



Editorial Note

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This second issue of the *International Journal for Peace and Public Leadership* reflects the Journal's commitment to the study of civil society's contribution to the promotion of peace and good governance alongside state and interstate actors. That contribution is becoming increasingly irreplaceable during the current crisis plaguing international organizations, including the United Nations, with the loss of trust in multilateral institutions, resurgent nationalism, and the intractable nature of conflicts such as in Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan, and most recently Iran.

In many cases, however, and despite frequent lack of success, the levers of power remain largely in the hands of governments. A prime example is that of negotiations aimed at the prevention of nuclear proliferation. Another example is found in interstate economic cooperation, or absence thereof, between countries that would benefit from policies promoting mutual prosperity yet struggle to take the first steps in that direction.

Location can be destiny. Myanmar and Bangladesh are immediate neighbors, but they also belong to the spheres of influence of two competing hegemony—China and India—with strongly divergent interests and identities. This, along with chronic internal problems, has severely limited these countries' economic, political, and social interaction. Investigating this too rarely discussed part of the world, M. Aynal Haque, offers an important analysis that shows how greater cooperation across all sectors would be of benefit to Bangladesh and Myanmar, and beyond.

The topic of nuclear risks and nuclear non-proliferation remains one of the most vexing and never conclusive debates. The classic example of non-proliferation efforts gone wrong remains that of North Korea. A member of the Russian Academy of Military Sciences, Vladimir Petrovskiy is well aware of the complexity of the deadlocked situation. He further presents a perspective that is cognizant of the position of the United States while, at the same time, offering a perspective seen from the vantage point of North Korea's northern neighbor, Russia.

In the quest for peace, history is often overlooked at one's peril. Alexandre Mansourov's contribution to this second issue of IJPPL brilliantly shows how centuries-old events can anticipate current tensions on the world stage. Russia's Tzar Peter III is remembered by most, if at all, for being deposed by his ambitious wife, Catherine the Great. This inglorious ending was the direct consequence of the German-born Tzar's obsession with recovering his ancestral lands from the Kingdom of Denmark, which led him to alienate his closest allies, endanger Russia's military assets, and lose the respect of European monarchs.

With a shift in focus from political to religious history, Ambrose Mong discusses Pope Leo XIV's approach to the sensitive issues of China-Vatican relations on the backdrop of a carefully researched history of Roman Catholic missionary activity in the Chinese Empire. At the same time, Pope Leo XIV's overall approach to social issues is seen in comparison to the pioneering Catholic social teachings of his 19th-century namesake, Leo XIII, who had already viewed the rising world power of that time, the United States, with a mixture of admiration and concern. According to Mong, the current pontiff's Augustinian spirituality is a significant asset due to its emphasis on dialogue and reconciliation.

Adran Holderegger's article on human dignity boasts a significant historical dimension as well. Human dignity, the notion at the origin of

the early and contemporary discussion of human rights, is examined from its origins in Ancient Rome to its prominence in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The long journey it took for human dignity to be acknowledged regardless of any status—including innocence or guilt of a crime—has been marked by social, theological, philosophical, and political developments in the search for a fundamental and universal definition.

in the closing article of this issue, John Koester offers a guide for emerging non-governmental organizations (NGOs) seeking to enhance their profiles and work with greater efficacy in achieving their goals. As observed above, the UN increasingly depends on NGOs for its peace activities on the ground. Ironically, however, the political landscape has made it more and more difficult for them to break through the administrative protocols required for accreditation. Koester suggests that achieving “reciprocal utility,” or making oneself uniquely useful to the UN and other, well-established NGOs, is a much better approach than the aggressive quest for dominance that is certain to end in a fratricidal war against other players—a war that cannot be won.

Book Review: *The Greatest Sentence Ever Written*, a concise text by Walter Isaacson, offers insights into the core statement on Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness in the US Declaration of Independence. Isaacson sees it as the starting point of a “moral arc” spanning America’s 250-year history. In his review, Gordon Anderson reminds the reader that a “negative moral arc” has followed it like a shadow that needs to be taken into consideration for a complete understanding of what is at stake today.