

The Birmingham brief - intelligent thought on policy issues

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Intelligent thought on policy issues

The School of Government and Societies contribution to the Birmingham brief include:

Latest briefs:

[How stable is Saudi monarchy after King Abdullah's death? \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2015/01/how-stable-is-saudi-monarchy-29-01-15.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2015/01/how-stable-is-saudi-monarchy-29-01-15.aspx)



Written by Professor Scott Lucas. On 23 January, Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah died at the age of 90 and was succeeded by his half-brother Salman, 79, one of the last sons of Saudi Arabia's founder Ibn Saud. The regime is keeping a watchful eye on dissent, including in the mainly Shia Eastern Province, and on internal security amid concerns over returning fighters from conflicts such as the Syrian crisis.

Friday 30th January 2015

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Monday 17th November 2014

2015

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Drones are here to stay, but the government must do more to ensure greater public acceptance
(<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2014/10/drones-are-here-to-stay-23-10-14.aspx>)



On 16 October, the Defence Secretary, Michael Fallon, announced that part of the UK Reaper drone fleet would be deployed in Iraq to support coalition efforts against the terror group ISIL. This week, he confirmed they would also be flying surveillance missions over Syria. These events mark the first operational use of UK Reapers outside Afghanistan and represent a significant and timely development in the UK government's stated policy towards 'drone warfare'.

Friday 24th October 2014

Britain's first air strikes in Iraq - is there a strategy?
(<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2014/10/britains-air-strikes-in-iraq-02-10-14.aspx>)



On 26 September, British parliament approved the Cameron government's request for authority to carry out air strikes inside Iraq on the Islamic State terror group. Four days later, two Tornado jets on an 'armed surveillance' mission dropped the first bombs, hitting a jihadist heavy-weapon position and an armed pick-up truck.

Friday 3rd October 2014

Things will never be the same again: reflections on the Scottish referendum
(<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2014/09/reflections-on-the-Scottish-referendum-18-09-14.aspx>)



Written by Professor Colin Thain. Whatever the outcome of today's referendum of 3.5 million voters in Scotland, Friday 19 September 2014 will be an epoch-making day in the politics of these islands. For once, the hyperbole is justified.

Thursday 18th September 2014

The Israeli-Palestinian crisis: A distressing déjà vu
(<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2014/07/israeli-palestinian-crisis.aspx>)



Written by Dr Asaf Siniver. The most depressing aspect of the current round of violence between Israelis and Palestinians, beyond the death toll and the human suffering, is the sheer predictability of this crisis. As far as contemporary armed conflicts go, few could match the intensity, inevitability and perpetuity of the ongoing struggle between the militant group Hamas and the Israeli government.

Thursday 17th July 2014

Remembering Rwanda: can we ever say 'never again'?
(<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2014/04/remembering-rwanda-can-we-ever-say-never-again.aspx>)



This week marked the 20th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide. More than 800,000 Rwandans, mostly from the minority ethnic Tutsi group, were killed by their Hutu neighbours while the UN force in the country and Western powers looked on.

Thursday 10th April 2014

A gay rights mountain to climb?
(<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2014/02/a-gay-rights-mountain-to-climb.aspx>)



On 29 June 2013, the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, signed a law banning the 'propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations' among people below the age of consent (18 years). For breaking the law, especially in the mass media or on the internet, individuals can be fined up to 1 million roubles. Foreign citizens can be detained for up to 15 days and deported back to their country, in addition to being fined up to 100,000 roubles.

Monday 17th February 2014

Crime on the high street goes missing
(<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/impact/thebirminghambrief/items/2014/01/crime-on-the-high-street-goes-missing.aspx>)



Written by Professor John Raine. For almost two decades now the statistics for recorded crime in England and Wales have been falling. And even though there has always been a difference, of some magnitude, between the numbers gathered through the British Crime Survey – a large-scale sample of the public's experiences of crime victimisation – and the (persistently smaller) statistics compiled by the police, there has been broad agreement at least in the downward trend.

