**Book Review for**

***National Human Rights Action Planning* by Azadeh Chalabi, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018**

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From the simplicity of the title *National Human Rights Action Planning* one could be forgiven for underestimating the richness and range of this ground-breaking volume. Chalabi’s multifaceted and detailed book bridges theory and practice to comprehensively examine the topic of national human rights action planning. Given the recent rise in populism and the negative and dismissive attitudes to the implementation of human rights standards, the publication of this volume is timely. As noted by Chalabi, contemporary threats to the enjoyment of human rights are significant – conflict, poverty, and environmental crisis coupled with ‘hard powers’ and political indoctrination confirm it is more important than ever to ensure human rights are given effect in practice and are not just guarantees written on paper. Consequently, the need to develop an in-depth and thorough model for national human rights action planning is evident. To date research in this critical area of knowledge has been lacking. The book addresses this gap and provides not only an analysis of national human rights action planning (NHRAP) from theoretical, doctrinal, empirical and practical perspectives but offers an alternative model of planning for use in practice. The resulting volume is an original contribution to human rights scholarship with impacts far beyond law.

The overall objective of the book is to identify the assorted problems with action planning at these four levels but also to ‘develop possible response strategies’ (viii). The book is divided into four constituent parts: Part I, ‘Theoretical Perspectives’ is structured in two chapters (Chapter 1 and Chapter 2) and develops a new general theory of human rights planning. This theory contains four sub-theories: Contextual sub-theory; Substantive sub-theory; Procedural sub-theory and Analytical sub-theory. Chapter 1 deals with the first of these and proposes a new contextual sub-theory of human rights planning through which the impacts of polity, economy, culture and community on the effectiveness of human rights planning are explored. Chapter 2 examines the other 3 sub-theories providing the knowledge base to inform the content of planning (Substantive sub-theory), proposing procedural principles for the formation, implementation and assessment of planning (Procedural sub-theory) and developing an innovative analytical sub-theory of human rights planning, what she terms an integrated ‘NIC’ approach – that goes beyond needs; interests; capabilities (52), formulating an integrated account of rights. Further, Chalabi’s model of national human rights action planning offers an alternative to the ‘traditional state-centric model of planning which is still predominant in international human rights law’(viii). The author convincingly argues that this alternative theory can considerably increase the legitimacy and effectiveness of planning in implementing human rights in practice. The approach is original, through-provoking and importantly may hold potential for the effective implementation of human rights more broadly than NHRAP alone.

In Part II, Chalabi turns to questions of doctrinal nature. In Chapter 3 she presents doctrinal analysis of all 9 core human rights treaties, relevant General Comments, reports and Concluding Observations with the aim of establishing the scope and nature of States parties’ obligations under international human rights law, to adopt a national action plan for realising human rights. She convincingly demonstrates that states parties to the main international human rights treaties have an immediate obligation to adopt and implement a NHRAP.

Chapter 4 therefore investigates states compliance with this obligation and addresses two questions: Firstly, whether states should adopt separate rights-specific action plans or just one global action plan covering all the rights and secondly, the author seeks to clarify the obligation to take all appropriate measures (as the most common obligation across all the core human rights treaties) from which the obligation to adopt a national human rights action plan is derived.

Having set out the theoretical and doctrinal perspectives, in Part III Chalabi turns her attention to ‘Empirical Perspectives’. Chapter 5, examines the results of a cross-case analysis of 53 states national human rights action plans. The aim of the empirical study is to identify significant problems across what the author terms the ‘pre-phase’ and the four phases of planning, namely ‘preparatory phase’, ‘development phase’, ‘implementing phase’ and ‘assessment phase’ and then to explore the underlying causes of these problems. This crucial chapter therefore establishes a strong evidence base for the new theoretical planning model and the practical recommendations to follow.

Finally, Part IV Practical Perspectives’, consists of two chapters: Chapter 6 and Chapter 7. Chapter 6 examines global human rights governance architecture as it currently stands and determines a ‘five-gap problem’ in the UN human rights system which Chalabi claims limits the effectiveness of system. She advocates for a networked model of global human rights governance as an alternative approach to help ‘narrow’ the gaps and enhance the integration of international human rights ‘system’. In Chapter 7 Chalabi brings her seminal work to a close. Here she focuses on operationalising the four phases of national human rights action planning in practice. She concludes with suggestions for accountability mechanisms and a seven-feature model of assessment along with some ideas on methodological techniques for planning.

In sum, this book makes several important contributions to the field of international human rights law: It addresses a significant gap in human rights scholarship and is the only book to date to provide a theory of NHRAP. As such it will be essential reading for practitioners and policy makers in human rights organisations, NGOs and relevant state institutions. It will also be invaluable reading for a wide range of academics and researchers working in law, sociology and social policy, philosophy and politics and international relations. It identifies current limitations in action planning and offers new insights in to how to address these challenges. It also provides a new rich dataset detailing the NHRAP of 53 countries which could also be utilised for further research and secondary data analysis in the future. Most importantly, it develops a new theory of action planning which can be operationalised in policy and practice. Hence it is not only a rich and valuable contribution to academia, but has potential to impact the realisation of human rights on the ground.

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**Biography (157 words)**

Dr Amanda Cahill-Ripley is a Senior Lecturer in Law at the University of Liverpool and is an expert in international human rights law. She specialises in economic, social and cultural rights. Her current research explores the intersections between socio-economic rights and peacebuilding (including transitional justice), development and human security. Dr Cahill-Ripley is also interested in the rights of women; human rights and public law in the UK and Ireland and empirical methods of human rights research. Dr Cahill-Ripley has previously written on the right to water and in 2011 published her first monograph entitled*, The Human Right to Water and its Application in the Occupied Palestinian Territories* (Routledge: Oxford). Other publications include articles *Human Rights Law Review, Netherlands Quarterly of Human Rights* and the *International Journal of Human Rights*, reports and several book chapters. She is currently working on her second monograph entitled *Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and Peacebuilding: Enhancing Human Security* (forthcoming, Cambridge University Press).

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