



**QUEEN'S
UNIVERSITY
BELFAST**

**THE SENATOR
GEORGE J. MITCHELL
INSTITUTE FOR GLOBAL PEACE,
SECURITY AND JUSTICE**



Resistance: Past, Presents and Futures

Conference Programme

FRIDAY 5TH AUGUST 11AM-6PM (BST)

Virtual Conference via Microsoft Teams



Programme

11:00AM

WELCOME

11:05AM-12:20PM

PANEL ONE: RESISTANCE IN/TO THE PAST

12:20-12:35PM

BREAK

12:35-2:10PM

PANEL TWO: RESISTANCE IN THE
PRESENT

2:10-2:20PM

BREAK

2:20-3:35PM

PANEL THREE: THE FUTURE AND
RESISTANCE

3:45-4:45PM

KEYNOTE: MEL BUER
JOURNALIST

"F*CK YOUR NEWSROOM": CULTIVATING COMMUNITY
AND RESISTANCE WITH ANTI-CAPITALIST MEDIA

5:00-6:00PM

KEYNOTE: DR. SHARON QUINSAAT
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR (GRINNELL COLLEGE)
STORYTELLERS AND INTERLOCUTORS: COLLECTIVE MEMORY-
MAKING AND THE FORMATION OF THE FILIPINO DIASPORA

Panel Details

PANEL ONE: IN/TO THE PAST

Reframing resistance in the Western Desert: Tracing Aboriginal agency in one colonist's narrative of the 1896-1897 Carnegie expedition (11:05 - 11:25)

NICOLA FROGGATT (UNIVERSITY OF LONDON)

Women, Silence and Resistance: Indigenous Cinema in Guatemala (11:25 - 11:45)

TRISHA (JAMIA MILLIA ISLAMIA UNIVERSITY)

Resisting the National Past in the Simultaneous Present: Young people protesting against 'history' in the National Galleries of Scotland's Ruined exhibition, Scottish National Portrait Gallery, 12 June - 14 November 2021. (11:45 - 12:05)

ROBIN BAILLIE (NATIONAL GALLERIES OF SCOTLAND)

PANEL TWO: RESISTANCE IN THE PRESENT

Intersectional Feminist Resistance in Northern Ireland (12:35 -12:55)

ELSPETH VISCHER (QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST)

Commemoration as resistance: Memory and dissent in County Fermanagh (12:55 - 13:15)

MATTHEW GAULT (QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST)

Digital Mobilisation in Northern Ireland (13:15 - 13:35)

MICHEÁL HEARTY (ULSTER UNIVERSITY)

Social workers' agency and resistance to violence in Belfast (13:35 - 13:55)

CHIARA MAGLIACANE (QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST)

PANEL THREE: THE FUTURE AND RESISTANCE

Just Transition, Capital Accumulation, and Environmental Movements to Enact a Law of 'Ecocide' in Developmental States: The Case of South Korea (14:20 - 14:40)

JUNESSEO HWANG (QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST)

#CommonSense isn't trending. A conversation about social media 'echo chambers' and the right to freedom of thought (14:40 - 15:00)

SHANIA KIRK (QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST)

Re-Conceptualising State-PGM Relationships (15:00 - 15:20)

DALE PANKHURST (QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST)

Conference Vision

Each year, the **Senator George J. Mitchell Institute for Global Peace, Security, and Justice** hosts a postgraduate conference organised by a small committee of students affiliated with the Institute, including PhD students and postgraduates on the MA in Conflict Transformation and Social Justice. Focused on a broad theme related to peace, security and justice chosen by the student committee, the conference is entirely student-led.

The Institute's Annual Postgraduate Conference provides a platform for postgraduate students and researchers from Queen's and beyond, to showcase their research to a wide audience and to build networks with researchers from across the world.

This year's conference on ***'Resistance: Pasts, Presents and Futures'*** will explore the many meanings and manifestations of resistance. Through presentations and discussion, the conference seeks to address questions such as:

- How do historical forms of resistance still speak to us today?
- What is the relationship between contemporary local and global forms of resistance?
- How will technology and the changing media landscape define resistance moving forward?

Resistance within conflict is not new. Mass protests in the past year have reinvigorated the idea of resistance as an aid to social change. Resistance can take many forms and has been a tool for diverse groups across the political spectrum. This conference aims to provide a space to reflect on both historical manifestations and modern interpretations of resistance. The papers presented cover a range of themes, concepts and case studies, from global to grassroots forms of resistance.

