2017

INSPIRES

The Magazine for Oxford Politics and International Relations Alumni

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

DPIR

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICS & INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

INSPIRES

Letter from the editors

Welcome to the seventh edition of *Inspires*, the alumni magazine from the Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Oxford. We hope that you enjoy it, and as ever, do send us your comments and suggestions for future editions.

Many thanks to those of you who joined us at the department's alumni event at London's Oxford and Cambridge Club back in November. Professor Desmond King, and his co-author, Professor Larry Jacobs gave a very interesting presentation on the politics of central banks after the US election, and it was lovely to meet so many of you there. We will be hosting future events in London, so do look out for details of those soon.

Alumni who studied the 'Modern Greats' may be interested to know that plans are well underway to celebrate the centenary of the PPE degree in 2020, which is fast approaching. 100 years is a phenomenal length of time for a degree to have been running, and in that time PPE graduates and tutors have been at the forefront of academic and public life, both in the UK and across the world. We intend to mark this anniversary appropriately. Those alumni of PPE attending the Alumni Weekend in Singapore at the end of March had the opportunity to gather to reminisce about their time studying at Oxford and, alongside the departments of Economics and Philosophy and the colleges, we hope to run more such events elsewhere in the build-up to 2020. If you would like to register your interest in advance, you can do so by email to PPE2020@politics.ox.ac.uk .

Recollections of your time at Oxford, whether studying PPE or any other Politics or International Relations degree can be added to our website, which has a dedicated section for alumni, found at www.politics.ox.ac.uk/alumni – these are then included in our alumni newsletters. You can also add 'classnotes' to our site – we hope that these provide a good way of keeping up to date with news from your former classmates. We always enjoy reading about the experiences and careers of former students, and very many thanks to those of you who have been in touch.

We hope you enjoy this edition of *Inspires*, and look forward to hearing from you.

Charlie Game and Stuart White

CONTENTS

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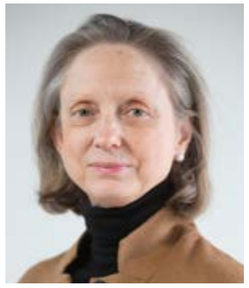
GET IN TOUCH
Department of Politics and International Relations
University of Oxford
Manor Road
Oxford, OX1 3UQ
United Kingdom

Email: alumni@politics.ox.ac.uk
Phone: +44 (0)1865 278700
Follow us on Twitter: @Politics_Oxford

WELCOME
FROM THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT



Louise Fawcett reflects on how Oxford research is meeting the challenge of a rapidly changing world

> *There is certainly a lot of work to be done to understand some of the more unexpected developments of the past year*

I am very pleased to have the opportunity to welcome you to another fantastic edition of *Inspires*, having taken over from Liz Frazer as Head of the Department of Politics and International Relations back in January. My own research relates to the International Relations of the Middle East, and I'm doing my best to stay up to date with developments in that fast moving field over the course of my term as Head of Department. I've recently attended several conferences in which academics and policy-makers have sought to better understand the recent events in the region, and I am also pleased to be part of a strong group of academics at Oxford who are advancing our understanding of the Middle East. As we all know, the fortunes of this critical region have implications for us all.

There is certainly a lot of work to be done to understand some of the more unexpected developments of the past year, and I hope that the articles in this year's *Inspires* go some way to showcasing just a snapshot of the of the diverse research which is taking place here at the Department of Politics and International Relations.

In this edition, we are very pleased to feature Teresa Bejan, who has been asking what lessons we can learn from history about how to deal with deeply held disagreements. Disagreements are more easily overcome when the parties involved can establish shared facts, and in a year that has seen the rise of 'fake news', Heidi Taksdal Skjeseth, Fellow of the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, asks what journalists can do to separate truth from falsehood.

Unsurprisingly, Brexit has been a focus for many colleagues, not least those who have joined us from the continent, and Kalypso Nicolaïdis has a particularly interesting story to tell. In conversation with Kira Huju she applies the lessons from a cosmopolitan career to asking what comes next for the European Union. We also include an article from Ezequiel González Ocantos and Elias Dinas on the legitimacy of courts, and whether involvement in the deeply political decisions around Brexit have damaged the UK's nascent Supreme Court. Looking at some of the longer-term trends underlying the political events we've seen this year, Ben Ansell asks how wealth inequalities, and house prices in particular, have affected voting behaviour.

Finally, the previous year has also been a momentous one for Colombia, where a peace deal was first rejected in a referendum, and then signed in a revised form. Annette Idler has been working in some of the most remote and unstable border regions of Colombia, and in these pages she discusses how the conclusions from her research could help build a sustainable peace.

We are also pleased in this edition to feature a number of our alumni for whom engagement in politics is still very much part of their lives – Jessica Panegyres and Sonia Sodha tell us their stories of 'Life After' study in Political Theory, and David MacDuff explains how his MPhil in International Relations remains both relevant and useful in his career in the Canadian Foreign Service, even 20 years after he left Oxford.

We are very proud of the fact that the original and important work that happens here is not only undertaken by our academics - the contributions made by our DPhil students to scholarship in the field is exceptional. We are very grateful to Dan Paget and Kate Roll (an alumna of this department who now researches at Saïd Business School), who have shared with us their experiences of undertaking fieldwork whilst studying here. Fieldwork is an important part of connecting research and study with the wider world. If you are able to, do consider funding students' fieldwork. It is often through fieldwork that researchers are able to gain insights into some of the world's most difficult political issues, and move us that one step closer to solving them. It is an area in which even small contributions can make an enormous difference.

One example of a gift that has had a real impact is that of the late Cyril Foster. His generosity has helped to fund many research trips over the years, in addition to an annual Cyril Foster Lecture on the 'elimination of war and the better understanding of the nations of the world'. The images on these pages are from this year's lecture, given by Sir Lawrence Freedman. He gave a fascinating talk, which can be heard again in full on our website.

I am very much looking forward to meeting as many of our alumni community as possible over the next few years – I know from having kept in touch with many of my own students just how helpful the alumni community can be, as a connection to the many and diverse areas of work that our alumni go into. It is also wonderful to stay in touch with old friends! In the meantime, I hope that you enjoy the 2017 edition of *Inspires*.

Louise Fawcett
Head of Department, DPIR Professor of International Relations
Wilfrid Knapp Fellow and Tutor in Politics,
St Catherine's College

The Challenge of **Wealth Inequality**

Ben Ansell explains why house prices could hold the key to understanding political change

It will not have escaped the attention of *Inspires* readers that we have seen a number of political convulsions over the past few years. While political populism is certainly driven by conflicts over national identity and global openness, it is the widening of the gap between rich and poor amidst a growth slowdown since the 1970s that has sparked the sharp political battles between fortunate elites and aggrieved mass publics.

Income inequalities have risen dramatically since the era of the postwar consensus. In Britain, however, as in many other European countries also in the throes of populism, income inequalities stopped rising almost a decade ago. And yet, that is not the felt experience of most citizens. Many people find the cost of living increasingly straining and the chances of upward mobility ever more distant.

What accounts for this paradox? Income inequality in the UK is dormant, indeed declining, but the 'end of class politics' has been replaced by a schism between 'educated elites' and the 'left behind'. Are we missing something about the economy? I believe the answer lies under our feet, or at least under our beds, kitchen counters, and sofas. Housing has taken on the role previously played by wages as the cleavage between rich and poor. Wealth, of which home ownership is a crucial part, now accounts for the core line of division in the welfare of the British public, and indeed in many countries worldwide. Yet social scientists have largely lacked both the data and the theoretical framework to understand inequalities in wealth.

