



THE POLITEIA



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“I have come to the conclusion that politics is too important to be left to the politicians”
Charles de Gaulle

*Cover photos: Westminster Parliament, pxfuel.com [public domain]
The White House, pixabay.com [public domain]*

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The Month Ahead

As fervent believers in Harold Wilson's sentiment "a week is a long time in politics", we bring back our 'The Month Ahead' feature, giving you a brief round-up of some of the events which may affect you in the upcoming month.

The US Presidential Election

Tuesday, 3rd November marks the formal date of the election for the next president (and, thus vice president) of the United States of America. Whilst many votes have already been cast by mail-in voting procedures, this is the date that Americans may vote in person at the ballot box.

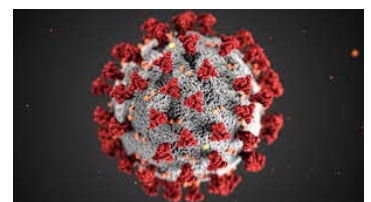
This election will be an interesting one as much has been made over potential voter fraud brought about by increased mail-in voting due to the Coronavirus pandemic: indeed, Trump has called for voters to attempt to vote twice in order to 'test the system'. Furthermore, there is speculation as to whether a peaceful transfer of powers will occur in the event of a Biden-Harris victory as President Trump has intimated he will contest such a result.

The election result will also have great world-wide effects. Donald Trump is known for his 'America first' and impulsive attitude to foreign policy whilst Joe Biden seems to be more diplomatic in nature and may thus resolve Sino-US relations. Furthermore, the politicians' attitudes to Britain are seen to be rather different: Trump has a close relationship with Boris Johnson and hopes to maintain this "special relationship" between the UK and US; contrastingly, Biden - according to 'The Times' sees Britain as a diminished power after Brexit and would thus prioritise deals with France and Germany.



Covid Restrictions

On the 31st October 2020, Boris Johnson announced that England would be going into a second "lockdown" from Thursday 5th November. This involves the closure of all "non-essential" shops and guidance is that all should stay at home unless performing essential travel (such as shopping for groceries or attending an education setting).



Whilst this "lockdown" is set to end on the 2nd December, some are sceptical with even Cabinet Minister, Michael Gove, stating it may be extended if the "R-rate" does not fall below one.

Unions are also calling for schools to be closed or extra measures to be brought in - Will the government "u-turn" on this as well?

Whilst the furlough scheme has been extended, it is yet uncertain as to how long this will be for.

Jeremy Corbyn and Anti-Semitism in the Labour party



Jeremy Corbyn was suspended from the Labour Party after a damning report by the Equality and Human Rights Commission on anti-Semitism in the Labour Party. It came after the former leader made a statement, claiming the issue was partially “exaggerated” by political opponents.

Some fear this act may cause a “civil war” within the party between the so-called “hard-left” ‘Corbynites’ and the “soft-left”. However, supporters of Jeremy Corbyn - such as the Unite leader, Len McCluskey - have called for calm, possibly reducing such a threat.

How united will the party be as this issue develops? Will Jeremy Corbyn return to the party? And how will Sir Keir Starmer finally resolved the anti-Semitism issue?

Margaret Ferrier



The SNP MP was caught attending parliament and travelling on public transport despite being Covid-positive. She has since been suspended from the SNP and been called on to resign - calls she continues to fight. Will she resign? Will she be deselected, triggering a by-election? Or will this story soon fall in prominence as with the Dominic Cummings controversy?

Boris Johnson’s position as Prime Minister

As the UK suffers a second wave and more restrictions are imposed, Johnson has - again - become increasingly unpopular. His unpopularity seems particularly well-observed in his own Conservative Party as Graham Brady’s 1922 Committee have described the Prime Minister’s actions as holding Parliament in contempt. Simultaneously, 27 “red-wall” Tory MPs have formed ‘The Northern Research Group’ and have collaborated to criticise the perceived ineffective nature of restrictions in the North. This has caused some to anticipate a leadership struggle in the near future - around Christmas, some argue - as even Tory-supporting media outlets like ‘The Spectator’ and ‘The Telegraph’ turn against Johnson. Favourites to be the next Conservative Party leader include Chancellor Rishi Sunak and Cabinet Office Minister Michael Gove.



