For many of you, the thought of further study after just spending three years slaving away at essays and revising for exams will seem anathema. I would nevertheless encourage you to give serious consideration to a postgraduate qualification.

If you wish to find work in the field of politics and international relations, a graduate degree can open doors that can sometimes be closed to BA students. A Masters degree won’t guarantee you your dream job. But it will equip you with the specialist skills and knowledge that provide a vital foundation to find work in a field that you are passionate about. It is, however, crucial that you choose the degree that is right for you. Masters study is demanding and is a significant financial investment, so choose your course wisely. Consider carefully the skills you want to strengthen during your Masters.

Postgraduate degrees in International Relations and Political Science vary widely in their focus: from more vocational policy and practitioner-focused degrees, to research-intensive degrees which prepare you for doctoral study.

Students can sometimes make the mistake of applying for a degree simply on the basis of the reputation of an institution, viewing the degree as a ‘brand’. Making your choice on the basis of ‘brand’ alone leaves you vulnerable to the risk of struggling and not doing yourself justice on the programme. The most important attributes to consider when choosing a course are the cognitive and transferable skill sets that the programme will deliver. It is also essential to consider the approach of academics at a department. If you are a Social Constructivist, you might have a frustrating time at a department dominated by Rational Choice theorists. Then again, arguments can be fun!

If you can, it would be wise to arrange to visit a couple of your preferred departments and talk to the postgraduate director. If you prepare properly for the meeting and ask searching questions about the programme, you can significantly improve your chances of a successful application.

Hopefully, you attended the session I held on postgraduate study; if not, do come and see me in my office hours. Also, look out for our adverts for a number of bursaries for our MA programmes at the School of Politics - we encourage you to apply!
Getting Your Message Across

Over the past six months or so, I've become a bit of a social media cheer-leader. I've dusted down the Twitter account I set up a couple of years ago, post regularly on a couple of blogs on different aspects of my research and I even roam around Facebook from time-to-time, posting on current topics.

What's the point? Wouldn't it just be simpler if I only talked to my students in class and to my peers in journal articles? Actually, no it wouldn't. Social media offers a great way to complement those more traditional avenues of communication.

Firstly, it lets me speak to the moment. One of my research interests is the European Union, an organisation that's been going through more than its fair share of activity over the past couple of years. Events such as European Council meetings or national debates all move at the wrong speed for timely capture in research publications, or even for classes (European politicians seem to like late-night meetings for some reason: students are less keen).

Secondly, it's interactive. There's real scope for getting feedback on your thoughts, in a way that's often very difficult otherwise. Academics online are still quite rare, so I've been able to push into new communities of political practitioners and media commentators in a way that wouldn't have been possible before.

Thirdly, it actually strengthens the traditional pathways. I can take back fresh ideas and developments to students and I can strengthen the evidence base for my research publications. Social media let me try out ideas at an early stage, before taking them into the more constrained world of peer review. I've got students following me, so they don't even have to wait until class.

Finally, it's enjoyable. This may just be a passing thing, but knowing that I only have a couple of sentences in which to make my point, or 300 words when I blog, lets me just focus in on the subject. A fresh thought can be translated to output within seconds.

So if you've not tried, then come and have a go: I'll read yours, if you read mine!

twitter: @Usberwood; Politics @ Surrey Blog (www.uniof­surreyblogs.org.uk/politics)/
Active Learning in Political Science (https://activelearnings.wordpress.com/)

DR SIMON USHERWOOD

School of Politics, University of Surrey: a Source of Inspiration

Coming to university does not only mean having a student identity, going to lectures, taking exams and going to the club. Since I came here at the end of September I have realised that there is much more than this to university life. Attending the lectures of International Politics, I have learnt not only theories and what thinkers have argued about this or that event or about this or that international organisation, about wars or decolonisation. I have learnt how to deal with people, how to be diplomatic and above all I have learnt how to be strong and to survive. Since I came here I started seeing that not everything must be necessarily black or white and that life is lived in a myriad of colours. I do not deny that it can be hard, especially at the beginning, but soon I realised that easy things won't make me grow up and that since moment my life has changed, and my mind too.