My new research project beginning this year, supported by a grant from the European Research Consortium, aims to fill this hole. Over the next five years, along with a team of graduate students and post-doctoral researchers based in the Department of Politics and International Relations, I will collect new international and historical data on wealth inequality and social mobility. I will develop an original policy database on how governments have tried to manage wealth – how they tax it, regulate it, shape its growth and transfer it from generation to generation. And, in a novel series of laboratory and survey experiments, I will examine how citizens from across Europe think about the distribution of wealth in their countries and whether they cast it in a different light to inequalities in income and employment.

> *Are we missing something about the economy? I believe the answer lies under our feet, or at least under our beds, kitchen counters, and sofas*

What do I expect to find? While at the University of Oxford, I have published on the politics of wealth, ownership, and consumer credit. The key lessons from this work are that political parties both shape and are shaped by surging (and crashing!) asset prices, particularly in the form of housing.

In a 2014 paper published in the *American Political Science Review,* I argued that wealth can matter just as much as income in shaping what citizens want government to do. Owning a house can substitute for social insurance, allowing people to rely on a highly appreciated asset when they retire rather than on government programs. Using longitudinal survey data from the USA and the UK, I've found that homeowners who experience rising house prices become much less supportive of social insurance programs (such as the USA's Social Security retirement system), even adjusting for differences in income across groups. In fact, homeowners benefiting from rising prices become more right-wing across a whole swathe of policy areas. So far, so good for Margaret Thatcher and George W. Bush's visions of the 'ownership society'. But there is a sting in the tail. When house prices decline, as British homeowners know they inevitably do every housing cycle, the same homeowners can become dramatically more supportive of social policies. One might say that there are no libertarian homeowners in a foxhole…

Rising house prices can underpin a turn to smaller government and a support for a capitalism redder in tooth and claw. It is no surprise then that Thatcher and Cameron benefited greatly from rising house prices in their eras of Conservative government. This line of argument also explains the political success of Blair's Third Way – while house prices were rising, there was less demand for a traditionally left-wing style of government.

Yet, my recent research with John Ahlquist at the University of California, San Diego (forthcoming in the journal *World Politics*) suggests that a more actively redistributive welfare state could have prevented skyrocketing house prices. We show that rising income inequality has, in fact, fed through to rising house prices, and hence surging wealth inequality, but only in those countries, such as the USA and the UK, without heavily redistributive government. Drawing on recent work in behavioural economics, we argue that rising income inequality amplifies the tendency of people to want to 'keep up with the Joneses' by borrowing greater and greater amounts in order to maintain high levels of consumption. Where an aggressive tax and transfer system is in place, such as in Scandinavia or Continental Europe, this motivation is weaker – the rich get taxed more and the poor receive more, thus narrowing the income gaps that encourage competitive consumption and borrowing in the first place.

These kinds of differences across countries in wealth inequality and credit-fuelled consumption may be endemic and difficult to change, but my research will shed light on how far back historically these differences go and on the ways in which governments have tried to shape wealth through policy. I hope that a better understanding of the politics of wealth inequality will allow us to better comprehend the political challenges we face today.

Ben Ansell
Professor of Comparative Democratic Institutions, Nuffield College

Wars *of* Words

The Value of Civility

Teresa M. Bejan argues that there is a lot we can learn from the history of heated disagreement

After a year of political upsets—and upset—the condition of political debate in the UK and US appears critical. The ongoing fracas over 'fake news' and the election of a Tweeter-in-Chief across the Atlantic have amplified longer-standing concerns about the hate speech, religious insult, and the abundant personal attacks symptomatic of public debate. As we continue to talk past each other with slurs and soundbites, it can feel like those who disagree with us are not simply on the 'other side' of the issue—are they even in the same room?

My recent book, *Mere Civility: Disagreement and the Limits of Toleration*, argues that our contemporary crisis of civility reflects a tension between diversity and disagreement at the heart of liberal democracy itself. As human beings, we naturally understand other minds on the model of our own. This lends an inevitable *disagreeableness* to disagreement when we discover that others have come to very different conclusions on questions to which the answers seem obvious – to us. When those disagreements challenge the commitments we consider fundamental to our identity the resulting incivility, real and perceived, pushes us farther and farther apart. Often we seek refuge among the like-minded and console ourselves by concluding that our opponents are malicious, stupid, or perhaps even insane—in any words, simply not worth engaging with at all.

What's a tolerant society to do? *Mere Civility* approaches this problem—and its proposed solutions—with historical perspective. This approach may at first seem counter-intuitive, because many commentators blame our predicament on innovations unique to the modern world. Yet in the current crisis, one hears uncanny echoes of earlier wars of words. For instance, after the Reformation, long-standing concerns about uncivil disagreement exploded when a virtuoso of religious insult, Martin Luther, took advantage of a recent advance in communications technology, the printing press, to broadcast his polemic (a word originating from the Greek for 'war') far and wide. Sectarians on all sides soon followed suit, condemning their opponents as 'heretics', 'papists', 'protestants', 'puritans', and myriad other insulting 'denominations' that observers feared would sever the bonds of society forever.

The early modern solutions proposed to combat the problem, too, sound eerily familiar. Many called for conversational virtue, lamenting the 'epidemic' of incivility that led each 'sect and Opinion to represent his Antagonist as odious as it can'. Attempts were soon made on that basis to restrain 'licentious Tongues' through law. In the Netherlands, communities banned conversing about religion altogether 'for fear of falling out,' while Jean Bodin praised the King of Muscovy's wisdom in imposing the death penalty on anyone who would 'preach or dispute about religion'. Elsewhere, the secular authorities tried to impose a gentler form of civil silence by banning particular insults. In England, successive Tudor monarchs prohibited 'contumelious words' like 'Hypocrite' and 'Pharisee', while in France, 'Papiste', 'Huguenots', and 'Lutheriens' were singled out. Still, other observers thought these statutes against 'persecution of the tongue' had not gone far enough. In 1626, one English observer declared his heart-felt wish 'that this offensive name of *Puritan*…might have some Statute passe[d] upon it…for certainly Satan gains much by [its] free use'.

> *As we continue to talk past each other with slurs and soundbites, it can feel like those who disagree with us are not simply on the 'other side' of the issue - are they even in the same room?*

Fascinatingly, several English colonies in North America committed to religious toleration followed this advice. The Maryland Toleration Act of 1649 banned an ecumenical list of 'reproachful' names, including 'Puritan', 'Presbyterian', 'Jesuit', 'Popish Priest', and 'Calvinist', while Pennsylvania took the more general route: 'If any person shall abuse or deride any other for his or her different persuasion or practice…in religion, such shall be looked upon as a disturber of the peace [and] punished accordingly'.

So, did these early modern hate speech laws work? It depends on whom you ask. Laws against incivility, which were meant to protect dissenters from abuse, soon proved a much more effective means of silencing dissent. Atheists were rebuked for violating 'common civility' by ignoring 'the offensiveness of their Discourse', while adverbial redefinitions of heresy—as an opinion 'factiously' or 'obstinately' adhered to—easily reduced complaints about the *manner* of disagreement to the *fact*. Paradigmatically uncivil groups like the Quakers, English Catholics, and Native Americans soon discovered that the prosecution of incivility was a convenient pretext for persecution. Accordingly, while anti-insult statutes persisted in the Old World, they eventually disappeared in the New. The Maryland statute lapsed, and although a similar law had been tried in Carolina, John Locke (who helped draft its constitution) described it as 'a matter of perpetual prosecution and animosity'. In Rhode Island, Roger Williams concluded that free exercise and free expression or 'evangelical liberty' must go hand in hand.

Political theorists and practitioners would do well to wrestle with this history. In the face of our own epidemic of heated and hateful disagreement, one often hears similar calls for the powers-that-happen-to-be to civilize speech by re-imposing order and authority. But whether it is through targeting 'fake news' or banning 'hate speech', we call down the civil sword most easily when we believe that our *opponents* alone are the uncivil ones—the liars, the bigots, and the perpetuators of 'fake news'. Why should excluding and suppressing *their* speech be a problem? Revisiting the troubled history of toleration reminds us that laws intended to protect vulnerable minorities often end up persecuting them. In suspending our principles to extract the mote from our neighbour's eye, let us take care not to render ourselves defenseless if—and when—others spot the beam in our own.

