Many warm congratulations to the following newly minted PhDs: Ed Marques whose thesis was a first hand account of the diplomatic strategies of rebel groups in Libya c. 2011; Noga Glucksam who looked at transitional justice, peace-building and normative change in Liberia and Uganda; Atta Barkindo who wrote on the emergence and transformation of Boko Haram in northern Nigeria; Akanksha Mehta who worked on a rich ethnography of right wing Hindutva and settler women in India and Israel respectively; and Goktug Sonmez whose thesis sought to explain shifts in Turkish grand strategy and foreign policy under the AKP.

Former doctoral student and teaching fellow James Eastwood has been awarded the Malcolm Kerr Award for Best Doctoral Dissertation, titled The Ethics of Israeli Militarism: Soldiers’ Testimony and the Formation of the Israeli Soldier-Subject. James is the second doctoral student from the Department in receipt of the award, after Hanan Toukan in 2012.

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Former doctoral student Jamil Mouawad has been awarded Max Weber Fellowship at the EUI.

Pia Ljungman (PhD student) has been awarded 47,200 euros by the Kone Foundation in Finland for her doctoral research on the European sovereign debt crisis and its effects. Pia is working on how the European sovereign debt crisis narrative has remodelled Europe with the objective to explain the strategic role of Europe in contemporary finance capitalism.

Former Department doctoral student, Priya Kumar has been appointed Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Social Media Lab (@SMLabTO) at Ryerson University in Toronto, Canada. She will be working as part of a SSHRC-funded research initiative in the lab to develop novel learning analytics for the social media age. In January Priya completed a short-term residency with the Digital Humanities Asia program at Stanford University. During her stay, Priya presented parts of her dissertation research in a public lecture titled ‘Diasporas Online: A Mixed Methods Approach to Sikh and Tamil Identity Politics’ and also lead a hands-on workshop on digital ethnography and online content analysis for DHAsia.

Dr Enze Han has won a British Council Newton Trust grant of GBP 50K to build institutional links with Chiang Mai University of Thailand.

Doctoral student Catherine Craven was awarded the Santander Mobility Award towards conducting field research on diaspora engagement in Canada, Switzerland and the USA.

Doctoral student Sameen Mohsin Ali has been awarded a doctoral bursary by the Charles Wallace Pakistan Trust.

From December to January, Dr Fanie du Toit (former executive director of the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation in Cape Town and current UNDP head of reconciliation programmes in Iraq) was a visiting researcher in the department. He contributed a guest lecture and several tutorials on Phil Clark’s ‘Violence, Justice and the Politics of Memory’ module and met with various colleagues and students to discuss mutual research interests in transitional justice and peacebuilding.

Bhavna Dave was a Visiting Senior Fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University, Singapore in November-December 2016. She gave two public seminars at RSIS during this period. The first was on ‘China’s Silk Road Initiatives: Economic, Political and Social Consequences for Central Asia and Russia’ on 29 November. Her second seminar was on ‘Russia’s ‘Pivot to the East’ and the Changing Geopolitical Scene in Eurasia:
EEU, SCO and the Implications for South and Southeast Asia’ on 7 December.

Leslie Vinjamuri has been appointed a Visiting Senior Fellow at LSE IDEAS, a foreign policy think tank at the London School of Economics. She has also been appointed to the Book Reviews Advisory Panel of International Affairs, the academic journal based at Chatham House.

Recent doctoral student Ed Marques has been teaching Libyan politics at the University of Virginia. He has also been appointed the Co-Director of an NGO called Global Covenant Partners.

New Publications

Leslie Vinjamuri published an article, ‘The distant promise of a negotiated settlement’ in Daedalus, the journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Michael Buehler reviewed Michael Barr’s The Ruling Elite of Singapore: Networks of Power and Influence.

Melvin Wah, SOAS Graduate 2016, published an abbreviated version of his Independent Study Project he wrote under Michael Buehler’s supervision in New Mandala. The article is about the Potong Pasir neighbourhood in Singapore.

PhD Candidate Lewis Turner published an essay as part of the Middle East Institute’s online essay series on refugee crises in the Middle East and Asia. His essay was titled ‘Are Syrian Men Vulnerable Too? Gendering the Syria Refugee Response’.

Lewis Turner published an article asking ‘Who Will Resettle Single Syrian Men?’ in the latest issue of Forced Migration Review.

Professor Stephen Chan’s new book, Plural International Relations in a Divided World (Cambridge: Polity) came out in February, with simultaneous release on both sides of the Atlantic in hard and paperback. In the book, Professor Chan explores the historical and philosophical roots of difference and discord in the international system. He begins with the introduction of the Westphalian system, showing how, throughout the 20th century, new states - from the Middle East, Asia and Africa - entered that system with reservations, preconditions, and great efforts to introduce new forms of concerts and congresses but without seriously challenging the international status quo.