Furthermore, at the University of Surrey I have encountered inestimable treasures. These treasures derive from my conversations with people from all over the world. Only through dialogue, with other foreign students, could I get to know faraway cultures. There is no better place than the University of Surrey for meeting a high number of international students. What's more, in the School of Politics I have got to know incredible people: my lecturers. Since I came here they have inspired me every day – by their personalities and their knowledge. I know that they will be by my side when I am in need and they will advise me when in trouble, as they have done so far. I will never forget what they have done for me. I hope that one day I will be like them and I will be a source of inspiration for younger people as well. Moreover, from them I have learnt how to help others and there is no better satisfaction than helping someone who asks for advice.

I want this article to be an invitation for all the people who have the desire of undertaking this marvellous experience to pursue their dreams as I did. To these people I would like to say to go ahead, to believe in themselves. Please do not surrender. One day you will be rewarded: there is no better reward than getting good results for working hard, no matter how dark some days may seem.

(Ed's Note: In my experience, students get out of university life what they put in - so while we'd love to take the credit – it's really all about you!)

MATTEO CORTI
POLITICS LEVEL 1 UG

Putin’s Foreign Policy 2012 +

Following on from the Russian presidential elections, which have returned Putin to power for an official third term as President, one of the big questions that is preoccupying western policy-makers is, what will Putin’s foreign policy look like now? It is striking how often in the immediate aftermath of the elections, it has been the Reset that has been scrutinised. In one breath Putin is criticised, in another, he is implicitly complimented. After all, if his primary foreign policy ambition is to be a great power, the fact that the USA remains so very concerned about the future of the relationship suggests that Putin has succeeded in this ambition – quite a coup for a state that has endured (understandably) so much criticism in recent years. Given Putin’s very recent statements on foreign policy and his electioneering discourse, the USA is in for a difficult time. We can argue about the reasons, say, for instance, that Putin talks about a threat from the USA (and NATO) to distract from what is happening at home. But let’s not forget that foreign policy is not made first or foremost in the international arena, it is made at home. Putin has interested parties to whom he must make some concessions. The USA can take what Putin throws at it, without it much affecting US interests. It would be far more worrying if Putin were to adopt an anti-EU tone, far too much is at stake there for far too many states, including Russia. Syria is worrying, of course, but for all those who still think of Russian foreign policy as unpredictable, on the question of intervention it is very predictable. It’s about time someone started taking Russia seriously on this and engaged them in meaningful dialogue. In broader terms, most will be watching closely what happens in respect of WTO membership. This is the issue most often invoked in conversations with policy-makers about the future of economic and trade relations with Russia. If Russia does not join the WTO, it will be difficult to remain optimistic about the West’s ability to engage Russia in anything at all.

So what should the West do? Firstly, continue to raise issues related to rule of law and human rights. For those fighting to improve conditions in Russia, such rhetoric will be vital. Connected to that, we have to be more careful about our discourse in respect of Russia. Putin is successful in casting the West as the enemy at least partly because so much of what we say about Russia is cast in such negative terms. We need to distinguish far more between Russia/Russians and Russian politicians/elites. Secondly, continue to develop trading relations with Russia and to encourage people-to-people contacts. The protests during and since December 2011 are vindication of the long-term approach taken by some states in the West, notably the UK. Intergovernmental relations are important but they are not everything. Exchange must continue to take place on a range of levels and in even the smallest degree of intensity. Putin may talk of this as intervention. It really doesn’t matter. We live in an interconnected and interdependent world and Putin knows that as well as anyone else. An isolated Russia is not an option for anyone.

DR MAXINE DAVID
Political and Civic Participation

2nd International Multidisciplinary Conference organised by the PIDOP Consortium in collaboration with the Centre for Research on Nationalism, Ethnicity and Multiculturalism (CRONEM), University of Surrey, UK

16 - 17 APRIL 2012, UNIVERSITY OF SURREY

The PIDOP project, led by the University of Surrey, is investigating the factors which facilitate and impede civic and political participation among young people, women, ethnic minorities and migrants. The 3 year project is funded by the European Commission under FP7 (€1,500,000), and is running from May 2009 until April 2012. The project is unique in drawing on a large number of social science disciplines including Politics, Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology, Social Policy and Education, and in studying citizen participation by members of 27 different ethnic groups living in 9 national locations across Europe – Belgium, Czech Republic, England, Germany, Italy, Northern Ireland, Portugal, Sweden and Turkey. The project is formulating a series of detailed policy recommendations for the European Commission, concerning the steps that may be taken by the Commission itself and by national governments to enhance levels of civic and political participation by citizens.

