

2019

INSPIRES

The Magazine for Oxford Politics and International Relations Alumni



DPIR

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICS &
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

INSPIRES

Letter from the editors

Welcome to the ninth edition of *Inspires*, the magazine for alumni of the University of Oxford's Department of Politics and International Relations. We hope you enjoy reading articles by and about our academics, students and fellow alumni.

This year's *Inspires* arrives to you in a compostable bag, which can be disposed of in a compost bin, with garden waste or with food waste, or indeed as a lining bag if you use a small food waste caddy as we do here in Oxford. We made this change as a small step towards producing a more sustainable publication in light of the climate crisis. We were inspired by the University's recent effort to reduce the amount of waste generated by the distribution of the *Gazette*, *Blueprint*, and *The Oxford Magazine* – which are now also delivered plastic-free in the same compostable bags. Many thanks go to our printing and mailing house OxUniPrint for helping make this happen.

We are again producing an extended digital edition of *Inspires* this year, available at www.politics.ox.ac.uk/inspires in response to your warm welcome of this development last year. Although many of us enjoy the feel of a physical magazine to leaf through, you can opt to receive your *Inspires* magazine digitally. Just fill out the enclosed form indicating your preferences and send it back to us, or visit the alumni section of our website.

As always, we will continue to listen and welcome your input on how to make both the print and digital editions of *Inspires* better. You can find us on the DPIR website's dedicated alumni section at www.politics.ox.ac.uk/alumni or reach us by email at alumni@politics.ox.ac.uk.

Minna Lehtinen and Ricardo Soares de Oliveira



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DIGITAL EDITION

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1. Local sixth formers at the 2018 Oxford Parliament Day, co-hosted with the Bodleian Libraries
2. Dr Katerina Tertychnaya receives the Arthur McDougall Prize
3. The Rt Hon David Miliband delivers the 9th Annual Fulbright Distinguished Lecture
4. DPhil student Ishrat Hossain presents her research to HRH The Duchess of Sussex
5. Students at the 2019 Oxford Spring School in Advanced Research Methods
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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

Once again, I am delighted to greet you from the pages of the latest edition of *Inspires*. As always, the magazine intends to give you a taste of the latest thinking and research in the Department, along with updates from among your fellow alumni. But before you dive into the articles, let me share some highlights from the past year.

We have had many achievements to celebrate. The University of Oxford was again ranked first in the UK in the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) Rankings for Politics and International Studies, marking our fourth consecutive year in the top spot. It's always wonderful to see our Department placed so highly in these rankings. I'm sure you'll also join me in congratulating Ben Ansell, who was elected as Fellow of the British Academy, and Rana Mitter, who has been appointed Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for services to education.

Rana's well-deserved recognition comes on the heels of a significant Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship to investigate China's role in postwar Asia, and we spoke to him about both achievements for these pages. Ezequiel González Ocantos has also been funded by the Leverhulme Trust, with a prestigious Philip Leverhulme Prize to continue his research to understand the impact of international human rights law on domestic judicial politics.

The Department has been particularly successful in securing significant funding for exciting research projects. Richard Caplan and colleagues have been awarded a large grant by the ESRC to investigate what happens to countries after UN peacekeeping missions leave. This follows on from his earlier research and recent book on *Measuring Peace*, which you can read about on page 17. Raphaël Lefèvre has been awarded a grant by the ESRC to consider the interplay of criminal organisations and terrorist activity in Tripoli, Lebanon. Ricardo Soares de Oliveira is contributing to DFID-funded research examining money laundering, and Jan Zielonka and Kalypso Nicolaïdis join colleagues on a large research consortium considering the increasingly differentiated European political order, coordinated by the University of Oslo.

Through the uncertainty of Brexit, we continue to foster our relationships within and beyond Europe. The OxPo programme facilitates exchanges for both staff and students between the University of Oxford and Sciences Po, and we are keen to continue our engagement in the Oxford-Berlin Research Partnership (OXIBER). Annette Idler won an OXIBER partnership seed-fund bid to expand her work on justice, peace and politics in Colombia in collaboration with Sérgio Costa at the Freie Universität Berlin.

We also continue to study Brexit, from a variety of viewpoints. Kalypso Nicolaïdis has published a thought-provoking book on the three meanings of Brexit, through an innovative crowdfunding model. It goes without saying that Brexit is and will continue to have wide-reaching consequences. For example, although the power that the British Government holds over Parliament has been weakening for some time, this process has arguably accelerated through Brexit. You'll read more about this in an article by Radosław Zubek and

Tom Fleming, who is just about to finish his DPhil in Politics. Institutional dynamics are also in flux in the United States, as Des King observes in his piece on the new politics of the Federal Reserve.

We have been fortunate to welcome fantastic new staff to the department. On page 7, you'll meet Jane Green, Professor of Political Science and British Politics, who co-directs the British Election Study (BES) at a very turbulent time in British politics. Some familiar faces have taken up new roles. Rasmus Kleis Nielsen has become the Director of the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, for example. Sudhir Hazareesingh has been spending time in the archives to learn more about Toussaint Louverture, the Haitian revolutionary. We're all looking forward to the resultant book *Black Spartacus*, though it will be an impatient wait until 2020.

In June, we welcomed the Rt Hon David Miliband to deliver the 9th Annual Oxford Fulbright Distinguished Lecture in International Relations, discussing "The New "Arrogance of Power": Global Politics in an Age of Impunity". Perhaps a little more civility could help us in this new age - Teresa Bejan asked "Is Civility a Sham?" in a TEDxSalon talk, and her argument (that it is certainly not a sham) has now been viewed more than 1.4 million times.

Our students also continue to achieve and exceed the highest of standards. Anette Stimmer and Patrick Quinton-Brown have both co-edited special issues in *International Affairs*, on the dynamics of dissent and the state of world politics 100 years after the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, respectively. Ishrat Hossain, who is studying her DPhil on a Commonwealth Scholarship, presented her research on transnational dynamics of violence on the Bangladesh-Myanmar border to HRH The Duchess of Sussex. The Political Studies Association has recognised two of our recent DPhil graduates: Katerina Tertychnaya, who won the Arthur McDougall Prize for best dissertation in the field of elections, electoral systems and representation, and Nina Yancy, who won the Elizabeth Wiskemann Prize for best dissertation in the field of inequality and social justice.

I would be remiss if I didn't take this opportunity to thank all the generous alumni who have donated in kind and in funds to support our students, our research and other activities. Your support is invaluable. The Department continues to be committed to supporting our students and every year we provide additional scholarships and fund matching where we can. Widening access to all University courses also remains a challenge that we want to tackle, and hope that two new University-wide programmes - Opportunity Oxford and Foundation Oxford - will help increase significantly the number of most promising students from groups who are currently under-represented in Oxford.

It was a pleasure to see many of you at the Alumni Weekend last September, and in Toronto this year as part of the International Studies Association Conference. We hope to see you again over the coming academic year, but if you can't make it to Oxford or to an alumni event abroad, do keep in touch in other ways - you can find the latest news and research on our website and social media channels. And we are again publishing a digital edition of *Inspires* at www.politics.ox.ac.uk/inspires with extended articles and other content.

With my very best wishes, I hope you enjoy the 2019 edition of *Inspires*.

Volatile Voters and Volatile Political Times



Jane Green

Professor of Political Science and British Politics
Professorial Fellow, Nuffield College
Co-Director, British Election Study

UK politics is going through a tumultuous period of change. In just a five year period, we've had two referendums (the Scottish independence referendum and Brexit referendum), two general elections (2015 and 2017), and we're about to have the third Prime Minister (as *Inspires* goes to print in early July). More voters have been switching their support between elections than ever before. The 2015 general election saw the greatest amount of switching between parties (since the previous election, 2010) and the highest vote share for 'other' parties on record. Just two years later, following the dramatic EU referendum and vote for Brexit, the 2017 general election delivered the highest two party share since 1970 and the greatest amount of Conservative-Labour party switching (from the election before, 2015). The recent UK European Parliament elections saw the lowest two party share since the UK has held elections to the European Parliament, and the Brexit Party rose from inception to topping that poll in a period of only months.

How should we study this incredible amount of volatility, and how can we explain these changes?

