

## Advanced Placement Comparative Government Unit II: Great Britain



- Wednesday 9/16 Finish 9/11 documentary and seminar discussion 9/11's impact on Britain. Begin reading. "Community Engagement for Counterterrorism"
- Thursday 9/17 Begin Reading Kesselman Ch. 2 pp. 37-48  
**Class Discussion:** How Britain Deals with Islamic Radicalism, Article. **A Critical Review will be due Tuesday! Prime Minister's Questions**
- Friday 9/18 *No School Parent Teacher Comp Day!*
- Monday 9/21 **Quiz over Ch2, pp. 37-48.** Finish Captain Phillips!
- Tuesday 9/22 **Critical Review Due:** "Community Engagement for Counterterrorism" **Class Discussion:** Britain split on how to handle draw of radicalism (Article in packet) **Prime minister's questions.**
- Wednesday 9/23 **Critical Review due:** Comparing Community engagement with split on how to handle radicalism. **Class discussion of articles.**
- Thursday 9/24 **Quiz:** Ch.2 pp. 48-55.
- Friday 9/25 **Quiz** Ch.2 pp. 55-63
- Monday 9/28
- Tuesday 9/29 **Critical Review Due:** The Longest Reign over them. Class discussion of article. **Prime Minister's questions.**

Wednesday 9/30 **Quiz** Ch.2 pp. 64-73.

Thursday 10/01 **EU/UK lecture/notes** **In class reading:** A new Constituion?

Friday 10/02 **Critical review due:** The New Conservatism. Class discussion of article.

Monday 10/05 **Quiz** Ch.2 pp. 73-77 **Continue** "A New Constitution" Discussion.

Tuesday 10/06 **Critical Review due:** UK and EU better off out or in? Class discussion of Article. **Prime minister's Questions.**

Wednesday 10/07 Simulation: British Parliament.

Thursday 10/08 " " "

Friday 10/09 " " "



# Community Engagement for Counterterrorism: Lessons from the United Kingdom

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It is now five years since the London bombings on 7 July 2005, which were shocking not just because of the devastation they caused but because they were carried out by four 'home-grown' bombers. The British Security Service had warned that it was a matter of 'when, not if' we would see the emergence of a home-grown threat,<sup>1</sup> but the focus had remained on counterterrorism efforts overseas and bolstering defences at home. The idea of a community-based approach to counterterrorism was not new: it was a cornerstone of the approach latterly adopted in Northern Ireland. But in the aftermath of 9/11 it was assumed that this type of response was redundant in the face of what appeared to be an international, foreign and highly coordinated threat.

The 7/7 attacks brought a community-based approach back to centre stage. As well as increasing resources for intelligence and policing agencies to ensure they were equipped to interdict planned attacks and break up terrorist cells, the government acknowledged the need to work in partnership with Muslim communities to prevent young people from being radicalized in the first place, and to ensure that communities were resilient enough to respond to, and challenge, extremists from within. If the response to 9/11 had matched the crime—big, bold and international—in the aftermath of 7/7 it was clear that a more localized and community-led approach was needed. The establishment of the Preventing Extremism Together (PET) Taskforce in August 2005 was the first manifestation of this.<sup>2</sup>

Five years on, much progress has been made. The 'Prevent' strand of CONTEST, the government's counterterrorism strategy, has grown in stature relative to the other three strands ('Pursue', 'Protect' and 'Prepare'); funding has increased from £6 million per year in 2006 to £140 million in 2008/9;<sup>3</sup> and it is now being delivered by local authorities, community organizations and other groups. Problems remain, though; the many arms of the state continue to struggle with the principles and practicalities of partnership with non-state actors on matters relating to security and counterterrorism; mixed messages about the importance of community engagement have emerged from different

government departments; local authorities on the whole have poor or non-existent relationships with Muslim communities, with an inevitable negative impact on their ability to deliver; and attempts to act on these difficult and sensitive policy priorities are being made in a hostile media and political environment.

As the new coalition government embarks on a review of 'Prevent', this article makes three key recommendations. First, the government should adopt an all-or-nothing position in relation to partnership working: this needs to be underpinned structurally by new approaches to management and decision-making, and culturally by new ways of working. Second, local authorities should invest in people rather than projects to build their own community knowledge and contacts. They should not commission external consultants—people who are not usually local to the area, and who take their knowledge and relationships with them at the end of the contract—to conduct community mapping and needs assessment. Third, the 'Prevent' strategy needs to be refocused around downstream preventive and deradicalization work and separated from broader, upstream community development. The latter should be brought within the umbrella of the government's Big Society programme and be focused on bolstering the resilience and capacity of all fragile communities, not just Muslims.

## The Rationale for Community Engagement in Counterterrorism

Since 2001, over a dozen planned terrorist attacks have been thwarted in the UK, and between 2001 and 2008 over 200 individuals were successfully prosecuted for planning, supporting or inciting terrorism.<sup>4</sup> The events of 7/7 were a wake-up call to the threat from home-grown terrorism, and these convictions provide evidence that there is a complex web of radicalized people within Muslim communities in some parts of the country. It is true that the terrorist threat comes from a tiny and marginal minority, but these individuals are integrated within their communities and not, on the whole, loners working on



their own. This is why communities need to play a central role in many different areas of the counterterrorism strategy, a principle that is now implicit within government policy.<sup>5</sup> There are four ways in which communities contribute towards an effective counterterrorism strategy:

First, and most obviously, if terrorists are well integrated, communities may be able to act as an early warning system for the police and intelligence services should they come across information or have concerns about particular individuals or groups. There is a long tradition of public involvement in crime prevention—as evidenced by the work of organizations such as Crimestoppers.<sup>6</sup> Now, as during the Troubles in Northern Ireland, the Metropolitan Police Service has established an anti-terrorism hotline in response to the current threat from Al-Qaeda,<sup>7</sup> and members of the public can also submit their concerns online. The police slogan is ‘If you suspect it, report it.’<sup>8</sup> The Home Office and the Association of Chief Police Officers have also funded a service allowing the public to report concerns about potential terrorist material on the internet.<sup>9</sup> This area of community partnership is at the boundary where ‘Prevent’ and ‘Pursue’ meet.

Second, communities can work upstream to prevent young people from becoming radicalized towards violence. There are many different views about what makes a young person vulnerable to radicalization, but most would agree that there is no single path.<sup>10</sup> Instead, we can observe a number of potentially contributing factors: the presence of radicalizers; the spread of global extremist narratives; the availability of extremist material; group or individual identity issues; personal crisis; changed situation or circumstances; under employment; links to criminality; social exclusion; grievances; and a lack of trust in political structures and civil society.<sup>11</sup> By working in a preventive way, and often in partnership with local authorities, the police or youth workers, communities can play a pivotal role in diverting young people from harm.

Third, communities can tackle the grievances—real and perceived—that allow terrorists’ messages to resonate more widely, either among those who might be swayed to commit, support or incite terrorism, or among those in whose name terrorists purport to act. Terrorists must convince large numbers of people that their aims are just, even if their means are not.<sup>12</sup> This is not only important for terrorists in providing justification for their murderous acts, but also crucial if they are to drive a wedge between ordinary people and their governments and law enforcement agencies, and thus undermine counterterrorism efforts. If the government is to gain the confidence of Muslim communities, it must work hard to maintain the moral high ground and show it is committed to tackling the injustices faced by Muslims both here and abroad.

Fourth, the principle of policing through consent is as relevant to counterterrorism as to any other area of law enforcement. The police and Security Service cannot act without the consent of the communities they are there to protect, because they need communities to extend to them the benefit of the doubt when they make mistakes, and to forgive them infringements of civil liberties that might happen in the heat of the moment (although civil liberties should be fiercely guarded at all times). The nature of the threat from Al-Qaeda, which is determined to cause maximum damage

without warning, compels the police to intervene much earlier than they would in other circumstances, which increases the likelihood of mistakes. Sustaining an effective response over the long term will not be possible without the trust and partnership of Muslim communities.<sup>13</sup>

## The Evolution of Community Engagement in Counterterrorism

Since 7/7, a number of developments have shaped the evolution of community engagement in counterterrorism: the PET initiative; Tony Blair’s exit from Downing Street; the roll-out of the Prevent programme; and the publication of the updated CONTEST strategy in March 2009.

The PET initiative was established in the aftermath of 7/7 and involved ministerial visits to nine towns, including discussions with over 1,000 Muslims. Seven working groups were convened on a number of themes: engaging with young people; providing a full range of education services, in the UK, that meet the needs of the Muslim community; engaging with Muslim women; supporting regional and local initiatives and community actions; the training and accreditation of imams, and the role of mosques as a resource for the whole community; security—covering Islamophobia, protecting Muslims from extremism, and community confidence in policing; and tackling extremism and radicalization. The working groups published their reports in November 2005. There has been criticism of the initiative for being rushed, government-led and filled with the usual suspects, and some felt that the government had decided the outcomes before the process started.<sup>14</sup> The government has been recovering from this ill-fated attempt at partnership ever since.

Tony Blair’s exit from Downing Street in June 2007 marked another important development. There had been recognition within government and the policy community of the need for a new approach to community engagement, but Blair’s continued presence was a block to progress because he was so personally associated with the Iraq war, which was a major source of anger in Muslim communities. Foreign policy became the elephant in the room in discussions between the government and these communities, and it was only after Blair had left office that the government was able to strike a more open tone about the role of the war and foreign policy in radicalization. The new approach was put to the test just days after Gordon Brown became Prime Minister when attacks were mounted on a London nightclub and Glasgow airport, and he and the then Home Secretary were commended for their measured response. The government’s own research found that the confluence of these events also precipitated a significant shift in press treatment of the issue of terrorism from the middle of 2007 onwards.<sup>15</sup>

The third major development came in June 2008 when the national ‘Prevent’ strategy was launched and the concept of a decentralized approach became embedded. A limited scheme—the Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) Pathfinder Fund—was introduced in October 2006 to support priority local authorities in developing programmes of activity to



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tackle violent extremism. The fund made £6 million available to 70 local authorities to build on their existing work to engage with communities, forge partnerships with the police, community and faith groups, and work with mosques and educational institutions. In 2008 the 'Prevent' strategy was rolled out nationally, along with National Indicator 35 (NI<sub>35</sub>)—building resilience to violent extremism—which incorporates a measure of a local authority's 'engagement with and understanding of Muslim communities'. All local areas are required to report, regardless of whether they have adopted the indicator as one of their performance measures.<sup>16</sup> 'Prevent' funding rose dramatically from £6 million to £140 million pounds in 2008/9.<sup>17</sup> It had been anticipated by the previous government that annual funding would rise to £240 million by 2011,<sup>18</sup> although at the time of writing figures from the new government are not available. The same year also saw the introduction of 'Prevent' engagement officers in local police forces, the creation of a toolkit for schools on their role in the prevention of violent extremism, and the national roll-out of Channel, a discrete referral process to provide support for individuals vulnerable to violent extremism.

The most recent event influencing the development of community-based approaches to counterterrorism was the publication of a revised counterterrorism strategy in March 2009.<sup>19</sup> It outlines a shift in focus from *violent extremism* to challenging *extremism* more broadly, stating: 'We will also continue to challenge views which fall short of supporting violence and are within the law, but which reject and undermine our shared values and jeopardise community cohesion. Some of these views can create a climate in which people may be drawn into violent activity.'<sup>20</sup> This raises a number of concerns: who decides on the degree of extremism that is to be tackled, or what kind(s) of extremism should be considered dangerous in a national security context? How do we ensure responses are proportionate and that the system is not vulnerable to abuse by individuals or groups with a vested interest? If the 'Prevent' strategy targets only terrorism related to, and inspired by, Al-Qaeda, does this mean Muslims will be held up to standards not expected of other segments of the community? And how can policy reach the most vulnerable without working with those sections of the community that are on the margins and whose views are potentially at odds with integration? What is more, there is no empirical evidence of a causal link between extremism and violent extremism.

This has led to debates about what should be included within a counterterrorism strategy, and, if the focus is on extremism rather than violent extremism, whether other forms of extremism not related to Islam should also be tackled.<sup>21</sup> There was a lack of clarity about these questions under the previous government: while former Communities Secretary John Denham stressed at the end of 2009 the need to allow local areas to remain free to respond in locally sensitive ways, acknowledging the existence of a wider range of extremist threats and the need for cross-community working,<sup>22</sup> a senior Home Office official stated when questioned at a regional 'Prevent' conference in March 2010 that tackling the far right had no place within the existing 'Prevent' strategy. It is therefore perhaps not surprising that local authorities and community groups were

confused about the purpose and focus of 'Prevent'. In recent months, 'Prevent' has come in for sustained criticism and has been accused of being a front for intelligence gathering and governed by obscure financial arrangements.<sup>23</sup>

There is a clear need to look again at the aims, structure and delivery of the 'Prevent' strategy; the new security minister, Dame Pauline Neville-Jones, acknowledged in her first interview in office that without community buy-in the strategy is ineffective.<sup>24</sup> The review she has announced is a welcome development, making this a timely moment to offer an assessment of past performance and recommendations for the future. In a tightening fiscal environment, it will be even more important to ensure that 'Prevent' spending is effective and efficient.

