

YOUR KEY TO INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS IN AUSTRALIA & THE PACIFIC



QUARTERLY ACCESS



March 2017
Vol 10 Iss 1

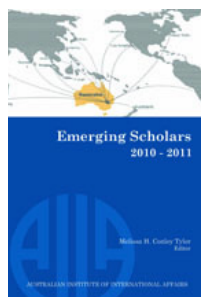


Australian Institute of International Affairs
Promoting understanding of international issues

Publications by the Australian Institute of International Affairs



The AJIA is edited by Professor Nick Bisley, Head of Department, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at La Trobe University and publishes high quality scholarly research on international political, social, economic and legal issues, especially (but not exclusively) within the Asia-Pacific region. The journal is published five times a year by Routledge Taylor and Francis.



The Australian Institute of International Affairs (AIIA) is proud to present the Emerging Scholars Series to enable young researchers to publish their work. The AIIA hosts a number of interns in its National Office who often write research reports to earn academic credit. To give these high quality papers an outlet, the AIIA produces an annual volume, the Emerging Scholars Series, in order to publicise their work.

Browse the catalogue online: www.internationalaffairs.org.au/publications/quarterly-access

Before reproducing any material from this publication please contact the Editorial Committee quarterlyaccess@gmail.com to clarify rights and responsibilities, except where a Creative Commons licence applies.

Magazine Layout & Graphic Design by Alicia Sherman

Logos: Australian Institute of International Affairs (AIIA), ACCESS Network, and Quarterly Access all rights reserved.

Photos used under Public Domain, Creative Commons or with permission:

Cover: Kurdishstruggle – Flickr (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/>)

Page 01: Kurdishstruggle – Flickr (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/>)

Page 04: Alex Proimos – Flickr (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/2.0/>)

Page 09: jtstewart – Flickr (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/>)

Page 14: Rhine Bernardino in collaboration with Anna Gray December, Regla series 2016 - menstrual blood, glass, water

Page 22: Fredrik Malm - Flickr (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/2.0/>)

For more information on each of the branches' youth network activities, visit www.aiaa.asn.au and select a particular branch.



QUARTERLY ACCESS

YOUR KEY TO INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS IN AUSTRALIA & THE PACIFIC

Quarterly Access (QA) is the national quarterly publication of the young professionals' networks of the Australian Institute of International Affairs (AIIA).

All the views expressed in this publication are solely those of the individual writers. While providing a forum for discussion and debate on international issues, the AIIA does not formulate its own institutional views, and eschews political bias.

Launched by ACCESS, the AIIA's Network for Students and Young Professionals, Quarterly Access is an entirely volunteer-based publication providing a forum for students and young professionals with an interest in international affairs to contribute to the exchange of ideas.

The Editorial Committee comprises a group of students and young professionals.

Editorial Team

- *Editor-in-Chief* Nina Roxburgh
- *Deputy Editor* Tamara Tubakovic
- *Editor* Felicity Driver
- *Editor* Alyce Hogg
- *Graphic Editor* Alicia Sherman

Contact the Committee via email quarterlyaccess@gmail.com or for information on submitting an article visit: www.internationalaffairs.org.au/publications/quarterlyaccess

CONTENTS

01 Looking into: The Future of Rojava

Sam Brennan

04 Collaborate or compete? Opportunities to adapt Australia's Smart Cities Plan to develop a stronger pathway to achieving SDG11 by 2030

Cassandra Cohen

09 "The Slow Hell": The Lived Experience of the EU's Flawed Asylum System – featuring an interview with Victor Roman, from the Lesvos Legal Centre

Nina Roxburgh and Tamara Tubakovic

14 Global Gag Rule and the Political Economy of Sexual and Reproductive Freedoms

Maria Tanyag

22 Media, Foreign Policy and Intervention

Ben Reeson



From the Editor-in-Chief

Welcome back to our wonderful team of editors and our dedicated readers. I am excited to bring you 2017's first edition of Quarterly Access. After a short break the team have come together to bring you the latest in perspectives and thoughts from some of Australia's best and brightest students and young professionals in International Relations.

Firstly I'd like to introduce a new feature of QA call "Looking Into". This is a hard and fast facts segment of the journal where young writers will place the spotlight on a developing issue. Our first "Looking Into" features a summary on the state of Rojava and the plight of Kurdish Syrians. Contributing author, Sam Brennan, lays out the key points of this story and some future struggles that Kurdish Syrians will be faced with in 2017.

Cassandra Cohen presents a rather unique article on urban development, and Australia's Smart Cities Plan. As an attendee at UN Habitat III conference in 2016, Cohen provides readers with future ways Australia can adapt its plan to meet its Sustainable Development Goals in 2030.

During the holidays, Tamara Tubakovic (deputy editor) and I came together to give readers an insightful and in-depth analysis of the Refugee crisis in Europe. Meeting with Lesvos Legal Centre worker, Victor Roman, for an interview regarding the day-to-day struggles in the islands' main camp Moria, this article provides a comprehensive analysis of how the issues on the ground are unfolding.

Maria Tanyag jumps on the unfolding (but not very surprising) issue of the recently reinstated Global Gag Rule. She provides a rich case for how the GGR has been used throughout many republican administrations to curtail the freedoms and rights of women globally.

Ben Reeson engages in the ongoing and highly debated issue of media in intervention and its role in shaping public opinion. Taking readers through several case studies, Ben shows how media has both positive and negative effects on society's understanding of issues, and the influence this can have on government policy and decision-making.

As always, thank you to our brilliant team of editors.

Happy Reading,

Nina Roxburgh, Editor-in-Chief

Looking into: The Future of Rojava



Article by Sam Brennan

Sam Brennan lives in Canberra and writes on the Middle East and North Africa for Foreign Brief.

There is a Kurdish proverb that says “the Kurds have no friends but the mountains.” This saying refers to the suppression the Kurdish diaspora has experienced under consecutive governments in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. However, in 2013 this idea was challenged. The previously diplomatically isolated Syrian Kurds began to form relationships with regional and international powers in the chaos of the Syrian Civil War. The momentum the Syrian Kurds gained in the initial years of the Civil War allowed for the establishment of an autonomous Federation. Yet these successes appear to be coming to an end as Turkey re-focuses its Syrian Policy, forcing away the Kurds previous allies.

The Kurdish people live in a mountainous region, which spreads across the borders of Syria, Iraq, Iran and Turkey: with the largest contingent living in Turkey and the smallest in Syria. Yet in Syria the Kurds constitute one of the largest minority groups. Despite their size President Bashar al-Assad’s government has constantly violated their human rights.¹ When the Arab Spring began Assad targeted Kurdish politicians, concerned of the threat this group could pose.² His concern was vindicated as the Kurdish militias, the Peoples Protection Units (YPG) and female only Women’s Protection Units (YPJ), quickly established themselves as proficient fighters, currently numbering at an estimated 60,000.

By 2013 the Kurds claimed to be in charge of an autonomous region called Rojava, which stretches across the northern border of Syria. By 2015 they established a new fighting force, the Syrian Democratic Front (SDF), made up of a loose, multi-ethnic and multi-religious coalition. The ability to establish both Rojava and the SDF was in large part due to the support the Syrian Kurds received from international powers. The US began to provide aid and small arms to the Kurds, in a policy aimed at countering ISIS and preventing regime control of northern Syria.³ This support also extended to include the use of US air power, training, and reports of providing heavy

weapons.⁴ The US has fought alongside the SDF on numerous occasions, most notably in the Raqqa offensive against ISIS, in which US soldiers wore Kurdish symbols on their uniforms.⁵

There have also been efforts to formalise diplomatic ties between Rojava and European states. In 2016 the YPG set up Syrian Kurdistan’s Representative Offices in Berlin, Prague and Stockholm, to act as pseudo-Embassies. This is the first time in modern history that the Syrian Kurds have gained autonomous political representation internationally. Moreover, Rojava has not only been seeking and receiving support from the west, but have extended their alliances to other actors, opening their first office in Moscow.

Russia has been providing support to the Rojavan Kurds, despite their adversaries doing the same. The SDF has coordinated with Russian air support to take regions of Aleppo and Afrin from jihadi militias.⁶ Russia also promoted the inclusion of the Kurds in the Geneva Peace Talks and has been able to mediate talks between the Assad Regime and the Kurds, resulting in tacit truces even in areas such as war torn as Aleppo.⁷ This has left the Syrian Kurds in a relatively good position. They have obtained military support from both the Russians and the US; established diplomatic ties in both Western Europe and Moscow; and have avoided sustained conflict with the Assad government while still seeking political autonomy.

1 Black, Ian, (2016) “Syrian human rights record unchanged under Assad, report says” <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/jul/16/syrian-human-rights-unchanged-assad> accessed March 10, 2017

2 Al-Arabiya, (2012) “Assad ordered killing of Kurdish activist Mashaal Tammo: Leaked files” <https://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/10/10/242928.html> March 10, 2017

3 Borger, Julian and Hawramy, Fazel, (2016) “US providing light arms to Kurdish-led coalition in Syria, officials confirm” <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/sep/29/syria-us-arms-supply-kurds-turkey> March 10, 2017

4 Dearden, Lizzie, (2016) “Syria war: US fighter jets scrambled to stop Syrian planes bombing special forces and allies in Hasakah” <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/syria-war-news-latest-air-strikes-us-fighter-jets-scrambled-hasakah-stop-syrian-planes-bombing-a7200956.html> March 10, 2017; Gibbons-Neff, Thomas, (2016) “This highly advanced U.S.-made anti-tank missile could now be on Syria’s frontlines” https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2016/02/23/this-highly-advanced-u-s-made-anti-tank-missile-just-popped-up-on-syrias-frontlines/?utm_term=.7dfc838624a8 March 10, 2017

5 Youssef, Nancy and Van Wilgenburg, Wladimir, “U.S. Troops 18 Miles From ISIS Capital,” <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2016/05/26/u-s-troops-18-miles-from-isis-capital.html> March 10, 2017

6 Tastekin, Fehim, (2016), “Russia, US and the Kurds: The friend of my enemy is – wait, what?” <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/05/turkey-russia-syria-kurds-cooperate-russians.html> March 10, 2017

7 Ara News, (2016) “Russia stresses importance of including Syrian Kurds in Geneva peace talks” <http://aranews.net/2016/09/russia-stresses-importance-of-including-syrian-kurds-in-geneva-peace-talks/> March 10, 2017; Bozarslan, Mahmut, (2016) “Syria rejects Russian proposal for Kurdish federation” <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/10/turkey-russia-mediates-between-kurds-and-assad.html> March 10, 2017; Ibrahim, Arwa, (2016) “ANALYSIS: The Kurdish ‘frenemies’ aiding Assad in Aleppo” <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/what-role-are-kurdish-ypg-forces-playing-aleppo-554547107> March 10, 2017

But these successes seem to be coming to an end as the balance of power changes in the region and Rojava's former allies pivot in their interests.

US support for the Kurds has been waning, as Turkish involvement and Russian tensions rise. Ankara has long been an opponent of the Kurds and has been pressuring the US to withdraw support. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who has been increasing military activity in Syria since the July coup, said the US needed to decide between "me (Turkey) or the terrorists (Kurds)."⁸ Despite a recent decline in US-Turkish relations, it is unlikely the US would abandon its strategic relationship with Ankara in favour of the Kurds, as Turkey has the second largest military force in NATO and is a station for US nuclear weapons. The Kurds currently can only offer the US an effective counter to ISIS, who are increasingly less of a threat. Furthermore, the primary antagonist in the eyes of the West is no longer ISIS, but instead is Assad and the Russian backing he is receiving. The ability for the Kurds to play both sides will be stifled in conflict increasingly galvanized by the US and Russia. While ties with the US are on the decline, turning to Moscow does not seem like an ideal scenario for the Kurds either.

The improvement in Russo-Turkish relations means the Kurds will likely find reduced support in Moscow. Tensions between the two States reached their peak in 2015 after a Russian aircraft was shot down over Turkey.⁹ Since the July 2016 coup in Turkey, Erdogan and Putin have reached an understanding and the Russians lifted the travel and trade restrictions imposed after the downing of the jet.¹⁰ Moscow reversing their growing cooperation with Turkey seems unlikely. Even after the assassination of the Russian Ambassador Andrei Karlov, Putin responded not in derision, but by doubling down on forming stronger ties with Turkey.¹¹

The balance of power is also shifting within Syria

itself. Assad backed by the Russians has taken back Aleppo and now overpowers all other rebel groups. ISIS' last major stronghold in Raqqa is under threat and what remains of the Free Syrian Army, the primary anti-regime rebel group, has degenerated due to infighting and mass desertions. This leaves the Kurds the DFSNS as the foremost rebel group in Syria, rivalled only by a possible coalition between Sunni jihadists, campaigned for by Jabhat Fateh al-Sham. Assad has not shown any signs in the past of wanting to establish a dialogue with rebels, and has rejected previous Kurdish proposals to establish a federalist system in which they would act as an autonomous region.¹² If Damascus rejected the Kurdish deal when fighting rebel forces weakened them, it is doubtful that they would agree to the same proposal when they have the battlefield advantage.

