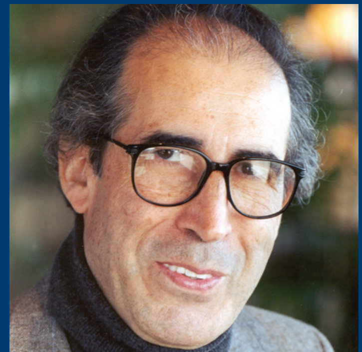
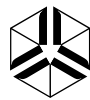
# International Commissions and the Power of Ideas



EDITED BY **RAMESH THAKUR, ANDREW F. COOPER** AND **JOHN ENGLISH**

# International commissions and the power of ideas

Edited by Ramesh Thakur, Andrew F. Cooper and John English



United Nations University Press

TOKYO • NEW YORK • PARIS

# Contents

Abbreviations .......... vii

Forward by Gareth Evans .......... x

Acknowledgements .......... xiii

1 International commissions and the mind of global governance .......... 1
*Andrew F. Cooper and John English*

2 The Brandt Commission: The end of an era in North–South politics .......... 27
*Jean-Phillipe Thérien*

3 The Palme Commission: New thinking about security .......... 46
*Geoffrey Wiseman*

4 The World Commission on Environment and Development: Ideas and institutions intersect .......... 76
*Heather A. Smith*

5 Equivocating on the future of world order: The Commission on Global Governance .......... 99
*W. Andy Knight*

6 Regulating the possession and use of nuclear weapons: Ideas, commissions, and agency in international security politics – the case of the Canberra Commission ............................... 123
*Marianne Hanson*

7 Beyond temples and tombs: Towards effective governance for sustainable development through the World Commission on Dams ........................................................... 142
*Sanjeev Khagram*

8 Fair assessment: The Independent International Commission on Kosovo ....................................................... 167
*Richard J. Goldstone and Nicole Fritz*

9 Intervention, sovereignty, and the responsibility to protect .... 180
*Ramesh Thakur*

10 The responsibility to protect: Assessing the report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty ...................................................... 198
*Jennifer Welsh, Carolin J. Thielking, and S. Neil MacFarlane*

11 The responsibility to protect: Humanitarian intervention and the principle of non-intervention in the Americas ............. 221
*Jorge Heine*

12 Ideas, institutions, and the evolution of women's human rights 246
*Elizabeth Riddell-Dixon*

13 Ideas, think-tanks, commissions, and global politics ........... 266
*Jon Pedersen*

14 UN Reform Commissions: Is anyone listening? ................ 277
*Edward C. Luck*

Appendix: International Commission on Weapons of Mass Destruction ....................................................... 288
*Ambassador Jayantha Dhanapala*

Contributors ......................................................... 295

Index ................................................................ 300

1

# International commissions and the mind of global governance

*Andrew F. Cooper and John English*

The structure – or body – of world politics has become an established object of close scrutiny. This is especially true with respect to the pillars of global governance, involving both the current ordering and a possible reform of the architectural composition and procedural makeup. As one recent book notes: "In nearly every study of global governance, international organizations loom large in the analysis and are often characterized as the building blocks for establishing a new global system".[1]

What may be termed the mind of global governance by contrast has suffered from comparative neglect. Only recently have the power of ideas been taken seriously as a form of agency in international relations. And even amidst this marked shift to embrace the "ideational turn"[2] there is still much analytical ground to catch up on so as to be able to capture this dynamic more accurately as it has been played out in specific domains of activity.

This book explores the power of ideas, as transmitted via the mind of global governance, through the focused lens of international or independent commissions. An awareness of the salience of commissions on a selective or one-off basis has long existed among both global policy makers and attentive publics. Indeed the names of these commissions – Brandt, Palme, Brundtland, the Commission on Global Governance, and the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), to list just the best known ones – have taken on an enormous recognition factor around the world. Yet, as both an interconnected process shaping

global governance and/or as a component of the wider ideational turn – the nature of international commissions remains under-analysed. The specific character – and level of impact – of each of the commissions merits study of their own, as witnessed by the pivotal position individual case studies of key selected commissions are placed in this collection. To understand the phenomenon of international commissions more completely, however, not only their content, track records, and controversies on an individual basis but their generalized context must be explored and appreciated. Before moving into what makes each of these commissions unique, therefore, a more systematic treatment is attempted with a focus on how this collective set of instruments fits into the larger ideational turn and what repertoire range can be found among them.

## Setting the boundaries

What stands out about the role of ideas through the entire span of post-1945 international relations is their bounded condition. Ideas were given some ample legitimacy to operate in terms of shaping or re-shaping the national mind especially within the industrialized countries. As rehearsed in an influential article by Anthony King in the early 1970s – which highlighted the need to view ideas as ''a necessary condition'' for explaining public policy[3] – an awareness of the importance of ideas as a determinant of national political and policy cultures became a strong theme in the academic literature.

This is not to suggest that under rare and compelling exigencies ''national'' ideas could escape from under these disciplines. The transnational flow and influence of Keynesian economics stands out as the obvious illustration (as does the backlash to this current of thought via monetarism).[4] These escapes were the exceptions, nevertheless, that proved the rule. As captured well by John Ruggie – notwithstanding the dominance of the United States (US) – the structure of ''embedded liberalism'' emergent in the post-1945 world order was not crafted according to one universal script.[5] National cultures and modes of policy-making remained crucial in differentiating this pattern along differentiated country-specific lines concerning approaches to the welfare state, industrial strategy and a wide variety of other policy issue areas.

The hegemony of realist thinking in the academic culture of international relations reinforced these well-defined parameters. What mattered under this mantra was positioning in the global hierarchy and structural power. As underscored by Ngaire Woods, ideational factors – or indeed other considerations that deviated from an understanding of world poli-

tics based firmly on power relations and interests of state – were simply "left out".[6]

When directly challenged this realist establishment (either in its classic or neo-formulations) marginalized or rebuffed alternative belief systems or world-views. Intellectually, practitioners/scholars such as Robert Cox could voice different opinions, to the effect that "In the final analysis, our world is ruled by ideas – rational and ethical – and not by vested interests".[7] But this perspective remained at the edges of scholarly discourse through the 1980s.

From a policy perspective the reaction was even harsher. The prime illustration of this disciplinary impulse in action came with the mobilization of the South through the creation of a New World Order. Instead of situating the debate on normative grounds, as suggested by Cox, this challenge was countered by an exclusive focus on the interest-based nature of these claims that the South was acting as a trade union of developing countries directed towards a redistribution of power within the global hierarchy. The wealth of ideas emanating from the South could thus be dismissed as ideological gloss or self-help advocacy.[8]

## Breaking out ideas

The movement towards an ideational turn in international relations went hand in hand with the erosion of discipline associated with the end of the Cold War and the accelerated forces of globalization not only in the sphere of markets but of principles, communication, and information, together with the flow of people and culture.

Some of the best-known intellectual entrepreneurs have cloaked this process of novel and unanticipated change in structuralized baggage; most notably Fukuyama's thesis about the convergence of values.[9] For most observers, though, the hallmark of this new era has been the privileging of fragmentation and competition whereby space for thinking as well as action has been created and struggled over.

The difficulties of achieving consensus on the rules and form of global governance in this environment should not be downplayed. Escape from control in ideational terms has brought with it abundant concerns, and even fears, about emergent and acrimonious global divides and disorders centred around the putative clash of civilization, tensions between a sense of resurgent ultra-nationalism or tribalism and transnationalism, and the shape and merits of democratic practices.

Still the unevenness and dichotomies located in this trajectory should not be used to hide the advantages of possessing these opened global

windows for the promotion of innovative projects with respect to the architecture of global governance. If ideas popped up and grappled with through often jagged and contradictory manifestations, this process offered important insights about the importance of agency. How actors think across the terrain of international relations – as much as what they do – mattered with the rupture of the tightly disciplined world featured with bipolarity and the Cold War.