## An Assessment of Community Engagement in the UK

In a strategic sense, community engagement has been successful as a policy innovation; while the new government might change its form and function, it would be difficult to imagine its eradication as a principle running through counter terrorism policy. But there are a number of deficiencies which need to be addressed at the tactical level.

First, if communities are to realize their full potential role they need to do so as trusted, equal and respected partners of local authorities, the police and other agencies. They need to be brought within the confidence of these bodies, and this in turn means providing them with information to help them perform their role. They also need to be afforded opportunities to share knowledge and information, and work alongside statutory bodies in making decisions about how best to respond to local needs. While there are some areas in which partnership is beginning to work in this way, the picture nationally is mixed. A recent study found that local authorities engaged selectively with communities, and that decisions continued to be made behind closed doors with little or no community involvement. It quotes the manager of a community organization who also sits on his local LAA Board, 'The chief executives of the local authority drove it through—which means that the usual processes of consultation and accountability were bypassed. It was presented as a *fait accompli*.' A local authority worker from the north of England told the research team: 'The voluntary sector has not been consulted and does not have the resources or experience to respond to these issues.'<sup>25</sup> Similar concerns were raised during the research conducted by this author for a forthcoming report.<sup>26</sup>

Much research—including the government's own—has shown that many Muslims feel alienated and disinclined to engage because they do not feel their views are valued or that their involvement will make any practical difference. One government study exploring ways of engaging with Muslims on issues of violent extremism described three Muslim audience 'segments'. First are the 'angry and alienated', who feel that their views are not taken into account by the government. They are keen to express their views as they feel they have rarely been listened to, but need convincing that





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the government is willing to listen before they are willing to listen to the government. Second, the 'frustrated but open to dialogue' share these frustrations but express themselves in more measured tones. They are willing to get involved but need to be convinced of the value of engagement and consultation with government. Third, the 'engaged and concerned' are mainly men over the age of 25 or women. They recognize the need to work with the government but need advice and support to enable them to get involved and take action to address these issues.<sup>27</sup> This does not bode well for efforts to engage Muslims, and suggests that the government's own behaviour has contributed to this state of affairs.

Second, for partnership to be effective all those involved need a shared understanding of the problem and how best to respond. The publication of the CONTEST strategy in 2006, the updating of it in 2009, the first annual review in 2010, and guidance for local partners on the delivery of 'Prevent' are all evidence of an attempt to make counterterrorism policy and practice more transparent wherever possible.<sup>28</sup> However, as this article has outlined, policies have been interpreted and understood differently from department to department, and this has caused confusion among those responsible for delivery on the ground.

One of the key issues relating to clarity of focus revolves around whether 'Prevent' should be limited to Muslim communities and threats related to and inspired by Al-Qaeda, or whether it should encapsulate other forms of violent extremism, such as that from the far right, which is significant in certain parts of the country. West Yorkshire police conducted a series of raids which found a far-right group in possession of 80 bombs: Neil Lewington was arrested in 2008 on the cusp of waging a terror campaign after it was discovered that he had built a bomb factory at his parents' house; also in 2008, police discovered 'the largest amount of' chemical explosives ever found in this country' in the home of BNP election candidate Robert Cottage, and Martyn Gilleard was caught with a huge stash of nail bombs and letters in which he declared, 'I am so sick of hearing nationalists talk of killing Muslims, of blowing up mosques, of fighting back, only to see these acts of resistance fail to appear. The time has come to stop the talk and start to act.'<sup>29</sup> The Communities and Local Government (CLG) Select Committee's recent report on the 'Prevent' strategy argued that responses to these two kinds of violent extremism should be kept separate, but this article will argue that certain aspects of preventive work should be tackled together.<sup>30</sup> Work to fight the far right, and preventive work with fragile white communities, had been conducted as part of CLG's Connecting Communities programme, which was launched with £12 million funding in October 2009 but axed by the new government in June 2010.

Third, there are growing concerns about the ability of local authorities to deliver the 'Prevent' agenda. NI<sup>35</sup> requires local authorities to report on the extent of their understanding of local Muslim communities, but some evidence suggests they are starting from an extremely low base. A previously cited report found that many local authorities relied on 'gatekeepers' that their own community cohesion strategies had identified as being problematic and divisive.<sup>31</sup> It is therefore perhaps

not surprising that the official review of the PVE Pathfinder Fund for the year 2007/8 found that in nearly two-thirds of local authority 'Prevent' projects only 20 per cent worked with individuals deemed to be 'at risk' and only . per cent with those 'glorifying or justifying violent extremism', suggesting that local authorities have at best poor relationships with their target groups.<sup>32</sup> It is therefore also not surprising that many local authorities pay external consultants to conduct community mapping and community needs assessments, rather than using these opportunities to build and develop their own relationships with local communities.

There are also concerns about the opaqueness of local authority decision-making processes in relation to 'Prevent'. For example, in response to a Freedom of Information request submitted by the Institute for Race Relations, Dudley Council admitted it had passed £277,000—its entire CLG 'Prevent' funding minus £27,000 for commissioning costs—to the British Muslim Forum (BMF), which has also received £48,023 to work with mosques in Sandwell and Wolverhampton. The BMF is chaired by a Labour councillor in Dudley who also chairs the Local Strategic Partnership.<sup>33</sup> It may be that the BMF is the best-placed organization to conduct this work, but in the absence of clear and transparent governance these kinds of decisions are vulnerable to accusations of cronyism or even corruption. Stories of this kind further undermine community trust.

Fourth, negative media reporting about Muslims and growing Islamophobia quite naturally influence the way in which Muslim communities view efforts at engagement. A report by Insted Consultancy found very negative media reporting of Muslims: in twelve out of every 19 newspapers, every article covering Muslims was negative; 96 per cent of tabloid coverage was negative; 89 per cent of broadcast reporting was negative; Muslims were portrayed in the national press as being a threat to traditional British customs; the assertion was made that there was little or no common ground between the West and Islam; and the tone of many articles was emotive, immoderate, alarmist or abusive.<sup>34</sup> Research sponsored by the Home Office found that, among blogs read by UK Muslims, more were anti-Islamic than pro-Islamic.<sup>35</sup> And other research has shown that Muslims are subject to physical and verbal attacks because of their religion.<sup>36</sup>

Muslims also feel indiscriminately targeted by anti-terrorist laws. A literature review conducted by the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL) found that many Muslims perceived some aspects of counterterrorist legislation to be unfair, unjust and discriminatory; that there was lower support among Muslims than non-Muslims for counterterrorism measures, and a sense that they violated civil liberties and human rights; and that, when discussing counterterrorist legislation, UK Muslims articulated a lack of trust in the police and had less confidence than non-Muslims that they would be treated fairly by UK authorities.<sup>37</sup> This is worrying, because low trust and confidence in the government could have a negative impact on the willingness of Muslim communities to accept, support and engage with counterterrorism measures.

Against this backdrop, efforts have been made to ensure that government messages are inclusive rather than divisive.



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stressing the fact that terrorism is a criminal act rather than a religious one, and that we all need to work together to tackle it. The Research Information and Communications Unit (RICU) in the Home Office has formulated four key government messages related to terrorism: (1) 'Terrorism is a real and serious threat to us all'; (2) 'Terrorists are criminals and murderers'; (3) 'Terrorists attack the values that we all share'; and (4) 'We all need to work together to tackle the terrorist challenge'.<sup>38</sup> However, its own research covering the period January 2007 to 31 March 2008 highlighted the fact that government representatives were far more likely to use message (1)—about the threat—than messages (3) or (4)—about shared values and partnership working—meaning that government communication was more likely to stress the threat than the need to work together.<sup>39</sup> Another study found that Muslims welcomed the partnership message (4), but wanted to know what it meant in practice.<sup>40</sup>

### Key Lessons and the Future of Community Engagement in Counterterrorism

This article has highlighted the fact that community engagement is now an established principle in counterterrorism policy, although it is anticipated that the forthcoming government review will result in changes to its shape and form in practice. The article makes a series of recommendations that it is hoped will feed into this review process.

First, community engagement is not something that can be done half-heartedly: partnership conducted with a lack of commitment is usually bad partnership, the impacts of which are difficult to undo. It is not good enough for government to talk about the importance of open and trusted partnership and then hide decisions about funding behind complex bureaucracies, such that it takes a Freedom of Information request to reveal them. This requires a shift in mindset among security practitioners used to a 'need to know' culture of information-sharing. It also needs to be matched by structural changes that 'lock in' partnership: new systems for decision-making and the allocation of funds, stronger reporting requirements to ensure that information about decisions and funding is open to all, and new accountability mechanisms that recognize that while government is ultimately responsible for providing the forum for the work and overseeing the process, the responsibility for decision-making and delivery is shared with non-state actors.

Second, one of the most important limiting factors for success is the extent to which the local authority understands and has solid relationships with its local communities—and this article has argued that, on the whole, they do not. Many have reached out to known interlocutors—some of whom have a history of 'gatekeeping'—and there is a tendency to outsource community mapping and needs assessments. Instead, local authorities should shift their focus and funding away from small-scale community projects which they are often ill-equipped to commission, towards enhancing their capacity

through the creation of additional community outreach posts to provide human links between the local authority and local communities. This goes against the grain of Treasury announcements about a freeze in recruitment,<sup>41</sup> but it would build sorely needed links at the local level, without which much of the strategy is doomed to failure anyway. These posts could also save money by conducting the mapping and needs assessments which tend to be expensive projects. It is also likely to enhance the quality of commissioning and increase the likelihood of reaching the priority target groups.

Third, the lines need to be drawn more clearly between activities aimed at preventing violent extremism and those seeking to achieve broader aims in order to guard against the creeping securitization of all manner of areas of policy, an outcome that contributes to the stigmatization of 'suspect communities'. Community development workers, teachers, social workers and mental health practitioners are not counterterrorism practitioners, although they undoubtedly have a contribution to make. However, in order to play their role they do not need to form part of the 'official' response, be recipients of government funding, or operate under the control of the state's security architecture. Establishing a comfortable 'arm's length' relationship between the state and these institutions and professionals runs counter to the top-down way that security policy has tended to be managed, but to instrumentalize their work would be to neuter their potential contribution anyway. Government needs here to persuade rather than instruct, and to work in partnership rather than through control.

This principle also needs to be extended to communities. It is clear they have a role to play, but the 'Prevent' strategy has been based on the assumption that their ability to deliver is directly proportionate to the amount of funding they receive. In fact, if they are to be effective in this role, it is important they are independent, so state funding should be the exception rather than the rule. The areas where counterterrorism-linked state funding is useful are those where the security aims of the project are clear: deradicalization programmes, the Channel process and projects to counter extremist messages, for example. Efforts to build capacity and resilience, tackle grievances and promote inclusion all contribute in the long term to counter-radicalization, but are best dealt with outside the security arena and within a framework that targets all fragile and vulnerable communities, not just Muslims. The new government's Big Society agenda perhaps offers an umbrella, working holistically with the most marginalized and fragile communities to increase resilience, raise aspirations, and build the infrastructure for mobilization.

### Conclusion

This article has argued that community engagement is central to an effective response to international terrorism and has earned its place in counter terrorism strategies for the foreseeable future. While it is embedded strategically, the forthcoming review of 'Prevent' offers an opportunity to reconfigure its tactical delivery. The article has argued that partnership



needs to be structurally 'locked in', underpinned by dedicated resources within local authorities, and that 'Prevent' needs to be focused on those activities which deliver substantively in the short term, with longer-term capacity-building work housed separately within a broader whole-community approach to fragile communities under the banner of the new government's Big Society. Communities are the long-term solution to terrorism, but they need to grow into this role organically and in a way that doesn't merely serve to open up divisions and tensions elsewhere. The Big Society might just offer that opportunity.

## Notes

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Europe

## Britain split on how to counter draw of radicalism

By Griff Witte and Souad Mekhennet July 3

BRADFORD, England — When three young men left behind the gentle West Yorkshire hills to blow themselves up on London trains and buses 10 years ago next week, the astonishment felt by people in this multiethnic area of northern England soon gave way to a desire to come together.

Rabbis, priests and imams linked arms and called for peace. Police and community leaders agreed to cooperate on efforts to stamp out Islamist violence. The government soon rolled out an ambitious program to make sure that nothing like the July 7, 2005, bombings, which killed 52 people and are known in Britain as 7/7, would happen again.

A decade later, nothing like it has.

But when three sisters left their homes here last month and traveled to Syria with their nine children, ostensibly to live within the Islamic State, the local reaction illustrated just how much has changed in Britain's fight against extremism.

Authorities whispered that something must have gone wrong in the women's homes or communities. Family members countered that the police had driven the women to a desperate act.

Rather than bring people together, the sisters' departure has become another flash point in an increasingly bitter and divisive national argument: Who is to blame for the troubling flow of hundreds of young British Muslims into the ranks of an organization that has declared war on the West?

It is an argument that pits the government against some of its own citizens, and that reflects the deep mistrust that many in Britain's Muslim community feel toward the nation's security services.