Wednesday 29th January 2014



Following the failure of the Ukrainian government to sign an Association Agreement (AA), a pillar of the European Union's much-vaunted Eastern Partnership with Ukraine at its heart, protestors spilled onto the streets of Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities to demand the rescinding of this decision.

Monday 9th December 2013

[Building trust in public policing? The contribution of Police and Crime Commissioners, one year on](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2013/10/building-public-trust-in-policing-the-contribution-of-police-and-crime-commissioners-one-year-on.aspx)
(<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2013/10/building-public-trust-in-policing-the-contribution-of-police-and-crime-commissioners-one-year-on.aspx>)



Written by Professor John Raine. The 'Plebgate' saga, which has now drawn apologies to Andrew Mitchell from three chief constables, has once again raised questions about police integrity and dented public trust and confidence in policing more generally.

Tuesday 5th November 2013

[The security impact of drones: challenges and opportunities for the UK](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/impact/thebirminghambrief/items/2013/09/The-security-impact-of-drones-challenges-and-opportunities-for-the-UK.aspx)
(<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/impact/thebirminghambrief/items/2013/09/The-security-impact-of-drones-challenges-and-opportunities-for-the-UK.aspx>)



When President George W. Bush handed over the reins of US foreign policy to Barack Obama, he reportedly made two requests. First, that the incoming US president maintains the covert cyber attacks against Iran, and secondly, that he continues the counter-terrorist drone campaigns in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Not only did Obama follow through on this request, but during his time in office US drone strikes have more than doubled.

Friday 20th September 2013

[Success at Edgbaston hits the wickets at Westminster: Why efforts to increase the number of women MPs seems to have been stumped.](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/impact/thebirminghambrief/items/2013/07/Success-at-Edgbaston-hits-the-wickets-at-Westminster-Why-efforts-to-increase-the-number-of-women-MPs-seems-to-have-been-stumped.aspx)
(<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/impact/thebirminghambrief/items/2013/07/Success-at-Edgbaston-hits-the-wickets-at-Westminster-Why-efforts-to-increase-the-number-of-women-MPs-seems-to-have-been-stumped.aspx>)



Edgbaston, best known for cricket, is politically interesting for two reasons – it was once the seat of the then Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, and this week, it is celebrating the fact it is the only UK constituency to have returned a female MP to Parliament for 60 consecutive years.

Monday 8th July 2013

[Weighing up the real value of the G8 summit](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/impact/thebirminghambrief/items/2013/06/g8-summit-2013.aspx)
(<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/impact/thebirminghambrief/items/2013/06/g8-summit-2013.aspx>)



It is easy to be cynical over the value of summits such as the G8 meeting recently concluded in Northern Ireland. After all, this year's meeting was preceded by the erection of fake shop fronts in Northern Ireland to disguise empty businesses, and when Birmingham played host in 1998 the city council sprayed the grass verges green.

Wednesday 26th June 2013

[Why national politics is a mixed blessing in today's local elections](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/impact/thebirminghambrief/items/2013/05/BirminghamBrief0105.aspx)
(<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/impact/thebirminghambrief/items/2013/05/BirminghamBrief0105.aspx>)



Local elections will be held today in 34 councils, for 2,362 seats in 27 county councils and seven mainland unitaries. There are also two mayoral elections. Gains and losses will be measured in terms both of seats won and which parties have overall control of which councils.

Friday 3rd May 2013

[Calculation and Miscalculation on the Korean Peninsula](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/impact/thebirminghambrief/items/2013/04/Calculation-and-Miscalculation-on-the-Korean-Peninsula.aspx)
(<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/impact/thebirminghambrief/items/2013/04/Calculation-and-Miscalculation-on-the-Korean-Peninsula.aspx>)



While it is sometimes tempting to see the regime of Kim Jong-eun as superficially comical, with its extravagant uniforms, dynastic worship and wild rhetoric, it is also important not to underestimate the serious risk of miscalculation and military escalation inherent within the current crisis. While there are many aspects of the present situation that are familiar to observers of the hermit state, there are also enough differences to give concern that this manufactured crisis could end differently.

