

Introduction

The Department of Government— A Brief History

Gordon Bannerman, Daniel Skeffington
and Cheryl Schonhardt-Bailey

Introduction

This volume represents the first ever History of the Government Department of the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). While histories of other departments, as well as a history of the School itself, have been written, the Department of Government has never explored its own past.¹ The volume coincides with and commemorates the 125th anniversary of the LSE, and as such aims to provide a comprehensive historical account of the Department since its emergence in 1895. However, we also hope that it inspires the many thousands of students, academics and interested followers with links to the LSE to engage with the roots of the institution. Through building a shared narrative among academics and students, the volume also seeks to help nurture and shape the unique identity of the Department within the School. Importantly, the volume represents the collective efforts of Government Department

¹ Dahrendorf 1995; Husbands 2018.

How to cite this book chapter:

Bannerman, G., Skeffington, D. and Schonhardt-Bailey, C. 2021. Introduction: The Department of Government—A Brief History. In: Schonhardt-Bailey, C. and Bannerman, G. (eds.) *Political Science at the LSE: A History of the Department of Government, from the Webbs to COVID*. Pp. 1–20. London: Ubiquity Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5334/bcn.a>. License: CC-BY-NC

students and faculty, who—even during one of the most disrupted years in the history of the School—worked collaboratively to bring this volume to life.

In the first section of this volume, we trace the development of the Department, before assessing the contribution of individuals and the overall impact of the Department on the School, on academia and in the wider public policy space. Subsequent chapters show how the Department's growth was coterminous with the School. From an initial loose collection of lecturers and temporary staff, which was more akin to a 'community of scholars,' the Government Department has become part of a university structure which is far more separated and self-contained than in previous decades. A much clearer departmental identity has emerged alongside greater professionalism—the latter a particularly important theme from the 1970s to the present day. Chapter 4 and the conclusion also raise wider questions about the future of political science at the School itself. Looking at the impact of Brexit, as well as of COVID-19, they reflect on the nature and practice of political science at the LSE, the challenges it faces and the paths it may take over the next few decades.

The volume assumes a chronological approach, with Chapter 1 assessing the early days of the School between 1895 and 1920, when the identity of the School and its respective departments² were still in embryonic form. Chapter 2 examines the period between 1921 and 1965, following the growth and maturation of this proto department under some of the great figures in the School's history: Harold Laski and Michael Oakeshott. Chapter 3 assesses the years between 1966 and 1989, an interim period heralding a new era in the Department, with a great change in personnel and an uptick in professionalism and specialisation. Chapter 4 covers the period from 1990 to the present day, detailing the continuing evolution of the Department into a modern, research-led institution, and the factors that helped create it.

As the chapters proceed, we identify several key themes. First, like other university departments in the United Kingdom, the Government Department has moved from an early era where one or possibly two prominent figures (men, in this case) largely dominated the ethos and direction of the Department, to one in which the Department is more identified by a number of scholars. Second, the periodisation captured by each chapter manages to highlight one or two 'dramas' (e.g. the birth of the LSE itself, the 'tussle' between two prominent figures—Harold Laski and subsequently Michael Oakeshott, the protests of

² The 'Government Department', as an entity, did not officially exist until 1962—as is the case for all LSE departments. For clarity in this work, mentions which refer to pre-1962 are designated with the lowercase 'department', or with the term 'proto department', while mentions to post-1962 are capitalised as 'Department'. This distinguishes the early collection of political scientists at the School from what later became the formal creation of the Department itself. It should be noted that histories of other LSE departments have not always drawn this clear distinction between their pre- and post-departmental incarnations (e.g. Bauer & Brighi 2003).

the 1960s and into Thatcherism, and the COVID-19 pandemic following years of professionalisation). Third, using a wider lens, the history of the Government Department is something of a microcosm for significant developments in Britain, namely the professionalisation of higher education, the centrality of London, the growing focus on Europe in the 1990s and early 2000s, and the challenges going forward, post COVID and post Brexit.

Throughout the volume, we seek to trace the Department's development, before assessing the contribution of individuals, and the overall impact and influence of the Department on the School, the wider academic community and the public policy space. The volume embraces archival research, especially in the earlier chapters, alongside an extensive series of interviews, especially useful for the later chapters. These interviews include current and former colleagues of long standing, as well as key individuals outside the Department, who have been connected closely with it in some way. We have also drawn from interviews with alumni, who provide a unique perspective on their time in the Department. These biographical details form a picture of the people who comprised the Government Department, as well as describing the culture and essence of education that characterised the Department over its history.

The volume also explores the environment in which the Department has grown, tracing its location on campus, while also locating the Department ideologically in the wider context of British and European politics. In so doing, it explores the contribution of Government Department academics to national and global debates, and academic scholarship more generally. Over time, the Department has become more varied in its curriculum and research, as its scholarship has become more diffuse. It has also become more international and comparative, in keeping with greater awareness of international politics, as well as reflecting the challenges and opportunities represented by globalisation. The School's particular appeal to international studies has also been a factor in encouraging a broader outlook.

The Department is fondly remembered by former students and academics and is acknowledged as making a multi-faceted contribution to the scholarship in the fields of political science and political theory, both in the United Kingdom and internationally. All of us who have worked on the volume have been struck by the unique nature of the Department in terms of its influence, impact and relevance over the duration of its existence. The lineage of the Department, like the School itself, is significant, revealing important strands in British political, social and economic history. In many ways, the Department has been groundbreaking, often leading as much as following opinion, and providing innovative and dynamic ideas into the sphere of civil and political society.

