

Politics and International Studies Newsletter

Introductions

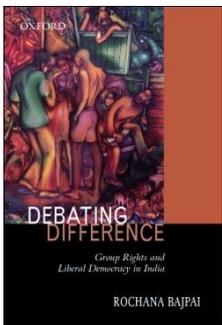


A note of introduction from **Caroline Strickson**:

“Hello everyone, my name is **Caroline Strickson** and I work for the Department in Academic Support, and here is a little bit about me. Before I started at SOAS in 2008 I worked as a Teaching Assistant in my hometown of Bexhill. As a student I studied English Literature with Creative Writing at Kent, and this is where my passion lies. Outside of work (if there is such a place!) I love cooking, watching anything sci-fi, reading fiction and writing. My main ambition in life is to become a published author and see more of the world.”

In January **Hardina Ohlendorf** began work as the Taiwan Studies Teaching Fellow at the Centre of Taiwan Studies. This is a seven month maternity post while Monique Chu is away. Ms Ohlendorf is a final year doctoral student in the Politics Department supervised by Julia Strauss. She will be teaching on the Politics Department's undergraduate and postgraduate Taiwan Politics courses and giving administrative support to the Centre of Taiwan Studies.

New Publications

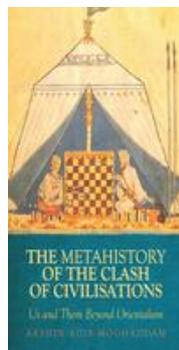


Rochana Bajpai's book, *Debating Difference: Group Rights and Liberal Democracy in India* (Oxford University Press, 2011) is now out. Using landmark Indian constitutional and legislative debates on minority rights and quotas, Rochana Bajpai develops a model for interpreting group rights that hinges on the interplay between five principal normative concepts—secularism, democracy, social justice, national

unity, and development. Tracing the shifting meanings of these values over time, this book demonstrates that liberal and democratic concepts are more sophisticated and widely shared in the Indian polity than is commonly believed. It also identifies the limits of Western-centric accounts of multiculturalism. Bajpai establishes the significance of political rhetoric for explanations of policy shifts and political change. Highlighting the role of argument and debate, *Debating Difference* elaborates a new approach to a crucial issue for liberal democracies today, how to reconcile the demands of group equality and civic unity.

David Taylor has edited a four-volume collection of articles, entitled *Islam in South Asia* (Routledge, 2011).

Mark Laffey's “Beyond Belief: Ideas and Symbolic Technologies in the Study of International Relations” has been reprinted in Walter Carlsnaes and Stefano Guzzini (eds.) *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 4 volumes (Sage, 2011).



Advanced copies of **Arshin Adib-Moghaddam's** latest book *A Metahistory of the Clash of Civilisations: Us and Them Beyond Orientalism* (Hurst, Columbia University Press, 2011) have now been distributed. The book will be available in all major bookstores and online in the United Kingdom in February and in the United States in March/April 2011.

Laleh Khalili's “Gendered Practices of Counterinsurgency” is now available online at *Review of International Studies* and will come out in paper later this year.

Tarak Barkawi and **Mark Laffey's** piece, “The postcolonial moment in security studies”, appears in the list of most-cited articles in *Review of International Studies* over the past two years, now available free as part of the journal's advertising. It is also the most recently published piece on the list.

<http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=online&aid=440693&fulltextType=RA&fileId=S0260210506007054>

Research Centres, Groups, and Networks

Centre for the International Politics of Conflict, Rights and Justice (CCRJ) hosted the second in a series of collaborative workshops on “The Rise and Fall of Humanitarianism”. This is part of a collaboration between SOAS/CCRJ, the Munk School at the University of Toronto, and George Washington University.

The **CCRJ** hosted Professor Elazar Barkan, Director of the Institute for the Study of Human Rights, Columbia University to speak on history, violence, and redress.

CCRJ hosted together with the European Council on Foreign Relations a small meeting of human rights funders to discuss differences in the context of human rights funding, practice, and policy in Europe and America. Discussion focused on the role that questions of impact play in human rights funding, and on the political context of human rights funding. This is part of a CCRJ research project led by **Leslie Vinjamuri** that is investigating how questions of impact are integrated into the practice of transitional justice and human rights.