By contrast, the 21st century has brought turmoil and change in the form of militant Islam - be it the Taleban, Al Qaeda, or ISIS - whose varied roots and fluid emergence have so far prevented the West from being able to understand and combat it. Developing Kissinger’s suspicion of Saudi Arabia as an Islamic state in Westphalian dress, Chan argues that what is at stake today is not the development of a new Caliphate or an old radicalism - but the effort to supplant and replace the Westphalian system itself. This is the complex and challenging reality to which a truly modern and persuasively relevant plural international relations must now adapt. Whether it can do so remains to be seen.

Manjot Rangotra published a review essay on Rousseau in Review of Politics 79(1).


Doctoral student Mathilde Zederman has published her article ‘The Hegemonic Bourguibist Discourse on Modernity in Post-revolutionary Tunisia’ in Middle East Law and Governance 8.

In January 2017, Dr Enze Han published an article ‘Ethnic Integration and Development in China’ in the journal World Development.


Neve Gordon co-edited a special issue on human shields for The American Journal of International Law and contributed both the introduction and an article showing how human shields help eviscerate the status of the civilian in times of war.
‘How Did the West Usurp the Rest? Origins of the Great Divergence over the Longue Durée’, Kerem Nisancioglu’s co-authored article (with Alexander Anievas) has been published in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. The paper addresses shortcomings in revisionist literature around the ‘Rise of the West’ by examining the international causes behind the emergence of capitalism and Britain’s subsequent colonisation of India.

Research Centres, Clusters, & Networks

Centre on Conflicts, Rights and Justice

Sir Roderic Lyne, a commissioner of the Chilcot Inquiry, and Bronwen Maddox, spoke at CCRJ about ‘The Chilcot Inquiry: Lessons for Strategy’.

Professor Scott Sagan, Stanford University spoke about ‘The Nuclear Necessity Principle: The Risk of Nuclear War’. Sir Adam Roberts, Oxford University, delivered remarks following this lecture.

Leslie Vinjamuri interviewed Professor Scott Sagan and Professor Ben Valentino for SOAS Radio about their research on public attitudes towards the use of nuclear weapons.

Centre for Taiwan Studies

On November 29, 2016 Dafydd Fell and Chang Bi-Yu joined the SOAS Director Valerie Amos at a ceremony for signing two major funding agreements between the SOAS Centre of Taiwan Studies and Taiwanese government ministries. This includes

- a grant of £109,082 over three years for the continuation of the Taiwan Studies Teaching Fellow (mainly working in the Politics Department). This project is sponsored by Taiwan’s Ministry of Education.
- a grant of £171,229 over three years to support the SOAS Centre of Taiwan Studies conference, seminar, research and publications programme. This is sponsored by Taiwan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Both agreements cover the academic years 2015-2018.

Dafydd Fell and Chang Bi-yu organized the following Centre of Taiwan Studies Seminars since the last newsletter:

**NOVEMBER**

10/11/16

Film Screening of Chasing the China Wind: A Musical Journey - 逐風捕樂：流行中國風？and Q&A with the Director Lin Chen-Yu

*Speaker: Ms Lin Chen-Yu*

14/11/16

Peace in the Taiwan Strait: An Important Cornerstone of Regional Security

*Speaker: Chang, Tien-Chin, Deputy Minister, Mainland Affairs Council*

15/11/16

The Economic Relation across the Taiwan Strait: Retrospective and Prospective and The Challenges facing Taiwan's Opposition Party

*Speakers: Chu-Chia Steve Lin 林祖嘉, Chen Hsiung-wen 陳雄文 and Sun Lih-chyun 孫立群*

15/11/16

From battered immigrant wife to determined working woman: Vietnamese wife in Taiwan

*Speaker: Prof Wang Hong-zen, National Sun Yat-sen University, Taiwan*

16/11/16

Taiwanese factory regime in Vietnam: Global production process and local strikes

*Speaker: Prof Wang Hong-zen, National Sun Yat-sen University, Taiwan*

17/11/16

The transformation of Taiwan’s political landscape

*Speaker: Dr Jonathan Sullivan*

24/11/16

Book Launch of US Firms’ Business Competence in the Taiwanese IT Industry

*Speakers: Dr Chen Pi-Chi and Dr Kim Young-Chan*

30/11/16

Women, idol drama and three dominant value systems in East Asia

*Speaker: Dr Jocelyn Yi-Hsuan Lai*
**DECEMBER**

01/12/16  
*Book Launch of Convergence or Conflict in the Taiwan Strait*  
*Speaker: Mr J. Michael Cole*

02/12/16  
*Writing on Taiwan: Experiences in Taiwanese Media*  
*Speaker: Mr J. Michael Cole*

02/12/16  
*How to Study Taishang*  
*Speaker: Dr Lee Chun-Yi*

07/12/16  
*‘The Daughter of Time’: Wang Chia-Ming’s adaptations of Richard III*  
*Speaker: Dr Lia Wen-Ching Liang*

15/12/16  
*Bifurcated Homeland and Diaspora Politics in China and Taiwan toward the Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia*  
*Speaker: Dr Han Enze*

