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Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies



# PeaceWrites

## newsletter

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### The International Project in Afghanistan: The Way Forward

by Astri Suhrke

International combat forces are scheduled to be out of Afghanistan by 2014, and as the date moves closer, there is increasing uncertainty and concern about what the future will bring. Analysts are divided, and in Kabul the mood is one of great uncertainty and fear of continued violence in the future. Yet we can look forward more confidently if we first look back. What forces have been driving the international, US-led engagement in Afghanistan during the past decade? What accounts for the mixed results? And from this vantage point, what are the likely future trajectories?

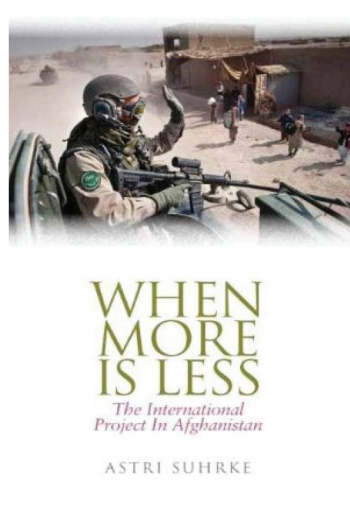
These are the questions I examine in my book *When More is Less: The International Project in Afghanistan* (Columbia University Press: London and New York, 2011). The main thesis of the book is that the international project itself contained serious internal tensions that significantly contributed to the lack of progress. Most important are the contradictions between building peace and waging war, between sovereignty



and interventionist controls, and between dependency and sustainability.

At the heart of the dependency problem lies the rentier state, a product of the aid and war economy over the past decade that has spawned a series of problems of its own. As the general literature shows, rentier states have a number of dysfunctional features: they tend to be corrupt, undemocratic, and vulnerable to collapse when the source of income ends.

In the Afghan case, dependence on external funds has not appreciably decreased since 2001. Domestic revenues have grown somewhat, but expenditures have grown even faster. A second order dependence has developed in the form of reliance on international technical experts as well as the so-called 'second civil service' – a large cadre of Afghan experts, mostly from the diaspora, who



help staff the state apparatus but whose salaries are wholly or mostly financed by donors.

Heavy dependence on aid breeds corruption. The pervasive, systemic and at times spectacular corruption in Afghanistan is hardly surprising given the vast, sudden influx of foreign aid and billions of dollars' worth of contracts issued by foreign militaries and international organizations. The money flow simply overwhelmed the country's social and institutional capacity to deal with it in a legal and socially acceptable manner. On the international side, aid and military contracts are handled by so many actors and pass through so many channels that neither the Afghan government nor the international financial institutions have a complete and accurate picture of the inflows. Potential misuse of public funds is thus an integral part of the aid-and-war economy and a shared Afghan-international responsibility.

### Easing of Tensions

For these reasons alone, I conclude, the transition to a lesser international presence – pegged to 2014 as the watermark – suggests positive effects in the long run. With less recourse to large-scale, foreign economic and military support, the Afghan state will become more dependent upon its own people. This will increase the incentives of the ruling elites to be more responsive to local realities and demands

with regard to revenue mobilization, political representation and governance.

On the military side, the withdrawal of ISAF forces will remove a major ideological pillar of the insurgency, most likely producing further fragmentation among the militants and a greater localization of the issues at stake. While this also happened in the early 1990s and was followed by a vicious civil war, widespread awareness of this catastrophic precedent among all parties concerned at present – Afghans and internationals – is a strong incentive to seize the possibilities for negotiated compromises that the NATO withdrawal also opens up.

In the short run, building down the state of extreme dependence chronicled in the book does spell conflict. The present elites will struggle to maintain their privileges. The competition over alternative sources of wealth (notably the country's newly-documented mineral wealth and the established drug economy) will increase. The military, which with international support has expanded rapidly in numbers and types, will want to be paid and maintain the power that comes with bearing arms. The new urban middle class that has prospered under the Western-supported political order fear the loss of newly won rights and prosperity. As political groups and social segments face the uncertainties of the transition, ethnic loyalties have become more pronounced and mark foundational lines of both conflict and compromise.

### **Afghanize the war vs negotiate**

At present the United States basically has two strategic options. The first is an incremental adjustment of present policy premised on a continued forward US position in the region. The aim would be to maintain a slim but long-term military presence in the country in order to (i) sustain counter-terrorist operations, (ii) protect US power in the region, particularly vis-a-vis China, but also Iran and (iii) deny the Taliban major political gains. This scenario

does not exclude negotiations with the Taliban, but the nature of talks would be subordinated to the longer-term goal of establishing Afghanistan as a pro-Western player in order to achieve the above objectives.

This seems to be Washington's preferred option, involving the presence of Special Forces (with support amounting to a contingent of ca 20 000), and the use of 5-6 military bases. The likely consequence is continued violence, although at a lower level and probably interspersed with instances of local accommodation and cease-fires. Continued US military presence will ensure, however, that regional tensions remain high, particularly in relation to Iran but also in Pakistan. The costs of war for the US and allies will be reduced, but the increasing Afghanization of the war will inflict continued suffering on ordinary Afghans.

The second option is more radical: negotiate with the Taliban, draw all the regional powers into a settlement based on the principle of non-interference in Afghanistan's internal affairs, and reciprocal guarantees that Afghan territory will not be used to threaten other countries. In a logical extension of these principles, all foreign military presence in Afghanistan is terminated and Afghanistan reverts to its one-time tradition of neutrality in foreign policy.<sup>1</sup> Within Afghanistan, a government of national reconciliation and unity is formed, representing all main political factions. Washington has embraced some of its elements by approaching talks with the Taliban, but hesitantly so.

Some 30 years ago, Soviet exit strategy from Afghanistan was built around this option. It did not, as we know, succeed. The prospects for the success of a similar strategy this time are not bright. It requires, in the first instance, reconstructing dominant narratives that have demonized the adversary (which invariably occurs in wars), and assumed that Western military engagement is a stabilizing force that stands between Afghanistan and violent ethnic civil war.

In fact, the scheduled withdrawal by 2014 is recognition that the US-led military engagement has not stabilized either Afghanistan or the region. Arguably, it has had the opposite effect. The militants have become steadily stronger over the past decade, and the war has spread to Pakistan.

The principal policy implication therefore is that efforts to negotiate with the Taliban and related militants must be intensified. Negotiations are opposed by some Afghans, particularly among the non-Pashtun minorities. Their opposition to the Taliban and fear of losing recent political and social gains have led to warnings that, once the international military forces leave, the present war will be fought along ethnic lines. This is a legitimate concern. It can at least in part be addressed by meeting some of the other demands of the non-Pashtuns, particularly regarding devolution of power to the provinces.<sup>2</sup> It should not be allowed to override the more fundamental need for settling a long war through negotiations.

*Dr Astri Suhrke is a senior researcher at the Chr. Michelsen Institute, Bergen (Norway), and an Associate Fellow at the Asia-Pacific College of Diplomacy, Australian National University, Canberra. This article is based on a seminar organised by CPACS at University of Sydney on March 13, 2012.*

(1) For an elaboration, see James Shinn and James Dobbins, *Afghan Peace Talks: A Primer* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2011). Note that the report is issued by an organization with close ties to the defense and foreign policy establishments in Washington. One of its authors, James Dobbins, was the envoy of President George Bush to the Bonn conference on Afghanistan in 2001.

(2) See e.g. Thomas Barfield, "Afghanistan's Ethnic Puzzle. Decentralizing Power before the U.S. Withdrawal," *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. Sep/Oct (2011).

## Politicians without Morals

by Ken Macnab

From the idea that weasels  
Suck the contents out of eggs,  
Leaving a shell into which  
Can be stuffed false morsels,  
Comes the tool of constant use  
By politicians without morals:  
Unctuous weasel words.

With its high-pitched signals  
Heard by dogs but not by humans,  
Used to galvanise for action,  
Control, command and train,  
Comes another tool of constant use  
By politicians without morals:  
Ubiquitous dog whistle.

Weasel words and dog-whistling  
Substitute for policies and plans,  
Code-dripping formulaic snippets  
Meaningless to honest people,  
But loaded, labeled and coded  
For packs of mindless public:  
Led by politicians without morals.

Crudely fashioned messages  
Of fascist, racist, sexist bile,  
Larded out by politicians without morals  
Tame shock jocks and servile press  
Lobbies who exploit their claim to serve,  
Become sick substitute for real debate:  
All weasel words and dog whistles.

When challenged as to meaning  
Of insulting, sneering, lying, cheating,  
Comes the claytons apology denial,  
Not for what was said or done,  
But to any perchance offended  
By these politicians without morals:  
Who live by weasel words and dog whistles.