The best data available come in the form of the British Election Study (BES). The BES surveys people immediately after general elections in the form of nationally representative in-person surveys, considered the 'gold standard' in survey research. These data have been central to our work understanding, for example, the 2015 opinion polling miss, and the contested 2017 'youthquake' (a supposed surge in youth turnout for Labour which our analysis subsequently refuted), as well as providing over-time comparisons of post-election BES surveys going back to 1964. We also run a large internet panel study, following the same people's attitudes and vote choices over time. BES data

have been central to identifying and explaining the large amount of switching that is taking place between elections, and explaining the causes of voting behaviour for parties over this tumultuous and fascinating period. It is central to our forthcoming book, co-authored with the BES team (*Electoral Shocks: Understanding the Volatile Voter in a Tumultuous World*), in which we explain why British politics is becoming so much more unstable and volatile, and in which we give a novel account for volatility and the reasons British voters opted for different parties in the two most recent general elections; 2015 and 2017.

I have been fortunate to be a Co-Director of the BES since 2013, and we are really delighted that the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) has recently awarded us the 2019-2023 study as well. As part of a team collaboration between the Universities of Manchester and Oxford, myself and Professor Geoffrey Evans (Department of Sociology) represent the University of Oxford's contribution to the study.

BES data are used internationally and domestically, by a wide range of academics, and are also highly valued and widely used by a range of important non-academic audiences. I use BES data, for example, to inform election-night coverage for ITV News, and was honoured that our most recent election night programme (in 2017) was nominated for a BAFTA. It would be quite something if we could pull that off again.

It is a huge privilege to run the study, especially at a time in British politics when rigorous social science data and analysis has so much to contribute to public understanding, political debate, and academic analysis that will be used for decades to come to make sense of the historic moment in which we find ourselves. Though none of us knows what will happen in the current British political saga, the BES will be ready to analyse its impact.





Exodus, Reckoning, Sacrifice: Three Meanings of Brexit



Kalypto Nicolaidis

Professor of International Relations
Faculty Fellow, St Antony's College

I don't know about you, but in spite of three years of high Brexit intake nearing overdose, I am still a Brexit addict. As seen from Oxford, Europeans on the continent may have moved on from the fear of Exit contagion to the hope of Brexit-as-vaccination, but the Faragian cancer is back at the heart of Brussels! Perhaps Europeans now fear that the poison of Brexit is here to stay, infiltrating the nooks and crannies of the EU's social fabric, even if no other country is likely to elect to leave.

I believe that we must push back against this narrative. For one, British society and public opinion are as diverse and divided as its continental counterparts. If British exceptionalism exists, it is in the collective self-confidence and stubbornness which makes it the only country in the EU to be collectively capable of leaving it. Moreover, the real fear we should all share is not of Brexit contagion but, on the contrary, that of trans-Channel drift.

Perhaps such an opinion is to be expected from the mother of Franco-British kids, who has elected to live and work in and on Great Britain. Be that as it may, and since the fateful vote, I have been animated by one conviction: if Brexit is to happen, something I regret immensely, it needs to be a mutually respectful process, the smartest, kindest, most gentle Brexit possible in our hard-edged epoch of resentment.

Naïve? Utopian? Impossible? Yes, if we go by the spectacle we have witnessed in the last three years. What a grand democratic mess this has been! But let's face it, figuring out how to sever the kind of ties that have bound the UK and the EU for more than four decades was never going to be easy. If Brexit is to happen, let us minimise its collateral damage, on both sides of the Channel, for our democracies need tender loving care. We must find shared languages in which to conduct our conversation across the many divides that both infuriate and enrich us.

This at least is what I tried to suggest in my recent book entitled *Exodus, Reckoning, Sacrifice: Three Meanings of Brexit* – a quest for one such language short of the expectation that we can ever agree, but in the hope that we can at least enter a spirit of mutual recognition as we confront our views across these ubiquitous divides: Leavers vs Remainers, young vs old, cynics vs idealists, Europeans vs non-Europeans.

The book was inspired by conversations with friends and strangers on all sides of the Brexit saga, with my British husband and my European children, as well as by echoes of a Parisian childhood steeped in Greek mythology. I believe that Greek and Biblical stories offer many variants, ambiguities and contradictions which open up spaces for our democratic debates. And so, in the book, I conjure up three archetypes to explore the competing visions that have clashed so dramatically over the meaning of Brexit, whether as the ultimate demonstration of British exceptionalism or as a harbinger of terrible truths or sacrifice on the altar of EU unity. The reader is invited on a journey through the imaginative worlds of the ancients to probe the mix of instinct, feeling and pride that inspires people's yearning to be free, to bond with others or to reinvent politics. And while I castigate the European project for its failure to accommodate the longings of the continent in all their glorious variety, I contend with the ironic possibility that after and perhaps because of Brexit, the EU will live up to the pluralist ideals that define both the best of the United Kingdom and the best of Europe.

Ultimately, the book offers a plea for acknowledging each other's stories, with their many variants, ambiguities and contradictions, in the hope that if we can do so, it may become easier to turn the tables against a common challenge rather than against each other on either side of the Channel.

Exodus, Reckoning, Sacrifice: Three Meanings of Brexit was crowd-funded by Unbound.com, trailblazer of an old tradition of democratic publishing reinvented through the power of the internet.
www.unbound.com/books/exodus-reckoning-sacrifice

The Fed Listens: New Politics of the Federal Reserve



Desmond King
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In the view of many critics of central banks, the adoption of quantitative easing policies from 2010 pushed these institutions and their policies into intensely political roles.

The adoption of unconventional monetary policy meant experimenting outside the standard toolkit. Quantitative easing proved a powerful stimulus, but benefited wealthy investors disproportionately, and the growing levels of income and wealth inequality in advanced democracies were exacerbated. This has created a legitimacy problem for central banks like the US Federal Reserve: while their policies have benefitted all citizens by helping growth and making borrowing cheap, most citizens have not felt these gains. Populism has been facilitated. Some argue that this legitimacy problem calls for a radical restructuring in how central banks communicate, and suggest devolving some economic policy to local communities to empower citizens – so they feel they can influence the macro policies which affect their lives.

In this context, four challenges face the Federal Reserve as its Chairman and Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) Governors direct US monetary policy:

Presidential push

President Trump has relentlessly criticised Chairman Jay Powell and his colleagues for not lowering interest rates (and indeed for pursuing the opposite strategy by raising rates) in 2018. The Fed has subsequently stopped raising rates and may lower them. But such criticism challenges the Fed's cherished political independence. If they appear to yield to Trump's preferences they will be seen to be politically compromised. If they don't, the critical barrage will persist. The exchanges go to the issue of central bank legitimacy, a problem not just in the US but in other advanced economies: the rise of populist sentiments about the "will of the people" is a new experience for central bankers.

Crisis of personnel

Trump's nominees for two vacancies on the Fed's Board of Governors have faltered. The economist Stephen Moore proved a controversial nominee because of his lack of relevant professional experience (he also has an outstanding federal tax bill with the IRS), and his nomination was halted when past sexist comments came to light. The same happened to Trump's second nominee, Herman Cain, who despite experience in business and monetary policy carried negative reputational baggage which led to his withdrawal. President Trump has now nominated economist Judy Shelton, US representative on the board of the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development. Having been vetted previously by Congress her prospects are good (as *Inspires* goes to print). However, she has been a long-standing critic of the Fed's powers and absence of democratic accountability.

Maintaining legitimacy

The world of central banking has changed globally since 2008 as citizens have learned both about the importance of these institutions in responding to financial crises and their regulatory weaknesses in the run up to the crisis. Their statutory independence does not make them immune to popular and political scrutiny, which has grown. Sir Paul Tucker, former Deputy Governor of the Bank of England, published a critique of central banks arguing they lacked sufficient transparency in decision-making to legitimise their choices with voters and citizens. They enjoy "unelected power". These kinds of perceptions threaten not just the power but also the legitimacy of central banks.

Monetary policy tools

Lowering the interest rate stimulates the economy, but if interest (and inflation) rates are already and consistently at low rates, the Fed's monetary policy tools are limited when a crisis hits. The FOMC has initiated a review of strategy, tools and communication practices. The review includes a series of town hall style "Fed Listens" events around the country, and a conference canvassing academic and non-academic views about monetary policy tools and responsiveness to citizen views. This populist public events strategy seems intended to counter enduring criticisms that the Fed's response to the 2008 Great Recession favoured banks over consumers, but it's highly unusual. All central banks value secrecy, remoteness, and the delivery of future policy intentions through gnomish hints rather than garrulous engagement.