Challenges for the Future:

In 2017, the Kurds of Rojava will start to lose friends, and are unlikely to establish new ones. The Kurds of Iraq would be the obvious ally for the Rojavans. However, the Iraqi Kurds are currently preoccupied with achieving their own independence, have a different political ideology, and are going through their own *Détente* with Turkey. Some smaller countries in Europe may also continue support, particularly non-NATO member states like Sweden. It is unlikely this will be enough to sustain Rojava amidst war. As the dynamics of the Syrian War change the Kurds are left in an awkward position, one that will leave them diplomatically isolated and hamper their ability to maintain their hold over Rojava.

8 Russia Today Staff, (2016) "‘Me or terrorists?’ Furious Erdogan tells US to choose between Turkey and Syrian Kurds" <https://www.rt.com/news/331711-erdogan-washington-syrian-kurds/> March 10, 2017

9 BBC, (2015) "Turkey's downing of Russian warplane - what we know" <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34912581> March 10, 2017

10 Al-Jazeera, (2016) "Russia closes 'crisis chapter' with Turkey" <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/06/russia-closes-crisis-chapter-turkey-160629131937917.html> March 10, 2017

11 Kim, Lucian, (2016) "After Diplomat's Killing, Russia Doubles Down On Ties With Turkey" <http://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2016/12/20/506278517/after-diplomats-killing-russia-doubles-down-on-ties-with-turkey> March 10, 2017

12 Ara News, (2016) "Syrian Kurds don't want federalism: President Assad" <http://aranews.net/2016/10/syrias-assad-reiterates-kurds-no-right-federalism/> March 10, 2017



Collaborate or compete? Opportunities to adapt Australia's Smart Cities Plan to develop a stronger pathway to achieving SDG11 by 2030

Article by Cassandra Cohen

Cassandra Cohen studied a Bachelor of Professional Communication at RMIT University, majoring in Politics, Economics & Communication. Last year, Cassandra was selected to attend the UN Habitat III conference in Quito, Ecuador as a Global Voices Australian Youth Delegate.

In 2008, the global urban population exceeded rural populations for the first time in history.¹ By 2050, the proportion of people living in cities is expected to rise to over two-thirds of the population.² In Australia, the figure is even greater, with over three quarters of the population living in cities.³ It is estimated that close to 80 per cent of Australia's economic activity occurs in urban settings.⁴ The Australian Government's Smart Cities Plan (SCP) maps a pathway to ensuring the prosperity of Australian cities, proposing that they develop domestic networks in order to become globally competitive. The SCP marks the first government publication on cities since Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull announced cities as a national priority for the Australian Government in September 2015.⁵ The plan paints cities into the nation-building narrative of Australia, rather than placing Australian cities in a global context.

The SCP was released after 193 United Nations member states ratified the 17 Sustainable Development Goals at the UN Sustainable Development Summit in September 2015.⁶ The goals are a major component of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Urban sustainability is one of the focus areas, with SDG11 aiming to 'make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable'.⁷ However, the SCP neglects to consider possibilities for partnering with other cities across the globe to share innovative ideas for improving housing and sustainable urban development. This is necessary in order for Australia to fulfill its commitment to UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11. To date, the Australian Government has been reluctant to support the

international aspects of this SDG.⁸ Australia's SCP charts a road map towards developing prosperous Australian cities, but fails to capture some significant targets within SDG11, achievable through greater global collaboration with partner cities across the development spectrum. The SCP could be adapted to exhibit greater correlation with SDG11.

Finding links between the Smart Cities Plan and SDG11

The SCP and the ten SDG11 targets share a number of key ideas for promoting urban sustainability.⁹ Australia's plan addresses the need for affordable housing (Target 11.1) in the 'right locations', where jobs are becoming more readily available.¹⁰ Transport (Target 11.2) is another area where the two documents align. The SCP announces a \$50 million investment in infrastructure, some of which is dedicated to expanding the urban rail network. This initiative seeks to connect Australians with communities in which they can work, socialise and contribute to the economy. However, the transport agenda falls short of SDG11.2 when it omits mention of improving transport services for 'vulnerable' people including the elderly and people with disabilities.¹¹ Targets 11.3 and 11.a, which address urban planning and management, relate closely to the SCP's call for 'better governance' through more coordinated interaction between Australia's major and regional cities through the City Deals initiative.¹² However, the SCP limits this collaboration to domestic networks rather than exploring international city partnerships.

Air quality and waste management (Target 11.6) are well covered in the plan, which recognises the importance of measurement tools such as the National Clean Air Agreement for air quality and the National Australian Built Environment Rating System (NABERS) in reducing adverse environmental impacts in cities. The plan also addresses the need for green urban spaces (Target

1 UN-Habitat 2015, Global Activities Report 2015, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1726Habitat%20Global%20Activities%202015.pdf>.

2 Ibid.

3 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Australian Social Trends, 2008 cat. No. 4102.0, Canberra 2008. <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Chapter3002008>.

4 Kelly, J-F, Donegan, P, Chisholm, C & Oberklaid, M 2014, Mapping Australia's Economy: Cities as engines of prosperity, Grattan Institute, Melbourne.

5 Department of the Prime Minister & Cabinet 2016, Cities, Australian Government, <https://www.dpmc.gov.au/cities>.

6 United Nations 2016a, Sustainable Development Goals, <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/summit/>.

7 United Nations 2015, Goal 11: Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, United Nations, <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/cities/>.

8 Henderson, H, Trundle, A, Stephen, A, Kamalipour, H & Lowe, M 2016, 'Habitat III: the biggest conference you've probably never heard of', The Conversation, 5 September, viewed 12 September 2016, < <http://theconversation.com/habitat-iii-the-biggest-conference-youve-probably-never-heard-of-63499>>.

9 Australian Government 2015, National Innovation and Science Agenda Report, Department of the Prime Minister & Cabinet.

10 Australian Government 2016, Smart Cities Plan, Department of the Prime Minister & Cabinet, p. 10.

11 United Nations 2015, Goal 11: Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, United Nations, <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/cities/>.

12 Australian Government 2016, Smart Cities Plan, Department of the Prime Minister & Cabinet, p. 24.

11.7) such as community gardens in order to produce sustainable cities. However, it stops short of proposing targets or specific initiatives that might increase the availability of trees and green spaces, particularly for vulnerable people, as Target 11.7 encourages. Climate change (Target 11.b) is well recognised in the SCP, with particular emphasis given to the technological innovation initiatives put forward to reverse the effects of carbon emissions. These include the '\$1 billion Clean Energy Innovation Fund', which will invest in forward thinking Australian companies adopting clean-energy practices, and the 'Emissions Reduction Fund', which offers Australian businesses and local governments carbon credits for adopting more environmentally friendly practices.¹³

In contrast, the Australian Government's plan for cities avoids any mention of Targets 11.5 and 11.c, which are specific to developed nations supporting the least developed countries to achieve their urban sustainability goals. Reducing economic losses from disasters (Target 11.5) is not discussed at any point in the report, despite what the UN describes in the target as the 'global' economic impact of these events.¹⁴ Additionally, while the SCP regularly emphasises the importance of developing sustainable buildings, at no point does the plan propose supporting cities in the least developed nations to do the same (Target 11.c).

International collaboration or competition?

The UN Sustainable Development Goals are a key component of the United Nations' action plan to unite all 193 member states towards the global goal of ending poverty by 2030 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In avoiding mention of Targets 11.5 and 11.c, and more generally, any plans to partner with overseas cities, Australia's SCP risks ignoring the shared potential economic, social and environmental benefits of international collaboration, not to mention Australia's responsibilities as a signatory of the agreement.

The SCP asserts that 'the global lesson is that cities collaborate to compete.'¹⁵ In this statement, the SCP focuses on collaboration as a nation-building weapon to use against overseas cities, instead of

a tool to partner with them towards achieving the shared goals of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. In her new book, *Habitat '76*, Habitat I attendee Lindsay Brown summarises the ideological tension involved in this debate when she says,

"The conflict within the UN (and governments), as always, is between those who focus on rights... - housing as a human right - and those who focus primarily on private sector solutions and financing in a deregulated environment."¹⁶

While the SCP tends to adhere to the neoliberal latter approach, this article proposes a fundamental shift towards the former.

Michael Cohen, a former World Bank employee, attended the Habitat I and Habitat II conferences, and points to the lack of 'cross-disciplinary' discussions as an explanation for the limited successful long-term outcomes of the forums.¹⁷ Accordingly, Cohen strongly endorses Habitat III as an opportunity to put politics aside and unite for the sake of the planet,

"There is no time for divisiveness or special interests. Habitat III should be a moment for the assertion of the planetary interest, and that is something all of us should be able to agree upon."¹⁸

Given the relevance of Habitat III's urban sustainability focus to SDG11, Cohen's analysis could similarly be applied to Australia's approach to international collaboration on cities. This would suggest that the Australian government should be prepared to compromise on outcomes that benefit both its constituents and, more broadly, humankind.

Contrary to the suggestions of the SCP however, this does not need to be at the expense of economic prosperity and growth. Numerous OECD and IMF studies have demonstrated that inequality impacts negatively on economic growth.¹⁹ According to these results, cities in the least developed countries

13 Australian Government 2016, *Smart Cities Plan*, Department of the Prime Minister & Cabinet, p. 27.

14 United Nations 2015, *Goal 11: Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable*, United Nations, <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/cities/>.

15 Australian Government 2016, *Smart Cities Plan*, Department of the Prime Minister & Cabinet, p. 3.

16 Brown, L 2017, *Habitat '76*, Black Dog Publishing.

17 Cohen, MA 2015, 'From Habitat II to Pachamama: a growing agenda and diminishing expectations for Habitat III', *Environment & Urbanization*, International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), p. 7.

18 Ibid p. 12.

19 IMF 2014, *World Economic Outlook: Uneven Growth. Short- and Long-Term Factors*, International Monetary Fund, Washington, DC; Ahrend, R, Farchy, E, Kaplanis, I, Lembcke, AC 2014, 'What Makes Cities More Productive? Evidence on the Role of Urban Governance from Five OECD Countries', *OECD Regional Development Working Paper No 2014/05*, OECD Publishing, Paris; Berg, A & Ostry, I 2011, 'Inequality and unsustainable Growth: Two Sides of the Same Coin?', *IMF Staff Discussion Note SDN/11/08*.

struggling to meet the SDG11 targets will place a burden on global economic conditions. From an environmental perspective, if all cities were able to reduce their carbon footprint (Target 11.b), this would begin to reverse the effects of climate change. It is therefore in Australia's best interests economically, environmentally and socially to support these cities to achieve the SDG11 targets.

Positioning Australia as a global leader in technological innovation for cities

The SCP charts Australia's path towards becoming a global leader in technological innovation in cities. This vision reflects the Australian Government's goal of incorporating cities into the National Innovation & Science Agenda, which launched in December 2015.²⁰ Advantages such as being located within close proximity to Asia, attracting a highly educated workforce and being at the forefront of research are said to position Australian cities well in comparison to their rivals.²¹ The knowledge exchange that occurs in cities is thought to boost productivity through 'resource sharing' and 'entrepreneurial activity'.²² However, the extent to which this is possible relies on a country's governance structure easing regulation to allow new innovations to prosper.²³

This article proposes that rather than simply aspiring to be the best, Australia could use its achievements in the technology sector to inform and educate cities across the development spectrum. This could be used as a tool to strengthen relationships with allies, as well as to improve global economic conditions by narrowing the gap between conditions in the least developed and most developed nations' cities. The innovative processes of developing countries differ from developed countries, as they are more likely to look to developed nations for reference than to conduct their own research and innovative practices.²⁴ Therefore, collaborating with developing nations becomes even more integral to reducing global inequalities.

The United Smart Cities Project is already facilitating this form of knowledge exchange between cities.²⁵ The program establishes partnerships between cities, where 'Pilot' and 'Ambitious Smart Cities' have the opportunity to learn from 'Advanced Smart Cities', such as London and Amsterdam, about developing sustainable urban solutions.²⁶ While this project is focused on European cities, large Australian cities – most likely Melbourne and Sydney – could seek to join the program in an extended network. Alternatively, Australia could initiate a regional version of the project, potentially in partnership with the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). This would not only assist Australia in strengthening local relationships, but would also be a valuable contribution towards SDG Targets 11.3, 11.5, 11.6, 11.b and 11.c.

Developing global mentor partnerships

In order for Australian cities to become innovation leaders in a model such as the United Smart Cities Project, it is important to form partnerships with those who have already achieved the goals described in the SCP. The recent Habitat III forum held in October 2016 in Ecuador presented an opportunity for Australia to meet with delegates from these cities to learn from their initiatives and discuss these partnerships at length. Australia can still use the forum as a springboard for addressing some of the shortcomings of the SCP. For instance, the SCP proposes a 'City Deals' plan in which 'governments, industries and communities will develop collective plans for growth' through coordinated investment and action.²⁷ Given that the UK already has a 'City Deals' plan in place, Australia could consult with key figures in the development of the UK format to discuss any challenges the Australian version may face and how to maximise the initiative's potential for success. If successful, the 'City Deals' plan would be a significant step towards achieving SDG Targets 11.3 and 11.a, which relate to city planning and management.²⁸ Australia could then move to support other countries to tailor the program to their needs –

20 Australian Government 2015, National Innovation and Science Agenda Report, Department of the Prime Minister & Cabinet.