Having just read the day's press, April 4, 2012

*Dr Ken Macnab is President of CPACS.*

## CPACS and the Responsibility to Protect

by Jake Lynch

'We will if you will'. It's a familiar impasse in armed conflicts where the parties teeter on the brink of a truce; and, at the time of writing, each side in Syria's incipient civil war was apparently waiting for the other to blink first. The 'Free Syrian Army' had promised to cease firing if government troops did so first. The Assad regime, for its part, had signalled in-principle acceptance of a six-point UN peace plan – calling for its forces to withdraw from contested areas – but was first insisting on written guarantees that the rebels would lay down their arms.

There is a legacy of mistrust, which may be impeding progress – and could, therefore, be seen as support for the 'moral hazard' argument against the Responsibility to Protect. 'R2P' is the principle that, if a state is unwilling or unable to carry out its responsibility to prevent serious human rights abuses, then that responsibility must be transferred to the international community. It was first put forward eleven years ago, in the report of an inter-governmental commission co-chaired by former Australian Foreign Minister, Gareth Evans.

There are powerful arguments in its favour. Gone are the dark days when police in many countries would interpret their jurisdiction as coming to an end at the front door of a man's house, with any violence perpetrated on his wife and children regarded as a 'domestic', and essentially their own affair. Society has a right and duty to intervene to prevent abuses – and if that applies in the home, surely it should apply on the world stage, to stem the excesses of autocratic governments?<sup>1</sup>

That argument was accepted, with some important safeguards, at the World Summit of



Syrian flag and pretesters in Idlib, north Syria, April 2012  
@ Freedom House

2005, when heads of government signed up to a closing statement that established 'R2P' in the UN toolkit for responding to conflicts and crises. It included the option of a so-called 'Pillar 3' intervention, the deployment of military force across borders without agreement by the government concerned – so long as it had backing from the Security Council.

And that, in turn, brings up some of the important arguments against the Responsibility to Protect, since it appears to add a third specific circumstance – over and above the traditional self-defence, and the maintenance of international peace and security – in which the use of force to achieve policy goals would be regarded as both legitimate and lawful.

I have considered some of these arguments in detail in two recent articles:

1. 'Conflict interventions: the case for a multi-disciplinary approach', Australian Journal of International Affairs, vol 66, no 2, pp 265-276.
2. 'Responsibility to Protect after Libya', International Journal of Peace Studies vol 16 no 2, pp 59-76 (copies available from me – for a reasonable price!)

The former is a review essay of four books on R2P, including one by CPACS Honorary Associate, Dr Belinda Helmke,<sup>2</sup> who identifies it as one of a “cluster of contemporary challenges” to the post-WWII principles limiting military action, also including the doctrine of ‘pre-emptive self-defence’ promulgated in the US National Security Strategy published by the Bush Administration in 2002.

The latter article, in the IJPS – which is the journal of the International Peace Research Association – considers the auguries from ‘Operation Unified Protector’, the NATO attack on Libya last year. That was carried out in furtherance of UN Security Council Resolution 1973, which conferred a mandate for human protection under Chapter VII of the UN Charter (governing the use of force) and was seen as the first occasion since the World Summit that R2P was actually ‘operationalised’ in Pillar 3 of its provisions.

The ‘moral hazard’ argument – refuted, though not entirely convincingly in my opinion, by one of the other books in the review essay – is essentially that the availability of R2P on the ‘statute book’ enters into the calculations of actual and prospective parties to conflict, and may even incentivize them to cause or provoke violence, in order to further their aims.

These aims may be explicit, as perhaps in the case of ‘rebel groups’, which seek to bring international intervention to their

side. Or they may be tacit. In my IJPS article, I urge a new methodology for R2P scholarship, much more attentive to the workings of power, which are “most effective when least visible”. The words are from a famous essay, *Power – A Radical View*, by Steven Lukes, first published just under 40 years ago, and I argue that academic research on R2P pays too little attention to such considerations. That’s because most of it is stuck in a realist International Relations approach, which tends to take the overt words and deeds of conflict parties at face value, and to be insufficiently curious about how the observable behaviours of nation states come to be constructed, and what interests and conflicts may lie within them.

For this reason, I argue, “conscience-shocking situations” (the words of Gareth Evans’ original report) tend to pose dilemmas that resolve themselves into dyadic form: ‘bomb or do nothing’. As Lukes contends, the workings of power may be discerned less from the contents of agendas for political action than from the list of those expedients excluded, in advance, from discussion. In Libya, the provisions of UNSCR 1973 for a ceasefire on all sides, and for inclusive talks on a political settlement, were swiftly sidelined by ballyhoo over the NATO-imposed no-fly zone. And that was soon followed by pressure to oust Colonel Gaddafi, turning a human protection mission into an exercise in regime change.

In the article I draw attention to proposals made at the time – among them, one by the International Crisis Group, headed then by the same Gareth Evans – for a more balanced approach, including the deployment of blue-helmeted UN troops to establish safe areas. But these were, somehow, pushed down and off the agenda. At the same time, NATO countries were surreptitiously ‘looking

away' as arms shipments reached the rebel forces, as a major piece of investigative journalism, in a Canadian newspaper, the Montreal Gazette, later found.<sup>3</sup>

The chaos and abuses that have marked the post-Gaddafi period in Libya, along with the tens of thousands killed by NATO's bombardment and the hostilities it triggered, attach a still greater importance to this perspective. If the UN had taken charge in the country, and reduced violence while creating space for political reforms, it would not have delivered the 'sugar rush' of removing a dictator but it would have set Libya on a more sustainable course to peace with justice for its own people.

Despite this, CPACS recently joined the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect, a group of NGOs accredited at the UN. It has a four-point statement of principles, two of which – half the total – are to do with trying to avoid the R2P principle being hijacked by intervening parties for their own ends:

- "Defend against RtoP being interpreted as a new version of military humanitarian intervention.
- Guard against the abuse of the norm by governments, regional organizations or international organizations".

Our membership furthers a longstanding record of critical engagement by the Centre in recent years. We have co-convened two workshops – one in Sydney, the other in Jakarta – and a one-day conference, titled, 'What works and what doesn't: new directions in conflict intervention', on the challenges and opportunities facing the international community, especially in the Asia-Pacific region, in preventing R2P crimes.

And since 2007, CPACS has been involved in the project for the creation of a UN Emergency Peace Service (UNEPS) in collaboration with the New York-based NGO, Global Action to Prevent War. UNEPS is a proposal for a standing, multidimensional peacekeeping service that would have the mandate to prevent and halt R2P crimes. Through the provision of well-trained peacekeepers, who are able capable of deploying rapidly, UNEPS could provide the international community with another tool to operationalise the so-called 'Pillar Two' of R2P, where intervention takes place with the agreement of the government in the intervened-in country.

As I write this, our own Annie Herro has just submitted her PhD thesis, examining attitudes towards the proposed UNEPS as well as the potential to strengthen and develop different UN-based civilian capacities to prevent R2P crimes. And Dr Wendy Lambourne and PhD candidate James Tonny Dhizaala, are conducting research on how transitional justice can contribute to reconciliation and peacebuilding after mass violence.

So we have approached the issues raised by the R2P norm from a range of different viewpoints. Out there in the 'blogosphere', it attracts at least as many critics as supporters. My colleague Dr Tim Anderson, from the University of Sydney's Department of Political Economy, collects some highly illuminating material and posts it on Facebook pages including Imperialism Watch and Stop the War Coalition. Some of it casts some very long shadows on the provenance of sections of the Syrian opposition and the motives of their international backers.

However, my own writings on the subject always emphasise the moral imperative

behind some of the genuine support the idea has generated, as well as the misgivings over how it is used, and its consequences. After all, one of CPACS' main strands of advocacy work in recent years, speaking up for the rights and protection of the Tamil people of Sri Lanka, has centred on the need for international actors to respond positively to calls for intervention and accountability in the face of atrocity crimes alleged against the Sri Lankan government.

In my article for the *International Journal of Peace Studies*, I characterise the mainstream

of academic commentators as 'R2P-o-philes'. There are also 'R2P-o-phobes', though they tend to be less prominent in academic literature. I attempt, in the article, to set out a position I describe as 'R2P-o-sceptical'.

*Associate Professor Jake Lynch is Director of CPACS.*

1 Thanks for this one to Emeritus Professor Stuart Rees.

2 Under Attack: Challenges to the Rules Governing the International Use of Force (Ashgate).

3 <http://www.montrealgazette.com/news/NATO+secret+against+Gadhafi/6184985/story.html#ixzz1n45n81hb>

### **The World Federalist Movement**

by Chris Hamer

I visited Washington, D.C. to attend the annual council meeting of the World Federalist Movement in November last year. I was very impressed by their professionalism. The current President is Lloyd Axworthy, former Foreign Minister of Canada, and the Executive Director is William Pace from the USA. They also have a bunch of bright and active interns to run things.

