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## Dear Reader

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**Dear Reader**

Dear Reader,

The election of Donald Trump as president, the UK's decision to leave the European Union ("Brexit"), and the wider rise of populism, have injected enormous uncertainty into the international system. Long-standing assumptions, such as the U.S. commitment to NATO and other alliances, are increasingly being questioned. Meanwhile, Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. election suggests that foreign states are seeking to benefit from political polarization in the United States.

At such a time, we need insightful and accessible writing on foreign affairs, which is why it is such a privilege to introduce the second issue of the *Swarthmore International Relations Journal* or *SIRJ*. Students write, edit, and produce the journal, working closely with a group of peer reviewers.

The journal represents the continuation of a rich tradition of engagement by Swarthmore students in international issues, with many alumni of the college working for NGOs, the State Department, or the U.S. military.

The five articles in this edition of *SIRJ* cover a range of topics: Bolivarianism, refugee issues in Europe, climate change, drones, and autonomous weapons systems. They are certainly timely, given the crisis in Venezuela and the Trump administration's decision to withdraw from the Paris climate deal. They also speak to each other, most obviously with the two articles on robots, but also in the discussion of Washington's "neo-imperialism" in Latin America and U.S. leadership (or lack thereof) on the climate issue. The pieces question accepted wisdom, calling, for example, for a paradigm shift in counter-terrorism and a new model for sharing the refugee burden.

I am confident that *SIRJ* will go from strength to strength and become a valuable voice in the national debate on these pressing issues.

Dominic Tierney  
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