On 17-18 December 2010 the Centre for Political Ideologies of the Department of Politics and International Relations at Oxford hosted the second meeting of the **SOAS-Oxford Comparative Political Thought** group. The workshop was jointly organised by Professor Michael Freeden (Mansfield College, Oxford) and members of the Department of Politics at SOAS—**Dr Rochana Bajpai, Dr Matt Nelson** and **Professor Charles Tripp**.

Professor Freeden opened the workshop with a set of very stimulating remarks regarding the parameters of comparative political thought as an evolving subfield within the discipline. Dr Carlo Bonura from the Centre for Political Ideologies at Oxford presented a paper entitled “Against Incommensurability: Comparison and Relations of Political Thought”. Three members of the SOAS Politics department gave talks:

Rochana Bajpai on approaches to comparative political thought and debates on affirmative action in India and Malaysia; **Phil Clark** on conceptions and practices of justice in the African Great Lakes region, and **Matt Nelson** on Islam and the "Ideology of Pakistan" in the context of debates regarding democracy.

The event coincided with the worst blizzard in years, so some of the twenty-five people signed up for the workshop were unable to attend. Nevertheless, the workshop was a great success.

In December **Dafydd Fell** visited the Shungye Museum of Formosan Aborigines to complete negotiations for a cooperation agreement with the **Centre of Taiwan Studies**. This £39,000 grant will allow the creation of a new two-year research post at SOAS to study British church archives regarding Taiwan's Aborigines from the 19th century.

The **London Migration Research Group (LMRG)** held seminars by Professor Christian Joppke on January 25th at the LSE and by Professor Nadje al Ali at UCL on February 8th.

Appointments and Awards

The **Department of Politics and International Studies** has been awarded an ESRC studentship in the new Bloomsbury Consortium ESRC Doctoral Training Centre. The award recognizes the quality of the research environment and PhD training in the department. The studentship will be administered jointly with the Birkbeck Department of Politics. The studentship will be awarded from 2011-12 and will be advertised shortly. If you are interested in learning more, please be in touch with the Research Tutor **Laleh Khalili** lk4@soas.ac.uk.

Fiona Adamson has been appointed associate editor of the *Journal of International Relations and Development*.

In January **Dafydd Fell** was awarded €14,000 from the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation to hold the second international workshop on Migration to and From Taiwan. This will be held in London in June 2011 and is a collaborative project with Chinghsing and Chungcheng Universities.

In January **Dafydd Fell** was also awarded €30,750 by the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation to manage the European Association of Taiwan Studies annual conferences for a further three years. This is the third three-year grant the centre has received for this project. In addition to funds to run the conferences, extra money was allocated for a new Young

Scholar's Prize to be given on an annual basis to the best conference paper by a scholar not yet in a tenured academic post.

Dafydd Fell is also a Co-Director in another Chiang Ching-kuo award of €25,000 announced in January. This is the European Taiwan Studies Lecture Series, which is a collaborative project between SOAS, Heidelberg, Edinburgh, Tübingen and Bochum Universities. The first three-year grant was from 2007-2010 and now is being extended for a further three years. The grant allows outstanding Taiwanese scholars to visit Europe and lecture at the partner universities and SOAS Taiwan Studies team gives short courses in German universities.

Former doctoral student and senior teaching fellow **Sossie Kasbarian** has started her new appointment post-doctoral fellowship on Middle Eastern minorities at the Centre for the Advanced Study of the Arab World at the University of Edinburgh.

Doctoral student **Toby Matthiesen** has been awarded the Abdullah Al-Mubarak Research Fellowship in Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies at Pembroke College, Cambridge. He will begin his post-doc in October.

Doctoral student **Thanos Petouris** was appointed a member of Council of the British-Yemeni Society, with the task of coordinating the activities of the student members of the Society.

Doctoral Student **Mehmet Ekinci** was awarded the Department's scholarship to attend the Institute for Qualitative and Multi-Method Research training programme in Syracuse. The programme will be held over the course of two weeks in June.

