

# British Academy Review

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This issue of the *British Academy Review* addresses a range of political topics.

The articles under the heading 'Reflections on British politics' consider the different forces and traditions that have held sway during the last 100 years, and ask where British political culture is now headed.

The 'Politics of energy' section publishes the texts of three lectures given in 2008–2009, which examine how our demand for energy impacts so forcefully on the political agenda, and which explore the solutions and constraints facing decision makers.

The three articles headed 'Politics of peace' show British Academy-funded researchers engaging with some of the most sensitive areas of conflict in the world, and offer valuable perspectives for those trying to broker peaceful settlements.

# The Strange Career of British Democracy



*When the British Academy organised a discussion on the current state of British democracy on 2 March 2009, no one could have predicted the storm that was about to overwhelm the political establishment. Martin Kettle discusses how the current furore highlights some deeper failings in our democratic system.*

What will be the shape and texture of the British political system and of British party politics in a generation's time? Predictions are always hazardous, particularly at a time when members of parliament are collectively in the public doghouse over their expenses and when many politicians are responding by again advocating radical political change as a means of rebuilding public trust. In spite of the current spike of public anger, though, the political system may ride out the furore of spring 2009 more or less unchanged, as it has often done before. But it is equally possible that a combination of shocks and events – economic recession and the outcome of the next general election as well as the expenses scandal – may precipitate significant institutional and cultural reform and perhaps even lead to some party political realignments.

Calls for and debates about institutional and electoral change long predated the current turmoil over MPs' expenses. One of the most striking aspects of the 2009 expenses scandal for historians, after all, has been its echo of the 'old corruption' which marked British politics in the period before parliament embarked on the long and winding road to democratic reform in 1832. Calls for reform, in other words, are always with us. Meanwhile the sense that Britain's main political parties, still significantly rooted in the industrial class divides of the late 19th century, need to adapt radically if they are to regain their dominant role within public debate, or create a new hegemony, has been a

major theme of domestic politics since at least the 1950s and continues up to the present.

Future historians should note, nevertheless, that the broad parliamentary and political culture of 2009 is characterised by a very widespread and multifarious but all too often unfocused sense that British democracy is very much unfinished business. They should note, further, that this sense of dissatisfied incompleteness distinguishes Britain from several of its developed world peers, where the national perception of constitutional, state and democratic failure, though not unknown, is less marked. And these historians would be particularly well served if they grasped the importance within this process of a book which was published in 2008 and which, for many readers, articulated an alternative taxonomy of British political history that illuminates many of the issues that have been brought to the fore by the impact of the banking crisis, the scandal over MPs' expenses and by what appears to be the dying fall of New Labour.

The book, *Britain Since 1918: The Strange Career of British Democracy* by Professor David Marquand FBA (published by Weidenfeld & Nicholson), is on one level a British political history of the years since the arrival of more-or-less democratic suffrage in 1918. But the book simultaneously offers a new way of looking at the dialectics of British political development over the following 90 years. Instead of seeing British history primarily in the frame of the party politics of the period – the rise of Labour, the decline of the Liberals, the postwar settlement, the pragmatic survival of the Tory party, the decline of Labourism, the radicalisation of the Tory party, and so on – Marquand tries a different way of framing these changes. He reframes his subject through the prism of a set of competing broad historical narratives of the last century.

Marquand's account proposes four such narratives. The first, which he dubs 'whig imperialism', is a narrative (in Marquand's own words) of 'evolutionary change, timely accommodation and subtle statecraft', linking the era of Gladstone with that of Macmillan – and putatively with that of David Cameron. The second, the 'tory nationalist' narrative, is predicated both on social anxiety and on the preservation of authority, property and nationhood, and stretches from Salisbury to Thatcher and her latterday Tory followers, via the ambivalent, in this context, figure of Churchill.

Marquand dubs his third narrative 'democratic collectivist'. This, broadly, is a narrative of progress, rationality and the democratic state. At its heart is the state as the weapon and guardian of progress and justice, counterposed against the unjust and cruel chaos of the free market. This narrative links the New Liberalism of Lloyd George and Keynes with the Fabianism of the Webbs and the Attlee government, and extends through the revival attempts under Wilson and, to an extent, Blair and Brown too. This leaves the fourth and final narrative, which Marquand calls the 'democratic republican', a tradition which shares the collectivists' commitment to social justice but rejects their statism, preferring instead to 'put their faith in the kinetic energy of ordinary citizens' and to promote a vigorous, independent-minded self-respect that was historically associated with English radical Protestantism. Acknowledging that this tradition is both difficult to describe and simultaneously the one in which he places most confidence, Marquand argues that it runs from Milton and Paine, through Orwell and Tawney, to some of the social movements, notably the Greens and the libertarians, of today.