Academic currents were swept along by the impetus of these changes. The interdependence school moved some way to embrace the ideational factor. Joseph Nye popularized the concept of "soft power" as a reaction to the limitations of the "hard" security agenda of structural realism.[10] Robert Keohane co-edited an influential book on ideas and foreign policy.[11] Both works opened the way forward by adding ideas to the mix of analytical models for the study of mainstream international relations. The first balanced the traditional emphasis on power – even for the US hegemon – with a regard for normative values. The latter provided an elaborate mapping exercise with respect to how ideas affected policy outcomes within a variety of discrete cases.

If deserving credit for bending the hold of the dominant academic model, nonetheless, this approach did not break the structuralist grip. The bias remained fixed on a rationalistic take on international relations, where actors took positions because of calculations vis-à-vis their own self-interest. Ideas were explicitly linked to instrumental gains – the reduction of transaction costs and other material benefits – as opposed to the assumption that ideas reflect expressions of social forces or pressures to think – as one sophisticated collection puts it – "ahead of the curve".[12]

The decisive push towards the ideational turn came with the challenge of the constructivist school. In its thickest versions this literature – while abundant in theory about the import of ideas in the social construction of identity and interest formation and pointing towards a future "where things do not have to be done as they have in the past"[13] – is pitched at too abstract a level to allow it to be of much use in the way of practical applicability for empirically driven research. The outstanding exception to this criticism has been the contribution of John Ruggie. Conceptually, Ruggie's embrace of ideational factors – not only ideas per se but cultural and normative influences more generally – provided this interpretation of international relations with enormous credibility. After he stated that he endorsed the view that the "building blocks of international reality are ideational as well as material; that they express not only individual but also collective intentionality . . . and that the meaning and significance of ideational factors are not independent of time and place",[14] the traditional bias towards structure could no longer completely trump an allowance for agency.

Moreover, the temporal conditions of this endorsement – as Ruggie took on the role of Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations – forged the crucial link between the swirl of intellectual currents and the pursuit of practical policies directed towards reshaping global governance. As Ruggie relates this experience: "it quickly became apparent that creative leadership in international organizations is social constructivism in action ... [the] project of international organization is all about how to stretch states' interests and preferences ... so as to produce in greater quantities the collective goods that the political marketplace of interstate behaviour otherwise under-produces. Ideational factors are an absolutely critical means by which this stretching is achieved".[15]

## The channelling and the purpose of ideas

In trying to map out more carefully the interaction between ideas as intellectual constructs and as sources of inspiration for the application of policy prescriptions, the location of this process along two axes serves as a valuable starting point. One axis of this framework projects the means by which ideas – reflective of the mind of global governance – are channelled or circulated. The major formal component of this activity hinges on diplomatic mechanisms. This view of diplomacy as transmission belt or switchboard for the ideational turn, it must be stated, goes against the commonplace assumption that diplomacy acts as the defender of the status quo, warding off the influence of any new thinking that would shake things up in global affairs. As one critic has stigmatized this response: "Most diplomatic services have responded to the changing international context by burying their heads in the sand".[16]

Yet as more nuanced observers detect, diplomatic method has demonstrated some enormous capacity for facilitating as well as resisting change. As the critics infer, this adaptive quality is not necessarily driven by an espousal of novel ideas for their own sake. Rather this response may be animated more often than not for organizational advantage and/or the demands of situational exigencies. As Kal Holsti persuasively suggests, contemporary diplomacy in a variety of negotiating arenas puts a tremendous onus not only on "persuasion, but with creating and systematizing new knowledge, enunciating general principles, and 'educating' those who do not have all the relevant knowledge surrounding a problem".[17]

The evolving complexity in the sites and actorness of diplomacy also drives this component of the ideational turn. New ideas could quite easily have been ignored or blocked by foreign ministry officials when they possessed a near monopoly over the diplomatic process. In an age of blurring responsibilities among different government departments, and be-

tween state and societal actors, this avoidance approach was much more difficult.

One fascinating feature of the International Commissions under review is how often and through such diverse means diplomacy makes an appearance. Jean-Philippe Thérien, in examining the Independent Commission on International Development Issues (or Brandt Commission), talks of ''development diplomacy'' in the context of North–South relations. Geoffrey Wiseman, in his chapter on the Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues (or Palme Commission), refers to ''multipolar two-track diplomacy''. With regard to her exploration of the World Commission on Environment and Development (or Brundtland Commission), Heather Smith details the technical aspects of ''environmental diplomacy''. In each case, although much of the diplomatic dynamic is state-oriented, there is increased space available for non-state actors to influence the stretching of the mind of global governance. Other contributors reinforce this image. Andy Knight embellishes the notion of commissions – in his case the Commission on Global Governance – as being on the intersect between old and new multilateral diplomacy.

Other contributors, while cognizant of the potential diplomacy possesses as a motor for the ideational turn, are also fully aware of the many obstacles and pitfalls putting a brake on this dynamic. Marianne Hanson puts some considerable emphasis on not only the opportunities but the operational problems placed in the way of ''the search for diplomatic influence'' as exemplified in the case of the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. Sanjeev Khagram highlights the split between the state-centrism of established practices and the expression of the ''maverick'' international experiment as promoted through the World Commission on Dams. The entire project of the Commission on Kosovo, as laid out by Richard Goldstone and Nicole Fritz, was underpinned by the failures of traditional modes of diplomacy in the prevention of severe violations of international human rights or the substantial suffering of civilian society. As well rehearsed by Ramesh Thakur, the report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty was designed to reconcile a push for a new diplomacy – grounded on the concept of the responsibility to protect – with a full appreciation of the exigencies of ''political realism''. In their parallel examination of the ICISS, Jennifer Welsh, Carolin Thielking, and Neil MacFarlane focus, among other themes, on the question of finding the ''right authority'' for international activity and the constraints on diplomatic practice – including its vocabulary. Jorge Heine is careful to add history as a limitation, with the legacy of ''gunboat diplomacy'' shaping the Latin American regional view on any form of intervention.

The other axis animates the purpose for which ideas are promoted. At

one end of the scale lay projects with a high degree of ambition with regard to good international citizenship, punctuated by a desire to stretch the mind of global governance as far as the diplomatic processes will allow. The emphasis is on a transformative ethos with ideas in the service of a normative design, usually through an expanded form of international architecture. At the other end, an onus is placed not on an overarching vision but on problem-solving in particular issue areas. Ideas through this lens have less of a heroic bias – with big ideas capturing attention in an immediate and robust fashion through high profile and diplomatically risky gestures. Rather the best ideas – and the means to sell them – are taken to be incremental and routine in nature, whereby they are applied in a low-key de-politicized and incremental fashion.

It is tempting to use this dichotomous approach to position the different commissions in either one category or the other. Hewson and Sinclair, most notably, divide some selected projects along these lines: "there is one striking difference in tone between the earlier global reform reports and the global governance report. The earlier reports had focused on solving a particular problem facing the world. The global governance report is more concerned with conveying the argument that pervasive global changes have altered the terrain on which global problem solving was to take place".[18]

On the basis of scope – and intensity – there is a good deal of validity to this form of labelling. Among other things, it brings out the degree to which a mesh exists between means and ends when located in these terms. Given the diffuse pattern found in formal diplomacy, the definition of actorness is usefully supplemented by the inclusion of informal networks. Some of these networks showcase problem-solving techniques, as illustrated by what are commonly called epistemic communities[19] or knowledge-oriented communities of experts.[20] Others, by way of contrast, exist as transnational advocacy networks operating with both a will (and often a capacity) to shape-shift existing ways of thinking and doing things.[21]

Yet, even with these merits, these divisions should not be drawn too starkly. The typology of networks often becomes blurred when scrutinized closely. Some of the best-known transnational advocacy networks have taken on the attributes of problem-solvers, as witnessed most explicitly through the actions of the anti-apartheid movement.[22] Nor – as Anne-Marie Slaughter illustrates clearly in the case of legal experts – can networks dominated by professional specialists be disassociated from normative considerations attached to a redesign of global governance.[23]

This complexity in the pattern of networks is confirmed in a number of thematic chapters added to this collection. Elizabeth Riddell-Dixon not

only denotes the extensive campaign pursued by women's rights advocates through vast networks, she showcases the manner by which this network gained input into the negotiating process through the UN system. Jon Pedersen suggests specific ways that networks of researchers can have an impact on policy decisions and outcomes, as demonstrated by the activities of Fafo, a Norwegian think tank on the Middle East peace process in the early 1990s. Although much of this effort was directed at technical problem solving on specific projects on the ground, a distinctive advocacy component is retained as well. Edward Luck, in his excellent (if sobering) review of the workings UN Reform Commissions, hones in the need to address – or straddle – both sides of the problem-solving/advocacy divide, with equal attention devoted to both vision and practical proposals. In his call for an International Commission on Weapons of Mass Destruction – a call which in retrospect proved a harbinger for the recently announced initiative by Sweden for a Commission on Weapons of Mass Destruction chaired by Hans Blix – Jayantha Dhanapala insists on the need for a focused diplomatic effort that taps into the on-going efforts of a variety of actors with established reputations.