The Roots of the School

The LSE was founded in 1895, in the late Victorian era, a period of great fluidity in British politics and of social and economic change, when the effects and impact of the industrial society created throughout the 19th century continued



Figure 1: Sidney & Beatrice Webb, c. 1895; Credit: LSE Library.

to raise public policy problems. Concerned with achieving maximum equity and efficiency, the founders of the School, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, George Bernard Shaw and Graham Wallas, saw the LSE as a laboratory and training ground for a new technocratic society.³

While the Fabians saw the contemporary socialist movement as the most likely vehicle for collectivist politics and the socialist transformation of British society, they were not exclusively attached to one political party. Their philosophy of ‘gradualism’, that is, gradual economic and democratic reform, was the overall strategy, but the tactics were those of ‘permeation’, attempting to influence all political parties for the progressive advancement of British society.⁴

For the Webbs, the LSE was not a propaganda tool for socialism, but aimed at filling the gap in ‘political and economic subjects’ in the same way as the *Ecole Libre des Sciences Politiques*, Paris, and Columbia College, New York, since ‘no similar provision has been made for these subjects in the United Kingdom.’⁵ Webb even had a spat with George Bernard Shaw as to the nature and purpose of the LSE, not wanting the LSE to be a tool of socialist propaganda as Shaw did.⁶ Webb was clear that the Fabians had to act in the world as they found it, and not how they wished it to be. As Anthony Howe suggests, the LSE was

³ Dahrendorf 1995: 6–7.

⁴ Dahrendorf 1995: 42.

⁵ *The Times* 1895.

⁶ Kedourie 1993: 59–60.

designed to make thinking people ‘socialistic’ by examining modern disciplines with contemporary public policy resonance.⁷

The School’s first Director, William Hewins (1865–1931), proved to be a perfect partner in bringing Webb’s vision of a ‘school of economics’ to fruition. Initially, Graham Wallas had been considered as an interim Director, but he declined the position.⁸ By the time the LSE opened on 10 October 1895, Hewins had found accommodation, designed the syllabus, gathered influential support, published a Prospectus and recruited 200 students.⁹

The first Prospectus indicated that there was to be ‘no differentiation against persons ... on the grounds of sex, religion, or economic or political views’.¹⁰ Public lectures and classes were organised across nine subjects, supported by special classes organised as a three-year course of study, including a research course. The Prospectus explained the need for ‘systematic training in economic and political science, and the promotion of original investigation and research’. The LSE aimed at proving its credentials in encouraging study of the economic and social sciences. It was also a centre for advanced research, with research scholarships and publications by staff and students planned. Those students attending public lectures were not being prepared for examination, or any kind of degree course, but the Prospectus suggested courses and lectures would be useful for those planning to take public examinations such as those for the Civil Service, Council of Legal Education, Institute of Bankers, Institute of Actuaries and London Chamber of Commerce.

The School was to have three terms: October to December and January to March, each 10 weeks, and April to July of 12 to 14 weeks, and no public lectures in the summer term. As many students were employed, lectures were delivered between 6pm and 9pm and daytime classes were repeated in the evening. The subject range, many of a commercial and business nature, and evening classes, added to the vocational feel of the School. Admittance to all or any lectures and classes and full membership of the School was £3 per annum (in 2020 prices, about £403). A single course of 20 lectures over two terms and accompanying classes cost 15 shillings. Shorter courses of lectures were charged at 5 shillings. The School would award scholarships to ‘students of ability’ to enable them to attend the School and undertake research.¹¹

The School’s origins left a mark on the type of institution the LSE became, influencing both the development and the nature of the School’s teaching and scholarship. While deliberately taking a different approach to the ancient universities, in terms of valuing empiricism and in avoiding a classical curriculum, the School did share some of the attributes associated with them, especially in its recruitment of personnel.

⁷ Howe 2020.

⁸ Hayek 1946: 4; Donnelly 2015b.

⁹ Donnelly 2015a.

¹⁰ Donnelly 2015b.

¹¹ Donnelly 2015c.

