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Shaky Afghanistan prepares to stand alone



The goal of the United States and NATO to leave behind a modern democratic state in Afghanistan has been abandoned and hopes of achieving this goal are unlikely to be achieved in

the near future. And Western aspirations to secure the rights of women are doubtful. [Read more.](#)

Dominant Abe faces long and winding road



The July 2013 upper house election has left Japan with a weak and disparate opposition and the Liberal Democratic Party dominant again. But Prime Minister Shinzō Abe faces major domestic and foreign policy challenges. [Read more.](#)

Turkey's season of protest



June is the start of the main tourist season in Turkey, and of summer holidays for schools and universities. Millions of people throng the public spaces of its cities. This year it was also a season of social protest and police violence. [Read more.](#)

Photo: Dilek Cilingir

Vietnam's conflicted human rights

Vietnam's human rights policy is marked by contradictions and paradox—by increased openness and continued repression. [Read more.](#)

Reform in Myanmar

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Shaky Afghanistan prepares to stand alone

For all the talk of a stable situation in Afghanistan after UN-led security forces leave, Afghanistan's future looks uncertain.

By Ian Bickerton

With all NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) troops expected to be gone from Afghanistan by the end of 2014, the question is, how will the country fare when they are no longer there?

The goal of the United States and NATO to leave behind a modern democratic state has been abandoned. And the creation of a functioning civil service, the repair of a corrupt and incompetent justice and legal system, and the building of a stable, sustainable economy will not be achieved in the near future. Also Western aspirations to secure the rights of women are doubtful.

Much will depend on presidential elections scheduled for April 2014. Although, at present, there appears to be no credible alternative to Hamid Karzai, should he try to cling to power and run for re-election (by rewriting the constitution, for example), or should these elections fail to produce a legitimate and credible winner, the government and the army could collapse. Already there is an exodus of many among the Western-supported Afghan elites. A successful election could see the Afghan government pull through. A disputed or corrupt election could lead to further ethnic and tribal fighting and the end of US and foreign support for the government.

In terms of security, lack of funding from the West will lead to a reduction of the newly created but largely ineffectual Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) from its present number of around 350 000 to

100 000. Kabul and other major cities (where most of the population lives) may be secured by the 10 000 strong, well-trained special forces of the ANSF but much of Kandahar and Helmand provinces will likely be controlled by the Taliban once the Americans leave. All this is a long way from the original stated aim of US operations to 'eliminate' al-Qaeda from the region.



President Karzai:
no credible
alternative.

The war in Afghanistan will not end when foreign forces leave the country. It will be over only when the Taliban, the Americans, and the Karzai/Afghan government reach an agreement on a sustainable political outcome. That outcome, according to NATO's own communiqués, must include, in addition to the reaffirmation of a sovereign, stable and united Afghanistan, a commitment by all parties to the renunciation of violence, the breaking of ties to international terrorism, and compliance with the Afghan constitution, including its human rights provisions, especially on the rights of women.

However, doubts remain as to whether Afghan forces will have the capability to stand up against a still-potent Taliban insurgency and instill stability. The besieged Afghan government will not only face the threat of overthrow by the Taliban but also the threat of collapse caused by a failing economy, a multisided civil war, and acute ethnic divisions.

Several unresolved issues will play a large part in how events in Afghanistan will unfold. The first is the future of the stalled talks

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in mid-June 2013, and President Karzai's attitude toward them. A second, related issue is just what kind of US military presence will remain in Afghanistan after 2014, and a third is the role of Pakistan.

The Taliban initiated talks two years ago, first with Germany, then in Qatar, and now with the United States, again in Qatar. President Karzai initially expressed grudging support for the talks, on condition that they were quickly moved from Doha to Kabul and that negotiations were conducted by the government-appointed Afghan High Peace Council. At the same time, however, he was deeply suspicious of America's intentions, and suspended his own security talks with Washington.



Afghan women: human rights concerns.

Although the Obama administration constantly affirms that the peace process must be 'Afghan-owned and

Afghan-led', Karzai suspects the United States will cut its own deal with the Taliban, which has always refused to negotiate with a government it regards as illegitimate. The Taliban still has not recognised either the Afghan government or the post-2001 constitution, which the United States insists it must do before being included in a wider political process. The talks between the United States and the Taliban broke down almost as soon as they began.

Of course, no-one really knows just how strong the Taliban are. The Taliban's political leadership in Pakistan—the Quetta *shura*—which is headed by Mullah Mohammed Omar, recognises that they will have to share power, and they realise that

For the United States to withdraw its forces totally would invite a repeat of the South Vietnam experience, which saw the complete collapse of the abandoned regime within two years.

Taliban forces cannot do more than control some parts of the rural south and east of the country. But more extreme elements—global jihadists—may wish to continue fighting for a new caliphate. And there are other smaller groups which may believe they are about to drive out all foreign troops.

In relation to a continued US military presence in Afghanistan after 2014, both the Obama administration and the Karzai government want to negotiate a bilateral security agreement. Initially, the United States planned keeping bases, aircraft, drones, special forces, private contractors and advisors (totally upwards of 20 000 personnel) in place until 2024, to support the Afghan National Army. However, Obama and Karzai do not trust each other.

Obama has offered a package that would make Afghanistan the largest recipient of US security and economic assistance in the world, ahead even of Israel. But he wants agreement from Karzai by October 2013. He has threatened to withdraw all US troops if Karzai does not accept the offer. Karzai, for his part, is deeply upset by US allegations of corruption during the 2009 Afghanistan elections, and believes that Washington has acted in bad faith in starting formal peace talks with the Taliban in Doha, the capital of Qatar, in mid-June 2013.

Failure to conclude a security agreement and the departure of all US personnel would be a major strategic setback for the United States. The loss of Afghan facilities

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would inhibit Predator drone surveillance and attacks against al-Qaeda in the region. It would also intensify internal conflict and invite increased meddling by Pakistan, India, Iran, China and Russia, among others, to fill the vacuum. In any event, the ANSF will still need American help with military advice, intelligence collection, logistics (a weak point), air support, counter-IED (improvised explosive devices) capabilities and medical evacuation. Furthermore, for the United States to withdraw its forces totally would invite a repeat of the South Vietnam experience, which saw the complete collapse of the abandoned regime within two years, and is therefore highly unlikely.

Friction, bordering on outright hostility, between the United States and Pakistan over Taliban guerrillas who are still finding sanctuary in Pakistan in spite of Islamabad's professed support for NATO's mission, is another issue creating



Loss of Afghan facilities will inhibit Predator drone strikes against al-Qaeda.

obstacles to any future peace and stability. Karzai wants the United States to do more to limit Pakistan support for the Taliban, as he believes

Pakistan is encouraging the insurgents. Although Pakistan clearly supports the present peace process, its policy toward the conflict is complex.

Pakistan and Afghanistan share a population of around 35 million Pashtuns, and they do not pay much attention to the border drawn by the British between the two states. The Pashtun see themselves as the core of Afghanistan, yet two-thirds of them live in Pakistan. On the one

hand, the Pakistan government does not want to see a total victory of the Taliban in Afghanistan as it believes they would then join with the Pakistan Islamist and Taliban opposition against it. On the other hand it needs allies in Afghanistan to combat the influence of India.

The situation is further complicated because of Pakistan's dependence upon the United States, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund while at the same time it relies upon its important ally China, which also has potentially large economic interests in Afghanistan. If stability is to be reached and maintained in Afghanistan there will need to be some economic integration between Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran on railway development, mining (of huge iron ore deposits), and to tap the tourist potential of the region.

No discussion of the future of Afghanistan after 2014 can avoid asking the question, what has the US-led war in that country achieved? Certainly Osama bin Laden, the main instigator of the 11 September 2001 attacks on the United States, has been executed, but the highly controversial circumstances of his assassination have almost certainly incited more dedicated jihadists determined to avenge his death, and in any event, bin Laden could have been located and brought to justice without a full-scale invasion of Afghanistan.

The war in Afghanistan is one part of a global war on terrorism which has led the Obama administration to construct, or to begin to build, a worldwide network of semi—if not fully—secret military bases, and in doing so Washington has created more enemies in its attempt to destroy one. In addition, the US government has institutionalised a security state and restricted civil liberties at home on an unprecedented scale. Dispassionate commentaries disguise the true costs of the war, which has decimated

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Afghanistan and its people. It is estimated that the war has indirectly impacted 95 per cent of the population, with 65 per cent of women and children killed, injured or displaced. Actual casualty figures are (perhaps deliberately) difficult to ascertain and verify. The Afghan economy is in ruins, highly dependent on economic assistance from donor countries (approximately 90 per cent of the national budget), and despite the injection of more than \$40 billion in aid, it remains one of the poorest countries in the world. Most of the overseas funds have gone into counterinsurgency projects and to private contractors to win the hearts and minds of the population rather than development, and it will take years to build a workable infrastructure.

For all the talk of a stable situation emerging after the departure of ISAF, history tells us that Afghanistan will continue as it has for the past several centuries.

For the United States, and other ISAF countries, casualty figures do not include the number of service men and women who carry physical and mental wounds, nor do they include the alarming and increasing number of former Afghan veterans who have taken their own lives as a result of their war traumas. Not only is the war the longest fought by the United States, the cost to American taxpayers is calculated to run to over 664 million dollars.

For all the talk of a stable situation emerging after the departure of ISAF, history tells us that Afghanistan will continue as it has for the past several centuries. Ethnic,

tribal/religious and regional groupings will continue to fight fiercely to secure and maintain their independence from external and internal centralised control.

Afghanistan is not a state in the modern Western sense of the term, and it is unlikely to become one anytime soon.

Ian Bickerton is Honorary Associate Professor, School of Humanities and Languages, at the University of New South Wales.

Conference to examine Indian diaspora

A two-day conference aimed at building cultural understanding between India and Australia will be held in Melbourne next month.

The conference—*Gondwanalandings: voices of the emerging Indian diaspora in Australia*—is an Australia India Institute flagship event, and will be held on 26–27 September. It will address the following goals:

- mapping the history of Indian–Australians, and bringing the sociocultural as well as political issues faced by the vast array of people of Indian origin living in Australia to the discussion table
- showcasing Indian–Australian artistic talent and facilitating arts policy to include more Indian–Australian voices in the mainstream
- sharing research and stories that shed light on the benefits of intercultural dialogue, and hurdles encountered in facilitating the same.

The conference will cover critical, community and creative perspectives as well as themes related to gender and migration, Indian–Australian literature in the Asian Century and diasporic media and film beyond Bollywood.

For more information, see [website](#) and [Coming events](#).

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Dominant Abe faces long, winding road

The Liberal Democratic Party's present command of both houses of parliament may suggest a return to one-party rule in Japan.