They have had remarkable success in recent years by lowering their sights, and concentrating on initiatives which do not require any change in the UN Charter. They formed a Coalition to campaign for the International Criminal Court, a permanent tribunal to prosecute individuals for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and the crime of aggression (although it cannot exercise jurisdiction over the crime of aggression until at least 2017). The campaign came to fruition with the foundation of the Court in 2002 under the Rome Statute. The Court has issued warrants or mounted prosecutions against a number of prominent malefactors, including Sudanese President al-Bashir and Joseph Kony and other leaders of the Lord's Resistance Army. The Coalition has a large network of NGO supporters, and is still very active in support of the ICC. It has a budget of the order of \$2 million per annum.

Another Coalition, the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICRtoP), was formed to campaign for the Responsibility to Protect. This Coalition disposes of funds of order of \$1.5 million per annum, some \$400,000 of which is contributed by the Australian government. One may detect the hand of Gareth Evans in this, perhaps!

I spoke briefly about my ideas for a World Community of Democratic Nations, but time was very short, and serious consideration was deferred until the Congress this year, which sets policy for the next 4-5 years. I also visited Tiziana Stella, Executive Director of the Streit Council. She and the Council are certainly very much in tune with my ideas, and we are considering setting up a 'Coalition for a World Community of Democratic Nations', on the WFM model.

*Dr Chris Hamer is founder of World Citizens Association (Australia)*



Stuart Rees trying traditional Ottoman dress in the West Bank, February 2012

## Erez Crossing

by Stuart Rees

A science fiction horror movie  
peppered with frightening ingredients  
would be difficult to watch  
but can be found in this place.

Beyond signs saying 'stop', 'no' 'forbidden',  
the concrete surrounds of walls and turrets,  
topped by millions of miles of wire,  
leave nothing to the imagination.

Once through the chambers of control  
and for some, elimination,  
microphones and cameras monitor  
an almost endless walk of shame.

Devoid of trees, grass or flowers  
here is the stage set of a grand opera  
distinguished by arias of cruelty  
and acres of desolation.

This entrance paints a country's black hole  
into which human rights have disappeared  
from a mind set which has created  
the world's largest prison.

Gaza, Jan. 30th, 2012

Erez Crossing is the barrier which has to be  
negotiated to get into Gaza from the Israeli side

## Burj-al Barajneh

by Stuart Rees

From alcoves of rusty fuse boxes,  
a spaghetti tangle of wires  
carry currents of danger  
over prison-like alleys  
peppered with puddles  
and garbage desolate  
beneath damp and peeling walls.

Women seeming dark in the darkness  
appear hopeful when light  
blinks unexpectedly  
where the width widens  
and unknowing children  
say 'welcome', as if, as if  
theirs is a mansion  
and this cruel tragedy  
had never been composed.

Men seeming exhausted  
by the illusion  
of their right to return,  
plea for help to escape  
the shackles of permanence  
with which their jailers,  
in alliance with something called  
'the international community'  
have crafted the fantasy  
that these people  
should stay silent and invisible  
because they do not exist.

Beirut, Lebanon, Jan. 23rd, 2012

Burj-al Barajneh is a refugee camp south of Beirut  
which contains 22,000 refugees some of whom  
have been there since 1948!

*Prof. Stuart Rees is Director of Sydney  
Peace Foundation*

## The Refugee Language Program at Risk of Closing

by Lesley Carnus



Refugee Language Program volunteers and refugees at end of year party, December 2011

The Refugee Language Program began this year, as usual, without any indication of our continued funding from the university. Then in February we learnt that our program would be the first cut in the Vice Chancellor's 'budgetary constraints'.

Teachers and volunteers were extremely dismayed at this loss and met to discuss strategies to request a reconsideration of this decision. Members at a meeting of the NTEU, unanimously supported the program and condemned the Vice-Chancellor's decision to withdraw funding.

The cutting of the program's budget generated a great deal of negative publicity for the University and the VC. I was contacted by a journalist from the Sydney Morning Herald to provide background information for an article in the Education section of the newspaper. One of the volunteer teachers, Lesley Freedman, was interviewed and she added the following,

'We feel that the Vice Chancellor, as part of all the cost cutting and in saving money here and there, has arbitrarily decided "well, this is a cost we don't need to keep

going with.'" He hasn't actually consulted the Senate. The Chancellor, Marie Bashir, has already expressed a lot of support for the program over the years. Most people think it's wonderful.'

<sup>1</sup>

The ABC radio program, PM, sent a journalist on February 9th to interview a number of the participants who had a stake in the future of the program. Those interviewed included Michael Thompson from the NTEU, a former student; Aaron, who has successfully gained admission to Mathematics and IT course at UTS; and the Vice-Chancellor, Michael Spence.

Michael Thompson was astonished that the university would seek to cut a program that cost so little and benefitted so many. The Refugee Language Program's only paid position (the co-ordinator), which has been held since September 2003, was described by the Vice-Chancellor in the PM interview as AD HOC!<sup>2</sup>

An article was also published in the Sydney Catholic on-line newspaper on 10th February emphasizing the shock that many refugee activists felt at the foreshadowed closure of the

program. "Many of those I have seen over the years have benefited from the program which played an important role not only in helping refugees and asylum seekers learn English but in helping many who had suffered terrible trauma and torture, to grow in confidence and adapt to their new life here in Australia," Father Jim Carty said.<sup>3</sup>

For the staff, including teachers and volunteers, February was a very stressful month. We lobbied University Senate members, Greens politicians and Sydney City Council, and held meetings with Linda Feinberg from the Staff Refugee Support Group.

The Sydney Catholic on-line newspaper also ran a follow-up article on the program titled Refugee Language Program Wins Three Month Reprieve on March 1st!<sup>4</sup>

We had won a reprieve because a very generous volunteer in the program, Colin Williamson, offered to make an extremely generous donation to help fund the program. Colin participates in the Saturday classes with conversation and computer tutoring and thinks that the program makes a valuable contribution to the lives of a group of people who have virtually nothing. With this offer came further support from the Arts Faculty with grant applications made and discussions with philanthropic foundations to possibly fund the program in future.

Carmen, a volunteer teacher, also wrote to John Kaye from the Greens and received this response:

"The axing of a programme that is so integral to the community is a tragedy. The University of Sydney is not just important to its students, but serves as a centre of activity and support to one [of] the most culturally and economically diverse communities in Sydney. The cost-cutting measures will have numerous negative

effects that extend beyond the experience of students and the livelihoods of staff".

We have also received support from individuals, university student groups, the Anti-Racist Collective, Lee Rhiannon and a number of others who value the work we do.

We started our classes a month late and are about to begin the second course in May. The students are pleased and relieved that we will remain a source of educational, social and emotional support for them. There has been so much goodwill and effort put into maintaining this program over the 9 years that we have been a part of the University of Sydney, that to lose this resource at this stage would be a tragedy.

Once again I would like to thank everyone who has helped us in our fight to remain a functioning program. I would like to thank my colleagues here at CPACS and in the Education Faculty, particularly Associate Professor Ken Cruikshank. I would like to thank the attendants in the buildings where we hold classes who welcome us warmly, and most of all I would like to say that I feel so fortunate to be working with such a committed group of volunteers as we have in the Refugee Language Program. My final thanks will go to Colin Williamson whose generosity has allowed us to live again!

*Lesley Carnus is the coordinator of the Refugee Language Program.*

1 <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/university-has-staff-hit-list-union-says-20120208-1rfhe.html>

2 You can listen to the program or read the transcript at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-02-09/refugees-to-miss-out-under-university-cutbacks/3821344>

3 [http://www.sydneycatholic.org/news/latest\\_news/2012/2012210\\_1417.shtml](http://www.sydneycatholic.org/news/latest_news/2012/2012210_1417.shtml)

4 [http://www.sydneycatholic.org/news/latest\\_news/2012/201231\\_905.shtml](http://www.sydneycatholic.org/news/latest_news/2012/201231_905.shtml)

## Kony 2012 – Beyond the Hype

by Wendy Lambourne and James Tonny Dhizaala

On 5 March 2012, the US-based non-government organisation Invisible Children released a 29 minute video entitled Kony 2012 on YouTube. The video called for a campaign to make the notorious Lord's Resistance Army leader, Joseph Kony, 'visible', so that the US government would be forced to take action to support the Ugandan government in capturing Kony to face justice at the International Criminal Court.

The video went viral, being viewed by millions worldwide, and generated much controversy and discussion about the wisdom of the campaign and its message, its style and method, and questioning the legitimacy of Invisible Children itself.