Friday 19th April 2013

[Sistine Chapel chimney could get sootier](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/impact/thebirminghambrief/items/2013/03/sistine-chapel-chimney-could-get-sootier.aspx)
(<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/impact/thebirminghambrief/items/2013/03/sistine-chapel-chimney-could-get-sootier.aspx>)



Benedict XVI told the faithful gathered in St Peter's Square on 24 February 2013 that his retirement 'doesn't mean abandoning the church'. Many Catholics, though, including those who are not church goers, consider his unexpected resignation as the Vicar of Christ, an ill-thought out decision that will lead to an irreparable desacralization of the role.

Friday 1st March 2013

Scandals, cover-ups and resignations: Is Eastleigh the by-election to reinvigorate British politics?
(<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/impact/thebirminghambrief/items/2013/02/eastleigh-by-election.aspx>)



A high profile political resignation following a legal scandal, allegations of sexual misconduct, two political 'partners' tearing at each other's throats, controversial candidates grabbing the headlines for the wrong reasons and the future positions of the Prime Minister and his Deputy placed under the microscope.

Thursday 28th February 2013

Electricity Market Reform: All power to the Big Six!

(<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/impact/thebirminghambrief/items/2013/01/Electricity-Market-Reform-All-power-to-the-Big-Six!.aspx>)



The Electricity Market Reform (EMR) has been billed as a measure to decarbonise the electricity economy whilst at the same time stopping the electricity system collapsing as old coal and nuclear power stations come off line. Unfortunately the Government is selecting policy mechanisms that give a market advantage to the electricity majors.

Thursday 10th January 2013

Size Matters: Two Decades after the Break-Up of Czechoslovakia

(<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2013/01/Size-Matters-Two-Decades-after-the-Break-Up-of-Czechoslovakia.aspx>)



New Year's Eve is traditionally a time for celebration, reflection and looking forward with optimism. As Czechs and Slovaks mark what they call 'silvestr/silvester' by popping champagne corks and setting off fireworks, some will reflect not just on the dawn of a new year, but twenty years of separate statehood.

Tuesday 8th January 2013

2012

What should we vote for? (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/impact/thebirminghambrief/items/2012/12/What-should-we-vote-for.aspx>)



Is there an ideal electorate system? As a recent Birmingham Brief demonstrated, we are often faced with a simple binary choice: do we want 'strong government' which can claim an empowering mandate, or do we want a government that represents, however messily, 'the will of the people'? If we want the former, in the UK at least, we have persisted with a first-past-the-post system. From time-to-time, though, we have had a dark night of the soul, wondered at the fairness of governments' claiming a mandate from a minority of voters actually supporting them, and flirted with alternatives.

Tuesday 11th December 2012

Legal, Legitimate, and Effective Drone Warfare: Grand Illusion or Future Reality?

(<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/impact/thebirminghambrief/items/2012/12/Legal,-Legitimate,-and-Effective-Drone-Warfare-Grand-Illusion-or-Future-Reality.aspx>)



On 14 November, 2012, an Israeli drone strike killed Ahmed Jabari, the head of the military wing of Hamas in Gaza. The sharply escalating violence in the aftermath of this so-called targeted killing, while particularly costly in human life, is part of a seemingly unending violent confrontation in the region: according to a timeline of the conflict, over the past almost four years (since the conclusion of Israel's ground offensive in Gaza) more than 300 Palestinians and 20 Israelis have been killed, while in the past two years, some 800 missiles have been launched from Gaza into southern Israel.

Wednesday 5th December 2012

Georgia's Parliamentary Elections - Democracy in Action?

