The UK's turbulent relationship with Europe is already changing the UK political landscape. Martin Ince talks to Professor Anand Menon about how the result of the promised referendum on EU membership might affect the UK's role on the world stage.
GOING IT ALONE?

The UK’s turbulent relationship with Europe is already changing the UK political landscape. Martin Ince talks to Professor Anand Menon about how the result of the promised referendum on EU membership might affect the UK’s role on the world stage.
Amand Menon’s job as Professor of European Politics and Foreign Affairs at King’s College London might sound pretty topical. But in January 2014 the ESRC made his role even more newsworthy, appointing him research co-ordinator for its initiative on The UK in a Changing Europe.

The idea, he explains, is twofold: “We want to be sure that there is more good social science research in this area, including comparative work on the UK and other member states. And we want the fruits of that research – including the large amount of existing research knowledge – to be available to a wider audience, including policymakers, but also a wider audience of stakeholders and the interested public.”

Professor Menon insists that, despite the intensity of British debate on Europe, the UK is not unique in having a troubled relationship with the EU. He says: “Certainly the UK has always been uneasy about its membership of the EU. But other member states also have their doubts, even if they are not as long-running. The French, for instance, are becoming more ill-at-ease within the EU. They used to be confident in their ability to lead it, but they now realise that their influence is waning.” There are also more doubts about the EU than before in nations such as the Netherlands and Finland, not to mention some of the countries of the south that are suffering the worst impacts of the economic crisis.

Part of the reason for British wariness, he thinks, is that the UK has no “grand narrative” about the European Union. “For the original members, it was about avoiding a new European war. For the southern states (Greece, Portugal and Spain) it was about replacing dictatorship with democracy. For the eastern nations, it was about the end of communism and the ‘return to Europe’. For the UK, membership has always been about enhancing economic performance, which is not terribly stirring.” Menon points to Francois Hollande, President of France, referring to the EU in a speech on the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of World War I, using vocabulary about not taking peace for granted. British political parties are far less wedded to Europe as an ideal than their opposite numbers in continental Europe.

Indeed, Menon acknowledges that there are real debates to be had about the costs and benefits of EU membership. For some, the benefits far outweigh the costs. Others point out that there are, after all, other non-member states, such as Norway, Iceland and Switzerland. There are also interests that might benefit from exit. “If you run a small business, you might be more comfortable in a smaller, protected market. But if you are a multinational trading across Europe, you want as few barriers to trade as possible.” This is true across Europe, he points out. “France and Germany opposed the liberalisation of trade in services, partly to protect these sectors from foreign competition. But if countries such as France and Germany confront EU legislation they don’t like, they don’t regard this as an existential reason to oppose membership as a whole, which Britain tends to do.”

Equally, Menon points out, there is a need for an informed debate about the implications of membership for the UK’s international role. Britain would not become unimportant on the world stage. Professor Menon says: “We have a big economy, strong armed forces, and other assets such as a seat on the UN Security Council and a leading role in the Commonwealth. But a look at the Ukraine crisis of 2014 shows how the UK might lose influence if it left the EU. The US wants to talk to large economic players like the EU when it comes to discussions about sanctions. Equally, proponents of membership point to the advantages Britain gains in terms of influence in international trade negotiations from being part of the world’s largest single market.”

LEARNING TO LIKE THE EU

This raises the question of whether it is possible to have an EU that would satisfy UK public opinion. UKIP, of course, has eyes only for the exit. But Conservative opinion is more varied, thinks Menon. Some Tory MPs want to leave as urgently as UKIP does. Others are committed to continuing membership and yet others are open to

PREVIOUS PAGE

WILL THE UK LEAVE THE EU?

CLOSE ALLIES

THE UK WANTS TO TALK TO LARGE, COLLECTIVE ECONOMIC PLAYERS LIKE THE EU WHEN IT COMES TO DISCUSSIONS ABOUT SANCTIONS IN RESPONSE TO A CRISIS SUCH AS UKRAINE IN 2014
The UK would have to negotiate access to specific parts of the single market,” he says. “Having done so, it might not have a vote on the regulations that govern that market. Instead, and depending on the arrangements that could be worked out with the EU, it might have to take what it was given.” Britain would be in roughly the same position as Norway is now, tied to the EU but unable to influence it.

FAX TO THE FUTURE?