## Timing and individual/collective source of agency

Delving deeper into the questions of how international commissions can contribute to the stretching of the mind of global governance, two additional themes require some elaboration. The first privileges the importance of timing. As in any other ideational manifestation, one basic ingredient for success of international commissions was simply the availability (or not) of an opportunity in terms of temporal conditions – or put another way, the degree of ripeness by which these projects were met. The reports of some commissions – regardless of the value of the ideas contained in them – simply ran up against closed inhospitable conditions. As Thérien details, it would be hard to imagine a more hostile ideological/political environment for the 1980 Brandt report to navigate for its notions of a grand social pact between North and South, with the end of détente and ascendancy of the new vigorous wave of neo-conservatism. The ideas flowing from this commission could be portrayed by its supporters as both attractive and necessary for the international community. But the immediate policy impact fell flat because of the poor timing of its initial release. When it was released in 1982, amidst the so-called second Cold War, the Palme report appeared to suffer a similar fate. In an atmosphere of renewed confrontation and arms-racing between the super-

powers, its call for security – with, not against, the adversary – received little in the way of instant traction.

Other commissions were the recipients not of blockage but a boost because of the system-change produced with the collapse of the Soviet Union and bipolarity. As stressed by Smith, the 1987 Brundtland Commission constituted a classic case where ''timing matters'' in a positive sense. Instead of being stymied because of the tight grip of the Cold War this Commission had the good fortune of catching the wave when the disciples of that old order were crumbling. The 1996 Canberra Commission could exploit the same systemic opening in terms of the end of the Cold War bilateral paradigm. Both of these Commissions enjoyed as well a number of additional situational windows of opportunity for the pursuit of their agenda, whether in the case of the Brundtland Commission because of changing attitudes to the environment and the redefinition of security or in the case of the Canberra Commission, a programme based on complete nuclear disarmament.

Notwithstanding these supportive cases, it is misleading to put all of the commissions in such a temporal straightjacket. The context of the report of the Commission on Global Governance in 1995 reflected a much greater tendency towards ambiguity. As pointed out by Andy Knight in *Our Global Neighbourhood*, could still take advantage of the thawing of the Cold War. But these opportunities were countered by a range of competing tendencies which accented new forms of vulnerability, most notably the forces of accelerated globalization and the rise of different types of security threats. Even in cases such as the Canberra Commission openings at both the international and domestic levels could be contested and faced with closure.

Equally, however, the fate of some of the best-known Commissions could take U-turns in the other more positive direction. The most tangible case of this sort – as comprehensively portrayed by Wiseman – centres on the delayed impact of the Palme Commission. Despite directly hitting the wall of Cold War politics on its publication, after some period of mutation and re-channelling the core ideas of the Commission have been embraced in various influential strains of discourse and some areas of policy-making about security both at the multilateral and regional levels.

This fragility in terms of the receptive conditions and fortunes for International Commissions was, if anything, even more exaggerated in recent cases. As acknowledged by Goldstone and Fritz, a major contextual danger in the aftermath of the release of the Kosovo Commission report was the manner by which the formulating of its principles risked being distorted to justify the interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. Consistent

with their wider argument, such logic was unjustified as it confused humanitarian intervention with self-defence. The ICISS faced a similar challenge head-on subsequent to the release of its report shortly after September 11th, 2001. To the credit of the Commission the report resisted shifting its mandate – making explicit in Thakur's words that "self-defence is conceptually and operationally distinct from the protection of at-risk foreign populations". As in the case of the Palme Commission (albeit with a much shorter time-line), there appears to be opportunities as well as vulnerabilities positioned in these situational circumstances. If critical about some of the arguments and implications of the ICISS, the chapter by Welsh and her co-authors remains open about the constructive impact of the Commission. While acknowledging the very different – and far more intense – challenge that the ICISS report faces because of the reassertion of a hard security agenda in this post-post Cold War era, they also posit the claim that "an alternative reading ... suggests a greater relevance for the ICISS and its view of sovereignty in a post-September 11 world".

The second prominent theme concerns the relationship between individual and collective agency as the platform for ideas. Some of the best-known commissions do bear the imprint of key personalities. This individualistic bias goes back to the origin of international commissions – with the branding of the Commission on International Development in 1969 as the "Pearson" report.[24] On the foundational "big three" commissions – Brandt, Palme, and Brundtland – a tendency exists whereby each is labelled via the name of their Chair. All of the commissions under review constituted impressive exercises where moral authority or normative leadership was exerted on an individual basis in world politics.

Yet this type of personal identification contributes to some misleading stereotypes about the commissions. Arguably the most ingrained of these inaccurate images is that of commissions as an exclusive home for retired and/or defeated politicians. Although it is true that some of the best-known commissioners fall into this category (starting with Lester Pearson, the former Prime Minister of Canada and Willy Brandt, the ex-Chancellor of West Germany), others belie this depiction. The example that stands out is that of Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland, who was the Prime Minister of Norway when she agreed to take on the chair of the World Commission on Environment and Development. But a much longer list may be accumulated when smaller and lesser-known commissions largely outside of the purview of this book are added to the mix. These include in 2002 the "Globalization Debate of Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt – the Belgian Initiative"; and The World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization (ILO Commission) co-chaired by the Presidents of Finland and Tanzania.[25]

Nor, it should be added, is personal identification – or the lending of a

prized reputation – a requisite for a well-known image. Commissions such as the Commission on Global Governance, Kosovo, ICISS, or even Big Dams have established a strong and sustained mental brand without becoming attached to one individual in the manner of the earlier wave of commissions. From this perspective the instinct to simply portray commissions as objects promoted and controlled by one pivotal actor needs to be severely modified. A more accurate understanding of the role and salience of international commissions is only possible when this activity is analysed in a wider context. Consistent with their own belief systems and will, individuals retain the capacity to act as high profile and significant carriers of ideas through their work as commissioners. A full awareness of the impressive design of these projects shines through, however, only when they are treated as illustrations of a form of collective agency able to pursue a shared sense of the mental map or common vision concerning the shape of global governance.

Casting commissions as an expression of a social dynamic or force has, it must be stated, risks imparting some negative connotations. As opposed to being viewed as ad hoc exercises, international commissions become tagged as series of exercises driven by a global managerial class. Alternatively, though, a shift to appreciate this process of reproduction is far more cognizant of both collective memory and the capacity for the passage of knowledge as well as innovation through the entire life cycle of Commissions. If fitting into what both Andy Knight and Ed Luck term ‘‘blue ribbon panels’’, the commissions deserve recognition for their talent to think and propel action ‘‘ahead of the curve’’, encompassing ideas that were both unorthodox and transformative.