Conference Organisers 2021

MATTHEW GAULT



Matthew is a third Year Anthropological Studies PhD Student in the School of History, Anthropology, Politics and Philosophy at Queen's University Belfast. His research examines the role of commemoration and memory of conflict plays in contemporary politics and everyday life in the rural Northern Irish County of Fermanagh. Before starting PhD research, he worked for three years in the Victims & Survivors sector with the South East Fermanagh Foundation (SEFF) in County Fermanagh. Follow him on Twitter @MALGault.

NATALIE NIEDERMAN



Natalie is a Masters student at Queen's University Belfast studying Conflict Transformation and Social Justice. Currently, her research focuses on Restorative Justice policy as it functions between community and criminal justice structures. Originally from the United States, she attended Grinnell College for her undergraduate degree in Political Science with a concentration in Peace and Conflict Studies. Beyond the topic of restorative justice, Natalie is interested in identity construction and conflict at the grassroots level. She can be reached by email at: nniederman@gmail.com

JULIA VOLKMAR



Julia Volkmar is a first year PhD Student at the School of Law, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) Fellow, and Early Career Researcher at Queen's University Belfast. Her research focuses on the impact of archives on transitional justice, examining and comparing the case studies of (Eastern) Germany and Northern Ireland. She has a background in international relations and human rights law and has worked in European politics before starting her PhD. She can be contacted by email at j.volkmar@qub.ac.uk

Keynote Speakers

3:45- 4:30PM

Mel Buer
Independent Journalist



BIOGRAPHY

Mel Buer is an independent movement journalist and literary studies scholar based in Omaha, Nebraska. They covered the George Floyd protests in Minneapolis and Omaha, Nebraska throughout 2020 and are currently working as a civics reporter for a local Omaha publication, NOISE. Previously, they co-hosted Protean Pirate Radio, an anti-capitalist podcast, and their work can be found in Protean Magazine and elsewhere. Their debut book, "F*ck Your Newsroom: Anti-Capitalist Media in the Digital Age" is set to be released by OR Books in 2023.

Find out more about Mel at: <https://muckedup.ghost.io/about/>

"F*CK YOUR NEWSROOM": CULTIVATING COMMUNITY AND RESISTANCE WITH ANTI-CAPITALIST MEDIA

Sustained criticism of "objective" journalism isn't a new phenomenon. In fact, the debate surrounding the supposed "objectivity" of journalism has raged for over a century, both within media circles and among the communities that journalists serve. When journalists choose to show deference to the institutions that actively cause the most harm to communities, allow the state to control the narrative surrounding documented injustices, and malign the credibility of so-called "outside agitators" (to borrow a contentious phrase) – activists who have a vested interest in the health and well-being of their communities and speak up against those injustices – they do untold harm to the communities they are expected to serve. What can be done when it seems the alternative is a fangless journalism that ultimately leads to reporters being mouthpieces for the state, rather than independent investigators acting in service of their community? The continued building of a thriving independent, anti-capitalist media ecosystem is the answer. This can be accomplished more readily in our current moment due to the rise of digital modes of communication, as it chips away at the towering monolith of legacy media outlets and gives anti-capitalist journalists the ability to build a robust infrastructure that moves far beyond alternative weeklies and digital zines. In my presentation, I will speak on the political and economic origins of modern American journalism, the corporate model that currently dominates the media landscape, and the ways in which independent, often anti-capitalist forms of media seek to subvert and provide alternatives to the prevailing model – cultivating community and resistance in the process.

5:00–6:00PM

Dr. Sharon Quinsaat
Assistant Professor
Grinnell College (USA)



BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Sharon Quinsaat is a scholar of social movements and migration. She currently is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Grinnell College, with affiliations in Peace and Conflict Studies and American Studies. Her research to date reflects her intellectual and personal interest in understanding how foreign workers, immigrants, and refugees engage in collective action to challenge hegemonic power and create new kinds of political spaces. Her first book project, *Contentious Migrants: How Protests Create A Diaspora*, argues that diasporas are outcomes, rather than causes or agents, of transnational mobilization. Her new research investigates the social origins of political conservatism and support for right-wing policies among Filipino immigrants in the U.S. and the Netherlands.

