

FOREWORD

Dear Readers,

I am delighted to provide a few short introductory words to this, the 15th issue of the SOAS Journal of Postgraduate Research. The theme of the issue, 'Opportunity in Crisis: Contingencies, Adjustments, Perseverance and Resilience', is apt and very fitting for our times, in which we see our fair share of crises – the Covid-19 pandemic, economic 'cost of living' crises in many countries, and the crisis of climate change and global warming are among the key examples.

And yet, as the title of the issue notes, there are opportunities in crisis. The English saying that every cloud has a silver lining has echoes and counterparts in many languages and cultures of the world. Chinese 拨云见日 (*bō yún jiàn rì*, 'When the clouds are parting, there is the sun') evokes the same image as the English saying, of clouds (the crisis) obscuring the opportunities (the sun). Latin employs more moral terms in *Malum nullum est sine aliquo bono* ('There is no evil without some good'), a saying which in similar form is found in many Romance languages of today. Swahili has *Baada ya dhiki faraja* ('After agony, there is comfort') and Hausa employs the metaphor of night and day: *Kome nisan dare, gari ya waye* ('No matter how deep the night, the morning will come'). It seems that we are a positively inclined species.

What, then, are the opportunities which may arise in a crisis? Some are mentioned in the title of the present issue: Contingencies, adjustments, perseverance and resilience. Some of these are addressed in the papers included in this issue. Other papers look at new models and approaches to addressing some of the structural problems underlying the current crises we are facing, including through employing and exploring notions such as sustainability, pluralism, indigenous knowledges (in the plural), and decolonisation. Another aspect is explored in papers concerned with representation and communication of and in crises, including film, visual display, and social media. Finally, some papers offer critical and methodological analysis of relevant literature and previous work on conceptions and moments of crises. In terms of geographic spread, the papers span a good part of the Global South, with regional

foci on locales in Africa, the Middle East, Southeast Asia and East Asia, as well as South America.

Against this background of engagement with and different takes on ‘opportunity in crisis’, two specific dimensions stand out: Crises provide opportunities for both reflection and for action. A crisis invites answers to both the question of ‘How did we get here?’ and the question of ‘Where do we go from here?’. It is fitting that the papers in this issue of the SOAS Journal of Postgraduate Research can be found between these two poles. Academic research, especially in the humanities and social sciences, has historic strengths in relation to the former question, providing explanations through gathering of evidence and reflective analysis. On the other hand, academia can and should also play a role in providing answers to the second question – thereby making a positive impact on people’s lives and contributing to a more just world. Our research strategy here at SOAS formulates this as applying ‘a global lens on the critical issues of our time’: rooted in academic excellence and addressing urgent global challenges.

The papers in this issue make a strong contribution to this agenda and invite all of us to make use of the opportunities the current crises afford.

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