In individual terms, the myriad of connections between the commissions is striking. Robert McNamara not only took the lead in initiating the Pearson and the Brandt Commissions but served as a member of the Canberra Commission. Willy Brandt, a decade after chairing the Independent Commission on International Development Issues, convened a meeting with Ingvar Carlsson (the former Prime Minister of Sweden) and Shridath Ramphal (the then Commonwealth Secretary-General, later, in turn, a member of the Brundtland Commission) which led to the creation of the Commission on Global Governance. Olof Palme took an active role on the Brandt Commission before chairing the Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues. Dr. Brundtland served as a Commissioner on the Palme Commission before moving to chair the World Commission on Environment and Development. Gareth Evans, the former Australian foreign minister, was a member of the Canberra Commission before becoming the co-chair of ICISS. Wiseman adds the important point that Evans remained influenced through this process by the ideas of the Palme Commission. Moreover, as demonstrated by

the appointment of Jayantha Dhanapala – a member of the Canberra Commission – to the newly formed Blix Commission on Weapons of Mass Destruction, this pattern has continued up to the present.[26]

In thematic terms, the links between many of the commissions are just as strong. A flavour of this common narrative and/or substantive cross-fertilization may be made by reference to the shared emphasis between the Pearson, Brandt and Palme Commissions on the ''mutual interests'' argument in the push for a restructuring of the international order. The idea for the allocation of 0.7 per cent of a developed country's GNP for development assistance passed from the Pearson to the Brandt Commission. Dr. Brundtland viewed her Commission as the third pillar after the Brandt and Palme Commissions. And, as elaborated by Khagram on the case of the World Commission on Dams, the thinking of the Brundtland Commission has continued to radiate out. The Commission on Global Governance pushed in a similar fashion to the Canberra Commission for the elimination of nuclear weapons. It also introduced the concept of ''security of people'' that later informed the Kosovo Commission and the ICISS in so rich a fashion.

## Debating the ''ownership'' of commissions

Tilting the analysis to affirm the value of collective as well as individual agency rehearses a much larger debate about international commissions. For the question of ''whose ideas'' are dominant on an individual basis conflates into the more general question of systemic ''ownership''. In addressing this question, three distinctive lenses stand out as serviceable devices. The first lens surveys ownership through an institutional prism. One possible candidate for this type of ownership is the International Financial Institutions, especially the Bank for Reconstruction and Development or World Bank. Institutional support for International Commissions runs through the ambit of these projects. McNamara initiated both the Pearson and the Brandt Commissions during the time he was President of the World Bank from 1968 to 1981. Although without a personal imprint of this nature, funding from the World Bank was crucial for the establishment of the World Conference on Dams (WCD).

Where the connection between the commissions and the ''Bretton Woods'' establishment must be refined is in terms of impact. The construct of ownership lends itself to an image of control imposed through structural adjustment and other forms of discipline.[27] Yet, in the case of the International Commissions sponsored by the World Bank, little evidence can be found of support for such a restrictive agenda. The Brandt Commission explicitly flew in the face of the ascendant forces of neo-

conservatism in the early 1980s with its emphasis on poverty reduction through a global Keynesian ''new deal''. In terms of process, as Khagram notes, one of the great concerns of the WCD was to maintain an autonomous stance with respect to the World Bank. And at least from the perspective of many critical observers within civil society, the recommendations of the WCD in specific areas such as water directly contravene the strategy favoured by the World Bank.[28]

The alternative choice for ownership is through the United Nations (UN) system. A wide variety of commissions tapped into the resources and possessed strong personal/ideational links with the UN. The Brandt report, *North–South: A Program for Survival*, was submitted to the UN's Secretary-General and, as Thérien stresses at the outset of his chapter, associated strongly with the ''UN paradigm''. The Palme Commission's report, *Common Security*, was presented both to the United Nations Special Session on Disarmament and the UN Conference on Disarmament. Raising the notch even further, the World Commission on Environment and Development had much of its membership appointed via the UN system. The Co-Chairs of the Commission on Global Governance met with the UN Secretary General to explain its objectives. As referred to by both Thakur and Welsh and her colleagues, Secretary-General Kofi Annan strongly supported the ideas promoted through the ICISS report.

As in the case of the Bretton Woods institutions, however, the influence sought or imposed by the UN system on international commissions should not be exaggerated. None of the commissions under review can be considered ''in house'' projects channelled through the UN system (as manifested, for example, by the Brahimi Report on UN Peace Operations). Even when the UN acted as a catalyst the commissions – and the commissioners – still enjoyed a high level of autonomy. As Smith denotes, arguably the most telling case in point was the manner Dr. Brundtland steered the World Commission on Environment and Development in a new and creative direction.

Nor did the high degree of generalized encouragement and legitimacy accorded international commissions through the UN translate into uniform measures of support for their recommendations on an individual basis. As Wiseman concludes, the Palme Commission received little in the way of follow-up through the UN system. In sharper fashion, the Goldstone and Fritz chapter signals the degree by which the Kosovo Commission sought to distance itself from the UN.

A second lens scrutinizes ownership through an ideological lens. The common assumption of the bulk of the academic literature on international commissions is that some of the most prominent of these projects fit comfortably into a liberal reformist framework. This view is especially pronounced in the Report of the Commission on Global Governance.

Knight takes this approach in his chapter, with eloquent backing from Richard Falk.[29] Higgott embellishes this point of view in saying that *Our Global Neighbourhood* offers "somewhat grander, although still essentially liberal [vision] of a rejuvenated system exhibited in the Commission on Global Governance's publication".[30]

As advanced through the ideas of other cases besides the Commission on Global Governance, there is much of a liberal flavour that shines through the entire range of these projects. Nonetheless, there is a compelling hybrid aspect that should not be ignored. With the liberal component can be detected as well a potent social democratic touch. This pedigree obviously goes hand in hand with the political credentials built up by the key figures chairing a good number of the commissions, Brandt, Palme, Brundtland, Ingvar Carlsson, and Gareth Evans. But it is also a reflection of the support given to these commissions by a host of other individuals and governments located on the social democratic side of West European politics, extending from the early support of Chancellor Bruno Kreisky of Austria by both the promotion of Brandt and Palme up to the initiation by the Social Democratic Prime Minister Goran Persson on the Kosovo Commission.

The dominance of and between these political strands can be contrasted, furthermore, with the exclusionary tendencies found in the international commissions towards both the far left and more conservative elements. The Palme Commission stands out as the exception tilting on one side as it included not only some prominent leftists but Georgi Arbatov from the Soviet Union. Edward Heath, the former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, was a member of the Brandt Commission; he was on the short-list to be the chair of the World Commission on Environment and Development; and, with some other moderate conservatives, was involved at the start-up phase of the Commission on Global Governance. Beyond these intrusions, though, some strict ideological barriers took shape. There was no Soviet representation, for example, on the Brandt Commission. And there was a noticeable absence of any individual with neo-conservative credentials through the run of commissions. Consensus inside the commissions was often vividly contrasted, therefore, with strong and protracted criticism outside from both categories of outsiders.

The third and final lens examines ownership through a national prism. At first glance it is tempting to couple the project of international commissions with the prime role of the United States as international agenda-setter through the entire post-1945 era.[31] Yet, at odds with the notion of "soft power" tightening this grip via the globalization of rhetorical principles and policy networks, the US did not have an unchallenged hold on the workings of the commissions. Some US institutions, copying the vision of the McNamara-led World Bank, did push hard for a leadership

role in these activities. The most significant of these initiatives was the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, led by Dr. David Hamburg and Cyrus Vance, Jimmy Carter's first Secretary of State. Rather than providing strength, however, this US-base appears to have become a liability.[32] It did not safeguard the Report from partisan criticism from conservative forces within the United States. Certainly, it did not guarantee international exposure on a global scale.

For the most part the United States – both in terms of state officials and American intellectuals – played below their policy weight on the International Commissions. Outside of McNamara no prominent American stood out in the workings of the Brandt Commission, a feature repeated in the context of the World Commission on Environment and Development. Cyrus Vance presaged his chairmanship of the Carnegie Commission by sitting on the Palme Commission, but as Wiseman convincingly demonstrates the main effect of the Common Security Report in the United States was felt well below the political surface. As Hanson relates, the Canberra Commission stands out as the anomaly with not only McNamara but a former Commander in Chief of US Strategic Command acting as Commissioners. The Kosovo Commission stretched out the mind of global governance with the inclusion of Richard Falk, and the political weight of the ICISS was buttressed by the presence of Lee Hamilton. Still, if valuable contributors, these latter choices confirm the outlier status of these Commissions in conservative American circles, a point that Luck reiterates in his conclusion.