Concerned to highlight the current needs of people in northern Uganda, Professor Robert Cumming of the Sydney Medical School and Dr Wendy Lambourne of the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies together organised a public seminar Kony 2012 – Beyond the Hype. The seminar was held on Thursday 22 March at the University of Sydney and featured three postgraduate students as panellists: James Tonny Dhizaala from eastern Uganda who is doing his PhD at CPACS; Dr Richard Okello from northern Uganda who is studying public health at UNSW; and Atem Atem from South Sudan who is a PhD candidate at ANU.

Joseph Kony and the LRA are no longer active in northern Uganda, having moved on to terrorise Uganda's neighbours South Sudan, Central African Republic (CAR) and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). But they have left a severe legacy of a traumatised population struggling to recover and rebuild their communities. The war in northern Uganda caused around 50,000 deaths and



Participants and Speakers at Kony 2012: Beyond the Hype seminar, March 2012

an estimated 50,000 children were abducted to join the LRA. More than 1.5 million people have returned from IDP camps where they were forced by the Ugandan government to live for years during the war in terrible conditions

The Kony 2012 campaign appears to have been motivated by sincere humanitarian concerns, but the message was oversimplified and misleading, and potentially dangerous.

It was misleading with regard to the priorities and needs of people in northern Uganda. The victims of LRA violence, including former child soldiers, and those returning from the IDP camps, require psychosocial support and assistance with reintegration, peacebuilding and development. These development priorities include investment in fixing roads, providing access to health services and equitable access to education. The victims and returnees require skills, resources and technology to ensure food security and improve livelihoods through agricultural productivity and access to land, cattle, microcredit and markets. The guns may have stopped, but there is a need to address the structural violence and imbalance in access to the country's resources, as well as issues of democracy and political leadership, in order to build a peace with justice.

It was oversimplified in that it branded Kony as the evil bad guy: stop Kony and the problem will be solved. The campaign ignored the socioeconomic and political structures and causes of conflict and violence in northern Uganda and elsewhere in the region. The Acholi, Lango and Teso people of northern Uganda have also suffered from the oppressive actions of the Ugandan government, and many are calling for President Museveni and other Ugandan military leaders also to be indicted by the ICC for crimes against humanity. The Ugandan government has in the past supported the southern Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) because Khartoum was supporting the LRA, and the US supports the Ugandan government, regardless of its record of human rights violations and discrimination against the north.

The campaign also oversimplifies the solution by suggesting that violence can lead to justice. The use of Ugandan military force supported by the US has failed to defeat the LRA and capture Kony in the past, and has instead served to further destabilise the region and led to LRA reprisal attacks on local populations, as well as increased population displacement. The African Union has subsequently announced that a regional force comprising troops from Uganda, South Sudan, CAR and DRC, supported by the US, will be sent to 'neutralise' Kony. It remains to be seen whether this intervention will succeed in capturing Kony so that he can stand trial at the ICC, whilst avoiding unnecessary violence and suffering of civilian populations.

Donating money for an advocacy campaign to gain support for the capture of Kony is therefore not needed; it is serving a diversionary political agenda of the

Ugandan government. The US government is already committed to the removal of Kony as part of a multi-pronged strategy which also includes protection of civilians; promotion of justice and reconciliation; promotion of LRA defections and DDR; and humanitarian relief in DRC, CAR and South Sudan. Financial donations and political campaigning would be better directed to alleviating the impact and causes of violence and atrocities perpetrated by Kony and the LRA in northern Uganda as well as in the region where Kony is still active.

The Kony 2012 campaign was naïve (at best) about the implications of the method of mass manipulation being used to create mass public support for a cause. There is nothing new in the method – utilising the power of propaganda – only the technology being employed. It is potentially dangerous to use the power of social media in such a way that produces demonisation and emotional responses that call for violence as the answer. This tactic is what made the Holocaust and the Rwandan genocide possible. It is far more responsible and effective to promote social change based on knowledge and understanding as well as determination and goodwill.

James and Wendy will be speaking about Kony 2012 at Politics in the Pub in Sydney on Friday 27 July at 6 pm –see [www.politicsinthepub.au](http://www.politicsinthepub.au) for further details.

*Dr Wendy Lambourne is Senior Lecturer and Academic Coordinator at CPACS. James Tonny Dhizaala is a PhD Candidate at CPACS.*

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#### Further reading

- Tim Allen & Koen Vlassenroot (eds) *The Lord's Resistance Army: Myth and Reality*, London: Zed Books, 2010.
- Carlos Rodriguez Soto, *Tall Grass: Stories of Suffering and Peace in Northern Uganda*, Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2009.
- Nicholas Waddell & Phil Clark (eds), *Courting Conflict: Justice, Peace and the ICC in Africa*, London: Royal African Society, 2008.

## The Death of a Dictator: Malawi's Tortured Democratic Transition

by Bonaventure Mkandawire

At 5:00am Friday 6 April 2012 in Sydney (Thursday 8:00pm Malawi time) I was woken up to a text message from my Ugandan friend at CPACS, James Tonny Dhizaala: "Is this breaking news to you!! Malawi President Mutharika 'has cardiac arrest.'" I immediately called friends in Malawi. They confirmed the President had collapsed earlier in the day, and there were conflicting reports on whether or not he was dead, but no official announcement was made. However, they heard from radio-trottoir he had been flown out to South Africa, apparently to seek medical treatment.

The 78 year-old President Bingu wa Mutharika suffered a massive heart attack Thursday morning at State House, Lilongwe. He was rushed to the local Central Hospital in the Capital City of Lilongwe where efforts to resuscitate him failed. What followed can only be described as macabre even by the fiendish imaginations of some of our Africa's notorious power-hungry political leaders. For the rest of Thursday, the ruling Democratic Progressive Party's (DPP) inner clique conspired to buy time, to lie to the Malawian people, and to the world that the President was still alive, and they were preparing to fly him to South Africa for medical attention.

In reality, they wanted to seize power. It was also a damning, if sadly befitting farewell to the reviled, failed President. So severe is the medical and energy crisis in Malawi that the Central Hospital could not conduct a proper autopsy or keep the body refrigerated. Thus, belatedly in death, the President finally encountered the dose of his own medicine, the collapse of social services that he and his cronies had created and rarely had to deal with. While he made social services collapse

and amassed wealth, members of his tiny elite could afford to fly to South Africa for medical attention and educate their children in expensive schools abroad, while the rest of the population are languishing in dire poverty. The President's despicable end should serve as a warning to them, and future leaders, to rebuild and sustain local social services first, if nothing else, for their own good.

### President's Death News Blackout

The official silence was an indication that a powerful clique within the DPP was desperately and despicably trying to block the Vice-President, Mrs. Joyce Banda, from assuming office. They had apparently been meeting since the President's death on Thursday to plan their seizure of power, which would amount to a coup. The Constitution of the Republic of Malawi is as clear as noon day in Section 83(4) as read with Section 87 (1): In the event of the President's resignation, incapacitation or death, the Vice-President immediately takes over. This is non-negotiable. But the problem was, from the view of the ruling DPP, in December 2010, after the May 2009 elections, the President and the Vice-President fell out.

In her televised pathetic press conference on Friday, a day after the death of the President, the Minister of Information and Civic Education, assured the nation that the President was still alive, and seeking treatment in South Africa. She claimed, therefore, that the Vice-President, Mrs Joyce Banda could not assume the presidency because she quit the DPP and formed another party. Going by that logic, President Mutharika should also have lost the Presidency in 2005 when he quit the ruling UDF under which he ran and was elected, to set up his own DPP after he fell out with his predecessor, President Bakili Muluzi.

The cause of the disagreement between President Mutharika and Vice-President Banda dogged and drowned the Mutharika Presidency. The President was determined to be succeeded by his sibling brother, Peter wa Mutharika, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and former Law Professor at Washington University, Missouri, United States, as the sole candidate of the DPP in forthcoming 2014 elections. But Vice-President Banda and another DPP member objected. Mutharika summarily kicked them out of the DPP. When she was kicked out, the Vice-President proceeded to form the People's Party (PP), but was effectively sidelined from all official functions as Vice-President. Even some of her Vice-Presidential responsibilities were taken away from her and given to the First Lady (the President's wife) who began to draw a salary, much to the chagrin of the Malawian people. Later Mutharika made a televised statement to the nation explaining why he had sacked the Vice-President from the DPP as quoted from *BBC*:

"When God noted that Lucifer was being big-headed, he did not hesitate to evict him from the heavenly government. I am not the first to fire someone, it started in heaven. So before you start faulting me for being intolerant because I have sacked Joyce Banda from DPP, fault God for sacking Lucifer from heaven."<sup>1</sup>

The President's dynastic ambitions became more evident to Malawians. The more authoritarian and unpopular he became, the more the international opposition against him grew. Meanwhile, the popularity of the opposition, including the Vice-President, rose. This resulted in the countrywide mass protests on 20 July 2011, in which the Malawi Police Service using live bullets shot to death 20 unarmed and peaceful demonstrators, causing the worst massacre in post-colonial

Malawian history. Thereafter, Mutharika openly announced to the nation that he will "smoke out" anyone who opposes him.