Broadly speaking, argues Marquand, whig imperialism was in the ascendant for the first 20 years of the period from 1918. From World



Figure 1. Participants at the British Academy Forum in March 2009: Professor Peter Hennessy FBA (Chairman), Baroness O'Neill (President of the British Academy), and Professor David Marquand FBA.

War II until Wilson and Callaghan's defeats by the unions, the democratic collectivists ruled the roost. From 1979, Margaret Thatcher attempted to restore the tory nationalist narrative at the heart of British politics. Whatever else Tony Blair may have been – and Marquand remains mystified by the former premier's alchemical political skills – he was not a tory nationalist, although aspects of all the traditions can be detected in his politics. Marquand does not attempt to predict which of the traditions and narratives will emerge dominant in the next decade. But he insists that our politics will be shaped by their interaction in the future, just as our politics have been shaped by them in the past.

A British Academy Forum discussed Marquand's book and ideas at the beginning of March 2009. Note the date. In March, the political economy agenda was dominated by the global financial crisis, the deepening UK recession and the increasingly uphill struggle of the Brown government to rally public support behind its measures to stabilise the banks, stimulate the economy and control the spiralling level of public debt. In that sense, however, the British Academy discussion was fundamentally post-lapsarian. Marquand's ideas were viewed, by friends and critics (and indeed Marquand himself),

through the prism of the worst financial crisis and global slowdown since the Great Depression. On the other hand, though, it was pre-lapsarian, in that very little of the discussion addresses – or, given the date, could have addressed – the hurricane force hostility towards all political institutions and traditions which was unleashed when the *Daily Telegraph* began to publish details of individual MPs' expenses two months later.

David Marquand began the forum by setting out his main thesis. He emphasised four main points. First, he stressed that his categories were not rigid, and that individual politicians, of whom Blair was a particularly striking but in essence not untypical example, inevitably straddled more than one tradition in various ways and at different times. Second, reflecting the preoccupations of March 2009, Marquand argued that the economic crisis was of unprecedented depth, to an extent that politicians have not yet appreciated or articulated. Third, the economic crisis has ruptured, especially in the UK, the implicit postwar contract between the people and the state, under which the state guaranteed to provide security in return for the public's allegiance. And fourth, that the crisis has also ruptured what Marquand – paying homage to the late

E.P. Thompson's phrase – described as the 'moral economy' of British life, in other words the 'network of norms, understandings, conventions, which tell economic actors how they ought to behave'. In that sense, maybe, there was a connection between the ruptured moral economy represented by Sir Fred Goodwin and the bankers and the shortly to be ruptured moral economy as represented by Sir Peter Viggers MP's expectation that the taxpayer could properly be expected to pay for the 18th-century Swedish design floating island which he installed in his private pond for the benefit of his ducks.

Marquand's insistence on the flexibility of his categories became a leitmotiv in the discussion that followed. Professor Vernon Bogdanor FBA suspected that the categories were better suited to the political agenda of 2007 (when Marquand wrote his book) than to the post-credit crunch agenda in which the forum discussed them. Tony Wright MP agreed, arguing that Marquand would need to add a fifth category, nationalist republicanism – stretching from Joe Chamberlain to the British National Party perhaps. Several speakers – of whom Lord Radice was one – argued that there was more overlap between the democratic collectivist and the democratic republican traditions than Marquand allowed. Richard Reeves of Demos disagreed, insisting that the categories nevertheless did 'useful work', not least because they helped to elucidate the important difference, as he saw it, between the two. Reeves also challenged Marquand to explain why he saw the democratic republican tradition as having most to offer in 2009 when the whig imperialist tradition, as embodied by Cameron, was talking such a strong game (though Reeves was not to know it at the time, Cameron would continue to compete strongly with the democratic republicans over ownership of the post-expenses reform agenda in May).

Both Professor Tony King and Sir Christopher Foster raised more systemic questions about the usefulness of Marquand's categories to explain the particular dynamics of the present. King felt he was unclear what the democratic republican tradition actually offered in the modern political world. 'What does the way forward look like?' he asked,

with characteristic sharpness. Foster highlighted Marquand's difficulty in categorising Blair. This difficulty, Foster suggested, said more about modern politics as a whole, with its imperatives to take day-by-day stands on a whole range of issues, than it said about the particularity of Blair. Blair, Foster suspected, kept feet in all camps precisely because to do this is good tactics in modern media politics. Professor Andrew Gamble FBA took a similar view. All four categories exist in the modern political world and therefore all exist to be drawn on by politicians of all traditions or tribes. How a particular leader or party will select from among the Marquand categories will depend upon particular circumstances – Brown's response to the banking crisis or Cameron's response to the expenses furore both underline Gamble's point.