The far more robust national ownership of the International Commissions belonged to the so-called middle powers. This mode of possession of course coincided with the support afforded a good many of these projects by Social Democratic politicians and political parties. In specific policy areas the cross-cutting nature of this backing comes out most forcefully in the case of the Brandt, Palme, and Brundtland Commissions that in effect extended the concept of the welfare state from the domestic to the international arena. Still, other commissions revealed distinctive characteristics that have become associated with middle powers whatever the political persuasion of its government. The activist middle power diplomacy – with its profession of good international citizenship – targeted at the Canberra Commission by Gareth Evans went well beyond the traditional style of Australian Labor governments. The Canadian contribution to commissions – showcased by Thakur and Welsh et al. in the case of the ICISS – was an extension of Liberal international going back to Lester Pearson and extending through to Lloyd Axworthy and his embrace of the concept of human security.

To parade this middle power effort is not to minimize the difficulties associated with it. The most obvious constraint remained the discrepancy

between the profile of these countries on military/security and economic/social agenda items. There was also the problem that in some cases national ownership took on either a parochial/political dimension and/or showcased status-seeking attributes. The first made a difference when an initiative took on a partisan hue, as in the case of the Canberra Commission. With the Keating/Evans Australian Labor Party acting as the motor for the initiative, the incoming Howard Liberal government applied the brake. The latter dilemma became magnified by tensions on two distinctive fronts. The first centred on the contrasting styles among established middle powers.[33] The second encompassed the divergence between what may be called the ''old'' middle powers clustered almost exclusively in the North and ''new'' emerging powers located in the South.[34]

A more exclusive form of ownership for these emerging powers was championed in particular by the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dr. Mahathir Bin Mohamad, leading to the establishment of the South Commission (1987–1990). Consistent with the overall pattern of participation this Commission contained a mix of high-profile elder statesman and up and coming policy/political actors. Julius Nyerere, the former President of Tanzania, served as the Commission's Chair. At the core of the staff as Secretary-General was Manmohan Singh, a well-respected professional economist, who much later in 2004 became Prime Minister of India. In its stylistic expression this Commission contained many attractive features, not only in terms of its attention to technical detail but its willingness to open up the process to a wider debate through an ancillary volume of commentaries. In substance, the Commission offered a sophisticated approach with a strong emphasis on both an integrated and people-centred development strategy.[35] But in terms of practical – and arguably even intellectual – bite, however, the Commission proved a disappointment. Although the release of the report, *Facing the Challenge*, was paralleled by a generally positive burst of publicity, the Commission had little staying power in the world of ideas and (particularly when set against the popular image retained by the Brandt Commission) is rarely cited. The core demands of the report – the need for an opening up of global markets to the products of developing countries in the face of continued protectionist regimes in the North – remain unsatisfied up to the present amidst the debate over the Doha Development Round of the World Trade Organization.

Resilient to this challenge the embedded repertoire of middle power agency continued to shine through the Commissions. Unlike bigger powers – both in the North and South – the diplomacy of middle powers acknowledged the need for bargaining and compromise even on the most sensitive issues dealing with sovereignty. Unlike more formidable (and muscle-bound) states, middle powers – and a variety of individuals oper-

ating in the middle power context – were prepared to devote substantive resources, persistence, and diplomatic acumen to the promotion of these new ideas through sites such as international commissions. Ideational prowess was instinctively substituted for structural power in the international arena. Important principles and operational agendas were brought to life through a mix of technical and entrepreneurial or coalition-oriented activity. This variation of mission-oriented activity is well shown off in the case of the Palme, Canberra, and ICISS Reports – under Swedish, Australian, and Canadian leadership respectively. But this willingness and capacity of middle powers to run with good ideas goes beyond these primary examples. South Africa exhibited many of the same middle power attributes in its support for the WCD. Norway, as made clear in the Pedersen chapter, was able to tap into the intellectual infrastructure and good will in driving forward with the Middle East peace process in the early 1990s. In other cases individual middle power leadership morphed into collective effort. Most explicitly, Hanson and Dhanapala have pointed to the role of the Canberra Commission in the emergence of the "New Agenda Coalition", a geographically diverse group of countries (Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa and Sweden) rallying support for a joint declaration on "The Need for a New Agenda".[36]

## The content and delivery of international commissions

The concern of this collection extends well beyond the context of international commissions to a treatment of their substantive content. Indeed it is this focus that informs the line of analysis of the core chapters devoted to specific commissions. While not wanting to enter into a detailed discussion either of the narrative or of the conclusions made by individual contributors in their distinctive essays, it seems a useful exercise to provide some thematic snapshots not only about what content was contained but how it was delivered – or sold – throughout the entire collection of commissions.

The first thematic snapshot concentrates on the scope of these commissions. In stark dualistic terms, international commissions can be divided into two categories. The first features those commissions that have centred their activities in specific issue-areas. The second clusters those commissions that cover a far more extensive terrain across the security, economic and social domains. In Raimo Vayrynen's classification of commissions on the basis of their definitions of security the Palme Commission represents the best illustration of a commission that falls into the discrete category, with a selective focus and compression into one specific

theme. The essence of the Palme Commission was found in the concept of common security, ''a political and military concept''. Although Vayrynen acknowledged that ''the report of the Palme Commission contained a chapter on its economic aspects'', even the addition of this component supported rather than detracted from the overall sense of concentration in the report in that it focused almost entirely on the material costs of the nuclear arms race.[37] By way of contrast, the Commission on Global Governance fits the model of diffuseness, with an extensive coverage of issues and volition to take ''a long leap towards expanding the notion of security''.[38]

This framework serves as a convenient short cut for ordering the entire span of commissions. Putting the emphasis on the dichotomous nature of commissions, however, covers up the ideational cross-linkages that from the start lay at the heart of so many of the commissions. The Brandt Commission focused on peace as well as development, making an explicit linkage between disarmament and development. Much of the genius of the Brundtland report was its explicit recognition between security and the environment.

Even among the more recent commissions that appear on the surface to be highly specialized there exists an appreciation of the need for linkage. Standing beyond the ambit of this collection, the 2000–2001 Commission on Macroeconomics and Health, established by the World Health Organization (under the leadership of Dr. Brundtland, from her position as Director General), and chaired by Jeffrey Sachs, falls into this category in that its underlying premise of its agenda was to make the connections between investments in health, economic growth, and poverty reduction.[39] The Commission on Human Security (2001–2002), which was funded primarily by the Japanese government, arose out of the UN Millennium Summit in September 2000, and took on a similar complexity with its mandate to explore the interface between poverty, human rights, violence, and security. Among the cases showcased in this book, both the Kosovo Commission and the ICISS demonstrate the manner by which targeted projects wedge out in a wide – and often controversial – number of directions both conceptually and operationally (into the domain of international law and the shifting terms of debate about humanitarian intervention).

As a starting point, therefore, a separation on the basis of range of activity still serves some purpose if only to differentiate a commission such as the highly targeted WCD from the far more extensive Commission on Global Governance. Sparseness of analysis, however, must be complemented by a more nuanced treatment.

A second thematic snapshot extends this coverage to include the style adopted by these commissions. One important variable from this per-

spective is the level of intensity adopted by the Commission. Some commissions have attempted to sell their ideas through a short burst – or sometime a series of bursts – of activity. The Brandt Commission can be viewed as the classic illustration of this mode of activity, in which the selling of the report was tied closely to the reputation of Willy Brandt as an individual and the credibility of each of its documents, initially in 1980 the *North-South: A Program for Survival* and three years later, *Common Crisis. North-South: Co-operation for World Recovery*. The WCD self-consciously imposed a limited time on its activities. Other commissions, through an alternative course, have either been designed or have taken on, through different circumstances, a longer life span. The Palme Commission demonstrates the salience of a time lag, as it gained a new bounce after its main ideas were picked up and utilized by Mikhail Gorbachev. The ICISS – in a more strategical vein – represents a very different model whereby a push for an immediate impact was supplemented by a longer eye to the prize where ongoing pressure was applied through the turmoil of September 11th and the Iraq war.

