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# Forging a Discipline

*A Critical Assessment of Oxford's Development  
of the Study of Politics and International  
Relations in Comparative Perspective*

Edited by CHRISTOPHER HOOD,  
DESMOND KING, AND GILLIAN PEELE

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## Preface

Although the history of political *thought* is a well-established field of study, the history of political *science*—or whatever other aliases the academic study of politics, government, and international relations goes under—tends to be much more fragmentary. But no one who has been involved in this academic field over the past thirty or forty years, as we all have, can fail to be struck by its remarkable growth, its march towards ever more ‘professionalism’ in style and methods, and by the rise and fall of different ‘paradigms’ or analytic ABCs. Some of those changes have been prompted by events in the world outside—such as the collapse of the Soviet empire in the 1990s or unanticipated waves of democratization—and some by developments within the discipline itself, such as the rise of the ‘median voter theorem’. Observations of this changing intellectual scene prompt a number of questions. For example, where exactly did this ‘discipline’ come from, and what sort of a ‘discipline’ is it? How has it been shaped by politics in the world outside, and by the micro-politics of academic institutions? What have been the big changes in academic approaches and in the ‘examinable corpus’ which students have to master? And where does it all go from here?

Such questions are easier to ask than to answer, and as this volume shows, different answers can be given to many of them. Sociology has been jokingly described as a discipline in search of a subject matter, and public administration as a subject matter in search of a discipline,<sup>1</sup> and modern political science arguably faces a mixture of both problems, dependent on subfield or analytic approach. In this volume, we set out to provide perspectives on the development of the academic study of politics over a century in a single university, the University of Oxford, tracing out how it started in its modern form, the institutional elements that aided its development or held it back, some of the subfields that it divided into, and some of the big discoveries or intellectual landmarks that occurred along the way.

Given that the academic study of politics today has proliferated into multiple subfields, we have explored its development by commissioning chapters from expert specialists on a sample (by no means a full set) of those subfields. But we have also commissioned two historical chapters to look at the beginnings of modern political science in the early twentieth century, long

<sup>1</sup> See D. Waldo, ‘Scope of the Theory of Public Administration’, ch. 1 in J. C. Charlesworth (ed.), *Theory and Practice of Public Administration: Scope, Objectives, and Methods* (Philadelphia: American Academy of Political and Social Science/American Society for Public Administration, 1968), 2.

before there were specialist professional associations in the field, and also a set of chapters to consider how the development of the subject was shaped by institutional and social factors for which Oxford seems to present a critical case, as we argue in the introduction. And, as we argue in the conclusion, the story seems to present some intriguing challenges to some received views about how to organize academic teaching and research.

This volume, like the activity of politics itself, reflects a mixture of collaboration, communication, and contestation, and a lot of all of those elements have gone into its production (we have at least 1,000 emails apiece in our mailboxes to mark the various drafts and discussions that went into writing and editing this book). And also, as with the activity of politics itself, there are issues of credit and blame to be considered. As editors, our general advice to our contributors was to pay rather more attention to detailed assessments of the work of the dead than of those living and still active, on the grounds that it is easier to arrive at definitive assessments of the former than the latter. In some cases, as will be seen, applying that rule strictly would have got in the way of an adequate account of the development of some important subfields, but where it has been applied, it reflects our advice. Also, to make a volume of reasonable length, we had to insist on fairly tight length limits for each of the chapters, presenting most of our contributors with difficult choices as to what to include, and we therefore take responsibility for some of the omissions that necessarily occur in such conditions. We have extensively debated what we say in our editorial notes and chapters, which were successively redrafted as we developed our ideas, and we take joint responsibility for those.

Christopher Hood, Desmond King, and Gillian Peele

*Oxford*  
*January 2013*

## *Acknowledgements*

This book has been some time in the making, and we have many debts to acknowledge. Most of the chapters in this book started life as papers presented to a two-day conference held in Oxford in December 2011, starting at Nuffield College, then moving to All Souls College, St Antony's College, and finishing at Lady Margaret Hall. We are grateful to all of those colleges for providing the support—in money, facilities, or both—that made this venture possible. Two of the chapters (by Rodney Barker and Robert Goodin) originated in 2010 and 2012 respectively as Lee Lectures in Political Science and Government, a lecture series at All Souls College funded by a generous donation from Dr S. T. Lee of Singapore. We are also very grateful to the Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of Oxford for additional funding for the 2011 conference.

We also have heavy intellectual debts to declare. We are deeply grateful to those who gave up time from pressing end-of-term business to act as chairs, discussants, and participants for the conference that led to this book. Their insights added immeasurably to our understanding of the developments we examine here, and their comments have been incorporated not only into revisions to the papers originally presented there but also have been drawn on heavily in our introductory comments. They include Nancy Bermeo, David Butler, Ivor Crewe, Cécile Fabre, Christopher Hill, Patrick Le Galès, Wyn Grant, Sara Hobolt, Andrew Hurrell, Yuen Foong Khong, Neil MacFarlane, Lois McNay, David Marquand, Kalypto Nicolaidis, Edward Page, Mark Philp, Peter Pulzer, Vivienne Shue, Duncan Snidal, and Marc Stears. We are also very grateful to the two anonymous OUP reviewers whose comments helped us to pull the book into shape; to Dominic Byatt, OUP's Senior Commissioning Editor, for his advice and support; and to Emma Anderson for her valuable help with assembling and editing the volume and for compiling the index.



Part I  
Setting the Scene



## Introduction

*The Editors*

Over the past century or so the study of politics has emerged from its origins in philosophy, history, jurisprudence, and economics into a recognized academic discipline across much of the world, with all the associated institutional trappings of dedicated professorial chairs, departments, centres and institutes, peer-reviewed journals and research funding, doctoral programmes, award ceremonies, proliferating subfields, and much more. To give just one example of the scale of this development, a hundred years ago, all of the ‘political scientists’ in the United States could probably have met in a single room. Today the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association (a mixture of talent show, hiring fair, and venue for the conduct of every kind of academic business) is attended by 8,000 or so political scientists, and indeed APSA is running out of cities with sufficient contiguous hotel spaces to accommodate all its conferees. Extrapolation is always perilous, but if that rate of growth were to be sustained, it would amount to 250,000 or so a hundred years from now.

But developments like that do not just happen. What sort of societies create a demand for academic research and teaching in ‘political science’ or the various other names given in different times and places to the academic study of politics, such as ‘government’ and ‘public administration’? What sort of institutional arrangements lend themselves to the development of ‘politics’ as a self-contained discipline, rather than holding it back? What sort of tensions arise over how to develop and promote the subject (for example by organizing it in departmental ‘silos’ or in other ways)? And what are the contested issues that arise over the essential purpose and mission of the subject? For instance, what is the proper balance between the notion of politics as a practical subject for training leaders, promoting specific policy goals, or serving the state in other ways (as applied to the ‘police science’ or ‘cameralistics’, which was taught across much of Europe up to the nineteenth



century<sup>1</sup> and which has plenty of present-day equivalents) and the alternative vision of a mature discipline whose curiosity-driven scholars generate puzzle-solving research largely for an international peer-reviewing academic community?

This book provides an angle on that transformation by exploring what happened to the academic study of politics over the course of a century in a single institution, the University of Oxford. (Table 1.1 indicates some of the key milestones in that development.) It puts what happened in Oxford in the foreground, but sets it against the background of developments elsewhere. Oxford, at least for a casual observer, could well be argued to be a critical case for examining the development of politics as an academic subject, because three of the university's specific features might have been expected to present a peculiar and perhaps especially challenging environment for the development of modern political science. One is the university's distinctive institutional structure; the second is a potentially dangerous proximity to the subject of its study, given that many of Britain's governing elite have traditionally been students of the university; and the third is the heavy concentration on undergraduate tutorial teaching for which Oxford is internationally famous, at the possible expense of specialized research. In this introductory chapter we delve a little further into each of these three features, to bring out some of their nuances. And—a point to which we shall return in the conclusion—the fact that none of those features seems to have stopped a remarkable growth in teaching and research in the subject over the course of a century suggests that some received ideas about successful academic organization may be less self-evident than they might at first appear. The Oxford story may thus be something of a critical case.

## OXFORD'S DISTINCTIVE INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE

Oxford's institutional structure is one in which the pressures of path dependency might be expected to be strong in ways that could easily impede new disciplinary developments. A famous book about Oxford written by a visiting American fifty years or so ago is titled *These Ruins are Inhabited*,<sup>2</sup> and indeed the aura of antiquity that strikes every visitor to the place—with its ancient

<sup>1</sup> See for example, H. Meier, *Die Ältere Deutsche Staats- und Verwaltungslehre* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1980); B. Chapman, *Police State* (London: Pall Mall, 1970); C. Hood, *The Art of the State* (Oxford: Clarendon 1998), 82–9.

<sup>2</sup> M. Beadle, *These Ruins are Inhabited* (London: Robert Hale, 1961).

buildings and quaint customs—might suggest a system too deeply constrained by the trappings of its past to be able to innovate easily.<sup>3</sup>

The obvious riposte to that is that remarkable new developments in the natural sciences have not been choked off by this environment, so why should they have been in the academic study of politics? Even so, it is instructive to see how a discipline could develop under institutional arrangements very different from those in which political science grew up in most other universities, and also at variance with some received views about effective academic organization. Three particular elements deserve comment, namely the university's federal structure and the conflicting pressures such a structure can generate, its relatively flat hierarchy and institutionally weak professoriate compared to many other universities, and the late development of an academic department to promote teaching and research in political science.

As to the first issue, Oxford is not of course the only federal university in the world, but in its distinctive federal structure, power and authority over teaching, examining, appointments, syllabus design, and much else are divided between a centralized university and a number of self-governing colleges. The colleges have the primary responsibility for the admission and teaching of undergraduates (though not of postgraduates) while the university has the primary responsibility for the admission and tuition of postgraduates, examinations, syllabuses, research, and the award of degrees. Appointments are overwhelmingly (unlike at Cambridge) shared between the university and the colleges, with the distribution of duties reflected in academic employment contracts. The colleges provide residential and social facilities for their members senior and junior.

As with other federal systems, the informal cooperative relationships fostered in this setting were at least as important as, if not more important than, the formal allocation of powers. And, as any student of federalism knows, such a system of divided responsibilities has strengths and weaknesses. The strength of a federal system typically lies in the benefits flowing from small-scale operations and from a high degree of self-government; the weaknesses are often those of achieving swift and decisive action in a complex system with multiple veto points.<sup>4</sup> And academic federalism of this specific type undoubtedly exposes faculty to dual administrative demands and conflicting pressures,

<sup>3</sup> Writing long before the period this book focuses on, Adam Smith in *The Wealth of Nations* argued that Oxford's traditional dependency on endowment income rather than the fees from students on which professors depended elsewhere (in Glasgow, in his case) meant that Oxford had weaker incentives to respond to student demand, and the continuing importance of endowment income in Oxford might possibly also be expected to act as a brake on developments in the time period being considered here. See N. Rosenberg, 'Some Institutional Aspects of the Wealth of Nations', *Journal of Political Economy*, 68/6 (1960), 557–70.

<sup>4</sup> See for instance F. W. Scharpf, 'The Joint Decision Trap: Lessons from German Federalism and European Integration', *Public Administration*, 66/2 (1988): 239–78.

with the collegiate system exerting claims on academic loyalty, time, and energy that rival those of the corporate centre—a point made in several chapters in this volume. For example, the standard contract of employment for college tutors until recently (which we will discuss further below) made those positions joint appointments between college and university with a roughly equal salary split, but heavily weighted towards the colleges in terms of workload hours. The appointees were responsible to their colleges for the organization and delivery of their undergraduate students' teaching, a task which generally absorbed a good deal of their time and energy and sometimes dominated the duties of the concurrently held university lecturer position which included an obligation to engage in research, give lectures, and teach graduate students.

Further, as in other federal systems, the balance of formal power changed over time, albeit not always in a unilinear direction. For example, a landmark report in the 1960s (the 1966 Franks Report) emphasized a determination to retain the university's federal structure but noted a need for change in many aspects of Oxford's arrangements and made the so-called 'CUF' (Common University Fund) contract the standard employment contract for college tutors.<sup>5</sup> Another major report some thirty years later (the North Commission in 1998) led to a restructuring of the central university administration into divisions that introduced another layer of administration between the university's central council and academic departments.

The way academic appointments were made within the federal system also changed over time in a way that affected the development of politics as a discipline at Oxford. The appointment process of 'CUF' faculty (as mentioned above), involving representatives from the colleges and the university, sometimes went smoothly and sometimes did not. Further, the decision-making was incremental and different selection committees were empanelled for each appointment in a way that tended to preclude any attempt to develop a 'master plan' for politics posts.

But gradually within that institutional framework the university through its representatives was able to exert more influence over the appointments. This influence was exerted by joint participation in drawing up the further particulars and defining the required field, constructing a shortlist, conducting interviews, and crucially giving the views of the university on the candidates by ranking them and in some cases vetoing ones unacceptable to the university. Although it was certainly true that colleges usually had a preference for someone with teaching breadth, this preference did not preclude a research

<sup>5</sup> See A. H. Halsey, 'Oxford and the British Universities', in A. H. Halsey, *Essays on the Evolution of Oxford and Nuffield College* (Oxford: Nuffield College, 2012), 45–80; A. H. Halsey, 'Oxford and the British Universities', ch. 22 in B. Harrison (ed.), *The History of the University of Oxford*, vol. VIII: *The Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 577–606.

specialism; and the requirement of breadth was frequently one which accorded also with the university's needs. Further, in recent years a different form of contract, that of University Lectureship (UL), became the norm for new politics faculty appointments in colleges, rather than the older CUF contract. Appointments to UL positions also relied on cooperation between the colleges and the university. But the switch to that form of contract gave the university more power over appointments, with college representation in the minority on the relevant appointment committees; and the distribution of teaching—especially allocation of resources between undergraduate and postgraduate—came to be tilted more towards the university.

Federalism relates to a second distinctive institutional feature mentioned earlier, namely a remarkably flat hierarchy with an institutionally weak professoriate. That structure contrasts with the 'Humboldtian' tradition widely adopted in Continental Europe in which autonomous professors, the basic building blocks of the organization, controlled how disciplines developed or failed to do so. At least in the early decades after World War II, many UK universities operated a variant of that system, with the names of some of the key politics professors—such as Samuel Finer at Keele, W. J. M. Mackenzie at Manchester, and Hugh Berrington at Newcastle—inextricably linked with the development of the subject in their respective bailiwicks. But in Oxford politics had to develop in an institutional context where most of the teaching was controlled by college tutors operating under incentives rather different from those of departmental professors elsewhere. Flat structures, like federalism, undoubtedly have their disadvantages in academic institutions, but they can have corresponding advantages as well, for instance in giving faculty a greater opportunity to pursue their own scholarly agendas than can apply in a more hierarchical setting with strong leadership from the top.

A third distinctive institutional feature of Oxford over the century considered here (and, as we shall see in later chapters, a feature considered detrimental by some authors) was its remarkably late 'departmentalization' of political science and international relations. For all but the final decade of the century covered by this volume, the academic study of politics had to develop without that standard unit of academic organization. Indeed, when the Philosophy, Politics, and Economics (PPE) or 'modern greats' degree programme was founded in 1920 it did not immediately lead to dedicated teaching appointments in political science. Rather, the colleges relied on historians and philosophers to organize the teaching, which they did to a varying extent until well into the 1970s. A 'sub-faculty' of politics (within the Social Studies Faculty) only came into existence in 1934, fourteen years after the creation of the famous PPE degree, and for better or worse that was the central institution through which politics was organized in Oxford for some sixty-six years.

How did this arrangement differ from the more conventional departmental pattern widely found in other universities in the UK and elsewhere? Though in

principle concerned with all matters relating to the academic study of politics, the sub-faculty in practice concentrated on arrangements for teaching; it did not have a 'head' who fitted into a university hierarchy answerable to a dean or similar office holder higher up the administrative food chain, it had very little professional administration, provided no central focus for graduate and faculty interaction or the planning of new initiatives, and had only limited space dedicated to 'politics' where faculty could have offices or where research centres could be located. A departmental structure of that kind only arrived in Oxford in 2000, and even then took some years to develop, so that for most of the hundred years on which this book focuses, the study of politics had to develop in Oxford without what is often seen as a basic motor of academic development.

That sub-faculty pattern contrasts with the more hierarchical departmental model that commonly developed outside Oxford, with a department responsible for both teaching (in its entirety) and research, headed by a figure who was part of a hierarchy reaching up to a Vice-Chancellor, Principal, or similar executive head, and located in a dedicated building that physically embodied the academic subject. But of course it is important to stress that there was a great deal of variety in the various alternatives to the Oxford sub-faculty model, and that the traditional 'departmental' model elsewhere changed greatly over the last four decades or so in the UK, for example in replacing the permanent professorial headship of department that was common up to the 1960s with a fixed-term headship, in greater financial devolution that made departments rather than centralized university offices the key allocators of resources, in replacing secretarial-level assistance to academic office holders with professional administration, and in much more preoccupation with the management of research profiles and performance than had applied earlier. Indeed, just as Oxford adopted something approximating to the departmental pattern for political science at the turn of the millennium, some other universities in the UK and elsewhere were restructuring their politics departments by combining subjects into larger schools.

These institutional features of Oxford over most of the period covered by this book represent a striking departure from the standard model of academic organization for political science. They undoubtedly provided a distinctive 'job experience' for faculty, not just in the different salary scales, and procedures for appointment, promotion, and tenure, but also in lifestyle in that the collegiate structure exposed Oxford's political scientists to a good deal of interaction with their colleagues in other disciplines; and faculty were expected to some extent to spend some time on activities beyond their formal duties. So how did the academic study of politics develop in these atypical institutional conditions? Did those structural features have advantages as well as the disadvantages that would be expected by those who see early and strong departmentalization and/or institutionally 'empowered' professors as a key

to academic progress? Were there other institutional features that compensated for the ones considered here? What were the ‘workarounds’ that made development possible? Later chapters throw light on these questions and we will return to them in the concluding chapter.

## RELATIONAL DISTANCE: DOES IT LEND PERSPECTIVE TO THE VIEW?

A second reason for seeing Oxford as a very special and perhaps challenging environment for the development of politics as an academic discipline is that of its historical and continuing position (to an extent only slightly rivalled by Cambridge and by the Scottish universities) as the provider of education (though not necessarily in political science) for much of the country’s political elite.<sup>6</sup> Now that closeness brought some obvious advantages in terms of access, influence, and perhaps some endowments. Yet it could be argued to have corresponding disadvantages, creating the risk of its politics academics simply being too close to their subject matter to develop the sort of critical perspective needed for consequential analytic breakthroughs. The concept of ‘relational distance’ is a well-known idea in law enforcement studies, and was developed by the legal sociologist Donald Black<sup>7</sup> to explain why the enforcement of laws and rules tends to become stricter when it involves greater social distance between the subject and object of enforcement; and several of the chapters in this volume suggest that relational distance of some kind is also a key requirement for academic breakthroughs in social science—perhaps a variant of the old question ‘what do they know of England who only England know?’<sup>8</sup> For those of that persuasion, it might be thought that such ‘political science’ as can develop in a context of low relational distance between observers and the observed is practico-descriptive commentary essentially rooted in the cultural assumptions of the ruling elite rather than anything more. The ‘observer problem’ is of course central to all science and especially to social science, but a university setting that has functioned so thoroughly as an entry point, waiting room, sounding board, and indeed exit route for much of its governing class might be expected to be one in which real-world politics shapes—and possibly even stifles—academic political studies to a greater extent than elsewhere.

Oxford’s position as a stereotypically ‘establishment’ university offers a good case for examining whether academic students of politics can get too

<sup>6</sup> See Halsey, ‘Oxford and the British Universities’, 591.

<sup>7</sup> D. Black, *The Behavior of Law* (New York: Academic Press, 1976).

<sup>8</sup> A phrase from ‘The English Flag’ (1891) in R. Kipling, *The Complete Verse* (London: Kyle Cathie, 1996), 181.

close to their subject matter to gain analytic perspective. In his well-known book *Bureaucracy*, the great Austrian economist Ludwig von Mises quotes a telling passage from a speech made in 1870 by the physiologist Emil du Bois-Reymond who was both the Rector of the University of Berlin and the President of the Prussian Academy of Sciences:

We, the University of Berlin, quartered opposite the King's palace, are, by deed of our foundation, the intellectual bodyguard of the House of Hohenzollern.<sup>9</sup>

It could be argued that any university that consciously or unconsciously acts as 'intellectual bodyguard' for a ruling elite is unlikely to develop deep or novel analyses of politics and government, as opposed to description or commentary at a less fundamental level. That is precisely von Mises's critique of the lack of relational distance between the universities and government in nineteenth-century Germany, where, he claims, direct government appointment of the professoriate led to academic mediocrity in the sense that 'the only qualities required in an academic teacher of the social sciences were disparagement of the operation of the market system and enthusiastic support of government control'.<sup>10</sup>

Oxford, of course, was not 'quartered opposite the King's palace'; its staff were not civil servants as in the German or French tradition (even though nominees to its 'Regius professorships', a type of chair also found in Cambridge, Trinity College Dublin, and the Scottish universities, were formally appointed by the Crown<sup>11</sup>) and by the nineteenth century it certainly did not officially profess its mission as that of intellectual bodyguard to the ruling elite. Still, there were some close cultural, institutional, and personal links between the state and the university, and it is notable that the original statutes for the Gladstone Chair of Political Theory and Institutions in 1912 provided that the Prime Minister of the day should be a member of the electoral board making the appointment. Indeed, as we shall see, several contributors to this book suggest that a lack of relational distance has shaped Oxford's contribution to the academic study of politics and may, at least in some times and places, have adversely affected it—for example by encouraging under-theorized approaches to the subject and scepticism about abstract systems and formal methods as well as a bias towards a pragmatic and utilitarian approach.

Against that, such views were widely held by politics academics in all UK universities until little more than a generation ago, and were hardly confined

<sup>9</sup> L. von Mises, *Bureaucracy* (London: William Hodge, 1945), 101.

<sup>10</sup> Mises, *Bureaucracy*, 101.

<sup>11</sup> In fact, Glasgow University had more Regius Chairs than Oxford at the time of writing. Twelve new ones were created across the UK in 2013 to mark the Royal Jubilee, including one in political science at Essex. Appointment to such Chairs once allowed government influence but now is typically made on academic advice.

to Oxford.<sup>12</sup> Nor is it clear exactly how the relational distance effect might have operated. Is it something to do with a student body with an exceptionally high proportion of individuals drawn from the present or future governing class? Is it something to do with faculty careers that involve an exceptional degree of 'intertwining' between the practice and study of government? And does it relate only to the politics of the United Kingdom (or perhaps specifically England) or does it apply to the study of other countries as well?

As far as the nature of the student body is concerned, up until recently virtually all British universities even with the 'Robbins expansion' and the Open University of the 1960s were part of an elite higher education system that catered only for a tiny percentage of school leavers. It contrasted with the more 'mass' approach to higher education in the United States and parts of Continental Europe that came to be adopted in the UK itself in the later part of the twentieth century. In the last few decades of that century, postgraduate education in politics also developed markedly, partly because in an age of more 'mass' first-degree education more students needed to differentiate themselves with a Masters or doctoral degree, and partly because overseas fee-paying students became an attractive financial proposition for universities looking for an alternative or supplement to state funding.

If Oxford was different or distinctive against this general UK pattern, it was in degree rather than kind, notably in the socialization experiences it provided and in the number of political leaders both in the UK and elsewhere who had been educated in Oxford in general and in politics at Oxford in particular. Of the eleven British Prime Ministers from the mid-1950s to the time of writing, no less than eight were Oxford graduates and out of that number, three (Harold Wilson, Edward Heath, and David Cameron) were graduates of Oxford's Philosophy, Politics, and Economics (PPE) programme. Leaders from other countries who went through the PPE programme include the late Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan, Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma, and Abhisit Vejjajiva of Thailand. Nor was this linkage with future power holders just a PPE phenomenon: Laurence Whitehead in his chapter in this volume quotes an observation from Roger Goodman that almost 5 per cent of the world's foreign ministers in the mid-2000s had studied at St Antony's College. And the sort of access to the UK's political elite that Nuffield College enjoyed at least up to the Thatcher period is vividly demonstrated in Whitehead's reference to a dinner in the college in the mid-1960s which was attended by the then Prime Minister (Harold Wilson), Chancellor of the Exchequer, Leader of the Opposition, and Jean Monnet, the father of the European Union.

Even so, Oxford's size and structural diversity allowed some important innovative activities directed beyond its traditional recruits. As Rodney

<sup>12</sup> See W. Grant, *The Development of a Discipline: The History of the Political Studies Association* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), ch. 1.



Barker's chapter in this volume shows, Oxford was running 'extension classes' in 'political science' from the 1880s, directed to working-class students; but they were also taken by women who were not then in a position to take degree courses.<sup>13</sup> Its college system meant there were long-standing institutionalized entry points for Scottish and Welsh students (through Balliol and Jesus Colleges respectively), and that a set of women's colleges developed in the late nineteenth century with female students initially taught to a large extent by female tutors.<sup>14</sup> The foundation of the women's colleges and the survival of all five as single-sex institutions until the 1970s allowed the university to cater for a group hitherto largely unrepresented in the university. (Although a small group of former men's colleges admitted women in 1974 the period between 1979 and 1984 saw all the men's colleges change their statutes to admit women at all levels; by 1994 all the women's colleges apart from St Hilda's were admitting male undergraduates.<sup>15</sup>) When the two graduate colleges, Nuffield and St Antony's, emerged in the middle of the twentieth century they soon became Oxford's first mixed-sex institutions (Nuffield was conceived as such from the outset<sup>16</sup>), although the number of women in them, both as fellows and students, was very small at first. Other institutional features such as the development of Rhodes Scholarships which brought a substantial body of elite students from the United States, Germany, and the Commonwealth, schooled in distinctive ideas about government and politics, could also be expected to work against homogeneous 'British ruling-class' attitudes and assumptions.

As far as faculty careers are concerned, the 'cradle-to-grave' political science academic who has no exposure to the practice of politics and government beyond that of observer, commentator, and critic represents only one career model in the subject. It can be contrasted with at least three patterns combining academic study of politics and government with practice. One is the 'in-and-out' pattern familiar in the United States, where service in government on

<sup>13</sup> Women were not eligible for degrees in any UK university until the late nineteenth century and Oxford was an entirely male university until the last quarter of the nineteenth century, with the first women's colleges (Lady Margaret Hall and Somerville) opening in 1879. Women were increasingly allowed to attend university lectures, but the university did not change its statutes to allow women to take degrees until 1920 and their number was restricted by a quota imposed in 1927. Oxford's extension movement came to be displaced by other institutional developments, notably the creation of provincial university colleges after 1918 and later still by the Open University and the polytechnics. See Halsey, 'Oxford and the British Universities', 586.

<sup>14</sup> That is, Lady Margaret Hall and Somerville (both founded in 1879), followed by St Hugh's (1886) and St Hilda's (1893) and then by the Society for Home Students which ultimately became St Anne's College. But the university was slow to grant these colleges recognition and the women's colleges did not become fully self-governing institutions on an equal footing with the men's colleges until the 1950s.

<sup>15</sup> LMH and St Anne's admitted men in 1979; St Hugh's admitted men in 1986 as did Somerville in 1994. St Hilda's did not admit men until 2008.

<sup>16</sup> See R. Taylor, *Nuffield College Memories: A Personal History* (Oxford: Nuffield College, 2008), 7.

the basis of its spoils system for executive appointments alternates with professional academic careers. A second is that of permanent career transition, from practice in government and politics to academia (of course permanent career transition can go in the opposite direction, from academia to practice, but the question here is about the effect on academic work of exposure to practice). And a third is that of part-time involvement—for example, combining the role of academic with local politics, service on official bodies of various kinds, or backroom advisory roles in some sort of *éminence grise* capacity, for example to political parties, government bodies, or legislative committees.

All of these political-science career models have been and are still observable in the UK as a whole, though the professionalization of the subject and increasing technical accomplishment needed for academic publication in many of its subfields have no doubt increased the relative incidence of the ‘cradle-to-grave’ academic career. As far as the ‘in-and-outer’ pattern is concerned, perhaps the closest the UK has approached it is in the careers of those politics academics, such as Sir Norman Chester, who had ‘had a good war’ (that is, an opportunity to distinguish themselves in government service during World War II) and developed insights and contacts that they drew on in their subsequent academic work in the 1950s and 1960s. A number of scholars in the field began life in government service and then switched to academic study of the subject (for example, Francis Campbell Hood at Durham, Maurice Kogan and Christopher Pollitt at Brunel, Robert Hazell at UCL).<sup>17</sup> As far as the third combined career pattern is concerned, it was once fairly common for politics academics to combine the role of scholar and teacher with that of local councillor, though rising workloads and research productivity demands on academics today make this combination much more difficult than it once was. The remarkable career of William (Bill) Mackenzie (1909–96), who is referred to approvingly by several of the contributors to this volume, and started out as a college fellow and tutor in Oxford but became one of the leading architects of the development of politics as an academic subject in the UK in Manchester in the 1950s and 1960s, included two of these three patterns of involvement. Mackenzie followed a classic ‘good war’ period in Whitehall (culminating in a commission to write the official history of the Special Operations Executive<sup>18</sup>) with subsequent service on a string of ‘quangos’ and a Royal Commission alongside his academic work.

<sup>17</sup> Of course there was traffic in the opposite direction as well, for example in the careers of Bernard Donoghue (LSE), Alan Beith (Newcastle), and Tony Wright (Birmingham).

<sup>18</sup> W. J. M. Mackenzie, *The Secret History of the SOE: The Special Operations Executive 1940–1945* (London: St Ermin’s Press, 2002) (the book was written in 1947, did not see the light of day until several years after Mackenzie’s death, and even then was heavily abridged). Mackenzie himself wrote perceptively about career patterns that crossed different institutional worlds: see, for example, W. J. M. Mackenzie, ‘Quangos, Networks, Pluralists, Spiralists, Commentators’, *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 39/3–4 (1980): 406–21.

The politics faculty at Oxford also includes examples of all of these three types of combined career. For example, the career of William Adams, the first Gladstone Professor of Political Theory and Institutions from 1912, shows an in-and-out pattern, with a movement from the civil service to academia in 1910 and back into high government service during World War I, after which he turned down the opportunity to become an MP and returned to academic life, becoming one of the key players in the establishment of the PPE degree. Some of the faculty, such as Nevil Johnson, switched from practice as a civil servant to the academic study of politics, and some such as Stewart Wood went in the opposite direction, into politics and government service. The second Gladstone Professor of Political Theory and Institutions, Arthur Salter (appointed in 1934), was elected as MP for Oxford University in 1937, and a number of Oxford's past and present politics faculty (such as Norman Chester, Kenneth Wheare, Geoffrey Marshall, and Iain McLean) have combined academic work with being local councillors for part of their careers, although service as special advisers in Whitehall or involvement with think tanks or other public bodies has apparently supplanted this career combination in the more recent past.

Again, if Oxford stands out from that general UK pattern of careers combining study and practice of politics and government, it could only be in degree rather than kind. It might well be argued that Oxford's institutional structure created some routes for close connections between the practice and study of government that were not readily available in many other universities. One, shared with Cambridge, was through its 'Head of House' (that is, headship of college) appointments, which has provided one of the classic exit routes for intellectually minded high civil servants or other members of the political class. As is shown by some of our contributors, Oxford's collegiate structure with its formal and informal dining facilities (like that of Cambridge) certainly provides some convenient opportunities for those involved in political life to discuss issues, exchange information, and even to do quite specific jobs such as drafting constitutions. And, as with Cambridge, its geographical location meant that faculty could fairly easily get to meetings in London as well as carrying on their regular academic work. But the image of Oxbridge dons forever popping in and out of the corridors of power, as portrayed in the mid-twentieth-century novels of C. P. Snow,<sup>19</sup> hardly reflects the life of most of Oxford's politics faculty today. Even past episodes of influence can be difficult to verify, as with the common but contestable claim that the UK's policy of appeasement (the controversial policy of conciliating Nazi Germany

<sup>19</sup> See, for instance, C. P. Snow, *The Masters* (London: Macmillan, 1951) or *Corridors of Power* (London: Macmillan, 1964).

before World War II) was hatched up at the High Table of All Souls College in the 1930s.<sup>20</sup>

This discussion raises many puzzles about how relational distance relates to successful academic work in politics. Is the ‘cradle-to-grave’ academic career truly the one that is optimal for really distinguished work? If a ‘combined career’ pattern can be a productive basis for academic work, how much non-academic involvement and what form of combination (in-and-outer, one-off career transition, or the various forms of part-time conjuncture) seems to be most beneficial? And how does the idea that some measure of relational distance is needed for critical insight carry over beyond studies of the ‘home country’? After all, if Oxford was somehow vulnerable to losing perspective or analytic rigour in its analysis of British politics, did that necessarily apply also to what Oxford did in other subfields of the subject?

## TEACHING AND RESEARCH AT OXFORD

As mentioned at the outset, a third feature of Oxford that would seem to make it distinctive and peculiar in the international context is its traditional conception of its academic mission as the intensive teaching of undergraduates through its famous tutorial system. By this method the colleges educate their undergraduates in very small group sessions. The traditional pattern involves a tutor meeting an individual or a pair of students weekly over each eight-week term, with each tutee preparing a piece of written work on a question set by the tutor, based on topics covered in the course’s broad syllabus.<sup>21</sup> At the tutorial students either read out or summarize their weekly essay, and then a discussion ensues on the basis of this work. The teaching system is both intensive and ‘public’ in that the curriculum and examination regulations for each course are set out in the university’s compendious Examination Regulations and that the final degree depends on a centralized and anonymously marked examination system rather than on faculty grading their own students.

<sup>20</sup> See S. J. D. Green ‘Appeasers and Anti-Appeasers: All Souls and the International Crisis of the 1930s’, ch. 10 in S. J. D. Green and P. Horden (eds), *All Souls and the Wider World: Statesmen, Scholars and Adventurers, c.1850–1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>21</sup> The courses available in Politics became increasingly numerous over time, but for many decades candidates had to choose two out of three core courses—political theory, political institutions, and a historical paper in British politics and government. After 1993 two other courses, international relations and political sociology, were added to the list of core subjects, such that students had to choose two out of five rather than two out of three.

Now the development of ‘normal science’—discussed in several of the later chapters in this book—is often seen as something that proceeds through specialization—‘knowing more and more about less and less’, notably at the edges of disciplines as conventionally defined. But the traditional Oxford tutorial system often encouraged and expected its tutors to teach widely across the disciplinary subfields, and certainly made teaching only a tutor’s research specialism difficult. Indeed, when the PPE degree was established in 1920 tutors had to teach across disciplines and not just disciplinary subfields, because the teaching for the politics part of the degree came to be provided by tutors from other disciplines (notably history and philosophy), some of whom (such as W. J. M. Mackenzie) seemed to have taken to it with relish. So how could an institution that historically appeared to resist the sort of specialization in politics teaching that developed earlier elsewhere provide an intellectual environment conducive to ‘cutting-edge’ scientific work as the academic study of politics developed? At least four possible countervailing pressures need to be considered.

The first is that the system was more flexible than it looked and over time the undergraduate teaching load became less onerous. The old CUF standard employment contract for college tutors, as mentioned earlier, relied heavily on flexibility and goodwill, allowing a large amount of choice to individuals as to how they would apply their energies. Although some might seek to duck their fair share of university and college work and avoid administrative chores, for the most part, arm-twisting and persuasion seem to have served to ensure that things got done. Later, ‘stint’ (workload) reform in 2002/3 formally reduced the tutoring workload for college tutors to roughly eight hours,<sup>22</sup> and more recently the older contract has increasingly been replaced by a university lecturer contract, as noted above.

Second, over time the system allowed more specialization than the ‘all-rounder’ stereotype might suggest. The early approach of politics teaching being provided by tutors from other disciplines began to change in the 1930s and particularly in the aftermath of World War II. A sharp increase in numbers taking PPE and the creation of a new postgraduate BPhil in Politics led to undergraduate colleges making dedicated politics appointments (albeit at varying speeds that reflected their differences in culture and wealth) as well as the specialist politics appointments made at the two graduate colleges (Nuffield and St Antony’s) formed in the mid-twentieth century.<sup>23</sup> Further, while the traditional obligation on tutors to spend twelve hours a week on undergraduate tutorial teaching was certainly not a light load (and in some cases the workload could rise well above that level), it could be organized with

<sup>22</sup> See Conference of Colleges Stint Reform 14 November 2002 (Conf 02/36) and Stint Reform Progress Log (Conf 04/49 updated November 2005).

<sup>23</sup> See Taylor, *Nuffield College Memories*; A. H. Halsey, *Essays on the Evolution of Oxford and Nuffield College* (Oxford: Nuffield College, 2012).

some flexibility. The rubrics for examination papers tended to be broad, allowing students and teachers substantial choice of what to concentrate on. And tutors could fulfil their obligations by teaching only a small percentage of the papers and farming out the rest to other colleagues rather than teaching more broadly across the syllabus; as time went on those specialist ‘swap’ arrangements became increasingly common. Further, a PPE syllabus change in 1993 that increased the number of subjects PPE students could choose as core examination papers gave tutors even more opportunities to specialize in their teaching. Indeed, that change reflects a process, brought out in Martin Ceadel’s chapter in this volume, in which tutors could help to form coalitions to promote further specialization by proposing significant modification in the content of the syllabus—something that could not be done overnight (given that they require formal enactment of changes in the university’s Examination Regulations) but was far from impossible.<sup>24</sup>

Third, the intellectual effects of the tutorial teaching system may have run counter to the common assumption in the UK and some other countries today that research and teaching (particularly undergraduate teaching) are separable and indeed competing academic activities. Quite apart from ‘Stakhanovite’ work ethics on the part of some tutors (commented on in several of the later chapters), it is possible that the traditional teaching system imparted some positive benefits into the creative process of conducting research, and thus had benign effects on scholarship and research in several ways.

For example, the essay-focused system gave the faculty the opportunity to rehearse critical discussions of the foundational assumptions in key works with mostly highly motivated and able undergraduates. That may be part of the reason why numerous college tutors (such as John Gray, Steven Lukes, and Alan Ryan) were able to produce important scholarship alongside their teaching obligations. Moreover, teaching across subfields (particularly ‘theory’ and ‘institutions’) may have enabled some cross-fertilization among the two literatures that fed through into productive research and scholarship.<sup>25</sup> A scholar such as Geoffrey Marshall could draw on this breadth to publish on subjects such as conventions in the British Constitution, a topic exactly expressing the interaction between theory and institutional practice. Other long-serving tutors such as Vernon Bogdanor (Brasenose College) produced standard works on a range of subjects in electoral politics, constitutionalism, and political institutions. Indeed, going beyond subfields of politics as an

<sup>24</sup> Other examples of papers reflecting new intellectual and political developments were those that were added on China and the Politics of the European Union.

<sup>25</sup> One reason why many tutors could straddle both theory and institutions in their teaching came from the training they had themselves received on the Oxford two-year politics graduate MPhil (formerly BPhil) degree which until reform in the early years of the twenty-first century required candidates to complete courses in both strands, and which provided a pathway to a doctorate.

academic subject, the embeddedness of undergraduate politics teaching in a multidisciplinary (to some extent interdisciplinary) degree structure could pay research dividends too (and was emulated in other universities such as UEA and York).<sup>26</sup> For instance, Iain McLean (University College) produced a work on public choice theory deeply knowledgeable of economic theory and philosophy, and the feedback to philosophy and economics from politics was intellectually consequential too.

Further, the system offered ‘lifestyle’ attractions that may well have had motivational effects that compensated for a heavy tutoring load. It is true that some tutors became research-inactive (but after all the same happened to some academics in other universities) and some tutorial post holders left their fellowship for a more obviously research-oriented institution, but many able incumbents of tutorial fellowships relished their jobs. They liked the flat non-hierarchical structure expressed in a collegiate university, the absence of overweening (and sometimes warring) departmental barons so common in other universities, and the high degree of intellectual autonomy that the collegiate system permitted. They enjoyed the highly personal form of teaching in which individual undergraduates can be given time and attention. Indeed, it is remarkable that many political scientists (often with an Oxford doctorate) opted to leave *other* universities to take up a tutorial fellowship at Oxford. For instance, in the 1980s and 1990s politics academics who held permanent positions at such universities as Warwick, Sussex, Durham, Newcastle, Edinburgh, the London School of Economics, and Essex, opted to take up college tutorships at Oxford. Finally, the peculiarity of the Oxford teaching model can itself be overestimated. Oxford was distinctive in that undergraduate teaching through a weekly tutorial regime was accepted as the core function of faculty elected as tutorial fellows of the undergraduate colleges, and that in general lectures were secondary to students’ primary focus on tutorial-based essays, at least up to rationalization in the 1980s and 1990s. But after all, undergraduate teaching was the core preoccupation of most UK universities until the graduate explosion that started to gather pace in the later twentieth century and likewise it was far from unknown in other universities in the past for the same teacher to teach across ‘political theory’ and ‘political institutions’ at introductory level.<sup>27</sup> And while many universities—notably the Scottish universities and the English ‘redbricks’—traditionally relied exclusively on lecturing, not using classes or tutorials at all until well into the twentieth century, some sort of class or tutorial system for politics and the social sciences became the norm across the UK university system in the 1960s.

<sup>26</sup> Efforts to break up the PPE degree—for example, to create a separate Economics degree—have failed on at least two occasions because of the value placed on the degree’s interdisciplinary format by its defenders.

<sup>27</sup> One of us did precisely that at the University of Glasgow in the 1970s.

For example, the new ‘concrete and glass’ universities of the 1960s, such as York, Sussex, and Warwick, emulated the Oxford essay-based tutorial style to complement lecture series, albeit with rather larger groups (of four to six students with a lecturer rather than Oxford’s one or two) and typically with fortnightly rather than weekly meetings. But while some variant on the tutorial system for teaching politics was widely applied fifty years or so ago, more recent pressures associated with increasing student enrolments, particularly of graduate students, and rising pressures on staff to produce research publications for the five-year research assessment cycle first introduced by the UK government in 1986, caused many universities to dilute the system, for example by reducing written work requirements and by replacing lecturers with graduate assistants as class teachers in a way that made undergraduate teaching a more marginal activity for senior faculty.<sup>28</sup>

**Table 1.1.** Some key dates in the development of political science at Oxford

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1910	First faculty appointment in ‘Political Science’ (later ‘Political Theory and Institutions’)
1917	Doctoral (DPhil) degree established
1920	PPE (Philosophy, Politics, and Economics) degree established; degree regulations amended to allow women to take degrees
1930	First specialist college tutor in Politics appointed; first Professor of International Relations appointed
1934	Sub-faculty of Politics established within the Social Studies Faculty
1937	Foundation of Nuffield College, the university’s first graduate and mixed-sex college (the first students did not arrive until 1945)
1948	First female ‘statutory professor’ appointed; postgraduate taught course degree established (BPhil, later renamed MPhil)
1949	Examination papers in PPE reduced from nine to eight
1950	Foundation of St Antony’s College, the second graduate college
1961	International Relations promoted to List 1 option in place of History 1871–1918
1963	Robbins Report leads to establishment of new UK universities
1966	Franks Report leads to reforms in tutorial teaching in Oxford
1968	Language paper dropped from first year of PPE
1970	Bipartite Option in PPE introduced
1971	Compulsory options in Politics, Political Institutions plus either British Politics and Government Since 1865 or Theory of Politics
1974	Thesis option introduced in PPE; five previously men-only colleges changed their statutes to admit women (all of the former men’s colleges were mixed by 1984; the first formerly women-only colleges began to admit men in 1979 and all of the former women’s colleges were mixed by 2008)
1986	Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) introduced
1993	Politics syllabus reform introduces five core subjects from which a choice of two must be made
2000	Department of Politics and International Relations established
2010	Blavatnik School of Government established

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<sup>28</sup> Though undergraduate teaching may be coming to have more priority again with the introduction of substantial fees for students in England and Wales in the 2010s.



The question is, then, do such countervailing factors account for the fact that the apparent handicap posed by labour-intensive undergraduate tutorial teaching burdens evidently did not prevent Oxford political science faculty from making major contributions to research in the subject,<sup>29</sup> from exercising key influence in the professional organizations, notably the Political Studies Association and the British International Studies Association,<sup>30</sup> and from developing a more specialized undergraduate and graduate teaching programme at a pace that at least matches that of the other leading UK universities? If not, what other explanations can be offered?

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As mentioned earlier, these three features—Oxford’s distinctive institutional structure and how it changed over the period covered in this volume, Oxford’s relational distance to ruling elites, and the nature and effect of Oxford’s distinctive teaching arrangements and how those changed over time—make Oxford’s story a critical case for exploring the development of politics as an academic discipline over a century or so. In an institutional environment that was strikingly out of line with the sort of recipe for intellectual development that puts heavy weight on departmentalism or professorial leadership (or both), how did the ‘bumblebee’ of academic political science manage to fly at all, and even take the lead in some subfields for at least part of the time? Are these features a caricature that obscures a more complex and nuanced picture? To the extent that those features represent potential obstacles to the development of academic political science, were these institutional obstacles overcome, and if so how and in what circumstances? Or does Oxford’s experience suggest that the assumptions set out above are themselves questionable?

We will be returning to these three issues in the final chapter, reviewing the answers that seem to come out of the twelve chapters that follow. Students of institutions often emphasize the path-dependent nature of organizational structures and routines—that is, the tendency of original forms to persist and/or shape what comes later. So we start with two chapters that explore how ‘political science’ emerged as a named field of study in Oxford a century or so ago, placing it in the context of what was happening in the political world outside and in the complicated micro-politics of the university itself, and comparing it with the approach pursued in two other UK universities. These two chapters are followed by three that explore how the general intellectual style and approach to politics as an academic subject were shaped by Oxford’s distinctive institutional structure and position in the English, British, and

<sup>29</sup> As shown both by some of the scholarly landmarks discussed in the following chapters and (though such ranking exercises are of course subject to substantial measurement error) in Oxford University’s consistent rating among the very top in all the RAE exercises in Politics since 1986.

<sup>30</sup> See Wyn Grant, *The Development of a Discipline*, ch. 4, ‘The Oxford-Led Insurgency: 1975’ which underlines the then Oxford faculty’s central role in the discipline as it developed nationally.

international world, picking up on the sort of questions we set out earlier. Those general analyses are in turn followed by chapters that explore the development of the study of politics (broadly conceived) in seven subfields. Those chapters trace out the highs and lows, the changes both in intellectual approaches and in the objects of study themselves, and the opportunities that were grasped or missed.

Our contributors include one or two ‘insiders’ who have worked in Oxford for all or almost all of their careers, and one ‘outsider’ who has never worked there. But most of the contributors combine some experience of working in Oxford with that of working in other institutions, so this volume itself reflects the experience of a set of scholars with varying relational distance to the institution they are focusing on. And, as we shall see, our contributors vary noticeably in the positivity or otherwise of their assessments of what Oxford contributed over the century, both to the academic study of politics in general and to its various subfields. Winston Churchill is reported to have said that history would be kind to him, because he intended to write it himself (or words to that effect),<sup>31</sup> but that is certainly not what has inspired this volume. Far from the production of some airbrushed and self-congratulatory corporate history, the aim is to present a range of perspectives on politics at Oxford, and to reveal the mistakes and false starts that took place over the century as well as the landmark achievements.

Inevitably there are some significant gaps in this collection. We did not set out to provide a blow-by-blow narrative history nor to cover the undergraduate experience in detail, and space limits prevented us from commissioning chapters on every subfield of the subject. For example US politics, African politics, Latin American politics, even British politics have only walk-on parts in other chapters, but could certainly have merited chapters in their own right. Similarly, we do not explore the development of political theory in Oxford beyond the contribution made by the five successive incumbents of Oxford’s major political theory chair between 1944 and 2008, we do not assess the development of political sociology beyond the analysis of voting patterns, and nor (beyond some passing references) do we explore the contributions made by Oxford to the study of public administration and public policy before the foundation of Oxford’s Blavatnik School of Government and its first intake of postgraduate students in 2012. There are some broader cross-cutting themes that would have been worth developing further as well if space had permitted. For example, one of the features of any major international university is the number of visitors or temporary residents whom it attracts, and also the individuals who become attached to it in various ways without being regular

<sup>31</sup> J. Ramsden, ‘That Will Depend on Who Writes the History: Winston Churchill as his Own Historian’, ch. 14 in W. R. Louis (ed.), *More Adventures with Britannia: Personalities, Politics and Culture in Britain* (London: I. B. Taurus, 2005), 241–54.

faculty or students. That feature is touched on in several chapters, but it is not explored in depth here. Similarly, for a university that has only had a formal 'department' of politics for the last ten years of the century examined here—a striking departure from orthodox institutional arrangements, as we have already noted—a chapter exploring the pre-departmental institutional arrangements in depth would have much to recommend it. All of these themes certainly merit attention, but the aim of this volume is not to cover every possible angle. Rather we have set out to present a sufficient range of views and perspectives on the development of the subject as a whole, and accounts of a sufficient range of subfields to provide a reasonably broad and balanced picture of a century of development.

## Part II

# Origins and Overview: The Academic Study of Politics in Oxford and Elsewhere



## 2

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### EDITORS' NOTE

In this chapter Rodney Barker traces the origins of the academic study of politics (and its various cousins or aliases, such as 'government' and 'public administration') in three major British universities, and brings out the still unresolved issue of what—or who—'political science' is for.

Barker argues that Sidney and Beatrice Webb, the founders of the LSE, seem to have conceived the subject as catering for the *hauts fonctionnaires*, technocrats and enlightened administrators who were the linchpin of the Webbs' vision of a properly ordered advanced society. He suggests that Manchester's vision of knowledge useful for the development of a modern industrial city at first gave very little place to education or research in politics. It did not go beyond the offering of Diplomas in Public Administration through evening classes for ambitious local government officials until the mid-twentieth century. At that point Manchester rapidly developed a political science department (actually titled 'Government') modelled on that of the University of Chicago and reflecting a more curiosity-driven vision of political science than the more utilitarian view of Sidney and Beatrice Webb; the Webbs' view reflected Jeremy Bentham's<sup>1</sup> vision of 'chrestomathic' (useful) knowledge. By contrast, according to Barker, Oxford divided itself between an undergraduate education in politics aimed more at national 'statesmen' or politicians and extension classes for those who aimed to participate in politics at the grass-roots level, for example in labour unions.

Barker argues that none of these three universities went very far in developing a political science for citizens (as opposed to statesmen or administrators). Certainly, all of the tensions he identifies in the earliest years of modern political science in those three universities are still evident today. For example, the tension between those who think that serious scientific advance in politics can only come from accentuating an ivory-tower approach (that is, with an international 'invisible college' of professors assessing other professors) and those who equally firmly think the development of a more socially useful political science means the very opposite.

<sup>1</sup> J. Bentham, *Chrestomathia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983, first published in 1816).

# A Tale of Three Cities: The Early Years of Political Science in Oxford, London, and Manchester\*

*Rodney Barker*

## A TALE OF THREE CITIES?

In 1910 W. G. S. Adams left the Irish department of agriculture and technical instruction in Dublin where he was superintendent of statistics and intelligence to take up a Lectureship in Political Science at Oxford. Government and politics had been studied, written about, and lectured on ever since there were universities, in Oxford as elsewhere, though frequently under other titles or as part of different or broader presentations, and Glasgow and Edinburgh in the eighteenth century have had their claims to precedence made.<sup>1</sup> But Oxford was claiming an increasingly distinctive and autonomous status for a subject which was being filleted out of its embeddedness with economics, history, law, and philosophy and established with a curriculum of its own. The Gladstone Chair to which Adams was appointed two years after his arrival (as Simon Green recounts in the next chapter) was a contribution to this development. Oxford was not alone, and its contribution can be illuminated by comparison with some of its contemporaries, in particular London and Manchester. A tale of three cities, Oxford, London, and Manchester, is about not a golden triangle but a steel one, academic exchange assisted by railways, for while each city was distinct, none was isolated. Adams had lectured in economics at Manchester, and Oxford was almost pipped by LSE for the Gladstone title and the funds generated by that statesman's reputation. Following the death of Gladstone in May 1898, the Director of LSE, William Hewins, was asked by Lord Samuel 'on behalf of the Liberal Party whether the School would accept a Gladstone memorial endowment, whereupon Hewins suddenly became almost Webb-

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<sup>1</sup> Stefan Collini, Donald Winch, and John Burrow, *That Noble Science of Politics: A Study of Nineteenth-Century Intellectual History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); A. H. Brown, 'Adam Smith, John Millar and the Academic Study of Politics', Paper delivered at the Edinburgh IPSA Congress, 16–21 August 1976.

like and insisted that this was possible only “if it was of a genuinely national character”, for “the School, like the rain, must fall equally on the just and the unjust, know no distinction of parties but equally inspire all in the faith that the strongest arguments will win the day”. This wasn’t the warmest response that Samuel might have expected, and ‘The endowment’, Ralf Dahrendorf rather acidly observes, ‘went to Oxford’.<sup>2</sup>

Samuel’s enquiries, coolly received though they were, illustrate that the years on either side of 1900 were the occasion for an expansion both of university education and of education within existing universities. With expansion went innovation, experiment, reaction, and speculation as tumultuous and radical in their way as the very different upheavals and transitions in the years around the Robbins report. London and Manchester can be added to Oxford in considering the implications for political education of these changes, though Charles Dickens’s opening words in *A Tale of Two Cities*, ‘It was the best of times, it was the worst of times’, provide an important warning. The story is not a simple one of progress triumphant or virtue defended; there is a mixture of qualities, of innovation and tradition, successful initiative and foiled experiment, and it is the mixture that creates the particular character. Cities are particular places, and they exist at particular times, as do the academic activities which go on in them.

### A TALE OF THREE CITIES AND THE GENERATION OF THREE IDEAL TYPES

Three ideal constituencies were implied by the early engagement of the three towns with teaching and research in politics, and three different groups with whom the universities saw themselves as dealing. And though these ideal types never provide more than an approximation for educational reality, the closeness or distance of practice from them provides a means of understanding both what each of the three cities was doing, and how they differed from each other. The three ideal constituencies can be summarized as statesmen, administrators, and citizens. Statesmen, intellectuals, and philosophers in Oxford; administrators and managers in London; and citizens or perhaps subjects or civil society in Manchester. An ideal constituency can be matched by an ideal manner of attention to politics, and of the kind of politics, if any, to which that attention should be given. In the case of a constituency of potential statesmen, politics as a calling or an art; in the case of potential administrators, politics as

<sup>2</sup> R. Dahrendorf, *LSE: A History of the London School of Economics and Political Science, 1895–1995* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 68.



a profession or science; but in the case of citizens, the role of political education is far more problematic, since for the majority of citizens government and politics might be seen as an auxiliary or support service rather than an autonomous sphere of activity, something which, whilst a minority of people are consistently and actively engaged in it, engages the energies and attention of ordinary citizens only sporadically.

This will not be a company history or a history of universities, or even of political science in universities, but a brief reflection on ideal types in relation to three universities in Victorian, Edwardian, and early Georgian Britain. The location is important, because the academic study and teaching of politics have always been aware of the practice of politics. The comparison will conclude by considering what the three ideal types can contribute to contemporary debate, whether the citizenship type in fact turns out not to be viable, and whether nonetheless some kind of democratic compromise can be found in the history of any one of the three sources, Oxford, London, or Manchester.

#### OXFORD: STATESMEN

As described in the next chapter, All Souls fairly swiftly provided funds to raise Adams's Lectureship in Political Science to a Readership, and after a further two years he was appointed to the new Gladstone Chair, but with the different job title, if not job description, of Political Theory and Institutions. Political science in Oxford would thus seem to have lasted only two short years. But titles in academic life are slippery things and a chemist can be a doctor of philosophy just as an historian can be awarded the degree of Bachelor of Science. Adams's first Oxford appointment, in 1910, may have been entitled political science. But the word science has had its mutations, and for the immediate past in which the three universities at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries developed their research and their teaching in politics, 'science' could mean not only an experimental investigation of regular laws and patterns, but the practice of a craft or skill.

The apparent jettisoning of political science and its replacement by less or possibly more ambitious terms should not be taken as in themselves a reliable indication of what was going on, or of what was not. There had been a paper called political science in Oxford since 1885, focusing on Aristotle, Maine, and Bluntschli, one small component of a syllabus whose ambition was the cultivation, if not of philosopher kings, then at least of philosopher princes. It was an aspiration which was perhaps only slightly exaggerated at Balliol under Jowett, of as Robert Wokler has put it, 'fostering of a spirit, and preparation for the duties, of public office and service', of governing rather

than administering, as befitted 'the great finishing school of the British Empire'.<sup>3</sup>

But while the university was prepared to accept the Gladstone endowment, there was less initial enthusiasm for expanding the constituency for political education. In 1913, a Diploma in Commerce and Administration was being considered, and rejected, in response to the Chancellor Lord Curzon's concern that the interests and generosity of business might be directed away from Oxford to newer universities. It was objected by the Warden of New College that 'it would indeed be a pity if too much of the brains and vigour of the country were attracted into a business career, and the more important and more ennobling career of the clergyman, the student, the man of science, the lawyer, the doctor, and even the public servant, should be neglected'.<sup>4</sup> Adams's own proposal two years later, whilst still within the ambit of statesmanship, is in contrast to these earlier objections, quite radical. A new degree in political science, political economy, and public law would, it was argued, be particularly suitable not only for those aiming to conduct teaching or research, but also for those envisaging careers in the higher echelons of politics and administration, commerce and business.<sup>5</sup>

Though the title of Adams's chair covered both theory and institutions, Adam's own revealed preference was for statesmanship, or responsible citizenship of a rather Whiggish kind. His contribution was closer to the tradition of civilized statesmanship, science as an art or skill, than to either an empirical science of politics or a practical science of administration. In 1914 he published a pamphlet on the war, and established *The Political Quarterly* which he then edited for the two years that it ran.<sup>6</sup> Apart from this, and what Brian Harrison describes as 'two businesslike and severely empirical chapters—on trade and public administration—in the British volume of the six-volume Oxford Survey of the British Empire',<sup>7</sup> there is not a great deal of written evidence of Adams's conception of his subject. His only signed contributions to *The Political Quarterly* were three short book reviews, informative and courteous, but giving no clue to the author's own view of things. If the unsigned contributions are assumed to be those of the editor, the understanding of his subject by the new Chair is similarly measured, tightly focused, and wholly consistent with a conception of politics as statesmanship, or at least as

<sup>3</sup> R. Wokler, 'The Professoriate of Political Thought in England since 1914: A Tale of Three Chairs', in D. Castiglione and I. Hampsher-Monk, *The History of Political Thought in National Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 138.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted N. Chester, *Economics, Politics and Social Studies in Oxford, 1900–85* (London: Macmillan, 1986), 24.

<sup>5</sup> Chester, *Economics, Politics and Social Studies*, 25.

<sup>6</sup> *The Political Quarterly* was a journal whose title but not whose character was to reappear, to the confusion of librarians, in 1930.

<sup>7</sup> B. Harrison, 'Adams, William George Stewart', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30336>>, accessed 3 August 2009.

the concern of the more active and reflective and informed citizen, an Athenian mode of citizenship which could only ever be practised by a minority. The editorial essays dealt with Home Rule and labour disputes in Ireland, and then with the war, together with regular summaries of principal events in parliament, the courts, and central administration. Each of the pieces is substantial, detailed, and informative, with a carefully expressed recommendation of negotiation, conciliation, the placing of sectional interests to one side in the promotion of the communal interest, nation before party during the war, and an aspiration for international judicial and legislative systems as an alternative to military conflict thereafter.<sup>8</sup>

It is not here, in articles or reviews, that the strongest evidence of Adams's political values and assumptions lies. His record of activity, as much as his publications, reveals a conception of a political education and a science of politics whose centre of gravity is close to the statesmanship ideal type, a career distinguished by public and university service rather than by publication. Within a year of arriving in Oxford Adams was a member of a committee advising the Cabinet on Irish finance. He surveyed the entire library service of the United Kingdom for the Carnegie Trust, and spent the war years from 1915 first at the Ministry of Munitions and then in Lloyd George's personal secretariat, returning to Oxford only in 1919. The 'politics' and 'political science' which are represented by Adams's career are an activity, not a programme of investigation or research. They are a science in this sense, the science of politics rather than political science—informed and inspired by political philosophy and theory, and applied in the current world of the statesman/citizen. Harrison's summary of his career reads like a generic picture of enlightened Whig statesmanship:

Adams was widely trusted in high circles, and . . . it is possible to comprehend a career now no longer feasible: the unashamed dominance of liberal-minded and rational debate within an intellectual élite with close links to Whitehall and Westminster; . . . the widespread belief in 'citizenship' as a set of voluntarist and rationalistic attitudes transitional between an individualist religious idealism and a secular and collectivist professionalism; and an academic world where respect was won from colleagues less through prolific publication than through displaying wisdom in informal debate.<sup>9</sup>

The history of Adams's contribution to teaching and research in politics at Oxford refuses to fit with exact neatness the ideal type I have used it to illustrate, though despite the use of the term 'citizenship', the level at which that citizenship was exercised represents political education as the transmission of wisdom and skills to potential leaders and statesmen. Added to this is an aspiration to discover through educated discussion one true public interest,

<sup>8</sup> *The Political Quarterly*, 1914–16, numbers 1–8.

<sup>9</sup> Harrison, 'Adams'.

above and beyond the partisan disputes of politics. However much Adams's published work consisted of the recording of factual information, this information was not data for scientific enquiry or for the investigation of the practice of administration. Rather it was an unproblematic resource for the exercise of the skills of responsible public service from above. It was a form of statesmanship which his own career perfectly illustrated, and to which it notably contributed.

But if the role of the scholar was shaped in this way, so was the scholar's responsibility to others as a writer and researcher, and to students as a teacher. What had to be communicated either by example or by explanation were the higher principles of public life and the higher skills for playing a leading role in that life. Political education was about driving the car of state, so whilst some skills of political and philosophic navigation were of value, taking care of what was under the bonnet of the vehicle could properly be left to others, and to more mundane training.

Research or teaching involving tasks lower down the governing pyramid might be expected to be looked on with some suspicion, unless the more mundane tasks were to be carried out by more mundane people. In this enterprise the university departed much further from the ideal type of statesmanship than anything attempted by Adams, or at least pursued some of its implications in very different directions. Oxford was keen to stretch out a hand to the able and aspirant amongst working people and to engage in this way with some of the consequences of industrial society via the University Extension Movement, taking education to the coalface. In 1908 a joint committee of the university and the Workers Educational Association had no doubt about the desirability of a strong degree of practical and contemporary relevance in the courses to be offered in extension classes to working-class students. The committee thought it 'desirable that the theoretical and analytical study of politics and economics, which has hitherto predominated at Oxford, should be supplemented by inductive investigation of political and economic problems'.<sup>10</sup> There were both similarities and differences between what was thought appropriate for aspiring proletarians and what was considered relevant for the cultivation of an elite. The provision of extension teaching and of two-year diplomas in Economics and Political Science should not be to separate workers from their class or their communities, but to prepare them for the proliferating responsibilities in voluntary, trade union, cooperative, and local organizations, and to give them the knowledge, understanding, and skills to moderate radicalism and promote

<sup>10</sup> Joint Committee of University and Working-Class Representatives on the Relation of the University to the Higher Education of Workpeople, *Oxford and Working-Class Education* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908), 79.

industrial peace.<sup>11</sup> Oxford would give them the education which would enable them to 'persuade large bodies of men to postpone immediate gains to the higher good of the community'.<sup>12</sup> The growing public presence and educational demands of the organized working class were to be met with the cultivation of organic intellectuals who would induct a developing proletarian citizenry into the realities and possibilities of democracy in an industrial society. Gramsci was anticipated and turned, to provide a Platonic version of ideology for the industrial citizenry. Education and research in politics would sustain and cultivate the different roles of workers and statesmen, and would build on and develop rather than subvert the existing hierarchies of responsibility, power, and function.

### LONDON: ADMINISTRATORS

A different cluster of ambitions had meanwhile been active in London, ambitions of which in their different ways both Lord Curzon and the Committee on Oxford and Working-Class Education had been very much aware. In London a whole institution had been robed in the title 'political science' since 1895 when the London School of Economics and Political Science was founded. Graham Wallas declined the post of director, but was appointed lecturer and began teaching a variety of courses in politics.

Though the relentless lead in setting up the new school had been Sidney Webb, with Fabian colleagues such as Shaw giving somewhat sniping support, it was Henry Straker, Shaw's motor mechanic in *Man and Superman*, who was most forthright in giving an opinion on the relative worth of institutions of higher learning and on their functions and constituencies: 'Very nice sort of place, Oxford, I should think, for people that like that sort of place. They teach you to be a gentleman there. In the Polytechnic they teach you to be an engineer.'<sup>13</sup> But whilst Shaw had clear ideas about what was useful and what was not in further and higher education, and despite his support for LSE, it was not clear that he thought the new school served his purpose. When he was constructing in his epilogue to *Pygmalion* an afterlife, or an after-the-end-of-the-play life, for Eliza Doolittle, Shaw sent the former flower seller to evening classes at LSE. She wanted to set up in business and therefore to acquire the skills and the knowledge to do so. But she was not impressed by what was on offer, and decided to rely instead on native wit, hard work, and support from a

<sup>11</sup> Joint Committee, *Oxford and Working-Class Education*, 82–3.

<sup>12</sup> Joint Committee, *Oxford and Working-Class Education*, 83.

<sup>13</sup> G. B. Shaw, *Man and Superman*, repr. 1946 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1903), 93.

wealthy patron.<sup>14</sup> Had she been in Manchester, things might have been different, but LSE was not for shopkeepers, but for the drafters and administrators of the laws governing shopkeepers. The constituency of the new institution was more successfully identified in another book by another, renegade, Fabian, H. G. Wells, who satirized the Webbs as Oscar and Altiora Bailey in his novel *The New Machiavelli*. The protagonists of Wells's satire were rational planners who, if they had been able to do so, would have chopped down all the trees and replaced them with stamped green metal sunlight accumulators.<sup>15</sup> The aspirations came out very clearly at the inception of the school when the Webbs and Graham Wallas were recruiting staff to teach politics. Beatrice Webb recorded in her diary a frustrating collision of ideal types:

Advertised for political science lecturer—and yesterday interviewed candidates—a nondescript set of university men. All hopeless from our point of view—all imagined that political science consisted of a knowledge of Aristotle and modern! writers such as De Tocqueville—wanted to put the students through a course of Utopias from More downwards. When Sidney suggested a course of lectures to be prepared on the different systems of municipal taxation, when Graham suggested a study of the rival methods of election from *ad hoc* to proportional representation, the wretched candidates looked aghast and thought evidently that we were amusing ourselves at their expense.<sup>16</sup>

In establishing the LSE in 1895, the Webbs and their colleagues were very clear both about what they wanted to achieve and whom they wanted to emulate or transcend. They were impressed by the models, or at least the inspiring examples, of the *École Libre des Sciences Politiques* of which Dahrendorf comments 'to whose name only "London" and "Economics" had to be added', of MIT, and of the *Technische Hochschule* in Berlin-Charlottenburg.<sup>17</sup> LSE may have been international if not in the inspiration at least in the justification, for its foundation and early growth. But influence and responsibility flowed in both directions, and the new School was also explicitly imperial in its rhetoric, seeing a leadership as well as a receptive role for Britain amongst the nations and peoples of the world.

The desire was to do not only that, but more widely to administer both empire and nation efficiently through the trained minds of a public-spirited and democratically accountable but not mandated elite. Such an ambition was possible at a high moment of proud imperial consciousness. Hewins, the School's first Director, argued for a 'system of higher education especially

<sup>14</sup> G. B. Shaw, 'Pygmalion', in *Androcles and the Lion; Overruled; Pygmalion* (1912) (London: Constable, 1916).

<sup>15</sup> H. G. Wells, *The New Machiavelli* (London: John Lane, 1911, repr. Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2004), 143.

<sup>16</sup> B. Webb, *Our Partnership* (London: Longmans, 1948), 94.

<sup>17</sup> Dahrendorf, *LSE*, 5.

adapted to the needs of “the captains of industry and commerce”, a system, that is, which provides a scientific training in the structure and organization of modern industry and commerce, and the general causes and criteria of prosperity, as they are illustrated or explained in the policy and experience of the British Empire and foreign countries’.<sup>18</sup>

What the School did for commerce, it could do for administration, both public and private. Its first calendar and prospectus announced its mission to civil servants, lawyers, bankers, actuaries, and the world of commerce in general.<sup>19</sup> In its early years the School provided special programmes for members of railway companies, insurance companies, the Treasury, and officers in the armed forces.<sup>20</sup> Even in its limited application, this provides evidence of a very different LSE from an image whose sole component was a parodic portrayal of Wallas’s successor as Professor of Political Science, Harold Laski. The School was to have a practical function, and it was entirely in tune with this that whilst Wallas was in 1914 the first salaried professor of politics, an unsalaried Chair in Public Administration had been conferred, two years earlier, on Sidney Webb.<sup>21</sup>

In the year that he took up the Chair in Political Science, Wallas wrote approvingly of the direction of things which he had observed on a recent visit to the United States, where in relation to controls on trusts and railways, employers’ liability or wage boards, policies ‘are being carried out in a new atmosphere of expert advice and criticism; and the administrative expert is often employed and respected even in cities where the politician who appoints him may be ignorant or corrupt’. There was, he considered, a refreshing ‘shifting of the intellectual centre of gravity from uninstructed opinion to instructed thought’.<sup>22</sup> It followed that there were ‘certain subjects, Recent History for instance—both political and economic—Jurisprudence, Comparative Legislation, and Statistics, which are of direct daily use to an administrative official, and which have already been developed far beyond the point which the ablest young man is likely to reach by picking up knowledge in his day’s work’.<sup>23</sup> The conception of the study and teaching of politics of LSE’s first Professor of Political Science was entirely in accord with the similar view of Beatrice Webb: political science was to be part of the School’s equipment for providing training ‘suitable for those engaged in administration or business’.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Dahrendorf, *LSE*, 60.

<sup>19</sup> London School of Economics and Political Science, *Calendar for the London School of Economics and Political Science at London University* (London: LSE, 1895), 3.

<sup>20</sup> Dahrendorf, *LSE*, 88–9, 370.

<sup>21</sup> F. A. Hayek, ‘The London School of Economics 1895–1945’, *Economica*, New Series 13, 49 (February 1946), 18.

<sup>22</sup> G. Wallas, *Men and Ideas: Essays*, ed. May Wallas; with a preface by Gilbert Murray (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1940), 176.

<sup>23</sup> Wallas, *Men and Ideas*, 184.

<sup>24</sup> Webb, *Our Partnership*, 88.

'Above all, we want the ordinary citizen to feel that reforming society is no light matter, and must be undertaken by experts specially trained for the purpose'.<sup>25</sup> 'Enry Straker would have to learn his place.

There is an intimate if complex relation between the type of political activity members of a university engage in and the type of political education they provide, or hope to provide, and the constituency to whom they expect to provide it. Both Adams and Wallas were politically active and involved, as Wallas had not entirely appreciated when he launched an attack on Oxford political education:

When those students who have survived the trenches and the seas return to Oxford, will they find that the whole 'universitas' of themselves and their teachers is ready to help in settling the new and urgent problems of international morality or the organization of currency, of eugenics, of the control of industry by the State or by the trade unions, of the constitutional position of the Army, and the efficiency of municipal government in the work of social reorganization?<sup>26</sup>

But it was the character of the engagement, not the fact of engagement, that divided the two new professors, and Wallas's complaint was not one which could be sustained against the occupant of the chair which, three years before, Wallas had failed to gain. There is an irony in the attack in that the Gladstone endowment specified that the post should be filled by an 'able man from outside with practical experience'.<sup>27</sup> This may have given Adams the edge. The difference was not between those who made a connection between their academic work and the world of politics and government and those who did not, but between different conceptions of the two worlds and of the possible and desirable connections between them. Wallas's political world was composed of local politics and administration, particularly the educational administration of London, just as Adams's was composed of central government and university and college government. The political education for cultivated statesmanship engaged symbiotically with this, just as a study of local taxation did with Wallas's commitment to administrative reform and reconstruction.

### MANCHESTER: CITIZENS

The third ideal type is derived from Manchester. A political education for citizens would be aimed at people who are principally involved in civil society rather than in government or politics, the recipients rather than the providers

<sup>25</sup> Webb, *Our Partnership*, 86.

<sup>26</sup> G. Wallas, 'Oxford and English Political Thought', *The Nation*, 17/7 (Saturday 15 May 1915), 227.

<sup>27</sup> Wokler, 'The Professoriate', 139.



of statecraft and administration. The aspiration to provide teaching and research which fed the needs of the city and its people, rather than of those who governed or administered them, which lay behind the foundation and development of higher education in Manchester might seem to fit this ideal. And although Shaw was associated with LSE, his own conception of the future of useful higher education looked very like the aspirations of Manchester. A formal letter from the University of Paris in March 1902 congratulated the university's precursor Owens College on its fiftieth anniversary for having 'collaborer à l'œuvre démocratique de l'éducation populaire. En effet, vous donnez leur part aux humanités, puisque vous formez des lettrés et des artistes; vous instruisez des ingénieurs, ces officiers de la guerre pacifique; et, par vos cours de soir, par l'extension universitaire, vous élevez le niveau intellectuel de vos artisans.'<sup>28</sup>

Yet Manchester is like the dog in the night, and much has been made of the transforming effect of the arrival as late as 1948 of W. J. M. Mackenzie. If Manchester and Owens had practical origins and were intended to provide education for the city and its people, but Mackenzie's arrival marks the first appearance of any serious study of his subject in the university, why was virtually no politics taught at Manchester for nearly three-quarters of a century? It is Manchester without Mackenzie or before Mackenzie, not Manchester with him, which raises questions about universities and citizenship. Was there an understanding of politics and government which, paradoxically, led to their absence from teaching and research?

One of the sources and pressures for Owens College and later the university into which it transmuted in 1880 was the belief that Manchester possessed a practical and dynamic talent which marked it off from the culture of Oxford and Cambridge and of other cities in Britain. Manchester, it was claimed, had a robust character which required distinctive expression in higher education, but also deserved, as much as Oxford or Cambridge did, academic cultural development. This double-sided aspiration led to a curriculum of teaching and research which was on the one hand traditionally scholastic and on the other practically addressed to what were seen as the needs of a modern commercial and industrial city. These were divergent aspirations. On the one hand was a belief that culture and learning as the enhancement and extension of material enterprise, ability, and success could and should be cultivated in as vibrant a centre of human enterprise as Manchester, and should not be the monopoly or preserve of Oxford and Cambridge. On the other was a puritan and utilitarian reaction against what were considered the frivolity and practical irrelevance of much that went on in the older universities. The first aspiration led to the pursuit of conventional and established disciplines—law, the natural sciences,

<sup>28</sup> H. B. Charlton, *Portrait of a University 1851–1951: To Commemorate the Centenary of Manchester University* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1951), 79.

literature—the second to the development of vocational, technical, and mechanical education, Straker’s engineering, and an arrangement of timetables and degree programmes compatible with the daytime commitments of students who were working in business, schoolteaching, or the professions. Existing universities assumed that their students would be young and able to devote their entire time to their studies, and Manchester by contrast insisted that its courses were ‘intended not only for students of the usual full-time type but for persons engaged in business and teaching’.<sup>29</sup>

The practical was seen as consisting of all those activities which made up the direct day-to-day business of society rather than its political management, and so a study of politics lacked any strong rationale if it could be justified neither in terms of practical usefulness nor as part of the higher learning. Political education fell between two stools. Whilst Stanley Jevons was appointed to teach economics and James Bryce from 1868 to 1874 to teach law, there was no equivalent appointment for the study of politics. Such teaching as there was of the kinds of things treated as politics and government at Oxford and LSE was occasional and tangential, and was incorporated within or auxiliary to other agendas, as an element within degree courses in history or commerce.

Despite the fact that of the three cities it was Manchester which rooted its higher education most firmly and directly in the life of society and the immediate concerns of its citizens, politics was scarcely on the agenda until after the Second World War. If the political dog was not entirely silent, it certainly interrupted its slumber for little more than the occasional snuffle and shake. There was both a positive and a negative justification for this absence. To be either scholarly and reflective or scientific and impartial, it was considered necessary to stand apart from controversy which was what politics was seen to be all about. Whilst active and radical citizens were prominent amongst the early trustees of Owens College and those cultivating its development,<sup>30</sup> party politics and hence anything which might seem partisan or even controversial or involved with current politics were still considered as out of place in an educational institution. Manchester was not untypical. In Birmingham Josiah Mason, in one of the trust deeds which laid the foundations for the new university there, specified that there were to be no lectures ‘upon any question which for the time being should be the subject of party political controversy’.<sup>31</sup> Far from being the master science, fit for the education of philosophers or aristocrats, politics was perceived as a noisy and vulgar activity, on the one hand too coarse and on the other too frivolous for admission to a place of higher learning. The later experience of other universities and other towns was to provide sustenance for this caution well

<sup>29</sup> E. Fiddes, *Chapters in the History of Owens College and of Manchester University 1851–1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1937), 154.

<sup>30</sup> Fiddes, *Chapters*, 17–18.

