



IN PRAISE OF IDEOLOGY

*An inquiry calculated to draw the timely attention of Britain and America to
the necessity for 'ideology' and to the inadequacy of 'the centre ground'*

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DEDICATION

To Conservative Central Office

Part monastery. Part campus. Part barracks.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As always, to Jeremy Sinclair

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

I admire two unfashionable things:

- I admire politicians. So I am sad that millions of people in Britain have lost hope in politics.
- I admire America. So I am sad that millions of people have lost hope in America.

This pamphlet sets out to examine what happened.

The game of chess

All proponents of ‘the centre ground’ in politics take satisfaction from analogy with the game of chess.

Wilhelm Steinitz, the first official world chess champion, on whose scientific principles chess is now based, said it was always good, on principle, to take an opponent’s centre pawn.

In the geometry of the chessboard, control of the centre – the four central squares and the eight squares round it – takes precedence; control of the centre is needed to maintain communication between the two wings, enabling a player to bring unrivalled power to bear over the whole board.

The chess analogy proved attractive to pragmatic politicians on both sides of the Atlantic, who decided, as a matter of electoral calculation, that they were better off in the centre.

Electoral Success

President Clinton made the opening gambit – a smart Left to Right move praising profit, tax breaks, the market economy. Tony Blair copied the move. Eager to avoid contamination with what Marx called ‘the Spectre of Communism’, he invented New Labour, which would combine compassion with competition, freedom with fairness and so on.

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Between them, they won five elections in a row – a tribute, all agreed, to the power of ‘the centre ground’.

Fuelled by their electoral success, reinforced by the rise of globalisation (if barriers between countries could come down, why not between political parties); symbolised by the fall of the Berlin Wall (so that there were no dragons left to slay); and endorsed by academic works like *The End of History* and *Beyond Left and Right*, the myth of the centre ground was born and became the conspicuous political feature of the age – the equivalent of a political law of gravity.

Dinner parties praised it

The myth grew and grew until it achieved the level of dinner party platitude in London and New York – as in the popular injunction: ‘You can only win elections from the centre ground’.

Even the Conservative Party succumbed. Hurt by long years of condemnation for ice-cold brutishness, and anxious to avoid contamination with the ‘Spectre of Thatcherism’, it attempted to shed its ‘nasty’ image with a simple move from Right to Left.

Better than Lenin or Mao

Everyone hoped, like Jack Nicholson’s US President in the movie ‘Mars Attacks’, that if we could put aside our philosophical differences and come closer together, then perhaps, at last:

We could all just get along.

How much better, anyway, than:

My ideology is better than yours!

Lenin and Mao were the dog-eared trump cards of those opposed to ‘ideology’. They remind us what happens when Utopian visionaries are let loose on the world, and that:

Great genius is to madness near allied

And thin partitions do their bounds divide.

But if all ideologies are indefensible, then all ideologies are equal, and the centre ground becomes a moral void.

INTRODUCTION

But people know more

The first consequence can be seen in domestic politics.

The last 20 years have seen a dramatic increase in public sophistication and awareness. People can now spot a Left/Right ‘positioning exercise’ a mile off. The motive for these moves is too transparent. Voters always suspected that politicians would:

Say anything to get elected.

Now they know it’s true. Applied to politics today, the great Hollywood law:

Nobody knows anything.

should read:

Nobody believes anything.

The rise of ‘neither’

One proof of this is that ‘neither’ is now the most popular party in Britain. This can be seen in public attitudes to UK Government spending. 86% agree with the statement:

There is too much government bureaucracy and waste.

But when asked which party is most likely to reduce Government waste, the majority choose:

Neither.

Asked which party has ‘the best policies on prisons’, 44% of the popular vote – more than Labour and Conservative combined – goes to the landslide winner:

Neither.

The same applies to the key question of which party has the best economic policies. Labour has recently lost its twenty-point lead over the Conservatives on this measure. However, the Conservatives have gained only two points. The other eighteen points have gone to:

Neither.

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A problem for Britain

One direct result of this convergence on the centre ground is a super-cynical British electorate and low turnouts at election time.

The slowest to turn out, young people, are often criticised for moronic addiction to computer games and iPods. But theirs might be the most rational response to centre ground politics. As one student said during the last election:

They just tell you what you want to hear. There's no actual ideology.

With little apparent difference between the parties on substance (which non-ideologists would say is a good thing), image and appearance take over. So, it is said:

All that matters is how the politician 'comes across' on TV.

Hardly the Athenian ideal of 'democracy', is it?

A problem for America

This absence of a moral vision may be bad enough in domestic politics. But inability to articulate a sense of great purpose matters even more on the international stage.

Try this test at home. Which of these descriptions best fits Anglo-American society? And which best fits our enemies? This...

Article of faith, conviction, moral certainty, unshaken confidence, take as gospel truth, take on trust, pin one's faith on, take at face value, take one's word for, buy into, be certain, have no doubt, have no second thoughts, no reservations.