Re-reading the discussion from the far side of the river of events that has swept through Westminster politics since the British Academy Forum in March, however, it is Sir Douglas Wass's contribution that seems particularly prescient. Over the half a century during which he worked in Whitehall, Sir Douglas argued, politicians have changed. In the past, they stood for their own sense of the

public good, which they applied to the policy options before them. Today, by contrast, politicians have become professionalised. They seek high office, the higher the better, rather than following a policy-based approach, because politics is a career rather than a means to a policy end. Inevitably, therefore, politicians of today take the media and public opinion far more seriously than their predecessors did, save at election time. It therefore follows, said Sir Douglas, that the media set the political agenda to a degree that was not true in the past. The media, he implied, have reshaped British democracy and politics in ways which no minister in the 1950s could have possibly foreseen. It is doubtful whether anyone sitting round the table could possibly have realised how the events of May 2009 would push that process even further so soon, bringing the careers of dozens of MPs to their knees and raising major questions about the sustainability of Britain's unreformed political institutions. Nevertheless, everything that has happened on expenses in the intervening weeks lends weight to Wass's thesis about the role of the media in weakening the British state. And as Marquand himself said when he wound up the discussion, there will be no going back to the way things were.

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Martin Kettle is a columnist on the *Guardian*.

The British Academy Forum on 'The Strange Career of British Democracy' was held on 2 March 2009. An edited transcript of the discussion is available via [www.britac.ac.uk/events/archive/forum-democracy.cfm](http://www.britac.ac.uk/events/archive/forum-democracy.cfm)

British Academy Forums are regular workshops at which senior academics, policy makers, civil servants and other practitioners, politicians, and journalists can engage in frank, informed debate – without the point scoring. They provide a neutral forum for argument based on research and evidence, to help frame the terms of public debates and clarify policy options. It gives those immersed in current issues the opportunity to exchange views with others who can bring historical perspectives or other contextual insights.

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Figure 2. *Politicians at the mercy of the media.* Labour Chief Whip, Nick Brown, speaking to journalists outside Parliament, to announce that MP Elliot Morley had had his parliamentary party privileges withdrawn, 14 May 2009. Photo: Reuters/Andrew Winning.



# The 'Winter of Discontent' in British Politics

*The industrial strife that beset the Callaghan government in the winter of 1978–79, the 'winter of discontent', was seen at the time as a key factor in Labour's defeat in the 1979 general election. On 22 January 2009 – the 30th anniversary of that winter's first public sector 'day of action' – the British Academy hosted a panel discussion that brought together modern scholars and those who had been involved at the time, to consider the continuing significance of these events. Joint convenors of the occasion, Dr Hugh Pemberton and Dr Lawrence Black, here provide an account of the evening's lively debate – which began with a presentation by Professor Colin Hay that sought to offer new perspectives.*

THE LARGE audience that gathered for this discussion was testament not just to the perceived importance of the 'winter of discontent' in the trajectory of post-war British politics, but also to the way in which the events of that winter continue to resonate today.

Professor Colin Hay argued for the enduring significance of the winter of discontent, but suggested that it is nonetheless best seen as a 'manufactured crisis', lived and responded to through a particular construction of events. He argued that the 'mythology' of an overloaded state held to ransom by the trade unions and brought to this condition by its reliance on moribund Keynesian techniques, is difficult to reconcile with the evidence itself.

Discussion of Professor Hay's paper began with Peter Riddell (chief political commentator at *The Times* and senior fellow of the Institute of Government) asking Lord (David) Lea if the picture painted by Hay rang true. Lea, who was assistant general secretary of the Trades Union Congress at the time, began by welcoming the way in which Hay had brought out 'the very testing role'

that the unions played in incomes policy in the 1970s. 'We did a lot that was right' he thought. He noted that 'It was difficult running the pay policy'. The TUC was required to 'deliver what we agreed to deliver', and it succeeded in doing so, even though this often meant overriding agreements struck between unions and employers that were not consistent with the policy.

What the TUC could not be expected to do was to deliver what it had not agreed to deliver. This, for Lord Lea, was the nub of the matter. The logic of moving towards a 5 per cent limit on wage rises in 1978 might have been impeccable, but union members were simply not prepared to see a further erosion of their real wages.