Department of Politics and International Studies has awarded Research Cluster Funding in the following areas:

1. International Politics of Social Change (Tom Young, Dave Harris, Felix Marco Conteh)
2. Comparative Politics of Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity (Steve Hopgood, Leslie Vinjamuri, Steve Heder, Phil Clark)
3. Comparative Political Thought (Charles Tripp, Rochana Bajpai, Matt Nelson)
4. Contemporary Debates in Religion and Politics (Leslie Vinjamuri, Rochana Bajpai, Salwa Ismail, Corinna Mullin, Steve Hopgood, Arshin Adib-Moghadam, Matt Nelson)

Awards have been made for amounts of £800-£1200 and will be supporting a range of activities that include research assistance, writing, travel, funding applications, workshops, visiting speakers, new courses, and a research centre.

Dr Sara Kutchesfahani defended her PhD thesis on epistemic communities and nuclear non-proliferation policy in November 2010 and has recently taken up a two-year post-doctoral fellowship at Los Alamos National Laboratory in the US. Sara was jointly enrolled in the SOAS and UCL Politics PhD programs, was supervised by **Dr Fiona Adamson** and received her degree from UCL.

Presentations and Conferences

On 4 February, the **Department** organised an event on "The Jasmine Revolution: Causes and Consequences for Tunisia and the Region". The event was moderated by **Corinna Mullin** and covered a broad-range of opinions and analyses, including international, political, socio-economic, media and human rights perspectives. Speakers included: Said Ferjani, (Founding Member of the Tunisian An-Nahda Party), Dr Noureddine Miladi (Senior Lecturer in Media & Sociology at University of Northampton and founder and managing editor of *Journal of Arab & Muslim Media Research*), Muhamad Ali Harrath (CEO, *Islam Channel*) and Nadim Mahjoub (Tunisian Political Refugee and International Activist).

Stephen Hopgood and **Leslie Vinjamuri** presented their paper "Faith in Markets" (part of an edited book project under review with Oxford University Press) at a Workshop held by the Overseas Development Institute on 'The Humanitarian Space'. Participants from the ICRC, UNICEF, Humanitarian Forum, British Red Cross, Save the Children, MSF and several other NGOs participated.

Leslie Vinjamuri participated in a day long working group "Sandpit" on post-transitional justice at the Transitional Justice Institute, University of Ulster.

Bhavna Dave presented "Kazakhstan's Language Programme 2011-2020: Transforming Symbols into Substance?" at a workshop on *Identity Construction in Media and Public in Eastern Europe*, University of Giessen, Germany (17-18 November) and on 3 November gave a talk to the SOAS Centre of Migration and Diaspora Studies on "Legality and inclusion of foreign labour migrants in Kazakhstan's urban space."

Felix Berenskoetter gave two talks at Oxford University, on 26 November he spoke to the Rothermere American Institute, on "International Friendship as Empowerment"; on 1 February he spoke to Oxford International Relations Society on "Conceptualizing Power in a Changing World".

On 2 November, **Rahul Rao** presented his research on homophobia in Uganda at the Oxford Transnational & Global History Seminar entitled "Closing the Borders? Exploring the Limits of Global Connection." On 11 and 12 November, he presented a paper titled "Postcolonial cosmopolitanism: making place for nationalism" at the Nathanson Centre seminar series on *Legal Philosophy between State and Transnationalism* at Osgoode Hall Law School, York University, Toronto. On 13-15 December, Rahul Rao was a keynote speaker at a conference on *Democratization and Cultural Diversity: Contestation and Consensus in EU and India*, organised by the Centre for Comparative European Union Studies, IIT Madras, India; and in December, he also spoke on a panel at the launch of *Law Like Love: a queer perspective of law in India* at the Law & Social Sciences Research Network Conference, Pune.

Matt Nelson provided the opener (paper) for a PSA-sponsored conference in December at the LSE entitled "Elites, Mass Publics, and the Political in South Asia".

