock. Khan and Nawaz estimate that



Delivery of food, medicine and water an immediate worry. Photo: Canadian Red Cross yoku.ca

altogether agricultural production this year could fall by as much as 15 per cent. Since it will be impossible to sow the spring grain crops in October–

December, next year's production is likely to witness further decline. This, and more, is likely to turn an expected 3–4 per cent growth in GDP this year into a 2–5 per cent fall in GDP. And the shortage of food and other goods could push inflation, which is already running in double digit territory, up to 20 per cent or more.

The current IMF program was in serious trouble before the floods. It will have to be scrapped and a program based on a completely new assumptions taking into account the effect of the floods will have to be negotiated and put in place. The US aid program, under the five-year [Kerry–Lugar Bill](#), will also need to be reframed, with aid front-loading to speed up relief and reconstruction work. Once reconstruction gets under way, it will boost growth, but the positive effects of reconstruction activity are unlikely to show up anytime soon and it is likely to be well beyond 2011 before the growth rate climbs back to its 2009 level of 4 per cent.

The political consequences of the floods are difficult to predict but full of deep risk, since Pakistan's provinces are largely language-based, with different ethnic groups and riven by tensions liable to erupt into violent conflicts.

The diversion of resources from other priorities, Khan and Nawaz argue, and attention to the flood relief and essential reconstruction work will affect social spending and the drive against the Pakistani Taliban, whose fighters have been dislocated from their tribal bases in the North West Frontier region and have taken the war back into the Pakistani hinterland.

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**The political consequences of the floods are difficult to predict but full of deep risk, since Pakistan's provinces are largely language-based, with different ethnic groups, and riven by tensions liable to erupt into violent conflicts.**

Economic recovery from the floods will depend not on the generosity of foreign donors, Khan and Nawaz argue (although this will be important to economic recovery as well as to the politics of recovery from the crisis), but on the ability of the Pakistan Government to mobilise the domestic resources and public support to undertake massive reconstruction. And it will take several years for full recovery to be achieved—a problem that will demand focused regional and global attention.



*Peter Drysdale is Emeritus Professor of Economics and Head of the East Asia Forum in the Crawford School of Economics and Government at the Australian National University. An earlier version of this essay appeared on the [East Asia Forum](#).*

# Delhi games facing security challenges

*On the eve of the 19th Commonwealth Games, KAMALA KANTA DASH asks how prepared is India to deal with a major security crisis during the event.*

If Melbourne is the model of a successful host city with its staging of the 2006 'best ever' Commonwealth Games, the 19th Commonwealth Games in Delhi next month are set to transform many facets of public life in India's national capital.

The Indian Government has provided more than Rs10 000 crore (about US\$2 billion) for the games and more than Rs.30 000 crore (about US\$6 billion) for other non-sport-related projects, including infrastructure such as airports and roads, and the beautification of the city. The aim is to turn the capital into a truly 'global city'. The makeover also includes a massive overhaul of security services.

Delhi has had the experience of arranging a mega event, the Asian Games in 1982. But the city has changed drastically since then with India's growing international stature. The Union government and the city-state government are preparing to cash in on the success of the Commonwealth Games.

The government wants to display its soft power through this international event. But managing more than 8 000 athletes from 71 countries, at least 100 000 foreign visitors and an estimated 70 000 spectators visiting five games venues daily will be a daunting task for the police. Along with recent serious human security challenges, such as a radiation leak, fire, flood and now a dengue fever outbreak, traditional security issues like mass casualty terrorist attacks are causing anxiety about overall safety and security during the games.

The radiation leak and exposure to cobalt 60 in the Mayapuri area of West Delhi in April 2010 injured at least seven people and caught the authorities by

surprise. The Delhi government, the police and the emergency services were unprepared for such a crisis and slow to recognise the potential danger from these radioactive agents to community security. There is now increasing demand to install radiation detection machines at entry points to the capital.

In March 2010 a number of fires in Delhi killed at least five people, injured more than 500 and gutted more than 1200 hutments, mostly in the slums. The fire services were unable to respond in time, citing the lack of communication facilities in the slums as the main reason. Now heavy monsoon rains over the past two months have led to an outbreak of dengue fever.