Populism deals in simplicity. Federal Reserve policymaking is inherently complex, and the Fed is at a crossroads. Chairman Jay Powell and his two predecessors Janet Yellen and Ben Bernanke have expanded the communications practices of the Fed in two senses. Firstly, the FOMC's Summary of Economic Projections, issued quarterly, includes "forward guidance" on where the FOMC sees interest rates going in the short to medium term, in addition to three-year rate projections. Secondly, Fed officials have given more public lectures than in the pre-Bernanke, Greenspan era, and press conferences follow FOMC meetings, offering explanations for the policy decisions taken.

These measures are now being broadened as the Fed wants to buttress its political independence and maintain its legitimacy embedded within a democratic and electoral politics based system. Hence the use of "Fed Listens" events and other efforts to acquire information about perceptions of the central bank in this time of change.

Government's Grip on Parliament



Radoslaw Zubek

Associate Professor of European Politics,
Tutorial Fellow, Hertford College

Thomas Fleming

DPHil Candidate in Politics

In Britain, the government dominates parliament. This claim is a staple of “textbook” descriptions of British politics, so the government’s struggle to secure parliament’s support for its Brexit deal has been widely seen as evidence that Brexit has challenged – or even overturned – this conventional wisdom. But perhaps recent events can be better understood as an acceleration of pre-existing trends. The Brexit process may have challenged the government’s ability to control parliament, but it was pushing at an open door.

The government’s recent difficulties largely flow from not being able to rely on three institutional advantages, all of which had been eroded by recent institutional reforms that predate Brexit:

Confidence vote procedure

Governments’ ability to elicit loyalty from their backbench MPs was substantially reduced by the Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011 (FTPA). Historically, governments had been able to declare votes to be a “matter of confidence” – defeat on such votes would prompt the dissolution of parliament and a general election. Potential rebels were forced to choose between supporting a policy they dislike or evicting their own government from office. However, the FTPA, which limited prime ministers’ power to call elections, ended the possibility of this “parliamentary nuclear option” for securing MPs’ support and played a crucial role in allowing the parliamentary Brexit deadlock.

In the first “meaningful vote”, 118 Conservative and 10 DUP MPs voted against the government, but then backed the government in the following day’s no confidence vote. Without the FTPA, Theresa May would have been able to force MPs to confront these choices simultaneously, offering them a choice – her Brexit deal, or a general election.

John Major used exactly this approach to get Eurosceptic Tories’ support for the Maastricht Treaty in 1993.

Control of the agenda

Since the early twentieth century the Commons’ formal rules have granted the government substantial power to decide what parliament debates. However, procedural reforms in 2010 weakened this power by creating time in the parliamentary agenda when backbench MPs could decide what was debated. The government still determines the timing of these debates, but cannot determine their content. And in fact, on multiple occasions in early 2019, MPs voted to suspend normal procedure, and instead let backbench MPs set the parliamentary agenda, for example to hold a series of “indicative votes” on alternative Brexit proposals.

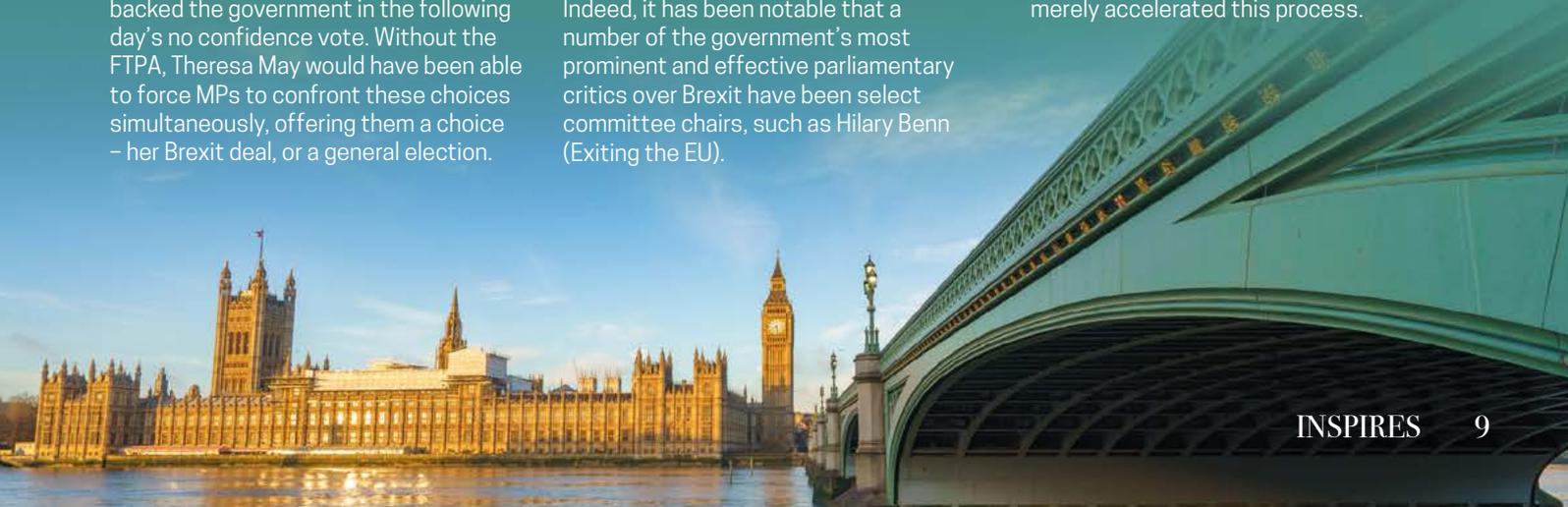
Weak committees

The weakness of the UK parliament has often been traced to the weakness of its committee system. Powerful committees are conventionally seen as a source of influence for opposition parties, and the UK’s committees usually fare poorly in international rankings. However, parliament’s committee system has been substantially strengthened in recent years. Changes under New Labour introduced salaries for select committee chairs, encouraging MPs to scrutinise rather than join the government, and since 2010 committee chairs and members have been elected by their fellow MPs, rather than being appointed by party whips. This is widely seen as heightening the authority of committee chairs, and making committee members more willing to challenge the government. Indeed, it has been notable that a number of the government’s most prominent and effective parliamentary critics over Brexit have been select committee chairs, such as Hilary Benn (Exiting the EU).

Governments’ traditional control of parliament has not been due solely to institutional advantages. It has also flowed from the UK’s party system, particularly the predominance of large, cohesive parties. British governments have typically been able to win a majority and rely on their MPs’ disciplined support. Both of these advantages noticeably declined in the 1970s, when support for the main two parties fell. Subsequent decades saw some recovery in parties’ ability to win sizeable, and generally loyal, majorities, but this came under renewed challenge in the late 90s with New Labour. Since then, MPs have become increasingly rebellious – and no party has won a large majority since the 2005 election.

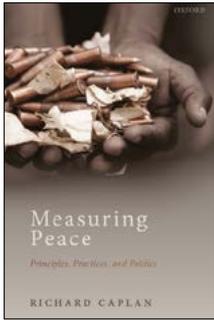
These trends – the institutional strengthening of parliament and the waning size and coherence of the main parties – are not separate. Instead, they have arguably co-evolved. Parliamentary rules shape party behaviour, but parties also shape those rules, and recent changes in the party system have encouraged institutional reforms that may in turn have reinforced those changes.

Political developments in the last two decades have simultaneously undermined governments’ institutional and partisan tools for controlling parliament. This was obviously a large part of Theresa May’s difficulties – she led a minority government, and was dogged by frequent Conservative rebellions. Yet while these difficulties worsened with Brexit, they did not begin there. Brexit has clearly placed the British political system under considerable strain, but the government’s grip on parliament has been progressively weakening for several decades; Brexit has merely accelerated this process.



RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Here we feature recent publications by current members of the Department and by our alumni. More books by DPIR staff and alumni can be found on our website.