The Prime Minister’s popularity has also diminished since his decision not to back Marcus Rashford’s call for free school meals to be extended over the October half-term. It is speculated the Prime Minister may “U-turn” over this decision before Christmas.



What is Public Sentiment About Politicians?

by
Usman Arif

Protests in wake of Windrush Scandal [David Mirzoeff and Global Justice Now, darkened]

The UK is becoming less and less tolerant of politicians. The MP's expenses scandal of 2009, the 2018 Windrush scandal, and the 'cash-for-questions affair' are three of some of the largest examples of outrageous behaviour from the politicians of the UK. The official list of improprieties is much larger, and given the clandestine nature of these affairs, it is only fair to assume that there may be many more skeletons in the closet. Public sentiment about politicians has been on a downward trajectory for decades, only accelerated by the tidal wave of populism that has swept over Europe, pitting 'the ordinary people' against 'the elite', politicians being in this subset.

In empirical terms, that has led to 49% of Britons surveyed being unsatisfied with progress on tackling crime and progress of improving healthcare quality and accessibility, 72% believe the government does not understand emerging technologies enough to regulate, and 45% feel their views

are not represented in British politics¹. The Edelman Trust Barometer of 2020 claims that most respondents to a survey 'blame politicians creating an environment of fear for their own political gain'¹. Thus, we can suggest that the UK is unsatisfied with politicians in general.

Is the work of these politicians sufficient? Or, are our views of their competence distorted by a public with high standards, or a history of sordid scandals?

First, we must find out what makes a good politician. Politicians, like almost every other job, can have their performance measured by targets. Politicians have set their own targets, in the form of a manifesto, which they create. Generally, they will not meet all of the targets that are set in the manifesto because it is, by nature, ambitious. It is essentially a marketing tool to gain vote share. A conflict of interest exists between gaining votes and being transparent about what's possible. However, this raises the typical problem of

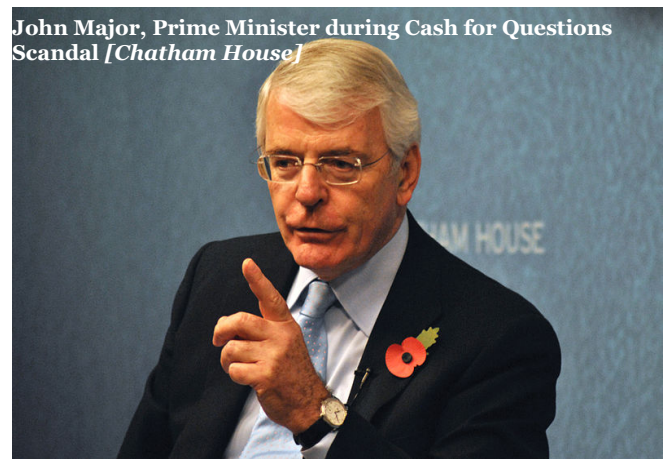
aggregating all politicians into a single party; they either succeed as a party or fail as a party, making it difficult to pinpoint the individuals who are to blame or praise.

To assess singular politicians would consist of either looking at their approval ratings in public think tanks or looking at their voting record.

Approval ratings can be delivered by public data sites, such as YouGov. This can give us a clear image of what the public think of such a politician. However, the respondent may be answering in terms of their satisfaction with the party, and not the individual politician.

The voting record highlights the politician's competence in voting for bills that have succeeded, or by voting against bills that failed. This shows that the politician has strong enough analytical skills to evaluate whether a decision is good for the country, and subsequently is a perfectly capable politician with a thorough knowledge of the political system. But the politician could be voting according to the party line, and therefore his or her voting record only gives us an image of the party's adequacy.