**JANUARY**

25/01/17  
*Studying and Research in Taiwan: Briefing on Scholarship and Research Funding Opportunities, and Youth Mobility Scheme*  
*Various Speakers*

26/01/17  
*Illiberal Liberalisation in Taiwan*  
*Speaker: Dr Charles Chen*

**FEBRUARY**

02/02/17  
*Exoticizing Japan: Taiwanese Films, Post-Colonialism, and Fictionality*  
*Speaker: Dr. Carsten Storm*

The final two lectures of the Contemporary Japan Speaker Series (sponsored by the Japan Foundation) of the London Asia Pacific Centre for Social Science (Co-Directors: Tat Yan Kong, SOAS and Ramon Pacheco Pardo, King’s) will take place in Term 2, 2016-17. Details about this and the Contemporary Korea Lecture Series (sponsored by the Academy of Korean Studies) can be found at [https://www.soas.ac.uk/apcss/events/](https://www.soas.ac.uk/apcss/events/)

**Centre for Comparative Political Thought**

The Centre for Comparative Political Thought hosted Professor Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na’im (Charles Howard Candler Professor of Law, Emory University School of Law) who gave a lecture on the topic of ‘Islam and the Secular State: why and how is the issue relevant?’ The lecture was chaired by Professor Lynn Welchman and the discussant was Dr Matthew Nelson.

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London Asia-Pacific Centre for Social Sciences

The London Asia Pacific Centre for Social Science (Co-Directors: Tat Yan Kong, SOAS and Ramon Pacheco Pardo, King’s) and SOAS Centre of Korean Studies co-hosted a lecture by Prof Ra Jong-Yil, former Republic of Korea Ambassador to the UK and Japan. Prof Ra spoke about his recent book on the rise and fall of former North Korean leader Jang Sung-Thaek.
the Australian National University. Professor Piscatori’s lecture was titled ‘In Search of the Umma: The Social Imaginary and its Discontents’ and there was a lively Q&A and reception afterwards. A video of the event is on the SOAS Politics website here.

From left to right: Charles Tripp, Salwa Ismail, Reem Aboul-El-Fadl, James Piscatori, Nellida Fuccaro

In November 2016 and January 2017 respectively, Michael Buehler gave a talk at the University of Toronto’s Munir School of Global Affairs and The South Asia Seminar at Cambridge University on his new book ‘The Politics of Shari’a Law: Islamist Activists and the State in Democratizing Indonesia.’ At the University of Toronto, Michael also held two workshops for MSc and PhD Students on Subnational Authoritarianism and the Diffusion of Shari’a Laws in Local Politics respectively.

Mark Laffey contributed ‘Processing Liberal Stories of Transnational Governance’ to an International Studies Quarterly on-line symposium (‘Can Networks Govern?’) which discussed Deborah Avant’s article ‘Pragmatic Networks and Transnational Governance of Private Military and Security Services.’

PhD Candidate Lewis Turner was invited to present his research on Syrian men and the refugee response to the Gender and Sexuality Research Network at the University of Reading in November 2016. His presentation analysed the prevailing conceptions of vulnerability in the humanitarian sector and how they affect the distribution of material aid, the provision of services, and humanitarian-refugee interactions.

Manjeet Ramgotra participated on a roundtable Professional development session ‘Getting published at the interstices of the disciplines’: a conversation about interdisciplinarity, political theory, and area studies at the Britain and Ireland Association for Political Thought Conference at Oxford, 6-7 Jan. 2017. Dr Ramgotra chaired the Feminist Activist Roundtable discussion at the ESRC Feminizing Politics: Voice, Access and Accountability, Feminist Activism and Feminist Policy Conference held at Birkbeck University of London 16th January. She also presented her research on ‘Postcolonial Republicanism and the Revival of a Paradigm’ at our departmental seminar on 7 December.

In January, Enze Han gave a talk on the politics of state building in the borderland area between China and mainland Southeast Asia at Chiang Mai University in Thailand. He also gave the same talk at Chulalongkorn University in Thailand in February.

In February, doctoral student Catherine Craven presented her paper, ‘Assemblages and Practices beyond the State: An alternative framework for analysing global diaspora engagement’ at the conference ‘Mapping the Global Dimensions of Public Policy 6, held at McMaster University, Ontario (Canada).


Arshin Adib-Moghaddam gave a public lecture in Yerevan, Armenia upon invitation of the European Club at Yerevan State University. The event was sponsored by the EU affiliated European Club. He also gave a talk about cultural diplomacy and interactions between Europe and Iran at an event organised Institute of Cultural Dialogue in Berlin (with Hamid Dabashi and Amir Hassan Cheheltan and chaired by Ali Fathollah-Nejad).

Prof Adib-Moghaddam in Armenia

The Centre for Strategic Research of the Middle East dedicated a day workshop to Arshin Adib-Moghaddam’s work on the international politics of the Persian Gulf. Adib-Moghaddam’s contribution to the seminar was transmitted per video-call. The German Middle East Studies Association (DAVO) has dedicated a panel to Arshin Adib-Moghaddam’s ‘critical Iranian studies’ theory. This is the second panel that DAVO has dedicated to this approach. Papers can be submitted here.