Public disaffection against President Mutharika's dictatorship, which was worse than that of Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda before him, deepened as the country slid into a stunning economic tailspin of widespread shortages of basic commodities, fuel, and power blackouts, leading to growing calls for political change. On 15 March 2012, the much-respected Malawi's Public Affairs Committee (PAC), a coalition of civil society and faith-based organizations, met and called for the President to resign, or call a referendum within three months. The beleaguered, but arrogant autocratic President dismissed the calls as he has done with all criticism from friends and foes. In fact, he responded by accelerating the arrests of opposition leaders, and burning homes and offices of human rights activists, and civil society organization leaders, suffocating Malawi's shrinking democratic space even further.

Malawi's relations with foreign donors have been strained by accusations that Mutharika was authoritarian and responsible for human rights abuses. Early March 2012, a U.S. aid agency that rewards good governance suspended US\$350 million worth of assistance to Malawi. Last April 2011, Mutharika expelled the British High Commissioner to Malawi after the envoy was quoted in a local newspaper expressing concern about the president's intolerance of criticism and about deteriorating human rights. Former ruler Britain then indefinitely suspended aid to Malawi. The European Union, Germany and Norway also halted assistance, citing concerns about the direction of the economy as well as Mutharika's human rights records. Mutharika openly told the donor community to "go to hell" with their aid.



Former President of the Republic of Malawi, Peter Mutharika @TheBostonGlobe

### Descent into Despotism

President Mutharika's rapid descent into totalitarianism after the May 2009 elections can be attributed to many factors deep-rooted in his personal and political biographies. His dynastic ambitions reflected the advances of Malawi's democratization. A third term was ruled out because former President Muluzi had foreclosed that option following his failed unconstitutional third-term bid in 1999. Ironically, Mutharika, whom President Muluzi handpicked as a pliant successor, benefitted and learned from the latter's failure. He sought to be succeeded by his own sibling brother, Peter, who last Saturday was elected as DPP President, replacing his late brother ready to take over as Malawi's President had DPP seized power.

Affirming whatever motivations for personal and political grandiosity the President may

have harboured, surely he was also inspired by the need to protect his ill-gotten wealth. Within a few short years in power, the man of previously humble means became massively wealthy. So did the DPP cronies around him. This wealth was certainly not accumulated from his paltry presidential salary. It is this primitive accumulation he sought to protect through dynastic succession, and which the few beneficiaries of his regime were determined to protect at all costs.

Meanwhile, by Friday evening, seeing there was no official death announcement by government, Civil Society Organizations including the Malawi Law Society, former President Muluzi, the Chief Justice, Malawi's military leaders, as well as the major Western countries, including Britain, and the United States, plus the Malawian population, began to pressure for a quick transition of power to Vice-President Banda.



H.E. Mrs Joyce Banda, the newly sworn-in President of the Republic of Malawi @ABC

### The New President of the Republic of Malawi

This pressure, fortunately, was heeded, and Mrs Joyce Banda was sworn in Saturday afternoon, 7 April 2012, which makes her Malawi's first, and Africa's second, female President.

President Banda has her work cut out for her. She has to heal a deeply troubled and latent ethnically divided nation. The division was created by Mutharika who openly hated other tribes, mainly those in the North of the country, in preference for his own tribal group in the south of the country in appointments to top positions in the civil service, judiciary, military, police and parastatal organizations.

President Banda must revive the economy. She must restore democratic governance. She must transform Malawi's external

relations. She must reclaim Malawi's place in the trajectory of a rising Africa. This is a tall order indeed. It will require surrounding herself with competent, honest ministers, and advisors. It will be hard, but she must rise above neopatrimonial and tribal politics and resist Malawi's perennial pitfall of rewarding political prostitution and recycling old, corrupt, and discredited politicians whose only fidelity is to alleviating their personal poverty not national poverty. It means upholding the division of powers between the three branches of government—the Presidency, Parliament, and Judiciary—and respecting the independence of the media and indispensable role of Civil Society.

President Banda must reconcile and transform relations with the international financial institutions and Western governments that have historically provided large amounts of development and budgetary assistance to Malawi. Their withdrawal since 2010 (due to arrogance of the Mutharika Presidency) has sent the economy into a debilitating economic crisis. For her long-term future, Malawi needs a bold vision of sustainable development befitting the successful economies and opportunities of the 21st century, at whose heart must be the development of the country's human resources. Such a future is only possible for this stunningly beautiful and peaceful country known as Malawi, "The Warm Heart of Africa," with its hard-working people if the transition from the authoritarian and inept regime of the late President Mutharika to President Joyce Banda is handled well. That is why a coup or dictatorship of any type must never be allowed root in Malawi again; but the rule of law, peace and justice, and transformation to succeed.

*Bonaventure Mkandawire is a PhD Candidate at CPACS.*

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13266263>



CPACS Director Jake Lynch at the rally organized by University Staff Union against job cuts, March 2012



Audience at the event 'Daring to Trust'



Speakers from the Palestinian-Jewish Dialogue Group Abe Quadan, Lyndal K Nayef Hajaj, and Donna Jacobs Sife at the event 'Daring to Trust', March 2012



Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies



Celebrating a birthday at CPACS with staff, students and alumni CPACS Director Jake Lynch, James Tonny Dhizaala, Paul Duffill, Lyn Dickens, Bonaventure Mkandawire, Melissa McCullough, Lydia Gitau, Punam Yadav, and Neven Bondokji, April 2012



The Hon Senator Lee Rhiannon addressing guests at a fundraising event organized by Ministry of Peace at CPACS, April 2012



Volunteer teachers with the Refugee Language Program



Ms Lucy Fiske and Dr Wendy Lambourne

**A summer of nonviolence, conflict resolution and mediation at CPACS!!****“Nonviolent Force in Political Change: Power and Dynamics of Civil Resistance”, Sydney Seminar held at the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies: February 20-22nd 2012**

by Sue Cohen

This three day seminar was organized by the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict (ICNC) and hosted by the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies. ICNC's stated aims of the seminar were for participants to learn more about people power, understand the interplay between strategies, tactics and mobilization for effective nonviolent struggle and interact with experts on nonviolence. I was particularly interested in the effectiveness (or not) of different nonviolent strategies and actions as tools for conflict resolution, especially where there is significant power imbalance. Lucky enough, I was accepted for the course which had no course fees.

The presenters, Hardy Merriman (ICNC, Washington), Shaazka Beyerle (ICNC based in Sydney), and Brian Martin (University of Wollongong) had considerable academic and practical experience in civil resistance which they were keen to share in an informal and interactive manner with the 35 participants, many of whom were/are activists themselves in their daily lives.

The seminar began by referring to Gene Sharp's views that civil resistance is a way for ordinary people to wield power without using violence. We then looked at what nonviolence

means for different people in different cultures and also, whilst complementary to 'peacemaking' or 'conflict resolution' methods, why nonviolent action was felt to be more powerful than violence in certain situations and with better long term effects. Another session looked at use of violence – condoned or otherwise, within a nonviolent movement: what happens when a sub-group uses violence and how this can damage the movement. There was recognition that for some participants in civil resistance movements peace is not always the final aim, and the discussion considered how this could be addressed. Following the initial theoretical and philosophical discussions, the seminar moved to more pragmatic discussions and interactive debates on how a movement can create awareness of itself and of the issues in question. The discussions also addressed a movement's public credibility, alliance building and taking action. We considered how a movement decides whether to focus on specific goals or more abstract ones; if you are too specific you may lose support. We addressed questions like how do movements define power? How do you define the values of your movement? Is dignity related to identity? It was then that I realized that the room was filled with very experienced nonviolence activists who themselves had a wealth of knowledge about campaigning and effective tactics.

During one 'tactics' workshop, I was interested to see how focused individuals were on winning their 'cause' via any method (computer crashing was popular) and I felt that their causes were very much viewed as a war between 'us' and 'them'.



ICNC trainers and participants in the workshop on Nonviolent Force in Political Change, February 2012

A previous session looked at negotiation and why it may or may not be valuable, so when I suggested that perhaps we could try and engage the 'other side' by seeking to understand the other group's interests or rationale, I was met with polite disbelief. Having just completed a summer course a week or so before at CPACS on 'Conflict in Organisations', which focused on identifying common interests and using Fisher and Ury's principled negotiation method, I must admit I had a 'clash of ideology' experience. I felt that these nonviolent methods were not for me. Perhaps people passionate about their causes simply loved the fight! Civil resistance fulfilled their need in a nonviolent and ideologically-acceptable way.