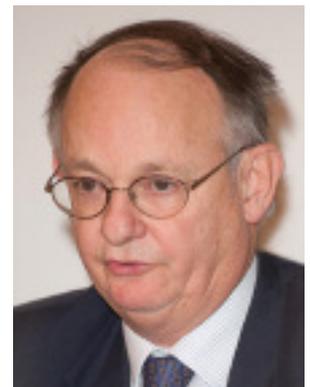
The unions were not 'trying to run the country' in the late-1970s. For years, in the teeth of opposition, the TUC had conceded cuts in real wages in return for social spending. That was responsible collective bargaining 'at a high level'. The unions had 'bust a gut to get the economy on the move again' after the 1976 IMF crisis. Much had been achieved, but by the autumn of 1978 they were being expected to sign up to a pay policy that was no longer supported by their members. In this sense, the winter of discontent was a crisis of the government's making.

Lord (Kenneth) Baker, who was in the Conservative shadow cabinet during the winter of discontent, then offered his perspective. He began robustly: Hay's analysis was 'interesting and original and profoundly wrong'. The winter of discontent was not a 'constructed' crisis. It was the inevitable 'end of an experiment in government which had lasted for 34 years'. Between 1945 and 1979, Britain's was a 'largely state controlled, state ownership economy' in which the market was not allowed to operate. Instead government was 'collectivist and corporative'.

In Lord Baker's view, 'that system broke down because of one thing – inflation.' Once inflation was injected into the system in the late-1950s, trade unions sought to protect their members from rising prices via higher wages. Incomes policy was the means by which successive governments sought to prevent this; but incomes policy was doomed to failure because it was akin to trying 'to alter the laws of gravity'. Gradually 'the whole thing began to blow apart'.

Ultimately, thought Lord Baker, incomes policy gave the unions too much power. He quoted Lord (Joel) Barnett's remark that the social contract was meant to be give and take, but the only give and take in the contract was that the government gave and the unions

Figure 1. Participants at the 'Winter of Discontent' panel discussion: Colin Hay, David Lea, Kenneth Baker and David Lipsey



took. Not surprisingly, Lord Lea vigorously disagreed, but Lord Baker ended by remarking that the events of the winter of discontent were 'absolutely amazing', marking 'the end of civil order'. The election of May 1979, as it had been in February 1974, was essentially about who governed the country – the government or the unions?

The phrase 'winter of discontent' was first used in 1978–79 by Lord (David) Lipsey, then special adviser to the prime minister, in a memorandum in which he set out the likely outcome of the 5 per cent pay policy. In his comments, Lord Lipsey immediately took issue with the idea that the events of that winter have been overplayed. He noted that in Manchester there was no water for 10 days; people were getting water out of stand pipes in the street. In Liverpool 'the mortuaries were closed because the grave diggers wouldn't dig the graves, and serious consideration was being given to dumping bodies at sea'. In Leicester Square a huge pile of rubbish was alive with rats. For those in No. 10, however, the worst thing 'was the constant, terrifying fear that the whole thing might collapse around us'. A fear compounded by the fact that Tony Benn, who was on the side of the strikers, was involved in ensuring the supply of fuel.

Lord Lipsey went on to say that, even if one accepted that the winter of discontent was a 'constructed' crisis, that analysis missed an essential point: that the politics of that winter was essentially a battle between two 'very crude narratives'. The Conservative narrative was 'the unions are running the country, Keynesianism is at an end, an over-burdened state simply cannot cope'. Labour's narrative was that 'government is best carried on working with the unions'.

Lord Lipsey accepted that the 5 per cent pay policy was unattainable. He thought it unnecessary that the whole post-war settlement should have been rejected in 1979. That this happened was, in his view, the fault of the unions. They had not decided if they were part of an 'ameliorative project or a transformational project'. In practice he thought it often ameliorative. The rhetoric, however, was 'transformational, revolutionary'. Coupled with the weakness of the TUC (which lacked control over member



Figure 2. Shepherd Street, central London, February 1979. A woman walks past a pavement piled high with rubbish because of a strike by refuse collectors. Photo: Graham Turner/Getty Images.

unions) and of trade union leaders (who were unable to control their shop stewards), the unions 'did for themselves' by turning the pay policy into a trial of strength. The result was Margaret Thatcher and the creation of New Labour, the latter 'simply the post-war settlement with no trade unions'.