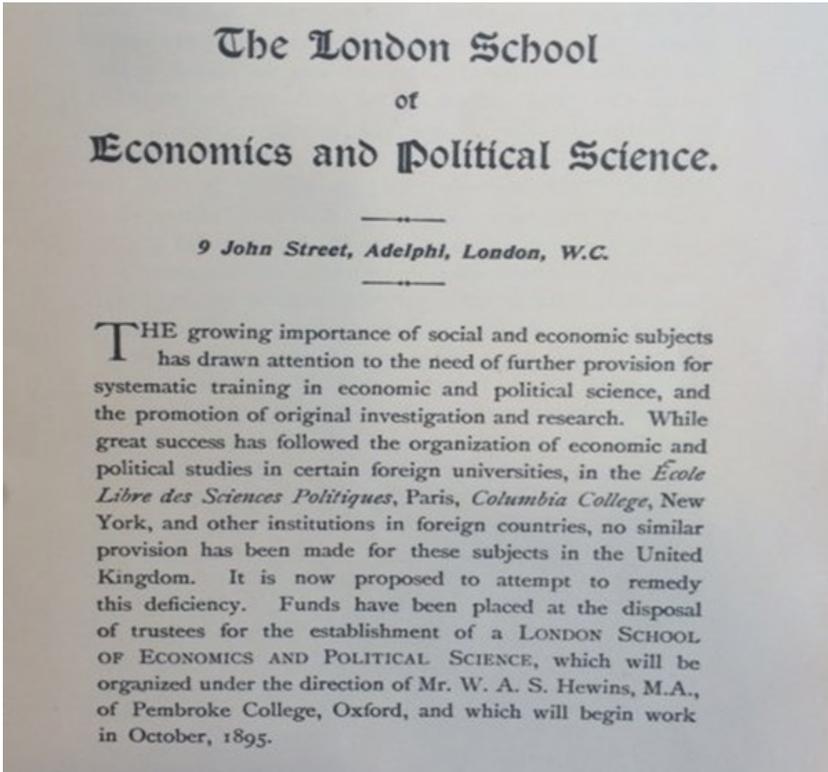


Figure 2: First page of the LSE Prospectus, 1895; Credit: LSE Library.

A Department of Government? Location and Identity

Where was the proto-Government Department located in the early days of the School? Several recent academics at the LSE have drawn a distinction between the informal notion of a Department before the 1960s and the more formal organisation thereafter. For ex-Director and official historian of the School, Ralf Dahrendorf, the notion of a government 'Department' was something of a misnomer, for at best it was 'small and institutionally almost non-existent'.¹² A formal departmental structure was not established until 1962. Before then, the 'Department' had a more nebulous quality. Michael Oakshott was the first Convener of the Department, serving in that role (unofficially and officially) between 1950 and 1968.

¹² Dahrendorf 1995: 226.

Part of the identity of any academic community is proximity and location. Before the 1960s, scholars teaching Political Science and Public Administration were spread across the School, consistent with the notion of LSE as a ‘community of scholars’ rather than a series of isolated, self-sustaining departments. George Jones (former convenor of the Department) saw the informality of departments not having their own departmental co-locations as an asset and source of strength. For him, when departments became more developed, it damaged the School’s ‘inter-disciplinary cohesion.’¹³

The School itself was organised in a rudimentary way. All administrative tasks devolved on one woman, the erstwhile ‘School Secretary’ between 1897 and 1919, Christian Scipio Mactaggart. Such was her importance that on his arrival at the School, William Beveridge called the LSE a ‘one woman show’. Miss Mactaggart was a key figure and point of contact between staff and students. She organised the afternoon tea hour, which Friedrich Hayek has claimed, almost certainly correctly, was one of the few opportunities the professors from across the School had to meet one another. That appears to have applied to those within as well as across different disciplines.¹⁴

It was almost certainly the case that, in the early years of the School at least, informal organisation arose not from any lofty ideals, but rather from shortage of space. Initially, the School was based in three sparsely furnished rooms at 9 John Street, Adelphi, near Charing Cross Station, with lectures delivered at the Society of Arts rooms in John Street, and Chamber of Commerce rooms at Botolph House, Eastcheap. The Society allowed free use of its halls in return for LSE offering courses in some subjects which the Society examined, including commercial geography and economics. In 1896, the School assumed a lease on 10 Adelphi Terrace, occupying part of the building inhabited by George Bernard Shaw and his wife Charlotte Payne-Townshend.¹⁵

The makeshift character of the School was superseded by the construction of the New Building, on the freehold land of Clare Market in 1900, presented by London County Council and opened in 1902 largely as a result of £10,000 and £5,000 donations from Passmore Edwards and Lord Rothschild respectively to equip a building for economic and commercial science for London University.¹⁶ At the official opening of the ‘handsome and convenient’ building, Lord Rosebery as Chancellor of London University saw the School as ‘a practical instalment of a new order of things.’¹⁷ We can surmise that teaching occurred across the New Building after 1900. By moving to its new purpose-built

¹³ Cook 2015.

¹⁴ Donnelly 2016; Hayek 1946: 10–11.

¹⁵ Donnelly 2015a.

¹⁶ *The Times* 1899: 11.

¹⁷ *The Times*, 30 May 1902, p. 9.

facility, the School was no longer dependent on the generosity of other institutions or the hazards of lease renewal. The poverty surrounding the New Building was plain to see, and worthy of press comment:

The slums which surrounded it have only been in part removed; the works subsidiary to the great new street are long in the doing; and there still remain streets and courts filled with people whose notions of economics are primitive, being confined to the question of how to earn and spend their pound a week.¹⁸

In contrast, the New Building contained a luxurious range of facilities, including a reading room, large hall (with an approximate capacity of 200), administrative offices, six lecture and classrooms, a students' and lecturers' common room and cloakrooms, as well as space for a library.¹⁹

While these were great developments in the life of the School, there is no indication that the nascent department had become more formally organised, or that it inhabited a designated and clearly defined space. We know from the 1895 Calendar that Wallas's lectures on 'The English Constitution since 1832' were delivered at the Society of Arts rooms at 6.30pm. Classes for other courses were also held at John Street, Adelphi and the London Chamber of Commerce rooms, so perhaps all three locations were used for Political Science and Public Administration lectures.²⁰

It is perfectly legitimate to ask whether a 'Government department' even existed before the 1960s. On the one hand, and a question not merely of nomenclature, the Department was never referenced in this way. Even though the subject matter of courses was progressively well-defined and became more precise over time, the Department remained somewhat amorphous. It is probably better to view the 'Department' as consisting of two streams of study and subjects: Political Science and Public Administration, the latter by far the most important.

