

Leading at a time of uncertainty

Blavatnik School of Government
Annual Report 2025–26



As the world becomes more complex and uncertain, the need for public leaders who can collaborate, think critically, and remain open to change has never been greater.

Ngairé Woods

Dean, Blavatnik School of Government

A MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

Leading in a more uncertain world

In 2015, when we moved into our new building, there was a sense of cautious optimism about the world.

Major international agreements, like the Paris Climate Accord and the Sustainable Development Goals, reflected a shared belief that countries could work together to tackle common challenges. Although there were still conflicts and crises, there was a general confidence in international cooperation and in the idea that collective progress was possible.

A decade on, the world feels more complex and uncertain. Geopolitical tensions have grown. Trust in long-standing allies has eroded. Uncertainty has become a defining feature of the global landscape. Rapid technological change is reshaping economies, societies and even the nature of security itself as AI redefines modern warfare.

Against this backdrop, the School has been moving fast to deliver maximally impactful teaching, rigorous scholarship and effective public engagement.





The first thing they learn with us is to listen, understand, and collaborate with people whose experiences may be very different from their own.

RESEARCH THAT CONNECTS AND DELIVERS

Our research is astonishingly collaborative because that enables scholars to conduct world-class research in ways which have real-time impact.

For example, the **Climate Policy Hub** has some 70 law firms across the world working pro bono to help monitor countries' climate policies.

The **Programme for Cyber and Technology Policy** brings scholars, senior policymakers, and industry experts together to address cyber-security.

The **What Works Hub for Global Education** is building world-leading research with practical applications by working with grassroots organisations and governments.

The **Oxford Institute of Technology and Justice** is combining research with mobilised students, alumni, lawyers, tech specialists, policymakers and human rights experts to enhance access to justice.

The **Centre for the Study of African Economies (CSAE)** creates collaborations among economists, political scientists, and senior government officials to build better national strategies (see page 30).

The **Government Outcomes Lab** links local authorities, social investors, charities, and central government around its state-of-the-art data and research (see page 12).

The **Mind and Behaviour Research Group** reaches out across Oxford to bring together economists, psychiatrists and psychologists.

TEACHING FOR REAL-WORLD LEADERSHIP

Our teaching draws outstanding people into public leadership and strengthens their ability to work across differences. Our Master of Public Policy (MPP) now attracts the largest pool of applicants of any graduate programme at Oxford. Those who win places are from a wide range of backgrounds and countries, from military officers to human rights activists, from techies to health workers, central bankers to speechwriters, and from age 21 to age 50. Some are the first in their community to attend a university, others have benefited from world-class tertiary education. The first thing they learn with us is to listen, understand, and collaborate with people whose experiences may be very different from their own.

ENGAGING ACROSS DIFFERENCES

Increasing polarisation has made our job more difficult. We seek to expose students and public leaders to ideas and leaders from across the ideological spectrum and to build the confidence to engage with different viewpoints, as well as the curiosity to look for solutions in unexpected places. This is hard and getting harder. We have learned to double down on building trust among those who study with us as soon as they arrive in the School.

Alongside this, we place a strong emphasis on teaching that challenges and inspires, whether in degree teaching or in our work with senior public leaders either at the School or in-country. The time and energy our faculty invest in teaching is reflected in exceptional student feedback which continues to push us to do even better. In an era of AI,



we have had to innovate fast and furiously – and we have been working with some of the world's best teachers and tech companies to work this out.

Together, these elements shape a School that is outward-looking, practical, and focused on preparing leaders for an increasingly complex world, alongside world-class research to guide them.

As we reflect on how far we have come since 2015, we do so with a clear recognition that the challenges ahead will require not only expertise, but also collaboration, critical thinking and a sustained openness to change.



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A message from the Dean

GROWING IMPACT

Our alumni continue to demonstrate an outstanding commitment to improving public service. This last year Pablo Mira Hurtado (MPP 2022) was appointed Undersecretary of Human Rights in the new government of Chile, Mohamed Al Qadi (MPP 2014) was appointed Minister of Education and Knowledge in the United Arab Emirates and Keir Mather (MPP 2020) was appointed Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the UK Government's Department for Transport, making him the youngest UK junior minister appointed in modern times. Viktorya Aydynyan (MPP 2024) was appointed Head of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister of Armenia, Ibrahim Olari (MPP 2022) was appointed Permanent Representative of Syria to the United Nations, and Blaise Fasel (MPP 2021) was appointed Secretary General of Swiss Centre Party. These are just a few examples.

Our faculty is growing. **Christian Schuster** joined us this year as Professor of Management and Public Policy. Christian focuses on performance and management in the public sector, and is the co-founder of some of the world's leading government analytics initiatives, including the Global Survey of Public Servants, the Latin American Public Employment and Pay Indicators, the Survey of National Statistical Office Employees, and the Government Analytics Fellowship. He is already leading work with senior leaders in some of our partner countries.

Rebecca Kitteridge joined us this year as Professor of Practice in Public Policy, strengthening our ranks of experienced senior leaders. Rebecca previously served in a number of senior positions in the New Zealand public service, including as the Director-General of the New Zealand Security Intelligence

Service and, most recently, as the Deputy Public Service Commissioner. She is also an alumna of the School's Executive Public Leaders Programme.

We were delighted to welcome **Sri Mulyani Indrawati**, Indonesia's former Minister of Finance and a previous Managing Director and Chief Operating Officer at the World Bank, as a **World Leaders Fellow**, joining current Fellow Margrethe Vestager to take forward projects in the School, alongside the Distinguished Fellows who sit on our **World Leaders Circle** including former Prime Ministers Rishi Sunak and Jacinda Ardern.

We have been hosting five **Visiting Fellows** this year. Senior UK civil servant Jenny Bates was appointed as the fourth Heywood Fellow to develop a longer-term strategy for the UK within the changing global economic order. Elsie Addo Awadzi, the former Second Deputy Governor of the Bank of Ghana, was appointed as the inaugural Women in Public Leadership Fellow at the School. The Director-General of the Administrative Staff College of Nigeria, Funke Adepoju, joined us as the new Aig-Imoukhuede Foundation Visiting Fellow in 2025-26.

Sir Christian Turner, the UK Ambassador to the US, joined as a Visiting Public Leadership Fellow, and Jen Easterly, former Director of the US Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency and former Special Assistant to President Obama, joined the School as a Visiting Fellow of Practice with the Oxford Programme for Cyber and Technology Policy.

Ngair Woods



A FOUNDING LEGACY

I can't end without a word or two about **Sir Paul Collier**, Professor of Economics and Public Policy and a founding member of the School, who retires this year.

Over the course of his career, Paul has been driven by an aspiration to make economics better, richer, and more aligned with human possibilities. His work has shaped thinking on conflict, development, and neglected places, reaching audiences well beyond academia, including advising countries, governments and international organisations.

Paul helped every step along the way as a founding member to make this School a place for people, students, government and thinkers from all different disciplines. His love of the classroom, his sheer, unstoppable joy at teaching has shone through the years, and the thousands of students, researchers and academics who have passed through our doors are richer for having known him.

Master of Public Policy

As we navigate a more uncertain and fragmented world, the need for effective public leadership has never been greater.



141

Students

63

Countries

76%

Won full scholarships

11%

Won partial funding

The challenges we face – geopolitical instability, climate change, technological disruption, and inequality – are complex, fast-moving, and deeply interconnected. They cannot be addressed by technical expertise alone.

The Master of Public Policy (MPP) is designed to strengthen judgement, diplomacy, leadership, and collaboration, and is grounded in the view that these complex challenges require not only analytically robust solutions, but also the capability to build coalitions and translate ideas into action.

We deliver teaching of the highest quality, investing significant faculty time and energy into approaches and innovations that inspire, challenge, and motivate our students. The exceptional

feedback we receive for our teaching encourages us to keep raising the bar.

Our MPP has become one of the most competitive in its field, with almost 1,500 candidates competing for around 140 places. We receive applications from all academic disciplines and professional backgrounds and have welcomed students from 138 different countries since our first cohort in 2012.

This year 141 students from 63 countries arrived at the School, with the majority of students receiving funding: **76% won full scholarships and 11% with partial funding.** We are grateful to all those partners and funders who recognise the enormous value in supporting public leaders of the future to fulfil their potential.

OUR COHORT

Our 2025 MPP cohort includes:

- Indigenous Kichwa-Otavalo leader representing communities in treaty negotiations
- Our first UK special advisors and election candidates
- Palestinian project manager working across tech and education
- West Point-trained US military officers
- Kenyan conservationist mobilising 3,000+ people

One popular element of the MPP are our **Options Modules** that allow students to drill down into specific issues. The 18 modules on offer this year, taught by global experts in their field, include China and the world economy, war and global security, statecraft and cyberspace, and geopolitical competition in the digital domain.