(<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/impact/thebirminghambrief/items/2012/12/Georgias-Parliamentary-Elections-%e2%80%93-Democracy-in-Action.aspx>)



On 01 October 2012 Georgia, a small post-Soviet state on the Black Sea coast with a population of 4.6 million people, conducted its 8th Parliamentary elections since 1990. The pre-election campaign was closely watched by the West and the number of international observers monitoring the elections was allegedly the country's largest-ever.

Wednesday 5th December 2012

The New Trident Debate (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/impact/thebirminghambrief/items/2012/11/The-New-Trident-Debate.aspx>)



According to Sir Humphrey Appleby in the 1980s BBC sitcom "Yes Prime Minister", the Trident missile system was "the Rolls Royce of nuclear weapons, the sort of deterrent that one would buy from Harrods." As the decision point looms for the replacement of this capability, questions are being asked whether Britain can afford a new Rolls, whether it should instead go for a more modest system, perhaps more of a Ford Mondeo deterrent, or whether indeed it should go green and eschew the need for such a costly and controversial system altogether.

Monday 5th November 2012

Euro 2012: the Janus-Faced Nature of Hosting Sports Mega-Events

(<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2012/06/Euro-2012-the-Janus-Faced-Nature-of-Hosting-Sports-Mega-Events.aspx>)



Avery Brundage, the former President of the International Olympic Committee, famously stated over 50 years ago that sport transcends politics and the former has no place in the dealings of the latter. Sport has always been inextricably bound up with politics, but nowadays the hosting of sports mega-

events has become competitive in its own right, as potential benefits weigh up the benefits against the substantial costs of putting on such occasions.
Friday 8th June 2012

The eurozone crisis is Angela Merkel's chief dilemma (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2012/06/The-eurozone-crisis-is-Angela-Merkels-chief-dilemma.aspx>)



Angela Merkel's second term as chancellor, which began in 2009, has been a difficult one. On the home front, there has been much infighting inside her CDU-FDP (conservative-liberal) government, her FDP coalition partner is weak and unpopular, and her own party, the CDU, has lost ground in important regional elections. Merkel's main challenge, however, remains the ongoing crisis in the eurozone.
Friday 1st June 2012

A 'no' vote for city mayors does not have to shut down discussion on how local political leadership can be strengthened (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2012/05/mayoral-vote.aspx>)



Last week, ten English cities voted on whether to alter the dynamics of leadership in their authorities and replace the current leader and cabinet formula with that of elected mayor, deputy, and cabinet. The rejection was almost unanimous, only Bristol registered a yes vote – but with a majority of less than seven per cent – and more than 60% of voters in Coventry, Leeds, Newcastle, Sheffield, and Wakefield prioritised the status quo above change.
Friday 11th May 2012

Taylor Verdict is a Warning to Others (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2012/05/Taylor-Verdict-is-a-Warning-to-Others.aspx>)



The landmark verdict on April 26th against the former Liberian President, Charles Taylor, is an important warning for those who perpetrate war crimes. Finding Taylor guilty of war-time atrocities during the war in Sierra Leone between 1991 and 2002, shows that no-one can be above the law.
Thursday 3rd May 2012

Building Mutual Nuclear Security with Iran (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2012/04/Building-Mutual-Nuclear-Security-with-Iran.aspx>)



Why has a solution to the decade long nuclear stand-off with Iran proved so elusive? Based on ongoing research into the dynamics of nuclear rivalries, and the role of trust in international politics, we argue that the main obstacle to solving the crisis over Iran's nuclear program is that neither side believes that it is possible to reassure the other without this reducing their own security. Recent talks in Istanbul suggest that a new path to mutual security might be opening up, but there are still challenges ahead.
Monday 30th April 2012

