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Western voices unheard on Sri Lankan human rights



Since 2009, human rights violations

have continued and Sri Lanka's democracy has been further eroded. But the West has failed to act, and strategic interests are winning out over concern for human rights.

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Xi Jinping's China Dream

Xi Jinping's announcement of a China Dream as a rallying point, inspiration and basis

for a renewed form of patriotism is handicapped at the outset.

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Indonesian human rights report a bridge too far

A National Human Rights Commission report shows that 50 years on, Indonesia still has difficulty coming to terms with the events of 1965 and their aftermath. [Read more](#)

Malaysia's election result

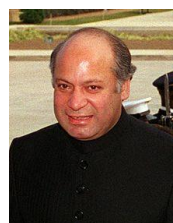


Photo: Malaysian Insider

Malaysia's 13th post-independence election was always likely to produce the same end

result: a new post-election government that would be far more assertively and unapologetically pro-Malay than its predecessor.

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Western voices unheard as human rights continue to decline in Sri Lanka

Strategic interests are winning out over the West's concern for human rights in Sri Lanka.

By Sandy Gordon

New powers like China are stepping in to occupy the financial and developmental space previously occupied by the West. The West's ability to foster liberal values on issues like human rights and democracy is consequently in decline.

Most emerging powers have avoided attempts to influence internal developments in the countries where they are engaged. In his 2004 publication, *The Beijing consensus*, Joshua Cooper Ramo described how China is gaining influence through its financial strength and soft power approach. This approach is essentially one of no questions asked.

A range of regimes have been supported and propped up in this way, from Burma's military through to al-Bashir's regime in Sudan, which has perpetrated major abuses in Darfur. As we write, the West remains impotent to intervene to prevent human rights abuses in Syria, partly because of support for Assad in the UN from China and Russia.

That is not to say that the West's record on human rights and support for democracy is exemplary—far from it. During the Second World War, Fascist abuses were second to none, before or since. In the Cold War the US supported a range of dictators against democratic and mainly leftist movements, from Chile to the brutal dictatorships of Central America. (Which is not to exonerate human rights abuses by 'Stalinist' dictators such as Mengistu or Pol Pot). Even in recent years, the US was notorious for propping up dictators like Mubarak in Egypt.

Nor is it to argue that the 'new' Asian powers are entirely devoid of interest in human rights. India has a vibrant press, flourishing democracy and vigorous civil society. Newly democratic Indonesia has also made strides not only in maintaining democracy, but also in developing human rights and protecting individual interests through a vigorous free press. But even India has been less inclined than the West to impose conditionalities on other countries with which it seeks to engage.

An interesting test case of the idea that the West's influence on human rights is in decline is provided by Sri Lanka.

The West, and particularly the US, sought to force a ceasefire on the government using financial and other influence.

As the intergenerational civil war on the island drew to its bloody denouement in 2009, Western attention focused on a group of an estimated 50 000 Tamil civilians (some put the estimate far higher), including whole families, who had been forcibly relocated to the no-man's land between the warring armies by the Tamil Tigers as a human shield. The West, and particularly the US, sought to force a ceasefire on the government using financial and other influence. This should have been easy, since Sri Lanka was struggling economically.

In order to prosecute the civil war, the Rajapaksa government had borrowed heavily. By 2009 defence spending was running at 4 per cent GDP and 17 per cent of government

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spending. Although the total cost of debt servicing had reached a high point in 2002 and subsequently fallen, by 2006 it was again creeping up. By 2009 foreign exchange availability was running at only six weeks on the back of a falling rupee.¹ Sri Lanka consequently sought a loan of \$1.9 billion from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), specifically to support foreign exchange. Washington initially opposed the loan unless Sri Lanka announced a ceasefire to allow for removal of civilians from the war zone.² The US also cut supplies of spares to Sri Lanka's US-supplied radars, C-130 transport aircraft and Bushmaster naval cannons.

The Sri Lankan government refused to cease fighting. Colombo assessed that any ceasefire could enable the Tamil Tigers to escape to fight another day rather than face the annihilation that it believed would be the only means of ending the war once and for all.

Far from being penalised for this defiance, following the government victory the IMF actually granted an even larger facility of \$ 2.6 billion. This was despite the fact that the government's position was one of triumphalism in the aftermath of the war rather than reconciliation. Moreover, China, Pakistan, Russia and India were to help defeat a UN resolution critical of both sides for human rights violations. Since 2009, human rights violations have continued and Sri Lanka's democracy has been further eroded. What explains this failure on the part of the West?

Throughout the 2000s, Sri Lanka had been developing its relationships with a range of military and financial powers to assist it to fight the civil war on its own terms. This gave it an expanded range of financial and military options other than buckling under to the demands of the West.

By 2008 China had replaced Japan as Sri Lanka's largest aid donor at \$1.1 billion and by 2009 it was reportedly donating about half of the entire aid program. Such was the relationship that *The Economist* titled an article 'the Colombo consensus'.³

China had also provided substantial soft loans for development. Projects included the strategically located Hambantota Port, which alone involved a cost of \$ 1.1 billion for the first two phases but will eventually cost much more. A range of military equipment, including fighter jets, was imported from China on a soft loan basis.

Australia faces double jeopardy. Not only does Canberra have little financial leverage, particularly in relation to a power like China, but it is increasingly dependent on the Sri Lankan government to 'turn back the boats'.

Other assistance was forthcoming from Iran to the tune of \$1 billion in oil credits. Gaddafi's Libya promised \$500 million during a visit to Tripoli by President Rajapaksa. Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, India and even Israel were also important in providing assistance, including weapons, credit, and military training.

India's position on Sri Lanka's record on human rights was eventually to shift, however. Under pressure from local politics in Tamil Nadu, by 2013 India came to oppose Sri Lanka in the deliberations of the UN Human Rights Commission. But New Delhi did so reluctantly, fearing China would steal a march on it in the strategically important island.

The one major area of leverage still available to the West is trade. Sri Lanka's exports are in trouble and the EU and US are still its major export destinations at 36.7 and

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21.5 per cent respectively. China, needing neither garments nor tea, imports very little. But even given this reliance on the West as an export destination, Sri Lanka still felt able to shrug off EU conditionality concerning renewal of its GSP Plus export benefit plan, which effectively allowed tax-free importation of garments. In these circumstances, the IMF decision eventually to provide the \$2.6 billion facility amounted to a defeat for the West. Although Britain and the US abstained, no significant conditionality on human rights was involved.⁴ Since then, Sri Lanka has been able to forge ahead economically without major Western support, with growth rates now regularly achieving 6–8 per cent.



Foreign Minister Bob Carr: rejected efforts to boycott CHOGM.

Australia faces double jeopardy. Not only does Canberra have little financial leverage, particularly in relation to a power like China, but also it is increasingly dependent on the Sri Lankan government to 'turn back the boats' before they reach the high seas. Foreign Minister Carr rejected efforts by human rights campaigners in Australia to boycott the CHOGM meeting scheduled for November in Colombo. According to Senator Carr, 'Any suggestion of a boycott would be counterproductive. It would simply isolate the country and render it defiant to international opinion.'⁵ As Senator Carr well knows, but cannot say, the problem is not so much that Sri Lanka would be isolated, but rather that it would be pushed further into the arms of China. CHOGM will go ahead, despite protests from Canada. Sadly, human rights cannot be divorced from their strategic and financial contexts. That proved to be true in the Cold War, and it is true today.



Conceptual drawing of completed Hambantota Port. Photo: Wikipedia.

Sri Lanka is extremely well placed strategically in terms of the developing security dilemma in the Indian Ocean over oil supply routes. The major oil routes pass just south of Hambantota. The port will increasingly fulfil the roles of way station, refining centre and possible also police post for this oil. It is also likely to do so under the tutelage of China.

And the Sri Lanka–China relationship continues to gain traction. According to the *Washington Times*, in June 2012 China pledged a massive \$50 billion in spending on civil military projects over 10–15 years and in August 2012, it announced a grant of \$100 million to the Sri Lankan military.⁶ This is the new geopolitics and it cannot be ignored. Which is not to say that human rights abuses should not be chronicled, publicised and objected to by whatever means available. But we should be realistic about what can be achieved and how.

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The emptiness at the heart of Xi Jinping's China Dream

The realisation of Xi Jinping's China Dream is bedevilled by paradoxes.

By Gerry Groot

One of the key ways Xi Jinping, the new General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and therefore also the new Chinese president, has already made a dramatic mark on his party, country and the world has been to announce a China Dream as a rallying point, inspiration and a basis for a renewed form of patriotism.



Xi Jinping: already made his mark

The big problem for Xi and those who must now seek out ideas, symbols and concepts to flesh out this ambition is that they are handicapped at the outset by two of its key criteria; simultaneously

preserving the CCP's monopoly of power over politics and the instruments of state while providing new principles around which to develop love of the nation. The latter is always likely to be at odds with the former.

To understand why a generally embraced China Dream would be extremely useful to the CCP we need only to think of some of the paradoxes currently bedevilling it. In today's China, many people are buying infant milk powder for their infants from smugglers because they have so little trust in the ability of the Party-state to ensure adequate regulation, inspection and enforcement which is not subject to corruption.

On the other hand, there is precious little faith that fellow citizens won't resort to dangerous and immoral ways of making money, including being prepared to adulterate even

infant milk powder with kidney-destroying melamine plastic simply to fake the protein readings. Cardboard in dumplings, gutter oil in cooking and cadmium-contaminated rice among many other scandals related to foods and medicines, only add a growing sense of insecurity and mistrust.

The Party-state, which claims all credit for every success and good in China, also has responsibility for all the failures because it is so involved in so very many areas of people's daily lives, even if it now allows an increasing degree of private life. Even many who have never experienced the heavy hand of the state nevertheless fear its capriciousness should boundaries of criticism and action be crossed.