Taken together, these subject areas did not quite add up to a department in the formal or modern sense. Partly that was to do with the embryonic departmental structure and a subject-driven curriculum, with a flexible interpretation of what exactly constituted 'Political Science' and 'Public Administration'. Perversely though, 'Political Science' was most often cited as the name of the department despite being the less important stream. Of course, the desire to advance political science as a discipline was important in this respect, but we should consider that desire to be more an aspiration than a reality for much of

¹⁸ Ibid.; Sir Laurence Gomme suggested the new thoroughfares between Holborn and the Strand should be called Kingsway and Aldwych—names he found in old maps of the area, *The Times* 1916: 5.

¹⁹ LSE 1901: 33–34.

²⁰ LSE 1895: 9.

the School's existence. The same may be said for other proto departments that were forming at this time. It is difficult to separate the development of distinct disciplines at the School from the histories of the departments themselves, for the former are invariably the raw substrate from which the latter emerge. As such, while scholars such as Bauer and Brighi have argued the International Relations Department can trace its emergence at the School as far back as 1927, the present work takes a different approach, by drawing a firmer distinction between the pre-1960s lowercase 'departments' or 'proto departments' and the post-1960s 'Departments' for clarity and ease of reference.²¹

While proto departmental structures existed in one form or another since the School's Constitutional Committee convened in 1937 to moot their formal creation, Departments in the modern sense formally emerged at the School in 1962. As the Calendars of the period show, before then the School was organised as a single faculty without organisational or residential division and evidenced by a single alphabetical listing of all faculty pre-1962. While many staff worked within broadly defined proto departments such as 'Government', 'International Relations' and 'Economics', their existence was still yet to be formally enforced.²² The creation of departments as independent entities is conspicuous in the shift in the calendar entries to list faculty separately by each department, as well as naming the convenors of all departments. In Chapter 2, we discuss this more fully in the context of the Government Department.

The physical geography of the Department impacted the nature of relations between professors and the Department's position within the School. There were several problems in generating a departmental ethos. Location and administrative organisational structures were two of the most vital which were intimately connected. For many years, there was no departmental co-location, but academics were spread throughout the School buildings, where they rubbed shoulders with scholars from other departments.²³ While this encouraged a collegiate approach across the School, the absence of a precise location meant that a strong departmental identity was inhibited and difficult to forge.

Even when the Department began to coalesce, it was not without problems. When based at King's Chambers and Lincoln's Chambers, the buildings promoted a self-insulated sense of community somewhat separate from the rest of the LSE.²⁴ As indicated in Chapter 4, the buildings were somewhat shabby and run-down, and for all the charm they held for students and staff alike, they were no longer a feasible home for the Department by the end of the 20th century. From the late 1970s, when the LSE pursued a 'business model' instead of being a community of self-governing academics, the Department succeeded to its own location, finally ending up in the purpose-built Centre Building in 2019.

²¹ Bauer & Brighi 2003.

²² LSE 1962.

²³ Cook 2015.

²⁴ Dunleavy interview 2019.

Replacing the East Building, Clare Market, The Anchorage and St. Clements, and with its corporate feel and layout, the Centre Building could hardly be any more different from King's and Lincoln's Chambers, and is perhaps representative of the commercialisation process of the Government Department, and the School as a whole, over the last few decades.

Location has also influenced the nature and organisation of the Department in a more direct and immutable way—the influence which comes from being based in London. Influential seminars between civil servants and senior Government Department faculty have featured over the decades, with its proximity to power playing a key role in the success of these collaborative programmes. As Patrick Dunleavy argues, if the School had not been in London, its position, image and reputation, collectively or as particular departments, would have been quite different, and the student body would almost certainly be less international in complexion.²⁵

The Development of Political Science at the LSE

Before the 1970s, the nascent Government Department was characterised by the domination of certain larger-than-life figures, from Graham Wallas between 1895 and 1920, Harold Laski from 1920 to 1950 and Michael Oakeshott from 1950 to 1968. Wallas and Laski were both influential in their respective contemporary socialist movements—Oakeshott, the diametric opposite, often seen as the prime proponent of a philosophical, at times quasi-libertarian, strain of conservatism. During Wallas's tenure, the School and department struggled to forge an identity, but with the Directorship of William Beveridge beginning in 1919 and the appointment of Harold Laski in 1920, a more clearly defined character began to emerge. With this character came a reputation—a reputation for radical socialist thought.

However, in the eyes of the influential political scientist and psephologist Robert McKenzie, this could hardly have been further from reality. To him, the School was a 'conservative institution in almost every sense of the term'. It was in no small measure owing to Laski that the School attained a 'wholly misleading reputation as a hotbed of socialism'.²⁶ Laski's role as Chairman of the National Executive of the Labour Party, and his prominence at the end of the Second World War, including outspoken run-ins with Churchill and Attlee, led to a perception that the so-called 'red professor' was 'soft' on communism.²⁷

There was little in the way of 'modernisation' during the Laski period, tarnished as it was by the rigours of post-war reconstruction, the depression of the 1930s and the outbreak of war in 1939. However, Laski's position at the

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Abse 1977: 97, 99.

²⁷ *Ibid.*: 8–9.