“This is what Norwegian officials call ‘fax democracy’,” says Menon. “You stand by the fax machine waiting to see what comes from Brussels, knowing you can’t do anything about it.”

Despite these issues, Menon thinks that the UK is likely to hold an in/out referendum on the EU at some point. A Labour win in the 2015 general election could postpone the vote beyond the Conservatives’ promised date of 2017. But it is impossible, he thinks, to imagine anyone becoming leader of the Conservative Party without promising a referendum.

But Menon is not inclined to speculate about the outcome of such a vote. He says: “A referendum is massively contingent on other events and any number of unpredictable events could impact upon the outcome. And trends in public opinion are hard to predict. Despite UKIP’s showing in the 2014 European Parliament elections, polling during 2014 suggests that British support for EU membership is actually increasing.”

Menon adds another intriguing detail of the current poll results. “A massive proportion of respondents say they would support continuing UK membership of the EU if the UK had renegotiated its terms of membership. However, no one yet seems totally clear about what such a renegotiation would consist of.”

“The important thing from our perspective,” he continues, “is that we need the debate in the UK to be as well informed as possible prior to any potential referendum. And it is here that social science has a particular role to play. There is already a lot of high-quality research being carried out in this area in UK higher education institutions. This new initiative will allow us to fund more such work in areas where there is a need for it, allowing for an informed evaluation of the advantages and disadvantages of membership. And, crucially, it will facilitate the effective dissemination of the findings of new and existing research to as wide an audience as possible. Social scientists have a duty to use their knowledge to inform these broader debates. I hope that this new ESRC initiative will provide an effective means for them to do so.”

www.esrc.ac.uk/europe

Martin Ince is principal of Martin Ince Communications. He is a freelance science writer, media adviser and media trainer.
AFTER THE MILITARY EVENTS IN UKRAINE, WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD FOR EU-RUSSIA RELATIONS?

THE EU AND RUSSIA have both undergone significant change since the collapse of the USSR. The EU has engaged in periodic enlargement incorporating some former Soviet republics while offering closer integration to others. Russia spent the first years coming to terms with its post-Soviet status, and then, with the election of President Putin in 2000, moved to asserting itself globally and in its ‘near abroad’.

These two developments now overlap – in Ukraine. The conclusion of the Association Agreement (basically integrating Ukraine into the EU single market) was deemed by Moscow to be treading on its territory. Indeed, such an agreement meant that Ukraine turned its back on Russia’s own integration project – the Eurasian Economic Union. In a project at the University of Birmingham we are tracing the rapid and unexpected rise of this new Eurasian regime, intrigued by Russia’s commitment to creating a Eurasian single market, modelled on the European version. As a result of these competing projects, Ukraine is now at the heart of a geopolitical tug-of-war.

This is no mere confrontation of alternative regimes of region-building. The invasion and annexation of Crimea by Russia in March 2014 represents the first territorial invasion on the European continent since the Second World War. The subsequent efforts of Moscow to split Ukraine by supporting separatism in Ukraine’s southeast was a determined effort by Moscow to block Ukraine’s westward drive. The shooting down of a Malaysian civilian airliner in July 2014 by – as is believed – pro-Russian separatists did little to hinder this effort.

Initially, Russia merely lent clandestine support to separatist forces – their belligerence was depicted by Moscow as a bottom-up, local rebellion; by the summer it was clear that Russian armed forces were directly involved. This ‘hybrid warfare’ blurred the boundaries between state-controlled regular armed forces and rogue local and mercenary forces.

BITTER RELATIONS
What does the future hold for the EU and Russia relations? It is clear that relations will not be the same in the foreseeable future. The European project has gained unexpected re-affirmation from Ukraine – never before have people died to foster closer ties with Europe. This places an obligation on the EU towards Ukraine, the contours of which are as yet unknown, although clearly involving some kind of opportunity for Ukraine to integrate into the European structures while stopping short of membership. The conflict has also given NATO a new sense of purpose. Russia, by invading a sovereign country, has sullied its international reputation, undermined its own geopolitical objectives and arguably ‘lost’ Ukraine for good: this is hugely symbolic as Russia’s very origins lie in Ukraine (the Kiev Rus).

In geopolitical terms, the conflict over Ukraine means that Russia will be pulled eastward, while Ukraine has decisively tilted westward. Indeed the conflict in and over Ukraine can be regarded as a second phase of the collapse of the USSR as two ‘brotherly’ nations part their ways.