Born and raised in the Philippines, Sharon was a child during the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos. She obtained her Bachelor's degree in Communications from the University of the Philippines, Diliman. She remained there as researcher with the Third World Studies Center for seven years, where she was involved in projects investigating the global justice movement in Southeast Asia. She received her MA in Social Sciences from the University of California, Irvine as a Fulbright scholar and her PhD in Sociology from the University of Pittsburgh.

STORYTELLERS AND INTERLOCUTORS:

COLLECTIVE MEMORY-MAKING AND THE FORMATION OF THE FILIPINO DIASPORA

The May 2016 Philippine presidential election saw overwhelming diaspora support for the eventual victory of Rodrigo Duterte, who had no qualms calling himself a dictator. He expressed admiration of the achievements of the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos in terms of economic development and crime prevention. The election had the highest turnout in overseas ballots since the passage of the Philippine dual citizenship law in 2003. In this presentation, I show how Filipino migrant activists strategically used the collective memory of the Marcos dictatorship and the collective resistance against it in the campaign to mobilize against Duterte. I explain how former anti-dictatorship activists in the U.S. and the Netherlands have become “memory entrepreneurs” who mobilize memories of the past to galvanize subsequent generations of Filipinos abroad, especially the descendants of migrants who have fully assimilated in their countries of settlement. This tactical repertoire has facilitated a continuous reimagining of the homeland among Filipino immigrants and their children. Through content analysis of collective storytelling in published memoirs, blogs, and social media, I explain how migrants counter dominant discourses and persistent narratives of the “golden years” of the dictatorship. They revive past strategies and discourses of resistance to mobilize a transnational constituency against Duterte and the War on Drugs. Finally, through their stories and how they narrate them, I describe how migrants assert their historical presence and role in an important period of Philippine nation building. During the Marcos regime, cross-border migration peaked and the transnational community was deeply disunited. Since shared history and memory are vital to constituting a diaspora, migrant stories about this divisive period in Philippine history help us understand the process of collective identity formation.

**NICOLA FROGGATT***University of London*

Nicola Froggatt is a collaborative doctoral student working with Royal Holloway, University of London and the British Museum. Her thesis '*Colonial Ambitions and Collecting Anxieties on Western Australian Frontiers*', traces the histories of Aboriginal objects made in Western Australia over the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and now held in British and Irish museums.

Reframing resistance in the Western Desert:

Tracing Aboriginal agency in one colonist's narrative of the 1896-1897 Carnegie expedition

This presentation explores David Wynford Carnegie's journey across the deserts of Western Australia in 1896 and 1897. The expedition was marred by violence against Aboriginal people living there, some of whom the party kidnapped, chained, and forced to reveal precious water sources. Carnegie described many brutal encounters in his private diaries and a book called *Spinifex and Sand* (1898). In writing these texts, however, Carnegie had to do work in order to reconcile his self-image and racist views about Aboriginal people with actions taken by the individual men and women whom he had attacked.

I start by exploring the kidnap of a senior woman who resolutely refused to eat and drink, and who the party ultimately felt 'compelled' to release. Examining how a frustrated Carnegie chose to describe his and the woman's actions, I explore the changing use of language and euphemism across the diaries and book. What do these accounts reveal despite Carnegie's omissions? I then turn to the kidnap of an Aboriginal man and his later ingenious escape from captivity, showing how Carnegie reframed objects - axes, chains and tins of meat - in order to downplay the man's resourcefulness and the severity of the situation into which he had been put. Reading these texts with and against the grain, I ask how their author chose to remember and retell Aboriginal peoples' experiences. In doing so, I ask how Carnegie's recollections can nonetheless help to reveal historical resistance and indigenous agency in the face of colonial violence.

**TRISHA***Jamia Millia Islamia University (India)*

Trisha is a Research Scholar, pursuing her PhD, from the Jamia Millia Islamia University, New Delhi, India. She is a recipient of the prestigious Junior Research Fellowship (JRF) awarded by the Government of India. She received a scholarship from the Government of Spain to work as a Language Assistant (Auxiliar de Conversación, Oct 2020-May 2021). Her area of research is 'The representation of indigenous women in Cinema of Latin America'. Apart from presenting papers in international seminars, related to her area of investigation, she has also published her paper in an international publication, "Ixcanul: Representation of Race and Gender in Indigenous Cinema" Journal IJMER Volume 9, Issue 10(5) Nov 2020. She graduated with a Bachelors (2013) and Masters (2015) in Spanish Language and Literature from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India.

