‘Statecraft in an Age of Fracture' Conference
5-6 February 2026
The BOX Conference Suite, Pethick-Lawrence House, LSE

This conference was made possible by a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York

Conference Agenda

Thursday, 5 February

9:00- 9:30 am | Continental breakfast

9:30-10:00 am | Welcome and introductions

- Larry Kramer, President and Vice Chancellor of LSE

10:00-11:30 am | The roots of the West’s polarised politics today

Liberalism, democracy, and globalism are in retreat. Populism is surging; polarisation is deepening. How did democracies get themselves into this predicament? If centrist governments could have a “do over” what would they do differently? This panel considers the sources and lessons of the division and dysfunction that have beset many democratic societies.

Chair: Peter Trubowitz, LSE

Panelists:

- Azar Gat, Tel Aviv University
- Jonas Pontusson, University of Geneva
- Ian Shapiro, Yale University
- Michael Zürn, WZB

11:30-11:45 am | Coffee break

11:45-1:15 pm | Weapons of polarisation: the role of ideology, culture, and law

There is extensive literature on the economic and institutional origins of polarisation in liberal democracies. This panel focuses on the role of ideology, culture, and law as drivers of polarisation and the conditions under which they are most likely to become weapons of polarisation.

Chair: Charles Kupchan, Georgetown University and CFR

Panelists:

- Margit Cohn, Hebrew University
- Yotam Margalit, Tel Aviv University

- Nissim Mizrachi, Tel Aviv University
- Elizabeth Saunders, Columbia University

1:15-2:15 pm | Lunch

2:15-3:45 pm | Foreign threats and domestic polarisation: accelerant or moderator?

Do international threats have a disciplining, rally around the flag effect on democratic societies? Or do they tend to strengthen and amplify domestic division? This panel explores the impact of foreign threats on public opinion and party politics in liberal democracies.

Chair: Jack Snyder, Columbia University

Panelists:

- Noam Gidron, Hebrew University
- Rachel Myrick, Duke University
- Dahlia Scheindlin, The Century Foundation
- Anand Menon, King's College

6:30 pm | Dinner: Staff Common Room (SCR), OLD Building, 5th floor, LSE

Friday, 6 February

9:00- 9:30 am | Continental breakfast

9:30-11:00 am | Foreign policy and domestic coalition-building

Domestic polarisation in liberal democracies influences their commitment to international openness and multilateralism. The reverse is also true: international fragmentation shapes the dynamics of coalition building in liberal democracies. This panel explores these interrelated causal dynamics and their consequences.

Chair: Jack Snyder, Columbia University

Panelists:

- Gal Ariely, Ben-Gurion University
- Sara Hobolt, LSE
- Gayil Talshir, Hebrew University
- Stefanie Walter, ETH

11:00-11:15 am | Coffee break

11:15-12:00 pm | Polarisation and foreign policy: A practitioner's view

How does polarisation in the United States affect the formulation and implementation of U.S. foreign policy? How does polarisation abroad, particularly among democratic allies, affect the formulation and implementation of U.S. foreign policy?

Chair: Charles Kupchan, Georgetown University and CFR

Presenter: Avril Haines, Oxford University and former U.S. Director of National Intelligence

12:00-1:00 pm | Working Lunch: Group discussion about conclusions and future work plan

Chair: Peter Trubowitz, LSE

Panelists:

Gal Ariely is professor at the Department of Politics & Government, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. His research interests are democracy and national identity.

Margit Cohn is a full professor at the Hebrew University Faculty of Law. She is currently a visiting lecturer at Yale Law School, where she co-teaches a seminar on comparative administrative law and corruption with Professor Susan Rose-Ackerman. Following service as a legal advisor at the Israel Central Bank (1987–2001), and after completing her doctoral studies, she taught at the University of Leicester, UK, before returning to the Hebrew University in 2006. Margit's main research interests in public law span the study of the nature and theory of the executive branch, the nature and politics of judicial review, comparative public law, and constitutionalism. In addition to her teaching at the Hebrew University, she has visited and taught at many law schools, including Tulane Law School, Columbia University School of Law, the University of Pennsylvania Law School, Lyon III Law School, Trento University Faculty of Law, and UCL London Faculty of Laws. Her Oxford University Press–published book (2021) on the nature of the executive branch in theoretical and comparative contexts has established her status as one of the most prominent scholars in this field. Margit's articles have appeared in leading journals including the *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies*, *Public Law*, and the *American Journal of Comparative Law*. She has also contributed to edited volumes published by Cambridge University Press, Hart Publishing, and Oxford University Press.

