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**“I believe that the foundation of democratic liberty is a willingness to believe that other people may perhaps be wiser than oneself”**

**- Clement Attlee**



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**Chief Editors**                      **Alexander Chopra and Neel Patel**

**Contributing Writers**        **Neel Patel, Alexander Chopra,  
Jasper Heikkila and Kinshuk Jain**

**Front-Cover Design**        **Jack Godwin**

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**Politics, by nature, is never something truly predictable. Nevertheless, here at *The Politeia* we have compiled a collection of articles about events that dominate current affairs and will prove pertinent to upcoming developments to help guide you through the upcoming weeks and months.**

### Relaxation of Covid-19 Restrictions



Boris Johnson before Covid Press Briefing [Simon Dawson, No. 10 Downing Street Office]

The Government has announced its intentions to continue with the restriction-easing “roadmap” without further delay, suggesting that any legal requirements on social behaviour (such as mask-wearing) will be removed.

This has caused divisions both inside and outside Government. Whilst ministers have sought to maintain clear support for the policy decision, it has been noted that different tones have been struck by its different members. Boris Johnson, for example, has—in his usual triumphant style—announced it as a “freedom day” - a sentiment seeming endorsed by the new Health Secretary, Sajid Javid. Contrastingly, the Vaccines’ Minister, Nadhim Zahawi, has continued to stress the need for ‘common sense’ and suggested that continuing to follow guidelines such as wearing a mask would be the ‘common sense’ option.

Outside Parliament, such a shift has caused both jubilation and concern. The effectiveness of the vaccinations appears to have reduced the harm of Covid-19 to individuals, though many more cautious scientists have warned that the link between infection and death is not (as Boris Johnson stated in Parliament) “severed” but merely weakened and the threat of ‘long Covid’ still remains highly prevalent, especially among the young and unvaccinated.

Socially, the easing of restrictions will—undoubtedly—allow greater mixing from a legal point of view, yet many argue the lifting of restrictions will actually have a counter-intuitive effect of preventing some socialising as the more vulnerable may fear the greater risks to which they become exposed to.

### Public Examination Results



Education Secretary Gavin Williamson [No 10]

Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> August marks the day when A-level students are due to receive their results whilst GCSE students will receive theirs on Thursday the 12<sup>th</sup>. The Government and parents alike will be hoping that their choice to commit to a ‘Centre-Controlled Testing’ system will have proved more efficient and amenable compared to last year’s chaos. However, there are suspicions that this system will result in somewhat inflated grades, causing great strain for tertiary education providers who will be inundated with applicants of typically ‘successful’ nature. If this year’s testing system causes substantial difficulties, pre-existing pressure on Gavin Williamson to resign from his job may further increase and force such a move.

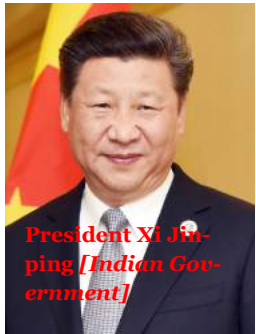


## Sir Keir Starmer and the Labour Party— “Labour is back”?



Sir Keir Starmer’s position as leader of the Labour Party has been somewhat fragile throughout his incumbency but particularly after the mixed 2021 local election results. The Batley and Spenningsdale by-election of the 1<sup>st</sup> July was described by many as Starmer’s final test, stating his position would be completely untenable had the Labour seat been lost. Fortunately for Sir Keir, Kim Leadbeater retained the seat for the party despite increased challenges such as George Galloway’s candidacy and competition for left-wing votes, earning Starmer some more time as he announced “Labour is back”. Nevertheless, pressure remains on him to fully devise a vote-winning manifesto and strategy with the party split on whether he should shift the party’s stance to the political ‘left’ or ‘right’ (Page 8). As Covid-19, perhaps, begins to take a less prominent position in the news, Sir Keir Starmer may take the opportunity to outline his party’s visions for the future.

## Centenary of the Communist Party of China



Whilst official celebrations have already begun, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of July, China’s ruling political party will celebrate its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, marking a significant moment in Chinese history as the country continues to grow and prove increasingly influential on international affairs. The nature of these relationships will not only be determined China’s own stance, but also that of the United States of America as the new President Joe Biden is yet to fully solidify his view of China and whether he continues his predecessor’s more hostile approach.

## Anglo-American Withdrawal from Afghanistan



American troops withdrawing from Afghanistan [John Moore]

Both British and American military personnel will continue with their withdrawal from Afghanistan. The Defence Secretary, Ben Wallace, has confirmed that by August, most UK troops will have left the country alongside US troops. The impact of such a withdrawal is, as of yet, not entirely known but there are significant fears that the political situation in the region will worsen again as the Taliban continues to make gains and reports suggest girls are already being denied

education in certain areas.