School was often considered in terms of a continuum of the School's traditions forged by Fabian doctrines of the Webbs and Wallas. Laski played an exceptionally important role during the Second World War when the LSE decamped to Cambridge, and the abiding memory of many students was that of great fondness and gratitude for Laski's way of making them think deeply about politics and political issues. Laski was valued in this way for his pedagogic skills rather than as a socialist propagandist—the latter often an accusation made against him in his forays into political life.²⁸

His successor as effective head of the department, Michael Oakeshott, was quite a different character. A political philosopher and noted conservative, Oakeshott's arrival at the LSE was greeted with howls of protest from those concerned that the soul of the LSE was at risk.²⁹ Many protested vigorously against Oakeshott's appointment to Laski's position, including the prominent Labour politician Richard Crossman. This outrage by left-wing thinkers and politicians was not helped by Oakeshott's influential inaugural lecture, in which he paid tribute to Laski before presenting his own vision of political science. This vision was to prove every bit as influential as Laski's, shaping the Department well into the last decades of the 20th century.

During Oakeshott's tenure, an informal, unorthodox mode of administration was dominant. Likewise, academics often considered themselves part of a single-faculty school, no more so than when enjoying the congeniality and conviviality of the School's Senior Common Room, which acted as a locus for academics from different disciplines. As late as the early 1970s, several academics have testified to this Common Room remaining important as a lively place for political discussion. The idea of 'departments' was anathema to many scholars who opposed such formal, rigid boundaries in the School. This unusual structure was part of the LSE carving out its own identity, intellectual culture and pedagogic style.³⁰ It was perhaps befitting of an age which valued a somewhat casual, philosophical approach to higher education, unconstrained by contemporary managerialism or rigorous research standards.

Yet, while unorthodox methods of hiring and an aversion to new modes of thought or disciplines has tended to mark the Oakeshottian era as clubbish, and an 'old boys' club at that, it cannot be denied that Oakeshott's personal and academic reputation were both held in high regard. His dominance of the Department extended well beyond its intellectual parameters, encompassing the everyday life of the Department and its collegiate style. It was even Oakeshott's idea that the Department should have a Convenor and not a Head, that is, 'convening' colleagues and not based on top-down planning or dictation.³¹ After his retirement in 1968, Oakeshott continued to be an occasional

²⁸ *Ibid.*: 57–60.

²⁹ O'Sullivan 2014: 471.

³⁰ Dahrendorf 1995: 209.

³¹ Cook 2015.

presence at the School into the 1980s, remaining on some flagship courses such as his *History of Political Thought* seminar.

Towards the end of his tenure, and shown in Chapter 3, the School and Department were intimately connected with the student radicalism of the 1960s.³² Other departments, such as Sociology and Law, were far more sympathetic to the students' cause. The protests were initially sparked by the appointment of Walter Adams as the School's Director, who had connections with Ian Smith's repressive regime in Rhodesia. As a result of the protests, the Old Building was occupied for eight days in March 1967. While there were issues specific to the LSE, campus unrest and student protests had occurred across the United Kingdom, including the new universities of Warwick and Hull. Drawing inspiration from events in France, unrest continued throughout 1968, and the School was forced to close in January and February 1969.

The impact on the School was multifaceted, transforming and in some cases embittering relations between departments and students, but also within departments. Within the Government Department, divisions solidified even after Oakeshott's departure in 1968. Oakeshott and Ken Minogue were particularly opposed to student protests, regarding them as juvenile and futile. A pervasive belief that the LSE was inherently left wing persisted, but the LSE was not a socialist institution by this point.

Reflecting on the School at that time, Rodney Barker has argued that the Department contained both left- and right-wing elements. Patrick Dunleavy's impression, however, is that the LSE was always on the right, and that the Government Department was 'very strongly on the Right' when he joined.³³ Perhaps the Department was reflecting a wider zeitgeist of impending change. The formation of the Institute of Policy Studies in 1974 and the 'New Right' coalescing behind Keith Joseph and Margaret Thatcher were indicative of a new challenge to the consensus politics which had held sway in Britain since 1945.³⁴ Among those in the Department who embraced this type of neo-conservatism were Maurice Cranston and Bill and Shirley Letwin, with the latter influential in the Centre of Policy Studies. Indeed, Thatcherite conservatism touched at various points with the older, non-political conservatism of Oakeshott.

The increasingly divisive politics of the 1970s was reflected in the life of the Department where there appeared to exist a Fabian left-wing group and a neo-monetarist Conservative group—though both were opposed to the left-wing student protests. Moving on from the student radicalism of the 1960s, there appeared to be more scope for channelling radicalism into more orthodox political forms, within political parties and pressure groups, rather than through direct action.

³² Ibid.

³³ Barker interview 2020; Dunleavy interview 2019.

³⁴ Gamble & Wells 1989: 58.

Aside from ideological tone, the main developments to affect the Department were its refurbishment and modernisation of the syllabus, alongside an increasingly professional approach to research and publications. Both of these factors would prove central in forging the identity of the Department in the years that followed, creating the modern research-focused institution that exists today. In many ways, these changes were a response to external factors, with deep-seated changes in the fields of interest among political scientists, and a far more demanding set of objectives set by successive British governments for universities. However, the impression given by those in the Department at that time was not one of transformation, but rather of stagnation, or even decline. For the acerbic Bernard Crick, the School's glory days were long gone by the 1970s. He lamented that:

‘And like our poor old country itself, the memory of unique power outlives the reality ... Yet it was a very tolerant and amusing place to have been in, both as a man and boy, and had the overwhelming advantage of being in London, the cultural and political capital, even if its great days both of scholarship and influence were plainly in the past. It is simply that, like the ocean liners, the cinema organs, the cavalry and the Kibbutzim, it has had its finest days.’³⁵

It was perhaps symptomatic of the recurrent economic crises of the 1970s and the sense of irrevocable decline that some could credibly write in this way. However, much was to change after 1979, with the academic landscape transformed by the expansion of a more market-based approach to higher education. For most of the 20th century, universities had enjoyed considerable autonomy, and often seemed to constitute a world apart from the rest of British society. The idea of serving the nation, contributing towards a closer relationship with business, and forging a closer alignment between academia and the business community was a constant theme in the Thatcherite Conservative Party from the mid-1970s onwards.