Contributions from the audience included Adam Ridley, in 1978–79 assistant director of the Conservative Party Research Department. He complained that Hay's account was 'unbalanced'. The social contract was about much more than incomes policy: it was about a much greater role for the unions in British society, for example in industrial democracy. Moreover, Hay was wrong to see 1979 as the point at which Keynesianism was replaced by monetarism; this had occurred in 1976. Thus Lord Baker was right to identify 1979 not as the end of Keynesianism, but as the end of the Butskellite consensus, and of the idea that unions should play a part in government. Nor did Ridley agree with the view that Labour had achieved much between 1976 and 1978. Economic growth was barely 1 per cent a year, public spending rose by 20 per cent, nominal wages more than doubled, but real wages grew scarcely

at all. He did not think any other OECD country had such a poor record, 'indeed it was probably the worst performance of any British government in the whole of our history'.

Professor Vernon Bogdanor FBA also thought Lord Baker right to see the winter of discontent as marking the, perhaps inevitable, culmination of the post-war settlement. He thought a key problem at the time had been that the unions had been seen as ameliorative and reforming; but that actually their role had come to be the preservation of 'an order that was already becoming politically obsolete'.

Lord (Kenneth) Morgan FBA agreed that the winter of discontent was 'a real crisis'. He highlighted the 'disloyalty' displayed by the unions towards Jim Callaghan. Robert Taylor, who in 1978–79 was labour editor of the *Observer*, thought it was too easy to blame the shop stewards, as Lord Lipsey had done. Nor was incomes policy unpopular – he noted a Gallup opinion poll showing two-thirds of people supported it. Rather the mistake had been to go for a 5 per cent pay guideline. This tightening of the policy when one might

have expected a loosening was 'historically extraordinary'. **Jim Morh**, then a junior official in the Transport and General Workers' Union, agreed.

Lord Lipsey had support from **Lord Bill Rodgers**, who was Transport Secretary during the winter of discontent. He highlighted the intensity of events, the sense of helplessness in government at the time, and Labour's ideological infighting. 'There had to be a collapse, or a near collapse', to enable Labour to reinvent itself and to allow the Conservatives to solve problems which Labour had found itself unable to deal with.

In this vigorous debate, whilst there was disagreement between Lords Lea, Lipsey, and Baker about whether the cause of the winter

of discontent lay in government, the unions, or the entire post-war settlement, what was striking was the unanimity amongst those who spoke that it was a transformative moment in post-war British history. Also notable was a pervasive sense that the country might now be at a similar turning point, but with the banks taking the place of the unions as the villains of the piece.

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Colin Hay is Professor of Political Analysis, and Co-Director of the Political Economy Research Centre, at the University of Sheffield. The full text of his discussion paper, 'Chronicles of a Death Foretold: The Winter of Discontent and Construction of the Crisis of British Keynesianism', can be found via: [www.britac.ac.uk/events/2008/discontent/index.cfm](http://www.britac.ac.uk/events/2008/discontent/index.cfm)

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An audio recording of the whole panel discussion can be found via: [www.britac.ac.uk/events/](http://www.britac.ac.uk/events/)

A fuller version of the discussion will be published in *Political Quarterly*.

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Hugh Pemberton is Senior Lecturer in Modern British History at the University of Bristol. Lawrence Black is Senior Lecturer in the Department of History at the University of Durham. Together with Professor Pat Thane FBA, they are convening a workshop to be held at the British Academy in September 2009 on 'Reassessing the 1970s'.

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## The Voluntary Sector in British Society

On 20 March 2009, the British Academy held a workshop to consider continuity and change in the socio-political roles of voluntarism and voluntary associations in British society. The convenor of the event, **Professor Pat Thane FBA**, charts the history of the voluntary sector from Victorian times to the present day.

**I**N THIS workshop, academics interested in the history and the present of voluntary action were brought together with practitioners in the sector, for a day of sustained, stimulating discussion. Despite public assertions that voluntary action is in decline, along with community cohesion in an increasingly individualistic, greed-driven age, the evidence from past and present is strongly to the contrary.

Change over time is hard to measure in such a diverse sector, in which much activity is local and/or ephemeral and poorly recorded. We do not have good long-run statistics or tools of measurement. It is so diverse that it is difficult to define, or even name. Forms of activity that once were wholly or mainly voluntary in staffing and sources of funding have, especially since the 1960s and 1970s, become increasingly professionalised, and are increasingly recipients of government and/or EU funding in addition to voluntary and other funding sources. These are perhaps more appropriately described as Non-Governmental Organisations, a term no longer reserved for the overseas aid sector. A

new term has recently entered the discourse, apparently propelled by New Labour: 'Third Sector', a sector of activity belonging neither to government nor the market.