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**A series of bombings in September 2008 and the 26/11 attacks on Mumbai exposed glaring security loopholes and inadequate coordination between the police and intelligence agencies.**

Securing the games against traditional security threats like terrorism will involve extensive use of surveillance equipment, such as closed-circuit television cameras, and the deployment of bomb-disposal squads, police and paramilitary forces, including the National Security Guard and the Border Security Force. The quick-reaction Special Weapons and Tactics team would be deployed to avert any attack.

A special group, along with a radiation control unit, will also be assigned to respond to nuclear, biological and chemical threats, while emergency care units and fire services will be on alert. However, policing 5.6 million vehicles on a road network of 30 985 kilometres will be a tough task. Policing will also involve providing security to athletes, team dignitaries and visitors, and physically controlling the stadiums and hotels. The complexity of the situation means effective

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policing and attack prevention will have to be based on close communication, coordination and information-sharing between the policing and intelligence agencies. Against this backdrop, Delhi Police will be working with Interpol to access Interpol's database on criminals and terrorists.



Police Commissioner Dadwal—city safe and ready. Photo: Delhi Police.

Delhi Police has collaborated with market and residents' welfare associations to 'sensitise' them to crisis management in case of a terrorist attack. In the past popular markets, such as Sarojini Nagar, Khan, Lajpat Nagar and Connaught Place, have been terrorist targets.

In April the US Embassy and the UK, Canadian and Australia high commissions issued advisories to their citizens to avoid these market places. After the advisories were issued, Delhi police commissioner YS Dadwal assured a media conference that the 'the city is absolutely safe and ready for the 2010 games'. He stressed that Delhi Police was 'totally prepared' and that all necessary 'arrangements are made' to ensure the games will be 'incident free'.

Intelligence agencies have found that the games are a target for the Lashkar-e Toiba and other external and internal terrorist organisations. A series of bombings in September 2008 and the 26/11 attacks on Mumbai exposed glaring security loopholes and inadequate coordination between the police and intelligence agencies. It was expected that lessons would have been learnt and a sense of urgency shown to compensate for these inadequacies, and that greater efficiency and more professionalism would be demonstrated in time for the Commonwealth Games.

Unfortunately Delhi Police's efforts to upgrade its counter-terrorism capacity have been hampered by red tape in procuring high-tech equipment such as CCTVs and other detection devices. Adding to this, Delhi Police is seriously

understaffed for such a large-scale event and its 6000 new recruits are under-trained. Delhi Police does not have the infrastructure to train so many recruits at once.



Image Sources: Delhi Police ([www.delhipolice.nic.in](http://www.delhipolice.nic.in)).

The recruits will receive about three-months training instead of the usual nine, and will be shouldering the responsibility of policing the games. Although they will certainly add to police visibility during the games, the question remains whether they could respond to a crisis such as a terrorist attack.

It is widely acknowledged internationally that a repeat of the 26/11 Mumbai attacks would likely lead to war, making cross-border support for a repeat of such an attack during the games highly unlikely. Even so, nothing can excuse the haphazard implementation of security arrangements for the games.

The last-minute rushes in security preparation and management for the games have raised anxiety among the citizens of Delhi. To remedy this, internal security and crisis management require a whole-of-government focus to prevent and respond to potential crises in the national capital.



*Kamala Kanta Dash is a graduate student at the Monash Asia Institute. His research is generally concerned with the policing models in operation since 9/11 years to counter radicalisation and terrorism.*

### Women in crisis

The Tenth International [Women in Asia Conference](#), to be held from 29 September to 1 October 2010 at the Australian National University, Canberra, will look at the impact of crises on women.

We profile two researchers who will be participating in the conference.



#### **Larissa Sandy— debt-bonded sex workers in Southeast Asia**

My current research centres on

understanding forms of unfree labour in the Southeast Asian sex industries, including debt bondage. Part of this work is focused on exploring the narratives of debt-bonded sex workers I collected as part of my doctoral research with women working in Cambodia's sex industry.

Through this I aim to understand the lived experiences of debt-bonded sex workers and the material and non-material factors that shape and structure their experiences, as well as the hierarchical kinship and social relations and systems of labour control that heavily influence such local practices. My work explores notions of obligation that infuse women's stories and how such ideas structure relations between sex workers and brothel owners and sex workers and their families.