One highly successful conference was organised by the PIDOP consortium in Bologna, Italy, in 2011. A second conference will be held at the University of Surrey on 16-17th April 2012. This will be followed by a more focused briefing meeting specifically for policymakers at the European Commission in Brussels on 24th April 2012.

For further information about the project, please visit the project website at: http://www.fahs.surrey.ac.uk/pidop/

Confirmed speakers:

Professor Judith Torney-Purta, Professor of Human Development at the University of Maryland at College Park, USA
"European Young People’s Civic Engagement in Cross National Perspective: Developmental Roots and Futures"

Professor Bert Klandermans, Professor in Applied Social Psychology at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, The Netherlands
"Contextualizing Contestation: Movements, Organizers, and the Internet"

Conference page:
www.surrey.ac.uk/cronem/newsandevents/conferences/pidop_conference_2012.htm

Forthcoming CRONEM seminar:

25 APRIL, 15.30 – 17.00

"WHY DO NATIONS MATTER?"
The struggle for belonging and security in an uncertain world

DR MICHAEL SKEY, UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

Centre for Research on Nationalism, Ethnicity and Multiculturalism (CRONEM)

CRONEM’S 8TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Joint international multidisciplinary conference with Migration Research Unit (MRU) at University College London (UCL) and Roehampton University

"The Future of Multiculturalism: Structures, Integration Policies and Practices"

26 - 27 JUNE 2012, UNIVERSITY OF SURREY

Participants:

Professor Mary Hickman, Professor of Irish Studies and Sociology, London Metropolitan University
"Britishness, Social Cohesion and “Suspect Communities”"

Professor Ted Cantle CBE, Institute of Community Cohesion (iCoCo), Coventry University
"Interculturalism as a new narrative"

Professor Lord Bhikhu Parekh, University of Westminster
The conference will also feature a high profile panel ‘The ‘Retreat’ of Multiculturalism?’ chaired by Professor Lord Bhikhu Parekh. This double panel explores whether, how and where multiculturalism has retreated, whether such a retreat precludes ‘multiculturalist advances’ and whether replacements for multiculturalism are necessarily different from it. The papers presented will be based on research either recently published or soon to be published.

Conference page:
www.surrey.ac.uk/cronem/newsandevents/conferences/cronem_annual_conference_2012.htm

Politics Month

Surrey students, staff and the public will attend a series of events aimed at showing why politics matters as part of Politics Month in March. The events, with a topical focus on international intervention, seek to showcase the research of the School of Politics and its applicability to real life. Politics Month began with Professor Marie Breen-Smyth’s inaugural lecture on International Women’s Day. “When the Past is Present: the Casualty, the Body and Politics,” which took a gendered examination of the human cost of war and was introduced by Lord Alderdice. A roundtable discussion on international intervention on March 21 will bring together a panel of academics and practitioners to examine “Can we stop the killing?”. Professor Sir Michael Aaronson, Professor David Chandler and Professor Paul Moorcraft discuss this sensitive subject which was given further saliency in the context of recent events in Syria. Politics month concludes on 27 March with a Sixth Form Conference entitled “Have we learnt the lessons from Afghanistan?”. See our website for further details.
The Polish Presidency as a Motor of CSDP: Stuck in First Gear or Full Steam Ahead?

What will we be expecting to see within CSDP in 2012? Much depended on the Polish Presidency’s success in getting through an agreement on a number of policies with implications for CSDP’s effectiveness and consequently the EU’s reputation as a security actor.