Or this...

Hard to believe, lack of conviction, under suspicion, credibility gap, hard to swallow, without faith, nobody's fool, not born yesterday.

Those are the Thesaurus meanings of 'Belief' and 'Unbelief'...

* * * * *

In Britain, the centre ground has ground the ideology out of politics.

In America, where a strong ideology still exists, nobody seems able to articulate it.

So, in both Britain and America, ideology has disappeared from view – in Britain because it is not wanted; and in America because it is not expressed.

CHAPTER TWO

BRITAIN – FROM DEFERENCE TO INDIFFERENCE

IN BRITAIN TODAY, before any political leader can express an uplifting set of beliefs – an ideology – there is a formidable obstacle to be overcome. En route to the centre ground, the pragmatic politician wears, as badge of merit, a sign reading:

I am not an ideologue.

Faced with calls to state ‘Your aim’, or ‘What you stand for’, occupants of the centre ground instinctively recoil. They are held back by the fine old political tradition of pragmatism.

It was pragmatism at the last election, that prompted one press officer to reply to a query about his party’s philosophy:

If you want philosophy, read Descartes.

What is pragmatism?

The pragmatic creed in Britain was best defined by Michael Oakeshott when he gave the inaugural address on assuming the Professorship of Political Science at the London School of Economics.

Oakeshott said ‘pragmatism’ offered no political system, no doctrine, no grand philosophy, no ‘happy ending’.

Pragmatism dismissed:

...the illusion that in politics there is a destination to be reached.

Because, he said:

In political activity, men sail a boundless and bottomless sea. There is neither harbour for shelter, nor floor for anchorage; neither starting-place nor appointed destination. The enterprise is to keep afloat on an even keel.

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No instruments are required on board ‘HMS Pragmatist’ because this ship is not going anywhere in particular. It will catch the morning tide wherever it takes it.

Pragmatic politicians distrust theories or blueprints. For them, reason is a vice, un-reason is a virtue. There are no Points A and B. There are no means and ends because there are no ends.

They insist on the pejorative use of the term ‘ideology’ to equate ideological thought with ‘dogma’, and contrast it with ‘common sense’ or ‘empirical wisdom’. They dismiss ‘abstract debate’ as a factor in politics.

Where did this uninspiring philosophy come from? It may have been with Edmund Burke, 200 years ago, when he encouraged politicians to concentrate on:

What is...

Not:

What should be.

Or 100 years ago, when the 15th Earl of Derby, then Foreign Secretary in Disraeli’s Government, defined pragmatism in a speech made at Edinburgh in December 1875:

To distrust loud professions and large promises; to place no confidence in theories for the regeneration of mankind, however brilliant and ingenious; not to compare our actual condition with the ideal world which thinkers may have sketched.

Or 50 years ago, when Quentin Hogg, in the 1950s, said the pragmatic politician should:

... offer no utopia at all but something quite modestly better than the present. Of catchwords, slogans, visions, ideal states of society, new orders... all the great evils of our time have come from men pretending that good government could offer utopia.

He recommended us:

...to die rather than sell such trash.

BRITAIN: FROM DEFERENCE TO INDIFFERENCE

The perils of pragmatism

The pragmatic tradition holds that ‘what matters is what works’. But in a rare lecture on politics, T S Eliot warned of the danger of that approach.

He defined a political party as:

...a movement, guided by permanent principles, a body of doctrine, disseminated and popularised through emotional appeal.

He contrasted that with pragmatism – a series of metamorphoses and adaptations to issues as they arise, the effect of which, he said, can be:

So endlessly and obligingly adaptable to changing circumstances that it discredits itself by its indifference to principle.

A commodity market

Eliot was right. That is how the pragmatism of the centre ground turns politics into a commodity market – because pragmatism leads to opportunism, which leads to cynicism.

Without ideology, political discourse is reduced to claim and counter claim about actual ‘delivery’. But in that arena, today, as we saw earlier, there is only one winner:

Neither.

Times change

There was once an era, we are told, when the Conservative Party won British elections because of the ‘deferential vote’ – the willingness of working class voters to believe in the natural superiority of their betters.

Times change.

Today, the public find it harder to respect their political masters.

People know too much.

The position is no longer as described by President Nixon when, one day in the Oval Office, President Nixon and Secretary Kissinger were discussing a particularly troublesome affair of state. Mr Nixon made a proposal to solve the problem. Dr Kissinger disapproved:

Mr President, I must remind you of the famous saying, ‘You can fool all of the people some of the time, and some of the people all of the time, but you can’t fool all of the people all of the time...’

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President Nixon leaned back in his chair, thought carefully for a few moments, then said:

Henry! Those sound like pretty good odds to me...

But nowadays it is impossible to fool any of the people any of the time – because people are now so knowledgeable that they approximate to what economists call ‘the perfect market’ – perfect knowledge and perfect ability to use it. So now we know everything.

