Institution: University of Bristol

Unit of Assessment: 21 - Politics and International Studies

a. Context

Impact has now become firmly embedded within our research and research strategy. Politics and International Relations (IR) at Bristol is driven by big ideas and pursued through rigorous empirical research: linking first class research to impact involves encouraging colleagues to think seriously about how their individual mediation of issues can add public value. As the impact agenda has grown, we have developed an infrastructure and research culture to match, such that all of our 28 academic staff members (part of a new School of Sociology, Politics and International Studies established in 2010) and increasing numbers of PGRs have been involved in impact and public engagement between 2008 and 2013. To promote impact, we aim for, and have achieved, stability in research strategy. We see this as vital to the expertise, reputation, and networks necessary for serious, sustained impact. Our **main impact-related research activities** are in critical security studies, gender and politics, and East Asian studies, but we have impact in all of our research areas.

The **main users** of our research in the UK have been the executive and legislative branches of government (e.g. Ministry of Defence [MoD]; Foreign and Commonwealth Office [FCO]; Department for International Development [DfID]; Speaker's Conference). Globally, the main users have been equivalent actors in other countries (e.g. Vietnamese government; AusAID; Irish Aid; Serbian Ministry of Defence), NGOs (e.g. Oxfam; Médecins Sans Frontières; Transparency International; Freedom House) and international organisations (e.g. World Bank; UN High Commissioner for Refugees; UN Development Programme; World Food Programme; North Atlantic Treaty Organisation [NATO] Partnership for Peace). Our users are also increasingly grassroots groups and networks and individuals in particular communities, as illustrated below. The print, digital, and electronic media locally, nationally and internationally, use our research to inform and attract audiences. Finally, our research is of interest to the general public.

The **main types of impact** our research have been stakeholder involvement in knowledge co-production (e.g. collaborative work between Herring, Weldes and Transparency Solutions in the Horn of Africa), reconceptualising and reforming political practice (e.g. in relation to the merging of security and development or the dynamics of governance reforms) and reframing policy (e.g. from civilian control to democratic control of armed forces). Other main impacts have been setting the operational agendas of institutions (e.g. security sector reform in the Balkans and beyond), raising awareness (e.g. on how to improve women's parliamentary representation), enhancing public understandings and influencing the shape and content of public debate.

b. Approach to impact

We have **five interlinked pathways to impact**: identifying potential impacts that could flow from our research; engaging stakeholders; disseminating research findings; support within the School for staff; and using wider university resources. Examples given in this section are mostly in addition to our case studies, illustrating the extent to which our impact activities extend right across Politics and IR.

1. Identifying potential impacts that could flow from our research: Our research addresses compelling contemporary political questions and provides conceptually, theoretically and empirically rigorous findings. We value applied and blue skies research equally. We recognise that the route to impact may be through immediate application of concrete recommendations to deal with specific problems or indirect and longer term critical reflection on the status quo.

2. Engaging stakeholders: We engage key stakeholders to ensure that our research is shaped by and is relevant to them by employing the following complementary approaches:

We involve stakeholders throughout the research process and develop long-term relations of trust and cooperation. Due to its approach to impact and knowledge co-production, the ESRC-funded Transforming Insecurity project (Herring PI, Weldes CI) has been described by the ESRC as 'genuinely transformative research at the frontiers of social science'. It is using online software and smartphones to facilitate collaboration. It has worked closely from the outset with individuals, groups and networks in the global stop street harassment movement, the global casualty recording practitioner network and unarmed neighbourhood watch groups in the Horn of Africa which have had major successes in preventing suicide bomb attacks. It has a senior practitioner as a core member of the research team: Ismail was nominated in 2012 as Foreign Minister of Somalia and National Security Adviser to the President of Somalia and is an adviser to NATO, the FCO and

MoD. It also works to connect grassroots groups with the highest levels of the Somali government. The project has the cooperation of the office of Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamoud.

We offer research-based reframing of issues that help those involved in policy processes understand issues and problems more deeply and therefore assist them to have a better grasp of what is and is not possible. Pelopidas' work on the concept of 'global nuclear vulnerability' is attracting interest that has snowballed: he has been invited to give evidence to the House of Commons Select Committee on Defence's inquiry into 'Deterrence in the 21st Century' and by the Swedish Radiation Safety Authority to run a two day workshop. Herring's ESRC-funded co-authored research which conceptualised the effect of the occupation of Iraq as the 'fragmentation' rather than collapse of political authority directly shaped the official 2009 US evaluation written by the US Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (http://bit.ly/16Hy4X9).

We seek to connect different types of stakeholder to enhance impact and demonstrate the central importance of social science within multidisciplinary projects. For example, Christie is part of a large EU FP7 multi-disciplinary consortium VUELCO project 2011-15 on volcanic event prediction and risk mitigation involving partnership with scientists, government and local communities in Mexico, Ecuador, the West Indies, Italy and Spain. His fieldwork has been vital to understanding why they live in volcanic risk zones and how they will respond to warnings.

3. Disseminating research findings: We have a comprehensive communication strategy designed to create routes to impact by facilitating dialogue and interaction with key users, with three core elements: face to face, online, and news media (online, print and broadcast).

We regard face to face interactions as indispensable. Staff run and target events involving practitioners as well as academics, with their concepts and findings presented in ways that show their practical implications. Higate's ESRC/AHRC-funded research 2009-12 on private military security contractors led to a major conference at the Royal United Services Institute in London in 2012: participants included private military security contractors (Control Risks/SCEG), UK government agencies (DfID, MoD, Department of Transport) and others (NATO, European Interagency Security Forum, RAND Corporation, US Congressional Research Service) (http://bit.ly/15Mj5cu). Politics/IR staff contributed to, and Michel was the director of, the University's Thinking Futures public engagement week in 2012. We will also be involved in this year's ESRC-sponsored Festival of Social Science for academics, practitioners and the public.