Teresa M. Bejan
Associate Professor of Political Theory
Tutorial Fellow, Oriel College

Peace, War and Uncertainty in COLOMBIA

Annette Idler explains how her research could help us to understand Colombia's difficult peace process

In late 2016, the Colombian government reached an historic peace agreement with the leftist FARC guerrilla group, seeking to put an end to its internal armed conflict. Although without doubt a remarkable achievement after more than five decades of insurgency, in the country's most war-torn regions it was little evident. At that time, I was in one of Colombia's most violent and marginalised regions, Tumaco, on the Pacific coast, studying my notes on the fear produced by the latest killings in the region, and planning my travels to Catatumbo, another 'red zone'. On my phone, I watched the pictures and messages that a contact from that region had just sent me: roads blocked by explosives, an attack by the National Liberation Army (ELN) against the police station, a burnt ambulance marked with graffiti by the Popular Liberation Army (EPL), pamphlets distributed by the EPL announcing the continuation of the armed struggle, and farmers fleeing their homes to avoid the crossfire of the state forces' retaliation. When the FARC finally started to demobilise in 2017, a new era of uncertainty, rather than stability, began in those regions: farmers previously 'protected' by the FARC suddenly had to find new ways to ensure their security.

The continued violence and new forms of uncertainty are related to the complex and evolving security landscape in Colombia. The FARC is the largest armed group that has been operating in Colombia, but it is by no means the only such group. Other groups that continue to operate are the remnants of now-dismantled paramilitaries and criminal organisations involved in drug trafficking and other forms of organised crime. The peace deal radically reshuffled these armed groups, and led to the emergence of new ones who are attempting to fill the power vacuum left behind by the FARC. In addition to this, there are also ex-FARC members who may continue their armed activities under new labels. Many communities continue to live amidst the presence of multiple violent groups.

Such a situation is not unique to Colombia. Across the globe there are regions where the proliferation of violent non-state groups, whether labelled as terrorists, rebels, paramilitaries, gangs, or simply criminals, impact people's everyday lives - both in war and in peace time.

To better understand how communities are affected by the presence of various violent non-state groups in the territories they live in, my forthcoming book identifies patterns in the relationships that these groups have with each other and traces their impact on people's security. Three patterns stand out:

First, when different groups fight each other, or even when there is a 'tense calm', during which violence can erupt any time, the population is affected by physical insecurity, or the constant fear that fighting may break out. In these cases, people can reduce insecurity by adhering to the rules that the groups impose.

Second, when violent non-state groups engage in short-term arrangements such as drugs-for-arms deals, tactical alliances or sub-contractual relationships, local populations face uncertainty. This is because such arrangements are very fragile and alliances change quickly. Not knowing who is on whose side and for how long, people mistrust everyone and over time this erodes the social fabric of the community. Selective violence is another element of the insecurity shaping people's everyday lives, since short-lived alliances often involve contract killings to enforce compliance.

Finally, violent non-state groups also engage in long-term arrangements with each other. These include transactional relationships. For example, different groups may control territory along the cocaine supply chain, requiring cooperation to move cocaine from production to market. Longer-term relationships can also take the form of strategic alliances, pacific coexistence or the domination of one group over several others. In such cases, violent non-state groups tend to assume governance functions, for example by providing basic services and goods. This is especially likely if the state is absent or if, through corruption, state officials are themselves linked to these groups. These may well be the most serious situations in the longer term, because in return for receiving basic services (and often also economic opportunities in illegal business activities), local community members may socially recognise these groups. My research refers to this as 'shadow citizenship' and 'shadow security'; it is as if the local community has a social contract with violent non-state groups rather than with the state.

> *Ultimately, my research has shown that the destabilising effects of changing arrangements between violent non-state groups can be mitigated by the presence of a state that is perceived as credible and legitimate*

The security impacts of these distinctive arrangements matter greatly in Colombia today. In some parts of the country, the FARC's demobilisation shattered an enduring order based on shadow citizenship. In other areas, especially those at the starting points of international drug trafficking routes on the Pacific coast and on the Venezuelan border, the arrangements between various other violent non-state groups simply continued—and with them (illicit) business as usual. That business as usual includes the violence that comes when fragile alliances break down or when there is brutal competition for larger profit shares.

If the peace deal between the Colombian government and the FARC is to produce a more secure life for local communities, and if that security is to include not only a reduction in violence but also economic opportunities and development, then interventions need to be guided by the security dynamics on the ground. As my research has shown, these are related to the particular arrangements between groups. This means accounting for security impacts that may not be measurable or visible from the outside. It may include situations where people are not allowed to leave their territory, or where no one speaks out against human rights violations, for fear of punishment by the groups that control the territory. Such regions may seem calm, and they are easily neglected if we only pay attention to homicide and displacement rates.

Ultimately, my research has shown that the destabilising effects of changing arrangements between violent non-state groups can be mitigated by the presence of a state that is perceived as credible and legitimate. In the context of the peace deal with the FARC, this means accounting for these arrangements by prioritising specific state functions such as the provision of basic services, security and justice to marginalised communities.

Such efforts are crucial to avoid the sobering scenario described to me in April 2017 by a farmer from a community near to a demobilisation camp in Southern Colombia. Her fear was that "this peace may become another battlefield".

Annette Idler
Senior Research Fellow at the Department of Politics and International Relations and at Pembroke College
Director of Studies, Changing Character of War Programme

Life After

MPhil Political Theory

The study of political theory is an area of real strength at Oxford, and the department currently hosts 30 MPhil Politics: Political Theory students. The degree was originally part of an overall MPhil: Politics course, with students having the opportunity to choose to specialise in political theory in the latter part of the degree. In Michaelmas 2002, this was split into the three degrees offered today: MPhil Politics: Political Theory, MPhil Politics: European Politics and Society, and MPhil Politics: Comparative Government, although until Michaelmas 2005, political theory was also on the syllabus for students studying MPhil Politics: Comparative Government.

Study of political theory has led alumni into a diverse range of roles, across the world. We are very grateful to Sonia Sodha and Jessica Panegyres who have shared their recollections of their time at Oxford, and their thoughts on how the study of political theory has influenced their careers.

Jessica Panegyres
MPhil Politics, 2010

During the MPhil in Political Theory, I fell in love… with Thomas Paine, the eighteenth century revolutionary, thinker and writer of the *Rights of Man*. Under the brilliant supervision of Mark Philp, and helped by long conversations with wonderful fellow students, I wrote my thesis on Tom Paine's theory of intergenerational rights. I was deeply inspired by a political thinker who joined real-world struggles for justice (the American and French revolutions being two).

My MPhil research on intergenerational rights in natural resources was notable for what I did not find. I found no compelling justification for the few destroying the common inheritance of the many. I was intellectually convinced we have a responsibility to fight for the rights of future generations – who, if we don't change our current trajectory, will inherit a vastly degraded planet. I wanted to put those ideas into practice.

After Oxford, I worked for Greenpeace campaigning for a safe climate and sustainable environment, particularly focused on trying to save the Great Barrier Reef and the magnificent tropical rainforests of Indonesia. From town hall meetings to addressing the United Nations, it is a real privilege every day to be part of the inspiring movement of people around the world striving to create a fair and healthy planet.

I was intellectually convinced we have a responsibility to fight for the rights of future generations

In my current role, I am campaigning for Australia to protect and restore our forests while doing our fair share to tackle climate change. The occasional academic publication and guest lecture keeps me in touch with the academic community, as the MPhil left me with an enduring commitment to building bridges between intellectual theory and practice.

