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Somerville, Will

Goodman, Sara Wallace

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PRIME MINISTERIAL GOVERNMENT?

Michael Foley updates a famous thesis

ANARCHY IN THE UK?

Steve Foster says no

BRITAIN AND THE FAR-RIGHT

Nigel Copsey assesses BNP prospects

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POLITICAL EDUCATION FORUM

January 2010

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Richard Kelly

Writers

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12 Inderjeet Parmar
16 Will Somerville
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19 Graham Goodlad
22 David Broughton
Stephen Thornton
26 Matt Hall
30 Robin Bunce

Production & Design
www.dmwm.co.uk

E-Pol
Political Education Forum
Old Hall Lane
Manchester
Lancashire
M13 0XT

Telephone: 07765 641297

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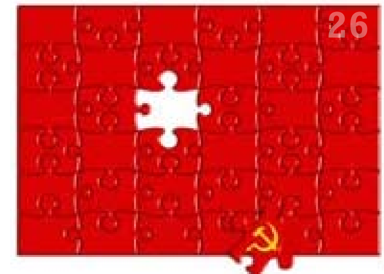
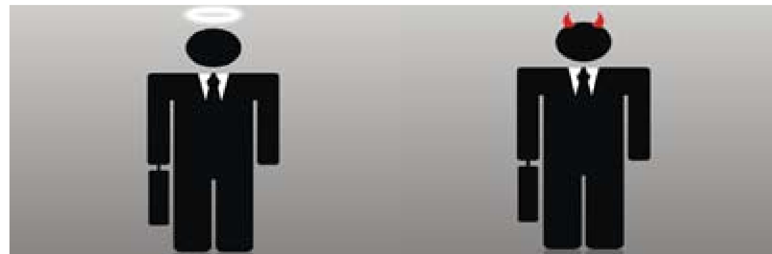


For over a century and a half, socialism acted as a beacon of hope for the oppressed, disenfranchised and exploited peoples of the world.



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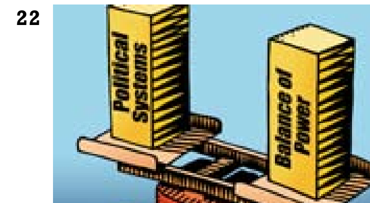

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British Fascism, the British National Party and the Quest for Legitimacy

Following its progress in the EU elections, Nigel Copsey surveys the prospects of the far-right in this country

British fascism is routinely dismissed as an abject political failure. To borrow Roger Griffin's words, a 'perpetual ugly duckling' that is 'destined to scratch around indefinitely without ever coming out as a swan'.[1] Even during the 1930s, when fascism was flourishing on the continent, not one British fascist ever came close to winning a seat in Westminster. The electoral high water-mark of Oswald Mosley's inter-war British Union of Fascists (BUF) came not in any national election but in local elections in 1937 when it polled between 14 and

> If the inter-war period was characterised by derisory failure, then the post-war period only seemed to confirm British fascism's chronic marginalisation

22 per cent of the vote in just three districts in London's East End.

Such has been the marginality of British fascism that the eminent historian of fascism, Stanley Payne, could dryly remark that the volume of literature on the BUF was 'inversely proportionate to the group's significance'.[2] Richard Thurlow further underscored the marginality of British fascism when he suggested that 'Perhaps the most enduring cultural image of the BUF was the comic one of Sir Roderick Spode and his Blackshorts as delineated by P.G. Wodehouse'.[3]

If the inter-war period was characterised by derisory failure, then the post-war period only seemed to confirm British fascism's chronic marginalisation. During its 1970s hey-day, the National Front (NF), which counted current BNP chairman Nick Griffin as a member, may have whipped up anti-immigrant sentiment, but it never succeeded in winning any representation to public office. The election of a BNP candidate in London's Tower Hamlets in a local council by-election in 1993 was such an exceptionally rare event for Britain's far right that it occasioned a public outcry. Rather than the harbinger of a national breakthrough, the BNP quickly lost this solitary council seat and swiftly returned to political obscurity. At the end of the 1990s, British fascism looked to have run up yet another blind alley.

The Rise of the BNP

It all seemed hopeless - a 'lost race' as the title of a 1999 BBC documentary on the far right described it. But, as events turned out, there was more than a glimmer of hope. On general election night, in June 2001, the image of BNP leader Nick Griffin - with a gag in his mouth and a T-shirt reading 'Gagged for telling the truth' - was relayed into millions of homes. Griffin had just contested the parliamentary seat of Oldham West and Royton, and had garnered over 16 per cent of the vote in the wake of serious racial disturbances in the town.

These racial disturbances, which spread to Burnley, Stoke and Bradford during the summer of 2001, combined with the rising saliency of the asylum issue, were to provide the initial stimulus to the BNP's emergence from the political ghetto. In local elections in 2002, the BNP captured three seats in Burnley. The following year its tally of councillors had increased to 13, rising further to 21 in June 2004, 54 by 2006, and following local elections in 2008 the BNP held 55 councillors across 22 local authorities. A seat in the Greater London Assembly elections was also won in May 2008, followed in June 2009 by the addition of three county council seats. Its most significant electoral breakthrough to date, however, was the capture of two seats in the European Parliament in June 2009. This marked a historic moment in British politics as never before had a British far-right party broken through in a national election.

Men are twice as likely to vote BNP as women.

A variety of factors account for this rise. Clearly, the political saliency of the immigration issue has played a central part. Recent research on the BNP vote indicates that its vote is primarily driven by opposition to immigration (as many as 87 per cent of BNP supporters in one recent poll identified immigration as one of the most pressing issues facing Britain). However, it also clear that disillusionment with Westminster's political establishment, particularly the Labour Party (57 per cent of BNP voters consider that Labour no longer cares about them), is an important driver, as is economic pessimism (BNP voters are the most pessimistic when it comes to their views).

Men are twice as likely to vote BNP as women. The BNP vote is also drawn from older social groups. The same poll shows that 44 per cent of BNP voters are drawn from the 35-54 age range, and around two-thirds of BNP voters are from social groups C2DE. In many respects, therefore, the BNP represents a racial-populist, anti-establishment vote that is rooted in a politically abandoned, and economically insecure white working-class.[4] In terms of its structural characteristics, this electorate shares many of the same features as those who voted for the NF in the 1970s. In his 1983 study of NF voters, it was Chris Husbands who identified the 'English working

class's special vulnerability to the politics of racial exclusionism'.[5] This vulnerability evidently remains.

One of the major problems the NF faced was its association with Nazism and Fascism. What all contemporary fascist parties have to negotiate, post-Auschwitz, is negative association with Hitlerism and genocide. For obvious reasons, to a greater or lesser extent, they try to distance themselves from this 'old' historic fascism. In the case of the NF, which was dominated for most of the 1970s by John Tyndall and Martin Webster, both graduates of earlier neo-Nazi organisations, the façade of moderation was paper-thin. Whilst more than a quarter of the British electorate in the 1970s agreed with the NF's policy of compulsory immigrant repatriation, the NF leaders' association with Nazism was the kiss of death as far as reaching the broader electorate was concerned.

Survey work undertaken during 1978 revealed that 64 per cent of respondents 'strongly agreed' or 'tended to agree' with the statement that the NF had a 'Nazi' side to it.[6] Yet John Tyndall, who went on to form the BNP in 1982, obstinately clung to a thinly disguised neo-Nazism, 'Nothing creates such a pathetic spectacle as those people who live in daily dread of being branded as "fascists" or "Nazis"', Tyndall remarked in 1988, 'and are thus deterred from adopting any robust principles at all'.[7]

Nick Griffin, originally a

hardliner who had joined the BNP in the mid-1990s urged the BNP to adopt a different tactical position. His line towards the end of the 1990s was that the BNP had to clean up its image, distance itself from Nazism/Fascism and turn itself into an electable party that presented its policies in more moderate 'mainstream' light. This did not mean abandoning core principles but meant talking in a non-threatening language which the public felt comfortable with. Inspired by the success of ostensibly more moderate extreme-right parties on the continent, not least Le Pen's *Front National*, Griffin ousted Tyndall in a leadership election in 1999. Up to his death in 2005 a bitter Tyndall continued to snipe at Griffin from the sidelines, accusing him of 'selling-out'.

The Quest for Legitimacy

Under Griffin, the BNP has re-branded itself as a modern, 'popular nationalist' party. Griffin dropped the NF-style call for the forced repatriation of non-whites, and distanced the party from fascist totalitarianism. Instead of strong, centralised government, he calls for a British nation comprised of largely self-governing communities, with government close to the people, along with the introduction of Swiss-style Citizens' Initiative referenda (he would be no doubt heartened by the outcome of the recent Swiss referendum on minarets).

As for race, the BNP refers to its principles as 'ethno-nationalist', that is, the British nation is comprised of several 'indigenous' ethnic groups (Anglo-Saxons, Celts etc) and these ethnic groups have a right to self-determination in their own territory. Of course, all these ethnic groups are white but the BNP denies that it is a white supremacist party: 'All peoples, all races, have a right to equal dignity and respect, and it is morally incorrect to regard any individual as "inferior" simply because of their racial origin. Any position or argument using that premise is morally bankrupt as well as politically "unsellable".'[8]

Nonetheless, it is also clear that the BNP considers race to be a valid concept, and that IQ differences between various racial groups do exist (it counters the charge that it is white supremacist by arguing that the IQ levels of South East Asians are on average four to five points higher than whites). As for anti-Semitism, rule number 11 of the BNP's language and concepts discipline manual states that 'Because of the inflammatory nature of this issue, as well as the party's past, it is *best to simply never speak or write of Jews at all'* (author's italics). Rule number 8 provides the key to all this: 'Arguments for our policies should always be couched in terms of the **most moderate language, and the most mainstream principles'**.[9] For Griffin, the modern BNP is all about making the '**Cause**' of white racial nationalism saleable.

A further aspect to Griffin's attempts to mainstream the BNP has been its embrace local community politics and doorstep contact with voters. This has involved emulating tactics pioneered by the Liberal Democrats. But it is also clearly intended to counter the image of 'sieg-heiling' skinheads by presenting the party in a non-threatening way. The idea is to create 'cognitive dissonance' amongst voters, that is, a gap between expectation (thuggery) and reality (a smartly dressed canvasser).

For the BNP, canvassing represents its 'trump card': it establishes contact on people's doorsteps, works to counteract its negative image, and demonstrates that it is listening to those voters who feel forgotten by out-of-touch establishment politicians. At the same time, the BNP eschews the type of violent street activity that characterised confrontations between fascist and anti-fascist groups during the 1970s. Such a policy is deliberate: the idea of avoiding provocative large-scale marches is to disarm anti-fascists and remove the traditional association with extremism and violence.

Conclusion: A Fool's Quest?

Significantly, the BNP has been able to transcend its traditional neo-Nazi image amongst a small minority of voters, particularly in its local strongholds (e.g. Stoke, Barking and Dagenham, Burnley) where it has become part of the mainstream fabric. Furthermore, in terms of providing the BNP with an opening into the national political mainstream Griffin expects that the European election results will have 'far-reaching consequences throughout the British body politic: *"The BBC will no longer have an excuse to bar us from prime political airtime, and the media will find it even harder to spin lies about us."*[10].

This marks a seismic shift for the BNP. Certainly his appearance on the BBC's flagship political discussion programme, *Question Time*, in October 2009 represented an important milestone in the party's quest for legitimacy - the first time ever that the BNP had been invited to share a national TV platform with mainstream panellists. Moreover, despite a nervous Griffin performing badly, and coming across as a 'smirking extremist', in the first opinion poll taken after his appearance more than a fifth of the British public (22 per cent) said they would 'seriously consider' voting the BNP in a future local, general or European election.

Nevertheless, we should avoid overstating its impact as those that said they would 'definitely vote' for the BNP remained stubbornly low at just 4 per cent (*Daily Telegraph*, 24.10.09). The party's quest for legitimacy may have worked amongst a hard core of BNP voters but it has so far had little effect on the broader (non-racist) electorate concerned by high levels of immigration. The BNP is still widely perceived as a racist (if not fascist) political party and will forever be frustrated by the anti-racist norms of British society which arguably provide the biggest obstacle to its transition from a 'big small party' to a 'small big party'.

For all the BNP's 'modernisation', 69 per cent of respondents agreed that 'Mr Griffin is still at heart a holocaust denier and only pretends to have changed his views to make the BNP appear more moderate' (*YouGov*, Oct. 2009). The BNP is Britain's most disliked political party for a reason: it is a racist party with its roots in a British fascist tradition that stretches back through the NF to the inter-war fascism of Mosley's Blackshirts and other anti-Semitic and racial nationalist organisations. The BNP used to have a poster that read 'Tomorrow belongs to us!' It doesn't: the BNP's quest for legitimacy is in the end a fool's quest. Unless it can truly distance itself from racism – highly improbable - it will never be a serious candidate for Downing Street.

(Endnotes)

1 Roger Griffin,' British Fascism: The Ugly Duckling', in M. Cronin (ed) The Failure of British Fascism (London: Macmillan, 1996), p. 163.

2 Stanley Payne, A History of Fascism, 1914-45 (London: UCL Press, 1996), p. 305.

3 Richard Thurlow, Fascism in Modern Britain (Stroud: Sutton, 2000), p .vvii.

4 See 'A hard and alienated vote: Who votes BNP and why', Searchlight, no. 409, July 2009, p. 15.

5 See C. T. Husbands, Racial Exclusionism and the City: The Urban Support of the National Front (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983), p. 142.

6 See M. Harrop, J. England, and C.T. Husbands, 'The Bases of National Front Support', Political Studies, 28, 2 (1980), pp. 271-283.

7 John Tyndall, The Eleventh Hour (London: Albion Press, 1988), p. 592.

8 BNP: 'Folk and Nation – Underpinning the Ethnostate', Voting Members Booklet, Number 1, p. 6.

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The author is Reader in Modern History at Teeside University and author of Contemporary British Fascism: The Quest for Legitimacy (Palgrave 2008)

The Death of Deference

Michael Blank examines the decline of respect for authority – and claims it's no bad thing

> "There is a growing suspicion of teachers' knowledge, with more students relying on revision guides"

Fifty –maybe even thirty– years ago, a newspaper would not dream of criticising the political elite on the scale it does today. Very rarely is there an article, in the opinion section of a modern newspaper, that doesn't criticise the government's actions. But this development goes beyond media circles. The second half of the twentieth century has brought an unprecedented decline in deference for political elites, teachers, parents, and anyone else who once gained respect. Why? And what are the consequences, if any?