<sup>31</sup> Fiddes, *Chapters*, 92–3.

into the twentieth century, and as late as the years after the Second World War, it could be observed of Manchester that ‘The shadow of Laski hovered over those who wished to move from the formal analysis of institutions to the detailed examination of political processes. In moving from the formal to the informal, and from the static to the dynamic study of political institutions, scholars risked their reputations. In such a delicate field as political studies it seemed only too easy to be regarded as an apologist or propagandist, and to lose academic objectivity and scholarly detachment.’<sup>32</sup>

So in 1914, whilst Oxford and LSE were creating new initiatives in political education, at Manchester the list of ‘professors, readers, and independent lecturers in charge of a department’ contains no teachers of administration or of any other form of politics or government.<sup>33</sup> Brian Chapman has suggested that the Second World War, and academics’ experience of it, was a catalyst for the development of teaching and research in politics. War service, either in the military or in the various support agencies of government, made it possible for academics to be more confident of their own authority to analyse and criticize political institutions in a professional and non-partisan manner. At the same time it drew their attention to those institutions not merely as formal executors of rules, but as both powerful actors in their own right, and at the same time open to influence, directing, and reform. As bridges from aspiration to action, and as a discreet component in the process of government, the institutions of government constituted a body of practices and patterns of their own which made their analysis both relevant for the scholar and necessary for the practitioner.<sup>34</sup> The experience which Hayek saw as in part responsible for the subversion of academia by collectivism is also a candidate for the stimulus of a more active and critical stance by academia towards the processes of government.<sup>35</sup>

It would be an oversimplification to say that not only did academics become involved in government more in the Second than in the First World War, but that there was far more government with which to become involved. But whereas before 1914 it was still possible to see the collectivist state as an undesirable development whose growth might still be curtailed and even reversed, even by the outbreak of the Second World War the collectivist state was, whatever view one took of its function and consequences, such an overpowering presence that no political education, whether for practical or scientific motives, could ignore it.

<sup>32</sup> B. Chapman, ‘Government’, in John Knapp, Michael Swanton, and F. R. Jevons (eds), *University Perspectives* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1970), 66.

<sup>33</sup> Fiddes, *Chapters*, 217–26; Charlton, *Portrait*, 172–82.

<sup>34</sup> Chapman, ‘Government’, 66–7.

<sup>35</sup> F. A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (London: Routledge, 1944), v.

At the same time, the final arrival of complete adult suffrage together with one person one vote made it less easy to present politics as at second remove from the ordinary concerns of ordinary people. Conversely, it made those who would not be included in an educational constituency if the function of education was to improve, inform, or elevate a governing or administering layer, all the more socially visible by the simple fact of being even more numerous.

But it would be a mistake to see, as some later commentators have done, the absence from the curriculum of the new University of Manchester of the sorts of things that would later be categorized as political science as a failure or an immaturity. The question should not be ‘why did Manchester not do one thing?’ but ‘why did it do what it did do?’ Silences speak as loudly as voices, and what the record of Manchester illustrates is the education considered conducive to flourishing in an industrial city. And when teaching and research which would be recognizable to a contemporary student or teacher of political science emerged in Manchester, that academic practice too was evidence of the context in which it arrived and grew. From its inception until well into the twentieth century, the reasons for understanding what was thought of as politics were concordant with those for understanding climate or geography. Politics, government, and legislation were support services, a necessary convenience and sometimes even an inconvenient obstacle, but secondary to the main business. Industrious citizens needed to know about law and the actions of states, but only in the way in which farmers needed to know about the weather. As late as 1937 when the creation of a Chair in Public Administration was being considered at Manchester, it remained as part of the planning of the Faculty of Commerce and Administration.<sup>36</sup> When the university, in conjunction with the Workers’ Educational Association, like Oxford began to provide extension lectures in 1908, the topics covered were industrial history, economics, general modern history, literature, and natural history.<sup>37</sup> They were all matters both worthy and potentially useful, rather than the essential equipment for radical proletarians, or even for active citizens.

Whilst the vigour and enterprise of ordinary people as members of civic society were the foundation on which the university was to be built, the university was not seen as making a reciprocal contribution to them as citizens, and its input into the community was in a different direction. When therefore the largely empty box of political education and research was filled after the Second World War, it was not with reference to those practical concerns which had driven the university’s development of other

<sup>36</sup> Faculty of Commerce and Administration, *Memorandum of October 1937*, 6–7. I am grateful to Dr James Peters, University Archivist, for this information.

<sup>37</sup> Fiddes, *Chapters*, 144–5; University of Manchester, *University of Manchester Calendar 1932* (Manchester: University of Manchester), 382.

subjects. Political science in Manchester was justified in the first place by scientific curiosity, and insofar as any wider function was even implied, it was largely by default, with an invocation of old themes of statesmanship and expertise, rather than a new business plan. It was advocated not because it was useful, but because it was interesting, and an important tool for understanding the contemporary world. The scientific comparison which Mackenzie revealingly made was with the explanatory rather than the constructive or practical sciences: biology rather than medicine or engineering.<sup>38</sup>

The principal reason for introducing a broad agenda of political studies was that the existing silences and absences were ‘in a scholarly sense indecent and undignified’.<sup>39</sup> The supporting reason was that important problems faced the world, but the further questions that raised about the distribution of powers and responsibilities were not pursued.<sup>40</sup> It was as if the teaching and study of politics had no need of either the support of statesmanship or expertise as arguments, save in the most distant manner. Those supports were there if needed, and might be considered self-evident, but they were not part of the articulated identity. But if the insights of political science were to be immediately available only in the university, particularly in the still elitist university of the mid-twentieth century, the argument of science for science’s sake was incomplete unless the question ‘for whom’ was answered, and the only apparent answers were those provided by the ideal types of Oxford and LSE. If research and teaching in politics were to have a practical in addition to a scientific justification, the only available practical constituency was still composed of leaders and rulers, manager and administrators.

So the third ideal type, political education for citizenship, was an empty box, since citizens were householders, churchgoers, workers but not, in the mass, politically active. Whilst those who taught and studied were frequently active citizens, the world of politics and the world of education were kept severely apart lest the partisanship of the one infected the independence of the other. This raises, or suggests, a problem larger than the historical explanation of what was happening in Manchester. If citizens needed political education—and political education was from time to time, if somewhat carelessly, justified as sustaining citizenship—how could a university, which was the preserve of a few, provide it? Universities could cater for statesmen and for administrators, or for engineers, but not it seemed, for citizens, or only for the most elevated citizens. And if what those citizens wanted, even if they wanted it from higher education, was illustrated by Henry Straker and Eliza Doolittle, then politics

<sup>38</sup> W. J. M. Mackenzie, *Explorations in Government* (London: Macmillan, 1975), xxxiii.

<sup>39</sup> Mackenzie, *Explorations*, xxviii.

<sup>40</sup> ‘World politics exist and are very dangerous. We simply do not know how to manage the human ecology of a small planet, and we had better find out, rather quickly. That is surely a practical form of knowledge.’ Mackenzie, *Explorations*, xxxiv.

was pretty low on the agenda. This suggests that if we had to choose between the various titles under which the matter is taught and studied in universities, 'government' would edge ahead of 'politics'. It did so in Manchester.

## THE PARADOX OF POLITICAL SCIENCE FOR CITIZENS

Each of the three tales is of a university which, though it lived in a society where democracy was a vigorous part of political debate, did not work in a society of simple, equal, and complete adult suffrage. Once that had been achieved, and it was not achieved finally and completely until after the Second World War, the problems involved in teaching politics in a democracy at a university might have become more glaring. If a political education was a valuable contribution to citizenship, should it not be available to all citizens, rather than to a minority, however that minority was selected, and however large it was? If there is more to the search for understanding than simple intellectual satisfaction, if understanding, as Laski claimed in his 1926 LSE inaugural, is liberating, then it is difficult to justify it as only a university subject. If it is liberating, then all citizens have a right to liberation.<sup>41</sup> The arrival of an ambitious and self-confident political science in Manchester after 1945 seems not, though, to have had that justification.

None of the three tales is of a study of politics originally conducted out of curiosity and as part of an attempt to understand the human world. Once that leap is made, however many claims are made for the utility of political education and research, the enterprise no longer depends upon them. The study of politics, broadly conceived and actively and critically pursued, becomes part of the wider enterprise of understanding the human world. If it was not art for art's sake, it had something about it of science for science's sake.

There is failure in each of these three stories to provide a motive or rationale for political education and research in universities if the constituency is not statesmen, administrators, or experts, but citizens. A conception of the contribution of teaching and research on politics whose principal commitment is to the well-being and flourishing of an entire population is not provided by the example of Manchester. It suggests rather that whilst it is fairly straightforward to conduct teaching and research about citizens, it is quite another matter to conduct it for them. Oxford's and Manchester's involvement in

<sup>41</sup> H. Laski, 'On the Study of Politics', in Preston King (ed.), *The Study of Politics: A Collection of Inaugural Lectures* (London: Frank Cass, 1977), 4.

working-class education before the First World War seems to come as close as any to providing a political education, if not to all citizens, then at least to more of them. And if there is an unavoidable elitism in any form of university education short of universal adult graduation, then perhaps the third ideal type, so far as politics is concerned, will remain an empty box. In that case the field remains in the possession of statesmen and administrators, even if they lack the articulate self-confident missionary spirit which informed their predecessors, both Fabian and philosophic. The very elitism for which both Oxford and LSE were criticized is an ineliminable feature of study and teaching in a university, and however democratic the aspirations of those engaged in it, they are continually accumulating an experience and an understanding which increases their distance, as what the Fabians would have called experts, from those whose equal status as democratic citizens they may acknowledge. It was something of this recognition which led the Italian Marxist and film-maker Pier Paolo Pasolini to break ranks with his left-wing colleagues in 1969. When students were demonstrating, often quite violently, Pasolini declared his solidarity with the members of the police force, the sons of the poor confronted by the children of privilege.<sup>42</sup>

It remains a paradox that the activity which might seem most fundamental to a free and vigorous people, politics as an activity of the whole society, is one part of that society's life to which universities seem able to engage only in an elitist manner. But if the empty box of political science for citizens cannot be filled by any of the three ideal histories, then a working compromise was nonetheless provided by the first occupant of the Chichele Chair in Social and Political Theory which emerged from the splitting of the original Gladstone designation into two, theory on the one hand and government on the other. Oxford had set out to educate workers at the start of the twentieth century, and another way of pursuing the same goal was followed by the occupant of the new chair. G. D. H. Cole settled for the compromise of disseminating the insights of political research to those in the wider society who would or could listen. When he studied social theory, he told his inaugural audience, it was 'for the practical purpose of suggesting to anyone I can influence, and above all to the society to which I belong, what is the right pattern of social thought to guide social action in the circumstances of here and now'.<sup>43</sup> This was representative politics in reverse, from the experts to the masses. If capitalists could trickle down wealth, socialists could trickle down knowledge. This might be

<sup>42</sup> D. Ward, 'Translator's Introduction' to Pier Paolo Pasolini, 'Manifesto for a New Theatre', in P. Rumble and Bart Testa (eds), *Pier Paolo Pasolini: Contemporary Perspectives* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 152.

<sup>43</sup> G. D. H. Cole, 'Scope and Method in Social and Political Theory', in King, *The Study of Politics*, 51.

the closest that university research and teaching could approach to a conception of citizenship.

The scholars, teachers, and researchers of 1910 may well have been bemused or astonished could they have seen what is going on, and what is not going on, today. There is no reason to suppose that our reaction would be any the less were we able to glimpse what our colleagues and successors will be up to a century hence. But more than a hundred years after Adams's arrival the problem of political science for citizens remains unsolved.





## EDITORS' NOTE

Political scientists can be forgiven for assuming that the emergence of their subject is simply to be explained by its self-evident intellectual importance. But political science does not exist as a formal academic specialism in all times and places, and even today 'public administration' is the closest that some societies get to it. So the development of an academic specialism devoted to the study of politics in its own right is itself the product of political processes which need to be unpacked and understood. How is resistance from other established academic disciplines overcome, and what sort of social conditions produce a demand for a 'politics' professoriate?

In this chapter Simon Green explores the micro-politics that produced a professorial chair devoted to the academic study of politics a century ago, in what might be considered the rather unlikely setting of All Souls College, Oxford—a college that had traditionally concerned itself with law and the humanities but had developed a 'public service' mission in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Green's account is not focused so much on what prompted the university to appoint that first lectureship in political science (as it was originally called) as on what made one particular college adopt that lectureship and to transform it (along with its incumbent) into a readership and a chair within two years.

As Green shows, that extraordinarily rapid transition cannot really be explained by deep academic conviction about the intellectual value of such a subject on the part of the college's Warden and Fellows. It seems more plausibly explained as an almost accidental by-product of intricate horse-trading between the university and a college which had become politically vulnerable as a result of a sudden rise to riches and was looking for any bargaining counters it could find to fend off efforts by the university to turn its beloved 'prize fellows' (selected by examination after their first degree for a seven-year term with no teaching duties) into regular teaching academics. But the academic micro-politics also linked up with wider political issues and developments of that day, in the form of broader political moves to reform England's ancient universities and more particularly of the crisis of the United Kingdom as a state.

# Warden Anson, All Souls College, and the Curious Creation of the Gladstone Chair of Political Theory and Institutions at Oxford, c.1908–1912\*

*S. J. D. Green*

There was an unmistakable smell of change in the air at All Souls during the winter of 1908. Fellows were first animated by a suggestion that serious study in the Great Library might be better facilitated in future by the provision of some ‘tables and chairs’, at least ‘along certain parts of it’, similarly by the practice of ‘warming and illuminating’ the room, anyway ‘during working hours’.<sup>1</sup> Then they were galvanized into action by a ‘proposal to introduce electric light throughout the College’, possibly as a means of stimulating academic endeavour at other times of the day as well.<sup>2</sup> When the Domestic Committee reported in favour of both ideas at the Stated General Meeting of 28 February that year, discussion proved vigorous on each side of the divide. Counterproposals, that the two questions be strictly ‘separated’, and the latter departure indefinitely ‘postponed’, were only narrowly defeated.<sup>3</sup> A ‘general scheme’ of electrification (which excluded the Common Room, Hall, and Chapel) proved acceptable only subject to a proviso that it be ‘left optional to any Fellow . . . whether . . . or not to have lamp fittings installed or not in his rooms’.<sup>4</sup> It was perhaps the same spirit that ensured bathrooms were not introduced at All Souls until after 1921.<sup>5</sup>

\* I am extremely grateful to Dr David Butler and to Professors Jack Hayward, Christopher Hood, George Jones, and Peter Pulzer for very helpful remarks on an earlier version of this chapter.

<sup>1</sup> All Souls College, Codrington Library, L.R. (‘ASCCLLR’) 5.a.9, Ms ccci(i), All Souls College Minute Book (‘ASCMB’), 1905–14, p. 41/1, ‘Librarian’s Business’, Stated General Meeting, 28 February 1908.

<sup>2</sup> ASCCLLR5.a.9, Ms ccci(i), ASCMB, 1905–14, p. 41/2, ‘Domestic Bursar’s Business’, Stated General Meeting, 28 February 1908.

<sup>3</sup> ASCCLLR5.a.9, Ms ccci(i), ASCMB, 1905–14, p. 42, ‘Domestic Bursar’s Business’, Stated General Meeting, 28 February 1908.

<sup>4</sup> ASCCLLR5.a.9, Ms ccci(i), ASCMB, 1905–14, p. 47/5, ‘Proposed Scheme for Installing the Electric Light’, Stated General Meeting, Whitsuntide 1908.

<sup>5</sup> E. L. Woodward, *Short Journey* (London: Faber & Faber, 1942), 147.

Still, the ascetic attitude had its limits. And these were being severely tested in other aspects of common life too. The Domestic Bursar, Charles Grant Robertson, gravely reported to the college at Whitsuntide 1911 that there had been a substantial increase in the consumption of port at All Souls during the years immediately prior to the death of Edward VII; similarly, that stocks of champagne in the cellar were by then seriously depleted. He therefore proposed that:

40 dozen Port (Sandeman) be purchased immediately to supplement the deficiency . . . [and that a] substantial purchase of the 1906 champagne vintage be made [even if necessary] at prices much above the average and in a larger quantity than would otherwise [have] be[en] the case.

Through such expeditious action, he hoped to ‘meet the [beverage] requirements of the College . . . for the next fifteen years’.<sup>6</sup>

These may strike some twenty-first-century academic sensibilities as trivial examples of social transformation. They may even confirm what for many remains an all but incorrigible caricature of All Souls College. This evidence actually points to a profound underlying alteration in the Edwardian college. It was rapidly becoming bigger. As late as 1900, it had supported just thirty-two fellows. Within the decade, that figure had increased by nearly one third.<sup>7</sup> It was fast becoming richer too. In 1891, incoming receipts amounted to £25,000.<sup>8</sup> Just twenty years later, and despite a general fall in prices, they had risen to around £33,000.<sup>9</sup>

What mattered more was the comparative dimension to such growth. Both in personnel and income, it was replicated almost nowhere else in contemporary Oxford. Most colleges were then suffering from either an absolute diminution or no discernible increase in their real revenues, with all the intellectual and other related consequences to match.<sup>10</sup> The reason was simple. The catastrophic and continuing consequences of the so-called ‘agricultural depression’ of the 1880s and 1890s struck at the very heart of academic revenue-raising powers throughout the last quarter of the nineteenth

<sup>6</sup> ASCCLR5.a.9, Ms ccci(i), ASCMB, 1905–14, p. 87/7, ‘Report From the Domestic Bursar’, Stated General Meeting, Whitsuntide 1911.

<sup>7</sup> J. S. G. Simmons, ‘All Souls’, in M. G. Brock and M. C. Curthoys (eds), *The History of the University of Oxford*, vol. VII: *Nineteenth Century Oxford, Part 2* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 209–20, at p. 217.

<sup>8</sup> ASCCLR5.a.8, Ms cccci(h), ASCMB, 1888–1905, p. 53, ‘Abstract of Receipts and Payments For the Year Ending 31 December 1891’.

<sup>9</sup> ASCCLR5.a.9, Ms ccci(i), ASCMB, 1905–14, p. 95/5, ‘Abstract of Receipts and Payments For the Year Ending 31 December 1911’.

<sup>10</sup> Arthur Engel, *From Clergyman to Don: The Rise of the Academic Profession in Nineteenth-Century Oxford* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), ch. V and Appendix 9, p. 293.

century.<sup>11</sup> This was as true of All Souls as elsewhere up to around 1900. Domestic income plummeted by a proportion not far short of one quarter between 1881 and the middle of the 1890s.<sup>12</sup> But, almost uniquely in Oxford, All Souls' fortunes quickly recovered thereafter. By 1909, it was earning more, even in simple monetary terms, than it had been thirty years earlier.

Much of this increase was owed to peculiar good fortune. Like almost every other contemporary Oxford college, late-Victorian All Souls relied overwhelmingly on agricultural rents for its regular income. As late as 1891, these represented very nearly three-quarters of all its revenues.<sup>13</sup> But twenty years later, that figure had been reduced to an amount closer to two-fifths.<sup>14</sup> Total landed income at All Souls was by then more than £3,000 *less* than it had been at the earlier date. The college prospered because its non-agricultural revenues boomed at much the same time. By 1911, lands let on building leases yielded in excess of £12,000 per annum, a figure only marginally less than the equivalent at rack-rent.<sup>15</sup>

Economic transposition on this scale was made possible only by the peculiar standing of so much of All Souls' capital endowment. No small part of its landed assets had been traditionally farmed in what became suburban north-west London during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. That windfall still had to be intelligently exploited. All Souls was especially lucky in this respect: first, in the foresight of its new Warden, William Reynell Anson, who in 1881 negotiated for the college flexible statutes which allowed for the altered disposal of inherited assets during the years that lay ahead; then, in the determination of his Estates Bursar, H. O. Wakeman, to adopt an aggressive policy of running down agricultural usage and letting on building contracts from the earliest years of rural decline onwards.<sup>16</sup> Between them, they created

<sup>11</sup> Engel, *From Clergyman to Don*, ch. V and Appendix 9, p. 293. For details, see Bethanie Afton and Michael Turner, 'The Statistical Base of Agricultural Performance in England and Wales, 1850–1914', pt. vii of E. J. T. Collins (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, vol. VII: 1850–1914, pt II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

<sup>12</sup> ASCCLR 5.a.7, Ms cccci(g), ASCMB, 1875–88, p. 274, 'A Statement of the Revenue and Expenditure of the College For the Last Thirteen Years'. College revenue in 1881 was £32,642-10-1. ASCCLR 5.a.8, Ms cccci(h), ASCMB, 1888–1905, p. 137, 'Abstract of Receipts and Payments For the Year Ending 31 December 1896'. The figure was then £25,822-13-0. ASCCLR 5.a.9, Ms ccci(i), ASCMB, 1905–14, p. 67/1, 'Abstract of Receipts and Payments For the Year Ending 31 December 1909'. The figure was then £32,683-12-0.

<sup>13</sup> ASCCLR 5.a.8, Ms cccci(h), ASCMB, 1889–1905, p. 53, 'Abstract of Receipts and Payments For the Year Ending 31 December 1891'; the respective figures were £17,372-18-6 of £25,573-4-6.

<sup>14</sup> ASCCLR 5.a.9, Ms ccci(i), ASCMB, 1905–14, p. 95/5, 'Abstract of Receipts and Payments For the Year Ending 31 December 1911'; the respective figures were £14,027-4-11 of £32,870-12-7.

<sup>15</sup> ASCCLR 5.a.9, Ms ccci(i), ASCMB, 1905–14, p. 95/5, 'Abstract of Receipts and Payments For the Year Ending 31 December 1911'. The precise figure was £12,283-19-11.

<sup>16</sup> Simmons, 'All Souls', 215; G. C. Faber, *Notes on the History of the All Souls Bursarship and the College Agency* (Plymouth: All Souls College, 1951), ch. 3 and p. 92; H. C. G. Matthew,

a college that thirty years later could actually afford to argue about the size of its drinks bill.<sup>17</sup>

## I

For some, collective good luck merely made for heightened individual indulgence. A few months after arriving in All Souls in 1910, Patrick Shaw-Stewart wrote to his sister that: 'I continue to live in the greatest idleness, making progress in nothing except expenditure.'<sup>18</sup> But for others, such unprecedented riches pointed to the possibility of fulfilling previously frustrated collegiate purposes. Of no one was this more true than William Anson. He had long committed himself to forging, in Archbishop Chichele's ancient foundation,

a college of an exceptional type, devoting itself through its professoriate and its library to University purposes, encouraging advanced study by the endowment of research, securing through a system of prize fellowships the continued interest in academic life of men engaged in professional and public works and yet retaining its old character of a collegiate society.<sup>19</sup>

Elected Warden in 1881, Anson achieved much of what he set out to do over the next quarter century.<sup>20</sup> He first arrived, in 1867, amongst a body of men ostensibly compelled by parliamentary statute to endow chairs in the new disciplines of Law and History that steadfastly refused to elect their holders to fellowships of its society.<sup>21</sup> He presided over the attachment to All Souls of more professorial positions than any other college in the university.<sup>22</sup> He had

<sup>17</sup> 'Anson, Sir William Reynell, 3rd Baronet, 1843–1914', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 267–8, at p. 267.

<sup>17</sup> Easily overstated anyway; total 'Table Allowances' at All Souls during these years usually amounted to c.£250–£300 per annum, i.e. about 1 per cent of expenditure.

<sup>18</sup> Cited in M. Jebb, *Patrick Shaw Stewart: An Edwardian Meteor* (Sturbridge, MA: Dovecote Press, 2010), 122.

<sup>19</sup> H. Hensley Henson (ed.), *A Memoir of the Right Honourable Sir William Reynell Anson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1920), 71. The statement was actually made by Anson of John Andrew Doyle, a fellow of the college from 1868–1907. But as Henson remarks on p. 70, 'what he said of Doyle was equally true of himself'.

<sup>20</sup> Henson (ed.), *Memoir of Anson*, 233. 'It was not excessive to say that his services to All Souls were of such magnitude and duration that he might fitly be described as its second founder'.

<sup>21</sup> J. S. G. Simmons, *All Souls and Oxford Professorial Chairs, with an Excursus on Readerships* (Oxford: All Souls College, 1987), 11. Mountague Bernard, appointed Chichele Professor of International Law and Diplomacy in 1859, was not elected to a fellowship of All Souls until 1870. Montagu Burrows, Chichele Professor of Modern History from 1862 was also elected that year. See ASCCLR5.a.6, Ms cccci(f), ASCMB, 1858–75, p. 185, 7 June 1870.

<sup>22</sup> See Simmons, *All Souls and Oxford Professorial Chairs*, 1–7 and 10–14; also T. Herbert Warren, 'University Life', in Henson (ed.), *Memoir of Anson*, ch. v.

been preferred for one of the prizes that legend conceived as bestowed mainly upon those *'bene nati, bene vestiti, mediocriter docti'* (literally, 'well born, well dressed, moderately learned').<sup>23</sup> He lived to see the annual examination at All Souls become the blue ribbon of an Oxford undergraduate career.<sup>24</sup> Only in the matter of research fellowships did college finances fail him before the turn of the twentieth century. Agricultural decline at the end of the 1870s meant promises faithfully made to the Selbourne Commission were reluctantly abandoned, at All Souls as everywhere else in Oxford. The 1881 Statutes allowed for the election of up to seven research fellows at All Souls. In the event, there were never more than two in residence prior to 1900<sup>25</sup> and one of those survived for years solely as a result of Warden Anson's private generosity.<sup>26</sup>

These sorry days came to an end around 1905. Revenues at All Souls boomed.<sup>27</sup> They continued to do so right up to the outbreak of the First World War and beyond.<sup>28</sup> In such circumstances, Warden Anson would probably have preferred to forge ahead with the third part of the peculiar plan he had envisaged nearly thirty years earlier. Some urged him to do just that. Writing from the High Commissioner's Office in Johannesburg on 24 December 1909, long-standing fellow Dougal Malcolm encouraged him to elect 'as many . . . research fellows as we [want]'.<sup>29</sup> Others suggested that the college might better increase their stipends to attract the best candidates for what remained temporary posts rather than lifetime positions.<sup>30</sup> Discussion then progressed to the possibility of extending the academic range of these appointments, beyond what were generally understood as the 'traditional' college subjects of Law and History. The university had begun to encourage

<sup>23</sup> See Simmons, 'All Souls', 209; also J. Ingram, *Memorials of Oxford*, vol. 1 (Oxford: J. H. Parker, 1837), 15, and even T. Fuller, *Church History of Britain* (1655) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1845), book 4, at p. 182.

<sup>24</sup> See S. J. D. Green, "'Government by Mallardry": The Golden Age of the Prize Fellows, c. 1875–1925', in S. J. D. Green and Peregrine Horden (eds), *All Souls and the Wider World: Statesmen, Scholars and Adventurers, c.1850–1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), ch. 2.

<sup>25</sup> Simmons, 'All Souls', 218; for the impact of the 'agricultural depression' more generally, see Engel, *From Clergyman to Don*, 230–45.

<sup>26</sup> Simmons, 'All Souls', 218; also Henson, *Memoir of Anson*, 80. For the effect, see M. Nixon, *Samuel Rawson Gardiner and the Idea of History* (Woodbridge: Royal Historical Society and The Boydell Press, 2010), ch. 5.

<sup>27</sup> ASCCLLR5.a.9, Ms ccci(i), ASCMB, 1905–14, p. 37/1, 'Abstract of Receipts and Payments For the Year Ending 31 December 1906'. In that year, revenues passed £30,000 (£30,415-19-11) for the first time since 1881.

<sup>28</sup> Faber, *Notes on the History of the All Souls Bursarship*, 92.

<sup>29</sup> ASCCL, Anson Papers ('ASCCLAP'), 18/8/1/2, College Letters, July–December 1909, Malcolm to Anson, 24 December 1909.

<sup>30</sup> ASCCLLR5.a.9, Ms ccci(i), ASCMB, 1905–14, p. 37/5, William R. Anson, Motion 1, Stated General Meeting, 1st November 1907. No 'career path' through the college by means of renewable research fellowships was established until 1931.

research and teaching in the new social sciences. Some thought that All Souls should follow suit. So, in 1909, All Souls elected N. B. Deale of Brasenose to a Research Fellowship in Political Economy after examination by thesis.<sup>31</sup> It thereby became 'the first college [in Oxford] to recognize by a special fellowship the growing importance of economic studies and the need for economic research within the University'.<sup>32</sup>

Yet that bold initiative proved to be an isolated gesture. All Souls elected no further research fellows for a decade. And when it bestowed seven years' paid leisure on a certain Colonel T. E. Lawrence in 1919, it meant to do something other than promote the fledgling social sciences.<sup>33</sup> This was not because the college turned itself against an impoverished university in the hour of its greatest need. To the exact contrary: during the ten years from 1905 to 1914, All Souls actively associated itself with three new university chairs: the Beit Professor of Colonial History, the Chichele Professor of Military History, and the Gladstone Professor of Political Theory and Institutions. It also awarded fellowships to newly created Readers in Indian and English Law.<sup>34</sup> Finally, it sponsored an 'All Souls Teacher' in 'Political, Constitutional, and Economic History', specifically appointed to offer 'Classes to Working Men' under the auspices of the Joint Committee on 'Working-Class Education'.<sup>35</sup> The first holder of this post was one R. H. Tawney.<sup>36</sup>

Why? Because All Souls made a choice. It spent its new-found wealth on university rather than collegiate purposes. As late as 1905, All Souls devoted twice the quantity of resources on its own fellows as university appointees.<sup>37</sup> By 1914, expenditure on external purposes actually predominated.<sup>38</sup> To be sure, these decisions were rooted in pragmatic judgement rather than altruistic effort. For Warden Anson understood something lost on Dougal Malcolm. Long and close experience had taught him that in a collegiate university,

<sup>31</sup> ASCCLR5.a.9, Ms ccci(i), ASCMB, 1905–14, p. 56, Stated General Meeting, 24 February 1909.

<sup>32</sup> Anon., 'Notes and News', *The Oxford Magazine*, vol. xxvii, no. 15 (4 March 1909), 232.

<sup>33</sup> ASCCLR5.a.10, Ms cccci(h), ASCMB, 1915–1925, p. 213, Stated General Meeting, 10 June 1919: 'that he continue . . . to prosecute his researches into the antiquities and ethnology and the history (ancient and modern) of the near East'. For a context, see Richard Symonds, *Oxford and Empire: The Last Lost Cause?* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986), 72–3.

<sup>34</sup> Simmons, *All Souls and Oxford Professorial Chairs*, 6–7 and 11. First holders of each respective chair were H. S. Egerton, H. S. Wilkinson, W. G. S. Adams, E. J. Trevelyan, and W. M. Geldart.

<sup>35</sup> ASCCLR5.a.9, Ms ccci(i), ASCMB, 1905–14, p. 59, Stated General Meeting, Whitsuntide 1909.

<sup>36</sup> ASCCLR5.a.9, Ms ccci(i), ASCMB, 1905–14, p. 63, Stated General Meeting, 1 November 1909.

<sup>37</sup> ASCCLR5.a.9, Ms ccci(i), ASCMB, 1905–14, p. 69/7, 'Abstract of Receipts and Payments for the year ending 31 December 1905'. The respective figures were £8369-11-11 and £4108-8-1.

<sup>38</sup> ASCCLR5.a.9, Ms ccci(i), ASCMB, 1905–14, p. 149, 'Abstract of Receipts and Payments for the year ending 31 December 1914'. The respective figures were £8170-9-8 and £8880-15-6.



poverty had surreptitious uses and wealth brought with it hitherto unexpected vulnerabilities. And if this was true in general, it was especially the case in the fevered atmosphere that prevailed after 1908 at Oxford, and even in the Empire more generally. It may be an exaggeration—but a pardonable one—to suggest that the Gladstone Chair of Political Theory and Institutions was in part the product of a profound crisis that gripped the nation in or around 1910.

## II

That all began—so much, seemingly, did—with the election of the last Liberal government of 1906. It came to a head—ditto—after the accession of H. H. Asquith to the office of Prime Minister.<sup>39</sup> ‘Radical’ proposals to reform pensions, parliament, and even the constitution of the United Kingdom made waves far beyond Westminster. Warden Anson of All Souls was anything but indifferent to the accompanying squalls. He was, after all, Member of Parliament for Oxford University.<sup>40</sup> He was a committed Unionist and also a partisan politician. Anson resigned with Balfour’s administration in 1905. He set himself four-square against the Finance Bill of 1909, the Parliament Bill of 1911, and any form of Home Rule for Ireland. Moreover, he shared in full the view of his colleague and friend, A. V. Dicey, that such opposition constituted nothing less than every patriot’s duty against a government conspiring ‘to corrupt . . . the people’.<sup>41</sup>

Asquith’s administration by and large avoided the question of educational innovation.<sup>42</sup> Certainly, it proposed little in the way of university reform.<sup>43</sup> This self-denying ordinance did not extend to other domestic radicals. Ox-bridge bashing conveniently filled the void. By late 1908, a conviction that the ancient universities provided pointless succour for the ‘idle rich’ whilst denying vital opportunities for the ‘industrious poor’ had become quite widespread. That they also prohibited degrees to women and persisted in pursuing antiquated learning at the expense of modern subjects only compounded their sins

<sup>39</sup> G. R. Searle, *A New England? Peace and War, 1886–1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pt. III, ch. 2 sets the scene.

<sup>40</sup> Henson, *Memoir of Anson*, ch. vii.

<sup>41</sup> ASCCLAP, 18/8/1/2, Fellows’ Letters, January–November 1909, Dicey to Anson, 28 February 1909.

<sup>42</sup> See Searle, *A New England?*, 362–3.

<sup>43</sup> J. Jones, *Balliol College: A History*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), ch. 16 suggests some of the reasons why.

according to progressive sensibilities.<sup>44</sup> The then Bishop of Birmingham was only the most strident in openly advocating a ‘drastic Royal Commission’ as the best way of righting these lingering wrongs.<sup>45</sup>

In those circumstances, Oxford may well have been fortunate—Anson was certainly lucky—in securing the services of George Nathaniel Curzon as its Chancellor from 1907. His Lordship quickly came to the view that a Royal Commission would be disastrous, i.e. it might actually do something significant. So he acted like a seasoned statesman instead. He launched a national appeal and then established an internal enquiry. The first was a great success, raising more than £100,000 during its first year of operations.<sup>46</sup> The second proved to be altogether more problematic. Even the *Oxford Magazine* described Curzon’s subsequent memorandum, *Principles and Methods of University Reform*, as ‘cautious’.<sup>47</sup> It was not a wholly conservative document. The Chancellor advocated female enfranchisement in the university, the establishment of new and stronger boards of faculties, and reform of both Council and Convocation.<sup>48</sup> But ‘advanced reformers’ decried its principal provisions as ‘timid’.<sup>49</sup> In the wake of their disappointment, they established numerous ‘Reform Committees’ variously committed to more radical measures, from the consolidation of faculty control over research and teaching in the university to the abolition of prize fellowships in the colleges.<sup>50</sup>

This last proposal particularly exercised Warden Anson’s imagination during the autumn of 1909.<sup>51</sup> That was scarcely surprising. It struck at the very heart of the ‘exceptional college’ he had so assiduously nurtured during the previous thirty years. By that time, minimally two-thirds and perhaps three-quarters of All Souls’ numerical strength was directly or indirectly drawn from this source.<sup>52</sup> Anson’s problem was that this was true nowhere else in the university. Nor had it been for the best part of a generation. Whatever the Selbourne Commission of 1877 achieved, it effectively turned Oxford into a teaching university, staffed increasingly by what became known as ‘official’ or

<sup>44</sup> J. Howarth, ‘The Edwardian Reform Movement’, in Brock and Curthoys (eds), *Nineteenth Century Oxford*, Part 2, ch. 32 furnishes the best account.

<sup>45</sup> Anon., ‘Notes and News’, *The Oxford Magazine*, vol. xxvii, no. 7 (26 November 1908), 102; Howarth, ‘The Edwardian Reform Movement’, 823.

<sup>46</sup> Anon., ‘Notes and News’, *The Oxford Magazine*, vol. xxvii, no. 1 (15 October 1908), 2.

<sup>47</sup> Lord Curzon of Kedleston, *Principles and Methods of University Reform: Being a Letter Addressed to the University of Oxford* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1909); Anon., ‘Notes and News’, *The Oxford Magazine*, vol. xxvii, no. 17 (29 April 1909), 260.

<sup>48</sup> Curzon, *Principles and Methods*, chs III, VI, VIII, and X; Howarth, ‘The Edwardian Reform Movement’, 831–6.

<sup>49</sup> Anon., ‘Notes and News’, *The Oxford Magazine*, vol. xxvii, no. 17 (29 April 1909), 260.

<sup>50</sup> Howarth, ‘The Edwardian Reform Movement’, esp. 836 ff.

<sup>51</sup> ASCCLR5.a.9, Ms ccci(i), ASCMB, 1905–14, p. 65/2, ‘Committees on the Chancellor’s Memorandum. No. 6: College Fellowships’.

<sup>52</sup> Simmons, ‘All Souls’, 218: including so-called £50 fellows, i.e. ex-prize fellows elected for further seven-year terms of fellowship, with an annual stipend of £50.

'tutorial', rather than 'ordinary' or 'prize' fellows.<sup>53</sup> The poverty of the colleges after 1880 had ensured that this process was, for the most part, achieved piecemeal; that is, through the partial or gradual transformation of 'ordinary' into 'official' fellowships.<sup>54</sup> Only Brasenose actually abolished the category of ordinary fellowships altogether, in 1907. Still, Curzon estimated that of 315 fellows of Oxford colleges at that time, more than 220, or 70 per cent, were engaged in university or college work.<sup>55</sup> Many now considered the removal of the residuum of 'ordinary'—increasingly termed 'idle'—fellowships as little more than an exercise in common sense.<sup>56</sup>

Curzon did his best for Anson and All Souls. His *Report* was equivocal on the subject of prize fellows.<sup>57</sup> But a University Committee established to circulate 'Questions on the Interim Report' amongst the colleges was altogether less indulgent. It proposed alternatively the outright abolition of the 'Ordinary Fellowship' category or its effective replacement by a small number of fellowships, specifically earmarked for younger graduates but subject to an obligation to pursue higher study and/or to teaching responsibilities in the university. These were to be supplemented by an increase in the number and value of Senior Scholarships, again directed towards younger graduates and also designed to prepare them for modern academic life.<sup>58</sup> Everywhere outside All Souls, this seemed like a very sensible idea. Inside Chichele's cocoon, it caused considerable consternation. The very future of the college—certainly the continuation of Anson's College—was now at stake.<sup>59</sup>

Anson replied personally, and at length, to the Committee. He pulled no punches. First, he reiterated All Souls' complete 'concurrence' with the terms of the previous University Commission.<sup>60</sup> Secondly, he mounted a vigorous defence of both the general principle and the College's particular practice of the prize fellowship. This was, he insisted, an 'excellent test of merit', corroborated by 'long experience' that yielded demonstrable benefits both for academic

<sup>53</sup> Engel, *From Clergyman to Don*, ch. iv; see also C. Harvie, 'From the Cleveland Commission to the Statutes of 1882', in Brock and Curthoys (eds), *Nineteenth Century Oxford*, Part 2, ch. 2; and Howarth, 'The Edwardian Reform Movement', 835 ff.

<sup>54</sup> Curzon, *Principles and Methods*, 95. See also Green, 'The Golden Age of the Prize Fellows', 48.

<sup>55</sup> Curzon, *Principles and Methods*, 95–6.

<sup>56</sup> Anon., 'Oxford after the Commission', *The Spectator*, no. 2803 (18 March 1882), 352–3 furnishes an example.

<sup>57</sup> Curzon, *Principles and Methods*, 94–100, see esp. 97–8.

<sup>58</sup> ASCCLR5.a.9, Ms ccci(i), ASCMB, 1905–14, p. 65/2, 'Committees on the Chancellor's Memorandum. No. 6: College Fellowships', Questions I, II, and III.

<sup>59</sup> Curzon, *Principles and Methods*, 97, particularly referred to the 'different position' of All Souls in this respect.

<sup>60</sup> ASCCLR5.a.9, Ms ccci(i), ASCMB, 1905–14, p. 65/4. W. R. Anson, 'Answers to Questions Submitted by the Committee of Council on the Chancellor's Memorandum. College Fellowships', November 1909, p. 1.

purposes and in public life.<sup>61</sup> Finally, he outlined ways in which the college might in the future sustain the university in its academic purposes: by support of the Bodleian Library, through the sustenance of its own ‘research’ fellows and in association with old and new professors throughout its various departments.<sup>62</sup> The implication was clear: that cooperation would continue for so long as the ‘Prize Fellowship’ remained safe. Otherwise, the Warden was willing to take his chances with the outcome of external arbitration.

For all its superficial stridency of tone, this was a subtle riposte. Anson instinctively understood that effective resistance to organic reform necessitated both a plausible public policy and a cunning covert strategy. In public he posed as a broad-minded defender of the autonomous colleges against a centralizing university. This did not necessitate a blanket opposition to change. Indeed, in a remarkable series of letters to the *Oxford Magazine* concerning ‘The Place of Colleges in University Reform’, he gave every impression of an enlightened attitude towards reform in matters of entrance examinations, college scholarships, and the organization of inter-collegiate teaching (i.e. issues that did not especially concern All Souls). Even over the great question of Professor Firth, the Faculty Boards and the future appointment of tutorial fellows, he remained surprisingly even-handed.<sup>63</sup> He was immovable only about the cause of prize fellows. They were inviolable because they encouraged undergraduates to set their sights high. They offered the best young men the leisure necessary for advanced study. At the same time, they furnished poor boys with the means by which to pursue a professional career. In that way, they also sustained a link between Oxford and the outside world. He wrote of all of this—at a time when between one third and one half of *all* remaining ‘ordinary’ fellowships were attached to All Souls—as if other societies might be similarly interested in the outcome.<sup>64</sup>

Behind the scenes, Anson pursued a different campaign, craftily designed to educate his colleagues in the delicate art of preservation through reform. He began with a series of ‘general suggestions’ to the college, characterized as a way of ‘doing a service to the university’. These included:

<sup>61</sup> ASCCLR5.a.9, Ms ccci(i), ASCMB, 1905–14, p. 65/4. W. R. Anson, ‘Answers to Questions Submitted by the Committee of Council on the Chancellor’s Memorandum. College Fellowships’, November 1909, pp. 1–2.

<sup>62</sup> ASCCLR5.a.9, Ms ccci(i), ASCMB, 1905–14, p. 65/4. W. R. Anson, ‘Answers to Questions Submitted by the Committee of Council on the Chancellor’s Memorandum. College Fellowships’, November 1909, pp. 3–4.

<sup>63</sup> W. R. Anson, ‘The Place of Colleges in University Reform’, *The Oxford Magazine*, vol. xxviii, no. 9 (20 January 1910), 143; *idem.*, no. 10 (27 January 1910), 157–8; *idem.*, no. 11 (3 February 1910), 175–6; *idem.*, no. 12 (10 February 1910), 191–2; *idem.*, no. 14 (24 February 1910), 224–6; *idem.*, no. 16 (10 March 1910), 257–8.

<sup>64</sup> See esp., as above, W. R. Anson, ‘The Place of Colleges in University Reform’, *The Oxford Magazine*, vol. xxviii, no. 10 (27 January 1910), 158 and no. 16 (10 March 1910), 258.

1. Assistance for university teaching in industrial centres;
2. Further endowment of university studies;
3. Further assistance to Bodley's Library; and
4. Further assistance to undergraduate teaching.<sup>65</sup>

As the less controversial (and less expensive) of these tasks were gradually fulfilled—bibliographic endowment and workers' education generally went through on the nod—so Anson passed on to the more contentious questions of whether and how many new professorships should be attached to the college: in particular, to the possibility of establishing new Chichele Chairs in Economic History, Constitutional Law, Comparative Law, and, finally, Political Science.<sup>66</sup>

By no means every fellow was immediately converted. Some of the 'old-timers' found Anson's strategy a bit 'old hat'. They traced professorial frippery back to the University Commissioners of 1850. And they emphasized the college's proven ability to resist its bogus demands. Writing to Anson on 24 March 1909, Francis Compton (first elected 1846) derided this latest example of a 'scheme from Oxford Reform [which] contemplated Professors without classes, each with a Reader to help him' and reminded the Warden of how 'Lord Redesdale had [dealt] with that subject so [effectively] at the time of the last Oxford Commission'.<sup>67</sup> Such opposition was far from confined to the elderly, nor merely to the spectre of more Law and History professors. Appalled by the thought of a 'Chair in Government' attached to the college, a young Keith Feiling—writing from temporary exile at the University of Toronto—impressed upon the Warden how 'my experience on this continent makes me violently opposed' to the very idea.<sup>68</sup>

Confronted by such seemingly intransigent opinion, Anson resolved to move more stealthily still. First, he sought to confound the new subjects with the old, thereby to deny any departure involved in the patronage of new social sciences. Then he endeavoured to confuse the emerging disciplines with each other. Having thoroughly muddied the intellectual waters, he proposed

That £200 a year for three years be contributed to increase the payment made out of the Common Fund to the Lecturer in Economic History on the condition that the duties of the Lecturer be raised to the level of a University Reader.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>65</sup> ASCCLLR5.a.9, Ms ccci(i), ASCMB, 1905–14, p. 55/3, 'Report of the Statutory Purposes Committee', p. 2, Stated General Meeting, February 1909.

<sup>66</sup> ASCCLLR5.a.9, Ms ccci(i), ASCMB, 1905–14, p. 55/3, 'Report of the Statutory Purposes Committee', p. 2, Stated General Meeting, February 1909.

<sup>67</sup> ASCCLAP, 18/8/2/2, Fellows' Letters, January–November 1909, Compton to Anson, 24 March 1909.

<sup>68</sup> ASCCLAP, 18/8/1/2, Fellows' Letters, January–November 1909, Feiling to Anson, 5 April 1909.

<sup>69</sup> ASCCLLR5.a.9, Ms ccci(i), ASCMB, 1905–14, p. 59/1, 'Notice of Motion', Stated General Meeting, Whitsuntide 1909.

Finally, he persuaded two sympathetic younger fellows, Harold Butler (a budding diplomat) and Leo Amery (by then a famous journalist), to table an amendment to his *own* recommendation, deleting the words ‘made out of the Common Fund to the Lecturer in Economic History’ and inserting the phrase ‘offered by the Chancellor’s Endowment Fund to a Lecturer in Political Science’.<sup>70</sup> This was a clever ploy. Alternatively, it was a disingenuous manoeuvre. Either way, it failed. The resulting division was lost by fourteen votes to eight.<sup>71</sup> So when the University of Oxford resolved in June of 1909 to establish a Lectureship in Political Science, initially funded for three years, it was paid solely out of university funds and unattached to All Souls College.<sup>72</sup>

That the university should have acted in this way need occasion no great surprise. The same year, Oxford’s diploma in Economics and Economic History had been specifically extended to include ‘associated branches of Political Science’.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, Tawney’s post, for all its portentous title, was envisaged from the first as a lectureship largely in Economic History.<sup>74</sup> There was a good academic case to be made for this new position, not only in connection with the diploma, already popular with Rhodes Scholars, but also amongst the tutorial classes in the industrial centres.<sup>75</sup> There was every chance, given the contemporary development of the relevant honour schools of ‘good audiences [from] Greats and History men’.<sup>76</sup> The university also envisaged from the first that the new lecturer should have experience in public affairs more generally. This requirement may have deterred some of the more academically obvious candidates, such as Graham Wallas and Ernest Barker, from applying for the post. It certainly does help to explain their eventual choice. His name was William George Stewart Adams.<sup>77</sup>

Oxford announced the appointment of a new Lecturer in Political Theory and Institutions on 5 February 1910. *The Times* immediately welcomed the choice of one who, though barely beyond his mid-thirties, had already enjoyed ‘an interesting career’.<sup>78</sup> The *Oxford Magazine*, noting an excellent but

<sup>70</sup> ASCCLR5.a.9, Ms ccci(i), ASCMB, 1905–14, p. 59, ‘Amendment to Motion’, Stated General Meeting, Whitsuntide 1909.

<sup>71</sup> ASCCLR5.a.9, Ms ccci(i), ASCMB, 1905–14, p. 59, ‘Amendment to Motion’, Stated General Meeting, Whitsuntide 1909.

<sup>72</sup> Anon., ‘Notes and News’, *The Oxford Magazine*, vol. xxviii, no. 1 (14 October 1909), 9.

<sup>73</sup> Norman Chester, *Economics, Politics and Social Studies in Oxford, 1900–1985* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986), 14.

<sup>74</sup> ASCCLR5.a.9, Ms ccci(i), ASCMB, 1905–14, p. 61/5, ‘Report of the Statutory Purposes Committee’, October 1909, refers to him as ‘lecturing on Economic History’.

<sup>75</sup> Chester, *Economics, Politics and Social Studies in Oxford*, 18–21.

<sup>76</sup> Anon., ‘Notes and News’, *The Oxford Magazine*, vol. xxviii, no. 12 (10 February 1910), 187.

<sup>77</sup> B. Harrison, ‘Adams, William George Stewart, 1874–1966’, *ODNB*, vol. 1, pp. 278–80. Barker was then Lecturer in Modern History at Wadham College and had already published *The Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle* (1906). Wallas was a lecturer at the London School of Economics and had just written *Human Nature in Politics* (1908).

<sup>78</sup> Anon., ‘University Intelligence’, *The Times* (7 February 1910), 4.

otherwise conventional academic background, pointedly referred to Adams's 'brilliant results' in the political philosophy and political economy papers of his History finals.<sup>79</sup> It also remarked upon his 'singularly wide range of experience, both as a teacher and as a man of affairs'.<sup>80</sup> This was not hyperbole. Following a short spell at Borough Road College in Isleworth, Adams had briefly lectured in economics at the University of Chicago. Subsequently, he taught political science at the University of Manchester. Then in 1905, he was appointed Superintendent of Statistics and Intelligence at the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction in Dublin. There he worked under Sir Horace Plunkett in the thankless task of modernizing Irish agriculture. He also represented the department at major conferences in France, Germany, and Italy. As part of his duties, he had lived in France for four months and in Germany for six.<sup>81</sup>

For Anson, Adams's elevation changed everything. What had, until then, been generally desirable now became absolutely essential. To understand why, it is vital to appreciate that if there was a cause dearer to the Warden than the continuance of his 'exceptional college' in Oxford, it was the maintenance of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. These two great challenges informed much of his adult life. They had done so separately to that date. Now they came together. In a Chichele Chair of Political Science and through the person of W. G. S. Adams, Anson saw an opportunity both to shore up All Souls' position in the university and to protect Britain's parliamentary union. He may have been misguided. He did not, in fact, know Adams at all well. Indeed, as late as 1910, he mistook someone quite different for the man he was then attempting to bring into his own college, walking down the streets of Oxford.<sup>82</sup> It seems most unlikely that he had ever read any of Adams's—strikingly few—publications to that date. The subtle federalism that Adams eventually argued for as a member of the Cabinet Committee on Irish Finance would have been an anathema to him.<sup>83</sup> What Anson understood was that Adams worked for Plunkett and that—anyway, by the standards of English life generally and Oxford dons in particular around 1910—Plunkett was sound.<sup>84</sup>

Chronology is important here. The Irish senator that Plunkett became after 1922 was naturally unknown to Adams, still more the sympathetic Sinn Féiner of 1917/1918. What Anson then saw was a man who had been a Unionist MP for South County, Dublin, from 1892 to 1900, also one who remained

<sup>79</sup> Anon., 'Notes and News', *The Oxford Magazine*, vol. xxviii, no. 12 (10 February 1910), 187.

<sup>80</sup> Anon., 'Notes and News', 187.

<sup>81</sup> Harrison, 'Adams', 278–9.

<sup>82</sup> ASCCLAP, 19/8/1/2, College Letters, January–June 1910, H. W. C. Davis to Anson, 15 June 1910.

<sup>83</sup> Harrison, 'Adams', 279; by contrast, Henson, *Memoir of Anson*, chs vi and x.

<sup>84</sup> P. Ball, 'Plunkett, Sir Horace Curzon, 1854–1932', *ODNB*, vol. 44, pp. 641–3, at p. 642.

implacably opposed to post-Parnellite Irish nationalism, anyway down to 1910.<sup>85</sup> What he thought he saw in Adams was a young man of similar mind. He was probably wrong. But he was prepared to take the risk. Men such as Anson, who ‘place[d] unionism before other considerations’, were pretty desperate by then.<sup>86</sup> In these circumstances, they sought allies wherever they could find them. Adams looked like one. There were plenty of alternatives—that is, far worse options—lurking out there for those unwilling to try. In the event, Anson struck with almost unseemly haste. This time he tolerated no opposition in college.

Within a fortnight of Adams’s initial appointment, All Souls’ Statutory Purposes Committee recommended that

the College should offer to the University to establish a Chichele Professorship of Political Science, the holder of which should lecture on the theory and practical working of political institutions, and should receive a fellowship, and £300 a year.

If that was a bit rushed, what followed was wholly unprecedented. The Committee then further recommended:

that the form which the offer should take would be that the lecturer appointed by the electors to the Lectureship in Political Theory and Institutions . . . should be the first Professor.<sup>87</sup>

Only Charles Oman, Chichele Professor of Modern History, opposed this curious manoeuvre. Oman invariably opposed anything that moved. But his arguments on this occasion were far from contemptible. By way of an alternative, he suggested

that the College should instruct the Warden and Committee to communicate with a view to ascertain the conditions in which it might be possible to establish a Professorship of Political Science and to report to the College at Whitsuntide.<sup>88</sup>

However, his counterproposal was ‘negated’. Interestingly, no vote was recorded. Warden Anson got his way. All Souls now set about seizing the chair and securing their man.<sup>89</sup>

It did not entirely succeed. It was unable to persuade the university to establish a Chair of Political Science, anyway, at this time and in that way. The college certainly tried. The Warden, Sub-Warden, and William Geldart,

<sup>85</sup> P. Ball, ‘Plunkett, Sir Horace Curzon, 1854–1932’, *ODNB*, vol. 44, pp. 641–3, at p. 642.

<sup>86</sup> ASCCLAP, 18/8/1/2, Fellows’ Letters, July–December 1909, Dicey to Anson, 17 December 1909.

<sup>87</sup> ASCCLR5.a.9, Ms ccci(i), ASCMB, 1905–14, p. 67/1, ‘Report of the Statutory Purposes Committee’, 20 February 1910.

<sup>88</sup> ASCCLR5.a.9, Ms ccci(i), ASCMB, 1905–14, p. 68, Stated General Meeting, 28 February 1910.

<sup>89</sup> ASCCLR5.a.9, Ms ccci(i), ASCMB, 1905–14, p. 68, Stated General Meeting, 28 February 1910. Votes were usually recorded at this time.



Vinerian Professor of Law in succession to Dicey, severally argued the case before a committee of the Council. They were urged to settle 'for the creation of a Readership instead of a Professorship'. This was on the grounds that the lesser appointment would 'enable Council to proceed by Decree instead of by Statute'. It was suggested that this 'procedure' would be 'more expeditious'. It was also noted that it would be 'less likely to arouse contentious discussion'.<sup>90</sup> Translated: Anson's extraordinary ruse had provoked widespread opposition within the university, even to the extent of uniting institutional conservatives (against the whole idea) and political radicals (suspicious of his motives in pursuing this particular policy).<sup>91</sup> The college reluctantly agreed. A readership it would be for now.

All Souls still drove a hard bargain. The following Whitsuntide, the Statutory Purposes Committee proposed to the SGM that:

1. The resolution passed by the College at the [last] Stated Meeting concerning the Professorship of Political Science be rescinded;
2. The College offer the University to contribute for the next ten years to the establishment of a Readership; and
3. The Reader be the Lecturer appointed by the Board of Management of the Lectureship created by decree of Convocation on 9 May 1909.

At the same time, the college was reminded that the Statutory Purposes Committee had 'recommended the formation of a permanent Professorship' and reassured that it would almost certainly be 'possible to raise the status of the Reader [during] the course of [those] ten years'.<sup>92</sup> These blandishments were clearly intended for consumption far beyond the High Street.

Anson had not conceded defeat. But his opponents were scarcely willing to grant him *carte blanche*. Writing to the Warden on 6 June 1910, Geldart (a long-standing member of Council) warned Anson that there was a distinct possibility that even this decree 'might be criticised' and perhaps 'actually . . . opposed'. Some, it seemed, were unhappy about a Board of Management dominated by fellows of All Souls. Others were disturbed by the college's efforts to increase the emoluments of the Lecturer on its own account. More to the point: many simply did not like what was being done and who was doing it. In these circumstances, Geldart urged that both the Warden and other members of the college should attend the critical council meeting. He even suggested that they should face down their detractors publicly.<sup>93</sup> Suitably advised, they turned out in force.

<sup>90</sup> ASCCLLR5.a.9, Ms ccci(i), ASCMB, 1905-14, p. 71/2, Item 1, Stated General Meeting, Whitsuntide 1910.

<sup>91</sup> On which, see Chester, *Economics, Politics and Social Studies in Oxford*, ch. 2.

<sup>92</sup> ASCCLLR5.a.9, Ms ccci(i), ASCMB, 1905-14, p. 71/2, Item 2, Stated General Meeting, Whitsuntide 1910.

<sup>93</sup> ASCCLAP, 19/8/1/2, College Letters, January-June 1910, William Geldart to Anson, 6 June 1910.

Anson spoke trenchantly in favour of the motion. This effectively ‘closed the mouths of his anonymous critics’.<sup>94</sup> The decree went through unopposed. Adams was appointed to a readership in the university. The college elected him a fellow at a Special General Meeting of 15 June.<sup>95</sup> Anson wrote at once to congratulate Adams. He replied by thanking the Warden for the ‘generosity of All Souls’ that had made his appointment possible, no less for the ‘esteem’ implied in an ‘association with the College’.<sup>96</sup>

The newly styled Chichele Reader in Political Theory and Institutions set about his duties assiduously. The following year he became secretary of an ‘Association to Advance the Study of Social and Political Subjects in the University’, specifically directed to coordinate the research and teaching of all those interested in the ‘social and political’ sciences throughout ‘the several’ relevant departments of the university.<sup>97</sup> He also began to advise His Majesty’s government on important Irish matters.<sup>98</sup> Anson kept to his promise too. In 1912, he persuaded the Committee for the Memorial of Mr Gladstone ‘to endow a Chair of Political Theory and Institutions with a sum of £6,000’. All Souls agreed to make its own, separate, endowment permanent. With much good grace but no little calculation, it also conceded that the new Chair be named ‘The Gladstone Professorship of Political Theory and Institutions’.<sup>99</sup> The university, in its turn, both recognized the title and acknowledged Adams’s prior claim to the post. His readership was ‘henceforth merged into the Professorship’.<sup>100</sup> No comment on his fitness for this position is implied in the observation that few men—before or since—can have risen so quickly up Oxford’s academic ladder subsequent to so little exertion on their own behalf.

### III

Warden Anson died in Oxford on 4 June 1914. No doubt, this was a peculiarly propitious day for so distinguished an old Etonian to have met his maker.<sup>101</sup> Such fortunate timing also spared him vicarious exposure to the horrors of a

<sup>94</sup> ASCCLAP, 19/8/1/2, College Letters, January–June 1910, H. W. C. Davis to Anson, 15 June 1910.

<sup>95</sup> ASCCL, L.R. 5.a.9, Ms ccci(i), ASCMB, 1905–14, p. 73, College Meeting, 15 June 1910.

<sup>96</sup> ASCCLAP, 19/8/1/2, College Letters, January–June 1910, W. S. G. Adams to Anson, 17 June 1910.

<sup>97</sup> Anon., ‘Notes and News’, *The Oxford Magazine*, vol. xxix, no. 18 (11 May 1911), 296–7.

<sup>98</sup> Harrison, ‘Adams’, 279.

<sup>99</sup> ASCCLR5.a.9, Ms ccci(i), ASCMB, 1905–14, p. 101, Stated General Meeting, 28 May 1912.

<sup>100</sup> Anon., ‘University Intelligence’, *The Times* (11 December 1912), 14.

<sup>101</sup> Henson, *Memoir of Anson*, 230, strangely does not mention the exact day. Matthew, ‘Anson’, 267, does.

war that claimed no fewer than six young fellows of All Souls. Not that the gruesome prospect of conflict was far from Anson's mind during the last months of his life. What he had once insisted on describing as principled protection of the constitution had by then passed into the more contentious defence of Ulster's right to self-determination. In a letter to *The Times* on 31 March 1914, Anson effectively condoned the actions of 'the good and loyal people' of that province in rising up in 'resistance' against the prospect of being placed by 'their own government' and 'contrary to their will', under a regime to the south which they 'distrust[ed] and abhor[red]'.<sup>102</sup> Whether he would have been content even with that interim solution to the 'Irish Question' negotiated between mutually distrustful parties eight years later must remain open to doubt.<sup>103</sup>

Events closer to home brought Anson much greater satisfaction. The high-stakes poker game he played with the university between 1908 and 1912 paid off handsomely. All Souls may have become something of a 'professorial college' thereafter. No fewer than eight were in residence there by 1914.<sup>104</sup> But the Prize Fellowship was preserved. Writing to Anson as early as September 1910, Charles Grant Robertson congratulated the Warden for the far-sighted actions that had made this possible. As a result, he observed, 'we shall be able to retain our Prize Fellowships with [scarcely] a struggle'.<sup>105</sup> In the event, no more than a symbolic gesture was required. College statutes were amended in 1911, requiring

Every Fellow elected under [these auspices] to undertake during the tenure of his fellowship to pursue some course of study or investigation to be specified by him to the Warden and Fellows and approved [by them] from time to time.<sup>106</sup>

Many noted that obligation was observed mainly in the breach for some time thereafter.<sup>107</sup>

Adams proved to be both an effective and a popular professor. True, he produced no major work of either political theory or analysis. But he was a good lecturer and an effective organizer. With the introduction, in 1920, of an

<sup>102</sup> W. R. Anson, 'Resistance of Ulster: A Comparison and an Analysis', *The Times* (31 March 1914), 9.

<sup>103</sup> For an account, see Henson, *Memoir of Anson*, ch. x.

<sup>104</sup> Simmons, 'All Souls', 218; Simmons, *All Souls and Professorial Chairs*, 6–7 and 11. These were the Chichele Professor of International Law and Diplomacy; the Chichele Professor of Modern History; the Vinerian Professor of English Law; the Drummond Professor of Political Economy; the Regius Professor of Civil Law; the Beit Professor of Colonial History; the Chichele Professor of Military Professor; and the Gladstone Professor of Political Theory and Institutions.

<sup>105</sup> ASCCLAP, 18/8/1/2, College Letters, January–October 1910, Charles Grant Robertson to Anson, 4 September 1910.

<sup>106</sup> ASCCLLR5.a.9, Ms ccci(i), ASCMB, 1905–14, p. 85, Special General Meeting, 5 June 1911. The revised statute was passed by 23 votes to 2.

<sup>107</sup> Less a matter of wilful disobedience than career choice. Of 52 'Prize Fellows' elected down to 1939, more than three fifths (33) subsequently pursued non-academic careers.

Honour School of Philosophy, Politics, and Economics at Oxford, he acquired a respectable number of students to teach and a proper Board of Studies to administer it. He also fulfilled the practical demands of his position. In 1915, he joined the Ministry of Munitions. Then in 1916, he was invited through the good offices of Thomas Jones to join Lloyd George's personal secretariat. There he edited the reports of the war cabinet. For these efforts, he was offered a seat in the House of Commons at the 1918 'coupon election'. He turned it down and returned to Oxford.<sup>108</sup>

There were many reasons for his decision. Not the least was an intention, expressed from the first, to be 'a worthy son of All Souls'.<sup>109</sup> And Adams was admirably true to his word. So much so that the college elected him Warden in 1933.<sup>110</sup> He was replaced as Gladstone Professor by Sir Arthur Salter, international civil servant, part-time politician, and occasional social scientist.<sup>111</sup> Salter had many merits, few fully recognized in All Souls at the time.<sup>112</sup> These did not include much interest in the theoretical aspects of his adopted academic discipline. Partly as a result, and partly the product of a broader development in the subject, the university resolved to split the intellectual responsibilities of the Chair on his retirement.<sup>113</sup> In 1944, Kenneth Wheare was appointed Gladstone Professor of Government and Public Administration. G. D. H. Cole, previously Reader in Economics at the university, was elevated to a newly created Chichele Professorship of Social and Political Theory.<sup>114</sup> That was how Nuffield College came into being, specifically designed to foster the social sciences in post-war Oxford, but perversely denied collegiate association with two of the principal chairs in one of its core subjects. This is still the case today.<sup>115</sup>

<sup>108</sup> Harrison, 'Adams', 279; Chester, *Economics, Politics and Social Studies in Oxford*, ch. 3.

<sup>109</sup> ASCCLAP, 19/8/1/2, College Letters, January–June 1910, W. S. G. Adams to Anson, 17 June 1910.

<sup>110</sup> Described in A. L. Rowse, *All Souls in My Time* (London: Duckworth, 1993), ch. 4, esp. pp. 107 ff.

<sup>111</sup> D. Rickett, 'Salter (James) Arthur, Baron Salter (1881–1975)', *ODNB*, vol. 48 (2004), pp. 757–8 offers the most recent account. Arthur Salter, *Memoirs of a Public Servant* (London: Faber & Faber, 1961) and his *Slave of the Lamp: A Public Servant's Notebook* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1967), chs 2–11, still contain much of value.

<sup>112</sup> See Rowse, *All Souls in My Time*, 110–11; also H. Hardy (ed.), *Isaiah Berlin. Flourishing: Letters, 1928–1946* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2004), 125, Berlin to Stephen Spender, 19 May 1935.

<sup>113</sup> Simmons, *All Souls and Professorial Chairs*, 6 ff. and 12; see also J. Harris, 'The Arts and the Social Sciences, 1939–1970', in Brian Harrison (ed.), *The History of the University of Oxford*, vol. VIII: *The Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), ch. 9, esp. pp. 119–21.

<sup>114</sup> M. Beloff, 'Wheare, Sir Kenneth Clinton (1907–1979)', *ODNB*, vol. 58 (2004), pp. 405–7, specifically notes (on p. 406) that Wheare was 'the first holder of the Gladstone Chair to come from academic rather than public life'. Cf. Marc Stears, 'Cole, George Douglas Howard (1889–1959)', *ODNB*, vol. 12 (2004), pp. 505–10.

<sup>115</sup> The effect—possibly as much for good as ill—is described in R. Taylor, *Nuffield College Memories: A Personal History* (Oxford: Nuffield College, 2008), 103–9.



## EDITORS' NOTE

One distinctive feature of the institutional set-up in which political science developed in Oxford is its two social science graduate colleges, Nuffield and St Antony's, both created in the middle of the twentieth century. Different in their intellectual orientation and governance style, though both closely linked to political elites in the UK and overseas, they had no real parallel in other UK universities such as Cambridge and the LSE. In this chapter Laurence Whitehead explores how these institutions influenced the development of political science in Oxford and how they dealt with two major twentieth-century discontinuities, namely the rise of Thatcherism in UK politics which challenged Nuffield College's previous view of its place in the world and the corresponding break point for St Antony's presented by the collapse of Soviet Communism.

Whitehead writes from a perhaps unique participant-observer perspective, having been a fellow of both colleges and observed the work of both at close quarters for over forty years. He argues that the graduate colleges jointly contributed more to the development of the academic study of politics than either could have done on their own, gave Oxford a competitive advantage both in the UK and internationally, and helped to facilitate 'creative marginality' for some important contributions to the subject that rely on more historical, contextual, or ethnographic approaches. The claim is that the two colleges provided an environment conducive to the development of such contributions, by avoiding the more mechanistic approach to intellectual production often found in more conventional departmental settings, and that 'cottage industry' structures of this type may continue to be important into the future.

Whitehead sees 'the Oxford approach to politics' as context-specific and reflecting a strong emphasis on history, philosophy, and area studies expertise. But his chapter brings out the rather different approaches to the subject represented by each of the graduate colleges. And it is an open question both as to how widespread similar biases were among politics academics at least in the British university system for much of the twentieth century,<sup>1</sup> and whether the internal heterogeneity of what

<sup>1</sup> See for example Wyn Grant, *The Development of a Discipline: The History of the Political Studies Association* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 32–5.

developed in Oxford in the twentieth century—including the import and adaptation of the 'Michigan' approach to the study of voter behaviour, the various political theory positions described in David Miller's chapter in this volume, and the development of a broadly anti-positivist approach to International Relations—amount collectively to an 'approach' that merits the definite article.

# The Role of Specialist Graduate Colleges in Disciplinary Development

*Laurence Whitehead*

## INTRODUCTION

Was there an ‘Oxford’ approach to the study of politics in the twentieth century, and if so, what became of it? This chapter focuses on the second half of that question. From my perspective, Oxford’s starting point was what could be found in the Greek and Roman classics. This meshed in with British imperial as well as domestic preoccupations, at least until mid-century. But for the first thirty years of the post-war period, as this generation of political scholarship faded from view, and classical philosophy gave way to language games, the Oxford approach to politics turned inwards. It also became more social democratic in tone. Then, when the welfare state consensus entered into crisis, in the 1970s, a more diverse (arguably more fragmented) academic agenda emerged, and various international influences became more salient. Marxism was easier to assimilate than feminism, given the persisting gender imbalance; and the influence of economics reduced the pre-eminence of history and philosophy, so that public choice and rational actor perspectives made rapid inroads. To some extent this could be described as the ‘Americanization’ of Oxford politics, a process that continues.

If the twentieth century witnessed the emergence of a distinctively ‘Oxford’ approach to the study of politics, what were the main factors behind this? And do those forces still operate as before in the early twenty-first century? Four broad areas external to the scholarship itself require attention. These are: the student body (who the work is for), addressed in the book’s first chapter; the political context (what political phenomena are to be foregrounded); the institutional environment (how this academic provision is to be organized); and the overarching state of the field through interactions with the overall discipline and the external social science environment.

This chapter provides just a brief overview of a complex subject that merits a much more extended enquiry. It also has a ‘parochial’ and insider-based aspect, focusing on the two specialist Oxford graduate colleges that achieved



their autonomy in the early post-war years. The exposition is structured around three contrasts: between Oxford University and its more unitary rivals; between Nuffield and St Antony's; and between the early, middle, and later stages of their roughly sixty-year trajectories.

Nuffield and St Antony's both achieved their autonomy within the collegiate university in the early post-war years (1958 and 1959, respectively). They were unlike all their predecessors, as graduate-only, mixed (although initially very male-dominated in practice),<sup>1</sup> and specialized (Nuffield in the social sciences and St Antony's in area studies). Given the loose confederal features of the collegial system (prior to the creation of the Social Sciences Division in 2000), as noted in the introductory chapter, Oxford had room for these 'add-on' institutions that need not directly conflict with, or even challenge, the undergraduate focus of the rest of the system. This focus persists even now, although the number of graduate students has expanded in the traditional colleges, especially in recent years. For most of the past half-century, Philosophy, Politics, and Economics (PPE) remained the core of the politics teaching provided by the older colleges, whereas the two specialized colleges only provided postgraduate facilities to their own students—although, over the years, many of their fellows have also supervised postgraduate students from other colleges, taught postgraduate courses, and also taught a large volume of undergraduates who were 'farmed out' to them for their specialist options. Cambridge never acquired this specialized graduate college resource in the social sciences; whereas at the London School of Economics (LSE) the study of politics was led from the graduate level, and fed down from there into undergraduate instruction, without a permeable barrier.

## POLITICAL CONTEXT AND THE ACADEMIC STUDY OF POLITICS

The Oxford approach to the study of politics has always been fairly context-specific, whether because of the strong influence of the history faculty (the current history and politics degree has further cemented this aspect), the area studies component, or simply on the basis of tacit assumptions about the shared liberal values and representative institutional traditions that make up

<sup>1</sup> After half a century both colleges have ended up with more female than male students. A third of the St Antony's Governing Body (including the Warden) is now female. Nuffield still lags behind in this regard. However, overall, male dominance persisted for most of the period under review. As recently as 1991–5, only 27 per cent of Nuffield's students were female. For some now embarrassing reminiscences from Nuffield's early history see R. Taylor *Nuffield College Memories: A Personal History* (Oxford: Nuffield College, 2008), 26, 60, and 140.

so much of its subject matter. Political theory may aspire to greater abstraction and universalism, but insofar as it is linked in to the rest of political studies it, too, reflects such contexts.

There is a reinforcing factor in the case of Oxford. When the study of politics is closely connected to the production of political elites whether purposefully or by default, the subject matter is almost sure to be significantly influenced by their 'real-world' concerns. After all, a school of politics that did not address any of the political realities that its alumni expect to deal with would soon lose its elite recruitment entry to rival establishments. It may be in response to this reality that in 2012, after a century of successful operations, the university admitted its first cohort of students for a Masters degree in Public Policy at the Blavatnik School of Government. There is thus a clear link between the question of 'who is it for?' and the more classic 'what is it about?' and 'how therefore is it to be studied?'

This section only considers one factor out of various. But at least in the case of Oxford, and more particularly in regard to its specialized graduate colleges, the background political context—and its disjunctures—requires explicit consideration. More concretely, the study of politics in Nuffield since its foundation encompasses a long period of crisis and readjustment of the British post-war political settlement that proved highly consequential in academic terms. Likewise, for St Antony's, the dismantling of the Berlin Wall and the disintegration of the USSR and its accompanying bi-polar world system produced equally consequential contextual challenges. Two big political discontinuities stand out: Thatcherism at home and the collapse of Communism abroad. That yields a simple tripartite schema—the generation that went before, the political jolt, and the generation that followed. There is evidence from at least three directions (PPE, Nuffield, and St Antony's) to consider how these largely unanticipated 'real-world' developments first disrupted and then reconfigured the study of politics in Oxford.

The PPE syllabus of the 1950s and 1960s contained much that reflected what might charitably be termed the post-war welfare state political consensus, or what contemporary critics referred to as 'Butskellism'. Dominant themes included a Downsian view of the two-party system of electoral competition; Keynesian macro-economic policies focused on full employment, with mildly redistributive taxation; a 'social partnership' between business and a strengthened trade union sector; the 'rise of the meritocracy', as expressed among other things by the founding of new universities and the Robbins Commission's expansion of state-funded higher education. Simply to list these central issues of political analysis is sufficient to demonstrate how much they were products of their time, and of what proved to be an impermanent context. By the 1970s, all of these givens came under challenge, both

from the social science side and, more crucially, as a result of direct political contestation.<sup>2</sup> Although academic critiques prefigured the rise of Thatcherism, my impression is that, during the 1980s, the dismantling of the consensus and its replacement by a reasonably coherent alternative agenda kept catching students of British politics by surprise. There seems to have been a time lag, with real-world developments outstripping academic explanations, and confounding expectations of an eventual reversion towards established verities. Economists may have done better than students of politics in providing at least some relevant intellectual guidance as this transformation gathered momentum. By the 1990s, something approaching a new dispensation was emerging, and students of British politics began to catch up again, but without the overconfidence of the first period, and still more as followers than as leaders. The progress of this academic evolution could no doubt be traced through PPE readings lists.<sup>3</sup>

The Nuffield College of the 1950s and 1960s provided a more focused, better connected, and more in-depth access to 'Butskellism'. Robert Taylor (a politics student in the college in the 1960s) writes of a 'golden age' and chronicles 'the emergence of strong informal and personal networks of influence between Fellows in the College and senior figures in government departments, the national media and Parliament who came to Nuffield as Visiting Fellows'.<sup>4</sup> For example, in February 1965, 'Prime Minister Harold Wilson was driven over from Chequers for . . . (a dinner) . . . also attended by Jim Callaghan, the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Edward Heath . . . was present as well as Jean Monnet, the first chairman of the European Commission.'<sup>5</sup> Taylor also underscores the prominence of trade union leaders and the political salience of college scholarship (as on the questions of devaluation, the reform of industrial relations, and local government issues). Another centrepiece was of course the Nuffield election studies, not only the books, but also the mass-audience television broadcasts. Like all golden ages, this one may have been glamorized in retrospect, and in any case it did not last.

There is not space here to reconstruct the complex and varied ways in which the college Politics Group responded to the rise of Thatcherism and

<sup>2</sup> Taylor, *Nuffield College Memories*, *passim*.

<sup>3</sup> A good illustration of the late 1960s backlash against the then prevailing PPE syllabus can be found in the manifesto penned by Trevor Pateman and others and partially reproduced in P. Foot, *The Politics of Harold Wilson* (London: Penguin, 1968), 32. 'Why is it that everything ever written by J. S. Mill (1806–73) is fresh, modern, and canonical, whereas everything written by K. Marx (1818–83) is stale, passé, no longer applicable, and purely ideological?' About this time a new option on 'political sociology' was added to the syllabus, partly as a response to such criticisms, and partly to reflect new scholarship that was more questioning of Butskellite assumptions. When I showed the reading list to my politics tutor it elicited the reaction: 'This is the hundred worst books in politics. Moreover it is a dynamic field. As even worse contributions appear the less bad will be dropped.'

<sup>4</sup> Taylor, *Nuffield College Memories*, 93.