A democracy of information

We know how much the Queen earns. We know the pension of the Chairman of BP. We know the marital condition of our movie stars. And the sexual persuasion of our politicians.

We know which schools produce the best A Levels. Which hospital has the best record in hip replacements. How much tar and nicotine there is in a cigarette. And the precise contents of a packet of cornflakes.

This is why it is impossible to view modern public opinion research without being humbled by it. It reveals that the British public are knowledgeable and rational. They can see through the logical flaw in a political argument, and ensure that the perpetrator suffers immediate punishment.

More knowledge. More power

So today, a democracy of information has been declared – in which the ‘need to know’ has been replaced by the ‘right to know’.

Consider this definition – from a textbook on *The Soviet Command State*. Does it sound familiar?

Public discussion is dominated by ‘the propaganda of success’, that is, the suppression of ‘negative’ facts and publication only of ‘positive’ facts and also of purely imaginary achievements.

People noticed, for example, that recently our Government had had a great day. In the morning, it lifted 700,000 children out of poverty. By lunchtime, it had halved the inflation rate. In the afternoon, it doubled the effectiveness of the Health Service. How did they do it? By changing the definition of ‘poverty’, all those children were saved at the stroke of a pen. By changing the definition of ‘inflation’ they eliminated it. By changing the definition of ‘output’ they achieved a 100% improvement in the NHS.

No wonder ‘neither’ is now the dominant force in British politics.

BRITAIN: FROM DEFERENCE TO INDIFFERENCE

It's like the weather

The point was illustrated during a recent focus group session.

In the standard form of research group for testing 'concepts', respondents were being shown various boards describing new policies and new promises. The group was proceeding in the normal manner, scoring the alternatives, when one man suddenly demanded a halt. He said 'none of these promises would ever be delivered'; that 'nobody would ever be accountable when they weren't'; that the parties were 'all much of a muchness', that there was 'no real difference between them', and that therefore this was 'all a waste of time'.

He ended his denunciation of the political parties with a striking statement that elicited the group's unanimous, enthusiastic agreement.

He summarised British politics in one phrase:

It's like the weather.

And they all cried out: 'That's right! He's got it!'

An example

Imagine a General Election in which the rate of daffodil production was the key issue. The Government would say:

Daffodil production is up.

The Opposition would claim:

Daffodil production is lower than when we were in power.

The Government would counter:

Daffodil production is higher than our EU competitors.

The Opposition would charge:

Daffodil production is lower than the G8 average.

and so on...

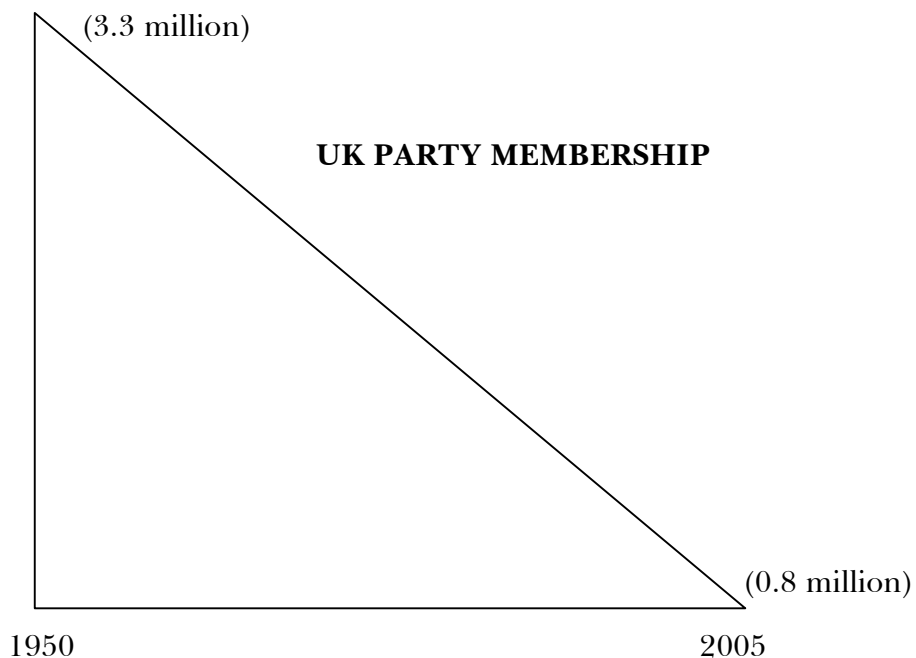
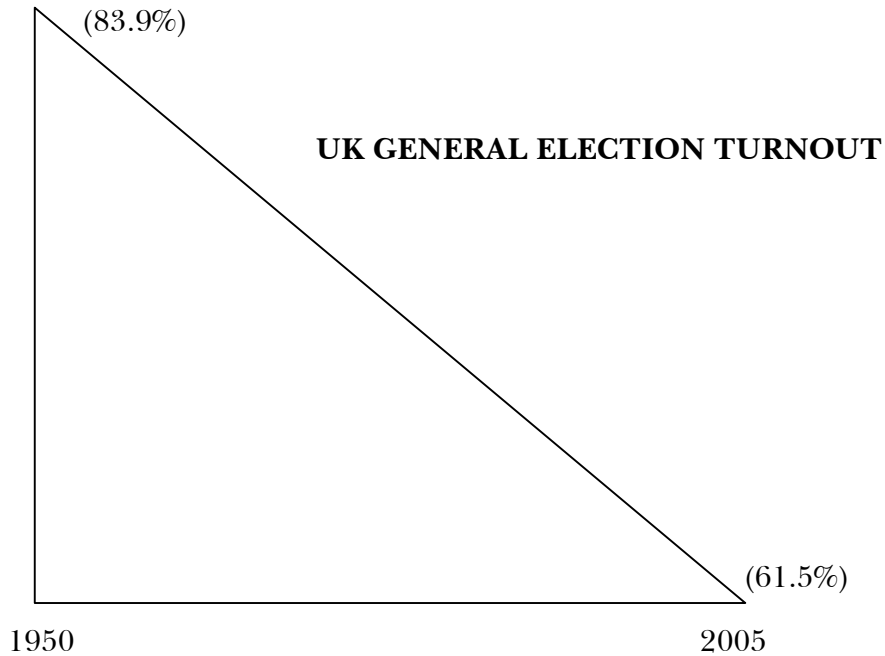
So far in this exchange, everyone has told the truth. But people know that by the time the matter had been considered over different timescales and different geography, their chances of discovering 'the objective truth' of which party has the best daffodil policy, would be limited.