## Angela Merkel’s Departure



Angela Merkel in 2008 [Aleph]

After holding the role of German Chancellor for over fifteen years, Angela Merkel is due to step down from her role as one of Europe’s most prominent leaders after having announced in 2018 that she would not seek re-election in the upcoming September elections. Instead, the new leader of her Christian Democratic Union Party, Armin Laschet, will seek to succeed her in the role. Merkel has become something of a symbol of stability in uncertain times, having managed numerous European crises from, more recently, Brexit and the Coronavirus

pandemic to the Global Financial Crisis of 2008, whilst other leaders have come and gone. It remains to be seen whether anyone else will be able to emanate her staying power and how far her departure may disrupt or influence German and wider European political stability.

# Johnson: Changing the Tories or Voter-perception?

## A Review of the Party's Political Policy Stance

Alexander Chopra

All political parties, rightfully or wrongfully, fall victim to certain negative generalisations and accusations. For the Labour Party, for example, it is the perception that they are too economically naïve and spend taxpayer money too readily and, thus, mismanage the Economy. Conversely, the Conservatives have often earned themselves the title of the 'nasty party', too brutal and uncompromising in its pursuit of "balancing the books", leaving social welfare ignored and diminished.

In order to gain or maintain power, a party must collectively disprove the generalisations, usually by distancing itself from past events that have led to such perceptions. Boris Johnson has attempted, and arguably succeeded, at doing so by emphasising his own credentials as an immense patriot and a more liberal progressive keen for social mobility and justice. But how much are these the true characteristics of the modern Conservative Party, or is it—more cynically—incredibly good "spin"?

Outlined below are opposing views on certain areas of Conservative policy.

### Patriotism?



A key part of the Johnson Government has been the idea of impassioned love and pride in the United Kingdom. Indeed, ostensibly, such patriotism seems integral to all that occurs from the smaller, more symbolic details such as the exponential increase in flag usage to more substantial matters like the continued use of the Brexiteer of "taking back control". The Johnson Government has even commissioned the building of a £200 million yacht to replace the Royal Yacht Britannia (which was retired in 1997) to aid international trade discussions and promote "the best of British". All these individual acts would seem to

suggest an overwhelming patriotic love for the country and the prioritisation and keenness to demonstrating the best aspects of so-called 'Global Britain' to the international community.

Yet many argue, at best, these actions are superficial and can, thus, be branded 'vanity projects' with no real effect or, at worst, the Conservative Government policy has actively weakened and destroyed the UK's integrity and reputation. It has been suggested projects such as the commissioning of a new yacht will have no impact on trade levels or international perception of the UK even though such an act might have done so decades ago, as the modern world sees trade deals struck in a variety of different ways, including through virtual means online and so the ability or need to flatter counterparts with luxurious yachts and entertainment to gain favourability has been forever diminishing. The Government's deliberate failure to adhere to or maintain previous agreements in the so-called "national interest" has also been strongly criticised across the political spectrum as ruining the UK's reputation of integrity. These acts include the Government's admission that they intended to break the law "in a specific and limited way" in relation to EU dealings and the recent decision not to adhere to its obligation to its obligation to give 0.7% of its GDP in international aid but reduce its expenditure to 0.5%. The latter, though put forward as a short-term plan to allow domestic spending, has been highly discredited as having very little economic impact on the UK but a much more damaging one on the wider-world, cementing the party's perception—in some people's view—as the 'nasty party' on a whole new level, willing to see the poorest in the world suffer. Such accusations have even come from staunch

## Social Mobility?

“Levelling up” has been a key slogan in the Johnson Government, suggesting strong intentions to reduce regional inequalities and improve social welfare for the more disadvantaged. Indeed, it is argued, that alongside the Johnsonian stance on Brexit, it is this slogan that has helped the Conservatives dismantle the metaphorical “Red Wall” of safe Labour seats.

In many respects, this presentation of policy is not an entirely new one: it was not long ago we had George Osborne and his ambitions for a ‘Northern Powerhouse’, famously mocked by Dennis Skinner as a creation of a ‘Northern Poorhouse’. Even Margaret Thatcher had used the very same term of “levelling up” in her 1979 Election campaign.

However, there is a shift in the usage of such ideas in that there has been an avoidance of Capitalist-style language. Johnson has not, like Thatcher, discussed the concept in the terms of laissez-faire economics and allowing entrepreneurial freedom to spark a “trickle-down” effect. Is this because Boris Johnson genuinely differs ideologically from his predecessors or is it a clever presentational tactic which realises neo-liberal economics no longer provide the same sense of exciting opportunity and hope that they perhaps did in 1979?

The truth to that matter is, as of yet, hard to judge given that the Coronavirus pandemic has prevented a large-scale discussion of what this slogan actually means in practice. Nevertheless, it is clear the Government is not afraid of directly using taxpayer money. Indeed, in the March Budget, Rishi Sunak announced a £4.8 billion ‘Levelling Up Fund’ and a £1 billion Towns’ Fund.

The size and effectiveness of such funds are, of course, subjective, but it is often worth considering in such matters that whilst Government spending may appear to be vast, involving sums of money that the vast majority of people will never come close to earning, these funds must be spread across the whole country and its 68 million people. Therefore, the £4.8 billion becomes considerably less impactful to the individual.