Society has been transformed over the last hundred years from the Victorian England which many (including Churchill) romanticised as morally upright. By the turn of the century, however, with a new monarch and improving working conditions, the people began to have a voice. No longer could the political elite stand by idle. No more could Britain ignore cries for full enfranchisement. It is no accident that Russia's October Revolution happened in this period: it was a time of defying the elites. The public awakened, albeit gradually.

Yet one has to be careful to avoid a misconception of the period. There was little or no criticism of bankers in the press after the Wall Street Crash of 1929. Compare this to today, with high-flying bankers being attacked across the media, in our homes and in the local pub for their bonus culture and apparent irresponsibility. How many of their critics understand the crisis beyond the words 'Credit Crunch'? The two great wars of the early twentieth century were run by the political elites, with little public criticism or questioning of their motives or actions. The public stood behind them firmly.

Criticism of war, though, began mainly with the Vietnam war of the 1960s, when deference began to die, and now the decline seems virtually complete given the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Globalisation and the EU's powers on the increase now mean that our politicians are increasingly powerless and thus the public are becoming disillusioned by them. John Simpson, a reporter for the BBC, was punched in the stomach in 1970 by the then Prime Minister Harold Wilson for daring to ask when the election was going to be, and it didn't even appear in the media. Now, the press do it all the time, and a Prime Minister would be forced to resign for punching a journalist. The culture of challenging the elite has changed. Is the difference between then and now that our political elites are getting it wrong, whereas before they didn't? Or is it merely being brought to our attention far more now?

As of June 2009, 79.8% of the British population use the internet. That translates into access to a huge mass of information, on demand. Whereas fifty years ago a lack of required weapons and armour for war might not be brought attention to (and indeed wasn't), today it is in the public domain. We are the 'Freedom of Information society', where everyone can question the elite as never before. Richard Kelly, in his book Changing Party Policy in Britain, has coined the term 'Karaoke culture' to refer to this phenomena: we just want to do everything for ourselves.

This partly explains the rise in pressure groups, and the decline in voter turnout as a rejection of the elite. The recent expenses scandal resulted in the production by The Daily Telegraph of a large index of every MP's expenses, something which would have been unimaginable only twenty years ago, causing a huge public backlash against our Parliamentary system. The public don't want the elite running their lives, and this, perhaps, is what New Labour has failed to see with its encroaching nanny state. We are better educated, and more aware of what we want. Ask a GP how many patients come to see him, already thinking that they know the diagnosis (probably from the internet), and his answer will be very high indeed.

As a student, I see the decline of deference all around me; I have embodied it myself in a number of articles for student papers. There is a growing suspicion of teachers' knowledge, with more students relying on revision guides, rather than on what teachers have to say, and a corresponding eagerness to argue with their conclusions. This is not inherently unhealthy. It inspires self-thinking, and an entrepreneurial spirit that many philosophers encompass. John Locke is a prime example with his rejection of despotism and an interventionist state. Marx 'scientifically' challenged the elite and argued that it would eventually collapse. He may have been proved wrong, but his idea of a majority that seeks the destruction of a stratified society still exists today.

There is, however, a down side to all this. A rejection of the elites means that often we refuse to accept when they do indeed know better. It is all well and good for pressure groups to challenge the government's policy on the environment or smoking. But government has hugely diverse interests to reconcile, and in a democracy this task is seldom done perfectly. Yet the task must still be attempted – and only the governmental elite can attempt it.

Rejecting elites can also become addictive, with repercussions throughout society. We may begin to lose faith in conventional medicine, turning instead to unscientific herbal medicine or 'alternative' homeopaths – a course of action that could make matters worse. We may start voting for extreme parties, such as the BNP, which ultimately threaten democracy. It's worth recalling that the Cultural Revolution in China was an attempt to end deference – but it resulted in the mass murder of teachers, officials, intellectuals and managers. The unthinking rejection of one set of elites can easily lead to the emergence of another which is less tolerant and more menacing.

We have to find the balance. Rejecting the elite entirely can lead to a downward spiral in which we refuse to acknowledge the rule of law and respect for others. Society can very easily lose its respect, and we must stop short of that. Nonetheless, decline in deference can be a good thing, and the openness that it has created in politics gives us a sense of empowerment. The question is: shall we use that power thoughtfully - and to good effect?

The author is a student of A-Level Politics

Presidential politics in the UK: The Blair inheritance

Michael Foley updates his celebrated thesis on 'prime ministerial governance'

Discussion and debate over the contemporary development of the British premiership have increasingly been characterised by allusions to the emergence of a presidential dimension. The claim is that, over the course of the last twenty-five years, a series of changes in institutional dynamics, organizational conventions and cultural landscapes have had the cumulative effect of altering the substance and tenor of leadership politics in the UK. The United States presidency has usually provided the comparative framework for contextualizing the high incidence of references to presidential themes in the language of British political exchange and evaluation (Allen; Foley 2000; Hargrove; Norton).

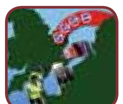
The central assertion of this viewpoint is that the forms and devices of presidential politics bear a strong resemblance to the trends that are discernible in the nature of what has become an advanced and sophisticated politics of competitive leadership operating at the heart of the British system. In some cases, these shifts can be seen as occurring within the normal range of the adaptive developments of a parliamentary order and in accordance with the evolutionary spirit of the British constitution. In other respects, these changes can be viewed as transcending the customary patterns of British politics and ushering in an alternative infrastructure of political projection, exchange and analysis.

What is important to note is that significant changes have been, and are continuing to be, made to the job specifications and personal requirements of a British prime minister. It is also noteworthy that these changes have become a central and sustained feature of the premiership, not only conditioning the exercise of power but also shaping the course of its decline (Foley 2004; Foley 2009).

A presidential predicament

British prime ministers usually find that they are the subject of a host of push and pull factors that project their individual and political identity into a sphere which is often far removed from the traditional foundations of the prime ministerial position. Whether this shift can be attributed more to the advent of an increasingly dealigned electorate, or to the depiction of political issues by news organizations, or to a generalised disenchantment with what is conceived as normal politics, the net effect has been one of placing a greater emphasis upon the brand name of leaders and their capacity to inject a personal appeal into a political resource on behalf of their respective organizations.

Political parties are complicit in the process that, in many respects, draws their leaders away from the immediacy of their own ranks in favour of a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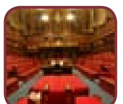
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broader and more responsive appeal to the volatile flows of floating and independent voters. Prime ministers and potential occupants of that position are propelled by their own parties to acquire as much discretion as possible so that they can compete effectively in this market for the support of a semi-attached electorate. All parties are aware that party image, and especially a party's perceived competence to govern in a unified way, is now closely associated with its apparent unity in being effectively and conspicuously led.

Leaders are now expected to break out of the immediate confines of their own party organizations in order to provide not only a conspicuously identifiable figure within a political environment devoid of many anchorage points of firm attachment, but also to devise and implement a marketing campaign that has to be responsive to the fluid character of shifting public concerns and issue profiles. This dynamic, in combination with other contributory factors, give leaders an ever greater prominence and invest them with increasing demands to convert personal resources into political capital.

While the phenomenon of 'leadership stretch' can enhance the position of leaders, it can also raise expectations to a level that leaders will find difficult to satisfy. The disjunction between high exposure and disproportionately low levels of political leverage is a common theme in presidential systems where leader-centric attention is often accompanied by a proliferation of established legal, political and constitutional checks. In modern British politics, a comparable predicament has arisen in which the prime minister has to manage the growing disparity between the symbolic and promotional nature of the office and its limitations within the arrangement of a pluralist democracy.

The preferred solution to this predicament in the US has been for presidents to resort to what has been termed a strategy of 'public leadership' (Kernell). The main element of this response is to work around established power centres and institutions in order to take the presidential message directly to the people through a near continuous engagement with public channels of communication. Experience in the United States demonstrates that the various devices and strategies of public leadership can be successful in developing and sustaining the presidential agendas and positions. Effective outreach can enable presidents to resist the counter-pressures of other political actors, to exert an often decisive influence upon the formation of public opinion and political issues, and to achieve the status of a trustworthy political channel – even to the point of assuming a separate identity from that of the government in general and even from the president's very own administration.

Through public appearances, televised addresses, photo opportunities, presidential conferences, political trips, international summits, visual spectacles and a host of other forms of communication, presidents engage in an unremitting strategy of personal projection in what is already a media saturated environment (Edwards). In many respects, they now have no choice other than to project themselves in this way in order to retain their hold on the political agenda and to ensure that other leaders do not diminish the resources of the office by displacing the president in the visibility and status of leadership claims.

Upside Blair

The most advanced exponent of this kind of public leadership in Britain came with the premiership of Tony Blair. His claim to the Labour leadership and to Number 10 was founded explicitly upon an ability to generate a sense of public immediacy and accessibility. Blair was not only the public face of New Labour, he was the primary means of transmitting its core themes of modernization, coherence and competence (Blair; Gould).

In the same way that the party looked to him to restore public trust in Labour, so Blair employed a range of devices to deepen and refine the connection between his leadership and a wider national constituency. These ranged from the adoption of sophisticated forms of news output, market research, policy presentation and electoral coordination (as employed by the party's communication centre at Millbank) to the projection of a leader-centred engagement with the public in which Blair not only adopted a role of popular advocacy but made numerous inferences linking his positions with such themes as the public interest, 'the people' and the nation. Through these devices, the Blair premiership became synonymous with the professionalization of political communications.

Blair's strategic imperative was that New Labour's initial electoral success as an opposition force in 1997 should be maintained with the same intensity and level of priority in government. In effect, this meant that New Labour administrations were to be organized as far as possible along the lines of a permanent campaign with the same aspirational emphasis upon presentation, projection and outreach that had characterized the party's electoral state of readiness.

The techniques employed ranged from the traditional channels of news management and media cultivation to more innovative forms of direct communication that included a rapidly developed Number 10 website; the usage of soft format television outlets; local and regional news contacts; lifestyle and ethnic publications; and the adoption of prime ministerial 'town meetings' in which Blair would engage directly with public audiences. Even towards the end of his premiership, Blair was still exploring new ways of keeping his channels open to the public through the use of citizen petitions via the Number 10 website; personal approaches to organizations like *YouTube*; and continued efforts to promote a positive image through connections to popular culture, life style issues and even celebrity outlets.

Downside Blair

The negative side of this kind of high profile leadership, geared to a state of permanent campaigning, is that it increases the vulnerability of a leader at a time when it is most needed. Presidents in the US regularly discover that while the strategy of public leadership can yield rich returns, it is also one with the potential for conspicuous losses.

In fact, presidential decline is more often than not characterized by a chronic deterioration in this precise sphere of leadership politics when the political initiative has been lost and the centrality of leadership has become a strategic liability. The more that prime ministers engage in public outreach, populist politics, media engagement, visceral symbolism and abstracted depictions of social cohesion, the more they lay themselves open to damaging changes in the terms of political trade. Tony Blair found to his cost that the advances he had made in the repertoire of public leadership techniques in the UK were to rebound upon him and leave him in condition of exposed political isolation.

Different types of leadership bring about different forms of dissent and reaction. In Blair's case, critical opinion was marshalled around the political

and constitutional propriety of his methods and practices. These involved increasingly critical references to the accumulation of units and agencies around Number 10; the preference for bilateral meetings with ministers; the usage of special advisors, business personnel, focus groups, media consultants, pollsters and task forces; the alleged politicisation of the civil service; the incidence of conspicuous prime ministerial interventions within the Whitehall machinery; and the marginalization of the cabinet, parliament and the Labour Party in the formulation of policy agendas.

Increasingly, discrete complaints against Blair were translated into generic challenges to the legitimacy of a premiership that raised serious concerns over issues of personal trust and over the usage of executive power. Criticisms of prime ministerial overreach and governmental detachment from the public realm were claimed to be at the direct expense of parliamentary rights, cabinet prerogatives, party traditions, constitutional practices and collective decision-making precedents (Bennister; Cowley; Hennessy 2000).

To a growing extent, Blair found that his leadership was subjected to the same kind of systemic assaults that regularly accompany the decline of US presidents. In similar vein, the presumptions and techniques of public leadership followed the familiar presidential pathway to over-exposure and depleted resources – i.e. that orchestrated political outreach not only provides an opportunity for opposition but largely predetermines the form and substance of its opposition.

The defining issue in this pathology

proved to be the Iraq war which not only demonstrated the emergent limitations of Blair's reliance upon public leadership posture, but acted as a mobilising cause to achieve political traction against what had previously a set of diffuse objections to the Blair's exercise of prime ministerial power. In effect, Blair created a high profile leadership issue whose political and public repercussions he could not control. This resulted in an enervating process of dissolution that included accusations of personal hubris and presidential overreach as well as assertions of constitutional degradation, system failure and leadership dysfunction (Butler; Hennessy 2005; Kettell; Marquand; Singh, Rabinder and Gearty).

Gordon Brown out of sorts

Gordon Brown's accession to the premiership was marked by a difficult balancing act. He needed to signify a break from the controversies of the Blair era whilst at the same time maintaining the continuity of the New Labour brand to which he had been committed since the mid 1990s. This problem was made more difficult by another source of tension. This was related to the need for Brown to adapt to the new strategic requirements of a high exposure public leadership role.

This role which was now considered to be an essential feature of political management - and one which Blair had been very adept at performing - was not one to which Brown seemed to be temperamentally suited. Even after such a long apprenticeship as Chancellor of Exchequer, Brown found the transition conspicuously difficult. His evident problems with the demands and intrusiveness of his new position underlined the substantive differences that now exist between a senior cabinet minister and the role requirements of a modern prime minister. Although Brown has made extensive efforts to adjust to the public outreach character of the position, he has been increasingly adjudged to be unsuited to the role. After only one year in office, Brown was facing severe criticism from backbenchers and party managers as well as reports of splits and revolts within the cabinet and persistent rumours of leadership challenges (*The Economist*; Stephens).