Yet, another paradox is that, based on opinion polls by reputable foreign firms, some levels of trust in the central government in Beijing are actually much higher than in Western democracies. Party leaders, though, seem very disinclined to take such polls for granted and generally act as if an existential crisis will break out at any minute.



Mao Zedong: clear goals largely acquiesced to.

Never before in human history have so many people become so much better off materially in such a short time as in China since 1978. Yet this has been at the expense of its dramatic retreat from Mao Zedong's anti-market, anti-profit, egalitarianism, central planning and the socialisation of all means of production principles. These ideas resulted in policies which meant that after rapid improvements to living standards by 1957, the next 20 years had left average Chinese materially worse off. However,

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whatever its practical problems and immense costs, 'at least' Mao's goals were clear and largely acquiesced to. While many remained desperately poor, 'at least' one's neighbours were generally seen to be at about the same level or only marginally better off; equality in poverty. Many who benefitted from CCP policies were naturally inclined to support the status quo, while those who suffered had quickly learnt to comply with whatever was demanded of them lest they again be subjected to the dictatorship of the proletariat in the form of sometimes violent struggle sessions and always humiliating and degrading rituals.

The CCP's current policies may have brought about economic success and unprecedented international influence, but only at considerable cost to the environment. They have also meant a fundamental loss of ideological direction. Significantly, this prosperity is a result of a retreat from nearly every major socialist principle. The CCP's current claims to remaining committed to socialism have been reduced to: a) the maintenance of state-owned enterprises and their dominating key and strategic segments of the economy, and b) the centrality of the CCP-Party-state itself.

Unfortunately for the CCP, the problems highlighted by the tainted milk and other scandals are also direct consequences of its Party-state system because of the way it concentrates power in the political party at every level of society, including the government, the law, the police and inspection regimes—and even the media which reports on all these levels. The institutional constraints on uncovering mistakes and corruption that can be invoked in Western democracies, such as a free press, independent judiciaries, independent police and elections, are

One consequence of the absence of independent institutions is endemic and apparently growing levels of corruption at all levels of society.

all absent because the CCP came to power explicitly rejecting these institutions as manifestations of bourgeois class exploitation.

However, while the early years of CCP rule seem to have been remarkable ones, with great idealism, good will (except for class enemies) and morality, this didn't last, and even Mao was soon calling for rectification of those Party members with bad attitudes, poor work practices, and bureaucrats with a sense of entitlement.

Today, one consequence of the absence of independent institutions is endemic and apparently growing levels of corruption at all levels of society. Kindergarten teachers are bribed to try to get good results in order to allow Xiao Li access to a 'good' primary school. Top leaders of the Party-state's inspection services themselves have been found out. The latter are (very) occasionally executed, the former almost never punished. As in empires of old, even positions in government and the military are again being bought and sold, with women having to pay a premium to overcome the disadvantage of their sex.

These outcomes are unintended consequences of the domination of so much of Chinese life by the Party-state even as markets play ever more important roles. The role of and importance of *guanxi* (social relations) has not only not declined as access to goods has increased, it has become even more important. The market aspects of the economy offer promise of material success, but jobs with the government and

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state-owned enterprises almost guarantee it. Even better, for some, there is one set of rules for ordinary Chinese and another for Party members, especially leaders with the right sort of backing.

The general reaction of the CCP leadership is not to spend too much time trying to address the systemic contradictions within its own organisations, systems of rewards, promotions and punishments but to resort to a pre-modern insistence that moral education be stepped up. This will, they maintain, compensate for the problems of modernity, the weaknesses of individuals and what it prefers to see as deliberate efforts by 'hostile Western forces' to undermine China through peaceful evolution and promotion of ideas like universal human rights and democracy. Its reaction to protests against systemic problems in the wake of the bloody suppression of the student movement of 1989 was, in 1990–91, to launch the Patriotic Education Movement (*Aiguo zhuyi jiaoyü*



Tiananmen Square
protests 1989

yundong) for every young Chinese, from kindergarten onwards. Part of this includes instilling a

personalised sense of humiliation on behalf of China, for defeats of the Qing Empire, beginning with the Opium Wars of the mid-19th century, and the 'unequal treaties' that the Qing acquiesced to. This education also allowed some leeway for young Chinese to identify with 'China' even if they were not predisposed to the CCP itself.

This renewed version of the 'Century of Humiliation' meme, though, has now become both an encouragement to those wanting China to be assertive in the world and claim what they see as rightfully Chinese

For some, there is one set of rules for ordinary Chinese and another for Party members, especially leaders with the right sort of backing.

territories (such as in the South China Sea), and a significant impediment to the CCP's ability to conduct foreign affairs. Anything less than the full capitulation of other parties to Chinese claims are now readily seen by many raised on patriotic education as more signs of weakness in the face of foreign aggression and injustice.

With the rise of the internet generation and increased social space, there are more voices influencing even foreign policy, but through very narrow lenses. Even though the CCP created these lenses and largely shaped the understanding of what China and her national interests are, it now finds itself painted into a corner by some aspects of its success. It has created a very narrow statist nationalism that, while usually pleasing at home, is a real problem abroad.

More importantly, it is not fully within Party control but is harnessed to deep emotions like humiliation which can be very difficult to rein in. The biggest threat is that it can now be used to actually attack the Party and key aspects of its legitimacy. No slight can be much worse than to be accused of selling out this statist if not revanchist version of what China is imagined to be.

The China Dream could be a way around this narrowness by providing a broader base of principles around which to rally all Chinese, at home and hopefully, abroad. It is also clearly a reaction to internal demands that China solve problems like corruption by adopting more Western principles and fully accepting Western conceptions of

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universal rights. Moreover, China's economic success would in itself perhaps turn these dreams into counter universal values.

Yet however attractive this idea of counter values is, where can they be found and how can they be propagated? The China Dream demands powerful ideas and principles which will support current statist nationalism but which will also be a counterbalance to them. They will be able to counter Western ideas and even be as attractive, if not more so! But where will they be found? There is no ready source which has not already been tried and found wanting, or worse, as potentially dangerous as those of the enemy.

What can be mined from Buddhism, assuming it is accepted as being authentically Chinese, or Daoism or Confucianism? Christianity and Islam, by definition, are too foreign to even consider.

The mere fact that nothing jumps out is an indication of the difficult task Xi has set China's theoreticians and researchers. Only Confucianism, the ideology so roundly rejected by the CCP for most of its existence, has any obvious attractive features, because for millennia empires used variations of its ideas and interpretations to instil obedience, if not loyalty, from generation to generation.

Yet even this authoritarian-friendly set of ideas and values contains dangerous values which could as easily threaten the CCP as its self-serving nationalism. The right to overthrow bad leaders and to speak truth to power are but the most obvious dangers.

Any wholesale state validation of Daoism is also problematic when one considers the dangerous Falun Gong,

Religion has long been a basis for insurrection against the empire and Falun Gong implied it might even undermine the Party-state.

Zhong Gong etc.—offshoots which sprang from the Qigong fever of the 1980s. Buddhism could even be dangerous if it transpired that Tibetan forms were of more interest than Chinese Chan forms and garnered sympathy for Tibetan claims.

But there are bigger immediate obstacles to crafting the China Dream, assuming the unlikely event that a coherent group of satisfactory and attractive ideas can be cobbled together. The fact that this is clearly a top-down approach means that the contents of the dream will have to be imposed from above and hence are unlikely to readily win legitimacy unless they gel with existing and popular ideas. Imperial regimes generally had the luxury of time to undertake such tasks; generations or even centuries. Xi has perhaps a decade to get it going before he is replaced, and it will have to have taken root by then lest a successor abandon or renounce it. Also, unlike ancient imperial times, it will simply be almost impossible for the CCP to simply impose any carefully collated collection because now millions of ordinary Chinese have the ability and resources to research them for themselves, interpret them in their own ways and then craft counter narratives via blogs and social networks. It worked for Mao, for a while. It will almost certainly fail for Xi Jinping.

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Indonesian human rights report on 1965 killings: a bridge too far

Fifty years on, Indonesia still has difficulty coming to terms with the events of 1965 and their aftermath.

By Ken Setiawan

Twenty years ago, the Indonesian government set up a National Human Rights Commission, the *Komisi Nasional Hak Asasi Manusia*, or KOMNAS HAM. Its establishment was a direct order of President Suharto and, unsurprisingly, observers both within and outside Indonesia were sceptical about the government's intentions as well as the independence of the commission.

Nevertheless, KOMNAS HAM surprised its critics. It attracted significant support for its investigations into human rights violations involving the military. While these efforts did not lead to a change in the human rights policies of the state or behaviour of the security forces, it was the first time that the government and military were criticised by another state body.

This was a truly remarkable achievement in the context of an authoritarian state. In doing so, the commission raised human rights awareness, legitimised the concerns of human rights NGOs and provided significant support for the wider Indonesian human rights movement.

The resignation of President Suharto heralded the swift development of Indonesian civil society, including a free press, as well as a number of legal reforms in the area of human rights. For KOMNAS HAM, two new laws were of particular relevance. Firstly, the 1999 human rights law which strengthened the commission's legal status—previously a Presidential Decree—and expanded its mandate, including mediation

between conflicting parties as well as the power of summons.

Secondly, the 2000 Human Rights Courts Law gave KOMNAS HAM the power to conduct preliminary investigations into suspected gross human rights violations. This function also extends to cases that occurred before the enactment of the law and therefore the commission has been given a crucial role in addressing past human rights violations.



Despite these improvements in KOMNAS

HAM's status, mandate and external environment, in practice the commission has struggled to translate its new opportunities into actual results. Members of the security forces have repeatedly refused to appear before the commission to testify. In addition, the Attorney-General's Office, which according to the Human Rights Courts Law has to follow up on KOMNAS HAM's reports, has often failed to do so.

