



THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

## Scholarly Circle in International Relations 2017

Australian National University

Several Christian professors and doctoral students in international relations (IR) have been meeting for the past 2 years to discuss how to think Christianly about our research and writing projects.

### AUTHORS, TOPICS AND ABSTRACTS

#### **Thinking Christianly about the Beyond Aid Agenda: Amos and the Future of Foreign Aid**

Benjamin Day, Department of International Relations, Coral Bell School of Asia Pacific Affairs, Australian National University

How can we interpret the dramatic shifts occurring in the international aid regime through a biblical lens? In this paper, I argue that aid spending, and specifically the 0.7% of GNI norm as a de-facto measure of a state's generosity, operates something like tithing did to the people of Israel in Amos' time. In our time, an overemphasis on aid volume can function as an excuse for avoiding deeper thinking about the way international behaviour of rich donor states impedes the development potential of poor states. I tease out this parallel in four steps: (1) highlighting the key features of the passing 'aid for development' paradigm; (2) charting common Christian responses to the aid for development paradigm; (3) highlighting the key features of the emerging 'beyond aid' paradigm; (4) applying lessons from previous Christian engagement along with the lens provided by the book of Amos to suggest ways to engage more effectively with the emerging 'beyond aid' development paradigm.

#### **What is Successful Religious Acculturation? The Case of the Syrian Orthodox Church in its Diaspora in Australia**

Allan Davies, Department of Sociology, Alphacrucis College, Sydney

The dilemma facing migrants in maintaining traditions of home cultures while adapting to new cultures has been the subject of study for several decades, particularly as multiculturalism has become a focus for policy makers and every day citizens. While progress has been made in understanding these issues, there is room for study of diasporas whose acculturation experiences are unique because of deep religious and cultural traditions spanning centuries. The Syrian Orthodox Church is one of the oldest Christian communities. In 451AD it separated from the Western church. Based in Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Lebanon, it has endured ongoing persecution and (today) civil war in Syria and sectarian conflicts in Iraq.

Large numbers of adherents migrated to the West in the 20th Century; many are now leaving as refugees. Australia has a small but growing Syrian Orthodox community.

As migrants settle in secular, multicultural Australia, they face acculturation challenges. Religion plays a part in assisting settlement. The intergenerational transmission of faith among Christian migrants depends, in turn, on circumstances of arrival, ethnicity, collective values, self-identification, and national society attitudes. These factors are complicated for the Syrian Orthodox Church, by the need to establish a new identity while retaining its ancient Syriac heritage and facing pressures to indigenize. The literature includes some findings about the Syrian Orthodox Church in Europe; there remain considerable gaps in our knowledge of their experiences elsewhere. There is little information to indicate how the church in Australia will fare in coming decades. This research identifies the challenges they face.

### **Reasons for Caring for the Vulnerable Beyond Borders**

Luke Glanville, Department of International Relations, Coral Bell School of Asia Pacific Affairs, Australian National University

Across numerous essays and letters written in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, Leibniz developed an argument for why individuals should want to help the vulnerable. I published an article in *Ethics & International Affairs* last year that applies this argument to relations between states. Drawing on emerging scholarship about the place of emotions in international relations, I argue that, just as individuals can derive pleasure from helping vulnerable strangers, so too can states derive collective pleasure and pride from helping the vulnerable beyond their borders. I suggest in the article that those who don't accept Leibniz's theology can still comprehend his claims about the temporal benefits that individuals (and states) can derive from helping and loving strangers. I explore further the relationship between the spiritual and temporal in Leibniz and for contemporary Christians and states.

### **Creativity, Dignity and Justice in Global Lawmaking: International Organizations in the Making of Rules for World Trade**

Terence Halliday, School of Regulation and Global Governance, Australian National University

Based on my forthcoming book with Susan Block-Lieb, *Global Lawmakers: International Organizations in the Shaping of World Markets* (Cambridge University Press, 2017), in this essay I ask: how can we think Christianly about ways that small, weak marginal state and non-state actors fare in global lawmaking for international trade and domestic markets? I lay out some of the stakes in lawmaking for global trade. I summarize key findings of our research from the vantage-point of weak actors. I offer part of the critique we advance in our book. I conclude with initial points of theological engagement with these issues.