On December 21, Dafydd Fell gave a talk titled ‘Developing Taiwan Studies Teaching Programmes: The experience of the School of Oriental and African Studies since 2000’ at the Department of Education, National Chungcheng University, Taiwan. On January 4, Dafydd Fell gave a lecture titled ‘Why I study and teach Taiwanese Politics’ at the Department of Journalism, Chinese Culture University, Taiwan.
In November Charles Tripp gave a talk on ‘Art and Political Contention in Tunisia’ at the Department of Middle Eastern Studies, KCL. He also took part in a panel on ‘Art as a Political Tool’ at a SOAS Alumnus event organised by Nour Saleh at SOAS, the inaugural event for the Art Breath x SOAS series.

Also in November, Charles Tripp took part in a panel discussing issues raised by the film ‘We are Many’ by Amir Amirani following its showing at SOAS. In December, he was a discussant and took part in a panel at the conference titled ‘The Precarious State of Sisi’ as part of the Middle East Centre Friday Seminar Series at the University of Oxford on 10 February 2017. Her presentation focused on the case of the Tiran and Sanafir Islands, with reflections on the sixth anniversary of Egypt’s January Revolution.

On November 21st, a book launch was hosted at SOAS for Matthew Eagleton-Pierce’s Neoliberalism: The Key Concepts (Routledge, 2016). The event featured the following speakers who engaged with the work: Andrew Lang, Professor of Law at the London School of Economics; Anastasia Nesvetailova, Professor in International Political Economy and Director of the City Political Economy Research Centre (CITYPERC) at City, University of London; and Alfredo Saad Filho, Professor of Political Economy at SOAS. Dr Michael Buehler served as the chair. Neoliberalism: The Key Concepts provides a critical guide to a vocabulary that has become globally dominant over the past forty years. The event was well-attended and featured conversations on the aims of the book, how to theorise and historicise neoliberalism, as well as potential futures of neoliberalism in light of Brexit and Trumpism.

On February 8, Matthew Eagleton-Pierce presented at the Political Economy Seminar Series at the London School of Economics. His paper was titled: ‘The Professionalisation of Protest: Expertise and Civil Society Groups in the Political Economy of Trade’.

Tat Yan Kong participated in the Global Diplomatic Forum event What Impact will the US Election Result Have on the US’ Global Engagement? on 12 December 2016. He gave a talk titled ‘Trump’s Foreign Policy and East Asia’ in which he discussed the South China Sea dispute and US alliances with Japan and South Korea.

Bhavna Dave gave a talk on ‘The Consequences of OBOR for Russia, Central Asia and South Asia’ at the India International Centre, New Delhi on 6 January 2017. In January, PhD student Adelie Chevee gave a talk on ‘Popular Intellectuals of the Syrian Revolution, 2011-2016: preliminary findings of a fieldwork in Beirut’ at the internal colloquium of the Orient-Institut Beirut.

Teaching fellow Dara Salam has given a talk titled ‘Public reason: A stranger in non-liberal and religious societies?’ in the Research Centres Seminar at the School of Law, Queen Mary, University of London. In his talk, Dara has argued that in these societies an inclusivist notion of public reason is in function that helps us to understand the complexity of legitimacy and justification in the pluralist non-liberal societies.

In October 2016, Rochana Bajpai travelled to UC Berkeley for a conference on Democracy and Religious Pluralism in Comparative Perspective. She presented a paper ‘Religious pluralism and the state in India: Towards a Typology’. In November, delivered a keynote lecture at the Concepta Research Seminar Comparing Concepts of Representation at Sciences Po and Paris 8. The lecture was titled ‘Representation and Difference: Revisiting the Indian Constituent Assembly debates 1946-50’.

Fiona Adamson delivered a lecture on ‘Migration and Security’ at the London School of Economics in February.

Rahul Rao participated in a panel discussion titled ‘Archival Troubles’ organised by Clare Hemmings at the London School of Economics on 25 January 2017.
Leslie Vinjamuri spoke on panels at the European Council on Foreign Relations about the US elections. She also moderated a discussion at Chatham House on the US elections and implications for international politics. She also gave a talk to fellows at the Queen Elizabeth II Academy for Leadership in International Affairs, Chatham House. She spoke about the strategies that civil society use to influence policy.

Ed Marques was on the keynote panel of a conference on extremism in Egypt in Jan. His presentation was on extremism as a global phenomenon.

First year doctoral student Ibrahim Nyei presented a paper at the Liberia Development Conference on Feb 1 in Monrovia. The Conference was organized by the United States Agency for International Development, Government of Sweden and the Government of Liberia. The Conference looked into an array of postwar governance reform and state-building issues in Liberia. Ibrahim presented on the political economy of political decentralization. His paper, which will be published in an anthology expected this year, looks at the structural opportunities, constraints and incentives for advancing political decentralization in Liberia.