The public does not expect too much of politicians. Rather, it expects too much of the party. The individual politician does indeed rise and fall with the party, which is where the shortcomings of the view of the UK public are. Looking beyond party lines, we can see many MPs who partake in charity work, such as sponsoring an event for charity, or creating their own foundation to help others. They redress our grievances in Parliament and propose bills that would benefit the nation, and as such, exist for our benefit.



Lord Peter Mandelson - politician caught up in Expenses Scandal [Remy Steinegger, World Economic Forum]



Knife Crime [Lars Ploughmann, The Fabian Society]

¹<https://www.edelman.co.uk/research/2020-trust-barometer-uk-results>

Internet Technology: The Propagator or Enemy of Democracy

by
Alexander Chopra

The concepts of internet technology and democracy, upon first glance, seem worlds apart. Democracy is something ancient, founded by the Greeks, and something – we like to argue – that the Brits have perfected as we impose our ideas of democracy across the world on foreign powers such as China and its handling of Hong Kong’s “one country, two systems” minefield. On the other hand, internet technology is something modern, only decades old, and – though heavily developed in the UK – something we associate with America. We treat it, in our day-to-day lives, with a blasé and lackadaisical attitude using all forms of different devices without putting very much thought into it at all. Yet, in reality, these worlds are closely aligned and overlapped as our democratic decisions become increasingly influenced, if not dictated, by the internet technology we use. So, perhaps, it is time we started to be more vigilant about its impact on our most treasured British value: democracy.

A key part of a good democracy is high levels of political participation in the

community. Here, internet technology seems to have excelled its competitors of television and newspapers as political parties pump cash into their vast social media machines. It allows for greater influence and education on key issues as the internet establishes communities and pressure groups for change: it offers minority and oppressed groups a platform and thus allows, previously neglected, voices and ideas to disseminate throughout society. We saw this through the prolific rise of the ‘Black Lives Matter’ group online after the horrific killing of George Floyd as the black community utilised internet technology to spread ideas of equality and the need to tackle systematic racism. However, whilst it enables historically oppressed groups to express their opinions more widely, it would be wrong to imply so-called ‘E-democracy’ has resolved the hierarchical disparities between the wealthy and the less so: ultimately, it remains that grass-roots groups’ ideas see much less exposure as less can be spent on efficient, widespread advertisements compared to the capabilities of the well-oiled machines of the prominent parties.

Yet, it would be an over-simplification to suggest the democratic victors are those who “shout the loudest” in the online environment; instead, it would – perhaps - be more apt to describe them as those who “whisper” the most frequently and effectively. In recent years, online political advertisements have grown increasingly numerous and targeted on social media websites such as ‘Snapchat’ and ‘Facebook’ as increased analysis allows political parties to establish which course of action would prove most effective on each individual. These advertisements maintain a certain subliminal nature – often keeping their real creators and party affiliations to the ‘small print’, as opposed to the unambiguous announcements made in television party broadcasts - to convey a sense of factual objectiveness. It is this subliminal nature, compounded by the personal and targeted nature of internet campaigns that makes internet technology considerably more threatening to democracy than other mediums of campaigning. Whilst targeted adverts may, on the surface, seem purely ingenious and like a harmless personal service, in reality, it is much more ominous as one’s basic rights of privacy are severely pushed to the limits.

This was seen in the case of the infamous Cambridge Analytica communication group and their prominent role in recent elections such as the EU referendum of 2016 and Donald Trump’s election to the White House. The group collaborated with the social-media giant, Facebook, to collate 87 million users’ personal data (the vast majority of whom gave no such consent). This information was then used to manipulate the electorate to vote in specific ways by tapping into their key areas of interest and subliminally subjecting the population to adverts which they would be most susceptible. Much of this action was entirely against the spirit of true democracy, as was recently revealed in a Channel 4 exposé which revealed the Trump campaign actively deterred so-called “deterrence” voters who they felt would not convert to supporting the then-Republican-nominee. Such acts of “voter suppression”, as many have referred to it as, would surely never be accepted if physical, yet in the unregulated world of the