On 15 November, Simona Vittorini delivered a lecture at the Centre for Indian Study in Africa (CISA) of the University of Witwatersrand. The lecture was titled "Slow but Steady like the Elephant: India's Rising Engagements in Africa" and was sponsored by the SOAS Academics Visit Africa pilot project managed by the SOAS Centre of African Studies.

Rochana Bajpai presented a paper, "Secularism and Minority Rights in India" at a conference on *Provincializing Secularism: Minorities and the Regulation of Religion* held on 4 February at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee. The conference is sponsored by Vanderbilt University's Asian Studies Program, Jewish Studies Program and Department of History and explores the nature of religion and secularism in the post-modern era.

In December, **Arshin Adib-Moghaddam** delivered a lecture at the University of Jordan in Amman upon invitation of the Centre for Strategic Studies and the Danish-Jordanian University Cooperation. In early January 2011, he was invited to participate in the first preparatory symposium for a "Conference for Security and Co-operation in the Middle East" in Bad Boll, Germany. The symposium brought together representatives, scholars and NGOs from core countries in the region, including Israel, Palestine, Iran, Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Kuwait.

On November 18, 2010 **Dafydd Fell** gave a paper titled "Tracking and

Explaining Legislative Violence in post Transition Taiwan" at the *Disruptive Democracy: Analysing legislative protest in contemporary legislatures* workshop, University of Warwick. The event was part of the *Gendered Ceremony and Ritual in Parliament Programme*, funded by the Leverhulme Trust.

On December 5 **Dafydd Fell** gave a presentation on book publishing at the Taiwanese Political Science Association annual conference. He gave a lecture titled Taiwan Studies in Europe on three occasions at National Chungshing University, Academia Sinica's Institute of Sociology, and Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He also gave a paper titled "Critical Elections in Taiwan" at a conference on *Prospects for Cross Strait Relations* held at the Institute of Political Science, National Sun Yat Sen University.

On 19 November **Professor Charles Tripp** gave a St Antony's Middle East Centre talk on "The Art of Resistance in the Middle East" as part of his ongoing work on both the politics of resistance and performative politics in the region" and on 24 November, he gave a lecture to the Association for the Study of Ethnicity and Nationalism at LSE on "Problems of Multinationalism and Nation-Building after Regime Change in Iraq". On 7 December, **Professor Tripp** gave a lecture to the Political Philosophy Society at Imperial College on "The Future of Iraq after American Withdrawal".

Lawrence Saez and **Zaad Mahmood** (PhD candidate, Politics) made presentations at the *India – Global Player* international conference held in Lisbon on 10 December 2010. Dr Saez spoke on quantitative measures of India's national power and Mr Mahmood presented a paper on the determinants of India's labour reforms. The event was hosted by the Institute of Oriental Studies, Lisbon Technical University (Universidade Técnica de Lisboa)

Dafydd Fell visited Taiwan from December 3, 2010 to January 6, 2011, where he was a Visiting Fellow at the Research Center for Humanities and Social Sciences, National Chungshing University, Taichung. On December 11-12 he co-organized an International Workshop on Migration to and From Taiwan with Chungshing and Chungcheng Universities. The event gathered together experts on migration issues from the field of political science, literature, social work, social welfare, anthropology, gender studies, education and sociology.

Phil Clark gave two keynote lectures at conferences in The Hague and

Brussels, examining the politics and anthropology of law in transitional settings. He also launched his recent book on Rwanda at seminars in Birmingham, Cape Town, Oxford, Galway and Amsterdam.

In November, **Laleh Khalili** organised a panel at the annual meeting of Middle East Studies Association in San Diego on "The Liberal Way of War: Torture, Humanized Security, and Counterinsurgency." Other panel members (Lisa Hajjar and Paul Amar of University of California and Dan Neep of Exeter) presented on "The Liberal Ideology of Torture", "The Crisis of the 'Human-Security State' in Egypt" and "Seeing like a Counter-Insurgent in French Mandate Syria" while Laleh Khalili herself presented "Remaking Civilians in Carceral Counterinsurgencies: Falluja and Gaza."