Being part of the Oxford DPIR community is something for which I continue to be grateful. In future years I hope to look back on our cohort as part of the generation that turned the tide and secured peoples' rights to a healthy planet.

Sonia Sodha
MPhil Politics, 2003

When I started the MPhil in Politics at St Antony's in 2003, I wondered how similar it would be to my undergraduate degree in PPE. I needn't have worried: although the course covered some of the same ground, it proved a completely different learning experience. I enjoyed the emphasis on learning through small-group seminars rather than tutorials, and learning with people from all over the world was incredibly enriching.

After graduating in 2005, I spent six years working for centre-left think tanks in Westminster, writing reports on social policy, education and families. I've also worked as a senior policy adviser to the then leader of the opposition, Ed Miliband, and have worked in policy and strategy for several different charities. Most recently, I've moved into journalism: I've been chief leader writer at the *Observer* since 2015, also writing columns and special reports for the paper; and I regularly make Analysis programmes for Radio 4 on economic and social policy.

The transferable skills I picked up when studying for the MPhil have been invaluable. Most important are the analytical skills I developed, which are so critical to policy analysis—whether researching a think tank report or writing a newspaper editorial. The ability to turn a piece of writing around quickly in the face of a looming deadline has also come in handy!

The transferable skills I picked up when studying for the MPhil have been invaluable

The content of the course has also proved useful. I chose to study a mix of comparative and institutional politics and political theory. My working knowledge of European and American politics has been helpful background, particularly in recent months. I studied very little political theory as part of PPE, but it turned out to be my favourite part of the MPhil. You can't undertake policy analysis—essentially thinking about means—without understanding what sort of end goal you're aiming for. The work of John Rawls and Ronald Dworkin has had a formative influence on my political beliefs. And in the last year, I've found myself making a Radio 4 programme and writing an *Observer* special report about universal basic income – an idea I first learned about in one of Stuart White's seminars at DPIR.

FUNDING FIELDWORK

Research in Politics and International Relations is fundamentally about people, and their interactions. As alumni of the University of Oxford, I'm sure you don't need me to tell you about the fantastic libraries here, full of the wealth of human knowledge and scholarship. However, I'm sure that you will also agree that reading about the world from behind a Bodleian desk is no substitute for going out into the world and seeing things first-hand.

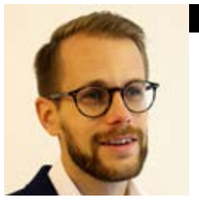
If you want to understand the world's political problems, you need to meet the people involved and understand their motivations, hopes and fears. Fieldwork brings the challenges of politics to life, and it is by studying the world up close and personal that our researchers are able to come to new conclusions, provide new insights and perhaps make that crucial observation that helps us to understand issues such as vote rigging, endemic conflict or political violence.

Here at the Department of Politics and International Relations, we are proud of the fact that we don't only provide our students with an excellent grounding in theory and methodology (though we certainly do!). We also encourage our students to think for themselves, to challenge the literature, and to add their own insights. Fieldwork is an important part of that.

However, fieldwork is often expensive, and often the most interesting parts of the world are some of the hardest to get to. We want to ensure that our students are free to follow their research wherever it may take them, and we hope that our alumni will help us to do that. Even very small donations can make a big difference – and may just lead to the nugget of research that solves a conflict or ends a war.

Louise Fawcett
Head of Department, Department of Politics and International Relations

To make a donation, fill out the form enclosed with this magazine, or visit www.campaign.ox.ac.uk/politics-and-international-relations
Further information is available by email: alumni@politics.ox.ac.uk



Dan Paget is a DPhil student, and is researching political campaign strategies in Tanzania.

When I began my doctorate, I had trouble convincing people that there was anything left for me to say about my chosen subject. My research was to be about the election campaign rally in sub-Saharan Africa. Many friends and colleagues pointed out that rallies were surely as old as popular politics itself. If I wanted to study them, they suggested, I should visit the stacks in the Old Bodleian Library.

After ten months in Tanzania, I felt vindicated. I began my field research in 2015, just as a general election campaign was getting under way. My plan was to shadow parliamentary candidates as they went about their campaigns. What I discovered was that they spend as much time conducting rallies as humanly possible. Tanzanian candidates for office will rise early each day of the campaign and travel from one village to the next. A hardworking candidate will conduct perhaps 150 rallies or more.

More strikingly still, I realised that the rally is evolving. As Tanzanian politicians seek to outdo one another, rallies are becoming sites of innovation. Candidates used to arrive alone and be greeted by party officials. Now they are accompanied by parading convoys of vehicles and welcomed by jubilant dance groups. They used to travel between rallies by 4x4. Increasingly, they criss-cross their constituencies by helicopter. Politicians are learning to display their wealth, to arrive with fanfare and to create a sense of carnival. Rallies in Tanzania today involve exhibitionism, entertainment, speed and technological innovation. While the rally originates in the past, it belongs to the future, and what's more, the size and scale of Tanzania's rallies change her politics.

That year, I came to appreciate the value of proper field research. To explore phenomena newly born or in transition, researchers need to witness them up close, and hear from those that participate in them. Funding for fieldwork helps develop our understanding of a changing world.

Kate Roll completed her DPhil in Politics in 2014; she is a Senior Research Fellow at the Saïd Business School and Lecturer in Politics at Somerville College.

My doctoral work examined the post-conflict lives of the men and women who fought against the Indonesian occupation of Timor-Leste (1975-1999). The two key issues with the scholarship on ex-combatants continue to be researchers' failure to reach beyond urban networks, and the lack of representative research on former fighters based on correctly constructed randomised samples. With Sheryl Sandburg's question of 'What would you do if you were not afraid?' in mind, I designed my fieldwork to address both.

Thanks to the support of a Cyril Foster research grant from DPIR, I returned to Dili, Timor-Leste, to study the relationship between veterans' benefits and state consolidation. I wangled a comprehensive list of former fighters from a pony-tailed UN volunteer, which became my sampling framework, and wrote a survey. A security guard at my old workplace taught me how to ride a motorbike in the dusky streets of Farol, encouraging me to try the higher gears.

The next five months were spent driving hundreds of kilometres through Timor-Leste, seeking out and surveying over 200 individuals who had fought in the resistance movement against the Indonesian occupation. Given only their names, code names, and places of birth, the search process itself became a game in reconstructing these resistance networks. Some communities were inaccessible even by motorbike, so I walked.

I heard stories of immense suffering, of pride and disappointment, of pension fraud and corrupt contracting, of collaboration and survival. I was shown tattered IDs from the first demobilisation effort, and mementos of the resistance. These often came out once the survey was done. Thinking back, I am struck by the richness of these encounters.

In the end, this fieldwork produced one of the top ten largest representative studies of ex-combatants worldwide, and this is helping change our understanding of state building and the construction of veteran identity. I also captured, in a comprehensive way that has not been done before or since in Timor-Leste, the views and thoughts of men and women who had resisted the Indonesian occupation; their experience might otherwise have been lost to history.

20 Years Later

David MacDuff recalls his time studying International Relations, and explains why, 20 years later, the lessons learnt at Oxford remain valuable

In March 1997, I walked up the steps of my residence in Toronto to find a thin envelope from the University of Oxford in the mailbox. Thin envelopes usually mean one thing: rejection. It doesn't take a thick envelope to say 'no'. To my surprise, the letter offered me a place on the MPhil in International Relations.

My study of this discipline in the 1990s coincided with a gap between the two great security conflicts of recent times: the Cold War and the War on Terror. The world of the 1990s seemed to be one of possibilities, including a liberal transformation of international affairs and the much discussed, and now much derided, 'End of History'. Fortunately, the MPhil course provided a solid grounding in both history and theory, allowing me to see beyond the immediate context.