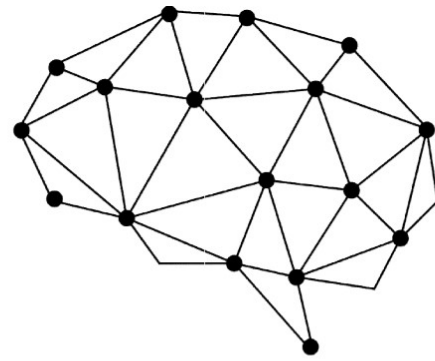
internet, this is common-place. Internet technology’s global nature makes it almost impossible to regulate, unlike newspapers and television broadcasters who are responsible to their respective watchdogs of Ofcom and the Independent Press Standards Organisation, and – thus – great exploitation of people’s privacy and data can occur freely and with little obstruction.

Furthermore internet technology allows for great confusion and liminality between fact and fiction. “Fake news” - a conceptual term President Trump rather ironically claims to have invented - has become an increasing danger on the internet as social media becomes dominated by a vast array of different outlandish and false claims. These such claims are rarely moderated: indeed, Facebook (the leading social media giant) has refused to fact-check posts such as the often skewed or sensationalised ones made by the American President as it fears to do such may be an infringement of free speech. However, this leaves many social media users vulnerable to coming to unreasonable judgements and making poor electoral choices as fake news becomes increasingly believable and noticeable due to its stark nature. For example, staunch Republican campaigns have often used platforms such as Facebook to slander Democratic candidates as being part of a paedophile ring when no such evidence exists. In some such cases, this has caused people to take violent political action, showing the great effect such false news has on political participation. This, perhaps, delegitimises the increased political participation internet technology can bring about as much may be based on completely false information which people have become indoctrinated in due to the unmoderated echo chambers of social media.

Internet technology also hinders the functioning of democracy in the inter-election periods. For democracy to truly function, in its most effective form, a degree of consensus and toleration is needed. Democratic society will naturally always be divided on the minutiae and specifics of government policy; however, general toleration and agreement on

over-arching principles between all parties is needed for any policy at all to be enacted and enacted with a degree of legitimacy. Indeed, we saw the great difficulties in society when these concepts fell apart during and after the 2016 EU referendum. The vast disagreements over what 'Brexit' meant (other than, of course, meaning Brexit) and whether it should occur at all caused a great logjam in Parliament and deep divisions in society until things began to calm after the 2019 General Election, arguably, marked a resignation in the 'Remain' side of the debate. Internet technology widens and deepens these divides as it forces the removal of the so-called "centre-ground" as it over-simplifies and sensationalises complex issues into a mere binary choice of extremities. We saw this in the social-media-driven 'Black Lives Matter' protests when people were compelled to join one of two "camps" regarding the legacy of Winston Churchill: he was either to be regarded as an evil racist who deserves no place in history or saintly figure to whom we owe our existence. In reality, Winston Churchill was a nuanced figure who we must acknowledge deeply contrasts our modern values yet we must also not neglect his great ability to rally the nation in the fight against fascist tyranny. People and political concepts are problematic in the real world, possessing both positive sides as well as negative characteristics; a realisation of these nuances – as opposed to the binary over-simplifications social media forces with its short and snappy style and character-limits – would lead to a greater consensus within society and thus lead to more frequent enactment of truly majoritarian and legitimate democracy.

Internet technology is ultimately here to stay and only ever going to get more powerful and widespread, so it would be unfeasible to remove its influence over democratic issues. Instead, we will be forced to embrace it and, in many respects, this will be of great benefit as the widespread availability of information and ease of expression educates our electorate more and more. However, we must embrace it with wariness, realising the ominous threat of exploitation if we allow it to proliferate unchecked.