By Purnendra Jain

The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) is rarely absent from the helm of governance in contemporary Japan. After a spell out of office for just over three years, the party was returned to power through a national election in December 2012. The July 2013 upper house election has given the party and its coalition partner, Komeito, a stable majority in both houses. With a weak and disparate opposition, the LDP again dominates Japanese politics.

The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), which won a landslide victory in the 2009 general election, was convincingly defeated by the LDP in 2012, placing LDP leader Shinzō Abe as prime minister for the second time; in 2007 he resigned before completing one year in office. Now commanding majorities in both houses, the LDP has broken the legislative impasse created by the so-called twisted parliament (*nejire kokkai*), in place since the 2007 upper house elections. For the six years till the 2013 upper house elections, the inability of any party to command majorities in both houses made passing legislation extremely difficult.

What does this return to LDP dominance in both houses of parliament mean for Japanese politics, for the LDP, and indeed for Prime Minister Abe, domestically and internationally?

Present LDP command of both houses may suggest a return to one-party rule as the LDP governed Japan almost without interruption from its formation in 1955 until it was replaced by the DPJ in 2009. The LDP lost power for about a year in 1993–94. But unlike in 1993, overwhelming

support for the DPJ and a big thumbs-down for the LDP at the ballot box in 2009 suggested a major blow that would unhinge the LDP from government for more than just one general election.



Prime Minister Abe faces major domestic and foreign policy challenges.

However, even under the rule of a new party, little appeared to change in how politics played out. Policies did not shift dramatically from one political leaning to the other and the institutional structure simply delivered more of the same in

national leadership. Revolving door prime ministers continued to come—and go. Even with the shift in the ruling party, the nation saw six prime ministers in six years, with the reins of power moving from the LDP to the DPJ, and back into the hands of the LDP.

The much-discussed arrival of a competitive two-party system has again disappeared from Japan's political landscape.

The DPJ's dismal performance in parliamentary elections suggests the opposition is now weaker than ever. The LDP–Komeito coalition occupies 135 of 242 seats (55 per cent) in the upper house and 325 of 480 seats (68 per cent) in the more powerful lower house. The strength of this hold on seats gives relative political stability, especially while the government's majority in both houses gives it the ability to pass legislation rather smoothly. But weak opposition tends to give the ruling party a free hand to make policies

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without robust debate at the parliamentary level.

The much-discussed arrival of a competitive two-party system has again disappeared from Japan's political landscape. The present configuration suggests Japan has returned to one-party dominant rule, with the governing coalition again holding an overwhelming number of parliamentary seats against many small opposition parties with little unity among them.

At the time of the lower house elections in 2012, it appeared that a 'third force' might be emerging in Japanese politics besides the two major parties. However, this possibility fell flat with the poor performance of that possible 'force' at the 2013 upper house elections. The Japan Restoration Party failed to win even a single seat in Tokyo where the party's co-founder, influential former governor of Tokyo, Shintaro Ishihara lives; and the other co-founder, Tōru Hashimoto, has lost the popular support nationally that was clearly visible for the 2012 general elections. What are seen as insensitive, irresponsible and provocative statements by Hashimoto on wartime issues and 'comfort women' have dealt a major blow to his popularity. The Social Democratic Party, which was once the main opposition force and much stronger than any of the opposition parties today, has also disintegrated and now lingers in insignificance. All up, the opposition in Japan appears to be in abysmal shape.

If the LDP remains united behind its current leader until mid-2015, when the other half of the upper house seats come up for election, Abe is likely to continue as Japan's prime minister. This will give some political and policy continuity, which Japan's political horizon has sorely lacked for the past decade. And unless the

Abe confronts a range of contentious domestic issues that concern the economy and will need judicious action.

lower house is dissolved for some unforeseen reason before its full term, a general election is not due until the end of 2015.

However, Abe faces major domestic and foreign policy challenges and his leadership and political skills will remain under sharp scrutiny by the Japanese public and the media.



Tōru Hashimoto lost popular support with his provocative statements.

Tactical mistakes and loss of popularity in the opinion polls may result in his exit—the fate of many of his predecessors—signalling that the revolving door phenomenon is still in the wings in Japanese politics.

On domestic policy, Abe is pushing a clearly nationalist agenda, particularly manifest in his goal to change the constitution by removing pacifist Article 9 to make Japan a 'normal state'. At present he clearly does not have enough public support to achieve his deeply conservative ideals. The Japanese people have made it clear that they want Abe, foremost, to press ahead with his economic agenda, dubbed 'Abenomics', which promises to improve Japan's economy, virtually stagnant for about two decades.

The results of Abenomics so far are seen to be positive. In the stock market, the Nikkei 225 has risen by almost 60 per cent in the six months since December 2012 and business confidence appears to be on an upward trajectory. But the kind of structural reform—the so-called third arrow—which Abe will undertake to

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keep the economy growing, remains unclear. Above all, the bulging national debt, which has now exceeded more than 200 per cent of Japan's GDP, remains untackled.

Abe also confronts a range of contentious domestic issues that concern the economy and will need judicious action. These are related to whether to reopen nuclear power plants, gradually increase the consumption tax from 5 to 10 per cent, and move ahead with joining the Trans-Pacific Partnership, and if so, on what conditions. Powerful pro- and anti-lobby groups are at work on all of these issues and there is division even within the ruling party itself and its coalition partner.

On foreign policy, too, we see Abe's distinctive conservative style. Abe has reconfirmed Japan's support for strong US-Japan ties and plans for more durable economic and security networks around the Asian region, particularly with countries in Southeast Asia, and with India and Australia. To this end, he and his ministers have travelled to these countries to strengthen and expand existing networks. In the eight months since becoming prime minister again, Abe has travelled to a number of Southeast Asian countries, including Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam and the Philippines, all of which have agreed to closer engagement with Japan. Some also share Japan's strategic concerns, especially on maritime issues in the South China and East China seas.

Many of the regional powers appreciate and welcome Japan's technology, aid and investment, and its role in regional institution building, especially to balance China's rising influence and assertiveness. Yet very few, if any, endorse Abe's nationalist agenda. Abe will therefore need to move

cautiously on his nationalist agenda in terms of both domestic and international reception.

The most difficult foreign policy issue is how to tackle Japan's relations with its neighbours—especially China, but also the two Koreas. South Korea is increasingly frustrated with the position of Japan's ruling party on bilateral history, particularly Japan's treatment of Korean nationals during and before the Pacific War. Unresolved territorial issues related to sovereignty of the Takeshima or Dokdo islands still linger. And North Korea remains a constant strategic concern through its nuclear and missile programs and the unresolved issue of the abduction of Japanese nationals by the North Korean regime.

Japan is becoming more and more concerned about China, with Beijing's maritime claims in the East China Sea and its expanding military spending and force modernisation programs. How Abe and his team manage this bilateral relationship will be watched, not just by regional powers, but also by Washington, Japan's key security partner, which has concerns about China's strategic designs.

Overall, it appears that by delivering the LDP coalition a solid parliamentary majority, the 2013 upper house election has increased political stability for Abe, the LDP and the nation. Most world leaders have welcomed this development. But Abe's real test is in maintaining party unity and his own popularity while pulling the nation towards the conservative and sometimes controversial policy outcomes he seeks, in the face of so many complex and seriously difficult challenges at home and abroad. The road ahead for Abe is long and winding.

Purnendra Jain is professor in Asian studies at the University of Adelaide.

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Vietnam's conflicted human rights policy

Vietnam's human rights policy is marked by contradictions and paradox—by increased openness and continued repression.

By Carlyle A. Thayer

Any assessment of human rights and religious freedom in contemporary Vietnam must confront contradictions in policy implementation and a major paradox.

Vietnam's 1992 state constitution makes provision for freedom of speech. Article 69 declares '[t]he citizen shall enjoy freedom of opinion and speech, freedom of the press, the right to be informed, and the right to assemble, form associations, and hold demonstrations in accordance with the provisions of the law'. Contradictions in policy implementation arise from Article 4 that establishes a one-party political system. This article states, '[t]he Communist Party of Vietnam... is the force leading State and society'.

At the same time Vietnam confronts a major paradox. Since the last national party congress held in early 2011 Vietnam has sought to proactively integrate with the global system. As Vietnam has sought to expand its relations with the United States and Europe it has come under pressure to improve its human rights situation. For example, US Acting Assistant Secretary of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Joseph Yun, testified before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific on 5 June:

we have underscored with the Vietnamese leadership that the American people will not support a dramatic upgrading of our bilateral ties without demonstrable progress on human rights.

Other US officials have linked ending the arms embargo and reaching agreement on the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) to 'demonstrable progress on human rights'.

The major paradox lies in the fact that Vietnam's human rights record has got worse, not improved in recent years, thus making more difficult its self-proclaimed objective of proactive international integration.

Because Vietnam is a one-party state there is no independent body to ensure that the freedoms enumerated in Article 69 are observed. The contradictions inherent in this political reality have led to the present situation, where unprecedented political opening up via the internet, and repression, coexist at the same time.

In its assessment of human rights in Vietnam, in 2012, Amnesty International concluded bluntly:

repression of government critics and activists worsened, with severe restrictions on freedom of expression, association and assembly. At least 25 peaceful dissidents, including bloggers and songwriters, were sentenced to long prison terms in 14 trials that failed to meet international standards.

Echoing this conclusion, the US Department of State's annual report on human rights, also covering events in 2012, noted 'a subcurrent of state-sponsored repression and persecution of individuals whose speech crossed boundaries and addresses sensitive issues such as criticizing the state's foreign policies in regards to China or questioning the monopoly power of the communist party'. Yet the State Department report also observed '[o]n the surface, private expression, public journalism, and even political speech in Vietnam show signs of enhanced freedom'.

A review of human rights developments in Vietnam during the first half of 2013 reveals a continuation of contradictions in implementing the country's human rights policy and the paradox of its seeking increased engagement with

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the United States while engaging in increased repression of human rights activists at the same time.



Daniel Baer: physically prevented from meeting high-profile dissidents.

In late 2012, Vietnam's crackdown on political dissidents led the United States to abruptly cancel its participation in the annual human rights dialogue with Vietnam in Hanoi. The dialogue was held in April 2013.

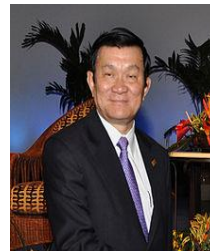
The United States was represented by Daniel Baer, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. During his visit he was physically prevented from meeting with high-profile dissidents Nguyen Van Hai (Dieu Cay) and Pham Hong Son. Two months later Baer testified before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific and drew attention to the contradictions in Vietnam's observance of human rights. On the one hand, Baer noted:

positive steps such as the release (albeit with restrictions) of activist Le Cong Dinh, facilitation of a visit by an international human rights organization, and a modest uptick in church registrations in the Highlands ... discussions between the government and the Vatican, and also what appears to be potential positive movement for the human rights of LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender] persons... [and] the flood of public comments about the draft Constitution ...

