Director’s welcome

Leading in research and academia is the Bell School’s way, writes Dr Brendan Taylor.

Named in honour of globally-renowned scholar of international affairs, Dr Coral Bell AO, the Coral Bell School of Asia Pacific Affairs has a long history, with roots in one of the university’s founding institutions, the Research School of Pacific Studies. The Research School, which later transformed into the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, was established to drive Australia’s engagement and understanding of its neighbourhood, and position ANU to become a global centre of excellence in research, teaching and influence on Asia and the Pacific.

Today, the Coral Bell School is a world-leading centre for research, education and policy analysis in the international, political, societal, diplomatic and strategic affairs of Asia and the Pacific.

The School’s commitment to education extends beyond the confines of the classroom, as part of the founding mandate of ANU to advance the country’s understanding of the region and its place in it. School staff are key contributors to national policy-making, appearing frequently in the media, advising government, and hosting highly-influential country update conference series and seminars. It is their knowledge and current research that we particularly want to share in this quarterly publication, providing insight into the work and projects that drive our academics, and their expertise for which the School has become best known.

Our annual flagship conference, Australia 360, will be held on Tuesday, 8 August 2017, at Old Parliament House in Canberra.

The day will start with a keynote address delivered by Senator the Hon Penny Wong, Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs. Her remarks will be followed by a series of sessions showcasing Bell School analysis of the region’s most pressing issues.

In its third year, don’t miss the Bell School’s signature event, writes Dr Nicholas Farrelly.

Australia 360 is an annual stocktake and forecast of international policy, addressing our political, security and economic realities. The event puts heavy emphasis on Australia’s key relationships across the region and the policies urgently needed to maintain our success and prosperity.

The event reflects the wide range of foreign and defence issues facing Australia by bringing together leading researchers, policy-makers, and practitioners. Past speakers have included leading academics on Asia-Pacific politics, international affairs, and defence and security; former politicians; senior government officials and businesspeople; ambassadors; and political and defence editors.

In 2017, this flagship event will be followed by a hand-on session for emerging leaders which will give them a chance to put what they learned at Australia 360 into practice through a policy development exercise.
A black elephant

Investigating pathways of influence for elected nations on the UN Security Council.

Conventional wisdom holds that only its five permanent members bear any real influence on the UN Security Council (UNSC). As part of a project examining power and influence on the Council, ANU academics will head to a workshop in Florence, Italy this September to counter that claim.

“If you’re an elected member what are the pathways of influence you can actually pursue to make a difference on the council?” Deputy Director of the Coral Bell School Dr Jochen Prantl asks. “That’s a question relevant for 188 member states.”

The ‘Leveraging Power and influence on the UN Security Council’ project is a collaboration between ANU and the University of New South Wales. Launched in 2016, after Australia had recently completed a term on the UNSC, the project has received four years of funding from the Australian Research Council.

“We bring a pretty diverse audience on board to discuss conceptual approaches of recent member state experiences on the council,” Dr Prantl says. For Dr Prantl, the workshop is essentially a mapping exercise – trying to come up with a 101 on pathways of influence beyond formal systems. “It has drawn quite a bit of interest because now a lot of countries would like to become elected members on the council,” he says.

The project has already debriefed Australian and New Zealand UNSC delegations, and is reaching out to former members. “Brazil is a different case,” Dr Prantl says. “After Japan, they’re the most seasoned elected members. This is more about the representation of the global south and they have a very experienced diplomatic service.”

A seat at the table

Putting forward the argument for strategic diplomacy as a tool to counter complex problems.

The black elephant is one of strategic diplomacy’s more striking metaphors. Like the elephant in the room, it poses a problem nobody wants to address. Like a black swan event, its arrival is as impactful as it is unpredictable. “There is a black elephant vis à vis Asia,” says deputy director of the Coral Bell School Dr Jochen Prantl. “If the US withdraws then this will be a huge game changer.”

In June, Dr Prantl of the Asia Pacific College of Diplomacy and Dr Evelyn Goh of the Strategic & Defence Studies Centre edited a volume of the East Asia Forum Quarterly. As part of their Strategic Diplomacy in the 21st Century project, they turned the focus towards Southeast Asia.

For the leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the challenges the regional bloc face have much to do with complexity. “We think in terms of causality – X causes Y,” Dr Prantl says. “But complexity is non-linear. You need to think in terms of systems.”

Complex systems, like those found in cities or the human body, are dynamic and involve numerous moving parts. Strategic diplomacy can serve as a tool to counter those complexities. “Strategy actually means you create or form an environment that is conducive to achieve a certain outcome,” Dr Prantl says. “It’s about getting the right weather conditions to achieve something rather than address a problem directly.”

Dr Prantl has been involved in global governance complexity thinking since his time at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore.

“If the US withdraws then this will be a huge game changer.”