On 1 and 2 November, doctoral student **Thanos Petouris** participated at a conference organised by Chatham House on Yemen (Political Dynamics and the International Policy Framework), the aim of which was to assess Yemen's economic challenges and its progress on governance reforms in the context of the country's transition to a post-oil economy. Also at Chatham House he took part at a private workshop on "Accountability and Political Inclusion in Yemen", where a group of Yemeni political and civil society actors were brought together with academics, NGOs, and policy makers from the EU, US, and the GCC, to facilitate dialogue between these groups and encourage the generation of new policy ideas.

On 29 November, **Professor Stephen Chan** presented "Beastly, Bestial, Bandido or Brigand: Mugabe of Zimbabwe, his Antiquarian and Latest Manoeuvres" at *Trinity College Historical Society*, Cambridge. On 20 January, Professor Chan spoke on "Elections and Democracy in Africa" at *The Africa Centre*, London. On 25 January, Professor Chan was a panellist at the *IDEAS Centre, London School of Economics*, on "Experiencing War".

Doctoral student **Priya Kumar** presented "Transnational Diaspora Linkages: A Comparative Analysis of Diaspora Networks", at the *Questioning Transnationalism: Culture, Politics & Media* conference, held at Royal Holloway College, University of London, on 17 December 17 2010.

Doctoral Student **Toby Matthiesen** delivered the paper "Centre-Periphery Relations in Saudi Arabia: The Case of the Eastern Province" at a pre-Conference workshop at the Gulf Research Unit of the University of

Oslo, 7 October 2010 and at the Panel on "Centre-Periphery Relations in the Gulf" organised by Reidar Visser at the Middle East Studies Association Annual Meeting in San Diego, USA, in November 2010.

Professor Stephen Chan presented "Black Majoritarianism, democratic protocols, and interested public administration in South Africa and Zimbabwe" at the *African History and Politics Seminar*, at Oxford University on 15 November.

Lawrence Saez led an REF workshop for the Department on December 6th, in which he presented extended analysis of the last round of RAE submissions, and the Department as a whole discussed strategies of submission for 2013.

The **International Relations Speaker Series** hosted a lecture, 'Assessing the Nuclear Threat' by **Dr Robert Gallucci**, President of the MacArthur Foundation.

Rahul Rao hosted a talk and video screening by **Professor Cynthia Weber** entitled "I am an American" on February 7th as part of the same series.

In the last session of the Politics Department seminar in Autumn term we heard from **Dr Carlo Bonura**. Dr Bonura is based in the Centre for Political Ideologies in Oxford. The title of his talk was "Reconsidering the Problem-Space of Islam and Democracy: Liberalism, Geopolitics and the Liberal Islam debates in Southeast Asia". In the current term, the Department seminar series has so far featured three presentations. **Dr Kristin Bakke** (Lecturer in Politics and International Relations, UCL) spoke on the impact of transnational insurgents on the objectives and tactics used by Chechen separatists.

Professor David Chandler (Professor of International Relations, University of Westminster) explored shifting conceptions of international state-building over the last twenty years and issues of self-critique within liberal democratic societies.

Professor Brandon Simms (Professor in the History of International Relations, University of Cambridge) presented "The Geopolitics of Anti-Slavery."

On Thursday 27 January 2011 journalist **Nir Rosen** gave a presentation to an overspill audience, titled "From Beirut to Baghdad & Kabul". **Professor Charles Tripp** chaired the session.

On 13 December, **Laleh Khalili** chaired a book launch where former Guantanamo Bay detainee **Moazzam Begg** spoke to **Asim Qureshi** about

the latter's book, *Rules of the Game*, on rendition in the War on Terror.

Upcoming Politics Department Seminars are scheduled on

16 February (4-6, Room 4418) by Dr **Patrick Jackson** (Associate Professor of International Relations, American University) on "The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations";

9 March (4-6, Room 4418) by Dr **François Tanguay-Renaud** (Assistant Professor in Law, Osgoode Hall Law School, York University) on "Basic Challenges to Governance in Emergencies"; and

16 March (3-5, room 4418) by Dr **Philip Roessler** (Research Fellow in Politics, St. Peter's College, University of Oxford) and **Harry Verhoeven** (DPhil Candidate in Politics, University of Oxford) on "Point of No Return: Kabila, Rwanda and the Internal Dynamics of Africa's Great War".

