

2020

INSPIRES

The Magazine for Oxford Politics and International Relations Alumni



DPIR

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICS &
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

- Perspectives on a very political pandemic
- Meet DPIR's new Chichele Professor
- Look back on 100 years of PPE

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Please note, the opinions expressed in *Inspires* are those of the contributors and are not representative of those of the Department or the University.

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Cover photo: Oxford’s famous Bridge of Sighs (Quercus 1/ Shutterstock)
Inside cover: Manor Road Building, the home of the Department of Politics and International Relations (Susan Taylor)

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WELCOME from the Head of Department



Louise Fawcett
Head of Department, DPIR
Professor of International Relations
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Politics, St Catherine’s College

Never in my lifetime has one global event touched the lives of everyone in the world quite so starkly as coronavirus. Of course, the effects of the pandemic are not felt equally by all. Our academic staff and researchers have been quick to remind us of this fact—from Trump’s ‘white protectionism’ in the US, to Brexit polarity showing up in lockdown behaviour patterns across the UK—you can read a selection of reflections from our colleagues on the implications of this ‘very political pandemic’ within *Inspires*.

In late March this year, to ensure the safety of our student and staff body as the coronavirus crisis grew, the Department—and the wider University—went into lockdown, embracing digital technologies as never before. We have begun teaching and hosting events online as a way of sustaining our intellectual community, which is now scattered across the globe. I would like to congratulate the Department on how well it has responded, adapting nimbly to this new world and remote way of working. It is thanks to the hard work of all our staff, and the committed engagement of our students, that we have been able to maintain the highest possible standards of teaching and learning through this difficult period. As the research landscape shifts too, and as travel and field trips have paused for the time being, our researchers and research facilitators have striven to turn challenges into opportunities, publishing extensively and responding quickly to new calls for COVID-19 research.

As you will read in the following pages, the challenges of the year have not stopped our faculty from achieving excellence, recognised in a host of awards and prizes for our academics and students. I am very pleased to report that DPIR has retained its place at the top of the UK subject table in the Complete University Guide and QS Rankings.

Of course, while the Department has done a remarkable job in recent months, we are fully aware of the difficulties which will follow on the heels of COVID-19 and will be working hard to mitigate these. In challenging times, communities like ours become ever more important. And, in coronavirus times, digital communities can be an absolute lifeline. As the economic impacts of lockdown are felt around the world, many of you in our alumni community may be responding to changes in your careers or industries. In response, we have teamed up with the University to set up a DPIR group on the Oxford Alumni Community web platform. We hope to use this space to host career events, set up mentoring relationships and share job opportunities—creating an online space which enriches the

lives and careers of the DPIR community around the world. If you are looking to build your professional networks which help you learn and progress, or if you are in the position to give something back to younger graduates, please sign up for more information, by returning the enclosed form or going to www.politics.ox.ac.uk/dpir-community.

We began 2020 looking forward to celebrating the centenaries of both women’s matriculation at Oxford and the foundation of PPE. World events soon overtook these plans: the past few months have seen history in the making. The pandemic has led to a digital—but not distant—DPIR community. Alumni events are moving online, and the University will host a PPE centenary website ‘exhibition’ and a virtual Meeting Minds PPE alumni event this September (page 21).

The year also witnessed the brutal killing of George Floyd. The Black Lives Matter protests which followed in response, around the world and in our city, invite reflection on our own institutional practices. As a Department we are fully committed to fostering an inclusive culture which opposes racism, promotes equality and values diversity. However, we also acknowledge that more needs to be done to turn words into actions, and to progress further reforms to our curricula, as well as to our recruitment and admissions processes.

On reflection, my last year as Head of Department has been challenging in ways that I could never have imagined. Now, as I prepare to hand over to a new and very capable leadership team (Petra Schleiter, Professor of Comparative Politics, and Nicholas Owen, Associate Professor of Politics, will share the responsibilities of Head of Department from September 2020), I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for all their support over the last four years. I feel very privileged to have worked with such wonderful and dedicated colleagues and students throughout my time as Head, and am particularly grateful for everyone’s efforts during these extraordinary times of late.

DPIR NEWS



DPIR retains top UK spot

We are proud to announce that the Department has retained its first place in the UK in both the Complete University Guide for Politics and QS World University Rankings by Subject.

Oxford's place as one of the top universities globally for the study of Politics and International Relations has also been confirmed, with QS ranking the Department fourth in the world for the subject.



David Miller receives Lifetime Achievement Award from ECPR

The European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) has named David Miller, Professor of Political Theory, 'an inspiration, a model of reasoning and of researching' in its biennial Lifetime Achievement Award.

Head of the nominating committee, Richard Bellamy (UCL), described David as 'one of the most prominent political philosophers in the world today'.

'I am delighted and very honoured... As a young academic, taking part in the ECPR's Joint Sessions was a memorable and formative experience for me, and I have held the ECPR in the highest regard throughout my career.'

David Miller



Rana Mitter awarded Medlicott Medal for outstanding services to the field of History

The Medlicott Medal is awarded annually by the Historical Association, with previous recipients including Mary Beard (2017), Simon Schama (2002), and Eric Hobsbawm (1999). This year Rana Mitter, Director of the Oxford China Centre and Professor of the History and Politics of Modern China, is honoured.

'It's an immense honour to be awarded the Medlicott Medal, which has been held by such a wide range of distinguished historians. I'm particularly pleased that Chinese history has been noted this year.'

Rana Mitter



Federica Mogherini delivers the 2019 Cyril Foster Lecture

We were delighted to welcome Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, to the DPIR last year.

In her lecture, 'The EU's Role as a Global Player for Peace and Stability', Ms Mogherini argued that the EU must play a global role and engage directly in world affairs in order to achieve a peaceful resolution of conflicts and a more equal global economy. Today's challenges are too big for any European nation state, she says: from global trade disputes to artificial intelligence, decisions are shaped by those who have or can mobilise a critical mass at the global level. In such a globalised world, Ms Mogherini argues that the EU is our best way to regain sovereignty.

Go to www.politics.ox.ac.uk/events/cyril-foster.html to watch the lecture online.

Between September 2019 and April 2020 DPIR received:

17
research
awards

FROM 14 FUNDERS:

British Academy, Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), European Research Council (ERC), Facebook, Gates Foundation, Google, Issachar Fund, KE Seed Fund, Leverhulme Trust, NORFACE, Nuffield Foundation, OPEN, Research England, Smith Richardson Foundation



Jane Green (left) with presenter Tom Bradby for ITV's 'Election 2019 Live' TV show, (Photo: ITV/Shutterstock)

Jane Green part of Bafta-nominated election coverage

Professor of Political Science and British Politics Jane Green was part of the ITV News team covering the UK's General Election results in December.

Drawing on her work as Co-Director for the British Election Study she explained and illustrated the key trends of the night to 1.4 million viewers, at the ITV 'Battleboard' of maps, constituencies and key data.

Go to page 17 to read about Jane Green's new book *Electoral Shocks: The Volatile Voter in a Turbulent World*

AWARD-WINNING WRITING

Richard Caplan, Professor of International Relations, has been shortlisted by the Conflict Research Society (CRS) for its 2020 Book of the Year Prize. *Measuring Peace: Principles, Practices, and Politics* addresses the challenge for peacebuilders of assessing progress towards the achievement of a consolidated peace.

Professors **Paul Chaisty** and **Timothy Power** have been awarded the 2019 Robert Elgie best paper prize by the European Consortium of Political Research, for 'What Moves the Needle in Executive-Legislative Relations?'

Karma Nabulsi, Associate Professor in Politics and International Relations, and Professor **Abdel Razzaq Takriti** (University of Houston) have been awarded the 2019 Middle Eastern Studies Association (MESA) Undergraduate Education Award for their new open-access digital teaching resource on the Palestinian revolution; learnpalestine.politics.ox.ac.uk.