On the other hand, Baer concluded:

but these steps are not enough to reverse a year-long trend of deterioration. Nor have the isolated positive steps formed a consistent pattern. In increasing numbers, bloggers continue to be harassed and jailed for peaceful online speech and activists live under a continual cloud ...

It is now known that in late March and April 2013 US and Vietnamese officials began discussions on the visit by President Truong Tan Sang to the United States, the first visit by a Vietnamese president in six years. The United States formally extended an invitation in July and Vietnam accepted. There is no evidence that Vietnam attempted to set the scene for Sang's visit by releasing any high-profile dissidents. There was one possible straw in the wind. On 8 July Vietnamese authorities abruptly postponed the trial of prominent pro-democracy activist lawyer Le Quoc Quan.



President Truong Tan Sang: invited to visit Washington.

Yet in contradiction, Vietnam continued to repress dissidents at the possible risk to President Sang's visit to Washington. In May-June, Vietnam convicted and imposed harsh sentences on two university students (Nguyen Phuong Uyen and Dinh Nguyen Kha) and three well-known bloggers (Dinh Nhat Uy, Truong Duy Nhat and Pham Viet Dao). This brought the total of political dissidents and bloggers arrested in the first half of 2013 to 46.

Presidents Obama and Sang met in The White House on 25 July. At a joint press conference President Obama stated, 'we had a very candid conversation about both the progress that Vietnam is making and the challenges that remain'. Sang acknowledged differences and revealed that President Obama promised to do his best to visit Vietnam before the expiration of his term in office.

A joint statement issued after their meeting listed human rights eighth out of nine topics discussed. The two leaders 'took note of the benefits of a candid and open dialogue to enhance mutual understanding and narrow

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differences on human rights'. No mention was made of the human rights issues raised by President Obama. Point eight of the joint statement devoted seven of its nine lines to summarising what President Sang had discussed with his American counterpart. Notably, President Sang affirmed that Vietnam would sign the United Nations Convention against Torture and would invite the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief to visit Vietnam in 2014.

President Sang's visit was overshadowed by an extended hunger strike by political activist Nguyen Van Hai. Hai founded the Club of Free Journalists and agitated for human rights and democratic reforms. Despite constitutional provisions for freedom of speech, he was imprisoned for 12 years for conducting 'propaganda against the socialist state' through blogs on the internet and articles broadcast overseas. While Hai was imprisoned, President Obama publicly called for his release.

Hai began a hunger strike in late June to protest his treatment in prison, including extended periods in solitary confinement. Two days after President Sang concluded his visit, Vietnam's Supreme People's Procuracy announced that it would investigate Hai's allegations. Hai then ended his 35-day hunger strike.

How can the contradictions in Vietnam's implementation of its human rights policy be explained? And further, how can the paradox of Vietnam seeking engagement with the United States while intensifying repression at the same time be explained?

There are three possible but not mutually exclusive explanations for Vietnam's contradictions and paradox.

Party conservatives are fearful that closer ties with the United States will exacerbate relations with China.

First, continued political repression is the result of the Ministry of Public Security's (MPS) bureaucratic process. When a political activist comes to its attention, the MPS routinely begins to assemble a file by gathering evidence. Once the MPS determines that a political dissident has violated Vietnam's vaguely worded national security laws it begins a campaign of intimidation and harassment of the dissident and the dissident's family and friends. If the dissident refuses to buckle under the MPS seeks approval from higher authority to arrest and hold a show trial.

Why are some dissidents repressed while others are permitted to voice similar opinions without retribution? In other words, why is there a contradiction between increased openness and continued repression?

Vietnam openly promotes the internet and encourages its citizens to speak out on a number of issues. However, dissidents will be subject to repression if they cross one well-known red line—making contact with overseas Vietnamese, particularly political groups like Viet Tan that are deemed reactionary by the regime. In summary, the MPS concludes that these dissidents are part of the 'plot of peaceful evolution', whereby hostile external forces link up with domestic reactionaries to overthrow Vietnam's socialist regime.

Another explanation for the contradiction in simultaneous openness and repression lies in Communist Party infighting. Political dissidents, particularly bloggers, raise sensitive issues regarding corruption, nepotism and the business interests of leading political

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figures. In these cases the dissidents are singled out for punishment at the behest of senior party officials or their supporters. In other words, domestic political considerations are the prime drivers of repression.

A third explanation argues that increased political repression in Vietnam is orchestrated by party conservatives who seek to disrupt, if not sabotage, the development of closer relations with the United States, particularly in the defence-security realm. For example, it is alleged that party conservatives orchestrated the June crackdown on bloggers to sabotage the first visit to Washington by the Vietnam People's Army's chief of staff.

Party conservatives are fearful that closer ties with the United States will exacerbate relations with China. Bloggers and activists who criticise the government's handling of relations with China are targeted in particular.

Party conservatives reject US pressures on human rights, call for increased US funding to address the wartime legacies of unexploded ordnance and Agent Orange, and demand an end to the discriminatory US arms embargo. The third explanation explains the paradox of why Vietnam does not address its human rights record in order to shore up defence relations with the United States in light of its territorial dispute with China in the South China Sea.

Carlyle A. Thayer is Emeritus Professor, The University of New South Wales at the Australian Defence Force Academy.

Peace builder wins major academic prize

A leading Asian studies scholar from the [Australian National University \(ANU\) College of Asia and the Pacific](#) has won one of the academic world's most prestigious awards—the academic laureate in the [2013 Fukuoka Prize](#).



[Professor Tessa Morris-Suzuki](#), from the [School of Culture, History and Language](#), was selected for her outstanding achieve-

ments in the field of Asian studies and her work on regional cooperation. Her award comes with a cash prize of 3 million yen (A\$33,000).

It's the first time the prize has gone to an Australian woman and only the third time an Australian-based academic has won.

Professor Morris-Suzuki is researching some of the biggest issues affecting East Asia, including conflict and reconciliation between Japan, China and the two Koreas, and human rights. She is currently undertaking a five-year, multimillion dollar [research project on grassroots movements](#) in East Asia as an Australian Research Council Laureate Fellow.

In awarding the academic laureate to Professor Morris-Suzuki, the Fukuoka Prize Committee noted her outstanding achievements as a scholar working with people at the 'boundaries of society'.

Her win is the third time that an academic laureate has gone to a scholar from the ANU College of Asia and the Pacific, with professors of Asian history Wang Gangwu and Anthony Reid winning in 1994 and 2002 respectively.

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Cambodia's elections remain a work in progress

Cambodia faces an uncertain political future following the recent elections.

By David Chandler

On 28 July, Cambodia's parliamentary elections took place on schedule. Voting was peaceful and voter turnout was heavy. On the same day, before many of the votes were counted, Cambodia's minister of information Khieu Kannaridh announced that the ruling Cambodian Peoples Party (CPP) had won 68 seats in the 123-seat National Assembly, while the recently consolidated Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP), led by Sam Rainsy and the human rights activist Kem Sokha, had won the remaining 55 seats.

It occurred to me on 28 July, as I was dealing with my surprise at the strength of the NCRP vote, that the CPP might have known early on election day that it had lost more than 22 seats, and had moved preemptively to limit the number of seats that the NCRP could officially win.

Early informal analyses of the vote, more or less confirming Kannaridh's figures, showed that the NCRP had gained seats from the ruling party in 14 of 25 electoral districts—unsurprisingly in Phnom Penh and the adjoining province of Kandal, but also in all heavily populated provinces, including Kompong Cham, the stronghold of Cambodia's wily, tough and resilient prime minister, Hun Sen.

Kannaridh's figures took most observers, including myself by surprise. After all, in 2008, the CPP had won 90 of the 123 seats. Soon after those elections, Rainsy, whose party had contested them, was sentenced to prison on trumped up charges. He fled to France, returning home 10 days before the 2013

elections, thanks to a royal pardon granted as a result of foreign pressure on Hun Sen.

The CPP-controlled media played down Rainsy's return, but the news spread via word of mouth and social media and a huge, enthusiastic crowd—filled with potential voters less than 30 years of age—welcomed Rainsy on the road from the airport to the center of Phnom Penh.

On 29 July, Rainsy announced that widespread irregularities had occurred on the previous day. He refused to accept the figures announced by Kannaridh, and called for a joint investigation committee, comprising representatives from the two parties, the National Election Committee, the United Nations and local and international non-government organisations.



Hun Sen: open to political discussions between parties.

Hun Sen waited until 1 August, during a visit to the countryside, to say that the CPP was 'open to political discussions between parties that have won seats, on the leadership of the National Assembly'.

In response, Rainsy agreed to meet with CPP officials to discuss irregularities. He also upped the ante by claiming that the NCRP had in fact won 63 seats, enough to form a government with a simple majority in the Assembly. Hard evidence for the additional seats was lacking, but before leaving Cambodia unexpectedly on 7 August to attend his daughter's wedding in the United States, Rainsy said he would accept no results that did not involve an outright NCRP victory.

The official results of the elections

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Cambodia's elections remain a work in progress

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will be released later in August, but substantial alterations of the tentative results or a recount of more than a couple of seats is extremely unlikely.

In the meantime, tensions in Phnom Penh have escalated, fuelled by rumors, uncertainty, intemperate threats from Rainsy and some NCRP supporters for mass demonstrations, and by the ominous deployment of military vehicles around the city.

The election is still a work in progress, but what does it mean?

The opposition's strong performance may well have blunted the self-confidence of the CPP, but I would argue that the election will have almost no effect on the behavior of the CPP, at least in the immediate future, or on in the way Cambodia is governed.



Sam Rainsy: won't accept results that do not involve an outright NCRP victory.

Notions of pluralism or a loyal opposition, after all, have never taken root in Cambodia. Instead, throughout Cambodian history, aside from the colonial period (1863–1953) the country has been

governed by varieties of one-man, one-family and one-party rule, with the leadership, when possible, controlling patronage (and subservience) on a national scale. The phrase 'to reign' in Khmer, unsurprisingly perhaps, translates literally as 'to devour the kingdom'.

The CPP bases its legitimacy on its assertion on its historically accurate assertion that with Vietnamese assistance it overthrew the murderous Khmer Rouge regime in

With both sides apparently unwilling to compromise, violent demonstrations against the CPP remain a possibility.

1979. The party shed its socialist credentials a decade later, but held onto the idea that it deserved to rule Cambodia unopposed. It kept the top-down organisation that it inherited from its communist beginnings.