Impact of Events in Egypt on the EU: Can any lessons be learnt from the Arab Spring? (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/impact/thebirminghambrief/items/2012/02/Impact-of-Events-in-Egypt-on-the-EU-Can-any-lessons-be-learnt-from-the-Arab-Spring.aspx>)



2011 was a truly historical turning point – it was a year which fundamentally changed the European Union's (EU) previous assumption about the Middle East and North African (MENA) region – that the fall of Arab autocrats was not imminent and that the dictators of the region would remain the partners to cooperate with in the near future. The Arab Spring events in Tunisia, Egypt, and beyond since December 2010 have successfully challenged the institutional order. Egypt is now embarking on a long and uncertain journey towards a more democratic future. But questions remain regarding the role of the EU towards nascent democracies.
Friday 23rd March 2012

The Afghan Reset (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/impact/thebirminghambrief/items/2012/03/The-Afghan-Reset.aspx>)



Afghanistan is rarely out of the headlines — and seemingly for the wrong reasons. At the beginning of March, six UK military personnel were killed by a Taliban attack in what was the single worst loss of life for UK ground forces since the launch of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission in Afghanistan. Birmingham brief written by Professor Mark Webber, Professor of International Politics.
Wednesday 21st March 2012

The Politics of Sporting Mega Events: do the benefits justify the budgets? (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/impact/thebirminghambrief/items/2012/01/05jan12-sportmegaevents.aspx>)



The London Olympics will undoubtedly be a spectacular success and bring with it a number of memorable sporting moments. Beyond the two weeks of action, however, it is worth reflecting on the increasingly political use of sport by a wide variety of states throughout the world. In recent years, there has been a shift from advanced capitalist states to developing, small or 'emerging' states who have queued up to stage a sporting mega-event.
Friday 6th January 2012

UK economic recovery depends on a renewal of strong, confident, public sector leadership
(<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2011/12/UK-recovery.aspx>)

Sir Michael Lyons has set out his vision for resolving what he sees as a deep crisis of confidence in public sector leadership, which is holding back the recovery.

Wednesday 21st December 2011

Building a Transparent System of Global Aid (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2011/11/building-a-transparent-system-of-global-aid.aspx>)

Having transparent mechanisms for distribution of global aid is hugely important. It allows scrutiny to ensure money is used effectively. The global aid landscape has changed drastically with the rise of southern donors like India and China. This makes it even more important that transparency for public flows of development aid should be non-negotiable, irrespective of whether or not they are official development assistance.

Tuesday 22nd November 2011

After Gaddafi – three questions for Libya and one on the region (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2011/08/23-Aug-Libya-what-next.aspx>)

As Colonel Gaddafi's 42 years in charge of Libya draw to a seemingly climactic end – the dramatic scenes in Tripoli leave a series of questions that need to be urgently answered.

Thursday 25th August 2011

A new settlement for public services requires a new generation of public servants
(<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2011/06/26JunPublic-Servants-Reform.aspx>)

With thousands of public sector workers striking this week and the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister both speaking at the Local Government Conference in Birmingham the future of public services has rarely seemed a more divisive or topical issue.

Thursday 14th July 2011

Cash or Credit? UK public spending cuts and the IMF (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2011/06/9-June-Cash-or-Credit-UK-public-spending-cuts-and-the-IMF.aspx>)

George Osborne has doggedly fought back at critics of the government's austerity strategy, repeating the mantra that sustaining the 'policy credibility' of UK plc with financial markets and investors is the paramount challenge facing this parliament. This week the Chancellor of the Exchequer has been able to draw on an apparent endorsement from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for his agenda of public spending cuts and the Coalition's broader economic policy choices. But is the IMF's 'endorsement' all that the Chancellor makes it out to be?

Thursday 9th June 2011

The death of Osama Bin Laden – what implications for international security?
(<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2011/05/5may-OBL-death.aspx>)

Now that the dust has somewhat settled after the initial euphoria, triumphalism, gloating, and relief that followed Barack Obama's announcement of the death of Osama Bin Laden, more sober analysis is beginning of the broader implications of the end of a 15-year manhunt.