However, in this short overview, I cannot do justice to the level and depth covered by ICNC in the seminar, which also addressed topics like corruption, backfire, role of women, extreme violence, the media and democratic transition. The seminar was extremely well organized, with e-classroom resources which provided details of daily presentations, additional readings (electronic access), videos and other links. I would invite anyone interested in civil resistance to visit the ICNC website [www.nonviolent-conflict.org](http://www.nonviolent-conflict.org) and look out for the next course!

*Sue Cohen, a lawyer, is currently studying a Master of Peace and Conflict Studies at CPACS.*

## CPACS Gets Organised with Conflict in Organisations

by Paul Duffill

Summer School 2011-2012 saw the return of CPACS postgraduate unit of study, PACS6913 Conflict in Organisations, which was last taught by Cheryl Minks in 2004 under the original title Resolving Conflict Within Organisations.

CPACS MLitt student Paul Duffill proposed the resumption of the course which he co-facilitated with Steve Lancken. Steve is one of our recent Master of Peace and Conflict Studies graduates and is a professional mediation, negotiation and Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) practitioner, consultant, and principal of the Trillium Group.

The aims of the course were both theoretical and practical. The course began with understanding and evaluating the theoretical perspectives and assumptions that govern the functioning of modern organisations. These insights were then related to sources and impacts of conflict within organisations. Various perspectives on peace with justice for organisational and broader community stakeholders were introduced. These included different approaches to negotiating, structural violence, critiques of neoliberalism and managerialism, human rights in organisations, healthy organisations, and conscious capitalism.

Practical skills training sessions on assessing, managing and resolving conflict within organisations were interspaced throughout. These skills are grounded in principled negotiation which approaches conflict from a collaborative interests and relationships based perspective, and seeks to follow a third course that avoids both “giving in” and competitive bargaining. Careful attention was paid to developing skills on cooperatively exploring the various interests, needs, hopes and



Steve Lancken and Paul Duffill

fears which lurk behind parties' positions and demands that drive conflict.

Guest lecturers drew on a range of expertise and perspectives. Students heard from Jenni Whelan, Human Rights lawyer, former Acting Director, Legal Services Section, Australian Human Rights Commission and Founder-Director of Discrimination and Rights Education (DARE); Caryn Cridland, mediator and Founder-Director of Mindful Mediation; Director of CPACS Jake Lynch; and Stuart Rees, Director of the Sydney Peace Foundation, who first created the course as a foundational unit in the Masters program more than 12 years ago.

Lecturers were surprised and excited to find that many of the students came from postgraduate programs outside CPACS, including Public Administration and Public Policy. It was rewarding for staff and students alike to be able to draw on such diverse educational and professional backgrounds. Taken together this experience suggests an important role for CPACS in connection with education, training and professional practice associated with both public and private organisations: a role which presents exciting local and international opportunities for the promotion of CPACS' own goal of peace with justice.

To find out more about the course contact: Steve Lancken on [steve@thetrilliumgroup.com.au](mailto:steve@thetrilliumgroup.com.au) or Paul Duffill on [pduf2593@uni.sydney.edu.au](mailto:pduf2593@uni.sydney.edu.au)

*Paul Duffill is a researcher, teaching assistant and facilitator at CPACS where he is completing a Master of Letters treatise on interactive conflict resolution.*

## **Nonviolent Resistance and Conflict Resolution: Complementary Cousins?**

by Wendy Lambourne

The articles by Sue Cohen and Paul Duffill in this issue of PeaceWrites reflecting on two courses run recently at CPACS, raise key questions about the respective philosophies and practices of nonviolence and conflict resolution.

Nonviolent resistance is intended as an alternative to violence to express grievances and achieve social justice in situations where the imbalance of power renders dialogue or negotiation impossible or ineffective. Like violence, nonviolent resistance strategies are intended as a last resort, not a first resort. Peace scholars and practitioners would advocate nonviolent conflict resolution strategies such as principled negotiation or dialogue as the preferred method for meeting human needs and transforming conflict situations.

Gandhi did not see the Indian government leaders as his enemies to be defeated by force, but rather as necessary partners in social change. His philosophy was one that envisaged cooperation once confrontation based on the moral force of truth converted one's opponent to a path of justice.

'... no institution can be made nonviolent by compulsion. Nonviolence and truth cannot be written into a constitution. They have to be adopted of one's own free will. They must sit naturally upon us like next-to-skin garments or else they become a contradiction in terms.'  
– Mahatma Gandhi, The Last Phase, II, circa 1947

However, as Sue has highlighted, the promotion of nonviolent resistance can in practice sometimes create and reinforce a view of 'the other' as the enemy to be defeated: a war of 'us' against 'them'. The method of 'winning over' the opponent can be confused with the goal of inflicting defeat on the opponent and thus a win-lose outcome – a conflating of 'power over' and 'power with' that is the goal of nonviolent conflict resolution.

Nonviolent conflict resolution strategies, as explained in Paul's article, advocate and rely on a cooperative process of understanding each other's perspectives and finding a mutually satisfactory solution. Conflict resolution practitioners argue that effective facilitation or mediation can help to rebalance power and, by creating mutual participation in finding a resolution, the process can lead to more sustainable, win-win outcomes than a confrontational, win-lose approach.

However, as indicated above, such interactive conflict resolution strategies are not always possible and may need to rely on nonviolent resistance to address injustices and pave the way for dialogue. CPACS promotes both approaches as appropriate in their place and the need to understand their complementarity if we are to work together towards peace with justice.

*Dr Wendy Lambourne is Senior Lecturer and Academic Coordinator at CPACS.*

## Community Mediation at CPACS

by Kimberley Webber



Students at Community Mediation course, February 2012

In January and February, over 36 postgraduates participated in the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies' summer school course 'Community Mediation: Theory and Practice'. Clearly the course, and the subject, has great drawing power, with students coming from regional NSW and Queensland as well as from Greater Sydney. Although many were studying for their Master in Peace and Conflict Studies, others were undertaking a Master in Public Administration, Master of Education or a Master of Arts.

The lecturers were Abe Quadan from CPACS and Dr Spase Karoski, the head of school in the Community Services Section at Sutherland TAFE. Both have extensive experience as mediators and as mentors and trainers. After an introductory day in mid January, the group was divided into two streams which were each held over five days in late January and February.

Classes were a mix of formal lectures, group work and role plays. We learnt about types of conflict, the different forms of mediation and the role of the mediator. Over the five days we worked through the ten stages of the mediation process, with plenty of opportunities for practical experience. Although Abe and Spase kept reassuring us it was just like riding a bicycle – once you learn how to mediate you never forget – I think most of us found it fairly challenging! As we moved through the process – continually practising what we learnt in role plays – it became apparent there was much to remember, from the types of questions to ask to the care that needs to be taken to ensure each party has the opportunity to have his/her story heard.

Our acting skills were challenged as we took on the roles of disputing parties, ranging from malingering tradesmen and unhappy home renovators to disputing neighbours

and partners in failing relationships. As mediators we learnt how to frame the process through the opening statement, methods for encouraging parties to tell their stories, how to gain agreement on the mediation agenda, what types of questions to ask to encourage investigation of the issues, when to move towards private sessions and how to move the parties towards agreement.

On days four and five we had the opportunity to conduct co-mediations and mediations overseen by external coaches. Altogether eight experienced mediators worked with us, providing feedback on our performance as mediators and insights from their own experience. The mediators work across the dispute resolution sector, including with local government, family courts and private practice. We all gained a lot from their comments and criticism.

Once we complete the course we have the opportunity to be considered for possible accreditation as community mediators in Australia. This will require a skills assessment mediation simulation with role players and, if found competent, will mean we can act as a mediator in, for example, community justice centres or local government.

Although the course was definitely intense, the opportunity to construct and manage a mediation session in front of external coaches brought home just how much we had learnt in the previous week. I am sure I was fairly typical in being prompted to undertake the course because it sounded interesting (and the timing worked well!), and discovering along the way a respect for what mediation can achieve and an insight into a possible new career direction.

*Kimberley Webber is completing a Masters degree in Public Administration.*

## Body Politics

by Punam Yadav

We talk about gender and social construction of gender roles and how it is discriminatory and how one gender is superior to another all the time, given the cultural context we are in. When I was reading an article published in one of the leading Nepalese Newspapers, the Republica on 23 March 2012, it made me think how body politics operate in the Nepalese society. It is the body that carries all meaning not the sex of a person. The article "The woman in me and my struggles in a wrong body" by Apsara adds one more example of body politics in Nepal. The article details a real story of a woman forced to live in the body of a man until she had her male organs replaced with female ones about six years ago. The article presents a very painful experience of a transgender who had to suffer all her life only because she was born in a male body. When I read the first few paragraphs, I felt so bad for her. I put myself in her shoes. It was almost impossible for me to feel the same pain she lived through all her life, without choice.