The challenges that Ukraine represents for EU-Russia relations are therefore based on whether Russia is prepared to normalise ties with a country it regarded an intrinsic part of itself. There are few indications that normality will return any time soon. President Putin’s reference to ‘Novorossiya’ (a term used to depict the southeastern Ukraine as a discrete entity) suggests that he is aiming to create a frozen conflict in Ukraine along the lines of Transnistria in Moldova. Such a conflict would leave Ukraine with a region in which tensions can flare up at will, and which leaves the country vulnerable to territorial fragmentation and further incursions by Russia. All of this means that it is unlikely that EU-Russia relations will revert to the status quo ante in the foreseeable future.

KATARYNA WOLCZUK
Reader in Politics and International Relations at the University of Birmingham, Kataryna leads an ESRC-funded project: Russia’s export of Governance to the ‘shared neighbourhood’: Implications for the EU and Legal (In) Compatibilities.

www.birmingham.ac.uk/staff/profiles/government-society/wolczuk-kataryna.aspx
INEQUALITY
A CRY FOR HELP
How are the less fortunate being aided in Brazil, India, China and South Africa?

SINCE 2002, GOVERNMENTS in Brazil, India, China and South Africa (the ‘BRICS’) have intensified efforts to tackle poverty and inequality by creating new social programmes. These countries now have nearly half of humankind and influence the agendas of other governments in their regions and yet this trend has gone largely unnoticed in the austere West.

A research project at the School of Advanced Study, University of London, is analysing the trend. Four teams of single-country specialists have examined five poverty programmes in each of the four countries, and are now comparing them. Eighteen researchers (in those four countries and in Italy, Switzerland and Britain) are involved, looking at the thinking that inspired each programme, the political and policy processes at work in the formulation stage, implementation and impact.

The four governments took action for different reasons. In Brazil and India, they sought to win votes. In South Africa, the ruling African National Congress is assured (so far) of abundant votes and in China votes are not needed. In those two countries, governments mainly acted to ease discontents that have sparked ‘instability’ – sometimes violent appeals for justice in South African townships, and over 100,000 collective protests across China in 2012. China now spends more on internal security than on national defence. Social programmes can ease that problem. Different policies included: cash transfers; programmes to tackle malnutrition or health and education service delivery; and rights-based initiatives. There was success and disappointment, but remarkable achievements emerged too. For a long time, it appeared that only the Brazilians had succeeded in reducing inequality amid growth. But a recent survey in India found that since 2004, household incomes among the poorest have risen faster than among prosperous groups.

Brazil and India have demonstrated that mounting inequality is not inevitable. And in all four of our countries, efforts to tackle poverty and inequality have proved economically and politically feasible – and efficacious. They have produced tangible, non-trivial impacts and this provides some much needed context for the West’s pursuit of austerity and its assault on social protection.

DISEASE CONTROL
THE OTHER VICTIMS OF AIDS
Research is improving the lives of children in sub-Saharan Africa who have been affected by HIV/AIDS

THERE ARE 85 MILLION children living in Sub-Saharan Africa who have been orphaned by AIDS, or who are looked after by caregivers who have AIDS. Since 2005, two pioneering research studies have investigated the impacts of parental AIDS on children’s psychological, educational and sexual health. The research team, led by Dr Lucie Cluver from the University of Oxford, has collaborated with the South African government, non-governmental organisations and AIDS-affected children to design and disseminate the studies, which comprise the developing world’s first longitudinal study of AIDS-orphaned children and the world’s largest study of AIDS-affected children.

The team’s findings revealed a threefold increase in the risk of child abuse in AIDS-affected families. AIDS-orphaned children have higher levels of psychological disorders than other children, including those orphaned by homicide and suicide. The social damage caused by AIDS includes stigma, extreme poverty and bullying. The direct use of these studies by policymakers and practitioners in sub-Saharan Africa has contributed to combating the effects of AIDS on some of the world’s most vulnerable children.

The researchers identified specific interventions that could reduce the risks that children face and increase their resilience. These interventions have shaped national and international policies and are extensively cited in South African government and UNICEF policy documents. Due to the research findings, the South African National Action Plan for children affected by HIV/AIDS now includes a requirement for programmes to support young carers.