Another innovation is our **Applied Policy Modules** – masterclasses which equip students with practical skills and professional knowledge used by policy practitioners. Designed for non-specialists, these short, intensive courses complement the core curriculum by focusing on real-world tools and applications.

One example, ‘How to Survive and Lead through a Crisis’, led by **Ciaran Martin** and **Rebecca Kitteridge**, gives students hands-on experience of managing high-pressure situations. Through case studies, practitioner insights, and simulations, students explore how crises are evolving and develop the skills to lead effectively in uncertain conditions. The module emphasises rapid decision-making, clear communication, and building resilience across individuals, teams, and institutions.



MSc and DPhil

We welcomed five new **MSc students** to the School, alongside eight new **DPhil students**, whose research topics include resilience against frontier AI systems, justice in military conduct and reducing gender-related barriers to education and labour market participation.

5

New MSc
Students

8

New DPhil
Students

WHO WE'RE LOOKING FOR

We're looking for individuals with curiosity, leadership potential and a drive to make a difference – people who take initiative, lift others up and turn ideas into action for the public good.

- outstanding individuals with a strong academic record and the analytical capacity to tackle complex, multi-dimensional issues

- people who can demonstrate that they really care about some of the world's most pressing policy problems and who are motivated to make a positive difference

- individuals who have stepped beyond expectations, partnering with others to make a real difference on issues they care about.

Ideas in action

Our world-leading research advances the understanding of critical areas ranging from economic development and governance to climate action, education, health, security and justice.

Expanding global insight

The work of the Oxford Climate Policy Hub, led by **Thomas Hale**, has expanded the area of research from three to six climate policy domains and increased coverage to 37 jurisdictions including the UAE, Egypt, Costa Rica, Colombia, Russia, Vietnam and the US. Supporting this work is a legal network now comprising over 60 leading global law firms.



The Oxford Institute for Ethics, Law and Armed Conflict, led by **Janina Dill**, has been producing applied research on democratic resilience and transnational justice targeting transatlantic policy debates. Janina also published new research on Ukrainian resistance to Russia and co-authored a report on Europe's nuclear future examining five deterrence options.

Roxana Radu, with Tsvetelina van Bentem, published new research on domestic and international approaches to combating ransomware as well as a paper on AI use in research.

The What Works Hub for Global Education, led by **Noam Angrist**, published a first-of-its-kind global analysis revealing massive returns from ensuring children can read by age 10. It concluded that universal foundational learning could deliver major long-term economic and social benefits worldwide.

Our Heywood Fellow **Jenny Bates** published her Fellowship paper, titled 'The Changing Global Economic Order' which proposes a refreshed UK strategy to address the changing global order.

Our newest faculty member **Christian Schuster** is working on a research project titled The Effect of Digital Leadership Training on Digital Transformation in Government: Field Experimental Evidence from Brazil. This research will provide governments worldwide with robust, empirical evidence on the effectiveness of digital leadership training as a tool for public sector reform, helping shape future investments in digital capacity-building.

Ideas in action

The Economic Policy Network, led by **Stefan Dercon**, has been working with the Office of the Prime Minister of Pakistan on economic reform. This has contributed to approved tariff reform, subsequently supported by the World Bank and the IMF. The network has also been providing ongoing support to the Government of Ethiopia's macroeconomics team and has developed a strategic partnership with the African Economic Research Consortium.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Philippa Webb was elected to L'institut de Droit International, an organisation comprising the world's leading public international lawyers. Philippa was also appointed as King's Counsel, the highest professional distinction a lawyer can receive in the UK.

Stefan Dercon was elected to the British Academy's Fellowship in recognition of his outstanding contributions to the social sciences.

Yeling Tan was named to Project Syndicate's Forward Thinkers list which spotlights emerging intellectual innovators.

Ciaran Martin was a recipient of the 2025 Social Sciences Division Teaching Excellence Award (Individual Award for Academic Staff), and Emily Jones was highly commended in the Vice-Chancellor's Awards for her innovative teaching on the MPP.

BOOKS AND JOURNALS

Thomas Hale was awarded the 2025 Don K. Price Award for his book *Long Problems* by the American Political Science Association.



Paul Collier was named a winner at the 2025 Axiom Business Book Award Medal for his latest book *Left Behind*, securing a silver medal in the 'Economics' category.

In his new book *Billionaire Backlash: The Age of Corporate Scandal and How it Could Save Democracy*, our Vice Dean **Pepper Culpepper** and co-author Professor Taeku Lee of Harvard University argue that the shared anger that follows major corporate scandals can be channelled into a backlash with the potential to reinvigorate failing democracies (see page 26).

Kate Orkin's latest publication in *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, demonstrated that boosting aspirations through low-cost psychological interventions leads to improvements in people's economic position within five years.

MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

Stefan Dercon wrote for VoxDev on the political economy of education research and how foreign aid can evolve in response to budget cuts and changing political dynamics.

Janina Dill provided insights on events in Gaza to CNN World and BBC News at Ten and was cited in *The Wall Street Journal* on Israeli government plans in Gaza. She also spoke to *The New York Times* about Israel's obstruction of aid deliveries into Gaza, as well as its plan to target Gaza's health infrastructure. Janina spoke to numerous media outlets about the war in Iran and specifically the strike on a girls' school.

In an article on state capture, *The Economist* highlighted **Chris Stone's** work on the formulas that should be used when reforming historically corrupt public institutions.



In an op-ed for *TIME*, **Philippa Webb** and Visiting Professor **Amal Clooney** explained how the Oxford Institute of Technology and Justice is using AI to bridge the global justice gap.

Maya Tudor was quoted in *The Guardian* following protests in Turkey after the arrest of Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu. **Yeling Tan** featured in *The Guardian* on the delicate balancing act China faces in responding to tariffs and spoke to *Fortune* about the prospects for US–China trade. Yeling was also quoted in *The Atlantic* on Chinese political economy. **Stefan Dercon** gave insights to *The New York Times*, shedding light on the critical delivery of humanitarian aid into Myanmar.

İrem Güçeri and **Christopher Adams** were featured in the *Financial Times* offering options to address welfare challenges. İrem also provided analysis to *Al Jazeera* on the UK budget.

Annette Idler offered BBC World Service listeners her analysis of Ecuador's elections and spoke to numerous media outlets about the Trump administration's operation in Venezuela.

Ciaran Martin spoke to BBC Breakfast and BBC Week at Westminster about the cyber-attacks on M&S and Co-op and what they mean for businesses. He also spoke to BBC Newscast on what needs to be considered going forward when dealing with cyber-attacks.

Ngairé Woods discussed President Trump's Iran nuclear policy on BBC Newsnight. She also talked about US tariffs on trade with BBC Radio 4 and wrote for *Foreign Affairs* on the resilience of the international order.

ENGAGEMENT AND POLICY IMPACT

Philippa Webb spoke on a webinar at the National University of Singapore on

legal accountability for malicious cyber operations, attended by 150+ participants from government, industry, and civil society worldwide.

Roxana Radu delivered a lecture at the Reuters Institute conference on AI and the Future of News, addressing the use of AI in conflict zones. Roxana has also been appointed Associate Editor of the *Journal of Cyber Policy*.

Ngairé Woods joined panels in Davos to discuss rebuilding trust in Latin America and the impact and potential paths forward following recent developments in Venezuela.

Thomas Elston spoke at a seminar on public service reform alongside Dame Meg Hillier MP, Stella Creasy MP, Damian Hinds MP, and Lord Freud, and spoke at the launch of the UK's Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.

Janina Dill gave evidence to the UK Foreign Affairs Select Committee about lessons from the Trump administration's approach to Venezuela, emphasising the consequences when states do not stand up for international law.

Emily Jones gave evidence to the UK House of Lords International Agreements Committee on a review of treaty scrutiny, and **Ciaran Martin** gave evidence to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee on electoral interference.

Aaron Maniam launched a new four-part documentary examining how emerging technologies are reshaping power, society and public policy titled *Raising Expectations*.

And finally, from within **our faculty** we celebrated the achievements of Professors Jo Wolff and Peter Kemp as they retired from the School.

Government Outcomes Lab: 10 years of research with impact

Over the past decade, the Government Outcomes Lab has become a global centre of expertise, helping governments build effective partnerships with civil society and the private sector.

WHEN CONTRACTING FAILS

Government partnership with private companies, charities, and specialist providers to deliver core services has been shown to unlock innovation, expertise, and scale that the state alone cannot match.

Failed contracts for essential protective equipment during the Covid-19 pandemic, for example, cost the British taxpayer £1.4 billion, much of it spent on over-ordering and unusable equipment. This wasn't just a crisis-era misstep; it was a failure of contracting. So how do you design contracts effectively that deliver value for money?

FROM SERVICES TO OUTCOMES

One part of the answer is outcomes-based partnerships, where government pays for the outcome rather than the service. The idea is like paying a gardener once you have apples, rather than for planting the apple tree. These partnerships are the focus of an international team of researchers, policy specialists and data experts at the Government Outcomes Lab (GO Lab), led since its inception by Mara Aioldi.