For some time now, the prime minister's position has been considered to be chronic because of what are taken to be his explicit and expensive failings in a model of leadership politics with which he engages only with great difficulty. Ironically, Brown has been critically assessed against criteria of prime ministerial performance that were mainly set during the Blair ascendancy. Brown has some claims to leadership success especially in the field of international financial management; but overall the dominant narrative that has become attached to his premiership has been one of entrenched leadership failure.

His position has been made worse by David Cameron's success in detoxifying the Conservative Party from the top down not least by offering the kind of personal immediacy, political outreach and individual branding that was once so closely associated with Blair (Rentoul; Underhill and Stryker). Further discomfort has been provided by Barack Obama's showpiece campaign in 2008. This witnessed a left of centre figure reviving the Democratic Party through a transformative programme for change. It also featured a highly innovative electoral strategy that introduced a new chapter in direct leader-citizen connections through the use of web 2.0 facilities to generate fundraising and volunteer networks at ground level (Allison and Waters; Gaudin).

Meanwhile, Gordon Brown has become a marginalised figure locked into a process of terminal decline through an inability to align himself with a leadership model that has its own incentive structures, behavioural codes, embedded logics and operational disciplines. He has been left to ruminate upon the way in which positions of high exposure leadership are highly proficient in revealing when a leader is out of synch with its modes of operation.

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Michael Foley is Head of Department at Aberystwyth University's Department of International Politics. His most recent book, American Credo: The Place of Ideas in US Politics, *was published by OUP in 1997*

NO FUTURE IN ENGLAND'S DREAMLAND

Steve Foster argues that anarchism is outdated and irrelevant

> Their faith in the existence of universal laws shaping the destiny of humankind is touching, but hardly the stuff of which serious politics is made.

DANGER WRONG WAY TURN BACK

If a critique of anarchism's political prospects in the UK poses a problem at all, it is in simply knowing where to start and what to leave out. Assuming they would regard the energy expended as worthwhile, all of the major political ideologies could have something to say about anarchism and little of it would be complimentary. What follows is an attempt to synthesise their main lines of argument.

Flaws and fault-lines

First of all, there are a number of very obvious contradictions running through the rather sickly corpus of anarchist thought. One of the more striking is the unresolved disagreement between the collectivist and individualist forms of the doctrine. All political ideologies are prone to a degree of fragmentation. Anarchism, however, is particularly cursed in this respect, largely because it is forced to straddle the cusp of socialism and liberalism: an uncomfortable position which would test the fortitude of St. Anthony. The result is a political tradition which has had to stretch itself to encompass, on the one hand, free market libertarians such as Murray Rothbard and, on the other, the denizens of the Class War Federation ('No War But the Class War'). The gulf between the two is unbridgeable and does little for anarchism's wider credibility.

Secondly, two of the most important anarchist thinkers - William Godwin (1756-1836) and Michael Bakunin (1814-1876) - are curiously dependent on philosophical determinism. Their faith in the existence of universal laws shaping the destiny of humankind is touching, but hardly the stuff of which serious politics is made. Further, the notion that we will be drawn towards anarchist

conclusions through our awareness of immanent cosmological forces is curious for an ideology whose key value is individual autonomy.

Thirdly, Godwin and Bakunin's determinism exposes a more serious fissure. Anarchism's insistence that the state is an unnecessary evil is credible only to the extent to which humanity has an innate capacity for spontaneous social organisation. This may, of course, be true. History, however, suggests otherwise and duly gives the last word on the subject to those such as Thomas Hobbes and (albeit from a rather different philosophical stand point) Arthur Koestler, both of whom offer a far more realistic and infinitely more credible assessment of humanity's capacity for goodness, tolerance and self-restraint. Little wonder, therefore, that Godwin and Bakunin seek to underpin their remarkable optimism by asserting the existence of universal laws. In the process, however, they ask us to engage in a discourse which passes rapidly from political theory into the realm of political mysticism.

A world we have lost: the sociology of anarchism

The history of anarchism as a political movement suggests that it has acquired prominence (or notoriety) only in highly specific circumstances.

Where the dominant mode of production in a particular locality, especially when supported by a powerful folk tradition, lends itself to communal organisations composed of economically independent, small scale producers;

Where the ostentatious display of wealth, allied to widespread political corruption, emphasises the gulf between the rich and the rest to a degree which the latter find intolerable;

Where the conduct of the Catholic Church has generated a powerful tradition of anti-clericalism; and

Finally, in the later 20th Century, where young people in particular, have become deeply disillusioned with what they see as the failure of political elites to overcome long standing politico-cultural problems.

This helps explain anarchism's very limited appeal in capitalist, reformist and secular Britain. However, it is worth adding that, whilst the UK was never particularly fertile soil for anarchism, the political leadership offered by the endogenous movement has been woeful. Despite the high levels of industrial unrest in the twenty-five years after Labour's victory in 1964, anarchism's influence on working class opinion remained in the words of one leading activist 'tiny' (Heath, 2006). This clarifies why a younger anarchist generation responded to Joseph Déjacque's clarion call and took to political violence with such enthusiasm after 1970. One detects in their actions the desperate hope that, by witnessing acts of destruction, the inert masses might be shaken free of their lethargy. At the very least, by provoking the State into political repression, they believed that the latter would finally expose itself as an authoritarian and self-serving political entity.

We can be only thankful, therefore, that when compared to the Baader-Meinhof gang or the *Brigate Rosse*, neither the Angry Brigade nor Class War showed any talent whatsoever for political violence. When set against the abduction and murder of Hanns Martin Schleyer and Aldo Moro (shameful and self-defeating acts both), Class War's 'bash the rich' invasion of the Henley-on-Thames regatta in particular was never destined to cause a political earthquake.

In addition, anarchism in the UK has a seemingly infinite capacity to divide against itself, something which has important implications for those who argue that anarchism might successfully merge with the more radical elements of the ecology movement. This has been tried before, in the 1960s and 70s. Quite simply, it didn't work; not least because of British anarchism's roots in the class struggle and its understandable concern over the motives of those who attached themselves to the movement largely because of lifestyle choices (Heath, 2006).

Absurdities and primitivism

However, it is anarchism's defining feature – its attempt to construct a theory of the State – which exposes it to the most damning criticism. There is something quite absurd about an ideology which insists, one, that the only outcome of the State is the perpetuation of Evil and, two, that the barbarism lurking within our hearts and minds will evaporate once we are freed from its malign grasp. The second of these assertions will strike the reader as particularly bizarre. That power corrupts would appear to be a sad if indelible feature of the human condition. Yet, the notion that human beings have tormented each other for millennia solely because they have fallen under the benighted spell of authority is palpable nonsense.

Further, as the quote from A.J. Polan below reminds us, for all its failings the modern State has played a critical part in a series of extraordinary advances, many of which been felt most keenly by those living in the lowest income groups.

'Modernity brings improved health, genuine popular access to education, a standard of living previously denied to all but a small majority, a rise in the level of culture and opportunities and so on' (Polan, 1984: 64)'

To play its part in this process, the State has indeed acquired remarkable powers and it is right that all of us should be concerned as a result. However, as Steven A. Peterson (1987) acknowledges, there is overwhelming evidence that people are everywhere willing to accept this process, even where it means exchanging part of their autonomy for the prospect of order, security and welfare support. The reasons why are set out by Bertrand Russell (1966: 494):

'the State, in spite of what Anarchists urge, seems a necessary institution for certain purposes. Peace and war, tariffs, regulations and sanitary conditions and the sale of noxious drugs, the preservation of a just system of distribution: these, among others, are functions which could hardly be performed in a community in which there was no central government'.

In addition to posing anarchists with the awkward question of how people can be forced to accept levels of autonomy they do not desire, the modern State also exposes any number of structural weaknesses within the anarchist conception of the self-governing community. Polan makes the obvious point that there is a direct

correlation between the size of each society and 'the possibility of dysfunctional dissidence'. In other words, once a large number of individuals gather together, they will soon begin to disagree. The bureaucratic State is set up precisely to absorb dysfunctional dissidence on this scale. But how might the anarchist community, lacking the power to cajole and compel, respond in such a scenario? Unlike the State, the latter depends upon the spontaneous emergence of a general will, instinctively recognised and accepted by all. Where this does not materialise, the community will inevitably fracture and divide.

As a result, one can confidently predict that, of necessity, anarchist communities will be very small indeed, something which has profound implications for economic activity and living standards. Large-scale political organization is a *sine qua non* for the extensive trading networks and complex division of labour on which all of the benefits of modernity are built. Anarchists have suggested that communities might agree to federate in ways which allow them to cooperate with each other. However, the global economy demands much more than mere 'co-operation'. Consequently, even if it were to succeed by its own terms, it is difficult to see how federation can secure the political and regulatory conditions necessary for the maintenance of global trade.

This problem – the problem of prosperity – is compounded by another difficulty. As Albert

Meltzer (1996) notes, within the contemporary division of labour 'There are dirty jobs which are socially unacceptable and poorly paid, so nobody wants to do them'. The State permits a variety of solutions to this problem. For example, the managed capitalism of the UK uses a combination of progressive taxation and the prospect of social mobility underwritten by universal public services to compensate those whose labour market position compels them to undertake such work. Meltzer, who is otherwise highly supportive of the anarchist cause, acknowledges that 'What an anarchist society would do could only be foretold by a clairvoyant.'

As a result, the latter's failure to conceptualise large-scale social and economic organisation exposes it to the charge of primitivism: it is effectively asking the British people to accept that, in return for unwanted additions to their stock of autonomy, their standards of living (and standards of culture) be set back half a millennium or so. In this respect, we should recall the origins of anarchism in the world of the Lyonnais artisan, the Swiss watch-maker or any number of peasant communities stretching from the Jura to the Urals: a world confident in its self-containment, resistant to authority and implacably opposed to capitalism: a world, in other words, long since lost.

Hobbes' ghost

Of course, it may be contended, especially by eco-anarchists, that pending environmental catastrophe will eventually compel citizens of the UK to accept low productivity and a radically simplified division of labour. Perhaps – but at this point anarchists everywhere should remind themselves of that old adage: 'Be careful what you wish for; you may get it'. For one is left with the uncomfortable thought that the eclipse of western civilization in the face of an epoch-shattering collapse of the global economy is not exactly the ideal nursery for the anarchist utopia. If anyone's spirit is destined to stalk such a post-apocalyptic landscape, it will be that of Thomas Hobbes and, I would venture to suggest, the first thing any survivors will be looking to do is to recreate his Leviathan in the desperate hope of alleviating their suffering.

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The author is Assistant Surmaster at the Manchester Grammar School, where he teaches Politics and Economics.

The eclipse of western civilization in the face of an epoch-shattering collapse of the global economy is not exactly the ideal nursery for the anarchist utopia.

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OBAMA'S FOREIGN POLICY: CAUTIOUS BUT CONTINUOUS?

Inderjeet Parmar finds strange links between the current US President and his predecessors

In a previous issue of *E-Pol* (2,1) Stefan Wolff argues that President Obama will "interpret American interests, and how best to achieve them, in a different way from his predecessor" (*E-Pol*, volume. Given Obama's obvious (and admirable) personal charisma and intellect, it was widely thought that he would "turn things around" for American power in the world.

This article, written a year after Obama's election victory, challenges Wolff's view (at least the first part of it) and concludes that little has fundamentally changed in US foreign and national security policy. This is because of President Obama's own attitudes, his appointments to high office, inherited legacies from the Bush era, and longer term tendencies and mindsets that limit policy-change possibilities. Interestingly, this view is now shared by US foreign policy scholars on left and right. It should, of course, be made clear that radical change or even significant reform of policy is normally unlikely due to entrenched policies and political forces. Most likely is some modification of the status quo, other things being equal.

"Change We Can Believe In" was, of course, candidate Obama's major election campaign promise. It was what many scholars, politicians, and especially the mass publics of the United States and, indeed, across the world, expected, and hoped for. One year after the 2008 election, however, there is growing scepticism and disappointment among many Obama admirers, despite the premature award of the Nobel Peace Prize.

To some extent, though, policy change is an ambiguous issue: it is nigh on impossible for some policy changes *not* to occur, at some level or other: policies never stay exactly the same – nor do policy styles and rhetoric, all of which can change perceptions, improve national image and reactions in international politics. Even declarations of friendship – such as

that towards Iran over its alleged nuclear weapons' development programme (while simultaneously moving several more missiles closer to Iran's borders and coastline and threatened sanctions) – can change the image of American power, *even if the underlying objectives remain the same*. And this is the point about policy change: unless it is fundamental change, i.e., a change in policy *goals*, all sorts of relatively superficial changes are possible but cannot truly be seen as authentic policy transformation.

The argument here is that the deepest underlying continuity between administrations of *both main political parties* – since the presidency of Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1933-45) - is the persisting influence of the east coast foreign policy Establishment in the United States, forged since Japan's attacks on Pearl Harbour in 1941, the main composition of which changes relatively slowly and operates regardless of the political party in power. This Establishment is composed of Wall Street bankers and lawyers, Ivy League university professors, executives of the largest industrial corporations, major philanthropic foundations like Ford, Rockefeller and Carnegie, Republican and Democratic party insiders and key think tanks like the Council on Foreign Relations and Brookings. This Establishment is, of course, very close to the US military establishment and, therefore, strongly resembles the 'military-industrial complex' of which President Eisenhower – a fully paid-up member - warned Americans about in his farewell address in 1961.

Pearl Harbour, among other catalytic events (such as the Chinese revolution of 1949, outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950, and 9-11), galvanised the foreign policy Establishment's *liberal internationalism* and has remained, within fairly narrow boundaries, the dominant, 'hardwired' mindset. The differences between the leading elements of both parties revolve around details, rhetoric and means, not policy ends or, indeed, interpretations of American national interests: both parties are inextricably attached to American global hegemony or 'leadership'.

The popular yearning for change was inevitable after 8 years of the Bush administration, by which time there was a deepening economic and financial crisis causing mass unemployment, an illegal war on Iraq, torture at Guantanamo Bay and 'extra-ordinary rendition', a developing quagmire in Afghanistan, the crumbling authority of a nuclear-armed Pakistani state and the alienation of the Muslim world and large swathes of European opinion. As such, Obama's clarion call for change was bound to raise high and unrealisable expectations.