IMMEDIATE APPLICATIONS
Findings have also been directly used in training manuals for government health and community workers, for example the Department of Social Development’s training in psychosocial support for orphans and other children made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS. The team’s findings on child physical, sexual and emotional abuse and mental health have also been included in Save the Children’s programming for abuse prevention for AIDS-affected children and were instrumental in the child protection policy developed by UNICEF in 2013 and its policy decision that AIDS-affected children required targeted social provision.

And the team’s research is extensively cited in the US President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR)’s Guidance for Orphans and Vulnerable Children Programming (2012). The studies have been used to inform PEPFAR’s programming for South Africa in particular, and were an important contribution in their focus on promoting psychological support for HIV-positive adolescents.

www.spi.ox.ac.uk

The project was a UK/South Africa bilateral research grant funded by ESRC and the National Research Foundation, South Africa.

AIDS is an ongoing issue in Africa, but support for sufferers, particularly children, is growing.
WHERE NEXT FOR NATO?

NATO has long been the central institution of defence co-operation in the Western world. Professor Mark Webber looks at the future of the organisation

At the end of 2014, NATO’s 13-year mission in Afghanistan comes to an end. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) has been NATO’s longest and biggest operation to date; and its costliest. Between 2001 and 2014, the ISAF coalition suffered over 3,300 fatalities – 450 of them British. The termination of ISAF has been a long time coming. NATO decided at its Chicago summit in May 2012 to accelerate the handover of ISAF’s functions to the fledgling Afghan security forces and to leave behind only a small NATO follow-on force. To explore the meaning of this watershed, both for the alliance and for UK foreign policy, between November 2012 and May 2014 Dr Martin Smith (Royal Military Academy Sandhurst) and Dr Ellen Hallams (King’s College London) and I organised an ESRC Seminar Series on the theme of ‘NATO after Afghanistan’.

Our research was inspired by a paradox: NATO is the central institution of defence co-operation in the Western world and is absolutely critical to the security of all its European members. Even the US, by far the world’s pre-eminent military power, relies on NATO to an extraordinary degree (as the anti-al Qaeda and anti-Taliban mission in Afghanistan has clearly illustrated). Yet, for all this, NATO is constantly seen by both commentators and politicians to be in a state of crisis. The alliance is, on the one hand, resilient and adaptable, but on the other, confronted by problems that test it to the limit and, for some, indicate its demise.

To explore this paradox, our research had a number of academic starting points to hand. Institutionalist approaches could tell us why NATO as an organisation had remained robust for so long, what resources it could draw upon to adapt to altered circumstances, and why it has been able to launch and sustain missions as far apart as Kosovo, Afghanistan and the Gulf of Aden. The realist position offered a slightly different take. NATO, by this view, was highly dependent upon its leading power – the US – and so was seen as steering toward American strategic interests.

As US foreign policy has shifted its focus from Europe to the broader Middle East and the Asia-Pacific, so NATO has, in parallel, adopted a more global perspective. But an expansion of NATO’s geographic horizons has not been accompanied by any increase in resources. In fact, the opposite has occurred as virtually all the NATO allies (the UK included) have cut defence spending. NATO, in other words, has broadened its ambitions but not acquired the means to pursue them.

Cornerstone of defence

The purpose of our seminars was to see how well these academic approaches stood up in the face of NATO’s real-world policy dilemmas. Across five seminars – involving academics, think-tank specialists, government and NATO officials, as well as service personnel – we discussed, debated and argued over NATO’s future. While we expected at the outset to be fixed on NATO’s retreat from Afghanistan, our seminars were forced to take up the issue of Syria (where NATO has desisted from intervention) and, more recently, the implications of the Ukraine crisis (which has posed the question whether NATO should give priority to the defence of its Eastern allies).

One unambiguous conclusion of the talks stands out: NATO has staying power. In academic as much as in policy circles the narrative of a NATO in crisis tends to be exaggerated. In this light, the paradox of NATO seems to follow from two sources. First, because it has adapted so successfully since the end of the Cold War, NATO has become the victim of heightened expectations. Any major security problem that touches upon the interests of NATO’s members is deemed to be within the organisation’s purview even if (as the conflict in Syria amply shows) there is sometimes little political will to follow through. Second, NATO’s history, as well as its unique military, political and institutional assets, make it the natural choice for action in the absence of workable alternatives (the EU and the UN, for all their merits, still lack NATO’s experience of military co-ordination and deployability). Even when its assets are in decline, NATO’s virtues persist. Indeed, as individual allies cut defence spending, so the necessity of joint efforts increases. No surprise, therefore, that NATO remains an unquestioned cornerstone of UK defence as it moves toward the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review.