"What's happened in the past 10 years is that we've become more polarized as a society," said Alyas Karmani, a Bradford city councillor and Muslim community leader. "We haven't really achieved anything. We're just repeating the same mistakes."





Britain is hardly alone in that respect. Thousands of young Muslims from Western countries have heeded the bloodcurdling call of the Islamic State, leaving behind societies they see as decadent, hypocritical and irreligious to start new lives in a war zone.

But British volunteers have made particularly grisly contributions to the wars in the Middle East and North Africa. The knife-wielding executioner who became known to the world as “Jihadi John” was raised in a middle-class area of northwest London. Other Britons have taken leadership roles in the Somali terrorist group al-Shabab or carried out suicide attacks across the North Africa and Middle East region — including one in Iraq last month by a 17-year-old who grew up just down the road from Bradford.

*[‘Jihadi John’ is a Kuwaiti-born Londoner named Mohammed Emwazi]*

With fears growing that it is only a matter of time before homegrown radicals turn their focus to another attack on British soil, the debate over who’s responsible for the alienation and radicalization has intensified.

To many in the government, the answer is for Muslim communities to look within. Most recently, officials from Prime Minister David Cameron on down have cited the case of the three Bradford sisters to push British Muslims to do more to combat extremism in their own families and neighborhoods.

In a speech, Cameron lashed out at those Muslims who “quietly condone” radical views. Using an acronym for the Islamic State, he said such people enable others to more easily transition “from a British teenager to an ISIL fighter or an ISIL wife.”

But here in Bradford, where the sisters lived on a block of century-old yellow-brick row houses among neighbors who are as likely to speak Urdu as English, Cameron’s words were seen as a provocation.

“The prime minister says it’s not the time to point fingers. But that’s exactly what he’s doing. And it’s what government policy is doing,” said Selina Ullah, chair of the Muslim Women’s Council, a Bradford-based nonprofit group.

Ullah knows government policy well from her four-year stint leading this city’s efforts under the national government’s signature counter-extremism program, Prevent.

The program, launched to great fanfare after the 7/7 attacks, was intended not just to stop would-be terrorists, but also to discredit extremism itself and to steer impressionable young people along a better path.

*[Muslim comedian’s anti-extremist message a big hit with British teens]*



“Prevent was a radical change — the idea that you could engage with people at the fringes of terrorism and seek to dissuade them and produce a better ideology,” said Clive Walker, a University of Leeds professor who has advised the government on counterterrorism policy. “This was new for the U.K.”

In the program’s early years, the government showered cash on groups nationwide with goals as disparate as building community cohesion, mentoring young people and empowering women. It flew in religious scholars from Pakistan to tour the country promoting the “right message” about Islam and worked with mosques to challenge radical narratives.

But when a Conservative-led government was elected in 2010 with a mission to impose austerity, it decided that Prevent was ripe for cuts. The program had no way to measure which initiatives were truly effective in countering extremism. More troubling, Prevent had funded individuals and groups that the government considered extremist.

“When talking to a youth group, you ask, ‘Who is going to do the talking?’” Walker said. “A number of local organizations said, ‘Well, the best people are people who have been through it — jihadis themselves.’”

The new government swiftly severed those ties. It also refocused Prevent away from its softer goals and toward the harder-edged mission of stopping terrorist attacks.

Today, Prevent is a dirty word among many Muslims, a shorthand for a government more interested in surveillance than in protecting vulnerable young people from radicalization.

“The whole agenda feels much more loaded, much more suspicious,” said Ullah, the former Prevent official. “We’re being watched all the time. It feels like ‘1984.’”

That sentiment has deepened this week with the implementation of a law that obligates teachers, health workers and local-government employees to inform law-enforcement agencies if they suspect that a young person is being radicalized.

The law, officials say, is designed to introduce much-needed accountability. But when it comes to the disappearance of the three sisters, many Muslims here are convinced that the police are the ones who should ultimately be held responsible.

Born and raised in Britain, the three — Khadija, Sugra and Zohra Dawood — were married to Pakistani immigrants. Neighbors said they were rarely seen outside their homes, and when they did go out, they wore the niqab, an all-encompassing veil with a slit for the eyes. Among them, they have nine children, the youngest just 3



years old.

On June 11, the sisters and their children failed to turn up for a return flight to Manchester after a pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia. Days later, Zohra Dawood called her parents to explain why: The group had flown to Turkey, then crossed into Syria.

The women's husbands, who were not along for the trip, have since pleaded with their wives to return.

"I'm not angry. Please come back. Everything is normal, come back to normal life," said a tearful Mohammed Shoaib at a news conference with one of the other husbands, Akhtar Iqbal.

The men said that they had had no warning and could think of no explanation for their wives to knowingly shepherd their children into a combat zone.

But in a letter written by their lawyer, they offer a theory: For over a year, police had been secretly encouraging the women to contact their brother, who had gone to Syria.

It is a tactic the police occasionally use to gather intelligence on British foreign fighters. But in this case, the husbands' lawyer has claimed, the contact radicalized the women.

According to the letter, Zohra Dawood explained in her call home that she and her sisters had fled Britain because they believed they were under constant police surveillance.

"The actions and misjudgment of the [police] has placed the lives of 12 British citizens at risk, 9 of which are innocent children," the letter reads.

Police have categorically rejected that claim. But they have not publicly commented on whether they encouraged contact between the sisters and their brother. In an interview, West Yorkshire Police Commissioner Mark Burns-Williamson said the case is being investigated internally and is "a complex situation."

Regardless of the truth, the theory that the police were responsible is widely accepted here — although not by all.

Karmani, the city councillor, said there is more than enough blame to go around.

The women, he said, were caught at the intersection of two cultures that prize secrecy — a highly conservative Muslim community on one hand and security services on the other. Ultimately, no one intervened to stop them from doing what had once seemed unthinkable but that has now become a nightmarish fear for Muslim families



across Britain.

“Everyone,” Karmani said, “has to realize that they failed these women.”

*Karla Adam in London contributed to this report.*

**Read more:**

[Should Westerners who joined the Islamic State be barred from returning home?](#)

[Hoping to create a new society, the Islamic State recruits entire families](#)

[Foreign fighters flow to Syria](#)

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## James Brady - How the exodus from Syria compares with history's great migrations—and how the world should respond

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**From:** The Economist <e-mail@economist.com>  
**To:** <bradyj@wcooh.org>  
**Date:** 9/10/2015 11:25 AM  
**Subject:** How the exodus from Syria compares with history's great migrations—and how the world should respond

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### The new Elizabethans

# Longest to reign over them

**Queen Elizabeth II's reign has seen the United Kingdom become a diverse, fragmented one**

Sep 12th 2015 | LEICESTER AND STOKE-ON-TRENT |  
From the print edition

ON THE occasion of Queen Elizabeth II's coronation on June 2nd 1953, a year and four months after she had become queen on the death of her father, 82 towns and villages in Britain roasted an ox—the Ministry of Food having loosened post-war food rationing rules only for places that could show they had a tradition of doing so on such occasions. Others gathered at street parties, crowded around new television sets in homes smelling of Bakelite and tobacco and strung bunting from buildings black with soot.



On September 9th 2015 Queen Elizabeth II's reign reached its 23,226th day, surpassing the record set by Queen Victoria. It is a landmark being passed over without much official fanfare—there is little dignity in celebrating knocking one's great-great grandmother into second place. Nevertheless, it provides an occasion for Britain to think about its queen and itself, as the end of the second Elizabethan age draws near.

Four hallmarks of the era stand out: the transformation of Britain from the industrial hub of a global empire into a cultural power and entrepôt; its development into an ethnic melting pot; the relaxing of interpersonal relations and moral codes; and the loosening of the United Kingdom itself. These connected trends have all, on the whole, been good for the queen's subjects, who are wealthier, longer lived and freer than they were. That said, some are in a sorry state: though many places, most notably London, have thrived in post-industrial, post-imperial Britain, others are depressed. Today 16% of households have no member in work, up from 4% 63 years ago.

### From shore to shore

During her reign the queen has travelled near-ceaselessly around Britain and beyond; Robert Hardman, a biographer, estimates that she has met 4m people. To revisit her early destinations illustrates the changes six decades have brought.

The queen went to Stoke-on-Trent in November 1955. The copious commemorative plates and teapots made in the city's potteries two years earlier to mark her coronation had heralded the end of wartime restrictions on the production of painted and coloured wares. On a freezing, windy day (so cold that several boys at a football match she watched collapsed on the pitch) the monarch toured the Wedgwood factory, where mass production still meant men engraving patterns with scalpels and spatulas, their forearms caked in wet clay, and women painting the rims and handles of recently fired teapots by hand.

The city was a product of the British Empire. It was here that porcelain-making techniques from China, imported by the East India Company, had been adapted by the likes of Josiah Wedgwood in the 18th century. The city had then taken advantage of the protected markets opened up by the Company. As Tristram Hunt, a historian and local MP, notes: "It was from the kilns and pot banks of Stoke-on-Trent that the forts, bungalows and government houses of the Empire were supplied with ceramics." Stoke still bears the traces of that period: ornate schoolhouses, a fine brick market-hall and, suburban enough to be out of smelling distance of the black sludge that filled the waterways, villas of industrialists made rich by laying the Raj's dinner table.



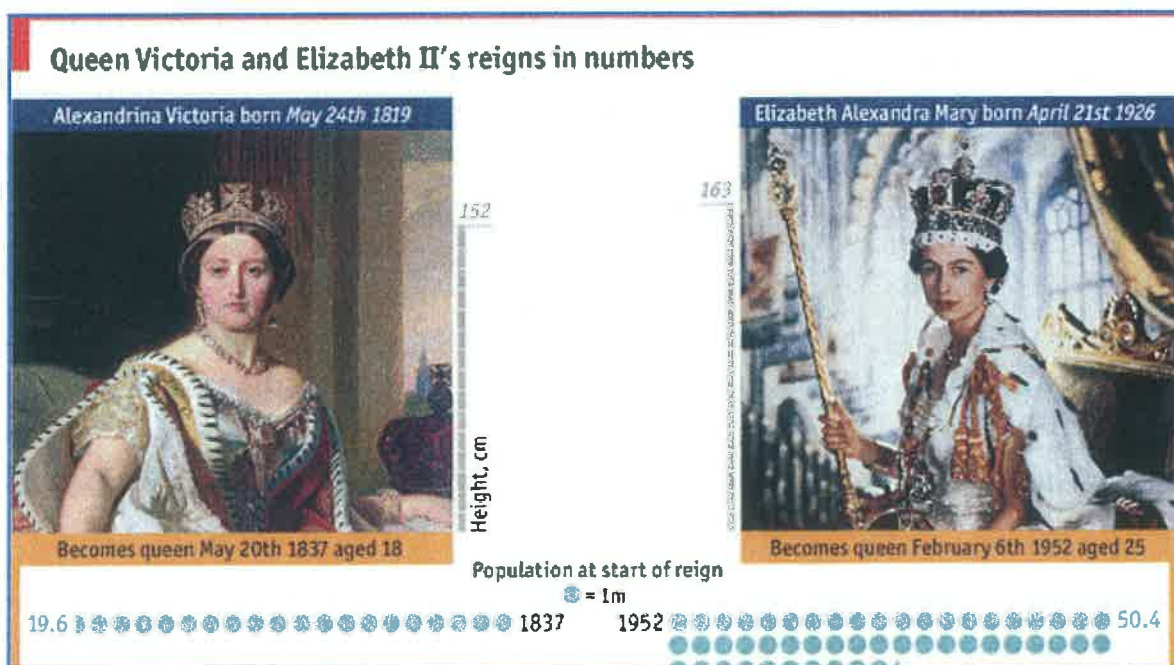
Our coverage of Queen Victoria's death, from 1901

The Empire was in already in decline—India had gained its independence in 1947—but its reach persisted: 46 now-sovereign nations (including Malaysia, Nigeria and Qatar) were ultimately governed from Whitehall, whose ministerial buildings retain the grandeur of an imperial capital. British schoolboys could buy an “Empire Youth Annual” of tales of derring-do; the country celebrated an annual Empire Day; students at Oxford University took courses designed to prepare them for careers as colonial administrators. The Victorian age still loomed over Elizabeth’s Britain: Victoria had reigned for longer than the four intervening monarchs put together.