£1.4bn

lost on failed PPE contracts



Their research suggests that tracking outcomes in these programmes offers a window into what works, improving transparency and allowing the government to clearly see what is being accomplished with public spending. With a clearer view of real-time results through continuous monitoring, waste is reduced and the most efficient strategies can be prioritised.

BUILDING THE EVIDENCE BASE

One example of outcomes-based financing is the Life Chances Fund. Launched by the British government in 2016, this nine-year £70m outcomes fund was at the time the biggest of its kind in the world. GO Lab was established at the Blavatnik School at the same time, as a fully independent research lab that could be the Fund's evaluation and learning partner.

Now in its tenth year, GO Lab published its final evaluations of the Life Chances Fund, looking closely at what worked, what didn't, and why, for the future benefit of policymakers worldwide. The Life Chances Fund Final Report evaluated the fund overall and each of the 29 funded projects, and the accompanying Evaluation Synthesis Report distilled nearly a decade of data and research.

This work forms part of one of the most extensive bodies of evidence on outcomes-based commissioning in recent years, including 16 evaluation and policy reports, over 100 practical resources and datasets accessed nearly two million times, and a growing body of peer-reviewed research that has been cited by organisations such as the OECD, World Bank and the World Economic Forum.

Eleanor Carter, Academic Director of GO Lab and one of the report authors, said: “Taken together, our findings suggest that well-designed and effectively managed partnerships can meaningfully improve outcomes. The detail of our evaluation offers lessons on how to design these partnerships well, how to manage them effectively, and how the costs – such as the complexity of managing multiple partners – might weigh against the benefits.”

GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE AND TRANSPARENCY

GO Lab’s team has developed a wider programme of research and engagement on how public services are commissioned and managed. GO Lab curates a global knowledge database, ‘INDIGO’, where lessons from different partnerships are collected, pulling together experiments in better ways to help people from all over the world. Covering more than 40 countries and over 1,000 organisations and projects, this open-access resource supports greater transparency.

GO Lab’s research has made important scholarly contributions, including major work on contracting and public value and a growing body of peer-reviewed research on shaping how governments think about performance, risk and collaboration. A programme of policy engagement and capacity-building ensures these insights are actively used by policymakers and practitioners across the globe, particularly through an executive programme on leading cross-sector partnerships.

FROM RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

GO Lab has hosted international workshops and exchanges with governments from across the globe,



Well-designed partnerships can meaningfully improve outcomes.

including Denmark, Canada, Singapore, South Africa, India, Pakistan, Malaysia, Australia, and Brazil, and contributed to global platforms including high-level discussions with the UBS Optimus Foundation and a UNESCO and UEFA workshop on social impact investment in sport. A partnership with the ShikshaLokam Foundation in India is exploring how governments can better support grassroots social movements, particularly in education.

Back in the UK, GO Lab is the learning and evaluation partner for the Cabinet

Office’s Test, Learn and Grow programme, a three-year, £100m initiative designed to reshape how services are designed and delivered through localised experimentation. GO Lab is examining how these approaches work in practice and under what conditions they lead to better outcomes, generating evidence to inform future decisions on how services are funded and run.

A DECADE OF IMPACT

As GO Lab draws in on a decade of research, analysis, and facilitation, the programme continues to reflect the central vision of the Blavatnik School. Dean Ngaire Woods said that, through GO Lab, “the School has contributed an invaluable institutional memory to a rapidly evolving field, demonstrating the lasting value of rigorous, practically engaged research in delivering better public services.”

Advancing technology for justice

The Oxford Institute of Technology and Justice is harnessing advances in artificial intelligence and digital tools to expand access to justice, strengthen accountability and support legal systems worldwide.

“The potential for empowerment is unlimited”, said UK Attorney General Lord Richard Hermer KC at the launch of the Oxford Institute of Technology and Justice in October 2025, a partnership between the Blavatnik School and the Clooney Foundation for Justice. “The use of AI and technology ... means that access to justice may no longer be the preserve of those who can afford to find lawyers or find lawyers who can afford to represent them for nothing.”

Philippa Webb, Professor of Public International Law at the School, is Co-founder and Director of the Institute alongside Amal Clooney, Visiting Professor of Practice in International Law. Philippa describes the partnership as “a paradigm shift in how we approach justice in the digital age.” By combining cutting-edge academic research with the Clooney Foundation for Justice’s experience of supporting free legal aid in 40 countries, the Institute is already demonstrating how technology can be deployed responsibly and with purpose.



BUILDING TOOLS THAT MATTER

In its first year, the Institute has moved quickly from vision to action. Since its launch, the team has been prototyping **four tools** to address a range of needs across the legal ecosystem.

1. Legal access for women and girls

One tool, co-created with the Women Lawyers’ Association of Malawi, aims to provide legal information and referrals for women and girls, including guidance on child marriage, gender-based violence and access to pro bono legal support.

Developed as a WhatsApp-based chatbot, the tool is currently available in English and is primarily used by frontline responders such as teachers, healthcare workers and shelter staff. But to place the technology directly in the hands of those it is intended to serve, the Institute is now working to develop a large language model in Chichewa, the most widely spoken language in Malawi, which remains significantly underrepresented online.

The three core pillars of the Institute’s work

-  Harnessing artificial intelligence to advance access to justice
-  Promoting accountability for unlawful cyber operations
-  Protecting human rights in trials in the digital age



Until now, there has been no coordinated global effort dedicated to applying the catalytic technological advancements of the 21st century to the field of international justice. We are filling that gap, seeking to become the gold standard for how you use technology and artificial intelligence to advance access to justice.

Philippa Webb

As one collaborator observed during the project’s development, “you started off building a tool, and you end up on track to transform a country.” Investments in local-language AI infrastructure could unlock wider social and economic benefits for Malawi, and other countries where Chichewa is spoken, far beyond the original scope of the project.

2. Streamlining protection orders

Another tool will help lawyers streamline protection order applications, a critical resource in settings where legal services are often difficult to access.

3. Protecting journalists at risk

A third tool, developed with the Committee to Protect Journalists, aims to support journalists who face detention, harassment or other threats, offering legal information and rapid connections to lawyers during the crucial first 48 hours after arrest.

4. Supporting fair trials

A further prototype, the Fair Trial Adviser, is designed to support judges by providing authoritative guidance on AI-related fair trial issues, including challenges arising from deepfakes and hallucinated case citations.



Picture a survivor not repeating her story three times, but once – accurately, respectfully, and securely. This efficiency will free lawyers to focus on litigation and client engagement while keeping the process survivor-centred and sensitive. Why does this matter? Because a protection order can be a thin line between safety and sustained harm.

Ruth Mchizi,
 Legal Consultant, Women Lawyers’ Association of Malawi (WLA)



TRANSPARENCY AND GLOBAL INSIGHT

The Institute’s AI Justice Atlas maps the use and regulation of AI in courtrooms around the world, becoming an important global resource for researchers and practitioners seeking to understand how AI is entering legal systems and what safeguards are needed.

The Institute has made strides forward in policy and research. Its first policy brief on legal accountability for malicious cyber operations has already been taken up in wider policy discussions, including the cyber law toolkit, part of the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence. The team is now developing further research on how digital evidence can be used responsibly in courtroom trials and the challenges posed by deepfakes, both of which are becoming increasingly important for justice systems navigating the opportunities and challenges of new technology.

TRAINING AT SCALE

Training has been another hallmark of the Institute’s first year. In partnership with UNESCO, the team has launched a massive open online course on AI and the Rule of Law, which will reach over 100,000 judges in 160 countries.



The use of AI and technology means access to justice may no longer be the preserve of those who can afford it.

The Institute is bringing its work into the Master of Public Policy seminar rooms later this year through the creation of a ‘Tech and Justice Lab’,

a space where students can work directly on live challenges the Institute is working on, bringing their policy expertise to bear on real-world problems. The students will also benefit from access to Harvey, an AI legal service, enabling students and faculty to engage with a best-in-class legal tool while contributing to wider conversations about governance and responsible AI use.

The Institute’s impact this year has been made possible by strong collaboration, generous support and a shared sense of urgency. As Ngaire Woods remarked at the launch event, “the University of Oxford, which has come through 900 years of civil wars, religious wars, of conflict, of history ... serves as a wonderful convening place, far from the madding crowds, for people to come together and realise they can actually work together. That’s the bet that the Blavatnik School is making.”

From ideas to impact: Sir Paul Collier's career in public policy

From moving away from the 'Ocado' model of public policy to being inspired by his students



RETHINKING ECONOMICS AND HUMAN BEHAVIOUR

When Ngoire Woods first approached Paul Collier with the idea of founding a school of government at Oxford, he was enthusiastic. After decades working in economics, he felt increasingly “queasy” about the discipline’s narrowing assumptions about human behaviour. His teaching and research explored how human beings are not simply rational, self-interested maximisers. “They are capable of selfishness but also deeply pro-social behaviour”, Paul puts it, “and public policy must recognise both of these faces.”