21 Australian Government 2016, Smart Cities Plan, Department of the Prime Minister & Cabinet.

22 Duranton, G 2014, 'Growing Through Cities in Developing Countries', Policy Research Working Paper No 6818, World Bank, Washington, DC, p. 40.

23 Buckley, RM & Simet, L 2015, 'An agenda for Habitat III: urban perestroika', *Environment & Urbanization*, vol.28, no.1, pp.64-76.

24 Acemoglu, D, Aghion, P & Zilibotti, F 2006, 'Distance to Frontier, Selection, and Economic Growth', *Journal of the European Economic Association*, vol.4, no.1, pp.37-74.

25 Organization for International Economic Relations 2016, Cities: Contributing to a Smarter World, OIER, <http://unitedsmartcities.com/city/>.

26 Organization for International Economic Relations 2016, Cities: Contributing to a Smarter World, OIER, <http://unitedsmartcities.com/city/>.

27 Australian Government 2016, Smart Cities Plan, Department of the Prime Minister & Cabinet, p. 21.

28 United Nations 2015, Goal 11: Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, United Nations, <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/cities/>.

particularly in Africa - as studies have shown that more than two-thirds of that continent suffers from a lack of connectivity between urban and rural areas.²⁹ Since Habitat II was held in 1996, Cohen notes that local governments globally have suffered financially as a result of a lack of support from national governments. It is therefore important that Australian cities develop strategic partnerships both domestically and internationally to promote prosperity across all levels of government. Discussions about heightened collaboration through 'City Deals' have the potential to create more successful outcomes from Habitat III.

Another focus area of the SCP is the proposal for a high-speed rail network to connect major and regional cities, thus providing greater access to jobs (Targets 11.1 and 11.2). A city mentor in this case could emerge from Japan, Spain or France, who have already proven their capabilities in delivering high-speed rail. In return for this expertise, Australia could offer advice on implementing innovative strategies involved in the National Innovation &

Science Agenda, such as promoting women in technology or open data.

Conclusion

If SDG11 is not met by 2030, it will be the shared failure of all 193 United Nations member countries, including Australia. While the SCP refers to most of the SDG11 targets on a domestic level, opportunities exist to expand the plan to involve international partnerships. This will be particularly useful in working towards Targets 11.5 and 11.c, but will also assist with the remainder of the SDG11 targets. Australia should seize the opportunity to develop mentor partnerships with relevant cities developed at global forums, including at Habitat III. By emphasising international collaboration instead of competition, Australia has the opportunity to strengthen global alliances and learn from, as well educate, cities worldwide.

29 Dudwick, N, Hull, K, Katayama, R, Shilpi, F & Simler, K 2011, From Farm to Firm: Rural-Urban Transition in Developing Countries, World Bank, Washington DC.

GLOBAL VOICES



globalvoices

A non-profit organisation seeking to promote understanding and participation in international diplomacy by young Australians.

We do this through regular events and research and development opportunities in Australia, and the coordination of youth delegations to important diplomatic forums abroad.

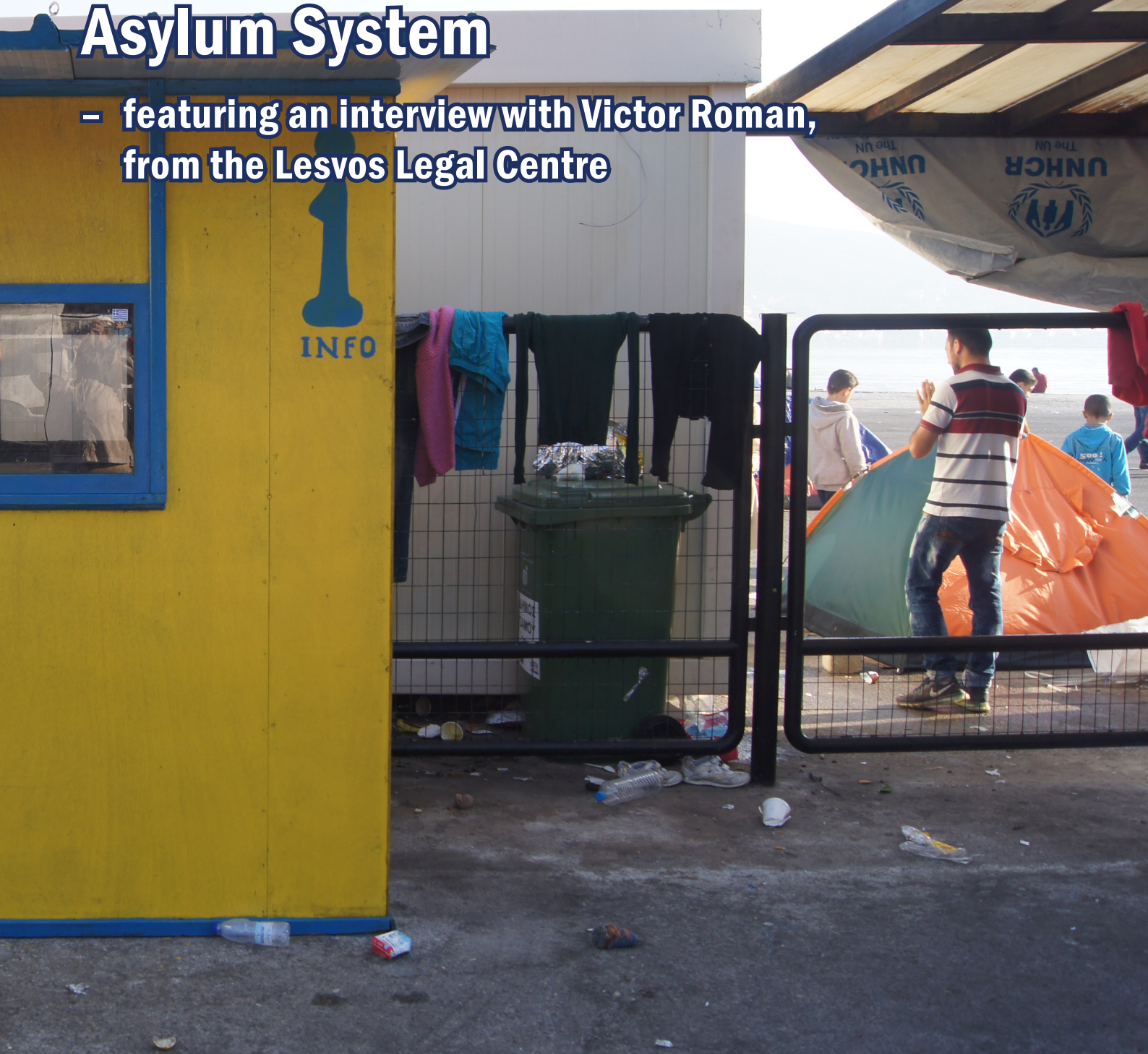
Our mission is to provide opportunities to young australians to research, discuss and contribute to foreign policy both at home and abroad.

Our vision is for young australians to be heard and engaged on the world stage.

www.globalvoices.org.au

“The Slow Hell”: The Lived Experience of the EU’s Flawed Asylum System

– featuring an interview with Victor Roman, from the Lesvos Legal Centre



Article by Nina Roxburgh and Tamara Tubakovic

Nina Roxburgh is Editor-in-Chief of Quarterly Access, recently returned from living in Sofia, Bulgaria where she worked on the presidential election monitoring and documented the refugee crisis. She is currently Producer of the podcast Binge Thinking.

Tamara Tubakovic (deputy editor) is a PhD Researcher at the School of Social and Political Sciences and the EU Centre on Shared Complex Challenges at the University of Melbourne, Australia.

Introduction: The situation is getting worse

The refugee situation in Greece has taken a turn for the worse with the incoming winter conditions placing the lives of thousands of people in danger. With temperatures dropping below freezing and heavy snowfall, the makeshift refugee camps on the Greek island of Lesbos have struggled to adequately meet the needs of its growing refugee population. In a media report by the UK news agency *The Independent*, there are around 4,500 people still living in overcrowded conditions in summer tents on the island of Lesbos.¹ According to the report, at least one Afghan man has died due to the winter conditions.² NGO Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) has come out criticising the EU, stating in a tweet that ‘Europe should stop making the lives of migrants and refugees more miserable.’ In response, however, the European Commission has claimed that the current desperate situation was ‘first and foremost’ the responsibility of the Greek authorities.³

So whose responsibility is it?

The notion of ‘responsibility’ is what lies at the crux of the current refugee crisis. In 2015, over a million refugees crossed the EU’s borders.⁴ This dramatic increase in the movement of refugees has had an asymmetrical impact on member states, undermining attempts by the EU to coordinate a collective and coherent response. The Dublin Regulation, the EU’s system for designating the member states responsible for processing an asylum claim, stipulates that the first member state through which the asylum seeker enters is the one responsible for processing their asylum claim.⁵ Furthermore, according to the Dublin Regulation, an asylum seeker can only make one application for refugee status.⁶

This mechanism however, has failed due to the unprecedented number of refugees arriving in Europe and placing immense pressure on border

countries, in particular Greece. We sought to find out what the reality is on the ground in Lesbos and where the notion of ‘responsibility’ lies in day-to-day practice.

In an interview with Victor Roman, who has been living and working on the island of Lesbos for 4 months at the Lesbos Legal Centre, we found that in particular issues of overcrowding, lack of medical support, poor sanitation and food supply, poor reception centres, lack of information about asylum processes, and lack of political motivation acutely impact the day-to-day life on the island for both the local Greek community as well as the refugee population.

NR: “What are some of the major issues on the ground?”

VR: “Moria is often referred to as ‘hell’ or ‘the slow hell’ by refugees and this is reflective of the slow and draining process, accommodation, food, sanitation issues and poor sense of security.”

In particular there is a lack of security for the most vulnerable of the refugees, women and children.

VR: “Women are afraid of going to the toilet late at night, they are afraid of being raped and/or assaulted. Fights break out, and there is alcohol and drug abuse.”

Compounding the widespread sense of insecurity among refugees is the lack of protection offered by the local security officials. Roman talked about how the police attitude towards refugees has increased the violence on the ground.

VR: “Reports of police violence against refugees come out frequently. There is a lot of stress in the police job, but this has definitely created an ‘us and them’ attitude. This is widespread in the local community as well: there is definitely an anti-refugee perception, that they are a drain on the local community.”

Exacerbating the situation are the appalling medical conditions on the island, with many refugees unable to effectively access medical services. One of the most visible examples of this is the agonising wait refugees are forced to endure to access any sort of medical care.

VR: “In one case there was a refugee’s daughter who was pushed on to the ground in the commotion of a fight in the queue, when she fell she broke her two front teeth. The medical attention response was to give her some toothpaste...so the medical support in the camp is really not functioning to an appropriate level.”

Often the criticism toward the lack of medical attention is directed at NGOs such as Médecins

1 McKernan, Bethan, (2017) “Refugees in Greece ‘could freeze to death’ in snow due to inadequate winter preparations, warn aid groups”, in *The Independent*, 9 January.

2 McKernan, Bethan, (2017) see note 1.

3 European Commission, (2016) “Commission reports on progress made under the European Agenda on Migration” Press Release, 8 December.

4 Sabbati, G (2016), ‘Recent migration flows to the EU’ European Parliamentary Research Service, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2016/580893/EPRS_ATA\(2016\)580893_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2016/580893/EPRS_ATA(2016)580893_EN.pdf), viewed 14 March 2017.

5 Fratzke, Susan (2015), ‘Not Adding Up: The Fading Promise of Europe’s Dublin System’ Migration Policy Institute Europe, March, p. 15.

6 Regulation 2013/604, Article 3.

du Monde (MDM), with many refugees seeing the organisation “as an extension of the Greek government.” Roman argues, “This is wrong... they are independent of the Greek government.” Organisations such as MDM and Lesvos Legal Centre, are there “trying to fill a gap which the Greek government has failed to fill themselves.” The desperate need for such organisations demonstrates the lack of resources and capacities of the Greek government to deal with the large-scale influx of refugees.

While these are only a few of the numerous examples that Roman presented when discussing the challenges on the ground in Lesvos, it is important to bear in mind additional factors on the ground which affect the responses and attitudes of the Greek government and local population towards the refugees.

Greece is still in a huge economic recession.⁷ So the welfare resources much needed for the Greek people themselves are already under pressure and this trickles down to affect the services refugees and asylum seekers can access.

Moreover, there is a lack of efficiency in processing the refugees that Roman links to a cultural set of behaviours. He says this means, “...there is no willingness to take responsibility for anything. And the best part of it is that this is all confirmed by the Greeks themselves all the time.” According to Roman, the Greek administration doesn’t work, and anyone trying to assist refugee cases on the ground constantly has to push for things to happen, even if it is a standard request. There is an enduring attitude of “come back tomorrow, come back next week” which evidently affects the handling of the refugee crisis on the ground.

Greece struggles under its weight of asylum applicants: The Dublin Regulation and its disproportionate obligations.

The original objective of placing one member state responsible for a claim was to ensure that applicants for asylum were not repeatedly referred from one member state to another with no state acknowledging itself as responsible.⁸ With the Dublin Regulation, a clear criterion was given for which member state was responsible. This commitment was seemingly presented as

a provision that would directly benefit asylum seekers by ensuring an application was processed by at least one member state. This logic may have worked when the system was created in 1990. At the time, it was impossible for the member states to imagine how the world would change, and how conflicts in the Middle East would lead to over a million refugees crossing the EU’s borders in a single year.