The argument here is that if Obama was serious about change, he should have appointed to high office people not implicated in the policies of the past or in the mindsets of the US foreign policy Establishment which broadly *supported Bush's policies*. Yet, despite his own much-publicised anti-Iraq war 'record', Obama appointed leading militarists close to the Bush administration and his Republican opponent in 2008, John McCain. Obama retained Robert Gates as Secretary of Defense and appointed General James Jones (a close ally of McCain's) as national security adviser. In addition, he appointed pro-war Democrats, Hillary Clinton and Joseph Biden, as Secretary of State and Vice President. Admiral Michael Mullen was retained from Bush as head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Admiral Dennis Blair as director of national intelligence. Obama appointed a large number of officials from the Clinton presidency, including Jim Steinberg, Susan Rice, Richard Holbrooke, and Dennis Ross. If McCain was billed as Bush mark II, Obama's administration could fairly be labelled a hybrid Bush-Clinton third term. Obama also appointed a number of conservatives, such as Michael McFaul (National Security Council), and John Brennan, a controversial supporter of "enhanced interrogation methods" (i.e. torture) during the Bush administration, to the office of national counter-terrorism, avoiding need for confirmation by the US Senate. Obama had previously proposed Brennan for heading the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) but feared Brennan would be vetoed by Senate Democrats.

Despite 'opposition' to a war on Iraq before it started, Obama's position gradually shifted: the closer to the White House he advanced, the more cautious his message became. Pragmatically, the war progressed from "dumb" in 2002 to comparable in values to World War II and the Normandy landings by 2008. One year into his presidency, Obama is firmly supportive of the Bush policy: train the Iraqi army and police, begin *partial* withdrawal as soon as is 'practicable', and leave behind anything from 35,000-50,000 US troops. He has also followed Bush into Afghanistan on the basis that that country, and its border area with Pakistan, is the *real frontline* of (Bush's) *global war on terror*. With the proposed military 'surge' into Afghanistan announced in December 2009, followed by immediate backtracking on the original July 2011 deadline for beginning withdrawal, Obama has become an 'active' war president.

Obama's appointments to high office are frequently ascribed to his own inexperience in foreign affairs: the contention here is that Obama's own foreign policy attitudes revolve around notions of America as an 'exceptional' country, morally superior and destined to lead the world - as the world's "last, best hope", as he noted in a speech in Chicago in 2007 . After all, Obama is on record as stating that "the American moment" is still within his grasp – it had not passed despite Bush's failures, and that he is the man who would seize back the initiative.

The main problem with Bush, from that point of view, was that he brought American power and the war on terror into disrepute and made the US substantive interests unrealisable. The resurgence of the Vietnam 'syndrome', which severely limited American military occupations overseas, and which liberals thought had been buried by the 'good' wars in Kosovo and Bosnia, was re-emerging as America's foreign wars failed to end in spectacular (and easy) victories. Obama's mission is, through change in rhetoric and style, to achieve those undisputed national interests. His appointments are instructive, therefore: drawn either directly from the previous administration, or from among Washington insiders who supported the thrust of Bush's foreign policies .

So change of a meaningful kind was unlikely, despite popular hopes. A relatively cursory glance across the foreign and national security fields demonstrates this: mention has already been made of Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan. The war on terror continues to operate as the dominant framework and mindset of the Obama administration. Hence, the closure of the embarrassing Guantanamo Bay prison for 'enemy combatants', announced by Bush several years ago, remains a problem (most of its inmates have not been charged with any offence nor permitted to challenge their incarceration in open civilian courts, and who are not accorded the protection of the Geneva Convention or American law). Likewise, rendition (kidnapping) of terror suspects for torture in various prisons in Jordan, Egypt and other US allied states, as well as the *expansion* of the notorious facility at Bagram air base, Afghanistan, is offers further continuity with Bush policies.

In a far cry from the response to the widely criticised elections in Iran, President Obama endorsed the clearly rigged election victory of Hamid Karzai, the president of Afghanistan. Mr Karzai was declared winner despite gaining less than 50% of the national vote, as stipulated by the Afghan constitution, drafted after America's defeat of the Taliban in 2001. At around 2 million voters, only 15% of the electorate actually participated in the elections. Obama is despatching 30,000

additional troops to sustain a government that has no legitimacy.

On the matter of Israel, nothing appears to have changed under President Obama. Indeed, the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas has been so frustrated by American back-tracking on new Israeli settlements on the West Bank and in Jerusalem that he has threatened to resign and withdraw from the 'peace process'. Despite Obama's Nobel Peace prize, nominations for which closed a mere two weeks after his inauguration, he remained silent on Israel's bombing of Gaza which killed thousands of civilians and caused untold damage to an already weak infrastructure and economy.

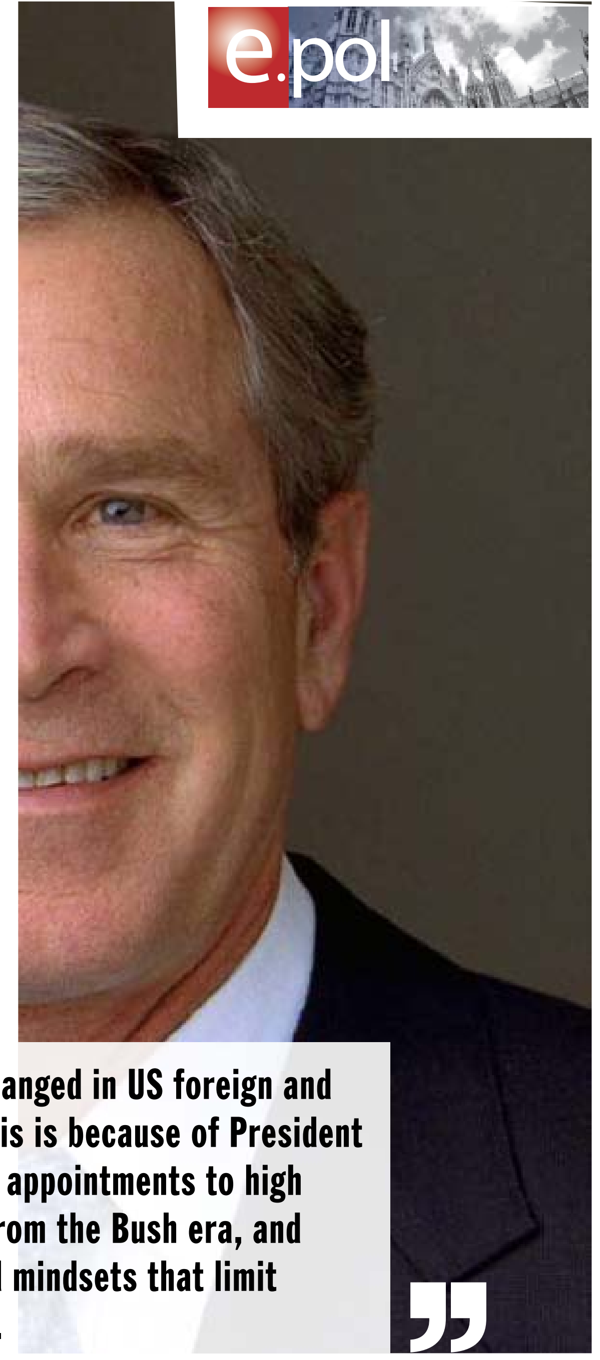
Indeed, the US administration has gone to some efforts since then to suppress the issue. President Abbas's resignation threat came after Hillary Clinton congratulated Israel for its '*restraint*' on the settlements question. With mid-term elections in November 2010, and the necessity of massive fund-raising to fight them, it is unlikely that Obama will raise the Israel-Palestine matter – it could prove fatal to fundraising from pro-Israel Christians and, indeed, the whole Israel lobby, as documented by John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt's, *The Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy*.

Obama's (and George W. Bush's) interest in expanding American power through assertive 'democracy promotion' is well illustrated by the expanding role of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO, formed in 1949 to fight the cold war against the Soviet Union). Obama's appointment of Ivo Daalder as US ambassador to NATO is instructive. Daalder is a well known democracy promoter from the leading think tank, Brookings, and one who has argued that NATO should become a global alliance for democracy.

NATO used to define its operations as "in area" (i.e., in the north Atlantic area) and "out of area", he notes. Today, the *whole world* is "in area" as far as NATO is concerned; the world's so interconnected that "in" and "out of area" simply makes no sense to the Obama administration. The United States backed the appointment to NATO secretary-general of Anders Fogh Rasmussen, former Danish premier and supporter of the Iraq war and the wider war on terror. During his premiership, Denmark sent around 500 troops to Iraq. Rasmussen has appointed a key Obama ally and adviser, former secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, to head up a strategic review of the role of NATO. Allbright had famously declared America the "indispensable nation" in world affairs when she was Clinton's secretary of state.

President Barack Obama, who differs in so many ways from George W. Bush, is an American 'exceptionalist': he believes America is destined to lead and police the world, and that American values have global appeal and application. Those entrenched attitudes – and his subsequent appointments to high office - largely explain Obama's foreign and national security policies… and why they so closely resemble those of his flawed and unpopular predecessor.

Inderjeet Parmar is a Professor of Politics at the University of Manchester and Vice-Chair of the British International Studies association



Little has fundamentally changed in US foreign and national security policy. This is because of President Obama's own attitudes, his appointments to high office, inherited legacies from the Bush era, and longer term tendencies and mindsets that limit policy-change possibilities.

Immigration and New Labour

Will Somerville and Sara Wallace Goodman ask whether the Blair-Brown regime has exacerbated a deep-seated problem

Labour's landslide success in the 1997 General Election was a culmination of a transformation in ideology and alliance building. After nearly two decades in the political wilderness, the party had to move toward the centre of British politics, ditching traditional socialist principles and accepting more free-market oriented policies. Tony Blair's election as leader in 1994 accelerated this move towards the centre, encapsulated in the New Labour project. Electoral success, via increased support from middle-class voters, duly followed in 1997.

But where did immigration fit in Labour's new alignment in the political centre? The answer is that it didn't. Philip Gould's *The Unfinished Revolution* (Gould, 1996), credited as a route map for New Labour election-winning coalition, did not consider immigration in any detail. Biographies of the major New Labour players (such as Anthony Seldon's *Blair*) or insider accounts (like Andrew Rawnsley's *Servants of the People*) hardly refer to immigration in either the run up to 1997 or in discussions across the first term. In other words, immigration was not crucial to the transformation of the Labour party into an electorally viable and successful centre-left party. Yet immigration would inexorably become a political issue so toxic that it required constant attention or would risk undermining New Labour's coalition.

The rise in political salience went hand in hand with legislative and policy energy. Looking back over the last decade, we can see that incremental changes took place in the first term, before, dating from about the start of Labour's second term, a staggering level of effort dedicated to immigration reform. What happened, and why?

Immigration 1997-2001

Before we examine the first four years of Labour government, a crucial analytical distinction should be made. Every immigration selection system is a composition of legally-mandated programmes and practices towards people
(a) coming to work or study
(b) to reunify with or form families through marriage etc

(c) to seek humanitarian protection (seeking to be recognised as a refugee).

Once inside the country, there are laws governing naturalisation and citizenship as people seek to stay permanently in the country. Recognising that these different sub-areas of immigration policy are often grafted on to the picture over long periods, we should think beyond the 'big picture' view of immigration, revealing that different policy areas have changed in different ways.

The first years of immigration reform were largely passive and reactive. Immigration came up through an intersection with overlapping topics, namely the promotion of human rights and anti-discrimination, as well as growing worry over asylum seekers. The germs of this "housekeeping" approach to policy change are visible in the 1997 Labour manifesto, which referenced changes to family-based migration, speeding-up asylum-based decisions, and ensuring a "crackdown" on fraudulent [immigration] advisers. But, in contrast to other social policy areas, strategic policy was severely downplayed (Labour Party, 1997). This lack of attention was (importantly) shared by the opposition: the Conservative Party was even less voluble, promising "firm, but fair immigration controls" and asylum seekers treated sympathetically if their claims were deemed genuine (Conservative Party, 1997).

The first term of Labour government confirmed the aims (or non-aims) of the manifesto. There were minimal changes to family migration (limited to abrogating the Primary Purpose Rule) and economic migration. More substantial changes came in the realm of asylum: in 1999, legislation sought to reorganise the asylum system to restrict the rights of asylum seekers (especially to penalise fraudulent cases) as well as to bring it in line with the Human Rights Act.

These limited legal and policy developments corresponded with Labour's cautious approach on winning the 1997 election: in the view of the then Prime Minister, it was an opportunity to 'put in place the foundations that would allow us to change the country in a way that lasts' (Blair 2002). In the case of immigration, however, such words lent the reforms a forward-facing quality they did not warrant. Labour Party strategists of the time were committed, if at all, to neutralising immigration as an issue. They recognised that immigration was a traditional area of weakness for the Labour Party relative to the Conservative Party and wanted it out of sight and out of mind.

Aside from these reforms to asylum-based migration, it was not until the turn of the century and Labour's second term in office that immigration became a major issue. Even a sanguine reading of policy changes from the turn of the century reveals an extraordinary amount of legislative and policy activity.

Immigration 2001-2009

There is insufficient space to detail all the policy and legal changes made after 2001, but important legislative change took place in 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, and 2009, with hundreds of small policy changes made outside of primary legislation as well as some significant shifts, such as the creation of the Points-Based System (PBS) in 2007. More changes took place in the arena of immigration policy than any other social policy area.

What happened in 2001-2002 to break the mould? Three major factors interacted with and drove political agenda-setting all came to a head:

(1) *Immigration change:* This was to be the major factor in the changing pattern of the debate. The headlines are well-known: the UK received a sustained influx of immigration (see Table 1). The figures below cover New Labour as a whole, but there was sustained net immigration above 100,000 per year starting in the late 1990s. From 1997-2007, at least 1.8 million more immigrants arrived than left and some more than two and half million non-British immigrants have arrived (Somerville et al., 2009).