Professor of European Politics **Jan Zielonka** has been awarded the 2019 Best Book Prize by the University Association for Contemporary European Studies (UACES). *Counter-Revolution: Liberal Europe in Retreat* explores the origins, implications and solutions to the populist counter-revolution currently taking place in Europe. It suggests how Europe and its liberal project can be reinvented and recreated.

Three DPIR alumni have won coveted Political Studies Association (PSA) Prizes for their DPhil dissertations: **William Allen** (2015, DPhil Politics), **Diana Koester** (2010, MPhil and DPhil Politics), and **Anette Stimmer** (2014, DPhil International Relations) won awards for their theses, in comparative politics, (in)equality and social justice, and international relations categories respectively. **Yuan Yi Zhu** (2016, DPhil International Relations) was also recognised by the International Studies Association (ISA) for producing the Best Paper in Historical IR by a Graduate Student in 2019.



Perspectives on *a very* political pandemic

During the global COVID-19 pandemic DPIR academics and researchers have been quick to respond to the rapid changes that the world has been witnessing. Through new research reports and opinion pieces, they have been sharing their insight so that we can all better understand the complex challenges that face us.

The ensuing highlights—taken from a wide range of sources—give a glimpse at just some of the diverse themes studied and thought-provoking voices within the Department. We shine a light on party political ‘blame wars’ and cracks appearing in China-UK diplomacy; inequalities in COVID-19 protection around the world; and ask what coronavirus can teach us about how to avoid climate catastrophe.

Coronavirus 3D rendering (joshimarin/Shutterstock)
Photo: Donald Trump (Andrew Cline/Shutterstock)

Who is Trump really protecting?



Rogers Smith (University of Pennsylvania) and **Des King** (Oxford's Andrew Mellon Professor of American Government) explain how Trump's policies have put traditionalist, white Christian Americans first. But as coronavirus spreads across the states and into Republican countryside, will Trump be able to protect his supporters—and his political future?



Our recent comprehensive review of Donald Trump's campaign rhetoric and administrative policies shows that Trump rose to power by replacing the conventional Republican embrace of the free movement of goods and labour with robust protectionist tariff, trade and immigration policies. These policies helped him advance a narrative portraying Americans—but particularly traditionalist, white Christian Americans—as vulnerable and in need of protection against the economic and social policies of selfish globalist elites. These protections include new barriers to immigrants, especially Muslim and Latin American immigrants, encouragement of militaristic police tactics, including racial profiling, and support for initiatives against ‘vote fraud’ that suppress voting by poorer, predominantly non-white Americans.

Trump has otherwise governed much as conventional Republicans did in previous periods when they controlled both chambers of Congress and the presidency. He cut back public programmes providing health care, food and shelter and, before the crisis, his administration proposed to cut more. He cut taxes, funding for regulatory enforcement, and innumerable business, health and safety regulations. Previously, in the 1920s and the 2000s, such policies encouraged irresponsible corporate

conduct that left the country unprepared for the Great Depression and the Great Recession that resulted.

With well over a million COVID-19 cases and more than 77,000 deaths [at time of writing], the United States is far and away the world leader in both categories. The stock market has lost all its gains during the initial Trump years and is far from recovery. Unemployment applications have reached unprecedented heights with frightening speed, as eleven years of continuous job gains have crashed virtually overnight. Even some White House economic advisors admit the unemployment and economic hardships could rival the Great Depression.

Unsurprisingly, both the health and the economic impacts have been far more severe for those Americans whom Trump seeks to protect against than for his ‘fellow Americans’ he claims to protect. Communities of colour and young people are disproportionately jobless, as work in service industries and the gig economy has shut down. The poorer and non-white residents of the nation's cities have suffered most. Though racial data are available for only about 35% of reported COVID-19 cases, the rate of infections and deaths for African Americans appears to be at least three times that

of whites, while Latinx American and Asian American rates are also higher.

Shocking as these disparities are, the data show why Trump voters feel comparatively protected. That may soon change. Senior citizens—many formerly ardent Trump supporters—are most vulnerable to the disease, and some are beginning to turn against him. The virus is now spreading from beyond the predominantly Democratic cities to predominantly Republican rural areas, causing factories to close. Trump's response so far has been to order meatpacking plants to stay open, while plant workers remain inadequately protected. The Trump White House has now had to report that it has not even adequately protected itself. As Trump's critics hammer hard at his handling of the crisis, the everyday experiences of suffering may persuade some of his supporters that this time, not all the criticisms are fake news.

This abridged extract was originally published by Public Seminar (publicseminar.org). It is based on Professors Smith and King's research paper ‘White Protectionism in America’, published in the Cambridge journal *Perspectives on Politics* (2020).

Blame wars



How does the handling of political credit and blame in a pandemic compare to that of waging war? Emeritus Professor of Government **Christopher Hood** examines some parallels and contrasts from a historical perspective.

During World War II the major UK parties came together into a grand coalition, suspended general elections and did not compete against one another in by-elections. Those parties thereby shared the blame for all the privations imposed on millions of citizens—and also shared the credit for eventual victory, of course. But the current war against coronavirus, involving unprecedented economic losses and restrictions on personal liberty imposed on the citizenry (arguably greater than those imposed in World War II) is being waged by a single-party government. Even though that government keeps reaching out to other players, the absence of a formal grand coalition runs the risk of a blame dynamic like that which developed over the conduct of World War I by Herbert Asquith's Liberal Government. (After initial support in an atmosphere of patriotic enthusiasm for the war, that government came to be heavily criticised for mishandling the military campaign, such that Asquith had to form a coalition with the Conservatives and Labour in 1915, which was in turn toppled the following year and replaced with another coalition led by David Lloyd George).

A century or so later, the political strategy of Boris Johnson's government for managing the blame risk of coronavirus seems comparable in some ways to its predecessor in

1914. One possible similarity is an original expectation that the episode would be over in a matter of months. Given such a timescale, it might be expected that blame exposure over the level of casualties and restrictions would be short-lived and could be countered by 'all in it together' patriotic rhetoric. This 'over-by-Christmas' expectation is probably the reason why no major democracy has yet adopted a formal grand coalition to fight coronavirus crisis.

A second strategic choice similar to that made by the Asquith government in 1914 is the decision to fund the 'war effort' largely by mega-borrowing, creating a debt mountain and associated fiscal blame issues to be faced by voters and governments in future decades, as happened (with grim political consequences) in the 1920s and 1930s. And a third, loosely reminiscent of the prominence given to generals like Herbert Kitchener at the outset of World War I, is conspicuously to share responsibility with technical experts, studiously 'following the science'. (As many have said, we have moved far and fast from 'had enough of experts' to 'can't have enough of experts'.)

The corresponding political risk for a single-party government is that one or more of those blame-handling strategies will be confounded. After all, contrary to what many supposed in the

summer of 1914, World War I was not over by Christmas. And divisions among scientists and specialists have already arisen over issues like 'herd immunity', approaches to testing and what counts as proper protective equipment, contrary to the presumed technical consensus over 'the science' that the rhetorical definite article connotes.

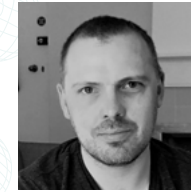
But opposition parties also face a political challenge as the blame game cranks up over an episode that has already claimed as many civilian lives as those lost in the 1940-41 Blitz in World War II. They need to criticise the details of the way the government has waged the coronavirus war, continuing to signal their distinctive political brand to the electorate, without running into a blame trap for 'playing politics'. That blame-game challenge presents parties that are in opposition at Westminster, but in office at subnational level (and thereby included in the UK government's collective COBRA crisis decision-making machinery), with some especially tricky choices.