As the current and subsequent Presidencies are held by countries which do not have CSDP at the forefront of their agendas (Denmark, which has an opt-out on CSDP; and Cyprus in 2012 followed by Ireland and Lithuania in 2013), the Polish Presidency was the last chance to give CSDP the momentum it needed. Indeed the changes advocated by Poland’s Presidency Programme would ensure that CSDP was at least given the tools to progress in the absence of any genuine strategy concerning when, where and how the EU should use force. The Polish Presidency put forward plans to make the Battlegroups more flexible and thus more usable as well as pushing the pooling and sharing initiative to create more capabilities. It also advocated creating a standing civil-military HQ meaning that lessons learnt are not forgotten when each national HQ is disbanded at the end of every CSDP mission as well as improving EU-NATO relations and incorporating Eastern European countries into CSDP activities. Momentum was particularly important considering that the European Security Strategy could come up for discussion at the end of 2012/beginning of 2013 in the context of its 10 year anniversary in 2013. This would give the Member States another attempt to define a CSDP strategy and so to define the EU’s role in the world.

The Polish Presidency certainly had their work cut out, particularly considering that the UK was strongly against any form of standing military HQ. A number of conferences were organised including one I attended on how to transform the EU Battlegroups. Whilst the Polish Presidency openly sought input and placed CSDP high on their agenda, the fact that the Weimar+ Initiative (on the programme outlined above) included all the large and medium Member States with the exception of the UK underlined the perennial problem. What the Presidency could not do was solve all of CSDP’s problems – these are issues which are long-standing and complex. The Council Conclusions on CSDP (1 December) underlines where progress has been made and where more work needs to be done. Eleven areas for cooperation were endorsed by the EU Member States’ Defence Ministers under the pooling and sharing initiative. The first of these began in December 2011. In relation to the Battlegroups a number of areas were highlighted where further work is required and the Council invited the High Representative to present the results of the work strands identified in the first part of 2012. The EU-NATO partnership was strengthened again through Pooling and Sharing and Smart Defence/ Multinational Approaches initiatives. The Council also asked the High Representative to continue work on EU-NATO cooperation. Meanwhile cooperation with Eastern and Mediterranean countries will be further developed on an individual basis. The one area where no movement was seen was in relation to a Standing Military HQ. Instead existing institutions and procedures in this area will be reviewed and optimised. Additional to this were declarations on current operations (the extension of EUNAVFOR Somalia’s mandate), on potential new operations for a civilian CSDP mission with military expertise in Somalia and the Horn of Africa, as well as potential assistance in Libya.

The Polish Presidency has paved the way for developments in key areas of CSDP which continue into 2012. In this respect Poland has punched above its weight. It also highlights that step by step capability development and pragmatic cooperation with NATO and the EU’s neighbours is not an issue, as compared to the political/strategic dimension. This is clearly highlighted by the UK’s resistance to a permanent military HQ. So what score would I give the CSDP motor? The Polish Presidency can be credited for getting CSDP out of first gear. However fifth is some way off due to disagreements among the Member States concerning CSDP’s strategic direction. This indicates that the Polish Presidency’s success has exceeded what could realistically be expected of it. That in itself should highlight the continuing problem that the EU has concerning its credibility as a security actor.

Dr Laura Chappell
So What Do You Do Apart from Lecture?

What? You mean apart from the admin and all the evening and weekends spent doing research? You mean, am I a real non-lecturing person as well? A human? Well, sort of.

I run. I am a runner. I ‘enjoy’ running. These distinctions are important. The first is a reply to questions such as ‘what do you do to keep fit’ and ‘how do you spend your free time?’ The second is more ontological, foundational and existential. It answers questions such as ‘who are you?’ It is about the construction or adoption of a particular identity. The third is a bold claim, which I’m sure is or was true, but that has long since ceased to be the answer to the question ‘why?’ Now, I run because I am a runner. I run because I run. That’s not to say that I don’t enjoy running; it’s just not really the point or the raison d’être.

So why then would somebody get out of bed first thing on a Sunday morning to run twenty miles? In the snow?! Lots of reasons: I like to eat and I do want to keep fit. I grew up in the Norfolk countryside and running gets me outside, to places you wouldn’t otherwise access. I’ve got to know Bushy Park, Richmond Park and the Thames towpath very well. And these days I rarely run alone, so it’s very social. But now I run for less logical reasons. I run to see how far and how fast I can go, because of all of the benefits that training brings and drink it in”. The sky both exists and doesn’t exist. It has substance and at the same time doesn’t. And we merely accept the same sky as always. The clouds are mere guests in the sky that pass away and vanish, leaving behind the same sky. The sky both exists and doesn’t exist. It has substance and at the same time doesn’t. And we merely accept that vast expanse and drink it in”.