Table 1: UK Immigration and Emigration 1997-2007

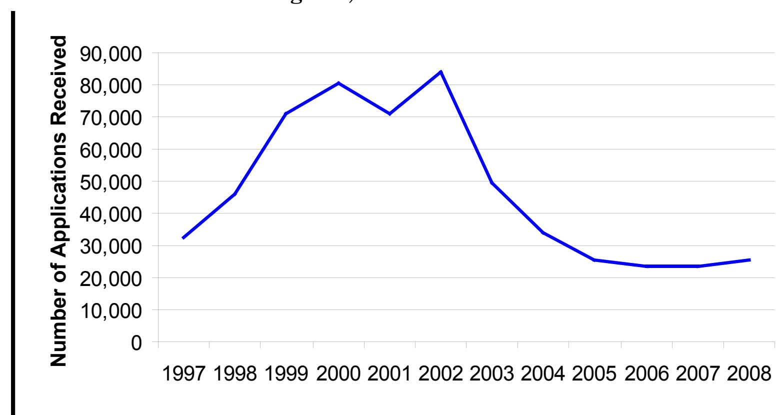
	British	Non-British	Total
Gross immigration	1,054,000	4,412,000	5,466,000
Gross emigration	1,867,000	1,747,000	3,614,000
Net migration	- 813,000	+ 2,665,000	+ 1,852,000

Source: Total International Migration. Office for National Statistics 2008.

Notes: A "migrant" is defined as someone born outside of the country and who is immigrating to that country for a period of 12 months or more. Numbers may not round; minus sign refers to net outflow and plus sign refers to net inflow.

Of course immigration trends and patterns of movement had been evolving, albeit quickly, for a decade. However, it was in this period that the media began to report such trends, highlighting the concern over the composition of immigration. In particular, around 2000-2002, there was a spike in the number of asylum seekers (see Graph).

Number of Asylum Applications (Excluding Dependents) Received in the United Kingdom, 1997 to 2008



Source: Home Office, various years

(2) *Crucial events:* The changing patterns of immigration were framed in the media and public mind by several major events that occurred in quick succession in the summer of 2001. Taken together, they contributed to a febrile policy making environment. First, the Sangatte crisis, replayed recently in stories about the "Jungle" in Calais, permanently imprinted images of desperate young men trying to reach the UK and symbolised chaos in the asylum system. This perception interacted with the real, aforementioned uptick in number of asylum claims

in this period. Second, riots in the Northern towns of Bradford, Burnley and Oldham created a heightened awareness about racial tension and the imperative for "community cohesion". Finally, the 9/11 terrorist attacks moved concerns of security to the forefront of policymakers' minds, including immigration and border security.

(3) *Public opinion:* Public attitudes responded to the volume change of immigration and real-world events in expected ways, serving as a final catalyst for policy change. The most conclusive evidence on UK attitudes comes from the *British Social Attitudes Survey*, which has indicated a trend of rising resentment: in 1995 approximately two-thirds of the population believed the numbers of immigrants should be reduced, a proportion that rose to three-quarters by 2003. The more important insight from opinion polls was the increasing belief that government was failing to control immigration. Above all, immigration rose up the list of issues critical to voters. Pollster IPSOS-MORI has ranked race and immigration as among the top three most important issues facing Britain in nearly every one of its monthly opinion polls since for the last five years for example.

These events and conditions altered the course of policy. In addition to being significant junctures demanding policy response, they created an environment of political opportunity for entrepreneurial policymakers. In a nutshell, the government approach was now two-faced—restricting unwanted immigrants (asylum seekers, illegal immigrants) while encouraging wanted immigrants (high skilled workers). At the same time, a more integrationist mantra played out as politicians appealed to common values, exemplified in an inclusively-based definition of British citizenship. A new requirement that citizenship applicants demonstrate 'knowledge of life in the UK', assessed through a test assessing country knowledge and liberal-democratic values, transformed British citizenship into an object of inclusion at a time where these other restrictions taking place at the border.

Asylum was the topic that dominated the immigration debate in 2001-2003, shown by Tony Blair's obsession with the issue (he spent more time on the asylum system than anything but Iraq (Spencer, 2008)). However, rising immigration in all categories of entry together with public opinion, which did not make distinctions between "immigration categories", built support for systematic reform of the migration system. This interest was significantly buttressed by two crucial issues: European Union expansion and the political dynamics of the 2005 General Election.

European expansion, and more directly the decision not to impose employment restrictions on Eastern Europeans after their accession to the Union in May 2004, led to an estimated 1.4 million Eastern Europeans coming to work into the British labour market (approximately 60 percent of who are Polish). Even accounting for the highly cyclical nature of such immigration, at least half remain in the UK, representing one of the largest waves of immigration in the nation's history. The sheer size of Eastern European immigration led to a change in focus away from asylum to economic migration, and policy reform in the shape of the Points-Based System.

The second watershed moment in the political configurations on immigration was the General Election 2005. The Conservative Party made an early, powerful intervention in the immigration debate with an advert in the *Sunday Times* on 23 January 2005, laying out proposals for a new immigration policy. This was followed by a speech by Michael Howard advocating some extremely restrictive measures, including withdrawing from the 1951 Refugee Convention and imposing an annual quota on immigrants. The strategy was credited on one hand by activating some of the Conservative base, but also an essential element in the Conservative label as the "nasty" party.[1] The Conservative party's failure in the 2005 General Election did not go unnoticed; a key plank in David Cameron's attempts to "decontaminate" the Conservative Party was to downplay any debates on immigration and to associate the party with a mainstream position.

Reflecting on a decade of change under the Labour government, it seems that most government policies have had broad cross-party support; politicians appear to differ most on matters of detail not direction.

Reflections on Immigration Politics

New Labour arrived in office with an agenda to downplay immigration. But global trends and patterns, networks and a series of events put paid to such a strategy. However, the response has been different depending on different policy areas. For one policy area in particular-economic migration-the confluence of these factors marked a shift in the government's agenda to welcoming the highly skilled. For another-asylum-it is has been an unremitting series of measures designed to restrict and reduce the numbers and rights of asylum seekers. Labour's welter of legislative energy was thus driven both by external events and patterns of human movement rather than by internal political factors.

The increasing salience of the issue to the public after 2001 has led to a more robust political role in developing policy. Blair was particularly aware that parties on the Left-and Labour specifically-were associated with weakness on issues of immigration control and security and was determined to address it (Somerville 2007). Unlike the "Brownite" approach of concentrating on core strengths and minimising focus on areas of weakness, "Blairites" were convinced of the need to take on issues, framing them by being on the front foot. Political energy was initially (and largely) expended on the issue of asylum before reforms to combat illegal immigration and citizenship rode up the agenda. The changes to economic migration have largely come outside of Parliament, but have been no less dramatic.

What lies in the future? A likely change of government may well reduce the temperature of the debate and Conservative ideas - such as a cap on immigration - will be (symbolically at least) a new departure. Yet debates will are still likely to be about points of competence rather than new directions, while immigration's salience as a political issue is unlikely to dissipate.

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Will Somerville is a Senior Policy Analyst at the Migration Policy Institute in Washington. Sara Wallace Goodman is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of California

As a first step, in 1999 the Blair government removed most of the hereditary peers, who at the time constituted approximately two-thirds of the House.

REFORMING THE LORDS: WHERE NOW?

Graham Goodlad reviews the recent history of second chamber reform and looks at what the future may hold.

Twelve years after New Labour came to power, with a wide-ranging programme of constitutional change, House of Lords reform remains the government's 'unfinished business'. In its 1997 general election manifesto, the party stated its intention to make the second chamber 'more democratic and representative'. As a first step, in 1999 the Blair government removed most of the hereditary peers, who at the time constituted approximately two-thirds of the House. As part of a compromise with the Conservative opposition, however, it was agreed to allow 92 hereditary peers to retain their seats, on the understanding that this arrangement would cease once the second phase of Lords reform had been decided upon.

On the precise form of this further overhaul, however, it proved difficult for the governing party to reach a definite conclusion. The Justice Secretary, Jack Straw, has now brought forward plans for a

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largely or wholly elected second chamber, but Gordon Brown confirmed at the September 2009 Labour Party conference that these would not be enacted until after the next general election. This article asks why it has been so difficult to bring Lords reform to a satisfactory conclusion, and brings the history of this issue up to date.

New Labour's changes

There is relatively little support across the British political spectrum for a move towards a single chamber parliamentary system. The role of the Lords in scrutinising, revising and often improving legislation passed by the Commons is widely acknowledged. Indeed the upper house has fulfilled this role more confidently since the removal of most of the hereditary peers. A smaller second chamber, dominated by members who owe their presence to their individual credentials, rather than to inherited rights (see Table 1), arguably has a stronger sense of its own legitimacy. For example, in March 2005 the Lords gained considerable media attention through its resistance to the Labour government's Prevention of Terrorism Bill, compelling Tony Blair to compromise on certain aspects of the legislation. On three separate occasions since the election of New Labour – most famously over the 2004 Hunting with Dogs Bill – the government has used its powers under the 1949 Parliament Act to assert the predominance of the elected house.

The composition of the Lords, in terms of party representation, has also changed considerably over the last decade. As Table 2 demonstrates, the historic domination of the house by the Conservative Party has been brought to an end. Following a number of government appointments to the peerage, Labour has become the largest party in the Lords, although without an overall majority over the other parties. Since 2000 the Prime Minister's powers of patronage have been balanced by the creation of an independent appointments commission. Its role is to recommend appointments of non-party 'crossbench' members of the Lords, and to vet nominations from the political parties. In 2006 the commission triggered the so-called 'cash for peerages' row, which overshadowed Blair's final year of office, when it turned down four businessmen, nominated by the governing party, who had loaned money to the Labour Party.

A further change has arisen as a result of the 2005 Constitutional Reform Act, which addressed the way in which the British political system failed to provide for a proper separation of powers. It decreed the removal of the senior judges, known as the Law Lords, from the Upper House to constitute a separate Supreme Court – a change which was finally implemented in October 2009. It also reformed the historic office of Lord Chancellor, whose fusion of executive, legislative and judicial powers was a long-standing grievance for supporters of constitutional reform. The Lord Chancellor's role as chairman of debates in the Lords has now been taken over by the Lord Speaker, elected by members of the upper house. He has also lost his functions as head of the judiciary, in which capacity he appointed judges and had the right to preside over court cases. The title of Lord Chancellor is now held by the occupant of a new post, the Justice Secretary, who currently sits in the Commons.

Elected or appointed?

Over the broader issue of the Lords' composition, controversy has continued throughout the New Labour years. To some, any wider reform should preserve the recognised advantages of a mainly appointed chamber. The House of Lords contains members from a range of different backgrounds, whose diverse expertise ensures a generally high quality of debate: former ministers and senior civil servants, retired leaders of the armed forces, figures from the worlds of business, trade unionism, the arts and the universities are to be found there. Should it be decided to move towards a wholly or mainly elected chamber, few of these people are likely to submit themselves for democratic approval. This would deprive the legislature of a wealth of talent and experience, and risk the creation of an upper chamber staffed almost entirely by professional politicians, many of whom may be individuals who have failed to secure election to the Commons.

On the other hand advocates of an elected house have argued that the priority is to give the second chamber the legitimacy that, in the modern world, can only come through a democratic process. The late Robin Cook, for example, who served as Leader of the Commons from 2001-03, queried how Labour could uphold its commitment to a more representative and democratic chamber if it was to be an 'election-free zone'.

Adherents of both alternatives have raised concerns about the implications of reform. Supporters of an appointed chamber warn that an elected body would challenge the Commons more aggressively, especially if it were to be elected on some form of proportional voting system, thus creating the danger of a constitutional clash between the two houses. Those who favour an elected solution have asked who would be responsible for making nominations to an appointed house, and on what criteria they would proceed. A new extension of prime ministerial patronage would surely be a retrograde step. It would revive memories of the Blair government when it was claimed that certain individuals, popularly known as 'Tony's cronies', were given a berth in the Upper House solely because of their personal connections with the premier.

During the last decade it has not been possible to reconcile these conflicting models for reform. The Wakeham Commission, which deliberated from 1999-2000, recommended a mixture of elected and nominated members without reaching a definitive judgement on the exact balance between the two. All the nominated members were to be selected by the independent appointments commission. Wakeham also sought to make the new House more representative of contemporary society by proposing quotas for women, ethnic minorities and different religions.

Blair ultimately shelved the report, demonstrating his own preferences in a 2001 White Paper, which would have preserved a much greater element of prime ministerial power to appoint members. Under this plan only 20% of the new House would have been elected. After the White Paper failed to command broad support, MPs were invited to vote on a range of options in February 2003, ranging from preservation of the status quo to the establishment of a fully elected chamber. None of the proposals commanded clear

support and the issue was effectively kicked into the long grass for the remainder of the Parliament.

By March 2007 Blair had abandoned his support for a wholly appointed House. A new White Paper recommended a half-elected, half-appointed second chamber, consisting of 540 members in total. MPs were once again allowed to vote on different options for change and this time there were majorities for both an 80% and a 100% elected house. This placed the Commons at odds with the Lords, who have consistently, and perhaps predictably, signified their support for an entirely appointed body. The voting process did not lead to the production of a parliamentary bill and it was left to the incoming Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, to decide on the way forward.

Where are we now?

The Brown government's proposals were disclosed in a new White Paper in July 2008 but it was not until August 2009, following extensive cross-party discussions, that the Ministry of Justice declared itself ready to move forward. Jack Straw stated that there was now a consensus in favour of a mainly elected Upper House. He was careful, though, to affirm that there was no intention to create a rival body to the Commons. There was no suggestion that the current powers and functions of the Lords would be altered.

In order to reinforce the primacy of the Commons, it was proposed that members of the new second chamber would serve for only one

term, of 12 to 15 years. Elections, for large constituencies, would be held simultaneously with those for the Commons, but only one third of the seats would be contested each time. The Prime Minister subsequently announced that plans for an elected chamber would feature in Labour's general election manifesto. In a separate move, to take place before the election, the remaining hereditary peers were to be removed from the Lords. Labour had declared its intention of doing this more than once since the 1999 compromise but thus far had failed to take action.

Nonetheless a number of matters remain unresolved. Labour and the Conservatives reportedly disagree about the method of election to be used for the new House – either first past the post or a more proportional regional list system. The exact proportion of elected members (80% or 100%) is undecided, as is the timetable for phasing out the existing life peers. These areas of uncertainty make it almost impossible for the Lords to be recast before the 2010 general election. Much depends on the willingness of the victorious party in that contest to take reform forward.