Laleh Khalili also spoke to the fellows at the Queen Elizabeth II Academy for Leadership in International Affairs, Chatham House on the ethics of research. Laleh was also invited to participate in a panel on the Middle East at the 8th Annual Karachi Literature Festival, where she was joined by Anatol Lieven and Ambassador Ashraf Qazi in a lively discussion of contentious subjects.

Sanaa Alimia and Laleh Khalili at the Karachi Literature Festival

Current Research

In 2017, Research Associate Steve Heder will be a associated with the Siem Reap-based Center for Khmer Studies to do eleven months of research in Cambodia and Viet Nam on the topic ‘Khmer Rouge Success and its Viet Nam Relationships, 1970-1975.’ The research will use Khmer Rouge and Vietnamese Communist documents, 1970s Khmer Republic documents held by the Documentation Center of Cambodia in Phnom Penh, evidence generated since 2006 by the UN-assisted Khmer Rouge Tribunal, and interview materials gathered by Dr Heder and others since the 1970s. Dr Heder has also agreed with the Singapore-based Institute of Southeast Asian Studies to study research during 2017 on contemporary Cambodia-Viet Nam relations for a chapter to appear in the Institute’s publication Southeast Asian Affairs 2018. In addition, during 2017 Dr Heder will be acting as an associate producer for Australian filmmaker Jim Gerrand on a documentary in progress tentatively titled ‘The Samdech Techo Hun Sen Era.’

Dafydd Fell visited Taiwan between December 2016 and January 2017. During the first week he was hosted by the Department of Education, National Chungcheng
University, where apart from giving a public lecture, he also led a group discussion on thesis writing for students on the Education Leadership Programme. He also conducted a series of interviews on his ongoing project on small parties in Taiwan.

In the last months of active fieldwork before returning to teaching, Laleh Khalili travelled to migrant-sending countries in South Asia in order to interview migrants’ rights activists, Overseas Employment department administrators at Labour ministries and port operators where Gulf countries have invested in transport infrastructure. These travels took her to Mumbai and Kochi in India, Manila in the Philippines and Karachi in Pakistan. In most of those locales, Dubai Ports World has a major presence, though its investment and modalities of management are not without controversy.

In Karachi, Laleh Khalili had the good fortune to overlap with former doctoral student Sanaa Alimia and meet some of Sanaa’s own research interlocutors. Sanaa’s book, based on the doctoral thesis she completed in the Department is forthcoming with University of Pennsylvania Press.

In December, Yuka Kobayashi conducted fieldwork in China. She met governmental advisors, leading academics and professionals working on issues related to China’s Belt and Road Initiative, one of the priority issues under Xi’s leadership. During her visit, she visited the Fudan University, Shanghai Institute for International Affairs, East China Normal University, Shanghai Stock Exchange and met with resident scholars in the Shanghai Stock Exchange Research Institute to discuss Chinese investment and economic activity under the Belt and Road Initiative.

In January, Matt Nelson visited Dhaka, Bangladesh, as Co-PI of a research project regarding religion, politics, and violence funded by the US Institute of Peace. He will visit Dhaka again in April before travelling to Washington, DC for an academic/policy forum in August. The project will build on Matt’s previous work regarding the religious views and political practices of students enrolled in Bangladesh’s public and private-sector universities.

In December, Rochana Bajpai travelled to Hyderabad and Delhi to continue her research on Muslim representation in contemporary India.

In November 2016, Michael Buehler and Kristin Surak met with a delegation from Sophia University in Tokyo, Japan to discuss a dual-program master’s degree.

In January, Kristin Surak offered expert commentary on the Shell Corporation’s ‘Scenarios for Japan’s Energy Future.’ She also participated on an international panel on ‘Nationalism, National Identity, and the Interregnum’ with Eiji Oguma held at the Asakusa Gallery in Tokyo.

Leslie Vinjamuri spoke to students at Harris Westminster Sixth Form about the Future of the International Liberal Order.

Dr Zaad Mahmood met up with Professor Lawrence Saez at the British High Commission in India’s trade promotion party at the Royal Turf Club in Kolkata, India. Dr Mahmood was Professor Saez’s first PhD student; and he is now an assistant professor of political science at the prestigious Presidency University in Kolkata.
In January, Doctoral student Ini Dele-Adeodeji was invited to participate in a one-day brainstorming session on radicalisation, on the 26th of January, convened by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs for its research arms in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. During the session, held in Berlin, Ini shared findings from his notes taken during fieldwork in north-eastern Nigeria and interviews conducted with members of the Boko Haram sect.