This abridged and edited extract was originally published by the *Institute of Art and Ideas* (iai.tv). Christopher Hood's article takes inspiration from his 2011 book *The Blame Game* (Princeton University Press), on blame avoidance in government and public services.

Photo: Matt Hancock Digital Covid-19 Press Conference 23/04 (Pippa Fowles / No.10 Downing Street, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)



Social distancing and the big Brexit divide



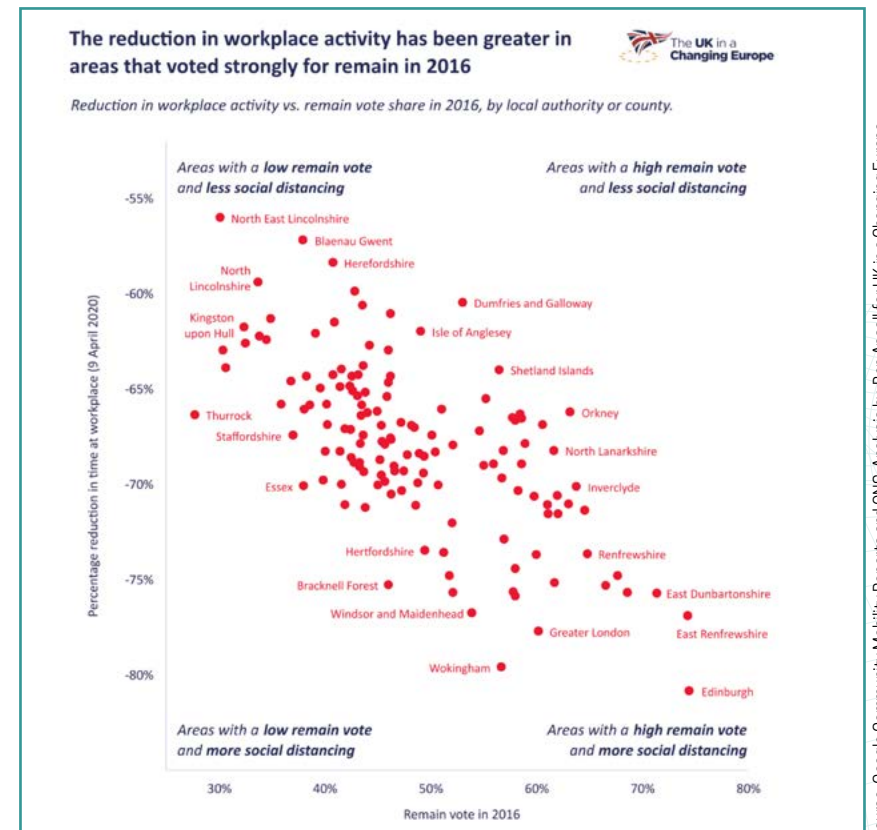
Professor of Comparative Democratic Institutions **Ben Ansell** looks back at Britain's transition into lockdown, breaking down big data to discover a correlation between 'Remainer' areas and the greatest reduction in workplace activity in March and April 2020.

At the beginning of lockdown, YouGov found that 45% of people in more 'middle class' social grades ABC1 avoided going to work to protect themselves from coronavirus, compared to only 29% of 'working class' social grades C2DE.

However, self-reported behaviour is prone to so-called 'social desirability' bias—people tell survey companies what they think they want to hear. To get around this problem we could look at people's actual social distancing behaviour, as opposed to their claims about it. To do so at an individual level would require 'Big Brother'-style monitoring that few of us would be comfortable with (at least not yet!). However, we can look at aggregated data on the amount of activity going on in different types of places.

Google's Community Mobility Reports provide just this kind of data. The reports are constructed from people's Location History in their Google Accounts—so this will be sent to Google from people's smartphones as they move around. Google keeps this data anonymous but can aggregate it at the regional level, showing how much activity is going on in various types of locations.

Google uses six location types: groceries, parks, residential, retail and recreation, transit stations, and workplaces. The data quality varies across categories, and is especially weak for parks and residential. But it provides, for each category, a helpful account of how much activity has changed since 29 February—and the Brexit divide that has shaped much of British life over the past half-decade is indeed showing up here.



This figure shows that, in both the poorest and richest places, the more Remain-voting areas distanced more in the weeks following the lockdown.

What are the implications? If Remain areas are able to social distance more—likely due to being able to work from home more easily, but potentially also related to different underlying attitudes—this could widen Britain's social divisions. It is not hard to imagine resentment building over the fact that in some places everyone seems to be working from home, whereas in others people have to head into work, putting themselves at risk. Or viewed the other way, there could be resentment that some people feel they are abiding

by the lockdown, whereas others are following it more loosely.

There is no right or wrong here. Most people are doing their very best. But we have already seen from media coverage that mixed compliance with the lockdown leads to moral outrage. And the economic shocks from COVID-19 are likely to be regionally very unequal, just as were the effects of the credit crisis. Anything that further widens Britain's already sharp divides should give us cause for concern.

This abridged extract was originally published in a report for *The UK in a Changing Europe* (ukandeu.ac.uk).

UK and China: Out of touch with the post-COVID-19 future



Rana Mitter, Director of the Oxford China Centre and Professor of the History and Politics of Modern China, reflects on the British government's threat to go 'back to the diplomatic drawing board' with Beijing after the COVID-19 crisis.

Late in March, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang warned local officials not to hide new cases of the novel coronavirus. His warning sounded more like a plea: officials in China today are aware that the Communist Party has declared 'victory' over the virus, and bearing news that the war is not actually won could be a sure path to demotion.

Meanwhile, last weekend the British newspaper *The Mail on Sunday* featured a 'senior [UK] government source' claiming that after the coronavirus crisis was over, China would face a 'reckoning' and might become a 'pariah state'.

Who is Britain's message about a 'reckoning' supposed to target? If it means that Britain wants to bring together like-minded countries to demand that China change its standards on internal transparency of information, or indeed on animal welfare, that's a worthy but very big ask. It's a particularly big ask for a country that has recently left the EU, the international entity with the most interest in raising such issues on the international stage, but with which the British government is still in a form of Cold War, even during the virus crisis.

Alternatively, if the 'reckoning' was a signal of closeness to the Trump administration, with its strong anti-China agenda, this might force a reversal of Britain's decision to use Huawei. And, of course, any 'reckoning' makes the likelihood of opening China's markets, one of the prizes hinted at by Brexiteers for the past four years, much harder to achieve.

Britain still has many advantages: creative talent, superb higher education, hi-tech manufacturing, world-class services. But Brexit has, at least in the short term, made its international relationships much more



fragile. Which of its relationships is Britain seeking to leverage with its comments on China? And why would China pay attention?

Actually, there are good reasons for China to pay attention not just to British but also world opinion. Beijing can expect immense sympathy for the many deaths in China, and respect for the swift way the state dealt with the crisis. But if China simply declares that it has been right all along, rather than reassessing its opaque treatment of information and the culture of political fear, then it will squander the goodwill it has created.

China would win immense credit by declaring openly that its political culture has learned major lessons from the crisis about the need for transparency in domestic and international affairs. Countries that acknowledge weaknesses, and pledge real steps to address them, have the true qualities needed for global leadership: confidence, trust and openness. It would also show understanding of why countries like Britain, which have been quite China-friendly in recent years, have suddenly turned cold.

In a strange way, Britain and China find themselves in a geopolitically similar position. Both are countries which are globally admired for aspects of what they do. But they are both a long way from the sweet spot that would give them a globally plausible voice when the virus crisis is over.

This abridged extract was originally published in *This Week in Asia* (www.scmp.com).