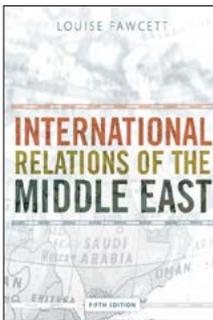
Measuring Peace: Principles, Practices, and Politics

Richard Caplan

(OUP)

Richard Caplan argues that efforts to build peace are hampered by the lack of effective means to assess progress towards peace. Rarely, if ever, do peacebuilding organisations and governments seek to ascertain the quality of the peace that they are helping to build and the contribution that their engagement is making (or not) to the consolidation of peace. Better assessment can inform peacebuilding actors in the reconfiguration and reprioritisation of their operations in cases where conditions on the ground have changed. To build a stable peace, Caplan argues, it is important to take the measure of peace.

Use code ASFLYQ6 for 30% discount when purchasing directly from OUP.



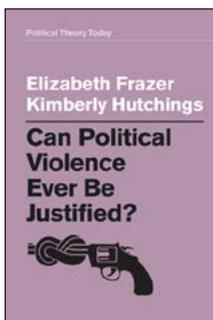
International Relations of the Middle East, 5th edition

Louise Fawcett (ed.)

(OUP)

By combining a history of the region with analysis of key themes, issues and actors, Louise Fawcett brings together carefully edited contributions from an international team of experts to provide the definitive guide to the international relations of the Middle East. The fifth edition provides a wide range of perspectives, more case studies, and topical insights, including coverage of the Syrian conflict and the impact of the Trump administration. All chapters have been updated to reflect the fast-paced changes in the region, and a new chapter on China and Russia examines the role of these increasingly important actors in the Middle East.

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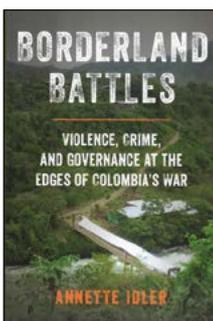


Can Political Violence Ever Be Justified?

Elizabeth Frazer and Kimberly Hutchings

(Polity Press)

Violence – from state coercion to wars and revolutions – remains an enduring global reality. Although it is often believed that the point of constitutional politics is to make violence unnecessary, others argue that it is an unavoidable element of politics. Elizabeth Frazer and Kimberly Hutchings address these issues using vivid contemporary and historic examples. They carefully explore the strategies that have been deployed to condone violence, either as means to certain ends or as an inherent facet of politics. Examining the complex questions raised by different types of violence, they conclude that, ultimately, all attempts to justify political violence fail.



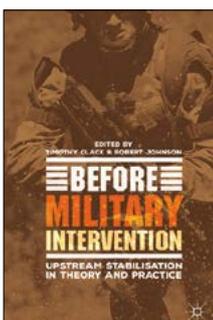
Borderland Battles: Violence, Crime, and Governance at the Edges of Colombia's War

Annette Idler

(OUP)

In *Borderland Battles*, Annette Idler examines the micro-dynamics among violent non-state groups and finds striking patterns: borderland spaces consistently intensify the security impacts of how these groups compete for territorial control, cooperate in illicit cross-border activities, and replace the state in exerting governance functions. Drawing on extensive fieldwork with more than 600 interviews in and on the shared borderlands of Colombia, Ecuador, and Venezuela, where conflict is ripe and crime thriving, Idler reveals how dynamic interactions among violent non-state groups produce a complex security landscape with ramifications for order and governance, both locally and beyond.

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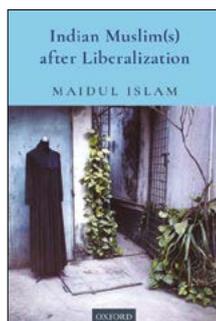
Before Military Intervention: Upstream Stabilisation in Theory and Practice

Timothy Clack and Robert Johnson (eds.)

(Palgrave Macmillan)

This book explores the natures of recent stabilisation efforts and global upstream threats. As prevention is always cheaper than the crisis of state collapse or civil war, the future character of conflict will increasingly involve upstream stabilisation operations. However, the unpredictability and variability of state instability requires governments and militaries to adopt a diversity of approach, conceptualisation and vocabulary. Offering perspectives from theory and practice, this collection provides crucial insight into military roles and capabilities, opportunities, risks and limitations, doctrine, strategy and tactics, and measures of effect relevant to operations in upstream environments.

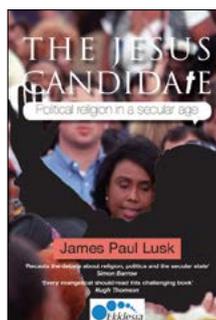
We welcome news of alumni publications and publish a selection of them each year in *Inspires*, on our website, and in our alumni newsletters. Please send information to alumni@politics.ox.ac.uk



Indian Muslim(s) after Liberalization
Maidul Islam
(OUP)

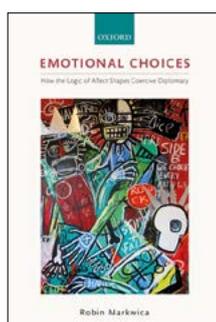
Maidul Islam suggests three principal reasons for a neglect of the socio-economic aspects of Indian Muslims during the period of neoliberal economic reforms. First, the problems of Muslims are inadequately understood by the governmental agencies and political leadership. Secondly, the lack of a progressive leadership among Indian Muslims has traditionally confined the problems of the community to issues of identity and security instead of demands for equity. Thirdly, popular Hindi cinema has misrepresented the identity of Indian Muslims, without showing the actual problems of Muslim minorities. As a result, misconception and myths permeate while the structural problems of Indian Muslims hardly receive attention for remedy.

Use code ASFLYQ6 for 30% discount when purchasing directly from OUP.



The Jesus Candidate: Political Religion in a Secular Age
James Paul Lusk
(Ekklesia)

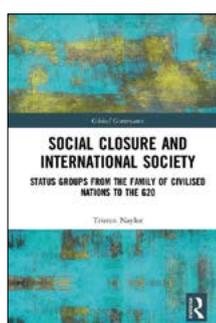
'Every election needs a Jesus Candidate'. With these words Senator Rick Santorum sealed his anointment as the Religious Right's challenger in the 2012 primaries – and summarised the mission of the movement that delivered the election of President Trump. Founded in a deal between Republican strategists and white southern evangelical leaders in the 1970s, it persuades Christians to favour a 'Judeo-Christian' state based on biblical law. Spread to the UK, this ideology uses court cases to claim that the liberal state is anti-Christian. Looking at the work of the pioneering Puritan democrat Roger Williams, James Paul Lusk calls on Christians to rediscover their roots in political liberalism. **Email sales@thejcan.org quoting INSPIRES to order the book for the special price of £6.00 including UK delivery. Payment will be by bank transfer only.**



Emotional Choices: How the Logic of Affect Shapes Coercive Diplomacy
Robin Markwica
(OUP)

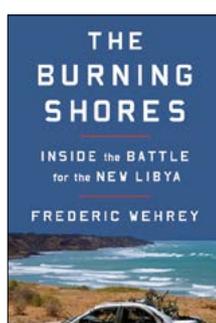
Why do states often refuse to yield to military threats from a more powerful actor, such as the US? Why do they frequently prefer war to compliance? Drawing on research in psychology and sociology, Robin Markwica develops "emotional choice theory" to explain this puzzling behaviour. The theory is applied to Soviet decision-making during the Cuban missile crisis in 1962 and Iraqi behaviour in the Gulf conflict in 1990-91, offering a novel explanation for why US coercive diplomacy succeeded in one case but not in the other. Emotional Choices was awarded APSA's 2019 International Security book award.

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Social Closure and International Society: Status Groups from the Family of Civilised Nations to the G20
Tristen Naylor
(Routledge)

In a broad historical survey from the 'Family of Civilised Nations', through the Great Powers' Club, to the G7 and G20 today, Tristen Naylor investigates the politics of membership in the exclusive clubs that manage international society and ensure its survival. He provides us with a new way to think about how status competition has changed over time and explains what this means for international politics today. With its sociologically grounded theory, this book advances English School scholarship and transforms the study of contemporary summitry, providing a ground-breaking approach rooted in archival research, elite interviews, and ethnographic participant observation. **Use code FLR40 for 20% discount when purchasing from Routledge.**



The Burning Shores: Inside the Battle for the New Libya
Frederic Wehrey
(Farrar, Straus and Giroux)

The death of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi freed Libya from forty-two years of despotic rule, raising hopes for a new era. But in the aftermath, the country descended into bitter rivalries and civil war, paving the way for the Islamic State and a catastrophic migrant crisis. Combining frontline reporting, analysis, and history, Frederic Wehrey tells the story of what went wrong. He paints vivid portraits of lives upended by a country in turmoil and chronicles the American and international missteps after the dictator's death that hastened the country's unravelling.