Constitutional reformers regard Lords reform as an urgent priority but it has never aroused the enthusiasm of the wider public. The debate about standards in public life, in the first half of 2009, was dominated by popular anger regarding revelations of MPs' abuses of their parliamentary expense allowances. Much less attention was given to the allegations that four members of the Lords had accepted money in return for helping to amend bills on behalf of companies, whose interests would be adversely affected by the legislation. An investigation into the affair was begun and in May 2009 two peers were suspended. To many observers of the political scene, however, this episode strengthened the case for change. It remains to be seen whether reform of the Upper House – often projected but not yet completed – will materialise. Still more important, will the new body be able to win the confidence of the public and establish itself as a useful and respected part of the constitution?

Table 1: Composition of the House of Lords, July 2009

Church of England Bishops and Archbishops:	26
Law Lords (later removed oncreation of the Supreme Court)	23
Life Peers	598
Hereditary Peers	92

Table 2: Party representation in the House of Lords, July 2009

Conservative	193
Labour	215
Liberal Democrat	71
Crossbench (no party affiliation)	202
Bishops	26
Other	17

(Source: www.parliament.uk/mpslordsandoffices/mps_and_lords/analysis_by_composition.cfm)

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The author is Director of Studies and Head of Government and Politics at St John's College, Southsea.

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COMPARATIVE POLITICS: WHY BOTHER?

David Broughton and Stephen Thornton confront one of the most complex areas of political science

Comparing different empirical political phenomena, particularly the varied and complex interactions *within* national political systems as they occur in the 'real world' lies at the heart of the comparative method. This particular approach to politics is often seen to contrast with others such as political philosophy, or international relations. The former focuses upon normative and theoretical ideas such as equality or justice, and the latter examines the interdependencies *between* political systems such as the balance of power or trade links.

> Adopting the comparative approach means we can amass a great deal of information about different countries, regions and organisations, which we can then analyse, using a qualitative approach

The initial stage when employing the comparative method is to identify both similarities and differences, and then to develop classifications and typologies such as types of electoral systems. The second stage is to attempt to explain these similarities and differences, such as why is electoral turnout higher in some countries than others? The third, and most difficult, stage is to formulate predictions on the basis of the ideas we have developed, such as can we predict the impact of changing the electoral system on the degree of fragmentation within a country's party system?

Although national political systems remain the focus of much comparative analysis, we can also compare *sub-national* political systems such as the

American states or German ***Länder***, or ***supra-national*** units such as Western Europe or Latin America, or ***former Empires*** such as the Roman or Habsburg, or ***international organisations*** such as the EU or NATO. Equally, rather than rely on geographical or historical contrasts, we can employ a ***thematic*** approach which focuses upon different types of political systems such as democratic systems and then compare them with authoritarian regimes or military dictatorships.

The sheer diversity of the potential methods which could be employed for comparative political analysis rests on the central assumption that everything can ultimately be compared, and that system diversity and experience remain both interesting and significant. Recently, this underpinning assumption has been called into question, particularly since the end of the Cold War in the 1990s, with developments involving greater integration between different countries, the spread of information, and the ease and speed of communication, as key dimensions of the phenomenon of globalisation. The testing of the assumption, that most world political systems would eventually converge on the model of a Western, liberal democratic political order, remains a key question in comparative politics today.

Why Undertake Comparative Analysis?

One powerful reason to undertake comparative political analysis is to enable us to understand how and why nations change and in the face of which particular challenges, and how the patterns that we can identify shift, or do not shift, in response to particular events and leaders for example. If we want to understand why some countries 'modernise', and others do not follow the same route map, the comparative approach is essential. If we want to understand the re-emergence of strongly held regional, linguistic and ethnic identities in a supposedly homogeneous and globalised world, the comparative approach can provide some answers using a variety of well-established methods and approaches.

Adopting the comparative approach means we can amass a great deal of information about different countries, regions and organisations, which we can then analyse, using a qualitative approach (sometimes small-scale, semi-structured interviewing or observation) or a quantitative approach, or a combination of the two. Quantitative data are often freely available over a long period of time derived from national censuses, along with multi-national surveys covering many topics such as political participation, attitudes to immigration and perceptions of current political leaders for example, with most of the data being free or cheaply available from national data archives. The ease and decreasing costs of collecting data, particularly via the Internet, from individuals as well as organisations, means that we have survey and opinion poll data covering a very wide range of political issues and themes.

Using an explicitly comparative approach to the analysis of politics also enables us to be aware of our working assumptions and the dangers of ethno-centrism. We are all ethno-centric to some degree, sometimes sub-consciously and implicitly, but in analytical terms, we need to be aware of the biases and consequences involved in criticising 'foreign' political systems on the basis of assertions that they are different and 'strange'. For example, it remains the case that, despite many in the UK regarding the single-party Westminster model as 'normal', in fact coalition governments of various ideological hues are the standard model in Europe - and, moreover, they are perfectly capable of producing sustained, effective and stable government.

The Problems of Comparative Analysis

A key challenge in undertaking comparative analysis is the problem of concepts which do not mean the same things in different countries. Concepts such as trust or alienation are often difficult to understand in different political cultures, where the specific socio-economic context may subtly and implicitly alter the mass understanding of their meaning and significance. This is certainly not a new problem for social research and it has been widely debated at least since the seminal work of Almond and Verba back in 1963, when they tried to establish the nature of the 'civic culture' in five different countries.

In addition, very few political analysts are generally multi-lingual to a high level, meaning that few are at ease with the jargon, concepts and specialist vocabulary of academic documents, or questionnaires and responses to them in different languages. Gaining a deeper understanding and valuable insights into a particular culture and context will require more than examining a country purely from the outside. The necessary 'immersion' will require reliable contacts, local assistance and considerable time, as well as long-term research resources. Such work is therefore usually confined to more senior academics with established reputations. Nevertheless, the broad comparative approach to political analysis can still be fruitfully employed on smaller scale projects conducted by less experienced researchers.

Types of Comparative Analysis

There are two, possibly three, major types of comparative analysis. The first of the two clear-cut categories is that which systematically compares a limited number of cases (sometimes as few as two) and these are sometimes known as ***small-N studies***. *N* is simply the term used in statistics for the number of cases. The second of the main categories of comparative analysis is that which compares a large number of cases, sometimes over a hundred, and involves the deployment of statistical methods and databases. These are sometimes known as ***large-N studies***. The type of comparative analysis that might not be regarded as comparative at all is that which investigates just one case, and these are known as ***case studies***.

Case Studies

Tackling the questionable type first, at first glance it seems odd that case studies can be considered, in any sense at all, comparative. There is just one case, a one-*N* study, and so what is there to compare? As Giovanni Sartori, one of the great names in comparative research put it: 'I must insist that as a "one-case" investigation, the case study cannot be subsumed under the comparative method'. Yet, despite this, case studies are a very popular form of political research, with some regarded as possessing the status of a 'classic'. For example, Pressman and Wildavsky's splendidly

titled *Implementation: How Great Expectations in Washington are Dashed in Oakland; Or, Why It's Amazing that Federal Programs Work at All* is regarded as a path-breaking work which examined in great detail the trials and tribulations encountered by a federal government agency during its attempt to implement an employment programme in Oakland in California. Though based on just one case, Pressman and Wildavsky's work has provoked and informed many further studies on the topic of the implementation of policies across the world.

Nevertheless, case studies, no matter how detailed they are, suffer from a major weakness. It is very difficult to generalise from them, that is, just because an explanation for a particular event or phenomenon works in one case, you cannot assume that it will work in another. For example, if you were examining the UK you might wonder why, over the last sixty years, governments in Westminster have, at any one point in time, been controlled by just one party (either Conservative or Labour), whereas in most other European countries during this same period governments regularly include two or more parties, working in coalition.

That might set you thinking as to what is causing these comparatively unusual single-party governments: what is special about this one case, the UK? Is it because the UK is quite rare in still having a monarch involved in politics? Or is it because the UK has an unusual

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‘unwritten’ constitution? Or is it because for general elections the UK has a distinctive electoral system based on small single-member constituencies? If we simply looked at this one single case, it would be impossible to test whether any one of these hypotheses was correct.

As illustrated, case studies can provide detail and provoke hypotheses - and on this particular score, even Sartori reckons case studies possess ‘comparative *merit*’ - but, on their own, case studies struggle to confirm, or not, any particular hypothesis. However, combining the case study with just a few comparisons can change that situation. Returning to the example of the UK and its peculiar fashion for single-party governments, it would be easy to test the hypotheses already generated. Thus, comparing the UK to other countries with a monarchy, such as the Netherlands and Spain, would quickly discount the hypothesis that countries with monarchies have a tendency towards single-party government. Equally, the ‘unwritten’ constitution theory loses plausibility after a quick comparison with the very few similar types of state with a similarly uncodified constitution, such as Israel and New Zealand.

Comparison with New Zealand would also be particularly useful for testing the last hypothesis, namely that the electoral system has something to do with the propensity towards single-party government. Between 1914 and 1996 New Zealand used the same electoral system as the UK, and like the UK, single party governments proved the norm. However, since a change to a more proportional electoral system, coalition government has been the order of the day. Thus, though not completely proven - for example, currently in devolved Scotland there is both single party government and a relatively proportional electoral system - some quick comparison has at least established that the connection between electoral systems and government formation looks one worth pursuing. Therefore, as Sartori suggests, case studies can have a role in prompting interesting hypotheses, but even basic comparative work is needed to move towards substantiation of the theories generated. This brings us directly to the first of the more obviously comparative approaches, small-*N* studies.

Small-N Studies

As suggested already, the main advantage of a study involving the comparison of even a few cases over the single case study is that it can help establish causality, using evidence that a relationship between one factor and another is not simply co-incidence, but that one is actively prompting a change in another, such as non-proportional electoral systems and single party government. One of the most important aspects of small-*N* studies is the selection of cases to study. It cannot simply be random. For example, if a researcher were to choose the cases of the UK, Japan and Tonga, they might end up suggesting a causal relationship exists between island nations and the presence of constitutional monarchy. This initially makes sense, until one considers cases such as Iceland, Cuba, and Madagascar for example.

Originally based on work by the famous British philosopher John Stuart Mill, two common strategies have been developed to bring some logic into the selection of cases. The first is generally known as the ‘most similar’ design. The idea here is that cases are chosen that are, in as many respects as possible, similar to each other, except for one key explanatory factor. The presence or absence of that factor can then be used to explain any variation in outcomes. To illustrate this, Burnham *et al* provide the example of a most similar study designed to answer the question ‘Do electoral systems that are more proportional generate a more even gender balance in Parliament?’

Following ‘most similar’ design logic, the cases should include different electoral systems, but, in every other respect, be as similar as possible. As Burnham *et al* note, post-devolution UK provides a good place to look for such an arrangement, and, to help answer this particular question, four cases that could potentially prove fruitful are Westminster elections, Northern Ireland Assembly elections, Scottish Parliamentary elections, and Welsh Assembly elections. Each case involves a different electoral system, and yet other factors that might play a part in influencing the gender balance, such as political culture and the proportion of women in the workforce, are, using Mill’s logic, largely neutralised as explanatory factors because they are quite similar in each case. Thus, if research indicated that the least proportional system (Westminster) does have the least amount of gender balance and that the most proportional system (Northern Ireland) has the most, then it is likely that this relationship is indeed significant, and not simply a coincidence.

The other common case selection strategy is that of ‘most different’ design. It is effectively the mirror image of the ‘most similar’ design in that the idea is to find a number of cases that are as different as possible, except for the relationship between a particular phenomenon and a key explanatory factor. The theory is that where cases which have very little in common apart from this one relationship, then this relationship it is likely to be a robust one, and not merely a coincidence. So returning to the example of Burnham *et al* and their continuing quest to answer the question about whether there is a connection

between a country’s electoral system and the gender balance in Parliament, they illustrate how a ‘most different’ design might look.

For this strategy, the plan is to select cases that have the same ‘independent variable’, in other words the factor that is reckoned to be influencing a particular result, which in this case is the electoral system, which is thought to be influencing the gender balance in Parliament. Firstly they suggest using the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly because they have the same type of electoral system, but this idea is discounted because - when using ‘most different’ design - these two cases are too similar in other respects. Instead the cases chosen are Portugal and Sweden because they have similar electoral systems, but they are different in other potentially significant respects, such as political culture and gender roles. Thus if both countries share similar gender balances in Parliament, with all the other variables being so different, then it would seem that the type of electoral system does indeed have a significant influence on this particular phenomenon.

Good small-*N* studies do effectively provide a good balance between the rich detail that case studies can provide and a sense of logic to suggest that some generalisation from the research is possible. A very fine example of research that demonstrates this, and which provides a clear illustration of power of Mill’s logic, is Theda Skocpol’s *States and Social Revolutions*.

Large-N Studies

The final type of comparative method, large-*N* studies, takes the more logical approach suggested in small-*N* work, and takes it much further. Indeed, sometimes when looking at large-N research - which invariably includes graphs, formulae and other statistical methodology - you might think you are looking at a maths textbook rather than a piece about politics.

The main goal of large-*N* studies is to establish a connection between variables: for example, to adapt an earlier theme, you might want to establish a connection (or 'correlation' as statisticians prefer, but not necessarily causation) between the proportionality of an electoral system and the number of political parties in Parliament. With access to national databases it would be possible to find details from all the world's parliamentary democracies, and plot a graph to establish whether or not such a correlation does indeed exist.

A seminal study using this technique is Seymour Martin Lipset's *Political Man*, which compared forty-eight countries and was the first to establish a correlation between economic development and democracy. Large-*N* studies are regarded as very robust (provided of course that the original data used in the research are reliable), and, by including large numbers, tend to avoid the case selection problem that can bedevil small-*N* work. However some suggest that the detail can sometimes get lost in the 'sea of statistics'.

Conclusion

The value of the comparative approach to political analysis remains full of tantalising potential, if not always sturdy achievement. The seminal works using this approach remain academic 'classics' of their kind, and the ability of the comparative method to develop in new directions in direct response to new challenges underscores a continuing analytical viability and credibility. Shifting its emphasis from an initial concentration on political institutions to functions, from cases to variables and back again, from aggregate to individual data and back again, and now grappling with the fresh questions posed by globalisation, strongly suggests that the comparative approach to political analysis retains an intrinsic value and purpose for the longer term.

The prominent diversity and flexibility inherent in the comparative method of analysis accurately reflects both its core subject matter and focus, and the strong emphasis on attempting to account for 'big' questions such as economic development, the 'democratic revolution', and ideological renewal, will continue to provide plentiful raw material for future analysis. The acknowledgement of potential ethno-centrism, and the need for the formal spelling out of working assumptions and underpinning principles, remain at the heart of all good quality comparative analysis. This applies, for example, to examining what exactly social democratic parties stand for in the first decade of the twenty-first century, or why organised religion did not actually disappear with the growth of the 'secular society'.