Cambridge Analytica





Freedom is Overrated: An Insight into the Hong Kong National Security Law *by* Neel Patel

Chinese and Hong Kong Flags Flying [Alan Mak]

China's stringent policy and draconian laws have dominated media headlines in recent times for solely one reason: their role in transforming Hong Kong from a sanctuary of free speech and political expression to a city plagued by restrictions, curtailing liberty, protest and threatening the rights of citizens.

Unsurprisingly, Western media has not been light in its condemnation of Beijing authorities who have imposed these laws, likening them to a modern analogue of ancient tyrannies like that of Draco. By now, you're probably expecting me to repeat or to further the criticisms that have become so common and honestly pretty repetitive in the news. But I want to delve deeper into the thought-process behind the decision – and the consequences of the law.

Firstly, let's look at what the law actually entails. According to expert analysis, Beijing's intentions have been to combat four key areas of duplicity: subversion, terrorism, secession and collusion. Secession means to break away from the country; subversion includes anything that causes substantial "interference, obstruction or damage" to the exercise of power by the state. Terrorism can be defined as using violence or intimidation against people and collusion refers to working with foreign or external forces to induce "hatred" of the government.

The most patent complication of the new law is the repression of freedom. Beijing has awarded itself expansive powers which transcend the law's four stated targets. Hong Kong will have to establish its own national security commission to ensure the law is enforced, with a Beijing-appointed advisor. This does not come under the jurisdiction of local authorities,

and therefore provides Beijing with power over the region of Hong Kong. The law also results in an invasion of privacy of both residents and non-residents as people who are suspected of breaking the law can be wire-tapped and put under strict surveillance, regardless of whether they are permanent inhabitants of Hong Kong.

Before it was enacted, only a small minority of officials had seen all of the stipulations of the new security law. Hong Kong's Chief Executive, Carrie Lam, was excluded from seeing the full text of the law. However, she expressed to the UN Human Rights Council that it would benefit the city and fill a "gaping hole" without undermining the region's autonomy or independent judiciary. Indeed, Lam commented that the law was "the most important development in relations" between Hong Kong and mainland China since the handover in 1997. Many still have major concerns about the loss of Hong Kong's native freedoms. Will this mean that candidates expressing disdain towards the law and/or the authorities who propagated it will be disqualified from running in political elections and standing for office? Other concerns include the increasing parallels between the Hong Kong judicial system and that of mainland China, perhaps foreshadowing the future of the region.

As I am sure you will have guessed, many other prominent individuals, institutions and organisations disagree with the implementation of a "backwards" law. More widely, though, the Basic Law – a unique agreement under which Hong Kong was handed back to China in 1997 from Britain – and a "one country, two systems" concept (which describes the governance of Hong Kong as a Special Administrative Region of China), under which the city flourished, has now been abandoned in place of the much harsher freedom laws. Millions of residents have taken to the streets to protest in recent times against the handling of Hong Kong by Chinese authorities in very tumultuous events. Protesters against the national security law were bombarded by tear gas, pepper spray and water cannons with 370 being arrested, including a 15-year-old

girl who was waving a flag that advocated Hong Kong independence.

Whilst these national problems are of a large significance, the international impact is arguably more profound. The law has an extraterritorial reach: it applies to everyone worldwide, for instance, if your business is critical of Hong Kong or China, sanctions could be imposed on your company in Hong Kong or China. This is a huge challenge for firms, who might be able to sensitise employees in Hong Kong and China to avoid making critical statements, due to the popularity of social media which makes doing this on a global scale less straightforward. A particularly powerful example of this is the case of Daryl Morey, the Houston Rockets executive who publicly displayed his support for the popular protests in Hong Kong in mid-2019. Following Morey's tweets, Chinese video streaming services, sponsors and leagues cut ties with the Houston Rockets. In places, the law conflicts with the regulations of other countries: if a company complies with US sanctions against a large number of Chinese corporations, does this constitute subversion or collusion with foreign forces? At the moment, most foreign business people in Hong Kong are waiting to see how the law is enforced and few have actually left. Nonetheless, with US-China relations at the lowest trough since the 1970s, will political antagonism triumph? What will this mean for China's national economy and rapid development? What will it mean for the global economy?