Mary, Quite Contrary



Teresa Bejan

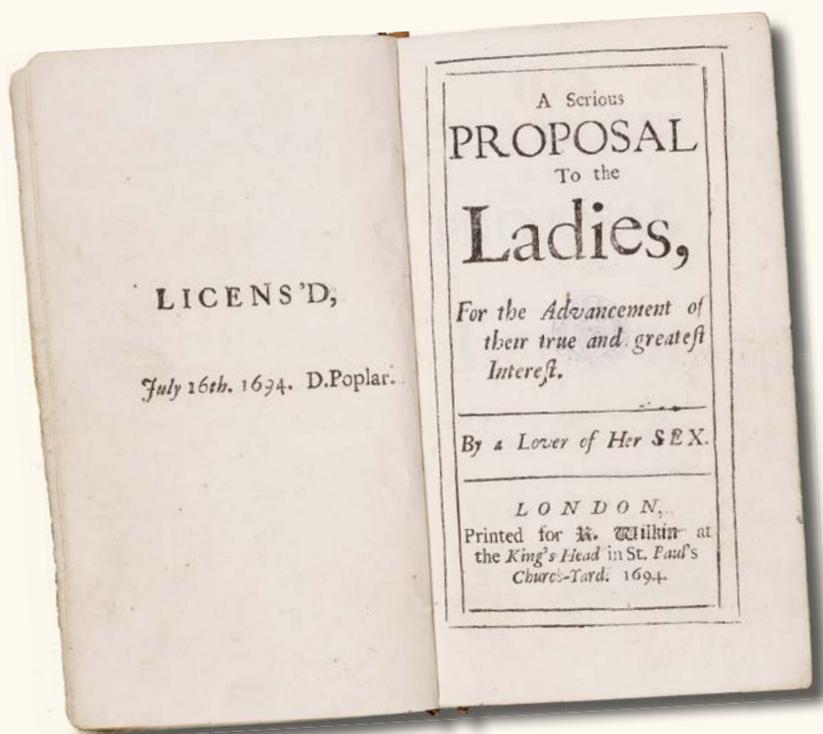
Associate Professor of
Political Theory
Fellow, Oriol College

It is an open secret among teachers of the history of Western political philosophy that from the 16th to the 20th century, every other author is named 'John.' For those of us committed to diversifying the canon from within, it is thus a great pleasure to introduce students to an early modern Mary, the author in 1706 of the first feminist challenge to John Locke's social contract theory: "If all Men are born free, how is that all Women are born slaves?" Not Mary Wollstonecraft, but Mary Astell.

Astell was born in Newcastle in 1666, the eldest daughter of a gentry family. She was only 12 when her father died, after which the family descended into genteel poverty. Mary's uncle Ralph, a local curate, educated his niece in the philosophy and theology he read at Cambridge. With this uncommon education and an iron will, Astell made her way to London with the so-called 'Glorious' Revolution of 1688: 22, poor, alone, and female.

Mary's first foray into print was accidental, when the Oxford Platonist John Norris asked permission to publish their philosophical correspondence. Emboldened, she hastened her anonymous *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies... by a Lover of her Sex* (1694) into print. Inspired by French feminists, Astell argued for the establishment of a female Academy, where women might exchange the depredations of the marriage market for the quiet and companionable cultivation of their minds in philosophic and religious study. Her *Proposal* was a blockbuster, fuelling controversy, multiple editions, and a much longer sequel. It even gained political traction before being scuppered by Anglican clergy concerned about its unsavoury Catholic associations (Astell's decision to describe her Academy as a 'monastery' did not help).

Thus began Mary's second act as a feminist polemicist, turning her surgical contempt on masculine arrogance in its every guise. *Some Reflections on Marriage* (1700), occasioned by the Duchess Mazarin's unhappy marriage and divorce, encouraged her sisters to think better of the whole business. Once again, controversy and multiple editions ensued, followed by a series of political pamphlets, and finally



Astell's magnum theological-philosophical opus, *The Christian Religion, as Profess'd by a Daughter of the Church of England* (1705). Astell capped her pen in 1709, enjoying her religion and her female friendships in retirement until her death in 1731.

Why has she been forgotten? Not only was Mary Astell an extraordinarily original and productive thinker, she was also a celebrity in her own day, plagiarised and satirised by the likes of Daniel Defoe and Jonathan Swift. Her political and philosophical writings engaged directly and critically with the leading thinkers (and Johns!) of the age. So why has she been excluded from teaching of the 'Tradition' of Western political thought by philosophers and historians alike?

Sexism tells much of the story. Eileen O'Neill has diagnosed the phenomenon of women's 'disappearing ink,' effaced by 19th century historians of philosophy; Astell is no exception. But even for feminist scholars, Astell presents problems, from her style (allusive, italic) to her philosophical preoccupations (Christian Platonist). Then, of course, there is her politics, a heady mixture of Jacobite Toryism, High-Church Anglicanism, and reactionary glee. Accordingly, Mary's politics have been a source of some embarrassment. Carole Pateman's *The Sexual Contract* (1989) neglected to mention that Astell's 1706 rejoinder to Locke on the part of female 'slaves' rested on a conviction that God instituted marriage as a subjugal, as well as conjugal relation – which explains, perhaps, why Mary herself opted to maintain her natural freedom from masculine tyranny.

Similarly, the Cambridge edition of Astell's *Political Writings* (1996) excluded *Moderation Truly Stat'd*, her most original work of political theory, entirely – and thus her reflections on the 'State of Nature' theorising in vogue among contemporaries, including the political economist Charles Davenant:

I have hitherto thought, that... a State of Nature was a meer figment of Hobbs's Brain... till you were pleas'd to inform me of that Equality wherein the Race of Men were plac'd in the free State of Nature. How I lament my Stars that it was not my good Fortune to Live in those Happy Days when Men sprung up like so many Mushrooms... without Father or Mother or any sort of dependency!

My own work on Astell argues that her political thought is worthy of recovery, both as the product of a singularly brilliant mind and as a fascinating vision of "equality before egalitarianism" that sheds light on the complex relationship between natural equality and social hierarchy to this day.

Scholarly efforts to ignore or excuse Astell's politics have thus done her—and our students—a grave disservice. They give the impression that a woman thinker is worth taking seriously only if and when her conclusions 'fit' with what a modern audience expects. Of course, even Astell was aware of how perplexing her arguments could be: "However, since all the World is Mad, why should not I be so?" Modern readers may agree. But, please, allow Mary to be mad on her own terms.