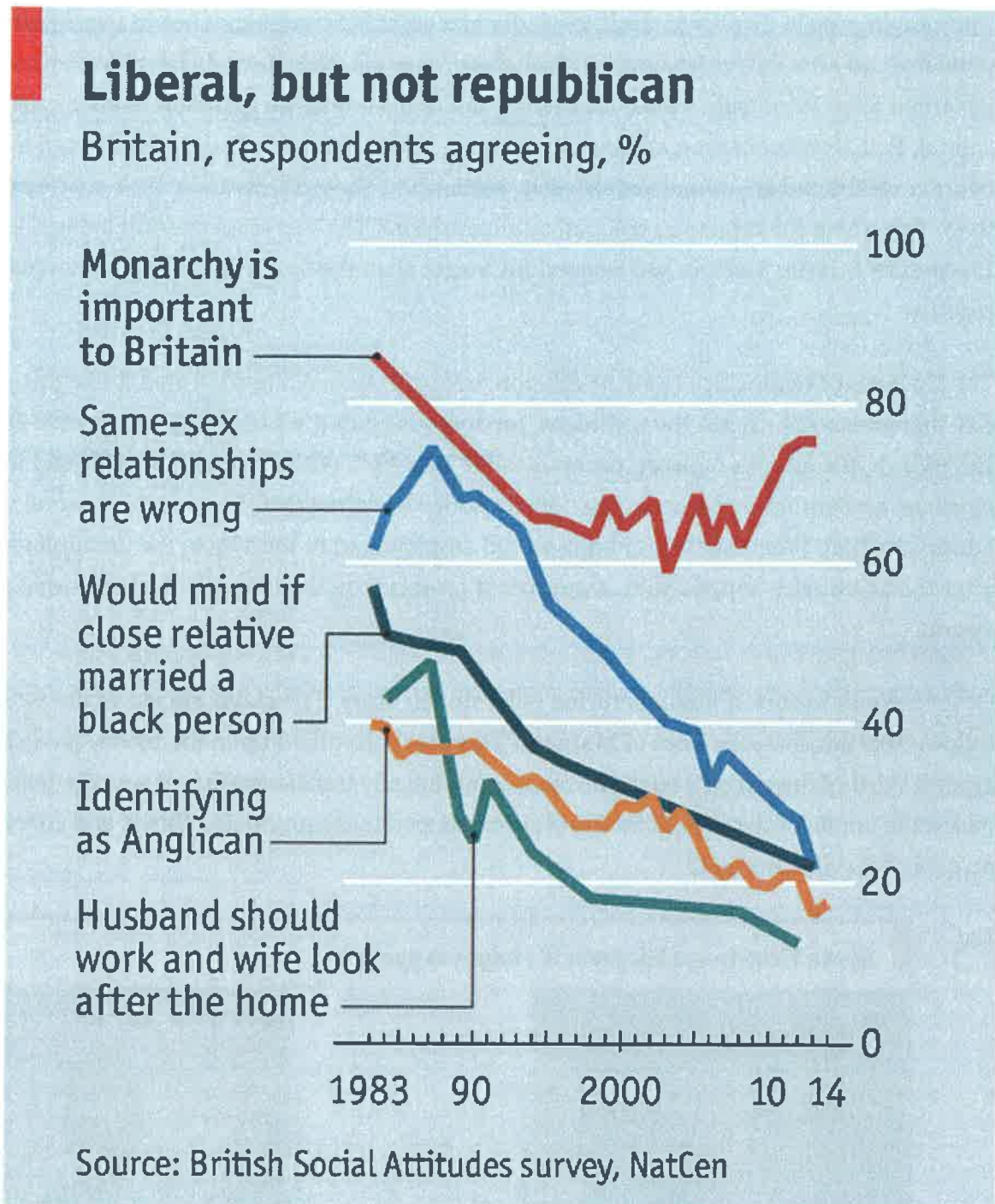
The Duchess of Cambridge (Kate Middleton, wife of Prince William) visited Stoke this year. The city that greeted her is not the confident, prosperous place it was in 1955. In 1997 the Duke of Edinburgh, the queen’s consort, pronounced it “ghastly”. Without access to sheltered imperial markets, and outbid by cheaper Asian rivals, Stoke has struggled. In 2009 Wedgwood went into administration. Whereas the city enjoyed full employment in the 1950s, the unemployment rate after the 2009 crisis topped 10%. A quarter of premises on the now-shabby high street are vacant.

Other former centres of manufacturing tell a similar story. The global shocks of the 1970s, followed by the domestic ones of Margaret Thatcher’s premiership in the 1980s, made this central third of the queen’s reign the most economically transformative. It was the point at which the cradle of the Industrial Revolution stopped mass-producing things and concentrated on selling services instead.

Big







Economist.com

cities, with their clusters of **IN GRAPHICS: The reigns of Queen Elizabeth II v Queen Victoria** firms doing what the country does best (banking, business services, retailing and creative work), are booming: in Leeds and Manchester former mills and factories are now smart offices, flats and shopping centres. In smaller post-industrial settlements, especially those with poor

connections, old factory-workers' houses sell for a symbolic £1 and social problems—poor health, illiteracy and underemployment—are concentrated. The result is a richer but more unequal Britain, with pockets of deprivation that are among western Europe's most severe.

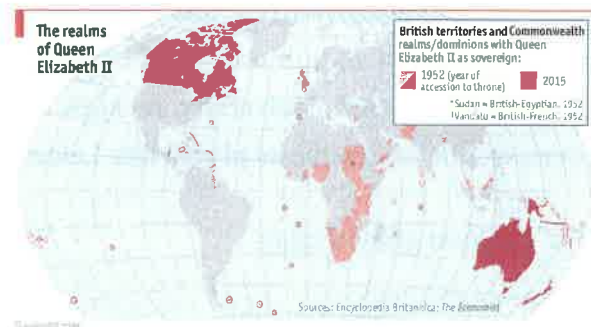
### The wide world over

Yet in recent years Stoke has experienced a modest revival, one that points to the role into which Britain seems to be settling. The designs and wares of the Potteries have found favour in Asia, especially among Chinese and South Koreans, busloads of whom arrive every week for factory tours and shopping trips. Wedgwood—now revived and turning a profit—will soon have 56 shops in China. Stoke has even acquired a Chinese name: Wan Bo Tao Ci (“diverse and plentiful ceramics”). These links are luring more than just tourists; last year a delegation from Chongqing and Dalian visited to spot investment opportunities.

Stoke thus represents Britain's evolution during the queen's reign from a trade-based empire, with all the pomp and gunships that implies, to a trading post where foreigners come to invest and do business with other foreigners. British pottery sits on the sideboards of Kuwaitis and Beijingers just as British programmes play on their television screens and British universities welcome their sons and daughters. The country may be diminished but, as Stoke shows, it is managing to pay its way as a sort of factotum to the wealthy from around the world: entertaining them, educating their children, looking after their money and firing their imaginations—as well as their decorative porcelain.

If Britain enjoys such a role, it is at least in part thanks to the far-flung origins of so many of its people. Footage of the queen's visit to the Corah hosiery factory in Leicester in 1958 will strike any Briton today as utterly alien: all the women at the banks of sewing machines are white. In that same year the recent arrival of modest numbers of West Indian immigrants in nearby Nottingham brought 4,000 people out onto the streets, supposedly angered about a black man flirting with a white woman in a pub. Unable to find many black people, they ended up brawling with each other.

Today Corah is mostly derelict, part of it charred and roofless after a fire in 2012. Its main yard is graffitied and broken-windowed. Outside, however, the city's present is more cheering. Cafés



and restaurants offering *shisha* and *kothu roti* do a roaring trade. Worshippers pour out of the Salahuddin mosque. Over the doors of terraced houses and around the neck of a statue of Gandhi hang Hindu garlands. At Milan Enterprises an elderly Indian man explains that, though lots of people worked for Leicester's textiles industry when they first moved in, his shop's saris are all imported from the subcontinent.

Britain today is increasingly ethnically diverse—unrecognisably so, to a time-traveller from the 1950s, when according to one study half of Britons had never met a black person. Like other cities, Leicester received a trickle of immigrants from Britain's former colonies in the 1950s and 1960s. They were followed by 10,000 Asians



Our coverage of Elizabeth's accession, from 1952

expelled from Uganda by Idi Amin in 1972—despite the city's advertisements in the *Ugandan Argus* newspaper insisting that it was, in fact, pretty lousy. Today Leicester is Britain's first big settlement with a non-white majority. The queen visited her first Sikh temple there in 2002 and came back in 2012 to launch her diamond-jubilee tour with a spectacle featuring Sikh *dhol* drummers and a Hindu Holi festival dance.

Leicester is increasingly normal in a country that, in contrast to its sluggish response to today's crisis in the Mediterranean, has taken in several waves of migrants during Elizabeth's reign. In 1951 Britain had 74,500 non-white residents; today the figure is 8m, and rising. Philip Rees, a geographer at Leeds University, reckons that by 2051 about half of the country's local-authority areas will be as diverse as places like Leicester and London are now.

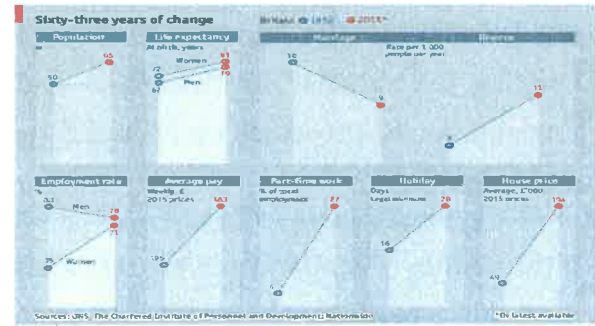
### The choicest gifts in store

The growing cultural diversity of Britain is part of a bigger story of social change. At the Ideal Home Exhibition of 1957, the queen was shown pyramids of food tins and rows of fridges by a delegation of middle-aged men who, one suspects, had little experience of operating either (the most exotic showpiece was a gadget that could fashion a potato into the shape of a corkscrew). She returned to the annual exhibition in 2015, when the inventions on show included a "smart home" tailored in every conceivable respect to the owner's tastes.

Britain as a whole has shed the formalities of the 1950s for an individualism that is exemplified by the royal family itself. When the queen took the throne, she had recently



claimed in a speech that “divorce and separation are responsible for some of the darkest evils in our society today”. In 1955 her sister, under pressure from politicians and courtiers, reluctantly turned down a marriage proposal from a divorced man. Plays were censored and a man invited to a royal garden party could bring a companion only if he was married to her.



The change, which began in the 1960s, was illustrated by Roy Jenkins as home secretary (a post that required him to join the queen on her boat in the Scottish lochs, should London succumb to a nuclear attack). In his 23 months in the job, Jenkins enacted reforms that both responded to and anticipated the defining social trends of the age: legalising homosexuality and abortion, legislating for “no fault” divorce, banning racial discrimination and abolishing censorship in the theatre, all in the name of the “civilised society”.

Governments have since extended his changes. Britons, meanwhile, have ditched the grand old cultural and moral monoliths to which they deferred willingly in the 1950s, drifting away from religion, political parties and organised labour, for example. At the rate of the past three decades the National Trust, an outfit that looks after old buildings and land, will have more members than the entire British union movement by the mid-2020s. Marriage, too, is not the totem it was: 5.6% of children were born out of wedlock in 1950; next year the rate is expected to exceed 50%.

One sign of Britons’ new informality was the clamour for the royal family to emote in response to the death in 1997 of Princess Diana. Unlike the queen, Tony Blair, then the prime minister, captured the mood; a settlement with a less stuffy electorate lay at the heart of the New Labour formula that had recently propelled him to power. In other ways, the royal family has caught up with the country’s changes. Guests at royal garden parties can now bring any partner they like. The queen has four children and three of them have committed the very act—divorce—that she disparaged before her coronation.

And form one family

The geography of British politics and society has changed along with its tone. When the queen visited Edinburgh in 1953 it was, in many ways, just another British city. It had a regional accent, local habits and identities, but like the rest of the country had voted for a mix of Conservative and Labour MPs at the 1951 election, had a manufacturing-heavy economy and

was proudly unionist. The policies of the post-war Labour government—nationalisation, house-building, the National Health Service—had been implemented there just as they had in England. As she processed up Princes Street, crowds five deep cheered, waving handkerchiefs and union flags.

If the politics of Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom have diverged in the intervening time, this is partly thanks to different economic experiences. The growth of the North Sea oil industry in the 1970s, the deindustrialisation of places like Glasgow that accelerated under Thatcher and the decision to test a regressive “poll tax” in Scotland all powered the rise of the pro-devolution (now pro-independence) Scottish National Party (SNP). To this day posters claiming “It’s Scotland’s oil” and depicting Thatcher as a vampire, the black stuff dripping from her fangs, line the shelves of its Edinburgh headquarters. In 1999 the Labour government in Westminster devolved swathes of domestic policy to a new Scottish Parliament at Holyrood in recognition of the growing sense of separateness north of the border.

Far from curbing secessionism, this new body created a platform for the SNP, which in 2011 won the majority needed to hold last year’s independence referendum. Scots voted against separation, but the pro-independence movement has since stormed ahead. Some polls suggest it would now win a plebiscite. Today at public events the Saltire is waved along with the Union



flag, the flying of which is now a political act, rather than the uncomplicatedly patriotic one it was when the new queen visited Edinburgh in 1953. On several occasions in the run-up to the referendum, pro-independence campaigners burned it; in February this year a man in Falkirk was asked to leave a bar on the grounds that the Union Jack on his shirt was “offensive” to other drinkers.