Having discussed the vast array of national and international problems that have arisen as a result of the new security law, let us now consider why the controversial law was passed in the first place. What is the logic behind the decision? To answer this question, we must refer back to the Basic Law and "one country, two systems" principle. They are responsible for protecting certain liberties associated with Hong Kong freedom of political expression and independent judiciary, which no other part of mainland China enjoys. In accordance with the same handover agreement, Hong Kong had to enact its own national security law as set out in Article 23 of the Basic Law. However, this

never happened due to the sheer unpopularity of such a law, perhaps explaining the lack of openness by authorities when drawing up the terms of the security law. The protests over an extradition law last year became violent and transformed into a broader anti-China and pro-democracy revolution, a scene which China does not want to see happen again.

Now that we have discussed Chinese motivations behind adding the law, let's focus on the means through which they are able to do this. After all, the city of Hong Kong is supposed to have certain freedoms guaranteed under the handover agreement, right? Well, the Basic Law says Chinese laws can't be applied in Hong Kong unless they are listed in a section called Annex III, which already contains some uncontroversial laws regarding foreign policy. These laws can be introduced by decree, which therefore means that they bypass the city's parliament. Therefore, in theory, authorities are acting within their legal right to introduce the law, but the practical, ethical and moral rights to enforce the law are debatable.

Obviously, in the eyes of Western media, the national security law is an attack on freedom and political expression. As we've discussed, many issues with the new security law have been detected, ranging from domestic problems regarding freedom to the impact on businesses outside of China. Notwithstanding the fact that the government is within their legal rights to foist such legislation over the residents of Hong Kong, is this truly an example of freedom being repressed? More interestingly, what will the international clauses in the law mean for international relations, especially considering that US-China relations are at their lowest ebb since the 1970s. Currently, we only know the short-term consequences that form the basis of most chastisements and protests, but a lot of things remain to become lucid and we can only speculate about the long-term impacts of the law. That being said, I will leave you with one final question: does the Hong Kong national security law foreshadow changing rights of political expression for citizens around the world, or is this simply a hurdle in the conquest of autonomy versus tyranny?



Umbrella Movement Protests [Studio Incendo]



Rioting in Hong Kong [Studio Incendo]



Hong Kong Legislative Council [17jiangz1]

Do We Need a Codified Constitution?

by

Ronnie Guha

The rulebook that has run the UK for the past eight hundred years is complicated, slightly non-existent, and constantly changing. Let me explain.

It is safe to say countries have rules, and in most places, these rules are written down together. In other words, these are codified constitutions where laws of the land can be found in one single document. An example you may have heard of is the US constitution. The second amendment gives them the right to bear arms, which has been a law since 1787. But why has this not been changed in the modern era? It is due to their codified constitution. In essence, this means some laws are fundamental (such as the second amendment) and are extremely difficult to change. But it is not just the USA, many democratic countries have a codified set of rules that cannot be changed easily. In fact, there are only five nations with uncoded constitutions, and you might be surprised to hear that the UK is one of them.



David Cameron and Nick Clegg [Office for Nick Clegg]

Alongside New Zealand, Israel, Canada and Saudi Arabia, the UK's constitution is not fully written down in one place. And this is what I mean by slightly non-existent. Acts of Parliament are often written down, but some parts of our constitution are not. Conventions are unwritten rules which have become common practice over time, although they are not properly defined. For example, the Clegg-Cameron coalition of 2010-15 introduced the practice of seeking parliament's

consent before deploying troops abroad: this convention can easily be broken as it does not feature in any documentation. Some parts of our constitution are even based on historical books and documents such as the Magna Carta. And many laws come in the form of common law, which is law decided by judges based on past court cases. So, the UK's constitution is all over the place which presents multiple problems. What if people break conventions? What if the historical writings are outdated? How do we know what the law is and what is not? Could Parliament remove our human rights?