During its years in power, even when it was ostensibly in coalition between 1993 and 1998, the CPP controlled the bureaucracy, the army, the police, the judiciary and most of the Cambodian language media. Hun Sen, for his part, has dominated the political scene ever since he became prime minister in 1984. He has taken personal credit for delivering peace and prosperity. He has also been brutal with dissent, and dismissive of foreign assistance (except what comes from China) and critical suggestions. Now only 60 years old, he has announced his intention to be prime minister for another 15 years.

CPP patronage networks, established decades ago, deliver a range of benefits to the people in exchange for loyalty and service.

Meanwhile, Cambodia's powerful small coterie of untaxed oligarchs, cultivated by Hun Sen, have wholeheartedly supported the party. In the process, the gap has widened between a few thousand very rich Cambodians and millions of others, especially in rural areas, who are extremely poor.

In the 2013 elections the CPP promised more 'development' to voters while the NCRP presented a somewhat utopian platform that offered to raise Cambodian salaries, ease rural poverty and halt the

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ongoing exploitation of people and resources. In other words, the CPP asked voters to validate the past, while the NRC asked them to place their trust in an untested, innovative form of politics.

On 28 July, a great many Cambodian voters, if not quite a majority nationwide, voted in a secret ballot against the status quo. The results revealed that an archaic, time-honoured, patrimonial system may not fit smoothly into an accelerated, impatient 21st century. The old system clearly failed to resonate with younger voters (60 per cent of Cambodia's population is under 30-years old).

In mid-August, as this paper is written, the 2013 Cambodian elections are a work in progress. With both sides apparently unwilling to compromise, violent demonstrations against the CPP remain a possibility, but a more optimistic scenario would see the NRC taking the 55 seats in the Assembly that the CPP had been willing to relinquish, and to work vigorously over the next few years as a constructive force in Cambodian government. At the same time, the likelihood that the CPP will relinquish control of the National Assembly, and drastically alter its behavior, can safely be set at zero.

David Chandler is an emeritus professor of History at Monash University. He has written seven books about Cambodian history and politics, the latest of which (2007) is the 4th edition of A History of Cambodia, originally published in 1983. Professor Chandler is currently an honorary research associate at the Monash Asia Institute.

Create more Asia study opportunities for teachers: report

*By Sunanda Creagh
Editor, The Conversation*

Asia knowledge should be included in all initial teacher education, according to a new [report](#) released on 13 August that also called for more opportunities for teachers and principals to experience Asia through exchange and study programs.

Asia literacy is already a part of the national school curriculum, while the White Paper on *Australia in the Asian Century* listed Asian languages and studies as national objectives crucial to driving productivity.

The new [report](#), conducted by researchers from Deakin University, included a survey of 1319 teachers and 432 principals aged between 23 and 63 that found that 35 per cent had visited more than four Asian countries, with most staying at least six months.

However, 60 per cent of those surveyed said that teaching and learning about Asia was never mentioned in their initial teacher training.

'The findings show that the most Asia-literate teachers were those who had experienced some form of extended cultural exchange in an Asian country (more than three weeks). On the other hand, teachers with no cultural education experiences had significantly lower overall Asia literacy scores,' the report said.

The report was commissioned by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, funded by the Department of Education, Employment and Workforce Relations, and managed by the Asia Education Foundation.

Read the full article on [The Conversation](#).

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Is reform in Myanmar becoming self-sustaining?

The prospects for ongoing reform in Myanmar and for free and fair elections in 2015 look promising—but can these changes be assured?

By Trevor Wilson

It is now two-and a-half years since Myanmar's reform trajectory began in early 2011, with another two-and a-half years until Myanmar's next election. Modern Myanmar has never experienced this kind of change, or this kind of anticipation that in all probability a free and fair election will be held at the end of 2015.

Moreover, it now looks increasingly likely that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi will seek to become president after 2015; that a strengthened parliamentary political process will be embedded; and that progress towards a decentralised but effective quasi-federal system of administration will be in place that better protects the interests of minorities. As for economic reforms, the prospects are good that flows of international assistance and foreign investment will have started the process of national economic rehabilitation that will finally improve the livelihood and opportunities for the ordinary people.

However, these changes cannot yet be assured, and as the media (from Myanmar and from abroad) remind us regularly, not everything is working satisfactorily in Myanmar: that there is still a long way to go before peace arrangements are locked into place and insurgency stops, before society and individuals are adequately protected from outbreaks of violence, and before occasional setbacks to reform can be navigated safely. Moreover, social and physical infrastructure generally remains at a low level. International support (including from Australia) for

efforts to address these problems effectively is welcome, but the real impulse for reform in these areas must come from within.



Aung San Suu Kyi:
running for
president?

It is no small achievement that Myanmar's place in the world is now 'normalised' and uncontested. There has been an exchange of presidential visits with the United States (and all that this entails); most political and economic sanctions against Myanmar have been lifted; and major international agencies such as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the International Labour Organisation, which still maintained restrictions on Myanmar's participation, have all lifted measures they maintained against Myanmar.

On a political level, the longstanding government-in-exile, the National Coalition Government for the Union of Burma (or NCGUB) has been dissolved, and some (but not all) Burmese activists living overseas have returned quietly to contribute to a process of nation building. Not only did Myanmar host the World Economic Forum East Asia Forum in Myanmar in May 2013, it is hosting the Southeast Asian Games later in 2013, and will assume the chair of ASEAN in 2014, hosting all the events that are part of the annual ASEAN-plus schedule.

Much more frequent international interaction has become the norm for Myanmar at a daily level as well, with tourist numbers swelling and business visitors filling hotels. Numerous multilateral organisations and leading international firms

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(such as Microsoft and Unilever) have already 'set up shop' in Yangon, and sometimes even in the capital Naypyitaw. All of this has been accomplished as part of an ongoing commitment to openness and transparency that might be the envy of other countries undergoing a transition. A concrete example is the Myanmar government's readiness to sign on to the obligations of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) at the EITI's annual conference held in Sydney in May 2013.

Evidence for the growing success of the reforms that have been undertaken is now obvious. For example, new practices and procedures under freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, and freedom of association have increasingly become the norm and now represent what the people expect (even though the need for protesters to register their protests is sometimes being abused by the authorities). Parliament is certainly a viable and vigorous institution. Macro-economic reforms are working relatively smoothly, but it is clear that some more wide-ranging reforms, such as tax reform and business transparency, will require more effort and more time to be implemented.

There is still a large and challenging array of issues for which solutions have not yet been found, and for which in some cases fundamental reforms have not even begun. These include improving the rule of law, and in particular a fair and accessible judicial system; creation of a practical and equitable land tenure system; and reforms to the education system, especially in restoring autonomy to universities, and effectiveness to vocational education.

Finally, the army has still not been brought under proper civilian control

There is still a large and challenging array of issues for which solutions have not yet been found, and for which in some cases fundamental reforms have not even begun.

or brought to account for continuing human rights abuses. The UN Development Programme has started work on rule of law capacity building, and some international support is also being directed at Myanmar's universities. However, there is still a long way to go to achieve real impact in poverty alleviation. Corruption remains a problem, although this is slowly being tackled. During the visits to the UK and France in early July, Thein Sein addressed some of these issues very directly, thereby acknowledging that dealing with internal problems satisfactorily could influence continued international support.

One phenomenon that continues to attract international interest—sometimes disproportionately, perhaps—is Aung San Suu Kyi's direct role in these developments, and inexorably her own growing political profile. For some time now, Suu Kyi has chosen to work cooperatively with the reformist Thein Sein government: she accepted appointment as Chair of the Rule of Law Committee of the House of Assembly; has also become Chair of the Parliamentary Committee for the Revitalisation of Yangon University (Suu Kyi did not attend Yangon University, but her father did, in the 1930s); and has served on the parliamentary commissions of enquiry into the communal violence in Rakhine State (in 2012) and the authorities' response to the Letpadaung copper mine protests in 2012.

Interestingly, Suu Kyi's cautious, and even conservative, public comments

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about these last two issues—where she stopped short of calling for citizenship for the Rohingya and restitution for the Letpadaung landowners—disappointed many of her supporters inside Myanmar. What this demonstrates is the way in which Suu Kyi has been coopted into a political supportive role with President Thein Sein—in effect, sharing some of his political burdens—without substantially stepping back from her role as leader of Myanmar’s democratic opposition.

Will Aung San Suu Kyi succeed in becoming president? Although this requires an amendment of the constitution—which prevents anyone with foreign family members being a candidate—it seems increasingly likely that Suu Kyi will succeed in getting the two-thirds parliamentary majority this requires. She has developed quite good working relations with the leaders from the pro-government Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP, who are mostly retired generals), so there may not be resistance from this quarter (although the Speaker of the House of Assembly, Shwe Mann, who now heads the USDP, is also clearly a candidate to be president).

It is significant that Suu Kyi announced her intention to stand for the presidency at the World Economic Forum meeting in Myanmar, as if to ensure that favourable international reactions would be helpful to her ‘campaign’.

Clearly, if the 2015 elections result in victory for her party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), it would be a natural follow-on step for her to assume the presidency. (NLD electoral victory in 2015 seems likely but cannot be assumed, given that several ethnic political parties could out-perform the NLD in regional seats.)

Finally, is it reasonable to expect Myanmar’s reform to continue and to

If opposition parties hold a majority in the parliament after the 2015 elections, the pace and depth of reforms in Myanmar could even increase.

survive? At the moment, significantly, there is no organised opposition to the reform process in Myanmar. All political parties have, at some stage, come out in support of specific reforms. The driving force for reform is often the opposition parties, which have relatively greater influence over reform through the parliament than their absolute numbers suggest. Even the military officers occupying the reserved military seats in parliament have supported many of the reforms. Importantly, they have never used their numbers to block reforms, and often have not voted in unison.

Meanwhile, USDP leaders continue to [reaffirm their commitment to reform](#). If, as seems likely, opposition parties hold a majority in the parliament after the 2015 elections, the pace and depth of reforms in Myanmar could even increase. This does not mean that the reform process will always go smoothly and that all reforms will be ‘successful’, but the overall direction will be settled.

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See [Soldiers and diplomacy in Burma](#), in *Books on Asia*.

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This is how we rise to the Asian century?

If Australia is to harness the benefits of the Asian century, it needs to better engage with the region. But with our debate about asylum seekers, we're doing exactly the opposite.

By Matt McDonald

In late 2012, the Australian government released its *Australia in the Asian Century* White Paper. For those of us with an interest in Australian foreign policy and international relations, it was an exciting development.

The White Paper suggested that Australian policy makers were coming to terms with major shifts in international relations associated with the rise of Asian power. It pointed to challenges for traditional alliances, institutions and relationships associated with the rise of Asia, while recognising the opportunities that the rapid growth of economies and political power within Asia provided for Australia and Australians.