Members of the Cambodian Prostitutes' Union giving alms to monks after the blessing of the Women's Room, September 2000. Larissa is pictured centre, wearing a black shirt.

explored the lived experiences of sex

My PhD was carried out at the Gender Relations Centre, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, at the Australian National University. My thesis, 'My blood, sweat and tears: female sex workers—victims, vectors or agents?'

workers in Cambodia. I demonstrated how the then dominant free/forced framework, shaped and structured by a division of sex workers into 'free' and 'trafficked', was unable to account for the contradictions and complexities in sex workers' experiences.

Based on long-term fieldwork and in-depth interviews, my doctoral research highlighted how Cambodian sex workers embraced multiple and conflicting subject positions as they talked about structural constraints, such as poverty, and patriarchy in relation to their own agency and self-determination.

By exploring the reasons for women becoming involved and staying in the trade (including economic necessity, cultural mandates/obligations, domestic and family violence and women's desires), I was able to describe the uncertainty that existed for sex workers between forced and voluntary participation in sex work. Through their narratives I was also able to illustrate how they ultimately faced a situation of constrained choice.

At this year's Women in Asia Conference, I have organised a panel on human trafficking, people smuggling and labour migration in Asia. The panel is part of efforts in the field to shift the focus of debates and scholarship on the issue of trafficking and migration towards work based on first-hand research and local realities.



Monks scattering petals and sacred water over members of the Cambodian Prostitutes' Union (CPU), their families and supporters as they bless the CPU's Women's Room.

Contributors to the panel will draw on and share insights into trafficking and migration from their extensive fieldwork in Southeast

Asia. The panel will examine the impact of anti-trafficking initiatives on temporary migration and sex work, the blurring of the

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## Women in crisis

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boundaries between people-smuggling and trafficking and the processes and patterns of human trafficking from the perspective of traffickers. My paper will highlight the consequences for Cambodian sex workers when the Cambodian Government passed its revised human trafficking law in February 2008. Its passage led to the widespread violation of sex workers' rights and contributed to the strengthening of the trafficking discourse in Cambodia.

I will also be taking part in a panel organised by Dr Linda Rae Bennet, a Senior Research Fellow at Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health & Society, on gender, reproduction and sexuality in Southeast Asia. In this panel, I will present on Cambodia's 100 per cent condom-use policy and how this HIV intervention perpetuated the sexual status quo and further compounded the stigmatisation and marginalisation of sex workers.

*Dr Larissa Sandy is a research fellow in the International HIV Research Program at the Australian Research Centre for Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University. She is working on the AusAID-funded HIV Consortium—Supporting HIV Social Research Program. She carries out training and capacity-building on HIV social research in the Asia-Pacific region. She is also involved in a collaborative research project with drug user organisations in Indonesia that aims to explore changes in drug-taking practices and drug users' experiences of accessing harm reduction services.*



### **Bina D'Costa— War, peace and reconciliation.**

My research specialisations are in peacebuilding, justice and reconciliation

processes; human security and borders; gender and conflict; children and war; and the role of NGOs in social movements. I am the author of *Nationbuilding, gender and war crimes in South Asia* (Routledge, 2010) and the co-editor (with Katrina Lee-Koo) of *Gender and global politics in the Asia-Pacific* (Palgrave, 2009)

My current project is on war crimes, transitional justice and peacebuilding in Asia. I'm investigating various 'justice seeking' processes in Sri Lanka, Nepal, Burma and Bangladesh, which is the subject matter of my next manuscript. Based on my fieldwork, I'm currently involved in the International Center for Transitional Justice and Brookings Institutions project on displacement, transitional justice and gender.



Field-work site: Mae-la camp, Thai-Burma border.

I've been involved in various policy-oriented projects on borders, identity and human security,

focusing on Rohingya refugees from

Burma, stateless Biharis and the internally displaced people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh.

I've conducted extensive field research on 'war babies' with special attention to the War of Liberation of Bangladesh in 1971. This project has developed largely out of my activist work. I am currently co-authoring a book on children and global politics in conflict zones with Katrina Lee Koo and Kim Huynh.

I've contributed to various projects in Thailand, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan and India and worked as a consultant for the United Nations Research in Social Development, and the Department for International Development, UK.