Photos: L-R: Boris Johnson (360)/Shutterstock, and Li Keqiang (photocostmos1/Shutterstock)

Crime, conflict and coronavirus at Colombia's closed border



Criminal groups that operate in the border zones are capitalising on the closure of all seven official border crossings to smuggle migrants in and out of Colombia illegally, extort this poor and vulnerable population and recruit new members, write Director of Studies and Senior Research Fellow **Annette Idler** and Postdoctoral Research Fellow **Markus Hochmüller**, both of Oxford's Changing Character of War Centre, in *The Conversation*.

Oil-rich Venezuela used to have one of Latin America's most robust economies, but its fortunes have declined massively since the death of president Hugo Chávez in 2013. His successor, Nicolás Maduro, left with a steeply unbalanced budget and dropping oil prices, has led the South American country into the abyss. By 2019, hyperinflation in Venezuela had reached 10,000,000%, and 9 out of 10 Venezuelans lived in poverty. To date, 5 million people have fled persecution, poverty and political turmoil in Venezuela—a mass migration rivaling that of war-torn Syria. Around 1.8 million of them settled in Colombia.

We have been monitoring this migratory crisis for years as part of our extensive research on the overlapping humanitarian and security crises in Colombia's borderlands. Before the pandemic, up to 40,000 Venezuelans were crossing the porous 1,378-mile Colombia-Venezuela border daily. Most of them remained in the country for a short period of time before passing on to other countries or returned to Venezuela that day after buying food, medicine and other items that are extremely scarce in Venezuela. But, typically, about 2,000 Venezuelans would end up staying for good in Colombia each day, according to Christian Krüger, former director of Migración Colombia, Colombia's customs agency.

The border's closure on 14 March due to the COVID-19 outbreak has only made a bad situation worse, our research finds. Transit across the border is now permitted essentially only for Venezuelans leaving Colombia—not the thousands still clamouring to get in to buy urgently needed food and medicine. But no government is entirely in charge of what happens at the Colombia-Venezuela border, which is nearly as

long as the US-Mexico border and runs through desert, dense jungles and the towering Andes mountains.

An array of rebels, criminals and corrupt officials control informal border crossings, where they sneak Venezuelans into Colombia in exchange for 'taxes' or forced sex. Human trafficking groups also prowl the region looking for potential victims, especially children, who are sold into prostitution. Venezuelans arriving further south in Colombia, to the Arauca region, may also be targeted for recruitment by insurgent groups like the National Liberation Army, Colombia's largest active rebel group.

The recent arrival of US military troops in the border region, officially to support Colombian anti-drug efforts, adds to the tense climate. And, our research shows, the militarisation of the border further increases the risks for vulnerable people on the move. Meanwhile, in the deserts of La Guajira,

hundreds of homeless Venezuelan migrants are sleeping on the streets. This makes them extremely vulnerable not only to the coronavirus, a humanitarian worker in the region told us, but also to violent assault and harassment by criminal groups and youth gangs.

Our past studies on civilian behaviour in such contested territory have found that Venezuelans who have only recently arrived in Colombia are particularly subject to harassment and exploitation because they don't know the rules of the game. Lacking shelter, safety, health care and jobs in Colombia as the coronavirus surges, many Venezuelans have been driven to despair and have returned home. By late May, over 68,000 Venezuelans had returned to their country. Theirs is usually not a happy, or lasting, return.

This abridged extract was originally published in *The Conversation* (theconversation.com).



Photo: An illegal and improvised bridge, a few metres from the Simón Bolívar International Bridge, Colombia (Sebastian Delgado C/Shutterstock)

Liberty in the time of corona



We are not facing a simple trade-off between liberty and public health, but a more complex challenge to maintain liberty as non-domination, writes **Cécile Laborde**, Nuffield Professor of Political Theory.



We live in a time where our liberty as non-interference is drastically reduced. The basic freedoms to work, travel, associate or even take aimless strolls have been taken away. Any infringement of these new restrictions can result in interference by public authorities. Under such—regrettable but necessary—conditions, we should be vigilant not to relinquish a no less important liberty: liberty as non-domination.

How can we best preserve this fundamental liberty in today's increasingly restrictive state of emergency? There are three main considerations. First, in a democracy, the state of emergency should be the exception, not the norm. It is crucially important that emergency powers be periodically reviewed and renewed (only if necessary) through parliamentary and judicial oversight. They should not be presumed to be indefinite. Normal democratic mechanisms of accountability—including elections—must be maintained as much as possible during the crisis.

Second, in a democracy, non-domination is secured through the quality and transparency of public information. Democratic accountability depends on a delicate balance between trust and distrust. The public needs to be able to trust crucial sources of information, such as scientific experts and professional journalists. A well-informed public can then robustly scrutinise governmental initiatives. All government actions in a crisis should

be subjected to public discussion and contestation—even in the case of grave mismanagement. Freedom of expression and public criticism often slows down and even disrupts political action, but it is crucial to guarantee that the exorbitant powers of the state do not go unchecked.

Third, in a democracy, power is exercised for the benefit of all the people, not a restricted faction. This truism becomes salient once we take the measure of the hugely unequal effects of the coronavirus pandemic. The pandemic has revealed how our social fabric is maintained by low-paid, working class members of the labour force, such as nurses, social care workers, supermarket cashiers, delivery workers and bus drivers. They now face the risk of sickness and even death on a daily basis. The socially regressive impact of lockdown is also clear in the way that it disproportionately hits families living in confined spaces and in precarious financial, physical or psychological health. Further, the pandemic's effects are intensified for struggling young generations like gig-economy workers, indebted university students and urban renters. Only a renewed democratic social contract can ensure that the long-term costs of the pandemic will not (as was the case after the financial crisis of 2008) be paid for by the most vulnerable.

With this knowledge, should we be hopeful about the future prospects of non-domination in actual democracies? Some scepticism is warranted. One

problem is that the conditions of democratic resilience have slowly been eroded over the last couple of decades in existing democratic states. The post-9/11 era has seen the uncontrolled development of anti-terrorist legislation, from which current emergency powers are often derived. The populist assault on scientific experts, traditional media and other countervailing institutions, such as the courts, has weakened the public sphere and its ability to oppose the exercise of arbitrary power. And many democratic governments worldwide have undermined public services, while scapegoating immigrants, Jews, Muslims or the EU for the economic and social despair of their core constituencies. States such as the USA, Brazil, India, Hungary, Poland and Israel have gone furthest into this dangerous democratic backsliding. Many democratic states, including France and the UK, have seen the weakening of the very mechanisms that justified their superiority over authoritarian states.

It is one thing for our liberty as non-interference to be suspended under the exceptional circumstance of a public health emergency. It is quite another thing for our liberty as non-domination to be eroded, for this loss is not so easily reversed.

This article was originally published by **OxPol blog** (blog.politics.ox.ac.uk).

Photo: Stay Home Now advert in London, during coronavirus outbreak (Lubo Ivanko/Shutterstock)

Photo: Extinction Rebellion protesters in London, February 2020 (Jessica Girvan/Shutterstock)

Lockdown and the climate crisis



In 2020, lockdowns around the world have reduced energy use and carbon emissions on an unprecedented scale. However, the current COVID-19 outbreak may be a double-edged sword in the fight against climate change, write DPIR Lecturer and Oxford Martin School Fellow **Hussam Hussein** and Luca Eufemia (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin).

This year individual countries' carbon reductions, as outlined in the United Nations-brokered Paris Agreement, are due to be reported. Although pre-coronavirus crisis global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are expected to continue growing by 1.9%, recent CO₂ calculations in Europe are predicting a surprising scenario. For instance, the German climate target for 2020, which until February 2020 was considered unattainable, should now be met. Due to this year's mild, stormy, windy winter, and, above all, the coronavirus crisis, the target of 40% CO₂ savings—unlike climate change targets of the past—is within reach.