Following my graduation in 1999, I embarked on a career in two think tanks followed by entry into the Canadian Foreign Service – a path I thought was the most natural fit for my interests. My duties have included: helping to develop Canada's non-proliferation agenda for our hosting of the (then) G8 in Canada in 2010; analyzing economic trends in Southeast Asia during a posting to Singapore (2010-2014); and supporting Canada's strategy for engaging the Trump Administration while back at headquarters in Ottawa.

Over the past two decades, there are have been three principal benefits from the MPhil degree: skills, content, and people.

With attention spans ever shortening, the ability to make a succinct, sharp argument, honed in the famous Oxford essay, is extremely valuable in the policy world. I am frequently called on to write briefing notes for ministerial meetings as well as PowerPoints for Cabinet presentations – speed, brevity, and accuracy (and sometimes even insight!) are highly prized.

I have been struck by how frequently some of the core concepts from international theory shed light on the ups and downs of global events. Hedley Bull's *Anarchical Society* was a core text – and an understanding of historical and theoretical approaches to global order is surely helpful amid Donald Trump's apparent willingness to question post-World War II institutions, rules, and norms.

With today's Canadian foreign service increasingly emphasising so-called 'commercial diplomacy' (much like its British counterpart), and thereby recruiting new employees with majors in business and economics, many of my colleagues (and perhaps a majority) have never taken a single university-level course in politics or international relations. The 'ah ha!' of seeing a core concept manifested in a daily event or an ongoing trend in the 'real world' of international affairs is not only personally rewarding, but can also fill a widening analytical gap in today's foreign ministry. Amid an ever increasing emphasis on management, 'value for money' cannot be understood without values.

I am still in touch with a handful of my former classmates. With the closest of these, I maintain a 'snail mail' correspondence, having exchanged over 100 letters over the past two decades. It is a beautiful and increasingly lost art.

I recall that one of the discussions in the 'International History, 1945 to the Present' seminar turned on the viability of prediction in International Relations. From the vantage point of the developments over the past two decades, I can strongly assert that foresight is not one of the skills I obtained. But I also feel confident that the perspectives and tools I gained from the course will continue to assist me in my own contribution to international affairs over the next twenty years and more.

David MacDuff (St Antony's College, 1997) is a Canadian foreign service officer. After a current stint at headquarters in Ottawa, he will begin an assignment in Jamaica later this year

The views expressed in this article are the author's alone

“Enemies of the People?”

Brexit and the UK’s Supreme Court

Ezequiel González Ocantos & **Elias Dinas**
assess the damage done to the UK’s Supreme Court by the Brexit debate

On 24 January 2017, the highest court in the United Kingdom handed down a decision in what the *Guardian* called ‘the most important constitutional case ever to be heard by the Supreme Court’. Months earlier, a private claimant had thrown the most senior judges in the land into the muddy waters of the Brexit saga, demanding that they force Theresa May’s Conservative government to seek parliamentary approval before triggering the process that will eventually culminate with Britain’s exit from the European Union - approval the Prime Minister had hitherto insisted was not necessary. Tabloids vilified the judges, describing them as ‘enemies of the people’ who, together with other members of the establishment, were on a mission to subvert the result of the referendum. When the Supreme Court finally ruled against the government, it was attacked and praised in equal measure by the two sides of the debate. How did this unusually salient decision affect the court’s standing among the British public? What influences whether citizens accept and support controversial rulings such as this one?

Democracy and the rule of law require that losers consent to outcomes they dislike. The perception that courts can legitimately hand down authoritative decisions is crucial in guaranteeing respect for those decisions. The judiciary lacks control of either the ‘purse’ or the ‘sword’, making it the ‘least dangerous’ branch of government, and this makes a sense of legitimacy, which can insulate judges from the possibility of backlash, all the more important.
Academic work on courts and public opinion, heavily dominated by studies of the US Supreme Court, makes an important distinction between ‘diffuse’ and ‘specific’ support. The former is a form of institutional loyalty that endures regardless of the outcome of individual cases, whereas the latter refers to attitudes towards particular rulings. An influential theory put forward by political scientists James Gibson and Gregory Caldeira suggests that the US Supreme Court has been able to amass a ‘reservoir of goodwill’ that then acts as a shield, ensuring that even highly polarising rulings fail to dent its levels of diffuse support. Knowledge about the courts is an important source of this favourable predisposition, as is exposure to the symbols that all courts constantly disseminate. These help create a ‘myth of legality’, nurturing the perception that courts are different from other institutions (in which opportunism or crass motives are seen as common), and leading citizens to hold the Supreme Court in high esteem.

But even when courts are perceived as highly legitimate, the public’s opinion of specific decisions still matters. Scholars have found that when rulings are seen as resulting from partisan considerations, rather than legalistic reasoning, those outcomes fail to command widespread acceptance. In addition, a series of decisions that systematically favour or disadvantage the interests of a certain group can gradually boost or erode diffuse support from that group.

Our research looks beyond the United States, and asks whether these findings apply elsewhere. We focus on the United Kingdom, where the Supreme Court was only established in 2009, and which therefore offers an interesting comparative perspective. Like the UK Supreme Court, most high courts around the world do not share their US counterpart’s long history of public salience and engagement with important policy issues of the day. When these courts are suddenly pushed into the political spotlight, they are much less likely to have amassed a reservoir of goodwill to protect them from harsh criticism, backlash, non-compliance or other threats to their institutional integrity. It is in precisely these contexts that public reaction to landmark rulings is most significant. Here, landmark rulings have the potential to become formative moments, shaping citizens’ perceptions of the courts for years to come.

> *Landmark rulings have the potential to become formative moments, shaping citizens’ perceptions of the courts for years to come*

We looked at the Brexit ruling, and explored how the public reaction was affected by reactions from others as well as the particular characteristics of that ruling. Using a nationally representative survey, we investigated how highlighting different aspects of the Brexit decision affected participants’ support for the ruling. Using four separate groups of participants as well as a control group, we assessed how support changed when the following were emphasised:

- The court’s attempt to compensate losers (by denying the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh and Northern Irish Assemblies a voice in the process of triggering Article 50),
- Compliance pledges from the Conservative and Labour parties in the aftermath of the ruling, and
- Populist depictions of judicial institutions as establishment-biased, a common criticism in many democracies.

The preliminary findings are certainly interesting. For example, when political parties pledge their support to a decision, this lends legitimacy to the court’s ruling, but the changes in support depend strongly on whether participants support the party in question. Similarly, when we signal to voters the court’s attempt to compensate losers in order to avoid a lopsided judgement, support for the ruling grows among those who benefit from compensations (e.g. Brexit supporters) and declines among those who are negatively affected by them (e.g. residents of Scotland).

By contrast, and perhaps most significantly, we found that the populist framing, which emphasised the elite educational background of the judges who sit in the Supreme Court, had no observable effects on levels of specific support. The UK Supreme Court may be less vulnerable to populist attack than is often assumed.

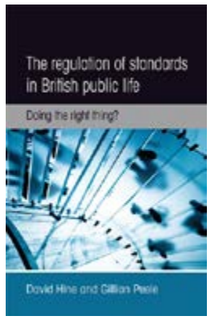
Ezequiel González Ocantos
Associate Professor in the Qualitative Study of Comparative Political Institutions
Professorial Fellow, Nuffield College

Elias Dinas
Associate Professor of Comparative Politics, Brasenose College

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Here we feature recent publications by current members of the department, and by our alumni.

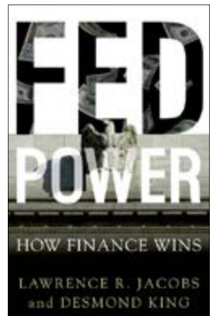
We would like to thank the many alumni who have sent in publications – more books by alumni and by DPIR staff can be found on our website.



