

Institution: University of Oxford		
Unit of Assessment: 28 – History		
Title of case study: Public Policy and Cultural Engagement with History of Central Asia: Silk Roads		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2013-2018		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Peter Frankopan	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Professor of Global History; Senior Research Fellow, Worcester College	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: Dec 2003-present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: August 2015- December 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) <p>Peter Frankopan's best-selling <i>Silk Roads</i> has captured imaginations and changed ways of thinking around the world. Its extraordinary success has contributed to rectifying a eurocentric imbalance in our understanding of global history, at a time when the Chinese government has sought to create economic and cultural links across the central Asian region through its ambitious Belt and Road Initiative. Drawing on primary evidence including numismatics, sigillography, material culture, art, and newly available scientific data, Frankopan's historical research has provided the framework for policy development in response to this dramatic initiative. Drawing on <i>Silk Roads</i> and related work, he has advised high-level policy makers in many countries. In addition to the UK, Ireland, Austria and the EU, he has addressed government officials from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Georgia. Through his collaboration with museums, television and radio, Frankopan's research has also increased public understanding of central Asia among Western publics who have had little exposure to the history and culture of this strategically important region.</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words) <p>Frankopan's book <i>The Silk Roads: A New History of the World</i> (2015) [R1] provides a major re-assessment of world history from antiquity to the modern day by demonstrating the importance of cultural and economic links through central Asia in global history. His research on the history of the Byzantine empire, the Crusades and the broader central Asian region has highlighted the importance of cultural, medical, economic and human connections across the ancient and early modern world. It draws on a rich series of sources in Greek, Latin, French, Italian, German, Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese, Swedish, Russian, Arabic, Turkish, Persian, Hebrew, Syriac and Chinese.</p> <p><i>The Silk Roads</i> was widely and prominently reviewed in the press around the world and has since been translated into more than thirty languages. It was described as 'magnificent' (<i>Sunday Times</i>), 'dazzling' (<i>Guardian</i>), 'a rare book that makes you question your assumptions about the world' (<i>Wall St Journal</i>), 'a treasure' (<i>Libre Belgique</i>), 'phenomenal' (<i>Die Welt</i>), 'a joy' (<i>Le Point</i>) and 'not just the most important history book in years, but the most important in decades' (<i>Berliner Zeitung</i>). It featured in Books of the Year of almost every newspaper, magazine and journal in 2015. In 2018, it was named as one of the 25 most important books translated into Chinese over the last 40 years, along with <i>The Great Gatsby</i> and <i>Pride and Prejudice</i>. At the end of 2019, it was named one of the <i>Sunday Times</i>' 'Books of the Decade' (2010-20). It was a <i>New York Times</i> Bestseller, and topped the Non-Fiction charts in a number of countries,</p>		

including India, the UAE and China. In 2018 it was also adapted for children as an illustrated edition by Bloomsbury Children's Books for ages 9 and over. [R2]

Since the publication of *The Silk Roads*, Frankopan has expanded his research to explore connections between the historical development of this region and current geopolitical, cultural and economic challenges, especially China's Belt and Road Initiative to invest approximately USD 1 trillion in connectivity between Asia, Africa and Europe. [R3, R4] The BRI was launched by the Chinese government in 2013 and comprises a Silk Road Economic Belt – a trans-continental passage that links China with south east Asia, south Asia, Central Asia, Russia (<https://www.ebrd.com/russia.html>) and Europe by land – and a 21st century Maritime Silk Road, a sea route connecting China's coastal regions with south east and south Asia, the South Pacific, the Middle East and Eastern Africa, all the way to Europe. This major global initiative is explicitly grounded in an understanding of China's historic links to its neighbouring regions. [R3, R4]