'...the 1965 events were a humanitarian tragedy, a black page in the history of Indonesia'

In addition to these external problems, KOMNAS HAM has faced challenges within its organisation. A key issue is the politicisation of its membership, which is a direct consequence of the manner in which commissioners (since 2002) are chosen: by a parliamentary committee. Political affiliations as well as interests have thereby become an important part of the election procedure. This has also forged direct links between

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commissioners and political parties, with the latter sometimes using that relationship to influence KOMNAS HAM's internal processes. In July 2012, KOMNAS HAM announced the findings of its investigation into the prosecution of (alleged) communists in Indonesia following the 1965 events. KOMNAS HAM, which under the leadership of Ifdhal Kasim (2007–12) had emphasised the investigation of human rights abuses during Suharto's New Order investigated the matter for more than 3 years, hearing over 300 witnesses across Indonesia.

In its detailed and lengthy report, the commission considered the matter from the perspective of victims and their families. It held that the military was responsible for the systematic persecution of members of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). KOMNAS HAM found sufficient evidence of gross human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearance, arbitrary arrest and detention, as well as torture, including sexual abuse and mass rape.

Furthermore, the commission condemned the discrimination suffered by people associated with the PKI, even after they had been released from detention. Among others, former political prisoners were barred from holding a position in the civil service, security forces or education. KOMNAS HAM stated that the 1965 events were a 'humanitarian tragedy, a black page in the history of Indonesia'.¹

KOMNAS HAM issued two recommendations. Firstly, pursuant to the provisions of the Human Rights Courts Law, the Commission recommended the Attorney-General's Office further investigate the case. This recommendation was issued with the view of bringing the case to court.

Secondly, the commission asked for a non-judicial solution to the case. This included an apology from the government, to be followed by rehabilitation, reparation and compensation.

As part of this recommendation, the commission referred to the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In 2006, the Constitutional Court declared the law to establish such a commission invalid. By issuing such a recommendation, KOMNAS HAM supported the demands of human rights non-government organisations (NGOs) to revise the law in order for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to be established.

Human rights NGOs in Indonesia welcomed the report. Among others, NGOs commended KOMNAS HAM's viewpoint, from a victim's perspective, clearly arguing for their rehabilitation and compensating them for the loss and damages suffered. Furthermore, the NGOs stated it was a 'new momentum', opening a door to address human rights violations that took place under Suharto's New Order.



President Yudhoyono: wanted policy to be part of his legacy.

The Indonesian government initially received KOMNAS HAM's report well: the government stated that it supported the recommendations and the Presidential Advisory Council said it was preparing a draft apology as well as a mechanism to compensate the victims. President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono added that he had instructed the Attorney-General's Office to study the report and was quoted as saying he wanted the apology to be a part of his legacy before the end of his final term in 2014.

However, two months later the

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government changed its tune, with Djoko Suyanto, Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs, stating that he rejected KOMNAS HAM's findings:

Define gross human rights violation! Against whom? What if it happened the other way around? [...] This country would not be what it is today if it didn't happen. [...] Immediate action was needed to protect the country against such a threat. Don't force the government to apologise.

Djoko's position was widely shared by representatives of the Indonesian military, who stated that it would not apologise. Political parties also lent support to Djoko. Member of Parliament Nudirman Munir, from Suharto's former ruling party Golkar, stated that the best way to solve human rights abuses was to bury them, an opinion shared by Marzuki Alie from Yudhoyono's Democrat Party. Societal organisations, too, rejected KOMNAS HAM's findings. The Nahdlatul Ulama, which under the leadership of Abdurrahman Wahid had actively pursued dialogue with 1965 victims, argued that an apology was not in the interests of the nation.

Human rights activists and survivors have slammed Djoko's statement, highlighting Indonesia's demands on the The Netherlands government to apologise for crimes committed during the independence struggle, but not willing to apologise for its own faults. KOMNAS HAM's chairperson, Ikdhal Kasim, argued that the government appeared to be turning back time: 'the current government is no different from the New Order regime because they want to perpetuate the latter's version of the 1965 purge'.

A few months after the publication of the report, new members were elected to KOMNAS HAM. The new chairperson, Otto Nur Abdullah, stated that he would continue the work of his predecessors, including

Nudirman Munir, from Suharto's former ruling party Golkar, stated that the best way to solve human rights abuses was to bury them.

the 1965 case. However, less than one year into his tenure Otto was ousted as chairman. Many observers suspected that the conflict within KOMNAS HAM was orchestrated by actors outside the commission who wanted to interfere with the commission's processes and were concerned about Otto's stance to uncover past human rights abuses.

The rejection of KOMNAS HAM's report underlines how sensitive and divisive the 1965 events remain in Indonesia—almost 50 years on. It is these dynamics that made the investigation a highly ambitious project and, because of that, the commission should be commended.

While it is highly unlikely that the case will be settled in a court of law, a state body has, finally, spoken out against one of the most serious human rights violations committed by the New Order. Once again, KOMNAS HAM has proved to be a strong critic of the military, which for so long has been spared such indictments. Unfortunately, the rejection of KOMNAS HAM's report also reveals some of the challenges Indonesia faces in implementing human rights: 15 years after the end of the New Order, the culture of impunity persists and does not appear to be waning.

Reference

See the [executive summary](#) of KOMNAS HAM's report (in Indonesian).

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Malaysia's election result—no surprise to the knowledgeable

Whatever the outcome, the election was always likely to produce an assertively and unapologetically pro-Malay government.

By Clive Kessler

Malaysia's 13th post-independence elections (GE13), held on 5 May, turned out largely as expected. The long-serving United Malays National Organization/Barisan Nasional (UMNO/BN) government, led by the dominant Malay UMNO party, which has directed the nation's affairs since the pre-independence elections of 1955, won a clear but, to many of its functionaries and followers, an unsatisfactory victory.

Since independence in 1957 the country has been ruled uninterruptedly by UMNO-led coalitions—first the Alliance Party until 1969 and since then the enlarged Barisan Nasional (National Front).

After five contentious years and often unconvincing government since GE12 in 2008, Malaysia for the first time entered into a national election whose outcome was not a foregone conclusion. Either side, UMNO/BN or the opposition, might have won; each had a chance, if not an equal chance. So the election was keenly, often desperately, contested and no less keenly followed by political observers, both at home and overseas.

A narrow or meagre UMNO/BN victory had always been the likeliest outcome—far more likely than the three other possibilities: (1) a narrow victory by the opposition Pakatan Rakyat (PKR) coalition; (2) an indecisive outcome or hung parliament; and (3) a clear, convincing UMNO/BN victory. What was less widely recognised was that

all four of these possible outcomes, each in its own way, was likely to produce the same end result: a new post-election government that would be far more assertively and unapologetically pro-Malay (in defiantly explicit disregard of the nation's many non-Malay citizens) than its predecessor, and far more inclined to call upon Islam—upon Islamic rhetoric and Islamist political forces—as a sacred bulwark to shore up Malay political ascendancy, even domination. This too has already begun to happen, and the process looks likely to continue and be promoted in the years immediately

ahead with gathering intensity and momentum.



Najib Tun Razak. Photo: [The Malaysian Insider](#).

The victory achieved by UMNO/BN—at enormous cost to the public purse and

national finances, in the form of vast largesse and ever more extravagant promises—was no mean feat. Its dimensions would have proved gratifying to most governments facing the electorate's judgement, especially under testing conditions, elsewhere. But for UMNO/BN and its partisans it was not enough.

The party has usually enjoyed a two-thirds majority in parliament's lower house, enabling it to amend the constitution at will (which it often did, over the years, to finesse its way out of difficult corners and to disable its opponents). It had lost that two-thirds majority in 2008, and for his underperformance Dr Mahathir Mohamad's successor as prime minister, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, had been forced to stand down. He was replaced in 2009 by Najib Tun Razak, the son of the nation's second

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prime minister and, on that basis, long the 'crown prince' of UMNO and Malaysian politics.

The challenge facing Najib was, at best, to win back the two-thirds majority (or 148 of the 222 seats in the Dewan Rakyat), or at least to improve on the 2008 yield of 140. For him, even 145 would have been a good result—good enough to ensure his immediate political survival against critics, adversaries and doubters (this last group including the politically still active and formidable Dr Mahathir) in his own camp. In the event, UMNO/BN won 133: for those who might be satisfied with nothing less than assured domination, a shortfall of eight seats had now almost doubled to 15.

Yet behind all its archaising ceremonialism and cultural nostalgia, Malay politics, especially within UMNO, is nothing other than Realpolitik of the most ruthlessly pragmatic kind. And realistically, UMNO (if its interests, and nothing else, are to be the focus of analysis, as the party 'hard men' insist) did not do at all badly. In many ways, its political domination was enhanced, not diminished, by the election result, notwithstanding the further decline in the government's parliamentary position and the opposition's advances. How so?

Drawing a contrast between the post-election situation of UMNO/BN and its PKR adversary is instructive. The PKR coalition has yet to prove that it is much more than an election-day arrangement among the three partners not to contest one another (which is fatal, especially in a fragmented electorate and society, under a first-past-the-post voting system). Instead it offers a single opposition candidate in each local constituency or area.

This 'no enemies within opposition ranks' principle must bind together

an improbable popular front in which opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim's PKR party pulls together two other partners: the decidedly secularist Democratic Action Party (DAP) and the clerical Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS). And yet, after the election, for all its improbability, this coalition displays one key strength or advantage. It is balanced. All three parties have if not an equal then a comparable presence in the Dewan Rakyat (DAP holds 38 seats, PKR 30, PAS 21) and each also derives political standing from its control of a significant state government: the DAP governs Penang, the PKR Selangor, and PAS Kelantan, a Malay 'heartland' state.