A second variable is the target of the commissions' proposals. As on scope there is a predisposition towards dividing the commissions up between those that use insider techniques targeting both national governments and international organizations and those that have adopted a more comprehensive approach. Still, looking more closely at this group of projects, what stands out is their hybrid nature. All of the commissions under review sought some degree of access to decision-makers. One of the major recommendations of the first Brandt report was the convening of a state-centric conference, an event that took place in Cancún, Mexico, in 1981. Brundtland, in the words of Smith, ''travelled the world and met state leaders promoting the idea of sustainable development''. The ICISS continued to attract support from Secretary-General Annan and both Prime Ministers Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin of Canada. This form of targeting did not preclude an expansion of networking of these same Commissions with members of civil society. The Brandt Commission's work not only gave rise to the Brandt 21 Forum, but because of its proposal for forgiveness of sovereign debt came to act as a harbinger for a newer generation of activists. Brundtland and her commissioners (including Maurice Strong) balanced their contacts with state officials with meetings with civil society representatives. Moving beyond this ''ad hocery'', the ICISS built a large civil society component within the ongoing structure of its activities.

Again, however, these sketches raise far more questions than they answer. One issue in terms of process that must be raised concerns the actual nature of the participation of civil society in the commissions' work; and one question that rises out of Riddell-Dixon's chapter is the

role of women on the Commissions. Several prominent women played crucial roles in these projects, starting with Dr. Brundtland and extending to the role of Jane Holl as Executive Director for the Carnegie Commission and Sadako Ogata as co-chair (with Amartya Sen) of the Commission on Human Security established in early 2001. But in most cases women were either highly under-represented or completely missing. The exceptions that stand out have been the WCD and the Kosovo Commission, both of which included a number of high profile women.

Another issue that raises similar sort of questions relates to a comparative assessment of business interests versus civil society in the work of the commissions. Knight relates how the agenda on the Global Compact became a core ingredient of the Commission on Global Governance. Just as sensitively, Khagram notes the difficult search for balance between business and civil society on the WCD.

The issue that stands out concerns the recipe for success in terms of delivery. Extending the discussion between both style and targeting, commissions straddle the choice between aiming for a platform based on a sharp slogan that creates an immediate impact or buzz, or a more complex message which takes longer to draw results. On this continuum it seems clear that buzz wins out over complexity. The most successful commissions are the ones that have their key phrase catch-on both with policy makers and the general public. This conclusion comes out strongly from the Brundtland Commission's ability to popularize the term ''sustainable development''. Equally, the coining – and continuous promotion – by the ICISS Commissioners of the term ''responsibility to protect'' also helps reveal why that project has been able to ride out the trauma associated with September 11.[40]

On the negative side of things, neither the presence of prominent individuals nor good research guarantees success. In the former category falls the State of the World Forum: The Commission on Globalization which, notwithstanding its energetic leadership by Jim Garrison and a star-studded line-up of supporters (albeit without a single national champion and an extremely ambitious mandate), apparently has not been able to sustain itself as an ongoing site for a global leadership network. The indicative case in the latter category is the Carnegie Commission, which despite a wealth of analytical reports and edited volumes, failed to catch-on notwithstanding its apparent timeliness post-Rwanda and Bosnia. The message of prevention was not enough to overcome the opposition of conservative forces in the US about the value of the report. Nor was it enough to generate any excitement at the level of civil society. As the ICISS has shown, solid research – based on an efficient secretariat and with both a creative and accessible roster of background papers – has to be teamed with other ingredients for popular momentum to build.

Nor in some cases does even the possession of an attractive catch-phrase create an immediate buzz. It took five years before the Palme Commission's phrase "Common Security" – dismissed along with the Brandt report by a leading Nordic policy-maker as lacking the ingredients "to translate the studies into a practical strategy for change" – took on significant meaning in international relations.[41] The centrepiece of the Commission on Global Governance – the notion of a "Global Neighbourhood" – fell flat in that it was seen as overly simplistic or unbelievable as a policy-related concept in a world arguably dominated more by conflict than cooperation. As Falk punctuates it: "The modern world transmits other, far more sinister, conceptions of neighborhood-gang struggles for exclusive control, inter-ethnic hostility, and class differentiation. Some of the worst instances of genocidal violence have been between those intimately linked by bonds of proximity and shared traditions, including language".[42]

This discussion connects in turn with the ultimate set of outcomes generated through the commissions. The most direct form of delivery is captured through the connection of the ideas promoted by the commissions with institutional reform. This ideational–institutional nexus emerges most explicitly and comprehensively in the impact of the Brundtland Commission as appraised not only by Smith but by a number of other contributors in this collection. On a smaller scale, though, this link stands out in a number of other cases as well. The Commission on Global Governance, while failing to advance many of the ambitious proposals (including global taxation, an Economic Security Council, and an end to the veto for the P-5 in the Security Council), did create intellectual space for the initiative on the International Criminal Court by its call for a new Court of Criminal Justice. The Palme Commission – as elaborated by Wiseman – morphed into Gorbachev's different construct, the Common European House.

More frequently commissions have facilitated and legitimated the extension of soft law or norm creation.[43] The Brundtland Commission had the overall effect of embedding the norm of environmentally sustainable development. The Commission on Global Governance popularized the concepts not only of global governance and the Global Compact but the notion of civil society. Kosovo promoted the concept of fairness. The ICISS refined the concept of human security found in a number of other commissions through the powerful idea of responsibility to protect. If a catchy slogan, it was also a crucial substantive ingredient for norm creation.

Moving the normative dimension to the hub of the debate at the same time exposed commissions to different and acute controversies. These rotated especially around the North–South relationship. In contrast to the

self-selected middle powers, the countries of the South retained a strong residue of suspicion concerning international commissions. In some cases – most notably in the case of the Brandt report – these initiatives were viewed as a means of suffocating even more ambitious schemes of global restructuring through the New International Economic Order – that is to say, as a tool for preventing the ideational turn from stretching the body of global governance too far. In other cases of norm development – alternatively – the criticism was the reverse. In other words, that the mind and body was being stretched too far. As Heine details in the case of Latin America, this sensitivity was especially acute on the entire set of questions concerning sovereignty and non-intervention. Indeed, the contestation of new norms as a challenge to the legitimacy and identity of actors in the South lies at the heart of the challenge for international commissions. In the words of Samuel Makinda, the aspirations of commissions such as the one on Kosovo come up against the reality that: ''most developing states would not endorse 'a principled framework for humanitarian intervention' because they would regard it as a threat to their sovereignty''.[44]

These debates could be tempered by the introduction of a better balance in the North–South participation on the commissions. Moving away from the asymmetry of most of the earlier commissions where individual commissioners from developing countries were badly outnumbered, recent commissions have been characterized by a much greater sense of equality. This shift from exclusion to inclusion is a feature found in the composition held by those projects featured in this collection. It is also a pattern located in a variety of commissions outside its domain, including the Commission on Human Security, The World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization (ILO Commission) co-chaired by the presidents of Finland and Tanzania, together with the UN Commission on Private Sector and Development co-chaired by former Mexican president Ernesto Zedillo and Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin.

The authentic test for International Commissions remains, nonetheless, to replicate equality of representation with substantive equity.[45] The key to the Brundtland Commission's success lay in finding a sense of balance between North and South. But it is not a recipe that is easily replicated. These sensitivities permeate the debate about the Kosovo Commission as well as the ICISS.[46] They also have intruded quite seriously into the activities of other commissions. To give just one additional illustration, the Tokyo Forum (one successor to the Canberra Commission) met resistance not only from the US but India as a result of the changing strategic landscape in the sub-continent in the late 1990s. It was reported that Jasjit Singh of India ''did not attend the last two meetings and ... made it known that he disagreed strongly with the contents and tone of the report''.[47]

## Bringing in the mind of global governance

From this overview it is clear that international commissions deserve concerted attention as part of a matching scholarly re-balancing exercise. To a hitherto unacknowledged extent international commissions have been central to international agenda setting. Although this minding of global governance often produces ambiguous and uneven results, the sheer staying power of these projects is impressive. At odds with the impression of Falk and other observers that they would fade away commissions have proliferated.