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- R1. [Authored Book, listed in REF2] P. Frankopan, *The Silk Roads: A New History of the World* (Bloomsbury, 2015). ISBN: 9781408839966
- R2. [Edited Book, available on request] P. Frankopan and N. Packer, *The Silk Roads: A New History of the World – Illustrated Edition* (Bloomsbury, 2018) [children's edition]. ISBN: 9781408889930
- R3. [Authored Book, available on request] P. Frankopan, *New Silk Roads: The Present and Future of the World* (Bloomsbury, 2018). ISBN: 9781526607430
- R4. [Journal Article] S. Brakman, P. Frankopan, H. Garretsen, C. Van Marrewijk, 'The New Silk Roads: an introduction to China's Belt and Road Initiative', *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, Volume 12, Issue 1 (March 2019), pp. 3–16. DOI: [10.1093/cjres/rsy037](https://doi.org/10.1093/cjres/rsy037)

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

(i) Public Policy Impact

Frankopan's research has fed into the development of foreign policy and development policy in many different forums. Drawing on his research, he helped shape policy for the **Asian Development Bank** (ADB) concerning global change in the 21st century when he took part in a forum at the ADB's Annual Meeting in Manila in May 2018. One of the aims of the forum was 'delve into the past using an unconventional lens to frame one of the biggest global economic shifts', namely 'Asia's re-emergence as a global economic powerhouse'. [E1] Frankopan's input into the ADB's developing policy in Asia was recognised in invitations to their annual meetings in both 2019 and 2020. On the last occasion he wrote and circulated a policy paper on 'Regional Co-operation in the Time of CoVid-19: Lessons Learned and the Way Forward.' He then chaired a flagship meeting of ministers and senior government officials from the 11 countries involved (**China, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Georgia**) on the subject of enhancing regional co-operation. The Regional Cooperation Specialist of the ADB describes the CAREC programme as 'one of the [bank's] most important initiatives' and has stated that Frankopan's policy paper 'provided an excellent overview of the challenges and opportunities currently faced by the member states, especially as we enter a post-pandemic world'. [E2]

In 2017-18, Frankopan was also appointed a lead expert to the **World Bank** project on transportation networks in South Asia. His research highlighted the importance of considering the history of these networks, their current development and their future impact, with the aim of advising governments, government agencies, non-government organisations, multi-lateral bodies and other stakeholders on developing policies. He was part of the Core Team from the

UK Department for International Development (DfID) for the project. [E3.1] The report (c.260 pages) was published in August 2018, and has been downloaded over 43,000 times by users in over 100 countries. [E3.2] Frankopan has also provided advice to the UN's **Industrial Development Organization** (UNIDO) about the future of cities in Asia. [E4]

Based on his historical research, Frankopan advised **UNESCO** on their Silk Roads Programme, which seeks to help preserve the cultural and human heritage of countries spanning the region between the Mediterranean and the Pacific. [Text removed for publication] He was subsequently appointed a member of the Scientific Panel of the UNESCO Silk Roads Youth Research Grant programme and is now Vice-Chair of this group. [E5.3]

The high profile of Frankopan's research means that his advice has also been sought by European governments.

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Since 2019, Frankopan has been asked to provide advice on political, economic, military and technological policy by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Treasury, the Ministry of Defence, the Royal Navy and the Office of the Prime Minister.

[Text removed for publication]

(ii) Transforming Public Understanding

Following the success of *The Silk Roads* [R1], Frankopan acted as adviser for Joanna Lumley's 4-part ITV series *Silk Roads Adventure*, a major documentary series that was aired in 2018. The four episodes averaged 3,700,000 viewers each [E11.1] and it remains available on Amazon Prime Video. Frankopan appears in the credits, and Lumley confirms reading *Silk Roads* as part of her research in *The Times*. [E11.2] Feedback (Amazon) included 'I had never realised how diverse the culture, history and lifestyle was of the communities inhabiting the remote regions.' [E11.3]

In 2018, Frankopan led a 'Silk Roads Study Day' at the **British Museum**, helping to devise a programme that was aimed at non-specialists and specialists alike. The Head of Adult Programmes at the Museum reported 'overwhelmingly positive responses' from those who attended, remarking that 'hosting a study day with such a prominent expert was enormously helpful for the Museum and for the curators in enabling them to showcase the objects and their own research to a wider audience'. [E12] In November 2018, he formally opened an exhibition on No Man's Land at the British Museum which was centred on the history of Mesopotamia from the kingdom of Lagash (3000 BC) to the Sykes-Picot agreement (1916).

