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Shaun Randol - ongoing The Non-Western Reading Project - Updated!

The Non-Western reading project continues... new authors reviewed include Tayeb Salih, Eduardo Galeano, Hwang Sok-Yong, Yoko Ogawa, and more. Check out the latest progress on my 2009 project here. *** Shaun Randol - 6.03.09

Labels Matter Since they shape our perceptions toward the object, and help to define the debate on a given topic, labels (terms, appellations, etc) matter. Take for example the prolific use of the term "war on terror." The use of "war" automatically connotes a militaristic approach toward "terror," an abstract emotion. It then follows that force rather than, for example, judiciary efforts will be a primary means in the mitigation of that terrorist threat. Imagine then, what the discourse and its pursuant actions on this topic would have sounded and looked like had former President George Bush termed his blanketing foreign policy scheme a "mission for human security," or any other myriad of phraseologies.

The use of privatized military, logistics, and security companies to implement foreign policy initiatives is an area that lacks clear definition. It does so, in part, because the sector also lacks distinctive, commonly recognized nomenclature. If states insist on the use of private actors to implement foreign policy, especially in conflict zones, it is imperative these private enterprises and their parameters be clearly defined; it is essential such delineations must be made at the international level. If these non-state actors cannot be categorically understood, they cannot be regulated. Unregulated private military firms acting in often dangerous environments, especially those with allowances to use deadly force is a tragedy in waiting.

CONTINUE READING at International Affairs Forum here.

*** Shaun Randol - 4.29-5.03.09 Notes from PEN's World Voices Festival of International Literature We Need to Be Radical

On Real and Imagined Conflict Zones

A Smorgasbord of Global Voices Fear, Musings A Picture's Worth A Million Words "Quiet" Induces Speechlessness An Economic Sachs-down! PEN's Short Attention-Span Theater Meeting Roland Barthes

Shaun Randol - 3.23.09 No Love in a Time of Cholera Foreign Policy in Focus asked me to participate in a three-way debate on the UN's Responsibility to Protect. The assignment: 1 essay and then a response to the other two. OPENING SALVO: Because it provides a framework for the prevention of impending humanitarian disaster or for the arrest of a crisis underway, the United Nation's doctrine on the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) is a notable step forward for the international system. Passing R2P is a move in a right and cooperative direction, one that seeks to further elevate international law and justice. But what's next? Despite UN Security Council approval in 2006, R2P has yet to be invoked to improve areas currently inundated by natural and manmade suffering. The bottleneck lies in translating concepts into deeds. R2P, it seems, passed on a faulty premise — that there are and will be individual and groups of states with the physical means and political will to invoke and act on their responsibilities to protect. Continue reading the essay here and my Response here, on Foreign Policy in Focus.

*** Shaun Randol - 3.01.09 Interview with President of International Peace Operations Association

I caught up with Doug Brooks, founder and president of the International Peace Operations Association, at the Marcus Evans 4th Annual Reconstruction and Stabilization Conference in Arlington, VA on Feb. 19. Read the interview at International Affairs Forum here .

Shaun Randol - 2.13.09 And the Ox it Rode in On: China's Charter 08

This year is shaping up to be a remarkable one for the Middle Kingdom. Protests and civil unrest are on the rise, and chatter surrounding the pro-democracy petition called "Charter 08" is making waves across the country. What began with 303 signatories, many of whom are the usual suspects (i.e. human rights lawyers, professors, etc.), and who promptly received complementary state surveillance for participating, has grown into a percolating movement bringing more and more "everyday" citizens into the fold. Continue reading at the World Policy Journal here . ***

Shaun Randol - 2.04.09 Africa: The Next Boon for Private Military Firms? As American and Coalition soldiers pull out of Iraq, tens of thousands of private military firm (PMF) contractors stationed there will seek employment elsewhere. While many are likely to return to civilian jobs in the United States, a large portion of this sector is unlikely to return home and become accountants and florists. Those looking to stay within their line of work may very well be eyeing various opportunities in Africa for their next tour of duty. The consequences of this migration will produce numerous, potentially negative, consequences. Continue reading at International Affairs Forum here.

*** Shaun Randol - 12.15.08

The Rise of China's Human Flesh Search Engine

One of the many reasons Beijing was awarded the 2008 Olympic Games was that, it was hoped, a massive influx of international visitors—journalists in tow—would help push the central government to lessen restrictions on China's own domestic media. One dramatic outcome would have been a lasting breach in the Great Firewall of China, the country's highly advanced internet censorship apparatus. While policies relaxed for foreign journalists reporting from China during the Olympics appear to be a welcome, permanent fixture, citizens reporting on events within China still have their work cut out for them. Four months after the lighting of the Olympic torch there seems to be little

official progress in the movement to expand internet free speech to the masses of the great Middle Kingdom. China's citizens, however, think otherwise. CONTINUE reading on the World Policy Journal website here . ***
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