The White Paper painted a generally optimistic view of the capacity of Australia to build stronger and deeper relations with the states and people of the Asian region. It also acknowledged, however, the need to overcome key obstacles to building such relationships.

In particular, the White Paper recognised the need to overcome deficits of understanding and even trust at the level of popular perception, in both Australia and the region.

The challenges here are indeed profound. Opinion polling within Australia indicates suspicion of the people and governments of India, Indonesia and China. Reciprocal opinion polling, meanwhile, has also frequently pointed to a negative perception of Australia and Australians.

These obstacles even hold for exchanges of immediate financial benefit to Australia. The White Paper itself makes reference to the 2012 Lowy Survey of Australian attitudes to foreign policy, which found that fewer than 20 per cent of Australians support an increase in Asian investment in Australia or an increase in migrants from the region.



Boat people arriving in Australian waters. Photo: ABC News Online

The White Paper was right to identify these particular challenges, and to promote increased diplomatic efforts

within the region and an increase in 'Asian literacy' through language training and education within Australia as key strategies for overcoming them.

Applied to Asia, where Australia's history of immigration restriction, a close embrace of culturally similar 'great and powerful friends' and general mutual suspicion continue to cast a powerful shadow over regional relations, these tools of public diplomacy could hardly be more important. And as the White Paper notes, the task itself is twofold: building a positive image of the region within Australia, and creating a positive image of Australia within the region.

The trouble is, our domestic debates about asylum seekers are doing just the opposite.

In the rush to take on a hardline stance on the issue of boat arrivals, Australia's major political parties are undermining our Asian engagement in two important ways. First, they are ultimately depicting Asia as a source of threat to Australian

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sovereignty and security. Here, the region is conceived as a source of unwanted boat people, and states of the region are depicted as not doing enough to respond to a problem with which Australians are deeply concerned, or even contributing to the process through corrupt practices on the part of their officials.

Such a depiction does little to overcome ignorance about the complex politics of asylum. And it does not encourage the development of positive (or at least informed) views of our neighbours, in particular Indonesia.

Second, the race to the bottom on asylum seekers, and the language of national crisis that accompanies our asylum seeker debates, risks reinforcing prominent regional views that Australia a racist country. At the least, the debate hardly suggests that Australia is an open, welcoming, multicultural society.

This image is important for Australia to develop if it is to overcome suspicion from those regional neighbours still smarting from Australia's embrace of the role of America's 'deputy sheriff' in the region in the wake of 9/11, to say nothing of attacks on Indian students in 2009.

The White Paper is surely right to emphasise the importance of the Asian region, and to suggest that better relationships 'will be built through collaboration and cooperation and based on trust, mutual respect and understanding' (p251). The tools and mechanisms suggested for achieving this, including recently released country strategies and implementation plans, appear generally fit for the purpose.

Yet even if these are effective, and even if a new government remained committed to the goals of the White Paper, these goals are daily

undermined by a discussion of asylum that portrays the region as a source of threat and an image of Australia as anything but an open, multicultural society.

Our stated foreign policy commitments to regional engagement demand a different approach to asylum seekers.

Putting aside the morality of Australian asylum seeker policy or the abrogation of our international obligations, our stated foreign policy commitments to regional engagement demand a different approach to asylum seekers.

If policy makers are serious about pursuing the opportunities of the Asian century, they would surely recognise that the foreign policy costs of an asylum seekers policy defined in terms of deterring the asylum seekers are too great.

While asylum debates are clearly domestically oriented, in an era of globalised media networks and transnational political challenges, separating domestic policy debates from international ones is becoming ever more difficult to do. Rudd, a former diplomat, should know that reality only too well.

This article was first published on the ABC's [The Drum](#) on 6 August 2013.

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Iran's foreign policy under Rouhani may be business as usual

Iran's new president, Hassan Rouhani, is much better placed than his predecessors to change Iran's foreign policies—but achieving significant change will be difficult.

By Brenton Clark

The surprise election of centrist cleric Hassan Rouhani in June's Iranian presidential elections has elicited both hope and cynicism over the future trajectory of Iran's regional foreign policy. Rouhani will bring about positive changes and place his own stamp on foreign policy by attempting to re-engage with the international community. However, it is difficult to imagine him being able to make significant changes to regional foreign policy due to Iran's chaotic domestic political arena and challenging external security environment.

Iran's system of governance is mind-bogglingly complex and opaque, with a number of formal and informal power centres. Not only does Rouhani have to deal with the oversight and power of the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has direct responsibility over foreign policy-making apparatuses, he will also have to negotiate with, and ensure support from, the Supreme National Security Council, which determines national security policies and ensures they fit within the framework of Khamenei's policy directions—a thankless task that blocked a number of the foreign policy agendas of his presidential predecessors, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Mohammad Khatami.

However, for a number of years Rouhani has had a close working relationship with Khamenei and, leading up to the election, was his representative on the Supreme National Security Council. Rouhani

will not make the same mistake as his predecessors, who strayed too far from the implicit, and explicit, red lines set by the Supreme Leader.



foreign policy, but will not seek to challenge him too early in his presidency.

President Rouhani: will work slowly within existing constraints and boundaries.

As a long-serving regime apparatchik, Rouhani will ensure he keeps Khamenei on side, while making small changes to Iran's

Instead, he will work slowly within the boundaries and constraints that

exist, even for the president of Iran. Rouhani will attempt to consolidate support within Iran's fractured political landscape and take a cautious, middle-way approach that neither alienates his presidency from the population, which already has unachievable expectations, and a political system mired in policy gridlock and internecine warfare.

Other than cosmetic changes, we can expect Rouhani to attempt to build bridges with some of Iran's regional rivals, in particular its Arab Persian Gulf neighbours. Rouhani will seek to engage in confidence-building measures with the Saudi regime, which has consistently regarded Iran with fear and disdain—a view that worsened under Ahmadinejad.

In recent years, Saudi Arabia and Iran have regularly sat on opposite sides in the multitude of regional disputes in the Middle East. Rouhani will seek some form of détente and warming of ties between the two states, having been deeply involved in such activities as a top presidential aide during the Rafsanjani and Khatami presidencies. However, he now encounters a significantly

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changed regional environment that will pose almost insurmountable challenges, even for the 'diplomatic sheikh'.

While we can expect to see more dialogue between these two Persian Gulf powers and, hopefully, a reduction in the heat that has risen over their support of rival groups in Syria, Bahrain and Lebanon, both will remain engaged in a regional cold war and continue to support opposite sectarian and political factions throughout the Middle East for the foreseeable future.



War-devastated street in Aleppo: Rouhani may be more flexible and pragmatic on Syria.

On Syria, Rouhani may be more pragmatic and flexible than

Ahmadinejad, but it is hard to imagine a substantial shift in

Iranian foreign policy in this context. So far, Iran has gone 'all in' with Bashar al-Assad, and this will surely continue. For real change to occur, Iran must be given a seat at any peace talks or negotiations between the regional powers, opposition groups and the Assad regime.

On Iran's borders we can expect to see further consolidation of ties with Iraq, increased attempts to re-engage with Central Asian neighbours, who were seemingly neglected in Ahmadinejad's attempts to woo the global south, and continued measures to ensure a stable post-2014 Afghanistan.

Iran's external security environment for the past 20 years has been characterised by disorder and chaos. Rouhani will ensure Iran has positive relations with its neighbouring states, in particular Afghanistan. It is consistently overlooked how critical

Rouhani will do all he can to ensure Afghanistan does not again become a bastion for the Taliban and Sunni-inspired extremism.

stability in Afghanistan is to Iran. Although Iran's power is limited in this sphere, Rouhani will do all he can to ensure Afghanistan does not again become a bastion for Taliban and Sunni-inspired extremism.

It seems there can be no discussion of Iranian foreign policy without reference to Iran's nuclear program, and relations with the United States. Rouhani will indeed attempt to re-engage with the international community over Iran's nuclear program, and will take a more conciliatory tone—but don't expect a change in its nuclear agenda or a quick resolution of the dispute.

A staunch supporter of his country's nuclear program, Rouhani has consistently declared it to be vital to



Rouhani is a staunch supporter of his country's nuclear program.

Iran's national interests. Under his presidency, the diplomatic to-ing and fro-ing, and prolonging of talks between Iran and the

P5+1 (the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, namely US, Russia, China, UK and France plus Germany) will continue despite the pain of economic sanctions that have seriously damaged the economy.

However, if Rouhani can improve Iran's international standing by appearing to be an honest broker with the West, we can expect to see a weakening and erosion of support for US economic sanctions, particularly among Asian states, such as China, India and South

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Korea, placing the efficacy of US sanctions under considerable strain. Rouhani has expressed hope for meaningful talks between Iran and the United States. While discourse between these intractable foes would be heartening, such expressions are nothing more than political rhetoric. Within the political establishments of both countries are those who capitalise on this dispute, and will continue to do so. Furthermore, the level of mutual distrust and hatred is pervasive, and changing the president of Iran will not change this 35-year state of affairs in the foreseeable future.

In summary, Rouhani will be much better placed than Ahmadinejad and Khatami to change Iran's foreign policies. As a consummate regime insider and shrewd political operator, he will improve Iran's image on the international stage and reinvigorate Iranian foreign policy after eight years of ill-informed rhetoric and bombast by Ahmadinejad and his conservative cadres.

However, he will not have it all his own way. Rouhani will not stray too far from the whims and beliefs of the Supreme Leader; nor will he attempt to alienate his domestic political rivals. Furthermore, Iran's difficult external security environment places huge challenges on Rouhani's shoulders, constraining his options and ability to recalibrate foreign policy. It will be business as usual for now.

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National Centre for Asia Capability

The Australian government is funding a National Centre for Asia Capability, which will be run by Asialink (The University of Melbourne) in partnership with the University of New South Wales (UNSW Australia) and the private sector.

Trade Minister Richard Marles MP announced last month that the government would commit \$35 million over 10 years to fund the centre.

Asialink has been working to source corporate and philanthropic contributions to complement the government's investment, and the Myer Foundation is committing almost \$1 million to the centre. Asialink will oversee the establishment of the centre.

The centre was a key recommendation of the Asialink Taskforce for an Asia Capable Workforce, chaired by ANZ CEO Mike Smith, in its report *Developing an Asia capable workforce*, which was launched in September 2012.

The taskforce brought together top business leaders with a vision of a more 'Asia-capable' Australia, including representatives of the Business Council of Australia and the Australian Industry Group.

The University of Melbourne's Vice-Chancellor, Professor Glyn Davis, described the centre as a visionary investment by the Australian government, a global first that would draw Australia fully into the Asian century.

The new centre will be a collaborative effort, combining the expertise of government, business and university sectors to build an Asia-capable Australian workforce.