“I’m a global governance person,” he says. According to Dr Prantl, Singapore itself stands out as an example of a small country that has successfully implemented strategic diplomatic thinking. “It’s basically thinking of diplomacy in system terms. For me that’s actually a way forward from global governance thinking. It’s global governance 2.0,” he says. Not only is strategic diplomacy a research project, it’s also a graduate course offered by the Asia Pacific College of Diplomacy. “Graduate students love it because of the huge challenges involved. It’s highly interdisciplinary,” Dr Prantl says. “Everyone is thrown out of his or her comfort zone because we clearly cross disciplinary boundaries which is a fascination but also a challenge.”
Reframing the responsibility

The children caught in conflict, and why they are not helpless.

When it comes to conflict studies, there is one sector of society that often goes overlooked. As part of a project initiated by ANU, academics here and abroad will examine the place of children within the UN’s Responsibility To Protect framework. “Not enough has been said about the particularity of interests and needs of children when it comes to protection against mass atrocities,” says one founder of the project, Dr Luke Glanville.

Dr Glanville along with Dr Bina D’Costa from the Department of International Relations put out the call a year ago for contributions to a planned special edition of the Global Responsibility to Protect journal. Most of the draft articles have been received, with contributions arriving from Australia, Canada, Brazil, Israel, Japan and the US. “We’ve got really fun and useful contributions from really unexpected angles,” Dr Glanville says. “We’ve got pieces on fiction – children of the novel – and the insight that the creativity of that kind of work can bring to challenging our assumptions about the protection and care of children.” A repeated feature of the submissions so far has been a focus on not diminishing the power of children themselves. “We need to also take into account the agency of children and their ability to sometimes adapt and respond to these situations individually or in communities,” Dr Glanville says. “We know we need to take serious account of the local and how local actors want to be helped and how they can help themselves and what useful role the international community can play that doesn’t just impose solutions on them but works with them.”

From the editor’s desk...

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Writing in Global Change, Peace & Security, Ruji Auethavornpipat’s article ‘Assessing Regional Cooperation: ASEAN States, Migrant Worker Rights and Norm Socialisation in Southeast Asia’ examines the impact of migrant worker rights norms on Thailand.

Mathew Davies in ‘Important but De-centred: ASEAN’s Role in the Southeast Asian Human Rights Space’ for TRaNS: Trans-Regional and –National Studies of Southeast Asia argues for a broader awareness of the human rights space in which ASEAN operates. With such awareness, ASEAN’s importance to the promotion and protection of human rights can be realised. ‘The Environment in Australia’s Foreign Policy’ by Lorraine Elliott in Navigating the New International Disorder: Australia in World Affairs 2011-2015 highlights three cases of approaches to Australia’s foreign environmental policy in recent years. The Minamata Convention on Mercury, whaling, and climate change form the focus of inquiry.

David Envall asks ‘Can Japan’s Golden Golf Diplomacy Win Over Donald Trump?’ in a topical tome, which asks its own question, The Trump Administration’s First 100 Days: What Should Asia Do?

In Studies in Conflict and Terrorism, Haroro Ingram’s article ‘An Analysis of Inspire & Dabiq: Lessons from AQAP and Islamic State’s Propaganda War’ examines how these texts seek to radicalise using narrative, imagery and counter-narrative messaging. It concludes by identifying strategic counterterrorism campaign points.

‘Human Considerations in Conflicted Societies’ is Cecilia Jacob’s contribution to Muddy Boots & Smart Suits: Researching Asia-Pacific Affairs that synthesises macro and micro approaches to conflict studies. The chapter also highlights ‘the practice turn’ in social science research.

Dahlia Simangan’s article ‘The Pitfalle of Local Involvement: Justice and Reconciliation in Cambodia, Kosovo and Timor-Leste’ for Peacebuilding cautions against exclusive local involvement in transitional justice. The legitimacy of liberal institutions are not immune to exploitation in the pursuit of political ends.

‘President Trump and the Implications for the Australia-US Alliance and Australia’s Role in Southeast Asia’ by William Tow in Contemporary Southeast Asia poses serious questions about the future of a critical relationship.

Jeremy Youde employs two key examples to explore President Robert Mugabe’s use of political demonization in ‘Patriotic History and Anti-LGBTI Rhetoric in Zimbabwean Politics’ for the Canadian Journal of African Studies.

In ‘Polarity Analysis and Collective Perceptions of Power: The Need for a New Approach’ for the Journal of Global Security Studies, Benjamin Zala identifies a collective confusion as to whether the global order is uni-, bi- or multipolar and suggests that polarity itself requires redefinition. The Australian Journal of International Affairs’ article ‘Assessing China’s Response to the South China Sea Arbitration Ruling’ by Feng Zhang explores how the ruling has had paradoxical effects on Chinese policy. China has hardened its claims, while also indicating readiness to renew negotiations.
Finding faith in numbers

27.8% Indonesian Muslims holding very intolerant views towards non-Muslims in early 2016, according to Mr Muhtadi’s research.