Arshin Adib-Moghaddam was amongst 76 leading national security experts and academics that signed a letter to Donald Trump urging him to keep the Iran nuclear deal. On November 29, 2016 Dr Dafydd Fell and Chang Biyu took their Taiwan Politics class to the Taipei Representative Office where they had a Question and Answer session with Taiwan’s former foreign minister David Lin. In January, Professor Charles Tripp gave a talk on ‘Tunisia: from activist public to the re-founding of the Republic’ at a CAABU event at the House of Commons. In January, Yuka Kobayashi gave a testimonial to the UK Parliament on UK-China relations. The UK post-Brexit vote has been entering into very uncertain times; and with EU investment in UK infrastructure being withdrawn, and China is seen as an alternative. Xi Jinping’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) launched in 2013 focusses on investment in infrastructure which is appealing to the UK. The central pillar in BRI has been connectivity and networks, so it will be interesting how Brexit will alter the perception of the UK in China. Building on past research on China’s economic diplomacy, and work on China’s trade and investment, her testimonial covered her recent findings from her fieldwork in China (December 2017) where she conducted interviews with leading scholars, governmental advisors and professionals.

Yuka Kobayashi was invited by China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs to take part in the UK-China track 2 dialogue on UK-China relations post Brexit. This was hosted at Fudan University in December 2016. Kobayashi gave a talk on UK-China relations under China’s Belt and Road Initiative; where interesting opportunities and challenges existed for both countries particularly in the area of investment and development for infrastructure and networks.

Seyed Ali Alavi, final year PhD candidate commented on the World-Weekly on Iran Air deal and former president Rafsanjani’s funeral. He was interviewed by Radio Sputnik on Trump’s presidential obligations regarding international agreements.

Manjeet Rangotra published a blog-post on ‘Dysfunctional democracy and the fall of liberal values’ on the PSA Women’s Specialist Group website 5 Dec 2016 which then was republished on the LSE British Politics and Policy blog as “Trump and Brexit: the fall of liberal values?”

Rahul Rao curated a symposium on Cynthia Weber’s Queer International Relations: Sovereignty, Sexuality and the Will to Knowledge on The Disorder of Things blog.

Rahul Rao wrote a blog post titled ‘Citizens of Nowhere’ exploring what might be at stake in understandings of cosmopolitanism and citizenship in migrant and refugee activism in the aftermath of the Brexit referendum.

In January, Meera Sabaratnam published a comment piece regarding the controversy over decolonising the curriculum on the SOAS blog.

The comments of Arshin Adib-Moghaddam were published in China, Norway, Turkey and in Iran. He gave several exclusive interviews that were published on the front page of the Tehran Times including about the death of Fidel Castro and the election of Donald Trump. He also commented to Times Higher Education about the Muslim ban in the United States.


Professor Adib-Moghaddam also featured in a major BBC Four documentary on the lavish party thrown by the Shah of Iran in 1971, which marked the break between the so-called ‘king of kings’ and the people of Iran he reigned over. ‘Decadence and Downfall: The Shah of Iran’s Ultimate Party’ focuses on the 1971 celebration of 2,500 years of the Persian monarchy where money was no object. The documentary has been translated into several languages and is now being aired in Europe.

In response to the US election, Kristin Surak published an op-ed in the Washington Post titled ‘Serious About Relocating from Trump’s America? Here are Your Exit Options.’ And in December she published the essay ‘Kosmopoliten: Der Handel mit Staatsbürgerschaften also globales Geschäftsmodell’ [Cosmopolites: The Trade in Citizenship as a Global Business Model] in Germany’s foremost literary magazine, Letter International. Both texts build from her current research on the spread of citizenship by investment programs.

Media and Blogs

In January, Michael Buehler’s research on the Politics of Shari’a Law was discussed in the Asia Times ‘Political Islam as Populist Appeal’. Also in January, Michael’s research was discussed in Turkish media reports on how the rise of Islamic populism has triggered Islamic tourism to Southeast Asia.
Kristin Surak was interviewed by PrimeTime FM Radio, Seoul on Shinzo Abe’s visit to Pearl Harbor.

Two students from the Department’s course Taiwan’s Politics and Cross-Strait Relations have recently published articles. Liam Han published “The 1992 Consensus: A Failed Doctrine for the KMT” (2 January, 2017) and ‘Dismounting the Tiger: Constraints and Opportunities for a New Cross-Strait Framework’ (2 February, 2017) with the blog Taiwan Sentinel. On February 3 Matt Taylor published ‘Bilateral Cooperation, a New Diplomatic Model for Taiwan?’ for the News Lens International.

In November, Yuko Kobayashi appeared on BBC world service to be interviewed on the impact of the Trump presidency on the Asia – Pacific. Commenting on Trump’s interesting manifesto regarding the Asia-Pacific region, she covered the impact on US-China relations particularly in respect to trade and economics. Kobayashi also discussed the issues regarding Japan and its US military bases, especially in regards to security for global and regional security.

