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| The Australian Institute of International Affairs New South Wales welcomes you to Week 36 of: |

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| **Our Councillor's Picks for the Best of 2020** |

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| For the final two editions of Columns for 2020, some of our Councillors will share with you the articles, analytical pieces, videos and podcasts that have shaped international affairs this year. In this edition, our Councillors recommend the writings of former speechwriter Don Watson, the book The Shadow King, an article on the origins of COVID-19 and a discussion on the future of capitalism.Disclaimer: The views expressed below by Councillors are their own. The Australian Institute of International Affairs New South Wales does not take policy positions. |

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| [**Watsonia: A Writing Life**](https://www.blackincbooks.com.au/books/watsonia)Don Watson has been at the centre of Australian political life for several decades, including as speech writer for Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating. He is, above all, a composer of elegant and incisive prose. [**This collection**](https://www.blackincbooks.com.au/books/watsonia) of published and unpublished essays range from society and politics to nature and humour. The reader is led to reflect on how much Australia has changed in just one lifetime, and how much has remained the same. There is surely something for everyone in this volume. Additionally, if you would like to hear more of Don Watson, you can listen to an [**extended**](https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/latenightlive/don-watson---a-writing-life/12901522)[**interview**](https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/latenightlive/don-watson---a-writing-life/12901522) with him on ABC Radio National's Late Night Live.Image credit: [**Black Inc Books**](https://www.blackincbooks.com.au/books/watsonia) |

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| This book was selected by Jocelyn Chey AM. Jocelyn is an Adjunct Professor at the Australia-China Relations Institute, University of Technology Sydney, Visiting Professor at the University of Sydney and an Adjunct Professor at the Australia-China Institute for Arts and Culture at Western Sydney University. She was previously a senior officer in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Jocelyn is a Fellow of Australian Institute of International Affairs. |

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| [**The Shadow King**](https://www.allenandunwin.com/browse/books/fiction/The-Shadow-King-Maaza-Mengiste-9781838851392)As a lover of political and historical non-fiction, I find myself surprised to be selecting a novel as my pick of the year. [***The Shadow King***](https://www.allenandunwin.com/browse/books/fiction/The-Shadow-King-Maaza-Mengiste-9781838851392) is a wonderful piece of literature set during the second Italian invasion of Ethiopia from 1935 to 1937. I found myself not only deeply absorbed in the novel’s multilayered characters, but also in the geopolitical turmoil of early 20th century Africa. Admittedly, I began this novel with little knowledge of the Italian imperial experience nor the complexities of Ethiopian politics and society. I am deeply grateful to the author, Maaza Mengiste, for making me realise my confessed ignorance. As Ethiopia again finds itself in armed conflict today, the novel’s recent release has been made all the more timely. In an epic sweep, Mengiste has ultimately crafted a haunting portrait of war and its tragic effects. I struggle to find a better book, fiction or non-fiction, that I have read in recent memory.Image credit: [**Allen and Unwin Book Publishers**](https://www.allenandunwin.com/browse/books/fiction/The-Shadow-King-Maaza-Mengiste-9781838851392) |

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| This book was selected by Chris Khatouki. Chris is an AIIA NSW councillor and has spent the last year working for the Gyeongsangnam-do Office of Education in South Korea. He is currently undertaking a PhD at UNSW, having previously graduated with First Class Honours in International Relations from the University of Wollongong, where he also received the University Medal. |

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| [**How Do We Know If a Virus is Geoengineered?**](https://futurehuman.medium.com/how-do-we-know-if-a-virus-is-bioengineered-541ff6f8a48f)Throughout 2020, there was plenty of conjecture that COVID-19 might have been genetically engineered. This [**article**](https://futurehuman.medium.com/how-do-we-know-if-a-virus-is-bioengineered-541ff6f8a48f) by Sarah Scolesin the blog Future Human provides a comprehensive and in-depth explanation of why COVID-19 is in fact a naturally occurring organism, and how this knowledge was produced. If you would like or perhaps need to counter any fake news-spreading relatives this festive season, you may find this a particularly useful article.Image credit: [**Virginia Guard Public Affairs**](https://www.flickr.com/photos/vaguardpao/50432708928/in/photolist-2jQyPjh-2juT9jt-2iU5qfj-2jC6iPX-2k2SJf1-2iU5pPQ-2iVusn8-2jrYvFR-2jk93iW-2k8DKFd-2iMDYY2-2jwTkiB-2jHxSqV-2iS5pMC-2k4h1UY-2jH78LY-2jV1LKG-2jV2jU7-2jXJFHg-2jePDta-2iGHuCs-2jc5wTz-2iVyMDR-2iY5PKo-2iYaa2R-2jLd1LM-2iZ2VEc-2jCyF7g-2iVyMpN-2iPWfG6-2jzKZ6P-2iPWfFe-2iPWfFp-2jiraeE-2jbaixL-2jCqUoU-2k1dAJ6-2iTTnop-2iGceiU-2juyD7X-2jALExy-2jUX1cS-2iQKYaD-2jb22XP-2jepawX-2jBn897-2jHyCVh-2kaEiyu-2jb22Ww-2iJzeV5) |