Facsimile of the Magna Carta [David Hillas]

In theory, the answer to that last question is yes – provided Parliament voted in favour of the idea as it has complete sovereignty to pass whichever statute laws it chooses regardless of its effect on the constitution. The Human Rights Act (1998) is not a fundamental law, unlike the amendments of the USA. Our human rights have extremely limited protection, and it is a problem. But it is not just human rights, there is no higher law in the UK that has any form of special protection. And in recent times, this has become a problem. After Coronavirus plagued the UK, Parliament gave Boris Johnson immense power under the Coronavirus Act of 2020. Never has a British prime minister been able to impose a lockdown on the entire nation until 6 months ago: even the President of the United States does not have this power. Even though this power has been given to Boris Johnson to ensure the safety of British people is maintained, many people have been critical

of the extended power the Prime Minister currently has and say that more Parliamentary scrutiny is needed.

Lady Brenda Hale, the former President of the UK Supreme Court, is one of these people. She is perhaps best known as the one to declare that the decision to suspend Parliament was unlawful as she announced in court, “Parliament has not been prorogued”. Hale has argued that Parliament “surrendered” its role to Boris Johnson and his cabinet over emergency laws. She has also been a leading voice in calls to modernise the legal system. Modernisation was one of the four reforms introduced by New Labour when they won the general election in 1997. It is an attempt to bring the UK's constitution in line with other Western democracies by codifying it, but it is one of the reforms that has seen little progress, as the Constitution is still uncodified. Lady Hale is one of many people who has lobbied for codification as it may help provide stronger checks and balances between Parliament and the executive branch.



Baroness Hale [University of Salford Press Office]

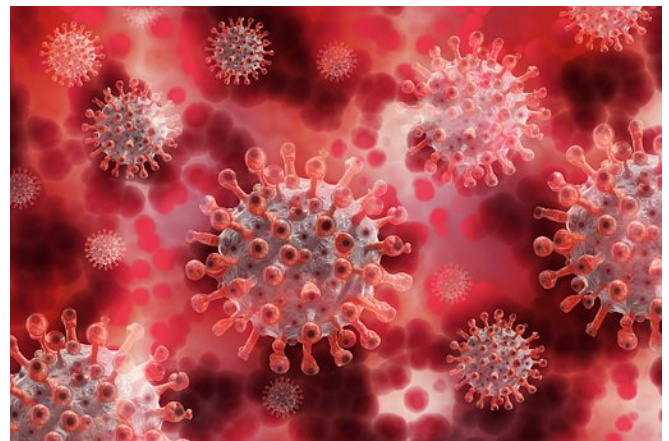
However, it would be unfair to say that there are no advantages to an uncodified constitution - the main advantage being it is far more flexible than those which are codified and contain fundamental law. Going back to the second amendment of the USA, the right to bear arms has been an unsettling problem. Compared to 22 other high-income nations, the US's gun-related homicide rate is 25 times higher, despite the fact its population is half those other 22 nations combined. And there is no doubt that one of the reasons for this is due to the ease of purchasing and carrying a weapon. Unfortunately, this is not an easy law to change. It would require two-thirds of the Senate to agree, and at least three-quarters of State signatures to go ahead. If only there was less protection on old-fashioned laws which need to be changed.

I am not saying that the USA needs to switch to an uncodified constitution, but the UK does not have the same problems. Laws which need renewing can be overwritten or adapted to fit the changing times. In this way, the UK's constitution is organic due to its ability to grow over time. Examples of new legislation which show the flexible constitution include the Slavery Abolition Act 1833 and, in more recent times, the inquiries into Disability-Related Harassment which amended the Criminal Justice Act 2003 and the Marriage Act of 2013, which legalised same-sex marriages. Although the UK may not have been the first nation to fix these problems in society, it has been much easier to amend them than in other nations with codified constitutions.