KEY EVENTS THAT HAVE SHAPED HISTORY AND NATO

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>The Washington Treaty is signed</td>
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<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>The Korean War increases fears of communist expansion</td>
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<td>1955</td>
<td>The Warsaw Pact is formed</td>
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<td>1956</td>
<td>The Suez crisis</td>
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<td>1959</td>
<td>Fidel Castro comes into power in Cuba</td>
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<td>1961</td>
<td>The erection of the Berlin Wall</td>
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<td>1962</td>
<td>The Cuban missile crisis</td>
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<td>1963</td>
<td>US President John F Kennedy is assassinated</td>
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<td>1964</td>
<td>US military intervention in Vietnam</td>
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<td>1969</td>
<td>The Prague Spring movement is crushed by the USSR</td>
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<td>1974</td>
<td>Oil price hike triggers global recession</td>
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<td>1985</td>
<td>Gorbachev initiates process of reform in the Soviet Union</td>
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Source: nato.int
The findings of our seminar series were published in article form in the summer of 2014, shortly before NATO met in summit format in Newport. The summit agenda was determined, in large part, by the Ukrainian crisis. But NATO still had to attend to the transition in Afghanistan, as well as long-term projects of defence integration, partnerships and how to address ‘new’ security challenges such as piracy and cyber attack. To avoid the problem of promising too much and delivering too little, NATO, we argued (and this remained relevant after the summit), needed to focus on its strengths: To reassure allies when threatened (hence, take robust measures to support the Baltic states in the face of possible Russian destabilisation); To continue to develop specialist shared resources, and co-ordinate more effectively national assets such that NATO retains the readiness to act; And to renew the alliance politically through a common commitment to its future.

This agenda – of reassurance, readiness and renewal – is modest and brings hard choices: NATO’s response to the crisis in Ukraine is to reassure allies, not come to the defence of Kiev (Ukraine is still not a NATO member); NATO is likely to have little role in the Asia-Pacific region; and NATO’s mission in Afghanistan, for all the sacrifice, is unlikely to be repeated.

www.chathamhouse.org/publication/repairing-nato’s-motors

Professor Mark Webber is Head of Government and Society, University of Birmingham
A MILLION VOICES have said that poverty is about more than income. The Multidimensional Poverty Peer Network, with representatives from nearly 30 governments and international institutions, in July 2014 recognised this by endorsing a multidimensional approach to poverty measurement and alleviation.

Where there is political realisation of the need to complement income with other measures, a poverty measure that relies solely on the $1.25/day indicator is likely to draw criticism. At the same time, crowding the anti-poverty agenda with competing indicators increases complexity and slows momentum. Instead, setting development goals requires an integrated multidimensional poverty measure to draw attention to the real deprivations experienced by poor people – and live in.

The work done at the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) recognises that no one indicator can capture the multiple aspects that constitute poverty and that for policy analysis it is essential to track the interconnected disadvantages experienced by poor people. ‘What will it take to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)?’ – a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

HOW POVERTY STRIKES

Only multiple indicators will draw attention to the real deprivations experienced by poor people

study of 50 countries – has echoed the need to address interconnected deprivations. The Alkire Foster method devised by OPHI is a key tool to capture these interconnections through multidimensional measurement of poverty. The method works from people up and captures both the percentage of people who are poor and the overlapping deprivations that each individual or household faces. The technique reveals which deprivations a poor person is experiencing simultaneously and thus helps inform more cost-effective, joined-up and better targeted poverty reduction policies.

One application of the measure has been the Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), an international measure of acute poverty for over 100 developing countries. It identifies overlapping deprivations at the household level across living standards, health, and education. The Global MPI for 2014 computed by the team at OPHI has shown that Nepal, Rwanda, Ghana and Tanzania had the largest absolute reductions in multidimensional poverty followed by Bangladesh, Cambodia and Bolivia. Strikingly, most of these countries have been classified as income poor or Low Income Countries (LICs) or Least Developed Countries (LDCs), yet they have been able to improve wellbeing for their populations. The findings suggest that income alone is not sufficient to track the deprivations that poor people face.