As I read further, I was disappointed by the fact that she was married with two children. My excitement for the person who fulfilled her desire had gone for the moment. Since I was aware about the cultural norms in Nepalese society, I started worrying for her (the husband's) wife and her children. What would have happened to them? What are they going through now? How is society responding to that? How are they coping with this? All these questions made me sad, and I also thought of how body politics operate in our society. If it was the opposite case, if the wife was male in a female body, would she have had the same privilege to go for a surgery? I am not denying the fact that her husband might have been supportive to her as she was to her husband. I am also not ignorant of the fact that each individual has the right over their own body,

and that it is their choice to decide what their gender is, but my concern is about patriarchal society and its social norms which give certain privileges to one body more than the other. She was female in a male body that is why she had all the rights that a man can have in a patriarchal society. She (the husband) was able to sell her inherited land for the surgery.

The male body has more privilege than the female body in the Nepalese society until and unless the body carries all the assigned norms such as dress code, behaviours, etc otherwise even male bodies are not accepted by society. Therefore, it is not the sex of a person that suppresses the other gender but it is the body that carries all the privileges and obligations of the society.

I quote what she said in her excitement after the surgery,  
 “I was on top of the world after the eight-hour surgery and I was dying to see myself in the mirror. I stood totally naked before the mirror, and it was the first time it reflected the real me. I gazed in the mirror for hours. I was so beautiful, so graceful. For the first time in my life I felt so comfortable, so content. I was overwhelmed just imagining that I would fulfil all my desire to wear fashionable skirts, kurtis and accessories.....My wife stood sadly by my side. She did not smile.”

I definitely have empathy for her (the husband) and I am happy that she was able to and capable of fulfilling her desire and that is her right. But I also feel for the wife whose happiness was ruined. I don't even know whether the wife should still be called a wife as she (the husband) says: “now I am no longer a husband to her”. Society hasn't taught me any other names for these kinds of relationships; therefore, I am using the term “wife” throughout this piece of writing to talk about a female in a

female body who was married to a female in the body of a male.

I quote her (the husband) again, “I have bought women's clothing and accessories and love to wear them. I feel uneasy doing so in front of my children”. Her concerns and love for her children made me feel better but in the article she further shares her story,  
 “my wife has never touched or felt me. While she used to caress me with love earlier, I was never comfortable in my own body.... However, we both have accepted our fate and decided to move on.”

It is interesting to note how the privileged body speaks the privileged language. Apsara says, “she [the wife] still loves me, though just as a human being, and I love her as a very good human being”. I wonder if this can be true. The wife has committed her life to the person she married and sacrificed her happiness so that her husband finds a body he relates to. The wife did not sacrifice all this for her love for him “just as a human being.” She did so for a husband that she loved as a partner and soul mate. But by changing his/her body, Apsara has undermined the wife's sacrifice. I wonder if this is now the person in a female body speaking with the privilege of a male body?!

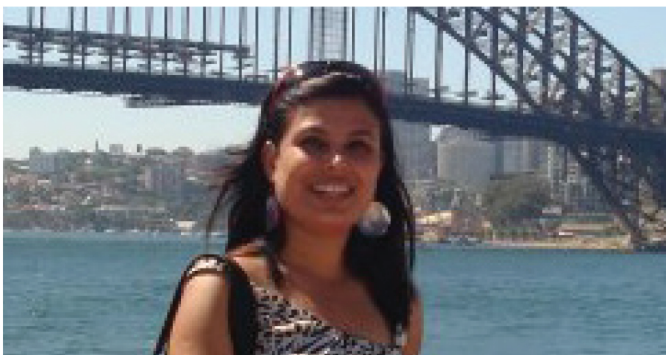
There is another side to it. Of course certain privileges are attached to the body other than the sex of the person. If the body carries the assigned norms such as if a man dresses like male, he is granted that privilege; if not, if he dresses up like a female then he is more marginalized than the female. In the above case, the male body provides the privilege of being able to go for the surgery. Yet if she starts dressing up like a female to fulfill her desire, then she will no longer have that privilege in front of the society. But interestingly, she can still exercise her male

body's power in her family.

This story is definitely disturbing and it feels bad because people whose sex and body don't match have been living a very tough life despite a little attention in recent days, but it is also important to see how the body carries so much meaning and so much power. In the above case a female (Apsara) carrying male body is not accepted by the society as a normal gender but it still has more power and privilege than a female carrying female body. This story has left me with many questions.

Third gender has been officially recognized in Nepal since 2007 which includes Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex population. They can obtain their citizenship as a third gender and the government also included third gender as a gender category in the recent census in 2011 which opens up the way for their recognition in public services. Nepal is the only South Asian country to recognize third gender rights. However, there is still a taboo and stigma attached to it in the Nepalese society.

This article is in response to the article published on 23 March 2012 entitled: The woman in me and my struggles in a wrong body by Apsara. Link: [http://www.myrepublica.com/portal/index.php?action=news\\_details&news\\_id=32091](http://www.myrepublica.com/portal/index.php?action=news_details&news_id=32091)



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## **Waiting for Godot: A Peace Proponent's Musings on Art and Life**

by Natilee McGruder

Waiting for Godot is a play that is very difficult to understand but incredibly easy to "get". You can hear the desperate and melancholic chorus in the lives of the two main characters: the tramps Vladimir and Estragon. Throughout the play, the two men wait on a barren road for a mysterious figure named Godot, who never arrives. Irishman turned French resident, Nobel prize winner Samuel Beckett paints a picture of humanity in the play that is tinged with bleak amusement, pain and the futility of life, with nothing but the companionship of the characters to provide some respite from a life that consists of endless waiting.

There are many repetitive actions in the play such as repeating the phrase "nothing to be done" whenever discussing a problem, waiting for Godot today under the assumption that he will come tomorrow, and a near collective amnesia as to what has occurred in the immediate past. Many people connect with Beckett's work because of the authenticity one feels when seeing it performed. The play is disjointed, repetitive, and confusing. This evokes a feeling of familiarity within the viewer: it mirrors the most difficult sides of the human struggle, that dark, dank place where everything seems harsh and incomprehensible.

Since my return home to the United States from my year spent at CPACS I have found myself utilizing art, music, theatre, and poetry, as a way to interpret some of the incomprehensible bits of life. Art, particularly music and literature, is a way for me to create daily inspiration for myself to actively promote peace under the constant whirl of political and social insanity. The recent murder of a young

man walking unarmed through a suburban neighborhood in Florida has highlighted on the national stage issues of direct, structural and cultural violence. Unfortunately this is not a unique occurrence in my country, a place where the interpretation of the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution makes gun ownership an acceptable, if sometimes uncomfortable, right. This right has been protected and overly enhanced by a select group of politicians, organizations, lobbyists and corporations in the United States who push expansive “gun rights” laws to the detriment of human life.

The pervasiveness of personal violence in the U.S. is most definitely connected to the violence committed and suffered under the American flag abroad. The righteously indignant American punk band, Strike Anywhere, in their song “Generation Time Bomb” speaks about the reality of violence and warmongering in the U.S.:

Your children are shooting up society  
 ‘Cause you made money making killing a commodity  
 At war on TV from a faraway field  
 A time bomb generation  
 The nation’s fate is sealed...  
 Time bomb! Is the building tension  
 Stretched across the globe  
 Time bomb! Watch the media lying  
 ‘Just another episode’  
 Time bomb! To transform awareness  
 In our hearts deep inside  
 From man to man to nation  
 End the fear and conquer pride.

So things are bad, but what can peace lovers do? Strike Anywhere expresses the need to reject war and the apologist coverage of government-sanctioned violence and exploitation by the media. The band goes on to declare that they “live in defiance of empty times.” This is a very important notion for me personally, akin to the concept of “freedom from fear” from Burmese activist Aung San

Suu Kyi. Both are peace mottos with an edge. They imply that difficult, “empty times” and fear are challenges that the conscientious peace activist must conquer. They also imply that peace is something you “do” and with a confident attitude. I would add “freedom from the status quo” and “living in defiance of willful ignorance” as peace-related mottos I aspire to. Peace and love are not toothless tools in the belt of the peace proponent. They are necessary to beat back the feelings of confusion, ennui, and helplessness in a world that too often feels like a Samuel Beckett creation.