As attested to by all of the contributors – and above all by Luck in his concluding chapter – the role of these commissions is full of challenges and obstacles. They expose many of the raw divides and high degree of fragmentation that exist in international politics. They reveal how good ideas can be distorted out of their original intent even if they are not completely immobilized in their challenge to the existing architecture – or body – of global governance.

Still, if problematic, the promise of international commissions also says a good deal about the margins open for imagination and innovation as ideas are brought in and played out in world affairs. Although far from sanguine about the measure or the nature of the eventual or decisive impact of this mode of agency, each of the chapters in this collection looks seriously at the power of ideas. The wealth of diversity found amidst this form of idea-generating mechanisms allows a novel and salient take on the socially textured world of international politics.[48] As this introduction has attempted to show, however, international commissions deserve study not only on their individual merits and for their extensive range of activities but on the basis of their collective contribution with respect to the world polity whereby the mind of global governance is scrutinized and re-evaluated as part of a wider ideational turn in international relations.

## Notes

1. James P. Muldoon, Jr. (2003) *The Architecture of Global Governance; An Introduction to the Study of International Organizations*, Boulder, Co: Westview, p. 12.
2. Mark M. Blyth (1997) ''Any more bright ideas? The ideational turn of comparative political economy'', *Comparative Politics* 29(2) (January): 229.
3. Anthony King (1973) ''Ideas, institutions and the policies of governments: A comparative analysis'', Part III, *British Journal of Political Science* 3(3) (October): 423. For a sample of recent work on variations of this theme, see Dietmar Braun and Andreas Busch (1999) *Public Policy and Political Ideas*, Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar; John L. Campbell (1998) ''Institutional Analysis and the role of ideas in political economy'', *Theory and Society* 27(3): 377–409.

4. On these themes, see Peter Hall (ed.) (1989) *The Political Power of Economic Ideas: Keynesianism Across Nations*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
5. John Gerard Ruggie (1982) ''International Regimes, Transactions and Change: Embedded Liberalism in a Post War Economic Order'', *International Organization* 36(2) (Spring): 379–415.
6. Ngaire Woods (1995) ''Economic Ideas and International Relations: Beyond Rational Neglect'', *International Studies Quarterly* 39(June): 164.
7. Robert W. Cox (1979) ''Ideologies and the New International Economic Order: Reflections on some recent literature'', *International Organization* 33(2) (Spring): 279.
8. For the best-known treatment along these lines, see Stephen Krasner (1985) *Structural Conflict; The Third World Against Global Liberalism*, Berkeley: University of California Press. For a more sympathetic view, see Craig N. Murphy (1984) *The Emergence of NIEO Ideology*, Boulder, CO: Westview.
9. Francis Fukuyama (1992) *The End of History and the Last Man*, New York: Free Press.
10. Joseph S. Nye, Jr. (2002) *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Can't go it Alone*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
11. Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane (eds.) (1993) *Ideas and Foreign Policy*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
12. Louis Emmerij, Richard Jolly, and Thomas G. Weiss (2001) *Ahead of the Curve? UN Ideas and Global Challenges*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
13. Alexander Wendt (2001) ''Driving with the Rearview Mirror: On the Rational Science of Institutional Design'', *International Organization* 55(4) (Autumn): 1049. See also his *Social Theory of International Politics* (1999) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
14. John Gerard Ruggie (1998) ''Introduction: What makes the world hang together? Neo-utilitarianism and the social constructivist challenge'', *Constructing the World Polity: Essays on International Institutionalization*, London: Routledge, p. 33. On Ruggie's role in ''nudging the course of the mainstream in some new directions'', see Iver B. Neumann (1997) ''Conclusion'', in Iver B. Neumann and Ole Wæver, *The Future of International Relations: Masters in the Making?*, London: Routledge, p. 365.
15. Ibid, Preface, p. xii.
16. Shaun Riordan (2003) *The New Diplomacy*, Cambridge: Polity, p. 9.
17. K.J. Holsti (1992) *International Politics: A Framework for Analysis*, 6th edn., Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, p. 144. For a more detailed analysis of these trends, see Brian Hocking (1999) ''Catalytic diplomacy: Beyond 'newness' and 'decline' '', in Jan Melissen (ed.) *Innovation in Diplomatic Practice*, London: Macmillan, pp. 21–42.
18. Martin Hewson and Timothy J. Sinclair (1999) *Approaches to Global Governance Theory*, Albany: State University of New York Press, pp. 13–14.
19. P.M. Haas (1992) ''Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination'', *International Organization* 46(1) (Winter): 1–35.
20. On ''discourse coalitions'', see Diane Stone (2002) ''Knowledge Networks and Policy Expertise in the Global Polity'', in Morten Ougaard and Richard Higgott (eds.), *Towards a Global Polity*, London: Routledge, pp. 125–144.
21. See for example, Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink (1998) *Activists beyond Borders; Advocacy Networks in International Politics*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press; Thomas Risse, Stephen C. Ropp, and Kathryn Sikkink (eds.) (1999) *The Power of Human Rights: International Norms and Domestic Change*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
22. For an illuminating analysis of this case, see Audie Klotz (1995) *Norms in International Relations; The Struggle against Apartheid*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
23. Anne-Marie Slaughter (1997) ''The Real New World Order'', *Foreign Affairs* 76(5): 183–197; Anne-Marie Slaughter (2004) *A New World Order*, Princeton: Princeton Uni-

versity Press. See also Manuel Castells, ‘‘Politics and Power in the Network Society’’, LSE Miliband Public Lecture, London, 18 March 2004.

24. Commission on International Development (1969), *Partners in Development*, New York, Praeger.
25. For valuable reviews of this and other commissions, see Helsinki Process, A Survey of Global Commissions and Processes of Global Governance, Helsinki, Helsinki Process Secretariat, October 2003; Frédéric Lapeyre (2004) The outcome and impact of the main international commissions on development issues, Geneva, Policy Integration Department, World Commission on the Social Development of Globalization, International Labour Office, Working Paper No. 30, May.
26. ⟨http://www.dailymirror.lk/2003/12/17/news/7.asp⟩.
27. Thomas Biersteker (1995) ‘‘The Triumph of Liberal Economic Ideas in the Developing World’’, in Barbara Stallings (ed.) *Global Change, Regional Response; The New International Context of Development*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 174–196. See also Morten Bøås and Desmond McNeill (2003) *Multilateral Institutions: A Critical Introduction*, London: Pluto.
28. Patrick McCully, Campaigns Director, International Rivers Network, ‘‘World Bank seems keen to turn the tide on limits on environmentally damaging projects’’, Letter to *Financial Times*, 9 September 2003. The report of the World Commission on Dams is published as (2000) *Dams and Development: A New Framework for Decision-Making*, London: Earthscan.
29. Richard Falk (1995) ‘‘Liberalism at the Global Level: The Last of the Independent Commissions?’’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 24: 563–576.
30. Richard Higgott (2001) ‘‘Economic globalization and global governance: Towards a post-Washington consensus?’’, in Volker Rittberger (eds.) *Global Governance and The United Nations System*, Tokyo: United Nations University Press, p. 136.
31. See for example, Stephen Gill (1991) *American Hegemony and the Trilateral Commission*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
32. David Hamburg and Cyrus Vance (1997) *Preventing Deadly Conflict*, New York: Carnegie Corporation. On the response to these Commissions, see Edward C. Luck (2000) ‘‘Blue Ribbon Power: Independent Commissions and UN Reform’’, *International Studies Perspectives* 1(1) (April): 100–101.
33. Andrew F. Cooper, Richard A. Higgott, and Kim Richard Nossal (1993) *Relocating Middle Powers: Australia and Canada in a Changing World Order*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press/University of Melbourne Press; Andrew F. Cooper (2004) *Tests of Global Governance: Canadian Diplomacy and United Nations World Conferences*, Tokyo: United Nations University Press.
34. Andrew F. Cooper (ed.) (1997) *Niche Diplomacy: Middle Powers After the Cold War*, London: Macmillan; Andrew F. Cooper, John English, and Ramesh Thakur (eds.) (2002) *Enhancing Global Governance: Towards a New Diplomacy?*, Tokyo: United Nations University Press.
35. South Commission (1990) *The Challenge to the South*, Oxford: Oxford University Press; South Centre (1993) *Facing the Challenge: Responses to the Report of the South Commission*, London: Zed.
36. For more detail, see Jayantha Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, ‘‘The Canberra Commission; Lessons Learned for a Future Commission’’, Luncheon Keynote Address, The Ideas-Institutional Nexus, A Conference co-hosted by the University of Waterloo and the United Nations University, 18 May 2002.
37. Raimo Vayrynen (1999) ‘‘Multilateral Security: Common, Cooperative or Collective?’’, in Michael G. Schechter (ed.) *Future Multilateralism: The Political and Social Framework*, Tokyo: United Nations University Press, p. 56.