Ironically, the idea of universities serving the economy was one the School had subscribed to in its early years, as indicated in Chapter 1, albeit for different reasons and under different circumstances, with the LSE acting as the handmaiden for many business-related courses. A stricter regime of Research Assessment Exercises, linking research activity to government funding, was established in 1986, later replaced by the Research Excellence Framework in 2014. Continuing the trend away from universities as secluded academic enclaves, university rankings or ‘league tables’, now a staple item in evaluating universities, began in 1993. Fuelled by a rhetoric of shining the light of

³⁵ Abse 1977: 162.

transparency and accountability on universities, the new approach had a transformative effect on higher education in the United Kingdom.³⁶

Research league tables, alongside similar reforms in the 1980s, created the pathway for a more professional Government Department. The Conservative Government's Education Reform Act of 1988 was designed to introduce greater efficiency and competition into higher education. The University Grants Commission was replaced by the University Funding Council to remove the prohibitive cost of expanding the number of students in higher education.³⁷ These educational reforms affected the LSE in a profound way. Research Assessment Exercises and Teaching Quality Assessments led to a more professional faculty alongside a more formal departmental structure and organisation. Within the Government Department, key appointments were made which had a transformative effect. In particular, the appointments of Christopher Hood and Brian Barry, both appointed to Chairs when George Jones was Convenor, were at least partly predicated on improving RAE scores. To boost the RAE metrics, it was necessary to publish academic works to raise the standing of the Department. The appointment of Patrick Dunleavy, a prodigious researcher and writer, contributed to this same goal.³⁸

As outlined in Chapter 4, the appointments of Brian Barry and others were to prove a seminal influence in the Department's organisation from the late 1980s and early 1990s, overseeing a more efficient regime, especially relating to research and publication. A higher degree of professionalism, and adaptation of the business model of the School, has undoubtedly led to higher standards in teaching and research. An examination of political science departments according to the quantity and impact of publications in 63 leading political science journals over rolling five-year periods between 1993 and 2002 placed the LSE at number 41 between 1993 and 1997, rising to number 15 between 1998 and 2002. Clearly, professionalisation, funding and a commitment to research and publication was yielding positive results, according to this 'Rolling Global Top Fifty'.³⁹

Yet, these positive and progressive developments also led to a more rigid view of what exactly constituted an academic, and the profile of academics changed somewhat. Despite clear improvements in many areas, there appears to be an undercurrent of regret that something of the foundational identity of the School and its respective departments has been lost in the process. Sometimes, this has taken the form of criticism of the new purpose-built offices and departmental space. However, the buildings are only the tangible outcome of what others had previously noted: the increasingly corporate and uniform nature of academia

³⁶ Jump 2013.

³⁷ Seldon & Collings 2000: 43–44.

³⁸ Cook 2015.

³⁹ The full range was as follows: 1993–1997 (41); 1994–1998 (39); 1995–1999 (37); 1996–2000 (37); 1997–2001 (25); 1998–2002 (15); see Hix 2004: 311.

which co-existed with professionalisation, league tables, research funding and performance reviews.

For others such as George Jones, Elie Kedourie and, most notably, Kenneth Minogue, this shift in tone and content represented a more deep-rooted malaise, and there was regret and some anger at the transition from the purer academic discipline and looser organisation of the Oakeshott era. Ideologically, there was particularly vehement opposition to the ‘Third Way’ policy-driven global economy ambitions and interests redolent of the Directorship of Anthony Giddens (1996–2003), and what this implied for universities and academic freedom.⁴⁰

Academically, the Oakeshottian legacy had led to a curious perception in the Department that a qualitative emphasis in political studies was associated with the political right, while quantitative work became associated with those on the political left who wished to empirically identify, trace and measure inequality as a prelude and justification for reform. Here was one of the fault lines in the Department. Before the 1970s, the non-theory side to politics in the Department came under the general heading ‘Political Studies’, echoing Oakeshott’s disdain for the term ‘political science’ that had been such a guiding feature of his tenure. The Calendars show GV100 was entitled *Introduction to Political Theory*, while GV101 (or its pre-1993 equivalent GV150) was entitled *Introduction to the Study of Politics/Political Studies*. This continued until GV101 was rebranded *Introduction to Political Science* in 2003. Simon Hix recalls how, in response to this, the quantitative and non-theory academics in the Department tried to consolidate during the latter years of the Oakeshottians, establishing a clearer role for themselves within the departmental structure.

The syllabus also changed to mirror structural changes in British society—the rise of Labour and the decline of Liberalism: the end of empire, the admission (and eventual departure) of the United Kingdom from the European Union. Most significant of all, we have witnessed the long-delayed arrival of political science as a discipline—at the School which included the discipline in its name, but rarely practised it.