The problem today for Greece, and Italy, is that the main rule applied to designating responsibility is that of irregular first entry. Since the main migratory routes come from the central and eastern Mediterranean, Italy and Greece now constitute the front line for asylum applications. As a consequence, these states struggle to effectively process the unprecedented increase in refugee applications, with their national reception and integration capacities being placed under severe strain.

The desperate situation in Greece and Italy reached its climax in 2011, when the ECHR ruled that Greece was violating the human rights of a refugee by detaining him under inhumane conditions. It was further judged that Belgium violated its obligations under the GC by sending him back to a country, Greece, where he would have his rights violated.⁹ This ruling effectively suspended all Dublin transfers to Greece.

In the same year, at a Council of interior ministers meeting, Italy and Malta called on the EU and other member states to activate a 2001 directive to grant temporary protection to migrants in cases of mass influx and to share the burden of absorbing newcomers.¹⁰ With the uprisings in Libya and the outbreak of violent conflict in Syria, southern member states had begun to experience an unprecedented increase to already high refugee flows. However, the interior ministers refused to activate this directive. The Commission, in fact, argued that such a proposal was premature and that flow of migrants to Italy did not constitute a mass influx.¹¹

However in 2015, the scale and intensity of the migratory pressure demonstrated that the first entry principle underlying the EU system could not function under massive inflows of refugees. The

7 Smith, Helena (2016) ‘A year after the crisis was declared over, Greece is still spiralling down’, *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2016/aug/13/greek-economy-still-spiralling-down-year-after-crisis-declared-over> viewed 14 March 2017

8 The Dublin Convention (1990), Preamble, Available from: [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:41997A0819\(01\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:41997A0819(01)&from=EN)

9 M.S.S. v. Belgium and Greece, App. No. 30696/09 (Eur. Ct. H.R. Jan. 21, 2011),

10 Monar, Jorg (2012), ‘Justice and Home Affairs’ *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 50, pp. 117.

11 Economist, The (2011), ‘The next European Crisis: Boat People’ *The Economist*, http://www.economist.com/blogs/charlemagne/2011/04/north_african_migration, viewed 14 March 2017.

challenge today, however, is achieving a consensus among member states on how to effectively tackle the unfolding situation at the EU's borders. On the other hand, there are those member states that are calling for the introduction of a mandatory joint processing system, in which refugees would be distributed across the EU.¹² Others, especially new eastern member states, are refusing to consider such measures, and have instead taken unilateral measures, such as building and reinforcing borders, to isolate themselves from the EU's growing refugee problem. The decision by Council in September 2015 to relocate 160,000 persons across the EU from Italy and Greece has failed to demonstrate substantial results.¹³ The events of 2015 have revealed the limits of solidarity among EU member states.

VR: "I have absolute sympathy for the Greek people who suffer a lot from its economic situation. Welfare and social services are not working very well for anyone in Greece. Yes, we must be able to demand that countries respond in an adequate manner to both its population and refugees. However, we can also demand other countries to take responsibility. All member-states of the EU have a shared responsibility with Greece. This shared responsibility is not limited to the EU. Refugee and migration issues is not a national or regional problem, it is a global issue that existed as long as mankind. All nations must look at these issues with humanity and compassion rather than fear."

However, recent trends at the EU level, such as third country deals with Turkey, have demonstrated a more isolationist approach to migration matters with considerable support on preventing inflows from arriving at the EU's doorsteps.

Lessons from Australia: Externalising its responsibilities

Unable to resolve the burden sharing flaws of the system, the EU has instead focused on externalising its responsibilities. The EU-Turkey deal is the EU's latest attempt to tackle the critical situation and manage the flow of refugees entering Europe. However, there has been severe criticism of the agreement by NGOs and some member states. The return of asylum seekers to Turkey under the

legal provision that Turkey is a safe third country is contrary to EU and international law, as Turkey does not provide all refugees with protection in accordance with the 1951 Geneva Convention.¹⁴

In fact, not all refugees have effective access to the asylum procedures and there have been reports of onward refoulement and returns of refugees to Syria.¹⁵ If these reports were proven true, then the EU would be violating the international principle of non-refoulement by which a country cannot return people to a place where they may be in danger. By returning refugees to Turkey, which is also guilty of human rights abuses, the EU is in effect in breach of the principle of non-refoulement. Turkey's human rights abuses include discrimination of minorities, and the denial of access to fundamental services such as health, education, social services, and employment.¹⁶

NR: "So what do you think are the impacts of the EU-Turkey deal in Lesvos?"

VR: "The conditions for refugees in Turkey are terrible. It should be mentioned that Turkey hosts almost 3 million refugees, which is an enormous humanitarian task.¹⁷ It [the decision to send refugees to Turkey] all comes down to political incentive, so any day there could be a massive movement of lots of people at once to Turkey, and this is a scary prospect for many refugees living in Lesvos. There will be no automatic return but the risk of being sent back to Turkey remains."

"I think there are similarities to the Australian approach when you think about the EU-Turkey deal. Australia has a policy of Sovereign Borders – and like this policy, Greece and the EU are trying to create a deterrence using people [refugees]. First is mandatory detention, and then you are imprisoned on the island (whereas before the EU-Turkey deal refugees could travel to mainland Greece) so they send a message of 'don't come here, because you won't be able to leave the island, and then you will just be sent back to Turkey anyway'..."

"...Boats are being towed back, like in Australia, by the Turkish navy, meaning that some people attempt the voyage to Lesvos four or five times

12 European Commission (2016), Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and the Council, 'establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national or stateless person (recast)' 2016/0133(COD), Brussels, p. 13

13 Knaus, Gerald (2016), 'Refugee crisis- A breakthrough is possible' European Stability Initiative, http://www.esiweb.org/index.php?id=67&lang=en&newsletter_ID=103, viewed 14 March 2017.

14 Human Rights Watch, (2016) EU: Don't Send Syrians Back to Turkey: Lack of Jobs, School, Health Care Spurs Poverty, Exploitation, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/06/20/eu-dont-send-syrians-back-turkey> visited 8 February 2017

15 Human Rights Watch, (2016), EU Policies Put Refugees at Risk, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/11/23/eu-policies-put-refugees-risk> visited 14 March 2017.

16 Human Rights Watch, (2016) note 12.

17 UNHCR (2017) Syria Regional Refugee Response: Inter-agency Information Sharing Portal, <https://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=224> visited 8 February 2017

before they are successful. But this deterrence method has worked. Arrival rates to Lesbos have clearly and quite incredibly changed since the deal. For example, in December 2015 just under 66000 people arrived. In February 2016, at the time of discussing the EU-Turkey deal, these numbers dropped to around 31000, and then in March 2016 down to 14000 and every month since there are less and less so you see that it's a significant change since the deal came into effect. Other factors may be the coast guard intercepting more vessels, but this shows to some extent the success of the deterrence method of the EU-Turkey deal. A signal across the water of 'Don't come here'...it's also important to note that the deal itself is illegal since Turkey is not a signatory to the refugee convention" The dangers of an unfair system

Perceiving the rules to be unfair, member states have protested against the lack of solidarity in the EU by intentionally not complying with their obligations. This includes the failure to fingerprint refugees and the permissive attitude taken by some member states, such as Italy and Greece, toward secondary movement. Other measures include lowering reception standards or misapplying EU rules on qualification.¹⁸

According to Roman, there is also a persistent incentive on the Greek side of the crisis to find a way to reject asylum claims. This sometimes manifests in cursory interviews, in not supplying any kind of legal aid or in some cases where applicants are vulnerable, the aid of a psychologist. Roman explained that this is problematic because the responsibility of making a refugee claim lies with the refugee, but many refugees need guidance and assistance. Yet, there is a worrisome lack of accessible information.

VR: "If you are not able to explain yourself properly, and your interviewer doesn't have the energy or resources to dig deeper, this means you won't get properly assessed."

"A main problem in Moria is really the lack of information. When people arrive they are registered, then they wait many, many months (sometimes 7 plus). The first registration is called Simple Registration, and then 7 months later they get Full Registration. Legally, you have not lodged an asylum application until your full registration. Meaning you do not get the full rights that come with asylum seekers until your full registration:

that is when you receive the asylum identity card called the International Protection Applicant Card. If you don't have this card, it means you are waiting for full registration, not your interview for asylum, which many refugees don't know."

It is apparent that there is no information available which clearly outlines the registration and asylum application process, meaning that many refugees think they are registered and waiting for their interviews, when in fact they are actually in basic registration and waiting to be fully registered before they can proceed to the next step of their asylum claim.

VR: "This is the void we [the Lesbos Legal Centre] are trying to fill. The centre tries to provide information about the asylum process and where they are sitting in the procedure. When there is no information, there is a lot of room for speculation and rumors. For example, there was a rumor going around the camp that on Christmas day there would be a lottery for 3000 visas for refugees in Greece... The level of knowledge of the EU law and human rights definitely varies from person to person. Many people have no idea what they mean legally (the Refugee Convention). Some people believe that Greece and the EU are the same thing. People within the camp feel the EU and Greek services are equally bad too. I don't think I've met a single refugee on the island that feels good about the EU as a political entity."

Conclusion

VR: "I think people in Europe experience the refugee crisis highly differently. Countries like Greece, Italy, and Bulgaria have become entry points into the EU. I believe all people have in some way seen or come in contact with the refugee crisis. When you are, however, in a hotspot like Lesbos, you become a witness daily to not only the refugee crisis but also its symbolic extension of numerous political, economical and social instabilities around the world."

It is clear that the refugee crisis has taken on many facets between international and regional discussions, to the realities faced on the ground in Lesbos and Greece more broadly. The reality in Greece is but one example of a global problem. The lack of international, regional and even national solidarity has made the current global refugee crisis a problem for only a small number of countries. These countries are often those at the periphery, with weak financial and administrative capacity to deal with such high numbers of refugees. The failure of responsibility sharing in Greece, and its consequences on the lives of refugees, is representative of the global failure to help the world's most vulnerable.

18 Pastore, F and Henry, G (2016) 'Explaining the crisis of the European Migration and Asylum Regime' *The International Spectator*, vol. 51, no.1, pp. 44-57; Trauner, F (2016) 'Asylum Policy: the EU's "crises" and the looming policy regime failure' *Journal of European Integration*, vol. 38, no. 3, pp. 311-325.

Global Gag Rule and the Political Economy of Sexual and Reproductive Freedoms



Article by Maria Tanyag

Maria Tanyag is a Doctoral Candidate in Politics and International Relations and a member of the Gender, Peace and Security (GPS) Centre at Monash University. Maria's research interests are in the global politics of sexual and reproductive rights, political economy of gender-based violence, and transnational religious fundamentalisms. Her research has been published in Women's Studies International Forum, Gender & Development, and the International Feminist Journal of Politics.

On January 23, 2017, only days after his inauguration and among a series of controversial executive decisions, President Donald Trump reinstated the Mexico City Policy.¹ More commonly known to its opponents as the 'Global Gag Rule' (GGR), the US policy places limits on US funding distribution by excluding overseas NGOs that perform or promote abortion and related services, such as public information campaigns and lobbying.² It originated under the Reagan Administration and was spurred by the 1984 World Population Conference held in Mexico City.³ Since it was first introduced in 1984, it has been rescinded or reinstated based on party lines. The policy was revoked under Barack Obama and Bill Clinton both representing the Democratic Party, and reinstated under the Republican presidencies of George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush.⁴ According to Crane and Dusenberry, "throughout its history, the politics of the Gag Rule have been rooted in domestic political struggles over abortion, played out between anti-abortion and pro-choice factions of the Republic Party, between Republicans and Democrats, and between the Executive branch and Congress."⁵ Indeed, prior to the creation of the GGR, abortion-related legal restrictions on the use of US aid had already been in place: from the 1973 Helms Amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act.⁶

The effects of the GGR are far reaching. The policy primarily impacts NGOs from the Global South, which are most reliant on foreign aid, and will be forced to comply with this 'gag' rule or risk losing funding. This is particularly concerning as the US continues to be one of the largest donor countries for international family planning assistance and humanitarian aid.⁷ NGOs are also effectively prohibited from operating in abortion-related work using their non-US funds, even in countries where abortion is legal domestically. In addition, US-based NGOs are indirectly affected because they are prevented from implementing US aid development programs and other related partnerships with overseas NGOs unless they meet the GGR eligibility. The rule, therefore, as swiftly pointed out by others, will be disproportionately detrimental to women and girls in the Global South.⁸ Evidence shows the reinstatement of this policy in the past has been positively associated with increased abortion rates in affected countries. It undermines the full basis for bodily autonomy and integrity by denying the availability of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) necessary for meeting different needs and preferences. Equally important, the reinstatement of the GGR runs counter to achieving key goals reflected in international security and development agendas such as the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In this article, I situate the ongoing debate on the GGR reinstatement within prevailing global inequalities in SRHR that are enabled under a neoliberal global economy. First, I outline the confluence of neoliberal fiscal austerity and religious fundamentalist ideologies in undermining SRHR globally. Second, I examine the exacerbating impact of restrictive policies such as the GGR for bodily autonomy and integrity in crisis situations, particularly for internally displaced women and girls. By tracing the political economy roots that undermine sexual and

- 1 "Presidential Memorandum Regarding the Mexico City Policy." 23 January 2017. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/01/23/presidential-memorandum-regarding-mexico-city-policy> (last accessed 31 January 2017).
- 2 An important exception, however, is that it allows NGOs to provide or support post-abortion care. See Crane, Barbara B & Jennifer Dusenberry (2004) "Power and Politics in International Funding for Reproductive Health: the US Global Gag Rule" in *Reproductive Health Matters*, Vol 12, No. 24, 128–137.
- 3 United Nations, "Outcomes on Population." <http://www.un.org/en/development/devagenda/population.shtml> (last accessed 31 January 2017).
- 4 The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation (2017) "The Mexico City Policy: An Explainer," <http://kff.org/global-health-policy/fact-sheet/mexico-city-policy-explainer/> (last accessed 31 January 2017); Gezinski, Lindsay (2012) "The Global Gag Rule: Impacts of Conservative Ideology on Women's Health," in *International Social Work*, Vol. 55, No. 6, 837-849.
- 5 Crane & Dusenberry 2004, p. 129
- 6 The Amendment stipulates that "[N]o foreign assistance funds may be used to pay for the performance of abortion as a method of family planning or to motivate or coerce any person to practice abortions." See USAID (2017) "USAID's Family Planning Guiding Principles and U.S. Legislative and Policy Requirements," <https://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/global-health/family-planning/usaid-family-planning-guiding-principles-and-us> (last accessed 31 January 2017).

