Recently at the Liu...

On October 1, Dr. Hisham Zerriffi joined the Liu Institute for Global Issues as the Ivan Head South/North Chair. Dr. Zerriffi received his PhD from Carnegie Mellon in 2004 and his thesis was titled, “Electric Power Systems Under Stress: An Evaluation of Centralized Versus Distributed System Architectures”. Hisham is a Visiting Fellow at the World Resources Institute and has recently been a post-doctoral fellow at Stanford University.

The South/North Chair was established by UBC together with IDRC for the late Ivan Head. Ivan Head (1930-2004) was a professor of law and founding director of the Liu Institute. He served as principal foreign policy adviser to Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau and was president of Canada’s International Development Research Centre.

Welcome, Hisham!

The Centre of International Relations is pleased to announce that Dr. Cameron Ortis has joined us, on a postdoctoral fellowship appointment, as our Security and Defence Program Manager.

Cameron Ortis completed his PhD studies here at UBC earlier this year. His dissertation examined “the relationship between rapid Internet diffusion and the emergence of new threats and the digitization of traditional threats.” In conjunction with his thesis, Cameron conducted field work interviews in East Asia and Canada and has published on cyber security in East Asia with Paul Evans. Cameron brings a broad range of expertise on security and defence issues, civil-military relations, and Canadian foreign and defence policy to this position. Prior to graduate studies, Cameron’s experience included working with the UN World Food Programme for the Sudan (UNOLS).

Cameron’s duties will focus on orchestrating the range of activities in the Centre’s SDF Program, including organizing of workshops and conferences, coordinating with other centres on campus, editing the Centre’s Working Paper series, and facilitating the research agendas of faculty, graduate students, and postdoctoral fellows.

Welcome, Cam!
The Faculty of Graduate Studies has announced that the 2005-2006 Olav Slaymaker Scholarship in Environment has been awarded to Sonja Klinsky, a doctoral student of Milind Kandlikar. Sonja is currently starting her second year of PhD studies in the Resource Management and Environmental Studies Program. She has an MA in geography and a BSc in Environmental Science / International Development. Her current research interests include looking at the influence of scale on people’s perceptions of environmental risk, the diffusion of ideas about climate change and the possible use of ethics to help structure decision making about climate change or other environmental risks with both local and global facets.

Dr. Olav Slaymaker was the former Director of the Liu Institute and recently retired as Professor of Geography. In 1990, Olav was Chair of the Sustainable Development Initiative Committee, which conceptualized the Sustainable Development Research Institute at UBC, and was Director of the Liu Institute from 2000-2003.

The Olav Slaymaker Scholarships in Environment have been endowed since 2003 by The Simons Foundation and UBC in recognition of Dr. Olav Slaymaker's contributions to research on environmental issues in mountain regions. The award is made on the recommendation of the Faculty of Graduate Studies to graduate students pursuing studies in environment.

Upcoming Events

Rebecca Slayton presents: Calculated Risks? Scientific Expertise and the Problem of Missile Defense, 1957-2005

Hosted by the Simons Centre on 6 November 2006 in the Liu Institute Multipurpose Room from 12:30-2:00 pm

Missile defense systems have been represented as anything from a ‘peace shield’ to a trigger for nuclear war. What role can ‘science’ play in adjudicating such controversial claims about the relationship between technology and international security? This talk addresses this question by showing how a new and contested science - computing - has shaped policy debates about missile defense in the United States and argues that the growing social acceptance of computing as a ‘science’ has influenced the ways that policy makers frame missile defense. In particular, ‘computer science’ has drawn attention to the risk that software complexity will lead to a catastrophic failure. It concludes with a reflection on the implications of this relationship between science and culture for missile defense policy.

Rebecca Slayton is a postdoctoral researcher and lecturer in the Science, Technology, and Society Program at Stanford University. She has previously held positions as a science fellow at Stanford’s Center for International Security and Cooperation and as an NSF postdoctoral fellow in the Science, Technology, and Society Program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (2002-04). She earned her doctoral degree in physical chemistry at Harvard University (2002). She is currently writing a book which uses missile defense as a case study to examine how experts produce public knowledge about technology for national security.

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Dr. Wade Huntley of the Simons Centre for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Research was featured in multiple newspapers and on several television and radio shows during the past two weeks, commenting on the recent nuclear tests performed by North Korea.

Publications

The Justice and Reconciliation Project is pleased to share a new report, Accountability and Justice and the Juba Peace Talks.