REVEALING MEASURES

The Global MPI’s use of the Alkire Foster method shows exactly how countries have been able to reduce poverty over time. When the research team had data available for countries over time they were able to see that Rwanda was able to reduce poverty by improvements in sanitation. Contrastingly Ghana reduced its MPI score by improving school attendance, while Tanzania made high improvements in both child mortality and sanitation and Uganda made great strides in improving the indicators on water and assets.

Measures such as the Global MPI created using the Alkire Foster technique are transparent: they can be broken down quickly and easily by region or by social group. For 2014 analyses conducted using the Global MPI showed that Benin reduced the MPI for only two out of the eight main ethnic groups in the country and the poorest ethnic group in the region, the Peulh, remained unaffected by the change in poverty that the nation recorded as a whole. Contrastingly Ghana cut poverty among all ethnic groups. In Kenya the poorest group, the Somali, had the biggest reduction in poverty, so Kenya could reduce inequality by reducing the poverty gap between the Somali and Kenya’s most well off group, the Kikuyu.

The Alkire Foster method has already been used by governments and agencies to create measures suited to national contexts and purposes. The government of Colombia has developed a measure based on this method to co-ordinate poverty reduction policies across ministries. Similarly, the state of Minas Gerais in Brazil has used the Alkire Foster method for integrated multi-sectoral interventions.

There is a clear recognition from different anti-poverty coalitions across that world that we need to end poverty as the poorest see it. Therefore we need to use a measure that highlights the set of the grave deprivations that affect poor people’s lives alongside a measure of income poverty. To tackle poverty effectively, we need to start measuring it effectively.

www.ophi.org.uk

By Dr Sabina Alkire, Dept of International Development, University of Oxford
THE REMOVAL OF PRESIDENT Morsi by the Egyptian Army following mass public protests against his rule raises profound questions about the democratic commitments of Egyptian citizens, the future of democracy in the country and the future of ‘electoral Islamism’.

Right after the parliamentary elections of 2011, a privately funded survey of citizens and political parties was conducted by Professor Stephen Whitefield (Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Oxford), Dr Mazen Hassan (Department of Political Science, Cairo University) and Dr Elisabeth Kendall, Pembroke College, University of Oxford.

The survey produced three results that have been put to the test by subsequent political developments. First, Egyptian public opinion appeared overwhelmingly supportive of electoral democracy as the best way of running the country. Second, differences between supporters of different parties in support for democracy were minimal. But a third feature of public opinion at that time illustrated clearly the nature of the country’s democratic crossroads, since the researchers found very strong levels of support for a ‘guardian army’ across the partisan divide.

DIVIDED OPINIONS

Clearly, Egyptian public opinion cannot hold on the lines of 2011. But in what direction is it breaking? From one angle, many Egyptians may have given up a belief in the very democratic principles they called for during the 2011 revolution. From a different angle, the several millions who took to the streets to call for Morsi to resign seemed to be supporting another view of democracy, not restricted by the formalities of elections, but directly applying the will of the people. The political dynamics in Egypt are clearly of great importance to the stability of the country and the Middle East as a whole, and whether Egyptians now support democracy – and what they mean when they do – is vital for our understanding of the country’s trajectory. This is the nub of the set of issues the researchers are now investigating.

Professor Whitefield led the 2013-15 ESRC Urgency Grant ‘Support for Democracy in Egypt: A Crucial Point for the Country, A Crucial Test Case for Comparative Politics’.

THE ‘BRICS’ WERE invented by economist Jim O’Neill to highlight the emergence of powerful new players in the world economy. At first there were four: Brazil, Russia, India and China. They became the ‘BRICS’ when South Africa was added in 2010. However we label them, these are large, growing economies that will increasingly challenge the established dominance of the West. But just as their economies have grown, so too the BRICS have become more unequal – China has the world’s second-largest number of billionaires, according to the annual survey carried out by Forbes magazine; Russia has its third-largest number. And incomes are distributed rather unequally compared with other countries and with the enforced egalitarianism of the recent past.

It is one of the oldest findings of political science that economic inequality of this kind is likely to be associated with political instability. Aristotle, for instance, pointed out in his Politics over 2,000 years ago that ‘when men are equal they are contented’. Will the same be true of the BRICS? As differentials widen, will their authoritarian leaderships be challenged? Or will they anticipate such pressures by a greater emphasis on redistribution and personal austerity?