Without ideology, politics is restricted to exchanges like that, about 'delivery'. Being better informed than in the past, an educated public might

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be forgiven for drawing the uncomfortable conclusion that the best party on the daffodil question is ‘neither’.

The result is indifference – as captured in these two charts from the Power Commission Report:



As the Oasis singer Noel Gallagher has pointed out:

I think the Labour Party's crowning achievement is the death of politics. There is nothing left to vote for.

CHAPTER THREE

AMERICA – FROM BENIGN TO MALIGN

Meantime, in America too, people are also coming round to an uncomfortable new experience – the dawning realisation that the magnificent words of their Declaration of Independence do not bring tears to everyone's eyes. Instead, 89,600,000 internet sites now respond to the keyword 'Anti-America', and in Nigeria the most popular name for baby boys this year is Osama. Millions dislike Britain and America. Millions more actively wish us harm.

Such is the curious alliance that has made anti-Americanism the conspicuous feature of the age.

From benign to malign

To quote one Washington luminary, Americans today are:

Perplexed and confused.

'Perplexed' because their ideology has been questioned. 'Confused' because their policy responses seem so inadequate.

The last ideological challenge to Western capitalism on this scale was launched by Karl Marx. According to Isaiah Berlin, Marxist Socialism was:

...the greatest organised social movement of all time, greater perhaps than occurred since the rise of Christianity against paganism.

Marx provided the angry, the miserable, the poor, the discontented and the disillusioned with a specific enemy – the capitalist.

Today, understandably, America is envied by poor people and poor countries. Ironically, the wealth of America has also created envy among rich countries too.

Consider what they say – here are some of the unanswered criticisms, so far not met with a coherent, principled, ideological reply.

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Too much power

America has too much economic power, they claim, accounting for seven of the top ten investment banks, eight of the top ten companies and so on. Jean-Claude Trichet, Governor of the European Central Bank, has pointed out that America accounts for only 30% of world trade, yet 70% of the world's business is transacted in dollars. This injustice to the new European superpower would be put right by the Euro, he said.

And too much military power. In Britain's heyday, the first Lord of the Admiralty, Sir John Fisher, had his 'rule of twice' – Britain's navy would equal the combined size of the next two countries. Today, American military expenditure is greater than the next nine countries in the world put together. This year's increase in US military expenditure is greater than the entire defence budget of the eurozone. Hence, French Foreign Minister Védrine's expression 'hyperpuissance' – beyond superpower – to describe the 'hectoring hegemon'.

No reply.

GI Joe

American unilateralism, critics complain, is offensive to European diplomats, who object to America's reluctance to submit itself to what the UN calls 'multilateral solutions' whether in matters of war, justice or the environment. The French like to think they tamed Germany by inviting it into the living room and making it a nice cup of coffee. The sofa and the coffee-pot were the tools of the Franco-German rapprochement, and they believe a similar approach would work with today's dictators and bullies. But 'GI Joe' dimly persists in his gun-slinging ways, failing to enlist 'transnational due process, negotiation and co-operation' to adjudicate international disputes.

No response.

Hypocrisy

America is accused of hypocritical foreign policy. Bitter memories persist of another 9/11, September 11 1973 when the Government of Salvador Allende, the democratically-elected President of Chile, was replaced by a military dictatorship backed by the US. To some eyes, America's support for Saudi Arabia's feudal monarchy is of a similar order.