The few plans that the Government has actually announced have also been criticised as not truly understanding the core issues and, instead, entirely

seeking good publicity. For example, it has been announced that 22,000 Treasury civil servants are to be relocated to Darlington by 2030. Critics of the policy have suggested that the issue at heart is not where administrators and decision-makers sit, but rather the actual decisions being made. Of course, few suggest the two matters are mutually exclusive, but it does seem peculiar to draw such a substantial causal link between the two factors.

## Socially Liberal?

The debate around freedom versus restrictions has always been a contentious one (**page 17**) and one that has truly come to the foreground recently. Boris Johnson, on this issue, has often portrayed himself as a liberal on social matters, happy to allow private citizens to go about their affairs how ever they see fit. This is a reputation he has had for a considerable time, dating back to before his time as Mayor of London and can be observed, perhaps, in his own personal lifestyle but also the nature of some of his policies. For example, his extreme, and potentially life-threatening, reluctance to enact “lockdowns”.

However, there is doubt as to whether his liberal nature is true and relevant to all his policies. Whilst argued as being a response to other issues, the Government’s recent Police Bill and proposals surrounding reform to the voting process have been argued as being excessively restrictive on freedoms. The former, allows for political protest to be categorised as illegal extremely readily with mere requirements of characteristics such as it being too noisy. Whilst portrayed as a protective measure against riots, this policy could seem to be desiring to quash political differences and disagreement. Similarly, whilst portrayed as a decision to eliminate the very minor voter fraud that may occur, the policy proposal to require all voters to supply identification at the ballot box has been criticised as potentially deliberately deterring working-class voters who will likely be of a more left-wing persuasion. Many of the less affluent, will not have inherent access to passports or driving licenses and, thus, may be put off from voting as they would now need to engage in a lengthy bureaucratic process to obtain special identification certificates.



# Can we 'Gamify' Politics?

Neel Patel

Game theory is essentially the study of how 'players' can apply strategy to achieve an outcome which is to their benefit – a 'payoff'. A classic game is 'Chicken'. Two people are driving two very fast cars towards one another from opposite ends of a straight road. If one of them moves out of the way, he is called a 'chicken'. If neither player swerves, the two cars will collide (the worst possible payoff). The best possible payoff is to be able to call your opponent a 'chicken'. The next to worst possible payoff is to be the 'chicken' as this entails forfeiting one's honour. The final possibility is that both drivers swerve. Although this is preferable to being the 'chicken', since neither player is less honourable than their opponent, it is not quite as good as being the victor. Game theory can be used to model the best decision for each player – even though the loss of swerving is so trivial compared to the potential collision, if one believes one's opponent to swerve, the optimal strategy is not to swerve at all. Of course, this seems very far-fetched, but this scenario – and other examples of 'game theory' – can very easily be applied to real life.

Take, for instance, the Cold War between the USA and the USSR. Assuming that each country had two options, either to arm or to disarm, the decision-making process can be modelled using game theory. In an ideal world, both countries would benefit most by disarming because they could re-purpose their finances into something more constructive. However, rationally, it made the most sense for each country to continue arming – if their opponent disarmed, they would become more powerful and if their opponent also continued to arm, they would at least maintain a level of equality. This adds another dimension to political decision making: rationality. When politicians make important decisions, it is assumed that they are rational. In other words, decision-makers are incentivised to maximise their own payoff.



Cuban Missile Crisis [Andreas Metz]



Game theory has its ardent supporters and opponents. There are some concerns that limit its application to real-life political scenarios. One of the most scathing of these criticisms focuses on whether labelling life-changing political situations as ‘games’ undermines their importance. In a poll conducted by Ipsos MORI, only fourteen per cent of Britons said that they trusted politicians to tell the truth. By playing ‘games’ in pursuit of a political advantage, perhaps at the expense of the public interest, it is of little surprise that politicians are viewed suspiciously by voters. That being said, if it is this game-playing aspect of politics that has sewed a public distrust of politicians, perhaps it is useful to explore how politics could be done differently. To delve deeper into this, game theory can be applied to a real-life case-study: the Greek debt crisis.

The negotiations on the extension of the bailout package for Greece in 2015 can be modelled as a real-life game of ‘Chicken’ between the Greek government and the Eurozone. The Eurozone asked Greece to adopt a programme of austerity to recover their loans. The Greek government preferred not to implement these reforms as it believed that austerity would inhibit economic growth. If neither ‘player’ were to concede, the game would result in a ‘collision’: an involuntary ‘Grexit’, leaving both parties worse off. Greece argued that its departure from the Euro was an ‘incredible threat’ because Europe had no incentive to risk financial contagion. Very interestingly, Yanis Varoufakis, the Greek finance minister at the time of these negotiations, spent a huge part of his academic career studying game theory. He could not, however, overcome Greece’s ‘weak hand’ after the Eurozone opted for an effective strategy: they promised to collaborate with Greece to avoid ‘Grexit’ but also insisted on the implementation of their reforms. Even though Varoufakis essentially threatened to rip Europe in two if it did not cut a deal with Greece, the Eurozone leaders called his bluff: Greek plummeted into recession, with businesses being shut down and individuals suffering from huge levels of debt. It turned out that the threat of ‘Grexit’ was far more damaging for Greece than the rest of Europe.