There is indeed a danger, as was pointed out in the discussion, of defining the sector so widely that it loses all coherence. But the reality is that it encompasses a sprawling, diverse set of activities. A number of speakers sought to sub-divide these for analytical purposes, for example distinguishing between different forms of activity – such as that directed towards the arts and leisure, or to welfare and community needs. These are not mutually exclusive categories, but such divisions have the advantage of familiarity to those operating in these and other sub-fields.

### The Past

If it is hard to measure change over time with any precision, phases of historical change were identified by speakers and contributors. To summarise these very broadly: voluntary action, often though not always directed towards the needs of the poor, can be found throughout British history, often closely

associated with religious institutions. Certain voluntary institutions, in particular the magistracy and local government, have long been part of the state apparatus.

Voluntary action in the welfare field grew fastest as the economy expanded, especially with industrial growth in the 19th century. Largely it was genuinely voluntary in personnel and sources of funding, and independent of government – though not entirely so even then, and less so as the sphere of government action expanded. Even from the 1830s, voluntary, mainly faith-based institutions providing schooling for the working classes were funded, and increasingly regulated, by a state which was increasingly concerned about the literacy and discipline of the population and which eventually took control of most educational institutions. Education provided a model for future developments in state welfare: activities pioneered by the voluntary sector were adopted by the state.

As the sphere of state welfare grew through the first half of the 20th century, the state

and voluntary organisations worked increasingly closely together. The state was slower to be involved in sport and the arts, which came mainly in the second half of the century. Pioneering state welfare measures, such as old age pensions (introduced in 1908), national health and unemployment insurance (introduced 1911) were in fact administered by voluntary organisations, mainly Friendly Societies and trade unions. This was partly because it was cheaper for the state to build on their experience in these fields and on pre-existing administrative structures than to create a new bureaucracy, but also the Liberal government of the early 20th century believed that voluntary action was essential to a good society and should not be supplanted by the state. In their view the role of the state was to supplement the limited resources of the voluntary sector and make the services pioneered by volunteers more widely available.

The post-1945 Labour government greatly expanded the welfare role of the state. It also, in 1946, founded the Arts Council, funded by the state to develop the arts and increase public access to previously largely elite forms of culture. An increasingly active state caused uncertainty for established voluntary organisations, who wondered whether they still had a role. Certainly, within the labour movement there was a strong, and understandable, strain of hostility to what was seen as 'charity', which many working people had experienced as demeaning. But there were other influential ideas at the time. William Beveridge (Figure 1), whose 1942 report *Social Insurance and Allied Services* influenced many post-war welfare developments, did not believe that the state should displace voluntary action; indeed he wrote a book of that name in 1948, stressing its continuing importance. He wanted the state to provide for the basic needs of everyone. Beyond that basic level, they should provide for themselves or be supported by voluntary action. For this reason, he always disliked the term 'welfare state', which he believed implied dependency on the state, and referred instead to the 'welfare society' and the 'social service state' which, he thought, implied the duty for people to help themselves and others and to support the state.

The very formation of the post-war 'Welfare State' stimulated some new voluntary activities on behalf of groups whom it was feared would be marginalised by the new institutions. For example, the National Corporation for the Care of Old People (now the Centre for Policy on Ageing) was formed in 1947 to protect the interests of older people; and the organisation that is now MENCAP was founded in 1946 to ensure that children who were then described as 'backward' should be adequately cared for in the new educational and health systems. Through the 1950s, it became increasingly clear that the gaps in the welfare state were considerable. Established voluntary organisations recovered and reconfigured their activities, and new ones were formed to campaign for improvements.

From the mid 1960s, when large-scale poverty was 'rediscovered' through the research of Peter Townsend and Brian Abel-Smith at the London School of Economics, there emerged a new type of professionalised, media-aware campaigning organisations, often more inclusive of the groups they sought to help than their predecessors, and with snappier titles. They included the Child Poverty Action Group (founded 1965) and Shelter (founded 1966). They were products of the new awareness of continuing poverty in an increasingly prosperous society; of the return of a Labour government in 1964 and

hopes that it would continue expansion of the welfare state, on hold since its defeat in 1951; of growing numbers of trained social scientists graduating from universities keen to change the world; and of a less deferential society and mass media. Older organisations gradually followed the new model, symbolised by name changes for most of them – for example, the Old People's Welfare Committee (founded 1940) became Age Concern.

