



Granite Journal

The University of Aberdeen Postgraduate
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Volume 9
Crossing Borders:
International Collaboration and
Cooperation in Research



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Editorial

Koster, L., Davidson, G., Gaudet, A., Jones, M. & Kovalski, A. Granite Editorial Team

The third decade of the twenty-first century has already brought us a global pandemic, rising concerns over the climate crisis, and for the first time in a generation, war in Europe. While multi-state, cross-border problems concomitantly require international consensus and solutions, global tensions appear to be rising at a time when harmony and cooperation are most needed. Natural pessimists may seemingly not have far to look to confirm their outlook. History, however, demonstrates not only the importance of international collaboration on pressing global matters, but that it can and has been done to mutual positive outcome. The Montreal Protocol of 1987 is widely credited with turning the tide on ozone depletion, while recent shoots of optimism have further emerged with the rapid development of innovative vaccines to fight COVID. Older members of the Granite team who remember the seemingly unstoppable growth and spread of HIV and AIDS at the end of the previous century may not have imagined such effective treatments as are currently available. International cooperation in research can and has been harnessed for the global good. In this spirit, and with an editorial team drawn from multiple states across Europe, Africa, Asia and North America, this issue of Granite aims to highlight and promote the further importance of international partnerships and cross-border academic collaboration.

Multi-state projects are not without their challenges, logistical as well as cultural barriers sometimes presenting themselves. We at Granite experienced such challenges in producing this issue. Editorial team members being based across oceans meant we met fully and in-person on only one occasion, while online meetings sometimes saw team members not based in Aberdeen logging on variously before the sun had risen or after it had set in the evening. We are however confident that the diverse range of



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cultures, competences and perspectives brought to our team means that the positives of such collaborations outweigh the negatives.

In the further spirit of this issue, we were pleased to receive submissions that came from across multiple disciplines, from representatives of different cultures and on divergent matters of international importance. This issue of Granite presents together work from graduate students in the fields of anthropology, international relations, religious studies and theology and linguistics, focusing on matters as varied as ecology and conservation, the role of religion in harmonizing cross-border relations and international law on cyber security matters. Writers based at the University of Aberdeen drew from across multiple, diverse cultures bringing to this issue their work on the value of cooperating across borders in academic research.

It is our hope as editors that you will find the works in this journal provide a variety of new and previously unconsidered approaches to issues of international collaboration and cooperation. We believe that the authors in this volume bring fresh perspectives to these issues, drawing from their own diverse positionalities. The articles which follow are the result of significant work on the part of their authors, and we hope any readers appreciate and recognise the quality of the work which has resulted from this.

Author Ian Clark's addition provides a necessary examination of emerging threats posed by evolving tactics in military operations regarding cyberwarfare as well as its implications for established international humanitarian law (IHL). In evaluating the successful production of The Tallinn Manual as a guiding study on the application of IHL to cyberwarfare encapsulates this year's theme in demonstrating the significance of collaborative research. The author demonstrates that while the world continues to grapple with legal uncertainties surrounding cyber operations, guiding tools such as The Tallinn Manual not only provide a framework for understanding these issues but also serve as a model for future collaborative research efforts across disciplines and borders.

Umur Kosal's work seeks to explore the role of religion in international conflict, as both an escalating and mitigating force. Focusing particularly on the ongoing conflict between the states of Israel and Palestine, this article argues for an understanding of religion based in the social sciences, asserting that it is through social scientific analysis that we can develop beyond classical western understanding of religion, and come to understand the true role of religion in international conflict. This paper offers a strong argument for interdisciplinary and international collaboration when studying religion, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of multiple perspectives, to demonstrate the benefits of a cross-disciplinary social science approach.



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Yiming Mao rightly captures the complexities of contemporary movements towards an ecologically stable civilization. By analysing Samuel Huntington's 'Clash of Civilizations' alongside the differing cultural positions of the environmental crisis, readers are met with the necessity for systemic change. Mao contests that the governmental complexities of the 21st century have quashed that which is required for an environmentally secure civilization, offering a timely perspective on practical steps towards a more environmentally secure future.

Sam McReavy offers a compelling analysis of China Miéville's *The City and the City*. Through examining the meaning of 'the city' within the dystopian reality that Miéville has created, McReavy offers a timely and important analysis of the necessity and unpleasant realities of living within a heavily bordered state. Landing in a split narrative, readers are left to ponder the effects of urban borders, and what they might mean for disrupting or unifying hope within the metropolis.

Aisha Williams' article brings to light the concerning challenges faced by ancient tree conservation particularly following the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union. This work highlights the importance of considering the ecological, cultural, and social contributions of ancient trees in conservation efforts. Williams asserts that collaboration between various parties may lead to a deeper ecological understanding of ancient tree conservation, more effective policies, and the closing of existing loopholes in legislation. While complexities remain on how best to protect ancient trees across the United Kingdom, this work offers a unique perspective on the issue.

Collectively these papers cover an incredibly broad spectrum of important and relevant topics. We hope this volume can stand in evidence of how prevalent the need for international collaboration is within a wide range of academic fields and areas of civil life. Questions of international collaboration have unfortunately become even more prominent as this volume has come together, with increasing international tensions in the Middle East, and continuing conflict in Ukraine. The articles in this volume argue for collaborative and cooperative cross-border solutions to a variety of international problems. The *Granite* Editorial team hope that they can provide inspiration for further study, and for action to make international collaboration a larger part of our academic workplaces and research.



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