- 7 Center for Reproductive Rights (2003) *Breaking the Silence: The Global Gag Rule's Impact on Unsafe Abortion*. New York: Center for Reproductive Rights; Schwerdtle, Patricia (2017) "Trump's 'global gag rule' will cause more abortions, not fewer" in *The Conversation*, 26 January 2017. <https://theconversation.com/trumps-global-gag-rule-will-cause-more-abortions-not-fewer-71881> (last accessed 31 January 2017).
- 8 See Bendavid, Eran, Patrick Avila & Grant Miller (2011) "United States aid policy and induced abortion in sub-Saharan Africa" in *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*. <http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/89/12/11-091660/en/> (last accessed 31 January 2017); Schwerdtle 2017.

reproductive freedoms in both crisis and everyday life, I deepen the case for promoting women's health and wellbeing at the centre of global peace and development agendas. Increasingly, this project requires the broadening of critiques and political mobilisation against Far Right politics to ultimately include the depletive nature inherent to a neoliberal economy.

Neoliberalism, Religious Fundamentalisms, and Global Health Inequalities

The final report on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) noted that Goal 5 or 'Improving Maternal Health' remains an unfinished agenda largely due to the slow progress in stemming maternal deaths globally.⁹ Tables 1 and 2 demonstrate the staggering global health inequalities among countries from different income groups. Adolescent fertility rates are overwhelmingly high at 96 per cent in low-income countries compared to 13 per cent in high-income countries. Adolescent pregnancy severely curtails the capacity of girls to pursue education and therefore also limits their potential to pursue full political and economic participation and realise their human capacities. Girls that are forced into motherhood before their bodies are physically able to cope with the strain of childbirth have heightened risks to maternal death. Consequently, as shown in Table 2, maternal mortality remains most acute for women and girls in low-income or developing countries. According to 2015 data, 1 in 40 women from poor countries are likely to die from pregnancy or childbirth complications, compared to 1 in 6000 for women in high-income countries. However, maternal deaths are mostly preventable. The high concentration of such deaths among a particular group of women and girls powerfully reveal global inequalities in resource distribution mediated not just by gender hierarchies but also by class, race, ethnicity, religion, age and sexuality.¹⁰ As health activist and academic Alicia Ely Yamin points out,

No global health issue may more acutely capture the culmination of conspiring inequities within, as well as between, countries than maternal mortality. And it is likely that no global health issue more graphically illustrates the role of health systems, their potential both for promoting greater democracy and for reinforcing exclusion

and discrimination along gender, class, racial, and ethnic lines, which further marginalises certain groups.¹¹

Restrictions to women's and girls' bodily autonomy and integrity, such as the GGR, exacerbate prevailing structural barriers to accessing health. At the same time, they reinforce the continued marginalisation and discrimination of women and girls on the basis of their sexual and reproductive identities. As a result, the wellbeing of households and communities reliant on the sustainable provision of care is undermined too.

Table 1. Fertility Rates by Income Group

	Total fertility rate		Adolescent fertility rate
	<i>births per woman</i>		<i>births per 1,000 women ages 15-19</i>
	1990	2014	2015
Global	3.3	2.5	44
Low-income	6.4	4.8	96
Lower middle income	4.3	2.8	45
Upper middle income	2.7	1.8	32
High income	1.8	1.7	13

Source: World Bank, *World Development Indicators: Reproductive Health*, <http://wdi.worldbank.org/table/2.17>.

Table 2. Maternal Mortality by Income Group

	Maternal mortality ratio	Lifetime risk of maternal mortality	
	<i>per 1,000 live births</i>	<i>per 1,000 live births</i>	
	1990	2014	2015
Global	385	216	180
Low-income	1010	496	40
Lower middle income	533	251	130
Upper middle income	114	54	970
High income	15	10	6000

Source: World Bank, *World Development Indicators: Reproductive Health*, <http://wdi.worldbank.org/table/2.17>.

9 UN, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015*, 43.

10 Petchesky, Rosalind (2005) "Rights of the Body and Perversions of War: Sexual Rights and Wrongs Ten Years past Beijing," in *International Social Science Journal*, Vol. 57, No. 184, 301-318.

11 Yamin, Alicia Ely (2017) *Power, Suffering, and the Struggle for Dignity: Human Rights Frameworks for Health and Why They Matter*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 232-233.

Global health inequalities, especially for SRHR, remain unmatched by foreign aid allocations and public health expenditures (see Table 3). The World Health Organisation (WHO) notes that while for many countries there is a need to mobilise and effectively use domestic resources, “only an increased and predictable flow of donor funding will allow them to meet basic health needs in the short to medium term.”¹² However, UNFPA has persistently called out the inadequate financial and political support for SRHR from developed countries in the face of worsening conditions for women in and from developing countries.¹³ Thus, the reinstatement of the GGR serves as a litmus test for bodily autonomy debates within US politics. Nevertheless, in so far as a curtailment of the accessibility of SRHR globally, the GGR aligns with neoliberal policies of austerity that involve cutting back on state social welfare provisions and conditioning privatisation of service delivery including health.

In developing countries, civil society actors especially foreign and domestic NGOs have been crucial in ‘filling in the gaps’ and mitigating health inequalities.¹⁴ They do so by servicing particularly underprivileged communities and typically through short-term programs. For example, international organisations such as the International Planned Parenthood Federation and Marie Stopes International have long supported NGOs in the Global South in delivering vital SRHR services and supplies. Indeed, more recently they are among the key partner organisations named by the Netherlands in its pledge to create an international safe abortion fund as a direct response to Trump’s reinstatement of the GGR.¹⁵ Ultimately, however, these initiatives are stopgap measures that fall short of meeting all

SRHR needs in the absence of guaranteed state allocation of resources. Importantly, as Nancy Fraser argues, their very presence inadvertently normalises state retrenchment.¹⁶

Table 3. Public Health Expenditure (% of total health expenditure)

	1990	2014
Global	62	60.1
Low-income	34.3	42.4
Lower middle income	35.4	36.4
Upper middle income	51.5	55.2
High income	63.4	62.3

Source: World Bank, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.XPD.TOTL.ZS>

The GGR is particularly significant in helping unpack the prevailing material and ideological conditions that curtail sexual and reproductive freedoms globally. It reflects the alignment of neoliberal fiscal austerity and state retrenchment with religious fundamentalist ideology. Moreover, the ‘rolling back’ of the state allows for the ‘stepping in’ of conservative ideologies articulated through pro-life and pro-family discourses.¹⁷ In the context of developing countries, the already weak infrastructures for sexual and reproductive health care are further weakened by globally promoted neoliberal economic policies that divest states of the primary responsibility vis-à-vis welfare provisioning. Religious fundamentalists have been able to leverage greater influence over the sexual and reproductive decision-making of many women and girls precisely as a result of these gaps. Presently, there is a growing body of research to unpack the relevance of interrogating the complementary role of religious fundamentalist forces in legitimising the gendered inequalities fuelled by neoliberalism including restrictions

12 World Health Organisation (2012) “Spending on Health: A Global Overview,” Fact sheet No. 319, April. <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs319/en/> (last accessed 31 January 2017).

13 See UNFPA (2013) Contraceptives and Condoms for Family Planning and STI/HIV Prevention. <http://www.unfpa.org/publications/contraceptives-and-condoms-family-planning-and-stihiv-prevention-external-procurement> (last accessed 31 January 2017).

14 Kandiyoti, Deniz (2015) “The Triple Whammy: Towards the Eclipse of Women’s Rights,” in *Inclusive Democracy* 50.50, 19 January. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/deniz-kandiyoti/triple-whammy-towards-eclipse-of-women-s-rights> (last accessed 31 January 2017).

15 Darroch, Gordon (2017) “Dutch respond to Trump’s ‘gag rule’ with international safe abortion fund” in *The Guardian*, 26 January. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/jan/25/netherlands-trump-gag-rule-international-safe-abortion-fund> (last accessed 31 January 2017).

16 Fraser, Nancy (2009) “Feminism, capitalism and the cunning of history,” in *New Left Review*, No. 56, 97-117.

17 Kandiyoti, “The Triple Whammy”.

to SRHR.¹⁸ For instance, the US Christian Right embodies the confluence between neoliberal and religious fundamentalisms because it endorses both social and fiscal conservatism.¹⁹ They play a key role in shaping US politics especially in terms of domestic sexual and reproductive rights debates such as on abortion and same-sex marriage. Through measures such as the GGR, however, their capacity to make a global impact becomes particularly pronounced.²⁰

SRHR, unlike all other health components, remain deeply contested and constantly under threat of backsliding in terms of progress. The idea that sexual and reproductive health is fundamental to human dignity remains fiercely contested by religious groups and conservative governments at various levels of policy-making. Studies show that religious fundamentalist forces are increasingly present in every religion – Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism and Judaism.²¹ Yet, they reflect a shared “conservative and patriarchal point of view on gender issues which come together under a rhetorical ‘pro-family’ rubric”.²² As Deniz Kandiyoti observes, they are characterised by a common intention “to establish the principle that matters relating to sexuality, to the control of female bodies, and to reproductive choice do not belong to the sphere of civic deliberation, public choice, or human rights but to a domain of non-negotiable morality defined by doctrinal imperatives.”²³

Another very recent example of the influence of religious fundamentalist ideology in backsliding

from gender equality progress is in the case of decriminalisation of domestic violence in Russia, which was legitimised on the basis of returning to traditional ‘Russian family values’.²⁴ At the global level, religious fundamentalists with representatives from two of world’s major religions (Christianity and Islam), and conservative governments from the Middle East as well as the US Christian Right, have mobilised transnationally to oppose SRHR. These ‘unholy’ alliances have solidified at UN conferences, Commission on the Status of Women meetings, and key international conferences on HIV/AIDS, population and development, and children.²⁵ As a conservative lobby, they are increasingly organised and adapting to global and regional governance structures to question the universal applicability of SRHR. Indeed, religious fundamentalist forces constitute an expanding transnational network of political connections and financial resources.²⁶

SRHR in Crisis Situations: Neoliberal Policies Diverting Resources

Globally, the 10 countries with the highest maternal mortality ratios in the world are affected by, or emerging from, war. Over half of the world’s maternal deaths occur in conflict-affected and fragile states.²⁷ From a human rights perspective, states have the responsibility under international human rights and humanitarian laws to progressively promote the health and wellbeing of all individuals regardless of crisis.²⁸ In addition, UNFPA stress that “conflicts and disasters do not exempt any government or humanitarian actor from obligations, embodied in the Programme of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, to uphold the

18 Sen, Gita (2005) *Neolib, Neocons and Gender Justice: Lessons from Global Negotiations*. United Nations Research Institute for Social Development Occasional Paper 9, Razavi, Shahra & Anne Jenichen (2010) “The Unhappy Marriage of Religion and Politics: Problems and Pitfalls for Gender Equality,” in *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 31, No. 6, 833-850; Association for Women’s Rights in Development (AWID) (2016) *The Devil is in the Details: At the Nexus of Development, Women’s Rights, and Religious Fundamentalisms*. https://www.awid.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/final_web_the_devil_is_in_the_details.pdf (last accessed 31 January 2017).

19 Gezinski, “The Global Gag Rule”.

20 See for related discussions Cooper, Melinda (2015) “The Theology of Emergency: Welfare Reform, US Foreign Aid and the Faith Based Initiative,” in *Theory, Culture & Society*, Vol. 32, No. 2, 53–77.

21 Sen, “Neolib, Neocons and Gender Justice”; AWID, *The Devil is in the Details*.

22 Chappell, Louise (2006) “Contesting Women’s Rights: Charting the Emergence of a Transnational Conservative Counter-network,” in *Global Society*, Vol. 20, No. 4, 493-494.

23 Kandiyoti, “The Triple Whammy”.

24 Human Rights Watch (2017) “Russia: Bill to Decriminalize Domestic Violence,” 23 January. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/01/23/russia-bill-decriminalize-domestic-violence> (last accessed 31 January 2017).