By this point he had begun writing books including *The Bottom Billion* (2007), *Wars, Guns and Votes* (2009) and *The Future of Capitalism* (2018) because he realised he needed to “create a constituency of voters who understood the issues”.



The immense collective talent in that room is greater than what's in my head alone.

This interplay between research, teaching and practice has defined Paul's career. Now honoured with a knighthood, a CBE and the British Academy's President's Medal, Paul insists that ideas must travel beyond academia. Research, teaching and impact on policy are not separate tracks, but parts of a single project.

The School offered a place to put that conviction into practice. Paul became one of its founding faculty members, teaching the first cohort of 38 Master of Public Policy (MPP) students while also launching an executive programme designed to train public servants from around the world.



Public policy must recognise both faces of human behaviour – selfishness and deep pro-social instinct.

LEARNING THROUGH PEOPLE AND PLACES

At the heart of Paul's teaching approach is encouraging conversation and peer learning.

"I open the class by telling them that the immense collective talent in that room is greater than what's in my head alone. I urge them to learn from each other and of course I learn from them too, as a good teacher should."

That ethos has shaped generations of students. Raees Khan, a former MPP Political Leadership Scholar who is currently on the UK Civil Service Fast Stream graduate programme, noted that Paul's book *Greed Is Dead: Politics After Individualism* was one motivation behind his application to the School. He also talks about his experience being part of Paul's work of catalysing regional renewal, joining a visit to Scunthorpe where Paul was supporting residents to think through local spending priorities.

Raees said: "Our visit and subsequent work with Scunthorpe Tomorrow showed me, beyond the classroom, the galvanising effect Paul's ideas can have on local communities. Most of all, it brought to life his core message for left-behind areas: that a committed group of local people, united by strong leadership and a shared vision for the future, can catalyse the first steps in reversing their area's decline."

This visit showed Paul in action as a synthesiser across a range of disciplines – a role he has also occupied as a



researcher. His partnership with Sir John Kay, a leading thinker on business economics, informed Paul's clarity on the need for devolved government.

"If governments do not know the right answer – and often they do not, as John's work on radical uncertainty underscores – the solution is not to centralise power further. We don't need an 'Ocado' model of public policy where a central authority designs solutions and delivers them uniformly. Devolving decision-making recognises the agency of communities. How do we get out of the Ocado model of delivery into something that actually works?"

Paul was one of the founders of the Centre for the Study of African Economies (CSAE), which has become a hub for research on development economics and policy. Now led by Stefan Dercon, Professor of Economic Policy at the School, the Centre continues to shape thinking on growth, governance and poverty reduction. Reflecting on Paul's influence, Stefan describes

him as "the best that I've ever seen talking to a policymaker... I haven't come across a more intuitive mind in economics."

THE STAKES OF PUBLIC POLICY

As Paul prepares to step back from full-time life at the School, he speaks with particular gratitude of his colleagues. In his office is a framed photograph that Dean Ngaire Woods gave him, taken of his son aged seventeen in a school play, acting as a young British officer about to be deployed to the Western Front. The image does not just make him proud of his son. It's also a reminder of the "catastrophic errors of public policy that produced the first world war and sent kids aged just seventeen, the age my son is in that photograph, to the front to die."

For Paul, that photograph captures the moral stakes of public policy. Governments must learn how to avoid catastrophic error. Institutions that educate public leaders matter because the costs of failure are measured in human lives.



EXECUTIVE PROGRAMMES

Inspiring public leadership

Public servants around the world are keen for opportunities to learn from each other and for the space to understand and adapt to the challenges they face.

Executive programmes

At a time when public leaders face increasing complexity and uncertainty, our executive programmes provide room to pause, reflect and learn with others. Focusing on a core set of themes – managing public sector organisations, leading with integrity, negotiation and decision-making, communication and narrative, and the effective use of digital technology – our programmes combine rigorous teaching with peer exchange, helping participants translate insight into action.

DEVELOPING PUBLIC LEADERS

Our schedule over the past year began with 32 senior public leaders from across 17 countries joining our **Rising Public Leaders Programme**. Participants from India, Africa, Europe, and South America strengthened their leadership skills and tackled the challenges faced by public leaders today. The programme has proved such a success that we are running a second course this year.

The fifth cohort of the **Executive Public Leaders Programme**, an exclusive group of heads of public organisations, joined us in July for an intensive, multidisciplinary programme to enhance their leadership and ability to serve the public.

STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONS AND SYSTEMS

Our short courses work with participants to strengthen the integrity of organisations, learn from the latest evidence, and build networks for future success.

The **Public Corruption Turnarounds Programme** continues to equip public leaders and managers with the skills and strategies to replace corruption with cultures of integrity.



LEADING IN COMPLEX ENVIRONMENTS

Today's complex societal challenges, spanning refugee crises, poor education outcomes, and climate change, cannot be tackled by governments alone, and our **Leading Cross-Sector Partnerships Programme** helps public officials to effectively collaborate with external partner organisations, in both private and not-for-profit sectors.

Armed forces worldwide confront ethical dilemmas on and off the battlefield, underscoring the urgent need to foster military cultures that balance combat effectiveness with moral and legal standards. Our **Military Leadership and Judgement Programme** works with combat leaders to build such cultures.

Emily Jones, Karthik Ramanna, Aaron Maniam, and the team from the School's **Case Centre on Public Leadership** ran a two-day workshop in Oxford on using case teaching for public policy students and government officials. The team took the workshop on tour to the World Bank

in Washington DC, to Chile in partnership with the Luksic Foundation, and finally to the KD School of Public Policy and Management in Korea.



When a student in class asked me, 'Can you describe the moment the President made the decision for Ghana to request IMF financing support and how you felt then?', I was reminded why the case teaching method, central to the teaching of the Blavatnik School of Government, is such a powerful tool for shaping public policy leaders. It is one thing to analyse policy decisions in theory; it is quite another to confront, even in a classroom setting, the lived reality of making those decisions under pressure.

Elsie Addo Awadzi,
Visiting Fellow at the Blavatnik
School of Government

Executive programmes

STRENGTHENING PUBLIC LEADERSHIP ACROSS REGIONS

As we headed into autumn, our executive programmes continued with the **UK Directors Leadership Programme** and the **Managing Mining, Oil and Gas for National Development Programme**.

In October we were thrilled to host 72 public servants from Nigeria, Cameroon, Egypt, Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania and Zambia for the fifth **AIG Public Leaders Programme**. This programme, run in collaboration with the Aig-Imoukhuede Foundation, is designed to equip high-potential African public servants with the skills and values needed to foster excellence, effectiveness and integrity in their institutions. This year, participants included a Chief Superintendent of Customs at the Nigeria Customs Service, an Assistant Director at the Pharmacy, Health Services and Environmental Secretariat, a Senior Judge in the State Council of Egypt and a Corporate Affairs Manager at the Electoral Commission of Zambia, who was listed among Africa's Top 100 Career Women.

A new programme for us this year was the pilot **Global Network Programme**, a flagship initiative from the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) Diplomatic College. The School led the programme's design, focusing on the changing nature of power in the world today, across economic, digital, soft and geopolitical spheres.

Bringing together leaders from across geographies and sectors to tackle some of today's most pressing geopolitical challenges and chaired by Christopher Stone, the pilot included participants from 15 businesses, 13 countries and 9 UK government departments, alongside a globally diverse group of speakers.



INVESTING IN TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Our Transformational Leadership programme enables distinguished individuals from the public, private or not-for-profit sectors to take up to one year out to develop the next stage of their impact on the world. In 2025–26 our **Transformational Leadership Fellows** come from an array of industry backgrounds spanning diplomacy, finance, philanthropy, healthcare, education and tech. Jason Stockwood, a Transformational Leadership Fellow in 2020–21, was recently appointed Investment Minister in the UK Government.

72

public servants from seven African countries came together for the fifth AIG Public Leaders Programme.



One of the joys has been spending time with other Fellows, meeting people with very different perspectives, backgrounds, and ambitions for what they want to achieve from their year here. That's been a thought-provoking learning experience in its own right.

Another high point has been working with the MPP students. It's a joy to be with them because of their optimism, sense of principles and values, and their desire to do the right thing and make the world a better place, through hard-edged choices.

To hear people from dozens of countries with different political systems, institutions, challenges and opportunities, and to see the sparks of innovation and ideas that flow from that is fascinating.

Dame Anne Richards, TLF, 2024–25

Alumni

Our alumni are a 2,000+ strong, highly diverse community working across the globe, applying the skills and approaches developed at the School.

From the offices of Presidents and Prime Ministers to senior roles across government, Blavatnik School alumni serve on every continent.