Women, Silence and Resistance: Indigenous Cinema in Guatemala

Guatemala is called the 'Heart of Mayan Civilization', but it has not only seen the obscenity of Spanish conquest but also has been a witness of enormity of Civil war that killed thousands of Mayan people since 1960. This presentation focuses on the films of Jayro Bustamante, his portrayal of indigenous women, their barriers with the 'Modern World' and how they are fighting their battles using many weapons but 'Silence' in particular. Bustamante is an influential film maker of Guatemala whose films not only portray the wounds of colonization but also the horror of civil war that still haunts the people of Guatemala, especially women who have been the survivors of mass rape and sex slavery by the State.

Decolonial feminist Maria Lugones in her theory '*The Coloniality of Gender*' (2008) stated that the discrimination of gender has its root in the era of colonization. Bustamante represents women's body as the conflict zone which aims to bring stories of injustice and their effort to overcome the atrocities they have been facing from centuries in the name of 'development'.

This paper discusses the feminist films *Ixcanul* (2015) and *La Llorona* (2019) of Bustamante whose protagonists have used silence as a powerful tool to show their resistance against their culprit or the State. In the movies of Bustamante his protagonists are mostly silent, but that silence displays, quite successfully, their strength to fight against the state.



ROBIN BAILLIE

National Galleries of Scotland

Robin's PhD research focuses on the shared 'performativity' that underlies Scottish art and history in the nineteenth century. Robin has also published papers and articles on contemporary art and young people, prisoners' portraits and community-based socially engaged art, and essays in catalogues for the exhibitions. Robin has curated at the National Galleries of Scotland, including *Mirrors: Prisoners' Portraits* (2010), *The Nation//Live* (2014), *The UNTITLED: Bad Entertainment* (2016) and *Art of the Future* (2018) and *Beings* (2019).

Resisting the National Past in the Simultaneous Present:

Young people protesting against 'history' in the National Galleries of Scotland's Ruined exhibition, Scottish National Portrait Gallery, 12 June - 14 November 2021.

This presentation assesses the National Galleries of Scotland (NGS) Image Liberation Force outreach project (2016 - 2021) - as presented in the exhibition, *Ruined* - asking whether an art institution can offer a platform for young Scots resisting and reshaping their historical inheritance.

This project connected young people to the Scottish national art collection by inviting them to protest, by 'taking over' the artworks themselves. The paper investigates how the unemployed participants 'detoured' nineteenth century Scottish history paintings, initiating the boundary-crossing associated with anarchic political protest. They responded to persistent themes - including violence, borders, colonialism, inequality, conformity and riot - by staging demonstrations, picketing statues and trespassing on Scotland's heritage. Above all, the videos at the core of the exhibition prove that they want to take control of the historical narrative.

The young people's protest is their art, and their art is a form of protest, particularly as they consciously use the 'vernacular' to empower their voices against a cultural form that seems to hold itself above them. This is exemplified in the videos' soundtracks - created to narrate the young people's views - by young Scots' rapper/producer Mercurius MC.

Given license to play with time and context - liberating the past as a malleable part of the present - these young artists have used the freedom of their imaginations to counter the dead weight of historical figures and events seemingly beyond their control. In doing so, they have proved the veracity of the Deleuzian concept of the 'simultaneity' of history - that it is a dynamic 'event' of the present.

Panel 2



ELSPETH VISCHER

Queen's University Belfast

Elspeth Vischer is a filmmaker and second year creative-practice PhD student from Belfast. Elspeth has worked on a freelance basis in the local arts scene for the last few years and has experience directing, filming and editing short form fiction, music video and documentary content for a variety of arts organisations, festivals and bands. Her current research involves analysing and documenting grassroots feminism in Belfast, with a particular focus on the time period of January 2017 to January 2021. Elspeth is currently editing a feature-length documentary composed of poly-vocal accounts of grassroots work across Activist, Educational and Arts strands. This film is entitled: *'Let Us Be Seen'*.