Contrast that with the situation on the government side. Of its 133 seats, UMNO now holds 88 (up from 79 in 2008). But the next largest party on that side holds only 14 seats. The UMNO's customary primary partners going back to Alliance Party times, even preceding independence—the Malaysian Chinese Association and the Malaysian Indian Congress—now together hold only 11 (7 and 4 respectively, the decline in their public plausibility and electoral viability the result of, and signifying, the increasing UMNO dominance over its old BN partners in deciding national policy).

After GE13, more even than before, the UMNO's ability to head a government, and rule over the nation's core in peninsular Malaysia, now rests disproportionately upon the seats that its fractious Eastern Malaysia partners hold in Sarawak and Sabah (33 seats, together held by eight different parties, many of them loose, unstable alliances of mercurial, opportunistic and 'gymnastic' leaders).

UMNO's task will be to satisfy, appease and manage its increasingly assertive Eastern Malaysia partners who now so heavily underwrite its ability to rule. But provided it can do

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Malaysia's election result

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that, in numerical and political terms UMNO now dominates—perhaps as never before—the national government. Provided it can decide without internal strife what it wants to do, it will always be in a powerful position to have its way, so long as its Sabah and Sarawak allies can be kept in line.

In national government, an era of unprecedented UMNO domination may now be in the offing. Yet this preponderance within government ranks masks, and contrasts starkly with, the popular support that the governing coalition could muster. It won some 47 per cent of the popular vote, the opposition 51 per cent. This anomaly results from a well-known malapportionment in the delineation of electoral boundaries which these days, far exceeding what had originally been intended constitutionally, over-represent the government's rural support base—and corral and confine its many critics and opponents within huge urban constituencies. One rural vote may overall be worth three city votes.

International media comment often seeks to highlight instances of government skulduggery on election day. Sharp practice clearly occurs far too often. But Malaysian elections have never been a level playing field. And, despite the growth of new media that mitigate the government's long-standing domination of the official media, in other ways things are now less level than ever.

Yet attention needs to focus not on election-day malpractice but on the nature of the electoral system itself: on the delineation of boundaries and the distortions entailed by the first-past-the-post system. More, it is not what the Election Commission (EC)

may or may not do during the course of the election, whether it acts impartially or in a partisan fashion, that is of concern. Before it even begins to swing into action to arrange the polls, the EC is an inherently compromised and flawed body. It is a contradictory beast with a dual nature. It is the statutory body appointed to stage elections with due propriety; but it also operates—by requiring citizens to vote in specific streams by age and ethnicity within every polling station—as the producer of a massive national political demography database whose findings are not made available to the public or other political parties but which is developed as the primary strategic instrument of the ruling UMNO party and its partners. So long as this remains the case, the EC will never be universally seen as impartial and will never enjoy sufficient public trust. It needs not simply to be reformed but replaced, root and branch.

The election result came as a shock, even a bitter pill, to some. But it was no surprise to the knowledgeable. On the eve of election day I said to a number of foreign journalists, 'the opposition may well have won the campaign. They may even win the vote tomorrow. But they will also have to win the vote count tomorrow night'. They would have to win their votes in the right places, I suggested, and be sure that all their votes were counted properly.

Not a bad prediction.

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Pakistan's hopes rest with third-chance prime minister

There will be no time for a honeymoon for Nawaz Sharif's new government.

by Alicia Mollaun

On 11 May, Pakistan achieved a historic milestone: for the first time, a democratically elected government was replaced by another democratically elected government. In a country ruled for over half of its existence by the military, this was a notable outcome.

The lead-up to the election, and election day itself, was marred by violence. Over 120 people were killed in the weeks before the election. On election day, more than 600 000 security personnel were deployed to protect 70 000 polling stations, half of which were considered to be in sensitive locations and vulnerable to attack.

Despite heightened security, voting was tainted by violence: at least 38 people were killed and over 130 were injured. The Election Commission of Pakistan had to [defer elections](#) for three National Assembly seats and six seats of the provincial assemblies because candidates had died—some of natural causes; others were killed. Many candidates were kidnapped, including former prime minister Yousaf Raza Gillani's son, who was [taken by militants](#) while campaigning for a seat in Multan.

Over 60 per cent of Pakistan's 86 million registered voters (including 36 million newly registered voters) waited in long lines in the hot sun for the chance to vote. The result: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), led by two-time former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, won the majority of seats in the 342-seat National Assembly.

Nawaz was elected to the prime minister's office on 5 June, becoming the first Pakistani to take the office for a third time. Nawaz had two ill-fated terms in government: the first ending in 1993 following a political stoush with the president, and the second in 1999, when General Pervez Musharraf staged a coup and installed himself as president.



Nawaz Sharif:
third time lucky?

Nawaz is hoping his third time is a charm—though his first term back in office will be challenging. Pakistan is mired in political, economic, social and security challenges. While Nawaz may continually look over his shoulder at the Army, given how his last term as prime minister ended, most analysts argue that it is unlikely his government will be toppled through a military coup, because the military simply are not interested in taking on Pakistan's [myriad problems](#).

The people of Pakistan voted in the PML-N to fix these problems. Pakistan has more problems than most new democracies—domestic terrorism is spiralling out of control; the economy has slowed; an energy crisis is causing significant harm to industry, livelihoods and quality of life; and there are deadly ethnic and social tensions, particularly in Sindh and Balochistan provinces. So what is Nawaz Sharif's government planning to do about these problems in its first 100 days?

The government's first priority must be the economy and fixing the long-running energy crisis. Waiting to do something to fix the economy

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because of a preoccupation with security was an election-losing error for the previous government, led by the Pakistan People's Party (PPP). Nawaz's new government must tackle both problems simultaneously if Pakistan is to have any hope of developing economically.



Poster in local market, Islamabad.

The biggest problem in Pakistan's economy is the energy crisis, which plunges the country into unproductivity for up to 20 hours a day. Unable to afford to maintain back-up generator power, small

businesses sit idle while the power is switched off. In the capital, Islamabad, the power goes off at regular intervals, for at least 6–8 hours a day. Parts of Punjab, Pakistan's largest province, are without power for 17–20 hours a day. When shopping at a local market and asking the vendor to switch on a light so I could examine his wares more closely, he said: 'Come back at 2pm, the power is off until then'. At tailoring shops, when asking how long it takes to have a new suit made, the answer is 'longer than usual because of [load shedding](#)'.

Power cuts have affected one of Pakistan's most important export industries. In the past four years, it is estimated that the textile industry has suffered losses of over 200 billion rupees because of load shedding. With over 50 per cent of Pakistan's exports coming from the [textile industry](#), this should be deeply concerning to the new government.

Nawaz summarised the dilemma when speaking to a conference in May, celebrating the anniversary of Pakistan's successful nuclear tests in 1998: 'Are other nuclear powers in

In its first 100 days, the government must begin to tackle the country's diabolical security situation.

the same state as Pakistan? We should look into the reasons why the country [doesn't even have electricity](#)'. Nawaz is hoping to get some immediate relief by taking money from Saudi Arabia, which will, allegedly, help [bail out the sector](#) and provide cheap oil.

Next, in its first 100 days, the government must begin to tackle country's diabolical security situation. Rarely a day goes by without a report of terrorism claiming a life. In 2012, 6211 people—equating to 17 a day—lost their lives in terrorism-related violence. In January 2012, there were 47 [incidents of terrorist violence](#). For a country not officially at war, these figures are astounding.

One of Nawaz's first meetings after the election was with the Chief of Army Staff, General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, to discuss security, especially how to stop domestic terrorism and



Pakistan First election poster.

the Tehreek-e-Taliban (TTP), or the Pakistani Taliban, from attacking Pakistani civilians, security personnel and institutions. This has become even more difficult now that the Taliban have suspended peace talks with the government following the US drone strike that killed the TTP's second-in-command. A Taliban spokesman threatened to respond to the attack with full force and said: 'On one hand the Pakistani Government is advocating the mantra of peace talks, and on the other it is colluding with the United States and killing the Taliban leadership.'

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It is not just terrorist-related violence that is crippling Pakistan; political and sectarian violence have a stranglehold over entire cities. Since election day, politicians have been targeted: Zahra Shahid Hussain, senior vice-president of Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) was [shot dead](#), and [Farid Khan of PTI was killed](#) outside his home in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

One of the most violent cities is Karachi, Pakistan's financial centre and home to over 20 million people, where armed wings of political parties battle it out in the streets for power. Driving through Karachi, the tension is obvious. In some areas, only a street divides one political party from another, with large



Men's polling booth, Punjab. Photo: Kate Chamley

posters, flags and graffiti clearly marking out territory. The political violence in Karachi has provided cover for the Taliban to move in. During recent

Supreme Court hearings, judges ordered an investigation into the claim that over 8000 Taliban were in the city. Security forces say Taliban are raising funds in Karachi through robbery, extortion and kidnappings.

Again, the security situation is affecting the economy. A representative from Karachi's business community estimated that 20 000–25 000 businesses have left the city, and that the economic loss equals about \$10 million dollars a day. Businessmen he talks with have begun hiring private security guards and are getting [licences to carry weapons](#).

Sectarian violence is increasing, with the Shia minority continually targeted. Of the 91 sectarian acts of violence in Pakistan in 2012, [88 occurred in Karachi](#). The head of Pakistan's Human Rights Commission said: 'It's a good day in Karachi when only five or so people are killed, because on average it would be eight to 10 a day'.



Karachi—one of Pakistan's most violent cities.

With security figures this dire it is hard to imagine what Nawaz Sharif's government will do to

improve the situation. The security landscape has become so complex—linked to poverty, the economy, poor rule-of-law, and corruption—that a policy solution to this 'wicked problem' is likely a long way off.

Nawaz Sharif needs to demonstrate in his first 100 days that he is serious about improving the lot of the Pakistani people, who are clinging to the hope that the new government cannot possibly be worse than the PPP's last five years in office—and also the hope that one day Pakistan will start climbing the ladder of development and realising its potential.