### **Religious Action on a Global Stage: The Impact of Belief on Christian Humanitarian Response**

Alana Moore, Department of International Relations, Coral Bell School of Asia Pacific Affairs, Australian National University

There is a rich and productive relationship between Christian institutions and the humanitarian ethic. However, much of the thinking and literature about Christian approaches to humanitarianism and development remains effectively walled off from the IR field because of its theological basis. While the

study of religion in IR is a rapidly growing subsection of the discipline, the concept that the content of belief (rather than just the existence of faith) is a central explanatory factor for faith-based actors is by no means widely accepted. In other words, the discipline does not necessarily accept that *what* people believe matters in explaining their choices and actions. My thesis seeks to challenge this by investigating the effect of the theological content of evangelical faith-based organisations' (FBOs) beliefs on their humanitarian practices. Through my PhD research, I hope to act as a kind of translator between these two areas, giving the IR field an example of the kind of enriched understanding that can be gained from taking the time to investigate the content and role of the beliefs of religious actors on the global stage.

### **Prevention, Protection and Restoration in Political Violence and Armed Conflict.**

Cecilia Jacob, Department of International Relations, Coral Bell School of Asia Pacific Affairs, Australian National University

We live in truly tumultuous times, where injustice, violence and oppression seems to prevail. Despite its successes, the international system of global governance for the management of armed conflict and the protection of populations appears to be in constant crisis and disarray. My research is primarily concerned with questions of human protection in the context of political violence and armed conflict. I work with the challenge that there is a need to think more strategically about how we mobilise the tools at hand – imperfect as they are – such as human rights accountability, peacebuilding and transitional justice to complement formalistic modes of state intervention and criminal prosecutions to prevent and resolve violent conflict as these often foster new forms of grievance through exclusion and perceived impunity. In a biblical context, the book of Habakkuk lays out a road map for Christians who, like Habakkuk, are stirred by the evil and violent destruction they witness around them. Habakkuk reveals God's biblical plan for forgiveness, healing and restoration that needs to be at the centre of our response to violent conflict and injustice in this world. In the book of Habakkuk, God promises profound justice. Yet the prophet also presses for a deeper and more humble politics of mercy through which forgiveness and reconciliation are made possible. We need to assume a vision of the legal, political and moral imperatives of atrocity prevention and conflict management through these more holistic lens of reconciliation, of forgiveness, healing, and restitution both within and between societies, states and members of the international community.

### **Repentance, Forgiveness and National Identity in Settler Societies**

Scott Robertson, State, Society and Governance in Melanesia, Coral Bell School of Asia Pacific Affairs, Australian National University

There are few notions as central to Christian faith as forgiveness. I have been increasingly struck by the role(s) of collective forgiveness in the construction of national identity. Part of this recognises that while individuals are moral beings who are accountable for their own actions, we are also judged according to our belonging to a particular moral community – above all the state. As such, one might argue that we should feel some form of regret or remorse based on the actions of our government, our church or our ethnic group. I consider these issues in relation to two settler societies—Australia and the French overseas territory of New Caledonia. In both, the colonial past and the continuing marginalization of indigenous populations lives on and informs present-day discussion of national identity. Acts of repentance and forgiveness-seeking have played an important role. In 2007, the Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd issued a formal and well-publicized apology to the Stolen Generations in response to the horrific findings on the government-sponsored policies that forcibly removed Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander children from their homes. In New Caledonia, no such formal apology has taken place, yet there is a general understanding that the 'light and shadows' of the colonial period must be recognized as New Caledonians' collective consciousness. Together, they prompt the question concerning the role that repentance and forgiveness play in the nation-building process.

**Co-convenors**

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**Date:** February, 2017

**Event organizer:** Faculty, Australia National University

**Event topic:** Scholarly Circle in International Relations

**Location:** Canberra

**Country:** Australia

**Participants:** Faculty, doctoral students in political science, sociology and international relations

**Language:** English