Intersectional Feminist Resistance in Northern Ireland

This paper explores how intersectional feminism operates in Belfast, connecting global scholarship to local practice. It will also explore how arts connect with activism to create visual and aural types of resistance. Many organisations working in Belfast today feel that the chasm between governing politics and grassroots work has never been wider. Since the Stormont Assembly collapsed in January 2017 there have been a number of milestones for feminists and LGBT+ activists: abortion was decriminalised, and same-sex marriage legalised on 21st October 2019 and these changes were orchestrated in Westminster. Through recording some 25 interviews during the pandemic year in 2020, this creative-practice research is interested in analysing perceptions of governing bodies and binary agendas and documenting how many see intersectional feminism as an egalitarian alternative for a post-conflict society to function. Protests, rallies, and events as well as discussions from participants across three sub-strata of Arts, Education and Activist grassroots organisations have been filmed and collaborative working methods deployed to create an oral history patchwork in a feature documentary film. Through a discussion of this interview process and its practical implications, this presentation will showcase findings thus far and elaborate on how the issue of 'free, safe, legal and local' abortion access in Northern Ireland can be seen as a synecdoche for the barriers facing the wider grassroots feminist movement. Using qualitative data from this practice-as-research, connections will be forged between forms of feminist resistance both contemporaneously and during the Peace Process in Belfast.



MATTHEW GAULT

Queen's University Belfast

Matthew is a Third Year Anthropological Studies PhD Student in the School of History, Anthropology, Politics and Philosophy at Queen's University, Belfast. His research examines the role of commemoration and memory of conflict plays in contemporary politics and everyday life in the rural Northern Irish County of Fermanagh. Before starting PhD research, he worked for three years in the Victims & Survivors sector with the South East Fermanagh Foundation (SEFF) in County Fermanagh.

Commemoration as resistance: *Memory and dissent in County Fermanagh*

The Peace Process in Northern Ireland has not had full support across society. Resistance and dissent to way the Peace Process is working has ranged from violence by loyalist and republican paramilitary factions to non-violent protest and public criticism. In Fermanagh, and indeed Northern Ireland more widely, the commemoration of the conflict in and about Northern Ireland plays an important role in how groups signal their resistance to the 'Peace Process' and how they put forward their alternative processes towards peace. This paper will focus on the resistance of two ideologically opposed groups to different parts of the Peace Process. The first is the critique of the 2006 Victims and Survivors (Northern Ireland) Order by the Innocent Victims constituency, led by the South East Fermanagh Foundation (SEFF) in Fermanagh. The second is the critique of absence of voices and representation in the wider peace process by non-Mainstream republicans. Both forms of commemoration resist dominant narratives of the peace process, whether that be how victims are defined and treated or that the peace process is for the benefit of all society equally. Though these groups oppose each other on many issues, they both believe that if they do not critique the current system and continue to remember their dead in their own way, they are doing a disservice to the memories of the deceased and, thus, will not be able to build a future they would have been proud of.



MICHEÁL HEARTY

Ulster University

Michéal Hearty is a PhD student at the Transitional Justice Institute, Ulster University. He holds a BA in History & Sociology obtained at QUB and later gained an MA in Conflict Transformation and Social Justice from The Senator George J. Mitchell Institute for Global Peace, Security and Justice. His research focuses on comparing how combatants and non-combatants are collectively remembered, memorialised, and commemorated in the North of Ireland. He has previously co-written research on symbolic reparations for victims of Historical Institutional Abuse.

Digital Mobilisation in Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland/the North of Ireland (NI) has long been identified as a site of transitional justice 'from below'. Driven by civil society, victims organisations, and local communities, there is a rich and extensive history of grassroots memory activism being used to challenge the UK Government's position on legacy issues like collusion, the provision of a pension for the severely injured, and conflict-related prosecutions. While this has traditionally involved utilising the physical landscape through murals, memorials and protests etc, the advent and spread of social media has allowed this grassroots memory activism to expand into the digital arena. This paper seeks to further explore how social media has become a site of resistant memory activism 'from below'. Using the recent mobilisation of victims against the collapse of a number of persecutions against former British soldiers and in response to recent UK Government attempts to 'draw a line under the past' by way of amnesty, this paper critically examines how the digital landscape has been transformed into a key site of contest on NI's divisive past. It examines how the above events can act as a catalyst that sparks a concerted digital mobilisation by grassroots memory entrepreneurs keen to shape both the debates on and policies for 'dealing with the past' in NI.



CHIARA MAGLIACANE

Queen's University Belfast

Chiara Magliacane is a PhD student in Anthropology at the School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics at Queen's University Belfast. She holds an MRes in Anthropology at 'La Sapienza' University of Rome and an MA in Conflict Transformation and Social Justice at the Senator George J. Mitchell Institute for Global Peace, Security and Justice. Her research interests are in medical, psychological, and political anthropology.