Frankopan's achievement in rebalancing public understanding of global history has been recognised in many other ways. Since 2018, Frankopan has also had a regular column in the *Evening Standard*, where he uses his research to comment on historical and current events. Between 2017 and 2019, he hosted an audio channel on British Airways In-Flight Entertainment system, featuring selections of World Music, chosen from countries of the Silk Roads to promote cultural exchange based on his historical understanding of the region. The popular resonance of Frankopan's work is illustrated by references to the *Silk Roads* in Philip Pullman's *Belle Sauvage* (2017) and his *Secret Commonwealth* (2019) and the fact that it inspired the character Astrid in the HBO TV series *Vikings*, watched by millions in the United States and Canada. The creator of the series explained, 'I've read this great book, called "The Silk Road," which was showing that in the Dark Ages, it might have been the Dark Ages to the western culture, but to the east, there was trade, cultural exchange.' [E13] Pullman has stated that 'Peter Frankopan's study of the Silk Roads and their influence on world history had a great impact on me. It clarified and illuminated something that had previously seemed to me part of a background, and revealed its immense importance.' [E14]

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- E1.** Details of the Asian Development Bank's 2018 forum 'Past, Present, and Future of the World Economy', <https://www.adb.org/annual-meeting/2018/events/host-country-event/past-present-future>, outlining Frankopan's contribution. Accessed: 02.02.2021.
- E2.** Email from Regional Cooperation Specialist, Regional Cooperation and Operations Coordination Division, Central and West Asia Department, Asian Development Bank, 12.01.2021.
- E3.** Evidence relating to World Bank project on transportation networks in South Asia: **E3.1.** *The WEB of Transport Corridors in South Asia*, report jointly produced by Asian Development Bank/UKAID/JICA/World Bank Group, 2018, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/28882>, mentioning Frankopan in the Acknowledgements as part of the DfID core team; **E3.2.** screenshots of webpages displaying analytics for the report.
- E4.** 'Cities of the Silk Roads: past, present and future', article written by Frankopan appearing in UNIDO's magazine *Making It* (September 2017), https://issuu.com/makingit/docs/makingit_24_full_web. Accessed: 02.02.2021.
- E5.** Evidence relating to UNESCO's The Silk Roads Programme: [text removed for publication] **E5.3.** Silk Roads Youth Research Grant webpage on UNESCO website, listing Frankopan as Vice-Chair of Scientific Panel, <https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/youthgrant>. Accessed: 23.02.2021.
- E6.** [text removed for publication]
- E7.** [text removed for publication]
- E8.** [text removed for publication]
- E9.** [text removed for publication]
- E10.** [text removed for publication]
- E11.** Evidence relating to *Silk Roads Adventure*: **E11.1.** Email from Marketing Manager, ITV, showing viewing figures for *Silk Roads Adventure*, 04.02.2021; **E11.2.** Interview with Joanna Lumley, *The Times*, 02.09.2018, mentioning her reading of Frankopan's research on the Silk Road. Accessed: 02.02.2021; **E11.3.** Comments on Amazon.co.uk, <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Joanna-Lumleys-Silk-Road-Adventure/product-reviews/B07KPP77YZ>. Accessed: 24.02.2021.
- E12.** Statement from Head of Adult Programmes, British Museum, 14.01.2021.
- E13.** 'Oxford research inspires creation of new character in hit series Vikings', article produced by University of Oxford, 29.09.2016, <https://www.research.ox.ac.uk/Article/2016-09-29-oxford-research-inspires-creation-of-new-character-in-hit-series-vikings>. Accessed: 02.02.2021.
- E14.** Email containing impact statement from Philip Pullman, 08.02.2021.