

Institution: University of Reading
Unit of Assessment: 21 Politics and International Studies
<p>a. Context</p> <p>The twin research themes of the Department of Politics and International Relations – ‘Applied Political Theory’ and ‘Conflict: Causes, Conduct, and Consequences’ – supply an excellent framework for facilitating impact. Each has an obvious ‘applied’ component; each cuts across traditional academic categories in such a way as to compel reflection about the ways in which ideas, particularly normative ideas, have shaped non-academic practices. The primary impact of much of the UoA’s research has been upon professional policymakers, who have been served by careful and disinterested work that has improved the standard of debate through improving the analysis of options, rather than through prescribing specific policies. Because of the unit’s commitment to the study of strategy (as something distinct from military history on the one hand and military technology/defence administration on the other), its largest and most distinctive group of beneficiaries has been security experts both in and out of uniform, within and beyond the UK. This impact has been magnified by influence upon military leaders and military educationalists. But the UoA has also benefited other groups, including British officials professionally concerned with state-building and post-conflict reconstruction (especially in the Department of Foreign Development and the Foreign Office), officials and politicians of the Houses of Parliament, and anyone concerned to grasp the nature of Al-Qaeda. In the case of comparative study of the implications of electoral systems, its work has performed a unique, and uniquely effective, service in bringing the findings of careful social-scientific research into a fundamental constitutional debate among a broader educated public.</p>
<p>b. Approach to impact</p> <p>The UoA’s general approach to research, of which its approach to impact is a natural extension, has been to promote integration of a wide range of specialised enquiries into two overarching cross-disciplinary themes. Its intellectual culture encourages reflection upon the implications of particular research projects and their findings both for academic work in other subdisciplinary fields and also for non-academic users. This intellectual emphasis has given rise to policies facilitating impact by maximising the extent of contact with those users. The governing principle has been that both the UoA as a whole and its individual members should foster those relationships enabling its research to enrich and shape analysis of practical dilemmas. In particular, substantial and intensifying effort has been devoted to serving defence professionals by fostering broader perspectives – informed by better history and better social science – upon a wide variety of current security problems.</p> <p>The mechanisms the UoA has employed have been founded on targeted recruitment of permanent staff and Visiting Professors in the context of commitment to the serious study of conflict. This commitment has been underpinned by a distinctive strength: the fact that four permanent members of staff not only undertake research within the field of strategic studies, but have direct experience of military planning (Gray) or military education (Heuser, Porter, and Sloan, who were recruited from the Bundeswehr University, the Defence Academy, Shrivenham and Britannia Naval College, Dartmouth respectively). All four see an intimate link between strategic understanding and a wide-ranging grasp of the comparative material afforded by the history of warfare. The Reading brand of strategy is thus shaped by a sympathy with, and knowledge of, professional concerns. The UoA’s programme for impact has built upon this strength. The outreach to professionals has been facilitated by the appointment of six Visiting Professors – including General Sir Rupert Smith, Air Vice Marshal Sir Brian Burridge, and Admiral of the Fleet Sir Jonathon Band – with broad experience at the highest level. Their involvement is a part of a deliberate policy of building a hub where theorists can meet professionals. As part of the unit’s commitment to this activity, a member of staff (Sloan) has been appointed to a formal post of Military Liaison (with teaching and administrative relief equivalent to 10% of workload).</p> <p>The appointment has borne fruit in a succession of theorist-practitioner workshops informed by a historical perspective. Sloan has acted as convenor of the Mackinder Forum, a group financially supported by the Ministry of Defence to act as a hub for discussion of geo-politics. He has also secured repeated grants (an aggregate of £37,000) from the General Dynamics Foundation to</p>

support three seminar series: 'Technology, Strategy and Warfare' (2009-10); 'The adequacy of fighting power' (2010-11); and 'British military campaigns since 1969: an audit of performance' (2011-13). These series have brought together senior military practitioners, the department's own Visiting Professors, and academics from Reading and elsewhere to consider strategic principles reflected in recent military practice. In February 2013, as part of the last of these series, the UoA convened a confidential workshop of ex-participants on the lessons of Operation Banner in Northern Ireland; this generated a report of policy recommendations that was passed on to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland at his own request. In May 2013, as part of the Liberal Way Programme, it hosted a one-day conference on 'The Idea of a National Security Strategy' that gathered together leading transatlantic scholars of security, military practitioners and public officials, including the Commander of US Central Command (CENTCOM) General James Mattis (who flew directly to Britain for the purpose). In June 2013, the UoA convened a discussion between Shadow Secretary of State Jim Murphy MP, military officers and academics.

These events have largely focused on the problems of command. But the approach has been both balanced and extended by giving support to activities directed towards **outreach to professional education** and by extension to the intellectual strengthening of Anglo-American military culture. The UoA has created a formal framework for interchange with military educationalists through the signing (in 2011) of a Memorandum of Understanding with the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst that sets out steps to bring together the institutions' intellectual cultures. Both Gray and Porter have played a part in US military education by publishing free downloadable monographs on American national security for the Strategic Studies Institute of the US Army War College. An outgrowth of concern for the Army's institutional culture (and a good illustration of the practical benefits of thorough intellectual integration) was the decision to grant seedcorn funding for a project studying 'The status of soldiers in society', now jointly supported by the ESRC and the Royal British Legion. This comparative project, which investigates the soldiers' own perception of attitudes towards them in Canada, the UK, and France, has a bearing on such pressing social problems as reintegration into civilian society, resilience to combat trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder and the ways in which society and government can assist military personnel post-deployment. The inaugural conference brought together a range of stakeholders including museums, veterans, and military health specialists as well as university researchers.