Social workers' agency and resistance to violence in Belfast

"We try and combat paramilitary exploitation with young men". The passion that transpires from Seanán's choice of words resonates loudly, and echoes similar pledges taken from other youth workers in West Belfast.

This presentation is about violence in "post-conflict" Belfast and focuses on the impact of violence on social workers' everyday work life. Albeit some studies have addressed this topic, many of these focus on The Troubles and its immediate aftermath, while research exploring more recent years are rare. This paper discusses the social workers' pivotal role in tackling violence in working-class and segregated areas from an anthropological standpoint. The work builds on ethnographic data collected in over a year of fieldwork in a youth centre in the Lower Falls. The main arguments address how youth workers negotiate their role as state actors amidst the distinct power relationships existing in the area they work in. The paper highlights the social workers' efforts to protect young people, using non-violence against violence, and argues that, while violence impacts their everyday work life, social workers actively respond with mediating strategies.

Panel 3

**JUNESSEO HWANG***Queen's University Belfast*

Juneseo Hwang is a PhD student in Politics at Queen's University Belfast. His current research focuses on the ecological unsustainability of post-conflict peace in Northern Ireland and is building a theory of sustainable peace drawn upon environmental peacebuilding and green criminology. He is interested in greening transitional justice and justice and security sector reform from a post-anthropocentric perspective. Before commencing his PhD at Queen's, he was a research intern in the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, where he conducted studies on police reform in Northern Ireland and transnational environmental crime in post-conflict societies. He is also an environmental activist who has monitored the responsibility of the US military on environmental destruction in South Korea and Japan. Now, he is engaged with the Gathering based in Derry, Northern Ireland to tackle waste crime across the country and campaign for rewilding the Irish border.

Just Transition, Capital Accumulation, and Environmental Movements to Enact a Law of 'Ecocide' in Developmental States: The Case of South Korea

Just transition is now being debated by not only academics and activists but also by policymakers. The OECD published a global plan for 'transition to a low-carbon future' accompanied by 'the energy transition, carbon pricing, green finance and reform of inefficient fossil fuel subsidies'. However, from a green criminology perspective, it is inevitable that environmental harms continue and accumulate as long as global capitalism is firmly rooted in extractivism. For this, just transition may fall prey to another 'greenwashed' branding of capital accumulation, such as the slogan 'Capitalism 4.0'. Advocates of just transition are required to question how the idea can be ecologically sustainable and ensure environmental and ecological justice. One way to do so is being suggested by environmental campaigners who call for the global society to enact a law of 'ecocide'. By introducing ecocide as a criminal act that causes substantial, long-term environmental damages, environmental activists expect that society can resolve environmental and ecological injustices caused by (neoliberal) capitalist growth—which just transition should be uncoupled from. While global and local movements to enact a law of ecocide are growing at a rapid speed, less attention has been made to how environmental campaigners have struggled for a law of ecocide vis-à-vis environmental and ecological justice in developmental/highly industrialised states. In this presentation, I focus on the experience of South Korea, which is a post-war country where rapid capital accumulation was led by an authoritarian regime, and is a place where the legacies of dictatorship still permeate society.

**SHANIA KIRK***Queen's University Belfast*

Shania studied undergraduate law and a Master's in Human Rights Law at Queens. She is returning to Queens in October to do a PhD. Her primary research interest is the relationship between human rights law and technological developments. She is interested in the question of how to ensure human rights remain relevant as societies become increasingly involved with and reliant on algorithmic decision-making.

Funded through the Leverhulme LINAS Doctoral Training Programme, Shania's research takes an interdisciplinary approach, combining law and computer science. It looks at how law and regulation might hold the companies who develop artificial intelligence (AI) accountable for unfair and discriminatory decisions. Her project asks whether the unique threat AI poses to equality demands a broader notion of discrimination which goes beyond protected characteristics.

#CommonSense isn't trending: *a conversation about social media 'echo chambers' and the right to freedom of thought*

In 2020, at the same moment as governments around the world were calling for a collective effort to control the spread of COVID-19, a wave of ideological possession swept across social media. It brought with it conspiracy theories about everything from modern medicine and technological innovation (anti-vaxxers and 5G conspiracists) to accusations of corruption against the UN, the WHO and national governments. Social media provided a platform for increasing transparency and accountability at a time when trust in public decision-making was extremely important. However, it also provided the perfect conditions for mob mentality through 'echo chambers' of anti-institutional, anti-scientific and anti-intellectual propaganda.