They include:

- Rwanda's first female Central Bank Governor
- A UAE minister and senior legal counsel at NATO
- The Chair of the Global Climate and Health Alliance
- Elected representatives across Europe, Africa and the Americas
- Senior civil servants, multilateral leaders, and NGO founders worldwide

Pablo Mira (MPP 2022) was recently named Undersecretary for Human Rights in Chile. Mohamed al Qadi (MPP 2014) was appointed to a ministerial post in the UAE, joining his MPP classmate Shamma Al Mazrui in cabinet. In the USA, Riley Owen (MPP 2023) has launched a campaign for Congress in Utah.

Mark Carney, Prime Minister of Canada and member of our Honorary Council, appointed Tim Krupa (MPP 2017) as Director of Policy. Toby Parker (MPP 2019) is now the UK Ambassador to the UN Agencies in Rome.

DIVERSE VOICES, REAL IMPACT

We bring together students committed to serving their countries and communities, supporting them to become effective leaders. As a result, alumni are advancing equality, diversity and inclusion across the world.

Two of our Afghan female alumni have devoted their lives to educational access in Afghanistan. Padraig Rice (MPP 2014, Irish, Public Service

Scholar) has been an LGBT activist and is now a member of Ireland's parliament. Batool Asadi (MPP 2020, Pakistani, Vicky Noon Scholar) was the first woman to serve as Assistant Commissioner in Balochistan and later became Deputy Secretary (Staff) to Balochistan's highest-ranking civil servant.

480

alumni contributed their time and talent to the School.

Quratulain Fatima (MPP 2015, Louis Dreyfus-Weidenfeld Scholar) was one of the first women in the Pakistani Air Force before the MPP, and after the MPP founded NGO Women4PeaceTech offering technological training and jobs for women in rural Punjab alongside her full-time job in Pakistan's civil service.

Robert Fisher (MPP 2016, Rhodes Scholar), having encountered prejudiced beliefs as a black boy in the US public education system, worked after the MPP on public education across Tennessee. And Zeljko Jovanovic (MPP 2016), a Roma student, is Director of the Open Society Foundations' Roma Initiatives Office (which promotes opportunity for, and challenges discrimination against, Europe's Roma).

GIVING BACK

Our alumni play a critical role in attracting brilliant students to the Blavatnik School. Around 45% of our current class first heard about the MPP from alumni, who connect us to public servants and related professions across the world. From the moment they join us, students are encouraged to support recruitment and to continue doing so as alumni. Thanks to this, alumni are highly proactive in identifying strong potential applicants.

Over the past year, 480 alumni contributed their time and talent to the School as advocates, ambassadors and leaders. Their impact has been transformative:

- **Employability and ambition building** – 48% of the MPP Class of 2024 secured Policy Report placements across ministries and international organisations through alumni hosts and referrals.
- **Enriching the curriculum** – alumni brought real-world experience from the front lines of public leadership into the classroom, co-teaching Applied Policy Modules, mentoring, and contributing as panel speakers.
- **Strengthening partnerships** – alumni collaborations with faculty span climate justice, digital transformation, social protection and economic reform, shaping policies with global impact.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Opening doors to public leadership

As a school seeking to persuade outstanding people into public leadership, scholarships are absolutely crucial.

Public policy benefits from multiple perspectives – geographic, economic, and cultural. Scholarships ensure representation from developing countries, conflict regions, and underrepresented communities. That diversity is a huge part of what makes discussions and learning at the School so valuable.

SUPPORTING FUTURE LEADERS

Scholarships help us attract future leaders – civil servants, policymakers, activists – who return to their countries and apply what they've learned. Many of these candidates simply couldn't come to Oxford without funding; scholarships make it possible for us to admit the very best candidates, ensuring finances are never a barrier to studying with us. In that sense, scholarships are an investment in better governance globally, not just individual students.

We are deeply grateful to all those who continue to support the School through funding research, academic posts and scholarships, mentoring, advising, teaching, and countless other forms of generosity. From supporters and donors, from alumni to long-standing partners of the School, your financial support and partnership makes it possible for talented individuals from every corner of the world to come together, learn from one another and pursue careers dedicated to public good.

By investing your time, resources, and expertise, you are not only shaping the experiences of our students but also strengthening the future of public leadership globally. Your support is fundamental to our mission, and its impact will be felt far beyond our classrooms.

SCHOLARSHIPS LIST

- Aig-Imoukhuede Foundation (AIG) Scholarship
- Alfred Landecker Foundation DPhil Scholarship
- Beit-Blavatnik Scholarship
- Academic Futures Scholarship
- Blavatnik School of Government Alumni MPP Scholarship
- Blavatnik Scholarship for Greece
- Berrow Foundation (Lincoln College)
- Brasenose-Blavatnik- Marshall Scholarship
- Chevening Scholarship
- Clarendon Scholarship
- Commonwealth Shared Scholarship
- Eisenhower Global Scholarship
- FirstRand Scholarship
- Governor Phillip Scholarship
- Hill Foundation Scholarship
- Jaime and Raquel Gilinski Scholarship
- Jardine-Oxford Scholarship
- Jepson Scholarship
- Joint Japan/World Bank Graduate Scholarship
- Kwok Scholarship
- Lemann Foundation Fellowship
- Lord Browne Scholarship in Public Service
- Luksic Scholarship for Public Service
- Mastercard Foundation Scholarship under the Africa Oxford Initiative (AfOx)
- Mo Ibrahim Scholarship
- Oxford-CREAT Group Scholarship
- Oxford Lebanon MPP Graduate Scholarship
- Oxford MESCYT Scholarship
- Oxford-Oak Zimbabwe Graduate Scholarship
- Oxford-Pershing Square Scholarship
- Oxford Thai Foundation Graduate Scholarship
- Oxford-University College Burma Graduate Scholarship
- Poler Family Oxford Graduate Scholarship
- Policy Leadership Scholarship
- Political Leadership Scholarship
- Prince William Scholarship
- Public Service Scholarship
- Oxford-Reuben Graduate Scholarship
- Rhodes Scholarship
- The Sultan of Selangor MPP Scholarship
- Simandou Academy MPP Scholarship
- University College Burma Scholarship
- Weidenfeld-Hoffmann Scholarship

And a special thank you to our founding donor, Sir Leonard Blavatnik

SCHOLARSHIPS

Expanding access worldwide

New scholarships in Greece and Malaysia mean that financial pressures need not stand between brilliant candidates and a future in public leadership.

THE BLAVATNIK SCHOLARSHIP FOR GREECE

In 2025 we were delighted to launch a new scholarship supporting Greek nationals to pursue graduate or executive study at the Blavatnik School of Government, marking a significant investment in the next generation of Greece's public leaders.

The scholarship has been made possible through the generosity of the School's founding donor, Sir Leonard Blavatnik, whose support continues to expand opportunities for exceptional students worldwide.

Kyriakos Mitsotakis, Prime Minister of Greece, celebrated the announcement on a visit to the School, noting the passion for public service that characterises Blavatnik School students. He highlighted the scholarship as an important opportunity for emerging public leaders in Greece, acknowledging the challenge of selecting from many talented candidates.



THE SULTAN OF SELANGOR MPP SCHOLARSHIP

In 2025, we marked a significant milestone with the establishment of the Sultan of Selangor MPP Scholarship, developed in partnership with Oxford's Somerville and Worcester Colleges. This prestigious award is dedicated to supporting outstanding Malaysian students with the ambition and potential to strengthen public leadership in the state of Selangor and across the nation.

The scholarship was shaped in no small part by the vision and dedication of our former Transformational Leadership

Fellows (TLFs), Tengku Amir Idris and Syed Haizam Jamalullail. Their commitment to nurturing a new generation of public-sector change-makers was instrumental in bringing this initiative to fruition. For more on our TLFs, see page 20.



“There is no way I could have gone to Oxford without a scholarship. Ever. Never!”

Alex Olivares (MPP 2015)



SCHOLARSHIPS

Partnerships

Luksic Scholarship for Public Service

This year, the School renewed its partnership with the Luksic Foundation through a new three-year agreement supporting the Luksic Scholarship for Public Service. Since 2014, 20 exceptional Chilean students have been able to pursue the MPP at the School.

The partnership extends well beyond scholarship funding. With the Foundation's support, the Case Centre on Public Leadership has translated seven of the School's case studies into Spanish, expanding their reach across Latin America. In January 2026, a Case Centre team delivered the second edition of the Case Method for Public Policy workshop in Santiago, bringing together faculty from 20 universities across Chile for two days of hands on training and peer collaboration.



in my family to attend university, I've relied on scholarships throughout my education. Pursuing a master's degree once felt out of reach. The Luksic Scholars programme opened doors I never thought possible. It gave me the support to imagine a fresh new future after this MPP, without any restriction or mandate of what I have to do, giving me enough time to think on how I would like to use the learnings from this degree to serve others."