These efforts to bring the Department more in line with political science in the United States also fuelled a change in the appointments system. The LSE calendar was aligned with the American appointments calendar to attract American applicants, as well as European ones. The Department also aimed to compete globally for staff, and this formed another major incentive for increasing competition in the appointments system, making the process fairer and less elitist in the hope of increasing the number of appointments of women and minorities.

Concerns were raised that the new appointments process would not support the appointment of more female and minority candidates, as the sociability element within the process would advantage more privileged and male candidates

⁴⁰ Jones 2013.

due to their affability. The worry was that the reformed system took the emphasis away from professional ability and more towards likeability.⁴¹ This change was part of a wider process from 2010 onwards to professionalise the Department, aligning it with the international academic hiring process, both to attract the best candidates and to place LSE PhD students at better universities worldwide, but inevitably with great weight placed on North America and Europe.

Before the 1990s, the Department had little focus on Europe, and few European students. Patrick Dunleavy argues there was not a focus on European or comparative political science, but instead an ‘Imperialist Public Administration’ legacy when he joined, in 1979. This shift in concentration towards European expertise allowed the LSE to challenge the tendency to engage mostly with English and American literature, recruiting more academics from across Europe, and enabling the Department to broaden its scope and course offerings. However, the challenges posed by British withdrawal from the European Union places this broader outlook at risk.

The School’s 125th anniversary also coincides with another historic event, one which any treatment of the Department cannot properly ignore. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about changes to both the School and society not seen since the Second World War.⁴² A pandemic of this magnitude has been faced only once in the history of the Department, back when it was still a loose collection of scholars led by Graham Wallas: the H1N1 Spanish Influenza pandemic of 1918. Its significance is usually overshadowed by the final months of the First World War. The war, which claimed almost 40 million lives, is rightly remembered as one of the most brutal conflicts of the modern age. An epoch-defining event for Britain and much of the world, the remembrance services and memorials which commemorate the First and Second World Wars—such as the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and the Cenotaph—remain at the heart of British national identity. These traditions and structures have helped create and preserve a memory of the horrors endured, and horrors overcome, during these devastating conflicts and impress deeply on the collective psyche even today.

No comparable memorials exist for the victims of the Spanish Influenza pandemic, which claimed the lives of almost 10 million *more* people than the total number of military and civilian deaths during the course of the entire Great War, even given the most conservative estimates.⁴³ Most now place the total number of deaths between 50 and 100 million people globally in just two years, a quarter of a million of whom were British. And yet, while the wartime evacuation to Cambridge between 1939 and 1945 is recalled fondly in histories of the School, the pandemic of 1918 goes all but unmentioned, as it had done nationally before the outbreak of coronavirus in the last months of 2019.

⁴¹ Phillips interview 2020.

⁴² See Chapter 2, section entitled ‘The Department and the War’, this volume.

⁴³ Bayly 2020; More et al. 2020.

Questions naturally arise about the memory and identity that coronavirus will create in this generation, and of lessons not learned from the ‘forgotten pandemic’ of 1918 can be taught more effectively in the years to come. Yet, this also raises the question of the impact the Department itself has on the wider world. The Department has maintained a close connection to British political and social life since its earliest days, on both sides of the political spectrum. Laski’s passionate advocacy on behalf of British Labour and socialist movements and Oakeshott’s quiet influence on the roots of conservatism in the late 20th century are but the most obvious examples of a deep tradition of political engagement at the School. This volume begins to explore the deeper connections between the Department and the society it has helped shape and, in turn, been shaped by.

Looking forward, the Department faces the challenge of where to situate itself in a shifting academic and political landscape. British withdrawal from the European Union and coronavirus are both significant concerns for the Department and the School; challenges that will shape the new, European-focused research unit in the Government faculty, and define its future agenda. The conclusion of this volume—a personal reflection by the Department’s current head, Professor Cheryl Schonhardt-Bailey—will explore these themes in more depth, situating the Department in the context of the times and providing some thoughts on the future direction of Government at the LSE.

Conclusion

When former Director Anthony Giddens hoped to restore what he perceived to be a ‘golden age’ to the School, he argued that the LSE had ‘never been a partisan institution’ at heart, but rather encompassed both Left and Right traditions for the common social good.⁴⁴ On balance, this seems to be the most accurate reading of both the School’s history and the Government Department, which has contained scholars whose views span the political spectrum over the years. The Government Department at the LSE has long been thought of as a radical entity within an equally radical School, particularly among British elites; Anthony Eden was even said to have ‘looked askance’ when J. W. N. Watkins informed him he was from the LSE.⁴⁵ Yet, despite its Fabian origins, the ‘red professor’ Harold Laski, several intransigently right-wing Oakeshottians and the lasting perception of student radicalism, the School has perhaps fundamentally remained what Sidney Webb first intended it to be—a non-partisan institution, promoting rigorous social and economic research for the guidance of policymakers, in the pursuit of more efficient policymaking.

⁴⁴ Giddens & Pierson 1998: 49–50.

⁴⁵ Abse 1977: 68.

Moreover, while this history of the Government Department indicates there have been phases when the faculty has displayed a clear political orientation, whether on the left or on the right, it also shows a balance has been at work. Even during Oakeshott's heyday, the Department was leavened by a number of socialist scholars, and effectively split between a 'Fabian left-wing' and a 'Thatcherite before Thatcher' group.⁴⁶ The Department has appeared to 'move with the times', and in many ways has presented itself as a microcosm of wider political and social movements, both in higher education and in British society more generally. Its history reveals a Department in constant conflict with itself—conflicts between socialism and conservatism, qualitative and quantitative analysis, theory and practice—challenging and remoulding its very identity in dialogue with the prevailing attitudes of the day.