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North Korea's 'rational' belligerence

There may be much more behind North Korea's rhetorical storm than meets the eye.

By Benjamin Habib

The hostile posturing of the North Korean leadership is decipherable if located within the context of its symbiotic national security and economic development goals. Further nuclear or missile tests would strongly indicate the North Korean leadership's intention to accelerate the maturation of its nuclear and missile programs, with a fully operational nuclear deterrent in place to provide the umbrella under which new economic measures can be rolled out.

The present moment represents an inflection point marking the end of Kim Jong-il-era muddle through and the beginning of Kim Jong-un's determined and proactive regime-consolidation phase.

Pyongyang's rhetorical storm has been well publicised and need not be rehashed here. These statements are indicative of an increasingly aggressive stream of rhetoric and posturing by the North Korean government, even by its own lofty standards of belligerent hyperbole.

My initial thought was that North Korea's fiery rhetoric was another coercive bargaining episode. Pyongyang has a history of using coercive bargaining tactics in its dealings with the international community, a strategy that utilises deliberate, directed provocations to obtain material rewards or diplomatic concessions in exchange for de-escalation. The Kim regime's present outburst may be an attempt to force the United States into diplomatic negotiations to roll back the sanctions regime.

Pyongyang's rhetorical flourish may have been a sign that international financial and economic sanctions levied against the regime have

touched a nerve. UN Security Council (UNSC) resolutions [2087](#) and [2094](#), while relatively weak at face value, are an accretion of targeted restrictions and injunctions building upon the pre-existing sanctions regime imposed through previous UNSC resolutions. The aim of these



Kim Jong-un:
establishing
authority.

measures is to strangle the revenue streams that fund North Korea's nuclear weapons and ballistic missile proliferation activities, along with the matériel required for their development. North Korea's recent outbursts may be an indication that this strangulation effort is beginning to impact tangibly on Pyongyang's ability to fund its nuclear and missile programs.

Upon reflection, however, the coercive bargaining hypothesis may not be as convincing in this case as it first appears. Nuclear weapons development lends itself to coercive bargaining escalations. Pyongyang has leveraged developmental milestones and violated proliferation safeguards and reprocessing freezes as deliberate escalations for crisis bargaining.

However, coercive bargaining loses its power once a nuclear program matures. I see two reasons for this: 1) with an essentially complete nuclear weapons deterrent, there are no more developmental thresholds over which to bargain, and 2) with the proliferation finish line in sight, the North Korean government is likely to see greater strategic incentives in realising full nuclear deployment as opposed to extracting relatively minor concessions from an unfinished developmental program.

Since the death of Kim Jong-il in December 2011, the question of

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Kim Jong-un's grasp on the leadership credentials has hung like a cloud over North Korean foreign policy behaviour. Many foreign observers continue to ask whether Kim Jong-un is completely in charge, is a figurehead or is involved in a contest for power with other actors.

The question is not without merit. Kim Jong-un needs to have established a network of institutional attachments and personal loyalties as the foundation of his claims to the leadership. Potential succession candidates need to establish their own institutional attachments and personal loyalties as the foundation of their claims to future leadership. For a smooth transition to take place, Kim Jong-un needs to be acceptable to a sizeable majority of the high-level elites, particularly in the Korean People's Army.

As has been [suggested](#) of the sinking of the *Cheonan* and the shelling of Yeongpyeong Island in 2010, the April 2012 satellite launch may represent an attempt to bolster Kim Jong-un's succession prospects. Such bold provocations may have been deemed necessary to secure institutional support for Kim Jong-un within the military, in the absence of a long grooming period in which the youthful new leader could cultivate a support base. Pyongyang's rhetorical storm circa 2013 could be interpreted in this context.

Kim Jong-un appears to have [transitioned smoothly](#) into the leadership in 2012 and enjoys a solid grip on power. Some observations are worth noting: Kim Jong-un is a charismatic figure who presents as a more confident public figure than his father. While Kim Jong-il rarely spoke in public at all during his two decades in power, Kim Jong-un has delivered a number of speeches and made numerous public appearances. The Respected Leader even looks

remarkably like a young Kim Il-sung, a striking resemblance which is being utilised in regime propaganda. The youth and charisma of Kim Jong-un may indeed tap into a broader lust for generational change among the wider population, a thirst for something new after the privations of the Arduous March period, from 1994 to 1998, and ongoing economic stagnation under *Songun* (military first) politics.

It would seem counterintuitive for the Kim regime to antagonise the United States and South Korea to the brink of a war that they would almost certainly lose.

It is useful to step back from the whirlwind of recent developments to place the current situation in the broader context of the North Korean regime's survival strategy based on external security and domestic economic development. On the surface, it would therefore seem counterintuitive for the Kim regime to antagonise the United States and South Korea to the brink of a war that they would almost certainly lose.

Here one needs to understand the unique logic of North Korean foreign policy, which generally exhibits [ultrarealist tendencies](#) based on *Songun* politics, emphasising the utility of military force as its only credible security guarantee in what it perceives to be a strategically hostile environment.

Pyongyang's nuclear weapons and ballistic missile capabilities are the ultimate practical expressions of this world-view.

The regime also maintains an explicitly stated objective to transform North Korea into a '[strong and prosperous country](#)' through a program of economic development.

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This development program may include moves toward the implementation of incremental economic restructuring. Top-down changes to the economy during the Kim Jong-il era were geared toward regaining control of the economy after the collapse of the command system in the mid-1990s.

Many of the economic concessions made by the regime in 2002 merely [ratified grassroots entrepreneurialism](#) that had taken root during the 1994–98 famine. Since that time, Kim Jong-il's government issued several edicts rolling back those concessions in an attempt to restore economic centralisation and [consolidate the position of the regime](#) by forcing minor market operators out of business.

If not the inexorable path toward full marketisation, what then might North Korea's economic transformation begin to look like? Two key developments have occurred under Kim Jong-un's leadership: 1) a burgeoning export trade in natural resources, and 2) hints at tentative structural changes to specific sectors of the economy.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) has a [rich endowment](#) of mineral resources, including rare earth metals and a substantial endowment of anthracite and bituminous coal, the two highest grades of coal. Indeed, the resources sector is one of the few non-illicit sectors where North Korea has a comparative advantage. Chinese state-owned companies began growing investment in North Korea's mining and resource sector from 2005, accelerating rapidly from 2008. The timing of this acceleration coincides with a [renewed focus](#) from the North Korean Government in developing the mining sector.

Signs of structural changes to the North Korean economy are perceptible but less obvious. In the agricultural sector, the [6.28 policy](#), reportedly announced in June 2012, called for a trial of a new quota system in which farmers in Ryanggang Province were entitled to keep or sell 30 per cent of the annual production quota.

North Korea's era of 'muddling through' appears to be over under the leadership of Kim Jong-un.

Kim Jong-un's 2013 [New Year's address](#) emphasised developing the country's scientific and technological capabilities to 'fan the flames of the industrial revolution in the new century'. North Korea's forgotten special economic zones, at Rason and Sinuiju, are being rejuvenated (with mixed results) as the government seeks the benefits of foreign investment while simultaneously quarantining the risk of political contamination of the broader population through economy-wide marketisation.

[Pak Pong-ju's reappointment as Cabinet Premier](#) after a 6-year hiatus fuelled speculation that the Kim government has a long-term plan for economic restructuring. Pak earned a reputation as a reformer among the DPRK elite during his previous stint as cabinet premier, when he oversaw a number of changes to the North Korean economy.

Rightly or wrongly, his government has noticeably quickened the pace of decisive policy decision-making in pursuit of a simultaneous nuclear security and economic development program.

Adopting a big-picture perspective on the current crisis helps to put North

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Korea's posturing into a rational context. Contrary to popular imagination, the leaders in Pyongyang are not stupid. Their actions follow a logic consistent with their unique world view and the prerogatives of their regime survival strategy based on symbiotic nuclear security and economic development.

Dr Benjamin Habib is lecturer in Politics and International Relations, La Trobe University.

Vietnamese artists contemplate the past

A leading international expert on contemporary Vietnamese and Southeast Asian art will give the 2013 ST Lee Lecture, organised by the Australian Centre for Asian Art and Archaeology, at Sydney University in July (see [Coming events](#)).

Professor Nora A. Taylor, Alsdorf Professor of South and Southeast Asian Art History at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, is author of *Painters in Hanoi: an ethnography of Vietnamese art* and co-editor of *Modern and contemporary Southeast Asian art: an anthology*, as well as numerous articles on modern and contemporary Vietnamese and Southeast Asian art.

Her talk will discuss the contrasting ways in which two contemporary Vietnamese artists, Danh Vo and Dinh Q. Le, have used historical documents dated to the American war period in their art installations as artefacts.

Professor Taylor will also address the recent project initiated by Asia Art Archive to collect documents pertaining to independent art spaces in Vietnam to highlight the role of the archive in historicising Vietnamese art.

International honour for Asialink CEO



Jenny McGregor, the CEO of [Asialink](#) at the University of Melbourne, has been awarded one of two 2013 [Universitas 21 \(U21\)](#) Awards for Internationalisation.

The awards recognise individual efforts which further internationalisation and build relations between U21 members.

Ms McGregor's award is for her involvement with [Asialink](#), an organisation which she founded at Melbourne University. Under her leadership, Asialink has become Australia's largest non-government centre for the promotion of Australia-Asia relations, with an annual budget of over \$10 million and activities spanning education, the arts, leadership, health, and corporate and public programs.

The second recipient of the award, Dr Xu Qian of Fudan University, China, was recognised for her role in raising awareness of the [Millennium Development Goals](#) and looking at how students and staff can help to advance them.

\$43.8 m for Asia literacy

The Australian government's 2013-14 budget has allocated \$43.8 million over four years for Asian literacy initiatives.

It will be shared between the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, Education Services Australia, and the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. The funding will support initiatives, including the development of a new curriculum for priority Asian languages, and curriculum resources.