Running is also extremely primordial. We evolved to run; research has shown that you just need to re-awaken those genes that are so often ‘switched off’ through years or even generations of redundancy. The simplicity of tying up a pair of trainers and leaving the house to achieve something so basic to human nature is very appealing when faced with a society that is increasingly more complex and detached from such fundamental requirements.

Evolution is important not just because it has helped to make us good runners, but also because we may well have a moral duty to help produce healthy future generations. For decades, Darwinian evolution has maintained a stranglehold on evolutionary theory. Its mantra — that variation occurs randomly — is central to the story it tells about the development of a species. What if variation was at times less than entirely random? What if by running regularly and getting fitter you also benefited from a change in your genes that could be inherited by your offspring? What if a good runner was more likely to produce a good runner by virtue of their having run? Well, this isn’t as unlikely as it sounds. I’m certainly not a biologist, but I have always struggled to accept the timeframe in which evolutionary adaptations were supposed to occur. An understanding of ‘punctuated equilibria’ helped me to account for evolution’s temporality to a degree, but it is the work of Lamarck that I feel best accounts for periods of relative evolutionary stasis and rapid change.

I first read Lamarck as an undergraduate. I was encouraged to read him as a forgotten, incorrect and disproved forerunner to the revered and accurate Darwin. Recent insights in epigenetics, however, have shown that Lamarck might have been closer to the mark than we have long imagined. Genetics, inheritance and evolution are more complex and more closely related to behaviour and lifestyle than was previously assumed. It is why species are sometimes able to adapt and evolve relatively quickly when faced with new environmental conditions. It helps us, for example, to understand the survival of species following traumatic geological events. As for running, it means that your actions today may lead to genetic variations that can be inherited by future generations and lead to the adaptation of the human species. It means that decisions on whether or not to exercise in the face of an obesity epidemic have become questions about intergenerational justice. (See, this is about ‘politics’ after all!)

More selfishly perhaps, I also run because I can’t afford therapy (!) and running is excellent for your wellbeing. I am yet to find a more effective way of finding perspective and coping with stress. As many of you enter the final semester of your degrees, make sure you are still taking the time to do these non-academic things, stay healthy and achieve a balance. Running is very good at helping you to unwind from the high-level thought that academic study and indeed research require. Haruki Murakami has managed to articulate my inability to think in a sustained, academic way, whilst running. And it is an inability that can be very welcoming. “The thoughts that occur to me while running are like clouds in the sky. Clouds of all different sizes. They come and they go, while the sky remains the same sky as always. The clouds are mere guests in the sky that pass away and vanish, leaving behind the same sky. The sky both exists and doesn’t exist. It has substance and at the same time doesn’t. And we merely accept that vast expanse and drink it in”.

Currently I am in training for the London Marathon again. The training is quite intense. I am currently running over 40 miles a week. It means that when I go to conferences, I’m planning training runs. Since I do due to be in San Diego for the International Studies Association annual conference at the start of April, the ‘obvious’ question is ‘can I run to Mexico?’ I’ve looked, and it’s only seventeen miles to the border… This year, unlike previous marathons, I am no longer running with the aim of raising money for a charity. This time, I am running a marathon because I want to see how fast I can complete 26.2 miles, because of all of the benefits that training brings and because it is what I do, apart from lecture.

DR JACK HOLLAND

1 This is to do with activating and de-activating different genes in various combinations. It is not about changing the basic structure of your DNA. As I said, it is very likely that you have the potential to be a good runner because our ancestors were. Experiments have shown that you just need to re-activate that likely dormant gene with training.
Briefing Notes: Understanding the Greek Tragedy

WHAT IS HAPPENING IN GREECE?
The economy is collapsing. Society is also under great strain, as many people are becoming too poor to look after their families. Unemployment is now more than 20%. Many parents are taking their children to orphanages because they can no longer afford to feed them. The numbers of homeless people are growing day by day. Many of these are people who used to have good jobs and seemingly solid incomes before they lost everything in the recent crisis. Many observers are comparing this situation to the Great Depression of the 1920s/1930s.