<sup>5</sup> Taylor, *Nuffield College Memories*, 92.

the ensuing post-Thatcher dispensation. Instead I can only contribute the following personal anecdote. When Heath's Visiting Fellowship ended, I proposed the not-yet-celebrated Mrs Thatcher (my home-town MP) as the successor, but was overruled. In similar circumstances in the early 1980s I proposed Arthur Scargill as the trade union Visiting Fellow, and was again unsuccessful. Finally, in 2005, I was in a position to invite my new local MP (David Cameron) to such an appointment, but at that stage the college was no longer an irresistible draw to an emerging national party leader. Nevertheless, even if that 'golden age' has passed (by no means an entirely bad thing from the scholarly standpoint), college engagement with the real world of British politics remains intense, and its contemporary scholarship on, for example, devolution or full independence for Scotland; the legacy of Britain's 'unfinished empire'; such constitutional issues as the Human Rights Act or the unelected Lords; or sensitive issues concerning British intelligence, all remain both highly relevant and academically prominent. More recent Politics fellows, however, define their professional authenticity in being abstracted from and unconnected to day-to-day politics.

The contribution of the college to the study of British politics was never confined to the 'politics' side of the college. In the new dispensation, with crucial policy matters handled by the Bank of England Monetary Policy Committee, the Office of Budget Responsibility, or the Office of National Statistics, college economists have become still further involved with public policy issues. And second, although British domestic politics dwarfed other matters during much of the 'golden age', Nuffield's approach to politics was always comparative and international as well. In contrast to St Antony's, the USA figured as a priority from the beginning, and that side of the subject has flourished as domestic political issues have retreated. Among the various other international themes prioritized I would be bound to mention democratization.

For St Antony's it was the ending of the Cold War rather than the decline of British social democracy that marked the critical watershed. At the outset, Soviet studies occupied a prominent—perhaps even a pre-eminent—place in the college's portfolio. Other world regions also received intense and interdisciplinary attention, but there, too, the influence of bi-polarity cannot be disregarded. In the new field of Latin American Studies, created at the behest of the UK government in the mid-1960s, for example, it is doubtful whether the impetus would have arisen at all but for the repercussions of the Cuban Revolution of 1959 and Havana's subsequent embrace of Moscow. Certainly, the types of political issue prioritized by scholars in that region (the nature of military regimes, the fragility of constitutional provisions, and the role of ideological polarization in the configuration of party systems among others) were, to a considerable extent, generated by this underlying bi-polar context. Similar points might

be made concerning the study of politics in post-independence Africa, or during the ascendancy of Moscow-supported Arab nationalism in the Middle East.<sup>6</sup>

Across virtually all the diverse world regions covered by St Antony's, the existence—or disappearance—of the Soviet alternative provided an essential and structuring context to the study of political phenomena, at both the national and comparative levels of analysis. Outside the USSR, Soviet retreat preceded Soviet collapse, so in most regions there was an incremental process of realignment and preparatory adjustment, rather than a single transformative moment. Even so, and here there is a resemblance to Thatcherism, scholarly work often proceeded with a time lag, rather than ahead of events. In Latin American studies, we like to think that early shocks such as the 1973 collapse of Chilean democracy had helped us prepare for the end of bi-polarity, but even in this field much of the scholarly agenda was upended by 1989.

Soviet studies experienced the most shattering encounter with unexpected political realities, but here St Antony's provided a notable exception. In particular, Archie Brown's early work on Gorbachev proved far-sighted (and indeed he was instrumental in persuading Mrs Thatcher's government to take perestroika seriously). More generally, although the disappearance of the Russian Communist alternative presented some serious challenges to the St Antony's community of students of world politics, they were better placed than most of their competitors in other institutions to adjust and keep up as the consequences in each of their regions became apparent.

It is questionable whether a more rigidly disciplinary or departmentalized approach would have proved so alert and well attuned. In the post-Cold War era, some area studies groupings have flourished more than others: European studies obviously expanded with EU enlargement, and African studies has also benefited, whereas other regions have become more marginal, or have surrendered some of their previous cohesion and distinctiveness. Perhaps the most important consequence of the emergence of 'unipolar globalization' for students of politics is that it has opened the way for more outward-looking and cross-regional approaches to comparative politics. The Oxford area studies community, still mostly concentrated in St Antony's, but now linked into the Social Sciences Division via the School of Area and Interdisciplinary Studies (SIAS), has adjusted quite well to a profound upheaval in its contextual setting, in part because so many multidisciplinary researchers and visiting scholars from each region have kept it grounded in local political realities. This resilience can be enhanced provided it proves open to cross-referencing (and even the transfer of concepts and methods) from each area studies community to the rest, as well as from the broader discipline of comparative politics.

<sup>6</sup> For a more rounded description see C. Nicholls, *A History of St Antony's College, 1950–2000* (Oxford: Macmillan/St Antony's, 2000).

TWO LINKED BUT CONTRASTING GRADUATE  
COLLEGE TRAJECTORIES

I became a fellow of St Antony's as a lecturer in economics in 1968, and I have done most of my graduate teaching at the Latin American Centre there over the ensuing four decades. However, I moved to Nuffield and became an Official Fellow in Politics in 1969. So my sense of the parallel evolution of these two institutions is very much that of a participant observer—a situation that brings insights, but also distortions. The very fact that a career such as mine was possible at the end of the 1960s dramatizes more eloquently than anything else I could say how much this world has changed since then.

This section sketches a profile of St Antony's institutional framework so that its contribution can be compared and contrasted to that of Nuffield.

In the 1960s, the *Daily Express* used to report on St Antony's as the training school for British spies, and allegations of links between the college and the intelligence services were frequently made at that time.<sup>7</sup> At least one former Warden (Deakin) had an intelligence background,<sup>8</sup> and according to his biographer, Raymond Carr, 'was . . . made privy by MI6 to classified information and wrote several reports for the service'.<sup>9</sup> Today, both Nuffield and St Antony's still include a strand of intelligence and security studies. Long ago, after studying with Raymond Carr and then working with Norman Chester, I formulated the following synoptic impression: St Antony's under Raymond Carr reminded me of eighteenth-century Spain. It had a magnificent and prestigious central authority, which exercised only very uncertain control over far-flung and rebellious provinces. For the Basque Provinces read the Soviet studies bloc; for Andalusia, the Latin American Centre; perhaps the Nissan Centre resembled Catalonia; and African Studies was more like the Canary Islands. Of course they all belonged together in a single political entity, with centralized powers. But the centre was often short of resources, and hard-pressed to accumulate the information it needed to impose controls over its somewhat disloyal *feudos*. By contrast, under Norman Chester (whose twenty-four-year rule was legitimated in part by his direct endorsement by the Founder) Nuffield was run on lines characteristic of the UK Treasury model. It is true that after he retired a tripartite 'group' structure of politics, economics, and sociology grew up to partially subvert his unitary model. But even at the very end of our period Nuffield remained far more unitary than St Antony's. Fiscal weakness at the centre in St Antony's made the autonomy of subunits unthreatening.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, M. J. G. Hernández, *Raymond Carr: The Curiosity of the Fox*, trans. N. Griffin (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2013), 272–4, 280–8.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, G. Elliott and H. Shukman, *Secret Classrooms: A Memoir of the Cold War* (London: St. Ermin's Press, 2003).

<sup>9</sup> See Hernández, *Raymond Carr*, 293 and 439, n. 84.

There are other contrasts that are just as telling. Both colleges received roughly similar endowments, and had parallel mandates in the 1950s. But as I understand it, the St Antony's allocation came largely in the form of Irish Land bonds, which were not liquidated until after the equity boom of the 1950s was complete. By contrast Nuffield's endowment was in British Leyland shares when the post-war British motor industry was still flourishing. Much of this was switched into Japanese shares before stagflation hit Britain, and before the Japanese stock market took off. In consequence, Nuffield became endowment-rich, while St Antony's remained cash-poor. So St Antony's tried to earn its way in the world by expanding its student intake (a laborious way to earn a living) while Nuffield remained much smaller with far better provisions for its restricted number of individual students and fellows. Larger numbers and a more international student body helped St Antony's increase the density of its international coverage but also kept it apart from both the undergraduate outlook of PPE, and the more professionalized graduate social science of Nuffield and the Department of Politics and International Relations. Instead, St Antony's has come to dominate the SIAS.

At the beginning, history was a master discipline in both colleges.<sup>10</sup> But in Nuffield this meant British (including British imperial) history above all. And by the end of the period under review it had dwindled to a really quite marginal status, displaced by 'quantitative' social science perspectives. In St Antony's history was area-based or global, with language skills attached, and the study of culture—including ethnographic as well as archival research—was unavoidable. (One new student party would offer Japanese seaweed biscuits, another might be alcohol-free, and some Latin American students might give tango classes or sing salsa.)

A particularly telling contrast concerned the place of the USA in the tacit world map and in each institution. Whereas Nuffield was sometimes portrayed as 'mid-Atlantic', with a strong bias towards US academia and a lively focus on US political trends, St Antony's did not include North America in its repertoire of regional studies centres.<sup>11</sup> Over time, of course, the balance of political studies within St Antony's has shifted. The Soviet bloc used to attract pre-eminent interest, but since the end of the Cold War the focus is more on post-Communist Eastern Europe. African Studies lagged behind for most of the period, but has more than caught up over the past two decades. Western Europe has faded, and Carr's ambition to create an Iberian Studies Centre never materialized. China was marginal compared to Japan but that has since been corrected. South Asia is still under-represented. Within Latin America there was a tussle over the weight

<sup>10</sup> Both N. Chester (*The Nationalisation of British Industry*) and M. Brock (*The Great Reform Act*) practised historical scholarship, unlike subsequent Nuffield Wardens. In St Antony's, Deakin, Carr, Goulding, and MacMillan all wrote history, and Dahrendorf's sociology was partly historical.

<sup>11</sup> This contrast is real, but should not be overstated. All post-war social science is US-centric, and Margaret MacMillan from Canada is now starting up a North American Studies programme.

to assign to Brazil, and so on. So whose politics we were studying, and how those studies were to be organized, elicited contrasting responses in the two graduate colleges.<sup>12</sup>

St Antony's has an international range reflected in both its faculty and student body. That provides a strong foundation for the study of global politics, but most of what is done there reflects a continuing 'area studies' particularism. Thus, Middle East experts exchange work with one another, but mostly have little contact with the 'Latin Americanists', who may be discussing parallel themes just across Church Walk. Some attempts at cross-regional comparisons are now being encouraged (one example is comparative presidentialism) but this is not where the college's intellectual centre of gravity lies. Development studies are somewhat more global, and some security issues are also more transregional, but the area focus is pre-eminent. This brings a tremendous flow of both academic and practical expertise into the college, but mainly to study contextually specific political issues, without a great emphasis on integrative analytical approaches.

Perhaps the best single indicator of what St Antony's has achieved in the study of politics (where both its strengths and its limitations lie) is that in his year as Acting Warden, Roger Goodman discovered that almost 5 per cent of the world's foreign ministers at the time (eight out of 178 to be precise) had studied at St Antony's. Quite a feat for a single modestly endowed graduate college within the University of Oxford.

In contrast to St Antony's, the Nuffield College charter explicitly called for the study of political (and other) problems to promote cooperation between academic and non-academic persons.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, almost half of the stated meeting of the Governing Body is composed of practical-minded governmental and political leaders, drawn overwhelmingly from the British establishment. This includes the main political parties, the civil service, the

<sup>12</sup> In Nuffield, the national politics of Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Canada, the USA, and Australia all merited focused attention. The rest of the world (other than the Empire) was not much disaggregated. Marjorie Perham was left free to cover decolonization in Africa. I succeeded her with a licence to cover whatever I wanted in Latin America, and in recent years Nuffield has promoted various projects concerning Mexico. But I was also assigned supervision of any topic not covered by the rest of the politics group—hence I acquired patchy exposure to Afghanistan, Hong Kong, India, Poland, South Africa, and Turkey, a range broadened by the focus on democratization since 1990.

<sup>13</sup> 'A college for post-graduate work, especially in connection with the study by cooperation between academic and non-academic persons of social (including economic and political) problems and also for other post-graduate research work.' Lord Nuffield's initial proposal had been to found a college devoted to engineering and accountancy. A. D. Lindsay and G. D. H. Cole helped to turn this into 'social engineering' given the problems of the 1930s. But some oral mythology suggests that the last phrase perhaps indicates that once the social engineering had been completed Nuffield still hoped the college would move on to real engineering. In practice, financial engineering has gained ground.



Bank of England, leading newspapers, prominent trade unionists, and some businessmen.

In the 1950s and 1960s, this constituted something like the apex of the Butskellite consensus in British political life. The Nuffield election studies (led by David Butler for sixty years) represent one of the College's most enduring offerings in this sense. When he moved to Nuffield from the LSE, the educational sociologist A. H. Halsey was startled at the breadth and regularity of attendance of the leading public figures of the time. He was also surprised at their frankness, their willingness to treat Nuffield academics as their equals, and their openness to new findings in the social sciences. However, as Halsey also noted, 'it must be recognised that the reputation of the college as one with close links to Westminster, Whitehall, Transport House and the CBI has been bought at some cost. Critics from within as well as from without the college point to the dangers of undue preoccupation with worldly interests and especially with definitions of problems in the social sciences, which are set by politicians and administrators.'<sup>14</sup>

Shortly after that was written, the British welfare state and the Butskellite consensus came to an end, and both sides of this fleeting partnership pulled back. In the 1980s and thereafter British politicians disengaged from such exchanges (or, at least, diversified their sources of policy advice, relying more on specific-purpose think tanks), while Nuffield fellows also redirected their energies towards the development of the social science disciplines. Economists (and even some sociologists) rose to the fore in policy matters, while the politics side of the college assumed a lower profile. As it turned out, Nuffield's two prime ministers were students of economics, not politics (Manmoun Singh and Abhisit Vejjajiva).

Whereas history and philosophy started out as major sources of inspiration for those studying politics in Nuffield, both have gradually ceded ground with the specialized discipline of 'political science'. While the Nuffield politics group could never have been in the vanguard of this transformation, neither was it a barrier. To take just one illustration of the role played by Nuffield in the development of the profession, Warden Chester was elected the first Chair of the UK Political Studies Association (PSA) when it was founded in 1950. He then went on to lead the foundation of the International Political Science Association, both of which held inaugural conferences in the college. Indeed, Nuffield College was the operative Oxford member of IPSA at a time when the Politics Sub-Faculty was not well organized, and did not itself have

<sup>14</sup> A. H. Halsey and D. Butler (eds), *Policy and Politics: Essays in Honour of Norman Chester Norman Chester* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1978), 7–8. The thirteen chapters in this collection provide a representative portrayal of the mainstream of the college agenda in the 1970s. For a parallel recollection by a 1960s student, see Taylor, *Nuffield College Memories*, 89–96, in particular the jingle by Philip Williams (p. 94), as well as Paul Addison's recollections (p. 136).

representation there. Continuing college links with the PSA include former student Professor Elizabeth Meehan (the first female chair in 1993–4) and heavy representation among the PSA Prize winners (six out of nineteen had some college affiliation up to 2007, with two more from St Antony's, and two others from other Oxford colleges). Likewise, continuing links with IPSA include the first two female presidents (both from Somerville but both supervised in Nuffield) and the current president (a Jemolo Fellow at the college). More locally, under Chester's leadership the college started a small computing and research service unit, with services that were mainly for college members but also extended to the wider university, at a time when no faculty organization offering assistance with quantitative approaches was available.<sup>15</sup>

The Nuffield election studies provided the base for a primary application of such methods. The canonical Butler and Stokes study of the 1960s and the college became host to a specialized journal (*Electoral Studies*) that promoted specialization in this subdiscipline. Under Brian Barry and then David Miller political theory became more separated from philosophy and more focused within the social sciences.

On the international side, as Oxford expanded its offerings in the field of international relations (with a burgeoning MPhil and a distinctive commitment to what has become known as the 'English School'), Nuffield politics also followed that differentiation, with faculty appointments in the 1980s (the former moving later to the Montague Burton Chair). US politics also became more of a college speciality with the creation of the Mellon Chair in 1982. Thanks to a generous Ford Foundation grant, first Uwe Kitzinger (*Journal of Common Market Studies*) then Philip Williams and Vincent Wright built up our expertise in West European politics (the latter edited the journal *West European Politics* from the college almost throughout his tenure here). I edited the *Journal of Latin American Studies* and Nevil Johnson edited *Public Administration*.

Thus, when Nuffield politics fellows 'turned to their discipline', they did not act as standard practitioners of an agreed and settled political science discipline.<sup>16</sup> Rather, their professional energies were devoted to a variety of emerging subfields within the broad umbrella of 'political studies'. What the college still expects is that almost one third of its activities will be devoted to the field of 'politics' broadly conceived—taking into account the requirements of the

<sup>15</sup> In the same vein, recently the college has used its own resources to create a small experimental methods centre for all the social sciences.

<sup>16</sup> Compare Vernon Bogdanor's view—as a student he looked down on Nuffield as a 'haven of empiricism'—a view he now considers mistaken. But currently he fears the College has 'gone too far in another direction—the direction of behaviouralism and rational choice. Both in the 1960s and today, Nuffield has not done enough to resist fashionable trends. Nor has it fought hard enough against the bureaucratization of the universities and the research assessment exercise. It is too eager to be nice to those in power.' See Taylor, *Nuffield College Memories*, 136.

college charter, the background and abilities of the respective scholars, and the broad research and education mandate of the university, with its unique history as a training ground for political leadership.

Comparing the postgraduate study of politics at Nuffield and St Antony's then, it would be reasonable to assert that Nuffield's contributions, while still pluralist and indeed eclectic, have been more directed towards the core concerns of the English-speaking political science community. National and international history perspectives have been overshadowed by an emphasis on quantitative methods and Anglocentric political theory. However, comparative politics (of an integrative type, which can encompass insights drawn from area studies) has been a strength, recently enhanced by the creation of the Nuffield Chair in Comparative Politics. So, although Nuffield and St Antony's have partially diverged—or operated on parallel tracks—they have also overlapped and complemented each other. It is not entirely fanciful to conclude that as a pair of specialized graduate colleges they have added more to the study of politics at Oxford than either could have contributed in isolation. But what exactly have they added, and has there been an associated cost?

#### THE GRADUATE COLLEGES AND OXFORD POLITICS AS A WHOLE

In the context of this volume it should be noted that the Gladstone and Chichele Chairs still remain firmly lodged, not at either of the graduate colleges, but at All Souls. On the other hand, doctoral and postdoctoral positions in the political studies field, having hugely expanded, are distributed across a wide array of the other colleges, with Nuffield and St Antony's strongly represented. As for more resource-intensive research initiatives, these are increasingly channelled through, and concentrated in, the mammoth new Department of Politics and International Relations (DPIR), among the largest single concentrations of faculty devoted to the academic study of politics anywhere in the world.

Beyond the institutional details of this transformative half-century, it is possible to stand back a little and reflect more abstractly about the alternative models of knowledge production now available in this area. There are basically three. The small residential community approach, highlighted in this chapter, has long had to contend with the more formal, hierarchical, and bureaucratic Departments (artisanal and craft-like production as opposed to Fordism). But in the twenty-first century both must contend with a third, market-driven, individualizing and fragmenting alternative. Why not just pick and choose between celebrity lecturers from across the world, increasingly available to all

via the Internet? This third contender for the market in political understanding is only now gaining momentum, as the financial costs of the small group residential option, and mindless careerism and the silo-like self-referentiality that tend to corrode most hierarchical bureaucracies. In reality, of course, these three models are far too starkly contrasted, and—as we have seen above in the case of Oxford and Franks—hybrid accommodations can often extract the benefits and minimize the drawbacks of ‘mixed’ arrangements.

Thus the early balance between Nuffield College and the Social Studies Faculty Centre (the DPIR since 2000) and between St Antony’s and the pertinent inter-faculty committees (the SAIS since 2004) were bound to be reconfigured in comparison to the opening stages of this narrative, when the number of politics graduate students was still very small, at least as compared with what was soon to come.<sup>17</sup> The reconfiguration had strengths and drawbacks.

### **Benefits to the university from the graduate colleges**

1. Although their contribution was slow and remains incomplete, the graduate colleges were in the vanguard as regards gender balance. They were from the outset mixed colleges, at a time when all the undergraduate colleges were single sex. The first Official Fellow in Nuffield was Marjorie Perham (appointed in 1939). St Antony’s was also mixed at the faculty as well as at the student level.
2. At a time when the mainstream colleges had to spread their resources thinly across a wide field, and the social studies faculty was weak, the graduate colleges were already havens for research clusters and specialisms. It is thanks to St Antony’s and its area studies centres that Oxford politics is so global in coverage, and can deliver in-depth local expertise for those who work in comparative politics. I know of no other university with such diversity and strength of local knowledge. Nuffield also promoted various forms of specialization and research collaboration that would not have been otherwise possible, at least until the 1990s (on the politics of France and the USA, election studies, and constitutional politics, among others).
3. At a time when the university was still quite inward-looking, the graduate colleges forged strong linkages to academic and scholarly networks

<sup>17</sup> Before the outbreak of Second World War there were only about seventy students reading for second degrees in the whole of Oxford. By the mid-1960s ten ‘undergraduate’ colleges had more than one quarter of their students reading for graduate degrees (about 1,000 in total), of whom perhaps 200 were studying politics.

outside Oxford, including the PSA, IPSA, ECPR, Sciences Po, the Swire scholarships, and many others.

4. Both the specialized libraries and the hosting of scholarly journals were boosted by these colleges, as were first quantitative and now experimental approaches.
5. It was through the graduate colleges that some of the strongest appointments were made. Of course, the university as whole had a few very distinguished chairs, and All Souls also provided a magnet. But most appointments in the Oxford politics faculty have come with heavy teaching, examining, PPE admissions, and related obligations, which may have deterred some talent, and certainly failed to retain others. The graduate colleges were to some extent able to counteract this competitive disadvantage to the benefit of Oxford politics faculty as a whole.

But these benefits are no longer the trump cards they once were. The departmentalized university no longer relies on these advantages to the same extent as before. And the graduate college benefits came with some drawbacks attached.

### **Some drawbacks**

1. The semi-apartness of the two graduate colleges has also created inequalities and frictions between the beneficiaries of these advantages and the university politics faculty as a whole. Departmentalization aims to provide more of a 'level playing field' and a uniform career structure and a more equitable distribution of responsibilities. The graduate colleges can be seen as something of an impediment to that desired process of rationalization.
2. The pluralism and diversity entrenched within the graduate college structure can also be seen as an impediment to scholarly integration. Oxford's tendency to offer proliferation of poorly coordinated optional papers is probably rooted in the college system as a whole, and in its tutorial structure, but the graduate colleges tend to entrench this 'smorgasbord' feature of our course provision.
3. For different reasons neither Nuffield nor St Antony's has done much to contest or modify the utilitarian and pragmatic conceptions of our subject, that were traditional in this university. Nor have they been in the vanguard of methodological innovation or self-awareness. Thus, neither has taken the lead in demonstrating how the DPIR might integrate its intellectual offerings, nor have they provided effective buffers against expedience-driven bureaucratization. If anything, they have tended to stand aside and hope that the full weight of these developments will fall on their often overburdened colleagues in less privileged colleges.

THE GRADUATE COLLEGES AND THE FUTURE  
OF OXFORD POLITICS

Is there an ‘Oxford approach’ to the study of politics, and if so what kind of future could it have? These are issues addressed in the volume as a whole, and no single reply is to be expected. In my case, I would begin by posing a prior question: what is the study of politics for; and how, therefore, should the discipline in general, and Oxford in particular, organize itself to deliver what is needed? But this chapter has a narrower focus. The two graduate colleges considered here can be expected to continue into the indefinite future as integral components of an Oxford University that also seems pretty permanent. If so, they are both likely to house important clusters of academic expertise in the social sciences in general and in the field of political studies in particular. (Political ‘science’ will no doubt figure prominently in both, especially in Nuffield, but probably not to the complete exclusion of more pluralist approaches, given the traditions and mandates of the two institutions.)

Four major factors seem likely to drive future developments: the needs and expectations of their student and non-academic audiences (the ‘market’); the unpredictable and contingent emergence of new political realities that will require academic elucidation (the ‘objects of study’); the advance of scholarly understanding of politics in the social sciences more generally (the ‘discipline’); and broader structural change and reorganization in the higher education sector (the ‘institutional’ setting). As this chapter has attempted to document, all four of these drivers have undergone remarkable transformations over the past half-century, and although it is always rash to make predictions (especially about the future) it seems guaranteed that further far-reaching innovations will occur over the next generation. Indeed, my sense is that the pace of change may still be accelerating, perhaps on all four fronts at once.

So the two graduate colleges will continue to generate research and provide instruction, adapting as best they can to the formidable uncertainties that lie ahead. Their recent record suggests that they may both be rather good not only at surviving, but also innovating and continuing to provide intellectual leadership as new challenges emerge. More specific speculations and proposals would be out of place in this chapter, although it may be hoped that some of its contents could prove useful to those charged with thinking about college strategies.

Instead this conclusion will deal with two more definite considerations. The first is institutional: the implications for both colleges, and for Oxford politics as a whole, of the opening of the Blavatnik School of Government in 2012. The second question is more foundational and it asks where the best innovation in the social sciences comes from. A major justification for the survival of small specialized graduate colleges might be that they can shelter constructive forms

of 'creative marginality' that would be harder to nurture in more hierarchically organized settings. Both these topics bear on the broader question of whether there either is, or should in future be, a specifically 'Oxford' approach to the study of politics.

The Blavatnik experiment is an ambitious new project that draws on Oxford's record of elite selection and education. It involves modernizing the old PPE formula, in particular by shifting from the undergraduate to the Masters level of provision, and by targeting a much more international base of student recruitment and public service career instruction. It involves a characteristically intricate balancing of departmental, collegial, and market-driven ingredients. Students will mostly pay very high fees for highly compressed courses, which should confer strong credentials in an elite global employment market. They will have college affiliations, although most of their time will be devoted to intensive coursework on the premises of the new centrally operated School. A few new senior faculty positions will be created by the university (with college fellowships, including at graduate colleges), but a substantial proportion of the teaching will be 'bought in' from existing post holders. The syllabus will be demanding and focused, with research-led content, but this is not a doctoral programme, and most of the graduands are expected to go into public policy careers rather than to end up in academia. The School is therefore likely to accentuate a divide between postgraduate teaching and research, in contrast to the convergence promoted in the graduate colleges. It will take some time to discover how far this innovative scheme can help Oxford to rebalance its provision of political education from the undergraduate to the graduate, from the national to the international, and from the generalist to the more vocationally expert outcomes. But this institutionally creative offering provides a good indication of the adaptive possibilities within the collegiate university. As far as the two graduate colleges are concerned it poses them with a competitive challenge and provides them with a fresh avenue for growth and renewal. As far as the social science division is concerned, it may both reinforce and modify the 'Oxford approach' to the study of politics.

At a more foundational level, if there has been an Oxford approach to the study of politics over the past century, its protocols could be schematically presented as follows: What is the subject area? What is the argument? What is the evidence? What are the conclusions? By contrast, in a modern political science department, and increasingly in the DPIP, the preferred protocols are: what is the puzzle you have identified in the existing literature? What model have you selected? What is your database? What are your findings? The underlying rationale for this shift in protocols, or redescription of procedures, is that the second approach will screen out subjectivity, facilitate replicability, and ensure that results contribute to a cumulative process of scientific advance. Of course, this dichotomous presentation overstates the real contrast,

and undoubtedly traditional Oxford made use of, and even at times practised, the second approach as well as the first (The highpoint of Nuffield election studies was probably Butler and Stokes, after all.) Nevertheless, in a modern hierarchical and project-focused political science department the typical old Oxford protocols, so closely linked to the tutorial method and the synoptic essay, are bound to suffer downgrading if not be crowded out.

Does this mean that Oxford's twentieth-century approach has now run its course and should be discontinued? Does it mean that the graduate colleges should be converted into halls of residence and feeders to the research enterprises organized through a department? Referring back to the four main factors driving change in this field, both institutional and disciplinary forces are pushing powerfully in that direction. But the tenor of this chapter has been that neither the 'market' (the political elites Oxford still helps to educate) nor the 'objects of study' (political realities that resist formalization and predictive objectification) can be straitjacketed in this way. If there is a fundamental conflict between two sets of drivers, then either the study of politics will fragment and disintegrate, or hybrid solutions will be crafted. The graduate colleges may be better equipped to shelter and promote hybrid solutions than a massified and bureaucratized department.

How Oxford politics will respond to these foundational challenges remains to be seen. One crucial aspect of the response concerns the intellectual *sine qua non* for scholarly progress: the imagination, flexibility, and resources required for disciplinary innovation, and therefore for the advance of knowledge. The elaborate division of labour so often found in the natural sciences and medical research has proved amazingly effective at advancing knowledge in those areas. The social sciences also contain some domains where similar procedures might be highly productive (demographic analysis, perhaps social mobility or educational studies, or econometrics, among others). But the Oxford approach to the study of politics has rested on the assumption that its objects of study mostly require more historical, contextual, perhaps even ethnographic, techniques of investigation. Small clusters of scholars, horizontal exchanges of ideas, interdisciplinary cross-fertilization, the critical re-examination of core concepts and assumptions, have all been valued as highly as team-based data collection and testing. Small graduate colleges, which promote commensality and the exchange of ideas across disciplinary and subdisciplinary boundaries, may still provide a privileged setting for what Mattei Dogan celebrated as 'creative marginality' in the social sciences.<sup>18</sup> In contrast, Oxford's main

<sup>18</sup> 'Innovation in the social sciences occurs more often and with more important results at the intersection of disciplines. This is both cause and effect of a continual fragmentation of the social sciences into narrow specialities, and the recombination of these specialities across disciplinary lines into what we term "hybrid fields."' M. Dogan and R. Pahre, *Creative Marginality: Innovation at the Intersections of Social Science* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990), 1.



competitors labour under a significant handicap. They lack such fertile seedbeds of pluralist innovation. In the challenging domain of twenty-first-century political studies it could be that the graduate colleges still have an indispensable role to play in updating the Oxford approach, and in projecting that university's distinctive contribution to the global academic community.

## EDITORS' NOTE

In this chapter Alan Ryan reflects on the 'paradigm wars' in US political science in the 1960s and 1970s, when a quest for disciplinary orthodoxy led influential scholars in the field to advocate systems theory and later rational choice as all-encompassing paradigms for the academic study of politics. Ryan looks at those disputes through the lens of Thomas Kuhn's well-known analysis of 'normal' and 'revolutionary' science, which provided a language much used at the time to describe the paradigm wars. It was particularly favoured by those dissidents who were spooked by the most prominent candidates for an overarching political science paradigm (including political theorists, historians of political thought, and the Marxist radicals who were far more prominent in the field then than now). Ryan argues that nobody paid much attention to the fact that Kuhn did not set out to attack conventional rules of evidence in science, doubted that social science fitted into his analysis of 'normal' and 'revolutionary' science, and had stressed that it was nature, not philosophical arguments, that tended to decide the fate of scientific paradigms. And, in contrast to what Robert Goodin implies in the next chapter, he argues that it is simply not feasible to have a single 'language of politics' operating at any one time, which may account for why no single version of a normal science of politics has yet emerged, in Oxford or anywhere else for that matter.

Ryan argues that 'paradigm wars' were strikingly absent in Oxford in the 1960s and 1970s, whereas those paradigm debates did have an effect on two other universities in the UK, Essex and Strathclyde. He explains that absence by a mixture of cultural factors and some of the institutional features that were noted in the first chapter, notably an abiding cultural predilection for a historical approach to the study of politics and the traditional centrality of undergraduate teaching by college tutors to syllabi that could only be changed by collective agreement. Unlike Goodin's disparaging take on some of these features in the following chapter, Ryan sees value in a historical approach and implies that the absence of disciplinary turf wars in the 1960s and 1970s may have been beneficial for the academic study of politics in Oxford at that time.

# Paradigms Lost: How Oxford Escaped the Paradigm Wars of the 1960s and 1970s

*Alan Ryan*

This chapter is a variation on Conan Doyle's story of the dog that didn't bark in the night.<sup>1</sup> It is an account of why Oxford was untouched by the arguments of the 1960s and 1970s that roiled American political science departments—arguments which focused on the inability of political science to unite as a profession around one paradigm of exemplary political science. There were two comparisons implicit in those arguments, the first between the social sciences generically and the physical sciences—more exactly, physics and chemistry; the second, between political science and economics. Economists are commonly accused of suffering 'physics envy'; American political scientists suffer a double dose of anxiety, suffering 'economics envy' on top of 'physics envy'. They do not envy perhaps more appropriate sciences such as epidemiology.

Forty-five years ago, explaining non-events was often said to be impossible by political scientists of a behavioural persuasion when fending off critics who thought that one interesting element of the exercise of power was ensuring that things did *not* happen; but this is not true. All we need is an account of why something *might* or *very probably would* have happened and what prevented it. Seat belts exist to ensure that death and serious injury do *not* occur in collisions that would otherwise very likely cause them; a seat belt is a preventing cause. I begin in 1962, fifty-one years before this essay will see the light of day; it happens to be the year I took PPE schools, but its significance is that it was the year that Thomas Kuhn's *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* was published.<sup>2</sup> I sketch the role of the concept of a paradigm in Kuhn's account of scientific revolutions and some of its problems; I explain its obvious attractions to social scientists and recount a little of the history of its use and abuse by American political scientists, and its more muffled impact on British political science departments. I then turn to the explanation of Oxford's immunity to, or indifference to, these arguments. I say almost nothing, and that only in passing, about the obvious question whether Oxford's indifference

<sup>1</sup> A. Conan Doyle, 'Silver Blaze', in *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* (London: George Newnes, 1894).

<sup>2</sup> T. S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1962).

to the arguments that erupted in American political science departments was a good or a bad thing.

### WHY KUHN MATTERED

Thomas Kuhn's best-known and certainly most notorious book was *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, published in 1962. The historical research on which it rested underpinned Kuhn's wonderful work *The Copernican Revolution*, published five years before.<sup>3</sup> Kuhn was a historian of the physical sciences, a point he somewhat plaintively insisted on after *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* was described by Karl Popper as a threat to civilization, and seemingly blamed by Popper's (then) acolyte Imre Lakatos for inciting assorted forms of political irrationalism among students at the London School of Economics.<sup>4</sup> His insistence that he was a historian rather than a philosopher is important for two reasons. The first is that Kuhn did not intend to inflate his account of the nature of revolutions in the physical sciences into an epistemological thesis about the nature of scientific knowledge; when he rashly declared that after a scientific revolution scientists 'live in a different world', he was distressed to discover that an exuberant metaphor had opened the door both to enthusiastic relativists and to their most violent critics. The second is that Kuhn thought that his work had no implications for the social sciences; authors do not have unchallengeable authority over the implications of their work, but their opinions carry some weight.

The interest of Kuhn's account of scientific revolutions extends far beyond its implications, if any, for the study of politics. Although Kuhn declared himself a disciple of Karl Popper, his views are most interesting when set against the 'hypothetico-deductive' orthodoxy in the philosophy of science that we associate with Popper. But we should begin further back, with the view that Popper attacked and played off, before turning to Kuhn's impact on what was by the 1950s the orthodox view. Popper attacked the empiricist view that scientific inquiry involves making large numbers of observations, detecting causal patterns in the observations, and extrapolating those patterns to cover new cases. This is an inductive process, simplified to the point of parody in many accounts as the process of moving from 'all hitherto observed As have property P' to 'all As have property P', that is to say from reports of observations to the assertion of causal laws.

<sup>3</sup> T. S. Kuhn, *The Copernican Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957).

<sup>4</sup> I. Lakatos and A. Musgrave (eds), *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

The relevance to Kuhn is not that inductive inference so described is transparently invalid, but that if science were like this, there'd be no scientific revolutions. Knowledge would be cumulative, but there would be few conceptual discontinuities marking our progress. We would discover that not all As possessed property P, return to our observational data, and refine our statement—'all As with property B have property P, but no As with property C have property P', and so on. There is a lot of such work in science, especially in applied sciences such as medicine, where rule of thumb, low(ish)-level causal generalizations are immensely important. Even there, generalizations are not exactly based on 'everyday' observation. 'Estrogen receptor positive tumours respond well to Tamoxifen, but estrogen receptor negative tumours don't' is true, but not verifiable with the naked eye; a biopsy is a 'theory-laden' intervention in the world. It can be argued, and Popper certainly believed, that *all* observations are theory-laden to the extent that all reports on our experience of the world presuppose the validity of one or another way of conceptualizing it. Nonetheless, the picture of 'formulate the question, observe, guess a causal link, project, refine' is accurate enough for our purposes; it was nicely described by John Dewey in *How We Think* and has long been seen by teachers as the key to intelligent teaching.<sup>5</sup> Why would this not produce revolutions? Because we are not raising questions about the *underlying* structure of the world that explains why these generalizations hold up to the extent that they do, not asking whether our conceptualization of the underlying reality is adequate; we assume that the conceptual toolkit with which we are operating is adequate to its purpose and seek to refine and make more reliable the generalizations we rely on for the purposes we have in mind. Kuhn claimed that everyday or 'normal' science is just like this; it is what non-revolutionary science looks like. The conceptualization of the world on which it rests may have been instituted by an intellectual revolution, but it has become far from revolutionary. Normal science presupposes a consensus on what count as facts, what methods best uncover them, and how causal connections between events are to be established.

If there were only non-revolutionary science, there'd be nothing for a theory of scientific revolution to explain. On the face of it, Popper's emphasis on conjecture and refutation offers a picture of science that is better adapted to explain scientific revolutions; indeed, it may be so well adapted to explain revolutionary science that it explains everyday scientific inquiry less well. Popper began from the 'problem of induction', the observation that no finite number of observed instances in which As have property P logically entails that *all* As have property P. The task of science cannot be to pile up observations to the point where it was overwhelmingly likely that all As had property P,

<sup>5</sup> J. Dewey, *How We Think* (1911), in *Middle Works*, vol. 6 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978).

since universal generalizations are vulnerable to *one* falsifying counter-example and no less vulnerable because they have innumerable confirming instances behind them. A single black swan does all the damage that can be done to the claim that all swans are white. Science progresses by making bold conjectures about how the world works and subjecting those conjectures to rigorous tests that will detect whether those conjectures are false, if they are. Most writers who have written about inductive logic in fact write about hypothesis testing, and the asymmetry of confirmation and disconfirmation was noticed by Francis Bacon in the seventeenth century. Still, Popper's point is well taken if not surprising.

Popper's first statement of this view was too austere to illuminate what happens in practice. Any decent theory is far less vulnerable to a purported observational disproof than the simple version of 'conjecture and refutation' suggests; when I, as a schoolboy aged eleven, produced results at variance with the inverse square law, nobody declared Newton overthrown; they made me redo the experiment. Popper not only knew this but treated a theory's capacity to reshape our understanding of the observational as a sign of its power. His account of conjecture and refutation did not at first emphasize the resources of a theory for resisting refutation, because he was more concerned to insist that the essence of good science is that theories are not indefinitely 'protected' by such familiar devices as impugning the skills of the observer, rewriting hypotheses to absorb contrary evidence, dismissing contrary evidence as a special case of no importance, and so on. Marxist sociology and Freudian psychology were too often guilty of such sins against scientific integrity.

The point of rehearsing these familiar points is not their philosophical interest, but their implications for science as a social practice. Popper thought that science was a cooperative activity, but a strenuous one; it was also 'unnatural', in requiring us to give up cherished beliefs in the face of contradictory evidence and requiring us to allow anyone with such evidence to get a hearing. It thus provided a model for Popper's defence of liberal democracy, much as it did for Dewey. A scientific community must be committed to science as conjecture and refutation; it cannot permit scientists to protect their favoured hypotheses by sacking their critics; and it needs to maintain a climate in which we conjecture boldly and take refutations on the chin without flinching. This does not rest on the idea that the scientist is a natural epistemic hero, nor is it an implausibly individualistic ideal; it is a picture of the way an ideal scientific community instills virtue in its members. Because we are creatures of habit, with limited imaginations and attachment to our own views just because they are ours, we need the help of others to keep ourselves up to the mark.

Kuhn meant to supplement not demolish this picture of science. Popper and many of his admirers saw it as a head-on attack on ideas they held sacrosanct. The essence of Kuhn's case is simple; its internal complications

much less so. The two key notions are that of a 'paradigm' and that of 'normal science'. 'Revolutionary science' happens when an old paradigm is overthrown and a new one established. Those who hoped that political science would find its own paradigm wanted politics to take its place as a normal science among other normal sciences. Kuhn claimed that for much of the time it is 'normal science' that is practised; it does not ask large questions about the basis of its own operations, but accepts the going paradigm. What is a paradigm? Kuhn used the expression to embrace many different phenomena; but three elements are simply described, and hang together. One is an overarching world view; because Kuhn's great book was *The Copernican Revolution*, we tend to think that the overarching intellectual construct must be a view of the entire universe, but Kuhn wrote as though an idea that was sufficiently broad in its implications to rationalize (what would in due course become) an entire discipline is also a paradigm. Explaining combustion by appealing to the role of oxygen is an example. The shift from a Ptolemaic/Aristotelian world view to a Newtonian/Galilean world view is more all-encompassing, but the death of phlogiston was dramatic enough.

A second element is related to the notion of a paradigm in grammar, in this case, exemplary work that can be held up as a paradigm of what good work looks like. It gives the budding scientist something to copy; my inability to copy the experiment I was supposed to at the age of eleven was like my inability to remember the formation of pluperfect passive conditionals in French. I never became a competent scientist, but I knew what one was. The natural sciences have a short attention span and are more interested in the future than in the past, but can all point to research that exemplifies what really good work in the discipline looks like. This leads to the third aspect of a paradigm: it underpins the apprenticeship process whereby a budding scientist is accepted as competent by the discipline. Anyone who has read academic recommendations written by physicists and chemists will be familiar with such phrases as 'even the very best students often stumble at . . .' as a preface to praising the student who has cleared that hurdle.

These three elements combine to provide the epistemological and organizational basis of science as a communal enterprise. To be a scientist in good standing, you must master the art of doing good science according to the current paradigm. For most, this provides the basis of a career doing what Kuhn described as 'normal science'. Kuhn did not intend his account of normal science disparagingly, but he made it sound less than exciting by depicting it as a matter of filling in the gaps in our knowledge, and a process of puzzle-solving not unlike finding the solution to the last few clues in a crossword puzzle. However, many scientists have happily accepted Kuhn's account, and—like Kuhn himself—have seen it as capturing something deeply satisfying: the collective search for an unforced consensus on how the world,

or some aspect of the world, operates, what is well understood, what less well, and where progress might be made.

It is worth emphasizing this for three reasons. The first is that Kuhn's picture of normal science as engaged in a process of filling in gaps in our knowledge, solving relatively well-described puzzles, and so on is an obvious threat to Popper's notion that the essence of science is the formulation of bold conjectures that are then rigorously tested. Boldness is less to the point than speculation firmly rooted in what we already know. If we allow ourselves to be seduced by the heroics of Popper's picture, we may be seduced into sharing his distaste for Kuhn's account of normal science. Yet Kuhn's account of normal science is persuasive, and unless we dismiss the lives of our colleagues and friends as a falling away from the demands of the examined life, we should acknowledge its merits *as a way of life*. The second is that we may devoutly believe that the essence of science is conjecture and refutation, but still believe that normal science will be the order of the day for long periods of time and over large stretches of the most developed sciences. There will certainly be a lot of conjecturing and refuting, whether it is about whether a piece of machinery will work or the location of a group of monkeys; but it will be small-scale and piecemeal, part of fitting pieces into a jigsaw. Kuhn insisted that in the last resort it is nature that decides what we can say about her operations; but to get her to decide, we must take many small steps that seem remote from that task.

Third, everyone was taken with the apparent implication that the scientific community is like a (non-violent) totalitarian regime, both in its 'normal' life and its revolutionary overthrow. Normal science is built around an orthodoxy; a member of the scientific community in good standing subscribes to that orthodoxy, accepts the community's understanding of good and bad work, and accepts the consensus on who possesses the authority to make such determinations. As it proceeds, any discipline encounters anomalies that can for long periods be swept under the carpet or put aside to be coped with later. Finally, the pressure on the old paradigm is too great; it collapses, and after a period of uncertainty, the new paradigm emerges. The practitioners of science under the old rules are now 'read out' of the profession. They more or less literally cannot see the world as the new paradigm requires; they cannot operate fluently; they are thrown on the rubbish heap of intellectual history. The claim that a scientific community is normally closed around an orthodoxy distressed Popper; he had written *The Open Society and Its Enemies* to argue that the scientific community was a model of openness and did not react kindly to the thought that scientific communities are, as Auguste Comte and Lenin had said long before, places where there is no room for free speech. Popper did not deny that many scientists practised normal science; but he insisted that we should feel sorry for them, that they had been taught to



swallow dogmas, and that it would be a disaster if normal science in Kuhn's sense became the norm.<sup>6</sup>

Two last questions have no very obvious answer. Do all true 'sciences' operate under the umbrella of a paradigm; and what should we call a discipline that is 'pre-paradigm', or perhaps 'non-paradigm'? Is it not science at all, or science pursued differently from—say—physics after Newton or chemistry after Lavoisier? If all that is at stake is what we *call* a discipline, the question is uninteresting. The interesting issue is the role of new conceptualizations in promoting intellectual progress; many commentators have thought that the human sciences still await their Newton, and many others have thought a 'Newtonian revolution' in the human sciences is impossible, and not to be looked for. A related question is just how dramatic a new conceptualization of human nature would have to be to provide a paradigm. The Copernican Revolution was a more thorough upending of a cosmology than the discovery of oxygen, let alone Darwin's evolutionary theory, although the Copernican Revolution may have been less disturbing to the man in the street than the Darwinian Revolution; the revolution in our understanding of human nature that cognitive scientists and others are urging on us would be far more dramatic and have an impact in every area of life, not only the study of politics. As to the nature of disciplines that are 'non-paradigm' or 'pre-paradigm', there are several possible answers; I offer one in passing as we proceed, and in summary in my conclusion.

## SUPPOSED IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE

Normal science, proceeding under the umbrella of an uncontested paradigm, has enviable assets: an uncontested view of what counts as excellent work, techniques that enable practitioners to do such work, and ways of distinguishing apprentice work from work that displays a full mastery of the issues and techniques of the discipline. Within the discipline itself, there is no room for philosophical dispute about the nature of the discipline or the adequacy of its grasp of the world; when a discipline is in crisis such questions are inescapable, but in other conditions, a physicist may be curious about what philosophers get up to, but will not think that whatever criticisms a philosopher might level at his discipline are serious contributions to physics. One can see how desirable this prospect might seem to American political scientists of the 1960s who found themselves sniped at by political theorists and philosophers, and at the height of the Vietnam War attacked by their graduate students for working on

<sup>6</sup> *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, 52–3.

topics that were either irrelevant to stopping the war or positively assisted the government to prosecute it. Looking at their neighbours in economics departments, they would have seen economists being paid substantially more, and displaying many of the characteristics of the much envied physicists—a near universal consensus on who the top thinkers in the profession were, a consensus on what the most interesting questions were that needed solutions, and contempt for criticism from outside the profession. In spite of the enthusiasm with which political scientists have embraced Rational Choice Theory over the past thirty years, there have always been some obvious difficulties in the way of modelling political science on economics, beginning with the fact that in spite of earlier efforts to treat ‘power’ as such a surrogate, politics does not have the same ‘currency’ as economics. The discipline of economics benefits from the fact that economic phenomena are themselves so heavily framed in the way the discipline needs; especially in areas involving the trading of financial instruments, the actors on the ground really are (ideally) trying to model their behaviour according to the strategic principles that economists model. Of course, it is also true that much of the most interesting work in economics has recently been in behavioural economics and that there is something paradoxical about the way political science departments became obsessed with Rational Choice just when it was being undermined by psychologists such as Adam Tversky and Daniel Kahneman,<sup>7</sup> the latter of whom got a Nobel Prize in economics for his work.

Nonetheless, economics was the obvious model; besides the pioneering work of Duncan Black on committees (discussed in a later chapter by Iain McLean), there had been a famous attempt to model voting behaviour along lines suggested by economics: Anthony Downs’s *Economic Theory of Democracy* built on Schumpeter’s suggestion in *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* that democratic politics is better understood on the model of firms trying to sell their wares to ill-informed purchasers than on what Schumpeter took to be the classical theory of a highly informed electorate delegating authority to their representatives.<sup>8</sup> Downs’s work was immensely influential, even though most readers became obsessed by the paradox of voting, the conclusion that if voters were rational, they would not vote. Nonetheless, there are innumerable disanalogies between voting and shopping, of which the most obvious is that nobody would go to the supermarket once every five years, put in an order and hope for the best. This is not a complaint against Schumpeter, who was guilty of nothing worse than using a throwaway line incautiously. If more people had

<sup>7</sup> See for example D. Kahneman and A. Tversky, ‘Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decision under Risk’, *Econometrica*, 47 (1979), 263–91.

<sup>8</sup> D. Black, *The Theory of Committees and Elections* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958); A. Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York: Harper, 1957); J. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1942).

read all four chapters of Schumpeter's discussion of democracy in *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*, and paid closer attention to the way the discussion is framed by his thoughts on 'the dictatorship of the proletariat', they would have seen that Schumpeter was obsessed with something that has little connection with economics, namely *legitimation*. The role of the public was not to purchase policies with votes but to place the crown on the heads of one set of competitors rather than another—and leave them to get on with it.

The most optimistic view of how political science might acquire a paradigm and with it a consensus on what political science was the science of was not based on emulating economics. It was broadly functionalist rather than oriented towards a rational choice paradigm. The hope that political science might become a 'normal science' was associated with Gabriel Almond, largely because he was a leading figure in the American Political Science Association during the 1960s, and had recently published the two books that made his name.<sup>9</sup> In an APSA presidential address that upset many political theorists, he advanced no more revolutionary a thought than that political scientists might decently turn their attention away from explorations of the separation of powers and towards an analysis of political systems *as* systems.<sup>10</sup> He was far from a lonely figure in so thinking; David Easton's several explorations of the illumination to be had from taking seriously the notion of a political system had been equally ambitious.<sup>11</sup> Not everyone joined in, but the hope that we might turn from cataloguing and comparing different institutions to explaining the dynamics of political behaviour was widespread; at Princeton, it ensured that for many years the graduate programme offered no 'field' in the politics of the United States. One strand of the subject was political culture and the other was systems and processes: if one understood the underlying principles of all political systems, their application to any particular country was a time-consuming but essentially empirical business. The thought is anything but foolish; I taught political institutions on this basis for a decade, and found it very helpful in enabling students to come to grips with comparative politics.

Nonetheless, various oxen seemed likely to be gored in the process of establishing a paradigm in the manner apparently envisaged by Almond. Readers of Kuhn feared that Almond believed that if philosophers and political theorists could be expelled from departments of political science, what would be left would be normal science. It was a bad time to appear to suggest

<sup>9</sup> G. Almond and J. Coleman, *The Politics of the Developing Area* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960); G. Almond and G. Bingham Powell, *Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach* (Boston: Little Brown, 1966).

<sup>10</sup> G. Almond, 'Political Theory and Political Science', Presidential Address, 1966, in *American Political Science Review*, 60/4 (December 1966), 869–79.

<sup>11</sup> D. Easton, *The Political System: An Inquiry into the State of Political Science* (New York: Knopf, 1953); *A Systems Analysis of Political Life* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1965).

anything of the sort, however inadvertently, for the reasons suggested above. Almond plainly had nothing resembling a purge of dissident faculty and students in mind, but the mere thought alarmed those who were teaching political theory in whatever shape or form. It was not political theorists alone who feared they were in the firing line; the 1960s saw a marked revival of interest in Marx, both the early humanist Marx and the later structuralist, Althusserian Marx, along with a good deal of enthusiasm for Gramscian ideas about the role of cultural hegemony. Looking at the very limited tolerance of 'mainstream economics' for anything that threatened the reigning orthodoxy, anyone who felt they were not likely to be embraced by 'mainstream political science' was inevitably fearful for their position. The belief of many dissidents that the search for consensus on what political science was and how it should be practised reflected the wish of conservative professors to be rid of their radical colleagues, and students added much heat but no light to the discussion. What nobody paid enough attention to was what Kuhn had said. He always insisted that it was nature that decided whether a proposed paradigm would stick. History was littered with failed attempts to produce the organizing synthesis that would enable inquiry to move forward. Those that succeeded did so because they produced better explanations than their rivals; and although the standards of superiority were flexible, they were not so flexible that one could just impose them on the evidence. Nor was there any suggestion that science made great strides by evicting dissidents. The sequence was that the great strides were made first; once progress was undeniable, philosophical and conceptual bickerings would die down of their own accord.

### THE BRITISH SCENE

In the late 1960s, the British academic landscape was not very like the American, but at the University of Essex there was some feeling that a decent ambition would impel us to become New Haven on Colne, perhaps appropriately in view of the role of settlers from Essex and Suffolk in establishing the colonies of north-eastern America. The then head of the Department of Government, Professor Jean Blondel, took the view that persons hired to teach the history of political thought from Hobbes were a cultural concession more decorative than useful. His view of science was an engaging mixture of Paris 1640 and 1968; he had an essentially Cartesian ideal of scientific explanation, emphasizing that any decent explanation should allow one to predict 'with necessity', but was attached to the more surprising idea that there must be room for 'événements', or wholly unpredictable happenings. At the time, this seemed simply incoherent, requiring one to believe in the simultaneous uniformity and non-uniformity of political nature; I later came to see it as a

descendant of Polybius's fascination with the role of *tyche* and Machiavelli's obsession with *fortuna*. Both thought it possible to predict what would and would not work, always subject to the sheer bloody-mindedness of fate.

Being counter-suggestible, I started teaching the students some elementary philosophy of science and social science, since few had much idea about law-like statements, counterfactuals, the difference between correlation and causation, the conceptual difficulties of functional explanation, and a whole lot more. In particular, they had a hard time grappling with the difference between classificatory schemas and genuine explanations; I thought much of Gabriel Almond's work was taxonomic rather than explanatory. Students suspected that 'political development' meant something like 'more like America', but did not know how to articulate their unease. Of course, in practice, they were perfectly capable of taking the train to London to demonstrate outside the American Embassy; several went to jail for collecting guns and ammunition, intending as the Marx of 1844 might have said to move from the weapon of criticism to the criticism of weapons.

The subsequent history I did not experience at first hand. A great deal of very distinguished work was done, but not under the umbrella of a single organizing conceptual scheme. Between the *marxisant* analysis of Latin American states, the analysis of changing political cultures in the United Kingdom, a great deal of hands-on policy analysis, and much psephology, a lot of illumination was gained; but the establishment of a paradigm or the creation of 'normal' science was not one of the results. Nor was it to be looked for. The fact that the search for a paradigm and the passion for normal science wore out of their own accord seems on its face less odd than the continued interest in the concept of a paradigm on the part of those who had feared their colleagues' desire for scientific normality. Political theorists retained their interest in the assortment of ideas that clustered around the concept of a paradigm. It was less surprising than it seems at first blush.

Arguments about legitimacy, authority, the nature of law, constitutionalism, rights, democracy, and the rest are arguments about how to conceptualize the world, and how to persuade the participants in political practices themselves to conceptualize their own behaviour in one way or another. Nobody suggests that electrons adapt their behaviour to the theories of physicists, and the process whereby political actors adapt their behaviour to the ideas of political theorists, publicists, and activists is not that they pick up a copy of *Political Liberalism* and remodel their discursive practices on the spot. Nonetheless, politics is kept going by talking, and talking involves the invocation of ideas, so it is an obvious question how one set of ideas comes to be thought to be 'normal' and others unintelligible, utopian, or intolerable. Fifty years ago, Sheldon Wolin argued that the debasement of the language of politics meant that it was all but impossible to talk about politics in the language of politics, a thought that he may have taken from Hannah Arendt and her anxieties

about the death of *homo politicus* and his replacement with the *animal laborans*.<sup>12</sup> John Pocock's interest in the languages of politics, and Quentin Skinner's concern with the way in which linguistic shifts have made it all but impossible to think about freedom in republican terms all tend in the same direction. One might even think that Marx devoted so much of *Capital* to the analysis of the nature of the commodity for the same reason: only if a capitalist economy was conceptualized as he proposed would the proletariat understand that wage labour really was wage *slavery*, unpaid forced labour.

How far political theory has benefited from thinking along Kuhnian lines is debatable. Two connections seem fruitful while a further fact suggests that talk of paradigms is out of place. One is the thought that in scientific revolutions, just as in political revolutions, there is a long and often invisible process in which the old way of doing things loses credibility; too many 'anomalies' pile up. The process of regime change itself and by contrast is very quick, at any rate if there is a competent pretender waiting in the wings. We need a new conceptual scheme that works better and can gain adherents quickly. Boyle and Hooke are, so to speak, the Lenin and Trotsky of the intellectual revolution that culminated in the Newtonian synthesis. Because no particular synthesis has 'taken' in political science, it is not easy to know whether one should regard, let us say, Rational Choice Theory as a paradigm in waiting, a failed attempt at a paradigm shift, or a piece of intellectual fashion with no more staying power than postmodernism turned out to have in literature departments. A second fruitful insight is Kuhn's claim that it is almost impossible to talk across the fracture that divides the world according to one paradigm from the world according to its successor. This thought seems at home in political theory at least: you say *jure divino* and I say *social contract*. I can translate, as you can, but I do not think your thoughts. In a contemporary vein, the idea of an American president praying to the God of the evangelical Christians for guidance on foreign policy is unfathomable to rock-ribbed secularists, but plainly not to those who say they propose to pray for divine guidance when they become president. But that example suggests the crucial way in which Kuhn's model does not readily carry over into our territory. We simply do not have *one* 'language of politics' in operation at a time, whereas the whole point of Kuhn's account is to explain how it comes about that a given scientific discipline speaks with one voice. It is noticeable that when the word 'paradigm' occurs in articles on politics, it is very much at arm's length, as it might be 'within the Marxist paradigm' or 'within the liberal paradigm' and so on. In such contexts 'paradigm' is no more than a synonym for the familiar idea of a particular explanatory toolkit.

<sup>12</sup> H. Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).

## THE SILENT DOG

It is time to turn to the dog that didn't bark in the night. My explanation of why the Oxford politics faculty did not engage in arguments over paradigms and paradigm shifts is simple. I think it is correct, but do not want to exaggerate the depth of research on which it rests or my confidence in it. Nor do I wish to say that the future will inevitably resemble the past. There was *some* discussion of the idea of a paradigm and its applicability to the social sciences in late 1960s Oxford, but it was largely confined to the students and teachers involved in the undergraduate Philosophy of Social Sciences paper in PPE. The level of sophistication at which some students operated can be gauged by the case of the young person who wrote (not very well) about 'Thomas Coon'. It is not unimportant that there was a *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* paper, since its existence was one feature of the PPE syllabus that meant that interest in methodological issues was siphoned off into philosophy or sociological theory, and away from what one might tendentiously call 'the study of politics itself'. As always, one must be careful to distinguish 'methodology' in the sense of high-level arguments about what a discipline might in principle hope to achieve, from 'methods' in the sense of particular techniques, whether statistical, game-theoretical, or whatever. Concern with the latter has steadily increased, as statistical techniques have become more sophisticated on the one hand, and an interest in rational choice or a taste for game-theoretical analyses has spread on the other. Here it is the former alone that is at issue: arguments about the nature of politics and its study.

The explanation of the absence of paradigm wars comes in four parts: first, the domination of the study of politics by history; second, the overwhelming importance of undergraduate teaching until the recent past; third, the career of the tutorial fellow; and fourth, the tyranny of *Examination Decrees*.<sup>13</sup> As readers of Norman Chester's very useful account of the early history of politics and international relations in Oxford will recall, the politics syllabus was initially a constitutional history syllabus.<sup>14</sup> As time passed, the *terminus a quo* shifted from 1688 to 1832 and then to 1867, but it was the study of politics, *modo* Sir David Lindsay Keir; the politics paper in the preliminary examination in March 1960 was the study of Tocqueville's *Ancien régime*. By the late 1950s, there was a paper in 'the theory and workings of political institutions' in PPE finals which covered the familiar quartet—Britain, the US, France, the Soviet Union. Oddly, the title was cut back to 'political institutions' in the

<sup>13</sup> I am grateful to Emma Anderson for securing copies of the minutes of Politics sub-faculty meetings in the 1970s and 1980s; since they confirmed that large methodological issues were *not* discussed, this (negative) reference is my only chance to express my thanks.

<sup>14</sup> N. Chester, *Economics, Politics, Social Studies in Oxford, 1900–85* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1986).

1960s as if to emphasize—perhaps in deference to Sir Max Beloff—that there was to be no damned theorizing about it. It was not a paper in comparative government, although there was room for, and some encouragement to engage in, the comparison of institutions with similar names and dissimilar functions: committees, for instance, or constitutions, where a knowledge of the details of Michel Debré's new constitution for the Fifth Republic came in handy. Political Theory from Hobbes was a special subject paper which sometimes appeared on List I and sometimes on List II, but was neither influenced by nor exerted any influence on the compulsory philosophy paper in Moral and Political Philosophy. A political theory paper existed in the Diploma, taken mostly by Ruskin students and giving them Senior Status if they continued to PPE. But until the creation of Theory of Politics, the companion paper to Political Institutions was British Politics and Government since 1832.

Many of us complained, in the late 1950s as students and in the late 1960s as tutors, that the institutions paper was not the way to study politics. It wasn't *comparative* government but 'consecutive governments' or 'parallel governments', with a couple of weeks on each of the countries studied, heavily geared to a simple historical account of how they came to have the political arrangements they did. The sub-faculty's reaction to whining from below reflected the fact that in many colleges the politics tutor was a tutor in modern history, with little interest in contemporary political sociology or empirical political theory, and no interest at all in what David Easton, Gabriel Almond, or even Robert Dahl might have to say. The *British Journal of Political Science*, yet to be invented in Essex, was, even when it was invented, less read than *Political Studies*. Wherever there might be a paradigm shift, it was not going to be in the core political institutions paper. The pressure for more speculation, for access to the great tradition of political sociology from Montesquieu to the present, including the varieties of Marxism, was met by the standard operating procedure for PPE thereafter, by the multiplication of special subjects. I do not think one can have a battle over paradigms—or anything else indeed—unless there is a territory which all parties wish to occupy on their own terms and nobody else's, and which they refuse to share. In Oxford, the sub-faculty avoided the need for anyone to stand up and abuse their colleagues as brain-dead reactionaries or air-headed *fashionistas* by allowing everyone to play in their own sandpit. The creation of the Theory of Politics paper was particularly important, allowing those with a taste for high-altitude methodological debate a place to engage in it. I regretted for four decades that Brian Barry did so much to create it but did not remain to shape it further. Its content was initially very like that of Barry's *Political Argument* and none the worse for it.

I offer this explanation with some gratitude at having escaped the turf wars I have seen elsewhere. There are two further things to observe. First, until the 1990s the great bulk of teaching in politics was undergraduate teaching. Clever



though Oxford undergraduates are and were, they do not arrive with a fluent understanding of the political arrangements of their own country, let alone a dozen others; there was and is much to be said for instilling that understanding before embarking on large questions about structural-functional analysis, RCT, and the like. Those who acquired a taste could do the appropriate special subjects. Life being short, there was not a great deal of time in which to reflect on the ways in which an immersion in the sociological theory special subject paper might sophisticate a student's grasp of the French parliament's use of committees—if at all. Second, the domination of Oxford teaching by the sudden-death examination of Schools at the end of three years meant that the local understanding of what a subject was has always been heavily coloured by how one might examine it. That in turn reflected the fact that with a large school like PPE, there were forty-five or more tutors teaching the core papers, and the only mode of coordination available was to focus everyone's attention on an examination syllabus.

When I was much younger, I had little patience with colleagues who thought that it was impossible to bring their undergraduates to a sophisticated grasp of the issues at stake in trying to make political science a genuine science or to bring themselves up to speed on the methodological enthusiasms of American political scientists. This was a mistake; not only was it insensitive to what colleagues were doing, it made no sense. The discipline did not possess a new paradigm which we young people had grasped and our elders resisted; at most, we were engaged in a long drawn-out methodological (in the 'high-altitude' sense) debate about why all human behaviour, including political behaviour, resists attempts to explain it in the same way as other natural phenomena. This may be another way of making the point that Kuhn had made but which was drowned in the hubbub; paradigms get established because people thinking in the new way solve puzzles that people couldn't solve as long as they thought in the old way. We weren't in that situation at all. Without knowing it, we were doing what we had deplored in Gabriel Almond and David Easton; they wanted to do political science unbothered by political theorists while we thought a more interesting political science could be contrived by turning it into a branch of political theory. This was not *wholly* foolish; for decades the more papers in philosophy that a student took, the higher their marks in Political Institutions.

In the Oxford case, there was a further reason why the sub-faculty was unlikely to change its conception of the empirical study of politics very rapidly. Leaving aside the near-impossibility of getting the faculty to achieve a consensus on what it thought the study of politics was, there was the problem of the *Examination Decrees*. Changes had to be introduced so that they could appear in the next issue of the *Decrees*, with an adequate interval before students faced a changed syllabus. In effect, all changes were changes for three years hence. Contrast this with the situation in an American PhD

programme. There might be thirty or forty incoming graduate students who will after two or three years face a general examination in whatever fields they have chosen. There are usually a couple of compulsory fields, but rarely more and often none. And fields are defined very broadly; ‘theory’, ‘methods’, ‘comparative’, ‘US’. Somewhat in the mode of Herbert Morrison announcing that ‘socialism is whatever the Labour Party does’, the content of a field is the topics covered in the seminars taught by the faculty—plus a lengthy reading list that few faculty pay much heed to. If a dazzling, or interestingly half-baked, work appears in May, it can be in the Fall semester syllabus.

The last of these ‘structural’ features of the Oxford system is the high degree of autonomy enjoyed by the colleges and, by extension, by college tutors. As Gladstone Professors have noted, sometimes with some irritation, their occupancy of a ‘flagship’ chair does not give them the authority over syllabuses, appointments, and the duties of colleagues that the chair of an American political science department enjoys. In the US, a chair with a particular doctrinal bent has—as long as he remains on good terms with his university’s president—a great deal of power to determine the content of the graduate programme: who gets hired, who gets tenure and who does not, and so generally on. As I shall shortly say, I think empirical political science is a ‘non-paradigm’ and in that sense a ‘non-normal’ science, though certainly a science, but the narrow point I make here is that in Oxford—almost uniquely—the structure of authority in the sub-faculty is such that the practice of Kuhnian normal science would be unlikely.

## CODA

Because this book marks a century since the first academic appointment in ‘politics’ at Oxford, I have focused on the micro-politics of the sub-faculty and the structure of Oxford undergraduate education in explaining not so much why people teaching and doing research on politics were slow to adopt new paradigms of political inquiry, as why they *would have been* slow to adopt them if they had had the chance—if there had been the sort of unequivocal paradigm shift that Kuhn described in *Structure*. In effect, I have said that the academic circumstances of myself and my colleagues were such that an interest in even talking about paradigms was not something to be expected of the tutorial fellows whose interests were solidly empirical rather than philosophical. I want to end by saying a very little about ‘non-paradigm science’, and one last thing about Oxford politics—the discipline, that is. There is no mileage to be had from arguing whether the study of politics is a ‘science’. It is not much like quantum mechanics, but it’s not wholly unlike wildlife ecology. The spread of ideas among members of a population is not

unlike the spread of disease among an animal population, and the techniques of the epidemiologist can be of use in analysing politics. 'Non-paradigm' science is characterized by a high degree of pluralism both in topics of inquiry and as to methods. Wildlife ecologists are not so to speak 'threatened' by molecular biologists, even if they are dependent on their findings when engaged in certain sorts of inquiry into disease transmission. It is sometimes said that political science has a subject matter but not a method; this seems only half-right. At the least, scrupulous data collection and analysis, allied to relatively commonsensical forms of causal explanation, ground what is quite properly called political science.

Moreover, the particular history of Oxford politics sustains an interest in political development that is both distinctive and highly productive. It is easy to think that 'politics' has struggled to emancipate itself from 'history'. American international relations scholars often contrast their enthusiasm for hi-tech modelling with an Oxford concern with the history of international relations over the past century. This is a mistake. There is nothing wrong with hi-tech modelling, once the data and the purposes for which the modelling is to be done are firmly established. Their establishment is a historical matter, however, as is the verification of whatever results one gets out of the particular model adopted. If there is one concept on which empirical inquiry rests more than any other, it is probably that of 'development', in the sense that the guiding principle of most political analysis hinges on the idea—familiar from David Easton and Gabriel Almond, and from Aristotle a little earlier—that a political system (what Aristotle meant by a 'constitution') is a set of arrangements for resolving an indefinite but not indescribable range of problems; there are some pretty reliable generalizations about what systems do well over a long period. We can usefully think of political systems as problem-solving devices, which are engaged in a sort of race; political and organizational inventiveness confronts problems that evolve in an unpredictable fashion. It is not surprising that from Thucydides and Polybius onwards, historical and political analysis have worked hand in hand. My moral is not that the impact of history on the study of politics has been a disabling factor, rather the reverse. Nor do I intend that observation as a rebuke to philosophers either; is not history philosophy teaching by examples?

## EDITORS' NOTE

In this chapter Robert Goodin draws on some of the institutional and cultural features that Alan Ryan in the previous chapter saw as explaining why Oxford was not divided by the 'paradigm wars' so prominent in US political science in the 1960s and 1970s. But Goodin argues in a rather different vein that those same features have had a deeply negative effect on Oxford's contribution to the discipline of political science, precisely by inhibiting the social practices associated with the orthodoxy necessary for the progress of 'normal science'.

This chapter reflects several of the arguments we set out at the beginning of the first chapter as to why Oxford might be expected to be a special and challenging institutional environment for the development of political science. Indeed, Goodin suggests that such expectations of underperformance can be derived from propositions about institutional efficacy that political scientists have themselves established. A major implication is that early 'departmentalization' of political science in a university structure is key to developing expertise and reinforcing the social norms necessary for research leadership, including that of vigorous mutual criticism. He argues that the late (and arguably still incomplete) departmentalization that took place in Oxford must have been a recipe for underperformance.

Whether propositions about the effect of institutional arrangements are quite as determinate as Goodin's argument implies is debatable. As Goodin himself notes, institutions as formal rules and organograms are in practice inseparable from cultural biases, and cultural theorists such as the late Aaron Wildavsky (approvingly quoted by Goodin) see such biases as inherently plural and contradictory, such that 'one best way' propositions are hard to establish.<sup>1</sup> And that raises intriguing questions about how we can account for the various times and places in which, as other chapters in this volume indicate, Oxford intellectually led or at least did not lag its 'early-departmentalized' counterpart universities in the UK and arguably beyond, for example in electoral studies, political theory, and International Relations. It also raises tricky questions about what is the appropriate benchmark for assessing 'performance' in the academic study of politics, for example as between puzzle-solving and the development of substantive 'area studies' expertise.

<sup>1</sup> For example, M. Thompson, A. Wildavsky, and R. Ellis, *Cultural Theory* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990).

# Political Science and Institution Building: Oxford in Comparative Perspective\*

*Robert E. Goodin*

Political scientists are supposed to know quite a lot about institutions and how to build them. Let us turn that knowledge in on ourselves, asking what is required to institutionalize an academic discipline. What does it take to build and sustain a tight-knit department of scholars working collectively to advance, and not merely impart, knowledge about their discipline? Answering that might, in turn, provide insights into why Oxford found that so hard in the case of political science.

If in the end the exercise produces nothing more than fancy pigeonholes for things that people have known all along (or say they have), just remember: pigeonholes matter. They are the generalizable stuff of science. They are what allow us to apply insights garnered in one place to others that are relevantly similar. They are what save us from having to treat every case and place as utterly *sui generis*. No generalizations are perfect. But eschewing generalization, where generalization is possible, is far worse.

## CHARACTERIZING INSTITUTIONS

‘Institutions,’ in Samuel Huntington’s term, ‘are stable, valued recurring patterns of behavior.’<sup>1</sup> Mark that definition well. Institutions are not buildings (although when we ‘institutionalize’ someone we lock him up in a building). Nor are institutions organizations. Both buildings (physical co-location) and organizations (departmentalization) may help promote and sustain the patterns of behaviour that define an institution. But it is the behaviours that institution builders are striving to promote and sustain.

The stable, valued, recurring behaviours to which Huntington refers occur not merely within institutions but also, importantly, *because* of them.

\* I am grateful for discussions at the Lee Lecture in March 2012, and with Jean Blondel, Christopher Hood, Des King, Tony King, Duncan Snidal, John Vickers, Jeremy Waldron, and Stephen Whitefield.

<sup>1</sup> S. P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968), 12.

Institutionalization is ‘the process by which organizations and procedures acquire value and stability’.<sup>2</sup> Once institutionalized, behaviour is rendered more stable and predictable. Such stability and predictability are precisely what we value about institutionalized patterns of behaviour.<sup>3</sup>

Think of the role of institutions in economics, reducing uncertainties and the costs of transactions by, in effect, taking some transactions off the table. Or think of the role of constitutions in politics, laying down rules of the game that are harder to change than are ordinary laws. Were they otherwise, they would not provide the secure, stable legal environment that we seek through them.

Why would anyone want his behaviour to be constrained in these ways? The answer is simple. Institutions are enabling, for precisely the same reason that they are constraining. If anyone might do absolutely anything at any given time, then no one can confidently pursue any project that in any important way depends upon the inputs of others. Among people whose behaviour is institutionally constrained, mutually productive interactions become more feasible. As Thomas Schelling says, no one wants to be sued—but living under laws that allow those breaching them to be sued is what makes it possible for them to enter into contracts at all.<sup>4</sup>

With academic disciplines, as with institutions more generally, the point of accepting the constraints is to enable you to do something you could not otherwise do (anyway, not nearly so effectively). A discipline imposes order, it creates a common code, it focuses attention on common problems, and it sets standards for what count as good solutions to them.<sup>5</sup> It orchestrates collaboration among people who have been rendered, by the discipline of the discipline, sufficiently similar to work together productively—yet still sufficiently different each to have something uniquely to contribute.

Academic departments are the local embodiments of the discipline that they represent. When I talk about what political science has to tell us about how to institutionalize political science itself, I will be talking about institution building at both levels. I will be asking what it takes to build a strong department at the local level—and one that is itself institutionalized, by being strongly connected to discipline as a whole. That is to say, I will be asking what it

<sup>2</sup> Huntington, *Political Order*, 12. See similarly S. N. Eisenstadt, ‘Institutionalization and Change’, *American Sociological Review*, 29 (1964), 235–47 and ‘Social Institutions: The Concept’, in D. L. Sills (ed.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, vol. 14 (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 409–21 at 410, 414–18.

<sup>3</sup> D. Soskice, R. H. Bates, and D. Epstein, ‘Ambition and Constraint: The Stabilizing Role of Institutions’, *Journal of Law, Economics and Organization*, 8 (1992), 547–60.

<sup>4</sup> T. C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), 43.

<sup>5</sup> R. E. Goodin, ‘The State of the Discipline, the Discipline of the State’, in R. E. Goodin (ed.), *Oxford Handbook of Political Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3–57 at 7. See similarly T. Parsons, ‘Professions’, in Sills (ed.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, vol. 12, 536–47.

takes to build a department devoted to advancing, rather than merely imparting, knowledge about the subject to which it is devoted.

## INSTITUTION BUILDING

The prime function of institutions politically, Huntington tells us, is to ‘give new meaning to the common purpose and create new linkages between the particular interests of individuals and groups’.<sup>6</sup> Institutionalization imposes coherence and imparts a sense of common purpose.<sup>7</sup> ‘[D]evelop[ing] an esprit and style that become distinctive marks’ is the prime task in building an institution.<sup>8</sup> So how do we do that?

### Institutional differentiation

The first step is surely to differentiate sharply your institution from other surrounding, competing institutions. Ali Mazrui once shrewdly remarked that the *sine qua non* of a new state was having a flag and a national airline all its own. Similarly with an academic discipline: for it to thrive in a place, it ought ideally have a department all its own. Of course there can be ‘invisible departments’, or ‘departments within departments’, with much the same effect. But for cultivating a sense of common purpose, there is nothing like having a department all your own, connected to a wider discipline outside your own university, and sharply differentiated from other departments and disciplines.

It is a mark of the maturity of a discipline that universities create departments devoted to that discipline and it alone. Political science achieved this status earlier in some places than others. In the US it happened early in the twentieth century; in Continental Europe politics teaching and research were subsumed within law faculties until much later (and in some places still are). In the UK departments of Politics began proliferating in the middle of the twentieth century. But again, in Oxford it happened much later. Although Politics and International Relations is now a separate department, it was a sub-faculty until not so very long ago. Although the department offers degrees entirely its own at Master’s level, it still has no undergraduate degree all its

<sup>6</sup> Huntington, *Political Order*, 10. ‘In the total absence of social conflict, political institutions are unnecessary; in the total absence of social harmony they are impossible’ (ibid., p. 9).

<sup>7</sup> ‘The more unified and coherent an organization is, the more highly institutionalized it is; the greater the disunity of the organization, the less it is institutionalized’ (Huntington, *Political Order*, 22).

<sup>8</sup> Huntington, *Political Order*, p. 22.

own. In terms of the organizational chart and degree structure, then, institutional differentiation has been slow in coming.