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Turkey's season of protest: Gezi Park and beyond

The recent mass protests in Turkey have provided a model for future democratic action at the local level.

By Christopher Houston

June is the start of the main tourist season in Turkey and of summer holidays for schools and universities. Millions of people throng the public spaces of its cities.

This year it was also a season of social protest and police violence. Civil demonstrations in Istanbul's Gezi Park, and the brutal police response, transformed nearby suburbs into hotbeds of political action and debate, infused by the drift of teargas and pepper spray, and by protesters being dragged away by security forces. Demonstrations in solidarity in a dozen other cities met with the same fate.

The first and immediate cause of the protest was environmental. In 2012 the government announced redevelopment plans for Gezi Park in Taksim, one of Istanbul's few remaining green spaces. The redevelopment envisioned uprooting the trees in the park to 'rebuild' a long-demolished Ottoman military barracks that would include a shopping mall and luxury housing.

Equally important, the proposed redevelopment replicated an all-too-familiar occurrence in Istanbul's booming building industry and neoliberal political economy over the past two decades—the privatisation of a public asset for commercial profit, owned by businesses close to the government.

The redevelopment proposal received a temporary setback when it was halted by the city's Cultural Preservation Board, but on 1 May the ruling was overturned by a higher

board, paving the way for the bulldozers to move in.

A second cause of the protests was excessive and unprovoked police violence. Environmental opposition to the development might have remained small had police not attacked peaceful demonstrators on 28 May. The response was a larger sit-in the next day and an even more violent clearing of the park's growing encampment over the following two days involving the pre-dawn gassing of environmentalists and the burning of their tents, the use of water cannons, the occupation of the park by security forces and the pursuit of protesters into Taksim's nearby



Taksim Square at the height of the protest, with an assortment of banners hung from the Ataturk Cultural Centre. *Photo: Dilek Cilingir*

suburbs. Hundreds of people were injured.

Online activism and the outrage of people informed by social media brought tens of thousands into Gezi Park

and the streets of other cities in protest, setting the scene for weeks of urban protest across the country. Fifty thousand demonstrators marched across the Bosphorus Bridge in Istanbul on 1 June to express their anger at police brutality and the government that authorised it. The demonstrators wore the dress of modern urban activism—pith helmets, goggles and bandannas, gas masks hanging from belts, digital cameras and mobile phones twittering incessantly to the wider public as the events unfolded.

Shocked by the mass movement unfolding in Istanbul and beyond, the government withdrew police armoured vehicles from the park on

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1 June, providing the opportunity for an 'Occupy Gezi' movement to begin. Volunteers worked four shifts a day to keep the park clean, coordinate a kitchen and first-aid facility, and establish a nursery and library. 'Anti-capitalist Muslims' made their Friday prayers in the park and later organised a mass *iftar* meal (breaking of the fast) on Istanbul's famous Istiklal Avenue.



Shared *iftar* meal on Istanbul's Istiklal Avenue, organised by the group 'Anti-Capitalist Muslims'. Photo: Dilek Cilingir

In the park, protesters named a street after murdered Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink, slain by Turkish nationalists in 2007, and marked trees with the names of Kurdish victims of a Turkish Air Force bombing. Forums were held each

evening for political and social discussion, and public activities such as cinema, concerts and yoga attracted thousands of supporters. Similar forums were organised in other Istanbul parks, and in other cities. The Istanbul street journal *Express* coined the demonstrations the 'first 15 days of a democratic republic'.

Equally remarkable in Turkey's fragmented politics was the coalition of groups, individuals and civil society organisations that participated in and supported the protest. In Gezi Park the rainbow symbol of Istanbul's emerging LGBT groups [lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender] was waved alongside the Turkish flag and the flags of socialist factions, football teams, and Kurds. Posters of modern Turkey's founder, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, and of the leader of the Kurdistan

Workers Party, Abdullah Ocalan, were held up side by side. This was in stark contrast to Istanbul's last great period of street politics, in the late 1970s, before the military coup, when groups fought each other to control the city and expel rival factions from the area.

As always in Turkey, political struggle and mobilisation generated an effervescence of street art, humorous prints, slogans and graffiti, and creative political tactics. Perhaps the most effective political tactic occurred on 17 June, in the face of an attack by police to reoccupy Gezi Park. A demonstrator, Erdem Gündüz, walked into the middle of Taksim Square and stood silent and motionless staring at the Turkish flags atop the Atatürk Cultural Centre. The 'standing man' (*duran adam*) was slowly joined by one or two others, and then by hundreds more, in a 'dilemma protest' that confounded the police and was emulated by thousands of people in cities all over Turkey.

The spontaneous and instantaneous nature of the protests caught the whole society by surprise, leaving local and national governments, opposition parties, civil society, media commentators and business associations scrambling to interpret the causes of the protests and appropriate their energy and creativity. At one street meeting I saw a small group of young men start chanting 'We are the soldiers of Mustafa Kemal'. Most people were unimpressed by their claims.

While prime minister Tayyip Erdoğan insulted protesters as looters (*çapulcular*) and blamed outside forces for seeking to harm Turkey's interests, the main opposition party and their 'Atatürkist' allies sought to channel the anger into a struggle between Islamism and secularism.

Neither position defined the essence of the Gezi resistance movement. Protesters were inflamed by a variety of grievances over government

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Turkey's season of protest

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policy, and accordingly presented different political demands as part of their antigovernment stance. If the broadness of the coalition was a weakness in terms of the movement's ability to construct a unified political program, it was also its strength in generating something new and vital that self-consciously transcended established ideological fault lines in Turkey.

More significantly, resistance to Gezi Park's redevelopment and the widespread anger directed at the government, the prime minister and the state's policing tactics revolved most widely around a struggle for urban citizenship, including, of course, the right to have a say in decisions about Istanbul's evolution—without being gassed. Specific issues that concerned particular groups; for example the naming of Istanbul's proposed third bridge over the Bosphorus—the construction of which would destroy one of the city's few remaining forests—or the expropriation of homes in the nearby suburb of Tarlabası in the name of urban transformation—articulated a deep disquiet over the rent-seeking and neoliberal developmentalism of the ruling Justice and Development Party.



Advertisement placed in New York Times by protesters.

preservation of Gezi Park, an end to police violence, the right to freedom of assembly, the prosecution of those responsible for the violence against

Taksim Dayanisma (Taksim Solidarity), the organisers of the initial environmental protest, met with deputy prime minister Bülent Arınc on 5 June. Their media release revealed the primary issues motivating the protest—among other things, the

demonstrators, and an end to the sale of 'public spaces—beaches, waters, forests, streams, parks and urban symbols—to private companies, large holdings and investors'.

In brief, the dissent involved demonstrators in a broad agenda concerning their rights to the city: the right to have a say on urban planning, conservation, public spaces and the quality of life in Istanbul (including sexual); rights that were removed in the 1980 coup, and again in 1982 (in the military Constitution).

By mid-July the protests had died down after an administrative court declared the Gezi Park redevelopment illegal because it violated preservation rules and unacceptably changed the identity of the square.

For the tens of thousands of activists in Istanbul, victorious in their immediate struggle, the partial experience of helping determine the future of the city parks and streets has provided a model for future democratic action at the local level. The two major issues still confronting Turkish politics—the Kurdish peace process and constitutional reform—will now connect with this popular opposition and potentially open up new democratic initiatives between the state, local government and citizens.

But the costs of the *Gezi diren* (Gezi resistance) have been high: 3699 people taken into custody, 134 charged and taken to court, 8163 injured, and six killed. And the built environment of the Gezi Park itself is still in dispute. The makeshift memorials, bedecked with chamomile flowers, to commemorate those killed have been collected twice by Greater Istanbul municipality workers, and thrown in the garbage.

Dr Chris Houston is Head of Department, Department of Anthropology, at Macquarie University.

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The demonisation of North Korea

Negative and often sensationalist views of North Korea dominate Australian media.

By Bronwen Dalton, Markus Bell and Kyungja Jung

A headline in *The Australian* states: 'Only the brave and very lucky are able to escape the clutches of the evil regime'. If, therefore, a North Korean is lucky enough to escape her Orwellian nightmare of gulags and starvation and access Australian media, she might struggle to adjust to the objective, balanced and critical reporting about North Korea that appears in a free press. Or would she?

Much has been written about how the North Korea government controls the supply of information and uses the media to reinforce the exercise of its own power. Yet less attention has been paid to how North Korea has been socially constructed in the public sphere through the mass media in the West.

The Western media has been central to how the international community frames discourse around North Korea. By producing and reproducing particular discourses, the media can tacitly endorse certain perspectives while silencing others. It is, therefore, important to be aware of the media's role in 'constructing' North Korea as a way of not only appreciating the wider discourse but to understand how this discourse influences key policy makers and wider public opinion.

An analysis of media coverage appearing in three major Australian media outlets, *The Australian*, *The Sydney Morning Herald* (SMH) and transcripts of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) over the three-year period, from 1 January 2010 to 31 December 2012, shows that while there are some differences in subject matter and style overall, Australian media

articles are dominated by a negative and often sensationalist view of North Korea.

An analysis also reveals a number of dominant metaphors: North Korea as a military threat (conflict metaphor); North Korea as unpredictable, irrational and ruthless (psychopathology metaphor); North Korea as isolated and secretive (pariah metaphor); North Korea as cruel dystopia (Orwellian metaphor); North Korea as impoverished (basket-case metaphor).

Such metaphors play an influential role in shaping public perceptions. In their largely uncritical reproduction of metaphors that linguistically frame North Korea, the Australian media reinforces a negative, often adversarial orientation towards North Korea. By using language that reflects conflict, games to be won and lost, or a mess to be cleaned up, an irrational leadership and a brainwashed people, the media constructs a belief that North Korea is something to be feared, something that requires a strategy to overpower, or something better swept away. These metaphors contribute to constructing facts about North Korea's interests and motivations and framing North Korea within a singular, immutable focus.

North Korea rarely a country; its rulers never a government

North Korea was rarely referred to as a country or its rulers as a government. (By contrast the most common descriptor of South Korea was country; for example South Korea, 'the most wired country in the world'). The most common descriptors for North Korea were Hermit Kingdom, North Korean state, North Korean regime and North Korea dynasty. The analysis found only five references to North Korea's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Some of

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Demonising North Korea

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the more common descriptors of country and/or the government (ordered by frequency) were:

State: impoverished rogue state; secretive state; the world's most isolated and Orwellian state; the whole rotten carcass of the North Korean state; a nuclear weapons state; instability within the rogue state; Stalinist state/the last Stalinist state; a failed state with nuclear weapons/ nuclear weapons state; the state as a religious cult; the world's most closed state; police state; failed state.