The Regulation of Standards in British Public Life: Doing the Right Thing?
Professor David Hine and Professor Gillian Peele
Manchester University Press

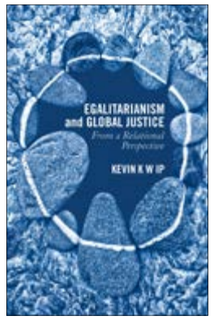
The 2009 expenses scandal was a defining moment in British parliamentary history, but it was also the culmination of twenty years of increasing concern with standards in public life, a concern reflected not only in scandals, but also in an erosion of trust in politicians and government.
This book analyses new rules that have been introduced in different parts of the public sector as a protection against corruption and conflict of interest and as a spur to raising standards. It provides the first full-length treatment of the evolving integrity agenda in the United Kingdom, and asks what impact these reforms have had, concluding that rising expectations mean that it is difficult for reforms to achieve their goal of restoring trust in public life.

Middle East Drugs Bazaar: Production, Prevention and Consumption
Dr Philip Robins
Hurst
The Middle East is intimately involved in the issue of illegal drugs, but despite this, *Middle East Drugs Bazaar* is the first in any language to focus on illicit drugs in the region. The consumption of *qat* in Yemen or cultivation of cannabis in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley is hardly news, but the extent of amphetamine use in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States or the international role of Israeli narcotics manufacturers and traffickers is less well-known. Based on extensive research, this book tells the story of drug-related experiences across ten countries in the region, exploring not only the social role of illegal drugs, but also their political and economic impact.

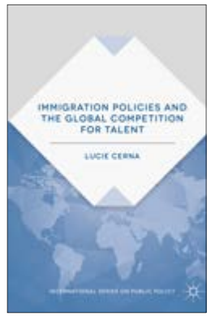


Fed Power: How Finance Wins
Professor Lawrence Jacobs and Professor Desmond King
Oxford University Press

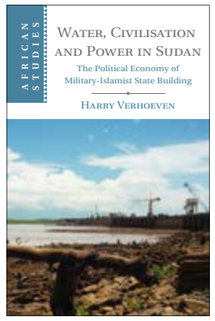
The Federal Reserve is the most powerful central bank in the world. Most commentators treat the Fed as an impartial referee exercising its independence to advance the best interests of America. In this book, described by the *Financial Times* as 'a welcome demonstration that grounded academic work can be entertaining as well as informative', Desmond King and Larry Jacobs argue that those commentators are wrong. The authors trace the Fed's historic development, and how, far from serving the national interest, the Fed increased economic inequality in America and further enriched the 'one percent.' In *Fed Power*, King and Jacobs present an energetic reform agenda to build an accountable central bank in the USA.



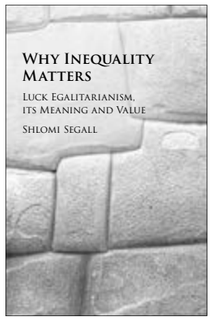
Egalitarianism and Global Justice From a Relational Perspective
Dr Kevin Ka-Wai Ip
Palgrave Macmillan
What would a truly just world look like? In this book, Kevin Ip articulates and defends an egalitarian conception of global distributive justice grounded on the value of equality as a normative ideal of how human relations should be conducted. Arguing that relationships of equality, rather than those characterized by domination or exploitation, are a requirement for a just system, Ip spells out the real-world implications of this approach. Ip defends the ideal of equality against the diverse objections which have been raised, and discusses the responsibilities we bear in our aspirations towards global justice



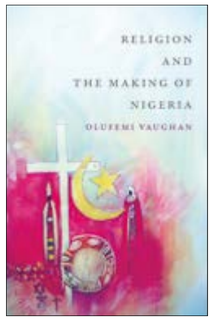
Immigration Policies and the Global Competition for Talent
Dr Lucie Cerna
Palgrave MacMillan
How do immigration policies vary between OECD countries? These countries face economic and social pressures from slowing productivity, ageing populations and pressing labour shortages. Harnessing the global labour market has the potential to address many of these problems, but to do this, countries need to intensify their efforts to attract talented people. Some are excelling in this new marketplace, but others lag behind.
This book explores the reasons for this difference, using a newly constructed index of openness to high-skilled immigrants, supplemented by detailed case studies. The book highlights the key role of coalitions between labour and capital, as well as examining the crucial interplay between interests and institutions.



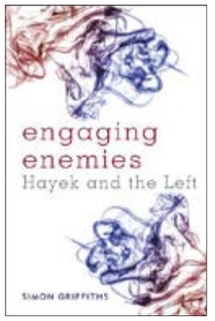
Water, Civilisation and Power in Sudan: The Political Economy of Military-Islamist State Building
Professor Harry Verhoeven
Cambridge University Press
In 1989, a secretive movement of Islamists allied itself to a military cabal to violently take power in Africa's biggest country. Sudan's revolutionaries offered a vision of authoritarian modernisation, with water and agricultural policy central to their state-building project. Based on years of unique access to the Islamists, generals, and business elites at the core of the 'Al-Ingaz Revolution', this book tells the story of one of Africa's most ambitious state-building projects in the modern era, and how its gamble to instrumentalise water and agriculture to consolidate power is linked to twenty-first-century globalisation, Islamist ideology, and the intensifying geopolitics of the Nile.



Why Inequality Matters: Luck Egalitarianism, Its Meaning and Value
Professor Shlomi Segall
Cambridge University Press
Equality is a key concept in our moral and political vocabulary. There is wide agreement on its instrumental value and its favourable impact on many aspects of society, but less certainty over whether it has a non-instrumental or intrinsic value that can be demonstrated. In this project, Shlomi Segall explores and defends the view that it does. He argues that the value of equality can't be reduced to a concern we might have for the worse off, or to ensuring that individuals do not fall into poverty and destitution; instead he claims that undeserved inequalities, wherever and whenever we might find them, are bad in themselves.



Religion and the Making of Nigeria
Professor Olufemi Vaughan
Duke University Press
In *Religion and the Making of Nigeria*, Olufemi Vaughan examines how religious structures have provided the essential social and ideological frameworks for the construction of contemporary Nigeria. During the nineteenth century, the historic Sokoto Jihad and the Christian missionary movement provided the frameworks for ethno-religious divisions in colonial society. Following Nigeria's independence from Britain in 1960, Christian-Muslim tensions became manifest in conflicts over the expansion of sharia, in fierce competition among political elites for state power, and in the rise of Boko Haram. Vaughan shows that these tensions are not simply conflicts over religious beliefs, ethnicity, and regionalism; they represent structural imbalances founded on the religious divisions forged under colonial rule.



Engaging Enemies: Hayek and the Left
Dr Simon Griffiths
Rowman & Littlefield International
Friedrich Hayek is often seen as the founder of neo-liberalism. Yet, despite his antagonistic relationship with socialism, his work became a surprising source of inspiration for several influential thinkers on the left. This book explains the left's unusual engagement with Hayek and reflects on its significance, using the engagement to examine the contemporary fate of socialism and social democracy. The book concludes with a discussion of the wider role of the market for the left today and the significance of engagement with Hayek for the British Labour Party in the wake of the 2008 economic crisis.

Displacement, Development, and Climate Change: International organizations moving beyond their mandates
Dr Nina Hall
Routledge
Focusing on three institutions, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Organization for Migration and the UN Development Programme, this book asks how these inter-governmental organisations have responded to climate change. None were established with a mandate for climate change, so are they moving beyond these mandates?
Hall argues that international bureaucrats play an important role in mandate expansion, often deciding whether and how to expand into a new issue-area and then lobbying states to endorse this expansion. By making changes in rhetoric, policy, structure and operations on the ground, they forge, frame and internalise new issue-linkages, adapting their institutions to a twenty-first century world.