WHY IS GREECE IN SUCH A MESS?
For three main reasons. First, the ongoing recession since 2008, which has caused economic hardship across the Western world. Second, as a result of the failures of successive Greek governments: for instance, there was too much tolerance of both tax evasion and corruption, ranging from the petty to the more serious, for too long. The gap between what Greek companies and the Greek state have borrowed and their ability to pay it back was exposed when the last government came to power, and made public the findings of their audit of the Greek public finances. Third, because the restructuring of the European economy that has been undertaken in the last 25 years, and which has accelerated since the introduction of the euro, has increased the gap between the core and the periphery of the European economy. As it is part of the single currency, Greece cannot devalue its currency, and economic orthodoxy holds that the only way it has to balance its books is to slash public spending to the bone.

WHAT IS THE EU DOING ABOUT IT?
Arguably, the EU is doing a lot. Particularly if you are in Germany, it will look this way: the EU has contributed billions of euro to a bail-out fund for Greece so that it can pay its debts. This money has all come from other member states, either via the EU’s bail-out fund, or indirectly via the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The great majority of this cash has come from Germany.

WHY ISN’T IT WORKING?
Because it’s not enough, and because it’s being spent on the wrong things. The money is largely being spent to pay off the interest on Greek debts. So the Greek government has no money to invest in anything that might help the economy grow. What’s more, the bail-out money comes with strings attached: public sector spending has to be slashed, which is adding to the unemployment figures and increases the need for welfare payments to citizens, and state assets have to be privatised, which means the state will get a one-off payment with which to pay off some debt, but lose assets against which it could borrow in the future. It’s a vicious circle.

SO WHY AREN’T THE EU AND THE IMF CHANGING TACTICS?
Because dominant economic thinking says what they are doing is right – despite the evidence. Very little has been done to challenge the prevailing so-called wisdom in economics – neoliberalism – despite the system-wide crisis of the last four years. These economic ideas have had what is called hegemony, or dominance, in policy-making circles since the 1980s and their grip is not yet lessening. This means that alternative proposals for getting ourselves out of the crisis – such as those derived from Keynesianism or other economic thinkers – find it hard to get traction. The reforms to EU policy – including the so-called fiscal union - that have been discussed for years now are still lost on the horizon, and even they are more a reflection of current thinking than a new departure.

AREN’T THERE POLITICAL FACTORS TOO, NOT JUST ECONOMIC ONES?
Absolutely. It is becoming almost impossible in the countries that are contributing most to the bail-out fund to argue that Greece needs to have even more help than it already receives. The spirit of cross-country solidarity seems to be on holiday; in return for their help, other countries are demanding savage reforms from Greece, and have even suggested that they might get certain Greek assets – even Greek territory – as collateral! For a real solution to the crisis, EU leaders will also have to take on the markets and make the private sector take far bigger losses than they have so far been willing to take.

SO WHAT’S GOING TO HAPPEN TO GREECE?
At the moment it’s very difficult to see a bright future in even the medium term, unless there’s a miracle. It’s becoming more and more likely that Greece will default on its debts, in either an ordered way (which means it would be negotiated and up-front), or a disorderly way (which would be chaotic). The general elections, currently expected in April, will indicate something about how the short-term future will unfold, but given the opinion polls just now it may well be that no government is capable of being formed after the election, even a coalition. Even if there is a stable new government, it almost definitely will be weak.

AND WHAT WILL THAT MEAN FOR THE REST OF US IN EUROPE?
A Greek tragedy could well become continental. It depends in part on how well the EU manages to contain other countries from the ‘contagion’ effect as and when Greece leaves the euro. If panic or speculation set in, the financial markets may well push countries like Portugal and Ireland into a similar fate as Greece. Even if the EU manages to build a firewall around Greece, the euro-zone will tremble, and the impact on the EU’s recovery from recession is bound to be harsh.

“Countering Hybrid Threats”
The School of Politics’ Prof Sir Mike Aaronson is also a Senior Adviser to NATO and has been working with them on the concept of “Countering Hybrid Threats”. Here he explains what this is all about.