In addressing this problem, several questions arise: What is the extent of institutional responsibility to control the spread of misinformation where it has real-world implications? Should we simply accept that it is the individual responsibility of users to approach content with a healthy degree of skepticism? I will approach this discussion by thinking about the right to freedom of thought. I will argue that closer attention should be given to the scope and application of this right in the online context. For example, if states have an obligation to protect freedom of thought, should this extend to psychological manipulation through social media? In my view, a clearer stance on this right is a pre-requisite for tackling more complex debates such as what constitutes legitimate monitoring and restrictions on social media.



DALE PANKHURST

Queen's University Belfast

Dale Pankhurst is an ESRC NINE DTP funded PhD candidate at the School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics at Queen's University Belfast. Awarded the Frank Wright Prize for excellence during his postgraduate studies, he completed his Master of Arts in Politics and Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in International Politics and Conflict Studies at Queen's University Belfast.

Dale's PhD research project will investigate complexity and variation in state- pro-government militias relationships. Because these groups are defined by their "pro-government" orientation, researchers often assume that governments directly or indirectly manage or delegate tasks to PGMs. However, a closer inspection reveals a variety of relationships with the state. Taking case studies from Northern Ireland, Colombia, and the Philippines, Dale's project will contribute to a better understanding of state-PGM relationships by providing theories that explain variations in government-PGM relationships, from open state-led paramilitaries through to hostile engagement between the state and counter-insurgency organisations.

Re-Conceptualising State-PGM Relationships

Across the world, states have formed and maintained relationships with pro-government militias (PGM) and paramilitary groups when faced with armed resistance from insurgencies, rebel organisations, and anti-state terrorist groups. The use of both PGMs and paramilitary forces as a counter-resistance mechanism remains a feature in the state's response to campaigns of resistance. Previous work on state-PGM relationships has analysed these complex relationships through top-down delegation frameworks such as PA (principal-agent) theory, state terrorism and plausible deniability. Others have constructed somewhat limited relationship models for quantitative research. There remains a range of influential and causal factors that both inform and influence the construction and evolution of state-paramilitary relationships. These include group and state leadership characteristics; state capacity; group ideology and structure; paramilitary resource and capacity; popular support; and case specific factors including international, country and conflict contexts. There is merit in viewing these relations through a bottom-up approach as elements from within the civilian population mobilise to counteract resistance movements. State-paramilitary relationship formation sometimes leads to cooperation on the one hand due to shared aims and objectives, and violence on the other due to grievances from either the state, the PGM or both. Forms of contention and antagonism that sometimes develop between states and PGMs are crucial for reconceptualising these relationships. The proposed paper will begin by offering a foundation for re-conceptualising state-PGM relationships before moving on to construct a conceptual framework that draws upon both intra and inter-state/PGM analysis alongside external stakeholder involvement/influence.



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Established in 2016, the Senator George J. Mitchell Institute for Global Peace, Security and Justice is a flagship for interdisciplinary research in areas of major societal challenge. It brings together researchers from a wide range of disciplines to tackle some of the greatest global issues of our age:

**How can societies emerging from conflict resolve lingering grievances?
How can they establish peace on a daily basis?
How can the competing demands of justice, peace and security be reconciled?**

The Institute's distinctive approach connects peace-making to social transformation, emphasising institutional and structural reform alongside social and cultural processes for healing in society. Through research, education and civic engagement, the Mitchell Institute aims to make a difference to the lives of ordinary people who are struggling with the aftermath of conflict by empowering them to realise fairness, justice and tolerance.

OUR MISSION

Global Challenge: Building a Peaceful, Inclusive and Secure World.

The Mitchell Institute engages this challenge through four priority themes.

Legacy Issues

How do peace processes become embedded in daily life following political settlement?

Justice and Rights

How do we establish international norms of human rights in local cultures?

Security

How do we ensure just and ethical responses to a diverse range of security risks?

Ideology and Beliefs

How do values and beliefs in different cultures shape approaches to peacebuilding?

IMPACT

The Institute works at the interface of theory and practice. An Institute priority is knowledge exchange between academics and practitioners, with a key goal being the cross-fertilization of ideas on conflict transformation, peace-building and social justice. To this end we host regular workshops, conferences and civic conversations encouraging participation from all sections of society. We believe our civic engagement strongly enhances the impact of our research.

CONTACT

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