The international economic crisis of the mid 1970s led to attempts to cut back state welfare, and to encourage and subsidise voluntary organisations to replace it. This was especially so in the 1980s and continued through the 1990s, through the change of government in 1997. One outcome was the emergence of a new type of voluntary organisation, formed to challenge what had once been voluntary organisations which were now seen as arms of the state – for example, the emergence of associations of tenants of housing associations which, from the 1980s, took control of what had once been council housing but was shifted into the 'third' sector. A growing danger for the voluntary sector through the past century, of which it has been well aware, was that close association with the state and dependence on state funding would restrict its independence, since state funding is rarely unconditional.

## The Present

The sector now consists of a wide range of activities that, despite frequent pronouncements of its demise, is large, active and continually renewing itself.

A UK Home Office survey in 2003 found that 39 per cent of adults in England and Wales had 'formally' volunteered within the previous twelve months, i.e. had participated in some organised voluntary activity. Many others are known to volunteer 'informally' – e.g. helping out neighbours with difficulties – but they are difficult to quantify. Whether this is a higher or lower proportion of the population than in previous decades is, again, unknown for certain, because of a lack of comparable statistics, but voluntary action is clearly still very strong in early 21st-century Britain. This brief survey of the history of voluntary action has discussed the

Figure 1. Lord (William) Beveridge, Fellow of the British Academy. Photo: Ramsay & Muspratt.



organisations, but not the volunteers. They too have changed. Until the 1950s, the backbone of volunteering was middle and upper class women, who were mostly excluded from paid employment. As employment opportunities opened up for them, they were replaced with paid professionals and younger people. More recently a major resource has been the growing army of fit, active and experienced retired people. For example, Voluntary Service Overseas was set up in 1976 to find opportunities for young people to volunteer in poor communities abroad after leaving school or university. Their clients have changed. In 2008, 28 per cent of VSO volunteers were aged 50 or above, compared with 3 per cent twenty years before. 'Retired' people are working in poor countries as nurses, doctors, teachers, improving water supplies, giving training in how to start businesses, with skills and experience to offer that 18–21 year olds do not have. About 27 per cent of people over 60 are active in formal

voluntary organisations in the UK. The shape of the population changes but does not diminish the commitment to voluntary action.

Society cannot be wholly 'broken' if organisations continually emerge, as they do, to try to remedy its 'broken', dysfunctional features. There *are* selfish, individualist strands in modern society, and they too create voluntary organisations to promote their sectional interests, protecting their own back yards. Voluntary action is not always altruistic. It expresses many aspects of society, including Britain's increased multiculturalism. Immigrant groups have always created voluntary organisations to protect their members and meet their needs, as Jewish migrants to Britain did in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Anyone who doubts the continuing importance of voluntary action should try to imagine British society without it. It is unimaginable, so central to life at all levels

are the diverse organisations in question. If they disappeared, the government might be glad to be rid of many critics, but they would miss many others. Government has become as dependent on non-governmental organisations that carry out essential tasks in the welfare and cultural spheres as some of them, such as housing associations, are on the government. Voluntary action enters almost every area of human activity. This British Academy workshop perhaps helped us better to understand its roles in British society.

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The workshop was organised jointly with the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary History, University of Birmingham, through its 'NGOs in Britain 1945–1997' project.

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## Civil Society – after a decade under New Labour, and in the age of Obama

**On 24 February 2009, the British Academy hosted an event in association with ARVAC (the Association for Research in the Voluntary and Community Sector) which compared the state of civil society in Britain and in the United States.**

In his talk 'Civil Society in the age of Obama', Jon Van Til (Professor of Urban Studies at Rutgers University) examined the choices that face President Obama's administration in the area of civil society – 'that vast but amorphous set of individual and group actions that lie outside the formal boundaries of government, business, and family/kin'. He argued that three embodiments of Barack Obama – orator, pragmatist and organiser – frame the policy choices of his new administration, which may find itself forcefully driven by a global transformation in civil society that Obama himself has done much to engender.

In 'A decade of Civil Society under New Labour', Colin Rochester (Visiting Senior Research Fellow at the

Centre for the Study of Voluntary and Community Activity, Roehampton University) provided an overview of the experience of the UK's voluntary and community sector since 1997. He critically examined New Labour's policy of engagement with the sector, and discussed the impact of its actions on voluntary sector organisations.

The texts of the two presentations may be found on the ARVAC website ([www.arvac.org.uk/docs/LECTURES2009.pdf](http://www.arvac.org.uk/docs/LECTURES2009.pdf))

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Summing up as Chairman at the end, Professor Nicholas Deakin spoke optimistically about the resilience of the voluntary and community sector in Britain. 'We don't get lectured by business so much – particularly in present circumstances – on adopting their models. We are much more likely now to be telling them about *our* models, and I think that is a thoroughly healthy development.'