Critics fail to see any difference between the bombing of the World Trade Centre and the US-backed bombing of Lebanon.

No reply.

AMERICA: FROM BENIGN TO MALIGN

Cultural Imperialism

Anti-Americanism has become a branch of anti-philistinism.

To many, America means 'Cultural imperialism'. Global US media are said to be paving over precious national identities with a homogenised US version of life. Critics high and low-brow link hands under the unlikely banner:

Join the worldwide movement against globalisation!

No answer.

Anti-Green

Meanwhile, they say that America, the richest country, with the cheapest petrol, is the world's greatest polluter. Yet it wants tough environmental regimes for developing countries. Why? To saddle them, they argue, with costly regulations that neutralise their competitive advantage of cheap labour.

No reply.

Not a democracy

Critics even question whether America is, in fact, a democracy. Average turnout of less than 50% and the expense and alleged corruption of voting procedure at Presidential elections, make them wonder.

No answer.

Too cynical

Finally, America is accused of a cynical calculation: that it is cheaper to pay for defence against the rage of the poor, than it is to pay to alleviate their poverty. President Clinton gave some credence to this view when explaining that Afghanistan was a cheap war – only \$1 billion a month. As he said:

At this rate, America could go on with this war... forever.

No reply.

* * * * *

The complaints are endless. Such is the cocktail of views to which America has not provided a response based on principle. That ideological vacuum explains how America's international reputation changed from 'benign to malign'; and why America's foreign policy responses do not appear to have been based on a clear and simple set of beliefs.

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AMERICA: FROM BENIGN TO MALIGN

DOUBLE PAGE SPREAD

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The Cold War – a golden age

There was a time when America had a clear and simple foreign policy – ‘deterrence’, colloquially known as MAD: Mutual Assured Destruction. To the modern American eye, this Cold War period must seem a golden age.

Deterrence kept the peace for 50 years – no country could attack America because it would be fearful of its own destruction.

New Enemy. New Policy

This compelling logic dissolved on 9/11 with the rise of suicidal individuals, for whom ‘Mutual Assured Destruction’ was a blessing. America’s new enemy was:

- Not a country;
- Not fearful of its own destruction.

So a new foreign policy was obviously required, and it duly arrived. They called it ‘Pre-emption’, and it ended the ‘No First Strike’ principle of the peaceful decades of deterrence. But as Professor Alan Dershowitz has pointed out, ‘pre-emption’ has been claimed as *casus belli* by practically every dictator in history, including Hitler; has never been codified in international law; and worse, has never been related to any fundamental American ideology.

A conversation in the State Department

Consider this imaginary conversation in the US State Department in Washington after 9/11, based on an argument put forward by the then Deputy Secretary of Defense. It illustrates the absence of ideology in American preparation for war.

Q: What is the first duty of the American administration?

A: To protect the lives of American citizens.

Q: From where comes the threat to the lives of American citizens?

A: From Islamic terrorists.

Q: Why do they want to kill Americans?

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A: Because of the war between Israel and Palestine.

Q: How can we stop that war?

A: By occupying Iraq.

Q: Why Iraq?

A: It will send two good messages.

Q: To whom?

A: To the Israelis and Palestinians.

Q: What messages?

A: To Israel, 'America is now on your right shoulder, so you don't need to be so paranoid about peace with your Arab neighbours'.

Q: And to the Arab nations?

A: It will encourage them to consider the fate of those who continue to be state sponsors of terrorism.

The world now knows where that State Department conversation led. No Israel/Palestinian peace followed. Instead, a third war erupted in Lebanon. In none of these three Islamic wars has America seemed able to articulate a clear aim, or to express the ideology behind it. The result of American inability to articulate its ideological purpose means it now finds itself in an ideological mire, hard to defend and harder to escape.

America's approach to Islam is far too confusing for most Americans. It does not want to criticise Islam, but it does criticise Islamic terrorists. It is as if America said, during the Cold War:

We like Communism.

But we don't like Russians.

This is no doubt why a change in foreign policy was endorsed in the mid-term elections. This will be welcomed by the three out of four Americans who feel the US is overdoing the job of global policeman, while 61% say the war in Iraq has not reduced the threat of terrorism.

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A conversation in Shanghai

Meanwhile, on the other side of the world, America faces another bewildering challenge to its ideology from China.

While that imaginary conversation about Islam may have been taking place in Washington, another conversation was actually taking place in Shanghai:

Q: Do the Chinese people want to have the vote?

A: Not really.

Q: Do the Chinese people want to be able to have private healthcare?

A: Not particularly.

Q: Do the Chinese people want their children to be able to go to private schools.

A: Not at all.

Q: Do the Chinese people want to be free to have a private pension?

A: Not much.

Q: Do the Chinese people hate America?

A: No.

Only one question elicited a positive response:

Q: Do the Chinese people want to replace America as the number one country on the planet?

A: Yes, definitely.