I serve as one of the peace and conflict specialists for the Gender, Crisis Prevention and Recovery Team and am involved in the feminist ethics board for the United Nations Development Programme Bureau of Crisis Prevention and Recovery.

*Dr Bina D'Costa is a Research Fellow at the Centre for International Governance & Justice, ANU. She is a member of the organising committee of the Women in Asia Conference 2010.*

# Life, death and magic: 2000 years of Southeast Asian ancestral art

## National Gallery of Australia

By Robyn Maxwell

*Life, death and magic: 2000 years of Southeast Asian ancestral art*, the major exhibition now on show at the [National Gallery of Australia](#) in Canberra, introduces the finest works of art made by small communities to celebrate their beliefs in the power of the ancestors and spirits of nature.

With loans drawn from great collections around the world—in Asia, Europe and the United States—the exhibition features sculptures, gold objects, ancient bronzes and textiles. The Gallery has deliberately created a dramatic display, the dazzling spotlights and curious shadows evoking the atmosphere of traditional ceremonies that celebrate the cycle of life and death. This is also a chance to enjoy the few superb examples of animist sculpture, textiles and gold in Australian public collections, especially rare and never before exhibited shrouds, sacred hangings, and ceremonial costume from the National Gallery's world-renowned holdings of Southeast Asian textiles.

The Gallery has also been actively acquiring majestic animist sculptures, including a 3.2 metre long celestial horse, carved from a single log, with two diminutive riders representing the founding ancestors of the village in central Flores. Other great Indonesian sculptures on display include a large stone couple from north Sumatra—a grand ruler mounted on a mythical long-tongued quadruped beside his elegant rather austere wife—on loan from the [Barbier-Mueller Museum](#) in Geneva. Like most of the ancestral figures in the exhibition, they are both depicted naked, yet adorned with heirloom jewellery.



East Sumbanese people  
Sumba, Indonesia  
Ceremonial ear pendant and sacred heirloom [mamuli] 19th century or earlier gold, 10.2 x 7.5 x 2.0 cm  
National Museum of Indonesia, Jakarta

Fabulous gold objects are an important feature of the exhibition, ranging from delicate death masks to enormous ear ornaments, from an exquisite 10th-century necklace imitating shells to an equally ancient gold vessel in the form of a palm-leaf dipper, both from Java.

The gold of the great families, their ownership traced back through the generations to significant ancestors, is not only displayed on human figures; beautiful and ornate family altars are carved with jewellery, while a huge stone throne for local nobility is created in the shape of a monster wearing long gold earrings and neckbands.

*Life, death and magic* offers Australian audiences a unique opportunity to appreciate the excitement and often strange beauty of objects created to venerate the spirits of nature and ancestral deities. While Southeast Asian Buddhist and Hindu art is better known and more accessible to art gallery visitors, this exhibition aims to broaden the understanding of the cultures of our northern neighbours by introducing Australian audiences to the art of remote parts of Taiwan, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysian Borneo, Vietnam, southern China and east Timor.

To achieve the extraordinary displays over all six temporary exhibition galleries, the Gallery's own Southeast Asian animist sculptures, such as the imposing stone figures from Nias, are joined by impressive wooden figures of ancestors, regarded by some as the pinnacle of Indonesian sculpture. These have been generously lent by major European collections of tribal and ethnographic art such as the Netherland's [Tropenmuseum](#) in Amsterdam and the [National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden](#). A striking seated figure holding a large container for



Luang Island  
south Moluccas,  
Indonesia  
Headdress [wutulai]  
19th century or earlier  
gold, 30.5 x 20.3 x 4.4  
cm  
Honolulu Academy of  
Arts, Hawaii (10624.1)  
Gift of the Christensen  
Fund, 2001

*Continued page 24*

## Life, death and magic

From page 23

an Ifugao shaman's magic herbs and charms from the [Fowler Museum of Cultural History](#) (University of California, Los Angeles) is a powerful example of objects created to control the spirit world. It is exhibited with a small group of bold wooden sculptures, also from central Luzon in the northern Philippines. Recent additions to the national collection, these range from a highly stylised king post for an ancestral house to the realistic depiction of a guardian couple with child. Like many objects in the exhibition, they demonstrate the power of art created to ensure fertility and prosperity in vulnerable agricultural and environmental conditions, a recurring focus for animist rites.