As peace talks between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Government of Uganda proceed in Juba, many anticipate the forthcoming discussion of the third agenda item on Reconciliation and Accountability. The LRA leadership has repeatedly stated that no fighter will return home unless the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court withdraws indictments against four of the remaining five commanders still alive. The Prosecutor, Luis Moreno Ocampo, has ruled out any possibility of lifting the arrest warrants, arguing if war crimes go unpunished, they could happen again.

This paper suggests ways to move beyond the current impasse. It identifies a series of current justice and reconciliation alternatives available. By placing an emphasis on what can be discussed in the peace talks, it hopes to illustrate means of realizing both peace and justice.


Click here to download the full report.

Newsletter Spotlight

Zoe Nielsen of the Human Security Centre presented a briefing to the Human Security Network at the United Nations on Tuesday the 3rd of October.

Michael Byers was a special guest at UBC Humanities 101: Undercurrents Public Forum Series on “The West and the Middle East” on Monday, October 16th. Michael was joined by speakers Deborah Campbell, Hadani Dtimars and Hila Russ-Woodland

Click here for more information on Humanities 101.

In the News

The Korean mouse that roared

by Michael Byers

The Tablet

14 October 2006

North Korea's announcement this week that it has carried out a nuclear test has shocked the world, arousing universal condemnation. It has also exposed the frailty of international diplomacy in the face of intransigence. Could this be the start of a new arms race?

In Leonard Wibberley's novel The Mouse that Roared (1955), a tiny impoverished country declares war on the United States in the hope of being rapidly defeated, occupied and reconstructed. The plan goes awry when the flyweight belligerent inadvertently acquires the world's most powerful weapon, and thus the ability to defend itself.

Click here to read the complete article.

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Clearing your conscience — and the air

by Michael Vaughan

Globe and Mail

4 October 2006

Being a trendy guy, I always want to catch on early to something like becoming “carbon-neutral.”

So I went to www.cooldrivepass.ca, and its handy emissions calculator told me that my car (a small, fuel-efficient turbo-diesel) produces 3,170 kilograms of carbon dioxide a year.

That's the bad news. The good news was that for only $63.40 I could purchase enough environmental benefits elsewhere to undo all the damage I was doing by driving my car for a year.

What a bargain! Welcome to the world of carbon offsets.

We've all heard about schemes like this where your liberal conscience directs you to pay money to plant trees somewhere, feel good about it and, in effect, get a voluntary “license to pollute.” But now a Vancouver-based group says they've found the way to make carbon offsets work for Canadians.

They sell you a CoolDrivePass and, with the money you pay voluntarily, they invest in projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions. They charge you just enough money to buy just enough of a project to reduce emissions by just the amount that is produced by your car.

CoolDrivePass, a commercial enterprise, is part of a new industry that promises to make consumers climate friendly. Britain's Avis, for example, offers customers the option to make a rental car carbon-neutral by buying carbon offsets. WestJet has a similar deal with another Vancouver-based group called www.offsetters.ca in which the airline agrees to invest part of the normal ticket cost to offset the climate impacts of your travel.

Hadi Dowlatabadi is executive director of CoolDrivePass, and is the Canada research chairman and a professor in the Institute of Resources, Environment and Sustainability at the University of British Columbia.

He grew up in Iran, but was sent to school in Scotland. He studied mathematics, physics and computer science at the University of Edinburgh, and then completed a PhD in physics at Cambridge.

Dowlatabadi says that a desire to solve real-world problems, rather than chasing elusive little particles, led him to focus on the interfaces of energy, society and the environment.

Click here to read the complete article.
Bombs Over Cambodia
New information reveals that Cambodia was bombed far more heavily than previously believed

by Taylor Owen and Ben Kiernan

The Walrus Magazine

October 2006

In the fall of 2000, twenty-five years after the end of the war in Indochina, Bill Clinton became the first US president since Richard Nixon to visit Vietnam. While media coverage of the trip was dominated by talk of some two thousand US soldiers still classified as missing in action, a small act of great historical importance went almost unnoticed. As a humanitarian gesture, Clinton released extensive Air Force data on all American bombings of Indochina between 1964 and 1975. Recorded using a groundbreaking ibm-designed system, the database provided extensive information on sorties conducted over Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. Clinton’s gift was intended to assist in the search for unexploded ordnance left behind during the carpet bombing of the region. Littering the countryside, often submerged under farmland, this ordnance remains a significant humanitarian concern. It has maimed and killed farmers, and rendered valuable land all but unusable. Development and demining organizations have put the Air Force data to good use over the past six years, but have done so without noting its full implications, which turn out to be staggering.