This large collective effort, involving the mobilisation of staff time and other resources, has been paralleled by efforts designed to facilitate impact by individuals. Impact considerations are now built into the UoA's provision for **staff training, career planning and progression**. Impact is now invariably discussed both in the annual Research Review with the UoA's Director of Research and also at the biennial Staff Development Reviews. As part of its commitment to communicating its work, the UoA encourages its members to play a disproportionately large part in the university's public lecture series: in the REF period, Zaum has lectured on 'Corruption in Fragile and Failed States', Cromartie on 'Human Rights', Heuser on 'Heroes' and Hellmich on 'Al-Qaeda'. All members of the UoA are supported in their engagement with lay audiences both through such mechanisms as teaching relief, research support, and funding for events and through tailored advice and training supplied, at the UoA's request, by a versatile Communications Office. In July 2012, for example, the Communications Office announced online Golub's interestingly counterintuitive findings about the relatively successful performance of small states and the UK in negotiations leading to the making of EU regulatory decisions. Encouragement of such activities has extended into academic areas not conventionally associated with impact. Among the political theorists, McKinnon has received teaching relief for work on Climate Change that has fed into the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change process, while Hyams won a place on a competitive three-day course run by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the Institute for Government on 'Engaging with Government'. Appearances in national media outlets supported by the Communications Office have included Sloan on Radio Four's *The Document* programme (July 2011: explaining the implications of his archival work on the 1916 Easter Rising), Renwick on a variety of current affairs programmes (in the campaign preceding the May 2011 Alternative Vote referendum), and Hellmich on *Start the Week* (February 2013: on Al-Qaeda and counter-terrorism). Impact considerations played a significant part in winning all three of these scholars promotion to Associate Professor.

c. Strategy and plans

The UoA's strategy and plans are a logical extension of its present approach to impact. Its principal objective is to sustain and to enhance its place as an independent centre for policy debate in which consideration of **practical security dilemmas** is integrated into broader projects in the intellectual context of historically informed comparative social science. The focus of this strategy will be mutually reinforcing activities that are designed as a collective platform for the impact that results from individual researches. In this connection, an emerging strength is the co-operation envisaged in the Memorandum of Understanding with Sandhurst: plans to be executed in 2013-14 include Reading staff involvement in Sandhurst training and research planning and the first Reading-Sandhurst public lecture. As this co-operation gradually intensifies, the UoA will acquire an increasingly important role in shaping the Sandhurst curriculum. The seminars supported by the General Dynamics Foundation will be developed further as a forum for independent-minded professional discussion and the new Ways of War Centre (see below) will supply the seedcorn funding for workshops on the concept of deterrence and on the current state of military ethics.

More generally, the strategy will strengthen the **incentives and opportunities** for the UoA's individual researchers to maximise the impact of their projects. All future probationary staff will receive media training. Colleagues with more developed impact-generating projects will benefit from targeted assistance. For example, Zaum has been granted administrative relief to facilitate work undertaken for Transparency International that will reinforce his status as an expert on corruption while usefully extending existing work on institution-building. Renwick has been granted a complete sabbatical to coincide with the Scottish independence referendum. Seedcorn funding has been set aside for Hellmich to organise events on Middle Eastern politics that capitalise on her status as an authority on Al-Qaeda. Persistence in the strategy will be guaranteed by favourable institutional structures. By securing the university's agreement to the establishment of two new Centres – Reading Ethics and Political Philosophy (REAPP), co-directed by McKinnon and reflecting her concern for the real-world application of normative ideas, and the Ways of War Centre (WOW), co-directed by Porter and Cromartie – the UoA has secured an institutional commitment to **institutional platforms for cross-disciplinary research involving a relationship with a lay audience**.

d. Relationship to case studies

The three case studies chosen are each good illustrations of the reciprocal relationship between the impact achieved by individual research and the structures and procedures that support it. All three have benefited from substantial teaching relief and from the stimulation that is offered by a supportive intellectual culture in which shared problems are addressed from inter- and cross-disciplinary perspectives. Professor Gray's formulation and defence of a general theory of strategy that is a crucial reference point for military thinkers has been facilitated by an academic context that guarantees regular contact with serving military officers; this impact in turn has encouraged further military links. Professor Zaum's research on the Political Economy of Corruption involves a concern both with the legitimacy of international political institutions (Applied Political Theory) and with the nuts and bolts of state-building (Conflict studies). Zaum's present intellectual programme, summarised in his title as 'Professor of Governance, Conflict and Security', was made possible by the UoA's encouragement to apply for and accept the fellowships that took him away from teaching and administrative duties, brought his specialised expertise into Whitehall, and gave him first-hand experience of relevant policymaking. Lastly, Dr Renwick's outstanding efforts in publicising the findings of his historically informed comparative research on constitutional reform, especially in the context of the 2011 Alternative Vote referendum, have been the culmination of a commitment to public education. This commitment has been supported by the UoA by means that have included media training, the creation of a blog (which Renwick edits), and the provision of research assistance. Each of the three case studies is thus a good example of the means by which an academic unit can facilitate the impact of rigorous research in shaping and developing extra-academic debates about a range of urgent practical problems.