Current Research

Doctoral student **Sami Everett** is currently being hosted by the *Langues et Cultures du Nord de l'Afrique* ("LaCNAD") research team at INALCO, *Langues O*, in Paris. Conducting fieldwork on the symbolism of specific urban sites of North African Jewish and Muslim inter-relations he will further develop his "parallel lives" project by following pilgrims to their North African birthplace later this year. Sami's research is being undertaken with the assistance of a grant awarded by The Leverhulme Trust.

Outreach

The Department has been awarded a Knowledge Transfer grant by the Research and Enterprise Office. **Poul-Erik Christensen** joined the Department as a Knowledge Transfer Consultant on February 1, 2011. He will be conducting a study of the how academics and students in the Department interact with NGOs, government offices, think tanks and the private sector. Welcome, Poul-Erik!

Matt Nelson was invited to write the 2006-2010 assessment of political freedom in Pakistan for Freedom House (Series: *Countries at the Crossroads*); this will be out in a couple of months. He, together with **David Taylor**, was invited to participate in a small-group discussion

regarding Pakistan with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in December ("Future Challenges Facing Pakistan").

Fiona Adamson participated in the Research Councils UK's Global Uncertainties Strategic Plan Consultation on 31 January.

On 1 February, **Professor Stephen Chan** briefed Xa Min, Political Counsellor, Chinese Embassy in London on "The Egyptian Uprising and the US Response".

As an elected member of the World Economic Forum (WEF)'s India regional council, **Lawrence Saez** had the opportunity to attend the World Economic Forum's India Economic summit in New Delhi from 14-16 November 2010. A few weeks later, at the invitation of the government of Dubai, he also attended the Forum's Global Agenda Summit in Dubai from 29 November-2 December. As part of his work on behalf of the Forum, Dr Saez will be helping draft a WEF report on challenges to India's inclusive growth strategy. The focus of Dr Saez's contribution to this report will be on the relationship between governance and food, water, and energy security. Dr Saez will be spearheading a WEF partnership with the Indian state governments of Assam and Maharashtra.

Corinna Mullin presented the Opening Ceremony lecture for Europe's first Model Arab League at the University of Birmingham (EuroMAL) on 28 January 2011. The title of her talk was "Regional Threats, Real and Perceived: An Examination of Power and Resistance in the Middle East Today."

Tresor Chovu, a 3rd year student in politics and development studies, has launched a business to facilitate joint ventures in Africa. His company also supplies engineering equipments to oil and gas, mining and construction industry in Africa. The countries he mainly deals with are DRC, Angola and looking to expand in Zambia, Congo Brazzaville, Ghana, Nigeria. Currently he is negotiating contract in Angola and Nigeria.

On 9th November 2010 doctoral student **Hannes Baumann** held an outreach event at City and Islington College. The students are currently enrolled in "Access" courses which are especially designed to get people aged over 19, and without A-levels, ready for university. Several want to study politics at SOAS. Although they found the entry requirements daunting, every applicant from City and Islington College is guaranteed an interview. The top students in the group showed all the qualities/ the department would expect from SOAS students: a passion

for the subject and a desire to tackle the big social and political questions in Asia and Africa. **Felix Berenskoetter** also held a similar event on 15 December.

Media Appearances

In early February, **Professor Charles Tripp** has appeared on *BBC World Service's Newshour* on several occasions to speak about the revolutions in North Africa.

Professor Salwa Ismail wrote a commentary for *The Guardian* titled "A Private Estate Called Egypt" on 6 February.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/feb/06/private-estate-egypt-mubarak-cronies>

Professor Ismail also has published another commentary on dignity in a revolution (reproduced below) at

<http://www.tni.org/article/egypt%E2%80%99s-dignity-revolution>

Bhavna Dave was interviewed on *Al Jazeera* in October on parliamentary elections in Kyrgyzstan; *BBC World Service* in November on WikiLeaks revelations in Kazakhstan; on *Deutsche Welle* and *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* in December on the proposed referendum to extend the president's term in Kazakhstan.