There is, of course, a lesson to be learned here. In early 2016, Varoufakis admitted his failure by confessing that he ‘would do a lot of things differently’ if put in the same situation again. At this point in time though, modelling the interactions between Greece and the Eurozone seems helpful in understanding why certain decisions were taken. It seemed clear, if not imminent, that Greece would have to implement austerity policies against its will. However, in June 2015, the Greek government announced a referendum, without notifying the Eurogroup, to gauge whether voters approved of the programme. The government hoped that a strong rejection of the proposal would strengthen their hand against Europe. In spite of the ‘no’ vote winning in every region and Varoufakis subsequently resigning (despite campaigning for this result), the Greek prime minister signed the very measures that the public voted against seven days later. Regardless of whether this was in the best interest of the country at this point in time, throwing away the result of the referendum was completely undemocratic. Politicians are elected to represent the people. Their role is to communicate the will of the people, and in this case, the will of the Greek people was to reject the austerity measures. Mario Monti, the former Italian Prime Minister, asserted that the politicians who ignored the Greek referendum result “violated democracy” even if the final outcome was better, both for Greece and the EU, than an exit of Greece from the Euro.



From this case-study, it is evident that politicians sometimes take risks that do not deliver the anticipated outcome. Returning back to the initial question on whether gamifying political decision-making undermines its importance, Varoufakis' opinion on this subject is rather ironic, yet fascinating. In an article published by the New York Times, he wrote that it would be 'pure folly to think of the current negotiations between Greece and our partners as a bargaining game to be won or lost via bluffs and tactical subterfuge'. At the same time though, throughout the negotiations with Europe, he continually asserted that 'Grexit' would spark the end of the Euro itself, an 'incredible threat' to which the Eurozone had to compromise. Herein lies a contradiction: the Greek finance minister agreed that applying game theory would not enable him to best represent the Greek public, but for Greek politicians to achieve their optimal payoff, they implemented certain strategies in the negotiations.

To answer the question, it must first be considered whether politics is in fact, in any way, a 'game'. Obviously, the word 'game' has connotations of triviality and childishness that would certainly undermine the importance of political decision making. In the words of Tony Wright, a former MP and a Visiting Professor of Government and Public Policy at UCL, the 'corrosive consequence of the game of politics' is that 'everything that a politician says, or does, is treated with suspicion because of the negative assumptions about why it is being said or done'. This is a fantastic take on why game theory cannot bolster political decision-making as long as politicians are viewed unfavourably by the public. Politicians are playing 'games' on the behalf of voters, many of whom will be affected differently by certain strategies. In the case of Greece, the strategy adopted by its government certainly had an effect on global markets and therefore on ordinary people across the world.

As mentioned earlier, rationality is pivotal when it comes to applying game theory and, in very important decisions, the most rational course of action is often unclear. For Varoufakis, did acting rationally mean securing Greece the best possible deal, even at the expense of its creditors? Or did it mean ensuring that the global economy did not fluctuate beyond a stable level? Or did it mean appeasing the Greece public to keep the government popular domestically? Game theory is not as effective when it comes to making these decisions, especially because the comparison of real-life situations to games is in itself questionable. One of the most important tools available to politicians is the ability to communicate, both with allies and adversaries: whilst the two car drivers in the classic game of 'Chicken' could not discuss the potential outcomes with one another, the Greek government and the Eurozone leaders obviously could - another fatal flaw of game theory modelling.

Like it or not, game theory is here to stay. It is no secret that politicians devise strategies, even on a very basic level, to give themselves an upper-hand: in electoral campaigns, telling voters what they want to hear is a simple way of garnering more votes or in the legislature, compromising on minor issues is useful in gaining support on a more significant issue in the future. As politicians continue employing game theory in this way, it seems probable, if not certain, that the cynicism towards decision-makers will not fade away any time soon. Minimising the game-playing and taking decisions in a more mature way would be better for politicians, as well as for us.



Tony Wright MP [Office of Tony Wright]





# Renew Labour— Not Re-‘New Labour’

Alexander Chopra

**T**he year of 2021 has provided a decidedly mixed series of results for the Labour Party. Whilst some seek to claim the local elections earlier this year were an unmitigated disaster for the party, symptomatic of an existential threat, this is a distorted mistruth. Labour has, indeed, made some gains such as in the extending of Andy Burnham’s majority as Manchester Mayor and winning the inaugural mayoral election in West Yorkshire. More recently, Labour has also succeeded in the Batley and Spen by-election despite the hyper-plurality dividing the left-wing vote between new candidate choices such as that of George Galloway under his Workers Party.

It must be conceded that the ‘New Labour’ years under Blair and Brown did, indeed, mark such a political shift. That is not to say the party ever became “right-wing” but rather that it underplayed its Socialist elements with the modification of Clause 4 (effectively the party’s mission statement) and a failure to end the so-called ‘Post-Thatcher consensus’ by not reversing several market reforms and privatisations. However, it must be questioned as to whether a shift to the political right was the winning Blairite tactic and, if so, would it still work today?