Self-love and inner peace are difficult to achieve but once obtained are continually rewarding. Underground hip-hop lyricist Raashan Ahmad says in his song “Peace”:

Concentrate on inner peace is probably the hardest  
 Humble and modest say: “peace”...  
 So I’m checking my anger, pain and frustrations  
 Convert to energy to raise new generations  
 With peace, peace! Peace, peace! Peace, peace!

I agree with Ahmad that the most challenging aspect of being a peace promoter is walking the walk: channeling my own negative emotions daily to be more productive and acknowledging my own limitations and that of others in order to better work around them. I have found that the best -and hardest- way to change minds and touch hearts is to be a living example of what you would like to see in others. Being vocal when necessary, being available to lend a hand to a stranger, shoring up a friend’s confidence, or even regularly thinking a kind thought about a perceived enemy are small steps one can take to promote peace.

In “To the World”, Strike Anywhere explores the concepts of the common goals of humanity and the responsibilities of global citizenship, while deftly summing up my own personal

pledge of allegiance to a more peaceful and loving world:

In justice, in hunger united  
 Searching for vision united  
 In justice, in hunger united  
 Law and order (but) for whose order?  
 I pledge allegiance to the world  
 Nothing more, nothing less than my humanity  
 I pledge allegiance to the world  
 Until the last lock breaks none of us are free  
 I pledge allegiance to the world  
 Under no nation we will ever be  
 I pledge allegiance to the world  
 For nothing more, nothing less  
 Than my humanity  
 Than my humanity (Pledge allegiance!)  
 To our humanity  
 To our humanity  
 To our humanity (To the world!).

Godot never arrives in Beckett's seminal but baffling work, and this open ending has inspired multiple interpretations of who or what Godot stands for and the overall meaning of the work. I find *Waiting for Godot* to be an excellent allegory for the way many people wait for peace. It is something they want, even though they're not exactly sure why, how, or what in particular they desire from it. Peace is hard to define or capture, so instead of working towards it, we wait on some representative to give us a status update on the peace "situation" similar to the tramps waiting on word from Godot via the messenger in the play.

That one must purposefully create a way of life to increase and bring about peace is a fact. To actively work with others in a disciplined manner against hate and injustice and towards positive peace is the key. Loving yourself is a good place to start sowing the seeds of peace because it gives you an idea of how to begin to love and be more peaceful towards others. Violence is a symptom of hate and greed, which makes love, solidarity, honesty,

fellowship and generosity an excellent arsenal for peace builders.

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## Book Review: Surviving Care

by Peggy Craddock

*Surviving Care: Achieving Justice and Healing for the Forgotten Australians.* Edited by Richard Hil and Elizabeth Branigan. Bond University Press, 2010

This important publication arose, in part, from the conference "Surviving care: towards a meaningful process of healing in N.S.W." held in Sydney in October, 2008. Included are impressive and moving contributions from writers intimately involved in dealing with so many adults traumatised by severe abuse which occurred during their time in institutional and foster care.

Orphanages and children's homes run by state, charitable and religious organisations and foster homes were responsible for the welfare of hundreds of thousands of Australian children, and for many of them, the results of their treatment are still causing misery. Contributions from care leavers, academics, social workers, legal experts and human rights activists give both historical and current perspectives.

One recurring theme is the effects of the loss of identity experienced by so many who were denied contact with family members.

A sense of self and place is crucial for the developing child and the destruction of identity is recognised by many as a denial of basic human rights. Treatment of the poor and marginalised of earlier years by state, philanthropic and religious institutions was dismissive of any human rights. There were widely held beliefs that such people were burdens, rather than possible contributors to society. The families of returned servicemen and women, (often damaged by their experiences in the wars, and not yet recovered from serious injuries), or even the families of those who had lost their lives in war were also included in this category, and the writers describe the process of social exclusion which meant that these people were “constituted as unfortunate, unwanted and unloved subjects who required regulation, supervision and control”.

Survivors tell of their frustration and anger at the difficulties, and for some, the impossibility, of finding any records of who they are or where they came from. For many, there was only a name and number. In many institutions it was policy to separate families, changing names in many instances. The lack of proper records makes the seeking of redress a futile and bewildering exercise. Feelings of worthlessness instilled in them by the perpetrators of these injustices persist even into old age.

The apologies from state and federal governments are discussed. For some, these were a valuable first step in recognition of the truth of their life in care. For others, the apologies mean nothing. Some of the programs set up to assist care leavers are outlined. The financial strategies some

churches have set in place to prevent them being sued successfully for historical abuse are described. When action has been successful in lower courts and the church concerned has appealed the judgement, the High Court judgement rejecting the appeal is quoted, revealing the effectiveness of these strategies.

Throughout the book, the wrongs of past treatment are clearly defined. The authors believe public awareness of this is critical and that children needing care in the future must be cared for with compassion, justice and kindness, with their basic human rights protected. Nelson Mandela’s words, quoted in the book, “a civilised society is judged by how it treats its children” are very relevant to this situation.

The postscript summarises, “what a sad and bewildering story it is, laced with institutionalised cruelty, abuse of power and aberrant self-interest”. The disinterest in their charges by many ‘carers’ is noted.

This publication is essential reading for students and professionals in the fields of health, welfare, social work and social policy, psychology, child development, counselling and human rights. Politicians too, should read this timely volume which adds to our knowledge of this sorry chapter in our nation’s history.

*Peggy Craddock is a CLAN member, CPACS council member, and voluntary Librarian at CPACS.*

## Teapot in the Tempest

by Lydia Gitau

They walked for endless miles  
Trudged upon the roughest routes, the toughest  
trails  
In the darkest of nights  
And at dawn  
It seemed the sun mercilessly rose  
Bent to scorch to death anyone its rays touched  
Nothing gentle here  
Neither dawn nor day  
Neither dusk nor dark.

It seemed we walked in circles  
From horizon to horizon and it seemed one  
Was this where we began?  
Where the sun rained  
And the storm raged?  
Where it was cloudy and bright

And it was dark too?  
Where would be reprieve  
Where rest and quiet we asked?

But hush, there seems a star  
Rising gently, shining through the dark scorching  
sun  
Its light ever so gentle  
And it seems to rain gentle drops  
Cool and warm  
Calm and quiet

Hush still, it rises at the centre  
Where we all met  
And shared a cup  
Here would be respite  
Here our teapot in the tempest.

April 2012

*Lydia Gitau is a PhD Candidate at CPACS.*

### Songs for Social Justice Singing together for change 24 – 26 August, central Sydney

The interest and momentum for the August weekend of singing for social justice has been growing. See our website below for more details, and in the meantime, here is some news:

**Venues:** Two of the venues have now been confirmed: The NCOSS (Council of Social Services of NSW) centre on Albion Street, Surry Hills for workshops and sessions, and the Gaelic Club in Devonshire Street, Surry Hills for the opening Friday night concert.

**Organising Group:** We need some more active participants in our core organising group. Please speak to Paul Spencer (0477 008 686) or Margaret Walters (0427 958 788) if you think you'd like to be involved in this venture.

**Workshops:** We are calling for ideas for workshops from people who would like to present them, as well as from people with topics to suggest. People to lead singing sessions will also be needed.

**SOME POSSIBLE THEMES:** peace, gender issues, climate change, mental health issues are examples of subject-based themes; others could be based on the style of song, eg songs and chants for marches and demonstrations, rounds, etc. We are open to suggestions. In addition to the workshops there will be plenty of singing sessions just for the joy of singing together – chorus songs are great – and you don't need to be a polished singer!

**Funding for the weekend:** The organisers, helpers and performers are volunteering their time and talents for what promises to be a truly inspiring weekend. We will be asking attendees for donations according to what they can afford and suggest a contribution of \$50 for the weekend or a pro-rata amount for those who can only come for part of the weekend. Out of the surplus a small seed fund will be set aside for next year, and the rest will be distributed in reimbursing performers and organisers.

**Accommodation:** We may be able to offer billets to people travelling to the event. Importantly, we would like to hear from any Sydney-siders who have floor space to offer. For more ideas on accommodation you could also contact the Sydney YHA at [www.yha.com.au](http://www.yha.com.au) or Sydney Tourism at [www.Sydney.com](http://www.Sydney.com).

<http://songweekend.wordpress.com>

**Music can connect us with each other, with ourselves,  
and with our deepest-held aspirations that drive us to work for change.**



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## GRADUATIONS

1 CPACS PhD Candidates Annie Herro and James Tonny Dhizzala with CPACS' first PhD graduate Dr. David Penklis, December 2011

2 CPACS Graduates Yoganaadan Kandasamy, Yang Zhang, and Benjamin Oh, October 2011

3 MPACS Graduates Vivian Kenny-Levick, Gobie Rajalingam, and Alexandra Miller, October 2011

4 CPACS second PhD graduate Dr Cammi Webb-Gannon with Dr Peter King, April 2012