Flores, Indonesia  
*Pair of ancestral effigies [ana deo]* 19th century or earlier  
wood, 174.5 x 13.0 x 13.0 cm;  
140.0 x 13.0 x 13.0 cm  
Musée Barbier-Mueller,  
Geneva  
© Musée Barbier-Mueller,  
Photo Studio Ferrazzini  
Bouchet

Also on loan from the Fowler Museum is the façade of a Toraja granary from Sulawesi, Indonesia, its surface completely filled with incised and painted patterns. Throughout Southeast Asia one of the most prominent emblems of agricultural and human fertility,

prosperity and wealth is the water buffalo that also appears in schematic and recognisable designs on the rice granary decorations.

The oldest Southeast Asian textile forms and styles, made from beaten bark cloth and a range of vegetable fibres, also display motifs associated with fertility and prosperity. As in architecture, buffaloes are prominent on Toraja textiles, along with the stars of heaven patterns that represent plenty. Archaic Toraja banners show village scenes of rice granaries and buffaloes with plough, while stylised horns are painted on superfine bark head cloths. So important is the buffalo symbol in Torajan art that a repository for the aristocratic corpse at a funeral ceremony can also take the form of a mighty buffalo. A richly decorated two-metre long coffin in the form of the prestigious animal comes from the collection of Musée du quai Branly, Paris.



Pakpak Batak people  
Barus district, Sumatra, Indonesia  
*Effigy portrait [mejan] of a village priest* 19th century or earlier  
stone, 87.0 x 90.0 x 27.0 cm  
Musée Barbier-Mueller, Geneva  
© Musée Barbier-Mueller, Photo  
Studio Ferrazzini Bouchet.

The greatest rites for animist Southeast Asia are funerals, when the spirits of the deceased are ushered into the afterworld with lavish ceremony and expense. Some of the finest art is created for these events, including spectacular coffins and mortuary jars. Archaeological finds from 2000-year-old Bronze and Iron Age sites across the region reveal the antiquity of elaborate burials and extravagant grave goods. This is marvellously demonstrated by the loans of a painted spiral covered Ban Chiang vessel from Thailand, a loan from Singapore's Asian Civilisations Museum, and Dian Culture (500 BCE–300 CE) bronzes originating in Yunnan, southern China.

A number of large bronze vessels in the exhibition were found across the Indonesian archipelago. The superb casting skills of the Dong Son culture of north Vietnam (500 BCE–200 CE) and the active trade in the spectacular Dong Son bronzes is encapsulated in the huge 2000-year old Makalampau kettle drum on loan from the National Museum of Indonesia. Displaying images of saddle-roof houses, birds, and boats manned by figures in extravagant feather headdresses, the drum was found on Sangeang, a small island off the coast of Sumbawa. The style of other ancient bronze objects, such as the Gallery's *Bronze weaver* and the Honolulu Academy of Art's *Standing bronze dog* illustrate a blossoming of local creativity inspired by the treasured Dong Son heirlooms.

*Robyn Maxwell is curator of the Life, death and magic: 2000 years of Southeast Asian ancestral art exhibition.*



## New books on Asia

### Asian art—from gardening to manga

From [Asia Bookroom](#)



**TOKYO CLASH.**  
By Ralf Bahren.  
Hardback, 191pp.  
Ullmann  
Publishing.  
\$39.95.

In an extraordinary encounter with Japanese design culture, author and photographer Ralf Bahren presents Japan's megacity in a visually stunning collection of images. Eye-catching signs, glittering games of chance, manga characters and countless other items in this collection of Japanese products compete for the viewer's attention. They exist, apparently without any contradiction, alongside traditional temples and Buddha statues.



**REVOLUTIONARY CENTURY. ART IN ASIA 1900-2000.**  
By Alison Carroll.  
Dustjacket, 207pp,  
Macmillan. \$99

With nearly 200 colour plates, this book aims to introduce the major themes and practices of art in Asia between the years 1900-2000. While national art histories have been written, there has been no overview across the region that exposes the major themes that affected the art of individual countries within the whole geographic context. It was a century of change, and the focus is on the developments in art and art practice, particularly those adapted from outside.