Nevertheless, results have been less-promising for Labour in other areas with the loss of Hartlepool - a once ‘safe’ Labour seat previously held by the Labour grandee and New Labour architect, Peter Mandelson. Whilst one can offset these losses with successes elsewhere, mixed results will never win the party a General Election. Consequently, many see the party as being at a ‘crossroads with the option to continue straight ahead or veer towards the political ‘left’ or ‘right’. Indeed, many hark back to the days of victorious ‘landslides’ under Tony Blair in the late 1990s and early 2000s and find those successes to be proof that Labour can only win by shifting to the ‘right’ and it must, therefore, do so again.





First and foremost, New Labour had clearly defined its policies. Tony Blair and Gordon Brown had established profound slogans that summed up their policies memorably and unambiguously. They had, as more cynical individuals may describe, “soundbites”. Indeed, whilst Blair’s reputation may be less positive today (Page 14), he is still remembered and paraphrased for his key commitments to be “tough on crime, tough on the cause of crime” and the four aims of constitutional reform (Democratisation, Decentralisation, Modernisation and Protection of rights). Contrastingly, few can properly define Sir Keir Starmer’s visions for a Britain under the Labour Party. In fairness, a large reason for this is the Coronavirus pandemic and how it has disallowed almost all politicians from defining their political policies as media attention focuses so narrowly on the single issue. Nevertheless, Starmer does have multiple opportunities to set out his visions in, for example, printed media and, indeed, in parliament and, as media attention begins to diversify away from the coronavirus, this will become increasingly more possible. Perhaps it is now time that he expands on what his plan to make Britain “the best place to grow up and grow old in” actually means in practice.

Whilst Jeremy Corbyn did lose two general elections, the party does not necessarily need to shift significantly away from the basic aspects of his policies, nor do they need to be noticeably less ambitious. In fact, a 2019 YouGov poll suggested a majority of voters did feel, to some extent, attracted to Corbynite economic policies but were rather dissuaded by factors such as Brexit policy and perceptions of leadership style. Therefore, whilst Coronavirus has meant society is rather different two years on, now is not the time to reject the radical ambition and drive of the Corbyn era.

It was the radical nature of the New Labour proposals, in part, which helped the party become victorious. They were not “radical”, perhaps, in the modern-day view of the word as something bordering on the extremes of politics and something to be inherently fearful of, but then neither – when truly explored – were the policies of the Corbynite Labour Party. Instead, they were ‘radical’ in its more literal sense that they wished to examine ‘the roots’ of fundamental issues within society and alter its foundations to resolve these problems. Today, we take the ideas and institutions of devolution, the Supreme Court and the Human

Rights Act for granted and assume they are somehow natural products of a civil, liberal democracy such as ours. However, pre-1997, none of these existed to any real degree: the idea of beginning to codify rights was deemed unnecessary as one could merely rely on the British system following the adequate unwritten conventions and many within the so-called ‘Westminster bubble’ saw no issue in it continuing to dominate regional affairs. Tony Blair’s Labour Party changes those fundamental constitutional aspects into a resemblance of what they are today. That was, therefore, highly radical at the time. Whilst the major concerns of the Blairite era may not be wholly similar to those today, it demonstrates the power of well-considered and logical radicalism in approach.

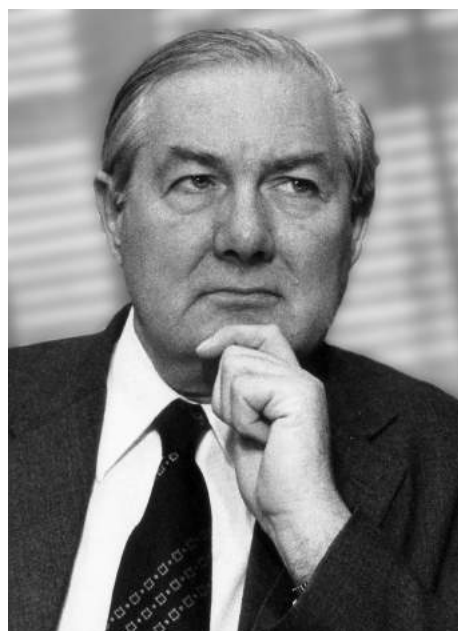
Another key success of, at least the early years of ‘New Labour’ before the Iraq War, was the ability to instil a level of unity that some of the previous leaders had failed to maintain. To an extent, unity came as a consequence of signs of success, but similarly, Blair achieved this by giving his ‘Frontbench’ significant power and opportunities to earn a reputation of their own. The media presentation was, indeed, centralised in the sense that messages were highly calibrated by the so-called ‘spin doctors’, Alistair Campbell and Peter Mandelson. However, contrastingly, it was not centralised in a way that meant all media interactions were exclusively about the party leader. Individual cabinet members, including those of somewhat different ‘schools of thought’, were allowed a prominent voice – most notably, perhaps, John Prescott and his decidedly weaker consciousness of good ‘PR’ as demonstrated by the “two jabs” incident of a physical collision with a member of the public. This usage of a vast array of prominent members not only helps foster a sense of internal unity as the individuals feel more involved in the party and its actions and, thus, feel more loyal towards it, but also helps create an outward perception of strength. A highly successful party should be able to prove that it can still function effectively without its leader as it can pull together as a team.