While COVID-19 is 'first and foremost an issue of human health and safety', the change in people's behaviour to contain the virus is having 'some subtle effects on the environment', writes Luca Franza in 'Is Coronavirus Good for Our Sick Planet?'. Some of the tangible effects on the environment of the spreading virus have been, among others, the decreasing use of gasoline and electricity, as well as a drop in fuel production and consumption. If similar trends can be proven for the performance of the G20 countries only, 2020 could represent an epic cornerstone not only for climate negotiations but also for the future world economy.

Yet, the COVID-19 crisis may also have negative implications and impacts on the climate, as a rebound effect is expected once the pandemic is over. In the short term, some are already affecting electric vehicles and the solar sectors, challenged by dips in oil/gasoline prices, the decreasing demand, and disruptions to both supply chains and manufacturing facilities. Besides, low commodity prices may drastically alter food supply chains, resulting in increased levels of food loss and waste, as well as exacerbating existing scenarios of food insecurity, especially in developing countries.

Notwithstanding these potential future developments, the current global situation is an opportunity to consider massive structural changes like we have never conceded possible before. A sound paradigm shift and significant economic and environmental reforms are going to be needed if we are to allay climate change and avoid setting off irreversible environmental chain reactions. As the international community of scientists and leaders at the United Nation's Conference of Parties in 2016 all agreed, time is running out. This shift can and needs to be taken now.

While rethinking unforeseen and unexpected scenarios when drafting



global climate targets, policymakers and global leaders should envision a new world economy without fossil fuels, with a higher reliance on renewable energies, decreasing travels, shortening value chains, challenging first-world living standards. This pandemic is showing us that refinements are possible. In fact, investments and measures taken beyond and after the coronavirus crisis are what would define the global fight against climate change.

This article was originally published by **OxPol blog** (blog.politics.ox.ac.uk).

AN INTERVIEW

with Amia Srinivasan

Amia Srinivasan is Chichele Professor of Social and Political Theory. We spoke to Professor Srinivasan about her research, the 2020 rollercoaster, and neglected feminist texts.

Welcome to the Department, Professor Srinivasan! Thank you for taking the time to speak with us. How have you found your first academic year as Chichele Professor of Social and Political Theory?

Thank you! It has been both wonderful and strange: wonderful because of my fantastic colleagues and students in the DPIR, and strange because of the state of global politics. I took up the post in January, at a vexed and bleak political moment—right-wing nationalists in power in the US, India, Brazil and elsewhere, a Conservative landslide election in the UK, and the climate crisis literally blazing its way across Australia. Then just a few months on we have a global pandemic that not only ravages many lives, but underscores pre-existing crises: of economic and racial inequality, of social and reproductive care, of the eroded welfare state, of leadership. In the last few weeks we have seen worldwide protests against anti-black racism and the carceral state. More than ever, it seems right to me that political theory must be a critical theory: that is, the sort of theory that seeks not only to understand the world, but to change it.

You've mentioned some of the global turmoil we're in the middle of this year. Why is political philosophy important today?

I don't think we can take it for granted that political philosophy is important, at least not in the sense of actually making a difference to the various political crises we face. That said, I think intellectual inquiry is valuable for its own sake. Some people want all philosophy to be directly oriented towards the practical. I understand why they think that—they are motivated by a genuine concern for oppression and injustice—but I think that perspective is mistaken. It is a perspective that inadvertently plays into an instrumentalist, neoliberal view of the university as a lever of the economy, rather than as an institution of free inquiry and learning that is

valuable for its own sake. The situation with political philosophy—as opposed to, say, philosophy of physics—is more complicated, since political philosophy is in a sense parasitic on the realities of injustice. So we might think—or at least I tend to think—that political philosophers have a deeper or additional obligation to think of the real-world consequences of their theorising. In my experience, most political philosophers really do hope that their work will contribute to a more just world. However, the mistake that many of

Social and political change, when it happens, is rarely just a matter of changed beliefs or persuasive arguments. My hope is to theorise in a way that does not prescind from our non-ideal realities, and that is grounded in a recognition of how social and political change actually happens.

us make is thinking that injustice exists because people have false beliefs about what justice demands: that what is needed is simply a compelling argument that things should be different. That sort of political philosophy is one that does not begin with a real understanding of politics and how it works. Social and political change, when it happens, is rarely just a matter of changed beliefs or persuasive arguments. My hope is to theorise in a way that does not prescind from our non-ideal realities, and that is grounded in a recognition of how social and political change actually happens. I hope that this has a material pay-off, but I don't assume it will. Theorists very often lag behind actual political practitioners—the organisers and activists—and it's too easy

to forget that. Meanwhile, I take comfort in teaching, which always has real, material effects, at an individual level.

Could you tell our readers a little bit more about your research and what you're interested in?

My philosophical interests are ecumenical, though there are some recurring themes: the nature of knowledge and self-knowledge, the relationship between theory and practice, the limits of political deliberation and the importance of affect and action, the relationship between how we conceptualise the world and how the world is, the significance of history. Recently, I've written about the role of anger in politics, debates about free speech and 'no platforming', sex discrimination law and the ethics of pedagogy, and the way in which our social position shapes our capacity to know.

You're currently working on your new book, *The Right to Sex*. Can you tell us more about it?

It's a work of feminist theory that centres on the politics of sex. In it, I discuss the ethics of sexual desire, rape and rape culture, sexual harassment, male sexual entitlement, campus sex, pornography, sex work, and sex and state power. The book tries to offer a way of thinking about the moral and political complexities of sex that pushes beyond the categories of 'consent' and 'pleasure'—categories that have come to dominate much recent feminism.

The book was sparked by an essay for the *London Review of Books* (LRB) on 'incels', individuals who view themselves as involuntarily celibate. You wrote about the two different responses to desire: empowerment and entitlement. Looking at the world today, do you feel that much has changed since you wrote your essay?

Not much. Since I wrote that LRB piece, there have been a number of violent



Photo: Cian Oba-Smith

Too often, including at Oxford, 'gender equality' means achieving parity within an elite group, leaving untouched the systems that make most women's—and many men's—lives a misery.



Photo: Keiko Ikuuchi

murders perpetrated by so-called 'incels'. More generally, there have been increasingly visible displays of white male entitlement: not just to women, but also to guns (in the US), public space, and exceptional treatment by the law. Think about Dominic Cummings romping around the country while black boys in London are harassed by the police for getting some fresh air in parks. There is a deep connection between all these things: different expressions of the expectation that certain people are entitled to more and better. When that expectation is thwarted, violence often ensues. This is why so many right-wing terrorists are also domestic abusers.

Alongside *The Right to Sex*, you're also working on a monograph about critical genealogy. What's the book about?

The book, which is called *The Contingent World: Genealogy, Epistemology, Politics*, is about the way in which our beliefs, concepts and values are shaped by the contingencies of history, culture and evolution. It traces the history of what I call 'genealogical anxiety': the worry that revelations of such contingency somehow undermine, debunk or cast into doubt the legitimacy of our beliefs or values, from the pre-Socratics to contemporary debates about the evolution of morality. It asks: when, if ever, do genealogical revelations render our beliefs unjustified? In short: it's complicated!

Put simply, I argue that history can reveal that our way of conceptualising the world is contingent—and thus open to change—and moreover can suggest to us how it is that we might refashion our concepts in order to change the world.

You've described feminism as 'not a philosophy. It's not a theory, it's not a set of ideas. It's a political struggle.' 2020 marks the 100 year anniversary of women matriculating at Oxford, as well as the centenary of the PPE undergraduate course. Today, where are we at in the political struggle for gender equality, and do you think this fight will ever end?