The book begins with a broad overview of the nature of art in Asia in the 20th century. This is followed by a cross-region study divided into four parts: the setting leading in from the 19th century; the decades 1900-40, followed by the period between World War II and 1960; and finally the years from 1960-2000.

The major geo-political groupings of the region are discussed within each time-period. This has not been easy given that over this century, borders have changed and countries have been renamed. But

Carroll, with her many years of experience and travel throughout the region as Director of Asialink's arts program, is in an excellent position to provide this long-awaited study.



**CHINESE LANDSCAPE PAINTING AS WESTERN ART HISTORY.** By James Elkins.  
Dustjacket, 180pp, Hong Kong University. \$59.95

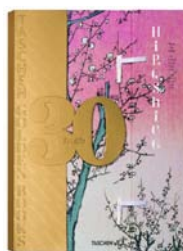
This is a provocative essay of reflections on traditional mainstream scholarship on Chinese art as done by towering figures in the field such as James Cahill and Wen Fong.

Elkins offers an engaging and accessible survey of his personal journey encountering and interpreting Chinese art through the writings of Western scholars. He argues that the search for optimal comparisons is itself a modern, Western interest, and that art history as a discipline is inherently Western in several identifiable senses.

Although he concentrates on art history, and on Chinese painting in particular, these issues bear implications for Sinology in general, and for wider questions about humanistic inquiry and historical writing.

### HIROSHIGE. ONE HUNDRED FAMOUS VIEWS OF EDO.

By Hiroshige. 240pp.  
Taschen. \$99.

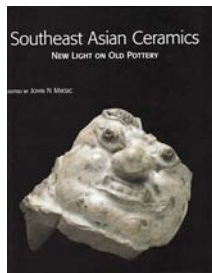


This is a quality reprint of *Hiroshige's One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*, first published in 1856-58. Most attractively presented in the style of

Japanese *ehon* (old picture book) in a Japanese-style binding and case with toggles, this edition presents the 120 plates, each with a description.

*More new books on page 26*

## New books on Asia



**SOUTHEAST ASIAN CERAMICS. NEW LIGHT ON OLD POTTERY.** By John N Miksic (ed.). Dustjacket, Editions Didier Millet. \$75.

Focusing primarily on the Classical Period (800–1500 CE), this book views ancient Southeast Asian culture through the lens of ceramic production and trade, influenced but not completely overshadowed by its powerful neighbour, China.

In this landmark publication, which accompanied the exhibition of the same name, noted archaeologist and scholar John N Miksic constructs a vivid picture of the development of Southeast Asia's unique ceramics. Along with three contributing authors, Pamela M Watkins, Dawn F Rooney and Michael Flecker, he summarises the fruits of their research over the past 40 years, beginning in Singapore with the founding of the Southeast Asian Ceramic Society in 1969.

The result is a comprehensive and insightful overview of the technology, aesthetics and organisation, both economic and political, of seemingly diverse territories in pre-colonial Southeast Asia. It is essential reading for anyone interested in the economic history of the region, and the material culture of Southeast Asia.

Oxford University Press is currently running a promotion for members of the Asian Studies Association of Australia. Oxford University Press is pleased to be able to offer members a 20 per cent discount on [linguistics titles](#).

**ASIAN GARDENS. HISTORY, BELIEFS AND DESIGN.** By Tom Turner. Dustjacket. 336pp. Routledge. \$89.95.

Tom Turner has been researching and teaching the theory and history of garden design for 40 years. Here he explores the ways in which designs were guided by beliefs. His visits, research, drawings and photographs are brought together in detailed studies of West Asia, South Asia and East Asia. The period covered extends from the earliest gardens to the present. Using maps, diagrams and photographs, Turner explores how and why Asian gardens developed their characteristic forms and functions. Treating garden design as a 'word and image' subject, the account is coherent, comparative and readable. Further details of all the gardens are available on the [gardenvisit.com](#) website, which the author edits.

**FRIENDSHIP IN ART: FOU LEI and HUANG BINHONG.** By Claire Roberts. Hardback. Hong Kong University Press. HK\$295/US\$38.

In letters, photos and paintings, this book by ANU research fellow and senior curator at Sydney's Powerhouse Museum,



Fou Lei. Photo: culture.sh.cn

Sydney, Claire Roberts, documents a special friendship between two highly creative individuals who helped shape Chinese culture in the 20th century—the revered

traditional painter Huang Binhong (1865–1955) and the young cosmopolitan critic and translator Fou Lei (1908–66).