Thursday 5th May 2011

A critical assessment of the 2011 UK multilateral and bilateral aid review
(<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2011/04/21apr-aid-review.aspx>)

The Department for International Development (DFID) recently published a Multilateral Aid Review (MAR), critically assessing 43 different international organisations (IOs), agencies and private groups. It has concurrently conducted a Bilateral Aid Review (BAR) of its own operations. This brief shows that both reviews indicate an important shift in UK aid policies, whereby future development assistance will be based on the UK's vision of development rather than more traditional global indicators.

Thursday 21st April 2011

'African solutions to African problems' - national, continental or international project?
(<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2011/04/14apr-conflict-in-africa.aspx>)

Recent events in Libya and Cote d'Ivoire have once again highlighted the issue of conflict in Africa, raising the question of whether the continent is capable of addressing crises without international intervention.

Thursday 14th April 2011

Libya: A solution worse than the problem? (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2011/03/22Mar-Libya-a-solution.aspx>)

As the crisis in Libya unfolds and as the US, France and the UK get potentially sucked ever deeper into yet another disastrous military intervention, policy debates and decisions appear to be driven primarily by humanitarian concern. Unsurprisingly, supporters and opponents alike use the humanitarian argument—one side seeks to stop a murderous dictator from slaughtering his own people, the other is concerned about the inevitable civilian casualties and 'collateral damage' caused by airstrikes, no matter how sophisticated the military technology behind them might be.

Tuesday 22nd March 2011

Alternative Vote: An end to wasted votes and a triumph for democracy?
(<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2011/03/2march-alternative-vote.aspx>)

Many keen supporters of electoral reform and, indeed, any constitutional reform which aims to strengthen processes of representation and accountability, may find it difficult to feel overly excited about the prospect of the introduction of the Alternative Vote (AV) for UK general elections.

Wednesday 2nd March 2011

[Prisoners' rights - which way would you vote? \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2011/02/10feb-prisoner-rights.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2011/02/10feb-prisoner-rights.aspx)

It's not surprising that the current debate on prisoners' voting rights is dividing opinions not just between political parties but also within the parties themselves.

Thursday 10th February 2011

[Crisis in Cairo \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2011/02/2feb-cairo-crisis.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2011/02/2feb-cairo-crisis.aspx)

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's announcement yesterday (1 February), that he will not seek re-election but will stay in power until the presidential elections in September to ensure a smooth transition period, is unlikely to satisfy the demand of the public for his immediate removal from power.

Wednesday 2nd February 2011

[Sudanese Independence \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2011/01/sudanese-independence-13jan.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2011/01/sudanese-independence-13jan.aspx)

On 9 January polling started in Southern Sudan in a referendum to determine whether one of the largest states in Africa will divide. The result of the referendum is so certain that the South's Independence Day has already been set for 9 July, six months after the start of polling.

Thursday 13th January 2011

2010

[What makes WikiLeaks so dangerous? \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2010/12/wikileaks-whatmakesitdangerous.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2010/12/wikileaks-whatmakesitdangerous.aspx)

Misguided, irresponsible, reprehensible – these are just some of the words used by critics to describe the latest set of releases on the website, WikiLeaks. But is this more than hurt pride and should we really care one way or another?

Thursday 9th December 2010

[Cuts to School Sport Partnerships: A Case of Ideology over Reason? \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2010/12/school-sports-partnerships-03Nov.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2010/12/school-sports-partnerships-03Nov.aspx)

The Coalition Government's proposal to cut £162 million funding for 450 school sports partnerships offers an intriguing case study of this era of new party politics and policy-making. Two points lend weight to the argument that this is a rushed decision made by an ill-informed minister, Education Secretary Michael Gove.