China's rise to prominence appears to challenge deep American ideology. It defies every American economics textbook ever written. Economists contend that it is not possible for a state-controlled enterprise to thrive – bureaucracy dulls its competitive edge. But China is apparently achieving the impossible – thriving businesses, 100% state owned, proudly flying the Red Flag in their boardrooms. They even have a name for it. They call it:

AMERICA: FROM BENIGN TO MALIGN

State Capitalism.

or

Capitalism with Chinese Characteristics.

World's new No. 1

With that system, so alien to American ideology, China grows by twice the American rate; so that soon, analysts say, China's GDP will overtake that of America.

What can Americans do about the dual ideological riddles of Islam and China?

Perhaps Conservatism can help.

CHAPTER FOUR

HOW CONSERVATIVISM CAN HELP

Conservatism has the capacity to provide and express ideals which are at the heart of Western civilisation.

At its core, is the belief that there are no gods responsible for man and his fate; that mankind has a need to be responsible and master of his own destiny. And that men and women have the power, given the right social circumstances, to be masters of their social world, to take control of the social structures in which they exist.

What is Conservatism?

Ironically, Karl Marx described as well as any Conservative the Anglo-American ideal of self realisation: the development of human potential in many different facets and directions for each person, so that a man could be:

...a hunter in the morning, a fisherman in the afternoon, a cattle rearer in the evening, and a critic after dinner.

In this, Conservatism follows Nietzsche's most consistent words of advice, his 'Ethical Imperative':

Become who you are!

as in Zarathustra:

If you would go high, use your own legs.

So while we can admire such well-known Conservative characteristics as the love of the concrete in preference to the abstract, and intolerance of mere book-learning, it is an error to think of Conservatism as merely a belief in 'practicality' and 'efficiency'. True Conservatism is practical idealism. Its aims, instead of being merely materialistic and mechanical, are idealistic to the point of being Utopian.

HOW CONSERVATISM CAN HELP

Independence

Conservatism meets the claim of men, as Aristotle put it:

...to be ruled by none, if possible.

Or, if this is impossible, to be as independent as they can reasonably be.

Individuality

As the aim of Conservatism is the full self-development of each individual, it follows that Conservatives would wish to ensure that each person had the resources to achieve this.

This means that Conservative belief is inextricably connected to economics. Because, in the real world, personal independence (of the kind admired by all Conservatives) and economic independence are inextricably linked. As Professor J K Galbraith explained:

The greatest restriction on the liberty of the citizen is a complete absence of money.

This is why economics is such a crucial issue for Conservatives – not because, as critics say, Conservatism is ‘money-obsessed’, but because, as Iain Macleod put it:

Money is the route of all progress.

Self-determination

Conservatives should be proud of Conservative economics and what it can do.

Conservatism believes that ‘caring that works costs cash’ – the Good Samaritan showed that first you need the money in order to do the good works.

Conservatism says that ‘a bigger cake means a bigger slice for everyone’. But first you have to create the wealth to make the cake bigger.

Conservatism says that, in a free market, ‘a rising tide lifts all ships’.

Conservatism says that lower tax is good – for moral reasons, because it means more freedom and choice for individuals: and for economic reasons, because ironically lower tax rates mean higher tax revenues and more wealth creation.

Conservatism says that even the meekest can meet life with the possibility of mastering its difficulties.

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A deep belief

Despite Conservative protestations of ideological innocence, all Conservatives do have one deep belief – in a free and independent individual. It is there in the beating heart of every Conservative. Like gravity, you don't have to invent it. You only have to discover it. And then express it. The driving motive of Conservatism is a belief in self-determination, individuality, independence.

True Conservatism

This guiding thread of Conservatism was well expressed in a remarkable essay in 1708, 'An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?'. In it, Immanuel Kant declared that:

...to be civilised is to be grown-up.

To be grown-up, he wrote, is not to abdicate one's responsibilities to others, not to permit oneself to be treated as a child, or barter away one's freedom for the sake of security and comfort. He said a paternalist government, based on:

...the benevolence of a ruler who treats his subjects as dependent children... is the greatest conceivable despotism and destroys all freedom.

Unless a creature can determine itself, he said, it is not a moral being. Kant was absolutely definite on this point – independence is the basis of all morality.

To be grown-up

He wanted a free man to be able to say:

I am the captain of my soul.

How Conservatism can help – in Britain

It is always helpful for a political movement, when expressing its ideology, to have an ideological opponent, to whom it can be in strenuous, philosophical opposition.

Labour ideology fills the bill admirably.

By contrast with Conservative belief in independence, Labour makes as many people as possible dependent on it. Labour has absorbed nearly a

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million more citizens onto its payroll. In Britain today, it now employs 7 million people, 28% of the working population. Meanwhile, Labour has nearly doubled the percentage of the households in receipt of state benefits, up from 24% to 40%. So now, the majority of people in Britain are financially beholden to the Government.

Labour likes it that way. The people as dependent children. Itself the master. The complicated tax and benefit system the chief instrument of its power.