It is not all bleak; progress has been made. However, even in the case of women at Oxford—who are overwhelmingly from wealthy backgrounds, privately educated and white—there is much work yet to do. Feminism must concern itself with the worst-off women: the poor women, often brown and black women, who are the world's labourers, in factories and fields and homes. Too often, including at Oxford, 'gender equality' means achieving parity within an elite group, leaving untouched the systems that make most women's—and many men's—lives a misery. To stay with the Oxford example: 100 years ago women first matriculated at Oxford. This is a milestone, to be remembered and celebrated. Yet the women who clean our colleges are rarely paid a living wage. Will feminism ever

be unnecessary? I hope so, but not in my lifetime, that is for sure.

One last question! You mentioned in your interview with Jonathan Derbyshire in the *Financial Times* that you'd like to use your position as Chichele Professor to highlight 'neglected' philosophical ideas, particularly feminist theory. If you could encourage our alumni to read one piece of work, what would it be and why?

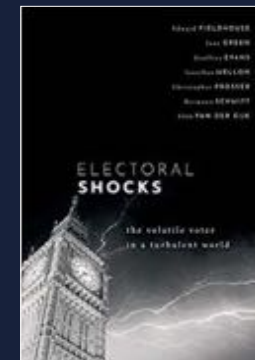
A brutal question! There are many works of philosophy and theory that are important to me. A text that I particularly love, and that I find my students love, is Adrienne Rich's *Of Woman Born*. It is a spectacular work of feminist theory, bringing together history, psychoanalysis, empirical political science and first-person narrative to examine the institution of motherhood—a deeply political institution, Rich shows, that shapes us all. It is at once unflinching in its diagnoses of the pathologies of gender, class and race, and deeply hopeful about what might be possible. It is also exquisitely written.

Amia Srinivasan's new book, The Right to Sex, will be published in 2021. You can preorder a copy now—from Bloomsbury in the UK or from Farrar, Straus & Giroux in the USA.

PUBLICATIONS

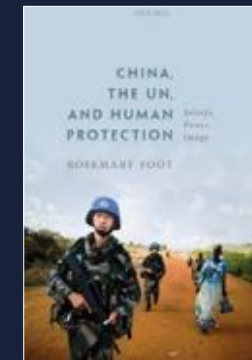
In the last year our alumni and DPIR faculty have continued to publish prolifically. Here is a small selection of the many excellent books to have come from the DPIR community over the last twelve months.

More books can be found at www.politics.ox.ac.uk. Please send news of your publications to news@politics.ox.ac.uk for inclusion on our website.



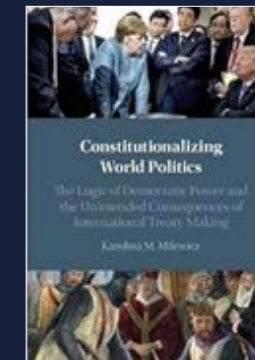
Electoral Shocks: The Volatile Voter in a Turbulent World
Edward Fieldhouse, Jane Green, Geoffrey Evans, Jonathan Mellon, Christopher Prosser, Hermann Schmitt and Cees van der Eijk
Oxford University Press

The latest official book from the British Election Study team takes a closer look at five electoral shocks that affected the 2015 and 2017 UK elections. Covering the rise in immigration after 2004; the global financial crisis; the coalition government of the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats between 2010 and 2015; the Scottish Independence Referendum in 2014; and the European Union Referendum in 2016; this book demonstrates the long-term trend in volatility, and explains how shocks have contributed to the level of electoral volatility, as well as which parties have benefited.



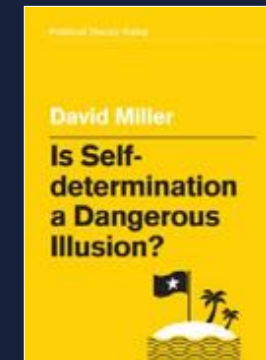
China, the UN, and Human Protection: Beliefs, Power, Image
Rosemary Foot
Oxford University Press

A new book from Rosemary Foot takes a closer look at how China is influencing the global conversation on 'human protection'—the provision of greater protection for the security of individuals and their individual liberties—through its increasing involvement with the United Nations. Over a relatively short period of time, she writes, Beijing moved from dismissing the UN to embracing it. How are we to make sense of the People's Republic of China's (PRC) embrace of the UN, and what does its engagement mean in larger terms? At stake in the questions this book tackles are both how we understand the PRC as a participant in shaping global order, and the future of some of the core norms which constitute that order.



Constitutionalizing World Politics: The Logic of Democratic Power and the Unintended Consequences of International Treaty Making
Karolina M. Milewicz
Cambridge University Press

The elusive ideal of a world constitution is unlikely to be realised any time soon—yet important steps in that direction are happening in world politics. Karolina Milewicz argues that international constitutionalisation has gathered steam as an unintended by-product of international treaty making in the post-war period. Democratic powers are the strongest promoters of rule-based cooperation. However, not realising the inadvertent and long-term effects of the specialised rules they design, states fall into a constitutionalisation trap that is hard to escape as it conforms with their interests and values.



Is Self-determination a Dangerous Illusion?
David Miller
Polity

Claims to self-determination are rife in world politics today. They range from Scottish and Catalan campaigns for independence to calls for the devolution of power to regions and cities. But what does self-determination actually mean? Is it meaningful or desirable in the 21st century, or merely a dangerous illusion? In this book, David Miller mounts a powerful defence of political self-determination. He explains why it is valuable, and examines how groups must be constituted if they are to have the capacity to be self-determining, arguing that geographic proximity alone is not enough: group members must also identify with each other.



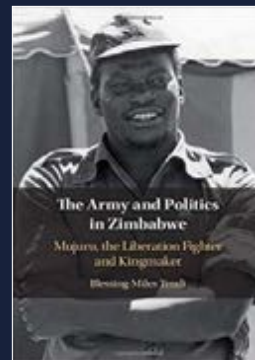
Other People's Struggles: Outsiders in Social Movements
Nicholas Owen
Oxford University Press

Conscience constituents are people who participate in a social movement, but do not stand to benefit if it succeeds. Why do such people participate, when they do not stand to benefit, and how welcome are these 'outsiders'? In Nick Owen's new book, he seeks to explain the changing place of these conscience constituents who can be found in social movements throughout British history. As well as history, the book also draws on social psychology, philosophy and political theory in search of explanations of why people act altruistically and what it means to others when they do so.



Composing Peace: Mission Composition in UN Peacekeeping
Vincenzo Bove, Chiara Ruffa and Andrea Ruggeri
Oxford University Press

How important is diversity in mission composition, in influencing the success of United Nations peacekeeping efforts? *Composing Peace: Mission Composition in UN Peacekeeping* offers an innovative theoretical framework for the study of United Nations peacekeeping operations, putting diversity at the centre. The authors focus on four types of mission composition: diversity among peacekeepers, within the mission leadership, between mission leaders and peacekeepers, and between peacekeepers and locals. It is the first book to explore mission composition and its consequences, unpacking a concept hitherto unexplored and empirically combining statistical analyses and qualitative data such as interviews, observation and secondary sources.



The Army and Politics in Zimbabwe: Mujuru, the Liberation Fighter and Kingmaker
Blessing-Miles Tendi
Cambridge University Press

An illustrious African liberation fighter in the 1970s and, until his suspicious death in 2011, an important figure in Robert Mugabe's ruling ZANU-PF party in Zimbabwe, this first full-length biography of General Solomon Mujuru throws much-needed light onto the opaque elite politics of the 1970s liberation struggle, post-independence army and ZANU-PF. Based on the unparalleled primary interviews with informants in the army, intelligence services, police and ZANU-PF elites, Blessing-Miles Tendi examines Mujuru's moments of triumph and his shortcomings in equal measure. It is an essential record of one of the most controversial figures in the history of African liberation politics.