The authors lecture in Political Science at the University of Cardiff

> Socialism has been in crisis, allegedly undermined by contemporary events and its own failings.

Keep Left: The Aims and Dilemmas of Socialism

In the first of two articles, Matthew Hall looks at the values and conflicts of socialist doctrine

For over a century and a half, socialism acted as a beacon of hope for the oppressed, disenfranchised and exploited peoples of the world. It influenced trade unionists and politicians in the Western world; political parties were established to promote the socialist ideal; and Marxist-Leninist revolutionaries overthrew their rulers in its name.

In recent years however, socialism has been in crisis, allegedly undermined by contemporary events and its own failings. In the western world, socialist parties have increasingly adopted neo-liberal policies and sought to broaden their appeal in the face of the alleged triumph of capitalism, the decline of class, de-industrialisation and the rise of post-modernism. Around the globe the collapse of the Marxist-Leninist regimes in the Eastern bloc has discredited both Marxism and the state-centric view of socialism and socialist planning. Despite this, in the era of globalisation and late-modernity, it can be argued that socialism retains its purchase as both a critique of capitalism and as an alternative conception of economic and social organisation.

Core Values

Sceptical view of capitalism

Socialism emerged in the 19th century as the horrors and inequities of industrial capitalism became increasingly evident. **At its heart lay a critique of capitalism and a vision of a new and better world based upon equality and common ownership.** Earlier movements such as the Levellers and the Diggers during the English Civil War, and even some Christian teachings, exhibit ideas akin to socialism. However, it was the emergence of capitalism that crystallised such ideas into a distinct ideological position. Miliband (1994) argued that socialism involves:

"the vision of a new social order in which *democracy, egalitarianism and co-operation* – the essential values of socialism – would be the prevailing principles of social organisation".

We should recognise however, that despite being based upon a range of clear values and ideas, these values has been conceptualised differently by socialists themselves. **Socialists from the Marxist tradition have advocated a fundamental socio-economic transition based upon the abolition of capitalism. For their part, revisionist socialists such as**

social democrats seek to promote greater social justice and equality within the capitalist system.

Optimistic view of human nature.
Unlike liberals, who stress individualism, or conservatives, who suggest human imperfection, socialists argue that ***human beings are sociable creatures*** whose natural state is to be drawn to live and work together in communities. Humans are caring and can overcome economic and social obstacles through ***community and collectivism*** rather than the individualism emphasised by capitalism. The belief that through our collective efforts we can achieve more than we can alone situates ***co-operation*** at the heart of socialist thinking. As sociable creatures, humans are naturally co-operative as opposed to competitive.

This co-operation makes economic sense as it utilises the skills and talent of all. It also makes moral sense as it stresses contribution to the common good rather than self interest. This avoids the dangers of competition and the promotion of selfishness and aggression. The socialist faith in collectivism and co-operation can be identified throughout the history of socialism from the emergence of ***Trade Unions*** and ***Co-Operative Societies*** of late 19th century Britain through to elements of the ***Anti-Globalisation Movements*** of the late 20th and early 21st century.

(c) Fundamental importance of society
Unlike traditional Conservatives, **Socialists believe that human beings are shaped by the social environment they live under.** For example, Marx referred to the concept of ***'species being'***, which recognises biology and instinct but suggests that much of what we are is conditioned by the socio-economic relations of the society we live under. As such ***human nature is malleable***. Social conditions nurture or condition who we are and how we behave. Whilst humans are naturally sympathetic and socially responsible, negative attributes such as greed, selfishness, competition and materialism have been conditioned into us by the environment we live under: capitalism.

(d) Distinctive view of 'justice'
Socialism also offers a distinctive view of justice based upon the concept of ***needs***. Socialists believe rewards should be distributed on the basis of need rather than merit or accident of birth. Socialists see this as ***social justice***. Universal objective needs such as water, food, shelter and higher needs such as companionship and love require satisfaction for humans to be both free and equal. For socialists therefore, freedom and equality are complementary concepts in that one cannot exist without the other. It is the role of the community and/or the state to ensure that these needs are satisfied. Through this, both equality and freedom are achieved. As Marx famously stated, socialism involves moving ***"from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs"***. However he offered little detail on how this would be achieved in the communist utopia, stating in 1866 that he had no desire to write "recipes for the cook-shops of the future". Social democrats for their part, seek to use material re-distribution through welfarism to satisfy needs and eradicate poverty in society.

(e)Stress on equality
Perhaps the defining feature of Socialism is a belief in equality. This puts socialism at odds with capitalism which stresses individualism and inequality. Furthermore this differentiates socialism from other ideological positions such as liberalism through its commitment to promoting ***social equality or equality of outcome***. For socialists, inequality in society is not based on different attributes or nature but rather on the unequal socio-economic structure and treatment emanating from the capitalist system. This concern for inequality has made ***social class*** a key analytical and organisational concept for socialists. Social inequality is seen as unjust in that it is based upon an accident of birth and ownership of wealth that should be owned collectively. Furthermore, it provides a basis for social rivalry, competition, tension and conflict. By contrast, social equality enables us to work in harmony and offers a utopian vision of a better society.

Socialists concerns regarding inequality have seen them historically emphasise the concept of social class. For socialists, class has been the most significant social division and one that emanates from capitalism and its operation. Classes share similar socio-economic positions and collective experiences. More recently, in the face of the 'decline of class thesis' and criticisms from feminists, socialists have sought to broaden their focus to include socio-economic inequalities emanating from gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and global poverty. As such modern socialists often refer to the broader concept of structured inequality, rather than solely class inequality.

But how is equality achieved?
The belief in equality does however raise tensions within the socialist tradition over the extent of equality that is both desirable and achievable. For example, many socialists argue that equality of opportunity is desirable but on its own insufficient. Without adjusting ***deeper inequalities in wealth, knowledge and power***, equality of opportunity will be ultimately unachievable. For example Marxist Socialists argue that inequalities of wealth, power and status derive from the ownership of private property and the means of production. Therefore to create an egalitarian society, the only answer is to abolish private property and create a classless society.

Social democrats, however, have sought to ***tame capitalism rather than abolish it***. They argue that the inequality which exists derives from the unequal distribution of wages rather than the existence of private property. As such, the solution to inequality lies in redistribution of wealth through progressive taxation and welfarism, rather than the abolition of private property. However, within the social democratic tradition debates exist over the extent to which redistribution of wealth could or should occur, and what form it should take. For example, modern social democrats such as Anthony Crosland (1956), or neo-revisionists such as Anthony Giddens, do not want to abolish material incentives and inequalities. Rather they seek to balance the existence of material inequality with ethical ideas and incentives.

Revolutionary socialism is defined by a passion for common ownership. For Socialists, private property is the origin of competition and inequality. The existence of ***private property is unjust*** in that it derives from collective rather than individual efforts. It is also ***divisive*** in that it promotes class conflict and materialistic, acquistional attitudes. The solution to private property lies in common ownership and administration of productive wealth for the benefit of all. However, once again differences

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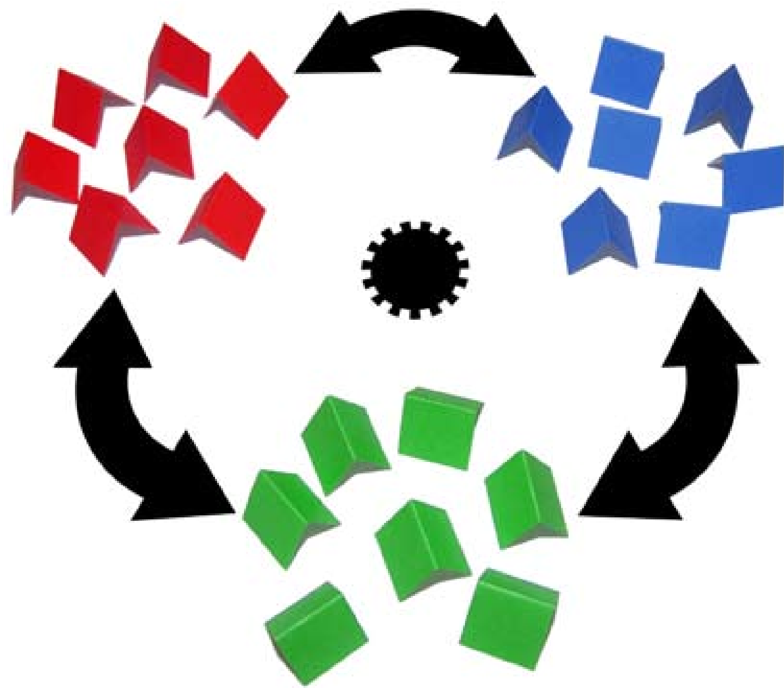

can again be seen between the various socialist traditions over how this might best be achieved. For Marxist Socialists, the solution lies in the complete abolition of private property and the establishment of an egalitarian society where all property is commonly owned. As we noted earlier though, Marx gave little detail on how this would be achieved.

The early Labour Party also saw this as the solution, as evidenced by the Fabian authored Clause IV of the Labour Party constitution (1918). However once in power, this commitment to total common ownership proved to be largely symbolic as nationalisation was used selectively. Once in government, social democrats have sought to balance the right to private property against the interests of community by advocating state intervention, the mixed economy and Keynesian style economics. Indeed post war western social democracy drew a great deal from modern liberalism. More recently, neo-revisionists have questioned the efficacy of common ownership and state intervention, favouring the free market, private ownership and consumer choice. Clearly this does raise questions regarding their inclusion within the socialist tradition.

Which Socialism?

Debates about the core of socialist values have raged throughout its history. Indeed how we define socialism undoubtedly influences whether or not we view communist regimes in the east or New Labour in Britain as socialism. Numerous politicians and political parties have claimed to be socialist, ranging from Marxists such as Lenin to social democrats such as the British Labour party and the German SPD. Questions over the various forms of socialism are more often than not questions regarding ***means and ends***. Socialists have wrestled with both the strategies for creating socialism and what socialism actually entails after its inception.

Means

On the question of how to create socialism (***the means***), the debate has hinged around whether to adopt a **revolutionary approach** such as Marxism or the **evolutionary approach** of revisionist social democracy. At the core of this debate lay differing conceptions of the state. Marxists ranging from Lenin and Gramsci, to Poulantzas and Miliband, have argued that the state in capitalist society represents and will always defend the interests of capitalism. As such it is a major obstacle to the creation of socialism and must be overthrown in a revolution. Revisionists, meanwhile, have adopted a liberal view of the state, suggesting it is neutral and that they can wield its power to change society and create social justice.

Revolutionary socialism developed from the theories of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the 19th century. Revolutionary groups, advocating the principles of Marxism-Leninism then successfully overthrew the regimes in Russia (1917), China (1949) and Cuba (1959) for example. This witnessed the creation of what became widely known as 'Communism', although the extent to which such regimes owed anything to Marx is highly debatable. These 'Communist' regimes were highly centralised, one- party states which dominated all aspects of economic, social and political life.

In the USSR the central planning committee GOSPLAN co-ordinated the dramatic upheaval of the Five Year Plans and the collectivisation of agriculture in the late 1920s and 1930s. In Maoist China, centralised planning drove the Great Leaps Forwards 1958-1961 and the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s. Alongside this centralisation of state power came the brutal repression of the population and the dominance of the secular religion of Marxism-Leninism, Stalinism or Maoism, and personality cults of the various leaders As the 20th century drew to a close, these regimes either collapsed as the USSR did in 1991 or in the case of China and Cuba, gradually moved away from the centrally planned economic organisation whilst retaining a highly authoritarian, and potentially repressive state apparatus.

Social democracy, on the other hand, became the ideological stance of numerous political parties across the western world. Parties such as the British Labour party and the German SPD accepted liberal-democratic principles and sought to win power in elections and then introduce policies promoting greater fairness and equality in society. In theory they were committed to widespread reform and the creation of a socialist society. For example Clause IV of the Labour Party constitution stated the aim was:

"to secure for the workers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible on the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange".

If fully implemented, this would have entailed the nationalisation of the entire economy. However, in practice, social democracy's commitment to fundamental

socialist ideals was diluted in the face of capitalism's alleged success and transformation in the late 19th and early 20th century. Thus the aim became to tackle the worst excesses and inequalities emanating from capitalism and, in essence, to 'tame capitalism'. For example in 1959 the SPD stated their views regarding the economy as "competition where possible, planning when necessary", whilst the British Labour Party's nationalisation programme was limited to major industries and public utilities once in power.

Ends

On the question of what the socialist society should look like (*the ends*), the debate has hinged around the extent of equality and common ownership that is both desirable and achievable. Marxists have advocated an egalitarian society in which private property and thus, social class are abolished and all productive wealth is held in common. In this society social relations are harmonious, co-operative and collectivist. However, whether communist regimes such as the USSR and Maoist China the world lived up to Marx's utopian vision is highly debateable.

Revisionist social democrats have been far less clear on the extent of equality and common ownership they favour. Whilst the early social democrats favoured an egalitarian society based upon the steady growth of common ownership, once in power social democrats have settled for the more vague concept of a 'socially just' society. This was to be achieved through progressive taxation, redistribution of wealth, more 'inclusive' education and the retention of private property alongside common ownership of key industries/ utilities. More recently, modern social democrats in the west have claimed to have updated social democracy for the era of globalised capitalism. In this they have reduced their commitment to equality of outcome, focusing almost exclusively on creating equality of opportunity. This has further blurred the distinction between social democracy and 'New' liberalism and raises questions over the extent of modern social democrats commitment to socialism. Indeed, it can be argued that if socialism involves a critique of capitalism, then it is highly debateable whether social democracy and New Labour are indeed socialist or just variants of New Liberalism.

Conclusion

From its earliest guise in the revolutionary politics of the 1830s and 1840s, through the emergence and successes of both communist and social democratic parties around the world, to the recent trials of the left, socialism has had a decisive impact upon the world. At its core is a critique of capitalism and a belief that an alternative form of socio-economic organisation (based upon equality, democratization, co-operation and common ownership) is both possible and desirable. While socialism has undoubtedly experienced a major crisis in the face of recent developments globally, it remains a vibrant and inspiring perspective that still has much to offer to the contemporary world.