With this system, as Lord Butler, the former head of the Civil Service, said:

The government can do what it likes.

Conservatives despise such a system. And here is the terrible injustice at the heart of Labour ideology, and the affront to Conservative ideology – the poorest people, who are the most dependent, who receive the worst in healthcare... also pay the most in tax.

Labour's ideology of dependence

Labour ideology demands of its adherents that they wear their hearts on their sleeves about caring for the poor. Yet Labour is content that the poorest people pay the most tax, at a rate of 63% of their income. The least well off pay the highest rate. We live in a mad world where the poor pay higher taxes than the rich.

The Government regards a child as being in poverty if he or she lives in a household which has an income below 60% of the average. Yet 3.6 million people who earn less than £10,000 a year – less than half the national average and below the official poverty line – still pay income tax. The requirement to pay income tax has never reached so low down the income scale.

Conservatism deplores such a system of dependency – as did the founding fathers of America, when they penned their great Declaration of Independence.

How Conservatism can help – in America

With American ideology under dual challenge as never before, the Conservative would advise Americans to take a leaf out of Freudian psychoanalysis, go back to their beginnings, and examine their childhood roots.

IN PRAISE OF IDEOLOGY

As Americans study their own Declaration of Independence, they will be struck at once by a great irony – that a radical revolutionary nation, born in anger at the injustice of an established ruler, has been transformed in the minds of millions of people around the world into a mere defender of the established status quo.

They will be baffled by America's current difficulty in expressing its founding ideology in an uplifting way.

A great irony

And they will ask themselves some basic questions. What made America the world's great superpower? It is not its land mass. China is bigger. It is not its population. Europe has more. It is not its mineral wealth. Russia has more. What is it? What caused America's pre-eminence in the first place?

What made America great?

As the reader of the Appendix will see, America was born out of a desire for self-determination, a longing for independence. Its constitution protects the rights of its citizens like no other. America is open – it has turned the huddled masses into millionaires, which is why there are more billionaires in America than the rest of the world put together. America embraces meritocracy before hierarchy. Its frontier spirit lives on so anyone can do well if they work hard. And its bravery is legendary: Americans twice rescued the world from tyranny.

These are the qualities that made America 'the shining city of the hill' for so many people – not its wealth but its intense belief in its moral purpose. In this harsh world, it still stands for unquestioned virtues. To disarm its enemies and defeat its rivals it only has to focus its intellectual energy and its vast economic resources on the policies which will help the world follow its lead; to find the language to project its founding ideology beyond its own shores; and to remind the world of its ultimate belief – in self-determination, individuality, independence – and in democracy as a means to that great end.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

The record seems to show that politics resembles war rather than chess. Generals say, the first principle of warfare is:

The selection and retention of aim.

Generals say, you can't win a war unless the aim is something good in the moral sense. The aim is not control of the air, or the taking of a bridge (they are 'objectives'); the aim is:

The mastery of the inside of men's minds...

so that your troops believe they are fighting for:

...a noble object.

Late in his life, Napoleon summed up how wars are won and lost:

Three parts moral. One part physical.

Embroidered in three wars, and after many lives lost, Britain and America are unable to express simply, in a few words, our war aim. They claim 'Democracy' as the aim, but that is sadly too abstract a concept for a world in which a British nurse on £15,000 a year is in the top 8% of richest people on the planet.

The need for a marching tune

So what is required today more than airpower, or financial power, or even manpower, is brain power. So our ideas are more compelling, more penetrating, and wiser, and all the world can see the splendour of our ideals.

What makes human beings special is that they possess the powers of imagination and can raise up in their mind a vision of a better world and a better life. It follows that lofty thoughts and nobler impulses touch the work-a-day lives of everyone. They are an escape from the dreary reality of the actual world – which Bertrand Russell described:

IN PRAISE OF IDEOLOGY

Real life is to most men a long second-best, a perpetual compromise between the ideal and the possible.

When a man stands up for an ideal, or strikes out against injustice, people are filled with hope. This is why people of all classes and ages, and at all levels of intelligence, find idealism more inspiring than pragmatism.

Our firmest beliefs are those to which we are most committed, in which we have invested everything. They make up our ideology – take them away and you take away the keystone of the arch or the base of the pyramid.

If you want your country to be:

...a shining city on a hill,

then first you have to climb the hill.

The centre ground is low and flat. From here, you cannot see far. No man can see to the end of time. But if you climb to the high ground, there the air is purer, and the sweep of naked eyesight much broader.

To do that, requires a certain idealism, a nobility of purpose, a marching tune people can respond to; in other words, to be a vanguard force.

John F Kennedy described himself, in a brilliant phrase, as:

...an idealist without illusions.

That is what is needed now to fight the War on Apathy at home and the War on Terror abroad.

So come on, you Conservatives, in Britain and in America! Man the ideological barricades!

APPENDIX

IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776 THE UNANIMOUS DECLARATION OF THE THIRTEEN UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

When in the Course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. — That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security. — Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.