Both were cultural mediators and translators of ideas and cultural expressions. Both had deep appreciation of the common origins of calligraphy and painting, rendering complex feelings with brush and ink. Their intimate artistic conversations over more than a decade depict their alienation and uncertainty amid China's turbulent cultural politics.

*More new books on page 27*

## New books on Asia



**MODERNITIES OF CHINESE ART.** By John Clark. Cloth with dustjacket. 346pp. Brill, Leiden. €114/US\$168.

This publication presents John Clark's collected writings on modern and contemporary Chinese art over almost 30 years of pioneering, empirical, in-depth research dedicated to modernities of Chinese art. Most of the essays published previously elsewhere have therefore been adapted for this publication, while others—e.g., the first-hand observations of Beijing and Hong Kong in 1981—appear in print for the first time. Chapters often include unique interview material and much other information not found elsewhere.

Including illustrations of over 200 art works in colour, with biographical appendices of Taiwan and Hong Kong artists, extensive chronological materials in thematic categories on Chinese art and an extensive bibliography, this is an essential reference work for anyone interested in modern Chinese art.

## New books from the ASAA series

### Southeast Asia Series

The Southeast Asia Publications Series seeks to publish cutting-edge research on all countries and peoples of Southeast Asia across disciplines including anthropology, geography, history, literature, political economy, politics, sociology and the fields of cultural studies, communication studies and gender studies.

### Women in Asia Series

The Women's Caucus of the ASAA operates a publication series in conjunction with Routledge that focuses on promoting scholarship on Women in Asia. See the Routledge web site [ASAA Women in Asia Series](#) for full details.

## Job websites

These sites offer career prospects for graduates and postgraduates in Asian Studies. If you know of other useful sites advertising jobs for postgraduates in Asian Studies, please send them to [the editor](#).

[www.jobs.ac.uk](http://www.jobs.ac.uk) advertises worldwide academic posts.

<http://isanet.ccit.arizona.edu/employment.html> is a free-to-access website run by the International Studies Association.

[www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int) is a free service run by the United Nations to recruit for NGO jobs.

[www.aboutus.org/DevelopmentEx.com](http://www.aboutus.org/DevelopmentEx.com) has a paid subscription service providing access to jobs worldwide in the international development industry.

<http://h-net.org/jobs> is a US-based site with a worldwide scope. Asia-related jobs (mostly academic) come up most weeks.

[www.aasianst.org](http://www.aasianst.org) is the website of the Association for Asian Studies. New job listings are posted on the first and third Monday of each month. You must be a current AAS member to view job listings.

[www.timeshighereducation.co.uk](http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk) The Times Higher Education Supplement.

[www.comminet.com](http://www.comminet.com) is the site of The Communication Initiative Network. It includes listings of jobs, consultants, requests for proposals, events, training, and books, journals, and videos for sale related to all development issues and strategies.

## Diary notes

**INDONESIA UPDATE 2010, ANU, Canberra, 24–25 September.** This year's update will be on the theme of employment, living standards and poverty in contemporary Indonesia. Enquiries [Indonesia.Project@anu.edu.au](mailto:Indonesia.Project@anu.edu.au), ph +61 2 6125 3794, fax +61 2 6125 3700.

**2010 EMERGING LEADERS' DIALOGUE, Southbank, Brisbane, Griffith Asia Institute 27–29 September 2010,** will examine China's rise and its implications for Asia. The discussions will result in a formal outcomes paper that will be sent to the Queensland Government and distributed widely among government departments.

**TENTH INTERNATIONAL WOMEN IN ASIA CONFERENCE, Canberra, 29 September–**

**1 October 2010,** hosted by the College of Asia and the Pacific at the ANU and supported by the Women's Forum of the Asian Studies Association of Australia (see p.24).



*More diary notes page 28*

## Diary notes

From page 27

**LIFE DEATH AND MAGIC, Australian National Gallery, Canberra, until 31 October 2010.** An exhibition of sculpture, jewellery and textiles from Southeast Asia.