Thus Edinburgh, where the queen spent September 9th, the day on which her reign overtook that of Queen Victoria, feels separate in a way hard to imagine 63 years ago. It is dominated by a party that not only declines to contest elections in the rest of her kingdom, but which wants to leave that kingdom altogether. With its own parliament, government buildings, school curriculum, health system and—increasingly—international voice, it feels more like the capital of a small European country than a provincial British city.

Although Britain remains one of the rich world’s most centralised polities, Wales is likewise



more self-governing than in the 1950s. And after three violent decades and many false dawns, Northern Ireland has a (fractious) power-sharing executive. London, too, was granted a mayor and legislature by the last Labour government. Other large cities, led by Manchester, which will soon run its own health service, are gravitating towards that model.

### Confound their politics

As an economy and a world power, Britain has declined in relative terms during the queen's reign. Yet the term "decline" does not describe the fact that it has a mature relationship with its former colonies, that on her travels around the country the monarch is greeted by crowds of more than one ethnicity, that her subjects can marry whom they want and that the nations and regions have more freedom. Britain in 2015 is, to nod to Jenkins's formulation, a more civilised country than in 1953.

But a side-effect of these welcome trends is that the country is fragmenting. The union's decentralisation could yet be its unravelling. The experiences of those in the diverse, successful cities and those in post-industrial backwaters are diverging. An ever-wider gulf, evident in the rise of the right-populist UK Independence Party, divides Britain's cosmopolitans from its nativists—inflaming the politics of immigration, its open economy and its liberal society. Britain is, in short, a much looser gathering of peoples than on the rainy day in 1953 when the queen took her crown.

The attendant risk of disunity requires firm and confident leadership. But that too is in question. Labour is tearing itself apart (as, to be fair, it was in 1953). The governing Conservatives are entering a period of acrimony, perhaps even an identity crisis, over Europe. Scottish elections next year could see the SNP win a mandate for another independence referendum.

Even the monarchy, whose supporters claim it has provided stability and continuity amid the change of the past six decades, could yet wobble. The queen's popularity is stratospheric, but Prince Charles—her heir and increasingly her regent—has a risky tendency to intervene in public policy debates. The defining trends of Elizabeth II's reign will outlive her by a long way. Her kingdom's ability to remain united in spite of them is less sure.

From the print edition: Britain



Britain's budget

## The new Conservatism

George Osborne's political vision is brave, bold—and on many counts wrong



**B**RTAIN'S chancellor is credited with turning received wisdom on its head. George Osborne steered the Conservative party to a stunning, if narrow, majority in May, because of—not despite—painful cuts and the promise of more. Britain is now growing faster than any of its G7 peers, employment is at record levels, and wages are rising. The opposition Labour Party is in disarray; the Tories in raptures. Unthinkable a couple of years ago, the austerity chancellor is now Britain's most likely next prime minister.

On July 8th Mr Osborne rose to give the budget—his seventh, and the first by a majority Conservative government in 19 years—and outline what he called a “new settlement” for Britain (see page 50). He announced plans to cut the deficit further, while trimming rates for business, slashing inheritance tax and furthering radical devolution to England's neglected cities. Boldest of all, he declared an overhaul of the welfare system, replacing benefits with a higher minimum wage. With this, and measures to raise the personal tax allowance and double free child care for parents, he marched his party onto ground once considered too left wing even for Labour.

Mr Osborne's rebranding of the Tories as the party of working people, chasing poor, northern votes that Labour has long taken for granted, is welcome and impressive. So is the alchemy by which he has turned fiscal rectitude into a vote-winner—other European countries should take note. Yet this was a budget whose slick politics hid economics that were often wrong and sometimes dangerous. The flagship substitution of tax credits for wage floors is a bad mistake; cutting benefits to the very poor while reducing inheritance tax for the wealthy is indefensible. And when it came to low productivity and strangled housing supply, the biggest economic questions facing Britain, the bold Mr Osborne had too little to say.

### George's marvellous medicine

The budget began with a sensible admission of austerity's limits. Mr Osborne originally planned to bring the public finances screeching back into the black by 2018-19. He rightly changed his mind. Britain's deficit will be 3.7% of GDP this year—sizeable, but not crushing. The country has plenty of fiscal wiggle room, as the IMF's economists have pointed out. Growth should do much to reduce borrowing. Mr Osborne's decision to extend his deadline by a year, to 2019-20, was correct.

So was the decision to add defence to the departments protected from cuts. Britain will now meet NATO's target of spending 2% of GDP on defence each year, to sighs of relief in a Washington worried about European firepower. Letting university tuition fees rise in line with inflation will help English universities to stay at the top of international league tables (in contrast to Scotland, whose once-proud colleges are buckling under a policy of free higher education). And cutting corporation tax, from 20% to 18% by 2020, will bring business to Britain.

Then things took a turn for the barmy. In perhaps the daftest

economic policy of the decade, inheritance tax was cut—but only on houses. A new allowance for homes means that estates worth up to £1m (\$1.5m) will escape taxation. Even if dead millionaires were good candidates for tax breaks—doubtful, especially given fiscal pressures—there is no good economic reason to privilege houses over other assets. Indeed, the policy will encourage the well-off to buy bigger homes. In a country facing a severe housing shortage, that is irresponsible.

Going easy on heirs and heiresses also damages Mr Osborne's claim to stand for working people. To this, he had a bold answer: the shake-up of welfare. He has long promised to cut £12 billion from the welfare budget, having already pared it back by £25 billion since 2010. As expected, many of the cuts were achieved by reducing tax credits, wage top-ups for low earners. In their place will come a “national living wage” of £7.20 per hour, due to rise to £9 by 2020.

This is radical—especially from a Tory government—but it is mistaken. Minimum wages do little harm when low, but create unemployment as they rise—indeed, Mr Osborne admitted that the higher wage floor would cost 60,000 jobs. Tax credits, by contrast, are an incentive to hiring. Some complain that they subsidise employers, but around three-quarters of the benefit goes to employees. Despite its fanfare, the new “living wage” is fairly modest. But swapping tax credits for minimum wages as a policy for alleviating poverty could do enormous damage in a world where firms are increasingly buying technology rather than paying workers. Ask France, with a generous minimum wage—and joblessness of more than 10%.

### The twits

Mr Osborne makes much of “fairness”, but his cuts to welfare are skewed by outrageous favouritism. Despite austerity, the basic state pension has grown by 16% since 2010. Such rises benefit rich rather than poor oldies, since other benefits raise the incomes of the less well-off above the state pension. If he were serious about shrinking the state, Mr Osborne would have cut the pensions of the better-off; but the elderly vote.

Instead he curtailed worthier spending. Productivity, which has been flat since the crisis of 2008, needs investment. Mr Osborne announced a fund for roads, to be paid for by car tax. But a fortnight earlier a planned rail upgrade to link northern cities was put on hold for lack of funds. The same fate may await other plans to boost productivity.

Nor were there answers to the housing shortage. Mr Osborne said that a tax break for buy-to-let landlords would be cut, which may ease pressure on prices. And, in a diktat that could have come from Ed Miliband, Labour's former leader, he ordered social housing providers to cut their rents by 1% a year. These steps do not come close to solving the housing crisis, which will need a shake-up of planning laws.

It was a beguiling budget: policies of the left given a Conservative justification, and cuts recast as a reshaping of the state. In the past five years Mr Osborne has played a dreadful hand well. But this was a budget built on economic mistakes. The chancellor's revamped Conservatism is characteristically daring. Economically, it is disappointingly thin. ■



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## UK and the EU: Better off out or in?

22 May 2015 | UK Politics



**David Cameron has promised a referendum on whether Britain should remain in the European Union by the end of 2017. Here is a summary of the key arguments for and against British membership.**

### Are there any viable options for Britain leaving the EU?

If Britain votes to leave the EU, it will have to negotiate a new trading relationship with what would now be a 27 member organisation, to allow British firms to sell goods and services to EU countries without being hit by excessive tariffs and other restrictions.

**Better off out:** Britain could negotiate an "amicable divorce", but retain strong trading links with EU nations, say those campaigning for Britain's exit.

There are several potential scenarios:

- **The Norwegian model:** Britain leaves the EU and joins the European Economic Area, giving it access to the single market, with the exception of some financial services, but freeing it from EU rules on agriculture, fisheries, justice and home affairs
- **The Swiss model:** Britain emulates Switzerland, which is not a member of the EU but negotiates trade treaties on a sector-by-sector basis
- **The Turkish model:** The UK could enter into a customs union with the EU, allowing access to the free market in manufactured goods but not financial services
- The UK could seek to negotiate a comprehensive **Free Trade Agreement** with the EU, similar to the Swiss model but with better access for financial services and more say over how rules and standards are implemented
- The UK could make a **clean break** with the EU, relying on its membership of the World Trade Organisation as a basis for trade

**Better off in:** An "amicable divorce" is a pipe dream, pro-EU campaigners argue. France, Germany and other leading EU nations would never allow Britain a "pick and mix" approach to the bloc's rules. Norway and Switzerland have to abide by many EU rules without any influence over how they are formed. Negotiating a comprehensive free trade agreement could take years and have an uncertain outcome. And if Britain went for a completely clean break with the EU its exports would be subject to tariffs and would still have to meet EU production standards, harming the competitiveness of British business.

- **Read more: What we know so far about UK's in-out referendum**

### What would be the impact on British jobs?



The run-up to the EU referendum is likely to be dominated by competing claims about how many millions of jobs will be lost or gained by Britain's exit. All such claims come with a health warning. Coming up with a precise figure is difficult as there is no way of knowing if threats by foreign companies to scale back their operations in the UK would come to pass or, indeed, how many jobs would be created by the reshaped economy that might emerge in the wake of an exit.

**Better off out:** There would be a jobs boom as firms are freed from EU regulations and red tape, say those arguing for an exit, with small- and medium-sized companies who don't trade with the EU benefiting the most. In **its recent paper, the EU Jobs Myth**, the free market Institute for Economic Affairs seeks to debunk the claim that 3-4 million jobs would be lost if Britain left. "Jobs are associated with trade, not membership of a political union, and there is little evidence to suggest that trade would substantially fall between British businesses and European consumers in the event the UK was outside the EU," it argues. "The UK labour market is incredibly dynamic, and would adapt quickly to changed relationships with the EU."

**Better off in:** Millions of jobs would be lost as global manufacturers moved to lower-cost EU countries. Britain's large, foreign-owned car industry would be particularly at risk. "The attractiveness of the UK as a place to invest and do automotive business is clearly underpinned by the UK's influential membership of the EU," said a KPMG report on the car industry last year. The financial services sector, which employs about 2.1 million people in the UK, also has concerns about a British exit. "The success of the UK financial services industry is to a large extent built on EU Internal Market legislation. To abandon this for some untried, unknown and unpredictable alternative would carry very significant risks," said **global law firm Clifford Chance** in a report by think tank **TheCityUK** last year.

### What about the impact on the economy as a whole?



Much would depend on the trade deals Britain managed to negotiate with the EU and rest of the world after its exit.

The best-case scenario, **according to think tank Open Europe**, is that the UK would be better off by 1.6% of GDP a year by 2030. That is assuming the UK carried out widespread deregulation after its exit and managed to strike favourable trade deals. The think tank adds: "A far more realistic range is between a 0.8% permanent loss to GDP in 2030 and a 0.6% permanent gain in GDP in 2030, in scenarios where Britain mixes policy approaches".

The Centre for Economic Performance, at the London School of Economics, **says the worst-case scenario** is a 6.3% to 9.5% reduction in GDP, "a loss of a similar size to that resulting from the global financial crisis of 2008/09". The best case, according to their analysis, is a loss of 2.2% of GDP.

### What about immigration?



**Better off out:** Britain would regain full control of its borders. UKIP wants to see a work permit system introduced, so that EU nationals would face the same visa restrictions as those from outside the EU, which it says would reduce population growth from current levels of 298,000 a year to about 50,000. This would create job opportunities for British workers and boost wages, as well as easing pressure on schools, hospitals and other public services.

**Better off in:** Britain might have to agree to allow free movement of EU migrants as the price of being allowed access to the free market. In any case, immigration from the rest of the EU has been good for Britain's economy. The UK's growth forecasts are based, in part, on continued high levels of net migration. The independent Office for Budget Responsibility says the economy relies on migrant labour and taxes paid by immigrants to keep funding public services.

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### Would Britain save money in membership fees?



The UK's net contribution to the EU, taking into account the rebate, was £11.3bn in 2013. That is more than four times what it was in 2008. It is about the same amount as the UK government spends on transport every year.

**Better off out:** The UK would save billions in membership fees, and end the "hidden tariff" paid by UK taxpayers when goods are exported to the EU, caused by red tape, waste, fraud and other factors.

**Better off in:** The UK's contribution to the EU budget is a drop in the ocean compared with the benefits to business of being in the single market.

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### What would be the effect on trade?



**Better off out:** The EU is not as important to British trade as it used to be, and continuing turmoil in the eurozone will make it even less so. Even if Britain did not manage to negotiate a free trade deal with the EU it would not be as disastrous as EU-enthusiasts claim, argues economist Roger Bootle in his book **The Trouble with Europe**: "It would place the UK in the same position as the US is currently in, along with India, China and Japan, all of which manage to export to the EU relatively easily." The UK would be free to establish bilateral trade agreements with fast-growing export markets such as China, Singapore, Brazil, Russia and India through the World Trade Organisation.