There is another important aspect of institutional differentiation at work. That has to do with staffing. When the Modern Greats/PPE degree was first introduced just after the First World War, teaching of it fell to fellows in History or Philosophy.<sup>9</sup> That pattern persisted even when dedicated posts in Politics were created, with appointments often going to people who were historians, *de facto* or *de jure*. One Gladstone Professor, Max Beloff, went so far as to entitle his intellectual autobiography *An Historian in the Twentieth Century*.<sup>10</sup> But both of the next occupants of that chair also held history degrees as their highest qualifications.<sup>11</sup>

Brian Barry is right, I think, to find it significant that, at the founding of the Political Studies Association, ‘the successful amendment striking “political science” and replacing it with “political studies” was moved by an [Oxford] historian’.<sup>12</sup> Shortly thereafter, speaking from Oxford’s Gladstone chair, Kenneth Wheare expressed the view that ‘political science is no more than recent or current political and constitutional history’.<sup>13</sup>

Now, as Finer is quoted as having told a scandalized meeting of his colleagues during his stint in the chair, ‘history and politics were different subjects’, and he should know because (as he went on to say pointedly) ‘he had taught both’.<sup>14</sup> The failure to differentiate politics sharply from history, as an academic subject, is another failure of institutional differentiation that undermined the building of a distinct department devoted to politics in Oxford—and has done so, well into the final years of the last century.

Still more problematic, in a way, is the failure to differentiate politics from journalism, masquerading as contemporary history. In a previous generation, Ernest Barker (who had taught modern history at Oxford before taking up the

<sup>9</sup> J. Hayward, ‘British Approaches to Politics: The Dawn of a Self-deprecating Discipline’, in J. Hayward, B. Barry, and A. Brown (eds), *The British Study of Politics in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, for the British Academy, 1999), 1–36 at 1; and B. Barry, ‘The Study of Politics as a Vocation’, *ibid.*, 425–67 at 433. When the degree was restructured in the 1930s, colleges responded with dedicated appointments in Economics as well as Philosophy; but ‘for Politics, Colleges tried to make do with their philosophy and history tutors’ still: D. N. Chester, ‘Political Studies: Recollection and Comments’, *Political Studies*, 23 (1975), 151–64 at 156.

<sup>10</sup> New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992. The anomaly is remarked upon even in his *Dictionary of National Biography* entry; D. Cameron Watt, ‘Beloff, Max’, in H.C.G. Matthew and B. Harrison (eds), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 5 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 39–40 at 39.

<sup>11</sup> P. Pulzer’s doctorate is in History; Samuel Finer took honours in both PPE (1937) and Modern History (1938).

<sup>12</sup> Namely, A. Cobban; Barry, ‘The Study of Politics as a Vocation’, 434, and Hayward, ‘British Approaches to Politics’, 20.

<sup>13</sup> K. C. Wheare, ‘The Teaching of Political Science’, *Political Studies*, 3 (1955), 70–2 at 71.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in D. Kavanagh, ‘Antecedents’, in M. Flinders, A. Gamble, C. Hay, and M. Kenny (eds), *Oxford Handbook of British Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 37, n. 1.



Cambridge Chair of Political Science) declared that he ‘learned such lessons of political wisdom as I have mastered, and acquired the tastes that have conducted me to a Chair of Politics’, from reading the *Manchester Guardian*.<sup>15</sup> It was a nice compliment to pay to the *Guardian*, but a dreadful description of the qualifications that should be professionally required for a Chair of Political Science.

### Crowding out and historical lock-in

Political scientists and others talk much of ‘path dependence’. Previous decisions set the parameters for future decisions.<sup>16</sup>

Staffing is of course one important source of historical lock-in. But firmly though staffing decisions might lock you in, that is only for thirty years or so. Placeholders eventually die or retire, and opportunities arise to replace them with others of a different sort. There is another historical lock-in that might be more serious and long-lasting. That concerns the syllabus or, more precisely, the examination papers.

A department with a strong disciplinary orientation will try to tailor its members’ teaching to their research interests. That can never be done completely: there are always service courses to be taught, of a more introductory sort. Still, in departments that attach high priority to their members contributing to the discipline themselves rather than merely reporting the work of others, synergies between research and teaching are always sought and often found. More often than not, people teach what they research, after some fashion or another.

At Oxford things are different, the consequence of another historical lock-in. As Alan Ryan’s chapter notes, pre-modern Oxford was primarily a place of undergraduate instruction, and mechanisms for assessing and teaching undergraduates were firmly in place long before there was any real expectation that tutors should contribute to knowledge as well as impart it. At other newer universities, teachers are substantially free to design their own courses and write their own examinations. At Oxford, you are constrained by the ‘strait-jacket of a prescribed syllabus’.<sup>17</sup> Examination papers are set centrally, and everyone has to teach to them. Not only do all tutors teach to the same papers; they typically also have to teach across a wide range of papers, well beyond

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Hayward, ‘British Approaches to Politics’, 9.

<sup>16</sup> P. Pierson, *Politics in Time* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

<sup>17</sup> R. Wokler, ‘The Professoriate of Political Thought in England since 1914: A Tale of Three Chairs’, in D. Castiglione and I. Hampsher-Monk (eds), *The History of Political Thought in National Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 136.

their own active research interests.<sup>18</sup> The tutorial pressure thus tends to encourage dilettantism, rather than concentration on topics for sustained research. In characteristically purple prose, Brian Barry refers to the 'tutorial system' as 'the institutionalization of the amateur ethos'.<sup>19</sup>

There is one other aspect of crowding out that is central to the story: the colleges. Institution builders know all too well the dangers of divided loyalties. Even where institutions are not 'total' (in Goffman's sense of all-encompassing, examples being prisons and armies<sup>20</sup>), they are nonetheless 'greedy'.<sup>21</sup> Strong, successful institutions brook no divided loyalties, at least within the particular sphere of life that they claim as their own. It is for just that reason that states have historically been allergic to dual citizenship.<sup>22</sup> And it is for just that reason that Aaron Wildavsky's first rule for creating a good school of public policy was no joint appointments: 'make direct, 100 per cent-time appointments in the school'.<sup>23</sup>

Anyone striving to institutionalize an academic discipline in Oxford has to cope with the fact that the undergraduate colleges were already well established, commanding the loyalty and affection of members and making heavy demands on their time and attention. Indeed, given the wide range of other functions that they also serve, those self-governing communities are not just greedy institutions but sometimes border on total institutions.

Nor is it just a matter of any new disciplinary organization having to compete with the college for people's time, attention, and loyalty. Like the monastic institutions from which they evolved, Oxford undergraduate colleges can serve as places of sanctuary for people who come under unwelcome (but not unwarranted) pressure from the department to comply with wider disciplinary norms. Although things differ at the two postgraduate social science colleges, St Antony's and Nuffield, between them those account for only a quarter of Oxford's Politics and International Relations staff.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>18</sup> 'This problem of amateurishness was exacerbated in Oxford by the norm maintained by the undergraduate colleges (now much attenuated by the growth of swap arrangements) according to which the Fellow in a subject was expected to teach all the compulsory papers and a large proportion of the optional ones to the college's undergraduates' (Barry, 'The Study of Politics as a Vocation', 433).

<sup>19</sup> Barry, 'The Study of Politics as a Vocation', 433.

<sup>20</sup> E. Goffman, *Asylums* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961).

<sup>21</sup> L. A. Coser, *Greedy Institutions* (New York: Free Press, 1974).

<sup>22</sup> J. Blatter, 'Dual Citizenship and Theories of Democracy', *Citizenship Studies*, 15 (2011), 769–98.

<sup>23</sup> A. Wildavsky, *The Art and Craft of Policy Analysis* (London: Macmillan, 1979), 407–19 at 409.

<sup>24</sup> Under 27 per cent: <[www.politics.ox.ac.uk/index.php/people/academic-staff.html](http://www.politics.ox.ac.uk/index.php/people/academic-staff.html)>, last accessed 3 September 2013.

### Institutional culture

Institutions have tonal properties as well as organizational aspects. These are perhaps best captured by the concept of ‘organizational culture’.

Every successful institution needs a discrete mission. To command the loyalty that is required for an institution to succeed, there had better be a ready answer—which had better be pretty much the same, across all members of the institution—to the question, ‘What at root are we all about?’ That is required to engender the sense of shared purpose that Huntington finds so central to political institutionalization.<sup>25</sup>

That everyone involved sees themselves as engaged in broadly the same enterprise is a necessary but not sufficient cultural condition of successful institutionalization. A sense of mutual trust is required, as well as a sense of shared purpose. As one scholar of the military remarks, ‘Comrades must trust one another’s ability to resist the innumerable temptations that threaten the group’s solidarity; otherwise, in trying social situations, the desire to fend for oneself becomes overwhelming.’<sup>26</sup> That is just as true in academic wars as in shooting ones.

In a strong academic department, colleagues will actually be interested in and supportive of what each other is doing. Mutual affection is nice but not strictly necessary; mutual respect is enough. You must be able to trust the competence and the values of your colleagues, if the department is to work well as an institution. Inculcating that sort of trust is one of the prime aims of an institution builder.<sup>27</sup>

Cooperation ‘requires trust; trust involves predictability; and predictability requires regularized and institutionalized patterns of behaviour’.<sup>28</sup> Huntington goes on to observe:

[T]he absence of trust in the culture of the society provides formidable obstacles to the creation of public institutions. Those societies deficient in stable and effective government are also deficient in mutual trust among their citizens, in

<sup>25</sup> Value-driven management, based on shared values within the organization, is a crucial element the McKinsey recipe; T. Peters and R. H. Waterman, Jr, *In Search of Excellence* (New York: HarperCollins, 1982), ch. 9.

<sup>26</sup> D. Rapoport, quoted in Huntington, *Political Order*, 23.

<sup>27</sup> The advice Wildavsky gives to would-be deans also applies well to those who would build strong institutions at the departmental level: ‘Correcting errors when things go bad is easier if you help school members when things are good. Administration and staff usually meet when one needs something from the other . . . It is desirable, therefore, for administrators to ask members how things are going, and to offer assistance, outside of a specific need to ask for or grant a favor. The idea that somebody out there cares, that administration is there to help as well as to harass, is best reinforced when nothing evident is at stake’ (*Art and Craft of Policy Analysis*, 417).

<sup>28</sup> Huntington, *Political Order*, 24.

national and public loyalties, and in organization skills and capacity. Their public cultures are . . . marked by suspicion, jealousy, and latent or actual hostility . . .<sup>29</sup>

Once again, what is true of political institutions is equally true of academic ones. Cultures of mutual trust and of mutual recrimination are both self-sustaining. Experience is an imperfect teacher, good at reinforcing, bad at innovating.<sup>30</sup> If you have trusted someone in the past and found that trust warranted, you will have more reason for trusting in future. Conversely, if you have distrusted in the past and found your distrust warranted, you will be all the more reluctant to trust in the future. In a tit-for-tat world of 'strong reciprocators', which behavioural economists tell us is the world that we inhabit, getting off on the right foot is everything.<sup>31</sup>

The remarkable department that Bill Mackenzie built at Manchester, referred to in several other chapters in this volume, is a good example of a virtuous cycle of this sort. As his biographer in the *Dictionary of National Biography* reports, 'A special feature of the Manchester faculty of economic and social studies [in Mackenzie's day] was the high degree of mutual respect between the senior professors, such as Ely Devons, W. Arthur Lewis, Michael Polanyi and Max Gluckman.'<sup>32</sup>

Oxford may well be an example of the opposite, at least from some of the stories one hears. My examples come from my home subdiscipline of political theory, because those are the stories I happen to hear. But I suspect they may generalize.

There has been, as one commentator puts it, something of a tradition for political theorists to 'articulate their opinions of one another and of each other's work . . . with a courteous smile through clenched teeth'.<sup>33</sup> Thus, for example, Isaiah Berlin 'frequently described John Plamenatz, who succeeded him [in the Chichele chair], as "Montenegro's greatest political thinker" . . .'.<sup>34</sup> Berlin himself, I am reliably informed, propped a placard advertising the Austin motorcar on the mantle in his study, in order (he said) 'to remind him of the sharks out there' (namely, J. L. Austin, whose withering remarks in his Saturday morning Philosophy reading group were legendary). H. L. A. Hart apparently

<sup>29</sup> Huntington, *Political Order*, 28.

<sup>30</sup> J. G. March, *The Ambiguities of Experience* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010), 106–14.

<sup>31</sup> S. Bowles and H. Gintis, 'Homo reciprocans', *Nature*, 415/6868 (10 January 2002), 125–8.

<sup>32</sup> J. M. Lee, 'Mackenzie, William James Millar', *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 35, 624–6 at 625.

<sup>33</sup> Wokler, 'The Professoriate of Political Thought in England since 1914', 151. Bhikhu Parekh similarly listed, as the first distinguishing features of political philosophy of the 1950s and 1960s, that 'they were decades of prima donnas or gurus. Hardly any of the major figures engaged in a critical dialogue with others or even referred to them': 'Political Theory: Traditions in Political Philosophy', R. E. Goodin and H.-D. Klingemann (eds), *A New Handbook of Political Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 503–18.

<sup>34</sup> Wokler, 'The Professoriate of Political Thought in England since 1914', 151.

lived in crippling intellectual terror of his colleagues, judging from his authorized biography.<sup>35</sup> None of that is the stuff of which a mutually supportive institutional culture is made.

Such an intellectual climate has consequences not only for how one engages one's colleagues but also for the sorts of thing one chooses to study. In a world of snide intellectual sharpshooters, foxholes provide the best refuge. In such an environment, it is only sensible to avoid exposing yourself. So cultivate norms against having serious conversations with colleagues about your work (they might catch you out). Choose a research topic that no one else is interested in (so no one can catch you out). Take shelter in the relative safety of single-country comparativism (fewer others can catch you out).<sup>36</sup> All of those practices are still strikingly common in Oxford, perhaps for self-protective reasons deriving from the institutional culture.

### Institutional leadership and transitions

Institutions are supposed to be relatively enduring. To institutionalize something is to set it in stone. In order to give rise to 'stable, recurring patterns of behaviour', institutions must themselves be relatively stable and enduring.

That in turn entails something about leadership, leadership transitions, and succession planning. Strong institutions are more likely to be led by cadres of people with similar values and priorities, rather than by a single individual. As Huntington observes politically, so too academically: "The simplest political system is that which depends on one individual. [But i]t is also least stable. Tyrannies, Aristotle pointed out, are virtually all "quite short-lived."<sup>37</sup>

Second, strong institutions need a succession plan and a mechanism for smooth leadership transition. They are robust against changes in personnel. They are made so in part by cultivating a cadre of possible leaders who share similar institutional values and priorities, and hence who are institutionally virtually interchangeable for one another. Institutions are made robust against changes in personnel, also, by self-consciously cultivating successor

<sup>35</sup> N. Lacey, *A Life of H. L. A. Hart: The Nightmare and the Noble Dream* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>36</sup> 'Safety in singularity', Jack Hayward puts it in his chapter in this volume. That is not to deny that 'getting your facts straight' about each of the countries you are comparing is not important, nor is it to deny that that is highly specialized labour in the first instance: V. Bogdanor, 'Comparative Politics', in J. Hayward et al. (eds), *British Study of Politics in the Twentieth Century*, 147–80 at 178. But that is just a matter of collecting and cleaning data, which until you do something more with it is just data awaiting analysis. As Barry rightly replies, genuine comparison require that those single-country studies either be embedded in some 'collective multi-national project' or else at least 'deploy concepts and ideas that have already [been] developed for comparative use' ('The Study of Politics as a Vocation', 446).

<sup>37</sup> Huntington, *Political Order*, 18, referring to Aristotle's *Politics*.

generations. The formula for building a great academic department is, when hiring, for each generation to strive to hire people younger and better than itself.

It is a matter, not only of picking horses, but also of backing them. Once you have identified and hired promising youngsters, protect and cultivate them as the research stars you hope they will become. Instead of dumping all your unwanted teaching and administration on them, shelter them for as long as possible from those ultimately inevitable facts of academic life. In that way, by the time they assume the burdens of leadership, they will have become sufficiently captivated by their research to lead in the right direction. That was certainly Mackenzie's strategy at Manchester.<sup>38</sup>

Elsewhere in Britain all of this was largely missing. Observers comment on an 'absence of clear identities, shared convictions or dynastic continuities'.<sup>39</sup> Nowhere has that been more true than at Oxford, where great politics researchers pop up from time to time, shine brightly for a time, and then fade leaving no intellectual heirs behind.

## PRAETORIAN POLITICS

Those are all things that need to be done, and not to be done, to build strong departments. The lessons that scholars of comparative politics such as Huntington draw at the level of the state carry over well to the level of the academic department.

So too do their findings about what life is like without strong institutions. Huntington coins the phrase 'praetorian politics' to characterize a situation in which institutionalization is low and participation is high. Quoting Macaulay, he characterizes that situation as akin to 'all sail and no anchor'.<sup>40</sup>

The presence or absence of strong institutions is what makes all the difference. The absence of effective political institutions in a praetorian society means that power is fragmented: it comes in many forms and in small quantities. Authority over the system as a whole is transitory, and the weakness of political institutions

<sup>38</sup> C. Hood, 'Twelve Volumes, Varying Influence: W. J. M. Mackenzie'. Paper presented at 'Volumes of Influence' conference, University of York, 1–3 September 2003, 20, fn 12. The great irony is that he did it too well: instead of building a cadre that stayed on to run Manchester, most of Mackenzie's coterie went on to provide many of the new universities and some of the old with some of their finest professors of politics. They included not only Samuel Finer and Richard Rose as is widely known, but also Jean Blondel, who had briefly passed through Mackenzie's Manchester and was plucked by the founding Essex Vice Chancellor from what is now Keele on Mackenzie's recommendation.

<sup>39</sup> Wokler, 'The Professoriate of Political Thought in England since 1914', 152.

<sup>40</sup> Huntington, *Political Order*, 87.

means that authority and office are easily acquired and easily lost. Consequently, no incentive exists for a leader or group to make significant concessions in the search for authority.<sup>41</sup>

In a system with strong institutions, in contrast,

The institutions impose political socialization as the price of political participation. In a praetorian society groups become mobilized into politics without becoming socialized by politics. The distinguishing characteristic of a highly institutionalized polity, in contrast, is the price it places on power. [There,] the price of authority involves limitations on the resources that may be employed in politics, the procedures through which power may be acquired, and the attitudes that power wielders may hold.<sup>42</sup>

Again, as in real-world politics, so too in academic politics. If there is no strong sense of departmental identity, no strong sense of shared values and purposes, then it really is all down just to a zero-sum struggle for resources. There simply is nothing to invest in the long term for.

But it is perhaps at university level where praetorian politics manifests itself most vividly. David Marquand has commented:

Collegiality and commensality have been of Oxford's essence since medieval times, and they still are. The originally German, but now virtually universal model of the university as a 'departmentally segmented and hierarchically controlled monolith' has always been alien to it, and attempts to force or lure it into a Germanic mould have always been broken on the stubborn independence of [what Halsey calls] the 'elitist democracy of the dons'.<sup>43</sup>

The most recent event to which Marquand presumably refers is the 2006 uprising in Convocation against the then Vice Chancellor John Hood's governance reforms. A leader of the successful opposition wrote in the *Guardian* after the crucial meeting, 'I swear I saw the vice-chancellor start to sweat' and 'the registrar seemed near to tears'.<sup>44</sup> Whatever the merits or demerits of those particular reforms, such periodic uprisings really do seem to fit Huntington's model of praetorian politics, in which 'apathy and indignation succeed each other: the twin children of the absence of authoritative political symbols and institutions'.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Huntington, *Political Order*, 196.

<sup>42</sup> Huntington, *Political Order*, 83.

<sup>43</sup> D. Marquand, 'From the Forum to the Cloister—and Back Again? Resisting the Temptations of Professionalism'. Paper presented to the colloquium "Tragedy or Triumph? A Hundred Years of Politics and IR at Oxford", Oxford, 1–2 December 2011.

<sup>44</sup> G. Evans, "I swear I saw the vice-chancellor start to sweat", *The Guardian* (17 November 2006). For the transcript of the debate in Convocation, see *Oxford University Gazette*, No. 4791, Supplement (1) (7 December 2006): 505–25.

<sup>45</sup> Huntington, *Political Order*, 88.

## WHAT'S SPECIAL ABOUT POLITICS?

Most of what I have been saying pertains to Oxford in general, and it should apply equally to Politics or to any other discipline. Clearly in some disciplines Oxford departments have succeeded in providing a coherent, collective sense of shared purpose to their members. So let me close by asking, 'What's so special about Politics?'

Two things, I shall suggest. The first is a failure to get sufficient critical distance from your research subjects—in Hayward's famous phrase, a failure for 'political zoologists [to] become separated from the denizens of the political zoo'.<sup>46</sup> The second is a 'just so' story that Politics dons tell themselves—a story that perverts 'pluralism' to serve a rationale for scholars of the same subject not actually engaging with one another. Let me elaborate each briefly, in turn.

As regards 'critical distance from your research subjects', there are three problems, which are interconnected. The first concerns what is thought to count as 'knowledge' about politics. The view that used to be endemic across Britain, and which has more exponents remaining in Oxford than most other places, holds that knowledge about politics must ideally be first-hand. Ideally, it comes from yourself having experience in government. At the very least, it comes from talking to those who have experience of that.<sup>47</sup> You get clear intimations of that not only from Oxford luminaries such as Bryce,<sup>48</sup> Wheare, and Beloff<sup>49</sup> but even, at times, from the likes of Laski<sup>50</sup> and Mackenzie.<sup>51</sup> At

<sup>46</sup> Hayward, 'British Approaches to Politics', 2, speaks of 'a time when the academic study of politics had not been divorced from its practice and it was considered an advantage to have had personal experience if one was to describe, analyze and propose improvements in the way politics was actually conducted'.

<sup>47</sup> The tendency to conflate the academic study of politics with the practice of it still, in many influential corners of the British profession, is revealed in the very title of the *Oxford Handbook of British Politics*, ed. Gamble et al. Using the same term to refer both to the subject under study and to the study of it carries clear implications about how it is supposed that the subject should be studied.

<sup>48</sup> 'The best way to get a genuine and exact first-hand knowledge of the data is to mix in practical politics' (quoted in Hayward, 'British Approaches to Politics', 8).

<sup>49</sup> Max Beloff's *Dictionary of National Biography* entry for 'Wheare' makes the point for both: 'His own writings combined . . . , above all, an awareness of how people actually behave in the political and administrative context—an awareness solidly based on his own practical experience in getting things done at many levels' (*Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 58, 405–7 at 406). In an earlier piece Beloff had asked rhetorically 'Is it really possible to write about politics effectively or to teach it properly without some experience of the political world?': 'The Politics of Oxford "Politics"', *Political Studies*, 23 (1975): 7–39 at 16. In fairness, however, it ought to be said that Wheare had himself cautioned against confusing 'the functions of the political scientist and the political practitioner' ('The Teaching of Political Science', 72).

<sup>50</sup> 'Full contact with practical affairs is one of the best ways of understanding the academic problems of politics' (quoted in Hayward, 'British Approaches to Politics', 14).

<sup>51</sup> 'I cannot avoid the awkward conclusion that to study government one must participate in government', writes W. J. M. Mackenzie, *Explorations in Government* (London: Macmillan, 1975), 107.



Oxford (as noted by Rodney Barker and Simon Green in their chapters in this volume), that principle was written into the very terms of the endowment of the Gladstone chair, stipulating that it is to be given to ‘some able man from outside, with practical experience’ (a stipulation that has been honoured in the breach after the first two appointments).<sup>52</sup> Politics dons who had ‘had a good war’—who had spent their war in the higher civil service—were regarded as the most insightful commentators on British politics well into the last quarter of the twentieth century.

Now, I have much time for participant observation as a research technique in social science. But the first rule of that technique is to be acutely aware of the need explicitly to *interpret* your observations through a *theoretical* lens. No good anthropologist—indeed, no good journalist—would ever accept an informant’s report uncritically, at face value.<sup>53</sup> It is not participant observation, but rather the lack of critical distance that can often accompany it, about which I am complaining.<sup>54</sup>

This hankering for proximity to power has long been a particular problem at Oxford, owing to its special status as ‘the great finishing school of the British Empire’ (and its successor states).<sup>55</sup> Two things follow from that status. First, Oxford academics tend to be closely acquainted with senior politicians and administrators from their student days. Second, perhaps because of that, those academics have historically been consulted by those politicians and administrators on a regular basis.<sup>56</sup>

Again, I have nothing against academics giving public officials the benefit of their informed advice. That is all to the good (insofar as the advice is taken and actually improves policy, at least). But notice the contrasting styles

<sup>52</sup> Quoted in Wokler, ‘The Professoriate of Political Thought in England since 1914’, 139.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. D. Freeman’s account of gullibility in *Margaret Mead and Samoa* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983).

<sup>54</sup> There may be an element of national character (to use that discredited notion) at work here. Macaulay remarks, ‘The perfect lawgiver is a just temper between the mere man of theory, who can see nothing but general principles, and the mere man of business, who can see nothing but particular circumstances. . . . But in English legislation the practical element has always predominated, and not seldom unduly predominated, over the speculative. . . . Our national distaste for whatever is abstract amounts undoubtedly to a fault. Yet it is, perhaps, a fault on the right side’ (quoted in Hayward, ‘British Approaches to Politics’, 4).

<sup>55</sup> Wokler, ‘The Professoriate of Political Thought in England since 1914’, 138. He goes on to describe the pedagogical task, seen in that light, as ‘to nurture our students’ zeal and prepare them for public office’ (157).

<sup>56</sup> Perhaps more so in the past than the present. Consider the example of Mackenzie, who was ‘something of an all-purpose quangocrat, moving effortlessly through the world of the “great and the good” and serving on a string of government committees, commissions and advisory bodies in many diverse arenas. For example, he worked as an adviser on the independence constitutions for Kenya and Tanzania. . . . and served on many of the regional and national quangos he later wrote about, as well as on the Social Science Research Council when it was created in 1965 and the Herbert Royal Commission which recommended the GLC’ (Hood, ‘Twelve Volumes, Varying Influence’, 4, fn 4).

of engagement in the US and UK and the different ways that those impact on their academic work.

In the US, academics tend to be ‘in and out’ of government. During the years their political party is in power, they occupy posts in government; during years their party is out of power, they sit in the Brookings Institution or the Hoover or the Kennedy School, and behave (more or less) as proper academics.<sup>57</sup> Politically connected British academics have historically been more ‘constantly on call’. That pattern entails ‘grave risks’.<sup>58</sup> And it is very hard to get any critical distance when your research subjects never leave you alone, when you are constantly called upon (or constantly expecting any day to be called upon) to enter into *their* mindset to craft some piece of advice that might be useful for them.

So that is my first answer to the question of ‘why politics is special’—why the generic features of Oxford academic arrangements that I identified seem to inhibit institutionalization of a proper, discipline-oriented research department more badly in the case of politics than in the case of other subjects. In the study of politics there is the risk, which all too often is realized, of identifying too closely with the objects of your study. Molecular biologists or astrophysicists simply suffer no such temptations.

## PLURALISM WITHOUT A POINT

A second explanation is the ready availability, within the discipline itself, of a seemingly apt defence for not imposing the discipline of a discipline. That defence is ‘pluralism’, which every properly trained political scientist should know to be a ‘good thing’.

By pluralism is meant the opposite of monism. It involves the claim that there is more than one valid way to study political phenomena. As the last pre-reform editor of *Political Studies* once put it,

There are many styles in political science. The freedom of the scholar to choose his own is essential to our academic tradition: pluralism is a ‘good thing’ in this respect as in others.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>57</sup> For example, Joseph Nye, sometime Academic Dean of Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government, served as Deputy Secretary to the Undersecretary of State under Carter and Assistant Secretary of Defense under Clinton.

<sup>58</sup> As Mackenzie, *Explorations in Government*, 107, delicately puts it, ‘one may take on unawares the attitudes of the very pleasant people with whom one is working’ so incessantly.

<sup>59</sup> F. F. Ridley, ‘If the Devil Rules, What Can Political Science Achieve?’ *Government and Opposition*, 15 (1980), 471–85 at 480.

You hear this same sort of thing from Bernard Crick's *In Defence of Politics*.<sup>60</sup> You hear it in Adam Roberts's valedictory lecture, upon vacating Oxford's Montague Burton Chair of International Relations and assuming the Presidency of the British Academy.<sup>61</sup> The *Oxford Handbook of British Politics* contains a rousing defence of the distinctively 'pluralist approach' to the study of politics in Britain, and the 'eclectic, tolerant and diverse community of scholarship' that that fosters.<sup>62</sup>

Now, being a properly trained political scientist I am not about to dissent from the proposition that pluralism, together with the academic freedom that gives rise to it, is a good thing.

But pause for a moment to reflect upon *why* Robert Dahl and I think pluralism is a good thing. It paves the way for competition and opposition. And *why* do John Stuart Mill and I like freedom of speech? Because in the competition of ideas, the truth will out.

It is precisely that competition that is missed out by the 'pluralism defence' as deployed by students of politics in Britain in general and Oxford most especially. When they talk about 'tolerant eclecticism', that *sounds* good.<sup>63</sup> But if the 'live and let live' programme is so strong as to amount to creating what Almond bemoans as 'separate tables', with people at the different tables not interacting, then that defeats the whole point of pluralism—academically, just as it would politically.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Crick claims there is a distinctively British conception of politics itself, which he characterizes as the 'conciliation of differing interests', as 'a way of ruling in divided societies without undue violence'. The desirability of this view is, for Crick, self-evident: 'conciliation is better than violence' and 'diversity is better than unity': *In Defence of Politics* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962), 21, 32, 141, 160.

<sup>61</sup> Celebrating what he regards as the characteristically British 'pluralist approach both to the actual conduct of international relations and to the academic subject', Roberts wrote: 'It is a pluralism that accepts the relevance of many different approaches to international relations: not just the proper emphasis on power and interest that is found in realist theories, but also approaches that stress the significance of ideas and norms, the impact of domestic political and economic structures on international politics, the roles of transnational movements and international organizations, and the existence of new challenges. It is a pluralism of theories, a pluralism of political systems, a pluralism of different cultures and mindsets, a pluralism of methods of analysis and a pluralism of academic disciplines.' Roberts ends by echoing Mill's comment in his *Autobiography* that 'Goethe's device, "many-sidedness", was one which I would most willingly . . . have taken for mine': 'International Relations after the Cold War', *International Affairs*, 84 (2008), 335–50 at 335–6.

<sup>62</sup> Pp. 6, 3. In their preface the editors collectively refer, clearly approvingly, to 'the generally more pluralistic approach to theories and methods that has formed a defining feature of British political studies since its emergence as a distinct profession during the middle of the twentieth century' (p. vi).

<sup>63</sup> B. Crick, 'The British Way', *Government and Opposition*, 15 (1980), 297–307 at 303.

<sup>64</sup> G. A. Almond, 'Separate tables: schools and sects in political science', *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 21 (1988), 828–42. Pillarization depoliticizes: which is of course the whole point of introducing it in deeply divided societies such as The Netherlands: Hans Daalder, 'The Netherlands: Opposition in a Segmented Society', in R. A. Dahl (ed.), *Political Oppositions in Western Democracies* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 1966), 188–236.

In a somewhat different context, Ralf Dahrendorf draws a distinction between ‘passive’ and ‘active pluralism’. The passive form that he bemoans is as I have just described: a system of ‘separate but equal’, ‘a clearly delineated toleration of differences’. Dahrendorf compares that unfavourably to a model of ‘active tolerance’, which Dahrendorf describes as involving ‘an attitude of acceptance and engagement with respect to a plurality of cultures’.<sup>65</sup>

The latter is most definitely the sort of pluralism that should be sought, when building academic institutions. Mono-culturalism academically is a disaster. That is why strong departments have a firm rule against hiring their own PhDs, at least until after they have been elsewhere for a time.<sup>66</sup> To put it only a little too crudely: they know nothing you haven’t taught them; you have nothing to learn from them; and there is simply no point in collaborating with clones. When building an academic institution, it is absolutely essential to bring interestingly different people into it. But what is equally essential is that you then actually intellectually engage with and learn from them—and they from one another.<sup>67</sup>

Likewise with ‘interdisciplinarity’. Much good can come from people rooted in different disciplines coming together and constructively engaging with one another on some topic of mutual concern. But again, it is essential that those people actually be deeply rooted in their own discipline, in order for them to have something distinctive to contribute. (Getting together a group of people each of whom is the same mish-mash of ‘all disciplines and none’ is pointless.) And again, an interdisciplinary team is genuinely productive only if its members actually engage with one another, rather than carving up the problem into disciplinary chunks each of which one disciplinary subgroup will address all on its own.

That, then, is the second reason ‘why politics is special’. One of the core teachings of the discipline is all too easily perverted into a ‘non-aggression pact’, allowing scholars of differing persuasions and specializations simply to

<sup>65</sup> R. Dahrendorf, ‘Doubts about Pluralism’, in E. Ben-Rafael and Y. Sternber (eds), *Comparing Modernities: Pluralism versus Hegemony* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 223–8 at 225, 226. N. Polsby’s description of an ideal editor is equally apt for an ideal institution builder. Both ‘must . . . have a well-developed curiosity about what is going on in other parts of the discipline [besides their own], a sense of where the emerging interests are, a sensitivity to cliques and schools of thought, and something more hospitable than tolerance toward work in modes and traditions different from their own’: ‘Editorial Comment: Help Wanted’, *American Political Science Review*, 69 (1975), 199–201 at 200.

<sup>66</sup> As one ex-chairperson of the Harvard department put it, in personal correspondence, Harvard overtook Yale in the professional rankings at the point in the 1980s when Harvard stopped hiring its own PhDs and Yale started hiring its own.

<sup>67</sup> As Barry rightly emphasizes, ‘specialization’ within a discipline does not necessarily imply ‘fragmentation’: ‘specialization goes with all those in the discipline having a common map marking out the relations between the different areas, whereas in a fragmented discipline there are a number of different maps putting a different locality at the centre and surrounding it with *terra incognita*’ (‘The Study of Politics as a Vocation’, 447).

go their own separate ways without seriously engaging with one another.<sup>68</sup> Pluralism is good, but only when it is a pluralism of engagement. A pluralism of non-engagement is a pure travesty.

## CONCLUSION

Thus, building strong institutions is important, in academics as well as in politics. There are some things that make that harder and some that make it easier—and the latter have historically tended to predominate in Oxford, when it came to institutionalizing a department of politics that is internally robust and externally tightly connected to the wider discipline.

What can be done? In academic institutions, like most others, staffing is what really matters. First and foremost, anyone trying to build an institution must seize control of appointments. In the meanwhile, you simply have to ‘work with what you’ve got’. There are already in Oxford clusters of dedicated research scholars properly socialized into wider disciplinary norms; bring them together, and create a seminar where the department-in-waiting can be melded.

Above all, take an interest in one another’s work. This academic business is supposed to be fun. It is supposed to be interesting. That is why we are all in it, rather than merchant banks or barristers’ chambers. There is no need for pulling punches. Part of what it is to take the discipline seriously is to engage deeply, and critically, with one another’s work. But the point of critical engagement is not to score points. The point is instead to improve their analysis, to show one another where they might have gone wrong and help them get it right.

<sup>68</sup> One-country comparativism might be another form of non-aggression pact: ‘I won’t venture a view about your country, or your interpretation of goings-on there, if you don’t about mine.’

## Part III

# Developments: What it Led to, in Disciplines and Discoveries



## EDITORS' NOTE

In this chapter John Curtice examines the development of studies of British elections in Oxford over six decades, comprising the study of electoral campaigns, of voting behaviour, and of the translation of votes into seats. While Oxford did not start the studies of what voters do, it took the lead within the UK in this subfield after World War II through the famous Nuffield Election studies. These studies became a major feature of the political-science landscape and the work that grew out of those studies, notably David Butler's rediscovery of 'cube law', the importation of the American concept of party identification and of panel studies of voter attitudes in a seminal mid-1960s work that decisively overturned then-prevailing views of what voters were like. In later decades Oxford remained a key player in research on electoral behaviour and arguably helped to take the subject in new directions—for example in comparative analysis of voting behaviour in Eastern Europe—even if it lost its early lead in the field.

Curtice's chapter brings out how academic understanding of the British electoral scene today differs from that of the 1950s and he shows that many of the early findings of the British election surveys—for instance, on the significance of the 'personal vote' for candidates in general elections, the degree of uniformity of electoral swings from one party to another across the country, and indeed the 'cube law' itself—have been overturned as a result of changing voter behaviour, particularly since the early 1970s. The intellectual pattern he depicts in this field is one of developing scale and professionalism—from a 'cottage industry' in one room at Nuffield College to what has been described as an 'industrial conglomerate' comprising the largest subfield in UK political science after International Relations and with guaranteed public research funding. But at the same time Curtice suggests that the rate of major intellectual advance in the field has slowed down, since the use of increasingly sophisticated quantitative analysis methodology has tended to yield less clear-cut or surprising results in recent decades.



# Elections

*John Curtice*

## INTRODUCTION

The role elections should play in a parliamentary democracy is the subject of much debate. Following Joseph Schumpeter, we can identify two contrasting visions.<sup>1</sup> One argues the principal purpose of elections is to make and unmake governments, thereby ensuring those who wield power are held to account. The other suggests their purpose is to produce a body whose composition reflects the diversity of policy preferences across the country as a whole, thereby ensuring it is a representative sounding board for determining the nation's will. Which of these two contrasting visions prevails depends on how the electoral process operates in practice, and in particular on how parties and politicians campaign, on whether and how voters decide to vote, and on how votes are translated into seats.

If elections are to be effective in holding governments to account, parties need to present voters with two alternative governments whose policy platforms appeal widely across the electorate, voters need to be willing and able to choose how to vote on the basis of their evaluation of the incumbent government's perceived performance, while the electoral system should help ensure that either the incumbent government retains its majority or else the principal opposition secures one instead. But if elections are to produce a sounding board for the nation, voters need to be presented with a variety of parties spread widely across the ideological spectrum, voters themselves need to be voting for the party whose policy platform most closely reflects their own views, while the electoral system should produce a distribution of seats that matches reasonably closely the partisan division of the vote. Evidently all these aspects of the electoral process need to be analysed and understood.

This chapter undertakes three tasks. First, it describes the role Oxford as an institution has played in instigating and promoting the study of each of these three aspects of the electoral process in Britain. Second, it examines what has

<sup>1</sup> J. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, 4th edn (London: Allen and Unwin, 1976).

been learnt about each process as a result of the research undertaken both at Oxford and elsewhere. Third, it attempts to evaluate what has been achieved, and speculates on the possible direction of electoral studies during the course of the next 100 years.

## BEGINNINGS

Rigorous study of elections has essentially been a post-war phenomenon. Not least of the reasons is that opinion surveys of voters using research designs grounded in the theory of statistical inference only began to appear in the 1930s. But so far as the study of how election campaigns are fought is concerned, timing was also a happenstance of academic inspiration. Disturbed by what he regarded as the myths that had grown up about more than one interwar election, shortly before the 1945 contest Ronald B. McCallum, a fellow at Pembroke, persuaded Oxford's then fledgling social science college, Nuffield, that a dispassionate contemporary account should be written of how the forthcoming battle for power was fought.<sup>2</sup> Thus together with a Nuffield student, Alison Readman, McCallum wrote the first of what was to come to be known as the 'Nuffield' series of election studies,<sup>3</sup> studies that have now graced every single one of the eighteen elections held during the post-war era, and fifteen of which (all those written between 1951 and 2005) were authored or co-authored by one man whose name appears more than once in this story, Nuffield's own Sir David Butler.

Published relatively quickly after an election, the Nuffield studies are not the product of long, distilled academic analysis. Rather they provide a contemporary account of how the election was conducted and act as a source for future historians and political scientists to use in subsequent academic work. Their speed of production means that, so far as survey data about voters are concerned, the studies have been able to do little more than rely on commercial opinion polls published at the time. On the other hand, they could attempt to conduct original analysis of the constituency-by-constituency election results, and this was to become one of the series' particular contributions, used not only as a way of analysing the behaviour of voters, but also the operation of the electoral system. At the same time, the series developed the habit, often with the help of specialist contributors, of systematically collecting

<sup>2</sup> D. Butler, 'Reflections on British Elections and Their Study', *Annual Review of Political Science*, 1 (1998), 451–64.

<sup>3</sup> R. McCallum and A. Steadman, *The British General Election of 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1947).

and reporting information on the background of candidates, and on how the campaign was reported by both the print and the broadcast media.

The heart of the series has, though, remained the description and analysis of the national campaign activities of parties and politicians, albeit not just during the campaign itself but throughout the previous parliament. To that end, since 1964 the authors have conducted extensive elite interviews with key participants.<sup>4</sup> These interviews have not only been a source of insight into the motives behind the moves made by the parties, but also have on occasion uncovered developments not (fully) reported by the media at the time. The interviews are secured on the understanding they remain confidential until after polling day, and even then the authors are usually careful not to relate particular statements in the book to individual interviewees. Thus to some degree access is secured at the expense of transparency.

The Nuffield studies have proved more or less unique as studies of how British elections are actually fought. After some recent elections Anthony King (Essex) has brought together a range of specialists to report, amongst other things, on the parties' approach to the last election, as have similar studies edited by Andrew Geddes (Sheffield) and Jonathan Tonge (Liverpool).<sup>5</sup> But it cannot be said that the Nuffield studies instigated a field of study that many others have sought to emulate and develop. Meanwhile, the college's and Oxford's own links with the series have now become rather tenuous; neither author of the 2010 study was a member of the university.<sup>6</sup>

Although such endeavour fell outside the scope of the Nuffield studies, others outside Oxford did soon rise to the challenge of studying voters during the course of an election campaign. Their inspiration came from the 'Columbia School' surveys of election campaigns conducted in 1940 and 1948 in the US by Paul Lazarsfeld and colleagues.<sup>7</sup> The School's primary interest was in the role and influence of the media and opinion leaders, an interest pursued by conducting multi-wave studies of representative samples of voters in particular localities. The first such study in the UK was sponsored by the London School of Economics and conducted in Greenwich in 1950, while in 1951 and 1955 Robert Milne and Hugh MacKenzie of Bristol University implemented a similar approach in a study of the campaign in Bristol North East.<sup>8</sup> Thereafter,

<sup>4</sup> D. Butler and A. King, *The British General Election of 1964* (London: Macmillan, 1965).

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, A. King (ed.), *Britain at the Polls 2005* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2005); A. Geddes and J. Tonge (eds), *Britain Votes 2010* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>6</sup> D. Kavanagh and P. Cowley, *The British General Election of 2010* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

<sup>7</sup> B. Berelson, P. Lazarsfeld, and W. McPhee, *Voting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954).

<sup>8</sup> M. Benney, A. Gray, and R. Pear, *How People Vote* (London: Routledge, 1956); R. Milne and H. Mackenzie, *Straight Fight 1951* (London: Hansard Society, 1954); R. Milne and H. Mackenzie, *Marginal Seat 1955* (London: Hansard Society, 1958).

the relaxation in 1958 of a ban on televised coverage of election campaigns motivated Joseph Trenaman and Denis McQuail, then based at Leeds University, to conduct the following year the first British study of the role and influence of television by undertaking a Columbia-style study in the two neighbouring constituencies of Pudsey and Leeds West, together with a sequel in 1964.<sup>9</sup>

So studying the impact of campaigns on voters was one area where Oxford was not the first in the field in the UK. But when it came to launching a nationwide academic study of voting behaviour, it was very much one of the university's members, David Butler (once again), who donned the mantle of academic entrepreneur. While the Columbia design was well suited to understanding the micro context in which voters made their decisions, it did not provide a reliable basis for making inferences about the character of a national electorate as a whole. That gap had been filled in the US during the 1950s by a study, launched at the University of Michigan, that interviewed a nationwide sample of voters both before and after the election campaign, and once again on the occasion of the subsequent election.<sup>10</sup> Not only was the focus shifted from the micro to the macro, but also from looking at how votes shifted during a campaign towards the longer-term question of how behaviour changed from one election to the next.

One of the members of the original Michigan team, Donald Stokes, was persuaded by Butler to help him launch the first such study in Britain. The initial round of interviews took place in 1963, and these respondents were then not only reinterviewed after the 1964 election but also after the 1966 and 1970 contests as well. In addition Butler and Stokes undertook a second panel study of people who were first interviewed in 1969 and again after the election in June 1970. Meanwhile, by asking their respondents about their political background and history, Butler and Stokes attempted to apply a very long lens indeed to the country's electoral habits and behaviour.

Their book *Political Change in Britain* was not only one of the most influential contributions to the literature of British political science in the post-war era, of which more later, but inaugurated a series of survey-based studies of voting at British general elections that has now become part of the central architecture of the academic study of voter behaviour in the UK.<sup>11</sup> After 1970, Ivor Crewe and Bö Särilvik at the University of Essex continued the task of undertaking a nationwide academic survey-based study of voting behaviour. They dubbed the survey series the British Election Study (BES),

<sup>9</sup> J. Trenaman and D. McQuail, *Television and the Political Image* (London: Methuen, 1961); J. Blumler and D. McQuail, *Television in Politics* (London: Faber, 1968).

<sup>10</sup> A. Campbell, P. Converse, W. Miller, and D. Stokes, *The American Voter* (New York: Wiley, 1960).

<sup>11</sup> D. Butler and D. Stokes, *Political Change in Britain*, 1st edn (London: Macmillan, 1969); 2nd edn (1974).

and it began to be regarded as an essential resource for the academic community as a whole, with many scholars undertaking further ‘secondary’ analysis of the data—and often finding a home for their findings in another Oxford-inspired innovation, a specialist journal for the field, *Electoral Studies*, co-founded in 1982 by David Butler in collaboration with Bö Särilvik. In the 1980s and 1990s responsibility for the BES reverted back to a multi-institutional team centred in Oxford (albeit in sociology rather than political science) consisting of Anthony Heath (Oxford), Roger Jowell (Social and Community Planning Research, now known as NatCen Social Research), and John Curtice (Liverpool and subsequently Strathclyde). Thereafter it reverted back once again to a team centred on Essex, and now in 2015 is due to have Oxford involvement yet again in the form of Geoff Evans as part of a team that also comprises members of Manchester and Nottingham universities.

The emphasis on studying long-term rather than short-term changes in voting behaviour became even more marked after 1970. For the next two decades the core of the BES came to be a post-election survey whose results could be compared with those of previous post-election surveys in the series. No interviews were conducted before the campaign, let alone during it. The only panel element consisted of interviewing after the most recent election respondents who previously had been interviewed after one or more previous elections. Given that one of the lessons of the 1950s and 1960s, including from the Columbia-style studies, was that there was usually little net movement in aggregate public opinion during a campaign, this focus on long-term change appeared justified—especially as there were already signs of important long-term changes to be analysed in the form of the erosion of Conservative and Labour dominance of the electorate. However, in 1970 and again in February 1974, the commercial opinion polls suggested that movements during the campaign did make a difference to the overall outcome, and that thus perhaps campaigns were worthy of study after all.<sup>12</sup>

Yet the first nationwide panel study of the dynamics of an election campaign was not conducted until 1987. Such a study requires that a sequence of relatively short interviews be conducted within narrow time frames, a process that is difficult and expensive to implement face to face, but one that is feasible via telephone interviewing. By the late 1980s telephone ownership had become near ubiquitous in the UK, ending concerns about the unrepresentative character of telephone samples. Thus William Miller of Glasgow University conducted a panel telephone survey of the 1987 campaign alongside that year’s

<sup>12</sup> D. Butler and M. Pinto-Duschinsky, *The British General Election of 1970* (London: Macmillan, 1971); D. Butler and D. Kavanagh, *The British General Election of February 1974* (London: Macmillan, 1974).

<sup>13</sup> W. Miller, H. Clarke, M. Harrop, L. LeDuc, and P. Whiteley, *How Voters Change: The 1987 British Election Campaign in Perspective* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

BES.<sup>13</sup> Since then not only has study of the dynamics of the election campaign become an integral part of the design of the BES (aided by the advent of the Internet), but so also has charting changes in the public's mood during the course of a whole parliament. In addition, at the last three elections the BES has also implemented a pre–post polling day design as part of the core survey.

Important though the decisions made by individual voters may be, the consequences of their choices depend crucially on how their votes are treated by the electoral system. Britain's single-member plurality system does not contain any formal mechanism that links votes cast across the country as a whole to seats won in the House of Commons. The overall outcome is simply an aggregation of who secures most votes in 600 or so individual constituencies, seemingly rendering the overall outcome nationally an unpredictable gamble.<sup>14</sup> Yet, as Maurice Duverger famously noted in the early 1950s, in practice, 'The simple majority electoral system favours the two-party system',<sup>15</sup> that is one in which power tends to alternate between two parties, and where at any one time one single party has an overall majority.

Part of the reasoning behind 'Duverger's law' is a subjective one, that voters are discouraged from voting for third or smaller parties because they have little chance of winning a seat.<sup>16</sup> But there is also a mechanical logic, viz. that the system appears to exaggerate the lead of the largest party over the second party, thereby more or less ensuring the largest party secures an overall parliamentary majority. Here too work at Oxford, and specifically once again that of David Butler, played a crucial role in initiating research in the field. As we noted earlier, from their inception the Nuffield studies featured analysis of the aggregate election results. Butler contributed an appendix to the 1945 book that purported to show there was a regular, predictable relationship between votes and seats won by the two largest parties across the country as a whole.<sup>17</sup> Subsequently, Butler came across James Parker Smith's pre-First World War formulation of that relationship as a 'cube law'.<sup>18</sup> This stated that if the votes won by the two largest parties were divided in the ratio A:B, the seats they secured would be divided between them in the ratio  $A^3:B^3$ . After making his discovery known shortly before the 1950 election via an article in *The Economist*, Butler demonstrated the law's apparent validity in an appendix to the 1950 Nuffield study, albeit acknowledging that there appeared to be

<sup>14</sup> D. Butler, 'The Relation of Seats to Votes', in McCallum and Readman, *General Election of 1945*, 277–92.

<sup>15</sup> M. Duverger, *Political Parties* (London: Methuen, 1954).

<sup>16</sup> K. Benoit, 'Duverger's Law and the Study of Electoral Systems', *French Politics*, 4 (2006), 69–83.

<sup>17</sup> Butler, 'Relation of Seats to Votes'.

<sup>18</sup> Royal Commission on Electoral Systems, *Report*, Cd 5163 (London: HMSO, 1910).

<sup>19</sup> D. Butler, 'An Examination of the Results', in H. Nicholas, *The British General Election of 1950* (London: Macmillan, 1951), 306–33.

something of a bias in the Conservatives' favour.<sup>19</sup> However, it was two renowned statisticians at the London School of Economics, Maurice Kendall and Alan Stuart, who identified the statistical underpinning behind the law and in particular how the relationship between votes and seats under single-member plurality depends on the geographical distribution of party support.<sup>20</sup>

Analysis of the operation of the UK electoral system, or indeed of the election results more broadly, has never become as large a field of research endeavour as the individual decision to vote. But it did begin to blossom when the February 1974 election not only resulted in a hung parliament but one in which, first, most seats were won by the party that came second in votes and, second, the Liberals secured as much as a fifth of the vote. This result cast doubt on the continued force of both the subjective and mechanical effects behind Duverger's law. Ten years earlier one former Nuffield student, Michael Steed (Manchester University), had taken on the job of analysing the election results in the Nuffield studies and he paid particular attention to how the subjective effect could sometimes benefit third parties through 'tactical voting'.<sup>21</sup> After 1979 another Nuffield student, John Curtice, re-examined the operation of the cube law.<sup>22</sup> Since then the relationship between seats and votes has attracted the interest of a number of geographers from outside Oxford, including most notably Ron Johnston of Sheffield and subsequently Bristol Universities,<sup>23</sup> while the law itself has also secured the occasional attention of researchers from outside the UK.<sup>24</sup>

So Oxford played an important role in initiating research into all three key aspects of the electoral process in Britain. It initiated the use of nationwide social surveys to study the behaviour of individual voters, a form of research that now dominates the field and one in which electoral researchers throughout UK universities—along with much of the rest of the world—are heavily engaged. The university made a vital contribution to our understanding of how the electoral system works, a contribution that still frames much of the research undertaken in that field today. And finally, it initiated a series of studies of how elections are fought that, while relatively unique, have ensured

<sup>20</sup> M. Kendall and A. Stuart, 'The Law of Cubic Proportions in Election Results', *British Journal of Sociology*, 1 (1951), 183–97.

<sup>21</sup> See especially, M. Steed, 'The Results Analysed', in Butler and Kavanagh, *General Election of February 1974*, 313–39.

<sup>22</sup> J. Curtice and M. Steed, 'An Analysis of the Voting', in D. Butler and D. Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 1979* (London: Macmillan, 1980), 316–62; J. Curtice and M. Steed, 'Electoral Choice and the Production of Government: The Changing Operation of the Electoral System in the United Kingdom since 1955', *British Journal of Political Science*, 12 (1982), 249–98.

<sup>23</sup> R. Johnston, *Political, Electoral and Spatial Systems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979).

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, E. Tufte, 'The Relationship between Seats and Votes in Two-Party Systems', *American Political Science Review*, 67 (1973), 540–54; R. Taagepera and M. Shugart, *Seats and Votes: The Effects and Determinants of Electoral Systems* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989).

that researchers working many years later have had access to a valuable window on how elections past looked and felt at the time.

In combination that undoubtedly represents a considerable record of organizational and intellectual influence. But it still leaves the question of what contribution the research Oxford has undertaken and stimulated has made to our understanding of the role that British elections actually perform. It is to this question we now turn.

## UNDERSTANDING

If elections are to perform either of the two roles laid out earlier, they need above all to be national events in which parties debate and voters evaluate either the record of the incumbent government (together with the apparent ability of the opposition to do any better) or the policy promises being made by the parties. A central theme of the early Nuffield studies was that, despite their formal status as 600 or so separate constituency contests, British elections were indeed national affairs, as attested by the fact that the change in party support since the last election (or 'swing') was always much the same in Shetland as in St Ives. Indeed, much local campaigning was apparently a ritual that made little or no difference to any candidate's chances of election.<sup>25</sup>

What, however, seemed less clear was that election outcomes depended on what the parties said during the campaign itself. Butler was impressed not only by the apparent uniformity of the nation's verdict, but also by the fact that it appeared largely to have been set in stone long before the starting gun was fired.<sup>26</sup> The role of the promises made by the parties in their manifestos was not, he argued, to help voters to determine which of the parties' policy positions at this election was closest to their own views, but rather to provide a benchmark against which the incumbent government would be judged at the next.<sup>27</sup> Still, this observation did at least suggest that election campaigns helped voters cast a verdict on the record of the incumbent government, albeit only some years later.

Yet this portrayal of British election campaigns as a national ritual of little immediate consequence has been questioned. As we have already noted, the outcomes of the 1970 and February 1974 elections undermined the notion that the overall national mood never switched decisively during a campaign. Thereafter, the 1992 election produced another surprising result, though in

<sup>25</sup> A. Ranney, 'Review Article: Thirty Years of 'Psephology'', *British Journal of Political Science*, 6 (1976), 217–30.

<sup>26</sup> D. Butler, *The British General Election of 1951* (London: Macmillan, 1952), 3–4.

<sup>27</sup> Butler, 'Reflections'.

<sup>28</sup> A. Heath, R. Jowell, J. Curtice, and P. Clifford, 'False Trails and Faulty Explanations: How Late Swing Did Not Cost Labour the 1992 Election', in D. Broughton, D. Denver, P. Norris, and



truth the surprise may well have been occasioned by the failings of the opinion polls rather than any genuine movement of opinion during the campaign.<sup>28</sup> Meanwhile the 2010 election saw a dramatic upsurge in Liberal Democrat support following the first-ever televised leaders' debate, albeit that much of it had subsided by polling day.<sup>29</sup>

In truth, campaigns have probably always mattered. Although the early Columbia-style studies of the 1950s had uncovered little in the way of change in the overall distribution of preferences, they had found that as many as one in four voters changed their minds during the campaign. Their movements had simply been mutually cancelling. What is less straightforward is identifying what causes voters to change their minds during a campaign. One particular claim that has generated much controversy is that the messages sent out by Britain's particularly partisan (and usually pro-Conservative) press influence voters' choices. In his study of the 1987 campaign, William Miller argued newspapers did exercise such influence, and especially so amongst those relatively ill-informed about politics.<sup>30</sup> However, that view was questioned in subsequent work on the 1992 and 1997 campaigns, where the findings echoed the minimal effects thesis that had been backed by Trenaman and McQuail thirty years earlier.<sup>31</sup> Less controversially, Harold Clarke et al. have reported that voters are moved during campaigns by a variety of considerations, including both the parties' records and their promises, together with their evaluation of the party leaders.<sup>32</sup>

Meanwhile, the early Nuffield claim that voters shift in much the same way throughout the country, regardless of their location or the quality of the parties' local campaigning, has also been questioned. Even within the Nuffield series itself, Steed and subsequently Curtice and Steed noted that the northern half of the country was consistently less inclined to swing towards the

C. Rallings (eds), *British Elections and Parties Yearbook 1993* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), 116–28; J. Curtice, 'What Future for the Polls? The Lessons of the MRS Inquiry', *Scottish Affairs*, 10 (1995), 64–83.

<sup>29</sup> M. Pickup, J. Matthews, W. Jennings, R. Ford, and S. Fisher, 'Why Did the Polls Overestimate Liberal Democrat Support? Sources of Polling Error in the 2010 General Election', *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*, 21 (2011), 211–35.

<sup>30</sup> W. Miller, *Media and Voters* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

<sup>31</sup> J. Curtice and H. Semetko, 'Does it Matter What the Papers Say?', in A. Heath, R. Jowell, and J. Curtice with B. Taylor (eds), *Labour's Last Chance? The 1992 Election and Beyond* (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1994), 43–63; J. Curtice, 'Is *The Sun* Shining on Tony Blair? The Electoral Influence of Newspapers in Britain since 1992', *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, 2 (1997), 9–26; P. Norris, J. Curtice, M. Scammell, H. Semetko, and D. Sanders, *On Message: Communicating The Campaign* (London: Sage, 1999).

<sup>32</sup> H. Clarke, D. Sanders, M. Stewart, and P. Whiteley, *Political Choice in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>33</sup> M. Steed, 'An Analysis of the Results', in Butler and Pinto-Duschinsky, *General Election of 1970*, 386–415; Curtice and Steed, 'Electoral Choice'; J. Curtice and M. Steed, 'Proportionality and Exaggeration in the British Electoral System', *Electoral Studies*, 5 (1986), 209–28.

Conservatives than the southern half, while the obverse pattern was evident for Labour.<sup>33</sup> Meanwhile, as long ago as 1964 one detailed study of a constituency campaign argued the local efforts of the parties did make a difference; it was simply that they were difficult to identify because they cancelled each other out.<sup>34</sup> More recently a number of studies have suggested there is a relationship between local electoral performance and local organizational effort,<sup>35</sup> while incumbent MPs are now also thought capable of securing a potentially seat-saving personal vote.<sup>36</sup> However, the intensity of a party's organizational effort in a particular constituency is often determined nowadays by decisions made at the centre about where to concentrate resources, with an evident tendency to do so in 'marginal seats'.<sup>37</sup> We thus should be careful in presuming that the role played by local organizational effort is necessarily a straightforward indication of a 'de-nationalization' of the British electoral process.

Part of the backdrop to the renewed interest in the impact of election campaigns has been an apparent decline in the long-term anchors of electoral choice. In their path-breaking study, Butler and Stokes painted a picture of an electorate that was moved primarily by affective attachments forged in the cradle of the family and of social class rather than by detailed evaluations of either the records or the promises of the parties at a particular election.<sup>38</sup> They imported into Britain the Michigan concept of party identification, or partisan self-image as they preferred to call it, that is a more or less lifelong emotional attachment to a political party commonly passed on from parent to child. Although a voter might occasionally vote for someone other than the party with which they identify, they could be expected sooner or later to return to that political home. Meanwhile, both the two main parties were associated in the public mind with a particular class—Labour with the working class, the Conservatives with the middle class—while those living in predominantly

<sup>34</sup> R. Holt and J. Turner, *Political Parties in Action: The Battle for Baron's Court* (New York: Free Press, 1968).

<sup>35</sup> P. Whiteley and P. Seyd, 'Local Party Campaigning and Voting Behaviour in Britain', *Journal of Politics*, 56 (1994), 242–51; C. Pattie, R. Johnston, and E. Fieldhouse, 'Winning the Local Vote: The Effectiveness of Constituency Campaign Spending in Great Britain, 1983–1992', *American Political Science Review*, 89 (1995), 969–83; D. Denver and G. Hands, *Modern Constituency Electioneering* (London: Frank Cass, 1997).

<sup>36</sup> J. Curtice and M. Steed, 'Appendix 2: An Analysis of the Voting', in D. Butler and D. Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 1983* (London: Macmillan, 1984); B. Cain, J. Ferejohn, and M. Fiorina, *The Personal Vote* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987); D. Wood and P. Norton, 'Do Candidates Matter? Constituency Specific Vote Changes for Incumbent MPs 1983–1997', *Political Studies*, 40 (1992), 227–38.

<sup>37</sup> D. Denver, G. Hands, J. Fisher, and I. MacAllister, 'Constituency Campaigning in Britain 1992–2001: Centralisation and Modernisation', *Party Politics*, 9 (2003), 541–59; D. Denver and G. Hands, 'Labour's Targeted Constituency Campaigning: Nationally Directed or Locally Produced?', *Electoral Studies*, 23 (2004), 709–26.

<sup>38</sup> Butler and Stokes, *Political Change*.

working- or middle-class communities had the link between party and class reinforced by their everyday social environment. Indeed the link between the class to which people belonged and the party they supported appeared so strong that it led one Oxford political scientist, Peter Pulzer, to pen the most widely quoted aphorism about British voting behaviour, 'Class is the basis of British politics, all else is embellishment and detail.'<sup>39</sup>

Whether electoral choice was ever as firmly rooted in partisanship or class as Butler and Stokes suggested is, however, open to doubt. For example, even their own analyses showed that well over half changed their vote choice on at least one occasion between 1959 and 1970. But in any event, as they themselves acknowledged in the second edition of their book, by 1970 partisanship appeared to be on the wane. Indeed that process has continued apace ever since.<sup>40</sup> Whereas in 1964 no less than 44 per cent of voters said they felt very strongly attached to a political party, in 2010 only 12 per cent did so. And voters that no longer profess a strong attachment to a political party would appear to be voters who are more likely to change their minds—not only during an election campaign but also at other times—and in so doing to take into account both the records and the promises of the parties.<sup>41</sup>

Not only was partisanship apparently on the wane, but so also was that link between class and politics. The association was certainly notably weaker in 1970 than it had been in 1964, and loosened once again in 1979.<sup>42</sup> At the same time the two elections of 1974 saw the avowedly non-class-based Liberal Party make a significant breakthrough. This weakening of the link between class and party was widely interpreted as evidence of a change in the motivation of voters. It was argued that fundamental social changes, such as increasing affluence, greater social mobility brought about by the expansion of higher education and white-collar employment, and the spread of owner occupation meant that the class divide was becoming less important in determining people's everyday lives—and thus in shaping their political outlook too,

<sup>39</sup> P. Pulzer, *Political Representation and Elections in Britain* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1967).

<sup>40</sup> I. Crewe, B. Särilvik, and J. Alt, 'Partisan Dealignment in Britain 1964–1974', *British Journal of Political Science*, 7 (1977), 129–90; I. Crewe, 'Great Britain', in I. Crewe and D. Denver (eds), *Electoral Change in Western Democracies* (London: Croom Helm, 1985); I. Crewe and K. Thomson, 'Party Loyalties: Dealignment or Realignment?', in G. Evans and P. Norris (eds), *Critical Elections: British Voters and Parties in Long-Term Perspective* (London: Sage, 1999), 64–86.

<sup>41</sup> R. Rose and I. McAllister, *Voters Begin To Choose* (London: Sage, 1986).

<sup>42</sup> A. Heath, R. Jowell, and J. Curtice, *How Britain Votes* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1985).

<sup>43</sup> D. Robertson, *Class and the British Electorate* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984); M. Franklin, *The Decline of Class Voting in Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985); J. Kelley, I. McAllister, and A. Mughan, 'The Decline of Class Revisited: Class and Party in England, 1964–79', *American Political Science Review*, 79 (1985), 719–37.

leaving them more willing and able to focus on the records and promises of the parties.<sup>43</sup>

These observations have ensured that rather different portrayals of the British voter have emerged since Butler and Stokes concluded their work. In their analysis of electoral change during the 1970s, Särilvik and Crewe emphasized the importance of voters' issue positions in shaping both vote choice and electoral volatility.<sup>44</sup> They suggested, for example, that the Conservatives did not simply win in 1979 because of disaffection with the economic record of the incumbent Labour government, but also because the electorate broadly supported the Conservatives' prescription for improving the then-ailing British economy. They noted too that voters in the centre of the ideological spectrum were more likely to change their vote than those whose views were closer to the traditional issue positions of the Labour and Conservative parties. Thus, although voting for the resurgent Liberals appeared to be more of a protest vote than a positive endorsement of Liberal policy,<sup>45</sup> it seemed that, overall, issues did play an important role in British voting behaviour after all.

For Anthony Heath et al., however, electoral choice could not be adequately understood simply by looking at the motivations of voters. One needed instead to understand the interaction between those motivations and the choice provided by the parties.<sup>46</sup> This perspective led this Oxford-centred group to question the widespread presumption that changes in the strength of the link between class and vote necessarily reflected changes in the importance of class in voters' minds. Instead they pointed to changes in the offerings put forward by the political parties.<sup>47</sup> Thus, for example, Labour's particularly heavy loss of support amongst working-class voters in 1979 could have been occasioned by that party's failure to protect working-class interests while in office. Equally, Heath et al. were of the view that Labour's relative success in

<sup>44</sup> B. Särilvik and I. Crewe, *Decade of Dealignment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). On the importance of issue voting see also H. Himmelweit, P. Humphreys, and M. Jaegar, *How Voters Decide*, 2nd edn (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1985).

<sup>45</sup> P. Lemieux, 'Political Issues and Liberal Support in the February 1974 General Election', *Political Studies*, 25 (1977), 323–42.

<sup>46</sup> J. Curtice, 'The State of Election Studies: Mid-life Crisis or New Youth?', *Electoral Studies*, 21 (2002), 161–8.

<sup>47</sup> Heath et al., *How Britain Votes*; G. Evans, A. Heath, and C. Payne, 'Modelling Trends in the Class/Party Relationship 1964–87', *Electoral Studies*, 10 (1991), 99–117; A. Heath, R. Jowell, J. Curtice, G. Evans, J. Field, and S. Witherspoon, *Understanding Political Change: The British Voter 1964–1987* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1991); A. Heath, R. Jowell, and J. Curtice, *The Rise of New Labour* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); G. Evans and J. Tilley, 'How Parties Shape Class Politics', *British Journal of Political Science*, 42 (2012), 137–61.

<sup>48</sup> Key critics were I. Crewe, 'On the Death and Resurrection of Class Voting: Some Comments on *How Britain Votes*', *Political Studies*, 34 (1986), 620–38; P. Dunleavy, 'Class Dealignment in Britain Revisited: Why Odds Ratios Give Odd Results', *West European Politics*, 10 (1987), 400–19, and I. Crewe, 'Changing Votes and Unchanging Voters', *Electoral Studies*, 11 (1992), 335–45, while an important defence of Heath et al.'s position was D. Weakliem, 'Class and Party in Britain, 1964–1983', *Sociology*, 23 (1989), 285–97.

attracting middle-class (and indeed centre-right) voters between 1992 and 1997 reflected the ideological repositioning of the party as 'New Labour'. Their arguments provoked one of the fiercer debates in the field in recent years.<sup>48</sup>

However, according to Heath et al., parties do not matter only insofar as they might occasionally reposition themselves ideologically. After all, such events are relatively rare. Parties also matter because much rests on their ability to persuade the electorate that they are capable of delivering on the promises they have made.<sup>49</sup> Rather than being motivated by policy promises or a party's record, what voters seek are both in combination—they will vote for a party whose policies are closest to their own views so long as that party is thought capable of delivering on its promises. Meanwhile, perceptions of the competence of a party vary much more from one election to the next than perceptions of a party's ideological position, and typically do so irrespective of voters' own ideological preferences. Consequently, contrary to the claims of Särilvik and Crewe, changes in the level of party support usually occur more or less evenly across the ideological spectrum.<sup>50</sup>

The idea that voters are motivated primarily by perceptions of the competence of the parties has, however, been taken up with even greater enthusiasm by the most recent Essex-based British Election Study team.<sup>51</sup> For them, in an era in which there is not only little social or partisan anchoring of the vote but also little ideological difference between the parties,<sup>52</sup> electoral choice has become—if it was not always—what Donald Stokes had dubbed fifty years earlier as 'valence politics', that is, a search for the party that seems best able to achieve an end on whose desirability more or less everyone is agreed.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, in Clarke et al.'s view rather than being a long-term, stable, affective attachment, party identification is, following Morris Fiorina,<sup>54</sup> a gradually evolving and updated perception of the perceived competence of the parties, including their ability to handle the economy, a competence that one member of the team, David Sanders, had particularly emphasized in time series analysis of the opinion vote intentions and economic perception

<sup>49</sup> Heath et al., *Rise of New Labour*.

<sup>50</sup> Heath et al., *How Britain Votes*; Heath et al., *Understanding Political Change*.

<sup>51</sup> Clarke et al., *Political Choice*; H. Clarke, D. Sanders, M. Stewart, and P. Whiteley, *Performance Politics and the British Voter* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>52</sup> J. Barra and I. Budge, 'Party Policy and Ideology: Still New Labour?', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 54 (2001), 590–606.

<sup>53</sup> D. Stokes, 'Spatial Models of Party Competition', *American Political Science Review*, 57, 368–77. See also J. Green and S. Hobolt (2008), 'Owning the Issue Agenda: Party Strategies and Vote Choices in British Elections', *Electoral Studies*, 27 (2008), 460–76.

<sup>54</sup> M. Fiorina, *Retrospective Voting in American National Elections* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981).

<sup>55</sup> D. Sanders, H. Ward, and D. Marsh with A. Fletcher, 'Governmental Popularity and the Falklands War: A Reassessment', *British Journal of Political Science*, 17 (1987), 281–313; D. Sanders, 'Government Popularity and the Next General Election', *Political Quarterly*, 62 (1991), 235–61.

in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>55</sup> In addition, according to Clarke et al., voters are also influenced by their evaluations of the party leaders, that is, the perceived personal competence of the individual in whom the country's fate would rest for the next four or five years.

This view has, in turn, not gone unchallenged. The Oxford political scientist Geoff Evans in particular has questioned whether perceptions of the economic competence of the parties influence party identification rather than vice versa,<sup>56</sup> while the idea that all recent current disputes in British politics, such as the 2003 war in Iraq, were simply valence issues can be doubted. But certainly few would disagree that perceptions of competence play an important role in how British voters choose, and this means that to some degree at least elections do help hold governments to account.

It was thus somewhat ironic that, just when it seemed that voters were behaving in a manner consistent with the idea that elections are an occasion for the making and unmaking of governments, in 2010 the single-member plurality electoral system should, for only the second time in the post-war era, have failed to deliver an overall majority to any one party, resulting in the first coalition government since 1945.<sup>57</sup> However, it had long been apparent that Britain's electoral system was no longer conforming to the expectations of the 'cube law' or Duverger's law.<sup>58</sup> Third parties were consistently winning seats in substantial numbers, while the system had long failed to exaggerate the lead of the largest party over the second party to the same extent or in an as even-handed a fashion as anticipated by the 'cube law'.

In part the rise of third parties was the result of developments on the periphery of the UK—the breaking of the link between the Conservatives and Northern Ireland Unionists in the wake of the outbreak of the Troubles in 1969, together with breakthroughs by nationalist parties in Scotland and Wales from the late 1960s onwards. The newly emergent parties on the periphery might be relatively small, but because their vote was geographically concentrated, they were still able to win seats.<sup>59</sup> In contrast, the vote of the Liberals, and subsequently the Alliance and the Liberal Democrats, largely lacked geographical concentration, but that repeatedly failed to dissuade a fifth of voters or more from backing a party that struggled to convert votes into seats. Moreover, as we have already noted, Steed had repeatedly pointed out in

<sup>56</sup> G. Evans and R. Andersen, 'The Political Conditioning of Economic Perceptions', *Journal of Politics*, 68 (2006), 194–207.

<sup>57</sup> J. Curtice, 'So What Went Wrong with the Electoral System? The 2010 Election Result and the Debate about Electoral Reform', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 63 (2010), 623–38.

<sup>58</sup> J. Curtice, 'Neither Representative nor Accountable: First-Past-The-Post in Britain', in B. Grofman, A. Blais, and S. Bowler (eds), *Duverger's Law of Plurality Voting* (New York: Springer, 2009).

<sup>59</sup> G. Gudgin and P. Taylor, *Seats, Votes and the Spatial Organisation of Elections* (London: Pion, 1979).

the Nuffield series that once a third party had secured second place in a constituency it could hope to benefit from the psychology of Duverger's law.<sup>60</sup> In any event by the late 1990s, thanks to both tactical voting and the party's own organizational efforts, the Liberal Democrats' vote became more geographically concentrated, enabling them to enjoy higher levels of representation than at any time since the 1920s.<sup>61</sup>

Meanwhile it was work arising out of the Nuffield study series that first identified the increasing inability of the electoral system to exaggerate the lead of the largest party over the second party.<sup>62</sup> As noted earlier, from the 1950s onwards Conservative support became increasingly concentrated in the southern half of Britain, Labour support in the north. A rural/urban divide also opened up.<sup>63</sup> By the 1970s this meant party support had become much more geographically polarized, leaving fewer seats marginal between Conservative and Labour, and thus fewer seats likely to change hands as a result of a swing from, say, a narrow Conservative lead nationally to a small Labour one. In tandem with the increase in third-party representation, this development meant the electoral system could no longer be relied upon to deliver an overall majority in the event of a narrow outcome in votes.<sup>64</sup>

As it happened, however, while they had been common in the 1950s and 1960s, such narrow outcomes were largely notable by their absence from 1979 onwards. Until 2005 the lead of the largest party over the second party was always more than five points. Yet even in 2005, one party, Labour, still secured a safe overall majority, thanks to a further development that was pointed out in the Nuffield studies but which was analysed most extensively by Ron Johnston and others—the emergence in the 1990s of a substantial 'bias' in

<sup>60</sup> See, for example, Steed, 'Results Analysed', in *General Election of February 1974*; J. Curtice and M. Steed, 'Appendix 2: The Results Analysed', in D. Butler and D. Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 1997* (London: Macmillan, 1997), 295–325; G. Evans, J. Curtice, and P. Norris, 'New Labour, New Tactical Voting?', in D. Denver, J. Fisher, P. Cowley, and C. Pattie (eds), *British Elections and Parties Review, Volume 8* (London: Frank Cass, 1998), 65–79.

<sup>61</sup> A. Russell and E. Fieldhouse, *Neither Left nor Right? The Liberal Democrats and the Electorate* (Manchester: Manchester University Press).

<sup>62</sup> Curtice and Steed, 'Electoral Choice'; Curtice and Steed, 'Proportionality and Exaggeration'.

<sup>63</sup> Steed, 'Analysis of the Results', in Butler and Pinto-Duschinsky, *General Election of 1970*.

<sup>64</sup> A. Blau, 'A Quadruple Whammy for First-Past-the-Post', *Electoral Studies*, 23 (2004), 431–53.

<sup>65</sup> J. Curtice, 'The Hidden Surprise: The British Electoral System in 1992', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 45 (1992), 466–74; J. Curtice and M. Steed, 'Appendix 2: The Results Analysed', in D. Butler and D. Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 1992* (London: Macmillan, 1992), 322–62; Curtice and Steed, 'The Results Analysed', in Butler and Kavanagh, *General Election of 1997*; J. Curtice, 'The Electoral System: Biased to Blair?', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 54 (2001), 803–14; R. Johnston, D. Rossiter, and C. Pattie, 'Integrating and Decomposing the Sources of Partisan Bias: Brookes' Method and the Impact of Redistricting in Great Britain', *Electoral Studies*, 18 (1999), 367–78; R. Johnston, D. Rossiter, C. Pattie, and D. Dorling, 'Labour Electoral

Labour's favour.<sup>65</sup> The system had come to treat Labour more favourably than the Conservatives because both the electorate and the percentage turnout in the average Labour-held seat was lower than in the average Conservative one, while, in sharp contrast to the position in the 1950s, Labour's vote was now the more efficiently distributed.

Thus our understanding of the workings of the British electoral system is very different now from the 1950s. We have come to appreciate that its ability to help sustain a two-party system of alternating government depends on both the geography of party support and the psychology of the voter—and that neither is guaranteed to facilitate the realization of Duverger's law. Voters may vote nowadays in a manner that helps ensure governments are held to account, but they can no longer be sure the electoral system will ensure they play the determining role in the making and unmaking of governments. Where once some argued that elections in Britain neither held governments to account nor delivered a representative assembly, now it would seem they provide an uneasy mixture of the two.

