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This week, our Councillors look at the UN's creditable 75-year history, the state of Australian business attitudes towards Asia and a new book implying links between  modern Chinese international policy and a science fiction fable.  Disclaimer: The views expressed below by Councillors are their own. The Australian Institute of International Affairs New South Wales does not take policy positions. | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | Diagram  Description automatically generated |  |  | | --- | | [**Can the Ants and the Dinosaurs Decouple?**](https://headofzeus.com/books/9781789546095)  Cixin Liu, an author who draws on his solid credentials in physics to write science fiction, has been described as China's Arthur Clarke. Liu first came to prominence with the trilogy [**The Three Body Problem**](https://headofzeus.com/books/9781784971540). His latest work, [**Of Ants and Dinosaurs**](https://headofzeus.com/books/9781789546095), is a political/ecological fable that will appeal to all those interested in international affairs. Supposing that there had been an alliance between ants and dinosaurs during the Cretaceous era which serendipitously promoted technology and high living standards, Liu speculates on the result of decoupling and potential conflict. Parallels will inevitably be drawn with current trends in China's international relations. It is not too early to reserve this book for someone's Christmas stocking and enjoy it during the summer break. Image credit: [**Head of Zeus**](https://headofzeus.com/books/9781789546095) | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | 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. | | | | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | A group of people walking on a city street  Description automatically generated |  |  | | --- | | **Australia's economic attitudes to Asia**  The April edition of [**Asia Society's Briefing MONTHLY**](https://asiasociety.org/australia/briefing-monthly-26-april-2020) sets out the responses from readers to four questions: How would you rate the Australian government's management of its relations with China? Which country in the region presents the biggest opportunity for Australian businesses? How do you think the COVID-19 crisis will reshape the global order? There is a push for domestic economic sovereignty; how should this be achieved? The responses, presented in graphical form, are quite different from conventional expectations.  An [**article**](https://bluenotes.anz.com/posts/2020/10/asia-society-australia-business-investment-roe-multinational) written by economics journalist Greg Earl and published in the ANZ Blue Notes pulls together statistics and commentary on the apparent reluctance of Australian corporates to embrace Asia as an investment target. Greg has substantial experience in living and working in Asia and commenting on Australia's commercial engagement with the region. He provides a factual positioning of Australia in relation to its potential commercial opportunities. Image credit: [**Marcus Winkler**](https://unsplash.com/photos/YmawptEadgc) | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | These articles were selected by Glen Robinson. Glen has spent the last 30 years providing advice and assistance to organisations wishing to establish or enhance a commercial presence in the ASEAN region. He has developed a wide range of colleagues in both government and the private sector in the region. | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  |  |  | | --- | | [**Multilateralism in the National Interest**](https://www.lawfareblog.com/multilateralism-national-interest)  As the United Nations celebrates its 75th year this month, it's a good time to reflect on its performance. While critics have long criticised the UN for being bureaucratic, ineffective and expensive, the organization has enjoyed many successes—some more visible than others. Writing together in Lawfare, United Nations Foundation president Elizabeth Cousens and Georgetown Professor Lise Morjé Howard [**take stock**](https://www.lawfareblog.com/multilateralism-national-interest)of the UN’s record and argue that the organisation deserves credit for a range of achievements over its many years. Image credit: [**Steve Cadman**](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_United_Nations_Secretariat_Building.jpg) | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | **From the Interns** | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | In addition to our Councillors, we invite one of our interns to share with you what they have found insightful or interesting in the world of international affairs over the past week. This week, Nimaya Mallikahewa explores how COVID-19 has deepened collaboration between Singapore and Sri Lanka, and the increasingly constricted media landscape in Pakistan.  