Corinna Mullin has published 'Post-Wikileaks lessons from the Tunisian intifada' in *OpenDemocracy*. She was also interviewed on 18 January on the Islam Channel's *Unplugged* on the recent Wikileaks revelations regarding Turkey's alleged complicity in the U.S. 'extraordinary rendition' program. She also published "Obama and the Despots of the Middle East: Why the US Must End Its Support for Undemocratic Regimes" in *CounterPunch*. Dr Mullin was also interviewed on *Islam Channel* live discussion on the "Turning Point – Egypt in Upheaval" on 1 February.

In early January, **Phil Clark** was quoted in *New York Times* coverage of the South Sudan referendum:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/09/weekinreview/09gettleman.html>

Some of Dr Clark's comments on the ICC and domestic justice in the DRC were picked up in *this IRIN News/UN OCHA* article:

<http://irinnews.org/PrintReport.aspx?ReportID=91672>

Phil Clark was also quoted in *Foreign Policy* magazine on the UN mapping report alleging Rwanda's crimes in eastern DRC. He was interviewed by *Radio Netherlands* and the *South African Broadcasting Corporation* about his book on community-based genocide trials in Rwanda.

On 23 December, **Dafydd Fell** was on the *Voice of America* talking about Taiwan's academic diplomacy.

Felix Berenskoetter contributed to the *LSE IDEAS* blog with a commentary entitled "Empire Without Clothes: Wikileaks and the Limits of American Power". The item is available at <http://lse-ideas.blogspot.com/2011/01/empire-without-clothes-wikileaks-and.html>

Lawrence Saez was interviewed on *Al Jazeera* to discuss vice-premier Li Keqiang's visit to Europe and the implications of Chinese rescue packages to vulnerable European economies. He was also interviewed in the *Christian Science Monitor* to comment on Chinese outward investment in Europe.

Steve Hopgood appeared on a *BBC Radio 4* program about Amnesty International's 50th Anniversary over the New Year (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/boowr8px>).

Rahul Rao was on *BBC News* on 27 July 2010 to discuss David Cameron's visit to India.

Arshin Adib-Moghaddam interviewed with *Danske Blad* (daily newspaper in Denmark), *Pravda* (daily newspaper in Slovakia), *Economics and Politics* (monthly academic journal in Iran), *El Nacional* (Venezuela), appeared on *Radio Farda/Radio Free Europe, Islam Channel, BBC World Service* and wrote opinion pieces for the *Guardian, OpenDemocracy.net, antiwar.com, and Gulf News*.

In early February **Laleh Khalili** appeared on SOAS *Open Air Radio*, *Al Jazeera English, BBC World Service* (The World Today) and on *Sky News* to talk about the uprising in Egypt. Her *Al Jazeera* commentary can be seen at

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zQOfsSKnraU> and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zQOfsSKnraU>.

Professor Stephen Chan's numerous media appearances included *Al Jazeera English* on David Cameron's visit to China (in November), the English Language programme of *Deutsche Welle Radio*, on South Sudan and China (24 January), and on "The Jasmine Revolutions of North Africa", for *Radio Free Asia*, Washington DC (30 January).

Events

On 12 November, **Professor Stephen Chan** was debate leader at *Commonwealth Conference 2010*, Cumberland Lodge in Windsor Great

Park. He argued "That the Commonwealth is no longer relevant to the citizens of its member states". On 11 January, Professor Chan appeared (along with Zeinab Badawi, David Milliband, David Kennedy and Gita Sahgal) on "SOAS International Question Time".

Students and staff enjoyed holiday festivities on 8 December with music provided by doctoral student **Mehmet Ekin** and friends.



International Collaborations and Exchanges

A Spanish doctoral student, **Daniel Rivera**, from the Universidad Autonoma de Madrid, has joined the department this term to work under Professor Tripp's supervision/guidance on aspects of constitutionalism in Iraqi politics.