## EVALUATION AND THE FUTURE

So Oxford not only played a particularly influential role in instigating academic research into elections in Britain, but it stimulated a field in which further research has cast fresh light on how elections are fought and decided, and thus on the role that they play in the country's parliamentary democracy. However, 'fresh light' is not necessarily the same as intellectual advance; it could represent no more than the presentation of old wine in recycled bottles, as different scholars interpret much the same evidence in a different fashion. Certainly, for much of the last fifty years the study of voting behaviour in particular has tended to be dominated by much the same question—is it primarily the product of such social psychological constructs as affect and identity, or by the more utilitarian motivations from economics such as issue proximity and performance evaluations?<sup>66</sup> It is a question on which little consensus has emerged, let alone the development of new intellectual frameworks for research to address.

Part of the problem lies in the difficulty of unravelling the chain of causation in how voters decide. Such questions as, 'Do voters like a party's policies because they identify with it, or do they identify with a party because they agree with its policy positions?' are inherently difficult to unravel, yet are

Landslides and the Changing Efficiency of Voting Distributions', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 27: 336–61.

<sup>66</sup> B. Barry, *Sociologists, Economists and Democracy* (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1970).



central to many of the disputes about voting behaviour. One possible path towards a solution is the conduct of multi-wave panel studies that open up some prospect of being able to identify which changes first, identity or issue positions, though as yet increased access to such panels has not served to bring about much consensus, not least perhaps because to some degree both processes are at work. Another is to conduct experimental work in a controlled setting, an approach in which until recently Oxford has not been particularly active, but one for which Nuffield does now provide the necessary facilities. These have, for example, been used by Sara Hobolt et al. to examine how voters attribute credit and blame in a system of multilevel government—that is, the kind of system that the UK now increasingly resembles thanks to devolution and membership of the European Union.<sup>67</sup>

Yet our understanding of elections will not be advanced adequately simply by yet more elaborate studies of the motivations and behaviour of individual voters. As this essay has emphasized, elections depend not only on voters but also on parties and electoral systems. However, for as long as we confine our study of elections to a single country, our ability to study either of these two influences is limited. Within any one country, the party system, party strategy and the electoral system are typically all constants whose influence is thus potentially so pervasive that it cannot easily be discerned. Only if we can compare countries with different party systems, and ones in which different strategies are being pursued in the context of different electoral systems, can that influence be unmasked.

In this chapter our story has primarily been about how Oxford has inspired and influenced the study of elections in and about Britain (and those for the House of Commons elections rather than the increasing plethora of elections to other institutions in the UK). That reflects not only the university's location but also the fact that for many years, electoral studies were everywhere primarily a national-level activity. However, more recently comparative study of what parties put before voters, how electoral choice is shaped by both parties and political institutions, and how different electoral

<sup>67</sup> S. Hobolt, J. Tilley, and J. Wittrock, 'Listening to the Government: How Information Shapes Responsibility Attributions', *Political Behavior*, 25 (2013), 153–74.

<sup>68</sup> Examples include A. Lijphart, *Electoral Systems and Party Systems: A Study of Twenty-Seven Democracies, 1945–90* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); H.-D. Klingemann (ed.), *The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), and R. Dalton and C. Anderson (eds), *Citizens, Context and Choice: How Context Shapes Citizens' Electoral Choices* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>69</sup> See, for example, R. Duch and R. Stevenson, *The Economic Vote: How Political and Economic Institutions Condition Election Results* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); S. Fisher, L. Lessard-Phillips, S. Hobolt, and J. Curtice, 'Disengaging Voters: Do Plurality Systems Discourage the Less Knowledgeable from Voting?', *Electoral Studies*, 27 (2008), 89–104, and S. Fisher and S. Hobolt, 'Coalition Government and Electoral Accountability', *Electoral Studies*, 29 (2010), 299–307.

systems translate votes into seats, has begun to blossom.<sup>68</sup> Oxford has not been absent from that endeavour,<sup>69</sup> and indeed has played an important role in developing our understanding of the electoral process in Central and Eastern Europe following the collapse of the Berlin Wall,<sup>70</sup> but it cannot be said to have been the main instigator of such activity as it was in the early days of the development of the field in Britain. The university's challenge

<sup>70</sup> G. Evans and S. Whitefield, 'Identifying the Bases of Party Competition in Eastern Europe', *British Journal of Political Science*, 23 (1993), 521–48; R. Rohrschneider and S. Whitefield, *The Strain of Representation: How Parties Represent Diverse Voters in Western and Eastern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).  
now, in common with electoral scholars throughout the UK, is to ensure it does not get left behind as this particular field of political science goes global.



## EDITORS' NOTE

In this chapter Iain McLean critically examines a century of constitutional analysis in Oxford and elsewhere. He argues that the celebrated constitutional law academic Albert Venn Dicey—even though he was, and remains, something of an academic megastar in terms of fame and citation—got modern constitutional analysis in Oxford off to an intellectually false start a century or so ago by presenting his own political preferences (notably over the status of the union in the United Kingdom) as constitutional truths, while the LSE's alternative strain of constitutional analysis simply involved different political preferences. So the implication of McLean's argument is that, while Oxford arguably led the field of constitutional studies in the UK at that time (or at the very least was one of the leaders) on any citation count or similar measure of intellectual and indeed policy impact, it somehow led the field in the wrong direction.

The real intellectual breakthrough in twentieth-century constitutional analysis in the UK, according to McLean, was made far away from Oxford in very different academic surroundings and lay in the discovery of the 'median voter theorem' by Duncan Black, which (together with the parallel discoveries of Kenneth Arrow) revolutionized the fundamentals of social choice theory and, by providing an analytic discipline to underlie its subject matter, paved the way for a whole generation of constitutional analysis with what McLean argues to be a far more robust theoretical basis than applied to Dicey's work.

McLean's bold argument challenges some long-established conventional views about the significance of the work done by a number of the UK's major figures in constitutional analysis in the first half of the twentieth century. He suggests that low relational distance, as discussed in the introductory chapter, may have played a part in accounting for the blind spots that meant Oxford was slow even to recognize the fundamental significance of the median voter theorem for modern political analysis.

# Constitutionalism since Dicey

*Iain McLean*

## AN OXFORD-LED CODIFICATION: THE MAINSTREAM VIEW

What is still the mainstream view among lawyers of the British constitution was forged, largely in Oxford, for half a century ending in 1914. Although forged by lawyers and historians, it also forms a core part of what we now call political science. Rooted in the English revolution of the seventeenth century, in which Parliament gradually asserted more and more powers over the monarch, it uses parliamentary sovereignty as both an analytical tool and a normative device.

The doctrine reached its fullest development in the work of A. V. Dicey (1835–1922, in 1910 a fellow of All Souls College, Oxford and recently retired as Vinerian professor of English law in Oxford University). Three of Dicey's works may be classed as political science: his *Introduction to the Study of the Law of the Constitution* (1885, 8th edition with a long new introduction 1915); *Lectures on the Relation between Law and Public Opinion in England during the Nineteenth Century* (1905); and, with R. S. Rait, *Thoughts on the Union between England and Scotland* (1920). His most famous work, the *Law of the Constitution*, continued to be reissued in many posthumous editions and is still actively cited: a recent search in the *Publish or Perish* database found over 1,000 academic citations of it since 2000 (last searched 3 May 2013). Not bad for a work published well over a century ago.

Following Dicey, lawyers like to cite the doctrine of parliamentary sovereignty in a paradoxical sentence: *the UK Parliament can do anything, except bind its successor*. The idea is that Parliament, appropriately defined, is the supreme legal authority in the United Kingdom. It is omnicompetent: its statutes override everything else, including common-law rules, judicial decisions, and executive actions whenever the latter may conflict with it.

<sup>1</sup> For example, Treaty of Union 1706, Article VI as recited in the Act of Union 6 Anne c.11: *That all parts of the United Kingdom for ever from and after the Union shall have the same*

The paradox arises because this is true of every Parliament. Therefore one thing any Parliament may do is repeal a previous statute, even if the earlier statute contained language saying that such and such provision is ‘for ever’.<sup>1</sup> Hence, the Parliament of 1707 cannot bind its successor of 2013.

For Dicey, or, as he puts it, ‘in the mouth of a lawyer’, ‘Parliament’ means the Queen-in-Parliament. A rule becomes a statute, trumping all other forms of rule, when it has been enacted by both Houses of Parliament and received Royal Assent.<sup>2</sup>

Analytically, this doctrine serves to give a judge a hierarchy of rules, with UK statutes at the top and everything else below. It also has normative force, although Dicey and his followers sometimes speak as if it is a purely analytical rule. Its normative force is to accord Parliament supremacy over the executive; over judges; and over foreign lawgivers. For Dicey and his followers, parliamentary sovereignty in this guise is the guardian of British liberty.

#### AN OXFORD BLIND ALLEY 1912–20

Unfortunately, Dicey’s oeuvre, taken as a whole, was incoherent. This section of this chapter will argue that the political study of constitutions in Oxford, and to a lesser extent in UK universities as whole, was impaired by a wrong turning taken by the leading figures in the subject at the time of the appointment of Oxford’s first lecturer in politics. The incoherent constitutional arguments of Dicey have been a successful failure in the sense that they are still discussed, especially by lawyers, but they obscure rather than clarify constitutional argument. To clarify it, new approaches were needed. These approaches found their way into British academia by various odd and sidelong routes.

As pointed out in other chapters in this volume, politics was studied in UK universities for centuries before the first Oxford appointment with ‘politics’ in its title was made in 1910. Two of the enduring great books of politics were written by *Oxford men* as they used to be called: Thomas Hobbes’s *Leviathan* and John Locke’s *Second Treatise of Government*. They endure for multiple reasons. One is the bravery and sweep of their constitutional analysis. Hobbes was braver and more original than Locke, for all that Hobbes is regarded as a

*Allowances Encouragements and Drawbacks and be under the same prohibitions restrictions and regulations of Trade and liable to the same Customs and Duties on Import and Export And that the Allowances Encouragements and Drawbacks prohibitions restrictions and regulations of Trade and the Customs and Duties on Import and Export settled in England when the Union commences shall from and after the Union take place throughout the whole United Kingdom.*

<sup>2</sup> Alternatively, if it has been enacted by the House of Commons after overriding Lords’ objections according to the procedures laid down in the Parliament Acts 1911 and 1949, and has received Royal Assent.

defender of absolutism and Locke as a pioneer of liberal constitutionalism. But they are both more interesting when they are wrong than most of us are when we are right. Has the academic study of constitutions returned to the level set by Hobbes and Locke?

They were both in the real world. As an associate of the 'Great Tew circle', Hobbes tried to persuade his royalist friends to produce better arguments for monarchy than Charles I used.<sup>3</sup> When he published *Leviathan* in 1651, he emphasized in the 'Review and Conclusion' that his argument for obedience to an undivided sovereign applied as much to Lord Protector Cromwell as it did to a king. Late in life, he was nevertheless protected by Charles II from those who held the notorious atheist Hobbes responsible for the Plague and Fire of London. Locke was the special adviser of the first and third Earls of Shaftesbury, a government adviser on the creation of the Carolina colonies, and ideologue of the Glorious Revolution of 1688. Both Hobbes and Locke, therefore, were constitutional advisers as well as first-rank political theorists.

Oxford men (not yet then any women) were also prominent constitutional advisers at the time when the first Oxford politics appointment was made. They included historians, geographers, and lawyers, all doing what we might now class as political science. This section focuses on Dicey and on Sir William Anson (1843–1914; in 1911 Warden of All Souls and MP for Oxford University; shortly to become constitutional tutor to the future Edward VIII).

In addition to his scholarly works, Dicey produced six excoriating polemics on contemporary British politics, whose style and subject may be gleaned from some of the titles: *England's Case Against Home Rule* (1886), *Letters on Unionist Delusions* (1887), *A Leap in the Dark* (1893), and *A Fool's Paradise* (1913).<sup>4</sup> Dicey described himself as

on the point of unionism a fanatic; it is a case in which a good deal more fanaticism would do a great deal of good.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> S. Mortimer, 'Great Tew circle (act. 1633–1639).' In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, ed. Lawrence Goldman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, May 2011), <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/theme/69884>>, accessed 31 October 2011.

<sup>4</sup> A. V. Dicey, *England's Case Against Home Rule* (London: John Murray, 1886); *Letters on Unionist Delusions* (London: The Spectator, 1887); *A Leap in the Dark: A Criticism of the Principles of Home Rule as Illustrated by the Bill of 1893* (London: John Murray, 1893; 2nd edn, 1911); *A Fool's Paradise: Being a Constitutionalist's Criticism on [sic] the Home Rule Bill of 1912* (London: John Murray, 1912).

<sup>5</sup> AVD to Walter Long, MP, 16 April 1913. Long MSS BL Add. Mss. 62046.

<sup>6</sup> R. A. Cosgrove, 'Dicey, Albert Venn (1835–1922)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and B. Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). Online edn, ed. Lawrence Goldman, January 2008, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/32811>>, accessed 28 October 2011.

As his otherwise bland notice in the *Dictionary of National Biography* states, 'Personal generosity of spirit did not extend to politics, where proponents of views contrary to his own drew fierce criticism.'<sup>6</sup>

Dicey's self-confessed fanaticism was intended to preserve the Union of Great Britain and Ireland at all costs. He has been labelled a *primordial Unionist*.<sup>7</sup> There were instrumental reasons to support the Union. Were Ireland to get a looser association with the rest of the UK, that would set a bad example to the non-white peoples of the British Empire. Indians, especially, might start demanding the looser association that they had had before the UK took over the government of India from the East India Company in 1858. Equally, the Empire was good for British jobs. The English upper classes could govern New South Wales; the Scottish middle classes could navigate them there and tend them when they fell ill; the working class could hope to emigrate there. Also, Unionists feared that a devolved Ireland might become a Roman Catholic theocracy that would oppress the Protestants of Ulster. But the fury of Dicey and others against the very mild degree of Home Rule proposed for Ireland can only plausibly be traced to something deep down, primordial: the Union must be preserved at all costs *because it was there*.

Dicey, together with Anson, the Conservative Party under Andrew Bonar Law, and the advisers of King George V, believed two incompatible things at once: (1) that Ireland must forever remain part of the United Kingdom, returning members to the UK Parliament; (2) when those members contributed to a majority for Home Rule, they must be ignored. The Irish Party had been formed in 1880; in every election from 1885 to December 1910 it contributed an impregnable bloc of about eighty-five MPs whose sole legislative demand was for Home Rule. In the Parliaments of 1892, January 1910, and December 1910 the Irish Party members were pivotal; they were therefore in a position to demand Home Rule as a condition of cooperating with any minority governing party. In the Parliament of December 1910 the Irish Party held a narrow majority of seats in Ulster, almost every seat in Ireland's three other historical provinces, and the Scotland division of Liverpool.

As noted in Simon Green's chapter, the constitutional tutor of the Prince of Wales wrote to *The Times* after the Curragh mutiny of 1914 (in which Army officers stated that they would resign rather than obey any orders to protect

<sup>7</sup> I. McLean and A. McMillan, *State of the Union: Unionism and the Alternatives in the United Kingdom since 1707* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 122–34; I. McLean, *What's Wrong with the British Constitution?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 158.

<sup>8</sup> I.e., signatories, some of them in blood, of the Ulster Covenant of 1912, who pledged themselves to 'us[e] all means which may be found necessary to defeat the present conspiracy to set up a Home Rule Parliament in Ireland', A. T. Q Stewart, *The Ulster Crisis* (London: Faber & Faber, 1967), 62. The title was derived from the Scottish Presbyterian covenants of 1637 and 1643.



arms dumps in Protestant Ulster from paramilitary raids). Anson's letter stated

If the Covenanters<sup>8</sup> meet [the Government of Ireland Bill] with armed resistance, I for one believe, with a conviction which no results of a Referendum or a General Election can alter, that they are justified in their resistance. (Letter to *The Times*, 31 March 1914, from *Times Online* database)

Green's chapter also suggests that the first Oxford lecturer was rapidly upgraded to professor because he had worked in Ireland. Dicey and Anson seem to have assumed without question (and incorrectly) that he would share their world view because he was a Scots Protestant. In the Dicey/Anson world view, 'the people' retained a right to rebel against a tyrannical government, even when such a government held a majority of seats in the House of Commons. In the main text of *Law of the Constitution*, Dicey had written:

Should the Dentists Act, 1878, unfortunately contradict the terms of the Act of Union, the Act of Union would be *pro tanto* repealed.<sup>9</sup>

However, in the long 1915 introduction he had written:

Coalitions, log-rolling, and parliamentary intrigues are in England diminishing the moral and political faith in the House of Commons. Some means must, many Englishmen believe, be found for the diminution of evils which are under a large electorate the natural, if not the necessary, outcome of our party system. The obvious corrective is to confer upon the people a veto which may restrict the unbounded power of a parliamentary majority.<sup>10</sup>

Some have argued that these statements are not contradictory, on the grounds that the former refers to a legal doctrine and the latter to Dicey's political views.<sup>11</sup> The legal doctrine is said to be addressed to judges, and supplies a set of rules about rules (what H. L. A. Hart—Oxford Professor of Jurisprudence and the leading UK legal theorist of his time—was to describe as a 'rule of recognition'<sup>12</sup>). It enables a judge to decide what is supreme law. If successive Parliaments have passed conflicting supreme laws, Dicey's legal doctrine gives the judge the rule: *the later overrides the earlier, because Parliament cannot bind its successor*. The year 1878 is later than the year 1707; therefore, to whatever extent the Dentists Act 1878 contradicts the Act of Union 1707, the later Act must be followed.

<sup>9</sup> A. V. Dicey, *Introduction to the Study of the Law of the Constitution*, 8th edn with a new introduction (London: Macmillan, 1915), 141.

<sup>10</sup> Dicey, *Law of the Constitution*, xcvi–xcix.

<sup>11</sup> This paragraph attempts to paraphrase the argument of V. Bogdanor, 'The Consistency of Dicey: A Reply to McLean and McMillan', *Public Law* (2008), 19–20.

<sup>12</sup> H. L. A. Hart, *The Concept of Law* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 92–107.

<sup>13</sup> Dicey, *Law of the Constitution*, 31.

Dicey encouraged this dualism himself:

The duty, in short, of an English professor of law is to state what are the laws that form part of the constitution, to arrange them in their order, to explain their meaning, and to exhibit where possible their logical connections.<sup>13</sup>

Political opinions therefore don't enter into it. A foreigner or Scotsman might make this mistake, but an English professor of law must never do so.

However, in a country that lacks a codified constitution, stating what laws form part of the constitution is inherently normative. From 1886 onwards, Dicey's selection of laws that formed part of the constitution was inextricable from his political opinions. That is why Dicey's last book, co-authored by the Historiographer-Royal for Scotland,<sup>14</sup> is so fascinating. The Act of Union 1707 created Great Britain. For Dicey the legal theorist it might be trumped by the Dentists Act 1878. To Dicey the primordial Unionist it is a foundational statute. It contains several sections which are expressly declared as binding successive parliaments 'for ever'. Two of these, in ss. 2 and 3, are the establishment of the (Presbyterian) Church of Scotland and the (episcopal) Church of England. Dicey and Rait call these 'not necessarily futile' and 'not unmeaning'.<sup>15</sup> Their double negatives are eloquently feeble. In 1953 the most senior Scottish judge—a former Unionist MP—said witheringly:

[The Act of Union] contain[s] some clauses which expressly reserve to the Parliament of Great Britain powers of subsequent modification, and other clauses which either contain no such power or emphatically exclude subsequent alteration by declarations that the provision shall be fundamental and unalterable in all time coming, or declaration of like effect. I have never been able to understand how it is possible to reconcile with elementary canons of construction the adoption by the English constitutional theorists of the same attitude to these markedly different types of provisions. (Cooper LP in *MacCormick v. Lord Advocate* [1953] S.C. 396, at p. 411)

That should have been the last word on Dicey. Unfortunately, it has not been.

## CONSTITUTIONALISM STARTS TO CREEP BACK

Thus at the foundation of the Oxford undergraduate school of Philosophy, Politics, and Economics ('Modern Greats'; now universally 'PPE') in 1920, the study of constitutionalism in British academe was in confusion. Dicey and Anson were no Hobbes and Locke. Their contradictions were unresolved.

<sup>14</sup> A. V. Dicey and R. S. Rait, *Thoughts on the Scottish Union* (London: Macmillan, 1920). There is no Historiographer-Royal for the Rest of the UK.

<sup>15</sup> Dicey and Rait, *Scottish Union*, 252–3.

They had encouraged a *coup d'état* against the government elected in December 1910. (Maybe that makes them Lockean, but Locke used better arguments.) Constitutionalism (including advice to princes) did not find its way into PPE until after World War II, as mentioned in Rodney Barker's chapter.

One of the schemes which got nowhere during the war was a joint degree in politics, economics, and law. Had that got anywhere, the return of constitutionalism to UK political science might have come sooner. Rather, the initiative for PPE came from philosophers who seem to have been looking for alternative pairings for their subject rather than the long-established pairing with classical languages and literature. The first PPE curriculum included a compulsory paper in 'British political and constitutional history' and various options in comparative government.<sup>16</sup> The historians and lawyers who taught constitutions tended to mistake England for Britain.

Of course, Oxford was not an island entire of itself. Some developments elsewhere in the UK are discussed in Barker's chapter. And the subject was in much better health in the United States, where the American Political Science Association had been founded in 1903. American political scientists had been borrowing from the Scottish Enlightenment since the days of Jefferson and Madison.<sup>17</sup> For constitutionalism to revive in British political science, it had to overcome numerous intellectual, class, and geographical challenges. The revival of constitutional political science in UK universities is due to a number of scholars, mostly from the periphery of the UK.

Scots were better placed than others to see above and beyond Dicey. W. J. M. Mackenzie (1909–96) was the son of a successful Scots lawyer, who although he graduated in classics from Oxford spent most of his career in Manchester and Glasgow. He was the first British political scientist since Hobbes to see that game theory had something to contribute to the subject.<sup>18</sup> He reportedly said, 'Political science started going wrong when Dicey was jobbed into the Vinerian chair at All Souls'.<sup>19</sup> The even more revolutionary Duncan Black of Motherwell (1908–91) is discussed below. The lifelong professional Mancunian D. N. Chester (1907–86) gained a Manchester external degree after leaving school at fourteen to work in the treasurer's department of Manchester City Council. A wartime civil servant, he became a

<sup>16</sup> D. N. Chester, *Economics, Politics, and Social Studies in Oxford, 1900–85* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986), 29–38.

<sup>17</sup> I. McLean and S. M. Peterson, 'Adam Smith at the Constitutional Convention', *Loyola Law Review*, 56/1 (2010), 95–133; A. Brown, 'Adam Smith, John Millar, and the Academic Study of Politics'. Unpublished paper for IPSA Congress, Edinburgh, 1976.

<sup>18</sup> W. J. M. Mackenzie, *Politics and Social Science* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), 120–43. On Hobbes as game theorist *avant la lettre* see, e.g., I. McLean, 'The Social Contract in *Leviathan* and the Prisoners' Dilemma Supergame', *Political Studies*, 29 (1981), 339–51.

<sup>19</sup> R. Rose, 'W. J. M. Mackenzie 1909–96', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 101 (1999), 465–85, quoted at 476.

scholar of public administration and a power broker and institution builder at Nuffield College, Oxford (see Laurence Whitehead's chapter). S. E. Finer (1915–93), the son of Romanian Jewish immigrants to London, was the leading UK scholar of comparative government of his generation. His brilliantly simple *Five Constitutions* (1979) prints English texts of the Constitutions of the USA, France, Germany, and the Soviet Union, with a penetrating essay on the British constitution. Geoffrey Marshall (1929–2003) is described in the *Dictionary of National Biography* as a 'political scientist': a title he would have rejected, although he was one. The son of a fitter from Chesterfield, he turned down a place in Oxford to study under Mackenzie in Manchester. After spending time in Glasgow, he arrived in Oxford as a college tutor, and stayed there for the rest of his life.

Chester and Marshall built on the previous generation of constitutional scholars, some at the LSE (Ivor Jennings, Harold Laski, William Robson—see Barker's chapter) and some in Oxford (especially the Australian Kenneth Wheare). The LSE school had replaced Dicey's reverence for an idealized Parliament by reverence for an equally idealized executive. A strong single-party administration such as the 1945–51 Labour government could adapt parliamentary sovereignty to become executive sovereignty. As Parliament would reliably do what the governing party requested, the 'Crown'—i.e. ministers—could do what they liked, bolstered by parliamentary sovereignty.

Wheare spent a lifetime considering federalism, especially in the British Commonwealth, starting with a magisterial book on the Statute of Westminster (1931). This was the Act of the UK Parliament that confirmed that the Dominions of the white-ruled Commonwealth were truly self-governing. However, Dicey's ghost stalked this subject too. Not until the 1980s did either the Canadians or the Australians fully shake off the last remnants of the notion that, as the UK Parliament could not abandon sovereignty, it retained some ghostly power to legislate for those two federations. Shaking it off required further Acts of the UK Parliament.<sup>20</sup> Wheare coined the term 'autochthony' for the notion that the constitutions of the Dominions 'were in some sense rooted in their own soil'.<sup>21</sup> But the coinage is only needed if you think that that notion is novel and strange. It is novel and strange only if you are fettered to Dicey's ghost. US constitutional scholars, who have never been fettered by

<sup>20</sup> *Canada Act* 1982 c.11; *Australia Act* 1986 c.2. Wheare (in his *Federal Government*, 4th edn Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963, at 54) notes that the *Statute of Westminster* 1931 c.4, which generally gave the Dominions complete control over their own legislation, expressly excluded the Canadian and Australian constitutions, which therefore remained as Acts of the UK Parliament throughout his lifetime.

<sup>21</sup> G. Marshall, 'Kenneth Clinton Wheare 1907–1979', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 67 (1982), 490–507, quoted at 503.

<sup>22</sup> Except for M. J. C. Vile, *Constitutionalism and the Separation of Powers* (1st edn, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967; 2nd edn, Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1998).

Dicey's ghost, appear to have been too autochthonous to pay any attention to British or Commonwealth writing about federalism.<sup>22</sup>

However, the climax of the Wheare era of Oxford constitutionalism was the production of the Constitution of Bangladesh, which was drafted in Nuffield College in 1971–2 after Bangladesh won its independence following a war with Pakistan. As originally drafted, the constitution was more Jeffersonian or Madisonian than Diceyan. One of its drafters has written:

we opted for the establishment of a secular state. . . . The constitution in Bangladesh . . . incorporated secularism as one of its basic principles. Article 12 . . . had provided:

The principle of secularism shall be realized by the elimination of:

- (a) communalism in all its forms;
- (b) the granting by the State of political status in favour of any religion;
- (c) the abuse of religion for political purposes;
- (d) any discrimination against or persecution of persons practising a particular religion.<sup>23</sup>

Of all the Jennings–Wheare-era constitutions (other examples including Pakistan, Ceylon, the West Indies, and Rhodesia and Nyasaland), that of Bangladesh is the only one to survive. Its secular provisions were removed but reinstated by a 2010 supreme court judgement.<sup>24</sup>

Jennings, Wheare, and even Geoffrey Marshall never fully broke out of Diceyan fetters. Like Dicey (but with better cause), both Chester and Marshall saw their enterprise as descriptive, maybe analytical, but not normative. Chester wrote on the relationship of the UK state with both nationalized industry and local government. Marshall wrote on Commonwealth constitutions, police accountability, and public law. As an editor of *Public Law* for many years, he helped to rebuild a long-broken bridge between political scientists and lawyers in the UK. 'Although the Queen's private secretary sometimes consulted him on constitutional matters, he was not one for taking public stands on issues of the day.'<sup>25</sup> He disliked both Dicey's political and his intellectual ambitions.

<sup>23</sup> K. Hossain, 'State and Religion—Bangladesh and Pakistan—Responses to the Challenge of Change'. Paper to 17th Annual Law and Religion Symposium, Brigham Young University, October 2010, <<http://www.iclrs.org/content/blurb/files/Hossain%20-%20Bangladesh.pdf>> (accessed 6 December 2012).

<sup>24</sup> Hossain, 'State and Religion', 5–6.

<sup>25</sup> D. Kavanagh, 'Marshall, Geoffrey (1929–2003)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, ed. Lawrence Goldman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, January 2007), <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/90046>> (accessed 27 October 2011).

## A FRESH START: SOCIAL CHOICE AND FORMAL POLITICAL SCIENCE

As recorded in other chapters, Geoffrey Marshall described the PPE optional paper *Political Sociology* as a rolling list of the 100 worst books ever written about politics. However, unlike A. V. Dicey, he said that with a twinkle in his voice. The third phase of constitutionalism in British, including Oxford, political science was marked by extensive borrowing from the USA. It was a crabwise movement. To see what ideas from American political science appealed to deep-thinking UK scholars in the 1960s and 1970s it is useful to consult two outstanding surveys of their era: Mackenzie's *Politics and Social Science* (1967) and Barry's *Sociologists, Economists, and Democracy* (1970). Others (e.g. Bernard Crick) had noticed the behavioural revolution that swept through US political science in the 1960s. The behavioural revolution had excellent aspects. It replaced hand-waving by numbers. It developed statistically sound ways of measuring public opinion, with standard errors attached. It began the long reign of multiple regression as the dominant technique in political science, as in several other social sciences. These developments are commented on in other chapters.<sup>26</sup>

However, behaviouralism had drawbacks. By concentrating on things that could be counted, such as roll-call votes, election results, and measures of public opinion, it neglected things that were harder to count, or could not be counted at all. The latter included constitutions. Behaviouralists tended to be impatient with what they regarded as dry descriptive analysis of constitutions. The study of constitutions in American political science went into decline except in a few eccentric corners.

Both Mackenzie and Barry noticed one of these eccentric corners—or maybe two: the beginnings of social choice under the influence of Kenneth Arrow and Duncan Black; and the model of constitutionalism by consent put forward by J. M. Buchanan and Gordon Tullock (1962).<sup>27</sup> Rereading Mackenzie and Barry while preparing this chapter, I was immediately struck by two things: first, (as Marshall had seen) how much nonsense had captured US social science, dominated by figures such as Talcott Parsons and David Easton; second, how perceptively both Mackenzie and Barry could tell the eccentric

<sup>26</sup> Mackenzie, *Politics and Social Science*; Brian Barry, *Sociologists, Economists, and Democracy* (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1970); Bernard Crick, *In Defence of Politics* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964).

<sup>27</sup> K. J. Arrow, *Social Choice and Individual Values*, 2nd edn with corrections (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1963, first published in 1951); D. Black, *The Theory of Committees and Elections* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958; 2nd edn rev. and ed. I. McLean, A. McMillan, and B. L. Monroe with a Foreword by R. H. Coase, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1998); J. M. Buchanan and G. Tullock, *The Calculus of Consent* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962).

but exciting and important (Black and possibly Buchanan and Tullock) apart from the pompous and vacuous. Therefore the strange career of another Scot, Duncan Black, calls for analysis.

Black was the classic poor but clever ‘lad o’pairts’ that the Scottish educational system is supposed to foster. He studied mathematics and economics at Glasgow, then went to Dundee where he met the future Nobel economics laureate Ronald Coase. The Dundee School of Economics had been founded in emulation of the LSE, by local industrialists who hoped that its staff would solve structural unemployment. What they got was of less help to the Dundee unemployed but more important for social science than they hoped for. It was in Dundee that Coase developed his pure theory of the firm, while Black developed his pure theory of politics. Coase said: ‘Black always maintained that he discovered the character of the problem to be solved as a result of discussions with me on the nature of the firm . . . [but] Duncan Black worked alone’.<sup>28</sup> In contrast to supreme committee men like Wheare and Chester, Duncan Black was so obscure that his long-time Glasgow colleague Alec Cairncross said: ‘I believe he was an expert on committees but I never saw him sit on one.’<sup>29</sup>

Like other Scots academics of his generation, Black worked in Scotland, Wales, and Ulster, but never in England. In the University College of North Wales, only one colleague, a mathematician, seems to have understood his programme. Black’s personal heights and depths both came during World War II. While fire-watching at Warwick Castle, and apparently in some trouble with his academic superiors for lack of output, he reports that he saw in a flash what became the median voter theorem (MVT). As explained below, the MVT is the foundation of modern constitutionalism. However, soon after that, he also (re)discovered the problem of cycles—i.e. the fact, discovered by Condorcet in the late eighteenth century and subsequently lost, that in certain circumstances majority rule is impossible because any option may lose a majority vote to at least one other. Black’s second discovery made him feel physically sick.<sup>30</sup>

Total lack of understanding impeded Black’s publications, as it had done earlier for Condorcet, and for the Oxford mathematician C. L. Dodgson (Lewis Carroll), whose work on voting theory Black rediscovered. His *Theory of Committees and Elections* was slow to penetrate the academy in the USA

<sup>28</sup> Coase in Foreword to Black, *Committees and Elections*, 2nd edn, x.

<sup>29</sup> Interview, Iain McLean and Alistair McMillan with Sir Alec Cairncross, August 1994. See I. McLean, A. McMillan, and B. L. Monroe (eds), *A Mathematical Approach to Proportional Representation: Duncan Black on Lewis Carroll* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1996), xvi.

<sup>30</sup> Black, *Committees and Elections*, 2nd edn, 390.

<sup>31</sup> To expound Arrow’s Theorem requires more space than this chapter has available. There are many student guides, most recently M. Balinski and R. Laraki, *Majority Judgment* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010), 47–66.

and even slower in the UK. Black's work is centred on an existence result—the median optimum. Arrow's is centred on an impossibility result.<sup>31</sup> It is only in the last generation that constitutional scholarship has come to understand that in the real world Black's existence result matters much more than Arrow's impossibility result. Black, like Dicey, has scored over 1,000 scholarly citations since 2000 (*Publish or Perish*, last accessed 3 May 2013).

The median voter theorem states that if the possible outcomes can be fitted on one dimension, then the median voter's favourite outcome is unbeatable under any well-behaved choice rule. This statement needs some unpacking.

- *One dimension.* For the result to hold, there has to be some dimension recognized by most voters. This might be, for instance, the left–right dimension, but it could be any dimension. Empirically, Poole and Rosenthal have found that for almost the entire two-century life of the US House of Representatives, most votes and voters have been so structured that they can be ranked from whatever was the contemporary 'left' to the contemporary 'right'. In principle, the median Congressman got his way.<sup>32</sup> The only exceptions were two chaotic periods in the 1820s and the 1850s.
- A *well-behaved choice rule* is one which chooses the median optimum when it exists (i.e. whenever there is no cycle). The binary voting systems used in committees and legislatures are quasi-well-behaved. For mass elections, neither First-Past-the-Post (plurality voting) nor Alternative Vote is well-behaved, but AV is slightly better behaved than FPTP.<sup>33</sup>

The revival of constitutional scholarship in the UK depended on work that used the theory of social choice as propounded by Arrow and Black. The first such publication was Buchanan and Tullock's *Calculus of Consent* (1962). Buchanan and Tullock modernize Locke, with a dash of Pareto, by stating that a constitutional contract requires unanimous agreement. The travails of the eurozone that began in 2009 show some of the practical problems of securing unanimity. The travails of the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia in 1787 prove that if the negotiators had insisted on unanimity to ratify, there would have been no US Constitution and therefore presumably no USA.<sup>34</sup>

Later work on the foundations of constitutionalism has been closer to the real world. The central figure was W. H. Riker (1920–93), founder of the Rochester School of constitutional political science. For much of his career,

<sup>32</sup> K. T. Poole and H. Rosenthal, *Congress: A Political-Economic History of Roll Call Voting* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

<sup>33</sup> I. McLean, "England Does Not Love Coalitions"—The Most Misused Political Quotation in the Book', *Government and Opposition*, 47/1 (2012), 1–18.

<sup>34</sup> J. Madison, *Notes of Debates in the Federal Convention*, ed. and intro. A. Koch (New York: W. W. Norton, 1966; originally published in 1840 from JM's MS of 1787); W. H. Riker, *The Strategy of Rhetoric: Campaigning for the American Constitution* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996).



Riker was more fascinated by Arrow than by Black, although he rescued Black from obscurity and secured a succession of emeritus posts in the USA for him. In Arrowian mode, Riker explored the breakdowns of the MVT that occur when opinion is cyclical. The most important of these, in his writing, was the American Civil War. Looking at Poole and Rosenthal's findings from both sides of the mirror, one may be impressed either that Congressional opinion is one-dimensional most of the time, or alternatively that when it is chaotic (in both the ordinary and the mathematical sense), as in the 1850s, interesting results follow: in that case a civil war that killed about 600,000 Americans. Riker coined the word 'heresthetic' (adjective and noun) to denote the manipulation of political issue space by a politician who wishes to exploit its multidimensional chaos.

Riker saw two profound facts: that 'institutions [result from] congealed tastes',<sup>35</sup> and that political outcomes depend on structured institutions. Both points may be illustrated from his favourite example: the victory of Abraham Lincoln in the US Presidential election of 1860. Lincoln won easily in the Electoral College, and therefore became President, by the rules laid down in Article II.1 and Amendment XII of the US Constitution, despite winning less than 40 per cent of the popular vote. The Electoral College is not a well-behaved electoral institution. Almost certainly, the median voter's preferred winner of that election was Stephen Douglas (Democrat), who would have been selected by any well-behaved choice mechanism.<sup>36</sup> To understand Lincoln's election and the subsequent outbreak of war, it is therefore necessary to understand, first, the tastes that congealed into the institutions under which Lincoln was elected; and, second, the (mostly) rational behaviour of political agents in the light of the known institutions.

This is not the place to examine either of these in detail.<sup>37</sup> In summary, however, the Electoral College is the result of a last-minute compromise in the Constitutional Convention of 1787. However, from 1800 to the present day, it has not operated in the way the Framers envisaged; rather, the tastes of successive politicians have congealed into an institution which has thrown up odd results in the Presidential elections of 1824, 1860, 1876, 1888, 1960, and 2000. Although all the congealed tastes that led to the 1860 result are constitutional, not all of them are in the US Constitution. For instance, the custom that almost every state awards its Electoral College votes to the slate that wins the most votes in the state is not in the US Constitution. Nor is the Democratic

<sup>35</sup> W. H. Riker, 'Implications from the Disequilibrium of Majority Rule for the Study of Institutions', *American Political Science Review*, 74/2 (1980), 432–46, quoted at 432.

<sup>36</sup> Riker maintained that the result was cyclical. Nobody else who has examined the data shares that conclusion.

<sup>37</sup> See I. McLean, 'William H. Riker and the Invention of Heresthetic(s)', *British Journal of Political Science*, 32 (2002), 535–58, and 'In Riker's Footsteps', *British Journal of Political Science*, 39/1 (2009), 195–210.

Party's rule that its successful Presidential candidate must win at least two thirds of the votes in its nominating convention. But both of these are, in a broad sense, examples of the constitutional rules that led to the Civil War.

The other side of the coin is that the behaviour of political agents can only be properly understood in the light of the known institutions. Why, for instance, were there four major-party candidates in 1860? A detailed study of the constitutional rules leads to the answer that John Breckinridge (southern Democrat) and John Bell (Constitutional Union) both probably stood in the hope that their vote blocs could be decisive if the election went into the House of Representatives, under the rules of Article II of the US Constitution.

The lessons to be drawn from this body of work are independent of place or time. Here is an unsystematic list of recent work on the constitution or politics of the UK that is informed by this new rational-choice constitutionalism.

- *Understanding the Repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846*. In the most surprising outcome in modern British politics, Tory Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel reversed agriculture policy, from protectionism to free trade, in defiance of both the economic interest and the ideology of most members of his own party in both Houses. Explanations have included the district interest of the median legislator and the heresthetic manoeuvres of Sir Robert Peel.<sup>38</sup>
- *The consociational constitution of Northern Ireland*. Consociation(alism) was coined by the Dutch-US political scientist Arend Lijphart.<sup>39</sup> It was designed to explain how societies such as the Netherlands and Lebanon, with deep religious divisions, could function as democracies. It was in the minds of those who designed the institutions behind the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. Under this agreement, the Northern Ireland administration is a forced coalition, with the leading party supplying the First Minister and the second-most popular party supplying the Deputy First Minister. As was common knowledge when the constitution was drafted,

<sup>38</sup> See respectively C. Schonhardt-Bailey, *From the Corn Laws to Free Trade: Interests, Ideas and Institutions in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), and I. McLean, *Rational Choice and British Politics: An Analysis of Rhetoric and Manipulation from Peel to Blair* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

<sup>39</sup> A. Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977).

<sup>40</sup> For analyses see J. McGarry and B. O'Leary, *The Northern Ireland Conflict: Consociational Engagements* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); R. Taylor, *Consociational Theory: McGarry and O'Leary and the Northern Ireland Conflict* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009).

<sup>41</sup> G. W. Cox, *The Efficient Secret* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). Recent work in the same vein has included C. J. Kam, *Party Discipline and Parliamentary Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) and Andrew Eggers and Jens Hainmueller, 'MPs for Sale? Returns to Office in Postwar British Politics', *American Political Science Review*, 103/4 (2009), 513–33.

this would almost inevitably require one of the two to be a Unionist and the other a Nationalist.<sup>40</sup>

- *Rational-choice institutionalism and the UK Parliament.* The key work here has been Gary Cox's *The Efficient Secret* (1987), which analysed the interaction of politicians and voters in Victorian England and revised the traditional account of the formation of a strong party system.<sup>41</sup>
- *Varieties of capitalism and electoral systems.* This important literature begins with Duverger's law, a cornerstone of the modern constitutionalism, and intimately related to the median voter theorem, although promulgated completely independently of it. Duverger argued that: 'The simple-majority single-ballot system favours the two-party system'.<sup>42</sup> a statement that Riker liked to characterize as one of very few scientific laws existing in political science. The conditions for Duvergerian equilibrium were defined in more depth by Cox.<sup>43</sup> Since then, several research groups have noticed the trade-off between being decisive and being inclusive.

The plurality electoral system with single-member districts is used only in the UK and some of its former colonies, including the USA, Canada, and India. Duverger's law predicts that with this electoral system there is a better than average chance that, even if no party wins half of the popular vote, a single party will win a majority of seats. The downside is that it may represent only a narrow spectrum of electoral opinion. The upside is that the government can act decisively, unconstrained by obligations to clients. Repeal of the Corn Laws is a classic case.

Regimes with proportional representation face the mirror-image description. They have a broad social and political base, but violent (e.g. heresthetic) policy leaps are less likely. However, there is an obvious direction-of-causation problem. Do PR electoral systems generate broad-based, consensual, but expensive political regimes? Or vice versa? Or are both the effect of some common prior condition?<sup>44</sup>

<sup>42</sup> M. Duverger, *Political Parties*, trans. B. and R. North (London: Methuen, 1954), 217.

<sup>43</sup> W. H. Riker, 'The Two-Party System and Duverger's Law: An Essay on the History of Political Science', *American Political Science Review*, 76 (1982), 753–66; G. W. Cox, *Making Votes Count: Strategic Coordination in the World's Electoral Systems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

<sup>44</sup> The debate is not over, but current contributions include P. A. Hall and D. Soskice (eds), *Varieties of Capitalism: The Institutional Foundations of Comparative Advantage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); T. Cusack, T. Iversen, and D. Soskice, 'Coevolution of Capitalism and Political Representation: The Choice of Electoral Systems', *American Political Science Review*, 104/2 (2010): 393–403; and T. Persson and G. Tabellini, *The Economic Effects of Constitutions* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003).

**Table 8.1.** Citations of the old and new constitutionalism as at December 2012

Author	Work	First published	Citations
A. V. Dicey	<i>... Law of the Constitution</i>	1885	2,223
I. Jennings	<i>Cabinet Government</i>	1936	358
K. C. Wheare	<i>Federal Government</i>	1946	1,172
K. J. Arrow	<i>Social Choice and Individual Values</i>	1951	11,945
D. Black	<i>Theory of Committees and Elections</i>	1958	3,343
W. H. Riker	<i>Theory of Political Coalitions</i>	1962	2,802

Source: Google Scholar, consulted on 8 December 2012

## THE OLD CONSTITUTIONALISM AND THE NEW

The Oxford philosopher Michael Dummett (1925–2011) was another notable contributor to the new constitutionalism, with two books on voting theory and social choice. In one of them, he complained that the entire academic enterprise of social choice ‘goes utterly to waste, like water gushing from a disconnected pipe’ for all the practical influence it was having on constitutions.<sup>45</sup> He was correct at the time. If this criticism were still valid, then the new constitutionalism would be largely futile. However, the position has changed markedly since 1984. This is true not only in social choice and electoral systems, but in other areas of constitutional design.

In the academy, the new constitutionalism now attracts more attention than the old, if the data in Table 8.1 are reliable.

Table 8.1 reports the Google Scholar hits scored by the most-cited work of the three most prominent scholars in the old constitutionalism (A. V. Dicey, Sir Ivor Jennings, and K. C. Wheare) and the new (Kenneth Arrow, Duncan Black, and W. H. Riker). The results are necessarily rough, not only because of the inherent limitations of any citation measure but also because the six authors published different numbers of works each, and Table 8.1 samples only the most-cited work for each author. An aggregation over all works (which would probably have to be done manually) would not produce much difference, except that the ranking of Black would probably be lower.

But, as Dummett observed, what goes on in the academy only matters in the real world if academics connect with it. This final section lists (again in no particular order) areas where political scientists have made practical contributions to institutional design.

- *The partial success of the Sainte-Laguë divisor.* The theory of apportionment has been invented twice, independently, with the second set of inventors unaware that they were not the first. The first proposals

<sup>45</sup> M. Dummett, *Voting Procedures* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 12.

addressed the problem thrown up by the US Constitution's Article I:2: *Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included in this Union, according to their respective Numbers*. Each State must get an integer number of members of the House of Representatives. As its entitlement would always be fractional, there was a rounding-off problem which was so unexpectedly intractable that its fundamental theorems were not proved until 1982.<sup>46</sup> Balinski and Young proved that the whole class of intuitive largest-remainder systems (allocate the whole numbers first, then distribute fractional entitlements from the largest downwards until you run out of seats) suffers from fatal paradoxes. By elimination, fair apportionment must use a divisor system of the form *Think of a number  $x$  with the property that after  $x$  is divided into the qualifying population of each unit and the results rounded off, the correct number of seats has been allocated*. The two main divisor systems were proposed by Thomas Jefferson and Daniel Webster. There are others. They differ only in their rounding-off points. Jefferson rounds down at 1—all fractions are ignored. Webster rounds off at  $\frac{1}{2}$ .

A century later, Europeans faced what they did not realize was the same problem, in the guise of allocating seats under proportional representation. All PR systems involve multi-member districts. Therefore, unless they treat a whole country as one district, they face a double apportionment problem. Constitution designers need a rule which allocates a whole number of seats to each district, and another rule which apportions the seats within each district to the successful parties in the light of the votes they have got. Two main algorithms were proposed, by Victor d'Hondt and by André Sainte-Laguë. D'Hondt is actually the same as Jefferson and Sainte-Laguë is actually the same as Webster.

The Webster (Sainte-Laguë) method is the only unbiased one: it treats large and small units equally. If Rutland and Yorkshire had to be assigned a whole number of members each, only Webster apportionment would guarantee to do that fairly, every time. Jefferson (d'Hondt) is biased in favour of large units. There is a case for using d'Hondt to allocate seats to parties, and most countries do. Large parties, which make the rules, find a rule which favours large parties appealing to their sense of fairness. But a non-partisan could support that on the grounds that having a large number of small parties in the legislature is undesirable. However, there is no case for using anything other than Webster (Sainte-Laguë) to allocate seats to multi-member constituencies.

<sup>46</sup> M. Balinski and H. Peyton Young, *Fair Representation: Meeting the Ideal of One Man, One Vote* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982; 2nd edn, Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2001).

In the UK, the apportionment problem first arose overtly when the UK first made arrangements in 1997–8 for multi-member districts for European Parliament elections. The sponsoring minister (Jack Straw) said in the Commons that Home Office simulations had proved that d'Hondt was the fairest system. Challenged by a political scientist who knew a priori that this must be wrong, and went through the Home Office simulations until he found the error in them, Ministers made a grudging apology to the House<sup>47</sup> but retained d'Hondt for the seats-to-parties apportionment.

On that occasion, no explicit algorithm was used to allocate MEP numbers to districts. However, the numbers were consistent with Sainte-Laguë, but not with d'Hondt. Faced with the need to adjust numbers for relative population movement, the Electoral Commission put four methods out for consultation in 2003. None of the four had any mathematical justification; neither d'Hondt nor Sainte-Laguë was among them.

A consortium of political scientists persuaded the Commission to drop all four of their proposed methods and substitute Sainte-Laguë, which (they argued) was the unique method that satisfied the Commission's statutory obligations. Since then, the Sainte-Laguë rule has also been embodied in statute for assigning Commons seats to each of England, Wales, Northern Ireland, and Scotland; and for assigning seats to regions in the proposed elected replacement for the House of Lords.<sup>48</sup>

- *A non-contradictory set of rules for the redistribution of parliamentary seats.* Before 2011, the statutory Rules for the Redistribution of Seats were contradictory. Rule 1 required the size of the House of Commons to be constrained it. The other rules jointly and severally increased it at every periodic boundary review. From a contradiction anything follows. Therefore *any* scheme proposed by a Boundary Commission must violate at least one of the statutory rules. For some years, a number of political scientists and geographers had been pointing this anomaly out.<sup>49</sup> The 2011 Act just referred to<sup>50</sup> also removes the contradiction in the Rules. The House is set at a fixed size, and this rule has explicit priority over the others. Or will do, if the 2011 Act is ever implemented.

<sup>47</sup> Hansard, Commons, 25 November 1997 and 26 February 1998, col. 525. From <[http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1998/feb/26/number-of-meps-electoral-regions-and#S6CV0307P0\\_19980226\\_HOC\\_229](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1998/feb/26/number-of-meps-electoral-regions-and#S6CV0307P0_19980226_HOC_229)> (accessed 1 November 2011).

<sup>48</sup> *Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011* c.1 Schedule 2; *House of Lords Reform Draft Bill Cm 8077/2011*, para. 46.

<sup>49</sup> E.g., the chapter authors in I. McLean and D. Butler (eds), *Fixing the Boundaries: Defining and Redefining Single-Member Electoral Districts* (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1996); D. J. Rossiter, R. J. Johnston, and C. J. Pattie, *The Boundary Commissions: Redrawing the UK's Map of Parliamentary Constituencies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).

<sup>50</sup> *PVSCB 2011* c.1, Schedule 2.

- *Voting power, voting weight, and the institutions of the EU.* Voting power is not the same thing as voting weight. The EU Council of Ministers offers a textbook example. For the original Six, the three large members (Germany, France, Italy) had a bloc of four votes each in the Council; Belgium and the Netherlands had two each; and Luxembourg had one. These numbers represent their voting weights. A proposition needed twelve votes to be carried. These weights were not proportionate to population. In particular, Luxembourg had a voting *weight* far above its population share. However, it had precisely zero voting *power*. In a weighted voting game, a player has voting power if it makes a proposition that would otherwise win, not win (equivalently, can turn a proposition from losing to not losing). There was no combination, nor permutation, of votes in the original Six in which Luxembourg could be decisive. Therefore its power was zero.<sup>51</sup>

Over the decades since 1958, policymakers have very slowly come to understand the problem. It has been addressed in successive European treaty revisions. Mathematically, an attractive solution has become known as the *Jagellonian compromise* (viz., to give each Member State in the Council a voting weight proportional to the square root of its population) after the home university of the two physicists who proposed it.<sup>52</sup> Despite the backing of the Polish delegation in the Council of Ministers and a consortium of scholars from across the EU, the Jagellonian compromise has not been adopted. The Council of Ministers remains a body in which it is much easier to stop things from happening than to make them happen.

These examples of recent constitutional intervention by political scientists may seem underwhelming. For sure, they are not Hobbes or Locke. But nor do they repeat the mistake made by Dicey and Anson of disguising their political beliefs as objective truths. Too often, writers in the old constitutional tradition were like Lewis Carroll's Bellman:

'Just the place for a Snark! I have said it twice:  
That alone should encourage the crew.  
Just the place for a Snark! I have said it thrice:  
What I tell you three times is true.'<sup>53</sup>

<sup>51</sup> The standard explanation is D. Felsenthal and M. Machover, *The Measurement of Voting Power: Theory and Practice, Problems and Paradoxes* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 1998).

<sup>52</sup> W. Slomczynski and K. Zyczkowski, 'Penrose Voting System and Optimal Quota', *Acta Physica Polonica B*, 37/11 (2006), 3133–43.

<sup>53</sup> L. Carroll, *The Hunting of the Snark* (1874), stanza 2.

<sup>54</sup> McLean, *What's Wrong with the British Constitution*, ch. 6, 'The Contradictions of Professor Dicey'; N. MacCormick, *Questioning Sovereignty: Law, State, and Nation in the European Commonwealth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); N. Walker (ed.), *MacCormick's Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 163–90.

## EDITORS' NOTE

In this chapter, David Miller explores how normative political theorists have adapted to the development of modern social science by looking at how five of Oxford's Chichele Professors of Social and Political Philosophy positioned themselves intellectually relative to the rise of social science research from 1944 to 2008.

Miller identifies five possible positions that political theorists might take up in relation to social science and shows that, while these five very different individuals adopted a variety of intellectual stances, and while some of them were oriented towards the history of political thought and others to philosophical analysis, none of them chose the path of what he calls 'collaboration', preferring instead to keep modern social science at an intellectual distance. And that in turn raises an intriguing path-not-taken question as to why that should have been so. Was it, for instance, the effect of their early training in philosophy, of the distinct intellectual atmosphere of All Souls, of the fact that those individuals were not subject to the pressures for 'collaborationism' arising from the strong bias towards interdisciplinarity in present-day research funding arrangements, or something else?

As Miller stresses, five Chichele professors over more than six decades undoubtedly represent an indicative and important group, given the status of that chair in the profession, but they are not necessarily a representative sample of political theory developments in Oxford more broadly over that period. He scrupulously excludes his own notable contribution, and the analysis necessarily deals only in passing with some of the other notable figures in Oxford political theory over some of the period covered by the chapter, such as Brian Barry.<sup>1</sup> In addition, Oxford political theory has been divided for the last few decades between the analysis of ideologies pursued

<sup>1</sup> Described by Albert Weale as 'the leading European normative political theorist of his generation', Brian Barry (1936–2009) was briefly a college tutor (University, 1965–6) and elected on two occasions as an Official Fellow of Nuffield College (1966–9 and 1972–5) before leaving the UK for the United States. See Albert Weale, 'Brian Michael Barry 1936–2009', *Proceedings of the British Academy: Biographical Memoirs of Fellows IX* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 2010), 2–23.



in particular by Michael Freeden<sup>2</sup> (which might well be counted as constituting a form of collaboration with social science analysis, in Miller's terms, and certainly succeeded in attracting significant social science research funding and graduate students) and a more philosophically oriented group for whom normativity rather than diagnostic analysis was central to their vision of political theory.

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, M. Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); *Liberal Languages: Ideological Imaginations and Twentieth Century Progressive Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); 'What Should the "Political" in Political Theory Explore?', *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 13 (2005), 113–34.

# Political Theory, Philosophy, and the Social Sciences: Five Chichele Professors\*

*David Miller*

Political theory has long been a significant presence in the academic life of Oxford, and still today it remains one of the fields for which the university is chiefly known. In one way this might not seem surprising given the prominence of the PPE (Philosophy, Politics, and Economics) degree in the undergraduate curriculum, since political theory seems to hold a pivotal position between its first two components, and might in principle be able to unite these two disciplines at least. But whether this can be done, and if so how, has proved to be a contentious matter, not least in Oxford itself. My investigation here is going to focus on the five political theorists who have held the Chichele Chair of Social and Political Theory prior to the present incumbent: Douglas Cole (1944–57), Isaiah Berlin (1957–67), John Plamenatz (1967–75), Charles Taylor (1976–81), and Jerry Cohen (1985–2008). These represent only a fraction of the large number of scholars who have contributed to political theory in Oxford over the last 100 years (in various sub-faculties and departments), but I single them out mainly for two reasons.<sup>1</sup> First, as holders of the senior chair in this field, their election may be held to reflect the prevailing view (though doubtless not a complete consensus) among the relevant faculty about the direction that political theory should take; and second, by virtue of occupying this position, each of them felt it incumbent to explain the nature and purpose of their work in political theory, and in particular how it was related to philosophy on the one side and to the social sciences on the other. So by studying their contributions, we can gain some sense of the way in which the debate about the nature of political theory evolved over the course of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. Although the Chichele Chair itself was only established in 1944, following the division of the earlier Gladstone

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<sup>1</sup> Similar intuitions lie behind Robert Wokler’s study of an earlier generation of professors of political thought, which focuses on Cambridge, the London School of Economics, and Oxford. See, R. Wokler ‘The Professoriate of Political Thought in England since 1914: A Tale of Three Chairs’, in D. Castiglione and I. Hampsher-Monk (eds), *The History of Political Thought in National Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 134–58.

Chair of Political Theory and Institutions, it is fortuitous that the first incumbent, G. D. H. Cole, had done his main work in political theory further back in time, especially in the period from about 1915–25. So by including this earlier work within the scope of my analysis, approximately the last 100 years of political theory at Oxford can be covered in outline.

As will already be clear, my investigation will focus on the tripartite relationship between political theory, philosophy, and the social sciences—in other words, my approach will be methodological in a broad sense rather than substantive.<sup>2</sup> I have both negative and positive reasons for taking this approach. The negative reason is that I am not sure we would learn very much by comparing the substantive political theories developed by these five figures. I do not think that it would be possible to display a pattern of development or progress, for example. Political theory does not work like that. It is formulated in response to practical concerns that shift somewhat from one period to the next, even though it uses concepts and principles that may have a much longer history behind them. If we look at their theories, we can see Cole responding to the aspirations of the working class in the 1920s and 1930s, Berlin to liberal anxieties at the time of the Cold War, Plamenatz to demands for self-government by colonized peoples, Taylor to the problems of Canadian federalism, and Cohen to the collapse of socialism, but it is much harder to find a driving concern that animates them all. *In some sense*, one might say, they are all liberals, but the character of their liberalism is so varied that it would be hard to present them as engaging more or less successfully in a common quest (say, to establish what freedom really means).

The positive reason for my focus is this. Over the period we are considering, political theory has had to respond to the growth of the social sciences, in the sense of disciplines constructed around the systematic formulation of hypotheses and the gathering of empirical data to test those hypotheses. Traditionally political theory had occupied much of the space that the social sciences now claim to own. Although of course always guided by its normative aims, and involving philosophical reflection on its defining concepts—justice, freedom, authority, and so forth—political theorists were engaged in informal social science, speculating, for example, about how people were likely to

<sup>2</sup> This may be the point at which to say that I shall not be making use of the distinction between political theory and political philosophy in my analysis. A number of people have thought, and continue to think, that this is an important distinction to draw. My own view is that it may once have been, but no longer is, at least if we are talking about normative political theory/philosophy (there can of course be other ways of theorizing about politics). For the purposes of the present exercise, where what is at issue is precisely how the relationships between political theory and philosophy, on the one hand, and political theory and social science, on the other, should be understood, it is unhelpful, because depending on the position one adopts in that debate, it will seem natural to apply one or other label to our subject. So I will follow the various protagonists' own usage in discussing their views.

behave in certain counterfactual circumstances, or about the consequences that would follow from adopting different forms of government. They drew eclectically on history, travellers' tales, personal experience, and so on in different proportions. Once the social sciences began to take shape—as they certainly had by the time that the Chichele Chair was established—political theorists could no longer continue to operate in their familiar mode, or at least not without looking hopelessly amateurish. How should they respond? I shall lay out a series of possible responses as a kind of matrix within which the authors being studied can then be placed. Here, then, are five strategies that political theorists may adopt when confronted by empirically grounded, explanatory social science.

### CAPITULATION

This may hardly deserve to be called a strategy, and it is certainly not one that a practising political theorist is likely to choose, but it needs to be included as a default option if the alternatives all fail; it may also represent the view of a number of those outside of political theory itself. This is the view that political theory has been superseded by social science; once sociology and especially political science had developed on proper empirical foundations, there was no justification for political theory as traditionally conceived to continue. On this view, social science could not of course directly play the normative, action-guiding role that political theory had traditionally set for itself, but this was no disadvantage. Its job was to provide citizens and decision-makers with the best possible evidence about the consequences of decisions they might take. The decisions themselves would still need to be guided by value judgements, but these were the responsibility of citizens and their representatives. What was left over once the social sciences had gone about their work was not something that could constitute an academic discipline.

This mood of capitulation was best expressed in the introductory essay by Peter Laslett to his edited volume *Philosophy, Politics and Society*, published in 1956. According to Laslett, political philosophy as it had been written, in English, 'from Hobbes to Bosanquet' (and in other languages before that) was now 'dead'.<sup>3</sup> It had been killed partly by developments in the social sciences, and partly by the view that had emerged within philosophy, as a side effect of logical positivism, that ethical statements of all kinds had no truth value. Consequently 'since political philosophy is, or was, an extension of ethics,

<sup>3</sup> P. Laslett, 'Introduction', in P. Laslett (ed.), *Philosophy, Politics and Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1956), vii.

the question has been raised whether political philosophy is possible at all'.<sup>4</sup> Laslett wrote in a spirit of regret, and was on the lookout for 'small signs' that 'philosophers were preparing to take up their responsibilities towards political discussions once more', but he clearly did not anticipate a full-dress revival of political theory in its classical form.<sup>5</sup>

Laslett wrote from Cambridge and his remarks bear chiefly on the state of political theory in the United Kingdom. That his essay captured the prevailing mood in the mid-1950s is suggested by the fact that both Berlin and Plamenatz shortly afterwards felt impelled to write essays defending political theory against the developments that had encouraged capitulation.<sup>6</sup> I shall examine these essays in greater detail shortly. But an alternative to capitulation was:

### RETREAT

Recognizing that much of the work of political theory had now been taken over by the social sciences, the aim here was to recast the field so that it became entirely non-empirical in content. This is equivalent to saying that political theory should become wholly philosophical in nature, where philosophy in turn is understood in such a way that it is emptied of empirical content. A popular version of this, in mid-century, was the view that the business of philosophy was conceptual clarification. When applied to political theory, this led to the view, made famous by T. D. Weldon in *The Vocabulary of Politics*, that political philosophers from Plato onwards had erroneously believed that questions such as 'What is the proper relation between the State and the Individual?' could be answered by investigating the essential meanings of the words ('State', 'Citizen') contained in them.<sup>7</sup> Instead, what was necessary was to disentangle the various meanings that these words might bear, with the result that many political controversies would be revealed to be cases of people with conflicting aims or preferences using concepts like 'freedom' in different ways, thereby simply talking past each other and disguising the real nature of their disagreement.<sup>8</sup> Other versions of retreat were also possible: one could

<sup>4</sup> Laslett, 'Introduction', ix.      <sup>5</sup> Laslett, 'Introduction', x.

<sup>6</sup> I. Berlin, 'Does Political Theory Still Exist?', in P. Laslett and W. G. Runciman (eds), *Philosophy, Politics and Society: Second Series* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962); J. Plamenatz, 'The Use of Political Theory', *Political Studies*, 8 (1960), 37–47. See also Anthony Quinton's Introduction to A. Quinton (ed.), *Political Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967). According to Quinton 'It has been widely held, indeed, that there is no such subject as political philosophy apart from the negative business of revealing the conceptual errors and methodological misunderstandings of those who have addressed themselves in a very general way to political issues' (2).

<sup>7</sup> T. D. Weldon, *The Vocabulary of Politics* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1953), 11.

<sup>8</sup> See Weldon, *Vocabulary*, 69–75. Weldon's position sometimes hovers dangerously between retreat and capitulation. At the end of this section of the book he writes: 'I fear that what I have

hold, Kantian-fashion, that political philosophy should take the form of spelling out the logical implications of a priori axioms, such as the principle of equal freedom. The point, in all cases, was that the development of the social sciences still left space for political theory, since political theory, now explicitly in the guise of political philosophy, had been redefined in such a way that it was no longer even partly an empirical discipline.

## COMMAND

At the other end of the spectrum lies the strategy I shall call command, which seeks to portray political theory—or more strictly *social* and political theory—as the master science which can incorporate and guide all of the more specific social sciences.<sup>9</sup> Political theory, on this view, is the general theory of social and political institutions. It is both descriptive and normative, because it depicts, in more abstract terms, the various component parts of a modern society, but also in doing so identifies those that are in some sense ‘dysfunctional’ and therefore in need of reform. How this strategy is meant to operate will become clearer when I examine the ideas of its main exponent, G. D. H. Cole. But plainly, on this view, the growth of empirical social science poses no challenge to political theory, other than the challenge of having to master a rapidly expanding body of empirical information. Specific branches of the social sciences are foot soldiers to be enlisted under the general command of political theory, which because it is able to take a synoptic view of how the various components of a modern society—economy, civil associations, the state, etc.—should relate to one another, can correct the myopia of these individual disciplines. From this perspective, political theory is threatened, not by the development of social science as such, but only by particular branches making overambitious claims about the scope of the explanations they can provide.

written . . . may give the impression that the traditional political philosophers have for the most part been wasting time by asking and attempting to answer general questions to which no answers can be given because they lack any precise meaning. To put it crudely, they have formulated questions of a type to which no empirically testable answers could be given, and such questions are nonsensical’ (74).

<sup>9</sup> ‘Social’ needs to be inserted if the command strategy is to make sense, since its aim is precisely to integrate all of the social sciences, political science being regarded as simply one among several. Indeed Cole, my exemplar of the command strategy, was insistent that the resulting theory should not pay excessive attention to the political as such—the institutions of the state—which he saw as an error of traditional political theory. It seems likely that Cole had a hand in naming the Chair that he was elected to hold, with ‘Social’ preceding ‘Political’ in its title: see L. P. Carpenter, *G. D. H. Cole: An Intellectual Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 219–20.

## ATTACK

If command fails and retreat is not a satisfactory option, another strategy is to attack the social sciences themselves, or more precisely perhaps to attack the claims that they make on their own behalf. This attack can be carried out on at least two different fronts. One involves challenging the social sciences' claim to be value-neutral. If social scientific explanations do in fact rely upon concealed normative assumptions, then what social scientists are doing is not in the end so different from what social and political theorists have always done, despite their newly introduced techniques. In fact in one respect it is less defensible, because whereas political theory makes its normative premises explicit, and thereby allows its readers to accept or reject what is being said on the basis of their own commitments, social science introduces them surreptitiously, under the veil of objectivity. The other challenge focuses attention on the scope of the explanations that social science can provide: is it able to establish universal laws of human behaviour? If not—if the best it can do is provide partial explanations of human behaviour in particular social settings—then it cannot displace political theory itself, whose aim is to explore all of the political possibilities that the human condition presents. A student of political sociology might be able to explain how voters behave in modern mass democracies, but this cannot tell us very much about whether a Rousseau-style republic would be possible under changed circumstances, for instance. The attack strategy, then, involves attempting to cut the social sciences down to size: they are not value-neutral, despite what they claim, and their explanatory power is far weaker than they suppose. If the attack succeeds, political theory is left with plenty of room to operate in something like its traditional mode.

## COLLABORATION

The final strategy that I wish to delineate involves political theory in a constructive engagement with social science. It accepts that once the social sciences have developed, political theory cannot continue as it did in pre-scientific times; it has to take social science seriously—more seriously than the attack strategy supposes. So now when a theory in the course of construction makes what seems to be an empirical claim, it is incumbent to see whether the claim is supported by the best available evidence. Because the aim of political theory is primarily normative—it aims to provide grounds for judging which practices and institutions to adopt and so forth—it can't be reduced to social science. There is still a gap between explanation and prescription which is wider than the command strategy imagines it to be. But nor on the other hand

should it become purely philosophical, in the sense of becoming wholly concerned with conceptual questions to which empirical evidence is irrelevant, as the retreat strategy suggests. Furthermore while drawing on social science in the course of theory construction, political theory may also contribute to it by suggesting which questions, from a normative point of view, are most in need of answer—it can play an agenda-setting role. Hence the description of this strategy as collaboration rather than merely as borrowing.

\* \* \* \* \*

That concludes the matrix. Now we must try to place our different characters within it. Let me begin by noticing two features that they had in common. First, they were all initially trained in philosophy. Cole and Berlin both read Greats at Oxford (though Berlin supplemented this with a final year of PPE). Plamenatz read PPE (though in this case supplemented with a final year of history). Taylor studied PPE as a second degree, and wrote a DPhil in philosophy. Cohen read philosophy and political science at McGill and the BPhil in philosophy at Oxford. Second, they were all deeply engaged in teaching and studying the history of political thought, which however they regarded not as something to be approached in a purely scholarly or historical fashion, but as a source of ideas that could be applied in the present day. In that respect they saw themselves as continuing the work of authors in the tradition they were examining. Capitulation, therefore, was something to be avoided. But which of the other strategies was to be preferred?

I begin with Cole, most of whose work in political theory was done many years before he acquired the Chair (and who was less exposed in that earlier period to the same forces that led to the alleged ‘death’ of political philosophy). Cole’s main aim was to defend a version of pluralism that challenged the pre-eminence of the state and championed the many forms of voluntary association that flourished in a modern democratic society. Each of these, he argued, embodied a general will of its own, and aspired to contribute to the common good of the wider society; which was not, however, to rule out the possibility of conflict between them. The means to bring them into harmony, accordingly, was to be found in ‘the principle of function’:

In so far as the various associations fulfil their respective social purposes, and in so far as these purposes are themselves complementary and necessary for social well-being, the welter of associations in the community is converted into a coherent Society. In so far as the associations work irrespective of their function in a social whole, or set before themselves purposes which are mutually contradictory and irreconcilable with the good of the whole, the development out of the welter of associations of a coherent Society is thwarted and retarded.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> G. D. H. Cole, *Social Theory* (London: Methuen, 1920), 50.



For Cole, this aspiration for social coherence or harmony explained the nature and purpose of social theory (his preferred term).<sup>11</sup> It should study the major institutions to be found in a modern society, treating each as the embodiment of a distinct form of association whose proper function could be discerned. But having done so, it should switch into more normative mode and identify the 'social goods' that the institutions promoted. From this perspective it could propose institutional reform. But might there not be dispute about these social goods, or about their ranking relative to one another? At least by the time that he took up the Chichele Chair, Cole was willing to concede that such conflict was unavoidable, and could not be resolved through empirical study alone.

I therefore arrive at no Utopian conception of a single best of all possible combinations of my different goods: nor do I believe it is feasible to measure in exact quantities how much of any of them a society either possesses or should seek to achieve. Nor, again, do I believe that they can all be resolved into, or caught up into, a single kind of good, which includes them all. On the contrary, I am sure they can and do conflict, and that there are many possible combinations of them that may be equally worthy of respect, but no combination that is clearly and demonstrably superior to all others.<sup>12</sup>

Since Cole admitted that listing and ranking these goods were a personal matter ('My list of goods is both personal to me and drawn up under the influences of the scales of value which exist in the society to which I belong'<sup>13</sup>), he does not fit neatly within the command box in my matrix, even though that was the box that he aspired, particularly in his earlier work, to occupy. His later concession opens the way to rival political theories each seeking to provide the best normative map of the same set of social institutions. What remains the case for Cole, even very late on, is his belief that empirical social science and normative social and political theory are indissolubly linked, and should be practised at least to some extent by the same pair of hands.

[T]here is nothing inconsistent in holding both that it is desirable to observe and analyse social facts objectively and that there is a place for the study of social values and for the making of value judgements about society and its affairs. As a matter of plain commonsense, these are complementary and not rival studies. . . . I believe it to be of the greatest importance for us all to know as clearly as possible

<sup>11</sup> On taking up the Chichele Chair, Cole delivered his inaugural lecture, of which the first eleven pages are devoted to explaining the nature and purpose of social theory and the final two-and-a-quarter to political theory. As he moves from one to the other he remarks: 'There are no doubt some in this University who think that I ought to regard myself primarily as Professor of Political Theory, and to treat the "Social" aspect as a mere frill. I think I have made it clear that this is not my view of what I have been appointed to do.' G. D. H. Cole, *Scope and Method in Political Theory: An Inaugural Lecture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1945), 14.

<sup>12</sup> Cole, *Scope and Method in Political Theory*, 9. I have cited this passage also to point out the perhaps surprising extent to which Cole's value pluralism anticipated Berlin's.

<sup>13</sup> Cole, *Scope and Method in Political Theory*, 10.

when we are simply collecting and analysing facts and when we are making value judgments; but I deny both that there is no place for the latter in political studies and that it is desirable for the two kinds of study to be pursued entirely by different specialists.<sup>14</sup>

When we move on to consider the next holder of the Chichele Chair, Isaiah Berlin, we encounter a very different understanding of the relationship between political theory and social science. In terms of my matrix, Berlin combines elements of retreat with elements of attack, while above all insisting on both the autonomy and necessity of political theory as an intellectual activity. He conceives of it centrally as philosophical in nature, although as I shall try to show with a very different understanding of the nature and scope of philosophy from that held by full-blown retreatists such as Weldon.

One rather obvious clue is provided by Berlin's main defence of political theory in the essay 'Does Political Theory Still Exist?' which begins by explaining how philosophical questions differ from both empirical and formal (e.g. logical) questions in a manner that exactly parallels a paper written at the same time called 'The Purpose of Philosophy'.<sup>15</sup> Berlin's claim is that once the concepts and techniques for answering questions develop to the point where it is possible to solve them either by empirical or by formal methods, they cease to be philosophical, and new specialist sciences are born. So in principle this could happen to political theory once political science takes shape—and in fact in various places Berlin concedes that this has indeed happened with the growth of social science, hence the element of retreat: political theory must become less ambitious in scope than it once was, by allowing that some of the issues that it had previously addressed are now better addressed by more technically advanced methods of social and political research. But, he argues, this cannot lead to its extinction, because of the existence of deep and pervasive disagreement about what the goals of society should be. He develops this argument by inviting us to consider the opposite (hypothetical) possibility: a society in which there was universal agreement on a single overriding goal:

In such a society, whatever its other characteristics, we should expect to find intensive study of social causation, especially of what types of political organization yield the best results, that is, are best at advancing society towards the overriding goal. Political thought in such a society would be fed by all the evidence that can be supplied by the empirical sciences of history, psychology, anthropology, sociology, comparative law, penology, biology, physiology and so forth.

<sup>14</sup> G. D. H. Cole, 'The Status of Political Theory', *Universities Quarterly*, 8 (1953), 27–8.

<sup>15</sup> I. Berlin, 'The Purpose of Philosophy', in I. Berlin, *The Power of Ideas*, ed. H. Hardy (London: Pimlico, 2001), 24–35.

But only under this counterfactual assumption of a widely agreed-upon overriding goal, Berlin argued, could political theory 'be converted into an applied science'.<sup>16</sup>

So what, more positively, was the large remaining task that political theory found itself needing to perform? Berlin claimed that the deep conflicts of value that exist in all really-existing societies were not merely conceptual disagreements which might be cleared up by attending to the use of language as Weldon, for example, had claimed. They arose from rival 'models' of man in his relation to society (and indeed to the universe as a whole), which according to Berlin played a pervasive, though often unacknowledged, part in human thinking. These models also conflict with one another:

It is seldom, moreover, that there is only one model that determines our thought. . . . Most men wander hither and thither, guided and, at times, hypnotized by more than one model, which they seldom trouble to make consistent, or even fragments of models which themselves form a part of some none too coherent or firm pattern or patterns. To drag them into the light makes it possible to explain them and sometimes to explain them away. The purpose of such analysis is to clarify; but clarification may expose shortcomings and subvert what it describes.<sup>17</sup>

Therein for Berlin lies the nature and purpose of political theory: to bring to light, clarify, and test the underlying models of man and society which stand behind the concepts and principles that we use to make political judgements—the concept or concepts of liberty, for example, to give the example for which Berlin became especially famous.<sup>18</sup> But how, ultimately, should such a model, once clarified, be tested? According to Berlin, by 'the only test that common sense or the sciences afford, namely, whether it fits in with the general lines on which we think and communicate. . . . In this sense, political theory, like any other form of thought that deals with the real world, rests on empirical experience, though in what sense of "empirical" still remains to be discussed.'<sup>19</sup> This may appear to let social science back into the picture as the ultimate validator of political theory, but the sting lies in the tail of the last quoted sentence. For Berlin goes on to argue that the 'experience' which forms the ultimate basis on which a political theory is to be accepted or rejected is not to be understood as 'empirical evidence' in the sense in which a social scientist

<sup>16</sup> Berlin, 'Does Political Theory Still Exist?', 11. By an 'overriding goal' Berlin must mean not only that the society has a single agreed-upon final aim, but also that it recognizes no constraints on the way in which that aim is to be pursued.

<sup>17</sup> Berlin, 'Does Political Theory Still Exist?', 19–20.

<sup>18</sup> I. Berlin, 'Two Concepts of Liberty' in I. Berlin, *Liberty*, ed. H. Hardy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 166–218.

<sup>19</sup> Berlin, 'Does Political Theory Still Exist?', 20.

would understand that phrase. According to Berlin, there are certain basic categories in terms of which we understand what it means to be human that are prior to our discovering any particular facts about human beings. And it is these categories that are crucial when it comes to determining how plausible any given model of social and political relationships actually is. Social scientists overreach themselves—this is the element of attack in Berlin’s position—if they believe that scientific methods alone are sufficient to answer the questions that political theory addresses. For instance ‘no amount of careful empirical observation and bold and fruitful hypothesis will explain to us what those men see who see the state as a divine institution, or what their words mean and how they relate to reality’.<sup>20</sup> If we want to reject that model of the state, we need to show how it violates some essential part of what we understand human beings, intuitively, to be like.