Belén Muñoz Zurita
(MPP 2024)

"To have the Luksic Scholarship was critical for me to be able to come to this MPP at Oxford. As the first generation



challenges that environmental and climate issues are posing for the country. Being able to pursue the MPP thanks to the Luksic Scholarship for Public Service has deepened my commitment and desire to contribute, hopefully through a role that will enable me to improve environmental and climate policies in Chile."

Leonardo Moreno Polit
(MPP 2024)

"Above all, I'm driven by the intention to return to Chile to apply what I have learnt over the past year to the many

Joint Japan–World Bank Scholarship



away from professional life for too long.

"For somebody like me to make it to Oxford from a small town in Madhya Pradesh is beyond imagination. For the first month I was here, I could barely believe it was happening. Without the scholarship it would have been impossible. Many people from my background would bid their family's life savings to come close to

"The one-year format was ideal, allowing for an intensive and immersive experience without stepping

funding themselves here. I am extremely grateful, and conscious of my responsibility to pay it forward. When I chose Oxford, I was often asked 'what will you learn abroad that you can apply back home in India?'. However, the Blavatnik School's cohort is incredibly diverse and inspiring, and the classroom discussions are international. The School made me realise that what the world is facing converges to similar challenges and questions. Regardless of how bordered and demarcated the world might seem, there is immense potential in learning from each other."

Ayushi Khare, MPP 2022, Indian,
Joint Japan–World Bank
Graduate Scholar



The MPP changed my trajectory and my perspective on life. I absolutely could not have afforded my MPP education if I did not get a scholarship.

Anika Gray (MPP 2014)

The Dean's Circle: strategic philanthropy

This year the Blavatnik School launched the Dean's Circle, a prominent group of international leaders and trusted advisors whose insight, experience, and philanthropic support will help shape the School's next chapter.

A partnership between the School and those who believe deeply in its purpose and potential for global impact, the Dean's Circle is committed to strengthening public

leadership and advancing the School's mission to help governments and citizens respond positively to an increasingly complex global policy environment.



DEAN'S CIRCLE MEMBERS

Afzal Abdul Rahim

Alan Parker

Ann Fitzmaurice

Ann-Kristin Achleitner

Anne Richards

Babatunde Soyoye

Badr Jafar

Brian Menell

Ceci Chan

Daniel Sachs

Edward Fitzmaurice

Emma Menell

George Kounelakis

Gerry Cardinale

Isabella Luksic

John Studzinski

Josh Silverman

Milan Khosla

Paul Achleitner

Philipp Freise

Phuthuma Nhleko

Rishi Khosla

Simon Freakley

Stephen Peel

Suzanne Brais

Tamara Jomaa Shakarchi

Tonye Cole

Yana Peel

Big business, scandals, and good populism

Pepper Culpepper explores how outrage at corporate power can reshape politics, and why it may offer an unexpected route to democratic renewal.

Pepper Culpepper is Blavatnik Chair in Government and Public Policy at the Blavatnik School. He is also coming to the end of his term as Vice Dean for Academic Affairs. We talked to him about his latest book, co-written with Taeku Lee, *Billionaire Backlash: The Age of Corporate Scandal and How it Could Save Democracy* (Bloomsbury).

THE QUIET POWER OF BUSINESS

How do you think about the role of corporations in democracies?

“I’ve always been interested in it and have spent my entire career working in political economy – that is, the study of how economic systems, such as markets and national economies, interact with political systems.

“In my 2011 book, *Quiet Politics and Business Power*, I looked at how corporations are so successful in politics. I’d say everybody agrees that they are successful except political scientists. Political scientists tend to say that corporations are always losing (for example, in their wish for lighter regulation) because politicians are chasing re-election, therefore looking to what the average voter wants. The point of *Quiet Politics* was to say: yes, that ‘average voter’ model has some applicability when lots of people are paying attention, but most of the time, people are not paying attention to politics. They are especially not paying attention to economic regulation or other ‘hard issues’ where they would need to think carefully about complicated issues to puzzle out where their personal interests lie. In these ‘quiet’ areas, business – which is lobbying hard in the background – traditionally wins.



Corporate scandals can still create widely shared moral outrage.

“Then I looked at the role of structural power. Some corporations can say to national governments: ‘most of our profits are elsewhere, so if we don’t like your rules and leave your country, we don’t lose out, but you lose jobs and capital’. That is real structural power. HSBC, most of whose profits are in Asia, exercised this structural power in the UK during the 2008 financial crisis, and succeeded in scuttling the UK government’s preferred solution of an industry-wide recapitalisation.

WHEN SCANDALS BREAK THROUGH

“My dive into the banking crisis led to *Banklash*, a large project to understand how the bailout of the banks and the public reaction to the crisis fundamentally changed politics. What we found was that corporate scandals were powerful in facilitating policy change. Unlike political scandals, where reactions these days tend to diverge along partisan lines, corporate scandals can still create widely shared moral outrage. One of the big insights of *Banklash* was that there is widespread latent public hostility towards corporations – hostility which scandals focus, concentrate and make politically active.”

THE OUTRAGE THAT STICKS

You've studied many scandals that prompted a shared sense of outrage. Which one personally angered you the most?

“The Goldman Sachs scandal that we write about in *Billionaire Backlash*. The short version is Goldman Sachs were betting that particular financial products would fall in value, while at the same time deliberately selling those products to their clients in order to shed them. Emails showed traders referring to them as a “shitty deal” and congratulating each other for making “lemonade from some big old lemons”. When the financial products did fall in value, Goldman Sachs made \$1.7 billion, while many of their clients faced devastating losses – ordinary people losing the funds they were relying on for retirement, for example. A US Senator managed to activate bipartisan outrage around that event that helped get major reforms passed that aim to prevent another banking crisis.

“The thing is, Goldman Sachs’ leadership didn’t think it was a scandal. When asked about it, their answer was essentially: ‘we’re offering a product, and if people bought it, they were adults allocating their capital the way that they wanted.’ But obviously, there’s an information asymmetry. Goldman Sachs leaders just thought, ‘that’s the way that it works: we made billions of dollars and a bunch of people lost their shirts’. My outrage is that they don’t really care.”

*How did Banklash lead on to your latest book, *Billionaire Backlash*, which looks more broadly at public anger?*

“Having started with the 2008 bank bailouts, we went on to study a variety of corporate scandals outside the

financial crisis – in areas like technology policy, cryptocurrency, and carbon emissions. We surveyed more than 60,000 people in six advanced democracies and found a generalised pattern of latent anti-corporate sentiment being activated by specific scandals in ways that led to change.”

‘GOOD POPULISM’

Billionaire Backlash sets out the concept of ‘good populism’. Tell us about it.

“There is this ongoing elite resentment out there. It’s a big bundle of anger that politicians worry about but can’t quite understand the character of. We political and social scientists don’t either: we continue to think in our old left–right categories, and we’re missing just how important the anti-elite, anti-incumbent feeling is.

“As we were researching the book, we saw a lot of outrage against corporations and billionaires, and we thought about whether there is a way to be democratically responsive to this feeling without giving in to what we consider the negative sides of populism – which are both its simplistic nature and, more fundamentally, its anti-pluralist character (it’s associated with hostility to minority groups).

“In several countries, most notably the US, we’re seeing a descent into oligarchic populism, in which billionaires and large corporations continue to call the shots beneath a veneer of anti-elite pandering. Latent anger is diverted towards minorities rather than powerful business interests. You see signs waved sometimes saying ‘they’re getting you to hate immigrants so you don’t hate billionaires’. I think that’s exactly right.

“While change may be inevitable, this negative kind of populism is not. Some look at today’s politics and see the 1930s, but my co-author Taeku Lee and I see the 1900s, when new technologies had changed the world and the so-called ‘robber barons’ – the titans of industry – had outsized power. Then, the Progressive Movement in the USA took on the robber barons and built a new regulatory framework and a range of laws that protected the interests of ordinary people.



Latent public opinion is an undervalued resource for good politics.

“Latent public opinion is an undervalued resource for good politics. Scandals are one way for latent opinion to get out, but there are other ways. Understanding this latent opinion is the important thing. We think the last 15 years has been about anti-immigrant politics and we think the next decade is going to be about anti-billionaire politics. Populist movements can compel governments to disregard influential industries and embolden them to heed voters instead. A policy programme that tackles corporate domination of democracy responds to the populist impulses today and represents a ‘good populism’.”

Rethinking democracy

ẸṄiqlá Ànúolúwapọ́ Ẹ́ọyemí explores how political philosophy shapes our understanding of justice, democracy and participation, drawing on African thought to challenge dominant ideas and reframe how societies might be organised.

ẸṄiqlá Ànúolúwapọ́ Ẹ́ọyemí is Senior Research Fellow in Political Philosophy and Public Policy at the School. Her research focuses on questions in African and contemporary political, moral, and legal philosophy.

ẸṄiqlá teaches on the MPP Foundations course, introducing students to theories of justice, feminism, authority, democracy, and equality, and focusing on applied topics such as immigration, post-colonial justice, ethics in public life, protest and revolution, and war.