25 Chappell, “Contesting Women’s Rights”; Petchesky, Rosalind (2003) *Global Prescriptions: Gendering Health and Human Rights*. New York: Zed Books.

26 Girard, Françoise (2014) “Taking ICPD beyond 2015: Negotiating sexual and reproductive rights in the next development agenda,” in *Global Public Health*, Vol. 9, No. 6, 607-619.

27 UNFPA, *Shelter from the Storm*; UN Women (2015) *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*. New York. <http://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/files/un%20women/wps/highlights/unw-global-study-1325-2015.pdf?vs=2435> (last accessed 31 January 2017).

28 UN General Assembly (UNGA) (2013) Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. 68th session, 9 August. A/68/297.

right of the individual to sexual and reproductive health, including the right to decide freely and responsibly whether, when or how often to become pregnant.”²⁹

In situations of recurrent and escalating conflicts and disasters, health needs intensify. However, it is also during crisis and emergencies that the sources of such care, including the availability of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health, are destroyed.³⁰ For example, in crisis settings where women and girls are highly exposed to various forms of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) they are also faced with limited reporting and protection mechanisms. This is particularly pertinent in protracted internal displacement situations. Because of reporting constraints, many victims of SGBV are effectively denied essential health treatment through the unavailability of sexual and reproductive health services including: post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), emergency contraceptive (EC) pill, and abortion. Consequently women and girls experience compounded harms first through direct physical violence and second, by being forced to bear the long-term consequences of sexual violence such as unwanted pregnancy, STDs or HIV/AIDs.³¹

Despite remarkable progress in targeting humanitarian services to women and girls over the past decade, large gaps remain in transformative actions beyond the crisis or emergency phase to address gender inequalities. Moreover, disparity persists in the gender-equitable distribution of resources during and after crises.³² And yet, studies show that global expenditures for military and internal state security continue to significantly outweigh global resources allocated for building lasting peace and sustainable development

globally.³³ According to the military expenditure database by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), global military expenditure in 2015 was an estimated \$1,676 billion USD. In the crisis-prone region of the Asia Pacific where protracted conflicts and severe environmental disasters routinely intersect, military spending rose by 5.4 per cent in 2015 alone, and by 64 per cent between 2006 and 2015, reaching \$436 billion in 2015.³⁴ Militarism diverts resources away from long-term prevention of violence strategies and sustainable development.³⁵ It aligns with, and exacerbates, neoliberal solutions such as fiscal austerity in response to economic crises thereby depleting resources for social welfare, and by extension, health service delivery during and after crisis.

Women's and Girls' bodily costs in crisis situations, and the effects of the GGR

The sustained growth in military spending alongside a surge in the frequency of humanitarian crises suggests that the deployment of crisis narratives leaves the neoliberal global economy intact. Such manoeuvres come at great bodily cost to women and girls. Feminists have shown that as a result of crisis, women's unpaid care and domestic labour is more intensely relied upon by states as an 'invisible safety net' for the coping of families and communities.³⁶ Gaps in crisis responses and interventions, particularly when they neglect SRHR, reproduce the assumption that this labour is elastic. That is, survival and recovery are contingent on women's willingness to make the necessary sacrifices by means of subordinating their personal needs to that of the family, community and the state. However, without replenishing or sustaining the bodily autonomy and integrity of women and girls, then the very bodies that meet intensified care

29 UNFPA, *Shelter from the Storm*, 104.

30 Robinson, Fiona (2016) "Feminist Care Ethics and Everyday Insecurities" in J. Nyman and A. Burke (eds.), *Ethical Security Studies: A New Research Agenda*. New York: Routledge, 27; see also Petchesky, Rosalind (2008) "Conflict and Crisis Settings: Promoting Sexual and Reproductive Rights," in *Reproductive Health Matters*, Vol. 16, No. 31, 4-9.

31 See for examples Tanyag, Maria (2016) "Peace, Sex and Violence in Mindanao," in *Australian Outlook*, 15 August, http://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australian_outlook/peace-sex-and-violence-in-mindanao/ (last accessed 31 January 2017); Garcia, Melissa & Sarah Rich (2017) "Emergency contraception is a simple part of post-rape care: Why is it not routinely provided?" in *Sexual Violence Research Initiative*, 16 January, <http://www.svri.org/blog/emergency-contraception-simple-part-post-rape-care-why-it-not-routinely-provided> (last accessed 31 January 2017).

32 UNFPA, *Shelter from the Storm*.

33 See for example Schippa, Camilla (2016) "War costs us \$13.6 trillion. So why do we spend so little on peace?" in *World Economic Forum*, 8 June. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/06/the-world-continues-to-spend-enormous-amounts-on-violence-and-little-on-building-peace/> (last accessed 31 January 2017).

34 SIPRI (2016) "Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2015" SIPRI Fact Sheet, April.

35 Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) (2015) *You Get What You Pay For*. Geneva, New York: WILPF, 11. <http://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/You-Get-What-You-Pay-For-Web.pdf> (last accessed 31 January 2017).

36 Elson, Diane (2009) *Social Reproduction in the Global Crisis*. UNRISD Conference on Social and Political Dimensions of the Global Crisis. [http://unrisd.org/80256B3C005BD6AB/\(httpAUXPages\)/934F4B5486C1FA40C1257678002E09F3/\\$file/1-1Elson.pdf](http://unrisd.org/80256B3C005BD6AB/(httpAUXPages)/934F4B5486C1FA40C1257678002E09F3/$file/1-1Elson.pdf) (last accessed 31 January 2017).

demands end up depleted.³⁷ Deploying a feminist political economy lens to sexual and reproductive freedoms is vital in relation to assessing the GGR, because it shows how violence is enforced through material or structural factors as much as it is also 'internalised' and thus effectively invisible through women's complicity and self-sacrificing practices. Stemming the root causes of bodily depletion extremely manifested in preventable maternal deaths requires eliminating both material and ideological barriers to SRHR, which are embodied by the GGR.

Additionally, faith-based groups have had a long history in humanitarian and development spaces.³⁸ Their unique positioning as both rooted in communities while being global in reach, has translated in them being regarded as 'privileged interlocutors'.³⁹ Neoliberal public-private partnerships potentially enable both faith-based groups and conservative governments, such as those represented in the US and Russia presently, to propagate and fortify religious fundamentalist beliefs. There remains very little research on the contradictory outcomes engendered by empowering religious groups and how their presence might further normalise cultural norms and practices that deny women and girls of sexual and reproductive agency within humanitarian spaces. In the case of emergency crisis responses, a report by the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) suggests that "making religious organizations a default choice for partnerships can have negative implications for human rights, and especially for women, sexual and gender minorities, and other marginalized groups."⁴⁰

While the quality of health care service delivery generally suffers as a result of conflicts, crises may also allow for vital health services and assistance to be made available through the influx of foreign humanitarian aid.⁴¹ However, the AWID study posits "there is some evidence

that at least some religious organizations have used services and relief to introduce narrower interpretations of religion and adoption of rigid gender roles, heteronormativity, conservative dress codes and behaviour."⁴² This finding is consistent with broader social science research that demonstrates how "in countries where political and ecclesiastical power are tightly linked, family law tends to discriminate against women."⁴³ Forms of gender inequality that are deeply embedded within institutional frameworks thus shape the provision of reliable health care before, during and after crisis. In the long-term, meeting the challenges of responding to multiple crises and their direct and indirect effects on health service delivery cannot be hinged upon states divesting more power to privatisation and financialisation.⁴⁴

Advancing SRHR within security and development agendas will require destabilising the pre-eminence of militarism and growing salience of religious fundamentalist ideologies within these spaces. This includes recognising how the reinstatement of the GGR sits squarely within these contemporary political and economic processes. For example, UN Women points out that a global humanitarian standard on the delivery of Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) for both reproductive health and clinical management of rape has been in place since 1999, which has also been revised in 2010. In many crisis settings this standard has not been attained or implemented. This is because the effective delivery of MISP "assumes some level of pre-existing, functioning health infrastructure, disrupted due to conflict, that humanitarians can help patch up and reactivate."⁴⁵ In many conflict and disaster-prone regions however, public health systems are already weak or deeply eroded as a result of an enduring global health crisis manifested in egregious lack of access to health

37 Rai, Shirin, Catherine Hoskyns & Dania Thomas (2014) "Depletion: The Social Cost of Reproduction" in *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 86-105.

38 Ferris, Elizabeth (2005) "Faith-based and secular humanitarian organizations," in *International Review of the Red Cross*, Vol. 87, No. 858, 311-325; Barnett, Michael & Thomas Weiss (eds.) (2008) *Humanitarianism in Question: Politics, Power, Ethics*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

39 Ferris, Faith-based and secular humanitarian organizations"; Cooper, "The Theology of Emergency".

40 AWID, *The Devil is in the Details*, 27.

41 Petchesky, "Conflict and Crisis Settings".

42 AWID, *The Devil is in the Details*, 27.

43 Htun, Mala & S. Laurel Weldon (2015) "Religious Power, the State, Women's Rights, and Family Law," in *Politics & Gender*, Vol.11, 452-453.

44 True, Jacqui & Maria Tanyag (2017) "Violence against Women/ Violence in the World: Toward a Feminist Conceptualization of Global Violence," in *Routledge Handbook on Gender and Security* edited by Caron Gentry, Laura J. Shepherd & Laura Sjoberg, Routledge (forthcoming).

45 UN Women, *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace*, 78

services and personnel.⁴⁶ Future challenges for SRHR are evident in the marginalisation of SRHR within the pioneering World Humanitarian Summit held in Istanbul, Turkey in May 2016. A joint statement calling for countries to increase economic investments to address SRHR in humanitarian crises received minimal support with less than 10 per cent of member states in attendance backing the call for action.⁴⁷ It is clear from the case of SRHR in crisis situations that promoting the full basis of human dignity for women and girls requires national and global structural reforms that overhaul unequal gender relations.

Conclusion

In this article, I examined the reinstatement of the GGR beyond representations of its 'exceptionality' associated with the rising global discontent against Trump to instead emphasise that it is intricately linked to the material and ideological conditions enabled by a neoliberal global economy. Certainly, the reinstatement of the GGR carries grave symbolic harms. As a form of restriction to sexual and reproductive freedoms globally, it was reinstated by the very same person who had also previously remarked that women who undergo abortion must be subjected to "some form of punishment" and confessed to grabbing women by the pussy.⁴⁸ However, it is equally crucial not to lose sight of broader structural inequalities that perpetuate the progressive abrogation of SRHR in crisis situations and everyday life. Global health inequalities remain pervasive and underpin the normalisation of preventable maternal deaths

in the Global South. These egregious forms of gendered violence severely undermine the health and wellbeing of women and girls, as much as of the households and communities, which rely upon their unpaid labour.

The rise of religious fundamentalisms in tandem with neoliberal global economic processes is not merely incidental, but in many contexts may increasingly play a central role in legitimising gendered inequalities that manifest at their most basic in the control of women's bodies. They similarly reveal how economic systems continue to be built on rewarding "masculinist modes of control [that] pervade the practices of both financialization and militarization."⁴⁹ Indeed, in crisis situations especially, militarism and religious fundamentalisms may serve to mutually reinforce one another to close off substantive and broader participation for women and girls in political and economic decision-making precisely by enabling material and ideological barriers to bodily autonomy and integrity. And yet, from a feminist perspective, it is precisely these women and girls as most marginalised who are in the best position to promote comprehensive crisis and long-term solutions that attend to multidimensional experiences of insecurity, peace and development. Such a transformative project of gender inclusion, however, begins essentially when women and girls are able to take full control over their own bodies.

46 Fonn, Sharon & TK Sundari Ravindran (2011) "The macroeconomic environment and sexual and reproductive health: a review of trends over the last 30 years," in *Reproductive Health Matters*, Vol. 19, No. 38, 11-25; Benatar, Solomon, Stephen Gill & Isabella Bakker (2011) "Global Health and the Global Economic Crisis," in *American Journal of Public Health*, Vol. 101, No. 4, 646-653.

47 This joint statement was signed by UNFPA and the following member states: Australia, Central African Republic, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Liberia, Netherlands, Norway, Philippines, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and Uruguay. The summit was attended by 173 member states of the United Nations, including 55 Heads of State and Government. See UNFPA (2016) "Accelerating efforts to save lives, protect rights and dignity and leave no one behind," <http://www.unfpa.org/press/accelerating-efforts-save-lives-protect-rights-and-dignity-and-leave-no-one-behind> (last accessed 31 January 2017).

48 Flegenheimer, Matt & Maggie Haberman (2016) "Donald Trump, Abortion Foe, Eyes 'Punishment' for Women, Then Recants," in *The New York Times*, 30 March, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/31/us/politics/donald-trump-abortion.html?_r=1 (last accessed 31 January 2017).

49 Hozic, Aida & Jacqui True (2016) *Scandalous Economics: Gender and the Politics of Financial Crises*. New York: Oxford University Press, 5.