Notices

The **Faculty of Law and Social Sciences** at SOAS has funding to host two Leverhulme Early Career Fellowships beginning next year. Please spread the word about this opportunity and/or consider applying yourself if you are eligible (those who have a PhD in hand and do not hold a permanent post).

More information can be found on the Leverhulme website:

<http://www.leverhulme.ac.uk/funding/ECF/ECF.cfm> and the Research Office (Contact: Vivienne Connors vc9@soas.ac.uk) can help in providing advice and assistance with the application process. The internal deadline is 17 February to Vivienne Connors.

Political Commentary

Egypt's Dignity Revolution
Salwa Ismail

In commenting on the unfolding Egyptian revolution, media and analysts have emphasised the role of social media in building up networks of dissidents and facilitating the

organisation of protests. Some have credited the 'Facebook generation' with lighting the spark of collective action. Undoubtedly, social media activists, in calling for 'the day of anger', put the tools of virtual communication to remarkable use. However these 'days of anger' can only be understood if we look at what the vast majority of Egyptians have experienced over the last three decades under Mubarak's rule.

Successive waves of protests by wide segments of the population, particularly over the last decade, have also given a clear indication of growing opposition to the regime's economic and social policies and its instruments of government and control. Prior to the recent protests, there were numerous massive strikes by textile workers demanding better pay, week-long street occupation by tax collectors protesting their low wages, and various sit-ins by university professors, doctors and lawyers calling for policy change.

Under Mubarak, the Egyptian state abandoned its welfare responsibilities and left citizens to fend for themselves. The so called free market became dominated by monopolies and oligopolies, with party elites and regime cronies controlling entire markets in basic and strategic commodities such as iron and steel, cement, and wood. The ruling clique and its business partners appropriated the country's lands converting publicly-owned property into gated communities and turning entire coastal areas into exclusive resorts for the super rich. Built on vast areas of privatised state land, enclaves like Qatamiyya Heights and Mirage City catered to multi-million dollar palaces for the very privileged few. The scale of the land grab has threatened to deprive future generations of any chance of decent housing and a share of the country's resources and wealth.

At the same time, masked and not-so-masked privatisation of education and health robbed citizens of the few citizenship rights gained in the country's post-independence period. Social disparities have grown at extraordinary rates as state offices turned into personal fiefdoms in order to maintain the regime and its clients and to implement the neo-liberal agenda of economic reform.

To try and prevent growing resistance to these economic and social policies, Egypt and the Egyptians became subject to a police government. The Egyptian police departments govern vast areas of social life. They have responsibilities over security and public order, but also have jurisdiction over the regulation of, among other things, outdoor markets, the use of

public utilities such as electricity, and the implementation of municipal building codes. With regular outdoor market raids and campaigns to monitor citizens' use of these utilities, the police intruded into the daily life of ordinary citizens. Endowed with the arbitrary powers of emergency laws, the police engaged in practices of extortion, and used violence to intimidate and silence any questioning of their powers.

Security checks and roadblocks on the streets of Cairo and many other cities were part of Egyptian citizens' daily reality. Drivers and pedestrians were randomly stopped, arrested and subjected to arbitrary investigation. Young men, feared by the regime for their potential for activism and resistance, were the main target of these practices. The everyday experience of humiliation at the hands of the police fuelled the youth's opposition and rejection of the regime and its coercive arm, the police.

It was befitting that the revolution had its spectacular beginning on Police Day and that the youth would take the lead in breaking down the barrier of fear that the police have erected over a long period of time. Egypt's youth have bravely put themselves forward along with vast segments of society to reassert their right to dignity and freedom. They have taken the first steps towards reclaiming their rights and towards exercising fully the responsibilities of citizenship. It is in reference to these objectives that the protesters' main and most powerful slogan "the people want to bring down the system" should be understood. The desired change is nothing short of an overhaul of the institutions and structures of government.

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The Department of Politics and International Studies was originally established in 1962 as the Department of Economic and Political Studies, but became independent in 1990. The department was ranked very highly in the 2008 UK HEFCE Research Assessment Exercise, coming 7th out of 59 departments in the UK.

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 a year's 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.
- Political Theory: political Islam, non-western political thought, multiculturalism.

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