If Sir Keir Starmer can prove this, in a style similar to 'New Labour' and, indeed, other successful periods in the party's history, the Labour Party may begin to gain an advantage over the Conservatives. Boris Johnson's major success has been his ability to define his party by his own personality – a highly cultivated personality which he has spent years developing inside and outside politics such as through his appearances on 'Have I Got News For You'. Elections, therefore, become dominated by how likeable one perceives "Boris". In contrast, there is little real confidence or understanding of his cabinet members as rather starkly shown when Johnson was incapacitated and a sense of panic arose as to who would deputise and whether they would be effective. Whilst Blair's incapacitation in 2003 for a heart operation was far less drastic and inopportune, there was greater reassurance when the public knew the trusted and well-known figure, Jack Straw, would deputise. Keir Starmer could, thus, present the party as an efficient collective endeavour where collectivism is not only in the roots of the party's ideology but truly manifested in its working style and contrast it with a perception of the Conservative party as functioning on disorganised personal interests and endeavours as shown from disjointed messaging on relaxing or increasing restrictions to allegations of sleaze.

Arguably, however, the most obvious purpose and success of New Labour is one that counter-intuitively demonstrates why Keir Starmer must only endeavour to emanate aspects of it and not entirely repeat its substance. That is the ability to strongly disconnect itself from previous Labour administrations and, thus, disconnect itself from the inherent negative stereotypes that all political parties earn themselves. The placement of the adjective "new" clearly signposted that the party voters were choosing in 1997 was not the same one people had come to blame for the 'Winter of Discontent' in 1979. Whilst Blair's predecessors of Harold Wilson and Jim Callaghan had overseen great successes and established their very own legacies, it did not pay to emphasise these as people would instinctively be drawn to think of its failures such as that of 1979.

Surely, this same concept applies to New Labour. It is undoubtedly objective to state that New Labour had its successes and, arguably, many of them as it managed to stay in power for thirteen consecutive years. However, mention Tony Blair or Gordon Brown and individuals are not easily drawn to those successes but rather the controversies or misfortunes of the times such as the Iraq War and the contention around whether Blair had sent troops to war on false pretences as well as the Global Financial Crisis. Therefore, it equally does not pay to make stark connections and parallelisms between the Labour Party of today and that of the 1990s and 2000s.

If Sir Keir Starmer is to succeed in renewing Labour and making the party once again a governing one, he should, indeed, take note of New Labour's victorious streak under Tony Blair and Gordon Brown. But this must be done more analytically than to simply portray it as evidence of the need for a political shift to the 'right' for the party won for many other more pertinent reasons. One must also take into account the legacy 'New Labour' has become tainted with and, thus, realise it is a case of lifting aspects from the past but not trying to repeat it entirely.



**Jim Callaghan, Prime Minister from 1976 to 1979 [EC]**



Prime Ministers (from left to right) Anthony Eden, Winston Churchill and Clement Attlee

# Legacies of Prime Ministers - How Can We Measure 'Greatness'?

Jasper Heikkila

Assessing the 'greatness' and legacy of former Prime Ministers remains a popular political past-time in Britain. Countless polls continue to probe the nation as to the ranking of our former PMs based on this nebulous and highly subjective term. This catch-all phrase deserves some interrogation - the political legacy of former leaders is often shaped and distorted by political bias, the romanticisation of 'great men' and one-dimensional assessments of political impact. By revisiting the legacies of recent Prime Ministers can we identify a meaningful criteria for Prime Ministerial 'greatness'?

Perhaps the archetype for Prime Ministerial 'greatness' lies with Winston Churchill, the leader of the nation through 'Britain's Finest Hour' and voted the 'Greatest Briton' by BBC viewers in 2002. The case for Churchill's greatness seems self-explanatory - an international figurehead for the fight against fascism who rallied the country with decisiveness and stirring rhetoric. As a result, Churchill often ranks highly in public polls, with the most recent Ipsos-Mori poll placing him above every other post-war Prime Minister (2021), even though his wartime stint in office was not considered for the poll. In the same vein, David Lloyd George's 'great' legacy is firmly cemented as a war-winner, despite his post-war failures overseeing economic hardship and a collapse of the Liberal party. In both cases, domestic policy is far outweighed by wartime heroics as the public seek

to measure 'greatness'- Churchill's resounding defeat in the 1945 General Election, thought by many to prove his inadequacy as a peacetime leader, has done little to damage his overall reputation as a 'great' leader. The public attitude to past wars equally explains why Neville Chamberlain is synonymous with 'appeasement' and weakness towards Nazi Germany, and not for his passing of reform such as the 1937 Factories Act, a footnote that becomes hastily forgotten.