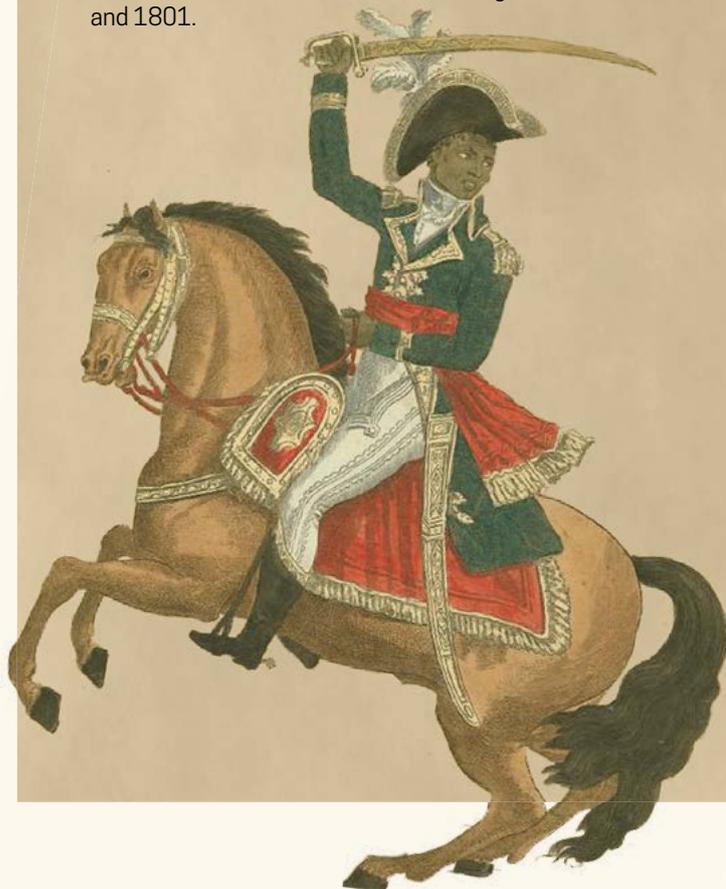
Black Spartacus



Sudhir Hazareesingh
CUF Lecturer in Politics
Fellow in Politics, Balliol College

Toussaint Louverture was the spearhead of the Haitian revolution, which began in 1791 with a massive slave revolt in the French colony of Saint-Domingue, and culminated in the proclamation of the world's first independent black state in 1804. Although Toussaint did not live to witness this climax, he decisively shaped the course of the revolution: he became the leader of the colony's 500,000 blacks, the commander of its republican army, and eventually its governor. In 1801 he promulgated a Constitution in which slavery was abolished "forever". Treacherously captured by Napoleon's invading army a year later, and imprisoned in a French fort, he ended his days as the revolution's most eminent martyr.

I have been writing a biography of Louverture (*Black Spartacus*, forthcoming next year), and it has been enormous fun, as it got me back to the archives. There are copious holdings on late 18th century Saint-Domingue in French, Spanish, American, and British archives. The bulk of these Toussaint papers were in France, and so I ended up spending many wonderful months in the Archives Nationales, the Bibliothèque Nationale, the Archives Diplomatiques, the military archives at Vincennes, the Archives d'Outre Mer in Aix-en-Provence, as well as regional depots such as Nantes and Bordeaux. The most unexpected treasure haul came from The National Archives in Kew, which coughed up some uniquely informative reports about the final years of Toussaint's leadership, thanks to the observations of British consular officials based in Saint-Domingue between 1799 and 1801.



This close examination of Toussaint's life also allowed me to explore larger political themes. The first was his unique style of revolutionary leadership. Toussaint confronted the mighty forces of his age – slavery, settler colonialism, imperial domination, racial hierarchy, and European cultural supremacy – and bent them to his implacable will. As the world's first black superhero, he defied convention: as a slave who achieved emancipation, as a black man who ascended to supreme power, and as a great captain whose triumphs against French, Spanish and British troops subverted existing martial norms. At the same time, Louverture anticipated the modern anticolonial tradition's struggle for justice and equality: he was idolised by slaves all over the Atlantic, and his legend was celebrated by Cuban rebels, Irish republicans, and Maori tribes, and Paul Robeson later called Ho Chi Minh the "Toussaint Louverture of Vietnam".

Toussaint's conception of race was also a landmark in the emergence of modern senses of black identity. Blackness for him was about honour, duty, and pride, and was integral to his sense of self, all the more so that he lived in a world which was rife with prejudice against men and women of African descent. The anti-slavery campaigner Frederick Douglass, the most eminent 19th century African-American, was a Toussaint devotee who helped disseminate his legend across the United States, using his example to celebrate black civilisation while affirming the fundamental equality between blacks and other racial groups. Likewise, the French poet Aimé Césaire's conception of *négritude*, one of the seminal developments in 20th century conceptions of black cultural identity, owed a great deal to his historical explorations of Toussaint Louverture's struggle for emancipation.

Toussaint's original philosophy of republicanism is illuminating, too, for historians of political thought. He was a disciple of the radical Enlightenment, who was familiar with the works of Rousseau, Montesquieu, and Raynal, but also an excitingly polyphonic thinker, who drew upon a wide range of African and Caribbean values. This shines through in the book's organising concept, the ideal of fraternity. Toussaint and his black revolutionaries invented an original version of brotherhood: it wove together, in a magnificent tapestry, European rationalism, Saint-Domingue's syncretic Catholicism, elements of runaway *marron* slave culture, as well as African royalism and Caribbean spirituality (notably the emerging *vodou* religion).

Toussaint Louverture also speaks to the contemporary postcolonial predicament. In 1998, a plaque in his honour was inaugurated in the Panthéon, the Parisian monument to French national heroes, and statues of Toussaint have subsequently appeared in several French cities, as well as in Canada, the United States, Cuba, and Benin – and of course in his native Haiti. In this sense, Louverture's memory remains an active site of intellectual engagement, symbolising the more robust ways in which the ongoing impacts of slavery, colonialism and imperialism are being discussed across the Atlantic world.

AN INTERVIEW WITH:

Rana Mitter

Rana Mitter is the Professor of the History and Politics of Modern China and Director of the University of Oxford China Centre. On the occasion of being awarded an OBE for his services to education, Rana spoke to DPIR DPhil Student and OxPol Blog Editor Jonas von Hoffmann about his research, public engagement and the importance of history for understanding contemporary China.

First of all, congratulations. You were recently recognised in the Queen's Birthday Honours for your services to education.

It was a great honour to receive the OBE, because in a sense it is also a recognition that the study of China is becoming more noticeable and recognisable as a field as a whole. So, I do hope that there's a sort of wider value than just the honour given to one individual.

We're here in the building of the Oxford China Centre. What can you tell us about the Centre not just as physical but also intellectual manifestation of the study of China in Oxford?

The Oxford China Centre is symbolic of the fact that the University of Oxford has now developed a very productive relationship with China and that, more broadly, UK higher education is engaging with China in a serious, equal-minded and very productive fashion. This is the single biggest centre for the study of China anywhere in Europe: we have over fifty academic staff, dozens of visiting scholars and hundreds of students. The subjects studied also range widely: colleagues upstairs are working on ancient Chinese philosophy or literature, but we also have a significant number of social scientists. This interdisciplinarity shows why the Centre benefits so much from being its own institution but also from engaging with many departments.

As a historian, how has the study of China changed during your career?

The study of China has changed immeasurably. And, the reason for this change can be summed up in one word: access. Previously it was much harder



for historians to go to archives to find documents in China itself. It's still not easy. There are a lot of barriers - political and otherwise, but it is feasible and indeed mandatory for social scientists and humanists to do fieldwork. It's vital to have that ability to go to China and have conversations, which, yes, can be constrained and often do run up against political sensitivities, but nonetheless give you some level of inside understanding of what's going on.

In your research you focus on China's modern history. What is the importance of recovering and writing that history?

Modern China - compared perhaps with any other major society - is very aware of its own history when it makes contemporary decisions. Whether it's the current turmoil in Hong Kong or the Sino-American trade war, understanding the historical background and what shapes China's attitudes and sensitivities is really important. For instance, awareness of the way in which China was forced during the Opium Wars of the 1830-1840s to open up its markets to so-called free trade regardless of whether it wanted to or not is important in understanding the mindsets even today about not responding to demands from the outside world about trade, as opposed to negotiations.

You wrote *Modern China: A Very Short Introduction with Oxford University Press*, the first edition in 2008 followed by the second in 2016. If you were to write a third edition now, how would it change?

If I were to look at the book again, the story that was less obvious in the previous two is about technology. China's contemporary society is changing very fast and its political system interacts with technology in distinctive way when it comes to using big data, artificial intelligence, virtual

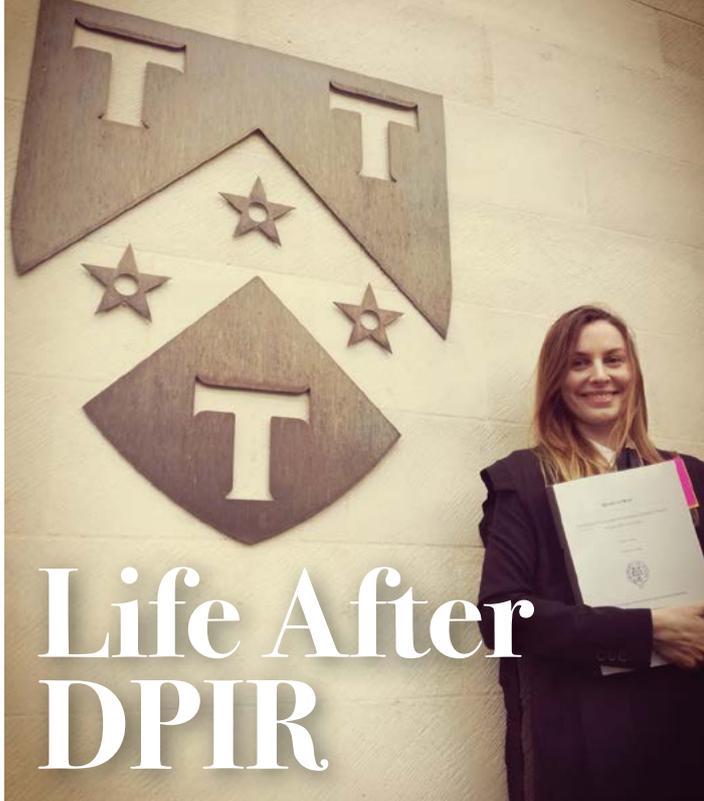
reality and the ability to create highly efficient and effective digital surveillance systems. I think by the time we come to the mid-2020s, the impact of technology on Chinese society and politics will be one of the big stories not just for China but actually as a comparator with other societies around the world.