In November, Xinhua News quoted Phil Clark on the possibility of a mass African withdrawal from the International Criminal Court; The East African quoted Phil Clark on Rwanda’s push against dissidents based in neighbouring countries; the Words in the Bucket website interviewed Phil about pre-election instability in the Democratic Republic of Congo; Phil was interviewed by Deutsche Welle about the resignation of the DRC prime minister and cabinet; Phil was a guest on BBC Newsday, discussing the withdrawal from the International Criminal Court by Russia and various African states; Radio Netherlands Worldwide quoted Phil on Uganda applauding South Africa’s withdrawal from the ICC; The East African interviewed Phil Clark about France’s harbouring of Rwandan genocide suspects; did the Monocle24 news review (32:24) on Tuesday, focusing on the Catholic Church’s apology for its role in the Rwandan genocide and the fake resignation by Robert Mugabe; Voice of America interviewed Phil on the possible exodus of African states from the International Criminal Court; Phil Clark was on Radio France International, Deutsche Welle and France24 discussing Rwanda’s investigation into France’s role during the 1994 genocide; a panellist on Monocle24’s Midori House programme, discussing negotiations with terrorists and the global Trump effect.

In December, Phil Clark did the Monocle24 news review (25:17) on the Colombia peace deal and Rwanda’s investigation into France’s role during the 1994 genocide; Deutsche Welle (10:25) interviewed Phil on France’s denial of involvement in Rwandan genocide; Newsweek quoted Phil Clark on the role of the Catholic Church in DR Congo’s protest movement; was a guest on Turkish Radio and Television’s ‘World Insight’ (05:49) programme, discussing the challenges facing the International Criminal Court in Africa; IRIN News interviewed Phil Clark on the trial of LRA rebel commander Dominic Ongwen in The Hague; The East African interviewed Phil about Rwanda’s investigation into France’s role in the 1994 genocide.

In January, Monocle24 (25:06) interviewed Phil Clark about the reparations case brought against Germany for the Herero genocide in Namibia; Phil was quoted by the Wall Street Journal about the Catholic Church’s political mediation in DR Congo; NewsHub quoted Phil about Rwandan genocide suspects being tracked down in New Zealand; the International Business Times interviewed Phil Clark about the death of exiled King Kigeli in Rwanda; Phil Clark was interviewed by Newsweek on Trump’s likely policies toward Africa; Phil did the Monocle24 news review on US/Israel relations, The Gambian presidency and Eritrean refugees; the New Internationalist quoted Phil Clark on the continuing crisis in Burundi; Phil Clark was a guest on Monocle24’s Midori House with Mary Dejevsky from the Independent, discussing Article 50, the Syrian peace talks, Uganda’s approach to South Sudanese refugees and right wing politics in the Netherlands.

In February, Phil Clark published this Rwanda briefing on the Africa Research Institute website, as part of a new interactive guide on African elections; Radio France International interviewed Phil about the death of Congolese opposition leader, Etienne Tshisekedi; The Gulf Times quoted Phil on the renewal of the M23 rebellion in eastern Congo; the International Business Times quoted Phil Clark on the threat of a mass African Union withdrawal from the International Criminal Court; Newsweek quoted Phil about the death of Congolese opposition leader, Etienne Tshisekedi; Phil Clark was a panellist on BBC Radio 4’s ‘Moral Maze’ programme, discussing whether truth and justice need to be sacrificed for peace and reconciliation in places such as Northern Ireland, Colombia and Rwanda.


In February, Charles Tripp published a piece ‘Academia and Conflict in the Middle East and North Africa’ on the British Academy Blog.


Laleh Khalili wrote a piece for Truthout on the ‘Muslim Ban’ in the US.

Leslie Vinjamuri published two opinion pieces for CNN (online). The first was published the day after the presidential elections and discussed the implications of a Trump presidency for US leadership, and a second piece evaluated the implications of the US raid in Yemen. She also recorded a radio interview for The Economist Radio, and two radio interviews for Newsweek on Trump’s presidency and its implications for the world. Additionally, Dr Vinjamuri was interviewed about various

Leslie was also interviewed by John Humphrys on the BBC’s Radio 4, Today programme. She also gave multiple interviews on television and radio including BBC’s Newsnight, CNN, BBC News, BBC World Service, BBC Daily Politics, BBC World News, Bloomberg TV, Al Jazeera, Sky TV, Channel 4 TV, Channel 5, Monocle, Voice of America and Radio 5 live on topics in US foreign policy and politics since the November elections including the US-UK relationship, US sanctions against Russia, Trump’s ban on immigration and refugees. Leslie was on Radio 4 PM throughout the Presidential inauguration to discuss the speech, the planned protests, and international reactions to Trump’s election.

Announcements

On November 24th, Alastair Fraser and his partner Corin Throsby took delivery of their first child, in relatively dramatic circumstances, since she almost made it out in the hospital car park. They were so confused they took eight weeks to name her before coming up with ‘Hazel’ and she’s cheered up since getting a name, recently learning to laugh, which makes her significantly better company.

Our librarian, Victoria Bird returned from maternity leave on Monday 13 February 2017. Please direct all library order requests, reading lists and other library-related fun her way once again - her email address is vb18@soas.ac.uk.

In Memoriam

The Department mourns the loss of our recent doctoral student, Antonia Raissi.