In an age of more rigorous academic standards, research-focused agendas and a shift from national to international concerns, this prevailing attitude has manifested itself in a drive towards European politics in the international order, reflected in the Department's syllabus, personnel and student body. Its strengths now appear broader than in previous years, with the rather insular focus on British politics eclipsed in favour of the seismic changes brought about by internationalism. In keeping with greater awareness of international politics, the Department has become more international and comparative over time, reflecting the challenges and opportunities represented by globalisation. Although interdisciplinary work of this type only truly began in the late 1990s, it has had a lasting impact, and this more global outlook and practice has brought the Department in step with the School as a whole.⁴⁷

While the Department has come a long way since the days of its Fabian founders, several of their guiding principles remain central themes even today; principles promoting disinterested social, economic investigations and social research remain vital principles, instincts and objectives of the Department, as much as they have always been. This volume explores the history of these principles and values both inside and beyond the porous borders of the Aldwych campus; their evolution, adaptation and transformation, and the character of the Department they created through their incarnation, here at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

References

- Abse, J** (ed.) 1977 *My LSE*. London: Robson Books.
- Bauer, H** and **Brighi, E** 2003 *International relations at LSE: A history of 75 years*. London: Millennium Publishing Group.

⁴⁶ Cook 2015.

⁴⁷ Dunleavy interview 2019.

- Bayly, M** 2020 Fatalism and an absence of public grief: How British society dealt with the 1918 flu, 28 October. Available at <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/public-memory-1918-flu/>.
- Dahrendorf, R** 1995 *LSE: A history of the London School of Economics and Political Science, 1895–1995*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cook, C** 2015 Tales from Houghton Street: an oral history. George Jones, interviewed by Clara Cook, 22 July. Available at <https://digital.library.lse.ac.uk/objects/lse:kub826huw>.
- Donnelly, S** 2015a Adelphi days—LSE’s first home, 14 October. Available at <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lsehistory/2015/10/14/adelphi-days-lses-first-home/>.
- Donnelly, S** 2015b LSE’s first Director—William Hewins, 21 October. Available at <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lsehistory/2015/10/21/lse-first-director-william-hewins/>.
- Donnelly, S** 2015c LSE’s first prospectus, 7 October. Available at <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lsehistory/2015/10/07/lse-first-prospectus/>.
- Donnelly, S** 2016 LSE’s ‘Deputy director, hostess, accountant, and lady of all work’—Christian Scipio Mactaggart, 1861–1943, *LSE History: Telling the story of LSE*, 1 March. Available at <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lsehistory/2016/03/01/lse-deputy-director-hostess-accountant-and-lady-of-all-work-christian-scipio-mactaggart-1861-1943/>.
- Kedourie, E** 1993 The British universities under duress: Two essays by Elie Kedourie. *Minerva*, 31(1): 56–105.
- Franco, P** 2004 *Michael Oakeshott: An introduction*. New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press.
- Gamble, A and Wells, C** (eds) 1989 *Thatcher’s law*. Cardiff: GPC Books.
- Giddens, A and Pierson, C** 1998 *Conversations with Anthony Giddens: Making sense of modernity*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Hayek, F A** 1946 The London School of Economics, 1895–1945. *Economica*, 13(49): 1–31.
- Hix, S** 2004 A global ranking of Political Science Departments. *Political Studies Review*, 2: 293–313.
- Husbands, C T** 2018 *Sociology at the London School of Economics and Political Science, 1904–2015: Sound and fury*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jones, D M** 2013 ‘The Conservative mind of Ken Minogue, *Quadrant Online*, 1 September. Available at <https://quadrant.org.au/magazine/2013/09/the-conservative-mind-of-kenneth-minogue/>.
- Jump, P** 2013 Evolution of the REF, *Times Higher Education*, 13 October. Available at <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/features/evolution-of-the-ref/2008100.article>.
- LSE** 1895 *The London School of Economics and Political Science, University of London, Calendar, 1895*. London: London School of Economics and Political Science.
- LSE** 1901 *The London School of Economics and Political Science, University of London, sessional programme, 1901–02*. London: London School of Economics and Political Science.

LSE 1962 *The London School of Economics and Political Science, University of London, Calendar for the sixty-eighth session, 1962–1963*. London: London School of Economics and Political Science.

Minogue, K 2002 Michael Oakeshott as a character. *Society*, 39: 66–70.

More, A F, Loveluck, C P, Clifford, H, Handley, M J, Korotkikh, E V, Kurbatov, A V et al. 2020 The impact of a six-year climate anomaly on the ‘Spanish flu’ pandemic and WWI. *GeoHealth*, 4.: 1–8

Ilivan, L 2014 Michael Oakeshott and the Left. *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 75(3): 471–492.

Seldon, A and Collings, D 2000 *Britain under Thatcher*. London: Longman.

The Times 1895 London School of Economics. 10 June, p. 6.

The Times 1899 The new London university. 1 May.

The Times 1916 A great Londoner. 25 February.

Interviews

Barker, Rodney, interview by Hilke Gudel, 10 February 2020.

Dunleavy, Patrick, interview by Cheryl Schonhardt-Bailey, 6 December 2019.

Howe, Anthony, telephone interview with Hilke Gudel, 11 May 2020.

Phillips, Anne, telephone interview by Hilke Gudel, 23 March 2020.