Regime: North Korean regime; totalitarian regime; evil regime; brutality of the Pyongyang regime; belligerent regime; Asia's worst regime; North Korea's regime may be crazy, but it's not insane; communist regime; isolated regime; hermit regime; regime is now inward looking; regime change cruel and despotic regime in Pyongyang.

Metaphors

Psychopathology metaphor: A common theme in these reports is that North Korea suffers from a pathological narcissistic disorder, with portrayals of North Korea as seeking attention to exploit the threat of nuclear retaliation to extricate more aid. For example, 'extorts aid and demands attention by threats of violence' (*SMH* 27 March 2012); 'So Kim thinks of his military capability as an attention-getting device and he has a history of using provocation as a tool of negotiation' (*SMH* 25 May 2010). The regime was also described as highly unpredictable. For example, 'the only predictable thing in North Korea is how unpredictable it is' (*ABC*, 23 November 2010) and 'Usually cited as northeast Asia's biggest wildcard and most unpredictable security threat ...' (*The Australian*, 18 August 2011). Evil, brutal, ruthless and irrational were also commonly used terms.

Conflict metaphor: By far the most common conflict metaphor used across the three news outlets was 'nuclear', which appeared more than any other conflict metaphor (1228 times) and almost as many times as all others combined. 'War' and 'fight' together were found 415 times.

The use of verbs such as attack, strike, provoke, escalate and confront likens North Korea to a dangerous predator, ready to pounce at any moment. While the North Korean government has consistently referred to satellites being launched as part of its space program, the Australian media consistently referred to the launching of rockets and ballistic missiles (the term rocket launch appeared 481 time, ballistic missile appeared 117 times while satellite appeared 98 times). When the term satellite did appear, it was in the context that North Korea *claimed* it was a satellite.

Similarly, while the extent of North Korea's nuclear capability is not categorically known, its nuclear capacity is consistently assumed, with references to a possible 'nuclear holocaust' (*ABC* 3 January 2011). Some reports made the highly unlikely claim that a North Korean nuclear warhead carrying a rocket could reach Australia; for example 'North Korea is developing an intercontinental ballistic missile that might be able to deliver a nuclear warhead to Australia' (*The Australian* 22 December 2012).

Pariah metaphor: Numerous references to the pariah metaphor were found. The words 'secret' or 'secretive' were the most common, appearing 136 times, followed by 'isolated' (73). Other common words included 'hermit', 'dark' and 'closed'. The following example is typical of the pariah metaphor: 'Occasionally the veil is pulled back from the secretive state of North Korea and we get a glimpse of what life is like there' (*ABC* 7 October 2011). At the crux of the pariah/secretive

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Demonising North Korea

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metaphor is media interest in North Korea's secret nuclear program (a secret which everyone seems to know about).

Economic basket-case metaphor: The sample also contained a number of root metaphors relating to 'North Korea as a basket case'. Food—or lack of—was most commonly discussed, appearing 185 times, as well as starving, collapse, survival, poverty and famine. Overall, the frame portrays North Korea as destitute, populated by starving people eking out an existence in desperate privation.

Orwellian metaphor: A common theme was that North Korea is some kind of dystopia. The most commonly found term was dictator, which appeared 120 times, followed by cult (101) and propaganda (63). Examples include references to a 'country that has been imprisoned in an Orwellian nightmare for nearly seven decades' (*SMH* 14 July 2012), and 'Orwellian surveillance' (*SMH* 20 December 2011).

Humour

Australian news media coverage of North Korea often seeks to combine humour and personal attack, focussing on the eccentric leadership and 'weird' qualities of leaders Kim Jong-il and Kim Jong-un. Common themes that some in the media justify as providing colour to a story on North Korea include Kim Jong-il sinking 11 holes-in-one in his first round of golf, and the corpulence of the Kims. Descriptions of Kim Jong-un include: chubby-faced son, and the baby-faced basketball and computer game fan. In the largely uncritical reproduction of metaphors that linguistically frame North Korea, the Australian media reinforces a negative, often adversarial orientation towards the country. The language applied to North Korea's leadership is also often dehumanising, taking the form of

psychopathology imagery that equates and reduces the leadership's actions to abnormal, irrational human behaviours. This orientation, like all frames, also highlights certain ways of dealing with North Korea, while obscuring our ability to see more creative, positive conflict management possibilities. No wonder audiences are cynical when conflict experts suggest they use interest-based, integrative conflict management.

The Australian media would be substantially enlivened by more stories illustrating actual individual and community life in order to give a human face to North Korea and offer the Australian public a less singular, monotonous depiction of a country so often written about with such a limited lexicon. This would alter the way we view North Korea and ameliorate the tendency to see it as an adversarial, irrational, rogue state of brain-washed citizens devoted to the cult of the Kims.

Without a timely change to the North Korean frame, resourced and evidence-based intervention is more likely to fail due to donor disengagement. We also run the risk of dehumanising the North Korean people and, in the event of conflict, human shields could easily be recast as collateral damage. In such a scenario, the humanitarian imperatives are more easily cast aside in favour of the option to send in the drones.

Dr Bronwen Dalton is the Director of the Centre for Community Organisations and Management at the University of Technology (UTS), Sydney.

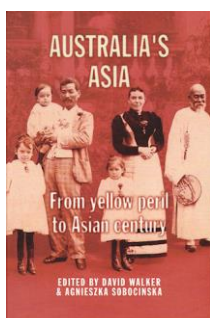
Kyungja Jung is a senior lecturer in Social Inquiry at UTS.

Markus Bell is a PhD candidate in the anthropology department of the Australian National University and is researching the emergence of a transnational North Korean diaspora.

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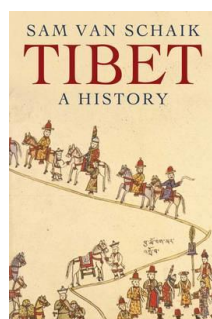
Books on Asia

Selected books from the *Asia Bookroom*



***Australia's Asia. From Yellow Peril to Asian Century.* By David Walker and Agnieszka Sobocinska. Paperback, 377 pp, UWA Publishing. \$39.95.**

To imagine that we confront Asia for the first time in the 21st century is to deny our history and the self-awareness that comes from understanding that we have been here before. Asia appears throughout modern Australian history as a source of anxiety or hope. Generic Asia has been imagined, visited and invoked, as have the individual nations that make up the Asian continent. It has been a presence both within and outside Australia, shaping who we are as well as our engagement with the wider world. In *Australia's Asia*, Walker and Sobocinska have assembled an impressive group of scholars across a range of disciplines to present a broadly conceived cultural history that places Asia at or near the centre of our national story.

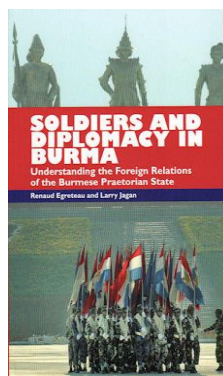


***Tibet. A history.* By Sam Van Schaik. Paperback, 324 pp Yale University Press. \$29.95.**

Famous for its unique culture and controversial assimilation into modern China, Tibet, in the 21st century, can only be properly understood in the context of its extraordinary history. Sam van Schaik brings that history to life by telling the stories of the people involved, from the glory days of the Tibetan empire in the 7th century to the present day. He explores the emergence of Tibetan

Buddhism and the rise of the Dalai Lamas, Tibet's entanglement in the 'Great Game' in the early 20th century, its submission to Chinese Communist rule in the 1950s, and the troubled times of recent decades. *Tibet* sheds light on the country's complex relationship with China and explains often-misunderstood aspects of its culture, such as reborn lamas, monasteries and hermits, *The Tibetan book of the dead*, and the role of the Dalai Lama. Van Schaik works through the layers of history and myth to offer readers a greater understanding of this important and controversial corner of the world.

***Soldiers and diplomacy in Burma: understanding the foreign relations of the Burmese.* By Renaud Egreteau and Larry Jagan. Paperback, 541 pp, NUS Press. \$38.00**



In this exploration of Burma's relations with the outside world since independence in 1948, the authors—a political scientist and a former top Asia editor for the BBC—address the key question of the ongoing role of the military in Burma's foreign policy post-junta context. Egreteau and Jagan provide a fresh perspective on Burma's foreign and security policies, arguing that key elements of continuity underlie its striking postcolonial policy changes and contrasting diplomatic practices, which have moved between proactive diplomacies of neutralism and non-alignment, and autarkical policies of isolation and xenophobic nationalism. The formidable dominance of the Burmese armed forces over state structure, as well as the enduring domestic political conundrum and the peculiar geography of a country

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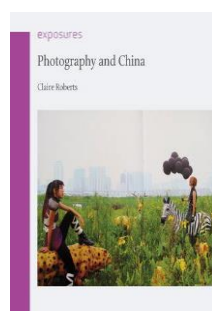
Books on Asia

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located at the crossroads of India, China and Southeast Asia, have all greatly influenced the definition and evolution of Burma's foreign relations over the years.

The authors argue that the Burmese military still have the tools needed to retain their praetorian influence over the country's foreign policy in the post-junta context of the 2010s.

For international policymakers, potential foreign investors and Burma's immediate neighbours, this will have strong implications in terms of the country's foreign policy approach.



Photography and China. By Claire Roberts. Paperback, 200 pp, Reaktion Books. United Kingdom. \$49.99.

Spanning the period from the inception

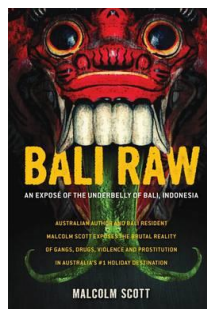
of photography until the present, this book foregrounds Chinese photographers and subjects, and draws on works in museum, archival and private collections across China, the United States, Europe and Australia.

Taking a thematic approach to her historical survey, Roberts brings together commercial, art and documentary photography, locating the images within the broader context of Chinese history.

With a constant focus on the images, and the studios, or individuals that created them, Roberts describes the long tradition of Chinese artistic culture into which photography was at first absorbed and which it subsequently expanded. She recounts the stories of practitioners who were agents in that process of change, both from China and overseas, and examines the different purposes for which they used

photography, be they commercial, political or artistic.

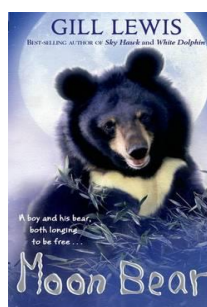
Bali raw. An exposé of the underbelly of Bali, Indonesia. By Malcolm Scott. Paperback, 256 pp, Monsoon Books. Singapore. \$23.99



A personal account of Bali's raw underbelly by

Australian author and Bali resident Malcolm Scott, revealing the extent of prostitution, the drug trade and hardcore partying by tourists.