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Nepal's democratic Maoists move toward economic transformation

The prospects for democracy in Nepal seem sound despite the Maoists' recent violent past.

By Ramesh Sunam and Keshab Goutam

The rise of the Maoists in Nepal is an extraordinary and, for some around the world, melancholy fact. Since its formation in 1994, the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) has gone through a number of radical transformations, shifting from a guerrilla warfare unit to a key democratising force within Nepali politics.

More recently, the party has pursued an agenda to transform the country economically to help Nepalis realise the fruits of the newly institutionalised Democratic Republic of Nepal.

The party's early history is defined by its role in launching the 'people's war' of 1996, a decade-long civil war that resulted in the loss of some 16 000 lives and halted the country's economic development. The Maoists' original aim was to benefit the poor and marginalised sections of society by overthrowing the monarchy, the perceived roots of feudalism.

Today, many people question the necessity for the war. However, the conflict did succeed in providing marginalised populations—particularly *dalits* (the so-called untouchables), women, the landless and ethnic and indigenous people—with more political space to articulate their aspirations and grievances. The result was a series of protests and rights movements across the country by the Madhesi (people from the Terai lowland) and ethnic populations. Such incidents have in turn facilitated the democratisation of Nepali politics.

In the first Constituent Assembly election of April 2008, minorities achieved [substantial representation](#) for the first time, with *dalits* receiving over 8.17 per cent of seats, women 33.22 per cent, ethnic and indigenous people 33.39 per cent, and the Madhesi 34.09 per cent.

The Maoists have also achieved two other key successes. Following their entry into peaceful politics in 2006, they gained the most votes in the April 2008 Constituent Assembly election, winning 220 out of 575 elected seats. But their biggest achievement so far has been the overthrow of the monarchy in 2008. Many analysts maintain that the Maoist-initiated war sped up this outcome by at least a few decades.

Despite these impressive political developments, the Maoists have still not made progress in other key areas. The [Constituent Assembly failed](#) to produce the new constitution it was originally tasked with writing, and the dissolution of the assembly has left the country in a [political and constitutional deadlock](#).

However, the prospects for a new constitution remain high, for good reasons. First, an elected government, led by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, has been working to hold free and fair elections this year for a new Constituent Assembly. Second, pressure from civil society for a new constitution continues to increase. Finally, the international community—mainly the US, the EU, India and China—is encouraging the major political parties to take action.

But daunting challenges have disturbed the political environment

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in which to hold new elections. The major political parties have argued over the form of the Constituent



Puspa Kama Dahal recently visited China and India.

Assembly, including the electoral system to be adopted. This has raised questions as to whether the major political parties really do want elections—or just political chaos.

Even after the elections, a key challenge would remain—achieving consensus on disputed issues, such as the models of federalism and governance mechanisms, that primarily led to the demise of the first Constituent Assembly.

Another daunting challenge for the Maoists relates to Nepal's stagnant economy. While many Asian countries, including China, India and Vietnam, are enjoying unprecedented economic growth, Nepal is still one of the world's least-developed countries, with a [per capita GDP of US\\$ 624](#) and an [unemployment rate of 46 per cent](#).

Recognition of this harsh reality is probably behind the Maoists' recent plan for an economic revolution, which they announced at their 7th Party Congress. This is a big shift for a once guerrilla-based party. However, the success of the plan will depend largely on the support of neighbouring China and India. The chairperson of the party, Puspa Kamal Dahal (aka Prachanda)—who recently visited both countries—has revealed that both would support Nepal in its economic transformation.

However, it is uncertain that the Maoists can accomplish this mammoth task, partly because some cadres still seek to resolve disputes through violence. The [party split](#) into

Some cadres still seek to resolve disputes through violence.

two factions after a protracted dispute, between a large establishment group supporting multiparty democratic politics, and a small dissident group embracing radical politics using violence to pursue a 'people's democracy'. This split will certainly diminish the party's voter base at the next election.

The Maoists have also failed to address the people's growing aspiration for change despite having occupied the premiership twice. This perceived failure, attributed partly to the workings of coalition governments, has triggered widespread fear that the Maoists will become yet another Nepali party that reneges on its commitments to change.

Since the end of the civil war, the Maoists have gradually shifted their ideology toward one that embraces democratic values and norms. This development, coupled with the growing watchdog function of civil society, signals sound prospects for democracy in Nepal.

The future course of democratisation in Nepal is unclear. But it is evident that the Maoist party's future successes will be measured against its promise to uplift the lives of the poor through the transformation of the Nepali economy and society.

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Hindi as a priority language

Vision and drive are needed to introduce Hindi as a viable language option for Australian schools.

By Richard Iles

Identifying Hindi in the Asian Century White Paper as a priority language to join the established priority languages of Indonesian, Mandarin and Japanese was a surprise to many people. The White Paper's findings were bold, and showed a sense of vision in articulating that Australia's long-run interests are best served by building a balanced engagement platform with Asia. Australia's economic and political engagement should broaden beyond Southeast and Northeast Asia and include India.

Initiating Hindi as a second language into the school curriculum in the years Prep–2 provides an opportunity for introducing Hindi as a viable language option for Australian schools.

The lack of qualified Hindi teachers is no surprise. There has been limited demand to warrant Hindi speakers qualifying as teachers. But interest in the study of Hindi is increasing. The Australian National University's new Diploma in Languages has received such a strong response from students wanting to learn Mandarin and Hindi that they are being turned away due to a lack of capacity.¹

Since the release of the White Paper, many have commented on the 'unrealistic' proposal to make Hindi language learning mainstream across the country (See [Asian Currents](#)). The dominant reason being given is the current lack of trained teachers capable of teaching the language. While this reasoning reflects current realities, it shows limited strategic insight, not only in the value of learning Hindi, but also in the critical elements of successful second language acquisition (SLA).

The proposal to commence Hindi acquisition in Prep is based on two important pieces of knowledge: 1) second languages (L2) are acquired best at young ages, and 2) social interaction and communication are critical elements of second language acquisition.

These two pieces of knowledge should lead Hindi language policy towards first employing Hindi speakers as teachers' aides to teach Hindi in the years Prep–2, with the longer term view of upskilling these Hindi speakers to fully qualified primary school language teachers.

There is little doubt that second languages are acquired best when the acquirer is young. While academic debate surrounds definitions associated with different age-based acquisition hypotheses, research shows that second languages are best acquired by young children.² This body of empirical research shows that children on average possess a better ability to produce the range of sounds necessary to speak a second language at a native-speaker level of proficiency.

Accepting the empirical evidence that language learning is best done at a young age should lead policy towards introducing Hindi in the early years of schooling, preferably in Prep. It will require political and bureaucratic leadership to promote the policy.

In native English-speaking countries the engagement of a second or third language is almost exclusively done in academic contexts. Success (as measured by the proportion of students who reach native proficiency) is limited. This paradigm, that SLA is an academic exercise, stands in contrast to the way that many of the world's second language speakers acquired the language. For most of these people, language acquisition is a means of facilitating

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communication for commercial, cultural or kinship reasons rather than building one's grade point average.

This alternative paradigm for SLA has major consequences for how people view language acquisition, and their aptitude for it. [The SIL International's](#) successful Australian program of linguistic course (Equip Training) argues that language acquisition is best done in social contexts in which the emphasis is primarily on spoken communication. As a result, they argue that, irrespective of academic aptitude, second languages are accessible to anyone who is willing to engage socially in the new language.

Based on the assumption that Prep students are the initial target for Hindi acquisition, primary engagement in spoken Hindi and interactive exercises is an important grounding on which to build later knowledge. At this stage of learning, teachers' aides are suitably qualified to engage young minds and foster an enjoyment in using Hindi.

Prep students' engagement with Mandarin at Rochedale State School, in Brisbane, reflects the dual principle of L2 at young ages with social, interactive exercises.

SLA at Rochedale incorporates the requirements of both the Queensland curriculum and the values of the International Baccalaureate's Primary Years Program. The process of SLA at Rochedale commences by developing phonic ability, fostering an interest in culture/country, and positive association with Mandarin language.

Mandarin is just one subject in a full curriculum. Emphasis is rightly placed on English literacy and numeracy skills in the early years of school. However, at Rochedale in 2013 Prep students have 2 hours per

week dedicated to Mandarin. This allows one Mandarin teacher (fully qualified) to cover all 10 classes in years Prep and 2 (alternate years learn French).

After 15 hours of Mandarin, students can count from one to 10, play games in Mandarin (i.e. paper, scissors, rock), give basic greetings and have a strong and developing interest in China and Chinese culture.

As a parent I'm very pleased with my son's engagement with Mandarin after one term's work. His interest is sparked and he enjoys using the little he knows with family friends.

In the absence of qualified Hindi teachers, teachers' aides for primary schools present a viable short-term solution. It is not the ideal, but is a clear step towards providing school communities with more choice from the targeted five Asian languages.

It would appear that a language-specific certificate 3 or 4 in Education Support corresponds well with the combination of limited face-to-face language facilitation students in Prep-2 receive and the early emphasis on developing enjoyable and satisfying language use and motivation for continued learning.

Without the professional knowledge of how to develop learning resources, often acquired through teacher training, resources for language-specific teachers' aides in Hindi would be required. These resources would be in line with the language objectives of young learners. Ideally, internet-based resources hosted on open-source sites such as [YouTube](#) could be developed with modest government funding.

The need to continue to develop Hindi school resources is a further reason why the use of language-specific teachers' aides would only be a short-term solution. Australia's ability to meaningfully engage with Asia and positively influence political and economic outcomes in the

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Hindi as a priority language

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nation's interest is closely related to the country's stock of human capital. At the level of Hindi language acquisition, the nation's human capital is lacking. Overcoming this deficit requires some flexible policy thinking to achieve long-term goals of national proficiency in several Asian languages, including Hindi.

