INTRODUCTION

Dear Readers,

Welcome to Issue 14 of the *SOAS Journal of Postgraduate Research* (SJPR). During the past year, we were still under the effects of the pandemic. This disruption, so overwhelming, casts a shadow that dominates everything else. However, after all, the challenges we are facing are connected, whether from the perspective of subject area, historical period, or geography. This issue focuses on "disruption" of all sorts in the areas of arts, gender, politics, etc.: the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic (Edwards; Saksena and Mohanty); colonialism and the efforts of breaking up with colonial legacies (Sarmet; Oliver; Koo); resistance to cultural assumptions (Nickols); feminist protest under coercion (Krishna); and the dynamics between statism and political religion (Lu).

The issue opens with an introductory note from Professor Adam Habib, the new director of SOAS. He discusses the disruption to the institutional capacities and human capabilities in the Global South due to the mobility of students led by the international higher education in the North. He also points out that this unbalanced distribution of talents between the North and the South could increase the challenges we, as human beings, all face – pandemics, climate change, inequality, social and political polarisation; and he proposes to think about teaching and learning at scale and emphasises the need to disrupt the habitual thinking and formulaic responses based on past experiences and develop custom-made context-based solutions to overcome the challenges of this historic era.

Following up, we have Nico Edwards' piece "*A Commentary on Disruption as a State of Being and (Anti)Practice: Challenging 'Resilience' as the Late-modern Recipe for Happiness*". She gives a sharp reflection on the notion of "resilience" as the popular formula of state-governing ethos nowadays. She points out that the notion of resilience is mobilised to disguise the inherent brittleness of global capitalism and has been recast as a solution to "bounce-back" from the challenges and secure the neoliberal hyper-productivity and omni-

marketisation. She calls for "disruption" as the state of being for both the personal and the systemic, to reflect on the epistemology one has adopted and to re-imagine the templates for human co-existence, especially through the systematic disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Then, we have another piece pondering the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. This is an ethnographic project researching epistemological and ontological questions of information – how information, being inherently invisible, is becoming visible through the virus, the restrictions, the risks of infection and even how the community is responding, all have shaped the individual's experiences during the pandemic. In *"Information and Liable Relations of Wellbeing during COVID19"*, through observing a group set by a local council of London for volunteers to share pandemic- and wellbeing-related updates, Gitika Saksena and Abhishek Mohanty explore how information came to take the centre stage, either as a measure by the state to build individual responsibility; or through being enmeshed by the group members themselves as community resilience, thus, shaping reciprocity and liable relations amongst them.

After thoughts on the impact of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, we turn our attention to the topic of colonialism. Though this occurred in the past, its effects still linger in the current. Gabriela Sarmet's article *"Disrupting the Colonial Subjectivity Imposed by Borders: The Experience of the Guarani People in Brazil"* shows the dynamics between the colonial subjectivities against indigenous peoples constructed by the imposed demarcation of borders by the Brazilian State and the Guarani people's reformulation of their cosmology to disrupt these colonial subjectivities through the forms of migratory movements and the repossession of ancestral territories.

In her article *"Edward Colston, Nostalgia and Resistance: How Does Britain (Mis)remember and (Re)imagine Colonialism?"*, Adele Oliver examines one of the defining moments of the Black Lives Matter movement, namely, the toppling of the Edward Colston statue, to explore what the public memory of Edward Colston reveals about Britain's

relationship with colonialism. She also ponders on what counter-memory can do to resist/disrupt the (mis)remembering and (re)imagining of colonialism.

Then, we have another two articles studying colonialism but in the field of the arts. Lina Shinhwa Koo's article "*Structuring Hierarchies: Archaeological and Museum Projects of the Government-General of Korea and its Colonial Legacy*" addresses a similar issue to that considered in Sarmet's work, that is, looking into the legacy of colonialism and the efforts to disrupt this legacy but in the field of art history. While examining how the cultural projects led by the Government-General of Korea, the chief administrator of the Japanese colonial government, carried out various tenets of global imperialism and coloniality throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the paper also interrogates the nationalist accounts on the colonial legacy in museum practices and proposes an intercultural perspective to look into the issue.

We also have Joe Nickols' article "*The Disrupt Project: Nikki S. Lee and Transcategorical Identities*", which examines Nikki S. Lee's photography series *Projects* (1997-2001). In the series, Lee photographs themself assimilated into multiple American social groups, through which they resist the boundaries of social conventions projected onto bodies due to assumptions of race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, or age. The article considers *Projects* a decolonial work that subverts the global colonial matrix that commands fixed identities.

Then, we switch to the field of gender. We have Koshika Krishna's article "*A Cry for Justice: Reimagining the Women, Peace and Security Agenda through the 2004 Kangla Fort Protest in Manipur*". It centres on the naked protest that was performed by twelve mothers in the state of Manipur in 2004 outside the army headquarters in Assam, India, against the rape and murder of a woman, Thangjam Manorama, by army men. The article focuses on the disruptiveness that this protest brought for resistance movements across India by discussing its unique approach to the traditional concept of political motherhood and political performance.

Lastly, we have Junda Lu's article *"Chinese Roots of Political Religion: Statism in Modern China, 1897-1924"*, which examines the dynamics between the evolution of statism in modern China and the concept of political religion. By examining the thoughts of Chinese political thinkers and early Chinese Marxists, Lu argues that the persistent theme of viewing a strong state as the guardian of Chinese civilization and the trailblazer for future humanity has contributed substantially to the popularization of the political religion of Marxism-Leninism in modern China.

The articles in this issue have discussed "disruption" in different historical periods, subject areas, and regions. On one hand, the destabilization that disruptions bring reveals social problems and pushes forward changes; on the other hand, the damages it causes threaten human life or even the existence of all lives on this planet. Most importantly, it provokes thinking. It makes us think about how to cope with the disruptive effects, such as in Sarmet's, Koo's, and Krishna's works. It also inspires us to reflect on the epistemology we are holding when living in and socializing with this world, such as in Edwards', Saksena and Mohanty's, Oliver's, Nickols', and Lu's works. After all, some questions worth pondering: are we moving progressively or retrogressively after the disruptions? How do we judge the differences between the two? What differences do the contexts make?

The Editor-in-Chief,
Yunzi Han.