Stephen White, Jane Duckett and Neil Munro at the University of Glasgow have been examining these issues as part of the ESRC’s Rising Powers programme, working with co-investigators in Australia (Ian McAllister of the ANU), and Russia (Olga Kryshtanovskaya and Mikhail Korostikov of the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences). As well as ‘hard’ data on incomes and living standards, a special effort has been made to capture the actor’s frame of reference: through national surveys, focus groups and elite interviews. The picture that emerges from evidence of this kind is complex. Differences have been widening, according to an interview conducted by the researchers in the Russian Presidential Administration earlier this summer. And they are already at a level that threatens to hold back economic growth. But there is no ‘ministry of equality’ that might take an overall view of these matters. And there is limited faith in traditional forms of redistribution, such as a more progressive income tax. In the long-term, governments hoping rising levels of education will improve levels of upward mobility. But will a discontented society be able to wait so long?

www.gla.ac.uk/schools/socialpolitical/research/politics/projects/risingpowers

\[ \text{Aristotle pointed out that ‘when men are equal they are contented’} \]
How Muslim political theory has reacted to the presence and absence of state authority

THE LINK BETWEEN ISLAM and violent terrorism is being continually reinforced by world events. Insurgent groups claiming Islam as their inspiration have gained immense international profile. These movements form only one part of the reformulation and reinterpretation of Islamic thought that has taken place in the past two centuries.

The Islamic Reformulations project aims to examine the variety of expressions of reform, both violent and non-violent, in modern Islamic thought. The project runs from 2012 to 2015 and is conducted by Professor Robert Gleave and Dr Mustafa Baig at the University of Exeter, and Dr Sarah Elbiary (until September 2013). It forms part of the Global Uncertainties programme of Research Councils UK (recently renamed Partnership for Conflict, Crime and Security Research).

The changing notions of the state power are particularly important. Governance and government took quite different forms in the past and pre-modern Islamic political thought reflects this context. The project is examining how Muslim political theory has reacted to the appearance of the state as the main locus of power in the 20th century, and then the breakdown of state authority in parts of the Muslim world. In the past, legitimate and illegitimate violence was always linked to actions by a legitimate government in Islamic thought. In the absence of a legitimate state, how do Islamic groups and their ideologues legitimise and delegitimise violence?

BRITISH MUSLIMS IN PUBLIC LIFE

The project will examine the main research topics through individual research, seminars, workshops and conferences. A major part of the project’s activities is to ensure that the project’s findings are communicated within academia and within non-academic contexts. For example, in 2013 and 2014 the project engaged in public meetings, jointly organised with Exeter Cathedral, to examine the place of religion in politics and society, and to better inform the public about the contribution of the British Muslim community to public life.

The project has sponsored a series of public art works by Muslims that explore how Muslim belief is expressed in the modern period, and organised music events in which music performed by Muslim artists provides the vehicle for theological and belief expression. Videos and reports from these events are available on the project website.

The main findings to date focus on the close relationship of legitimate power and legitimate violence, and how in Muslim thought, classical and modern, the absence of legitimate power is able to inspire quietist and activist political positions. The notion of legitimacy, and what counts as a legitimate form of power, comes before the notion of valid or invalid violent action. This is true for Muslim communities living in non-Muslim contexts (such as the UK and Western Europe), but also for Muslims living in Muslim-majority countries where the government is widely perceived as illegitimate. The project will continue into 2015, with academic publications and public events, including seminars on religious reformers and their influence on Islamic thought today.

www.islamicreformulations.net

LEGITIMACY
WHY ARE PRIVATE SECURITY COMPANIES BEING INCREASINGLY USED IN INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTIONS?

WHEN PRIVATE SECURITY companies are mentioned people tend to think of mercenaries. Companies such as Blackwater have given the industry a bad reputation but this has not stopped many countries from using private security firms in international interventions, such as in Iraq and Afghanistan. Even the United Nations (UN), NATO and the European Union are increasingly relying on private contractors for the provision of security services in international military operations. What has caused this development? And what is the impact on local populations?

My research project with international collaborator Professor Anna Leander from the Copenhagen Business School investigates the causes and consequences of the growing role of private security firms. Our research on the UN has so far shown that cost-efficiency and effectiveness are not the only or even the main explanations for the proliferation of these firms. It is rather that the UN’s approach to security in international interventions has changed. Historically the UN counted on the acceptance of all warring parties to ensure the security of its peacekeeping missions. Today the UN is increasingly operating in places where there is no stable peace to keep. Civilian and military staff deployed to these countries face considerable risks. Peacekeeping forces are often unwilling to delegate soldiers for guarding duties at UN bases and compounds. They consider the protection of UN personnel and facilities outside their military mandates. Also the soldiers loathe serving as guards because they have been trained for combat. Very few countries – such as Romania, Nepal, Fiji, Jordan and Morocco – take pride in volunteering military or police contingents to ensure the safety of UN missions. Private security firms have, therefore, become a fallback option for the UN.