Of the five holders of the Chichele Chair, Berlin’s successor, John Plamenatz, was perhaps most fully conscious of the threat that the rise of social science appeared to pose to the tradition of political theory that he studied and identified with.<sup>21</sup> Often we find him defending the thinkers who belong to this tradition against the charge, which he puts in the mouth of the social scientist, that they have become redundant.

These theories . . . flourished, it is said, before the scientific study of man, of society and of government had properly begun; they pretended to a knowledge they did not possess. But now that men are beginning to see how to get this knowledge, how to study themselves and society to good purpose, they can do without these pretentious theories.<sup>22</sup>

Plamenatz also believed that the aim of political theory was to explain as well as to justify. So full-blown retreat—to a purely philosophical understanding of the nature of political theory—was not an option worth considering. Admittedly his first book, *Consent, Freedom and Political Obligation*, written under the influence of his philosophical mentors in pre-war Oxford, had taken a much narrower view. He described its aim as being ‘purely theoretical. It is concerned to do nothing more than to attempt definitions of several words often used in political discussion, and to discover in what ways the facts which they mean are related to each other.’<sup>23</sup> Its only practical relevance was that it might help to avoid the confused thinking of practical politicians—‘some of them, like Lenin, being apparently incapable of expressing themselves on theoretical matters with even an ordinary amount of clarity and sense’. At

<sup>20</sup> Berlin, ‘Does Political Theory Still Exist?’, 28.

<sup>21</sup> For Plamenatz, this was primarily the tradition that ran ‘from Machiavelli to Marx’, as the subtitle of *Man and Society* explained.

<sup>22</sup> J. Plamenatz, *Man and Society*, vol. I (London: Longmans, 1963), xiv.

<sup>23</sup> J. Plamenatz, *Consent, Freedom and Political Obligation*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), x.

this stage, then, Plamenatz had a conception of political philosophy much like Weldon's. But when thirty years later he returned to the book to add a postscript to the second edition, he was unsparing in his self-criticism:

As an essay on political obligation in representative democracies it leaves too much that is important out of account, and such merits as it may have belong to it mostly as an essay in conceptual analysis. . . . The book is often unfair, at times to the point of absurdity. . . . The sociologist, the social psychologist, and the historian of ideas are all better equipped to discern what is valuable in the political and social theories of a Rousseau or a Hegel than is the mere student of philosophy with a taste for looking closely at how words are used.<sup>24</sup>

For the mature Plamenatz, 'analytical philosophy' was something to be contrasted with political theory. But how was the latter to be defended against the rise of the empirical social sciences, since he freely admitted that much of what political theory had done in the past occupied the same explanatory terrain as social scientists were now claiming for themselves? He deployed two arguments. One had to do with the purpose that political theory played in a modern society, which Plamenatz saw as enabling the members of such a society to make sense of their social environment and orient themselves towards it practically. Modern man, he argued,

. . . lives in a society where men strive deliberately to change their institutions. If he is not to feel lost in society, he needs to be able to take his bearings in it; which involves more than understanding what society is like and how it is changing. It also involves having a coherent set of values and knowing how to use them to estimate what is happening; it involves having a practical philosophy, which cannot, in the modern world, be adequate unless it is also a social and political philosophy.<sup>25</sup>

But this argument suffers from one obvious flaw. Underlining the need a person may feel for a political theory that allows him to 'take his bearings' in modern society does nothing to establish the intellectual credentials of such a theory. If, as Plamenatz envisages, the critic's charge is that political philosophy 'not only pretends to give us knowledge but also stands in the way of our getting it',<sup>26</sup> explaining the psychological function that political theory serves to discharge is no sort of answer. After all many people apparently need to consult their horoscopes on a daily basis, but this tells us nothing about the validity of their predictions. Plamenatz may in this essay succeed in showing that political theory can serve a purpose that empirical social science cannot,

<sup>24</sup> Plamenatz, *Consent, Freedom and Political Obligation*, 163–4.

<sup>25</sup> J. Plamenatz, 'The Use of Political Theory', *Political Studies*, 8 (1960), 37–47, at 42–3. This article also sees Plamenatz self-consciously distancing himself from Weldon's version of political philosophy.

<sup>26</sup> Plamenatz, 'The Use of Political Theory', 38.

but he leaves it vulnerable to the charge that the guidance it offers is essentially bogus.

The second argument is more promising, though it is not spelt out at length in Plamenatz's defence of political theory.<sup>27</sup> This begins from the claim that the human behaviour studied by social scientists is itself theory-laden behaviour. As he puts it, 'man, being self-conscious and rational, has theories about himself and his social condition which profoundly affect his behaviour; theories which have not been, are not, and never will be merely scientific'.<sup>28</sup> The implication of this is that we cannot fully understand human behaviour, including political behaviour, without engaging with these theories. Observation and data-gathering alone might, for example, enable us to say how likely it is that a person with a particular demographic profile will turn out to vote, but it cannot explain what voting means to the person who engages in it, or more generally what it means to be a citizen. When we ask these latter questions, we are engaging in interpretation, and we need to draw upon some implicit understanding of the kind of creatures human beings are. What political theories do, on this view, is to spell these implicit understandings out more openly, enabling us to decide which of them makes best sense of our experience. We can ask, for example, whether Hobbes or Rousseau gives a better answer to the question 'What is man?', which, Plamenatz claims, is not a question that social science can answer.<sup>29</sup>

Here Plamenatz exposes the limitations of a social science constructed along positivist lines. But he did not pursue the attack strategy very far. In particular, he did not challenge the objectivity of social science by claiming that it could not avoid engaging in interpretation, and therefore could not be value-neutral. Indeed in his book *Ideology*, he argued at some length against the thesis that explanations in the social sciences were inevitably value-laden in a way that those in the natural sciences were not.<sup>30</sup> For a more robust version of attack we need to move to the next player in our cast of characters, Charles Taylor.

Of the five members of the cast, Taylor had by a considerable margin the most to say about social and political science and its relation to political theory. He had shown a lifelong interest in the nature of explanation in the social sciences. Indeed the first book he wrote, *The Explanation of Behaviour* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964), contained an extended critique of

<sup>27</sup> It is more apparent in Plamenatz's practice than in the account that he gives of it: see my earlier discussion (with Larry Siedentop) in D. Miller and L. Siedentop, 'Introduction', in D. Miller and L. Siedentop (eds), *The Nature of Political Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 12–13.

<sup>28</sup> Plamenatz, *Man and Society*, xx.

<sup>29</sup> Plamenatz, *Man and Society*, xxi. Plamenatz acknowledged that the answers given to such questions 'differ from age to age and, perhaps even more, from person to person'.

<sup>30</sup> J. Plamenatz, *Ideology* (London: Pall Mall, 1970), ch. 3.

behaviourism in psychology. In papers written in the decade before he took up the Chichele Chair—and partly in response to the ‘death of political philosophy’ debate—he engaged critically with political science, particularly as manifested in the work of American authors such as Almond, Easton, Lasswell, and Lipset. Taylor’s line of attack was that this version of social science attempted to model itself upon the natural sciences, with empirically observable ‘behaviour’ and ‘attitudes’ serving as the raw data out of which theories might be constructed. Yet this overlooked the fact that the behaviour being studied was interpreted in a certain way by the agents who engaged in it.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, beyond these individual-level interpretations lay a further level of what Taylor called ‘inter-subjective meanings’ which were shared throughout a society and which were necessary if social practices such as ‘voting’ and ‘negotiation’ were going to exist. Thus a person entering a voting booth will understand what he is doing in a certain way—‘supporting party X’, for instance—but over and above this individual interpretation there must be a common social understanding of the meaning of voting itself. For that reason, Taylor concluded, social science must have a hermeneutic character—it must supply a second-order interpretation of social behaviour that was already endowed with meaning by the agents who engaged in it. And this meant that political scientists who modelled what they were doing on the natural sciences simply failed to see how theory-laden (in the hermeneutic sense) their research actually was. Political theory was unavoidable because anyone who sought to understand the political world in a systematic way—going beyond low-level observation—was bound to engage in it either openly or covertly.

There was a further implication of this critical appraisal of social science as unavoidably theory-laden: it could not avoid having an impact, for better or worse, on the practices it was studying. For it must either endorse or criticize the prevailing interpretations on which these practices were based. As Taylor put it:

This is the striking disanalogy between natural science and political theories. The latter can undermine, strengthen or shape the practice that they bear on. And that is because (a) they are theories about practices, which (b) are partly constituted by certain self-understandings. To the extent that (c) theories transform this self-understanding, they undercut, bolster or transform the constitutive features of practices. We could put this another way by saying that political theories are not about independent objects in the way that theories are in natural science.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> See especially C. Taylor, ‘Interpretation and the Sciences of Man’, in C. Taylor, *Philosophy and the Human Sciences: Philosophical Papers 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 15–57.

<sup>32</sup> C. Taylor, ‘Social Theory as Practice’, in Taylor, *Philosophy and the Human Sciences*, 101.

Taylor accordingly challenged the idea that political science could be value-neutral.<sup>33</sup> He pointed out similarities between, for example, the work of Aristotle and that of S. M. Lipset on the role of class conflict in political life, and argued that what they shared was an ‘explanatory framework’ which also had a ‘value slope’ in that it made certain ways of organizing a society look plausible and others completely unacceptable:

Once we accept Lipset’s analysis concerning the fundamental role of class in politics, that it always operates even when division is not overt, and that it can never be surmounted in unanimity, then we have no choice but to accept democracy as he defines it . . .<sup>34</sup>

The upshot of all this is that Taylor sees no sharp dividing line between social science and political theory. Indeed he goes further in this direction even than Cole, for Cole as we saw held on to the basic distinction between empirical propositions and value judgements, even while he argued that social science and social/political theory should be practised in tandem. Taylor challenges this distinction when he argues that explanatory frameworks have clear normative implications.<sup>35</sup> So for him there is really only a single set of interpretive enterprises, which one might call ‘human sciences’, that are simultaneously explanatory and normative. In terms of my original matrix, it might therefore be tempting to classify Taylor as a collaborator, since he leaves the door of political theory open to (the right kind of) social science. But because of his root-and-branch critique of mainstream political science, he is not a collaborator in the sense I intended—he does not argue that political theory should join forces with social sciences in the form in which they are now mainly practised. He is calling instead for a revolution in the way in which social science is conducted. That is why I label him primarily as an attacker—and the form of his attack is more fundamental than that of either Berlin or Plamenatz.

In this respect, the contrast with the last of the past Chicheles, Jerry Cohen, could not be sharper. For Cohen, although he did not directly address the relationship between political science and political philosophy in the way that his predecessors did, had a quite explicit understanding of the latter as a purely philosophical activity, while showing little or no inclination to challenge the social sciences on their own terrain. This then was definitely an example of retreat, to a position not so far from that of Weldon, even if Cohen’s conception of political philosophy itself was rather different from Weldon’s.

<sup>33</sup> C. Taylor, ‘Neutrality in Political Science’, in Taylor, *Philosophy and the Human Sciences*, 58–90.

<sup>34</sup> Taylor, ‘Neutrality in Political Science’, 70.

<sup>35</sup> To be clear, what Taylor challenges is not the distinction between empirical and normative propositions itself, but the claim that they are mutually irrelevant—that there is no way of moving from empirical premises to normative conclusions.



That conception is spelt out in a late paper in which Cohen presents political philosophy as a sub-branch of philosophy in general and as employing the same analytical techniques as would be employed in its other branches.<sup>36</sup> For example, he stresses the need to distinguish between an argument that supports a position that you hold and an argument that undercuts a rival position, but only supports your own in a negative way by making that rival less attractive. And he illustrates political philosophy at work by presenting various triads of propositions each of which have some plausibility, but taken together are inconsistent—the political philosopher’s job, he suggests, is first to notice the inconsistency and then to work out which of the three propositions it is most plausible to sacrifice. Its aim, then, is to bring clarity to our thinking about political questions by identifying the fundamental principles that we want to hold on to even when confronted by implications of those principles that we had not previously considered.

Cohen rejected the idea that empirical evidence could be used either to support or to undermine those fundamental principles.<sup>37</sup> This was central to the charge that he levelled against John Rawls and those associated with him whom he referred to as ‘constructivists’. Rawls had suggested that valid principles of justice were those that would be chosen in an ‘original position’ by people deprived of certain kinds of knowledge of their own personal features; on the other hand they were said to be equipped with knowledge of ‘the general facts about human society’ and it was in the light of these facts that they would choose the principles that Rawls proposed.<sup>38</sup> So Rawls willingly conceded that where social science was able to establish well-founded generalizations—for example, about the way in which economic markets operated—these should be taken into account when principles of justice were formulated. For Cohen this was a fundamental mistake. He contrasted ‘principles of justice’ whose validity or invalidity in no way depended on social facts, and the ‘rules of regulation’ that a particular society might adopt by combining those principles with facts about the circumstances in which they

<sup>36</sup> G. A. Cohen, ‘How to Do Political Philosophy’, in G. A. Cohen, *On the Currency of Egalitarian Justice and Other Essays in Political Philosophy*, ed. M. Otsuka (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 225–35.

<sup>37</sup> This was the central argument of his paper ‘Facts and Principles’, *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 31 (2003), 211–45, reproduced in revised form as ch. 6 of G. A. Cohen, *Rescuing Justice and Equality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008). I have discussed this paper critically in ‘Political Philosophy for Earthlings’, in D. Leopold and M. Stears (eds), *Political Theory: Methods and Approaches* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 29–48.

<sup>38</sup> According to Rawls, ‘... there is no objection to resting the choice of first principles upon the general facts of economics and psychology. As we have seen, the parties in the original position are assumed to know the general facts about human society. Since this knowledge enters into the premises of their deliberations, their choice of principles is relative to these facts.’ J. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), 158.

were going to be applied.<sup>39</sup> The proper business of political philosophy, he implied, was with the higher-level, fact-independent principles.<sup>40</sup>

This was not, however, because of any doubts that Cohen harboured about the objectivity or explanatory power of social science itself. He was not tempted down the path followed by Taylor, and to a lesser extent by Berlin and Plamenatz, which involved drawing a fundamental distinction between explanation in the natural and in the social sciences, with the latter construed as interpretive in nature. In his painstaking reconstruction of the Marxist theory of history, for example, he proposed that historical materialism used a functional form of explanation (of the legal superstructure, for instance) that was isomorphic to functional explanation in natural science,<sup>41</sup> and although later he came to doubt the substance of some of Marx's explanatory claims, he never questioned the form that they took. In particular, he challenged Plamenatz's argument that man's 'social being' could not determine his consciousness, because 'social being' was in part constituted by ideas, by showing that a causal reading of Marx's claim remained possible.<sup>42</sup> In other words, he resisted any suggestion that interpretation should replace causal explanation in the social sciences. For Cohen, then, political philosophy and social science could coexist happily but independently from one another, the contribution of social science (from a philosophical point of view) being to provide information about the best way to implement normative principles that the philosopher had devised without its aid.

What is perhaps most striking, as we conclude this survey of the nature of political theory as understood by the five Chichele Professors, is that with the partial exception of Cole, none chose to inhabit the box in the matrix that I labelled collaboration, where political theory would draw upon social science to substantiate its claims. This was not because the box was uninhabitable, even in Oxford. Without trying to survey the wide range of approaches followed by the current generation of political theorists,<sup>43</sup> prominent past members, most notably Brian Barry, Steven Lukes, and Alan Ryan were perfectly comfortable acting as collaborators. What explains this? Why did the Chichele Professors feel impelled to keep social science at arm's length, through some combination of retreat and attack, rather than devising a form

<sup>39</sup> Cohen, *Rescuing Justice and Equality*, esp. ch. 7.

<sup>40</sup> This of course did not prevent anybody, including political philosophers, from engaging in applied political theory where the principles that has been established were used to justify or recommend particular laws or institutions, but this activity should not be confused with political philosophy proper.

<sup>41</sup> See G. A. Cohen, *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), chs 9–10.

<sup>42</sup> G. A. Cohen, 'Being, Consciousness, and Roles', in G. A. Cohen, *History, Labour, and Freedom: Themes from Marx* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988),+ 37–50.

<sup>43</sup> These are well represented in the collection by Leopold and Stears, *Political Theory: Methods and Approaches*, all of whose contributors held posts in Oxford.

of political theory that would embrace with enthusiasm the large advances made in the social sciences over the course of our century? As I noted earlier, all were trained in philosophy—but so, on the other hand, were those who were willing collaborators. As holders of the Chair, their college location in All Souls perhaps gave them less direct exposure to social science than those who were based elsewhere. Possibly more relevant, all were deeply committed to studying aspects of the history of political thought, and were therefore perhaps extremely sensitive to the claim, often made by social scientists, that the growth of rigorous social science had made social and political theory as traditionally practised redundant. To some degree, they saw themselves as conducting a rearguard action against the main intellectual currents of twentieth-century thought, crystallized in the mid-century debate over the death of political philosophy. And this, though not quite a tragedy, was in one respect at least a shame, because, as I noted at the outset, in a university famous for its PPE degree, a social-science-friendly version of political theory would have made a natural linchpin for that degree.

## EDITORS' NOTE

International Relations is the largest subfield in modern political science in faculty and student numbers in the United States and United Kingdom (though it has been notably less important in Continental Europe). Indeed, it is considered by some as a separate subject, as in the case of the LSE, which has long had its own dedicated department of 'International Relations'. Oxford put a toe in the water of International Relations as early as the mid-nineteenth century, but in this chapter Martin Ceadel concentrates on the period from the 1920s to the 2000s and gives an account of how International Relations 'normalized' as a subject in Oxford in those decades.

'Normalization' in this story means specialization, the emergence of a group of career academics developing this subfield and a move away from an initial pro-history, anti-theory stance. How far this development resulted in an approach to IR that is or was distinctive to 'Oxford' is debatable: it can be argued that IR in the UK as a whole and not just Oxford has been dominated by an anti-positivist approach (though 'critical theory' and postmodernism arguably had less of an impact in Oxford than elsewhere in the UK). But even the much-vaunted tension between Oxford's historical approach to IR and the North American 'social-science' approach can perhaps be exaggerated. The version of 'social science' that Hedley Bull and the English School reacted against in the mid-twentieth century may have been a caricature, and the more recent rise of 'constructivism' in IR in the United States could be understood as a something of a reinvention of the 'English School' approach.<sup>1</sup>

The normalization that Ceadel describes took place in an institutional environment that seems to have worked against a similar development in military history and strategic studies, as the succeeding chapter by Hew Strachan shows. Ceadel brings out how important individual leadership (or lack of it) was for the institutional development of the subject and how important the development of the PPE degree was in providing a resource base of career academics that in turn led to the development of post-graduate teaching and thereby to further specialization.

<sup>1</sup> These points draw on valuable observations made by Duncan Snidal and Christopher Hill in the conference on which this book is based.

# The Academic Normalization of International Relations at Oxford, 1920–2012: Structures Transcended\*

*Martin Ceadel*

The development of International Relations (IR) at Oxford can be understood only in relation to the constitutional structures and pedagogic traditions of a university whose unusual features have already been commented on in several previous chapters. It is moreover a story of fits and starts in which a small number of individuals played decisive roles, negative as well as positive. Collegiate and democratic, Oxford lacked the centralized command structure that enabled Aberystwyth and the LSE to create chairs and departments in the years after the First World War. Focused more on educating a prospective national elite than on generating scholarship for its own sake, its colleges chose staff for their ability to teach over a wide range of papers rather than to develop academic specialisms. Even so, Oxford could innovate, as when it created the Philosophy, Politics, and Economics (PPE) undergraduate degree in 1920, with IR as an option within Politics. It also made a successful professorial appointment in 1930, which boosted IR within PPE and introduced it at doctoral level; but from the Second World War until the beginning of the 1970s professorial leadership failed, and IR was kept alive only by a dedicated group of tutors. The almost simultaneous creation of the BPhil (later renamed MPhil) postgraduate degree and revival of professorial initiative began a period of steady growth. Thanks largely to PPE, the Montague Burton Chair, and graduate studies, Oxford opened up a significant lead in the study of IR over Cambridge, which shared many of its structural constraints. And in recent years, as Oxford IR has partially normalized its teaching arrangements, it has arguably caught up with its nimbler redbrick rivals even as a producer of research.

In order to provide individual and sustained attention to undergraduates, Oxford traditionally organized its recruitment and instruction on collegiate rather than departmental lines. The principal mode of instruction was the

\* I am grateful to the university archivist Simon Bailey for his efficiency (citations here being from UR 6/MB/1, files 1 and 2; FA 3/4/1/1; FA 9/3/428; and Social Studies Board Minutes), and to John Dunbabin, Neil MacFarlane, Peter Pulzer, Sir Adam Roberts, and Jonathan Wright for information.

one-student tutorial. Tutors, usually only one per subject (or cluster of subjects) in each college, were at the heart of this labour-intensive system, and spent around eighteen hours a week<sup>1</sup> teaching the core curriculum in their college. Unlike in the more usual system in which a single professor defines the syllabus through his or her lectures, courses were harder to change or update, since all tutors were affected. Oxford's professors, appointed by the university rather than by individual colleges, were allowed to be specialists and expected to be scholars, but were few in number. Moreover, because their lectures were optional for students, whereas tutorials were compulsory, and because outside departmentally organized subjects chairs carried little institutional clout, professors could have an impact only if they were distinguished or approved of by the tutors.

IR's first six or so decades at Oxford revealed the considerable strengths yet greater weaknesses of this dichotomous system. A number of tutors developed significant IR expertise as a result of having to teach it from the early 1920s; and occasionally they even published on the subject. But others were stretched thin or worn down by their teaching stints, proved hostile to or ignorant of new ideas, and did little or no research. Professorial input, when it began in 1930, was initially stimulating but then virtually disappeared for three decades. Central to IR's impressive and sustained revival from the early 1970s was not just choosing better professors: no less important was creating a new tier of university lecturers, whose teaching loads were more in line with those of other universities. By bridging the gap between a small professoriat and an overburdened and generalist tutoriat, they made the system less dichotomous and more effective, particularly for graduate teaching. They also produced significant specialist research.

After the First World War Oxford decided to introduce modern studies at BA level, partly for the same reason that it had in 1917 legislated for the DPhil: to cater for Rhodes Scholars and other foreign students. The university's philosophers were sufficiently numerous and powerful to ensure that the tripartite structure of *Literae Humaniores* was retained for 'Modern Greats', which therefore took the form of the Final Honour School of Philosophy, Politics, and Economics (PPE), first taught in 1921, rather than of the bipartite Economics and Politics degree that most non-philosophers wanted. Few colleges were geared up to teach the non-philosophy parts of the new course. On his arrival to teach for three of PPE's early years the LSE-trained economist Lionel Robbins discovered 'amateurishness and superficiality' in the teaching of both his subject and Politics, though he found New College to be 'paradise'.<sup>2</sup> Yet despite the improvised quality of the early PPE product, it found favour in the home-undergraduate marketplace: although the first cohort numbered

<sup>1</sup> D. Ogg, *Herbert Fisher 1865–1950: A Short Biography* (London: Edward Arnold, 1947), 38.

<sup>2</sup> Lionel Robbins, *Autobiography of an Economist* (London: Macmillan, 1971), 111, 122.

only thirty-one, the course grew by a remarkable 9.8 per cent per annum throughout the interwar period,<sup>3</sup> surpassing the numbers on Cambridge's Economics Tripos, which Robbins considered 'almost myopic' in its narrowness.<sup>4</sup> This expansion, driven by student demand, eventually obliged every college to appoint tutors dedicated to Economics and Politics. PPE's tripartite whole thus proved greater than the sum of its parts; but the price paid, as noted by Bob Goodin in his chapter, was that each branch of the degree had to be content with little more than a third of a syllabus, which particularly constrained IR as merely a subdivision of Politics. ('Bipartite' PPE was introduced only with effect from Schools 1971.) PPE's initial tripartism made the establishment of single-subject BPhils an important development for all branches of PPE, and especially (though belatedly) for IR.

It is surprising, given Oxford's historic peculiarities, that it lagged so little behind Aberystwyth, which in 1919 pioneered IR as an autonomous university subject, when the millionaire industrialist, Liberal MP, and League of Nations enthusiast David Davies part-endowed a department and a chair in the subject. Aberystwyth's original Woodrow Wilson Professor of International Politics was Alfred Zimmern, a former tutor in Ancient History at New College, Oxford, who during the First World War had worked on proposals for a League of Nations under Lord Robert Cecil in the Foreign Office. However, IR arrived at Oxford hard on the heels of Aberystwyth: right from the initial regulations for PPE adopted in 1920, 'The Development of International Relations since 1815', though not a compulsory paper, was one of only three optional subjects in Politics.<sup>5</sup> Admittedly, it was IR of an unspecialized kind: when in 1930 John Maud arrived at University College as Oxford's first college tutor dedicated to the still 'undefined subject' of Politics, he found that it 'was taught, often with some reluctance, by dons whose primary interest was in modern history or constitutional law'.<sup>6</sup> Thus at Balliol the IR paper was covered during its first decade by Francis ('Sligger') Urquhart, a historian famed more for his social salon than his academic work.<sup>7</sup> And at New College it was probably taught by the Law fellow appointed in 1923, C. A. W. Manning: this may be inferred from the fact that when he left Oxford in 1930 it was to take up the Cassel Professorship of International Relations at

<sup>3</sup> B. Harrison (ed.), *The History of the University of Oxford*, vol. 8: *The Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 119.

<sup>4</sup> Robbins, *Autobiography of an Economist*, 111.

<sup>5</sup> N. Chester, *Economics, Politics and Social Studies at Oxford, 1900–1985* (London: Macmillan, 1986), 38–9.

<sup>6</sup> John Redcliffe-Maud, *Experiences of an Optimist: The Memoirs of John Redcliffe-Maud* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1981), 21.

<sup>7</sup> Urquhart's tutoring of this paper was mentioned in E. Vignaux to A. Zimmern, 26 October 1932: Zimmern Papers, box 30.

the LSE, where in a long tenure he recruited Hedley Bull, at that time a prospective political theorist, to the subject.<sup>8</sup>

Specialist representation for IR on Oxford's teaching staff was achieved only in 1930 when Montague Burton funded a chair, the first university post within the ambit of PPE to be added since the launching of that degree. The creator of a chain of clothing stores who believed that cheap suits could smooth over class distinctions, Burton marketed himself as the 'Tailor of Taste'; and, convinced that both industrial and international relations could be made harmonious, he created professorships in both subjects.<sup>9</sup> He made his offer to Oxford via intermediaries: in the autumn of 1929 the distinguished mathematician Professor Selig Brodetsky, like Burton a Russian-born Jew working in Leeds, sounded out Gilbert Murray, who in addition to his academic post was now Chairman of the Executive Committee of the League of Nations Union (LNU), the highly influential internationalist pressure group. After Murray showed enthusiasm, Burton made an offer in writing on 7 November; and within three weeks the university's Hebdomadal Council (its chief executive body at that time) had responded positively, although on the basis of the sum Burton had envisaged—derived from the 20 per cent-lower salary of provincial professors—it suggested the cheaper alternative of a readership. But the donor believed that 'the position requires all the dignity that can be bestowed upon it to make it effective', and agreed to cover the costs of an Oxford chair for seven years in the first instance.

Burton's liberal-internationalist intentions, already deducible from his encouragement of LNU branches among his workforce, were made explicit in his original title for the chair, 'International Peace', which however Oxford persuaded him to change to 'International Relations'. He also asked that not just Murray but also Cecil, now President of the LNU, be consulted over the appointment: the university was happy to appoint both men to the electoral board, which Burton asked 'to bear in mind that the underlying motive of the Donor is in the furtherance of International Peace in accordance with the deliberations and decisions of the League of Nations at Geneva'. Oxford was prepared to require the appointee to profess 'the ideals of the Covenant of the League of Nations' and to lecture 'on the theory of International Relations and on the methods of international cooperation with particular reference to the work and aims of the League of Nations'. (The creation of the chair led to the modification of the title of the Chichele Professorship of International Law and Diplomacy, which had been created at All Souls as early as 1859. From its

<sup>8</sup> Domestic politics at New College were then taught by its Warden, H. A. L. Fisher, a politician as well as a former history tutor: see P. Williams, *Hugh Gaitskell: A Political Biography* (London: Cape, 1979), 16.

<sup>9</sup> E. Sigsworth, *Montague Burton: The Tailor of Taste* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), 214–15.



next filling the reference to Diplomacy was dropped, presumably as an encroachment into IR; and the field of the chair was more narrowly defined as Public International Law.<sup>10</sup> The contribution to IR at Oxford made by the overlapping interests of international lawyers is omitted here, however, for reasons of space.)

The Montague Burton Professorship of International Relations was advertised in June 1930.<sup>11</sup> Meeting in August, the electors briefly considered John Fischer-Williams, an international lawyer who had just retired to Oxford and hoped to be offered it; but they soon agreed on Alfred Zimmern, who had left Aberystwyth in 1921 after his marriage to the ex-wife of the professor of French proved unacceptable within that small town. After teaching briefly at Cornell, he had found employment at Geneva as deputy director of the League of Nations' Institute of Intellectual Cooperation. He had become a public figure with the ear of the British Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, whom he was to follow from Labour to National Labour in 1931. He was sufficiently oriented towards Geneva, where he continued to run his 'Zimmern School' each summer, to be the donor's ideal choice.<sup>12</sup> Yet he was sufficiently Oxonian to satisfy the university, which he flattered in his inaugural lecture as 'the traditional guardian of standards' and 'suited to be a home of international study because she is a home of real thinking'.<sup>13</sup> He was given a supernumerary fellowship by New College, whose Warden, H. A. L. Fisher, made clear that this was because the appointee had previously been 'a Scholar, Fellow, and Tutor of the College' and not because of any interest in the chair as such. From the fact that his surviving correspondence was almost entirely addressed to 149 Banbury Road, it is evident that the uxorious Zimmern worked mostly at home, although a letter in which his friend R. W. Seton-Watson promised on a visit to Oxford to 'find my way after the lecture to your rooms'<sup>14</sup> implies that New College provided him with accommodation too.

Zimmern's arrival coincided with a PPE syllabus revision which in 1931 introduced two new core subjects. One, 'Political Institutions', was compulsory and so was to dominate the lives of almost every Politics tutor for more than six decades. The other, 'Political History 1871–1914', was an alternative to 'British Social and Economic History since 1760' (which had previously been compulsory). It had a substantial international component, its syllabus being: 'The developments in the domestic and foreign politics of the principal

<sup>10</sup> The new name came in with the appointment of C. H. Waldock in 1947 to succeed J. L. Brierly, who had held the chair under the original title since 1922.

<sup>11</sup> Information about Fischer-Williams from his erstwhile grandson-in-law, Alan Ryan. Murray to Zimmern, 3 August 1930: Zimmern Papers, box 24.

<sup>12</sup> Burton to Zimmern, 4 October 1930: Zimmern Papers, box 24.

<sup>13</sup> A. Zimmern, *The Study of International Relations: An Inaugural Lecture Delivered Before the University of Oxford on 20 February 1931* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1931), 20, 22.

<sup>14</sup> Seton-Watson to Zimmern, 20 January 1939: Zimmern Papers, box 44.

states'. In 1932 Zimmern shortened the name of the original IR option to 'International Relations', confined its scope to the twentieth century (thereby reducing the chronological overlap with the newly introduced 'Political History 1871–1914'), and introduced a long list of recommended documents. He threw himself into his lectures, which surviving student notes show to have been both up-to-date and replete with arresting phrases: 'Geneva is not a paradise, it's a Chess Board'; 'if ever there were secret diplomacy it is now'; 'the League has . . . become an international circumlocution agency'.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, as Kenneth Wheare was to acknowledge during his period tutoring at University College, Zimmern was 'the one [PPE] professor who really did the job for the undergraduates' and thereby 'encouraged the college tutors'.<sup>16</sup> Such tutors were sometimes now appointed with IR interests, in two cases inherited from fathers who had served prominently in the Foreign Office: Agnes Headlam-Morley took up a fellowship in Economics and Politics at St Hugh's in 1932; and Sibyl Crowe became a college lecturer in Politics at St Hilda's in 1938, being later elevated to a fellowship. Others developed IR interests through their teaching: H. G. Nicholas, appointed as college lecturer in Modern History and Political Science at Exeter in 1938, particularly liked IR as it was 'uninhibited by Modern History's self-imposed terminal date of 1914'.<sup>17</sup> And of course the looming world crisis concentrated the minds of tutors and pupils on the subject.

Despite the growing importance of IR at both undergraduate and doctoral level, Zimmern, who reached 55 in 1934, began worrying about being too old to find other employment should his post not be funded beyond the agreed seven years. The canny Registrar, Douglas Veale, asked the Social Studies Faculty Board to report immediately on the impact of the chair. It no less cannily concluded that Zimmern had turned 'International Relations' into the most popular Politics option, his lectures on 'The Machinery of International Cooperation' being attended by more than sixty students, and his more general lectures on 'International Economic Relations' and on 'Aspects of the Period, 1918–32' attracting audiences of more than 100. It also pointed out that he supervised five graduates, and that his 'extra-mural activity' had also been impressive. Its conclusion was that the chair had proved itself 'not only a valuable but an essential factor in the work of the University'. At Veale's suggestion, Murray showed this encomium to Burton, who duly made the chair permanent by assigning the takings of certain branch stores. When Magdalen History tutor A. J. P. Taylor belatedly discovered this unusual

<sup>15</sup> W. J. Samuels (ed.), *Documents from F. Taylor Ostrander at Oxford, John R. Commons' 'Reasonable Value' and Clarence E. Ayres' Last Course* (Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing Ltd, 2008), 110–11.

<sup>16</sup> Wheare to Zimmern, 8 July 1944: Zimmern Papers, box 48.

<sup>17</sup> H. Nicholas, 'The Education of an Americanist', *Journal of American Studies*, 4/1 (1980), 13–15.

arrangement, he asked the Registrar: 'What would happen to the income of the Professor if the Tailor of Taste went bust? Or if a fascist government closed down the shops of Jewish multiple tailors?' In the event, it was inflation that eventually required the university to contribute an increasing share of the rising professorial stipend. The making permanent of the chair required a decision about its long-term college association: New College raised no objection when Balliol claimed it with effect from the next filling, though at least one fellow later thought that 'the Warden slipped up badly in letting the chair go so easily to Balliol'.<sup>18</sup>

With his future now secure, Zimmern could give his full attention to Oxford's first major publication in the field of IR, *The League of Nations and the Rule of Law*, which for all its idiosyncrasies remains the most incisive analysis of that organization's eclectic Covenant. Commissioned in February 1935 by Harold Macmillan, it was completed seven months later just as the League entered its make-or-break confrontation with Mussolini over his invasion of Abyssinia. In a preface dated 21 September 1935, Zimmern admitted uncertainty as to whether he was 'writing a history of an experiment that had reached its conclusion or describing the early phases of a living and developing institution'.<sup>19</sup> Though he was to become the principal target of *The Twenty Years' Crisis*, the seminal diatribe against utopianism that one of his successors at Aberystwyth, E. H. Carr, published in 1939, Zimmern had never been an ideal-type liberal internationalist. From the outset he had wanted the League to be essentially a concert of great powers, and always doubted whether political machinery created by multilateral treaty could generate the solidarity enjoyed by an organic body such as he conceived the British Commonwealth to be.

When the League's credibility was broken by its failure against Mussolini in 1935–6, Zimmern joined most of his professional colleagues in concluding that it had become 'an empty shell'.<sup>20</sup> By December 1937 Murray was recording ruefully that 'all the holders of the special League of Nations professorships, Zimmern, Manning, Carr and their numerous pupils' had turned against Geneva.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, Zimmern now complained that between 1918 and 1936 there had been 'something like a suspension, in this country, of the normal processes of thought and discussion on foreign affairs' in favour of a faith in the League of Nations that overlooked the fact that its Covenant was 'not brought down, like the Tables of the Law, from Sinai, but was a diplomatic document drawn up rather hastily at an international conference', and

<sup>18</sup> R. H. Lightfoot to Zimmern, 9 April 1944: Zimmern Papers, box 48.

<sup>19</sup> A. Zimmern, *The League of Nations and the Rule of Law, 1918–1935* (London: Macmillan, 1936), vii–viii.

<sup>20</sup> *The Times*, 11 June 1936, 17.

<sup>21</sup> G. Murray, Memorandum to LNU Executive Committee, 29 December 1937: Gilbert Murray Papers.

obscured the profound truth: 'Power is the currency of politics.'<sup>22</sup> But though thus moving further in a realist direction analytically, Zimmern's policy inference from that realism was the opposite of that of Manning and Carr, who advocated 'peaceful change' (in other words, appeasement). Zimmern still believed in trying to contain Germany, his opposition to appeasement causing him to break decisively with his National Labour colleagues in 1938: soon afterwards, one of these—Lord Elton, a history tutor at Queen's who strongly supported Neville Chamberlain—accused him of sounding like 'a "war at any price" man'.<sup>23</sup>

The outbreak of war terminated Zimmern's active tenure of his chair: he joined the staff of Chatham House, temporarily housed at Balliol; and he later moved to London to work for the newly created research department of the Foreign Office. As the electors prepared to choose his successor in time for his formal retirement in August 1944 he sent them a memorandum, via R. C. K. Ensor, suggesting Arnold Toynbee for the post, but also making the case for splitting it into two, as was happening at that time to the Gladstone Professorship. In personal terms Zimmern claimed success not only 'in making his subject an integral part of the PPE School' but also 'in at least indicating its dimensions, as contrasted with what may be called the League of Nations Union view of International Relations'.

Despite this strong hint that the original specification was now inappropriate, it was not changed when the chair was advertised in February 1944, although Cecil and Murray were dropped from the electoral board because they had passed the age of 75. Murray would have voted for Will Arnold-Forster, an unreconstructed liberal-internationalist campaigner now best remembered as a painter who married into the Bloomsbury Group.<sup>24</sup> The other ten applicants included Manning from the LSE, R. B. McCallum, the Pembroke history and politics tutor who was shortly to make his name as a pioneering psephologist, and E. L. Woodward, who had combined the domestic bursarship at All Souls with a college lectureship at New College. Toynbee did not apply; and there is no evidence of his being seriously considered.

Woodward was offered the chair, even though his major publication was the 1815–70 volume of the *Oxford History of England* and he made no secret of being 'a historian and not a philosopher'.<sup>25</sup> Presumably his having spent the Second World War editing diplomatic documents for the Foreign Office was seen as a sufficient qualification. He accepted with a characteristically tongue-in-cheek promise to the Registrar: 'In the unlimited leisure of a

<sup>22</sup> A. Zimmern, *Spiritual Values and World Affairs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939), 6, 40, 57–9, 62.

<sup>23</sup> Elton to Zimmern, 31 March 1939: Zimmern Papers, box 44.

<sup>24</sup> Murray to Zimmern, 27 March 1944: Zimmern Papers, box 48.

<sup>25</sup> Woodward to Zimmern, 21 February 1944: Zimmern Papers, box 48.

professorship—broken only by 36 hours of statutory duty per annum—I will study C[harlotte]. Bronte again but I still maintain that she is not in the L[ewis]. Carroll or Mark Twain or Charles Dickens, or even in the W. W. Jacobs or P. G. Wodehouse class.’ Despite his levity and lack of experience of academic IR, Woodward was alert to the increasingly realist tone and transatlantic dominance of his new subject. His inaugural lecture in February 1945 criticized ‘the dangerous optimism’ which the earliest teachers of the subject had fostered.<sup>26</sup> Nine months later he was reported as wanting ‘to see how his subject is taught in American Universities, where it is given more prominence than in this country’. Indeed, IR courses were starting to burgeon as universities in the United States strove to make sense of their country’s new world role.

In 1946 Woodward changed the undergraduate syllabus so that the IR paper focused mainly on the years 1919–39 ‘with special references to the policies of the Great Powers’, and dropped the documents. But that same year he missed a major opportunity at postgraduate level when the PPE subjects persuaded the university to create the BPhil, a taught degree that permitted them a specialization not available at undergraduate level. The expansion of graduate teaching strengthened the university in relation to the colleges; and the BPhil’s two-year duration gave it a weight that shorter rivals could not match. A course in Politics was immediately introduced: this was the degree that Hedley Bull was to take when he came to England in 1953. Yet, although a special paper on the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 was included in the Politics BPhil, presumably because both Headlam-Morley and Crowe had a family interest in teaching it, Woodward did not establish a separate IR course, almost certainly because he felt Oxford’s resources in that subject to be inadequate. Indeed, in May 1946 he complained to the Registrar that when meeting ‘professors of the subject at universities where there is a whole department dealing with it I find it difficult to say why there should be a professor without even a map of the world to his name—or a place in which to house it except a noisy room reluctantly provided by Balliol—let alone a staff of research assistants’. In this defeatist frame of mind Woodward unsurprisingly jumped at the chance to revert to Modern History: he accepted the new chair in this subject established at Worcester College, Oxford, with effect from 1 January 1948.

As the university prepared again to refill the Montague Burton Professorship, it realized that the dissolution of the League of Nations in 1946 required a new mission statement. Its first instinct was simply to drop the reference to the League without replacing it with an updated liberal-internationalist message; but Murray warned that this would offend the donor. In Woodward’s words:

<sup>26</sup> E. L. Woodward, *The Study of International Relations in a University: An Inaugural Lecture Delivered Before the University of Oxford on 17 February 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1945), 7.

‘Murray says he thinks Old Man Burton . . . will be annoyed if we cut out the reference to the L of N without substituting UN. He—Murray—suggested something like “organisations for international cooperation or world government”.’ The Social Studies Board concurred, so the next incumbent was required to lecture ‘on the theory and practice of International Relations, on methods of International Co-operation and on Organisations for World Government’.

Despite Murray’s idealist form of words the only two applicants for the chair when it was advertised in the early spring of 1948 were realists: Max Beloff, then Nuffield Reader in the Comparative Study of Institutions at Nuffield but working on Soviet foreign policy, and E. H. Carr, who had resigned from Aberystwyth the previous year after being cited as co-respondent in a divorce petition—a second Woodrow Wilson Professor to fall foul of the Nonconformist conscience. The electoral board rejected both, freeing Beloff to become Gladstone Professor of Government and Public Administration nine years later and Carr to serve two academic years (1953–5) as a college lecturer in Politics at Balliol, where he was denied both a fellowship and tenure, despite his status and seniority, more because of his private life than because of his still controversial but now pro-Soviet opinions.<sup>27</sup>

With no applications left in play, Agnes Headlam-Morley stood down from the electoral board in order to be considered as a candidate. She had shouldered considerable responsibility for the subject during the war when Zimmermann and other male colleagues had undertaken other duties: indeed, she may have been responsible for the more precisely specified undergraduate syllabus introduced with effect from Finals 1941. The electors weighed her citizenly claims against the scholarly ones of Lewis Namier, a history professor at Manchester, John Wheeler-Bennett, an independent scholar who taught part-time for New College, and C. A. Macartney, an expert on central Europe based in All Souls who had belatedly expressed an interest. Of these the 60-year-old Namier, whose *Diplomatic Prelude, 1938–1939* was then hot from the press, was the most distinguished; but Kenneth Wheare, now Gladstone Professor and an elector, did ‘not conceive the Burton Chair to be primarily an historical chair’. The electors therefore chose Wheeler-Bennett; but he turned them down because he was writing the history of the Nuremberg trials, although soon afterwards he was to become a founding fellow of St Antony’s College. Their second preference was Headlam-Morley, who accepted with the observation: ‘It is a subject which I think could and should be developed in the university and I shall enjoy trying to do it.’<sup>28</sup> The university thereby took a step in the right direction by electing its first-ever female

<sup>27</sup> J. Haslam, *The Vices of Integrity: E. H. Carr, 1892–1982* (London: Verso, 1999), 133, 137, 166, 173.

<sup>28</sup> Headlam-Morley to Veale, 27 June 1948: UR 6/MB/1, file 1.

established professor. Her precursor was however worried by her lack of productivity, though Wheare believed that she 'would soon demonstrate the capacity to write distinguished books' once released from her tutorial travails.

As it turned out, however, the new Montague Burton Professor, who remained a fellow of St Hugh's because Balliol was then male-only, did almost nothing to develop her subject during the years 1948–70. She published little—certainly nothing comparable in stature to *The United Nations as a Political Institution*, which H. G. Nicholas, by then Politics fellow at New College, produced in 1959. Her waning enthusiasm was apparent as early as April 1956 when, in applying for sick leave, she informed the Secretary of Faculties: 'I doubt if anyone would be prepared at the last moment to give my lectures on the League of Nations etc., and I do not think it really very much matters.' Despite a Cold War and a decolonization process to maintain the salience of the discipline, IR was overtaken on Headlam-Morley's watch by Sociology, which created four university lectureships, two further subjects within PPE Politics (from 1964), and its own BPhil course (first taught in 1965).

Even so, IR made some progress. The establishment in 1950 of St Antony's, a graduate college which, after brief uncertainty as to its intellectual identity, specialized in international and area studies, gave Oxford the same structural advantages in those areas that Nuffield College was giving it in political science. Amongst many contributions, it provided a long-term base for Evan Luard, who after resigning from the Foreign Office in protest against the Suez invasion combined the roles of Labour politician and freelance IR scholar while failing to secure a university post.

IR also expanded within PPE. Although 'Political History from 1871 to 1914' lost its semi-compulsory status in 1949, it continued as an option, its terminal date being moved on to 1918 with effect from Schools 1952. Around the same time the IR paper had its chronological scope slightly increased, its dates being now 1918–41. But it was not until 1960 that the Cold War entered the syllabus, when 'International Relations since 1939' was approved by the Politics Sub-faculty alongside 'International Relations, 1919–1939'. For a few years there were thus three chronological IR or part-IR options, covering 1871–1918, 1919–39, and 1939 onwards. With effect from Finals 1969, however, the first move towards theory was made: 'Political History from 1871 to 1918' was replaced by 'International Relations: Theory and Institutions'. The latter was available only to undergraduates who also took one of the other IR papers—a requirement designed to discourage the historically ungrounded speculation that was then dismissed in the Politics Sub-faculty as 'the higher nonsense'.

These PPE changes were the work of a small but expanding group of tutors, who had been given enhanced university roles thanks to extension to all undergraduate colleges in 1951 of CUF lectureships to be held jointly with their college posts. Politics tutors/CUF lecturers whose interests lay in IR

included Wilfrid Knapp at St Catherine's, Saul Rose at New College, Christopher Seton-Watson at Oriel, and Peter Pulzer of Christ Church. Given their heavy PPE obligations, it was impressive that they proposed a new BPhil, which the Social Studies Board approved in principle in December 1968 (as 'International Studies') and in detail in March 1970 (as 'International Relations'). The new course was deliberately introduced before Headlam-Morley's successor was chosen, to avoid excessive professorial influence on its content.

The half-century (1921–70) during which Oxford IR had been essentially a PPE project had given it a historical, real-world, critical, and teaching-centred cast of mind. Most teachers of the subject had been trained as historians, ancient or modern; and it was an interest in the world around them rather than an appetite for theory-building that drew them into the study of politics. As generalists required both to 'get up' a wide range of specialist literatures from which they were professionally detached and to correct the understandable tendency of undergraduates to go with the flow of what they have just read, they were usually sceptics rather than enthusiasts. Because of the cultural prestige of the humanities in Oxford they suffered less than many American social scientists from physics envy; and the worldly connections of St Antony's College reinforced their suspicions of the higher nonsense. Their research output, which included Rose's work on British policy towards South East Asia or Knapp's on the Mahgreb, was modest in quantity and empirical in character.

The need to move IR at Oxford into a new era as soon as Headlam-Morley retired in September 1970 was generally understood. Even though its endowment now covered only a small portion of its costs, the Montague Burton Chair was advertised as early as January 1969. Twelve applicants and three non-applicants were considered; but the electors had little difficulty in plumping for the Hon. Alastair Buchan despite what one of his referees, Robert E. Osgood, admitted were 'his lack of credentials as an academic scholar'. Originally a journalist, Buchan had been founding director of the Institute of Strategic Studies before his appointment as Commandant of the Imperial Defence College, a position he was committed to occupy until the end of 1971. Facing a four-term professorial interregnum, the Social Studies Faculty Board fought a six-month battle with the university authorities to appoint Knapp as a deputy discharging most of the duties of the chair. In order to carry the day, the faculty had to emphasize not only the effort involved in introducing the BPhil, which was to be first examined in 1972, but also the extent to which 'the subject had "run down"' under a professor who, owing to 'periods of ill-health', had been 'unable to give direction and leadership' at a time when IR had 'attracted increasing interest'. During 1971, moreover, Buchan himself had to fight another battle over office space, particularly with Balliol which now reclaimed the chair that it had bid for three-and-a-half decades previously



but had hosted only during Woodward's short and unhappy tenure of 1944–7. On 20 July 1971 the professor-elect's frustrations boiled over in a 'personal' letter to the Vice-Chancellor, Alan Bullock:

The absurd aspect of all this is that my requirements are minimal: a study, a small bedroom, a telephone and space somewhere in an institution for a secretary to work—a problem that in business, or even in the Civil Service would be solved in a matter of minutes. But I am damned if I am going to put up with the standards of a nineteenth century undergraduate or be treated in the cold, unhelpful manner [in] which Balliol and its outliers have so far behaved.

To his credit, Bullock immediately arranged for the new professor and his secretary to have two rooms in Wellington Square.

Buchan's arrival in January 1972 enabled IR to resume the progress begun in the 1930s before Zimmern's war work, Woodward's abrupt sideways move, and Headlam-Morley's torpor had intervened. His inaugural lecture announced his refusal to teach world government—a formal requirement that had been maintained even though the founder was now long dead—even if Hebdomadal Council 'suspend me from Magdalen Bridge'.<sup>29</sup> His 'dynamic renewal of a major branch of Politics' was much appreciated by the Social Studies Board. Buchan paid attention to both the undergraduate and graduate courses. He turned the PPE option 'International Relations: Theory and Institutions' into an almost completely theoretical paper, 'The International System', with effect from Finals 1974. And he expanded the BPhil from a couple of students a year to more than a dozen. The course was eventually to more than double again in size and become the Trojan Horse for specialized IR at Oxford: the teaching load it generated, both through the course itself and the doctoral theses many of its products stayed on to write, made the case for new appointments better than PPE alone could; and it trained many future Oxford staff members. The new professor also attracted high-calibre DPhil students from outside Oxford such as Lawrence Freedman, created a Foreign Affairs Club that was later named in his honour, and enhanced his position as a public intellectual by giving the BBC's 1973 Reith Lectures.

But Buchan's patience was tried by Oxford IR's second unfortunate experience with a fellow of St Hugh's. Rachel Wall had served since 1964 as a tutor of that college and a Faculty Lecturer in Politics. (A faculty lecturer was a variant of CUF lecturer for the poorer colleges, the Faculty Board paying more and taking more of the teaching, though not as much as in the case of a full university lecturer.<sup>30</sup>) Wall defined her research interests as 'international

<sup>29</sup> A. Buchan, *Can International Relations Be Professed? An Inaugural Lecture before the University of Oxford on 7 November 1972* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 25.

<sup>30</sup> CUF lecturers did at least 288 hours per year for their college and 16 for the university. The equivalent totals for faculty lecturers were 240 and 24, and for university lecturers 144 and 36.

history with special reference to Asia', and was regarded as an IR specialist. Unfortunately, her wayward behaviour worried both college and faculty from the outset; and at the end of her probationary period she was reappointed only for a second five-year term. However, in 1972 the university decided to convert some faculty lectureships into university lectureships, thereby increasing its control over their duties. So urgent were the needs of the new BPhil that Wall was considered for such a conversion, her second academic review being brought forward and perhaps carried out less stringently than would otherwise have been the case. She was not only appointed to what was in effect the first university lectureship in IR (though technically her post was still labelled Politics) but also given tenure. Within two years, however, her waywardness was revealed as symptomatic of a bipolar disorder; and she in effect stopped teaching. By the autumn of 1975 Buchan was reporting a 'crisis' caused by the increasing demands of PPE, the BPhil, and the DPhil, exacerbated by 'the defection of Miss Wall from her duties as a University Lecturer' and the likely loss to a history chair of Michael Howard, a senior research fellow at All Souls who had been superrogatorily teaching 'The International System'. He told the Social Studies Board that there were 'only five members of the faculty who professed International Relations': himself, Howard, Knapp, Rose, and Seton-Watson. He was already lobbying for a Readership in IR and a University Lectureship in International Theory when on 4 February 1976 he died in his sleep aged 57 after only four years and a month in post.

The tragedy of Buchan's sudden death, compounding that of Wall's illness, meant that Oxford's unofficial IR cabinet—Knapp, Pulzer, Seton-Watson, and Howard, plus Hedley Bull of the Australian National University who was spending that academic year as a visiting fellow at All Souls—had to make emergency arrangements. The Montague Burton Chair was readvertised without delay; and although the Modern History Faculty queried the 1948 reference to international cooperation and world government, the job specification was left unchanged in the belief that to do otherwise would be legally problematical. The electors considered thirteen applicants and two non-applicants at their meeting on 20 July 1976, and unanimously chose Hedley Bull, who accepted with effect from 1 April of the following year. His arrival thus coincided with the publication in 1977 of *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*, the work that established him as not merely an *enfant terrible* with reassuringly sceptical views on American social science and reassuringly realist ones on defence issues but the standard-bearer of the 'English School'. To Buchan's worldly standing Bull thus added an intellectual eminence that elevated his subject within the university. So did Howard's almost simultaneous appointment to the Chichele Professorship of the History of War (as described in Hugh Strachan's chapter), which gave Oxford IR a *de facto* chair in strategic studies as well as another heavyweight of international stature, although his transfer to the Regius Professorship of Modern

History three years later gave him heavy administrative responsibilities in that faculty.

Even before Bull and Howard took up their posts, there were two encouraging straws in the wind. First, the university took the unusual step of funding a three-year appointment to cover Wall's duties while the Visitation Board (the university's disciplinary committee) considered her future. In creating this supernumerary post, the university had been swayed by the fact that Knapp was supervising no fewer than twenty-two Social Studies graduate students and Howard twelve. Second, progress towards creating a readership in Buchan's memory began when a stellar appeal committee was constituted, with Howard as secretary, Lord Franks in the chair, and George F. Kennan and Henry Kissinger as sponsors. Although it did not raise enough fully to endow the new post, the generosity of the Rhodes Trustees and the creativity of the Social Studies Board, which suppressed a recently vacated lectureship in economic history, bridged the funding gap. It was a sign of IR's rising status in Oxford that Nuffield College, previously detached from the subject despite admitting occasional students in the field such as Miles Kahler and Lawrence Freedman, bid for the readership, though St Antony's was understandably judged to be more deserving.

Soon after Bull arrived, he had the grim duty of attending the lecture series in which, after a three-year gap, Wall attempted to show herself fit to resume her duties. She failed, and was compulsorily retired on medical grounds with effect from 31 March 1978. A less stressful early task was persuading the Sub-faculty of Politics to rejig PPE's empirical IR options as 'International Politics in the Era of Two World Wars' and 'International Politics since 1945'. The most rewarding of Bull's early efforts was the appointment of Adam Roberts as the first Alastair Buchan Reader, whose arrival at St Antony's in 1981 triggered a marked increase in IR students at that college.<sup>31</sup>

With Roberts's assistance, Bull drew more non-specialists into the MPhil (as the BPhil had become in 1979). For example, two historians arriving in 1984, John Darwin and Norman Stone, served for a time as supervisors. A few years after my own appointment to a Politics fellowship in 1979, I was asked by Bull first to sit in on his Tuesday class and then to supervise a student or two. As my college stint was then thirteen tutorials and I had to lecture in two terms out of the three, to attend an MPhil class and give an MPhil tutorial often constituted contact 15–17 hours of the week, with doctoral supervision on top. But tutors took on extra work because Bull and Roberts were themselves putting in shifts that were at least as Stakhanovite. Tutors also found the MPhil students rewarding: for example, my third supervisee for the course was Susan Rice, who went on to win a BISA best-thesis prize for her doctorate and

<sup>31</sup> C. S. Nicholls, *The History of St Antony's College, Oxford, 1950–2000* (Basingstoke: Macmillan in association with St Antony's College, 2000), 78.

to become Obama's representative at the UN. Even when staffed by the thinnest of specialist red lines backed up by a volunteer reserve of historians, politics tutors, and junior research fellows, the MPhil attracted the best and the brightest. Presumably in this regard Oxford's collegiate quaintness and ethos of individual attention to students worked to IR's advantage.

However, attempts by Bull and Roberts to appoint IR specialists to CUF lectureships mostly foundered on the fact that their core teaching was in political institutions, political theory, and British political history. The failure of Christopher Hill, a rising star at the LSE and now Cambridge's second-ever Professor of International Relations, to replace the retiring Seton-Watson at Oriel in 1983 suggested that the only reliable route to IR recruitment lay through creating university lectureships rather than hijacking Politics CUFs. Indeed, although three years after the Oriel appointment Don Markwell, who had read the MPhil in IR, was appointed at Merton, the range of teaching required of him as he dramatically improved his college's PPE results delayed his own research.<sup>32</sup> By assiduous committeemanship and fundraising Bull and Roberts created new specialist posts, the fields of which they could for the first time determine. The University Lectureship in International Political Economy at St Antony's was the first of these in 1984. I was on the Social Studies Board from that year and watched admiringly as IR overtook Sociology, which lacked the graduate or undergraduate numbers to justify its academic establishment once Thatcher's cuts had drawn attention to widely disparate staff: student ratios within Social Studies. IR was attracting more students for its undergraduate and graduate taught courses and also for research. Indeed, Bull's and Roberts's supervisory tallies alone could justify several more appointments.

Bull's illness, to which overwork surely contributed, was a devastating blow, though he stoically continued teaching until shortly before his death on 18 May 1985. A fund in his memory part-financed a junior research fellowship in IR. But Roberts's promotion to the Montague Burton Professorship in 1986 and Avi Shlaim's appointment to the Alastair Buchan Readership the following year meant that the disruption was short-lived; and the appointment in 1987 of Robert O'Neill to the Chichele chair, frozen since Howard's transfer to the Regius chair, plugged the gap in strategic studies. Bonded by its all-hands-to-the-pumps origins, the IR group developed into the most cohesive element within the Sub-faculty of Politics, helped perhaps by the absence of a Nuffield Official Fellowship in the subject as a glittering, research-only prize that might lure a leading figure away from the university operation. Temporary funding

<sup>32</sup> Markwell's work on Keynes and international relations, under way when he was appointed to a junior research fellowship at New College in 1985, was not completed as a doctorate until 1995 and not published until 2006. He has latterly enjoyed a very successful career in academic administration.

from the Ford Foundation enabled a theorist to be appointed to a university lectureship attached to Nuffield in 1989; a joint IR/Politics university lectureship in Russian and East European Politics was created at St Antony's in 1989; and the following year the Swire Foundation funded a senior research fellowship in Chinese foreign policy.

A major syllabus change in PPE with effect from 1993 deposed 'Political Institutions' as the one compulsory paper in Politics. IR gained 'core paper' status for the first time, on an equal footing with comparative government, political theory, political sociology, and British political history. Undergraduates henceforward chose any two out of these five, and consistently preferred IR. Initially 'International Politics since 1945' was the IR core paper, because more tutors taught it than 'Theories of International Politics', a modified version of 'The International System' introduced in 1991. But the intention was always to have a more conceptual core paper; and the change was made with effect from finals 1999 when 'Theories of International Politics' disappeared and 'International Relations' became the core paper, with a mainly theoretical focus although knowledge of the world since the Cold War was also required. 'International Politics since 1945' reverted to optional status as 'International Relations in the Era of the Cold War', alongside 'International Relations in the Era of Two World Wars'; but there was no longer a requirement to take one of these as an inoculation against the higher nonsense. As Oxford overcame its fear of theory, it brought its undergraduate syllabus more into line with those of other universities

These PPE changes made it easier for IR specialists to secure CUF lectureships. Meanwhile university lectureships continued to be created: an endowed post in American Foreign Policy was established at Nuffield in 1994 and another in Middle East Politics at St Antony's from the following year. Also in 1995, a university lectureship attached to Somerville was associated with a tutorship, a combination that the popularity of the IR core paper had suddenly made attractive to undergraduate colleges. In 1996 Neil MacFarlane took up the newly created Lester B. Pearson Professorship of International Relations, another fundraising success. These appointments shifted the balance of power within the Politics Sub-faculty, so that in 2000, when Oxford went through the organizational revolution that saw the Social Studies Faculty disappear into a new Social Sciences Division, no objection was raised when the Sub-faculty was not only restructured but redesignated as the Department of Politics *and International Relations*. By that stage IR could even have gone it alone had it wanted to, though unscrambling responsibility for PPE teaching would have been difficult.

By permitting more academic specialization for college tutors, creating more university lectureships and professorships, giving parity of esteem to IR, and introducing more theory into its undergraduate teaching of that subject, Oxford was normalizing. The next stage in this process was the

phasing out of CUF lectureships in Politics. A quirk in the university's post-2000 resource allocation system meant that the department would at negligible extra cost acquire more teaching hours and a higher share of research income if such posts became university lectureships, while colleges would save so much money by the same process that they would mostly accept the accompanying reduction in tutorial hours. After Neil MacFarlane became head of department in 2005, he offered immediate conversions to all CUF lecturers; and during 2007–8 a number accepted the offer. The eventual disappearance of the CUF lectureship from the Department of Politics and International Relations should mean that college tutoring in those subjects at Oxford will never be as distinctively burdensome as it once was.

Of course, Oxford will not fully normalize while it retains college autonomy and its commitment to tutorials. But in 2012, when its 'core IR' email list has as many as eighteen names and its 'wider IR community' one a much larger number, IR at Oxford is no longer seriously constrained by the institutional idiosyncrasies of its host university. Its research output is wide-ranging and methodologically pluralistic. Under a leader who for the first time is a product of its own MPhil, Andrew Hurrell (who to the satisfaction of the locals succeeded to the Montague Burton Chair in 2008), with its previous leader, Sir Adam Roberts, presiding over the British Academy, with ten applicants for every place on its MPhil course, with its doctoral programme thriving, and with a steady stream of luminaries from other universities coming to pay their respects, it is even just a little bit pleased with the distance it has travelled in nine decades. That progress is perhaps most starkly encapsulated in Balliol's tutorial journey from Mr Urquhart in the 1920s and early 1930s to Dr Hazareesingh, FBA, *alumnus* of both PPE and the MPhil in IR, since the 1990s—from Sligger to Sudhir.



## EDITORS' NOTE

Clausewitz famously described war as the continuation of politics by other means.<sup>1</sup> The opposite often applies too, making the study of politics and the study of war hard to separate, particularly since so much warfare today occurs within as well as between states. 'War (or peace) studies' and 'strategic studies' are nowadays often intellectually bundled together with international relations and political science, though they straddle the intellectual domains of politics, strategy, and history.

In this chapter, Sir Hew Strachan recounts the history of a chair created a century or so ago in Oxford which was intended precisely to straddle those three domains. Established at much the same time as Oxford's first faculty appointment with 'politics' in its title (as described in Simon Green's chapter) and in part reflecting German intellectual developments, the Chichele Chair of Military History was conceived as contributing 'not only to teaching history but also the study of contemporary and even future war'. Indeed, the first incumbent of the chair seems to have initially taken up a strikingly anti-history, pro-theory stance towards his subject. Strachan shows that the tensions between history, strategic studies, and public policy, evident from the outset, have presented an ever-more difficult balancing act for any one professor.

The story Strachan tells—of somewhat arrested development, with no 'school' and no institutional growth over a century, but rather a succession of individuals with varying talent and interests in one chair—contrasts sharply with that told by Martin Ceadel in the previous chapter about the 'normalization' of IR as a discipline from somewhat similar origins. And the fact that the two fields started out in the same way but finished in such different places seems more plausibly attributed to Oxford's internal institutional features (and perhaps to lack of individual leadership at some critical periods) than to developments in the outside world. This particular field seems to have ended up either on the wrong side or split by institutional processes of academic divisionalization and departmentalization, since it was located in a history faculty that moved from a 'public life' to a purer academic mission after the creation of PPE in the 1920s. Military history by contrast was split off from the theory of war in many universities in the 1960s.

<sup>1</sup> C. Von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. A. Rapoport (1832; Harmondsworth: Penguin 1968), 119.



# The Study of War at Oxford 1909–2009

*Hew Strachan*

In 1909 Henry Spenser Wilkinson delivered his inaugural lecture as Oxford's first Chichele Professor of Military History, a chair which has been titled 'History of War' since 1946. The name is often shortened by those who don't know better to 'Professor of War' or (no doubt in deference to the impact of the Department of War Studies at King's College London) of 'War Studies'. The reasons for the omission of 'history' from the title are a reflection of more than laziness: they are complex and increasingly relevant. By the same token, the inclusion of 'history' is important, even if for reasons that are today very different from those of over a century ago. Many early twentieth-century historians were so focused on constitutional and narrowly diplomatic history that they elbowed out the actual business of war. The causes of war mattered, and so did the consequences, but the course of a war and its contingent effects, according to this stereotype, were passed over. That was much less true of Oxford. In 1909 the Regius Professor of Modern History was Sir Charles Firth, a research fellow of All Souls, who is possibly best known for his book *Cromwell's Army*. Firth opened the door to modern military history, and he proved a friend both to the study of war and to Spenser Wilkinson.<sup>1</sup>

Firth was not alone in his interest in war. Another fellow of All Souls, Sir Charles Oman, who was appointed Chichele Professor of Modern History in 1905, had built his early reputation on his histories of the art of the war in the Middle Ages and began a seven-volume history of the Peninsular War in 1902. The influence of sea power on history had been highlighted by Montagu Burrows, Oman's predecessor, and by J. A. Froude, Regius Professor of Modern History between 1892 and 1894. As an undergraduate, Oman had attended the meetings of the Oxford Kriegsspiel (or war game) Club, set up in 1876 to study tactics by Wilkinson himself, who was then a scholar of Merton and member of the Oxford University Rifle Volunteers.

<sup>1</sup> This chapter is based on a lecture, 'War in Oxford, Oxford at War, 1909–2009', delivered to mark the centenary of the chair, on 28 October 2009. It owes a large debt to J. Hattendorf, 'War History at Oxford: The Study of War History at Oxford, 1862–1990', in J. Hattendorf and M. Murfett (eds), *Limitations of Military Power: Essays Presented to Professor Norman Gibbs on his Eightieth Birthday* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990); see also J. S. G. Simmons, *All Souls and Oxford Professorial Chairs, with an Excursus on Readerships* (Oxford: Warden and Fellows of All Souls College & J. S. G. Simmons, 1987), 11–12, 15.

At one level Wilkinson was not the most obvious choice to become the founder of the academic study of war at Oxford. As a Mancunian in the mid-nineteenth century, he was effectively born a Liberal, and was certainly brought up as one. He was also a classicist, not only by education but also by inclination. His military interests emerged almost accidentally: he declared in his autobiography that, when he founded the Oxford Kriegsspiel Club, he 'was too old to enter the Army and had no taste for fighting or for the soldier's life'.<sup>2</sup> When he returned to Manchester to be called to the bar in 1880, he joined the Volunteers, founded the Manchester Tactical Society, and from 1883 began to write on military matters for the *Manchester Guardian*, analysing current campaigns in ways that impressed the military titans of the day, and advocating army reform. He called for the creation of a general staff, whose head should be the professional military adviser to the cabinet.

In 1892 Wilkinson and the radical MP Sir Charles Dilke co-authored a book called *Imperial Defence*, which broke with the tradition of Richard Cobden and the Manchester School. Free trade, it argued, remained desirable but it would not guarantee world peace. War was part of the international order, and 'the art of carrying on war is not in itself either good or bad. It becomes right or wrong according as the object with which it is undertaken is just or unjust'.<sup>3</sup> In the eyes of radicals Wilkinson, by embracing what international relations theory would today call realism, had become a militarist. The vehemence with which Wilkinson now rebutted the idealism of the Manchester School seemed to support the accusation. 'Peace,' he argued in a lecture in Oxford in 1911, 'cannot rationally be the object of policy.'<sup>4</sup> During the First World War itself he declared: 'Peace is a negation. It cannot be defined except as "not war", so that to know what peace is we must know what war is.'<sup>5</sup>

For Wilkinson militarism was wrong thinking about war: it mistook war, which was a means, for an end. This sort of logic was too much for C. P. Scott, the famous editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, and in 1892 Wilkinson lost his job on the newspaper. But Lord Roberts, then Commander-in-Chief in India, came to his rescue, inviting Wilkinson to the subcontinent. He accompanied the greatest military hero of the age on manoeuvres and to the north-west frontier, read Clausewitz for the first time, and, as he wrote, 'When I came home my course was clear, my business henceforth must be to try to communicate to my countrymen a true view of war.'<sup>6</sup> Roberts helped secure him a job on the *Morning Post*, albeit ostensibly as drama critic (since that was the

<sup>2</sup> H. Spenser Wilkinson, *Thirty-Five Years* (London: Constable, 1933), 6.

<sup>3</sup> C. Wentworth Dilke and H. Spenser Wilkinson, *Imperial Defence* (London: Macmillan, 1892), 18–19.

<sup>4</sup> See also Spenser Wilkinson, *Government and the War* (London: Constable, 1918), 64, 121.

<sup>5</sup> Spenser Wilkinson papers 13/55. Wilkinson's papers are held by the Army Museums Ogilby Trust, but there is a microfilm copy in the Codrington Library, All Souls College.

<sup>6</sup> Wilkinson papers 13/51, p. 16.

only post available). Wilkinson's reputation as a military critic and army reformer reached its apogee with the British army's setbacks in South Africa in 1899, but his career came off the rails again in 1905. He clashed over naval policy with Jackie Fisher, who became First Sea Lord in 1904. He fell out of favour with his editors at the *Morning Post* and found his articles being censored or changed. He failed to secure an appointment to the Committee of Imperial Defence, set up in 1902, because of clashes over principle and policy, and also of personal rivalry with G. S. Clarke (later Lord Sydenham) who became the Committee's secretary.

Just as Wilkinson's career was set to change direction, Oxford too was changing. In response to its failures in South Africa, the army had encouraged entry from the universities to the service, and laid down that those undergraduates aspiring to military careers should receive some practical and theoretical training in military subjects during their time at university. The Modern History Faculty, mindful of its commitment to the preparation of undergraduates for public life, and guided by Firth and Oman, agreed to include military history in the Honours School of Modern History. The question was: who was to do the teaching?

Leo Amery, who had been the military correspondent of *The Times* for the past five years and was in the throes of producing *The Times History of the War in South Africa*, was a fervent army reformer. He was also an advocate of imperial confederation for defensive as well as economic reasons. In 1906 he helped to form an 'Imperial Defence Society' in the university, to promote 'the discussion of matters naval and military, connected with the Home and Imperial Defence of the British Dominions'. With an undergraduate membership of forty-three and Lord Roberts as its president and Amery himself as its vice-president, it met three times a term. At one of these it was joined by Alfred, Lord Milner, High Commissioner in South Africa during the Boer War and to become a member of Lloyd George's war cabinet in the First World War.<sup>7</sup> Milner's use of his Oxford links to recruit to his South African 'Kindergarten', and the latter's subsequent development into the Round Table, a discussion group dedicated to imperial unity and wider security issues, highlighted the relationship between the university and the direction of public policy.<sup>8</sup> Milner, who had once described Wilkinson as 'the gadfly of naval and military officialdom',

<sup>7</sup> In 2010 F. Brice Faller discovered a photograph of Milner with the committee of the Imperial Defence Society, which is now in the Bodleian; a copy of the society's rules for the Michaelmas term 1906 is in the Selborne papers, MS.Eng.his.C.1005, fol.107. I am grateful to Michael Webb for the latter reference.

<sup>8</sup> See Michael Howard, 'All Souls and "The Round Table"', in S. J. D. Green and P. Hordern (eds), *All Souls and the Wider World: Statesmen, Scholars, and Adventurers, c.1850-1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

recommended to H. H. Asquith, when he became Prime Minister in 1908, that he use Wilkinson as his defence adviser.<sup>9</sup>

This determination to use the university as a forcing house for both new thought and new blood in public life was an ambition shared not just by Amery, Milner, and historians like Firth and Oman, but also by Sir William Anson, the Warden of All Souls, who figures in several other chapters in this volume. Anson, prompted by Amery, himself put up sufficient money to fund a lectureship in military history for three years. The college appointed to the post one of its own, Sir Foster Cunliffe, who, like Amery, had written a history of the South African War, and who persuaded the Modern History Faculty in 1909 to take charge of the military history syllabus from the army, which changed it every year. All Souls more than matched any expectations vested in it. When Anson's funding of the lectureship ran out, the college established a full professorship in military history, which was intended to give 'special reference to the conditions of modern warfare'.

Firth suggested to Wilkinson that he apply for the post, which the latter duly did. One of his referees, Lord Roberts, who had retired as the last Commander-in-Chief of the British Army in 1904, wrote to Wilkinson when he got the job: 'You have in virtue of this appointment a unique opportunity of rendering invaluable service to the country by inculcating the lessons of national duty and national reconstruction. . . . your tenure of the Chair may prove as important to Great Britain as Fichte's work after Jena proved to Prussia.'<sup>10</sup>

The reference to Prussia and to the awakening of German national consciousness after the crushing defeat of 1806 was particularly apposite. In 1907 Eyre Crowe, Wilkinson's brother-in-law, had circulated to his colleagues within the Foreign Office a now-famous memorandum, drawing their attention to the fact that Britain's interest in maintaining the balance of power in Europe was being challenged by Germany's pursuit of political hegemony.<sup>11</sup> Wilkinson is credited with being the inspiration behind the memorandum.<sup>12</sup> In 1909, just as his candidature for the chair was reaching fruition, Wilkinson published *Britain at Bay*, a call to arms, and a warning about the threat posed to Great Britain by Germany and the German navy.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> T. O'Brien, *Milner: Viscount Milner of St James's and Cape Town 1854–1925* (London: Constable, 1979), 124, 235.

<sup>10</sup> Roberts to Wilkinson, 20 October 1909, Wilkinson papers 13/14/105.

<sup>11</sup> Z. S. Steiner, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy 1898–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969; revised edn, London: Ashfield Press, 1986), 68, 112–14; Keith Wilson, 'Sir Eyre Crowe on the Origin of the Crowe Memorandum of 1 January 1907', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 56 (1983), 238–41.

<sup>12</sup> A. J. A. Morris, 77, 399, says the memorandum quoted *The Scaremongers: The Advocacy of War and Rearmament 1896–1914* (London: Routledge, 1984) Wilkinson without acknowledgement; Steiner, *Foreign Office*, 110, 190, sees the influence as more indirect, while acknowledging that the two shared many interests, including the Volunteers and military tactics.

<sup>13</sup> Spenser Wilkinson, *Britain at Bay* (London: Constable, 1909), 2.

That is why the Chichele Professorship in the History of War is so often abbreviated to a chair in war, *tout court*. In 1909 the professor of military history was expected to dedicate his time not only to teaching history but also to the study of contemporary and even future war. The Secretary of State for War served on the appointments committee. The post-holder had a duty to educate both those destined for the armed services and those headed for public life and political careers. The conflation of current national policy with the study of recent war was not solely driven by the demands of generals, but also came from within the fast-developing world of academic history.

The expectations imposed on the Chichele Professor of Military History conformed with those entertained of Oxford history more generally. History was not only a professional discipline, but also an education for public life. After 1901, the Honours School of History produced more graduates than any other degree course in the university, and set out to prepare them for influential positions at home and abroad. In 1914 the Faculty published a series of pamphlets which publicly articulated, in ways that no government statements did, the reasons why Britain was at war. And this was the university whose Officers Training Corps, in conjunction with that of Cambridge, produced over 15,000 men for commissions in Kitchener's New Armies.<sup>14</sup> For Wilkinson the study of military history was not primarily a matter for professional historians. Indeed he told the Historical Association in 1912 that its members would derive little pleasure from what he called 'a museum of dead and even fossil wars' or from 'a reconstruction of armies and navies that no longer exist'.<sup>15</sup> Wilkinson's task at Oxford was to teach not only the history of war but also its theory, subjects which he and his contemporaries saw as intimately linked.

In 1919, soon after the ending of the First World War, Wilkinson concluded a set of public lectures with the observation that 'not a few of the mistakes made between 1914 and 1919' were caused by 'an insufficient acquaintance of our Generals with the principles of national policy, and of our statesmen with the principles of what for want of a better name may be called international dynamics'. Wilkinson's remedy for these deficiencies was greater awareness each of the other. The judgements of statesmen required greater 'insight into the naval and military consequences of the decision taken' and that they be better informed of 'the naval and military means of carrying out any policy proposed'. On their side, the army and the navy had a responsibility to advance knowledge through 'a historical and a scientific department'. However, Wilkinson's remarks were also directed to the universities since it was

<sup>14</sup> J. M. Winter, 'Oxford and the First World War' in B. Harrison (ed.) *The History of the University of Oxford*, vol 8: *The Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 22. See also T. Weber, 'Oxford and Heidelberg Universities Before the First World War: British and German Elite Institutions in Comparative Perspective', DPhil thesis, Oxford University, 2003.