Neville Chamberlain celebrating peace agreement with Hitler



In a 2019 YouGov poll (2019), Margaret Thatcher topped the list of greatest Prime Ministers since 1945, followed by Churchill, Blair, Attlee and Wilson. The Iron Lady's greatness was attributed to her "strong" (58%) and "decisive" (49%) nature, with people citing her greatest successes as becoming the first female Prime Minister and winning the Falklands War, despite many criticising her role in the decline of mining and increase in overall inequality. Perhaps Thatcher's perceived 'greatness', despite her polarising domestic policies, arises from her ruthlessness and success in transforming Britain's global reputation, even if her boot-strap economic policy makes her a target for hatred in many coal-mining and industrial areas.



Protests Against the Iraq War in which Blair gained the nickname 'Bliar'. [Chris Beckett]



Miners' Strike Rally 1984 [Nicksarebi]

An important factor to consider when evaluating former Prime Ministers is the difference between public and specialist opinion. While the general public place Clement Attlee as the fourth greatest post-1945 Prime Minister, an Ipsos poll (2004) of 258 academics judged Attlee to be the most successful, ahead of Lloyd George and even Churchill. Whilst Attlee may have lacked the oratory and bravado of his more famous contemporary, his forging of the NHS and the foundations for the welfare state is arguably one of the stand-out political legacies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century - a legacy noted by political scientists and historians yet undervalued by the public.

In contrast to Thatcher's show of unflinching patriotism in Argentina, Tony Blair's intervention in Iraq would come to overshadow his legacy. As commentator Charlie Burton puts it, 'Blair's virtues slip easily from memory'. His domestic policies of devolution, a minimum wage, investment in education and welfare were to destine him for 'greatness'. Even his early liberal interventionism, such as his opposition to the Milosevic regime in Kosovo, was widely appraised. Ultimately though, the decision to enter the Iraq War in 2003 would come to haunt his legacy for years to come as he was charged with betrayal of public trust. Yet, with retrospect, there were certainly aspects of greatness in his administration. Tony 'Iraq' Blair and Anthony 'Suez' Eden share similarities in this respect - polls suggest that the British public are unforgiving of failed foreign policy.



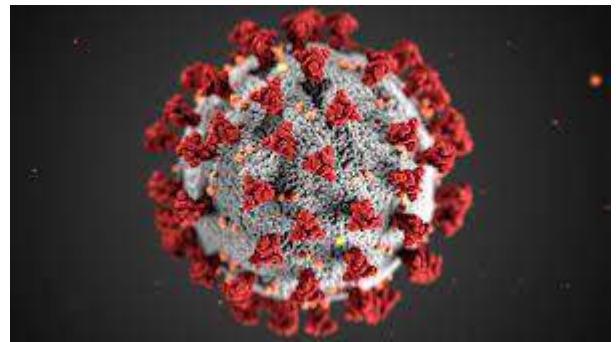
George Harcourt's Portrait of Clement Attlee

Indeed, one of the issues with using polls to rank Prime Ministers is that, overall, there is a lack of public knowledge on the leaders of past generations. In the most recent poll, Ipsos wrote of 'how little Britons know about post war Prime Ministers before Thatcher aside from Churchill' and that in the eyes of the 'general public' most Prime Ministers 'do not end up with much' of a 'legacy'. 56% of the surveyed answered 'don't know', 'never heard of them', or 'neither good or bad' to Harold Wilson and 66% to Harold Macmillan, with the former being one of the great social liberalisers amongst Prime Ministers, abolishing both the death penalty (1965) and decriminalising homosexual offences (1967). Furthermore, as political lecturer Ben Worthy writes, "many of the 'great' achievements of Prime Ministers in the twentieth century are pretty contestable" and inherently 'political'. An argument could be made for the 'greatness' of any Prime Minister given your political stance, and even the stereotypical 'greats' like Churchill were heavily flawed characters. Allan Warren

Notions of legacy and 'greatness' can be both helpful and misleading in political discourse. Fundamentally, 'greatness' can never be meaningfully defined and is open to interpretation. The term encapsulates qualities we cherish in Prime Ministers such as leadership skills, sound judgement and being 'good' in a crisis and generally doing a 'good job', yet may not be appropriate for giving nuanced evaluations of our former leaders as the term can be hijacked by selective memories. There is no one path to political 'greatness', but it seems that winning a world war is a safe bet.



Harold Wilson (Labour Prime Minister—1964-70 and 1974-76)  
[Allan Warren]



Covid-19 visualization [RawPixel Ltd]



As such, Boris Johnson will understand the challenge of carving out a positive legacy that warrants 'greatness' and praise. Oftentimes it appears that Prime Ministers get attached, if unfairly, with buzzwords: Blair with Iraq, Cameron with the Brexit referendum, Thatcher with the unions. While Mr Johnson has time yet to enact reform, the history books will ultimately judge him on 'getting Brexit done' and, more importantly, his own buzzword - Covid-19.





# To What Extent Should People be offered Freedom?

Kinshuk Jain

***Freedom (noun): the power or right to speak, act or think as one wants. (Oxford Languages)***

In most countries, freedom is the central pillar upon which society is built - and rightly so. Without freedom, there would be no individuality and no ability to express what people think and feel. People would become puppets acting on behalf of a despot. To most, freedom is an essential component of modern life. But how far should said freedom extend? Should there be limits to what individuals can think, say or do?