Rahul Rao remembers Antonia: I first got to know Antonia when she enrolled in my International Security class in the Centre for International Studies & Diplomacy at SOAS. She was a bit older than most of the students and had traveled and seen things that most people wouldn’t in a lifetime, much of this on the back of a career in journalism. I learned, for example, that Antonia had conducted what might have been the last interview that Ahmed Shah Massoud gave before he was killed by Osama bin Laden’s agents in Afghanistan in 2001. I was thrilled when Antonia broached the idea of doing a PhD, which she began shortly after her MA under the supervision of Mark Laffey with myself as second supervisor. Antonia wanted to think about how indigenous understandings of the environment might enrich Marxist conceptualisations of geopolitics. She had a particular interest in Bolivia, but she was keen to use her knowledge of struggles over resources there to speak to larger questions. Her initial drafts and outlines were impressive and almost impossibly ambitious: there was little that didn’t interest her.

I became aware of Antonia’s diagnosis only later, but I didn’t know how serious it was till I received a devastating email from her in November 2014 saying that she was dying. Among the many sentiments that she expressed in that message was the following: ‘Finding SOAS was a life changer after the loneliness of being constantly outraged as a journalist.’ Antonia spent the last few months of her life writing a book for her two sons. It’s called Blood & Chocolate, taking its name from a moment that she describes in the opening pages, when her older toddler had had a minor accident and ran around the hospital waiting room, not unhappily, with blood and chocolate smeared over his face! Antonia wrote this book primarily for her children and for the adults in their lives. But it is a work that will strike any reader as breath-taking in its scope and vision - profoundly urgent, moving and humane in its meditation on the many issues that interested her, meticulous in its attention to detail (down to the names of trees and vegetation that she would have liked her children to know), and more ambitious than any doctoral thesis would have been. Ultimately it is a testament, alternately despairing and hopeful, about the kind of world that she would like her children to inherit.
Antonia is survived by her husband Esfand, and her sons George and Hugo. She left many of her books to the SOAS library.

Doctoral student Sruthi Muraleedharan writes: Antonia was one of the first few friends I made in my PhD cohort (2012). She was extremely warm and enthusiastic with a never-ending energy to learn and grow intellectually. Her journalistic career and experiences being in the field made for really engaging conversations in our usual hangout - that small cafe at Russell Square park were the three of us- Antonia, Ed Marques and me- would just talk and share life! For a fearless life made out of incredible struggles it’s a loss. She will be truly missed.

Are you a graduating Politics student or one of our alumni? Let us know what you will be doing or have done after graduation. Email Laleh Khalili at lk4@soas.ac.uk!

The Department of Politics and International Studies is one of the most cutting edge politics departments in the United Kingdom, and uniquely positioned for the study of the politics of Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. There are at present nearly 500 students studying for degrees (BA, Certificate, MSc and MPhil/PhD) in the Department. The Department also hosts visiting students who are here as part of their work towards degrees in other countries (notably the United States, EU, Korea and Japan).

Apart from providing students with a firm grounding in the discipline, the department has particular strengths in the following areas:

- Regional Politics: Middle East, East Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and Africa
- International Relations: IR theory, security, human rights, transnational justice, international migration, IPE
- Comparative Politics: comparative political sociology, comparative political economy, comparative political thought
- Political Theory: political Islam, non-western political thought, multiculturalism

The current officers of the department are:

- Head of Department
  Dr Mark Laffey
- Undergraduate Admissions Tutor
  Dr Rochana Bajpai
  Dr Matthew Eagleton-Pierce
- Undergraduate Programme Convenors
  Dr Michael Buehler BA Politics
  Professor Arshin Adib-Moghaddam BA International Relations Term 1
  Dr Vineet Thakur BA International Relations Terms 2 & 3
- Undergraduate Tutors
  Dr Carlo Bonura (Student Welfare Tutor)
  Dr Reem Abo-El-Fadl (First Year Tutor)
  Dr Yuka Kobayashi (Second Year Tutor)
  Dr Hagar Kotef (Third Year Tutor)
- Postgraduate Tutor
  Dr Dafydd Fell
- Postgraduate Admissions Tutors/Programme Convenors
  Dr Phil Clark (MSc African Politics)
  Dr Dafydd Fell (MSc Asian Politics)
  Dr Kerem Nisancioglu (MSc International Politics)
  Prof Charles Tripp (MSc Middle East Politics)
  Dr Yuka Kobayashi (MSc Politics of China)
  Dr Tai Yan Kong Terms 1 & 3 (MSc State, Society and Development)
  Dr Dafydd Fell Term 2 (MSc State, Society and Development)
  Dr Leslie Vinjamuri Term 1 & 3 (MSc Conflict, Rights and Justice)
  Dr Phil Clark Term 2 (MSc Conflict, Rights and Justice)
  Dr Matthew Nelson (MSc Comparative Political Thought)
  Dr Phil Clark (MRes in Politics with a Language)
- Research Tutor
  Dr Alastair Fraser
- Research Admissions Tutor
  Dr Hagar Kotef

This newsletter is produced three times per academic year by Laleh Khalili. Send any announcements or notices to lk4@soas.ac.uk.

On Facebook, you can find and befriend us at SOASPolitics