**Better off in:** The EU is the UK's main trading partner, worth more than £400bn a year, or 52% of the total trade in goods and services. Complete withdrawal from the EU would see trade barriers erected, with car exports to the EU, for example, facing a 15% tariff and imports a tariff of 10%. "The idea that the UK would be freer outside the EU is based on a series of misconceptions, that a medium-sized, open economy could hold sway in an increasingly fractured trading system dominated by the US, the EU and China; that the EU makes it harder for Britain to penetrate emerging markets; and that foreign capital would be more attracted to Britain's economy if it were no longer part of the single market," the pro-EU Centre for European Reform **said in a recent report.**

Would the UK's influence in the world change?



**Better off out:** The UK would remain a key part of Nato and the UN Security Council and a nuclear power, with a powerful global voice in its own right. The Eurosceptic Bruges Group wants an end to the "discredited" principle that Britain acts as a transatlantic bridge between the US and Europe, saying the country should make self-reliance its guiding principle.

**Better off in:** Stripped of influence in Brussels, Berlin and Paris, Britain would find itself increasingly ignored by Washington and sidelined on big transnational issues such as the environment, security and trade. America and other allies want Britain to remain in the EU. The UK risks becoming a maverick, isolated state if it leaves.

What would happen to Britons working in Europe, and EU citizens working in the UK?



**Better off out:** Britain would gain full control of its own borders, with migration in and out of the country regulated solely by British law. It would be more difficult for EU citizens to move to the UK, although those already living here are unlikely to be removed.

**Better off in:** A lot would depend on what kind of deal was reached with the other EU nations. Britons may have to apply for visas to enter EU countries and those already living there may face integration rules, such as proving they can speak the language before gaining long-term residency rights. There would also be uncertainty for many EU workers now paying taxes in the UK - what benefits, if any, would they be entitled to?

Would taxes change?

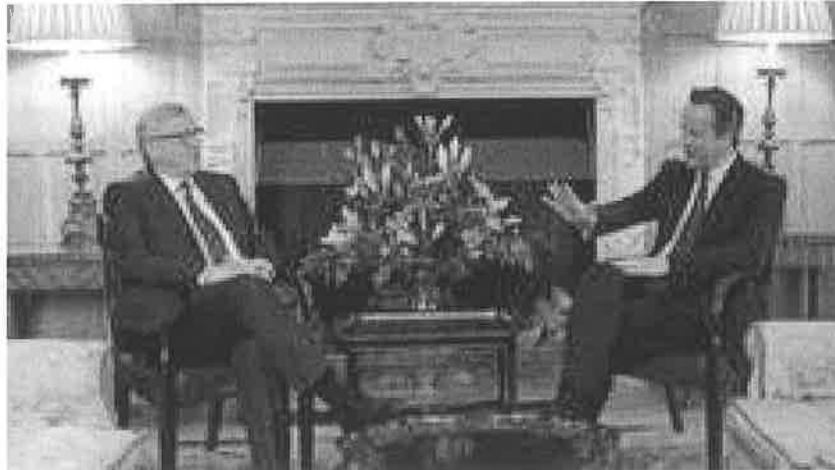


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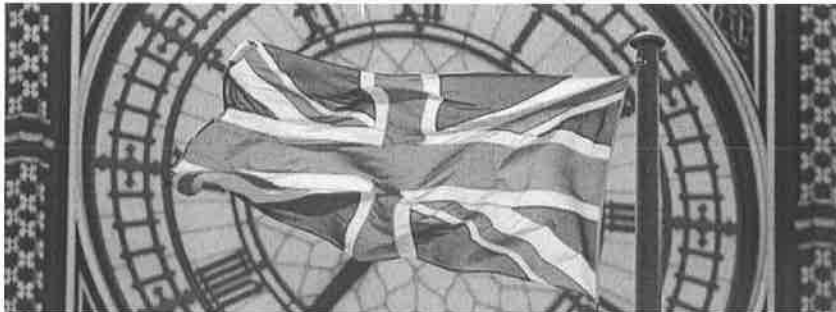
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**Better off out:** The EU has limited power over tax, which is largely a matter for national governments. The exception is VAT, which has bands agreed at the EU level. Outside the EU, the UK would potentially have more flexibility.

**Better off in:** "Tax avoidance and evasion will reach crippling levels as our economy becomes increasingly wholly owned by foreign multinationals that make tax avoidance in Britain central to their business strategy," argued the pro-European *The Observer* newspaper **in an editorial**.

Would Britain's legal system, democratic institutions and law-making process change?



**Better off out:** It would be a major shot in the arm for British democracy as the Westminster parliament regained its sovereignty and reconnected with voters. The country would be free from the European Arrest Warrant and other law and order measures.

**Better off in:** Britons benefit from EU employment laws and social protections, which would be stripped away. Withdrawal from the European Arrest Warrant could mean delays for the UK in extraditing suspects from other European countries; and the UK already has some opt-outs from EU labour law, including the Working Time Directive.

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# AP Comparative Government CLASS SET

## A Revised British Constitution: Tony Blair's Lasting Legacy? DONLEY T. STUDLAR

Since its re-election to a third consecutive term of office under Tony Blair's leadership in 2005, assessments of "New Labor's" long-term effects on the British constitution have become more numerous and more reflective, especially since Blair pledged to leave the prime ministership by the time of the next election, which he later moved up to 2007. The most distinctive campaign policies of the first New Labor government in 1997 were those on constitutional reform. From its earliest days in power, Labor promoted its constitutional reform agenda: (1) devolution to Scotland and Wales, (2) an elected mayor and council for London and potentially other urban areas, (3) removal of the voting rights of hereditary peers in the House of Lords, (4) incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights into British law, (5) a Freedom of Information Act, and (6) electoral reform at various levels of government, including a referendum on changing the electoral system for Members of Parliament. These reforms, plus a stable agreement for governing Northern Ireland, the constitutional implications of membership of the European Union, the question of modernization of the monarchy, and the Labor government's recent legislation for a separate Supreme Court, will be considered here. The article analyzes the nature of Labor's constitutional proposals, including their inspiration, implementation, and potential impact.

### Traditional British Constitutional Principles

The United Kingdom as a state in international law is made up of four constituent parts – England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland—all under the authority of the Queen in Parliament in London. The constitution is the structure of fundamental laws and customary practices that define the authority of state institutions and regulate their interrelationships, including those to citizens of the state. Although in principle very flexible, in practice the "unwritten" British constitution (no single document) is difficult to change. The socialization of political elites in a small country leads to a political culture in which custom and convention make participants reluctant to change practices that brought them to power.

Even though Britain is under the rule of law, all constitutional provisions are subject to change through parliamentary sovereignty. Instead of a written constitution with a complicated amending process, a simple voting majority of the House of Commons can change any law, even over the objections of the House of Lords if necessary. Individual rights are protected by ordinary law and custom, not by a constitutionally entrenched bill of rights.

Officially Britain remains a unitary state, with all constitutional authority belonging to the central government, rather than a federal state with a formal, even if vague, division of powers between the center and a lower level. Some commentators argue that Britain should be considered a "union-state," since the relationship of the four parts to the central government is not uniform. Although limited devolution has been utilized in the past, especially in Northern Ireland, 1921—1972, central government retains the constitutional authority to intervene in lower-level affairs, including local government. At a parliamentary general election, voters are asked once every four or five years to choose a team of politicians to manage the central authority based on having majority support in the House of Commons at Westminster. Under the single member plurality (SMP) electoral system, the outcome usually has been a single-party government (prime minister and cabinet). This is a fusion of power between the legislative and executive branches. Referendums have been rare and are only advisory; parliament retains final authority on all legislation. The judiciary seldom makes politically important decisions. If a court finds that the executive has exceeded its lawful authority, such a decision can be overridden by having a parliamentary majority pass an appropriate law, even retrospectively. Thus, in the United Kingdom almost any alteration of the interrelationship of political institutions can be considered constitutional in nature. Constitutional issues were one of the subjects of major party debate during the 1997 election campaign. Labor and the third party, the Liberal Democrats, had developed an agreed agenda for constitutional change. The Conservatives upheld tradition

British constitutional principles, including the unwritten constitution, no guarantees of civil liberties except through the laws of parliament, maintenance of the unitary state, and a House of Lords composed of hereditary peers and some life peers, the latter appointed by the prime minister.

Other features of the British constitution have also resisted change. British government has been one of the most among Western democracies, with unauthorized communication of information punishable by law.

Large cities did not elect their own mayors or even their own metropolitan governing councils. The House of Commons is one of the few remaining democratic legislatures elected by the single member district, simple plurality electoral system, which rewards a disproportionate share of parliamentary seats to larger parties having geographically concentrated voting strength. Thus the membership and organization of the House of Commons has remained largely two-party despite having a multiparty electorate since 1974.

Even though the elected Labor government proposed to institute reforms of several of these procedures, there was doubt about its commitment. Like the Conservatives, traditionally Labor had embraced the almost untrammelled formal power that the "elective dictatorship" of British parliamentary government provides for a party with a majority in the House of Commons. Although Labor sometimes voiced decentralist and reformist concerns when in opposition, in government it usually proved to be as centralist as the Conservatives.

## **Labor's Constitutional Promises**

The most radical aspect of Labor's 1997 election manifesto was constitutional reform. This program was designed to stimulate the normally passive, relatively deferential British public into becoming more active citizens with a wider range of choices. In addition to parliamentary elections, they would vote in more frequent referendums and for other levels of government with significant authority. In addition, they would have more individual civil rights.

Prior to becoming prime minister, Tony Blair had advocated a more participatory British citizenship. In his book *New Britain*, Blair criticized the traditional Westminster system as too centralized, secretive, and unrepresentative. Blair called Labor's constitutional program "democratic renewal." He argued that since World War I there had been an erosion of consent, self-government, and respect for rights under governments of all parties in Britain; a leftist party true to its own instincts should extend political rights as well as pursuing its recognized goals of economic and social equality.

## **Developing a Program for Constitutional Change**

Several events and trends focused Labor's thinking on constitutional reform. Labor had suffered four consecutive general election losses (1979, 1983, 1987, 1992) even though the Conservatives never achieved above 43 percent of the popular vote. Eighteen consecutive years out of government made Labor fearful of ever returning as a single-party government. The possibility of permanent opposition made the party more receptive to arguments for weakening central authority.

Groups interested in constitutional reform grew more numerous. The third party in Britain, the Liberal Democrats, long have advocated several of these reforms, including decentralization, increased protection for civil liberties, and changing the electoral system. The latter would allow them to have their voting support more proportionally represented in parliament. Since 1988, a nonpartisan lobby group, Charter 88, has proposed a number of reforms, including even a written constitution and a bill of rights. Other influential thinkers on the moderate left argued that a precondition for social and economic change in an increasingly middle-class Britain was to encourage citizen involvement by limiting central government authority. In Scotland, the broadly-based Scottish Constitutional Convention encouraged devolution of power. The Electoral Reform Society has been an active proponent for a more proportional voting system. Eventually Labor and the Liberal Democrats formed a pre-election commission on constitutional matters, which continued after the election in the form of a special cabinet committee on constitutional reform.

Skeptics have argued that public support for constitutional change is a mile wide and an inch deep. Surveys indicate that the public usually supports constitutional reform proposals in principle without understanding very much about the specifics. Intense minorities, such as Charter 88, fueled the discussion. Although constitutional issues featured prominently in elite discussions of party differences during the 1997 campaign, they did not emerge as a critical voting issue, except perhaps in Scotland.

New Labor had multiple incentives for the development of an agenda for constitutional change. It provided a clear sense of party distinctiveness from the Conservatives, especially important when there were only minimal differences on social and economic policy. It also helped to alleviate threats to Labor by Scottish and Welsh nationalist parties arguing for more autonomy and even independence for their regions. There was also longer-term prospect of a realignment of the party system through the cooptation of the Liberal

Democrats into a more permanent alliance of the center, thereby reducing both the Conservatives and die-hard socialists

of the Labor party left wing to permanent minority status. The large single-party majority that Labor surprisingly gained in the House of Commons in the 1997 election did not discourage it from pursuing most of its constitutional reform program.

## **Constitutional Change under Labor**

It is commonly stated in the British press that Labor's constitutional agenda, considered as a whole, represents the most fundamental changes in 400 years. There are now legislatures with devolved powers in Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. All but 92 hereditary peers have been removed from the House of Lords, with the pledge of the eventual elimination of those as well. Although a report from the Independent Commission on the Voting System advocated a change in the electoral system for the House of Commons, no government legislation was proposed. The European Convention on Human Rights has been incorporated into British law through the Human Rights Act and is effective. A Freedom of Information Act was passed and implemented. In 1998, Londoners voted favorably for a referendum proposal for the city to be governed by a directly-elected mayor and assembly; these elections were held in 2000 and 2004. Other cities have now adopted this measure through referendums. The judiciary has been separated to a degree from the other branches of government.