Azar Gat is Ezer Weitzman Professor of National Security and Head of the International and Executive MA Programs in Security and Diplomacy at Tel Aviv University. He is the author of twelve books, including *A History of Military Thought: From the Enlightenment to the Cold War* (Oxford, 2001); *War in Human Civilization* (Oxford, 2006), named one of the best books of the year by the *Times Literary Supplement*; *Victorious and Vulnerable* (Hoover, 2010); *Nations*(Cambridge, 2013); *The Causes of War and the Spread of Peace* (Oxford, 2017); *War and Strategy in the Modern World*(Routledge, 2018); *Ideological Fixation* (Oxford, 2022); *The Clausewitz Myth* (2024); and *Military Theory and the Conduct of War* (2025). His books have been translated into multiple languages. He is the recipient of the 2019 EMET Prize, Israel's premier scholarly distinction.

Noam Gidron is an Associate Professor at the Department of Political Science and the Program in Philosophy, Politics and Economics at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His research interests lie at the intersection of political behaviour and

political sociology, with a focus on populism, polarisation, and democratic backsliding.

Avril Haines is a Visiting Fellow at All Souls College in Oxford, a Carnegie Distinguished Fellow at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs, a Senior Fellow at Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory, and a member of the Atlantic Council's International Advisory Board. Avril was the U.S. Director of National Intelligence and a cabinet member during the Biden Administration, during which she led the U.S. Intelligence Community and served as the President's principal intelligence adviser. She has held senior roles across government, including as an Assistant to the President and Principal Deputy National Security Advisor, Deputy Director of the CIA, Legal Adviser to the National Security Council, Assistant Legal Adviser for Treaty Affairs, and Deputy Chief Counsel to the U.S. Senate's Committee on Foreign Relations – giving her experience in intelligence, policy, and legal positions over the course of both Democratic and Republican Administrations in all three branches of the U.S. government. Avril received a law degree from Georgetown University Law Center, and served as a law clerk for Judge Danny Boggs on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit. Prior to law school, Avril received her bachelor's degree in Physics from the University of Chicago and founded and ran a bookstore café for five years while engaged in community service in Baltimore. She has been the recipient of numerous awards for her leadership and government service, including the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, "Women for Peace and Security Award", the Atlantic Council's International Distinguished Leadership Award, and the Business Executives for National Security Eisenhower Award.

Sara Hobolt is the Sutherland Chair in European Institutions and Head of the Department of Government at the London School of Economics. Her research focuses on elections, public opinion, populism, and political parties. In her most recent book, *Tribal Politics: How Brexit Divided Britain* (Oxford University Press, 2026), she examines how the Brexit vote gave rise to new political identities in Britain. She is President of the European Political Science Society and Chair of the European Election Studies.

Charles A. Kupchan is Professor of International Affairs in the School of Foreign Service and Government Department at Georgetown University, and Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. From 2014 to 2017, Kupchan served as Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for European Affairs on the National Security Council in the Obama White House. He was also Director for European Affairs on the National Security Council during the first Clinton administration. His most recent books are *Anchoring the World: International Order in the Twenty-First Century* (2021), *Isolationism: A History of America's Efforts to Shield Itself from the*

World (2020), *No One's World: The West, the Rising Rest, and the Coming Global Turn* (2012), and *How Enemies Become Friends: The Sources of Stable Peace* (2010). His forthcoming book is *Bringing Order to Anarchy: Governing the World to Come* (2026).

Yotam Margalit is the Brian Mulroney Chair in Government at Tel Aviv University and a Professor in the Department of Political Economy at King's College London. His research centres on the political economy of globalisation, particularly immigration and international trade, as well as public attitudes toward social and economic policy, populism, and economic crises. He is also a non-resident Senior Research Fellow at the Israeli Democracy Institute. Before joining Tel Aviv University, he was a faculty member at Columbia University. He earned his B.A. from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and his PhD from Stanford University.

