Welcome to the inaugural issue of *Politica Northwestern*. *Politica Northwestern* is the academic journal of *Politics & Policy (P&P)*, a student publication at Northwestern University. *P&P* looks at the world in terms of what impact events will have. Political events happen all the time, but their impacts are not all equal. We distill major events to determine, at the end of the day, how they will change the world. For the inaugural issue of *Politica Northwestern*, we have compiled a list of past Weekly Focuses; the Weekly Focus, as the name implies, is a weekly section where we analyze a timely issue in-depth. We have selected articles that reflect major developments over the past several years with decent coverage in terms of subject and geographic area. The image we have chosen above may seem like an odd choice; Egypt is not the subject of any of our chosen articles. But the photo depicts events during the Arab Spring, which was first sparked around the time *P&P* began. The symbolism in the image mirrors the themes of many of our articles, where policy choices led to a political response – and vice-versa.
The first article (“Not so clean after all”) discusses a major corruption scandal in Turkey’s ruling Justice and Development (AK) Party. At the time of publishing, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the prime minister and now president, was in the midst of a transition from pragmatic, democratic leader to increasingly authoritarian strongman. Since the piece was published, Mr Erdoğan’s quest for power has only escalated.

“Ongoing violence in Venezuela” travels to a different part of the world and examines issues in a troubled country. The confluence of oil trends and turbulent politics has changed Venezuela over the past several years, and not all of it has been beneficial. Venezuela is also relevant because of the similarities and contrasts with other South American countries. At some times, Venezuela acts as a trendsetter. At other times, it is the contrarian of the continent.

“Regulating the shared economy” highlights a development that has affected the whole world. Across the world, names such as Uber and Airbnb have become near ubiquitous. At the core of such services is the merchant doing business by sharing their access to some good. Uber drivers drive their own cars around, while Airbnb users stay in other people’s homes. This blurs the line between contractor and employee. How this concept aligns with regulatory framework is still an open question three years after this piece was published.

The likes of Uber have made many consumers better off. But not all trends are so positive. “Anti-Islamic sentiment on the rise in Europe” traces growing tension in Europe against Muslims. The causes – from economic hardship to security fears – are numerous, and the effects are also wide-ranging. Such issues now shape European political debate and reflect new divisions.

The next article (“Decline in oil prices puts pressure on major producers”) travels to the Middle East, an area of the world that is often in the news, and focuses on a resource widely associated with the region: oil. Whereas oil once made oil-producing nations rich beyond measure, its price has dropped like a stone over the past several years. That has severe implications for governments that rely almost solely on oil revenue.

If there is now something of a glut of oil, infrastructure faces the opposite problem. As “Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank” explains, Asia will require a great deal more infrastructure to maintain and continue its economic growth. China claimed leadership on the issue with the launch of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). The AIIB is a challenge to existing institutions, like the IMF, and possibly even the global order that they represent. But Western countries – and America’s allies –
have also joined the project, much to American frustration. The AIIB is not only an economic issue but a geopolitical one as well.

“Tilting the scales” switches to a physically smaller setting but one that could still have long-lasting implications – the United States Supreme Court. The passing of Antonin Scalia has obvious effects on the court’s future direction. With the number of controversial issues at stake and the longevity of the court’s occupants, both Democrats and Republicans know they have much to gain and much to lose. And that reflects another aspect surrounding Mr Scalia’s death: the politics. The bitter fight to name a replacement reflects high levels of partisanship.

Similarly divisive battles are taking place across the ocean. “Drawbacks and advantages of Brexit” focuses on one of the most seismic events of 2016: the United Kingdom’s vote to exit the EU. Much like the rise of anti-Islamic sentiment, Brexit is an example of new economic and political divisions. The British debated the extent to which the UK should be open to the world, both in terms of migration and economics. But the vote sparked questions in the EU as well. The exit of one of the most prominent members of an institution is no small matter.

If the Supreme Court and Brexit have fairly clear battlegrounds, the internet is a lot hazier. Hacking is something that most people know to fear but have only a nebulous conception of. “Dark destiny of safety” examines one particular type of attack: DDoS, or denial or service. DDoS attacks have been on display recently, with both politicians and businesses falling prey. The world has become more interconnected. Many consider that a positive development, but this piece highlights some of the disadvantages.

If you are a student, please consider submitting to our next edition, which is scheduled for publication at the end of fall.