The Labor government immediately set out to implement more decentralized authority, subject to its acceptance through referendums in the affected regions. The Scottish Parliament has more authority, covering nearly all of domestic policy as well as limited taxation powers while the Welsh Assembly is responsible for implementing legislation after the primary bills have passed through the Westminster House of Commons but has no taxation powers. Elections in each region in 1999 and 2003 were held under a combination of the traditional single member district, simple plurality electoral system and party list proportional representation; these yielded no clear majority in either legislature. Instead, Labor Liberal Democrat coalition governments and minority governments have been formed. Both have functioned largely as anticipated, with another round of elections due in 2007. With an organized women's movement taking advantage of the opportunity to choose legislators in a new institution without incumbents, women's representation in both devolved chambers has been high, with the Welsh Assembly becoming the first in the world with a majority of women in 2003.

Perhaps surprisingly, no major disagreements on the constitutional allocation of powers have occurred. The Welsh Labor party has advocated greater authority for the Assembly, stopping short of taxation, and the Westminster Labor government has brought forward a bill for this purpose. Nevertheless, the "West Lothian" question has still not been seriously addressed. This refers to the fact that now MPs from Scotland can still vote on legislation affecting England, Wales, and Northern Ireland even though the devolved Scottish Parliament has authority over the same issue there. If the Welsh Assembly had similar powers as the Scottish Parliament, the problem would be that much more complex.

Eighty percent of the population of the United Kingdom, however, lives in England, which has been treated as a residual consideration in the plans for devolution. Labor has promised to form devolved governments in "regions with strong identities of their own," as expressed through voting in referendums. However, when the region showing the greatest amount of interest, the Northeast, was offered limited devolution in 2004, it was rejected overwhelmingly. Nevertheless, with encouragement from the regional aid policies of the European Union, the Northeast does have a considerable amount of administrative devolution, even if it lacks legislative devolution.

The Mayor of London is the first modern directly elected executive in the United Kingdom. The introduction of party primary elections for mayoral candidates led to less central party control over candidates and a more personalized contest. The first mayor, re-elected in 2004, was a dissident leftwing Labor MP and former London official, Ken Livingstone, who has proven to be relatively conciliatory in office.

Northern Ireland is a perennial problem, a hangover of the separation of Ireland from the United Kingdom in 1922. Six counties in the northern part of the island of Ireland, with the majority of the population consisting of Protestants favoring continued union with Great Britain, remained in the United Kingdom. Many Catholics north and south remain convinced that there should be one, united country of Ireland on the island. This fundamental division of opinion over which country should have sovereignty over the territory led to organized violence by proponents of both sides; some 3,600 people have died in sectarian violence since 1968. The provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) was the main organization using violence in the cause of a united Ireland.

The Good Friday Agreement of 1998, brokered by the U.S. administration of Bill Clinton, was a peace

accord that promised a different future through new institutions. In 1999, devolution of power from the Westminster parliament to the Belfast parliament ushered in a period of what the British call “power sharing,” or “consensus democracy.” This entailed not only joint authority over internal matters by both Protestants (Unionists) and Catholics (Nationalists) through the requirement of super-majorities in the Northern Ireland Assembly and executive, but also regular consultation between the United Kingdom and Ireland. Both countries pledged that Northern Ireland would remain part of the United Kingdom as long as a majority of the population in the province wishes. The latest census showed Protestants to be in the majority, 53 to 44 percent.

Referendums on the Good Friday Agreement passed overwhelmingly in both Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic; the latter also repealed its constitutional claim over the province. As expected, devolved government in Northern Ireland has been rocky. Groups representing formerly armed adversaries, including Sinn Fein, closely linked to the IRA, assumed ministerial positions in the power-sharing executive. Some dissident factions refused to renounce violence. The major issues have been the need for verification of the decommissioning of weapons and renunciation of violence by the IRA, incorporation of Catholics into the overwhelmingly Protestant police service, and divisions among Protestants about how far to cooperate with the new government. In October, 2002, accusations of IRA spying on the government led to the suspension of the Northern Ireland Assembly and government for the fourth time in three years. Direct rule from the central government in London replaced the power-sharing executive. Elections in November, 2003 resulted in the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), which had opposed the Good Friday Agreement as a “sell out” to Catholics, becoming the largest Protestant party while Sinn Fein became the largest Catholic party. This further complicated discussions.

Subsequently the IRA moved to decommission its weapons caches and to discourage criminal activities of its members. In September 2006, the Independent Monitoring Commission confirmed the dismantling of most of these internal IRA structures, leading Prime Minister Blair to declare that “the IRA campaign is over.” He considered this to be a clear commitment to move from violence to politics. Protestant paramilitary groups also have disarmed. Nevertheless, choosing a new, power-sharing executive was stalled by the deep cleavages and lack of trust. When these disagreements frustrated the hopes of the British and Irish governments for returning devolved authority to the province, in the St. Andrews Agreement they gave the parties in Northern Ireland a deadline to begin reconstituting the power-sharing executive. This would be done according to a plan whereby Sinn Fein would recognize the authority of the police (now composed of 20% Catholics), and in return the DUP would agree to a power-sharing arrangement led by it and Sinn Fein. The new government would not assume office until late March, 2007, to allow a test of Sinn Fein’s support for the Northern Ireland police as well as a new legislative election. Despite progress in making peace, “normal politics” has not emerged in this most abnormal part of the United Kingdom.

Britain signed the European Convention on Human Rights in 1951. Since 1966 it has allowed appeals to the European Court of Human Rights at Strasbourg, where it has lost more cases than any other country. Under New Labor, a law was passed incorporating the European Convention on Human Rights into domestic law. British judges rather than European judges now make the decisions about whether Britain is conforming to the Convention, which enhances the ability of British citizens to raise issues of human rights in domestic courts. Parliamentary sovereignty supposedly is maintained because Westminster retains final authority on whether judicial decisions will be followed, but in practice the British government has lodged appeals in such cases with the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. Under the Human Rights Act, suspected terrorists have appealed against government detention and extradition to countries where they could face persecution. More generally, there has been concern about courts upholding human rights over legitimate crime and security concerns of the public. In response, the government has rejected legislation but urged officials, including judges, to place a higher value on public safety concerns. However, this has raised questions about interference with judicial independence in deciding individual cases. Constitutional scholar Vernon Bogdanor has argued that the Human Rights Act is now “fundamental law,” which suggests it is beyond the ordinary reach of parliament.

The first-term Labor government later addressed other measures of constitutional reform—the electoral system for the House of Commons, freedom of information, and the House of Lords. The Freedom of Information Act eventually enacted creates an independent Information Commissioner’s Office and allows public access to more government information, but within considerable limits. Information goes to the ministry involved, with an Information Commissioner handling appeals. However, department ministers still can overrule decisions of the Information Commissioner. When the act was implemented in 2005, there were both rumors of departments destroying information beforehand and new revelations of what had

transpired in previous governments, usually upon inquiries from media organizations. Nevertheless, British governments can still withhold a large amount of information. Overall, the United Kingdom remains one of the most secretive democracies in the world, under the doctrine of executive prerogatives of ministers of the crown.

On the other hand, the British government wants to keep its citizens under close watch. An independent study issued in 2006, called *A Report on the Surveillance Society*, found the United Kingdom to be “the most surveilled country” among Western industrialized democracies.

Superficially House of Lords reform appears simple since the Parliament Act of 1949 allows a government majority in the House of Commons to override any objections from the Lords. However, the capacity of the Lords to delay legislation makes reform difficult to complete, especially when there is no agreement about new arrangements. New Labor pledged to abolish voting by hereditary peers, leaving only life peers appointed by the prime minister remaining. Life peers are often senior political figures who want a more limited political role after a long career in the House of Commons. Critics labeled this a plan to make the second chamber one consisting solely of “Tony’s Cronies,” an entirely patronage-based body under prime ministerial influence. In order to accomplish some early reform despite such criticism, Prime Minister Blair accepted a temporary arrangement in 1999 allowing 92 hereditary peers to remain in the House of Lords while eliminating 667 others. Labor also established an independent commission to advise the Prime Minister on Lords appointments.

There followed a plethora of proposals for the second stage of Lords reform from several official sources, including a Royal Commission, the government, a joint cross-party parliamentary committee of MPs and peers, and a cross-party group in the House of Commons. These ranged from a fully elected to a fully appointed second chamber, but getting agreement was difficult. Critics have complained that the government’s preference for a largely appointed chamber, plus possibly further limits on the power of the Lords to delay legislation, would lead to a weakened second chamber, less able to act as a check on the government. In contrast, a body with at least some elected members would provide greater democratic legitimacy. Both the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats back a partially-elected second chamber. Although still committed to eventual elimination of the remaining hereditary peers, the government has agreed not to demand party unity but to allow a free vote in parliament on the question of the new composition of the Lords.

The latest government plans, as previewed for a White Paper (intention to legislate), are for a mixture of 50 percent election and 50 percent appointment, with quotas for women and ethnic minorities, no single party majority (many peers already sit as “cross-benchers,” or independents), a reduction in the membership from 741 to 450, a limit of three terms of parliament for all members (no more than 15 years), phased in over several years, and possibly a different electoral system. Tony Blair has indicated that consensus among members of both houses on the legislation is necessary for it to proceed. A free vote is promised in the new session of parliament which commenced in November 2006, but agreement may continue to be elusive.

Although the Prime Minister indicated that he was not “personally convinced” that a change in the electoral system was needed, he appointed an Independent Commission on the Voting System to consider alternatives to the current electoral system for the House of Commons. In 1998, the Commission recommended what is called “Alternative Vote Plus.” The single-member district system would be retained, but instead of casting a vote for one person only, the electorate would rank candidates in order of preference, thus assuring a majority rather than a plurality vote for the winner. There would also be a second vote for a “preferred party.” These votes would be distributed regionally, with 15—20 percent of the total seats being awarded to parties based on their proportional share, a favorable development for smaller parties.

Even such a relatively mild reform, however, generated substantial political controversy, as expected when the basis by which legislators gain their seats is challenged. The proposed change was criticized not only by the opposition Conservatives, but also by Labor members because it might make it more difficult for Labor to obtain a single-party parliamentary majority. With Labor winning 55 percent of the seats in the election of 2005 with only 35 percent of the popular vote (and only 22% of the electorate), there were renewed calls for a new voting system. But nothing has been done. In 2003 the government decided to move toward greater separation of powers among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. Previously the Lord Chancellor was a member of all three parts—a minister in the cabinet, head of the judiciary (including authority to appoint judges), and also Speaker of the House of Lords. The highest appeals court has been the Appellate Committee of the House of Lords (Law Lords) consisting of the Lord Chancellor, twelve life peers specially appointed for this purpose, and other members of the Lords who



have held high judicial office. The Labor government rearranged the duties of the position of Lord Chancellor, retaining the title for court administration and ceremonial functions but creating a new position, Secretary of State for Constitutional Affairs, to deal with areas such as devolution, human rights, and data protection. Nevertheless, under Blair both of these positions have been held by the same person. The government also introduced legislation to remove the judiciary from the House of Lords and to designate the highest appellate court as the Supreme Court, with a reformed Judicial Appointments Commission to make recommendations for such positions. Despite controversy, parliament eventually enacted the Constitutional Reform Act, which established the new Supreme Court and is due to take effect by 2008. Some commentators have argued that an independent judiciary could move to establish its ultimate constitutional authority by upholding “the rule of law” even over parliamentary sovereignty, as Supreme Courts in the United States, the European Union, and Israel, among others, have done.

Some analysts argue that the most significant constitutional change in the United Kingdom has been brought about not by Labor but by three actions of Conservative governments— joining the European Community (now European Union) in 1972, approving the Single European Act (1986), and signing the Maastricht Treaty (1992). Lord Denning famously observed that the European Union is an incoming tide that cannot be held back. Within the expanded areas of EU competence, EU law supersedes British law, including judicial review by the European Court of Justice. Almost one half of total annual legislation in the United Kingdom now arises from the European Union, and members of the government, civil service, and even judiciary are in almost daily contact with their counterparts in the EU and in other countries on EU matters. In the negotiations over the proposed EU Constitution, Britain was largely successful in maintaining its “red lines” against further centralization of the EU. Although Tony Blair promised that the United Kingdom would hold a referendum on the Constitution, its defeat in referendums in the Netherlands and France in 2005 allowed him to cancel the British referendum, thus avoiding further rancorous debate on this issue.

Britain continues to be a leading member of the “awkward squad” of countries within the EU who want to maintain strong state sovereignty within the organization rather than surrendering more authority to a supranational organization. It remains one of only three long-standing EU members not to join the European Monetary Union and its currency, the euro. If Britain were to join the central bank and adopt the euro, then control over monetary policy would effectively pass into the hands of the European Union. The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Treasury Secretary) periodically announces whether economic conditions meet the five tests necessary for him to recommend that Britain should converge with Euroland. Tony Blair indicated that this step would only be taken with public support in a countrywide referendum.