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| This article was selected by Thom Dixon. Thom is the Vice-President of AIIA NSW. He is undertaking a PhD at Macquarie University looking at emerging technology and international security, and is an honorary research fellow with Remi AI. He regularly writes on issues in research, innovation and international affairs. |

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| [**Why There's No Going Back to Pre-COVID Capitalism**](https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/viktor-shvets-on-why-theres-no-going-back-to-pre-covid/id1056200096?i=1000487280601)In light of the massive COVID-induced disruption, there’s now a widespread view that the global economy has been altered permanently. This view suggests that interest rates have bottomed out, fiscal policy should take a more active role in the economy and that the role of central banks is changing. While this view is de rigueur these days, Viktor Shvets from Macquarie Group's Hong Kong office has been anticipating these major economic and geopolitical shifts for a while. In a [**fascinating conversation**](https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/viktor-shvets-on-why-theres-no-going-back-to-pre-covid/id1056200096?i=1000487280601) with Bloomberg editors Tracy Alloway and Joe Weisenthal, Shvets argues that the old model of economic growth has accelerated inequality, reached its own inherent limits and is now giving way. As for what economic model will come next? Nobody knows.Image credit: [**Scott Beale**](https://www.flickr.com/photos/laughingsquid/14313069699/in/photolist-nNNdXM-PrXUAL-JH4EUt-h5aDdn-2534u9B-bmBBMM-5sjRDy-9iaFsj-8vLPiJ-7fP58U-HPztnn-fUPyXj-hzyNP7-224R7TT-rwcDTj-5sfurc-34xF6f-7kMWPS-EPppD4-vEEyiy-oDnoAq-FCNLbB-g7RRGL-HPtfr4-bCX4Rm-bRPwHP-bCUHQs-bRP9PM-rgVk7G-NWHB1V-5AByeQ-5AxiFe-5zhjnj-RvNtXE-vwfL7D-8LcZwE-XXf1Ss-ryuqLv-qBudwj-dTD8dz-517qLQ-cyptJY-ewDwW5-rgUjVQ-5KfVSP-exxYAc-o6hyWP-bBnyCt-PrXUym-eHeALt) |

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| [**UPCOMING EVENT: 'AUSTRALIA AND THE WORLD: 2020 AND BEYOND'**](https://aiiansw.tidyhq.com/public/schedule/events/32335-australia-in-the-world-2020-and-beyond) Join us next week for AIIA NSW's final event of the year! Three guest panellists, including former Director-General of the Office of National Assessments Geoff Miller AO, AIIA NSW Councillor Professor Jocelyn Chey and Dr John Symons from Macquarie University, will discuss the biggest events of 2020 and what the year 2021 might hold for international affairs. Register [**here**](https://aiiansw.tidyhq.com/public/schedule/events/32335-australia-in-the-world-2020-and-beyond) and secure your place - registrations close on Monday December 14! |

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| **Letters to the Editor** |

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| **Get involved!**We're committed to keeping conversations about international affairs going, so get involved in our Letters to the Editor section!Each week, we publish letters from our subscribers about what they think of the issues we’re discussing.You can take part in the conversation by emailing us with your comments on each week’s articles. There are just a few simple guidelines: letters should be no more than 100 words in length, and should only be about the previous week’s articles. Please include your name and affiliation, and a mobile number (which won't be published). If you are a university student, please include your university and current degree.Send all letters to the editors at **aiianswletters@gmail.com** by Wednesday at 5pm Sydney time for the chance to be published in the following week's newsletter. |

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