**ASIAN AUSTRALIAN FORUM AND AMERASIA JOURNAL LAUNCH, Melbourne, 4 October 2010.** Forum, 1–5pm; launch, 5.30–6.30pm, level 2, Museum of Chinese Australian History, Cohen Place. The Asian Australian Studies Research Network forum will highlight activities in Asian Australian studies that benefit from connections with their Asian North American counterparts. The forum precedes the launch, which will celebrate the publication of the special 'Asian Australia, Asian America: making transnational connections' issue of *Amerasia* [36.2 (2010)]. Please register your forum and/or launch attendance by **Monday, 27 September** with [tseen.khoo@monash.edu](mailto:tseen.khoo@monash.edu).

**BOOK LAUNCH: John Clark, *Asian Modernities: Chinese and Thai art compared, 1980 to 1999*, Sydney, 5:30 pm, Friday 8 October 2010.** Venue: Schaeffer Library, Mills Building, The University of Sydney. RSVP: essential to [powerinstitute@sydney.edu.au](mailto:powerinstitute@sydney.edu.au).

**SUNTA GRADUATE STUDENT PAPER PRIZE.** The Society for Urban, National, and Transnational/Global Anthropology has announced its Annual Graduate Student Paper Prize competition. Students in anthropology and PhD programs are invited to submit papers on urban, national, and transnational/global anthropology and/or any of the areas of interest to SUNTA, including refugees and immigrants, poverty and homelessness, and space and place. The winner will receive a \$250 cash prize plus consideration for publication in the international, refereed journal *City and Society*. Submit papers to Dr Gautam Ghosh ([gghosh2@gmail.com](mailto:gghosh2@gmail.com) or [gautam.ghosh@otago.ac.nz](mailto:gautam.ghosh@otago.ac.nz)) by **31 October 2010**.

**THE IDEAS OF REGIONALISM IN ASIA,** a workshop on 11-12 November 2010, Burwood Campus, Deakin University, Melbourne.

**SPATIAL CULTURES AND CULTURAL SPACES IN TAIWAN: historical and contemporary perspectives** conference, Melbourne, 9–10 December 2010, organised by the Asia Institute, University of Melbourne, in association with the Melbourne University [Taiwan Research Reading Group](#). The conference will be run in conjunction with a postgraduate symposium on Taiwan Studies to be held on 7–8 December, also at the University of Melbourne. Further details about

the conference will be available from the [conference website](#).

**INDONESIANS OVERSEAS: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES** conference, University of Wollongong, 10 December 2010. The organisers invite proposals for papers on the history of Indonesians overseas. Send abstracts to [Julia Martinez](#) by 1 November 2010. See [conference website](#).

**INTERROGATING MULTICULTURALISM IN AOTEAROA/NEW ZEALAND: AN ASIAN STUDIES PERSPECTIVE** symposium, University of Otago, Dunedin, NZ, 19 February 2011. The one-day symposium, hosted by the Asia-NZ Research Cluster at Otago University, will examine multiculturalism in New Zealand. The symposium is free of charge and open to the public. The organisers have called for papers. Please see [www.otago.ac.nz/humanities/research/clusters/asian/](http://www.otago.ac.nz/humanities/research/clusters/asian/) for more details.

## Contributing to Asian Currents

Contributions, commentary and responses on any area of Asian Studies are welcome and should be emailed to the editor. The general length of contributions is between 1000–1500 words. As *Asian Currents* is intended for scholars and general readers please avoid technical language and keep references and notes to a minimum.

## About the ASAA



The Asian Studies Association of Australia (ASAA) promotes the study of Asian languages, societies, cultures, and politics in Australia, supports teaching and research in Asian studies and works towards an

understanding of Asia in the community at large. It publishes the [Asian Studies Review](#) journal and holds a biennial conference. The ASAA believes there is an urgent need to develop a strategy to preserve, renew and extend Australian expertise about Asia. It has called on the government to show national leadership in promoting Australia's Asia knowledge and skills. See [Maximising Australia's Asia knowledge: repositioning and renewal of a national asset](#).

*Asian Currents* is published by the ASAA and edited by [Allan Sharp](#). The editorial board comprises Kathryn Robinson, ASAA President; Michele Ford, ASAA Secretary; Mina Roces, ASAA Publications officer; and Lenore Lyons, ASAA Treasurer.