The contemporary relevance of socialism will be discussed further in the next issue of *E-Pol*.

Matt Hall is Head of Politics at Worcester Sixth Form College

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DEMOCRACY AND LIBERALISM

Robin Bunce charts the past, present and future for two key concepts

> For Bush, democracy and liberty go hand in hand, the one supporting the other.

Speaking in defence of democracy and his foreign policy in the Middle East, President George W. Bush made the following remarkable claim: 'The work of American democracy is to constantly renew and to extend the blessings of liberty.' For Bush, democracy and liberty go hand in hand, the one supporting the other. It is for this reason that Bush championed 'regime change' abroad, creating democracies in order to secure liberty.

Nonetheless, at the same time that America has been aggressively 'advancing democracy' in Afghanistan and Iraq, democracy in the west has come under unprecedented attack. In America, for example, the Patriot Act, has given the government new powers which directly conflict with existing civil liberties. As a result the US government has new powers to detain and deport immigrants and to keep citizens under surveillance. The crisis in British democracy has taken a different form. Public trust for democratically elected MPs is at an all time low in the wake of the expenses scandal.

This article analyses

Bush's claim. The first section considers the lessons about democracy that emerged from the French Revolution, arguing that the relationship between democracy and freedom is a much more complex matter Bush claims. The second section looks at the American Revolution, and debates over democracy in Britain, and argues that the relationship between democracy, representation and elections is again, more complicated than commonly assumed. The final section looks at the future of democracy, considers a series of problems that continue to plague modern democracies, and argues that the future of democracy may be found in radical democratic organisations such as the American and British Black Panthers.

Democracy and Freedom

George Bush claims that freedom and democracy are complementary. In the twenty first century, this is a common enough idea, but thinkers and writers have not always seen things this way. Before considering how true Bush's statement is, we should first consider what it means. When Bush talks of freedom and democracy he has something specific in mind. By freedom, Bush means the freedom of the individual to act in a way that is unconstrained by the government; and when he speaks of democracy he means a system of representative government in which the people elect representative to govern on their behalf.

Once this is clear, the essential conflict between freedom on the one hand and democracy on the other becomes plain. A democratic government represents the will of the majority, and may well interfere with the freedom of the individual. Moreover, a democratic government may even become a 'tyranny of the majority' in which individuals are enslaved or exterminated. This tension, between the rule of the majority and the freedom of the individual, has caused concern to many political thinkers, and has led to important changes in how democracy has been understood.

The French politician and writer Benjamin Constant considered this tension in his speech *The liberty of the ancients compared with that of the moderns* (1816). Constant lived through the French Revolution, and saw how easily a democratic government could turn into a dictatorship. The Revolution, which set up a democratically elected parliament, quickly degenerated into a reign of terror where 40,000 'Enemies of the People' were executed in a little over a year. It was clear that a democracy - a government that ruled in the name of the people - could turn on individuals and minorities and trample on their rights.

In response, Constant argued that the form of democracy practiced by the French was at fault. Many of the revolutionaries had been inspired by the first democracy, the ancient democracy of Athens. In Athens, democracy meant that all citizens took part in government, making the laws that governed the people. However, this ancient form of freedom also went hand in hand with enormous governmental power, and therefore the freedom of individual citizens was extremely limited. In ancient Athens, Constant argued, the people as a whole had great power, but individuals had very limited freedom. Freedom of religion was unknown in Athens; moreover, the government could interfere with how a citizen related to his wife or his child. The tyranny of the ancient democracy was so extreme, said Constant, that musicians couldn't even change the strings on their instruments without the government getting involved!

Nonetheless, Constant argued that this form of democracy was appropriate for the ancient world, because the liberty that they valued was the liberty to be involved in government. Indeed, the ancient world relied on the labour of slaves, and therefore their cities were set up in such a way as to make this form of direct democracy possible. The modern world, Constant said, was very different. Modern people value individual liberty: freedom of religion, freedom of speech. In short, freedom to be left alone by their government. Additionally, in the modern world slavery had been abolished, people had to work and therefore they no longer had the time to spend all day making laws and participating directly in government. The French needed a democratic government, but ancient democracy should be replaced by a 'representative government' in which the people choose their government, but did not spend all day, every day involved in politics. Furthermore, this new form of 'representative government' should be limited in order to respect individual rights.

Constant's speech is interesting because it gives a very different understanding of democracy to that of George W. Bush. Whereas Bush argues that all people value liberty regardless of their culture, Constant suggests that different cultures have different values and therefore different forms of government are appropriate in different times and places. Secondly, Constant also shows that democratic governments can be tyrannical, whereas Bush assumes that democracy always leads to freedom.

Democracy, elections and representation

Today, elections are commonly viewed as the essence of democracy. Indeed, this common view was echoed by Bush in 2005, again in defence of his policy in the Middle East. 'The promise of democracy' he asserted, 'starts with national pride, and independence, and elections.' However, the link between democracy and elections is far from straight forward. Elections became associated with democracy during the American Revolution. Prior to this it was

commonly believed that it was possible to represent the people without allowing the people to vote.

Originally, America had been a British colony, part of the British Empire. However, relations between the colonists and the British government soured over the issue of taxation. According to the American colonists, the British government had no right to tax the American colonists because the Americans had no right to vote in British elections. This argument was summarised in the slogan of the American Revolution: 'No taxation without representation'. But the British were not convinced. Americans, they argued, were represented in the British government. Specifically, the House of Commons, the democratic element of the British constitution, represented all common people across the empire because the members of the House of Commons had the same interests as the common people in America. Voting, said the British government, was a red herring; one person represented another because they shared the same interest, and therefore voting had nothing to do with it.

The American revolutionaries saw things differently and, following their revolution, they created a constitution in which the people were represented in government through voting for representatives in regular elections. This system of government was so new that for some years after the revolution there was a great debate about what the system should be called. Some called it a 'democracy', others a 'republic.' Alexander Hamilton, one of the founding fathers of the American constitution, came up with a more appropriate description: 'representative democracy.'

However, while the people elected the American government, the people did not actually govern. This feature of the new system appealed to many revolutionaries who wanted a representative government rather than a democratic one. In this sense, the American system allowed the people to play a role in government, but did not permit the people sufficient power to persecute individuals and minorities. The new constitution contained other safeguards against the tyranny of the majority. Checks and balances were built into the constitution, such as the Bill of Rights, which gave each individual citizen the legal right to free speech, free assembly, freedom of religion and a fair trial. Consequently, in theory at least, if the government ever took away any of these rights the citizen could go to court and force the government to back down. The Constitution also enshrined the separation of powers, that is to say, different branches of the government, the legislature, the executive and the judiciary, had different roles and therefore, no one individual or institution could have supreme power. Finally, at the heart of the system was a written constitution, a higher law, which guaranteed individual rights, and ensured that government itself must operate within the law. This system is now often described as 'liberal democracy', as it is a combination of democratic, representative institutions which allow the people to play a part in government; and liberal institutions that protect the rights of individuals and minorities.

Where America led, Britain followed. However, in Britain, the line between liberal and democratic institutions became blurred and British thinkers began to argue

that democratic institutions such as elections could be used to ensure that governments worked in the interests of individuals. Jeremy Bentham, the father of Utilitarianism, was highly critical of the undemocratic government in Britain. He argued that the governments should aim to ensure the greatest happiness for the greatest number. The undemocratic government was not, however, interested in Bentham's reforms and therefore, he proposed radical democratisation, including universal suffrage, secret ballots and annual parliaments in order to create a new government that would be more concerned with the happiness of the people.

In this sense, Bentham was one of the first thinkers to suggest that democracy would aid good government rather than assuming that democracy must some how be constrained in the interests of effective government. Bentham's friend and collaborator James Mill came up with a different scheme in his *Essay on Government* (1820). For Mill, government should rule in the interests of the people. However, in practice, governments often ruled in the interests of the governors. Regular elections, Mill claimed, would give the people to opportunity to choose governors who shared their interests, and to dismiss representatives who had become corrupt. These arguments helped create support for the extension of the franchise in Britain, and in 1832 Parliament passed the Representation of the People Act which gave voting rights to 650,000 property owning men. However, women, poor men and the vast majority of Britain's population of 24 million were still denied the vote.

J.S. Mill, James Mill's more famous son, took up the cause of franchise reform in the next generation. His book *Considerations on Representative Government* (1861) set out an argument in favour of extending the franchise. Notably, J.S. Mill argued for representative government rather than democracy. J.S. Mill, like many liberals, was concerned that a democratic government could lead to a tyranny of the majority. For J.S. Mill representative government, on the other hand, would serve to protect the individual. Representatives, J.S. Mill claimed, could and should think for themselves, rather than simply acting as the mouth piece for those they represented. In this way, the representatives would act for the good of the nation as a whole, including minority groups, rather than serving the majority.

In order to ensure the 'mental superiority' of the representatives, J.S. Mill proposed a system of plural voting, whereby the best educated professionals would have multiple votes; the less educated would have fewer votes; and the uneducated and the unemployed would have no right to vote at all. Indeed, Mill advocated extending the right to vote to educated women. This system, J.S. Mill hoped, would ensure that wise electors would elect a wise government. J.S. Mill was not only a theorist; as an MP he was involved in the Representation of the People Act of 1867 which extended the franchise to almost all working class men. J.S. Mill supported the Act, in spite of the fact that it did not include his system of plural voting. What is more, he introduced an amendment to allow women to vote. The Act was passed, but without Mill's amendment, and British women only gained voting rights equal to men in 1928.

For J.S. Mill elections were a

way of creating a *representative* government rather than a *democratic* one. This was also the view of many of the American revolutionaries. However, for other thinkers elections and representation are the essence of democracy. Clearly, while this view has come to be dominant there are differences between a government of the people and a government that is elected by the people. However, as I will argue in the next section, there is a danger in equating democracy with elections, as this line of argument can be used to diminish democracy and suggest that all sorts of other aspects of a democratic life are illegitimate.

The future of democracy

The modern system of liberal democracy, which emerged in America, has proved to be highly influential. India, the largest democracy in the world, has a constitution which combines representative or democratic elements with liberal aspects such as constitutionally protected individual rights. The same is true of the South African constitution, which contains a Bill of Rights that enshrines the right to privacy, the freedom of religion, belief and opinion for each citizen, as well as stating that every citizen has the right to vote in regular elections.

One of the first studies of American democracy was Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* (1835). Tocqueville, like Constant, was a supporter of the French Revolution, but he too was concerned by the fact that the Revolution had descended into chaos and tyranny. America, unlike France, had managed to establish a democratic regime whilst avoiding the excesses of the French Revolution. This apparent success inspired Tocqueville to study the new American democracy at first hand. Traditionally, it had been assumed that democracy would turn into mob rule. However, Tocqueville argued that American society had certain characteristics which protected the rights of the individual. Specifically, Tocqueville claimed that strong local government, de-centralization, Protestantism, well-educated women, freedom of association, and freedom of the press encouraged independence and protected individual freedom. Notably, most of these features of American democracy were not part of the written constitution.

In this sense, Tocqueville suggested that democracy was bigger than elections and constitutions. Democracy, for Tocqueville, was a feature of society not just government. However, Tocqueville did spot new dangers in the new society. He argued that the individualism of American society was leading to a break down of traditional institutions. Traditionally, Tocqueville argued, people looked to their communities for help and support. However, the Americans were very individualistic and, as people became more individualistic, these institutions broke down. Consequently, citizens in America were very independent but still weak, because they could not count on the support of a community. For this reason, they turned more and more to the government to solve their problems, and gave the government more and more power. With this in mind, Tocqueville argued that democracy might turn into a 'soft tyranny', in which the government controlled more and more of life because the people had no where else to turn to solve their problems. Tocqueville also noted that American democracy had other problems that were far more immediate. The Bill of Rights did nothing, for example, to protect black people the vast majority of which were still treated as slaves. Equally, white Americans had driven Native Americans from their land and waged war on their tribes, decimating their population.

To some extent, these issues are still problems facing democratic nations today. The power of the state has extended massively under democratic regimes. For example, in Britain, there now laws regarding health and safety and smoking which look a lot like Tocqueville's 'soft tyranny'. Equally, American democracy failed to tackle the issue of slavery and a civil war was necessary before black slaves gained their freedom. Even after the Civil War, democracy proved slow to protect minority rights. Slavery was abolished in 1863, and yet it was not until the Voting Rights Act of 1965, more than a century later, that black Americans finally gained an indisputable legal right to vote. Racial minorities are not the only groups who have suffered under democratic regimes. Women have also been excluded from political life for much of the history of liberal democracy. Women did not gain equal political rights until 1920 in America, 1928 in the UK and 1944 in France. Democracy has also proved slow in empowering people with disabilities. In Britain, for example, it was not until 1995 that discrimination against disabled people was finally outlawed.

If societies are to become truly democratic, liberal democratic regimes must ensure that the rights of all are respected. In this context Tocqueville's observation that democracy is about the culture of the society, not just the government is extremely important. Indeed, in many cases, the forces championing democracy in the second half of the twentieth century have worked outside traditional democratic institutions. In America, for example, the civil rights movement and the black power movement used grass roots campaigns to break the tyranny of the white majority and ensure the rights of all were respected, regardless of race. In Britain too, the Black Panthers took to the streets in London to demand an end to police harassment, and went to court to demand that black defendants be tried by all black juries. Conservatives criticised black activists for using 'undemocratic' tactics; and in a very narrow sense these campaigns were 'undemocratic' because they bypassed elections. However, democracy is a much bigger notion than elections. In this bigger sense the Black Panthers were champions of democracy in Britain and America, as they worked with the people at the grass roots to stand up to racism in the police and the government.

Power to the People!

George W. Bush justified the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq in terms of democracy and freedom. However, his understanding of these terms was simplistic and narrow. Historically, democracy has not always meant freedom, nor has it always entailed elections. Indeed, in the late twentieth century, and in the first years of the twenty first, democratic governments have increasingly become 'soft tyrannies' in which the state has taken on ever greater power to ensure the safety and wellbeing of its citizens. At the same time new radical democratic movements have worked outside the traditional institutions of electoral politics. In so doing, modern pressure groups and new social movements have fought to return 'power to the people.'

The author is Director of Studies for Politics at Homerton College, Cambridge.