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He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.

He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them.

He has refused to pass other Laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of Representation in the Legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only.

He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their Public Records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.

He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.

He has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected, whereby the Legislative Powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within.

He has endeavoured to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.

He has obstructed the Administration of Justice by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary Powers.

He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.

He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harass our people and eat out their substance.

He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures.

He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil Power.

He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation:

For quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:

THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

For protecting them, by a mock Trial from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States:

For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world:

For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:

For depriving us in many cases, of the benefit of Trial by Jury:

For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences:

For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies:

For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments:

For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.

He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us.

He has plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.

He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to compleat the works of death, desolation, and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty & Perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation.

He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the executioners of their friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands.

He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.

In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince, whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.

Nor have We been wanting in attentions to our British brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred. to disavow these usurpations, which would

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inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.

We, therefore, the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States, that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. — And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.

New Hampshire: Josiah Bartlett, William Whipple, Matthew Thornton

Massachusetts: John Hancock, Samuel Adams, John Adams, Robert Treat Paine, Elbridge Gerry

Rhode Island: Stephen Hopkins, William Ellery

Connecticut: Roger Sherman, Samuel Huntington, William Williams, Oliver Wolcott

New York: William Floyd, Philip Livingston, Francis Lewis, Lewis Morris

New Jersey: Richard Stockton, John Witherspoon, Francis Hopkinson, John Hart, Abraham Clark

Pennsylvania: Robert Morris, Benjamin Rush, Benjamin Franklin, John Morton, George Clymer, James Smith, George Taylor, James Wilson, George Ross

Delaware: Caesar Rodney, George Read, Thomas McKean

Maryland: Samuel Chase, William Paca, Thomas Stone, Charles Carroll of Carrollton

Virginia: George Wythe, Richard Henry Lee, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Harrison, Thomas Nelson, Jr., Francis Lightfoot Lee, Carter Braxton

North Carolina: William Hooper, Joseph Hewes, John Penn

South Carolina: Edward Rutledge, Thomas Heyward, Jr., Thomas Lynch, Jr., Arthur Middleton

Georgia: Button Gwinnett, Lyman Hall, George Walton

RECENT PUBLICATIONS FROM THE CPS

FROM PRINCIPLES TO POLICY: what an alternative manifesto should say

Norman Blackwell and Ruth Lea

The principles on which the CPS has developed its policies include the beliefs that the individual and the family should have freedom to determine how they want to live their lives and take responsibility for their destiny; that the size of the state should be constrained in order to ensure that government is the servant of the people, not its master; and that individual and national prosperity will flourish with a low overall tax burden and limited regulation. From these principles flow several keystone policies: growing public spending less rapidly than overall economic growth; true independence for schools and hospitals; and support for the traditional family.

“...a radical agenda” – Daily Telegraph

HANDLE WITH CARE: an investigation into the care system

Harriet Sergeant

This report describes, in the children’s own language, the true extent of a problem which has for too long been hidden: the catastrophic failure of our care system. This failure is not just a tragedy for the individuals concerned. A successful system of care would transform this country, and eliminate a major cause of social exclusion. The failure is not a lack of effort: the Government is passing Acts, proposing initiatives and spending money (it costs an average of £40,000 for each child in care). Yet its best efforts are failing to address the deep-rooted problems in the system. While many strong-willed and talented individuals survive the care system, the figures speak for themselves. Why, asks Harriet Sergeant despite generous funding and good intentions, does the care system fail so badly?

“...a devastating report” – James Naughtie on Today

‘THE BETRAYAL OF 60,000 CHILDREN’ – front page headline in The Daily Mail

“About one in six young people in Centrepoin services have experience of the care system, which backs up Harriet Sergeant’s report on the complete failure of the care system.” – Balbir Chatrik (policy and communications director, Centrepoin) in a letter to Young People Now

RECENT PUBLICATIONS FROM THE CPS

NO MAN'S LAND: how Britain's inner city young are being failed

Shaun Bailey

Shaun Bailey lives and works in a run-down inner city estate in London, trying to save the neglected, the rootless, the crack-addicted from a life of despair and death. He tells of how the problems he faces are getting deeper every year; and of how failure and a poverty of aspiration have become engrained into the soul of the community. Bailey argues that it is time for the liberal consensus to be questioned. The ethical void that is at the root of so many young people's problems must be challenged. Easy access to, and liberal attitudes towards, drugs, alcohol, pop culture, teenage sex, greed, single parenthood and the celebration of violence are causing deep damage – and it is now time to think again.

“Mr Bailey sees what is happening on estates such as those in North Kensington as “the betrayal of Britain's inner-city young”. He argues convincingly that they need rules and moral guidelines. They also need role models who provide a clear link between hard work and success, not a culture of celebrity and bling. Their parents need to be encouraged and helped. What they do not need is misguided liberalism” – leading article in The Sunday Times



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