You do a lot of public engagement, whether in your newspaper column, radio show, or documentaries. Why?

I think public engagement is essential. The changing status and rise of China in the world is one of those stories that everyone knows about but is seriously underexamined in its wider context. People know patchy facts, but they don't really see the picture as a whole. Some of the fault could be placed with the experts who have spent years studying the subject but maybe aren't doing enough to get it out into the public sphere. So, I've always considered it to be a really important part of who I want to be as a scholar to do very in-depth and sometimes abstruse academic research, but also try and make it relevant to a wider audience - as I did in my BBC Radio 4 series *Chinese Characters*.

What do you think are the biggest misconceptions that are out there about China?

We have been working very hard as a body of scholars to overcome the failure at large to understand what kind of society and state China is and what it isn't. China is a one-party state. It is a classic example of an authoritarian state. It doesn't operate liberal democratic politics. But that does not mean that China is a monolithic society or a univocal society that simply has one propaganda-driven voice. Instead you'll see that a country of 1.3 billion people clearly has a tremendous number of angles through which you can understand it: China is a plural noun.



Life After DPIR

Dr Mara Tchalakov is a very recent graduate, having completed her DPhil in International Relations just last year. She came to Oxford to read the MPhil in IR, having completed her BA at Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. Prior to pursuing her graduate studies at DPIR, she worked at the US Departments of State and Defense, and in 2010-2011 she was deployed to Afghanistan with NATO's International Security Assistance Force. She is a former President of the Oxford University Strategic Studies Group, an officer in the United States Navy Reserve, and a term member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

We spoke to Mara about her research and what life has been like immediately after DPIR.

Your dissertation won last year's Dasturzada Dr Jal Pavry Memorial Prize, which recognises theses on a subject in the area of international peace and understanding. What was your doctoral work on?

My dissertation investigated the ways in which individuals contribute to war and peace decisions, particularly during moments of intense crisis. Unlike other international relations schools of thought that treat the state and its leadership as a "black box", I remain convinced that individuals can and do matter. Specifically, I posited that the specific mindsets of individual leaders act as an intervening variable that can help to explain when and why states choose to go to war instead of prolonging negotiations, and vice versa. I applied this theory to the historical puzzle of why the First World War broke out when it did in July 1914, during a relatively calm period of European politics, and not in response to the Balkan crises of 1912-1913, when the continent appeared to be on the brink of international disaster. Although the assassination of Franz Ferdinand is often fingered for blame, I discovered that many of the decision-makers in July 1914 had actively participated in these

earlier Balkan crises and their experiences were crucial to explaining a collective shift in mindset that occurred in response to the archduke's assassination.

What did you do after graduating?

I joined the US Foreign Service, the diplomatic corps of the Department of State. I am a political officer by training (there are five specialties, or "cones", in the Foreign Service) and I am assigned to the US Embassy in Nouakchott, Mauritania. I knew very little about the country before departing for post, although I think that will change for future generations of diplomats as the geostrategic importance of the Sahel becomes more pronounced.

What is a day in your life like in Mauritania?

Mauritania is about as far removed from the verdant cloisters of Oxford as one could possibly imagine. There are few paved roads where I live and goats often roam free in my neighbourhood – and seem to be in no particular hurry, complicating my commute. On a given day, I might be meeting with human rights activists or politicians in the morning and helping nongovernmental organisations like The Carter Center partner with local civil society groups on their election monitoring efforts in the afternoon. Mauritania just experienced its first democratic transition from one elected leader to another in its nearly sixty-year history. In between navigating the odd camel and the intense Nouakchott city traffic, I try to remember what a privilege it is to have this kind of a ringside seat to history.

What is the most significant thing you learned at Oxford that still influences you?

Read voraciously and fearlessly. Even if it is simply a peculiarity of British English, I love that one *reads* for a degree at Oxford. It evokes this marvellous image of plunging into a tottering pile of the greats with its corollaries of intellectual freedom and personal responsibility. I sorely miss afternoons spent reading in the Bodleian or at Blackwell's café. There is a wonderfully stubborn quality about Oxford's insistence on the solitary, immersive nature of reading in our increasingly fast-paced and interconnected world.

By far the second most significant thing I learned was how to serve and when to pair port versus sherry at a dinner (and how never to confound the two).

What's next for you?

I'm thrilled to be heading to Berlin for my next diplomatic posting. I will arrive just before Germany's next federal elections as the country – and the European continent – transitions to a post-Angela Merkel era. In the meantime, I get to spend a year learning German and indulging my love of Cold War-era spy novels. Next on my list is Ian McEwan's *The Innocent*.

Looking back on your first year as an alumna, what advice would you give to this year's graduates?

First, don't feel obliged to pursue an academic career to make significant use of your academic degree from Oxford. Pursue what genuinely interests you and it will prove the best way to give back to the alma mater that has given you so much.

Second, cherish the friendships you made while at Oxford. These are the people who will rejoice and commiserate in your life triumphs and tribulations, and, chances are, they will span many continents and time zones upon graduation, so value the ready-made global network that Oxford provides!

Exploring the “Crime-Terror Nexus” From Below



Raphaël Lefèvre
Senior Research Fellow

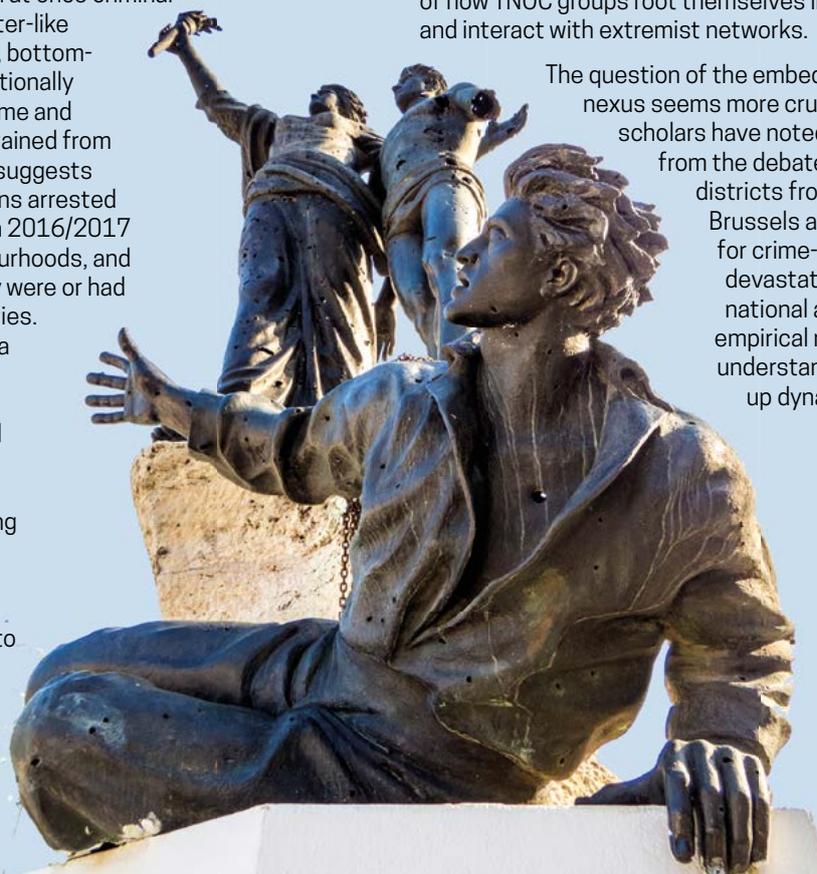
For many Lebanese, the name of Shadi Mawlawi is associated with organised crime and terrorism, given his dual involvement in weapons smuggling and his senior role within the al-Qaeda-affiliated Salafi-jihadist terrorist organisation, the Nusra Front. And yet, in the deprived neighbourhood of Qobbe, in Lebanon’s second city of Tripoli, where he resided before escaping in 2015, many residents still view him as a “hero” who “protected the district”. In fact, far from being a remote warlord or jihadi ideologue, Mawlawi was deeply embedded in the social structure and the value system of the neighbourhood. There, he not only provided security and social services to impoverished locals but, by acting as neighbourhood leader, he also embodied the identity, grievances and social ties of solidarity which traditionally characterise the most deprived districts. Although his criminal and terrorist activities quickly turned him into Lebanon’s most wanted man, these activities were embraced in his neighbourhood, where they fit traditions of violent masculinity, urban unrest and rejection of authority, and resonated with a longer history of interaction between criminal and revolutionary groups that had gained popularity in the 1970s. And, when the Lebanese army finally arrested Shadi Mawlawi, the outburst of popular anger which seized Qobbe was such that he had to be released right away.