Targeting the introduction of Hindi to school curriculums at the earliest level is well supported by SLA empirical research. Drawing on this, the creation of an interim language-specific teachers' aide qualification and position in the early primary school years is a practical way of seeing Hindi taught in primary school within 5-years. Without vision and drive from school communities, politicians and education bureaucrats, Hindi will not be seen in Australian schools. Yet there exists no valid reason for a continuation of the status quo apart from a lack of commitment by those in education leadership.

References

1. B Lane 2013. 'Talk of Asian Century just that as languages funding falls short', *The Australian*, 17 April, p. 35.
2. JE Flege, GH Yeni-Komshian and S Liu 1999. Age constraints on second-language acquisition. *Journal of Memory and Language*, 41(1), 78–104.

Richard Iles is a PhD candidate at Griffith University and has a Masters of Teaching (M.Teach) from the University of Sydney.

Paper urges rethink of Asian partnerships

[Asialink](#) and its sister organisation, the [Asia Education Foundation](#) (AEF), have lodged a joint submission with the Australian government calling for new ways of working with Asian partners to realise the opportunities of the Asian Century.

In their [Country Strategies](#) submission they say 'one-way transactional relationships will need to be transformed into multifaceted partnerships based on mutual respect and the recognised need for two-way learning'.

The submission also emphasises the importance of ensuring the Australian workforce is Asia-capable across diverse sectors.

'Not only will employees in business and government require a unique skill set but Australians in sectors as varied as education, health and the arts will also need to develop their Asia capabilities,' the submission says.

Asialink was invited to make a written submission to the government's consultations into developing Australia in the Asian Century country strategies for Japan, China, Indonesia, India and South Korea.

The submission emphasises the need to leverage existing Asia capability in Australia's well-travelled, linguistically and ethnically diverse community. It also says Australia should leverage its strong relationships with ASEAN countries as a strategic and symbolic bridge between Australia and the countries of East Asia and North Asia.

Read the [full submission](#).

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Researching Buddhism in Australia

More research is needed to better understand the history and sociology of Buddhism in Australia.

By Anna Halafoff and Ruth Fitzpatrick

Next to Christianity, Buddhism is Australia's second largest religion. This is mostly due to migration from Asia and also to conversion, given Buddhism's popularity in Western societies.

Buddhist presence in Australia dates back at least as far as the 1850s Gold Rush period, yet despite this long history, relatively little research has been conducted on Buddhism in Australian society.

In our 2012 article in the *Journal of Global Buddhism*¹, we, together with Kim Lam, argued that Buddhism in Australia was an emerging field of study and that while there had been an increase in historical, anthropological, and sociological scholarship in recent years, a comprehensive analysis of Buddhism in Australia, and particularly its impact on Australian life and culture, was yet to be conducted.

We applied Paul D. Numrich's framework for identifying an academic field² to our study. Numrich stated that a distinct field of research needed to demonstrate a high degree of specialisation, organisation and proficiency in peer review publications. He also added that the capacity for internal debate and critical self-reflection was also a sign of developing maturity within a research field, as was cross-disciplinary collaboration.

When we published our paper we stated that Buddhism in Australia was an *emerging* multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary field of study as it satisfied many, but not all, of

Numrich's prerequisites. We also predicted that it was likely to fulfill all of his criteria in the near future.

With regard to specialisation, we demonstrated that a growing number of scholars considered Buddhism in Australia to be their primary, or at least one of their research interests, and that a new multidisciplinary framework for conducting research in this field was evolving. We also stated that in terms of organisation, the rise of interest in Buddhism in Australia within a number of prominent academic associations, such as the [Australasian Association of Buddhist Studies](#) and [The Australian Sociological Association](#), indicated that the study of Buddhism in the Australian context was beginning to be taken more seriously. In addition, we noted that the number and quality of publications on Buddhism in Australia was also growing steadily, and that the level of critical self-reflection was increasing.



The 1st Buddhism in Australia Workshop. From left, Julian Bamford President of the Buddhist Council of Victoria, Chi Kwang Sunim, Dr Anna Halafoff and Praveena Rajkopal.

Since early 2012, these trends have been continuing. In particular, scholars at the University of Western Sydney, Deakin University, University of Sydney, Charles

Darwin University, Monash University, the Nan Tien Institute and the Australian National University have held a series of workshops with Buddhist Councils and community leaders to identify areas of interest and community priorities for future research on Buddhism in Australia. Thus far these workshops have been held in Melbourne, Canberra and Sydney, and more are currently being planned in Perth, Hobart, Brisbane, Darwin and Adelaide.

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Researching Buddhism

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This has led to the formation of a Buddhism in Australia research network and one collaborative grant proposal has been jointly submitted thus far by the Buddhist Council of Victoria and Deakin University. The Network is in the process of preparing an additional two grant applications and a website describing our activities. There is no doubt that scholarly interest in Buddhism in Australia is building. However, more research is needed to better understand the history and sociology of Buddhism in Australia, particularly the role of Buddhist organisations in religious settlement, the contributions of Buddhists to Australian society and the global flows of Buddhisms both in and out of this land. Such research can also hopefully enable communities and state actors to better understand the history and sociological significance of Buddhism in the Australian context, in order to assist Buddhist diasporic and mainstream Australian communities with countering prejudices and building socially inclusive societies. It is therefore both timely and necessary given the large numbers of Buddhists in Australia, and as we have now entered the 'Asian century'.

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1. A Halafoff, R Fitzpatrick, and K Lam, K. 2012 'Buddhism in Australia: an emerging field of study', *Journal of Global Buddhism*, 13: 9–25.
2. P Numrich P 2008 North American Buddhists: a field of study? In P Numrich, *North American Buddhists in social context*, Brill, London and Boston.

Dr Anna Halafoff is a Research Fellow at the Centre for Citizenship and Globalisation (University Strategic Research Centre), Deakin University.

Ms Ruth Fitzpatrick is a casual academic, Dean's Unit – School of Humanities and Communication Arts, University of Western Sydney.

Women-in-war conference

An international conference looking at the role of 'fighting women' in the Second World War—with a particular focus on China and Japan—will be held in The Netherlands in 2014.

Organisers are calling for papers ([see Bulletin board](#)) for the conference, *Fighting women' during and after the Second World War in Asia and Europe*, by 1 September, 2013.

The conference will be held 12–13 June at the Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies in Amsterdam, and is being organised in close cooperation with Kwansei Gakuin University, Japan.



Keynote speaker
Prof. Sonya
Michel

Professor Sonya Michel, Professor of History at the University of Maryland, College Park, USA, will deliver the keynote address.

The aim of the conference is to focus on what women did during the war and how their attitudes, scope of social and economic activity, and social status changed as a result. The conference seeks to go beyond a dichotomous 'passive victim/pacifist' portrayal of women in the Second World War.

The organisers are interested in 'recovering the history of women who transgressed normative, peacetime gender boundaries by choosing to be masters of their own fate in abetting and perpetrating violence, in collaborating with or resisting aggression, or actively furthering or frustrating the war goals of their own side.'

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Books on Asia

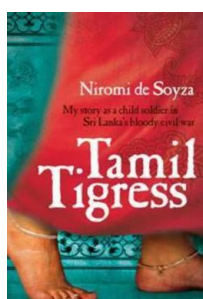
Viewing Asia through Australian eyes

By Sally Burdon, [Asia Bookroom](#)

Books about Asia for the general reader written by Australian authors are being published in greater numbers today than ever before.

For many years trade publishers seemed reluctant to publish books with Asian themes. It was commonly viewed as an area that was not commercially viable unless there was a sensational component.

Luckily the tide is turning, but it is noticeable that small presses still contribute many titles to this field. The following are examples of some recent publications:

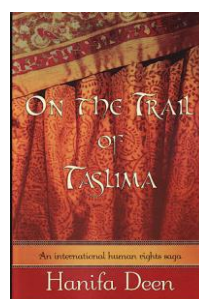


Tamil tigress. My story as a child soldier in Sri Lanka's bloody civil war. By Niromi de Soyza. Paperback, 308 pp, Allen & Unwin. \$24.99.

Two days before Christmas in 1987, at the age of 17, Niromi de Soyza found herself in an ambush as part of a small platoon of militant Tamil Tigers fighting government forces in the bloody civil war that was to engulf Sri Lanka for decades. With her was her lifelong friend, Ajanthi, also aged 17. Leaving behind them their shocked middle-class families, the teenagers had become part of the Tamil Tigers' first female contingent.

Equipped with little more than a rifle and a cyanide capsule, Niromi's group managed to survive on their wits in the jungle, facing not only the perils of war but starvation, illness and growing internal tensions among the militant Tigers. And then events erupted in ways that she could no longer bear. How was it that this

well-educated, mixed-race, middle-class girl from a respectable family came to be fighting with the Tamil Tigers? Today she lives in Sydney with her husband and children; but Niromi de Soyza is not your ordinary woman and this is her compelling story.



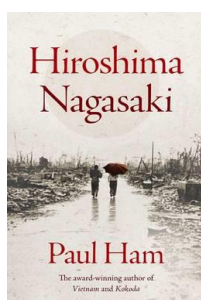
On the trail of Taslima. An international human rights saga. By Hanifa Deen. Paperback, 260 pp. Indian Ocean Press. \$29.95.

Melbourne author Hanifa Deen travels around the world on the trail of dissident writer Taslima Nasreen. After tracking down the unhappy Bangladeshi author living in exile, she becomes enmeshed in an exciting subculture inhabited by freedom-of-expression activists and their organisations: International PEN, Reporters San Frontières, Amnesty International and other fellow travellers ready to do battle with the Islamist anti-Taslima forces. An intriguing tale unfolds featuring headline Muslim 'Dragons' versus the 'Dragon Slayers' from the West, hell-bent on defending free speech—and Taslima.