8.1% The potential for religious radicalism among Indonesian Muslims in early 2016, according to Mr Muhtadi’s research.

Talking about torture

Examining the relationship between torture, politics and social order.

Dr Nicholas Cheesman wants to reframe the way scholars approach the question of torture. Rather than ask whether torture ‘works’, ask what work torture actually does, he argues. “I want to set aside totally unrealistic debates about torture scenarios, ticking time bombs, that kind of thing,” he said.

Based at Princeton University for the theoretical leg of his research, Dr Cheesman will look at how institutional arrangements are articulated within torture. “It takes us beyond instrumentalities to torture’s larger political and social functions,” he says.

Aiming to publish a book on the topic, Dr Cheesman released a working paper in April as an early abstract of his research so far.

Since 2001, much scholarship on torture has focused on the USA. Dr Cheesman wants to draw the lens of inquiry to Southeast Asia - Thailand and Myanmar in particular. “To try to better understand its persistence in those places, but also to enrich the discussion of the topic more generally,” he says.

Dr Cheesman is also quick to point out that some of the most important scholarship on torture is being written in Australia. “Which is really exciting for me as a researcher and also reflects the strength and depth of our critical engagement with our neighbours,” he says.

But studying torture is difficult for a whole host of reasons. “It’s not just that you can’t observe it as you might an election or even some forms of public collective violence,” Dr Cheesman says. “It’s also because it’s difficult to articulate what we refer to when we use the term ‘torture’, and to think about how to research it both as a practice and as a category of analysis.”

“I want to set aside totally unrealistic debates about torture scenarios.”

There are no students or classes at the Institute for Advanced Studies at Princeton where Dr Cheesman has been a member this year and last. But weekly social science seminars and fortnightly gatherings keeps members of the Institute actively engaged beyond their research.

“It’s become increasingly clear to me how important this small but unique place has been in nurturing the best traditions of interpretive social science and historical studies,” he says.

“My goal is to contribute what I can to those traditions and I look forward to having my own acknowledgement to the Institute in a book of significance published some years from now.”
The election watchers

The program led a team of observers during Papua New Guinea’s recent national election.

This is the third consecutive, large-scale domestic election observation conducted by SSGM in PNG. Involving over 250 election observers, including researchers from ANU, Swinburne University of Technology, the Lowy Institute, and Divine Word University in mentoring roles, and observers from a number of PNG tertiary institutions, government agencies and civil society organisations, observations have been conducted in 36 electorates across the country. Electorates have been selected to ensure a representative mix of rural and urban, and open and provincial, electorates to ensure a comprehensive view of the 2017 elections is captured.

SSGM’s approach to domestic election observation uses methods to systematically observe nomination, campaigning, pre-polling, polling and counting periods in order to provide research-based evidence on electoral politics, electoral administration, election conduct and political participation. Nine ANU students undertaking SSGM’s PNG Field School undergraduate teaching course joined the election observation team for a week. The course was run to coincide with the election in order to provide students with first-hand experience of the electoral process as a part of their studies in politics, security, international relations and law.

The data collected from the observation will provide the basis for significant comparative work across PNG elections and elections conducted elsewhere in the Pacific. A report will be handed down in early 2018.

Urbanisation report launch

Report on urban development in Honiara launched by Solomon Islands minister.

In late May, the Honourable Moses Garu, Solomon Islands Minister of Lands, Housing and Survey, launched the SSGM report on Urban Development in Honiara: Harnessing Opportunities, Embracing Change.

The report is the product of a year-long research project on Urbanisation in Honiara. Led by Meg Keen, a team of ANU scholars—Julien Barbara, Jessica Carpenter, Daniel Evans and Joseph Foukona—with significant Solomon Islands experience conducted workshops, discussion groups and individual interviews with well over 200 people. Case studies from other capital cities in Melanesia with lessons for Honiara are also included in the report.

The research responded to rising concerns about rapid urbanisation in Honiara. By 2050, it is forecast that population growth in the Honiara region will treble from its current figure of about 100,000. This rapid growth is putting pressure on land, housing, services and transport. However, the report emphasises that while urbanisation can generate social challenges, if well managed it can also be a driver for national development, as has occurred in many other developed nations.

Among the report’s key findings is that urbanisation can be a win-win for urban and rural areas if linkages are strengthened, such as through improved infrastructure, financial accessibility, and information and communication networks.

Getting results, however, requires attention to governance and incentives. Good planning helps, but it is not enough. Compliance requires public awareness and engagement, strong regulation and enforcement, and supportive partnerships.