Children's books

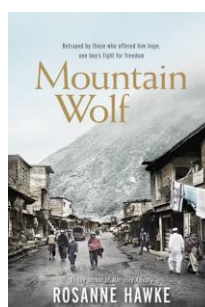


Moon Bear. By Gill Lewis. Children's novel, paperback. Oxford University Press.

When 12-year-old Tam is sent to work at a bear farm in the city in Laos, he has never felt so alone.

He hates seeing the cruel way the bears are treated, but speaking up will mean losing his job. And if he can't send money home, how will his family survive?

When a sick cub arrives at the farm, Tam secretly nurses it back to health and they develop an unbreakable bond. Tam swears to return his beloved cub to the wild, but how will they ever find a way to be free?



Mountain wolf. By Rosanne Hawke. Paperback, 214 pp, HarperCollins. \$19.99.

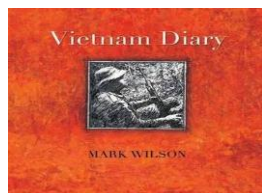
South Australian children's author Rosanne Hawke has had a longstanding interest in Pakistan. This powerful and

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confronting book is set in Pakistan and deals with social justice for disenfranchised young people who have no voice or power as they are sold into slavery.



Vietnam diary.
By Mark Wilson.
Children's picture book,
Hachette.
\$24.99.

Book 3 in the 'Children in war' trilogy tells the story of brothers Leigh and Jason, who are inseparable. But when Jason is conscripted and sent to fight in Vietnam, they are divided not just by distance, but by their beliefs about the war. Illustrated with drawings in watercolour, crayon, pencil and other mixed media by the author, the book complements Wilson's other books about war, *My mother's eyes*, and *Angel of Kokoda*.

ASAA series

Southeast Asia Series: research on countries and peoples of Southeast Asia.

Women in Asia Series: promotes scholarship for women in Asia.

East Asia Series: principally concerned with the East Asian region (China, Japan, North and South Korea and Taiwan).

South Asia Series: research on the countries and peoples of South Asia across a wide range of disciplines.



AsiaSapes

Contesting Borders

8-10 July 2014 • University of Western Australia

ASAA calls for submissions for 20th biennial conference

The Asian Studies Association of Australia (ASAA) is calling for panel and abstract submissions for its 20th biennial conference (ASAA 14), to be held at the University of Western Australia, 8–10 July in 2014.

The conference theme—*Asiascapes: contesting borders*—will seek to emphasise the involvement of Asia as a region of origin, transmission and reception of peoples, technologies, money, images, ideals and ideologies throughout the world.

Panels and individual papers are invited from all areas of Asian Studies. Panel submissions are due 29 November 2013 and abstract submissions by 7 February 2014. See [conference website](#).

Sponsorship Opportunities

ASAA 2014 is seeking to partner with a range of sponsors in creating a world-class event for Western Australia. A range of individually tailored sponsorship opportunities will be made available to interested parties.

Major partnerships are strictly limited and will be available on a first come first served basis. In addition to the chief partnership categories, there are a number of specific individual partnerships available, including advertising and satchel inserts. If your organisation has special needs, the organisers would be pleased to tailor a suitable package.

For further information on sponsorship and trade opportunities contact:
ASAA 2014 Conference Secretariat
EECW Pty Ltd
T: +61 8 9389 1488
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E: info@eecw.com.au

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Bulletin board

'Fighting women' conference

This is a call for papers for the conference *'Fighting women' during and after the Second World War in Asia and Europe*, to be held 12–13 June, 2014, at the Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies (NIOD) in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. The conference is being organised in close cooperation with Kwansei Gakuin University, Japan. The organisers are particularly interested in papers on Japan and China.

The working language of the conference is English. Applicants should [submit](#) a 300-word abstract and a 100-word biographical note to the conference coordinators—Eveline Buchheim and Ralf Futselaar (NIOD) and Timothy Tsu (KGU), and indicating 'Fighting women' as subject matter, by 1 September 1, 2013. Authors will be notified by 1 November 2013. Please direct inquiries to the coordinators at the same email address.

Australia–Thailand Institute (ATI) inaugural artist-in-residency program

The ATI's artist-in-residency program will support innovative projects that promote cultural awareness (up to a maximum of \$A10 000 AUD), with the aim of creating long-term relationships between artists and organisations in Thailand and Australia. The residency is open to Australian and Thai artists over the age of 18 (with a proven art practice of at least three years) in visual arts, performing arts and literature. Guidelines for the program are available on the ATI's [website](#). The application round opens on 1 September 2013 and will close on 30 September 2013.

Jobs

Research fellowships/senior research fellowships and postdoctoral fellowships

Applications are invited for Research Fellowships/Senior Research Fellowships and Postdoctoral Fellowships at the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore for commencement either in June/July 2014 or December 2014/January 2015. Applications for the one-year Visiting Research Fellowships/Senior Research Fellowships are for commencement in April, July or October 2014. Closes **1 Sept. 2013**.

Three-month visiting senior research fellowship appointments

Applications are also invited for three-month Visiting Senior Research Fellowships at the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore to commence in April, July or October 2014. Closes **1 Sept. 2013**.

Contemporary Japanese. East Asian culture

Assistant/associate/full professor to teach courses on Japanese pop culture and other aspects of contemporary Japanese and/or East Asia culture at Kwansei Gakuin University. Closes **30 August 2013**.

Coming events

25x25: Contemporary Japanese & Australian printmaking exhibition, Sydney, 12–30 August 2013. An exhibition by 25 Japanese printmakers, together with 25 members from Sydney Printmakers, to celebrate the cultural collaboration of printmaking, at the Japan Foundation Gallery, Level 1, Chifley Plaza, 2 Chifley Square, Monday–Saturday, 11am–4pm. Free admission. See [website](#).

Changing India: from decolonization to globalization. Conference to be held at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, **28–29 August 2013** under the auspices of the New Zealand India Research Institute. See conference [website](#) for more information.

Australia India Institute Tiffin Talk: *India and the International Climate Negotiations*, **29 August 2013**; *Cricket, sport and the new India: soft power analysis of India global position*, **12 September 2013**. See [website](#) for details.

Inner Asia: exploring cultural and religious exchanges across the inner Asia region from the 6th to the 9th century CE, symposium, Sydney, 7 September 2013. Organised by the the Asian Arts Society of Australia in association with Macquarie Asian History Society, the symposium will be held at Target Lecture Theatre, Powerhouse Museum, 10.00 am–4.15 pm.

Indonesia Update Conference 2013, Regional dynamics in a decentralized Indonesia, Canberra, 20–21 September 2013. Leading international authorities with diverse perspectives, will examine Indonesia's regional diversity and dynamics in the wake of recent social and political reforms. Venue: Coombs Lecture Theatre, HC Coombs Building, No. 9 Cnr Fellows Road and Garran Road, Australian National University. See [conference website](#).

2013 Australia-China Youth Dialogue, Canberra and Perth, 24–29 September, 2013. See [ACYD website](#) and [Bulletin board](#) for further information.

Gondwanalandings: Voices of the emerging Indian diaspora in Australia conference (2013 Australia India Institute flagship event), Melbourne, 26–27 September 2013. .University of Melbourne and State Library of Victoria. See [website](#).

More coming events page 34

Coming events

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17th Japanese Film Festival. This year, the festival will add Brisbane, Perth and Canberra to its two flagship cities, Sydney and Melbourne. Dates and locations: **Brisbane: 16–20 October**, Events Cinema Brisbane Myer Centre; **Perth: 23–27 October** Hoyts Westfield Carousel and State Library Theatre; **Canberra: 30 October–3 November**, Capital Cinema Manuka; **Sydney: 14–24 November**, Event Cinemas George Street; **Melbourne: 28 November–8 December**, Hoyts Melbourne Central and ACMI Cinemas, Australian Centre for the Moving Image. The festival will also travel with free abridged programs to **Broome (17–18 September)**, **Townsville (26 October)**, in addition to the already existing programs in **Hobart (13, 14 and 16 October)**, **Cairns (3 November)** and **Darwin** (TBC). The official 2013 program will be launched in September. [Website](#); Facebook: [japanesefilmfest](#); Twitter: [@japanfilmfest/#jff17](#). The festival is presented and run by the Japan Foundation, Sydney.

'Fighting women' during and after the Second World War in Asia and Europe, conference, The Netherlands, 12–13 June, 2014, The Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Amsterdam. See [Bulletin board](#).

20th NZASIA Biennial International Conference, Environment, dis/location and cultural space, Auckland, New Zealand, 22–24 November 2013, hosted by the University of Auckland. More information on [conference website](#).

12th International Conference on Thai Studies, Sydney, 22–24 April 2014. The triennial conference will be held at the University of Sydney and will adopt the theme 'Thailand in the world'. Further details from the [conference website](#).

ASAA 2014 Biennial Conference, 8–10 July 2014. The 20th ASAA biennial conference, *Asiascapes: contesting borders*, will be held at the University of Western Australia, Perth. See [conference website](#).

About the ASAA

The [ASAA](#) was founded in 1976 to promote and support the study of Asia in Australia. Its membership is drawn mainly from academic staff and students at Australian universities, but it also takes a strong interest in Asian Studies and the use of Asia-related materials in schools and in Australian attitudes to and policies towards Asia.

The association supports two refereed journals, the *Asian Studies Review* and the *e-Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*. It holds a biennial academic conference which offers members and other scholars the opportunity to hear the latest in research and to develop

contacts with other scholars. It also sponsors four book series, covering Southeast Asia, South Asia, East Asia and Women in Asia and makes regular submissions to governments and universities on issues of importance in Asian studies. [JOIN NOW](#).



Asian Studies Review

Asian Studies Review is a multidisciplinary journal of contemporary and modern Asia. The journal sets out to showcase high-quality scholarship on the modern histories, cultures, societies, languages, politics and religions of Asia through the publication of research articles, book reviews and review articles. It welcomes the submission of research articles from across the broad spectrum of the social sciences and humanities on all the regions of Asia and on international and transnational issues in which Asia is the major point of focus. *Asian Studies Review* sets out to publish a balanced mixture of articles in both traditional and emerging disciplines. The invited review articles and book reviews published in *Asian Studies Review* provide a vital point of articulation between the scholarship on display in the research articles and the broader world of Asian Studies.

Asian Studies Review is associated with the [Asian Studies Association of Australia](#). All research articles in this journal have undergone rigorous peer review, based on initial editor screening and refereeing by two anonymous referees. All review, invited, opinion, and reflective papers in this journal have undergone editorial screening and peer review.

Asian Currents is edited by [Allan Sharp](#). Unsolicited articles of between 1000–1500 words on any field of Asian studies are welcome for consideration.

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