38. Ibid, p. 57.
39. ⟨www.cmhealth.org⟩.
40. See most notably, Gareth Evans and Mohamed Sahnoun (2002) ''The Responsibility to Protect'', *Foreign Affairs* 81(6) (November/December): 99–110.
41. Hans-Henrik Holm (1987) ''Brandt, Palme and Thorsson: A Strategy That Does Not Work?'', in Toivo Miljan (ed.) *The Political Economy of North–South Relations*, Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview, p. 141 (originally published in *IDS Bulletin* 16(4) 1985).
42. Falk, ''Liberalism at the Global Level'', p. 573. Held and his colleagues echo this criticism: ''Many thinkers argue that accelerating globalization merely intensifies and generates conflicts as the nations of the world seek to secure their interests in the 'global neighbourhood' ''. Held and Anthony McGrew, David Goldblatt and Jonathan Perraton (1999) *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, p. 451. The image of bad neighbourhoods, of course, has been reinforced by specific situations such as the Kosovo crisis. See for example, J.L. Holzgrefe and Robert O. Keohane (eds.) (2003) *Humanitarian Intervention; Ethical, Legal, and Political Dilemmas*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
43. This theme remains at the core of some proposals for new International Commissions. Deborah Hurley, for example, has made the proposal that: ''Similar to the Brundtland Commission of the 1980s, a World Commission on the Information Society should be formed to articulate and establish, based on human rights, the necessary norms and institutions for the information society'' (Deborah Hurley (2003) *Pole Star: Human Rights in the Information Society*, Montreal: Rights and Democracy, p. 40).
44. Samuel M. Makinda (2001) ''Human rights, humanitarianism, and transformation in the global community'', *Global Governance* 7: 349. See also his (2000) ''Recasting Global Governance'', in Ramesh Thakur and Edward Newman (eds.) *New Millennium, New Perspectives: The United Nations, Security and Governance*, Tokyo: United Nations University Press, pp. 163–181.
45. The search for equality shaped the criticisms of International Commissions from the outset. See, for example, the critique of the Pearson Report by I.G. Patel that ''the concept of genuine partnership in development ... lacks credibility'' (I.G. Patel (1971)) ''Aid Relationships for the Seventies'', in Barbara Ward, Lenore D'Anjou, and J.D. Runnalls (eds.) *The Widening Gap: Development in the 1970s*, New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 295–311.
46. The influence of this model on the ICISS is made explicit by a report of one of its Roundtables: ''The ICISS final Report will be succinct and accessible. It may draw on the Brundtland Commissions' approach to re-frame a concept in order to build consensus on a divisive issue. In that report the chasm between environmental concerns and mainstream theories of economic growth was bridged by inventing a new concept of sustainable development. Perhaps, the ICISS could achieve a similar objective'' (Marketa Geislerova (2001)) ''Report from the Ottawa Roundtable for the International commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty'', Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development, 15 January, p. 3.
47. Patricia Lewis, Director of UNIDIR and a member of the Tokyo Forum (Patricia Lewis (2000)) ''Facing Nuclear Dangers: An Action Plan for the 21st Century; The Report of the Tokyo Forum for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament'', in ''What Next for the NPT?'', *Disarmament Forum* 1: 51–55.
48. For the importance of this perspective, see John Gerard Ruggie (1998) ''Introduction'', *Constructing the World Polity*, London: Routledge, pp. 1–39.

© United Nations University, 2005

The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations University.

United Nations University Press
United Nations University, 53-70, Jingumae 5-chome,
Shibuya-ku, Tokyo, 150-8925, Japan
Tel: +81-3-3499-2811  Fax: +81-3-3406-7345
E-mail: sales@hq.unu.edu
general enquiries: press@hq.unu.edu
http://www.unu.edu

United Nations University Office at the United Nations, New York
2 United Nations Plaza, Room DC2-2062, New York, NY 10017, USA
Tel: +1-212-963-6387  Fax: +1-212-371-9454
E-mail: unuona@ony.unu.edu

United Nations University Press is the publishing division of the United Nations University.

Cover design by Mea Rhee
Cover photographs (clockwise from top left):

Gro Harlem Brundtland © UN/DPI Photo
Kofi Annan © UN/DPI Photo
Gareth Evans © by Mike Pinder Photography, 2000
Mohamed Sahnoun © by Mike Pinder Photography, 2000
Willy Brandt © by Engelbert Reineke, 1980, Bundesbildstelle Berlin
Olof Palme © AFP=Jiji

Printed in the United States of America

UNUP-1110
ISBN 92-808-1110-X

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

International commissions and the power of ideas / edited by Ramesh Thakur, Andrew F. Cooper, and John English.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 928081110X (pbk.)
1. International agencies. 2. International organization. 3. International cooperation. I. Thakur, Ramesh Chandra, 1948– II. Cooper, Andrew Fenton, 1950– III. English, John, 1945–
JZ1318.I559 2005
341.2—dc22 2004028336

## International Commissions and the Power of Ideas

## Edited by Ramesh Thakur, Andrew F. Cooper and John English

**Contributors:**

Andrew F. Cooper • John English • Jean-Phillipe Thérien • Geoffrey Wiseman • Heather A. Smith • W. Andy Knight • Marianne Hanson • Sanjeev Khagram • Richard J. Goldstone • Nicole Fritz • Ramesh Thakur • Jennifer Welsh • Carolin Thielking • S. Neil MacFarlane • Jorge Heine • Elizabeth Riddell-Dixon • Jon Pederse • Ambassador Jayantha Dhanapala • Edward C. Luck

How are good ideas for enhancing global governance converted into policy initiatives and international institutions? One major route has been via international commissions. The names of many are well known: Brandt, Palme, Brundtland, Kosovo, the Commission on Global Governance, and the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty. Yet, as an expression of the power of ideas, in the search for a better world, they remain under-analyzed.

*International Commissions and the Power of Ideas* situates the Commissions as an inter-connected process shaping the mind - and the architectural body - of global governance. The influence of these Commissions has been varied, and these differences make this book particularly relevant. The character and record, and style and substance of a wide variety of International Commissions receive detailed analysis on an individual basis, while the generalized context and impact of International Commissions receives rich comparative appreciation.

*"This is the first volume that really focuses on the nature and impacts of the international commissions. It addresses the rationales and impacts of a very interesting and important development in international politics, and that is the creation of international commissions of experts and politically notable figures to try to break logjams in thinking with regard to major policy issues."*
**Mark W. Zacher, Centre of International Relations, University of British Columbia Liu Institute, Canada.**

**Ramesh Thakur** is the Senior Vice-Rector of the United Nations University, Tokyo, Japan, (Assistant Secretary-General, United Nations).
**Andrew F. Cooper** is a Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Waterloo, and Associate Director of the Centre for International Governance Innovation, Waterloo, Canada.
**John English** is Executive Director, of the Centre for International Governance Innovation, Waterloo, Canada.

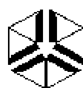
---

**Book information:**

**ISBN 92-808-1110-X; 350pp; US$45.00**

**Order from:**

---



United Nations University Press

53-70, Jingumae 5-chome, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 150-8925, Japan
Tel +81-3-3499-2811; Fax +81-3-3406-7345
E-mail: sales@hq.unu.edu; http://www.unu.edu