<sup>15</sup> Wilkinson papers 13/52, 1.

their task to study the relationship between strategy and policy: ‘the knowledge of war as national action ought not to be neglected by those institutions, which cultivate the studies of history, of law, and of the nature of society’.<sup>16</sup> Wilkinson set the agenda for the academic pursuit of what in the Cold War came to be called strategic studies, but he—and as a result Oxford—saw its principal constituent discipline not as game theory or mathematical probability, but as history.

In his inaugural lecture, Wilkinson argued that ‘Military History is the effort to understand war, to get to know what war is and what it means. There is no method of getting to know war except the study of wars, and the only wars that can be studied are either wars that have happened and are over, or a war that is taking place. But a war that is taking place cannot be fully known. While it lasts, no one whatever can be fully acquainted with it.’<sup>17</sup> It followed therefore that military history should focus on two sorts of war in particular: recent wars, and on what Wilkinson described as ‘struggles for existence between great nations’.<sup>18</sup> The military historian had three processes which he could apply to his task. One, common to all historians, was critical sifting of evidence. The second, peculiar to the student of war, was the application of military judgement to show cause and effect. Third, and more controversial, was the application of counterfactual methodologies which asked whether the means employed were the most suitable to achieve the desired effect.<sup>19</sup>

Many have seen the outbreak of the war in 1914, for which Wilkinson had done so much to prepare the country, as marking his eclipse as commentator and pundit.<sup>20</sup> This was not the case at first but from 1916 ‘these extra-academical demands upon me ceased and there were never more than two or three members of the University seeking instruction in my subject’.<sup>21</sup> He cancelled his lectures and turned to writing history, first to that of nineteenth-century Germany and then to his outstanding account of the Piedmont campaign of 1742–8. Although this was to prove his most important contribution to scholarship, it provided a bizarre contrast with the realities of the Great War as it reached its climax in 1917–18. In 1919 Wilkinson asked specifically that the professor be relieved of his obligation ‘to lecture and give instruction in Military History, with special reference to the conditions

<sup>16</sup> S. Wilkinson, *British Aspects of War and Peace* (London: Duckworth, 1920), 61–2; I am grateful to Paul Ramsey for discussing these points with me.

<sup>17</sup> Wilkinson, *Government and the War*, 11–12.

<sup>18</sup> Wilkinson, *Government and the War*, 154.

<sup>19</sup> Wilkinson, *Government and the War*, 23–6.

<sup>20</sup> See J. Luvaas, *The Education of an Army: British Military Thought, 1815–1940* (Chicago, 1964), 282.

<sup>21</sup> University Archives, UR 6/HMC/1, file 1, Wilkinson’s quinquennial report to the Vice-Chancellor, 26 June 1919.

of modern warfare', since 'this suggests a technical study of contemporary methods, such as is inappropriate except in a professional institution'.

The timing of this request, which formed part of his application for a third five-year term, was not well judged. Several powerful voices within the university and without called for his replacement by a 'quasi-professional intelligence', able to meet the demands of the War Office syllabus. Winston Churchill, who as the Secretary of State for War was invited to serve as an elector, and Henry Wilson, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, both supported the candidature of Major General Guy Dawnay, who had distinguished himself as an outstanding staff officer at Gallipoli and in Palestine and France. Wilkinson was saved by Dawnay's submission of an application that was—rightly—described as 'meagre' and probably also by the presence on the electoral board of voices likely to be supportive of the current incumbent.

Wilkinson was increasingly unhappy after 1914 because he could not secure a job which would enable him to apply his expertise to national ends. In 1917, Maurice Hankey, the secretary to the War Cabinet, dubbed Wilkinson an 'extinct volcano'. By 1921 he was characterized in terms that were fogeyish: 'an old man with a long white beard, a long rather bulbous red nose, going in the knees very wheezy and terribly loquacious'.<sup>22</sup>

Wilkinson finally retired in 1923. The Warden of All Souls had wanted the title of the chair changed from the professorship of military history to that of the history of war. His motivations were not those which underlay Wilkinson's remarkably modern plea to the Vice-Chancellor in 1919 for a redefinition of his duties: the view that military history smacked too much of the sort of operational history practised by the historical sections of general staffs and not enough of the relationships between armed forces and society or between war and international relations. Instead his concern was to stress that candidates in naval history as well as in the history of land warfare might apply. In 1917, with the German campaign of unrestricted submarine warfare at its height, Professor A. F. Pollard had told the Historical Association that 'it would be a depressing thought that the British people, who depend for their very existence on sea-power, should never understand naval warfare. . . . It must, however, obtain so long as our University authorities make no provision for the education of the public in naval history.' In 1919 Cambridge responded to this call by establishing the Vere Harmsworth Professorship of Naval History, a post later rebranded as a chair in imperial and naval history, and since 1936 one held continuously by an imperial historian.<sup>23</sup>

Oxford has done no better, although in 1923 it was not for want of trying. Maurice Hankey, a Royal Marine as concerned with British sea power as

<sup>22</sup> S. Roskill, *Hankey: Man of Secrets* (3 vols, London: Collins, 1972–4), I, 441. J. Beach (ed.), *The Military Papers of Sir Cuthbert Headlam* (Stroud: History Press, 2010), 246, diary entry for 26 November 1921.

<sup>23</sup> *The Historical Association, 1906–1956*, with a foreword by H. Butterfield (London: G. Philp, 1955), 12.

Wilkinson, served on the appointing committee as the representative of the chairman of the Committee of Imperial Defence, and proved to be a dominant influence in its proceedings. However, none of the seven applicants for the post possessed a naval background. Nor did they include the most effective teacher of military history within Oxford of the first half of the twentieth century, C. T. Atkinson, who had been elected to a fellowship at Exeter College in 1898, had taught military history since 1908, and who withheld his application in order to clear the path for his brother-in-law, Major General Sir Frederick Maurice. Maurice had been Director of Military Intelligence at the War Office in early 1918, and had written to the newspapers on 7 May that year, accusing the Prime Minister, Lloyd George, of lying to the House of Commons about the strength of the British army in France when the Germans had attacked on 21 March.<sup>24</sup> As secretary to the war cabinet, Hankey had had to deal with this 'veritable bombshell', drafting the brief used by the Prime Minister in the House of Commons in his response to the charges. Unsurprisingly, therefore, it seemed as though, for Hankey, the principal qualification required of the individual to succeed Wilkinson should be that he was not Maurice.<sup>25</sup> Instead Hankey's eye alighted on Major General Sir Ernest Swinton, who had served with Hankey at the Committee of Imperial Defence before the First World War. His referees included two Prime Ministers, one past, Asquith, and one prospective, Stanley Baldwin, and could have included a third, Lloyd George, on whose memoirs Swinton was working. Oxford's loss was London's gain. Maurice went off to be Professor of Military Studies there in 1927, and in 1938 became Principal of Queen Mary College. He published extensively on military history and the theory of war. Swinton did not.

The failure to appoint somebody with stronger historical interests was extraordinary given the developments in the teaching of military history which occurred in Oxford after 1918. Both Wilkinson and the Warden of All Souls felt that attention to 'the conditions of modern warfare' would be too technical and insufficiently theoretical.<sup>26</sup> In 1920 the Board of the Faculty of Modern History agreed that the theory of war would be examined by the study of a selected campaign, considered as far as possible through the original documents. In 1924, on Oman's and Atkinson's recommendation, the

<sup>24</sup> N. Maurice, *The Maurice Case: from the Papers of Major-General Sir Frederick Maurice* KCMG, CB (London: Leo Cooper, 1972); J. Gooch, 'The Maurice Case', in *The Prospect of War; Studies in British Defence Policy 1847–1942* (London: Frank Cass, 1981); D. Woodward, 'Did Lloyd George Starve the British Army of Men Prior to the German Offensive of 21 March 1918?', *Historical Journal*, 27 (1984), 241–52.

<sup>25</sup> Roskill, *Hankey*, II, 539–51; also M. Hankey, *The Supreme Command 1914–1918*, 2 vols (London, 1961), II, 798. See also University Archives, UR6/HMC/1, file 2, Roskill to John Sparrow, 18 June 1968, and subsequent correspondence.

<sup>26</sup> University Archives, FA 9/2/336; see also 'Napoleon and the Great War', n.d., Wilkinson papers 13/56, 3.



Peninsular War was chosen and it remained on the syllabus until 1950. A new special subject in military history, on Britain and the Mediterranean 1797–1802, was approved in 1948.

A knowledge of the Peninsular War did not figure among Swinton's qualifications, which were indeed modern and technical: exactly those attributes which the Warden of All Souls (and Wilkinson) had felt were not wanted. As an engineer and railway expert, he was a scientist rather than a historian, and is best known today as an early advocate of the tank. Swinton devoted his inaugural lecture to contemporary issues, stressing the Bolshevik threat and the danger of what would come to be called the 'Cold War'. He addressed a number of themes which do indeed remain pregnant to this day: the functions of the media, and especially radio and cinema, and their impact on war; the effects of new technologies, such as submarines, aviation and gas; and the collapse of the distinction between war and peace.

If he had seen these as an agenda for his tenure, Oxford might have made a more forthright contribution to the understanding of war in the interwar period, but he did not. He found students difficult, disliking those who disagreed with him, and thought the tutorial system tended to overdevelop the capacity for independent criticism. He found that undergraduates lacked the manners of subalterns, were insufficiently deferential, and were too often 'long-haired youngsters of the Arty and Crafty type'.<sup>27</sup> But even if he had shown a more constructive engagement with contemporary conflict, he would still have had to surmount a problem which had not confronted Wilkinson in 1909. The divergence in Oxford between the teaching of history and the teaching of politics weakened the case for having a professor of military history who was actually more interested in contemporary war. As noted in several other chapters in this volume, the School of Philosophy, Politics, and Economics was set up in 1920. In 1932 the Oxford University *Handbook* advised that the School of Modern History was either for those seeking a general education or for those planning careers as professional historians; PPE, on the other hand, prepared people for 'business, the civil service and public life'. History refused to compete with PPE, and the two subjects—history and politics—pursued increasingly divergent courses. By 1938 PPE had overtaken history in popularity among Honours Schools finalists,<sup>28</sup> and when Alfred Zimmern (discussed in Martin Ceadel's chapter) became Oxford's first Montague Burton Professor of International Relations in 1930, he proposed that the university create a postgraduate school of government. The university did not do so for another eighty years, but the logical home for the study of the theory of war lay no longer in a history faculty that had ceased

<sup>27</sup> E. Swinton, *Over My Shoulder* (Oxford: G. Ronald, 1951), 282.

<sup>28</sup> R. Currie, 'The Arts and Social Studies, 1914–1939', in B. Harrison (ed.), *The History of the University of Oxford*, 111–16, 142.

to aspire to prepare its undergraduates for careers in public service but in a school of politics and international relations. Military history and the theory of war remained the title of the offering within the Faculty of Modern History, but as history qua history grew as a discipline it would elbow out the study of war as many theorists, and even as Swinton, understood it.<sup>29</sup>

It is hard not to conclude that, if somebody with the intellectual proclivities of Wilkinson had been in the post in the 1920s and 1930s, he would have been able to use the opportunity provided by the growth of the study of politics in Oxford to put the study of war on a new and firmer foundation: it was an opportunity whose forfeiture has dogged Swinton's successors. Swinton did not retire until 1939. He sounded out General Sir Archibald Wavell as to the possibility of his taking on the post.<sup>30</sup> But at the same time, changes were proposed in the statutes, first to give effect to the alteration in title from military history to the history of war, and secondly to revise the composition of the electoral board. These proposals were not approved by All Souls until June 1939. Then other events supervened, and the electors agreed in 1940 to postpone any appointment until after the war was over.<sup>31</sup>

As a result, during the Second World War Oxford was home to no strategic commentator of significance. Nonetheless, when the electors finally convened in 1946, they had a good chance of appointing one. Twenty-three candidates applied, among them Captain Basil Liddell Hart, who had been gearing himself up for the opportunity to do so since 1935. In 1938, he had been approached by the Warden of All Souls and asked to form a small group of defence experts to meet in the college. This was to be an offshoot of a similar 'informal gathering' of students of foreign affairs, convened by Sir Arthur Salter (the second Gladstone professor of political theory and institutions, who also figures in other chapters in this volume, and who was the coordinator of Allied shipping in the latter stages of the First World War). Liddell Hart planned to approach one or two of the 'best minds in each of the fighting services, together with certain members of the present group who are economic experts or have special knowledge of particular parts of the world'.<sup>32</sup> Significantly the Warden does not seem to have approached the Chichele professor, Swinton.

One of those whom Liddell Hart asked to join the group was Wavell, and the latter was also one of the three whom he asked to act as his referees in 1946. The others were Hankey and Gilbert Murray, both of whom had for a

<sup>29</sup> On the Montague Burton Chair, see A. Roberts, 'Professing International Relations at Oxford', *Oxford Magazine*, Noughth Week, Hilary Term, 2008, 10–12.

<sup>30</sup> Swinton to Wavell, 19 May 1938, Wavell papers; see also Wavell's typescript recollections for 1934–9, 36. I am grateful to Owen Humphries for allowing me to see these documents.

<sup>31</sup> University Archives, UR 6/HMC/1, file 1.

<sup>32</sup> Liddell Hart to Wavell, 17 May 1938, Liddell Hart papers, King's College London, LH 1/773, f. 169.

long time 'encouraged me to think of this Chair as a way of devoting myself more fully to historical research'.<sup>33</sup>

In the event he was not even called for interview.<sup>34</sup> There are three possible explanations for the reluctance of the electors—who included General Sir William Slim, then the Commandant of the Imperial Defence College, and Keith Hancock, another fellow of All Souls and responsible for the civil series of the official histories of the Second World War—to see probably the best-known British writer on military topics of the twentieth century. None of them relates to the fact that Liddell Hart had read history at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.

The most important was that Liddell Hart's career was at its nadir in 1945. He had suffered a physical and psychological breakdown early in the war, and he had favoured a compromise peace with Hitler. Our image of Liddell Hart today is in large measure a product of his self-reinvention after the Second World War. The most remote reason for Liddell Hart's rejection, but a possible second factor, was Spenser Wilkinson's doubt about his academic qualities. Wilkinson liked Liddell Hart, but thought—as he put it in 1928—'he writes too much & is in a hurry. The right way to get there (wherever he is going) is to go quietly, slow & sure.'<sup>35</sup> The third and most proximate reason for Liddell Hart's absence from those called for interview was the influence of C. T. Atkinson, who, according to one of his tutorial pupils in 1952, 'said of Liddell Hart that he wouldn't insult his arse by using his books for lavatory paper!'<sup>36</sup>

So the electors instead appointed Captain Cyril Falls. He was not a bad choice; indeed as Liddell Hart observed, he was the safe one. Falls was an official historian of military operations in the First World War (as well as a veteran of that war), who had also had a much better Second World War than Liddell Hart. He had succeeded the latter as the military correspondent of *The Times*, a job he retained throughout his tenure of the chair, and his Lees Knowles lectures, delivered in Cambridge in 1941, said much that was consonant with the theories that had been dear to Spenser Wilkinson's heart. He praised Clausewitz; he declared war was an activity engaged in by states; and he felt that military history and the theory of war belonged together. In his inaugural lecture he was clear that history broadly defined should encompass

<sup>33</sup> Liddell Hart to Wavell, 3 April 1946, Liddell Hart papers, King's College London, LH 1/773, f. 313.

<sup>34</sup> A. Danchev, *Alchemist of War: The Life of Basil Liddell Hart* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1998), 182, 222.

<sup>35</sup> Wilkinson to J. M. Scammell, 18 January 1928, Wilkinson papers 13/68.

<sup>36</sup> James Fraser writing to his parents, 1954, *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 74 (1996), 254–9. Wavell thought he had been approached about the chair by Swinton specifically to keep Liddell Hart out: Wavell's typescript recollections 1934–9, 36.

military history, rather than isolate it, and that military historians should not be regarded as second-class citizens by other historians.

The dilemma for the holder of the chair, whether he was to profess military history or the study of war, was real enough, and would only magnify over the remainder of the twentieth century, but Falls's deficiencies lay elsewhere. In the harsh but not inaccurate verdict of Liddell Hart's friend, Major General Eric Dorman-Smith, 'Falls is a recorder perhaps, a critic seldom, a guide never'.<sup>37</sup> His characteristics were balance rather than incisiveness, fluency rather than controversy. He did not excite the History Faculty, especially when his duties on *The Times* seemed to make him more absent than present. *The Oxford Magazine* had called for change in 1946—to have a naval historian, and one who was 'neither a narrow specialist, nor a generaliser and philosopher, but a genuine historian'.<sup>38</sup> This mood presumably affected the decision not to push for Falls's extension beyond the retirement age in 1953, and it may also have ruled out the possible candidacy of the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir John Slessor, who might have been interested in the post if it had become available in 1955.<sup>39</sup> The electors' preference was for an academic historian. They were enjoined not to neglect the claims of naval history, but failed to call for interview two candidates who were qualified in that respect (Commander John Creswell and Captain Stephen Roskill), and were not able to see a third (Cyril Northcote Parkinson, the author of *Parkinson's Law*, who was then in Singapore and not available to come to Britain); the only naval historian whom they interviewed (J. G. Bullocke) was probably the least impressive. 'Bill' Williams, who had served on Montgomery's staff in the Second World War and had just been appointed Warden of Rhodes House, counselled the electors that, while Norman Gibbs, whom he knew, was not a pure military historian, he was an all-rounder who was familiar with the relationship between politics and war. The electors took his advice and plumped for Gibbs. It was an act that had profound consequences for the study of war at Oxford.<sup>40</sup>

Gibbs, a tutorial fellow of Merton, had written his doctoral thesis on the history of Reading in the late Middle Ages, 'considered with special reference to the importance of the guild merchant in the medieval seigniorial boroughs'. Admittedly Gibbs had done other things since completing his thesis in 1935. Commissioned into the King's Dragoon Guards in 1939, he had not gone abroad with his regiment, but had remained in Britain as a gunnery instructor, and then in 1943 had moved to the historical branch of the War Cabinet office.

<sup>37</sup> Dorman-Smith to Liddell Hart, 22 June 1946, Liddell Hart papers, 1/242/202, f.579.

<sup>38</sup> *The Oxford Magazine*, 31 January 1946.

<sup>39</sup> University Archives, UR6/HMC/1, file 2, Slessor to Registrar, 2 March 1953.

<sup>40</sup> The correspondence surrounding the election is to be found in the University Archives, UR 6/HMC/1, file 2

Here he made a special study of the origins of the Committee of Imperial Defence, which he would choose as the subject of his inaugural lecture. He also came under the aegis of Keith Hancock, who was an elector in 1953, as was J. R. M. Butler, the editor of the grand strategy series of the official British history of the Second World War. Butler had already selected Gibbs to write the first volume in his series, that on rearmament in the 1930s, but if Butler hoped Gibbs's election would speed the book, he was to be sorely disappointed. It finally appeared in 1976, the last of the six to do so, and only one year before Gibbs retired. K. B. McFarlane, who had supervised Gibbs's thesis, advised the electors that Gibbs was a conscientious tutor, ready to do his stint for college and faculty, but not 'the brilliant teacher who gives a powerful new turn to his subject and inspires a "school"'. As A. L. Rowse commented, reporting the words of Michael Howard, Gibbs sat on his chair.<sup>41</sup>

Gibbs held the chair for twenty-four years, the longest tenure of any incumbent. He supervised some distinguished adornments to the subject in the fields of naval history, military history, and strategic studies, and he was the first professor of the history of war to confront the real growth of the study of war at postgraduate level. But in almost a quarter of a century he supervised in total about the same number of students as are currently taught in the subject in Oxford at any one time. It is this explosion in postgraduate supervision which has really changed the duties of the chair by comparison with those of an earlier era. In 2009 there were on offer in the United Kingdom at least sixteen master's degree programmes in war studies or military history, all of them potentially generating new doctoral students. In that year, thirty-five applied to Oxford.

What also changed in Gibbs's time was the relationship of the armed forces, and particularly of the army, with Oxford. In 1909 Wilkinson complained that the War Office regulations for opening commissions to university graduates were 'carefully arranged so as to exclude those of intellectual power and to smooth the way for mediocrity'.<sup>42</sup> He thought the army should attract from Oxford not just those with pass degrees (and perhaps he had Douglas Haig in mind) but also some of the brightest graduates. In Wilkinson's day most of those commissioned into the army entered straight from school, a pattern which persisted until relatively recently. Today 80 per cent of those commissioned into the army are graduates. In 2009, two of the five chiefs of staff were Oxford graduates, and at least six more generals and two more admirals were Oxonians.

Wilkinson's other concern was that officers, once they had learnt the grammar of their profession, needed a broader education in the relationship

<sup>41</sup> K. B. McFarlane to the electors, 1 February 1953; A. L. Rowse, *Historians I Have Known* (London: Duckworth, 1995), 185.

<sup>42</sup> Wilkinson on 'Generalship', late 1914, Wilkinson papers 13/55, 2.

between war and policy. He suggested in 1910 that the nation, 'may also reasonably expect its Admirals and its Generals also to reach the highest plane and to make the intellectual effort needed to understand the relation between the national life and war'.<sup>43</sup> Between 1964 and 1970 Denis Healey, the most successful defence minister of the second half of the twentieth century, responded to this challenge by instituting the scheme of Defence Fellowships, designed to send mid-career officers to universities for a year in order to pursue a programme of research. They included General Sir Frank Kitson (author of the famous book on counter-insurgency warfare, *Low Intensity Operations*, published in 1971) and Field Marshal (as he became) Sir Nigel Bagnall, who shaped the army's thinking on the operational level of war.

However, the most important challenge which emerged in Gibbs's day was the need to respond to the growth in subject matter since the establishment of the chair in 1909. The events of the twentieth century themselves redefined the content of military history, most obviously through the two world wars but also during the Cold War. Not only was there chronological growth; there was also intellectual change. By the 1960s the split between military history and the theory of war was becoming institutionalized almost everywhere in the western world. The Cold War prompted the emergence of strategic studies as an independent subdiscipline, both in policy-related fields and in postgraduate teaching. By the 1970s war found its niche not in faculties of history but in departments of politics. In 1958 the Institute for Strategic Studies was set up in London, with Alastair Buchan, who had read history (and not PPE) at Oxford, as its director. In 1969 Buchan refashioned the Imperial Defence College as the Royal College of Defence Studies. As recounted in Martin Ceadel's chapter, Buchan was appointed to Oxford in 1972 not as Professor of the History of War but as the Montague Burton Professor of International Relations, and was succeeded after his death in 1976 by Hedley Bull, and then in 1986 by Adam Roberts. All three had profound interests in the place of *War in Modern Society*, to use the title of a book published by Buchan in 1966. Under their guidance international relations has flourished at Oxford, making it one of the most important centres in the field in the United Kingdom. The MPhil degree in international relations, whose origin dates back to 1970, has a strategic studies option. But as the study of politics in Britain was increasingly influenced by the discipline of political science in the United States, and as security studies—with its focus on human security as much as on national security—displaced strategic studies, so the theory of war itself moved away from military history and even lost its centrality. The causes of war and the resolution of conflict are, naturally enough, of greater interest to international

<sup>43</sup> Wilkinson on 'Generalship', late 1914, Wilkinson papers 13/51, 31.

relations scholars. Their discipline is shaped by an underlying hope, even faith, in a better future. Students of the conduct of war tend to greater pessimism.

The cleavage in the subject as it was understood by Wilkinson and his contemporaries was also widened by the fact that historians no longer aspire to influence public policy. The research agenda has taken the subject in fresh directions, discovering and growing economic, social, and gender history, but has also caused it to turn in on itself as it responds to the demands of academic professionalization and research assessment. So which way was the Chichele Professor of the History of War to jump? Should he go towards history, which in the 1960s went through its own ferment as it responded to the *Annales* School and Marxism? Or should he go towards strategic studies, as they embraced the existential questions posed by nuclear weapons and their threatened use in the Cold War?

The university has never really made up its mind. In 1971 it proposed to drop the Commandant of the Royal College of Defence Studies from the electoral board, principally to bring the appointment more fully under university control, but then did not implement the decision, so implicitly acknowledging the chair's ongoing relationship to contemporary defence policy.<sup>44</sup> And yet within three years the university was confirming that the post was open to candidates with pre-1800 interests.<sup>45</sup> Its choice of successor to Gibbs in 1977, Michael Howard, postponed the need to ask the question. Howard had begun life as a Tudor historian, but was appointed Professor of War Studies at King's College London, before returning to Oxford to become Fellow in Higher Defence Studies at All Souls in 1968. The post was itself part of Healey's recognition of the need for universities to take contemporary conflict more seriously, an awareness which resulted in the establishment of Defence Lectureships at a number of British universities, many of them with enduring legacies for the serious study of the subject. Michael Howard's appointment to the Chichele Chair was at once a new beginning, an end to a quarter of a century of drift, and a denouement. Howard encapsulated in near perfect form the tradition which Wilkinson had inaugurated—the combination of the theory of war with the study of military history. On the one hand, stood his work on Clausewitz and his pivotal role in the development of war studies at King's and in the formation of the Institute for Strategic Studies; on the other, he was the author of a prize-winning history of the Franco-Prussian War and of one of the grand strategy volumes on the British official history.

Professor Sir Michael Howard, OM, CH, CBE, MC, FBA has done more than anybody else in the English-speaking world to put the serious study of

<sup>44</sup> University Archives, UR 6/HMC/1, file 2, Registry to Alastair Buchan, 11 November 1971, and subsequent correspondence.

<sup>45</sup> University Archives, UR 6/HMC/1, file 2, Registry to Geoffrey Parker, 7 October 1975.

war on a proper footing, and since 1977 the chair has been linked in the minds of many with its most distinguished holder. But his reputation in the field and his long association with Oxford obscure the fact that he held the post for only three years, a shorter period than any of the other incumbents before or since. In 1980 he was elevated to the Regius Professorship in Modern History. He himself did his best to ensure that the Chichele Chair was filled immediately, but the ambiguity in the chair's remit was reflected in the draft advertisement for Howard's successor: it called for a specialist in military history, but hedged its bets by expecting candidates to have 'an informed interest' in contemporary strategic questions, 'since it is to be hoped that the professor will contribute to the teaching of strategic studies in the university'.<sup>46</sup>

In the event the fact that Howard continued to practise both military history and strategic studies justified the university in its decision to freeze the Chichele Chair. When in 1987, not least thanks to Howard's efforts, the professorship was again filled, the electors opted to go down the strategic studies route. From a field which included at least four distinguished military historians, they chose the Director of the International Institute for Strategic Studies, Robert O'Neill. As a Rhodes Scholar, O'Neill had completed a DPhil on the German army and the Nazi party under Norman Gibbs's supervision, but his interests had long since moved to more contemporary topics. His inaugural lecture was entitled 'Alliances and International Order'; its focus was not on military history or even on war, but on the future of international relations. Then, when O'Neill retired in 2001, the electors jumped in the opposite direction. All three of the shortlisted candidates held university teaching posts in history, and had few pretensions in the field of strategic studies.

This does not mean that the relationship between military history and strategic studies is no longer a fruitful one. Indeed the dialogue between the two has grown in relevance rather than diminished since the end of the Cold War, and even more since the 9/11 attacks on the United States in 2001. Strategic studies in the Cold War was focused on the prevention of war, and the study of strategy was as concerned with the preservation of peace as with the conduct of hostilities. Furthermore, its insights seemed to some to be more dependent on technological change than historical understanding. Since 1990 the experience of actual conflict, and the importance of social, political, and cultural ways of looking at those wars, have revived the value of historical perspectives and the context they provide.

This is not an argument that history provides us with lessons—that the three Afghan wars which Britain fought between 1839 and 1919 are helpful in any direct way in conducting operations in Afghanistan in the twenty-first

<sup>46</sup> University Archives, UR 6/HMC/1, file 2, Michael Howard to Jack McManners, 21 May 1980, and subsequent correspondence.



century. The value of history to the student of strategy is that it raises questions more than it gives answers, and that it describes the process of change rather than deals with continuities. Marc Bloch, the great economic historian of medieval France, but also a soldier in both world wars—and hence by default a military historian, wrote in his analysis of France’s defeat in 1940 that, ‘The lesson it [history] teaches us is not that what happened yesterday will necessarily happen to-morrow, or that the past will go on reproducing itself. By examining how and why yesterday differed from the day before, it can reach conclusions which will enable it to foresee how to-morrow will differ from yesterday.’<sup>47</sup>

In 2004, thanks to the generosity of the Leverhulme Trust, Oxford was able to establish an interdisciplinary programme on the ‘changing character of war’, which brought together not just history and international relations, but also applied ethics and law. The Changing Character of War Programme proved strikingly successful, creating something where there was nothing, producing many publications and linking academics with practitioners. Its coincidence with the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq meant that it did indeed bear witness to war as its character changed, and it attracted the support not only of the British armed forces but also of those of Australia, Canada, France, Norway, Turkey, and the United States.

In 1961, in an often-quoted piece, Michael Howard said that military history needs to be studied in width and depth.<sup>48</sup> That is true of war as a whole. But the width cannot any longer be encompassed by one professor or one discipline. The study of war is now a collaborative activity, sustained by a group of scholars working in cognate and related fields. This is what Oxford, probably uniquely in the United Kingdom, can do, because war is touched on at so many points in the university. But what Oxford lacks at the moment is depth. The home of so much serious research on Clausewitz does not offer an examinable course on the theory of war or on military history, beyond the optional course on strategic studies for the MPhil in international relations. At undergraduate level, the History special subject on the War of the Second Coalition gave way in 1980 to one on the Gallipoli campaign, and in 2000 it too was replaced by a further subject paper on the comparative history of the First World War. The Professor of the History of War performs what is no longer a balancing act between the Faculty of History and the Department of Politics and International Relations, but the splits, as the core study of military history and the theory of war drops into the chasm which is opening up beneath him.

<sup>47</sup> M. Bloch, *Strange Defeat: A Statement of Evidence Written in 1940* (New York: Norton, 1968), 118.

<sup>48</sup> Reprinted in M. Howard, *The Causes of Wars and Other Essays* (London: Temple Smith, 1983), 188–97.

Writing in 1965, Jay Luvaas said of Oxford, ‘the curious fact remains that neither Wilkinson nor his illustrious successors ever succeeded in founding a vigorous or distinct school of military historians’.<sup>49</sup> Luvaas was close to Liddell Hart, and his judgement may well have been influenced by the frustration of the latter. Undoubtedly the situation today is vastly more positive than it was then, at the mid-point in Gibbs’s tenure. Nevertheless, Wilkinson’s words in his inaugural lecture in 1909 still apply: ‘To-day, I cannot but dream of an Oxford School of War developing that which time has confirmed of the ideas of the older writers into a fresh yet true idea adequate to the needs of the present day and of our own people.’<sup>50</sup> That challenge and—more importantly—that opportunity still lie before us.

<sup>49</sup> Luvaas, *Education of an Army*, 280–1.

<sup>50</sup> Wilkinson, *Government and the War*, 27.



## EDITORS' NOTE

In this chapter Jack Hayward traces the development of comparative political analysis in Oxford from the late nineteenth-century studies of historians and academic lawyers and studies of single countries that were only limitedly or implicitly comparative. The latter were just the kind of 'traditional' studies dismissed as hopelessly amateurish and 'descriptive' by the mid-twentieth-century movement in the United States that aimed to model comparative politics on the natural-science approach of larger-scale hypothesis testing using fully explicated and where possible quantitative variables. Hayward shows that Oxford did not respond frontally to this challenge. Much of the running in the development of comparative analysis in the UK from the 1960s to the 1990s in something approximating to the abstract hypothesis-testing style was made outside Oxford. Oxford came only quite late to that party, and still retained a strong element of what Hayward describes as 'an empiricist-particularist, rather than a rationalist-universalist inclination'.

Does that pattern mean that Oxford became something of a backwater in comparative politics in the middle of the second half of the twentieth century, only catching up with the scientific revolution happening elsewhere in this field quite late in the day? Not necessarily. As Hayward shows, at least three objections could be offered to such a conclusion. One is to question whether a quantitative and hypothetico-deductive approach to comparison is the only valid one, and Hayward points to alternative approaches, such as historical-taxonomic work and the comparative analysis of privatization and regulation in which Oxford's work had a global impact. A second and related point is Oxford's definition of a new research area in studies of Europe and the European Union in the 1980s and 1990s. This latter research made Oxford's politics faculty for a time a—arguably the—global centre for that kind of work and had a big impact on other key centres such as Harvard and Princeton. A third, also related, point is Oxford's development and retention of strength in depth of area-specific subject knowledge (and resistance to the tendency observed elsewhere to convert area-specific faculty positions into general analytic ones, as noted by Brown and Whitefield in the next chapter), which, albeit highly balkanized, represents one of Oxford's most distinctive features in the international context.

# Beyond Zanzibar: The Road to Comparative Inductive Institutionalism

*Jack Hayward*

## PRELIMINARIES

Because Oxford University and the London School of Economics were the dominant foci of British politics research and teaching for most of the twentieth century, many of the salient features of comparative politics have exemplified their distinctive styles. Although there was some interchange between them, the fact that (as noted by Robert Goodin in his chapter in this volume) at the founding of the Political Studies Association of the UK in 1950 their leading figures championed titles with differing connotations was significant. Whereas William Robson of the LSE ardently advocated calling it political science, the Oxford preference for the more latitudinarian appellation political studies prevailed. Shunning the more explicitly social-scientific approach, Oxford remained methodologically loyal to the humanities, with self-explanatory historical fact as the main source of empirical description and philosophical theory for normative prescription. Taking advantage of hindsight, much more attention is deliberately devoted to the past rather than the present, for which one lacks the necessary perspective.

Before exploring successively comparative politics without political scientists, the singular study of specific countries or institutions, the response to the American challenge, and then some original Oxford contributions, the way in which the compendious term 'comparative politics' will be used should be specified. It is a method, not an object of study, which was made clear by its forerunners. As Edward Page, placing the British contribution in comparative context, has defined its practitioners, they 'present empirical evidence of some kind in an attempt to compare systematically and explicitly political phenomena in more than one country'.<sup>1</sup> He made it clear that 'Comparative politics in

<sup>1</sup> E. Page, 'British Political Science and Comparative Politics', *Political Studies*, 38 (September 1990), 439.

<sup>2</sup> Page, 'British Political Science', 443.

Britain does not conform to any single tradition.<sup>2</sup> We shall see that how comparative politics has been practised is not only variable but has changed over time, yet Oxford arguably retains an empiricist-particularist rather than a rationalist-universalist inclination.

When comparative politics moved on from the 'Cook's Tour' juxtaposition of discrete discussions of individual countries to attempts at generalization, notably by American political scientists impatient with monographs about particular institutions in a single country, the expected reaction might be what James Fesler dubbed the Zanzibar ploy: '... whenever an exciting hypothesis or generalisation was uttered in international conferences, a petty voice might be heard saying: "But it isn't like that in Zanzibar" ...'.<sup>3</sup> Collected country specialist studies ran the risk of being a conflation 'of little or large Zanzibars—rather than a genuine comparison'. Karl Popper's falsification test, requiring only one counter-example to invalidate a hypothesis, puts the Zanzibar ploy in a strong position.<sup>4</sup>

While Hans Daalder defends configurative analysis because 'it forces one to take note of the complex interaction of many variables', he goes on to argue that 'One can improve insights in one country greatly by immersing oneself in at least one other country, by seeking to explain the one country in the terminology and hidden assumptions of the latter.'<sup>5</sup> This strategy of restricting the number of countries compared was to be prudently adopted by those prepared to go beyond their specialization without risking having both feet fixed in mid-air due to a reckless combination of abstraction and comprehensiveness.

## ARISTOTLE AND ALL THAT

It would generally be agreed that the ancestor of comparative politics was Aristotle and his pioneering study of the constitutions of the Greek city states. However, he only came into his own, as the forerunner of the Oxford embrace of the comparative method in history and law, from the 1860s and 1870s, when those classically educated in *the literae humaniores* curriculum of 'Greats' knew much more about the political life of ancient Athens than of

<sup>3</sup> H. Daalder, 'Countries in Comparative European Politics', *European Journal of Political Research*, 15/1 (1987), 9. The American Public Administration specialist James Fesler was credited by Robert Dahl with coining the Zanzibar observation (Daalder, 'Comparative European Politics', 17 n.).

<sup>4</sup> Daalder, 'Comparative European Politics', 16.

<sup>5</sup> Daalder, 'Comparative European Politics', 15–16.

<sup>6</sup> S. Collini et al., *That Noble Science of Politics: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Intellectual History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 240.

modern Washington . . .'.<sup>6</sup> James Bryce's path-breaking, three-volume *The American Commonwealth* (1888) was to shift the focus to the study of contemporary institutions, which culminated in his two-volume *Modern Democracies* (1921). In the interim a political career as member of parliament, Cabinet minister, and ambassador to Washington, led him to assert that 'The best way to get a genuine and exact first-hand knowledge of the data is to mix in practical politics,'<sup>7</sup> reflecting an era in which the study of politics came from politicians with intellectual inclinations or philosophers and historians who dabbled in politics. Similarly to Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* which he admired, Bryce relied only one-sixth on books and documents supplied by American friends and five-sixths on talking to Americans.<sup>8</sup> We shall return to Bryce, who had the rare distinction of teaching Americans things about their institutions they did not know. That this largely ceased to be the case subsequently (with occasional Oxonians Brogan and Laski as exceptions) reflects the shift across the Atlantic of much political science.

Macaulay having buried Benthamite political science in the name of historical inductive political science, it was legal and political historians in Oxford that prepared the way for their twentieth-century successors. They did so in a spirit conveyed by Macaulay's remark: 'Our national distaste for whatever is abstract in political science amounts undoubtedly to a fault. Yet it is, perhaps, a fault on the right side.'<sup>9</sup> The most influential champion of comparative law was the Oxford historical jurist Sir Henry Maine, who complemented Macaulay's 1829 attack on James Mill's utilitarian *Essay on Government* by his critique of Austin's conception of law as the will of the sovereign in his pioneering *Ancient Law* (1861) based upon his knowledge of Indian land tenure. Maine's successor as Oxford Professor of Jurisprudence, Sir Frederick Pollock, published his *An Introduction to the History of the Science of Politics* in 1890, a disappointing history of ideas that ends with the call 'Back to Aristotle'. Oxford historians like Edward Freeman, for whom 'history is past politics and politics are present history', began a *History of Federal Government in Greece and Italy* (1863) that never got past the classical era but he was an influential champion of the comparative method through his emphasis on classification.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> J. Bryce, *Modern Democracies* (New York: Macmillan, 1920), I, 19; cf. 6–7, 10–11, 16–22. Richard Crossman is another example of an Oxford politics lecturer turned politician and minister to good effect for the study of politics both in his Introduction on prime ministerial government in his edition of Bagehot's *English Constitution* and in his three-volume *Memoirs of a Cabinet Minister* (London: Hamish Hamilton and Jonathan Cape, 1975).

<sup>8</sup> E. Ions, *James Bryce and American Democracy, 1870–1922* (London: Macmillan, 1968), 133.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Collini et al., *That Noble Science*, 198.

<sup>10</sup> F. Pollock, *An Introduction to the History of the Science of Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1920), 134. See ch. 7 of Collini et al., *That Noble Science*, on 'The Appeal of the Comparative Method'.

Although the appointment of Sir Ernest Barker as the first Cambridge Professor of Political Science in 1927 was a forlorn attempt to repair the defeat of Sidgwick by Marshall, leading to the domination of economics in Cambridge until the twenty-first-century resurgence of political studies there, his normative intellectual roots were in Oxford, where he lectured in modern history from 1899 to 1920. The author of *The Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle* (1906), for Barker the state was less a moral community than a legal association, with a pluralist slant.<sup>11</sup> However, it was James Bryce who was the main forerunner of comparative government in Oxford, along with his life-long friend A. V. Dicey, who figures in several other chapters in this volume. A Fellow of Oriel from 1862–89 and Regius Professor of Civil Law from 1870–93, Bryce combined this with being a Liberal MP from 1880 and a minister in various Liberal governments from 1886. His 1888 *American Commonwealth* had by 1950 gone through 101 editions (one third abridged), reflecting his enduring influence. In confining his focus on government rather than politics, Bryce was emulated by most of his Oxford successors, so such will be the emphasis adopted in this analysis.

A pioneer in the use of the census, in 1904 (before serving in the Liberal government from 1905–7) Bryce advocated the study of institutions based upon observation and comparative analysis, leading to probabilistic ‘generalisation of observed and recorded fact’.<sup>12</sup> In his swansong *Modern Democracies* that explicitly followed the Oxford historical-comparative method, he repeated his injunction to seek facts above all,<sup>13</sup> deliberately excluding the UK from states successively discussed because he could not be impartial. Bryce’s country-by-country approach was to characterize the case study approach that predominated in the mid-twentieth century that concentrated upon in-depth studies of particular countries and institutions.

## SAFETY IN SINGULARITY

To dismiss the historically grounded studies of foreign politics as casual and amateurish because they are inductive, qualitative, and only implicitly

<sup>11</sup> J. Stapleton, *Englishness and the Study of Politics: The Social and Political Theory of Ernest Barker* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 32–3, 62–5. Barker’s Cambridge successor was Denis Brogan, who taught politics in Oxford (Corpus Christ) 1934–9 where he wrote his major work, *The Development of Modern France 1870–1939*.

<sup>12</sup> Ions, *James Bryce*, 191, quoting from Bryce’s Godkin Lectures at Harvard on ‘The Study of Popular Governments’.

<sup>13</sup> Bryce, *Modern Democracies*, I, 13, 20. See also Vernon Bogdanor’s ‘Comparative Politics’, in J. Hayward, B. Barry, and A. Brown (eds), *The British Study of Politics in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1999), 154–8.



comparative, is to assume that the quantitative American deductive approach is the only sound one. We shall return in the next section to the attack on what were dismissed as monographic, descriptive, parochial, and static 'traditional approaches' that had declined into a 'tedious and stagnating routine'. Roy Macridis quoted a 1944 APSA report by a Research Panel on Comparative Government that reflects the innovative ambition of an aspirational American political science convinced that it could be an agent of change. It roundly asserted that 'comparative government has lost its traditional character of descriptive analysis and is about to assume the character of "total" science if it is to serve as a conscious instrument of social engineering'.<sup>14</sup> There seemed to be nothing further from the prudent study of one or a few countries practised in Oxford than the self-conscious preoccupation with a social science methodology dismissive of 'random description'. Macridis put the anti-Bryce view by asserting: 'today we have many facts but we do not know why we have them and we are unable to decide what to do with them'.<sup>15</sup> We shall see later, notably in the activities of G. D. H. Cole, that World War II Oxford was concerned to harness social science to practical public purpose.

Comparative politics can be researched across both space and time. The Oxford emphasis was on a historical comparative method. This led to the neglect of the geopolitics pioneered in Oxford by Halford Mackinder, where he taught human geography from 1887 and founded in 1899 the first British university geography department. In 1893 he chaired in Oxford the first meeting of the Geographical Association of which he was chairman from 1913–43. Although he went on to the LSE in 1903 and then a parliamentary career, as well as becoming an ardent advocate of imperialism, his *Britain and the British Seas* (1902) expounded the geographical basis of international political power that was to prove highly influential.<sup>16</sup> But this was not the road that comparative politics took in Oxford. Instead I shall turn to Philip Williams on France and Kenneth Wheare on a succession of institutional case studies.

The limited scope of comparison allows avoidance of abstraction and facilitates in-depth empirical analysis. Philip Williams's *Politics in Post-War France* (1954), revised as *Crisis and Compromise: Politics in the Fourth Republic* (1964), followed by *The French Parliament (1958–1967)* (1968), are examples of an outsider who had things to teach scholars from the country studied particularly because he was an outsider. His knowledge of the historical and sociological bases of the French political cleavages that led both to

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in R. Macridis, *The Study of Comparative Government* (New York: Random House, 1955), 17.

<sup>15</sup> Macridis, *Study of Comparative Government*, 18; cf. 19.

<sup>16</sup> *Oxford Directory of National Biography*, vol. 35, 648–51.

institutional instability and immobilism made him the classic analyst of the Fourth French Republic. Williams has been criticized for an inclination to historical determinism,<sup>17</sup> yet he did not anticipate that, unlike the past, crisis might lead to recourse to a saviour in the shape of de Gaulle, both at the start and the death of the Fourth Republic. His implicit comparison of French 'government by assembly' with Westminster was made explicit in the comments on the Fifth Republic—'under the new regime, the parliament of France, once among the most powerful in the world, became one of the weakest', 'somewhat weaker than the British House of Commons'.<sup>18</sup> The French exercise in lesson learning was to lurch (again) from an anti-authoritarian to an authoritarian extreme.

Kenneth Wheare, an Australian, who from PPE in 1932 until his retirement as Rector of Exeter College in 1972, via appointment as the first academic to the Gladstone Chair in 1944, has been described as 'the model of a true Oxford don, as then understood'.<sup>19</sup> He undertook his study of *Federal Government* in spare moments during the Second World War because 'There is no adequate book in English on the working of government.'<sup>20</sup> This comparative study was mainly limited to the English-speaking world of Australia, Canada, and the USA, with the addition of Switzerland. His most original work was *Government by Committee*, dealing separately with British committees to advise, inquire, negotiate, legislate, administer, scrutinize, and control, making 'some comparison between them of their effectiveness and shortcomings'.<sup>21</sup> Relying upon his personal experience on university and Oxford City Council committees (he represented the university on the Council from 1940–57) as well as printed sources, his comparative approach was to study the behaviour of seven committee characters: the chairman, secretary, official expert, layman, party man, and the interested party. He sought to ascertain how committees worked, the quality of their decisions and 'whether the committee itself is actually operating or whether it is merely the façade for the action of others'.<sup>22</sup> He hoped that his study would encourage others to 'compare like with like' such as legislative committees cross-nationally.<sup>23</sup>

In 1960 he followed this up with *The Constitutional Structure of the Commonwealth* treated not country by country but comparatively in terms of

<sup>17</sup> Bogdanor, 'Comparative Politics', 167; cf. 165–8.

<sup>18</sup> P. Williams, *The French Parliament (1958–1967)* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1968), 21, 12.

<sup>19</sup> M. Beloff, in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* entry for Wheare, vol. 58, 407; cf. 405–6.

<sup>20</sup> K. C. Wheare, *Federal Government* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1947; 1st edn 1946), 261.

<sup>21</sup> K. C. Wheare, *Government by Committee: An Essay on the British Constitution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), 2.

<sup>22</sup> Wheare, *Government by Committee*, 10; cf. 4–5.

<sup>23</sup> Wheare, *Government by Committee*, 3.

membership, equality, autonomy, autochthony, cooperation, and symbols, having in 1951 published *Modern Constitutions*. In 1963 he published *Legislatures* and in 1973 lectures on *Maladministration and its Remedies* inspired by the import of the Swedish model of the ombudsman into the UK. The shelter of singularity was no longer sought.

### CROSS-NATIONAL COMPARISON: THE RESPONSE TO THE AMERICAN CHALLENGE

Deductive models of many countries, exemplifying a rationalist–globalist approach, became increasingly popular, especially in US political science, as the data initially from advanced industrial societies became available. Comparative politics was to model itself methodologically on the natural sciences, seeking to devise equivalents of experimentation and the ‘laboratory’ testing of abstract hypotheses whose variables should be made explicit and could ‘withstand falsification’.<sup>24</sup> The negative British response came from a non-Oxonian in Bernard Crick’s *The American Science of Politics* (1959) but his views were shared by virtually all home-grown political scientists. However, the two outsiders, Jean Blondel and Richard Rose, who have had the greatest impact upon the study of comparative politics in Britain, spent virtually all their careers in Britain and pursued postgraduate studies in Oxford. Their minimal intellectual debt to Oxford is nevertheless evident from the fact that they thought that they had no training in political science prior to moving to Essex and Manchester Universities respectively, as noted in Robert Goodin’s chapter in this volume.<sup>25</sup> (Bill Mackenzie had left Oxford in 1949 to make the Manchester Department of Government a major challenger to Oxford and the LSE as well as a nursery of professors at many of the politics departments that sprang up from the 1960s.)<sup>26</sup> After two years at St Antony’s and recruitment to Sammy Finer’s Keele, it was Blondel’s Yale fellowship in 1962 and his appointment as founding Professor of Government at Essex University in 1964 that inspired Blondel, with Ford Foundation financial support, to establish the

<sup>24</sup> Macridis, *Study of Comparative Government*, 18; cf. 22.

<sup>25</sup> J. Blondel, ‘Amateurs into Professionals’, in H. Daalder (ed.), *Comparative European Politics: The Story of a Profession* (London and Washington: Pinter, 1997), 115 and Richard Rose, ‘The Art of Writing about Politics’, also in Daalder (ed.), *Comparative European Politics*, 133.

<sup>26</sup> B. Chapman and A. Potter, *W. J. M. M.: Essays in Honour of W. J. M. Mackenzie* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1974) and Richard Rose, ‘The Art of Writing About Politics’ in Daalder (ed.), *Comparative European Politics*, 133–4. See also the chapter by Rodney Barker in this volume.

<sup>27</sup> Blondel, ‘Amateurs into Professionals’, 116–22.

ECPR in 1970 as its Executive Director.<sup>27</sup> The ECPR was to play a crucial part in encouraging collaborative, comparative research without most Oxford political scientists being conspicuous participants.

The other leading outsider, Richard Rose, was not just American-influenced but an American. After coming to Nuffield to do a doctorate in 1957 (completed in twenty-one months under the nominal supervision of Saul Rose at St Antony's) he sarcastically declared: 'I am untrained: I have an Oxford D. Phil.'<sup>28</sup> Although he co-authored with David Butler *The British General Election of 1959* (1960) he was advised to go back to journalism. Whereas Blondel imparted what he called the 'Americanization' of European political science to tradition-bound Britain through a training in professionalization, Rose's stream of landmark publications alternated between 'broad comparative analysis and the intensive examination of key questions in a single nation'.<sup>29</sup> Before considering initial Oxford responses to the American challenge, I pause to consider the salutary elucidation of comparative political analysis by Rose at the interface between American and British political science.

In contrast to the 1955 Macridis sweeping claim that comparative analysis would lead to predictable institutional trends based upon verified knowledge, by 1991 Rose contrasted and rejected both 'uniqueness through false particularization' and 'false universalism', attributing the first to British and the second to American comparativists generalizing from American evidence.<sup>30</sup> He included Philip Williams's work on France in the category 'incomparable because alien', while those, notably in the USA, who mimicked economic models, were prone to 'landless theory: multiple concepts without a country'.<sup>31</sup> He favourably contrasted probabilistic lesson-drawing across permeable national boundaries based upon real-world examples with speculative a priori abstraction from political reality. However, Rose was not content with comparison to provide explanation because 'national policy-makers are instrumental, seeking to learn from the experience of other nations how to design programmes that can be applied effectively in their own country'.<sup>32</sup>

As the British Empire receded into the Commonwealth in the mid-twentieth century, it provided an opportunity for instructive comparisons to Oxford politics fellows. Max Beloff, author inter alia of a two-volume study of *Imperial*

<sup>28</sup> Rose, 'The Art of Writing About Politics', 132.

<sup>29</sup> Rose, 'The Art of Writing About Politics', 136.

<sup>30</sup> R. Rose, 'Comparing Forms of Comparative Analysis', *Political Studies*, 39/3 (September 1991), 446–62, at 450. In *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, ed. Carlos Boix and S. Stokes, almost all the authors are American. Pippa Norris, the sole British contributor, has long since left for Harvard. References to any work by British political scientists are conspicuous by their absence. Aristotle receives two passing mentions.

<sup>31</sup> Rose, 'Comparing Forms of Comparative Analysis', 451–2.

<sup>32</sup> Rose, 'Comparing Forms of Comparative Analysis', 459; cf. 458–61.

*Sunset, 1897–1942* (1969, 1989) thought of himself as a historian rather than a political scientist. He was allergic to American influence which ‘seemed more concerned with political science than with political reality’, concentrating upon the quantification and sophistication of their methods rather than new findings.<sup>33</sup> Nuffield Reader in the Comparative Study of Institutions, 1947–57 and then Gladstone Professor of Government and Public Administration from 1957 to 1974, he left to become Principal of the private University College at Buckingham. He retained an Oxford link through St Antony’s as a fellow from 1975 to 1984, appreciating its area studies focus that devoted attention to non-Anglocentric parts of the world, rather than concentrating upon the familiar. In what he called his ‘undelivered valedictory lecture’ the future Baron Beloff gloomily reflected upon the exchange of alien rule by the enfranchised British colonies for indigenous despotism before criticizing Oxford for its failure to lead political studies in Britain.<sup>34</sup>

Beloff’s colleague at Nuffield, Margery Perham, took a much more sanguine view of the imperial experience, undertaking what amounted to a comparative inductive political science of colonial administration instead of trial and error. After graduating in Modern History and discontented with lecturing in history, she returned to Oxford in 1926 to train those destined for colonial service, becoming in 1935 a Research Lecturer in Colonial Administration attached to Rhodes House. In 1939 she became the only woman fellow involved in planning Nuffield College until she retired in 1948 to write many books and articles on West and East Africa, editing a series of Nuffield Studies, notably *Studies in Colonial Legislatures* and *Colonial and Comparative Studies*. She delivered in 1961 the Reith Lectures on *The Colonial Reckoning*. From her pioneering *Native Administration in Nigeria* (1937) researched by on-the-spot investigation and interviews of district officers and the Governor, she went on to develop her theory of indirect rule based upon the idealized model of Lord Lugard, whose diaries she edited and whose biography she wrote in two volumes. As Governor-General of Nigeria, Lugard had practised what he had earlier formulated as avoidance of colonial despotism in favour of governing through the indigenous chiefs and according to their customs. His conceptions of the ‘dual mandate’ and ‘indirect rule’<sup>35</sup> were popularized by

<sup>33</sup> M. Beloff, ‘The Politics of Oxford “Politics”’, *Political Studies*, 23/2–3 (June–September 1975), 129–39, at 130.

<sup>34</sup> Beloff, ‘Oxford “Politics”’, 131–8.

<sup>35</sup> F. Lugard’s key book was *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* (London: Blackwood, 1922). Perham’s biography is *Lugard: The Years of Authority, 1898–1945* (London: Collins, 1960). Anthony Kirk-Greene of St Antony’s described Lugard as ‘Britain’s most famous African colonial governor in the age of empire and pre-eminent thinker in the inter-war years . . .’ (*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 34, 732; cf. 729–30). See also V. Dimier, *Le gouvernement des colonies, regards croisés franco-britanniques* (Brussels: Editions de l’Université de Bruxelles, 2004).

Perham in defence of British colonial rule as trusteeship towards self-rule, notably at meetings of the League of Nations in Geneva. It is an example of a generic concept applicable elsewhere.

After the failure of the imperial elite's attempts to export Westminster-style government, a preoccupation developed with Latin America and then in Eastern Europe about comparative democratization as pivotal to regime change. As the study of post-Communist politics is being examined separately (but noting in passing Archie Brown's extroversion from Soviet studies to a comprehensive and comparative study of *The Rise and Fall of Communism*) we turn to Laurence Whitehead's work on Latin America and the delayed legacies there of the former Spanish and Portuguese empires. He pointed out that comparative democratization studies had been unable to predict regime transition because comparative politics was in part intuitive, inductive, and judgemental, more of an art than a science. 'Contextually sophisticated interpretations' were required, with normative engagement 'built into the very fabric of the analysis'.<sup>36</sup> In stressing the need for a historically informed, multiple methodology to accommodate the tension between complex narrative and explanatory frameworks identifying strategic variables of change, Whitehead and his collaborators sought to reconcile an Oxford-style sensitivity to the diversity of starting points with the American urge to confine them within a few alternatives.<sup>37</sup> Alfred Stepan, to whom we shall return, devoted his early works to Latin America before expanding into a comparativist.

### WHAT HAS OXFORD ADDED?

Before concentrating upon the major contributions to historical institutionalism of Sammy Finer and Vincent Wright, mention of the relevant work of three others is in order. The economic historian Karl Polanyi (lecturer in Oxford University's extension activities) in *The Great Transformation* (1944) was one of those—like G. D. H. Cole at Nuffield—who during the Second World War were thinking, both retrospectively and prospectively, about the implications of the implosion of Europe's political, economic, and social institutions. He did so by reference to their political economy underpinnings,

<sup>36</sup> L. Whitehead, 'Comparative Politics; Democratisation Studies', in R. Goodin and H.-D. Klingemann (eds), *A New Handbook of Political Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 358; cf. 369.

<sup>37</sup> Whitehead, 'Comparative Politics', 364–5. See also G. O'Donnell, P. Schmitter, and L. Whitehead (eds), *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Prospects for Democracy*, 4 vols (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1986) and L. Whitehead (ed.), *International Dimensions of Democratisation: Europe and the Americas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

the rise and fall of the market economy in which ‘The elementary truths of political science and statecraft were first discredited and then forgotten.’<sup>38</sup> He referred back to Aristotle’s *Politics* distinction between household production and money-making for gain as ‘probably the most important pointer ever made in the realm of the social sciences’.<sup>39</sup> David Apter, in discussing the ‘new’ comparative politics, asserted that ‘It would be hard to overestimate the impact of this work (*The Great Transformation*) on a whole generation of comparativists’.<sup>40</sup>

G. D. H. Cole, who was at home in all three PPE subjects and a fine social and intellectual historian to boot, as Chichele Professor of Social and Political Theory was active in the UNESCO promotion of IPSA in 1948 and then in the 1950 creation of the PSA. He had published a *Guide to Modern Politics* in 1934 but it was his World War II collaboration with William Beveridge that concerns us. Cole worked with Beveridge on manpower policy in 1941, influencing his view of the need for government intervention to avoid a return to post-war mass unemployment. As Sub-Warden of Nuffield College, he organized the conferences and Social Reconstruction Survey that influenced both Beveridge’s 1942 report on Social Insurance and 1944 *Full Employment in a Free Society*, with whom he launched the Social Security League in 1943.<sup>41</sup> (Norman Chester, the future Warden of Nuffield College, was Secretary to the Beveridge Committee on Social Insurance.) Beveridge had in 1937 returned to Oxford as Master of University College after being Director of the LSE, only reluctantly leaving his post when he was elected an MP. Although no political scientist or comparativist, Beveridge’s worldwide influence upon the conception of the welfare state fulfils the Richard Rose criterion for ‘extroverted case studies with generic concepts . . . that make it possible to derive generalisations that can be tested elsewhere. Even though the study is not explicitly comparative, it is comparable.’<sup>42</sup>

Rose pointed out that ‘Comparison starts from the logic of a matrix’<sup>43</sup> and for Sammy Finer ‘the devising of frameworks, tables, charts, matrices etc. was of the essence . . . of being a comparativist per se, as against (for example) an

<sup>38</sup> K. Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (1944; Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), 33.

<sup>39</sup> Polanyi, *Great Transformation*, 53.

<sup>40</sup> D. Apter, ‘Comparative Politics, Old and New’, in R. Goodin and H.-D. Klingemann (eds), *A New Handbook of Political Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 382 n. See also C. Joerges and J. Falke (eds), *K. Polanyi, Globalisation and the Potential of Law in Transnational Markets* (Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2011).

<sup>41</sup> J. Harris, *William Beveridge: A Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 350, 358, 367–8, 434–5, 443. On the Nuffield-based and Cole-led Social Reconstruction Survey and the weekend conferences, see N. Chester, *Economics, Politics and Social Studies in Oxford, 1900–85* (London: Macmillan, 1986), 113; cf. 92–112.

<sup>42</sup> Rose, ‘Comparing Forms of Comparative Analysis’, 454.

<sup>43</sup> Rose, ‘Comparing Forms of Comparative Analysis’, 453.

<sup>44</sup> C. Jones Finer, ‘S. E. Finer: A Memoir’, in the special issue devoted to him, *Government and Opposition*, 29/5 (1994), 578.

area specialist'.<sup>44</sup> The art, not the science, of comparison needed them to prompt 'thought-provoking concepts, definitions and distinctions'.<sup>45</sup> Beginning and ending his career in Oxford, as a double First both as a trained historian and as a political scientist, Finer saw himself both as a specialist scrupulous about particularities and generalist recording and interpreting regularities across space and time. As a political scientist he personally gave priority to comparative analysis of secondary sources rather than collecting first-hand evidence. While he had himself engaged in both types of research (as we shall see, in his different way, did Vincent Wright), 'Comparativists were bound to be "parasitic" on the work of specialists and this not necessarily in ways the specialists themselves were likely to appreciate—since it would not have been they who set the questions, let alone determined the answers.'<sup>46</sup> He did this particularly in two works, *Comparative Government* and in his comparative *History of Government*, the one before he returned to Oxford and the other after he retired from the Gladstone Chair.

Sandy Lindsay, Keele's first Vice-Chancellor, plucked Finer from Balliol in 1950 to become the founding Professor of Political Institutions, where his incomparable originality of conception and imaginativeness of formulation flourished more fully than in Manchester (1966–74) and back in Oxford. He regarded his *alma mater* as a backwater, his attempts to reform the PPE syllabus being frustrated. 'They had never understood the distinction between political science and contemporary history . . .'<sup>47</sup> However, he was not intimidated by American political science, remaining a classical individualist scholar methodologically. 'He did not need research grants or research assistants but relied on a good library, his formidable memory and his own sharp mind.'<sup>48</sup> He was active in the Political Studies Association, becoming Chairman in 1965–9, and in IPSA, being offered but declining its presidency, so he was by no means a solitary scholar in disciplinary terms. In 1967 the PSA, as part of a development of specialist groups, set up a Committee on Comparative Politics, which alongside Finer included Jean Blondel, Norman Chester, Bill Mackenzie, and Richard Rose.<sup>49</sup>

Regarding governmental institutions as the hard core of his discipline, Finer bluntly asserted that 'Government is institutionalised politics' without swamping it in the political system.<sup>50</sup> Concerned to preserve the autonomy of statecraft, Finer focused on the unity in diversity of forms of government

<sup>45</sup> C. Jones Finer, 'A Memoir', 579.

<sup>46</sup> C. Jones Finer, 'A Memoir', 582.

<sup>47</sup> D. Kavanagh, 'The Fusion of History and Politics: The Case of S. E. Finer', in Daalder (ed.), *Comparative European Politics*, 18.

<sup>48</sup> Kavanagh, 'Fusion of History and Politics', 19.

<sup>49</sup> W. Grant, *The Development of a Discipline: The History of the Political Studies Association* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 64.

<sup>50</sup> S. E. Finer, "'Almond's Concept of the Political System": A Textual Critique', *Government and Opposition*, 5/1 (Winter 1969), 7.



investigated across continents and millennia. In 1962 he published *The Man on Horseback: The Role of the Military in Politics* in which a multitude of case studies were drawn upon to classify levels of military intervention and types of regime correlated to levels of political culture. His methodical use of comparison and classification to make generalizations was advanced in his 1970 *Comparative Government*. Pragmatic rather than paradigmatic, 'The problem is to establish categories that are neither so numerous as to make comparisons impossible nor so few as to make contrasts impossible.'<sup>51</sup> Refined successively in lectures delivered at Cornell, Keele, and Manchester, it was a demonstration that not all textbooks are born free and equal. He set out his typology in a preliminary survey, explicitly moving on from Aristotle, that '(a) covers all the known varieties of governmental forms, with (b) the most economical set of distinctions . . . to (c) . . . explaining what forms arise in what given circumstances and (d) hence, has some power of predicting what vicissitudes and alterations any given form may undergo should circumstances change in named aspects'.<sup>52</sup> To make the criteria of comparison explicit, Finer went on to differentiate types of government by three dimensions: participation—exclusion, coercion—persuasion, and order—representativeness, classifying countries by according combinations of them in a series of tables and matrices. From these he arrived at a map of five types of regime to which he devoted the rest of the book: military, façade democracy, quasi-democracy, totalitarian, and liberal democracy.<sup>53</sup>

The planetary reach of *Comparative Government* could not exhaust Finer's ambition and in anticipation of his retirement project he gave a lecture in January 1983 on 'Perspectives in the World History of Government—a Prolegomenon'.<sup>54</sup> He had come to see that his map of comparative politics was too static to remain accurate or explain the process of change. His earlier work with Charles Tilly and the example of Stein Rokkan were other staging posts to his history of state building but despite the affinity they were both more limited in time and less focused on governmental institutions.<sup>55</sup> Taking full advantage of the numerous Oxford historians for advice, Finer devoted the last ten years of his life to a book that was to be 'the summation and culmination of everything he had worked at and stood for academically' and be 'as near all-

<sup>51</sup> S. E. Finer, *Comparative Government* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), 39.

<sup>52</sup> Finer, *Comparative Government*, 39–40.

<sup>53</sup> Finer, *Comparative Government*, 40–61, 575–85.

<sup>54</sup> S. E. Finer, 'Perspectives in the World History of Government—a Prolegomenon', *Government and Opposition*, 18/1 (Winter 1983), 3–23.

<sup>55</sup> G. Ionescu, 'New and Old Perspectives on Government', *Government and Opposition* 29/5 (1994), 613–14. See also C. Tilly, *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1984), chs 4–6 and S. E. Finer, 'State—and Nation—Building in Europe: The Role of the Military', in C. Tilly (ed.), *The Formation of Nation States in Western Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 84–163.

<sup>56</sup> C. Jones Finer, 'A Memoir', 585–6.

inclusive and all-extensive as even he could make it'.<sup>56</sup> However, it was to be primarily a work of comparative political science rather than history, enunciated with his characteristically iconoclastic verve.

It is not possible to summarize adequately the breathtaking three-volume posthumous book covering some 5,200 years since 3200 BC. What concerns us is his new typology with four dimensions: territorial (city, national, imperial); decision-making personnel (among elites and between elites and masses); the level and nature of control relationships (constraint, control, accountability); and decision-implementing personnel (minimal bureaucracy and militia to large bureaucracy and standing army). From this he derived ten policy types: four pure types and six hybrids. The typology enabled Finer to classify the mass of data into categories with which he could undertake the identification of the innovations that survived the turbulent historical trajectory. To summarize:

In the Palace the ruler appoints and removes the court nobility and priests. Ancient Egypt, the Mesopotamian kingdoms and empires, the Persian, Roman, Byzantine, Chinese and Islamic empire conformed to this type, characterised by intriguing, feuding and factionalism between ministers and *entourages*. In contrast, the Forum's principle of legitimacy resides in the ruled not the rulers. Persuading rather than commanding makes rhetorical skills crucial. The Nobility polity is conciliar government, with rival aristocratic families intriguing and fighting for predominance. The Church is seldom found as a pure type, even when combined with the nobility (Teutonic Knights) or forum (Calvin's Geneva). However, the Church-Palace hybrid is more common, notably in the Caesaro-papist sub-type with the Byzantine emperors or some Reformation Protestant monarchs or with the dual control of Pope and Holy Roman Emperor in middle age Christendom. The Forum-Nobility polity was exemplified by the Roman Catholic and Venetian merchant aristocracy. The Palace-Nobility has various sub-types, including the reigns of Louis XIV in France and Whig dominance under George I and II in Britain. Finally, the Palace-Forum polity ranges from the Greek tyrants and Roman dictators to Mussolini's Italy, Stalin's Soviet Union and Hitler's Germany.<sup>57</sup>

Finer's history of government is neither teleological, linear, nor predetermined in outcome. He identified twelve surviving innovations. The Assyrian first *modern* empire governed through centrally appointed officials. Persia was the first *secular* empire. The Jewish Kingdom invented *limited monarchy* with God as supreme power. The Chinese Empire pioneered the *professional bureaucracy* and *standing army*. The Roman Republic institutionalized *checks*

<sup>57</sup> S. E. Finer, *The History of Government from the Earliest Times*, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 'The Conceptual Prologue', volume I, 38–58. For a concise account see J. E. S. Hayward, 'Finer's Comparative History of Government', *Government and Opposition*, 32/1 (Winter 1997), 118–29.

and balances. The Roman Empire devised the *rule of law*. Byzantium invented and bequeathed *caesaropapism* to Russia. Medieval Europe invented *representation*, while early modern Europe developed *parliament* and *competitive political parties*. The American Revolution devised the *written constitution*, guaranteed *civil rights*, *judicial review*, and reinvented *federalism*. The French Revolution pioneered modern *nationalism* and *manhood suffrage*. The twentieth century saw the advent of generalized *universal suffrage*, the *welfare state*, and *totalitarianism*.

He did not live to complete his *magnum opus* but he had provided the analytical basis for the 'primordial set of institutionalised arrangements which Finer wanted to find in all its infinite variations' and fit them into a conceptual framework.<sup>58</sup> Unlike contemporary political scientists, Finer had the self-confidence and breadth of vision, nurtured by his Oxford training, to make his explicit diachronic comparison of similarities and differences across and over the whole history of governments. He held firm to the view that, as against political studies and area specialists, 'political science is delimited, not only by its subject matter, but by its distinctive approach. That approach is *comparison*, since only by comparison can uniformities and regularities be established.'<sup>59</sup> He did not follow fashion but nor has he set a fashion in comparative politics. 'He belonged to no school and did not found one,'<sup>60</sup> remaining an irreplaceable original who demonstrated what a comprehensive historical institutionalism is capable of achieving.

Vincent Wright was prepared to accept historical institutionalism as a starting point but although history and political science were 'indispensable bedmates', he feared that 'comparison and history are intrinsically ill-suited partners and relegating each to different roles (the first to demonstrating differences, the second to explaining them) does not resolve the discomfort'.<sup>61</sup> He was resigned to his 'intellectual schizophrenia' because unlike Finer he never achieved a fusion between them. The ingrained scepticism he had imbibed from Michael Oakeshott at the LSE bequeathed an enduring allergy to methodology and models. Eschewing glib generalizations, his 'splitter's' predilection for stressing diversity means that his writings are replete with words such as complexity and cleavage, tension and dissension, variety and fluidity, diffuseness and chaos,

<sup>58</sup> Ionescu, 'New and Old Perspectives', 612.

<sup>59</sup> S. E. Finer, 'The Vocabulary of Political Science', *Political Studies*, 23/2-3 (July-September 1975), 122; cf. 123-4.

<sup>60</sup> Kavanagh, 'Fusion of History and Politics', 25.

<sup>61</sup> V. Wright, 'The Path to Hesitant Comparison', in Daalder (ed.), *Comparative European Politics*, 176; cf. 172-3. More generally, see S. Steinmo, K. Thelen, and F. Longstreth (eds), *Structuring Politics: Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), ch. 1 and B. G. Peters, *Institutional Theory in Political Science* (London: Pinter, 1999).

incrementalism and fragmentation, precariousness and fragility, contraction, competition and confrontation'.<sup>62</sup> Although his archive-based micro-studies of French politics and administration were mainly individual efforts, Wright resorted to collaborative teamwork for his comparative studies, relying upon specialists with knowledge of the detailed data and the understanding of how to evaluate and interpret their findings.

Finer and Wright both started as researchers in public administration (although Finer began top-down from the British centre while Wright worked from the provincial French periphery) so they both preferred government rather than politics as their focus. Wright's wish to avoid refutation by recourse to the Zanzibar ploy<sup>63</sup> meant that he held fast to 'untidy reality' and revelled in the demystification of theoretical models and conventional wisdoms, exposing their limitations piecemeal. While they both resisted macro-theoretical behaviouralism and rational-choice reductionism, Finer was committed to the typological tidying up of complex realities within an overall classificatory framework. He was determined to put the parochial Zanzibars in their place, not ignoring but subsuming them.

Wright acquired his hesitant comparativism gradually as a teacher and researcher rather than through his first degree at the LSE, where comparative government was exclusively taught through individual countries. Archival doctoral research in France imparted a historical bent that began to be corrected at his first post in Newcastle University under the influence of Finer's former Keele colleague Hugh Berrington. Returning to the LSE after a brief spell at St Antony's, Wright published books on the French Prefects, Council of State, and a textbook which reflected his subversive insight into the workings of the French state as habitually portrayed in France. He showed how the grasp, first bottom-up and then top-down, of a country's institutions would lay the foundation for subsequent comparison. French government was 'a world composed of entrenched traditions, half-remembered rules and conveniently forgotten stipulations, of complicity and conflict, ideological clashes and Masonic collusions, political chicanery and petty administrative corruption, personal rivalries and political alliances, unabashed self-interest and embarrassing idealism, compromising commitments and watchful opportunism, unforgivable cowardice and praiseworthy courage, naked ambition and calculated disinterest . . . defiant of comparison by the unceasing interplay of irritating human imponderables'.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>62</sup> J. Hayward and S. Hazareesingh, 'Vincent Wright', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 115 (2002), 452–3.

<sup>63</sup> Page, 'British Political Science', 441–2.

<sup>64</sup> V. Wright, 'Politics and Administration the Fifth French Republic', *Political Studies*, 22/1 (1974), 65.

Nevertheless, just before he left the LSE for Nuffield College in 1977 he founded with Gordon Smith *West European Politics* that reflected a willingness to promote a comparative politics journal of limited geographical stretch that was to develop into a leading haven for the burgeoning research on the widening European Union as well as its specific member states. Collaboration with Yves Mény at the EUI and the influence of Hans Daalder encouraged Wright further into comparative work which came into its own when he returned to Nuffield, notably in comparative political economy work on *Privatisation in Western Europe* (1993) and on the politics of regulation. Wright pointed out the need for interdisciplinary comparison by a community of scholars. 'Regulation is an intellectually more demanding and more exciting field than privatisation. It requires a comparative interdisciplinary and theoretical approach, since it raises clear questions for economists, international political economists, political scientists, sociologists, organisational theorists and even social anthropologists.'<sup>65</sup> However, his typologies clarified without simplifying because tidiness came second to authenticity. He was now becoming ever more the social scientist and although historians are absent from this list Wright still believed that 'the biggest decision-maker in any political system is the past'.<sup>66</sup>

Before his untimely death, Wright reacted against those who wished to consign the state to the scrapheap, emphasizing that it was more a matter of redefinition than retreat, with national contexts explaining persistent divergences.<sup>67</sup> In one of several incomplete major works in progress that were published posthumously, Wright (in editorial collaboration with Jack Hayward, by then an Oxford colleague) initiated a six-country comparative analysis of their core executive coordinating capacity in four policy sectors. He characteristically commented that 'As with all comparative work, an apparently straightforward project, based on a relatively simple matrix, quickly ran into a methodological and definitional quagmire...'<sup>68</sup> Although the comparative framework was spelled out in a detailed chapter and one of the country core studies on France was published, the other five volumes did not survive Wright's death in 1999.<sup>69</sup> Reflecting the duality of his intellectual

<sup>65</sup> Wright, 'The Path to Hesitant Comparison', 174.

<sup>66</sup> V. Wright, *The Government and Politics of France* (London: Hutchinson, 1978), 229–30. This book went through several editions and is still in print.

<sup>67</sup> W. Müller and V. Wright (eds), *The State in Western Europe: Retreat or Redefinition* (Ilford: Frank Cass, 1994).

<sup>68</sup> Wright, 'The Path to Hesitant Comparison', 175.

<sup>69</sup> V. Wright and J. Hayward, 'Governing from the Centre: Policy Coordination in Six European Core Executives', in R. A. W. Rhodes (ed.), *Transforming British Government*, vol. 2 (London: Macmillan, 2000), ch. 2 and J. Hayward and V. Wright, *Governing from the Centre: Core Executive Coordination in France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>70</sup> S. Hazareesingh (ed.), *The Jacobin Legacy in Modern France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) and J. Hayward and A. Menon (eds), *Governing Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

contribution, Oxford colleagues edited two volumes in his memory, separately devoted to French and to European politics.<sup>70</sup> Vincent Wright convincingly demonstrated that one could remain both a single-state specialist and a comparativist, in his case confined to bounded European variability.

Devoting extended attention to two outstanding Oxford comparativists means that there is little space to discuss the work of more recent Oxonians. Some like Uwe Kitzinger played an early part in promoting European studies, notably as a founding editor of the *Journal of Common Market Studies*, before leaving Nuffield to become President of Templeton College and then INSEAD, concentrating on management studies. But here I shall confine myself to a brief sketch of the general direction of travel in more recent times without detailed comment on individual scholars.

In the decades following Finer, comparative politics in Oxford could be argued to have followed a pattern of academic 'normalization' somewhat similar to that described by Martin Ceadel in his chapter in this volume, although arguably Oxford's comparative politics scholars were rather less cohesive than those in IR. That may partly have reflected lingering tensions between 'Area Studies' and 'Political Science', although after the fall of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, 'Communist Studies' came to be reframed into terms and concepts that were integrated more closely into generic themes of comparative politics, as the next chapter by Archie Brown and Stephen Whitefield shows, focusing on topics such as parliaments, semi-presidentialism, public opinion, and voting behaviour. Theoretical framing tended to become more elaborate and self-conscious: for example in the years before his death Vincent Wright ensured Nuffield increasingly embraced the 'new' and 'historical' institutionalism developed in the 1980s by such US-based scholars as Harvard's Peter Hall (a Canadian who completed his Masters at Oxford), and that approach was developed further by Oxford scholars such as Desmond King.

Oxford also became more integrated with the US approach to comparative politics than had been the case earlier, such that an 'Oxford approach' may have become less distinctive than in the days of scholars such as Max Beloff who had not really believed in, or related to, American political science. That reflected an increasing tendency to appoint faculty from outside Oxford to major positions, such as Albert Stepan (famous for his work with Juan Linz on democratic consolidation and breakdown), who held the Gladstone Chair for a few years in the late 1990s, and Nancy Bermeo (a leading scholar in the field of regime change), appointed to a newly created comparative politics chair at Nuffield in the mid-2000s. It was also demonstrated in the ever-increasing numbers of Oxford faculty participating in the annual American Political Science Association conference.