Whether we need to change our complicated, slightly non-existent, and constantly changing constitution is up for debate as there are benefits and drawbacks that must be considered. Should we codify it? It is still unclear whether it will be codified but perhaps Coronavirus will be the factor that instigates a change.



European Court of Human Rights [pxfuel]





Scottish Parliament
[Colin, Wikipedia]

Devolution:

Yay or Nay?

by

Ishan Paul Chowdhury

As a nation, aspects of leadership, power, inequalities and the extent of democracy are all being questioned and challenged actively, and as social advancements are happening at a rate higher than ever before, the answers and amendments to these issues couldn't come at a better time.

For those unaware about the term 'devolution', the Oxford English Dictionary puts into plain words that it is 'the transfer or delegation of power to a lower level, especially by central government to local or regional administration.' However, as growth inequalities present themselves to the attention of leaders, the act in itself is debated on a much wider scale. Many would argue that undergoing devolution and transferring certain powers from the England-based central government to the 3 other countries of the UK (Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) is beneficial in resolving the growth-inequalities, providing greater attention to those in need within the other countries and the resources that they have. However, others

would disagree, arguing that it isn't the best idea in the long run. Let's have a look at the different arguments.

An argument for the act of devolution to occur is that it is more democratic and representative, meaning the government is brought to the people. It can be insufficient to just have a voice in Westminster, where local issues are not a high priority and so - with devolution - issues such as, the NHS in the other nations can be dealt with in a much more specific approach, allowing and acknowledging the different sectors of the NHS within the UK to give the same medical attention to those regardless of their area. Following Scottish devolution in 1999, health and social care policy and funding became an issue for the Scottish Parliament. Although this gave Scotland the right to run its own health service, statistically it hasn't been as effective as NHS England, begging the question whether funding is an issue- an aspect to inequality which could be rectified if further financial devolution was to occur, where

Westminster were to distribute funds better. This is not to take away the good that devolution has already done, but to point out that further devolution would prove even better. Also, this has been demonstrated to be beneficial, as economies in devolved areas have really begun to succeed: for example, in Manchester, employment was set to rise by 22,000 in 2018. This is following, increased funding given to Manchester by the central government, thus, showing that devolution is undeniably in the greater interest of UK parliament and its people.

In Addition, devolution could prevent the breakup of the UK. When the Scottish Independence Referendum of 2014 happened, Gordon Brown promised that if Scotland voted to remain in the UK, the next Prime Minister would grant them Devo Max, otherwise known as full fiscal autonomy. Devo Max or Full Fiscal Autonomy is a particular form of far reaching devolution proposed for Scotland. The Scottish Parliament would receive all taxation levied in Scotland; it would be responsible for most spending in Scotland but make payments to the UK government to cover Scotland's share of the cost of providing certain UK-wide services. This would cause greater desire for the union to remain intact as its benefits would be favourable.

However, one could argue that devolution could fuel desire for independence, as directly seen with the Scottish Independence Referendum of 2014. This would mean that the UK would undergo break up which would lead to a weakening of the national government, and its position in world politics.

Also, an argument that proves to be against devolution is the idea that it, in-fact, creates more inequality, meaning it fails to deliver its sole aim! Uneven devolved decision-making leads to incredibly harsh financial conditions for individuals, causing postcode lotteries to emerge. A prominent example of this is university tuition fees. A

student in England looks at debts in excess of £27,000 for fees, while Scotland has never introduced them. This would lead to further constitutional instabilities, as the conflict ensues between national and regional governments over what is best for specific areas and the country as a whole. Those against devolution would argue that the issues in the long run, following it, will emerge in such horrific ways that dealing with it will be greater than actually undergoing devolution in the first place.

There are clear arguments for and against this hugely topical issue and incidents will occur even after this article is published regarding separation of powers within the UK, but ask yourself one question: Devolution, Yay or Nay?



Welsh Assembly [Anne Siegel]



Alex Salmond [Chris Watt]

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