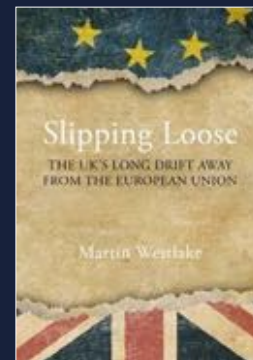
Israel's Jewish Identity Crisis: State and Politics in the Middle East
Yaacov Yadgar
Cambridge University Press

In this innovative, provocative and topical contribution to the field of Middle East studies, Yaacov Yadgar tackles head-on the main assumptions of the foundation of Israel as a Jewish state, arriving at a fresh understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through his focus on internal questions about Israeli identity. This study brings internal Israeli debates—previously inaccessible to non-Hebrew speaking academics—to an international audience. Featuring discussions on Israeli jurisprudence, nation-state law and rabbinic courts, Israel's Jewish Identity Crisis will have far-reaching implications, not only within the state of Israel but on politics, society and culture beyond its borders.



Now We Have Your Attention: The New Politics of the People
Jack Shenker
(2004, BA History and Politics)
Bodley Head and Vintage Books

Most political commentators continue to fixate on the personalities at Westminster. Alumnus Jack Shenker's new book charts an alternative map of a country in crisis, shining a light on local, personal—and usually ignored—fierce political struggles. From Kensington to Manchester, from a dank club night in Brighton to a shabby shop-front in Glasgow, Shenker travels deep into the lived experiences of individuals and communities across the UK to uncover the ways in which the old politics is falling apart, and the spaces in which rival futures are being fought for.



Slipping Loose: The UK's Long Drift Away from the European Union
Martin Westlake
(1976, BA PPE)
Agenda Publishing

The 2016 Brexit referendum result has been portrayed as the consequence of various short-term phenomena: the financial crisis, austerity, migration and UKIP, to name a few. However, DPIP alumnus Martin Westlake (London School of Economics) argues that focus on the short-term, reflex action of the Brexit vote has overshadowed a series of longer-term trends that were inexorably leading, or pushing, the UK away from full membership of the European Union. He shows that the UK was an increasingly semi-detached member. Rather than a sudden, impulsive act of rejection, Brexit should be seen as having taken place over a number of years at various levels.

ALUMNI PUBLICATIONS

Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2020



This year's report from the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (www.digitalnewsreport.org) covers 40 markets across six continents and offers insights on misinformation, trust in news, local journalism, digital subscriptions, and covering politics and climate change.

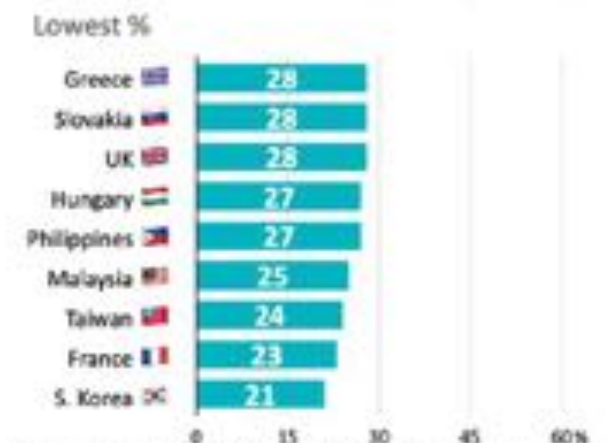
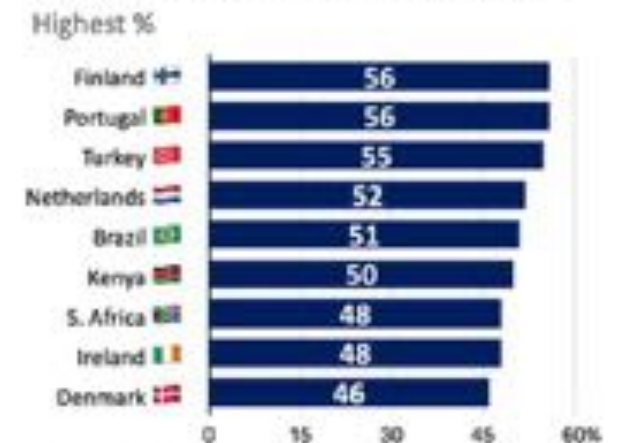
Some key findings from their data include:

- Global concerns about misinformation remain high. Even before the coronavirus crisis hit, more than half of our global sample said they were concerned about what is true or false on the internet when it comes to news. Domestic politicians are the single most frequently named source of misinformation, though in some countries – including the United States – people who self-identify as right-wing are more likely to blame the media – part of a pick-your-side dynamic.
- Facebook is seen as the main channel for spreading false information almost everywhere but WhatsApp is seen as more responsible in parts of the Global South such as Brazil and Malaysia.
- In RSI's January poll across countries, less than four in ten (38%) said they trust most news most of the time – a fall of four percentage points from 2019. Less than half (46%) said they trust the news they use themselves. Political polarisation linked to rising uncertainty seems to have undermined trust in public broadcasters in particular, which are losing support from political partisans from both the right and the left.

“As the structure of the media environment has changed in recent years, so has the relationship between politics and journalism. The growth of platforms like social media and video sites means that politicians can now communicate with the public more directly. This allows politicians to largely sidestep media scrutiny – the price they used to have to pay to get their message across – arguably shifting the balance of power, giving politicians the confidence to bend the rules that used to govern their relationship with the media. (Think, for example, of cases where political parties have used social media to spread re-edited versions of video interviews that make their candidate look better or their opponents look worse.)”

Richard Fletcher
Senior Research Fellow, Reuters Institute
for the Study of Journalism

Proportion that agree they can trust most news most of the time



Q1. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: 'I think you can trust most news most of the time.' Base: Total sample in each market = 2000, Taiwan = 2007.

% that say they are most concerned about false or misleading information from each – all markets



Q2. TAKE_News_Jacobs. Which of the following, if any, are you most concerned about and/or false or misleading information from... Base: Total sample = 2000.

100 years of PPE

Is 2020 the year of PPE? The acronym for one of Oxford's most famous undergraduate courses has become better known over the last six months for another meaning: Personal Protective Equipment. But this year is also the 100th anniversary of the subject being introduced and taught at Oxford.



High Street Oxford, 1920s



Photo courtesy of the Bedi Family

Freda Bedi and her husband BPL Bedi met whilst both studying PPE at Oxford and married in 1933, before both moving to Lahore where they became involved in politics and publishing.

Read their story, along with those of other famous and less well-known alumni, on the PPE centenary website when it is launched in the autumn. Sign up for updates on the project at politics.ox.ac.uk/dpir-community.

Try your hand at the first ever PPE EXAM QUESTIONS

- What is democracy?
- To what extent and with what results was International administration attempted before 1914? How far is the League of Nations engaged with it?
- Illustrate the inherent dangers of democracy, as analysed by Bryce, from his account of the US and of Australia.

Questions about democracy were a key theme within 1923's Finals

Some things don't change—you might still see questions like this today

- Describe the operation of the Referendum in modern democracies.
- Criticise the proposals which have been made for the reform of the House of Lords.

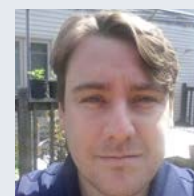
- Account for the long survival of the hand-loom weavers after the invention of the power-loom.

As well as questions on disruptive technology trends

In 1923 'fake news' went by a different name

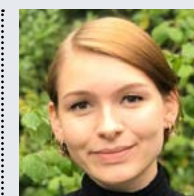
- On what grounds of principle or expediency should governments deal with revolutionary propaganda?