Click here to read the complete article.

True North strong and . . . free to give up our sovereignty?
European countries may feel comfortable sharing their autonomy, but North America is another story, Michael Byers writes

Globe and Mail

7 October 2006

The North American continent became a lot smaller last month, when the governments of Canada, Mexico and the United States released the Security and Prosperity Partnership Report. That document details collaborative efforts to develop “compatible” or “comparable” standards on matters as diverse as railways, travel visas, air pollution and food safety.

Will these standards affect Canadian sovereignty? Not according to the report, in which the partners vow to respect “the sovereignty and unique cultural and legal heritage of each country.”

Yet sovereignty means different things to different people. In Canada, since Sept. 11, 2001, two distinct conceptions have competed with each other. The traditional notion holds that a country must have full independence in domestic and foreign policy. The other, more European approach maintains that sovereignty can be shared or delegated to other countries or organizations.

Click here to read the complete article
Harper accuses Liberals of being anti-Israel  
Furor grows as PM seizes on Ignatieff's war-crime comment

by Campbell Clark and Michael Valpy

*The Globe and Mail*

13 October 2006

OTTAWA and TORONTO -- Prime Minister Stephen Harper yesterday accused the Liberal Party of an anti-Israeli bias, charging that Michael Ignatieff's comment that Israel committed a war crime against Lebanon this summer reflects the leanings of most Liberal leadership candidates.

All the major contenders for the Liberal leadership quickly criticized Mr. Harper for lobbing "insults" and "lies." Beyond the anti-Conservative solidarity, murmurs were growing within the party about whether Mr. Ignatieff's style might prove a liability if he leads the Liberals in an election.

"This is consistent with the anti-Israeli position that has been taken by virtually all of the candidates for the Liberal leadership," the Prime Minister said about Mr. Ignatieff's remarks that an Israeli strike on the Lebanese village of Qana that killed 28 civilians was a war crime. "I don't think it's helpful or useful."

*Click here to read the complete article featuring Michael Byers.*

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Canadian government cannot afford to dither on Arctic sovereignty

by Michael Byers

*The Hill Times*

16 October 2006

Pierre Berton called the Northwest Passage the "Arctic Grail." From Martin Frobisher in 1576 to John Franklin in 1845, European explorers searched for a navigable route around the northern rim of North America to Asia. Their efforts were stymied by the thick ice which choked the straits and channels between the Arctic islands, even in summer. Roald Amundsen completed the first transit in 1906, but it took him three years—including two winters lodged in the ice.

Today, the ice is melting. In 2004, the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment reported that the average extent of sea-ice cover in summer had declined by 15 to 20 per cent over the previous 30 years. The remaining ice was 10 to 15 per cent thinner overall and 40 per cent thinner in the central Arctic Ocean. These trends were expected to accelerate so that by the end of the 21st century, there might be no sea-ice at all left in the summer.

*Click here to read the complete article*
Losing Its Lustre

*The Economist*

13 October 2006

An anti-poverty campaigner and a bank in Bangladesh have won this year's Nobel Peace Prize. The purpose of the prize has become muddled. It may be better to withhold it next time.

BRAVERY is a characteristic shared by most winners of the Nobel Peace Prize. On Friday October 13th, the Norwegian part of the Nobel Institute (a Swedish body that dishes out the other coveted prizes, for science and literature) named the recipient of the 2006 peace award. An unofficial shortlist included a pair of Irish rock stars who have received a lot of attention for trying to promote development in Africa, a Finnish diplomat who works at the UN and who has lobbied for peace in Indonesia and a Vietnamese Buddhist. In fact the award was given to Muhammad Yunus and Grameen bank in Bangladesh, which promotes lending to the poorest, especially women.

*Click here to read the complete article featuring the Human Security Report*

Afghanistan: Wrong Mission for Canada

The coolly reasoned case made by a leading expert in international law

*TheTyee.ca*

by Michael Byers

6 October 2006

We are approaching the five-year mark of Canada's military involvement in Afghanistan.

Joint Task Force 2, Canada's special-forces unit, has been active in that country since shortly after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. We know that JTF-2 soldiers transferred detainees to U.S. custody in January 2002, participated in an attack at Tora Bora in December 2002, and transferred detainees to U.S. custody again during the summer of 2005.

The first deployment of regular soldiers came in January 2002, when 750 infantry from the Princess Patricia's Regiment were sent to Kandahar as part of an U.S. counter-insurgency task force. Four of these soldiers were killed, and eight others injured, in a "friendly fire" incident in April 2002.

*Click here to read the complete article*