When NATO leaders gather in Chicago in May for their 25th summit meeting since NATO was founded in 1949, one of the things they will be considering is how the Alliance should guard against new security challenges and emerging threats. To put this into context, before 9/11 no-one realised that weaknesses in the vetting arrangements for applicants for pilot training in the US, combined with lax security procedures for domestic flights from US airports, constituted a threat that would be exploited in devastating fashion by a shadowy adversary known as Al Qaeda.

In response to the changing nature of threats to its security NATO has developed the concept of “hybrid threats” to describe hostile activity that may occur in unexpected ways, carried out by actors whose existence may or may not be acknowledged or understood and who may employ a range of different tactics to achieve their objectives.

During the Cold War, the threat facing NATO could be expressed as the political intent of a highly visible enemy multiplied by that enemy’s capability, but contemporary threats are defined by the weaknesses in our own systems, which can be exploited by any number of potential adversaries. We may not even be sure that the enemy exists, but if we do not address our own vulnerabilities we are at risk. To guard against this we may need to adopt a completely different approach to our collective defence and security.

What might a hybrid threat look like today? Think of a radical group in a fragile state with a history of political violence, with a resolutely anti-Western political agenda and a track record of terrorist activities against domestic targets. Should that group decide to extend its reach to attack targets in the rich world, what methods might it employ? Perhaps a combination of illicit financial activities and some form of cyber attack plus threatened or actual acts of terrorism aimed at taking down critical infrastructure? And if so, would NATO, as a collective security organisation, be ready to defend against this threat, preferably by preventing it from crystallising in the first place?

NATO is generally thought of as a military alliance, but it is actually a political alliance with a military capability. Part of the answer for NATO is to recognise the importance of political action in securing collective security, and to use its considerable muscle not just militarily but by building stronger partnerships with non-NATO nations and regional security alliances such as the AU and ASEAN, as well as with non-military stakeholders in NATO countries such as multinational businesses and international organisations. Only by doing this will it be able to respond to the challenge posed by “hybrid threats” and help assure the safety of its citizens. It will be interesting to see whether NATO leaders can rise to this political challenge in Chicago.
“Hitting the Target?”
How New Capabilities Are Shaping Contemporary International Intervention

On 12/13 July the Centre for International Intervention (cii) will host a workshop, supported by the Institute of Advanced Studies (IAS), to examine the impact of new technological capabilities on approaches to international intervention. The workshop will involve academics from a wide range of disciplines both within Surrey and from universities from all over the world, as well as practitioners from government, the military, industry, and NGOs.

When we first proposed this topic to the IAS we were very conscious of the high profile in the media and in policy circles of the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (“drones”) to carry out targeted assassinations and other security-related objectives. This raises obvious questions of ethics and law as well as politics: have the frameworks for judging the ethical, legal, and political implications of such interventions kept pace with the dramatic pace of technological progress, or is the availability of the technology driving the decision-making process at the political level?

However, as we looked more closely at the subject we realised there was also a very important individual behavioural dimension. How do the particular characteristics of remote warfare impact on the operators of weapons systems, and is the conduct of war affected as a result? Inspiration for looking more closely at this area came from our colleague Lynn Millward Purvis from the School of Psychology, whose tragic death earlier this month we are all still trying to come to terms with. We shall honour Lynn’s memory by making sure this aspect is properly examined at the workshop.

We also intend to look more generically at the subject of technology itself, with the participation of colleagues from the Advanced Technology Institute at Surrey, as well as from the defence industry and the field of medicine. Key questions we will consider are: How can we anticipate the consequences of technological innovation and mitigate any harmful social consequences, particularly for those on the receiving end of international intervention? Is there a danger that we will be encouraged to intervene inappropriately simply because we have the technological means to do so? Can technology make intervention a safer rather than a more dangerous process?

From the perspective of international politics this is a massively important topic. As the Obama Administration tries to leave behind the naïve interventionism of the Bush era without exposing itself to charges of neglecting American security technological solutions seem increasingly favoured – whence the prominence of “drones”. How much have the lessons of previous interventions been learnt; to what extent will future policy be based on evidence rather than driven by perceived political necessity? There is sure to be an interesting debate when we bring people together for the workshop in July.

PROFESSOR SIR MICHAEL AARONSON