We spoke with ẸṄiqlá about the ideas that shape her work, and why they matter for how we think about democracy today.

What field do you work in?

“I’m a political philosopher, which means I think hard about the concepts that underpin politics: how should we organise societies in ways that ensure freedom and justice, and what do we even mean by these terms? What does it mean to have societies where everyone is a genuine participant in decisions?”

“Unlike political science, which primarily examines how things are, political philosophy asks how things ought to be and what we ought to be doing to make that happen.

“I’m interested in applying philosophical thought to the big questions of today, with a particular interest in freedom, participation, and deliberative democracy and in the questions of African political philosophy.”



Which African thinkers do you work on?

“Primarily Kwasi Wiredu, who was a Ghanaian philosopher, and Steve Biko, who was a South African anti-apartheid activist and thinker.

“Wiredu, while deeply versed in Euro-American political philosophy, was steeped in an African philosophical heritage that included major African philosophers such as John Mbiti, Kwame Gyekye, and Ifeanyi Menkiti. He believed thoughts are significantly influenced by the culture of the language they are written in, and that African philosophers can and should

scrutinise the assumptions of Western philosophers. He also believed that this was possible precisely because across cultures, all human beings shared the individual capacity for critical interpretation of the world.

“Biko was at the forefront of one of the foremost grassroots anti-apartheid campaigns, the Black Consciousness Movement, during the 1960s and 1970s. His movement focused on the psychological empowerment of black people (he popularised the slogan ‘black is beautiful’). Biko has big and hopeful ideas about what it means for a community to be free, which includes

both external and internal power. His thinking, while rooted in apartheid, is generalisable to societies today, given we are still dealing with questions of systemic injustice and oppression.

“My direct focus, though, is less about the identity of African philosophers per se than with developing core ideas about questions of justice, freedom, and democracy, on which there is a lot of valuable thinking in the African philosophical tradition. When you draw on it, you come up with different answers, and different questions, also, than if you’re just using the ‘general canon’ – that is, the body of thought and writing that is considered core to mainstream political philosophy and that makes claims to be universal.”

Would you challenge the idea that there can even be such a thing as a ‘general canon’?

“Personally, I think a general canon is and should be possible, with core ideas that apply across contexts, but we haven’t reached it. Until we’ve gathered what is useful from many different perspectives across the world, we’re not going to know what really applies generally. Some parts of the world are more powerful, have more resources, and have more and better universities, so, formally, they get there first on topics and say, ‘what we’re doing is general philosophy’. It may be, but to illuminate that, we need to have the ideas interrogated by thinkers from multiple contexts, and to add new ideas that mainstream thinkers haven’t introduced.”

What is deliberative democracy, and what ideas and perspectives do African thinkers have on it?

“Deliberative democracy is the idea that there’s something crucial missing from democracy if we don’t come to

decisions by talking to each other. It’s a shift from seeing democracy as procedural, as electoral, as majoritarian, to the view that what makes something fundamentally democratic is the depth of talk in the decision-making process.



There’s something crucial missing from democracy if we don’t come to decisions by talking to each other.

“That talk needs to not just be between elected representatives: it’s ground-up conversation where you discuss what decisions need to be made, why, and how. There’s something about electoral democracy that doesn’t care about your reasons: it just wants to know what your decision or opinion is, and then those who have the most in the same pot win. In deliberative democracy, reasons and reasoning are key: I can access why you think something, and that influences my thinking, and our capacity to reason together gives a way forward.

“Wiredu and other African philosophers were interested in deliberative democracy and there are many contemporary African thinkers working on it, including Uchenna Okeja, Emmanuel Ani, Bernard Matolino, and others. The distinct perspective that comes out of a contemporary African philosophy framework is a logic about communalism and interconnectedness.

“The general canon says the reason that we deliberate is to give a decision or law legitimacy. That assumes the same outcome as electoral democracy, which

is the ascendancy of one viewpoint over another – we got to your preferred outcome by you convincing me you’re right rather than simply winning a vote, but it is still your solution. For me, the point of proper deliberation is not to choose between one starting position and another: it’s for me to understand you and you to understand me. I get to see you, and you get to see me; I can better understand what kind of decisions are required for you to live a life that is meaningful to you, and also for me to live the kind of life that is meaningful to me. We may both ‘lose’ to some degree in terms of getting a particular decision made or law passed, but in reaching a mutual understanding about how our needs interconnect, we perhaps gain a better idea about the terms of our living together. And this might even offer an altogether different way forward in how we assess how well laws and policy are working for us all.

“Another distinctly African contribution to thinking on deliberative democracy is that the continent provides real larger-scale examples of deliberative participation, from pre-colonial Africa, prior to the imposition of the modern nation state. In 15th-century Ghana, for example, there was deliberative decision-making in decentralised federal structures that then came together for big things.

“In the mainstream philosophy literature on deliberation, the nation state is taken as a given. That leads to an obvious challenge: “deliberative democracy may work in a town hall, or on a specific issue, but how do you scale up and out?”. Rather than claim it can be tacked onto existing systems, African thinkers are saying that it may require rethinking the state – thinking about a fundamentally different type of society. Those bigger questions are where I see my next project.”

Four decades of impact

How the Centre for the Study of African Economies has shaped research, policy and opportunity across Africa for 40 years.

Celebrating its 40th anniversary this year, the Centre for the Study of African Economies (CSAE), based jointly at the Blavatnik School and Oxford's Department of Economics, is one of the largest concentrations of economists working on African economies within a single university, with close connections across the continent. With a backbone of rigorous research, the Centre now works with a broader range of countries, bridging the academic, business, and policy worlds to help economies grow and people prosper.

THE FOUNDING MISSION

In 1986, the Centre was founded by a group of academics with a clear mission: to apply rigorous economic tools to better understand economies in Africa. Among these founding academics was Sir Paul Collier, Professor of Economics and Public Policy at the School, together with collaborators across Oxford, the University of Gothenburg and beyond. At a time when research on African economies tended to use an anthropological lens, CSAE showcased how the same analytical tools used to study economies elsewhere could be applied to African economies too.

Stefan Dercon, Professor of Economic Policy at the School and the current Director of CSAE, joined the Centre in the early 1990s as a postdoctoral researcher and, as he puts it, has "never quite left." Over the decades he remained closely connected to the Centre, which he describes as "the place to be for anyone wanting to do serious research on African economic development". Today he leads the Centre, continuing its



founding mission of producing research that is both scrupulously rigorous and policy relevant.

In the early days, the researchers set out to collect systematic longitudinal data on households and firms across the continent.

"Longitudinal data collection had not been done in Africa at scale and there was no data collection on firms specifically. That was definitely a key research contribution", says Stefan.

They also built partnerships with organisations such as the African Economic Research Consortium, helping to train a generation of economists who would go on to strengthen central banks and public policy institutions across Africa. The Centre's research also informed an executive programme on Managing Mining, Oil and Gas for National Development which has now trained



The secret of CSAE's longevity is fantastic people, persistent rigour, and a commitment to connecting evidence to policy where it matters most.

almost 500 public leaders over 11 years on designing policies for pragmatic resource management in challenging contexts.

RESEARCH THAT DELIVERS

CSAE's research sits at the frontier of development policy innovations helping those most in need. Their analysis of the



The CSAE annual conference in Oxford is one of the largest development economics meetings focused on Africa.

impact of ‘anticipatory’ cash transfers in Bangladesh is one example. When predictive models allowed humanitarian agencies to provide a small cash transfer of \$53 mobile money to over 23,000 households in advance of peak flooding, they found that households receiving the cash transfer were 52% less likely to go a day without eating, compared to households that did not. Strikingly, three months later, children in recipient households were also more likely to have eaten three meals the previous day. Reported wellbeing among recipients was 18.7% higher, highlighting the cost of failing to act early in a crisis and the opportunity for effective early response.

Another case in point is research that is helping to build the evidence base for micro-equity in development. Unlike traditional microfinance loans, which must be repaid even if a business fails, micro-equity provides capital without the burden of repayment. This allows

entrepreneurs to take productive risks and invest in growth rather than prioritising short-term survival.

BUILDING NETWORKS AND TALENT

A defining feature of the Centre’s approach is connectivity. Its annual conference in Oxford is one of the largest development economics meetings focused on Africa, with a significant number of African scholars presenting papers. Pre-conference workshops are run in a different African country each year, bringing faculty to coach participants and help to prepare papers for the conference. This ensures that junior African researchers gain visibility, feedback and pathways into global academic networks.

“We wanted to invest in a platform for African scholarship. For our 40th anniversary we are pleased to be funding the participation of 40 scholars across the continent”, says Stefan.

Since its inception, CSAE has found a home in the Blavatnik School of Government, which Stefan calls his “happy place”, because it allows and encourages outward-facing policy engagement alongside multidisciplinary research: “It allows me not just to follow academic incentives but to pursue policy engagement as a meaningful use of my time”, he says.