Anand Menon is Professor of European Politics and Foreign Affairs at King's College London and Director of the UK in a Changing Europe project. His research interests include European Union institutions and policies, European security, and British politics. He is co-editor of the *Oxford Handbook of the European Union* and co-author of *Brexit and British Politics*. He is a trustee of Full Fact and holds advisory roles with several leading European policy institutions.

Nissim Mizrachi is a full professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Tel Aviv University. He previously served as head of the department and currently heads the Center for the Challenge of Living Together at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute. His research interests include sociology of knowledge, culture, medicine, social identity, liberalism, ethnicity, and stigma. He has received major awards including the Clifford Geertz Prize and the Louis Guttman Prize. His recent book, *Beyond Suspicion* (University of California Press, 2024), examines the moral clash between progressive liberalism and rooted social identities.

Rachel Myrick is the Douglas & Ellen Lowey Associate Professor of Political Science at Duke University. Her research examines how partisan polarisation affects foreign policymaking in democracies, with an emphasis on U.S. national security policy. Her first book, *Polarisation and International Politics*, was published by Princeton University Press in 2025. She earned her PhD from Stanford University.

Jonas Pontusson received his PhD in political science from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1986. His research focuses on comparative political economy and the politics of inequality. He previously taught at Cornell University and Princeton University and is now a research-active emeritus professor at the University of Geneva. From 2017 to 2023, he directed the ERC-funded research programme "Unequal Democracies".

Elizabeth N. Saunders is Professor of Political Science at Columbia University and Director of the Saltzman Institute of War and Peace Studies. Her research focuses on the domestic politics of international security and U.S. foreign policy. Her most recent book, *The Insiders' Game* (Princeton University Press, 2024), won the 2025 Best Book Award from the International Studies Association.

Dahlia Scheindlin is a political strategist and public opinion researcher with more than 25 years of experience advising national campaigns and civil society organisations in Israel and internationally. She holds a PhD in political science from Tel Aviv University and a master's degree from Harvard Divinity School. She is a columnist for *Haaretz*, a policy fellow at Century International, and author of *The Crooked Timber of Democracy in Israel*. In fall 2025, she was the Distinguished Middle East Fellow at the University of Pennsylvania.

Ian Shapiro is Sterling Professor of Political Science and Global Affairs at Yale University. His work focuses on democracy, justice, and political methodology. He has authored numerous influential books and has served in senior leadership roles at Yale, including as Director of the MacMillan Center. His forthcoming book, *After the Fall*, will be published in 2026.

Jack Snyder is the Robert and Renée Belfer Professor of International Relations at Columbia University and Acting Director of the Harriman Institute. A Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, his work focuses on nationalism, democratization, and international conflict. His books include *Myths of Empire* and *Human Rights for Pragmatists*.

Gayil Talshir is an assistant professor of Political Science at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She holds a DPhil from Oxford University and has led major public policy and academic leadership programmes. Her research examines ideology and democratic crisis, and her forthcoming book, *The Netanyahu Era* (SUNY Press), analyses ideological and structural change in Israeli politics.

Peter Trubowitz is Professor of International Relations and Director of the Phelan US Centre at LSE and Associate Fellow at Chatham House. His research focuses on the relationship between geopolitics and domestic politics. Before joining LSE, he taught at the University of Texas at Austin. His most recent book is *Geopolitics and Democracy: The Western Liberal Order from Foundation to Fracture* (Oxford 2023) with Brian Burgoon.

Stefanie Walter is Full Professor of International Relations and Political Economy at the University of Zurich. Her research focuses on globalization, European integration, financial crises, and political backlash against economic openness.

Michael Zürn is Director at the WZB Berlin Social Science Center and Professor of International Relations at Freie Universität Berlin. His research focuses on global governance, international institutions, and contestation of liberal democratic orders. His recent books include *The Democratic Regression and A Theory of Global Governance*.

Conference Rapporteur:

Alexander J. Davies is a doctoral candidate at LSE's Department of International Relations. His research investigates how domestic politics shape the credibility of alliance commitments. His broader research interests include US politics, alliances, and grand strategy, and his related research projects have been generously supported by the Carnegie Foundation of New York.