The story of Mawlawi epitomises the urgent need to understand the progressive merger of criminal and terrorist milieus, practices and narratives as well as their growing embeddedness within the most marginalised urban communities. This phenomenon is far from unique to the neighbourhood of Qobbe. Two other of Tripoli’s most impoverished districts, Bab al-Tebbaneh and Mankoubin, have also become home to locally-rooted movements of contention. Violence in these areas is often at once criminal and political, resulting in gangster-like terrorist behaviours and in new, bottom-up synergies between the traditionally distinct worlds of organised crime and terrorism. Preliminary data I obtained from the Lebanese Interior Ministry suggests that two-thirds of 152 Tripolitans arrested for terrorism-related charges in 2016/2017 were from these three neighbourhoods, and that the overwhelming majority were or had been involved in criminal activities. Therefore, there appears to be a “neighbourhood effect” in how crime-terror interaction arises and takes root. It seems crucial to explore this phenomenon at a time when other deprived urban communities are emerging as spaces where transnational organised crime (TNOC) arises and intersects with extremism, from Manchester’s Moss Side to Brussels’ Molenbeek.

By investigating how Tripoli’s deprived districts are becoming a privileged milieu for TNOC and a safe space for interactions with extremists, my work engages with the growing academic and policy discussions on the roots and nature of the “crime-terror nexus”, which refers to the organisational and operational overlaps between criminal and terrorist networks. The fact that the term was only coined in 2001 by political scientist Tamara Makarenko reflects the embryonic nature of the literature on this fundamental topic. Scholars have observed the concept’s growing importance not just in the Middle East but also in Europe and Latin America, and categorised known instances of cooperation between criminal organisations and terrorist cells. Yet, despite these notable efforts, Makarenko herself has acknowledged the “limited” nature of the progress made in this academic field of inquiry. This is both because it is situated at a crossroads of disciplines and because it is difficult to develop the necessary networks to access rich qualitative and quantitative data.

Through a recently funded ESRC project, I hope to make two key contributions to studies of the “crime-terror nexus”. First, on the basis of the extensive networks I have developed during my doctoral and postdoctoral research trips to Tripoli, the project will provide an evidence-based look into the “crime-terror nexus” in Qobbe, Bab al-Tebbaneh and Mankoubin. Second, a bottom-up approach will introduce new dimensions, such as the spatialities and temporalities of the “crime-terror nexus”. Indeed, it is striking the extent to which both criminal and extremist networks are rooting themselves in specific urban spaces in Tripoli by drawing on social ties, practices and narratives that resonate with local residents, and by playing to much older histories of cooperation between criminal and revolutionary networks in the city. The combination of my expertise in contentious politics with that of my co-investigator, Caroline Rooney (University of Kent), in cultural anthropology and criminality in political contexts, will see the project carry out the first truly interdisciplinary and empirical study of how TNOC groups root themselves in deprived neighbourhoods and interact with extremist networks.

The question of the embeddedness of the crime-terror nexus seems more crucial than ever before, yet scholars have noted that it is notoriously absent from the debate. At a time when deprived districts from Tripoli to Manchester to Brussels are emerging as safe spaces for crime-terror interaction – with devastating consequences on local, national and international levels – our empirical research will help better understand and approach the bottom-up dynamics at play.



BEIRUT, LEBANON – *Martyrs’ Monument*
by Italian artist Marino Mazzacurati
in Martyrs’ Square

How to Measure Peace



Richard Caplan

Professor of International Relations
Official Fellow, Linacre College

Can we know with any certainty if the peace that has been established following a civil war is a stable peace? This is the question at the heart of my latest research and book, *Measuring Peace: Principles, Practices, and Politics*. It's an important question because we spend billions of dollars and deploy tens of thousands of personnel each year in support of efforts to build peace in conflict-affected states around the world. Yet despite these prodigious efforts, conflict recidivism has been and remains a chronic problem. By one estimate, on average 40 percent of countries emerging from civil war are likely to revert to violent conflict within a decade of the cessation of hostilities.

Conflict dynamics are often too complex to allow us to determine with any certainty whether the peace being built will be a lasting peace. But it is possible to ascertain the quality of a peace, and the vulnerability of that peace to conflict relapse, with greater degrees of confidence. There are numerous ways in which peacebuilding actors have successfully enhanced their

capacity to assess the quality of the peace in conflict environments – from early warning and conflict analysis in the case of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), to smart benchmarking in the case of the United Nations, to the use of 'peace indicators' on the part of leading non-governmental organisations. Many of these initiatives have brought the quality of peace into sharper focus and have helped to improve the efforts of peacebuilding actors. Indeed, in some cases, these initiatives have arguably prevented the outbreak of renewed violence. Unfortunately, these are often isolated efforts. Effective practices are not diffused across the organisation, or shared with the broader peacebuilding community.

Varied though these initiatives may be, what they all have in common is a recognition of the vital importance of contextual knowledge for the insights it affords into local conflict dynamics and their implications for devising appropriate strategies for the maintenance of peace.

The importance of such knowledge may seem obvious and, yet, there is a tendency among peacebuilding actors to rely, to varying degrees, on preconceived models or templates that are either maladapted or plainly ill-suited to local conditions.

This is not to suggest that all peace failures can be foreseen or that, if foreseen, can be prevented. The point is simply, but not unimportantly, that more rigorous assessments of the quality of the peace can facilitate more effective international and domestic engagement. The absence of effective assessment means we don't necessarily know which peacebuilding interventions work and which don't. Policy-makers want to know that national and international funds are being invested in constructive initiatives that are most likely to be successful. This will always be difficult as local context will differ from conflict to conflict; however, using more effective measurement practices and encouraging the sharing of good practice among peacebuilding practitioners would be a step in the right direction.

Better assessments of the quality of peace are not a panacea for conflict recurrence. And we know that at the end of the day, the decision to engage, or not, in support of building or maintaining a peace is often a political decision on the part of third parties. However, to the extent that sound analysis can inform policy deliberations, more rigorous assessments of the robustness of the peace have the potential to make a substantial contribution to the prevention of conflict recurrence.



NEW YORK, USA – *Non-Violence*
by Swedish artist Carl Fredrik Reuterswärd
at the Headquarters of the United Nations

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Whether you are near or far, you are always a part of the DPIR community. In addition to the annual *Inspires* magazine, here are some of the ways you can find out about the latest news, research and events in the Department.

WEBSITE

Our website has all the latest updates: news, events, projects, and more. It's the best way to find out what's happening in DPIR
www.politics.ox.ac.uk

OXPOL BLOG

The Department's blog, OxPol, explores various topics in Politics and International Relations through commentary, discussion and analysis. This past year, blog topics have ranged from behavioural norms in climate change protests to drug use in the Conservative leadership contest.
www.blog.politics.ox.ac.uk



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