Cast as a female Salman Rushdie, Taslima Nasreen struggles to meet everyone's expectations but eventually slips from her literary pedestal. Deen explores the mayhem and contradictions of the controversial author's life.

More books on Asia on page 30

Books on Asia



Hiroshima Nagasaki. By Paul Ham. Paperback, 629 pp, HarperCollins. \$35.

We have discovered the most terrible bomb in the history of the world.—

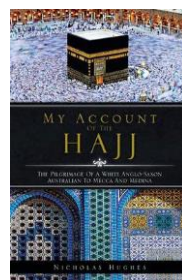
President Harry Truman. The atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki killed more than 100 000 instantly, mostly women, children and the elderly. Many hundreds of thousands more succumbed to their horrific injuries later, or slowly perished of radiation-related sickness. Yet the bombs were 'our least abhorrent choice', American leaders claimed at the time—and still today most people believe they ended the Pacific War and saved millions of American and Japanese lives.

Australian journalist Paul Ham challenges this view, arguing that the bombings, when Japan was on its knees, were the culmination of a strategic Allied air war on enemy civilians that began in Germany and had till then exacted its most horrific death tolls in Dresden and Tokyo. The war in Europe may have ended, but it continued in the Pacific against a regime still looking to save face.

Ham describes the political manoeuvring and the scientific race to build the new atomic weapon. He also gives powerful witness to its destruction through the eyes of 80 survivors, from 12-year-olds forced to work in war factories to wives and children who faced it alone, reminding us that these two cities were full of ordinary people who suddenly, out of a clear blue summer's sky, felt the sun fall on their heads.

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 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.



My account of the hajj. The pilgrimage of a white Anglo-Saxon Australian to Mecca and Medina. By Nicholas Hughes. Paperback, 79 pp, Trafford Publishing. \$21.50.

Rare are works that combine personal revelations with explanations of Islam in a way that Westerners can easily relate to. The beauty of Hughes's account of the hajj is that an Australian farm boy with an education imbued in Christian principles, and a lifetime of exposure to religions and cultures in the Arab world and South and Southeast Asia, can relate to and convey, in a straightforward manner, Islamic beliefs and practices that many may consider foreign.

In his descriptions of the rites of the Hajj and explanations of their origins and meaning, Hughes has done a great service to those interested in religions and spirituality. As a diary, the work animates the daily life of the pilgrim in an engaging style reminiscent of writings from an earlier period of exploration. Hughes expresses a personal revelation: 'The Hajj inspires a deep sense of serenity, humility and affinity with the Almighty'. He writes: 'If my Account of the Hajj can contribute to inter-cultural and religious understanding, I am happy to have shared it with others'.

More books on Asia on page 31

Books on Asia

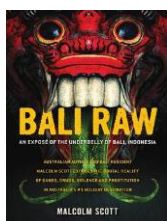


China: the new Long March. By Anthony Paul and Brodie Paul. Hardback, 396pp, HarperCollins. \$69.99

Australian father and son Anthony and Brodie Paul wrote the text for this beautifully illustrated book on China which was published by Harold Weldon, who together with his family company, have had a long association with China. As well as being profusely illustrated, the book features 3D augmented reality, which allows a smart phone (with an app) to be held over many of the images to hear music or see a film.

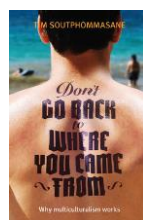
History is marked by great moments of human achievement against all odds. China's Long March was one such achievement. For two years, from 1934 to 1936, the Red Army retreated across China, battling Nationalist forces. Of the 86 000 people who embarked on the 10 000-kilometre journey, fewer than 4000 survived.

The new Long March revisits the original route and portrays the country today through the eyes of a celebrated team of Chinese and international photographers as China rushes into the 21st century.



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

A personal account of Bali's raw underbelly by Australian author and Bali resident Malcolm Scott. It reveals the extent of prostitution, the drug trade and hardcore partying by tourists.



Don't go back to where you came from. Why multiculturalism works. By Tim Soutphommasane. Paperback, 237 pp, UNSW Press. \$29.99.

Tim Soutphommasane boldly stakes a claim for the overwhelming success of multiculturalism in Australia, showing that it is more than laksa, kebabs or souvlaki and that it doesn't automatically spell cultural relativism, ethnic ghettos or reverse racism.

Soutphommasane, an academic, political philosopher, social commentator, writer, and columnist grew up in Sydney. This book was the winner of the Community Relations Commission Award, a category of the NSW Premier's Literary Award 2013.



Ten Canberrans and the sleeping crocodile. A travel diary of Timor-Leste. By Stephen Utick. Paperback, 40 pp,

Canberra Friends of Dili Inc. Canberra. \$17.50.

This travel diary records an expedition through Dili and 10 of Timor-Leste's Districts, complete with extraordinary travellers' tales about the land as well as the people.

Geography, population, history, natural history, religion, art and much more feature in these accounts of the adventures of 10 Canberrans as they explore this developing nation, known as the Land of the Sleeping Crocodile.

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Bulletin board

Call for papers

2013 Australia–China Youth Dialogue

The Australia-China Youth Dialogue (ACYD) is now accepting applicants for the 2013 ACYD, to be held in Canberra and Perth, from 24 to 29 September, 2013. Delegate applications are open until 30 June for Chinese and Australian applicants.

The ACYD promotes frequent and meaningful engagement between young adults in China and Australia who are interested in furthering Australia-China relations. The [Australia-China Youth Association](#), in partnership with the China University Media Union and the All-China Youth Federation's 'Dialogue with the World' series, will present the 2013 ACYD.

The ACYD will bring together 30 future leaders from Australia and China to discuss, debate and analyse key issues that will shape Sino-Australian relations in the coming decades.

The ACYD is seeking applications from exceptional young Australians and Chinese between the ages of 18–35 who have a demonstrated interest and engagement in Sino-Australian affairs whether through international relations, politics, defence/security, journalism, international business, law, academia, sport or creative industries.

Applicants must be an Australian citizen or permanent resident, or Chinese. Further information is available from the [ACYD website](#).

‘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* (see p.28), 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.

Inoue Yasushi Award

The Department of Japanese Studies, University of Sydney, is calling for applications for the 2013 Inoue Yasushi Award for Outstanding Research in Japanese Literature.

The award is for the best refereed journal article or book chapter published in English by a researcher based in Australia or New Zealand during the previous year. The recipient for 2013 will receive \$1500 and a certificate of award.

Inoue Yasushi was a prominent post-Second World War novelist and poet. He wrote in many genres ranging from contemporary novels focusing on social problems to historical novels.

The Inoue Yasushi Memorial Foundation established the award in order to encourage Australian interest in Japanese literature generally, and in Inoue Yasushi more particularly. The Foundation also donated 28 volumes of Inoue Yasushi's collected works, which can be found in the East Asian Collection of Fisher Library at the University of Sydney.

Applicants for the 2013 award should submit an electronic copy of their work with covering letter by 31 July 2013 to [Dr Matthew Stavros](#).

New Voices competition

The Australian Centre on China in the World (CIW) invites Australian citizens and residents who are students or who have completed an undergraduate degree within the last three years to submit entries to its New Voices Competition.

Entries should be in the form of a policy brief or a short essay written to the Australian government addressing what it should do in regard to China policy following the September 2013 federal election. Entries should be 1500 to 2000 words in length.

Essays judged to be outstanding by a distinguished selection panel will be published on the CIW site, [The China Story](#), and logged in The Australia–China Story archive. They may also be included in the print version of Australia-China Agenda 2013 that will be presented to members of parliament, as well as to key opinion makers and the media following the election.

CIW will fund authors of published entries to come to Canberra for the launch of the book *Australia-China agenda 2013* and asked to speak at a New Voices Forum. The most outstanding entry will be awarded a cash prize of \$2500. The closing date for [submissions](#) is 1 August 2013.

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Coming events

State of the Nation: Indonesia, Melbourne, 25 June 2013, 6–8pm. This forum, organised by Asialink, will provide key insights on building successful engagement with Indonesia in business, trade, research or the arts. Cost: \$44 (incl. GST). Venue: Corrs Chambers Westgarth. This event will also be held in [Sydney](#) on 27 June. Further information: [Leanne Van Diemen](#) or 03 9035 3789.

2013 ST Lee Lecture, Australian Centre for Asian Art and Archaeology, Sydney, 31 July 2013, by Prof. Nora A. Taylor, Alsdorf Professor of South and Southeast Asian Art History at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Time: 6–8pm. Venue: The Refectory, Quadrangle, Sydney University.

ANZCA 2013 conference, 3–5 July 2013, Fremantle, WA. The 2013 Australia and New Zealand Communication Association's annual conference, hosted by Murdoch University's School of Arts. See [website](#).

18th Biennial Conference of the Japanese Studies Association of Australia, Canberra, 8–11 July 2013, at the Australian National University, hosted by the ANU College of Asia and the Pacific. The conference theme of, *Cities, nature and landscapes: from Nara to the networked city* focuses not only on the social impact of disaster, but on learning from the past experiences as we move towards the future of living spaces and human communities and on the 'networked' cities of the future. Further information from the [conference website](#).

Asia Education Foundation first national conference, Melbourne, 12–14 August 2013: See [website](#) for details.



South Asian childhoods: contemporary and historical perspectives, Canberra, Conference 18–19 July 2013, Australian National

University. The conference will provide an interdisciplinary platform for scholars and NGO representatives who work in the areas of childhood and education in South Asia. See [website](#) for details.

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

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

'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 report, [p. 28](#) and [Bulletin board](#) for call for papers.

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. The conference invites presentations addressing shifts, continuities, innovations and tensions in Asia and welcomes engagement from scholars and practitioners in the humanities, social sciences and other sciences, as well as interdisciplinary explorations of Asia and Asia–Australia relations. Further details and a call for papers will follow.

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