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SPECIAL CONFERENCE ISSUE:  
20TH ANNUAL ANZSIL CONFERENCE  
INTERNATIONAL LAW IN THE NEXT TWO DECADES:  
FORM OR SUBSTANCE?  
SPECIAL ISSUE EDITORS: PETRA BUTLER AND  
ALBERTO COSTI

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# CONTENTS

Introduction	
<i>Petra Butler and Alberto Costi</i> .....	289
Foreword	
<i>Andrew Byrnes</i> .....	291
An International Lawyer's Odyssey: From Natural Law to Empiricism	
<i>Ivan Shearer</i> .....	297
Law, Ethics and Global Governance: Accountability in Perspective	
<i>Jan Klabbers</i> .....	309
The Scope of Transnational Injunctions	
<i>Richard Fentiman</i> .....	323
Democracy and Regime Change in the Post-Cold War International Law	
<i>Jure Vidmar</i> .....	349
What Next for Endangered Cultural Treasures? The Timbuktu Crisis and the Responsibility to Protect	
<i>Jadranka Petrovic</i> .....	381
International Climate Law and the Protection of Persons in the Event of Disasters	
<i>Teresa Thorp</i> .....	427

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# INTRODUCTION

*Petra Butler and Alberto Costi\**

This issue of the New Zealand Journal of Public and International Law features three keynote addresses delivered at the 20th Annual Conference of the Australian and New Zealand Society of International Law (ANZSIL), held in Wellington on 5-7 July 2012, as well as three additional papers presented at the conference. A foreword by the then President of ANZSIL, Professor Andrew Byrnes, introduces the six contributions for the benefit of readers.

The occasion was significant, as it marked the 20th anniversary of ANZSIL. From humble beginnings, the Society has grown into an organisation that brings together scholars and practitioners from well beyond Australasia, and the papers in this special issue testify to the Society's global appeal.

ANZSIL was established in 1992, notably to develop and promote the discipline of international law, to provide a forum for academics, government lawyers, non-governmental organisations, students and practitioners to discuss research and issues of practice in international law, as well as to increase public awareness and understanding of international law. The annual conferences are typically held in this spirit and now also include a postgraduate workshop that helps promote the next generation of international lawyers while also supporting the teaching of international law.

Marking a milestone for the Society, the 2012 conference provided an ideal opportunity to reflect more deeply on international law, both private and public, in its development journey. Keynote plenary speakers and presenters in 16 panels, comprising scholars, government lawyers, practitioners and civil society actors, addressed a range of issues around the general theme of "International Law in the Next Two Decades: Form or Substance?". Participants were truly privileged to hear from over 50 eminent specialists in the discipline of international law hailing from Australasia, but also Asia, North America, South Africa, the United Kingdom and continental Europe, and international bodies, such as the World Trade Organization and the International Committee of the Red Cross. Yet, despite the growing size of the Society, ANZSIL conferences have retained a very collegial and collaborative atmosphere.

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The development of ANZSIL in the past two decades mirrors that of international law. Free from the constraints of the Cold War, the international legal order has sought to include a wider range of issues previously considered to be confined to the domain of domestic jurisdiction: it has seen non-state actors playing an increasingly important role, whether formally or informally; it has witnessed the blurring of the traditional divide between public and private international law; and it has also permeated, and been influenced by, other complementary disciplines. At the same time, globalisation has had a tangible "shrinking" effect on the planet. More and more issues, such as the environment, financial regulation, trade and terrorism, have become the concern of the international community. It may be said that more than any other time in history, the past two decades have seen international law develop into a law that transcends the traditional realm of inter-state relations. Today, international law represents a complex legal order where law is not only shaped by the traditional sources of international law, but also by soft law instruments, and where non-state actors rub shoulders with the "primary subjects" of international law, along horizontal and vertical power structures. The increased interest in, and awareness, of international law is displayed in the expansion of specialised university programmes and the wide array of publications on the subject.

What about the next 20 years? The work of international lawyers is not, and will never be, completed. The discussions at the conference and the papers published in this issue show the vibrant character of the ANZSIL community in reflecting on the challenges facing the world: the relentless progression of climate change; the momentous developments in international criminal law; the emergence of novel concepts (such as the responsibility to protect, or global administrative law); the sophistication of weapons and methods of war (including the use of unmanned aerial vehicles and the practice of targeted killings); the uncertainties arising from political revolutions and uprisings in the Middle East; the continuing, or shifting, disparities between powerful and less privileged parts of the world; the synergy between the different strands of international law (for example, the effect of human rights on international business); and the fragility of the international financial system. These issues are being addressed in the literature, argued before international bodies, debated at academic conferences and scrutinized in the classroom. They show a world in constant movement, calling for complex and effective answers, and a more extensive, varied and inclusive international legal order able to seize future opportunities and cope with the challenges ahead. Questioning existing norms, exploring the boundaries of the law and developing new legal and policy theories or approaches, all point towards a dynamic discipline whose architects each in their own way will continue to inform decision-makers and prepare the next generation of international lawyers.

*Petra Butler and Alberto Costi*  
*Editors of this Special Issue*