To mark the occasion, the University has commissioned a research project. A DPhil researcher, **Sam Wainwright**, and MPhil student, **Lilly Schreiter**, are currently going through Bodleian and college archives to find past exam papers, anecdotes about the early years of PPE and alumni stories. They are also looking at how the degree has spread to universities around the world, and how the public perception of the subject has changed over time. Their findings will form the basis of a PPE centenary website which will be launched in the autumn. Here, the researchers, Sam and Lilly, give us a preview of some of their favourite discoveries so far.



Benjamin Jowett came to Balliol College as a scholar, aged eighteen, and remained there until his death, being Master from 1870 to 1893. Jowett once wittily remarked that he would like 'to govern the world' through his pupils.

True to his aspiration, he attracted scholars from outside the United Kingdom—emigrants domiciled overseas, indigenous colonial inhabitants and foreign internationals. Moreover, he was convinced that it was 'important to provide a means of giving the best education to the best intelligences in every class of Society'. It was in this spirit that Alexander Dunlop Lindsay was appointed as the Jowett Lecturer in Philosophy at Balliol in 1910 and, later, Master (1924-1949). Lindsay, like Jowett, was concerned with making education available to the best students, no matter their circumstances. 'Greats', the famous tripartite School over which Jowett had presided and from which Lindsay had graduated, was not available to students who had learned neither Greek nor Latin. If Oxford was to open itself to the best available applicants it needed a modern studies programme. Lindsay thus concerned himself in the proposal for a new School: Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE) or 'Modern Greats'. Lindsay's aim was to open first-class education to a wider demographic. He pursued the same ideal in his efforts to admit women to full membership at the University. Vera Brittain recorded, 'when the preamble for the Women's Statute was to be debated ... young women queued outside the crowded Congregation House', to gaze 'with hero worship at their champions, Professor Geldart ... and A. D. Lindsay'. I have taken considerable pleasure in working on the PPE centenary project and, in particular, in researching the programme's origins, aims and objectives. Lindsay built upon the educational culture which Jowett shaped at Balliol to create an institution (PPE) based on the idea that higher education consists not in reinforcing our own biased opinions, but in studying among others unlike ourselves and learning to negotiate diverse ideas within a pluralistic society.



Researching for the PPE centenary project has been a delightful experience. During the course of compiling alumni profiles, I was struck by the diversity of career paths pursued by former PPE students. Not only did the programme produce economists, historians and sociologists, but musicians, children's writers, anthropologists and clergymen. The degree truly shaped extraordinary lives; the first British woman to take ordination into Tibetan Buddhism, Freda Bedi, studied PPE at Oxford (1929-1933). You can see a photo of Freda and her husband BPL Bedi, whom she met studying PPE, on the opposite page. Alix Hester Marie Meynell, who studied PPE at Somerville College (1922-1925), became a long-standing civil servant. In 1925, she succeeded in the examination of the administrative grade of the civil service. It was the first time the examination was opened to women. Remarkably, the year in which PPE was introduced at Oxford—1920—was the same year in which female scholars were formerly accepted. For this reason, I have become particularly invested in researching female PPE students.

One hundred years later, Oxford's PPE degree remains a thought-provoking, multidimensional intellectual foundation, which prepares its students for outstanding work and ground-breaking careers. Nevertheless, it is a letter to the editor of *The Times*, written on 8 April 1954 by Patricia James, that remains one of my fondest research discoveries. She wrote, 'Sir, I think we should distinguish between "making use" of an academic education and "making money" out of it—the two are often confused. In bringing up four children, I make far more direct use of my philosophy, politics, and economics than my husband does of his Latin and Greek in the British Civil Service. Yours faithfully, Patricia James.' In my research, I have highlighted alumni who turned their education into extraordinary professions. However, let us not forget that the degree touched many more lives, in ways that often escape the archive.

Join Us

There will be a virtual panel discussion featuring some well-known PPE alumni at the University's **Meeting Minds Global** event on **12 September 2020**. The topic will be '**the global outlook for democracy**'. Further details, including the names of our speakers, will be released nearer the time, so sign up to receive updates at politics.ox.ac.uk/dpir-community

Life after DPIR

Carys Roberts completed her PPE BA at the University of Oxford in 2011. After leaving Oxford, she held roles in the charity sector before moving to work for think tanks.

Carys has recently been promoted to Executive Director for the progressive policy think tank, Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), and is the Editor of its journal of politics and ideas, *Progressive Review*. We spoke to Carys about her journey to Oxford, and what life has been like after DPIR.



Can you tell us about your journey to Oxford?

I only decided I wanted to study PPE at Oxford quite late in the day, and with the encouragement of a particularly supportive teacher at my FE college. I applied to St John's College and was so nervous in the interview that I couldn't really think or speak. Unsurprisingly I didn't get in. I knew I hadn't done myself justice, so reapplied to University College the following year, without telling anyone—even my parents—that I'd done so. I asked the admissions tutor to send all the post to my Saturday job. But I really liked the tutors at Univ (I'm still in touch with some of them now) and they put me at ease. I was offered a place.

What does your work as executive director of IPPR involve?

I lead the strategic direction of the think tank, working with an incredible and dedicated team to identify opportunities for progressive change and setting out bold and practical policy ideas to get there. A 'think tank' sounds like we sit alone and think—but in fact, it's a people-based job: we work collaboratively, meet with politicians and journalists to persuade them of our ideas, and coordinate with others seeking similar policy change to us. I believe the UK—and indeed many countries around the world—faces a series of crises: economic, environmental, social and democratic. The next ten years will be critical in determining the resilience of our natural systems including climate, and in either locking in an economic model that isn't working for most people, or shifting towards a fairer and more sustainable economy. My hope for IPPR under my leadership is that we can demonstrate there really is an alternative, and work with policymakers at all levels of government and all political colours to begin to put it into practice.

Can you tell us about a piece of work that you are most proud of?

I'm extremely proud of the work we did on IPPR's Commission on Economic Justice. This was a two-year programme bringing together people from across the economy and society, from the Archbishop of Canterbury to

citizen organisers to business leaders. We were extremely ambitious, seeking to shift the agenda of political debate and the common sense of what good economic policy looked like, including a recognition of the role of power in the economy. Many of the policies in the 2019 party manifestos, and many being discussed today that depart from the consensus of the coalition government's economic agenda, were proposed in the Commission's final report. That wasn't us alone—it never is—but I think we played a very important part.

How is IPPR meeting the challenges of the current political and economic landscape?

COVID-19 has created an extraordinary time for anyone working in politics and policy. Not only is there an urgent need for rigorous policy research to protect people in potentially the worst economic crisis in living memory, but the pandemic also places the UK political economy at a crossroads. Many will argue that fiscal restraint, slashed regulation and low taxes are the only way out. We argue that instead, public investment to boost demand, rebuild dangerously weakened public services and put the UK on a path to net-zero are essential if we are to build a better economy and society. As well as the pandemic, the Black Lives Matter protests have rightly caused a lot of reflection and learning in organisations like ours, which are majority white and have the privilege of voice and agency. We've been thinking about how we can better use that privilege to be anti-racist in our work.

What is a favourite memory from your BA at Oxford?

I have a Bodleian card and still go to the libraries when I visit Oxford. I alternate between the modern SSL and ornate Rad Cam. I didn't appreciate them as a student and now wish I could go every week—I find the calm, studious atmosphere helps me to focus, be productive, and rediscover a love of reading and learning.

Read more about Carys' career journey and advice to DPIR graduates online at www.politics.ox.ac.uk/alumni

“In challenging times, communities like ours become ever more important. And, in coronavirus times, digital communities can be an absolute lifeline.”

Louise Fawcett

Whether you are near or far, you are always a part of Oxford's Politics and International Relations community. Sign up to DPIR's new Oxford Alumni Community group and *Inspires* e-newsletter, sharing job opportunities, alumni news and events and the latest research from your Department.

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