I would argue that there are certain lines that should never be crossed, in the name of freedom or otherwise. To help explain my views, I will use examples of where absolute freedom isn't beneficial.

### **Example 1: Freedom of Speech**

***Freedom of speech (noun): the power or right to express one's opinions without censorship, restraint, or legal penalty. (Oxford Languages)***

Sounds good, right?

That's because it is.

Freedom of speech is argued by many to be the most important right in life. It is protected in the UK by the Human Rights Act 1998: "everyone has the right to freedom of expression", and in the USA by the First Amendment: "Congress shall make no law...abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press".

Most people will agree with me that people should be allowed to express their ideas and opinions on anything, from politics to religion. There is no doubt in modern society that it is wrong to censor people's views regardless of whether or not we agree with them. However, many may argue that more damaging uses of free speech, for example, racist comments should not be allowed. But is censorship the right way to eradicate racist views? I believe that educating people on why discriminatory views are wrong would be a far more effective method than censorship (which would most likely add fuel to the fire).



There does, however, need to be a limit. How can you justify freedom of speech where it is used to incite physical violence? Radicalisation, encouragement of abuse or any other incitement of physical violence should be prohibited and punishable. The loss of life under the name of freedom is simply inexcusable. Whilst this idea hasn't caught on in the USA, the Terrorism Act of 2006 makes "encouragement of terrorism" illegal in the UK. The UK also outlaws "hate speech", which is more of a grey area, but speech which leads to physical violence is clearly wrong.

### **Example 2: Gun Laws**

Another matter of contention relating to freedom is the laws surrounding guns.

At around 9.30 a.m. on 13<sup>th</sup> March 1996, Thomas Hamilton arrived at the grounds of Dunblane Primary School in Scotland. In the gymnasium, a class of 28 Primary-school pupils, aged 5-6, were preparing for a PE lesson. Hamilton entered the gymnasium and opened fire, inflicting gunshot wounds on thirty-two people. He killed sixteen pupils and a teacher.

A year after the Dunblane Massacre, the UK passed the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1997, effectively banning the private ownership of handguns. However, in the USA, the Second Amendment effectively allows all citizens to own and carry guns: "the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed." As a result, the USA has the highest proportion of guns per civilian in the world, with 120.5 firearms per 100 residents.

More than 38,300 deaths involved guns in USA in 2019. For comparison, UK had 33 deaths involving guns in the same year. Eight of the ten deadliest mass shootings in USA have happened in the last ten years. UK has had no mass shootings in the last ten years.

It is not hard to see a trend here: a lack of gun ownership restrictions costs lives. In order to save these lives, freedom needs to be curtailed and gun control needs to be enforced.



**Dunblane Massacre  
Memorial Garden**  
*[Jonathan Thacker]*



### **Example 3: Economic Freedom**

I believe that the free market is a good thing: it promotes efficiency, choice and prosperity. Most people agree with me (albeit to varying extents). But how free is too free?



Consider a hypothetical country that has a completely free market economy; the state has no role. It does not take much thought to recognise that this would be disastrous – almost all the wealth would be owned by very few people, who would exploit the rest of the population. Standard of living would plummet and quality of life indicators such as education and healthcare would go out of the window. It is clear that freedom in the market needs to be curbed to some extent by the state.

### Conclusion

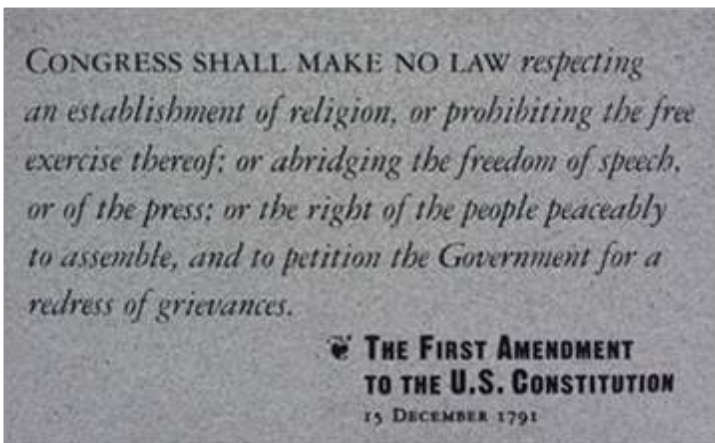
Freedom is an important part of life which should be valued and preserved. In most situations, freedom of thought, speech and action is essential and should not be compromised. However, how can you argue for freedom when innocent people lose their lives because of it? I believe it is important that governments recognise instances where freedom poses a threat to people and does not hesitate to curtail these freedom to whatever extent is necessary.



**Then – Labour Health Minister Aneurin Bevan visiting one of the first NHS hospitals**



Of course, a complete command economy would likely fare even worse than a completely free economy; nevertheless, some state intervention – for example, in the state provision of healthcare - is necessary for the economy to function in a socially acceptable way.





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