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

An Interview
with Kalypso Nicolaïdis

Kira Huju talks to Kalypso Nicolaïdis about academia, identity and what is next for the European Union

> *Across both national and disciplinary boundaries, as well as between academia and public life, much has been lost in translation in the last few decades of EU debates*

Kalypso Nicolaïdis is on a life-long quest to undermine the 'tyranny of dichotomies' that governs so much of our thinking on the European Union. For the Professor of International Relations and Director of the Centre for International Studies, this quest involves mastering three different types of translation: translation across different languages and cultures; the transdisciplinary translation across academic boundaries; and finally, the political translation that bridges academia and the public sphere. Nuanced translation carries the argument beyond the straight-jacket of traditional labels: nationalism versus cosmopolitanism, pragmatism versus idealism, Europhobia versus Europhilia. Nicolaïdis' framework speaks to what might have gone wrong with the Brexit referendum, too.

Translating across nations

Translation across different cultures and languages involves recognising the diversity of how people explain Europe to themselves and others. In many ways, Nicolaïdis herself embodies this. A Franco-Greek citizen, she was raised in Paris by a Franco-German mother (who insisted on her 'European' identity) and a Greek father from Asia Minor. Now married to a Brit with tri-national children, the self-identifying 'rooted cosmopolitan' exemplifies European hybridity. Translation is a suitable metaphor for untangling this hybridity, because it, too, is an indeterminate undertaking that hopes to make things intelligible to others without flattening out nuances and idiosyncrasies. For Nicolaïdis, the prescription of 'more Europe' has never entailed the artificial construction of a single European people or 'demos', but instead a consensual construction of European *demoi-cracy* - a Union of peoples, understood both as states and as citizens, who govern together, but not as one.

Demoicracy thus escapes the false dichotomy between identifying either solely with a nation or solely as a European, and resuscitates the possibility of overlapping, comfortably complex identities. It also helps us resist the Eurocentric temptation of constructing the EU through opposition to various non-Europe others. The nationalist *cul-de-sac* of ascribing specific identities based on nationality, Nicolaïdis insists, is not meaningfully countered by demanding supranational allegiance. "The European institutions employ thousands of professional translators and even run a book translation service," Nicolaïdis laughs, "but have given little thought to how the ideals of translation might apply to the identitarian diversity of Europe". The Union, and those analysing it, must learn to speak across, not over, various languages and collectives. And this cannot happen if we fail to deeply engage with each other in a spirit of what she calls 'transformative mutual recognition'.

Translating across academic disciplines

Translation across academic disciplines poses its own challenges and opportunities. Academic diversity need not render one's work untranslatable to colleagues with different methodological or epistemological commitments. Different perspectives – such as constitutional law, empirical studies of policy-making, normative political theory, uses of history or anthropological considerations on settlers and nomads - can be brought together to develop a more variegated understanding of the 'nature of the beast', as Thomas Risse-Kappen would say. In the spirit of practicing what one preaches, Nicolaïdis is a native of different disciplinary fields. Trained as a French civil servant, she completed a master's in international economics at Sciences Po and another in political economy and government at Harvard, before settling at the Kennedy School of Government to write her PhD on the Single Market. Drawing game and negotiation theory into her academic ambit, she spent nearly two decades teaching at Harvard before resurfacing at Oxford as an IR scholar. Nicolaïdis suggests that the diversity of EU scholarship's theoretical vocabularies ought to remind us why each field's 'standards of truth' should always remain ajar to insights from outside.

Translating between the academy, the public and the political world

Finally, and arguably most acutely, we have much work to do in translating academic thinking into intelligible contributions in the allegedly separate 'real world'. One way to do this is through stories. "Politics without stories is like a world without colours", Nicolaïdis says. In the recent EU referendum, the Remain campaign focused on the economy, but had no story to tell of the same power as Leave's 'take back control'. The academic reflex cannot be to dismiss stories, but must involve an attempt at providing accessible counter narratives. For example, a sensible story about *demoicracy* might have persuaded even patriotic Brits, who talk of European unity as a top-down negation of national identity, that membership in the EU can readily accommodate national differences. Similarly, Nicolaïdis' vision of *sustainable integration* does not insist on the inevitable goal of an ever closer Union, but points to an open-ended agonistic politics in which goals are always contested against shared long term ambitions and in which there is an ever-present exit option. This fosters a sense of agency and possibility rather than fatalism. As the only academic in a 12-member EU Reflection Group on the future of Europe, chaired by Felipe Gonzáles, Nicolaïdis has recently had her original instincts reaffirmed—Europe needs academic storytellers who can envision an EU 2.0 without expounding one hegemonic EU narrative penned in Brussels. Within the limits of liberal democracy, academics should reflect upon a plurality of acceptable ways of belonging, without shutting out unorthodox interpretations. Our translations must always be grounded in competence, but never in contempt.

Across both national and disciplinary boundaries, as well as between academia and public life, much has been lost in translation in the last few decades of EU debates. To recover the art of translation, Nicolaïdis encourages EU scholars to practice self-reflection, mutual learning and academic humility. Academics should try to communicate what is at stake in Europe today to more diverse audiences. Paradoxically for scholars committed to theory building, this can require relying on intuition to find the ever elusive balance between one's academic or political language, and that of others.

Kira Huju
MPhil Candidate in International Relations

When THE TRUTH Doesn't Matter

Heidi Taksdal Skjeseth looks at the challenges that *post-truth politics* pose for journalists and the media

There have been lies as long as there have been politicians. There have been deliberate lies, unintentional falsehoods, unconfirmed rumours and political statements spun so far the facts have disappeared somewhere on the way from the spin room to the public. Lies are nothing new, whether in politics or in public life. Yet the spread of fake news and the proliferation of falsehoods online pose serious challenges for journalists and the media industry. Add to this an American president with little regard for facts, and it is clear that the truth is living in dangerous times. How should the media respond to this?

Oxford Dictionaries declared 'post-truth' the word of 2016. In the run-up to the presidential elections in November that same year, Google Trends showed a sharp rise in searches for the term 'fake news'. It spiked again after Donald Trump's first press conference as president-elect on 14 January 2017, where the president accused CNN of being 'fake news'. He later repeated this claim about several news outlets, and went on to call the American media *the enemy of the people*. After Mr Trump's inauguration on 20 January 2017 and the following debate about the size of the crowds, his advisor Kellyanne Conway introduced a new term that then dominated both headlines and Google Trends: *alternative facts*.

Technological developments and social media have enabled teenagers in Sofia or agents in Moscow to produce and spread deliberately false news (such as 'The Pope endorses Donald Trump') either to generate traffic to make a profit or to create political support. Lies travel faster than before, and we are more likely to share news that creates emotion, particularly if that emotion is anger. According to analysis by the website Buzzfeed, in the three last months of the US presidential campaign, the twenty best-performing fake election stories on Facebook generated more engagement than the best-performing real news stories from 19 major news outlets. The majority of those false stories worked in Donald Trump's favour. It is still unclear what impact those fake news stories had on the election outcome. What is clear is that both the media industry and the platforms like Facebook and Google now take fake news seriously, and are working on ways to counter this type of fake news by flagging untruthful articles and denying advertising revenue to websites publishing fake news.

The other kind of fake news, the kind originating with politicians, cannot be solved by a change of algorithms. In January 2017, we launched a crowdsourcing effort here at the Reuters Institute, to gather ideas and input on how journalists should deal with powerful people who lie. The response was encouraging, with more than 100 active contributors, and many more shares and views. Among the contributors, there seemed to be consensus that journalists should call out lies when they meet them. This debate is very current in the US media, which has met with an unprecedented amount of falsehoods promoted by President Donald Trump and his administration. Some, like National Public Radio and *The Wall Street Journal,* argue that to call something a lie, you must know the intent of the false statement. Did the person *intentionally* use a false statement, or did they know no better? Others argue that when a falsehood is repeated several times and there is plenty of information debunking that claim, it is simply a lie. If the aim of journalism is to be accurate, sometimes the word 'lie' is the most accurate. This is the argument used by *The New York Times* when they decided to call a lie a lie on the paper's front page, after the then presidential candidate Donald Trump officially conceded that President Barack Obama was 'probably' born in the United States, after years of claiming Obama was not born in the US and was therefore not entitled to be president. *The New York Times* used 'lie' again on 23 January 2017, when they stated, in a front page headline, that Donald Trump had repeated a lie when meeting with lawmakers.