CIVILIAN CASUALTIES

The discussions about private security firms in international interventions usually focus on questions of efficiency and control. Are private guards cheaper than soldiers? And to what degree are clients able to control security companies, in particular in conflict environments? The question about the impact of private security firms on local populations is too often disregarded. While our research identifies several potentially negative consequences, we’ve found that human rights abuses are an exception. More frequent are low levels of crime and corruption by security firms.

The most serious problem for civilian populations is the creation of local security industries. These enable ex-combatants and militias to continue operating in new, legal guises. Since the employment by private security firms is often well paid by local standards it can undermine international efforts to re-integrate former soldiers into the civilian economy. Private security firms also contribute to isolating international missions from local populations.

The UN’s policy of surrounding its compounds with high walls topped by barbed wire and protected by security guards has been described derogatorily as ‘bunkerisation’. It explains why some missions have failed to notice or help when civilians in surrounding areas have become targets of violence by rebel groups or militias.

None of these problems can be addressed by improved national and international regulation of the private security industry. If states and international organisations are serious about improving the security of civilians in international interventions, they must develop alternatives. The proposed UN Guard Force, a contingent of security guards delegated by member states, would be a good solution. So far, international support for the Guard Force has been limited. It is time that member states realise that security in international interventions is an important issue that cannot be left to contractors.

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Soldiers loathe serving as guards because they have been trained for combat
**INFOGRAPHIC: TIDY DESIGNS)**

**BRITAIN IN 2015**

**SOME KEY FACTS**

- Global military expenditure was $1,747 billion in 2013.
- Total military expenditure by the top 15 was $1,408 billion in 2013.
- Total spending fell by 1.9% between 2012 and 2013. This was the second consecutive year in which spending fell.
- Military spending fell in the West - North America, Western and Central Europe, and Oceania – but increased in all other regions.

**THE TOP 15**

- **US** $640b
- **China** $306m
- **Russia** $1,408b
- **Saudi Arabia** $1,293m
- **France** $61.2b
- **UK** $57.9b
- **Germany** $48.8b
- **Japan** $48.6b
- **India** $47.4b
- **South Korea** $33.9b
- **6.** **Italy** $32.7b
- **Brazil** $31.5b
- **Turkey** $19.1b
- **14.** **UAE2** $188b
- **15.** **Australia** $128b

The UK has fallen out of the top 5, to 6th place, probably for the first time since World War II.

Military spending by the US fell by 7.8%, to $640 billion. A large part of the fall can be attributed to the reduction in spending on overseas military operations.

Military spending increased elsewhere, with several countries doubling (or more) their military spending between 2004 and 2013. These countries are in all regions of the world apart from North America, Western and Central Europe, and Oceania. Reasons behind the increases include: strong economic growth; high oil or gas revenues; significant armed conflict or other violence.

**IRAQ**

Spending 2013: $7,896m
Increase since 2004: 284%

**KAZAKHSTAN**

Spending 2013: $2,799m
Increase since 2004: 248%

**GEORGIA**

Spending 2013: $443m
Increase since 2004: 230%

**GHANA**

Spending 2013: $230m
Increase since 2004: 137%

**AFGHANISTAN**

Spending 2013: $1,293m
Increase since 2004: 557%

Afghanistan had the world's highest increase in military expenditure in 2013 at 77% – a spending increase of 557% since 2004.

Much of the total of $1,293m was spent on salaries and wages for the national army as the country built its defence and security forces in preparation for the departure of other foreign forces at the end of 2014.

Hey Big Spender!

77%

Russia's military spending increased by 4.8%, and for the first time since 2003 it spent a bigger share of its GDP on the military than the US.

China's spending increased by 7.4%, representing a long-term policy of rising military spending in line with economic growth.

Saudi Arabia climbed from 7th (2012) to 4th, increasing military expenditure by 14%.


KEY: In real terms, = SIPRI estimate, b = billion; 3 grenades = where spending has trebled, 4 quadrupled, 5 quintupled (or more)