We work through online channels, including social media. Every large research project has dedicated space on the School website and bespoke branding is commissioned for multi-partner projects (e.g. www.transforming-insecurity.org). Our blogging strategy involves adding value by grounding posts in staff's own research findings, securing recognition as a regular blogger and contributing posts to key blogs e.g. staff post on Comment is Free; Huffington Post; PSA; LSE Impact of Social Sciences; LSE Politics and Policy; and PolicyBristol. Staff increasingly have their own Twitter feeds: Brooke has 1,261 followers for his political theory feed, for example.

Staff contribute frequently to the news media or have their research reported upon. We cover online, print, TV and radio, and we value local outlets as well as national and international ones in order to engage with the local Bristol community in which the University plays an important part. Staff appear often on BBC Radio Bristol as well as larger outlets (Flint *Guardian* online Global Development Network; E. Evans BBC1 Sunday Politics; Cini BBC1 Breakfast; Zhang BBC News 24; Higate ABC Radio Australia; Childs BBC Radio 4 You and Yours, Woman's Hour*.*

We also use less conventional ways of connecting to users. The Transforming Insecurity team is developing an ESRC-funded animation on effective use of nonviolent grassroots networks, while Tucker (with Brown) has an AHRC-funded REACT project 'Quipu: The Living Documentary' with Chaka Films to provide a voice for Peruvian indigenous women about their forced sterilization. They are enabling the women to create oral histories combining analogue and digital technologies.

4. School-level support for staff: The School has created the position of Impact Director (ID) and we have ensured that the academic in this role is senior, knowledgeable and committed. The current ID is Herring, PI on the Transforming Insecurity project. The School has mechanisms and resources to facilitate impact (resources posted online to the university's intranet; individual support and annual impact training for academic staff and PGRs; annual review of the impact of all staff; and review by the ID of all Pathways to Impact of funding applications).

5. Use of wider university resources: The University has identified impact as a key priority in its *Impact Action Plan 2011-15*. It incentivises impact activities with its Impact Development Fund (IDF) of up to £15,000 and via the Vice Chancellor's Impact Award. These

signal that impact will be valued, supported and rewarded. We use University resources as a springboard to secure much larger external resources for impact. The University, with the University of the West of England, has set up the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement. The University's own Centre for Public Engagement provides advice, including on pathways to impact. The University's Research and Enterprise Development (RED) team consists of more than 80 staff who help us develop research and impact. They provide vital online materials and are friendly, accessible and familiar. They visit us on site and provide frequent, extensive advice by phone and email. The University Research Institutes (Cabot and Elizabeth Blackwell) and the University's Institute for Advanced Study (IAS) provide seed funding. Edmunds is on the Steering Group of the Cabot Institute on living with environmental uncertainty (June 2012-). The University's PolicyBristol unit works to increase the impact of Faculty of Social Sciences and Law (FSSL) research and features our work (Childs; Herring; PGR Melrose).

c. Strategy and plans

Our core goal for 2014-20 is to increase the breadth of impact generated across our research. The success of these measures will be assessed and developed through an annual review of the School's *Impact Strategy*.

Embedding impact: Both individual and School level initiatives will ensure impact is not only taken seriously as an important additional aspect of Politics and IR research but becomes commonplace across the entire discipline. Existing annual research reviews with staff will identify impact potential and develop individually-tailored plans for its realisation; since September 2013 all staff have been required to input into the university's research information system their ongoing records of impact. As standard practice staff and PGRs will be expected to produce a briefing paper and social media post in relation to each of their academic publications. In 2014 the School will integrate impact into its quantitative workload equalisation model and impact achievements will be valued for academic promotion. During 2014 the School will institute comprehensive online and social media sharing facilities across its website in order to give a higher profile to our research findings and their political and policy implications. We will aim to shape impact agendas through innovations such as Herring's work on the concept of 'critical impact' (the subject of an ESRC-funded workshop In September 2013) and Childs' work with Campbell on the concept of 'feminist impact' (published in *Political Studies Review* in April 2013).

Supporting impact: Within the School setting, Research Centres, clusters and individuals with the highest level of engagement in impact activities will be tasked with providing support and knowledge and these will be integrated into our existing mentoring procedures. Expertise from the University's Centre for Public Engagement and RED team will provide information on pathways to impact and especially the opportunities offered through interdisciplinary collaboration. More specifically, training will be provided on developing and managing face to face and online collaboration with users using cutting edge methodologies, such as Teamwin (www.teamwin.com). Financial support for new impact initiatives is also available. Since September 2013 all staff have been allocated £1,000 annual research support including for impact activities. We will also make use of funds from the University's £100k ESRC Transformative Research fund, and from the £894k ESRC Impact Acceleration Account anticipated to be available within the University for social science research.

d. Relationship to case studies

The variety, reach and significance of the impacts in the case studies (on development and security, security sector reform, women's parliamentary representation in the UK and governance reform in Vietnam) reflects the diversity of Politics and IR at Bristol. They showcase our open, pluralistic and inclusive approach to developing impact (section a) that also informs our strategy and plans (section c). We prioritise allocating impact support to areas with evident impact potential, while recognising that valuable impact contributions originate from both conceptual and applied research. The case studies indicate the vitality and success of the five interlinked pathways to impact (section b) established over the current REF period to promote impact in a coherent way. Collectively, the impact cases demonstrate the very high value that we have always placed on research impact even before the existence of the REF, the support we offer to staff to achieve excellent research with high impact and our commitment to the strategic development of research impact in the future.