It is clear that the truth is living in dangerous times. How should the media respond to this?

The past few years have seen a rise in fact checking websites, both in the US and in Western Europe. While the US media has a longer tradition of fact checking, we have seen new sites and fact checking efforts emerge in France, Spain and Northern Europe. However, it remains unclear whether this admirable attempt at keeping politicians in check actually works. Even the fact checkers are themselves accused of bias in choosing which facts to check.

Perhaps the biggest challenge is the public's high scepticism towards the media, and so one of the most important questions is what can be done to re-establish trust. Fact checkers might be doing a heroic job trying to judge what is true and what is not, but this doesn't matter if people don't care about facts. Some research suggests that telling stories which make the reader curious is the way to regain trust, and there are some interesting attempts at telling news stories in a way that makes readers care about facts. Engaging the audience in a more solution-based type of journalism is another interesting suggestion, focusing on responses and solutions to social issues, in addition to the problems themselves. More transparency might also be part of the solution, with journalists more openly demonstrating how we work, who our sources are, and how we find stories, as well as engaging the public.

Truth and trust are both crucial for our liberal democracy, and citizens and the media must together create an environment that allows for respectful discourse, open debate and fact-based decision-making.

Heidi Taksdal Skjeseth
Fellow, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism

Since 2010, Heidi has been the US correspondent for *Dagsavisen*, a leading Norwegian daily newspaper

STAY*in*TOUCH with Oxford research

It's in the nature of the discipline that the study of politics and international relations cannot be confined within the walls of an academic department, and we are committed to making our research available to the wider world.

If you have enjoyed reading about our research in this magazine, and would like to know more, we hope that some of the publications and websites listed here will help you to keep up to date with the projects, analyses and debates taking place here at Oxford.

OxPol

https://blog.politics.ox.ac.uk

OxPol, the Oxford University Politics Blog, aims to promote academic research and commentary to readers both within and outside the University, and it features the best in political analysis from students, academics and commentators both within the department and beyond. It is an excellent means of staying informed of the latest research from the department, as well as offering a platform for comments and reactions. We welcome contributions from alumni.

The OxPol site has recently run series on the US Election and the UK's Brexit vote, as well as hosting articles on the future of political polling, and the role of NATO.

The DPIR website

www.politics.ox.ac.uk/news.html

www.politics.ox.ac.uk/research.html

The DPIR website is the first place to look to find out more about the research taking place here. If you are interested in academic comment on current affairs and news from the department do check the 'news and media' pages of our site.

If you would like to know more about research on a particular area, our website also lists the projects currently taking place in the department, along with updates and links to any further information.

Research Highlights

Each year, the department produces a publication showcasing the diverse and varied research which takes place here, the *Research Highlights*. The 2016 edition is available online, and we would also be very happy to post copies to any alumni who might be interested.

You can request a copy via email: alumni@politics.ox.ac.uk

www.politics.ox.ac.uk/materials/Research-Highlights--WEB.pdf

Podcasts

https://soundcloud.com/dpir-oxford

Even if you are no longer in Oxford, you can still benefit from the wealth of high-profile speakers who visit the Department of Politics and International Relations. We record many of our lectures, seminars, and discussions and recent podcasts include talks from alumni events such as 'The Politics of Central Banks' and 'Does Inequality Matter?'. We have also recently produced a podcast series examining the relationship between ideas and political violence, hosted by Jonathan Leader Maynard and our former Head of Department, Liz Frazer.

Follow us

For regular updates on the work of the Department of Politics and International Relations, you may wish to follow our social media accounts:

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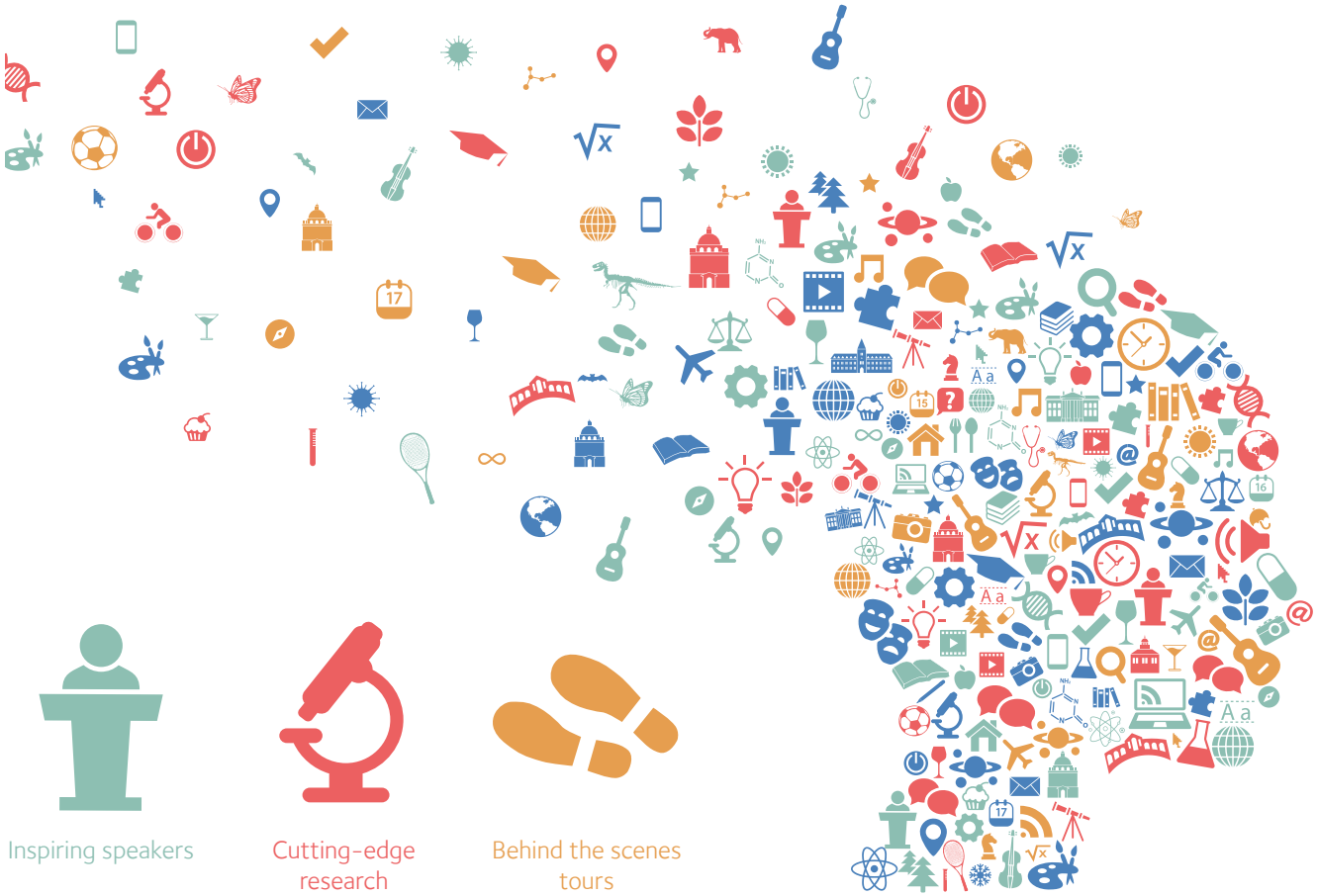

Inspiring speakers

Cutting-edge research

Behind the scenes tours

Booking opens in June

www.alumniweekend.ox.ac.uk