The report was designed to inform policy debate around urbanisation issues in Honiara and provide policy options to the Solomon Islands Government.
Writing an official history requires a significant amount of filing cabinet space. “When I did my PhD I had a filing cabinet that had two draws for documents,” Australia’s Official Historian David Horner says a research assistant told him. In August, Dr Horner will publish volume six in the official history of Australian peacekeeping. “At this stage I’ve got three filing cabinets full of documents,” the research assistant had said. The official history includes six volumes of 300 000 words each, making every volume the equivalent of three PhDs – 18 PhDs all told. “This is a quantum jump up from the sort of major research project a normal academic is involved with,” says Dr Horner. “There’s no scope for any flights of fancy, for running any individual agendas. We are just concerned with getting the story right as far as the records reveal it. It’s not the last word. We might not get it right. There might be more of a story to tell. But we’ll give it a very good shot.” Australia has had official histories, and an official historian, since the First World War. “What we’ve sought to do in [volume six] and more broadly in the whole series is just to bring to light what Australians have done overseas on behalf of Australia,” Dr Horner says.

“It’s not the last word. We might not get it right. There might be more of a story to tell. But we’ll give it a very good shot.”

Edited by Dr Horner and authored by Dr Steven Bullard, the sixth volume is titled ‘In Their Time of Need: Australian Overseas Emergency Relief Operations, 1918-2006’. “People like myself and others were agitating to get going with the official peacekeeping history,” Dr Horner says. The volume, to be launched by ANU Chancellor Gareth Evans at the Australian War Memorial, covers overseas emergency relief operations ranging from Papua New Guinea and Sumatra to Pakistan and Iran. “The public have a right to know. The people who served there have a right to know,” Dr Horner says. “They were truly representing Australia on the international stage.” According to Dr Horner, at the project’s outset the research team had thought there might have been nine or 10 such missions. After months of research the number of operations is now close to 60. “There’s been a much more substantial story to tell there than people thought,” he says.

The history seeks to tell the story at personal, operational and strategic levels, with most of the project’s authors coming from the Strategic & Defence Studies Centre. “This is very much an ANU, and particularly a Strategic & Defence Studies Centre, project,” Dr Horner says.

The American alliance

Australia’s alliance with the US is less formalised than some. How sustainable is that?

In the age of Trump, an ANU academic is headed abroad to spotlight the dynamics of the US-Australia alliance. On a Fulbright Scholarship, Dr Stephan Frühling will spend four months at Georgetown University from September to examine why Australia’s US alliance appears less formalised. “It can help inform our thinking about the alliance and where we should take the alliance in the next few decades,” Dr Stephan Frühling says. “I think it’s also significant globally in the sense that there’s a lot of fluidity in US alliances.”

Other US alliances have been characterised by joint secretariats, joint staff support or policy development summits and agreed defence guidelines. “We don’t have any of that,” Dr Frühling says. “And that’s a notable difference to other US alliances.” The reason for this, Dr Frühling says, is reasonably straightforward. From the 1950s to 1970s, the US showed less interest in the Asia Pacific region and Australia itself was less interested in institutionalising the alliance to preserve greater policy freedom. “We now have a much greater interest in the Americans becoming more engaged in the region again,” he says. “Those calculations are changing.”

Dr Frühling will interview current and former officials as well as think tank analysts and experts as part of his research.

The China question

What is Chinese thinking about the role of international economic institutions?

As the international order comes under strain, everyone wants to know what China really thinks. Westpac Fellowship recipient Dr Amy King’s research into Chinese thinking on global institutions has already taken her to the US and UK, with a trip to the archives in Taiwan planned next. “I’ll really try to tell that story of the historical period, then use that as a way to cast forward - the evolution of Chinese thinking up to the present day,” Dr King says.

Organisations like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund emerged from the post-WWII order and are often associated with US predominance. “But actually China was heavily involved in the early 1940s in setting up these institutions and had some pretty important ideas about what they should look like,” says Dr King. In the terminology of the time, China was one of the ‘four policemen’ of the world. For Dr King, her work is significant right now partly because countries like the US and Britain are trending towards protectionism. “But also because we have these newly emerging countries, like China, wanting to play a more important role in shaping the global economic order,” she says. “We really don’t know enough about what China wants to do with these initiatives. There’s a lot of fear and anxiety I think.”
Prospects for the Rules-Based Global Order: Join Dr Greg Raymond and Rob McLaughlin for this SDSC lecture and Centre of Gravity publication launch exploring the global rules-based order, past and present.

75th Anniversary of the battle for Milne Bay: Register for this special war studies seminar which coincides with the awarding of travel grants named after Clark Davis Ivins who died at the battle.

Mr Mothercountry: Colonialism and the rule of law Sign up for this panel discussion with Professor Keally McBride on the relationship between colonialism and the rule of law.