Disclaimer: The views expressed below by interns are their own. The Australian Institute of International Affairs New South Wales does not take policy positions. | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | A picture containing outdoor, sitting, water, large  Description automatically generated |  |  | | --- | | [**Singapore and Sri Lanka: Newfound opportunities during COVID-19**](https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/singapore-and-sri-lanka-newfound-opportunities-amid-covid-19-pandemic)   COVID-19 has significantly disrupted global supply chains which has created uncertainty for countries like Singapore who are reliant on imports. In Lowy Institute's The Interpreter, Chulanee Attanayake and Roshni Kapur [**explore**](https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/singapore-and-sri-lanka-newfound-opportunities-amid-covid-19-pandemic) the growing possibilities of Singapore’s expanding cooperation with Sri Lanka. During the pandemic, this cooperation has been strengthened as the two countries worked closely on repatriation efforts and delivering critical medical supplies. Attanayake and Kapur highlight that Singapore and Sri Lanka have further broached relations on food management, with Singapore attempting to diversify its food imports and Sri Lanka eager to capture new markets. Singapore’s long history of investment in Sri Lanka aside, this also brings Sri Lanka the opportunity to stabilise its agricultural sector which employs approximately one third of the labour force. This would lead in turn to an increase of exports to other Asian markets. Image credit: [**Trey Radcliff**](https://www.flickr.com/photos/stuckincustoms/34239333192) | | |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | A picture containing snow  Description automatically generated |  |  | | --- | | [**Toothless and Terrified: The State of Pakistan's Media**](https://thediplomat.com/2020/10/toothless-and-terrified-the-state-of-pakistans-media/)   Media freedom in Pakistan has been, at the best of times, restrictive and riddled with danger. Prime Minister Imran Khan’s championing of free press prior to his election has since reversed into the criminalisation of critical speech, crackdowns on political satire and widespread censorship. Niha Dagia, for The Diplomat, emphasises that the current climate for journalism is particularly dangerous due to inconsistency in policy, an ever-growing list of sensitive topics and a misuse of cybercrime law to trap the media. With perpetual confusion on issues which may lead to their arrest, disappearance or death, Dagia argues that journalists have been forced into self-censorship. Critical journalism has taken a massive hit and with blatant censorship on television, newspaper and online platforms, Pakistan’s media are walking an increasingly thin rope in their attempt to simply do their job. Image credit: [**Absolut Vision**](https://unsplash.com/photos/WYd_PkCa1BY) | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | These articles were selected by Nimaya Mallikahewa. Nimaya is in the final year of her double Bachelor’s degrees in International Studies and Media (PR & Advertising) at UNSW, where she has focused her research on development aid, transitional justice, maritime security and foreign policy in the Indian Ocean region. She has interned at AIIA NSW since February 2020. | | | | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | **What else we're reading** | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | * Al Jazeera [**examines**](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/10/25/un-treaty-banning-nuclear-weapons-to-enter-into-force?fbclid=IwAR3SOkpcjRYyhpK2OXFgKYUDPtu-4vd404r4Lz0MXFP3P2tlrcGmVjfyOo0) the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which has now obtained its 50th signature and will now enter into force in January 2021. Major powers, as well as Australia, continue to oppose the Treaty. * Nate Silver, from FiveThirtyEight, [**explores**](https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/is-joe-biden-toast-if-he-loses-pennsylvania/) whether Joe Biden's presidential bid is doomed if he is unable to win the state of Pennsylvania. * AIIA NSW interns [**recently debated**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_PPP1wgaIg) whether Australia should prioritise diplomatic and development efforts over military spending. * In Lowy Institute's The Interpreter, Dan Flitton [**argues**](https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/shocking-abuse-female-passengers-doha-demands-resolute-response) that Australia should take a more aggressive diplomatic line towards Qatar in response to the invasive examinations of Australian women in Doha's international airport. * Ezoza Yakvalkhodjieva [**weighs up**](https://thediplomat.com/2020/10/uzbek-weddings-in-the-time-of-covid-19/) how COVID-19 is impacting Uzbekistan's unique, culturally important practice of lavish wedding parties. * In Pearls and Irritations, former Australian ambassador to Thailand John McCarthy [**offers suggestions**](https://johnmenadue.com/political-fault-lines-in-thailand-grow/#more-54565) for the resolution of continuing unrest in Thailand. | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | **Letters to the Editor** | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | **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**](mailto: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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