THE NEXT CHAPTER

As CSAE celebrates four decades of research and engagement, Stefan also credits the brilliant support teams that have enabled it to flourish. “CSAE could only exist for 40 years because we’ve had amazing support teams. They’ve been an essential part of building it up.” The secret of CSAE’s longevity, Stefan suggests, is fantastic people, persistent rigour, and a commitment to connecting evidence to policy where it matters most.



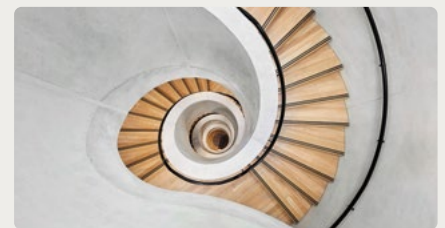
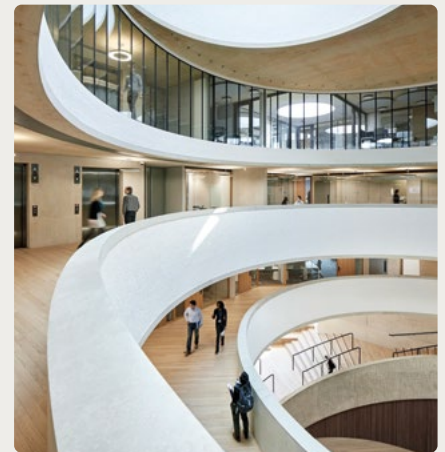
As architects, we are not so powerful to have a say in this world. We have simply tried to create an environment that might help the students to go out and change it.

Jacques Herzog, Architect



A cathedral of learning

Ten years on, the School's landmark home continues to bring people, ideas and public purpose together under one roof.



In 2025 we were excited to celebrate ten years in our building. Designed by internationally renowned architects Herzog & de Meuron, the building reflects what we value as a society, illustrating, in physical form, what is important to all those who walk through our doors, the open spaces speaking to our drive to collaborate and our shared purposes.

Our classrooms invite exchange and debate; lecture halls turn knowledge into shared experience. In one space, researchers might debate new findings, while practitioners forge new ways to collaborate with partners far and wide; in another, we can learn from visionaries and innovators who teach us to embrace our curiosity.

A decade on, our community of students, alumni and partners continue to shape better governance around the world.

Reflecting on the building's role in that mission, Dean Ngaire Woods said:

“From the very beginning, we worked with the architects to ensure that our new home reflected our values. The building is designed to foster collaboration and interaction among students, faculty and guests. Research, teaching and engagement are made easier by the light, collaborative spaces that both inspire and enable conversations and connections. It is a welcoming home to students, academics and policymakers from across the world who share our desire to improve government.

“This building, made possible by the vision and generosity of Sir Leonard Blavatnik, is as resolutely modern as our approach to solving some of the toughest governance challenges in the world.”



“We were inspired by the idea of a campfire around which students and researchers and public leaders could gather to reflect, share ideas and learn. That became the forum, an agora, and the vibrant heart of informal and intellectual exchange.”

Ascan Mergenthaler, Architect

Learning from leaders

The School welcomed global leaders and innovators, giving students direct access to ideas shaping a changing world.

We want our students to be open-minded about where solutions might spring from, and to learn, listen and understand viewpoints with which they might disagree. We seek to nurture their curiosity and create opportunities for them to engage with ideas and leaders at the forefront of global challenges.

Over the past year the School has welcomed leading figures from across the political spectrum and beyond, bringing in voices from the fields of technology, climate, and economics.

GLOBAL SECURITY

Global security is under growing strain, with overlapping challenges from great power competition to emerging technologies, creating risks not seen since the Cold War. We were delighted to host the **Calleva–Airey Neave Global Security Seminar Series**, bringing together leading experts to examine the drivers of conflict and explore solutions to today's most pressing security challenges.

Speakers included:

Lord Hague of Richmond, Chancellor of the University of Oxford.

Professor David Kilcullen FRGS, former soldier and diplomat, world-leading counterinsurgency and modern warfare expert, and former chief strategist in the Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism at the US State Department.

Rachel Ellehuus, Director-General of the Royal United Services Institute.



Lord David Anderson, the UK's Independent Prevent Commissioner and former Terror Watchdog.

Andrew Miller, Senior Fellow at the Center for American Progress (CAP) and former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Israeli-Palestinian Affairs in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs in the Biden Administration.

Professor A C Grayling, one of the UK's leading public philosophers and author of *For the People: Fighting Authoritarianism*, *Saving Democracy*.

Our **Dean's Forums** continued to provide an exclusive space for students

to hear from world leaders in closed sessions. This year students questioned businessman and politician Sir Andy Street; the School's World Leaders Fellow Sri Mulyani Indrawati, twice-serving former Minister for finance of Indonesia and Managing Director at the World Bank; our World Leaders Circle members, the Rt Hon Dame Jacinda Ardern, former Prime Minister of New Zealand, and Rishi Sunak MP, former Prime Minister of the UK; French politician Valerie Pécresse; Odile Renaud-Basso, President of European Bank of Reconstruction and Development (EBRD); and Warren A Stephens, the Ambassador of the US to the UK.



We seek to nurture curiosity and create opportunities for students to engage with ideas and leaders at the forefront of global challenges.

We also heard from the 2024/25 Heywood Fellow, UK civil servant Lucy Smith, in a lecture that explored what reforms are needed for the UK to practise long-term national strategy-making.

As part of our **Global Tech Policy Seminar Series**, students spoke to Troy Hunt, Australian security researcher and cyber security expert who founded a data breach notification service; David Koh, Commissioner of Cybersecurity and CEO of the Cyber Security Agency of Singapore; and Katrina Mulligan, National Security Lead for OpenAI and former US Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense.

Professor Sir Lawrence Freedman, Emeritus Professor of War Studies at King's College London, joined us for a conversation on peace diplomacy and the Russo-Ukraine War, and Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Nicholas Kristof of the *New York Times* joined Vice Dean Pepper Culpepper for a wide-ranging conversation reflecting on Kristof's role as a journalist in the current political moment. Our new Visiting Fellow Jen Easterly joined Margrethe Vestager, World Leaders Fellow and Michael Wooldridge, Oxford's Ashall Professor of the Foundations of Artificial Intelligence, for an expert panel covering how societies cope with rapid technological change, competition, regulation, and security.

Renowned political scientist Margaret Levi, Professor Emerita of Political Science and Senior Fellow at Stanford University, joined Maya Tudor a timely conversation on the role of universities in the current political and economic climate, and the roles universities across



the world play in defending civil liberties. Liisa-Ly Pakosta, Minister of Justice and Digital Affairs of the Republic of Estonia, shared how governments can navigate emerging challenges and AI-driven risks in the digital age, drawing on Estonia's global leadership in digital policy.

KYOTO PRIZE

The School hosted the annual Kyoto Prize at Oxford, with lectures from Kyoto Prize Laureates choreographer William Forsythe, whose work has reshaped the world of contemporary performance; geologist Paul F Hoffman, whose extensive research on 'Snowball Earth' has significantly advanced our understanding of earth's early climate and its impact on the evolution of life; and physicist Sir John Pendry, whose groundbreaking work on metamaterials laid the groundwork for technologies like invisibility cloaks and ultra-powerful lenses.

ALFRED LANDECKER

This year's Alfred Landecker Memorial Lecture was delivered by journalist and historian Anne Applebaum and was based on her new book *Autocracy, Inc.: The Dictators Who Want to Run the World*. The Alfred Landecker Memorial Lecture is hosted at the School each year to mark the United Nations Holocaust Remembrance Day and is an integral part of the School's Alfred Landecker Programme, which explores the values and institutions that underpin democratic society in relation to the rights of minority groups.

Finally, we celebrated the career of Professor Jo Wolff, one of the most influential political philosophers of our time, a scholar whose work has shaped numerous debates in philosophy, from equality and disadvantage to health and disability, urban policy, and structural injustice.

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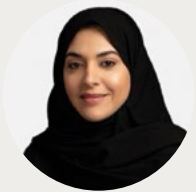


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Dean of the Blavatnik School of Government and Professor of Global Economic Governance

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Academic Director (Government Outcomes Lab)
Left in October 2025

Noam Angrist

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Eric Beinhocker

Professor of Practice in Public Policy, Executive Director of the Institute for New Economic Thinking

Eleanor Carter

Academic Director (Government Outcomes Lab)

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Professor of Management and Public Policy

Thomas Simpson

Alfred Landecker Professor of Values and Public Policy

Ἐπιθλά Ἀνούλωραφοῦ Σόυεμί

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Senior Research Fellow in Global Health and Public Policy

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Philippa Webb

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Jonathan Wolff*

Professor in Philosophy and Public Policy
Retired in 2025–26

Yeling Tan

Professor of Public Policy

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