Media, Foreign Policy and Intervention



Article by Ben Reeson

Ben Reeson lives and works in Melbourne. He has completed a BA and is currently writing an honours thesis on Burundi, Rwanda and the prevention of mass violence

In an age marked by instant communication and 24-hour news, nearly all global events are accessible at the local level. From a coup d'état in Mauritania, to a bombing in Iraq or an earthquake in Chile, technology has severed the news gap between an event happening and it appearing on our screens. With this near instant access to newsworthy incidents globally, we have the ability to form opinions on events in real time as they unfold and regardless of their effect on us. The implications and consequences this can have on democratic societies contribute to the shaping of public opinion and how that affects governmental responses; the impact of which has shown to be profound. Through considering the case studies of Somalia, Rwanda, East Timor, and the current refugee crisis in Europe, it is possible to understand the important role media plays in informing public opinion. Yet as these cases demonstrate, state responses to mass violence and genocide will vary according to public opinion or reshape public opinion itself.

The United States, Inaction, and Rwanda

The Rwandan Genocide, as a singular event, occurred between April and mid July in 1994. The scale and horror of the genocide has rendered it one of the most widely known historical events of the 1990s and has secured Rwanda's place in our collective memory. This was not always the case. The genocide occurred within the wider context of the Rwandan Civil War, which had pitted the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), a largely rebel Tutsi force, against the mostly Hutu Rwandan Government.¹ The initial stages of this conflict were brought to a standstill with the Arusha Accords, signed in 1993. The accords intended to create a transitional government, with warring parties given proportional stakes. Refugees were to be repatriated and the rule of law to be re-established. As part of enforcing the accords, a peacekeeping force, United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR), was established. The mission was given a wide range of responsibilities, but was limited in scope and resources. These limitations reflected the circumstances in which the UN mission was developed: with widespread and costly UN missions already on the ground in twelve areas, the United States (US) and United Kingdom (UK) argued that the UN was overstretched. Large-scale missions in Cambodia and Somalia already drew significant resources and the US and UK argued that any new mission ought to be more

affordable. Two major factors seemed to affect the US government's decisions: the domestic political environment and the media cost of casualties.²

Prior to leading the UN missions into Somalia, the US, under George H. Bush' administration, had been opposed to intervention until a ceasefire was in place. It was only when major TV stations drew attention to the spreading famine, that a change of policy was considered. Once a wider audience knew of the millions of starving Somalis, the political cost of inaction and its consequences became apparent; under the glare of the media spotlight, the political necessity to intervene became clear.³ As the UN mission in Somalia began, led by the US, it seemed there was no limit to humanitarian intervention. President Bush, who had decided to commit to the mission before leaving office, stated,

"Only the United States has the global reach to place a large security force on the ground in such a distant place quickly and effectively and, thus, save thousands of innocents from death".⁴

In this atmosphere of optimism, US forces stormed Somali beaches in December 1992 as the media's cameras rolled. They eventually contributed 22,000 soldiers, with another twenty states contributing 17,000 more. However, as the mission stretched out, flaws became evident. Eighteen US Special Forces soldiers were killed on October 3 1993, in an incident that became known as the Battle of Mogadishu. The event revealed that public and domestic political opinion had firmly changed. It had swung away from the romanticised notions of the humanitarian intervention mission to a political and public relations disaster. Footage and photos of dead US soldiers being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu to cheering crowds shocked audiences and ensured an end to any remaining goodwill.⁵ The incident caused the US to announce it would pull out of the mission, while encouraging other western nations to do the same.⁶

1 Melvern, Linda (2000) *A people betrayed. The role of the West in Rwanda's genocide.* Zed-Books: London.

2 Ibid.

3 Mermin, Jonathan (1999) *Debating war and peace: Media coverage of US intervention in the post-Vietnam era.* Princeton University Press: Princeton., Carr, Caleb (1993). "The consequences of Somalia." in *World Policy Journal* Vol. 10, No. 3, 1.

4 Melvern, Linda (2000) *A people betrayed. The role of the West in Rwanda's genocide.* Zed-Books: London.

5 There is extensive footage available on YouTube., Dauber, Cori. (2001) "Image as argument: The impact of Mogadishu on US military intervention." in *Armed Forces & Society* Vol. 27, No. 2, 205.

6 Melvern, Linda (2000) *A people betrayed. The role of the West in Rwanda's genocide.* Zed-Books: London.

After the Somali mission disaster, the US government faced significant domestic political pressure relating to UN interventions and costs. Congress attempted to pass an act that would have made it impossible for the President to commit US troops to UN operations. The government was also accused of allowing US foreign policy to be turned over to UN bureaucrats.⁷ The high cost of the US contribution to UN operations further sapped US governmental will to act. Two days after the Battle of Mogadishu, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) was due to vote on the provision of peacekeepers to Rwanda.⁸ The unfortunate timing, coupled with the public relations fallout and domestic political pressure to limit costs, led to UNAMIR being a small and cheap peacekeeping mission. The US initially argued for a symbolic presence of only 100 soldiers, but contributed none. To cut costs further, the US, with the support of Russia and the UK, argued for a further reduction in the role of peacekeepers. Eventually the force, deployed in late 1993, would be composed of personnel from Belgium totalling 400, Bangladesh with 940, and Ghana offering 800.⁹ It was a far cry from the enthusiastic response to the call for intervention in Somalia just a year before.

When the genocide itself began in April 1994, the complete inadequacy of UNAMIR to carry out its mission goals was obvious. Despite the efforts of UNAMIR to protect senior Tutsi and moderate Hutu forces, many were killed, including Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana. The ten Belgian troops meant to protect her were also slain.¹⁰ The effect of these deaths was immediate. Within days, outraged public opinion in Belgium had pushed the Belgian government to send in 850 elite troops to withdraw all of its citizens and subsequently, its remaining forces from UNAMIR. The flow on effects of this policy decision based on adverse public opinion was tremendous. The opinion in Washington, already averse to intervention after Somalia, thought that the Belgian withdrawal was a further sign that they could not intervene. The impact on the ground was to remove any chance UNAMIR had to impede the genocide from proceeding.¹¹

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid., Klinghoffer, Arthur. (1998). *The international dimension of genocide in Rwanda*. New York University Press: New York City.

10 Melvern, Linda (2006) *Conspiracy to murder: The Rwandan genocide*. Verso: New York City.

11 Burkhalter, Holly. (1994). "The Question of Genocide: The Clinton Administration and Rwanda" in *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 11, No. 4, 44.

Throughout the genocide, members of the UNSC and nations that had contributed to UNAMIR knew of the spreading killings. General Dallaire, commander of the mission, consistently reported to UN headquarters on the escalating violence.¹² Despite this stream of information out of Rwanda, no extra action was taken. US and British officials continued to call for a complete withdrawal of forces, citing that a change in the mission may require extra troops and costs and that such an assertive policy was the undoing of the Somalia mission.¹³ As the death toll climbed, and despite what they knew, western governments including the US, UK, and France, played down the situation as a part of 'a horrific civil war' and refrained from using the term 'genocide'. The Clinton administration specifically avoided using the term, so as to bypass criticism of their newfound non-intervention policy.¹⁴ Media reports largely echoed the government line, especially in the first few pivotal weeks. Early in the genocide, *The Guardian* wrote pieces about Rwandan gorillas, while *The New York Times* wrote of the "disintegration... into chaos and anarchy".¹⁵ Unlike in Somalia, the relatively limited number of journalists in Rwanda hampered efforts to report on what was actually happening outside of government communiqués. When they did though, it was self-censored; photos of the killings were suppressed as there were deemed too graphic. A news piece filmed by a BBC crew based in Kenya was dropped for the same reason. The team were advised that any future reports should be shot at a wide angle, intended to make images less distinct; bodies were also often edited out of shots.¹⁶

Unlike the reporting of the famine in Somalia, it took many weeks for sanitised reports and footage to come from Rwanda.¹⁷ With a lack of journalists in the region and the inadequate knowledge of Rwanda, news outlets had limited on the ground

12 Des Forges, Alison & Human Rights Watch & International Federation of Human Rights (1999) "Leave none to tell the story": *Genocide in Rwanda*. Human Rights Watch: New York City.

13 Ibid.

14 Schimmel, Noam (2011) "An invisible genocide: how the Western media failed to report the 1994 Rwandan genocide of the Tutsi and why." in *The International Journal of Human Rights* Vol. 15, No. 7, 1126., *The Guardian* (2004) US chose to ignore Rwandan genocide, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/mar/31/usa.rwanda>, 11 March 2017.

15 Schimmel, Noam (2011) "An invisible genocide: how the Western media failed to report the 1994 Rwandan genocide of the Tutsi and why." in *The International Journal of Human Rights* Vol. 15, No. 7, 1126.

16 Ibid.

17 Carr, Caleb (1993) "The consequences of Somalia." in *World Policy Journal* Vol. 10, No. 3, 1.

access to information. While there was some early reporting on the mounting death toll, reports did not come with the same visual stimuli that had been so impacting in Somalia.¹⁸ A lack of footage and photos to go with this information and an inability to easily distinguish the good from the bad, the story was not particularly compelling or one that was easy to tell.¹⁹

As the genocide wore on towards its end, the reality of it became clearer to the media. Bodies were choking the Kagera River, and the trope of it merely being a part of a 'civil war' was wearing away. International figures including the Americans had begun to mention it as 'genocide' or 'acts of genocide'.²⁰ The RPF drew closer to ending the genocide by completing their conquest in mid July, and some two million Hutus fled across the borders into the Democratic Republic of Congo, then known as Zaire, and Tanzania. They moved into camps and were plagued with disease and other issues.²¹ The sight of a constant stream of poor and bedraggled faces made for a perfect media story and attracted considerable international coverage. By the end of July there were nearly 500 journalists and technicians in Goma, Zaire, many covering the new refugee tragedy by satellite. This coverage brought the scale of the tragedy to light and pushed the US and wider international community into action. One day after the RPF declared a unilateral ceasefire on July 20 1994, the US began a huge airlift. Within three days planes were on the ground in Goma, and 4000 US forces dispersed some \$400 million worth of medical and food aid.²² The misery in the mostly Hutu refugee camps while horrifying, especially at the peak of 3000 deaths per day, paled in comparison to the situation Rwanda itself had been through without assistance.²³ Without the considerable media presence in Goma, sufficient action may never have been taken.

18 Power, Samantha (2001) "Bystanders to genocide." in *Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 288, No. 2, 84.

19 Schimmel, Noam (2011) "An invisible genocide: how the Western media failed to report the 1994 Rwandan genocide of the Tutsi and why." in *The International Journal of Human Rights* Vol. 15, No. 7, 1126.

20 Power, Samantha (2001) "Bystanders to genocide." in *Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 288, No. 2, 84.

21 Peacock, Dorinda Lea. (1997). "It happened and it can happen again": The international response to genocide in Rwanda." in *North Carolina Journal of International Law and Commercial Regulation*, Vol. 22, No. 3, 918.

22 Melvern, Linda (2006) *Conspiracy to murder: The Rwandan genocide*. Verso: New York City.

23 Dallaire, Romeo (2003) *Shake hands with the devil : The failure of humanity in Rwanda*. Random House Canada: Toronto.

In both the Somali and Rwandan cases, news coverage had an essential role in the response (or lack thereof) provided by the US and the international community. The coverage of each crisis affected public opinion and influenced the decision-making at the political level. There were both negative and positive consequences to this relationship between media, public perception, and government. The effect of little visual imagery, and sanitised imagery of the genocide itself, meant that reporting was unable to contradict the framing that numerous western governments provided. It also meant that stories did not have the same impact in the media cycle, and did not move public opinion in such a way as to create pressure for the US government to act.

Australia, Action, and East Timor

Australia and Indonesia have a long and at times fractious history. This is especially true in regard to East Timor, which had been a Portuguese colony, before brief independence in 1975. After less than two weeks of official independence, the East Timor was violently invaded by Indonesia with the tacit support of Australia and the US. This takeover led to a long campaign against insurgent East Timorese forces, often using tactics that amounted to war crimes, and then eventual incorporation into Indonesia.²⁴ However, this incorporation was not harmonious, with the now Indonesian province seeing sporadic outbreaks of violence, such as the Dili Massacre in 1991, and as such requiring a constant military presence.

Despite occasional stories in Australian media over human rights concerns in Indonesia and activism from East Timorese and their supporters, the Australian government took the policy position of supporting East Timor within Indonesia. However this began to change in 1998, when the prevailing economic conditions triggered the resignation of President Suharto, long time leader of the New Order. It ushered in a new period known as 'Reformasi', ruled over by former Vice-President, now President Habibie.²⁵ pushing the long-suppressed discussion of the status of East Timor into the open. At the same time in the domestic

24 Schorr, Daniel, "Intervention in East Timor" in *The Christian Science Monitor*: Boston, MA. September 10 1999, p. 11.,

Fernandes, Clinton (2015) "Accomplice to Mass Atrocities: The International Community and Indonesia's Invasion of East Timor." in *Politics and Governance*, Vol. 3, No. 4, 1.