The subject also 'normalized' in the sense that a new generation of younger comparative politics scholars at Oxford (in fields such as federalism, state

theory, comparative political economy, comparative public policy, and parties and institutions) paid far more attention to ‘methodology’ and explication of ‘research design’, particularly but not only of a quantitative kind, than Finer or Wright or their contemporaries had done. Many of those more recent appointments were of individuals who were not Oxford DPhils but had been trained in other leading graduate programmes. That led not only to a different style of faculty scholarship, but also to a remodelling of the teaching of comparative government both at undergraduate and postgraduate level. At undergraduate level, the syllabus was extensively restructured in the 2000s to put more emphasis on methodology and new themes (such as democratization) on top of the traditional focus on a set of different institutional domains. The same thing happened at the Masters level, where increasing emphasis came to be laid on research methods training in contrast to the older stress on substantive knowledge, and a new specialized MPhil degree in Comparative Government appeared in the mid-2000s. While in a broader sense it might be argued that Oxford mostly retained a historical approach to comparative political analysis, the style and methods were utterly different from those pursued in earlier generations.

I am concerned that my old college, St Antony’s, has been rather short-changed by the very selective earlier discussion. By its extrovert cosmopolitan diversity, whose Centres deal with virtually the whole of the non-anglophone world, with larger numbers of junior and senior members, as well as foreign senior associate members and visitors, than Nuffield College, it has been well placed to develop comparative politics. However, if politics has played second fiddle to economics at Nuffield, it has been contemporary history that is cock of the walk at St Antony’s. The latter is more open to comparison but tends to be somewhat confined within the bounds of an area studies focus. Nevertheless, Nuffield had twice-yearly meetings of political scientists with Sciences Po Paris for several decades from the 1958 inaugural conference on the newborn Fifth Republic constitution; while St Antony’s (whose founder was French) developed close ties with the Oxford Maison Française, so Franco-British comparison was facilitated in multifarious ways. St Antony’s also has had a flourishing European Studies Centre since 1976 that has promoted interdisciplinary and cross-national collaboration between historians, political scientists, and economists, as well as those specializing in international relations.<sup>71</sup>

The distinctive work in area studies, precisely because of its restriction of the scope of comparison, has more recently given them a standing previously denied because of their ‘low level of abstraction in which the specifications of

<sup>71</sup> See ch. 5 on ‘European Studies and International Relations’ by A. Nicholls in C. S. Nicholls, *The History of St Antony’s College, Oxford, 1950–2000* (London: Macmillan, 2000).

<sup>72</sup> P. Mair, ‘Comparative Politics: An Overview’, in R. Goodin and H.-D. Klingemann (eds), *A New Handbook of Political Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 316; cf. 317.

context become crucial determinants'.<sup>72</sup> However, it was precisely against the consequent fragmentation that Finer's *History of Government* was directed, without sacrificing grounded analysis in favour of landless generalization. The renewed interest in inductive case studies that respect spatial and temporal context and compensate for their limited applicability by in-depth analysis has dangers. They easily lead to ad hoc explanations that preclude comparison. The tension between country-specific particularities and universal relationships will always persist but Vincent Wright was an exemplar of what Peter Mair called 'the bringing together of micro case-sensitive, context-sensitive groups of studies which, through team effort, and collaborative group effort, can genuinely advance comparative understanding, and can genuinely contribute to the development of comparative politics'.<sup>73</sup> While Finer's heroic comparison is magnificent but unrepeatable, Wright's 'hesitant comparison' does not make demands that preclude emulation.

Oxford's distinctive contribution to comparative political institutions, by contrast with American behaviouralism and later rational choice, has not been sufficiently sustained to make it either an intellectual rival or an exemplar either in anglophone or international political science generally. It occupies a niche conceptually and empirically. Gladstone professors might have provided intellectual leadership but Oxford's collegiate structure and culture has made

<sup>73</sup> Mair, 'Comparative Politics', 331.  
this virtually impossible, compared to what a Finer at Keele and Mackenzie at Manchester were for a while able to achieve with conspicuous success.





## EDITORS' NOTE

In this chapter Archie Brown and Stephen Whitefield trace out the way in which teaching and research on Communist and post-Communist systems developed in Oxford over six decades. The story they tell brings out at least three striking puzzles. First, how was it that Oxford (along with several other British universities) was so early in developing the academic study of the politics of Soviet Russia and Communist Eastern Europe, but so late in developing comparable teaching and research on the politics of China until the eve of the twenty-first century? Second, how did this particular part of political science respond to dramatic changes in its object of study, especially with the disappearance of most of its original subject matter after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s—an event which came as a surprise to the great majority of mainstream political scientists? Third, what sort of academic organization is most conducive to the sort of study that cuts across divisions between ‘political science’ and ‘area studies’, across different research units within ‘area studies’, and across different ways of framing its subject matter (such as comparative politics, IR, Communist politics, regional politics).

From Brown and Whitefield’s account, the answer to the first puzzle lies in institutional reinforcement of original patterns developed in the aftermath of World War II and what they describe as the inbuilt conservatism imposed by syllabi adopted at that point. As for the second puzzle, they show that there was a lot of reframing and rebranding (especially of teaching offerings relating to the former Soviet bloc, as undergraduate interest in Russia slumped after the collapse of the USSR), with comparative-politics analytic lenses replacing the ‘Communist Politics’ one in Russia and Eastern Europe. And from their account, the answer to the third puzzle seems to lie in some sort of matrix organization or creative tension between area-specific specialisms and disciplinary organization that presents a major challenge for those who believe in tidy and clear-cut patterns of academic organization.

# The Study of Communist and Post-Communist Politics

*Archie Brown and Stephen Whitefield\**

The study of Communist politics in Oxford began in the 1950s but developed greatly from the early 1970s onwards. Undergraduate interest in the subject was highest in the first half of the 1980s, while for graduate students it peaked in the second half of that decade. Interest at the graduate level in the study of post-Communist Europe has been sustained, although for undergraduates post-Communist Russia has had a narrower appeal than did the study of the Soviet Union and Communist Europe. Serious research on contemporary Chinese politics came later than study of the contemporary Soviet Union and Eastern Europe at Oxford—and later than it did in some other British universities. After a modest beginning in the last decades of the twentieth century, it has developed markedly in the new millennium.

Oxford acquired an international reputation for its work on Soviet and East European politics and its scholars have had an influence on British policy towards the region. After several false starts, Oxford now has a China Centre which has gained a similarly high reputation internationally. Since politics, economics, and culture are even more obviously intertwined in Communist systems—and, arguably, some post-Communist systems too—than in democracies, interdisciplinarity has been a feature of research and teaching in these areas. With the demise of Communist government in the successor states of the Soviet Union (few of which, however, became democracies), and with the more successful democratization of Eastern Europe, research on post-Communist Europe has become more closely aligned with mainstream political science, including the use of survey research and the study of legislative behaviour.

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## ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE STUDY OF COMMUNIST-ERA POLITICS

### **The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe**

Soviet studies took off in the United Kingdom, especially in London, Glasgow, Birmingham, and Oxford, following the Second World War.<sup>1</sup> The first person appointed specifically to teach Soviet politics in a British university was Leonard Schapiro at the London School of Economics (LSE) in 1955. At that time the focus in Birmingham and Glasgow was more on Soviet socio-economic development, whereas at London's School of Slavonic and East European Studies (SSEES) Hugh Seton-Watson had already brought his historical study of Soviet foreign policy and of East European politics up to the present. Politically, there was a division between Glasgow and Birmingham, on the one hand, and London and Oxford, on the other. The faculty in the former two institutions viewed Soviet developments much more sympathetically than did the overtly anti-Communist scholars in London and Oxford.

That the study of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe got underway in Oxford in the 1950s owed much to the influence of Bill (Sir William) Deakin, the first Warden of St Antony's College, which opened its doors as Oxford's second exclusively graduate college, in 1950. Deakin, a pre-war fellow of Wadham, strongly favoured the study of recent and contemporary history, based on serious knowledge of particular parts of the world. As an army officer, he had been parachuted into Montenegro in occupied Yugoslavia in May 1943 to make contact with, and fight alongside, Josip Broz Tito and his Communist-led Partisans. Deakin subsequently played a significant role in persuading Winston Churchill (whom he had helped with research for his books and who had become a personal friend) that the main resistance to the Germans in Yugoslavia was coming from Tito and his comrades-in-arms, rather than from the Serbian royalist Chetnik forces commanded by Draža Mihailović.<sup>2</sup> Deakin's wartime experience in the Balkans led him to favour the establishment of a number of regional studies centres at St Antony's, starting in 1953 with the Russian and East European Centre.<sup>3</sup> A seminar devoted to the

<sup>1</sup> They were followed by Manchester (where Soviet politics was taught by Derek J. R. Scott and John Erickson), Swansea (where Roger Pethybridge, Neil Harding, and Richard Taylor were the Politics specialists) and Essex (where Mary McAuley, Peter Frank, and Geoffrey Hosking led the way).

<sup>2</sup> See F. W. D. Deakin, *The Embattled Mountain* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971).

<sup>3</sup> The Centre is still flourishing, but following 'real-world' developments, it has ceded East-Central Europe to the European Studies Centre at St Antony's, and is now called the Russian and Eurasian Studies Centre (with a focus mainly on the successor states to the Soviet Union, especially Russia).

region had been launched even earlier—in 1952—and has met every Monday in term time up to the present day.

The first permanent appointment in Oxford, ostensibly in the social sciences, of a scholar who was intended to have contemporary Soviet politics within his purview was that of George Katkov in 1959. The post was oddly named the University Lectureship in Soviet Economics and Institutions. No less oddly, Katkov was neither an economist nor a political scientist, but a historian. The great-nephew of a prominent conservative Russian nineteenth-century philosopher (Mikhail Katkov), he had been a senior member of St Antony's since the formation of its Russian and East European Centre. Although the author of original historical studies, he paid no attention in his writings and little in his lectures to contemporary Soviet institutions. Within a few years 'economics' had been dropped from the title and the post became a University Lectureship in Soviet Institutions within the Sub-faculty of Politics.<sup>4</sup> The second position in this field to be established within the Politics Sub-faculty—in 1967—was a Faculty Lectureship in International Communism, jointly funded by St Antony's and the Faculty of Social Studies. Richard Kindersley, who held that post until retirement in 1989, had studied Russian at Cambridge. His knowledge of the language was further honed during his time as a British naval officer and interpreter in the Murmansk region of the Soviet Union during World War II. Kindersley published a scholarly book on the pre-revolutionary Russian 'legal Marxists' (such as Petr Struve and Mikhail Tugan-Baranovsky), based on his 1957 Cambridge PhD.<sup>5</sup> He became, however, a specialist on Yugoslavia (a strong point in the eyes of Deakin who encouraged him to apply for the Oxford post), having learned Serbo-Croat prior to serving for three years (1964–7) in the British Embassy in Belgrade. Kindersley also developed an interest in 'Eurocommunism' when that emerged as a political phenomenon in the 1970s.<sup>6</sup>

Katkov's successor as University Lecturer in Soviet Institutions in 1971 was Archie Brown who had a social science background, with a particular specialization in government, having studied as an undergraduate and graduate student at LSE. Subsequently, he was the first specialist on the Soviet Union to be appointed by the Department of Politics at Glasgow University where he taught from 1964 to 1971 (including a year as a British Council exchange scholar in Moscow State University). Brown's interests were broad and

<sup>4</sup> A separate University Lectureship in Soviet Economics was established, with Michael Kaser, who became a fellow of St Antony's in 1963, the first (and last) holder of it until his retirement (latterly as a Reader) in 1993. A Cambridge economist, Kaser served in the Foreign Office in London and Moscow between 1947 and 1951 and with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe in Geneva, 1951–63.

<sup>5</sup> *The First Russian Revisionists: A Study of Legal Marxism in Russia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962).

<sup>6</sup> See R. Kindersley (ed.), *In Search of Eurocommunism* (London: Macmillan, 1981).

belonged in the mainstream of political science. They included political leadership and political power, the comparative study of political culture, the sources of change in Communist systems, and the study of comparative politics more generally.<sup>7</sup> He taught Communist and post-Communist politics at Oxford for thirty-four years (as Professor of Politics from 1989) until his retirement in 2005. The arrival of Mary McAuley in 1985 as Politics Tutor in St Hilda's College and of Alex Pravda in 1989 as a fellow of St Antony's were important additions to Oxford's research and teaching on the eastern half of the European continent. McAuley had played a vital part in developing the study of Soviet politics at Essex University and was already the author of a book on Soviet labour disputes, based on her Oxford doctoral thesis, and a highly regarded textbook on Soviet politics.<sup>8</sup> During her time teaching in Oxford, she produced two further books on Communism—a substantial volume on state and society in the earliest years of the Soviet Union and a concise and best-selling textbook on the politics of the entire Soviet period.<sup>9</sup> After a decade teaching at St Hilda's, McAuley left in 1995 to head the Ford Foundation's Moscow office.

Alex Pravda, whose Oxford doctoral thesis was on the role of the workers in the Prague Spring, did much of his early research on East-Central Europe.<sup>10</sup> His main work, however, has been on the region's international relations with a particular specialization in Soviet and post-Soviet Russian foreign policy and the links between domestic and international politics. Having directed the Soviet programme at the Royal Institute of International Affairs, Chatham House, Pravda was frequently consulted by the mass media as well as by the Foreign Office. Out of eight scholars who took part in a highly significant seminar at Chequers convened by Margaret Thatcher in 1983, he was one of three (Archie Brown and Michael Kaser were the others) to have spent most of his academic career at Oxford. That Chequers meeting led directly to a change of British foreign policy—towards much closer engagement with the Soviet Union and

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, *Soviet Politics and Political Science* (London: Macmillan, 1974); 'Political Power and the Soviet State: Western and Soviet Perspectives', in N. Harding (ed.), *The State in Socialist Society* (London: Macmillan, 1984); 'Political Science in the USSR', *International Political Science Review*, 7/4 (1986), 443–501; A. Brown (ed.), *Political Culture and Communist Studies* (London: Macmillan, 1984); 'Comparative Politics: A View from Britain', *APSA-CP*, 16/1 (2005), 1–5; *Seven Years that Changed the World: Perestroika in Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); and *The Rise and Fall of Communism* (London: Bodley Head, 2009).

<sup>8</sup> *Labour Disputes in Soviet Russia 1957–1965* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969) and *Politics and the Soviet Union* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977).

<sup>9</sup> *Bread and Justice: State and Society in Petrograd 1917–1922* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991) and *Soviet Politics 1917–1991* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

<sup>10</sup> See his *Reform and Change in the Czechoslovak Political System: January–August 1968* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1975) and 'Poland 1980: From "Premature Consumerism" to Labour Solidarity', *Soviet Studies*, 34/2 (1982), 167–99.

Communist East Europe—as was noted by two successive Foreign Policy Advisers to the Prime Minister, Sir Anthony Parsons and Sir Percy Cradock.<sup>11</sup>

## THE STUDY OF CHINESE POLITICS

In contrast, Oxford's China Centre was not officially launched until 2008, and only from 2014 will it be housed in a dedicated new building at St Hugh's College—named the Dickson Poon Building in honour of a generous £10 million donation from the Hong Kong-based philanthropist. This development reflects the growing strength of modern Chinese studies within Oxford since the turn of the century. There had long been Oxford scholars in the humanities with expertise on China. What was lacking until recently was the appointment of specialists who combined knowledge of the language with expertise in the social sciences. Since the year 2000 this has changed, not least as a result of funding from the Leverhulme Trust. Three people, in particular, played notable parts in the establishment of the new China Centre which has superseded all previous attempts to develop interdisciplinary Chinese studies at Oxford. They were Dame Jessica Rawson, a Sinologist and specialist on art and archaeology who was Warden of Merton from 1994 until her retirement in 2010; Andrew Dilnot, Principal of St Hugh's College from 2002 until 2012 when he became Warden of Nuffield; and Lord (Chris) Patten, former Cabinet minister, last Governor of Hong Kong, and Chancellor of the University. It is only from the first decade of the twenty-first century that Oxford has had a critical mass of scholars working on recent and contemporary Chinese developments. They included several doing research on Chinese politics.

Why did it take so long for this to be achieved? In general, far more British university politics departments had Soviet than had Chinese specialists from the 1960s onwards. The Cold War, the greater availability both of state funding and of foundation grants for Soviet and East European politics, as well as an extreme shortage of scholars who combined a social science background with knowledge of the Chinese language all played their parts in that imbalance. Nevertheless, there were other British universities with specialists on Chinese politics well before Oxford acquired strength in this field.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> See A. Brown, 'The Change to Engagement in Britain's Cold War Policy: The Origins of the Thatcher-Gorbachev Relationship', *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 10/3 (2008), 3–47; and P. Cradock, *In Pursuit of British Interests: Reflections on Foreign Policy under Margaret Thatcher and John Major* (London: John Murray, 1997), 18.

<sup>12</sup> They included London (School of Oriental and African Studies) where Stuart Schram was Professor of Politics and one of the world's leading specialists on Mao Zedong; Manchester, where John Gardner taught until his early death in 1988; Sussex (Gordon White—who had studied political science, including Chinese politics, at Cornell and Stanford—was the leading

Local contributory factors included disagreements among those in Oxford who did study China, the university's emphasis until quite recently on undergraduate rather than graduate teaching, and the fact that China was seen as being within the purview of Oriental Studies rather than the social sciences. Within the Sub-faculty of Politics, which provided such coordination of the discipline at university level as existed prior to the creation of the Department of Politics and International Relations (DPIR), the main priority was to provide adequate teaching resources for the existing PPE courses. The syllabus generated its own built-in conservatism. As China—in contrast with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe—was not an existing PPE option, college tutors of politics, who formed the largest constituency within the Sub-faculty, had no incentive to argue for the appointment of a China specialist. It took outside funding, in the form of a Leverhulme grant, to bring about change.

Vivienne Shue, who had been head of the Government Department at Cornell, was appointed Leverhulme Professor of the Study of Contemporary China in 2002, and her profile as a senior scholar of Chinese politics gave the programme a considerable boost. Since 2002 there has been an expansion in the numbers of senior members of the university doing research on Chinese politics, and this has had its counterpart in teaching. In the same year as Shue was appointed, a PPE course on 'The Politics of China' was at last introduced. Initially taught by Rana Mitter alone, it has been delivered since 2008 by Mitter and Patricia Thornton. A Chinese politics option in the Politics MPhil was also approved in 2002 and taught for the first time in 2003–4. Oxford has now become one of the leading places in the western world to study China in the round. Mitter is Professor of the History and Politics of Modern China, and as that title suggests, his approach to the study of Chinese politics is historically grounded.<sup>13</sup> Thornton's research is more directly contemporary, but broad-ranging. It includes a focus on how the Chinese state uses cultural policy as a major instrument of government and how it attempts to modify the workings of the market through the management of consumption. She has also studied dissent and conflict within Chinese society, ethnic and sectarian identity, and the use of cyberspace.<sup>14</sup> The unifying feature of the research of Oxford's Chinese politics

specialist there); and Warwick where Peter Ferdinand has long combined Chinese expertise (both political and linguistic) with knowledge of the USSR and Russia.

<sup>13</sup> See Rana Mitter's *The Manchurian Myth: Nationalism, Resistance, and Collaboration in Modern China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000) and *A Bitter Revolution: China's Struggle with the Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Patricia Thornton, *Disciplining the State: Virtue, Violence, and State-Making in Modern China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007) and James L. Peacock, P. Thornton, and P. Inman, *Identity Matters: How Ethnic and Sectarian Allegiances both Prevent and Promote Collective Violence* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2007).



specialists has been a major interest in relations between state and society. (This is manifestly true of Shue's work.<sup>15</sup>)

Between 2005 and 2010, when he moved to a chair in Leiden, Frank Pieke, the author of a number of notable publications in the field, played an important role with his work on the political anthropology of China.<sup>16</sup> From disciplines other than political science, significant contributions to the study of Chinese politics at Oxford have been made by economists Albert Park and Christine Wong and sociologist Rachel Murphy. An important member of the China studies team over a longer period is the International Relations scholar Rosemary Foot, who has been at Oxford since 1990. A supervisor of many graduate students over the years, her own research focuses on security issues in the Asia-Pacific, human rights (with specific reference to China), China's regional policy, and US-China relations.<sup>17</sup>

### THE TEACHING OF SOVIET, EAST EUROPEAN, AND POST-COMMUNIST POLITICS

In the Communist period, many college tutors contributed to teaching on the Soviet Union because it was included (until the late 1980s) both in the first-year Prelims syllabus and the Final Honours School compulsory paper then called Political Institutions. From the 1970s to the mid-1980s (when Mary McAuley joined the team), Brown provided most of the tutorial teaching of a Soviet and East European politics option in PPE, with Kindersley and Zbigniew Pelczynski (Politics Tutor at Pembroke) also contributing. Pelczynski combined expertise on Hegel with a continuing interest in the politics of his native Poland, writing on the crises in the relations between the Polish United Workers' Party and Polish society, and on the rise of Solidarity and the development of civil society. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s the PPE option was called 'Communist Government of the Soviet Union and Eastern

<sup>15</sup> V. Shue, *The Reach of the State: Sketches of the Chinese Body Politic* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 'China: Transition Postponed?', *Problems of Communism*, 41/1-2 (1992), 157-68; and 'Legitimacy Crisis in China?' in P. S. Gries and S. Rosen (eds), *Chinese Politics: State, Society and the Market* (London: Routledge, 2010), 41-68.

<sup>16</sup> See F. Pieke's *The Ordinary and the Extraordinary: An Anthropological Study of Chinese Reform and the 1989 People's Movement in Beijing* (London: Routledge, 1996) and *The Good Communist: Elite Training and State Building in Today's China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>17</sup> See especially R. Foot, *The Practice of Power: US Relations with China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); *Rights Beyond Borders: The Global Community and the Struggle over Human Rights in China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); and R. Foot and A. Walter, *China, the United States and Global Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

Europe'.<sup>18</sup> In 1990, in rapid acknowledgement of the fact that Communism had been dismantled in Eastern Europe in the previous year, it was renamed 'Soviet and East European Government and Politics'—and in 1993 'Soviet and Post-Soviet Government and Politics'. No longer united either ideologically or institutionally by a Communist system, the countries of Eastern Europe were now seen as too politically diverse to be included in a paper for undergraduates, alongside the formidably large subject of Soviet and post-Soviet Russian politics. East-Central Europe reappeared in the undergraduate syllabus only from 2010–11 with the transformation of the West European Politics paper into Politics of Europe. The Soviet and Post-Soviet paper was renamed in 2002 as 'Russian Government and Politics', although knowledge of the preceding Communist system was still deemed necessary for an understanding of post-Soviet developments. From 2011–12 the course once again became a comparative one, bringing in other successor states to the Soviet Union in addition to Russia, having been renamed 'Politics in Russia and the Former Soviet Union'. Countries such as Ukraine and the Central Asian successor states, which as Soviet republics were studied in the past, thus re-entered the PPE curriculum.

The rapid changes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the second half of the 1980s had a great impact on the choices of graduate students. Their numbers, whether as doctoral students or in the MPhil in Russian and East European Studies, sharply increased. Some undergraduates, in contrast, appear to have been deterred by the bewildering speed of change—no textbook could keep pace with it. The numbers taking the Communist Government of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe PPE option in the Andropov and Chernenko years (1982–5) were significantly above the average for 1986–91. The forty-two who took the course in 1984 constituted a higher figure than in any year of the perestroika period. Between 2003 and 2011 on average fewer than fourteen students took the renamed paper on Russian Government and Politics. So the distinctive Communist system—in its totalitarian, highly authoritarian, and subsequently pluralizing phases—attracted much more undergraduate interest than has post-Soviet Russia.

This Oxford experience reflects a general trend in universities throughout the English-speaking world. From the Khrushchev era onwards—and the university expansion in Britain, the USA, Canada, and Australia of the

<sup>18</sup> The rubric of the course throughout most of these two decades read as follows: 'Candidates will be required to show knowledge of at least two East European countries in addition to the Soviet Union. Approximately half of the paper will be devoted to the Soviet Union and half to Eastern Europe. The subject comprises the theory and practice of Communist rule and includes the study of party and state institutions, ideological trends, political culture and political change, the political influence of economic and social groups, the problems of multi-national societies, and inter-party and inter-state relations within the area.'

1960s—there was lively interest in Soviet politics.<sup>19</sup> Every major political science department felt a need to have a specialist on America's rival superpower. Typically, however, when former 'Sovietologists' appointed in the 1960s or early 1970s have retired over the past decade, their posts have become 'general comparative' ones, with Russia seldom a high priority. Oxford has, in that respect at least, been an exception to the rule. When Brown retired in 2005, his post was filled by Paul Chaisty who was appointed to a University Lectureship in Russian Politics. There was recognition that Russia remained an important country to study, and one for which there was strong graduate student demand both in political science and in area studies. The interdisciplinary MPhil in Russian and East European Studies—with a mainly Politics core course, and the possibility of a further paper and thesis on a political science topic—followed a different trajectory from the PPE option. Its student numbers could invariably be counted on the fingers of one hand during the first twenty years following its introduction in 1965. The changes in the Soviet Union which followed Mikhail Gorbachev's coming to power in 1985 made a vast difference. Whereas four students embarked on this MPhil in 1985, twenty-four were admitted the following year, no fewer than twenty of them from the USA.

For American graduate students with an interest in the Soviet perestroika, Oxford was seen as one of the leading places in the world to study. In the remainder of the decade, student numbers on the MPhil REES varied between thirteen and twenty-two, with Americans continuing to be the largest single group, usually outnumbering all other nationalities put together. Significantly, numbers on this course remained buoyant at twenty or more per year in the post-Communist era. A striking change is the influx of students from the former Communist states themselves. They had no chance of coming to Oxford to take such a degree course so long as they lived in countries under Communist rule, but the 1990s and the first decade of the present century saw the arrival of Russian graduate students (as many as four in some years) in addition to students from Poland, Slovakia, Ukraine, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, and Tajikistan.

Doctoral theses in politics relating to the Soviet Union (in particular), Eastern Europe, and China became more numerous in the 1980s, as compared with earlier decades, but a still greater number were completed in the first half of the 1990s. This—like the sudden increase in numbers taking the MPhil in Russian and East European Studies—can be explained by the 'perestroika effect'. The changes in Moscow, with their huge implications for

<sup>19</sup> One factor, specific to Oxford, which may help to account for the relatively large number of undergraduates taking the Soviet option in PPE in the 1970s and 1980s and the decline thereafter is that in the early 1990s Russia ceased to be one of the countries studied by first-year students in Prelims.

the rest of the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and international relations, attracted many talented doctoral students. Whereas twenty-two doctoral or MLitt theses were completed on aspects of Communist politics during the 1980s, there were twenty-nine successfully completed doctorates in this field between 1990 and 1995 alone (all of them begun while the Soviet Union still existed). The figure dropped to thirteen for the period 1996–2000—still a substantial number, but a decline which probably reflected diminishing academic job prospects for Russianists, although that was less true of East European and China specialists. However, between 2001 and 2009 there were thirty-seven completed doctorates in Communist and post-Communist Politics (only four fewer than in the previous decade), an increasing number of them in aspects of international relations, including the accession of formerly Communist states to European Union membership. Many of the doctoral students have gone on to distinguished careers in the policy world, whether as politicians or in think tanks, and still more have made a mark as university teachers and scholars.

## OXFORD RESEARCH IN NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

There is no doubt that Oxford research on Communism and post-Communism has made an impact in the wider world. This is most obviously the case within the international community of scholars who specialize in the Soviet Union/Russia, Eastern Europe, and China. Some of the work has, however, had an impact on political science more broadly. Three academic areas, in particular, where Oxford research has made a mark internationally are: (1) political institutions; (2) political culture; and (3) problems of democratization.

### **Political institutions**

This is a broad category, embracing the study of the power hierarchy within unreformed Communist systems, structural change in the last years of the Soviet Union, the disbanding of Communist institutions throughout the eastern half of the European continent, the study of state–society relations in China, and research on elections, political parties, and legislatures in post-Communist Europe. Among the internationally acknowledged work by Oxford scholars on political institutions of the Communist era is Stephen Whitefield's reinterpretation of the role of the economic ministries in the

Soviet political system. Whitefield argued that the central importance of these ministries had been inadequately studied and ill understood.<sup>20</sup> If the ministries wielded more de facto power within the Soviet system than had been generally recognized, there was, however, no disputing the fact that power was highly concentrated at the apex of the Communist Party—above all, in the office of General Secretary of the Central Committee. That office, its holders, and the Politburo were among the interests of Brown who took a particularly early interest in Mikhail Gorbachev.<sup>21</sup>

In the post-Soviet period, political leadership and power at the top have continued to constitute a focal point in the study of Russian politics,<sup>22</sup> but new areas of institutional analysis have opened up. Legislatures, even when they had titles such as Supreme Soviet, were *supremely unimportant* until almost the end of the Communist era. In post-Communist Eastern Europe, they do matter, although in most of the successor states of the Soviet Union, including Russia, they have become progressively less independent, with the 'administrative resources' of the state used to manipulate elections and keep oppositional parties out of the legislature or, at best, reduced to a handful of deputies. Nevertheless, even in Russia, with its increasing executive dominance of the parliament, there have been issues in the legislative process well worth studying. Paul Chaisty has published an innovative analysis, using a diverse range of sources (including parliamentary debates, votes, and interviews) of how regional and corporate interests pursue their goals in the State Duma and Federation Council.<sup>23</sup> Chaisty used deputies' voting records to estimate statistically the extent to which parties engage in coherent legislative activity or are fractured in their voting by the impact of local or regional economic interests. In this way, he applies mainstream political analysis to the post-Communist Russian context.<sup>24</sup>

Exploration of the importance of constitutional design, and in particular the relationship between parliament and executive in semi-presidential systems,

<sup>20</sup> See S. Whitefield, *Industrial Power and the Soviet State* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993). The book won the Ed Hewett Prize of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies for best political economy book of the year.

<sup>21</sup> See Brown in A. Brown and M. Kaser (eds), *Soviet Policy for the 1980s* (Macmillan, London, 1982), 240–42 and 267–70; 'Gorbachev: New Man in the Kremlin', *Problems of Communism*, 34/3 (1985), 1–23; and *The Gorbachev Factor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) which won the W. J. M. Mackenzie Prize of the Political Studies Association of the UK. The link between ideational innovation and institutional power is explored, drawing on declassified archival documents (including Politburo transcripts), in A. Brown, *Seven Years that Changed the World: Perestroika in Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>22</sup> A. Brown and L. Shevtsova (eds), *Gorbachev, Yeltsin, and Putin: Political Leadership in Russia's Transition* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2001).

<sup>23</sup> *Legislative Politics and Economic Power in Russia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, 'Defending the Institutional Status Quo: Communist Leadership of the Second Russian Duma, 1996–1999', *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 28/1 (2003), 5–28; and 'Party Cohesion and Policy-Making in Russia', *Party Politics*, 11/3 (2005), 299–318.

has been a major focus of the work of Petra Schleiter, often in collaboration with Edward Morgan-Jones.<sup>25</sup> Allying the use of quantitative and qualitative data to a rational-choice principal-agent theoretical framework, they have argued that the characteristics of semi-presidentialism in Russia did indeed have an impact on patterns of governmental stability between 1994 and 2003. Increasingly, however, their work has moved away from Russia as that country has deviated ever further from a political system in which formal constitutional rules define institutional interactions and political outcomes. Like Whitefield, they have begun to incorporate comparisons with Western Europe. Radoslaw Zubek's work is also institutionally focused, particularly on characteristics of the core executive, on executive-legislative relations in Central and Eastern Europe, and on legislatures themselves.<sup>26</sup> And, while doubts are expressed by some Oxford scholars about the importance of formal institutions in Russia and other parts of the former Soviet Union, Zubek (with Klaus Goetz) has argued forcefully for the increasing importance of institutions in the Central and East European states.<sup>27</sup> Gwendolyn Sasse has likewise shown their political significance for the avoidance of conflict in the Crimea in the 1990s.<sup>28</sup> State-building in post-Soviet Georgia as well as Georgian–Russian tensions have been the subject of research by Neil MacFarlane, the Lester Pearson Professor of International Relations.<sup>29</sup>

### Political culture

Over the past four decades Oxford scholars have been prominent participants in the debate on political culture which has proceeded on and off within political science ever since Gabriel Almond launched it in 1956. The study of political culture in the context of Communist countries had both conceptual advantages and methodological disadvantages. A major *advantage* was that

<sup>25</sup> For example, their 'Constitutional Power and Competing Risks: Monarchs, Presidents, Prime Ministers, and the Termination of East and West European Cabinets', *American Political Science Review*, 103/3 (2009), 496–512; and 'Party Government in Europe? Parliamentary and Semi-Presidential Democracies Compared', *European Journal of Political Research*, 48/5 (2009), 665–93.

<sup>26</sup> See, for example, R. Zubek, 'Parties, Rules and Government Legislative Control in Central Europe: The Case of Poland', *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 42/1 (2008), 147–61; and R. Zubek and Christian Stecker, 'Legislatures and Policy Uncertainty: Evidence from East Central Europe', *Journal of Public Policy*, 30/1 (2010), 63–80.

<sup>27</sup> R. Zubek and K. H. Goetz, 'Performing to Type? How State Institutions Matter in East Central Europe', *Journal of Public Policy*, 30/1 (2010), 1–22.

<sup>28</sup> *The Crimea Question: Identity, Transition, and Conflict* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

<sup>29</sup> See N. MacFarlane, 'Colliding State-building Projects and Regional Insecurity in the Post-Soviet Space: Georgia versus Russia in South Ossetia', *Comparative Social Research*, 27 (2010), 103–26.

these were countries where a virtually uniform set of political institutions had been imposed on the societies and a conscious attempt made to inculcate Marxist-Leninist ideology. With the radical break in continuity of political institutions and the unusually systematic attempt to create new political values, it became fruitful to focus on the harmony or dissonance between societal values and political structures. In democratic systems disentangling the development of ideas and institutions is, by contrast, problematical.<sup>30</sup>

A major *disadvantage* methodologically is that professionally conducted survey research on political beliefs and values, capable of producing reliable data, was ruled out by the nature of Communist systems. The exceptions were times when these systems were ceasing to be Communist—periods of pluralization, such as the Prague Spring in Czechoslovakia, the later years of the Soviet perestroika, and parts of East-Central Europe in the late 1980s. Oxford scholars, among them Brown, McAuley, Whitefield, and Zielonka, have been prominent participants in the debate on the scope and value of the concept of political culture.<sup>31</sup> For some, like Brown and Whitefield, political culture is a subjective phenomenon that involves the fundamental beliefs and values, foci of loyalty and identification, and political knowledge and expectations of citizens.<sup>32</sup> For others, like McAuley, political culture is seen as a property of social *collectives* and embedded in the social practices and resources that define social meanings and possibilities of action for institutions.<sup>33</sup> Different interpretations of the concepts are reflected in the focus of investigation and often in methods. Thus, the subjective approach, focusing on the beliefs of individuals, made it imperative to draw on a broad range of anthropological and social psychological findings and sources, particularly when Communist systems precluded conducting professionally reliable survey research on political topics. Those who emphasized culture as an attribute of social collectives, by contrast, were much more likely to focus on institutional practices and processes as they evolved over time.

While these findings, based on a variety of approaches, could hardly meet the most exacting social science criteria, they appeared to show—and long before this became obvious in the political behaviour of citizens of Communist Europe at the end of the 1980s—a large gulf between the values Communist leaders and ideologists attempted to inculcate and the beliefs widespread among the populations. Such a conclusion was virtually the opposite of that

<sup>30</sup> A. Brown and J. Gray (eds), *Political Culture and Political Change in Communist States* (London: Macmillan, 1977), 12.

<sup>31</sup> A. Brown (ed.), *Political Culture and Communist Studies* (London: Macmillan, 1984); and H.-D. Klingemann, D. Fuchs, and J. Zielonka (eds), *Democracy and Political Culture in Eastern Europe* (London: Routledge, 2007).

<sup>32</sup> A. Brown and J. Gray (eds), *Political Culture and Political Change in Communist States*, 1.

<sup>33</sup> S. Whitefield (ed.), *Political Culture and Post-Communism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 2.

which Samuel P. Huntington and Jorge I. Domínguez reached when they wrote:

Many states, old and new, try to plan change in their country's political culture. The *most dramatically successful case* of planned political cultural change is probably the *Soviet Union* . . . To date, *other than in communist systems*, planned political culture change through mobilization has been rare and has fared poorly.<sup>34</sup>

In countries where Communist systems were imposed from without (by Soviet force of arms), Communist parties had an especially hard time instilling the values and beliefs they wished citizens to imbibe. Conformist political behaviour, during the lengthy periods in which overt dissent was confined to the few who were prepared to brave severe consequences, was very far from fully reflecting the subjective beliefs of the majority of citizens. In the Soviet Union there appeared to be less dissonance between officially approved values and those held by the citizenry than was the case in Poland, Czechoslovakia, or Hungary. Even in the Soviet case, however, the view that 'planned political culture change' had been successful was vigorously challenged by Alexander Lukin in a book based on his Oxford doctoral thesis.<sup>35</sup> Almond, the father of the concept of political culture in twentieth-century political science, drew heavily on Brown and Gray's *Political Culture and Political Change in Communist States* when arguing that 'a comparison of the real political culture in communist societies with the official political culture may be a kind of test of the explanatory power of cultural variables', concluding that this body of work suggests limits to the 'plasticity' of political culture, in spite of 'the awesome efforts' by Communist regimes to transform it.<sup>36</sup>

A variety of approaches to the study of political culture is to be found in Whitefield's edited volume, *Political Culture and Post-Communism*. With the demise of Communism in Eastern Europe, the use of survey research to investigate political culture within those countries became more widespread. Much of this work in Oxford was conducted by Whitefield in association with Geoffrey Evans of Nuffield College. The extent to which survey research can get at deep-seated beliefs and values as distinct from more ephemeral attitudes has been questioned, particularly by Stephen Welch, whose book on the concept of political culture, grew out of his Oxford doctoral thesis.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>34</sup> S. P. Huntington and J. I. Domínguez, 'Political Development', in Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson W. Polsby (eds), *Handbook of Political Science*, vol. III: *Macropolitical Theory* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1975), 31–2 (italics added).

<sup>35</sup> A. Lukin, *The Political Culture of the Russian 'Democrats'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). See also Alexander Lukin and Pavel Lukin's chapter in Whitefield (ed.), *Political Culture and Post-Communism*.

<sup>36</sup> G. A. Almond, 'The Intellectual History of the Civic Culture Concept', in Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba (eds), *The Civic Culture Revisited* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1980), 30–2; see also G. Almond, *A Discipline Divided: Schools and Sects in Political Science* (London: Sage, 1990).

<sup>37</sup> S. Welch, *The Concept of Political Culture* (London: Macmillan, 1993).



Whitefield and Evans have attempted to minimize these potential problems by the use of multiple measures and scale construction, reliability studies to test for stability of responses over relatively short periods of time (six weeks) as well as triangulation with other studies. Whitefield and Rohrschneider, moreover, have addressed the important empirical question about when deep-seated and fundamental beliefs and values—as opposed to more ephemeral attitudes—are most likely to dominate in how individuals make judgements about political issues. They demonstrate that political culture in this subjective sense is a powerful factor precisely in conditions of post-Communism when people's social, economic, and political world is uncertain and in flux.<sup>38</sup>

### Problems of democratization

In the second half of the 1980s liberalization turned into democratization in the Soviet Union, although that process remained incomplete. (For some post-Soviet states democracy was further off in the second decade of the twenty-first century than it had been in 1990.) The rapidly changing Soviet and East European polities and societies during the second half of the 1980s were closely scrutinized by Oxford scholars.<sup>39</sup> The East-Central European dimension of democratization was studied historically by Richard Crampton<sup>40</sup> and recounted in the vivid reportage of Timothy Garton Ash who spent much time in Poland, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, and Hungary in close contact with some of the leading oppositional figures.<sup>41</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, then Warden of St Antony's, published in 1990 a stimulating book rejoicing in the advance of liberty over the previous year, but airing some sceptical thoughts. He was pessimistic about the likely outcomes of the pursuit of 'national self-determination' which he viewed as 'one of the more unfortunate inventions' of international law. Ascribing rights to nations rather than individuals invited usurpers 'to claim this right on behalf of peoples in whose name they speak while at the same time trampling on minorities, and sometimes on the civil rights of all'.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>38</sup> R. Rohrschneider and S. Whitefield, 'Support for Foreign Ownership and Integration in Eastern Europe: Economic Interests, Ideological Commitments and Democratic Context', *Comparative Political Studies*, 37/3 (2004), 313–39.

<sup>39</sup> See, for example, A. Brown, 'Political Change in the Soviet Union', *World Policy Journal*, 6/3 (1989), 468–501; and A. Pravda, 'The Politics of Foreign and Security Policy', in Stephen White, Alex Pravda and Zvi Gitelman (eds), *Developments in Soviet Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1990), 202–27.

<sup>40</sup> R. Crampton, *Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century—and After*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 1997).

<sup>41</sup> See especially *We the People: The Revolution of '89 Witnessed in Warsaw, Budapest, Berlin and Prague* (Cambridge: Granta, 1990).

<sup>42</sup> R. Dahrendorf, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1990), 138.

Over the years political scientists whose primary area of specialization has been Latin America have made a great contribution to the comparative study of democratization. With the fall of Communism, a number of them expanded their range of cases to include the former Soviet Union and East-Central Europe. Few, if any, books on the study of transitions from authoritarian rule and problems of democratization have made a bigger impact internationally than the 1996 work of Alfred Stepan, co-authored with Juan Linz and published while Stepan was Gladstone Professor of Government.<sup>43</sup> These scholars have been outstanding examples of comparativists whose work has thrown light on many aspects of the post-Communist world, applying insights drawn from their earlier research on southern Europe and South America. Another notable comparativist with a primary specialization in Latin America who has contributed to the understanding of Communist and post-Communist democratization has been Laurence Whitehead of Nuffield College.<sup>44</sup> The international dimensions of democratization in Central and Eastern Europe, which have been an especially important aspect of Whitehead's work, were further elaborated by Pravda and Zielonka.<sup>45</sup>

#### CONCLUSION: THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE OF COMMUNIST AND POST-COMMUNIST STUDIES IN OXFORD

Oxford's impact on the scholarly understanding of Communist and post-Communist systems has been a major one, as has its role in the education of countless academics and students from many countries. Its scholars have also had a broader political and societal impact, not least at the influential Chequers seminar of September 1983,<sup>46</sup> but also through continuing policy advice to governmental institutions and their contributions to public understanding of the issues in the mass media, especially the BBC. With the growth in the

<sup>43</sup> J. Linz and A. Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

<sup>44</sup> See, most notably, L. Whitehead (ed.), *The International Dimensions of Democratization in Europe and the Americas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); and Whitehead, *Democratization: Theory and Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>45</sup> J. Zielonka and A. Pravda (eds), *Democratic Consolidation in Eastern Europe*, vol. 2: *International and Transnational Factors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). On problems of democratization under conditions of post-Communism, see also A. Brown (ed.), *Contemporary Russian Politics: A Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); and G. Evans and S. Whitefield, 'The Politics and Economics of Democratic Commitment: Support for Democracy in Transition Societies', *British Journal of Political Science*, 25/4 (1995), 485–514.

<sup>46</sup> See note 11.

core faculty, Oxford has maintained its high status in the field. Moreover, methodological and political pluralism—hallmarks of the Oxford approach to Communist and post-Communist studies—remains a source of scholarly strength today.

The positive aspects of this continuity, however, should not obscure some important challenges facing scholarship and teaching in contemporary Oxford. First, it is fair to say that those who study Communism and post-Communism move in increasingly divergent circles. The Monday five o'clock seminar of the Russian and Eurasian Studies Centre at St Antony's no longer brings together all the Oxford scholars who are occupied with the study of Russia and Eastern Europe. This is partly because the faculty has grown in size and because there is a greater variety of scholarly forums. But it also reflects a divergence in approaches—between quantitative and qualitative and between discipline-oriented and country-oriented research.<sup>47</sup> The St Antony's seminar attracts an interdisciplinary group of faculty and students more interested in Communist and post-Communist Europe (especially Russia) than in testing political science hypotheses.

Second, insofar as area studies versus political science is a 'cleavage' (however regrettable) in the analysis of post-Communist politics and of political science more generally, it is one that is reinforced organizationally. Oxford posts have for a long time involved joint appointments. Those who were university lecturers without tutorial fellowships or were readers or professors, and whose teaching and supervision obligations were primarily to the university, nevertheless had college homes. In the field of Russian and East European Studies this most commonly meant St Antony's, with its support for interdisciplinary and area studies approaches and regional centres. Since the 'dawn of the departments' in 2000, however, many academics have been further divided—contrary to hopes that they would be more positively combined—by joint appointments between the Department of Politics and International Relations and the School of Interdisciplinary Area Studies. The impulse behind the creation of SIAS was to protect studies of politics and society of countries other than Britain and the United States, including knowledge of their languages and cultures. Creating a separate organization for the administration and support of area studies reflected a concern that other social sciences might go the way of economics, where knowledge of how actual economies in foreign countries work is valued significantly less than

<sup>47</sup> Latin Americanist Malcolm Deas, in his retirement speech at St Antony's on 16 June 2008, referred to the latter point in characteristic style when he said that there are scholars who 'think that academic disciplines exist to help the understanding of countries, and others who think that countries exist for the advancement of academic disciplines'. He added: 'I put myself in the first category. I sometimes feel now part of a threatened minority'.

contributions to the development of the discipline, often narrowly defined.<sup>48</sup> Joint appointments between SIAS and social science departments were intended to ensure that the latter would not become insular and neglect the wider world. Ideally, the new structures would foster closer links, both in teaching and scholarship, between a variety of disciplinary approaches (including those of political science) and real-world knowledge of other countries. There is a danger, however, that the new organizational structures could lead to an outcome the opposite of that intended, fostering autarky rather than cooperation.

Alongside such organizational dilemmas, there is the important fact that post-Communism itself has diverged. Most of the former Communist systems of Central and Eastern Europe have successfully (albeit often incompletely) democratized and have been integrated into the European Union. The literature, methods, and assumptions in political science and its various sub-branches concerned with the study of established democracies may increasingly be the most relevant ones for the study of East-Central Europe. It might, accordingly, be argued that much of post-Communist Europe should now simply be integrated into broader comparative studies—despite strong evidence from actual comparisons of West and East European party systems that the legacies of Communist rule still distinguish their politics in important ways that point to the continuing significance of the phenomenon of ‘post-Communism’.<sup>49</sup>

In the greater part of the former Soviet Union, however, democracy has proved elusive. With the exception, principally, of the Baltic states, hybrid regimes or ‘electoral authoritarianism’ have been the norm. China, for its part, remains an authoritarian state without even the ‘electoral’ qualifier. It is, nevertheless, a hybrid regime in the sense that its economy is no longer, by any stretch of the imagination, Communist whereas its political structures surely are. For a majority of the formerly Communist states in the post-Soviet space and for the party-state capitalist hybrids in Asia, many of the assumptions made and the methods used in the study of democratic politics appear inappropriate. There remains a pressing need for attention both to the historical legacies of the Communist past and to the local specificities of regimes and societies. The challenge for Oxford—and for other universities—is to combine such substantive knowledge with disciplinary expertise and to ensure that changes in academic organization support the tackling of big questions, while fostering collaboration between as well as within disciplines rather than unwittingly promoting fissure and insularity.

<sup>48</sup> Alec Nove of Glasgow University, who died in 1994, but who over many years was the world’s leading authority on the Soviet economy, told one of us a quarter of a century ago: ‘I would not get tenure today in any self-respecting economics department.’

<sup>49</sup> R. Rohrschneider and S. Whitefield, *The Strain of Representation: How Parties Represent Diverse Voters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).



Part IV  
An Assessment



## Conclusion: What Can be Learned from the Oxford Politics Story?

*The Editors*

### REPRISE

We began this book by offering three reasons for supposing that the distinctive features of Oxford might have presented an unusually challenging environment for the development of the academic study of politics over the past century. They were: (a) an organization characterized by late departmentalization, a remarkably flat hierarchy with an institutionally weak professoriate, and a collegiate system making rival claims on academic time and loyalties; (b) an academic community so close to Britain's ruling elite as to have insufficient 'relational distance' to establish a critical perspective on the subject matter of their studies; and (c) a system so dominated by the treadmill of highly labour-intensive and limitedly specialist undergraduate teaching as to crowd out serious research.

Many readers will no doubt have thought these arguments to be superficial or at least overstated. But, as the previous chapters have shown, a number of well-placed observers do indeed see such features as decidedly disadvantageous for the development of modern political science. For instance, Robert Goodin, a seasoned observer and international benchmarker of political science, makes much of the negative consequences for the development of political science arising from the absence of strong and early departmentalism in Oxford. Iain McLean suggests that lack of relational distance may have been what underlay the analytic weakness of Oxford's contributions to constitutional analysis, at least in the days of Alfred Venn Dicey. And several of our contributors, including Alan Ryan and Robert Goodin, see the pressures of the undergraduate teaching system as holding back the development of disciplinary orthodoxy in Oxford (for good or ill). So how well do these propositions stand up to the overall picture that emerges from the previous chapters of this book?



Answering that question is not as straightforward as it might seem. Loose claims of academic ‘underperformance’ often do not distinguish between whether the underperformance in question is relative to some counterfactual—of what might have been achieved in some imaginary world where the relevant structures, people, or processes had been different—or relative to other universities with different characteristics. The former is an imponderable and even the latter is far from easy to establish, even—or should that be ‘especially’—in an age of multiple university rankings.<sup>1</sup> Nor is the yardstick for what is to be taken as good or bad performance beyond dispute, because there are so many dimensions on which the quality of research or teaching can be assessed; and the tensions over who or what academic political science is for that Rodney Barker identified in his account of the LSE, Oxford, and Manchester a century ago have by no means been resolved once and for all. For instance, is the key test to be what Barker calls ‘science for science’s sake’—the production of stylized research articles for an international peer-reviewing professoriate—or of some wider impact, such as the real contribution to international peace that the tailoring mogul who funded Oxford’s original chair in International Relations wanted the incumbent to make? Even—perhaps that should also be ‘especially’—governments and academic bureaucracies rarely have stable or coherent preferences over whether they want academics to come out of the ivory tower or get back in there.<sup>2</sup>

#### WHERE EXPECTATIONS AND OBSERVATIONS DIVERGE

Even with all those qualifications, though, it seems hard to argue that the three features with which we began this book and which are invoked by several of the earlier chapters, have had a consistent or very clear effect. As far as structure is concerned (leaving aside those counterfactual might-have-beens), Oxford evidently did not lag behind more conventionally departmentalized universities in the UK (and indeed beyond) in subjects such as political theory, international relations, electoral studies, Soviet and European politics, democratization studies, and arguably led the field in many of those subjects

<sup>1</sup> See for instance H. G. Frederickson and E. C. Stazyk, ‘Ranking US Public Affairs Educational Programmes: Searching for Quality, Finding Equilibrium? A General Theory of University Rankings’, in H. Margetts, Perri 6, and C. Hood (eds), *Paradoxes of Modernization: Unintended Consequences of Public Policy Reform* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 63–80.

<sup>2</sup> For an extreme example of such contradictory pressures, see D. J. Enwright, *Memoirs of a Mendicant Professor* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1969).

for at least part of the time covered in this book.<sup>3</sup> The subfield in which structural features seem to have had the most effect in holding back development out of all those considered in this book is 'war studies', as described in Hew Strachan's chapter, and that seems to have been because it was split off from politics and located in a history faculty that was moving away from its earlier emphasis on contributing to 'public life', such that there was no real scope for the cooperative interplay between professors and college tutors that Martin Ceadel describes as leading to the development of International Relations.

The same point could be made for the relational distance argument, and it can also be noted that evidence for this proposition offered in some of the earlier chapters can be selective. For example low relational distance does not seem to have impaired the analytic rigour of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, according to Iain McLean in his chapter in this volume, while McLean suggests that it did so for Albert Venn Dicey. It does seem plausible to argue that Oxford's first two Gladstone professors, whatever their other achievements may have been, were probably too close to their subject matter to make a deep academic impact on the scholarly literature. But on the other hand, low relational distance does not seem to have stopped Bill Mackenzie (one of several UK politics academics who had a 'good war' in Whitehall during World War II and established contacts that he drew on heavily thereafter) from making a major contribution to the development of the subject and building up what several of the contributors to this volume see as a remarkably innovative department in Manchester in the 1950s. Within Oxford, it is hard to imagine the remarkable development of the study of Communist Russia and Eastern Europe after World War II, as described by Archie Brown and Stephen Whitefield in this volume, taking place without the contacts with the world of practice that were institutionalized and fostered by St Antony's College, as described in Laurence Whitehead's chapter.

And when it comes to the third element, the putatively depressing effect of pressure of undergraduate teaching across a range of subjects, Martin Ceadel's chapter shows not only that this feature did not prevent the academic 'normalization', as he calls it, of International Relations in Oxford, but on the contrary may even have acted as a 'Trojan horse' in developing the subject. That is because the runaway success of the PPE degree in attracting undergraduate enrolments after its introduction in 1920 sucked academic resources away from Law and History and in time forced every college (however reluctantly) to make dedicated tutorial appointments in Politics, which in turn led to the development of postgraduate offerings that further reinforced

<sup>3</sup> A point that led David Marquand to pose a perceptive question to members of the Oxford politics faculty during the 2011 conference on which this book is based: 'If you're so bad [you lot] . . . why are you so good?'

the march of 'normalization'. It is true that the postgraduate developments took some decades to develop, but the pace was hardly slower than in other leading UK universities.

The conclusion would thus have to be that these three features at most only limited development in some of the subfields of the academic study of politics for some of the time (leaving counterfactuals aside). And that in turn suggests that the 'institutional theory' on which they rest may not be quite as robust as Robert Goodin argues. Why might that be? At least three possible explanations could be suggested. One is that, while institutions matter in facilitating or obstructing disciplinary development, the three features that we highlighted at the start of the book exclude or mask some other countervailing institutional features and thus do not adequately characterize the institutional background. A second is that, while institutions matter, individuals also matter, and that outstanding individuals may have succeeded in overcoming or counteracting the obstacles that the institutional environment might otherwise have presented. A third is that, rather than there being a well-established set of propositions about what institutional arrangements represent 'best practice' for academic development, the available recipes are more plural and contradictory than 'best practice' assumptions might lead us to suppose.

### THREE WAYS OF EXPLAINING THE DIVERGENCE BETWEEN EXPECTATIONS AND OBSERVATIONS

#### (a) **Countervailing effects of other institutional features**

Perhaps the least radical way of reconciling what has been observed with the expectations set out at the start of this book, and in several of the contributors' chapters, is that institutions do indeed matter in fostering or holding back scientific development, but that other important institutional features, not sufficiently taken into account by those who put the emphasis on the trio with which we began, turned out to have a compensating effect. After all, analogous processes often compound determinate predictions or assumptions in medicine, where different physiological or psychological processes can work against one another.

One obvious candidate for an institutional feature that could have worked against the trio with which we began is that of the graduate colleges, a distinctive feature of Oxford's development that we touched on in the introductory chapter and that is discussed in Laurence Whitehead's chapter in this volume. Here we might note the role of Nuffield College in enabling Oxford's internationally trailblazing work in voting studies from the late 1940s (and we

could also add the related early development of the subfield of political sociology, not discussed in this volume) and the role of St Antony's College in developing and sustaining a level of expertise in depth about different areas of the world that is not possessed by any other single institution in the UK and by few, if any, others in the world. These graduate colleges constituted only a minority of all the politics teachers and researchers in Oxford for several decades before the creation of a conventional department at the start of the 2000s, but their ability to concentrate expertise and develop research fields arguably acted at least as a partial substitute. Indeed, the bi-polar world of politics research that they created might be argued to have allowed different approaches to be developed side by side without the baronial battles and academic civil wars to which university departments are so commonly subject.

Whether the creation of a conventional department ninety years after the university's first formal academic appointment in 'politics' turned that bi-polar world into a tri-polar one, created a new hegemon, or made little difference is debatable and in part remains to be seen, insofar as the story is still unfolding. It might be argued that the creation of the department had more of a 'new hegemon' effect on Nuffield than on St Antony's, given the department's centrality in political science appointments and the fact that UK research funding (arguably more salient to Nuffield's traditional research profile than St Antony's) came to be channelled through the department rather than directly through the college. For St Antony's, on the other hand, it might be argued that it maintained its 'polar' status after the creation of the department, insofar as the college retained its two traditional strengths as a centre (or perhaps a loose grouping of multiple centres, in Whitehead's analysis) for interdisciplinary teaching and research, and as a world centre for the study of politics in countries which require a knowledge of languages other than English. While conventional academic departments of political science in both North America and the UK tended to reduce appointments of specialist scholars in such 'area studies' fields in recent decades, St Antony's has allowed Oxford to buck that trend. But if Laurence Whitehead's argument is correct, there may also be an important 'no difference' role for both of those colleges in the future as settings for 'creative marginality' for work across disciplinary and subdisciplinary boundaries that risks being crowded or frozen out as a result of the development of ever more bureaucratized, hierarchical, and project-focused political science departments and the intellectual monocultures such organizations can produce.

A second and related feature that could have had a countervailing effect on those other institutional elements is Oxford's position on the international academic 'trade routes', visited sooner or later by academics from around the world and thus exposed willy-nilly to ideas and trends in international political science, for example in leading to the pathbreaking Butler and Stokes study described by John Curtice in this volume. As we noted in the

introduction, if space had permitted, a whole chapter in this book could have been devoted to the impact of ideas and expertise contributed by academic 'birds of passage' to the development of the academic study of politics in Oxford.

Such countervailing institutional features may well account for some of the deviation between the observed outcome and that expected, at least on the assumptions about institutional theory with which we began. But it seems implausible to argue that they account for all of that deviation. After all, the development of subfields such as political theory and international relations rested heavily on a combination of undergraduate college tutors and other figures (such as the Montague Burton professors of International Relations and the Chichele professors of Social and Political Philosophy) who were not based in the graduate colleges.

### (b) Countervailing effects of individuals on institutions

A second, slightly more radical, possible way of reconciling the observations made in this volume with the trio of institutional features noted at the outset would be to argue that, while institutions matter, individual leadership or entrepreneurship also matters, and sometimes matters more. After all, it is frequently said of government bureaucracies that brilliant or dedicated individuals can compensate for otherwise dysfunctional rules or structures by devising 'workarounds',<sup>4</sup> and the same might well apply to academic organization. Individuals who are sufficiently able and determined can overcome the obstacles that would defeat lesser mortals.

Certainly there are examples in this book that could be used to support such an argument. Probably the most striking one is that given by Martin Ceadel, who shows how a creative alliance between a cohesive group of college tutors and a succession of outstanding professorial appointments in International Relations, sharing what he describes as 'Stakhanovite' work ethics and indefatigably working together to advance their subfield through close combat and 'committeemanship' within the university's labyrinthine structures, served to build the subject up in a way that was never achieved for 'war studies' and helped it to get ahead of Sociology in levels of resourcing.

But for the argument that able individuals overcame institutional disadvantages to be plausible in accounting for the discrepancy between what we observe and the trio of institutional features we began with, it would be necessary to show that Oxford consistently made better appointments than its counterparts in the UK and elsewhere with putatively more advantageous

<sup>4</sup> See for example D. Campbell, 'Public Managers in Integrated Services Collaboratives: What Works is Workarounds', *Public Administration Review*, 72 (2012), 721–30.

institutional features. We do not have the evidence on which to make such a comparative judgement, and it is not even clear what would be evidence. After all, along with many outstanding appointments, it is apparent from several of the chapters in this volume that some of Oxford's selection decisions over the period considered in this book were at best questionable and at worst, in the words of Hew Strachan, acts of collective insanity. For instance, whatever his other virtues (including that of helping to found the PPE degree that established the basis for further academic appointments in politics), it would be hard to argue that William Adams, the first holder of the Gladstone chair, was as intellectually distinguished as Graham Wallas or Ernest Barker, both of whom are said to have expressed interest in the job but failed to get it. Similarly, both Martin Ceadel's and Hew Strachan's chapter contain examples of some ill-judged and even disastrous appointments in International Relations and Military History—in the latter case Oxford managed to turn down or fail to pursue both Northcote Parkinson and Basil Liddell Hart for less intellectually distinguished figures. And if Iain McLean is correct to identify Duncan Black as by far the UK's most outstanding academic contributor to constitutional and institutional analysis in the twentieth century, Oxford signally failed until very late in the day even to spot the significance of that contribution, let alone to try to attract Black to its ranks.

Such examples must give us pause. But while these cases are striking, what we cannot say is whether Oxford made more or less than its share of outstandingly bad or outstandingly good appointments. Casual empiricism would suggest that it by no means had a monopoly on academic misjudgement, but we lack the evidence to go any further than that.

What can be said over the whole period is that the earlier pattern of practitioner-scholars reflected in the first two appointments to the Gladstone chair and of the teaching of politics by historians and philosophers came to be overwhelmingly supplanted by appointments of career academic specialists in politics, and the composition of the faculty changed in other ways too. In contrast to the United States or other countries, ethnic, racial, or linguistic politics have not hitherto been highly salient for either faculty or student composition in Oxford, either in political science or in the university more widely—there has been, for instance, no equivalent of the 1968 '*Leuven Vlaams*' movement that forced the former Catholic University of Leuven to split into Flemish and Walloon components. For students in Oxford generally, the most salient diversity politics issues over the past 150 years have been (in order) religion, gender, and social class (the first two involving the removal of legal or official 'bars', as noted in the introductory chapter, the latter typically represented in terms of the proportion of the student intake not coming from private fee-paying schools and not readily achieved through formal rule changes). But for Oxford faculty the most salient issues have tended to be the first two, and since 'politics' did not emerge as an academic subject until some

forty years after the religious bar was removed,<sup>5</sup> gender in practice has been the most salient diversity issue affecting the political science faculty.<sup>6</sup>

As was noted in the first chapter, the university moved over the century considered by this book from a 'separate but equal' approach of having separate men's and women's colleges to the creation of Nuffield College as the first mixed-sex college in the mid-twentieth century (though Nuffield was heavily male-dominated in practice<sup>7</sup>) and the eventual spread of that model across the whole university system. The number and proportion of female faculty members in politics grew over that period, and indeed one of the university's first female professors was Agnes Headlam-Morley, elected to the Montague Burton Chair of International Relations in 1948 (though, as Martin Ceadel's chapter explains, she could not become a fellow of Balliol College at that time, because it was still men only). Indeed, up until the point when the former men's colleges started to admit women (a process begun by five of those colleges in 1974 and completed only in 1984, as noted in the introduction), women could not be appointed to the overwhelming majority of teaching positions in politics, because those positions were in men's colleges. Even in the women's colleges, dedicated teaching positions in politics were slow in coming, because the women's colleges tended to be relatively poor and therefore had to make do for longer with politics teaching being provided by faculty from other disciplines such as history and philosophy.

Putting the picture into numbers is hard to do with precision, partly because the university's complex structure over the period has included so many different categories of teaching and research positions, by no means all of which appeared in the university's calendar, the main central record of academic appointments, and partly because the boundary between 'politics' and other academic specialisms (such as area studies and history) has always

<sup>5</sup> Religious tests involving subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England were required on matriculation and graduation at Oxford until 1854, and colleges were able to apply religious tests for teaching appointments until the passage of the Universities Tests Act in 1871.

<sup>6</sup> Gender has also arguably been more politically salient in Oxford's diversity politics than other kinds of diversity issues, such as sexual orientation, disability, and age (though the latter may become more important in the future with the university's retention of stipulated retirement ages in 2011 following the introduction of regulations in that year phasing out default retirement ages except when specifically justified by employers).

<sup>7</sup> Nuffield had one female fellow (Marjory Perham) at the outset; in 1972 it still only had one female fellow (the sociologist Jean Floud); in 1992 it had two female fellows in total and that number had only risen to three (of which two were politics fellows) out of forty or so in 2012. The causes of Nuffield's failure to appoint more women fellows are hard to establish with certainty. One possibility is that the mix of subjects that constituted Nuffield's specialism were heavily male-dominated; another is that consciousness of gender issues was slow to develop even in colleges dedicated to the social sciences. It is instructive to note that as late as 1986, Norman Chester in a history of the faculty virtually ignored women and used the phrase 'PPE men': Sir N. Chester, *Economics, Politics, Social Studies in Oxford 1900–85* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1986), 175.

been fuzzy, particularly but not only in the earlier period when much politics teaching was done by people from other disciplines.

Accordingly, we can only give some indicative numbers, and Table 14.1 indicates three sets of numbers, namely (a) those who were listed in the university's calendar as having a specialism in politics or IR and who had the title of professor or reader (a category greatly expanded at the end of the period as a result of increasing numbers of those with professorial titles but not established 'statutory' chairs); (b) those who were listed in the university's calendar as university appointments with a specialism in politics, government, or international relations (a categorization that under-represents those teaching politics from a base in other disciplines in the earlier years); and

**Table 14.1.** Some indicative numbers of faculty, selected years<sup>8</sup>

	1920	1932	1952	1972	1992	2012
A. Professors and readers Staff listed in calendar with IR or politics specialism and with title of Professor or Reader	1	2	3	4	15	32
Female	0	0	1	0	0	9
'Statutory' positions	1	2	3	4	5	6
Female	0	0	1	0	0	1
B. Other politics teaching staff listed in calendar as university teachers with IR or politics specialism	0 <sup>9</sup>	3 <sup>10</sup>	14 <sup>11</sup>	36	31	34
Female	0	2	2	3	4	9
C. Politics or IR fellows at Nuffield and St Antony's Colleges not listed under A or B above	n/a	n/a	3	2 <sup>12</sup>	8	2
Female	n/a	n/a	0	0	2	0

Source: Numbers derived from Oxford University Calendars 1920, 1932, 1952, 1972, 1992, 2012

<sup>8</sup> Classified by university staff listed in the university calendar as professors, readers, directors of research centres, university, faculty, CUF or special lecturers and fellows of Nuffield and St Antony's colleges whose title included 'politics', 'international relations', 'government', or 'Soviet institutions'. Excluded are emeritus professors, visiting professors, research officers, research lecturers, St Antony's research fellows, Nuffield junior research fellows, and college-only appointments in other colleges.

<sup>9</sup> At this time, as explained elsewhere, all politics tutorial teaching for the PPE degree was provided by tutors from other disciplinary bases.

<sup>10</sup> These numbers greatly understate the numbers teaching politics at this time, because the classification excludes figures such as John Fulton, David Keir, Ronald McCallum, Marjory Perham, and Francis Urquhart, who taught politics and in several cases later changed their job titles to reflect that, but whose appointment was formally to tutorships in subjects such as history or philosophy.

<sup>11</sup> These numbers also somewhat understate the numbers teaching politics at this time, given the basis of this classification, which excludes figures such as Jennifer Hart (elected 1952), who taught and wrote on politics but whose appointment was formally in modern history.

<sup>12</sup> These figures are estimated and may well understate the true numbers.



(c) those not listed under the second category who were college appointments in politics in the social science graduate colleges created at mid-century Nuffield and St Antony's (which excludes other college-only appointments in other colleges).

Even with all the imperfections of such numbers and all the hard-case categorization choices that lie behind them, the table tells its own story, showing a slow increase in female faculty appointments, but also showing that female faculty remained at the end of the period in a minority of both professors/readers and of all (university) teaching staff, in sharp contrast to the eventual gender composition of the politics student body.<sup>13</sup>

### (c) Questioning 'best-practice' assumptions about institutional design

A third and still more radical modification to the institutional assumptions with which we began would be to conclude that 'one best way' propositions about institutional design (in this case for optimum academic performance) are no more robust today than they were seventy-odd years ago when Nobel laureate Herbert Simon<sup>14</sup> comprehensively demolished the then ruling propositions about good organizational design. What Simon showed then was that for almost every received and plausible proposition about what constitutes good administrative design (for instance, 'keep hierarchies relatively "flat" by limiting the number of levels in the structure, thus keeping to a minimum the number of levels through which any matter must pass before being acted upon') there could be found an equally plausible contradictory proposition (for instance, 'limit the number of people supervised by any one individual, to ensure supervision is effective'). That meant, according to Simon, that those received design principles were like proverbs, not so much in the sense that they were pithy and memorable—much writing about institutions and administration, then and now, tends to be anything but—as in the sense that they tended to come in contradictory pairs, such as 'look before you leap' and '[s]he who hesitates is lost', or 'if it ain't broke don't fix it' and 'a stitch in time saves nine'.

As one of only two or three Nobel laureates in the whole history of political science, Simon's ideas merit some attention, and indeed they led to a whole generation of so-called 'contingency theory' research in organizational studies, aimed at trying to find out (but arguably still not definitively establishing)

<sup>13</sup> A review of faculty appointed in politics from ethnic minorities would also show a pattern of under-representation relative to the make-up of the student body.

<sup>14</sup> H. A. Simon, 'The Proverbs of Administration', *Public Administration Review*, 6 (1946), 53–67.

when one design proverb works better than another in terms of organizational performance. But Simon is not the only, and certainly he is not the most recent, scholar to have made the point that the emperor of received propositions about good organization is at least semi-naked. Equivalent and much more recent claims about ‘best practice’ in organizational design have come under similar fire from academic critics.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, cultural theorists such as the late Aaron Wildavsky (whose precepts for organizing an effective public policy graduate school are noted approvingly by Goodin in this volume) argued elsewhere that viable forms of organization are inherently plural and contradictory, reflecting different cultural biases.<sup>16</sup>

So could the same be said of propositions for good organization of political science itself, and might that explain the ‘Oxford discrepancy’ observed in this book? Let us briefly return for the last time to the three institutional propositions with which we began this book.

First, the idea that the recipe for academic development is one of tidily organized departments monopolizing control over their subjects (perhaps allied with a professoriate with the authority to shape research and teaching in their fields) can be challenged with the alternative precept that the key to creative development in science and technology is a messier multipolar matrix organization that emphasizes serendipitous contact as much as tight bonding among specialists, and which bears a closer resemblance to the architecture of the brain itself.<sup>17</sup> After all, a number of universities in the UK and elsewhere have moved towards ‘de-departmentalizing’ political science and brigading it with other subjects using that sort of argument (perhaps, it must be admitted, as a convenient cover for saving money); as indicated in the opening chapter, several universities emulated or invented their own version of Oxford’s PPE structure in undergraduate curricula and interdisciplinary organization; and there is an emerging concept of architecture for innovation in science and technology that aims literally to build serendipitous mixing rather than ‘like with like’ coupling in with the bricks.<sup>18</sup> If such messy structures are an alternative—perhaps in at least some circumstances superior—basis of

<sup>15</sup> For example, E. L. Wagner and S. Newell, “Best” for Whom? The Tension between “Best Practice” ERP Packages and Diverse Epistemic Cultures in a University Context’, *Journal of Strategic Information Systems*, 13 (2004), 305–8.

<sup>16</sup> See for instance M. Thompson, A. Wildavsky, and R. Ellis, *Cultural Theory* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1990); C. Hood, *The Art of the State* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998); M. Pepperday, ‘Way of Life Theory’, PhD thesis, University of Canberra, 2009; M. Verweij and M. Thompson, *Clumsy Solutions for a Complex World: Governance, Politics and Plural Perceptions* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

<sup>17</sup> See for instance, S. Beer, *Brain of the Firm: The Managerial Cybernetics of Organization* (London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1972); J. A. Scott Kelso, *Dynamic Patterns: The Self-Organization of Brain and Behavior* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995).

<sup>18</sup> T. G. Allen and G. Henn, *The Organization and Architecture of Innovation* (Oxford: Elsevier, 2007).

organization for scientific development, Oxford's 'spontaneous mess' may have helped as well as hindered. Laurence Whitehead in his contribution to this volume suggests that there are essentially three 'modes of production' applicable to intellectual development in political science, which could almost be summarized as communes (as with the graduate colleges Whitehead describes), hierarchical bureaucracies (departments), and more individualistic arrangements in which individuals compete in what Whitehead terms 'the market in political understanding' in numerous forums.<sup>19</sup> If, as he suggests, hybrids of these types can often extract the benefits and minimize the drawbacks of each of the pure types, the pattern that developed in Oxford may not be as anomalous as it might at first sight appear.

Second, the idea that the recipe for academic development, in social science anyway, is one of high relational distance from the relevant subject matter to give proper scope for analytic abstraction and critical perspective, can be challenged by the alternative precept that since the best ideas often come from close familiarity with problems thrown up by practice, low relational distance may often constitute a better route to true creativity. Many of the classics of political theory and constitutional design, as pointed out by Iain McLean in this volume, have not been produced in monkish isolation from the political world but by individuals who were engaged and 'networked' in the politics of their day. So perhaps there are at least some circumstances in which low relational distance has positive effects on intellectual creativity, and perhaps a mixture of high and low relational distance can sometimes have beneficial effects as well. If so, Oxford's position may not have been quite such a handicap as advocates of high, or at least higher, relational distance in political science might suggest.

Third, the idea that the key to intellectual development is one in which teaching is narrowly specialized and 'research-led' and talented research scientists are freed from teaching obligations at least in their early years, can be challenged by the claim that the best research in practice is often teaching-led. Such a claim would rest on the argument that it is in teaching, particularly of entry-level students, that the most fundamental questions in any subject tend to be posed, and imperial nakedness consequently exposed. Research divorced from teaching, this argument might go, often tends to be arid, producer-oriented, and less innovative, despite or perhaps because of the drive by governments or academic bureaucracies in the UK and elsewhere to more fully separate funding and organization of teaching and research in higher education, and the pressures on every university to claim that its

<sup>19</sup> Cultural theorists would expect a more detached, hermit-like style of production to constitute another viable form. See for instance, M. Douglas, *In the Active Voice* (London: Routledge, 1982), 183–254.

teaching is ‘research-led’ rather than that its research is ‘teaching-led’.<sup>20</sup> Again, if, contrary to this orthodoxy, teaching-led research can sometimes be a formula for highly productive intellectual innovation, Oxford’s development may have been helped as well as hindered by the importance it placed on interactive teaching.

So if we step away from the assumption that institutional research has reliably identified determinate one-best-way routes to disciplinary development, the ‘Oxford anomaly’ may be of rather wider significance than it might at first appear. Whether or not it could be feasibly copied elsewhere is an open question—institutional copying (or ‘mimetic isomorphism’, in the jargon of modern institutional theory) often turns out in practice to be a formula for mediocrity rather than genuine innovation.<sup>21</sup> But it may nevertheless have constituted a viable basis for disciplinary development at least for some of the subfields considered here over the period covered by this book.

## CONCLUSION

As we have already noted, Herbert Simon thought that the way to resolve the ‘contradictory certainties’ posed by alternative recipes for good organization was a programme of systematic comparative research across a range of organizations, designed to identify the particular circumstances most appropriate for each precept. Obviously that is one possible route to explaining and contextualizing the apparent ‘Oxford anomaly’, and it may be a productive area of future research.

Alternatively (or additionally) it may be that the complex institutional/cultural context in which the academic study of politics developed in Oxford may be a critical case for those who see ‘messy’ or ‘clumsy’ institutions—that involve multiple cultural biases—as something other than an obvious case for rationalization and tidying up. From that perspective too, the ‘Oxford anomaly’ may be a case of central importance rather than a quaint exception to the normal rules of institutional life.

But all that begs the more fundamental question of who sees what as ‘development’ in the academic study of politics, and, as we noted earlier, the tensions comprised by the different ideal types laid out by Rodney Barker in this volume have certainly not been fully resolved. In his comparison of

<sup>20</sup> Indeed, contrary to this current UK orthodoxy, it is notable that elite US universities always require undergraduate instruction of their star faculty.

<sup>21</sup> H. G. Frederickson, ‘Easy Innovation and the Iron Cage: Best Practice, Benchmarking, Ranking, and the Management of Organizational Creativity.’ *Kettering Foundation Occasional Paper* (Dayton, OH: Kettering Foundation, 2003).

Oxford's early development of the academic study of politics with two other major British universities, Barker identified fundamental tensions in what or who political science is for—whether for citizens, administrators, political leaders or (as he noted in passing but did not characterize as a fourth ideal type) for other political science professors, while Whitehead in his chapter identified basic tensions in modes of production among markets, hierarchies, and clans or communes. Both of those sets of tensions are clearly evident in the academic study of politics in the second decade of the twenty-first century. They are shown for example in reactions against what is claimed to be excessive 'academicization' of political science by the creation of applied schools of government, as in Harvard's famous Kennedy School<sup>22</sup> and Oxford's more recent creation of its Blavatnik School of Government, which also represents a more 'instrumental' turn in postgraduate teaching in the subject. How those tensions play out in the future remains to be seen, but we do not expect them to go away.

<sup>22</sup> The Kennedy School, created in the 1960s, was intended to represent a less 'academicized' approach to the study of government than Harvard's previous Graduate School of Public Administration (dating from the 1930s) onto which it was grafted; but even then it seems to have attracted some criticisms of 'academic drift'. See for instance M. and K. Keller, *Making Harvard Modern: The Rise of America's University* (New York: Oxford University Press), 269–75.

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