Although not on the Labor party agenda of constitutional change, the role of the monarchy has also come under increased scrutiny in recent years. The Queen’s Golden Jubilee Year in 2002, celebrating the first 50 years of her reign, was not a happy one, with two deaths and scandals in the royal family. A resolution of the Scottish Parliament, supported by some MPs and Lords at Westminster, has petitioned the government to allow the monarch or her spouse to be a Roman Catholic, a practice forbidden by the Act of Settlement (1701) at the end of a period of religious wars. The heir to the throne, Prince Charles, has proposed removing the monarch’s connection to the Church of England in favor of the title of a more general “defender of faith” in what is now, despite appearances, a highly secularized country.

More vaguely, the government has suggested moving toward a “people’s monarchy”—a simpler, slimmer, and less ritualized institution, perhaps with a gender-neutral inheritance. This would be more congruent with the lower profile “bicycle monarchs” common in other European countries. For the first time since Queen Victoria, there is substantial, if muted, public expression anti-monarchist (republican) sentiments, largely in elite circles on the Labor left. However, tampering with this traditional institution, still widely revered by the public, requires extremely careful preparation as many are opposed to change.

## **Conflicting Views on the Effects of Constitutional Change**

Labor’s program of constitutional renewal already has brought about some changes in Britain. Instead of near-uniform use of the simple plurality electoral system, there are now five different systems in operation: Single Transferable Vote (a form of proportional representation with candidate choice) in Northern Ireland, party list proportional representation for European Parliament elections, alternative member systems (a combination of single member district and party list proportional) for the devolved legislatures in Scotland and Wales and the London Assembly, and a popularly elected executive through the Supplementary Vote (voting for two candidates in order of preference) for London. Plurality elections remain the norm only for the House of Commons at Westminster and English local government elections.

Until 1997 there had been only four referendums in the entire history of the United Kingdom. In its first year of office, Labor held four additional referendums (in Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and London). Other countrywide ones, however, on the EU constitution, the European single currency, and the Westminster electoral system, have been canceled or postponed. There also have been local referendums on elected mayors and potentially others on regional government. Despite these increased opportunities for participation, voting turnout at all elections has plunged, reaching a low of 59 percent in the Westminster parliamentary elections of 2001 and barely increasing in 2005; turnout for the second devolved elections also decreased.

Broadly, commentators have offered four interpretations of these developments. We might term these the (1) popular social liberalism, (2) lukewarm reform/symbolic politics, (3) radicalism, and (4) constitutional incoherence. These contending explanations exist at least partially because Labor itself has never outlined a comprehensive theory behind its constitutional reforms. Constitutional reform has consisted of a series of *ad hoc* measures rather than a general constitutional convention.

The well-known American analyst of Britain, Samuel H. Beer, has compared Blair's reforms to the popular social liberalism of the early twentieth century Liberal governments, which included restricting the power of the House of Lords and devolving power to Ireland. After the First World War, however, the Conservatives came to dominate Britain electorally as the Left divided between an insurgent Labor Party and the remaining Liberals. In the first term of office for New Labor, social and constitutional reform served as a substitute for a more traditional Labor program of increased government spending. This was important for establishing the long-term political dominance of a revitalized center-left by appealing to the "median voter."

Another constitutional scholar, Philip Norton, has argued that New Labor's proposals are radical in concept but moderate in form and effects, e.g., lukewarm reform. Similarly, Anthony Barnett of Charter 88 claims that the government practices *constitutus interruptus*. Another British academic, Patrick Dunleavy, has suggested that constitutional reform for New Labor represents financially cheap activity at a time when the government is wary of alienating its middle-class supporters by appearing to be another Labor "tax and spend" administration. This amounts to little substantive change, however, until the two critical questions, electoral reform for the House of Commons and Britain's long-term relationship to the EU, are addressed.

Although there has been some grudging acceptance from constitutional conservatives who originally opposed change, they are still fearful of the implications of some reforms. The former editor of *The Times*, William Rees-Mogg, envisions Labor's constitutional changes eroding democracy in the United Kingdom through a semi-permanent Labor-Liberal governing coalition in Westminster, Scotland, and Wales, a House of Lords based on patronage, and a more centralized, bureaucratic European superstate. More sanguinely, *The Economist* foresees a weakening of Westminster's authority through the combined forces of devolution and a more integrated European Union. More recently it has warned that Blair's reform program will be judged a "hypocritical failure" unless it produces a democratically-elected second chamber.

Finally, another prominent British political scientist, Anthony King, has argued that Britain no longer has a coherent set of constitutional principles. Because of the piecemeal constitutional changes over the past quarter century by both Conservative and Labor governments, traditional interpretations of the British constitution no longer adequately describe contemporary practice. But no alternative theory has emerged as a guide. Britain has moved away from its traditional status as a majoritarian democracy (all-powerful single-party governments based on holding a majority of seats in the House of Commons) without becoming a fully-fledged consensus democracy, featuring proportional representation and coalition governments.

## **Further Constitutional Change on the Horizon?**

The second and third Labor terms have consolidated and extended constitutional reforms despite their lack of emphasis in party election manifestos and discussion during election campaigns. In a White Paper in 2006, the Labor government endorsed further, if gradual, reform through elected mayors and more decision making power to local councils in England. If Gordon Brown succeeds Tony Blair as Prime Minister, a more active constitutional reform agenda may be pursued. In his 2006 Labor Party Conference speech, Brown spoke of revitalizing the devolution agenda to give individuals and communities, including regions and local councils, more control over their own lives, including local referenda, and even hinted that Britain might need a written Constitution to enshrine its values. He also indicated that he thought it right to allow parliament to vote on war decisions, heretofore an executive prerogative, but one that became controversial in the wake of how Blair took Britain into the Iraq war on bad information. Whether such promises to shift

power from the central executive would hold up when faced with the exigencies of government is an interesting question.

The Conservatives have opposed measures such as an appointed House of Lords, the Human Rights Act, further devolution to Wales, and the new Supreme Court, plus, of course, greater European Union authority over member states. They have proposed strengthening the House of Commons against the executive and an elected House of Lords. More recently, party leader David Cameron has proposed a British Bill of Rights as a better-balanced substitute for direct enforcement of general European standards through the Human Rights Act. He has established a committee under the chairmanship of former cabinet minister Kenneth Clarke to develop plans for a Conservative policy on the future of democracy. Some form of "English votes for English questions" in parliament (the West Lothian question) will be the focus of that policy. The Liberal Democrats have the most radical positions on constitutional reform, advocating a written constitution, a bill of rights, and a more proportional voting system. An English Constitutional Convention has been formed to press for self-governing powers for that part of the United Kingdom. Others fear, however, that establishment of such a body would lead to the breakup of the country because of the unevenness of population distribution for four devolved legislatures.

Despite Labor's constitutional reforms, commentators refer to what is often called the "Blair paradox." While the Labor government led by Blair has engaged in various constitutional innovations for decentralization and individual rights, it has not disturbed the core of the strongly executive-centered Westminster system. In fact, by dominating the cabinet, the extensive use of politically-appointed advisers throughout the executive, attempting, not always successfully, to keep the House of Commons under strong party direction, rarely attending parliamentary debates, and desire to have a completely appointed House of Lords, Blair's style has been claimed, debatably, to be more "presidential" than that of previous prime ministers. Ross McKibbin condemns the Blair government for having eviscerated any constitutional reform, including changing the electoral system, which would restrain single-party executive authority.

Nevertheless, institutional rearrangements often have unanticipated consequences. Although New Labor legislation on constitutional matters claims not to disturb the principle of parliamentary sovereignty, this constitutional convention has already been compromised. Congruent with the process of decentralization in other European countries, devolution is likely to be entrenched *de facto* if not *de jure*. Some observers have begun calling Britain a "quasi-federal" political system. Although specific powers are granted to each devolved government, disputes over which level has authority over certain policies will eventually arise, especially if the governments are led by different parties. Even without a comprehensive Bill of Rights, incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights may mean a stronger, more politically active judiciary, a form of creeping judicial review. House of Lords reform has become so controversial because it is a struggle over how much the second chamber should be allowed to check the House of Commons and the sitting government. Incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights, as well as a limited form of joint authority with Ireland over Northern Ireland and possible membership of the European common currency and central bank, suggest that Britain may be moving into new patterns of international shared authority in areas heretofore considered exclusively within the domain of the sovereign state.

Regional policies of the European Union even may be helping regions circumvent British central authority and sustaining ethnonationalist demands. If the Scottish National Party, still committed to independence for Scotland, ever wins a majority in the Scottish Parliament, the United Kingdom could be faced with a "Quebec scenario," whereby control of a subordinate level of government enhances secessionist claims. The SNP wants Scotland to join the EU as an independent state.

The "third way" ideas of Anthony Giddens, influential in the New Labor government, propose a restructuring of government to promote "subsidiarity" (the taking of decisions at the lowest level possible) and correcting the "democratic deficit" through constitutional reform, greater transparency, and more local democracy. In such a process, Britain would become a more complex polity institutionally. This would demand cultivating habits of conciliation, cooperation, and consent rather than the usual reliance upon single party government, parliamentary laws, and executive orders. Already this has occurred through the formation of coalition governments in Scotland and Wales as well as in Northern Ireland. Having additional levels of elected government also has created difficulties for central party organizations attempting to exert control over their parties in these jurisdictions.

The electoral system, however, may be the linchpin of the British parliamentary system as it currently exists. Even the relatively modest changes proposed by the Commission on the Voting System could realign the party system. Because of fears this arouses within the Labor party, electoral reform at Westminster is unlikely to occur in the near future.

Whatever one's view of the desirability and impact of the changes, New Labor under Tony Blair has largely pursued and fulfilled its 1997 pledges on constitutional reform. Although delays and retreats have occurred on some issues, the implications of these changes will continue to be felt in British politics for some time to come. Especially if further changes occur under his successor, then Tony Blair may go down in history similarly to the popular social Liberals of the early twentieth century, as a constitutional innovator with a long-lasting legacy.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Due \_\_\_\_\_

### **AP Comparative Government Simulation of Prime Minister's Question Time**

Directions You will be divided into groups to represent the major parties in the UK Conservative / Liberal Democrat coalition and the Labour party. Each "party" will select the Prime Minister or leader of their shadow government and will prepare to debate the the issues below.

Preparation Assignment (20 homework points) At the top of your essay, write your name, assigned issue, and party you are assigned to. Write a one page (3 paragraph) argument from the perspective of the party you are assigned to, and defend that argument during the mock question hour (use suggested links if they are provided below as one source).

**Hard copies only, no google docs.** Include an MLA formatted reference list. If you are Labor, you will defend the prime minister's proposal. If you are Conservative or Liberal Democrat, you will oppose.

Simulation Students will play the roles of members of Parliament during an official question time, face each other and debate these issues according to their party platform. The Prime Minister will announce his support of the issues and take "questions" or comments from the opposition. Mr.Brady will act as Speaker of the House and will monitor the debate. **Your argument will be limited to 1-2 minutes.**

**Web Sites to use:**

<http://www.bized.co.uk/current/argument/index.htm>

<http://www.labour.org.uk/home>

<http://www.conservatives.com/>

<http://www.libdems.org.uk/>

**Labor Party Prime Minister's Proposals to be made at Question Time Simulation:**

1. The UK will maintain the number of troops in Iraq, and Afghanistan in proportion to the US to support our "special relationship" with the United States.
2. The UK will hold a National Referendum on joining the European Monetary Union.  
<https://www.bized.co.uk/current/argument/arg11.htm> AND  
<https://www.bized.co.uk/current/argument/arg2.htm>
3. Devolve more power to the Scottish National Assembly and establish a parliament in Wales with taxation authority.
4. Initiate a referendum to move to absolute proportional representation in the House of Commons by the year 2016.
5. We should address climate change head on by directing greater government resources to tackle this problem.

<http://www.bized.co.uk/current/argument/arg29.htm>

6. I propose the Chancellor of the Exchequer be given increased authority to combat inflation. <https://www.bized.co.uk/current/argument/arg28.htm>
7. By 2016, we will be increasing our spending on wind power. <https://www.bized.co.uk/current/argument/arg27.htm>
8. The Labor party will initiate programs to get the common Brit out of debt. <https://www.bized.co.uk/current/argument/arg25.htm>
9. A low rate of duties on microbreweries will be proposed in the House of Commons. <https://www.bized.co.uk/current/argument/arg24.htm>
10. The UK will negotiate with ISIS to release US and European hostages.
11. The UK will increase funding for the National Health Service.
12. The UK will increase funding for universities, decreasing fees for families. <https://www.bized.co.uk/current/argument/arg14.htm>
13. The UK will halt the process of privatizing the rail industry. <https://www.bized.co.uk/current/argument/arg3.htm>
14. Taxes will be increased by 2016 to solve the deficit problem. <https://www.bized.co.uk/current/argument/arg4.htm>
15. We will stand up to Kim Jong-Il by releasing “The Interview” in our theaters immediately.
16. We will begin the sever relations with Russia due to Russia’s annexation of Crimea.
17. We will encourage the United States to halt the normalization of relations with Cuba.
18. Optional -Want to argue a topic not included? Let me know!