25 Mcdougall, Derek & Kingsley Edney (2010) "Howard's way? Public opinion as an influence on Australia's engagement with Asia, 1996-2007" in *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 64, No. 2, 214.

political environment, the Australian government faced increased pressure for an independent East Timor.²⁶ John Howard, then Australian Prime Minister, responded to growing domestic pressures, and took what he thought to be the most pragmatic course of action given the ructions in Indonesian politics and sent a letter to Habibie. It outlined a plan for an eventual self-determination vote and support for independence should the East Timorese vote for it. The letter angered Habibie so much, that he showed it to a range of top officials and decided to call a referendum.²⁷ Habibie requested the UN administer the referendum and as a result, plans were laid out between Indonesia and Portugal, the last colonial ruler. The United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNAMET) was created, with hundreds of election officials and unarmed police being sent out in preparation for the referendum. Sporadic and increasing intimidation and violence began to rise, yet in spite of this; nearly 100% of registered voters went to the polls.²⁸

After the vote on August 30 1999, which showed that an overwhelming majority had voted for independence, the violence escalated dramatically. Pro-Indonesian militia aided by members of the Indonesian Army tore through the country killing over 1000 people and destroying nearly all infrastructure. Within two and a half weeks, no home was left untouched with nearly all personal wealth looted and most houses burned. Hundreds of thousands fled to the mountains or over the border into West Timor.²⁹ This violence in the presence of UNAMET officials, and media personnel on hand to witness it, caused a public outcry in Australia for something to be done. The Australian government had foreseen that violence was a likely outcome of any vote, and as early as

March 1999 had moved an extra brigade to Darwin in preparation. A planning team was also formed to consider possible scenarios for intervention. Despite this forward planning, there was reluctance for unilateral intervention, given the very real possibility of violent confrontation between Australian troops and pro-Indonesian forces and the Indonesian army, and the potential for its escalation into a national war.³⁰

No matter these obstacles, public opinion within Australia was firmly in favour of intervention. The sense of 'moral unease' at the situation and that Australia had played a part in it since 1975, was supported by vehement media coverage. The Sydney Morning Herald argued that Australia "must lead the way – in force".³¹ Polling released by the same paper on 14 September 1999 reflected the strength of public opinion for intervention, with 72% in support of peacekeeping and 34% supporting intervention, with or without UN support.³² As the Australian government ruled out unilateral action and sought UN and US support for intervention and Indonesian permission for it, they were in the words of Alexander Downer, then Foreign Minister, "forced to endure vociferous criticism", something for which they were unlikely to survive if action were not taken.³³

This combination of forethought by the Australian government and significant domestic pressure on them, kept them committed to intervention. Australian, UN, US and other members of the international community's diplomatic pressure on Indonesia ensured that they acquiesced to

26 Smith, Gary & David Lowe (2005) "Howard, Downer and the Liberals' realist tradition" in *The Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 51, No. 3, 464.

27 He, Kai (2008) "Indonesia's foreign policy after Soeharto: International pressure, democratization, and policy change" in *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 56., ABC News (2008) Howard pushed me on E Timor referendum: Habibie, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2008-11-16/howard-pushed-me-on-e-timor-referendum-habibie/207044>, 11 March 2017.

28 Traub, James (2000) "Inventing East Timor" in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 79, No. 4, 74.

29 Ibid, Cohen, Michael & Andrew O'Neil (2015) "Doubts down under: American extended deterrence, Australia, and the 1999 East Timor crisis" in *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, Vol 15, No. 1, 37., He, Kai (2008) "Indonesia's foreign policy after Soeharto: International pressure, democratization, and policy change" in *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 56.

30 Cohen, Michael & Andrew O'Neil (2015) "Doubts down under: American extended deterrence, Australia, and the 1999 East Timor crisis" in *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, Vol 15, No. 1, 37., Cotton, James (2001) "Against the Grain: The East Timor Intervention" *Survival*, Vol 43, No. 1, 131.

31 Smith, Gary & David Lowe (2005) "Howard, Downer and the Liberals' realist tradition" in *The Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 51, No. 3, 464., Cohen, Michael & Andrew O'Neil (2015) "Doubts down under: American extended deterrence, Australia, and the 1999 East Timor crisis" in *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, Vol 15, No. 1, 37., Jago, Marianne (2010) "InterFET: An Account of Intervention with Consent in East Timor" in *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 17, No. 3, 386, 387.

32 Mcdougall, Derek & Kingsley Edney (2010) "Howard's way? Public opinion as an influence on Australia's engagement with Asia, 1996-2007" in *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 64, No. 2, 214., As a personal note, I recall there being petitions left at the local library calling for the government to intervene.

33 Mcdougall, Derek & Kingsley Edney (2010) "Howard's way? Public opinion as an influence on Australia's engagement with Asia, 1996-2007" in *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 64, No. 2, 214, 215., Jago, Marianne (2010) "InterFET: An Account of Intervention with Consent in East Timor" in *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 17, No. 3, 386.

intervention; and the international forces in East Timor (InterFET), consisting mainly of Australian forces, were authorised on the 15th and deployed on the 20th September 1999.³⁴ InterFET were able to stabilise and take control of East Timor and prevent further violence. While the Australian government had already planned for the eventual course of action that was taken in East Timor, the intense media coverage, backed by ample visual imagery, both supported their decision, and ensured that it was carried through.³⁵

Public Opinion, Media and Foreign Policy

In democratic states, public opinion matters. Due to the nature of democratic systems, politicians must consider public opinion in all decision making processes, especially in the lead up to elections.³⁶ As to what extent public opinion affects these processes is questionable. There is no evidence to suggest that all policy decisions are derived from public opinion, especially foreign policy decisions. But public opinion does however have some impact and governments are, on occasion, prone to following it.³⁷

Public opinion, especially in regard to politics, is developed through the media in its role as the propagator of news and an agenda setter.³⁸ The media can have this effect, as what they choose to focus on establishes public conversations around that story. They have long acted as gatekeepers, not only deciding the biggest topics of the day by virtue of their choice of which story to run, but also in framing the public conversation around that story. This framing is not done in a vacuum, but within the social and political context of the dominant culture.³⁹ As the social and political context changes, so does the ability of media to focus on or frame a story. In the aftermath of the Cold War and with the development of new technologies, the changed context appeared to allow media to look outside the 'prism of the Cold War' and react far more quickly to international

events.⁴⁰ The possibility of real-time news reporting of events far away from home, an accelerated news cycle, and its supposed effect on public opinion, came to be known as the 'CNN effect'.⁴¹ The advent and deep penetration of the Internet has further enhanced factors of the 'CNN effect', with news spreading at an even faster pace, while reducing the ability of traditional media to act as gatekeepers and agenda setters.⁴² In Australia, 99% of the population use the Internet and 79% do so daily, with that number rising far higher amongst younger demographics. Of that percentage, 68% have a social media account with the vast majority (93%) having a Facebook account. 40% of users stated that they used social media to "get information on news and current events." With a Facebook user spending an average of eight and a half hours a week on the site, the power traditional media had to be gatekeepers or set the agenda has been substantially reduced by who or what the user sees on Facebook.⁴³

There is a growing consensus that the grand overarching narratives of state foreign policy, while not driven by public opinion, are certainly influenced by it. In individual circumstances of mass violence and genocide though, the 'CNN effect' can have a profound impact on public opinion and draw an immediate response from the state.⁴⁴ It is important to note the necessity of visual imagery: that is photos and footage, on this effect. Reports of casualties, mass violence or even genocidal action have relatively little effect, but the 'graphic portrayal of human tragedy' is crucial in determining its impact on public opinion and through that, the state response to it.⁴⁵ This is evinced in the US reaction to the Battle of Mogadishu and subsequent response to Hutu refugees flowing out of Rwanda after the genocide. Even with the visual imagery, how these crises

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

36 Kennamer, J. David (1994) *Public opinion, the press, and public policy*. Praeger Publishers: Westport, CT.

37 Burstein, Paul (2003) "The impact of public opinion on public policy: A review and an agenda" in *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 56, No. 1, 29.

38 McCombs, Maxwell (2004) *Setting the agenda: The mass media and public opinion*. Polity Press: Cambridge.

39 Kennamer, J. David (1994) *Public opinion, the press, and public policy*. Praeger Publishers: Westport, CT.

40 Robinson, Piers (1999) "The CNN effect: can the news media drive foreign policy?" in *Review of international studies*, Vol. 25, No. 2, 301.

41 Ibid.

42 Bahador, Babak (2007) *The CNN Effect in Action: How the News Media Pushed the West toward War in Kosovo*. Palgrave Macmillan US: New York City.

43 Sensis (2015) *Sensis Social Media Report 2015*, https://www.sensis.com.au/asset/PDFdirectory/Sensis_Social_Media_Report_2015.pdf, 11 March 2017

44 McDougall, Derek & Kingsley Edney (2010) "Howard's way? Public opinion as an influence on Australia's engagement with Asia, 1996-2007" in *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 64, No. 2, 207., Kennamer, J. David (1994) *Public opinion, the press, and public policy*. Praeger Publishers: Westport, CT.

45 Shaw, Martin (1996). *Civil society and media in global crises : representing distant violence*. Pinter, London

were framed was crucial in determining the political impact of the story and allowed the US to act in a way that it felt appropriate.⁴⁶ In the absence of overt visual imagery, the ability of the state to set and frame the way in which a story is reported is enhanced.⁴⁷

With the changing role of traditional news media and the profound power of social media as a source of 24-hour news, we can see that the 'graphic portrayal of human tragedy' is creating new waves of response in public opinion and government decision-making. A recent example of this is the death of Alan Kurdi in September 2015. While the Syrian refugee crisis had been escalating for some time and had been widely reported on, the image of Alan dead on a Turkish beach brought the issue to the forefront. The particularly graphic and confronting nature of the images had a significant impact on European public opinion of the crisis.⁴⁸ While many traditional media outlets chose not to publish the most graphic of the images, its presence on social media ensured it was seen globally. In the days after, many European state leaders expressed shock and sorrow at his death and promised policies more compassionate to refugees. The German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, declared "The right to political asylum has no limits on the number of asylum seekers".⁴⁹ Some news outlets, previously hostile towards taking in refugees, struck a more conciliatory tone, and his death propelled the refugee crisis to the forefront of the Canadian federal election.⁵⁰ While the image may not have spurred a timely end to the crisis, it cut through all other news and brought the human cost and immediacy of the crisis into public consciousness globally and spurred political action.

Conclusion

In the media driven political landscape, it can be easy to assume that democratically elected political leaders are only acting in self interest - that is, they are acting up and saying what they need to say to ensure their own positive public polling. That the 'CNN effect' of wall-to-wall news ensures political leaders respond to mass violence and genocide as per the prevailing winds of public opinion; this view is a black and white one, without nuance and does not reflect reality. In responding to mass violence and genocide in other states, political leaders have to balance their need to heed public opinion, but also to act according to what they consider the best interests of the state. They are in a unique position to utilise positive public opinion to justify what they consider morally just action against any opposition, but they are also in a position to sway public opinion in favour of that morally just action. In the case of East Timor, the Australian government saw an opportunity in the changing political landscape of Indonesia to amend their foreign policy and correct the 'moral unease' they felt over it, and to carry the public with them in that choice.⁵¹ With firm public opinion on their side, they were able to make a bold change of policy and see it through. Alternatively, in the US case in Rwanda, the Clinton administration's disingenuous reporting of the situation on the ground, so as to support their prior decision not to intervene, and a relative lack of media coverage to counter that narrative, worked together to create a situation where there was no governmental support for action and no public imperative for it either. It is entirely possible that the Clinton administration could have swayed public opinion in favour of intervention, should they have chosen to do so. This can be seen in the response to the post-genocidal refugee crisis, which the public were supportive of. It is clear that rather than being determined principally by public opinion, democratic state responses to mass violence and genocide are both influenced by, and influence, public opinion; especially where independent media coverage is insufficient or absent.

46 Dauber, Cori. (2001) "Image as argument: The impact of Mogadishu on US military intervention." in *Armed Forces & Society* Vol. 27, No. 2, 205. 211-212., Schimmel, Noam (2011) "An invisible genocide: how the Western media failed to report the 1994 Rwandan genocide of the Tutsi and why." in *The International Journal of Human Rights* Vol. 15, No. 7, 1126.

47 Robinson, Piers (1999) "The CNN effect: can the news media drive foreign policy?" in *Review of international studies*, Vol. 25, No. 2, 301.

48 The University Of Sheffield (2016) Alan Kurdi A Year On: How An Image Transformed The Debate On Immigration, <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/news/nr/alan-kurdi-immigration-debate-twitter-1.641251>, 11 March 2017.

49 Independent.ie (2015) Germany's Angela Merkel Says No Numbers Limits To Right To Asylum, <http://www.independent.ie/world-news/germanys-angela-merkel-says-no-numbers-limits-to-right-to-asylum-31504442.html>, 11 March 2017.

50 Patrick Kingsley (2016) The Death Of Alan Kurdi: One Year On, Compassion Towards Refugees Fades., <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/sep/01/alan-kurdi-death-one-year-on-compassion-towards-refugees-fades>, 11 March 2017.

51 Jago, Marianne (2010) "InterFET: An Account of Intervention with Consent in East Timor" in *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 17, No. 3, 386.



Australian Institute of International Affairs
Promoting understanding of international issues

GET PUBLISHED...

Now calling for submissions

Quarterly Access provides an opportunity for students and young professionals to publish quality in-depth articles on global issues of importance.

Quarterly Access helps inform and foster debate amongst a new generation of leaders.

Want to read more? Contribute? Browse past issues?

Register for a free PDF subscription and find author guidelines for future submissions:

www.internationalaffairs.org.au/publications/quarterly-access

For all enquiries including for printed copies email **quarterlyaccess@gmail.com**



**QUARTERLY
ACCESS**

YOUR KEY TO INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS IN AUSTRALIA & THE PACIFIC