Friday 3rd December 2010

[Aid and UK Security: what is the relationship? \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2010/09/AidandUKsecurity.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2010/09/AidandUKsecurity.aspx)

On 16th September Andrew Mitchell MP, Secretary of State for International Development, made a speech about conflict and development at the Royal College of Defence Studies. In this speech he argued that as part of the government's Strategic Defence Security Review (SDSR) there should be a reassessment of the UK's response to overseas conflict which puts development at the heart of an integrated approach that both protects the world's most vulnerable people and protects the UK from external threats.

Thursday 30th September 2010

[Does the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on Kosovo's Declaration of Independence Resolve Anything? \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2010/07/courtsofjustice.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2010/07/courtsofjustice.aspx)

I always tell my students that, when sitting an exam, they have to answer the question that has been set rather than one that they feel comfortable with. No analogy is ever perfect, but this one sums up pretty neatly the outcome of the deliberations by the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which, by ten votes to four, found that the Declaration of Independence (DoI) of Kosovo adopted on 17 February 2008 did not violate international law.

Tuesday 27th July 2010

[Lessons from local government: Hung parliaments can work \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2010/05/localgovtlessons.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2010/05/localgovtlessons.aspx)

Following the third of the historic Prime Ministerial debates – staged, of course, here at the University of Birmingham – the possibility of the election producing a single-party Conservative majority government increased – though marginally – for the first time in weeks. Similarly, the likelihood of a less conclusive result reduced somewhat; presumably to the relief of those who have been predicting instability, legislative deadlock and parliamentary collapse as the probable outcomes of a hung parliament.

Sunday 30th May 2010

[What is the future for UK aid policy? \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2010/05/UKaid.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2010/05/UKaid.aspx)

In a month of election campaigning the issue of international development and aid policy was barely referred to by any of the three major parties. So what will the new government mean for UK aid policy?

Thursday 20th May 2010

[After New Labour \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2010/05/afterNewLabour.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2010/05/afterNewLabour.aspx)

Commentators are currently focused on the extraordinary Conservative-Liberal coalition, and whether it will deliver a 'new politics'. But the emerging contest over Labour's future may prove even more significant for the long-term shape of politics in Britain.

Tuesday 18th May 2010

[A new political landscape an opportunity for a new approach to local government \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2010/05/newpoliticallandscape.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2010/05/newpoliticallandscape.aspx)

This week, the national political and policy landscape for the UK has changed, as demonstrated by the sight of David Cameron sharing a press conference podium with Nick Clegg. However, this changed political and policy landscape applies to UK Local Governance as well.

Friday 14th May 2010

[A new generation of militants strikes with bombings in Russia \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2010/03/Moscowmilitants.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2010/03/Moscowmilitants.aspx)

Although no groups have as yet claimed responsibility for the two suicide attacks the Russian security services, the FSB, have indicated that groups linked to the North Caucasus may have been behind the bombings at the Lubyanka and Park Kultury metro stations in Moscow.

Tuesday 30th March 2010

[A cautious Political budget with all the difficult decisions delayed \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2010/03/politicalbudget.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2010/03/politicalbudget.aspx)

The last Budget before the General Election shows that the Treasury and Prime Minister have not agreed on a comprehensive medium-term strategy to deal with the public finances. By not giving targeted and detailed cuts in spending, the Chancellor has left all the really difficult decisions until after the General Election. It is a cautious but modest political budget.

Wednesday 24th March 2010

[Women, Religion and Attitudes Towards Corruption \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2010/03/women.religion.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2010/03/women.religion.aspx)

Since 1996, when the then World Bank president spoke out against the 'cancer of corruption', foreign aid donors and national governments in many developing countries have been trying to find workable solutions to often systemic problems with corruption. Corruption has been seen by many as one of the biggest challenges facing the developing world: reducing funds available for poverty reduction, increasing inequality, destroying or stultifying democratic institutions and, at worst, leading to conflict and global insecurity.

Thursday 11th March 2010