# UK Civil Nuclear Energy: What Lessons?

*In 2008–09, the British Academy, the Science Museum and the Mile End Group of Queen Mary, University of London have jointly sponsored a series of lectures on 'Politics and energy'. On 6 May 2008 at the Science Museum, Professor Sir Roger Williams began the series – listing the lessons to be learned by those planning a nuclear solution to our future energy needs.*

I WAS FLATTERED when asked to give this lecture. An ex-Vice Chancellor who has compounded his academic sin by going on to chair a higher education funding council is usually invited to speak only about higher education. My nuclear credentials are also somewhat long in the tooth: my book analysing Britain's Magnox and AGR nuclear power programmes was published in 1980, and the House of Lords inquiry on research and development in nuclear power, for which I was a specialist adviser, reported as long ago as 1987. The other specialist adviser on that occasion was Sir John Hill, former Atomic Energy Authority chairman, who sadly died in January 2008.

The remarkable thing, after the early decades of hyper-activity, is how relatively little has since happened to nuclear power, at least until the last few years. From the late 1970s to the late 1990s in particular, when new Asian orders began to be placed, the nuclear industry worldwide was in the doldrums. Nuclear power's share of expanding world electricity demand did nevertheless hold up, at around 16–17 per cent. This was because, despite all, there were a few start-ups as well as shutdowns, while growing experience with nuclear stations permitted increases in plant ratings, load factors and projected lives. But in the years of cheap gas and oil, when for most people carbon dioxide was something which they encountered only in fizzy drinks, nuclear power in Britain became almost *passé*, less considered even than coal as we rapidly shrank that industry.

Having begun by acknowledging the venerable character of my credentials, I want as a second initial point to enter a reservation.

Although I am in this lecture to draw lessons from the history of nuclear power in Britain, I am a shade sceptical about all such exercises, for the following reason. Attacking Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin, Winston Churchill once asserted that 'History will say the right honourable gentleman was wrong in this matter,' adding after a brief pause, 'I know it will, because I shall write the history.' I recognise, in other words, that mine is simply one view of past events, and that other equally valid views are perfectly possible.

And there is yet a third introductory point I must make. With most topics it is hardly necessary for a speaker to say where exactly he is coming from, what his biases might be. But such an approach will not do here. Rather, I feel that, to be taken seriously, it is incumbent upon me to start by being as honest as possible about my own personal approach to nuclear power.

I did not spend years researching a book and publishing numerous papers about nuclear power because I was technocratic or gung-ho for this new technology. On the contrary, while deeply interested in nuclear power as science, technology and policy, at root I began by sharing the man-in-the-street's worries about it. Frankly, I had been uncomfortable about radiation since discovering casually one day in Oxford's Clarendon Laboratory that, among us physics undergraduates, it was my particular luminous wristwatch which emitted by far the most radiation. Further, in 1964 I initially accepted a junior research position at Culham, from Bas Pease no less, because, in my youthful idealism, I believed there had to be a better route to energy than nuclear fission, and that nuclear fusion was probably it. Fusion, you will recall, was then just forty years away from successful exploitation – as of course it still is.

Actually, romantic that I remain, I still have hopes of fusion: that after all is how the stars shine. But even if in the end fusion does prove a viable energy source on earth, such a development is well outside the current policy timeframe. As well as fusion, my other great speculative hope in the energy field centres on the new, or warm, super-

conductors, whose commercial introduction could hugely diminish transmission losses and so substantially transform the overall picture by increasing effective supply. This innovation would obviously be of greatest benefit where long distance transmission is required, as for example in bringing electricity from solar arrays in the Sahara to Europe, a scheme which has its advocates even with existing transmission methods. Unfortunately, superconductors of this sort, if not perhaps as distant a prospect as fusion, are still hardly on the immediate horizon.

To complete these somewhat personal observations, I ought finally to admit that, although in the mid 1960s I worked in operational research for the National Coal Board, was in fact safety-trained in the Kent coalfield at a time when there were many hundreds of coalmines, I have never held much of a brief for coal as an energy source either, because I grew up in a South Wales mining village and so knew at first-hand about both pneumoconiosis and the propensity for accidental death underground.

I am then, someone with no great natural love for either nuclear power or coal. It follows that I firmly support careful policy encouragement of all three current energy hopes: enhanced efficiency (including improved heat insulation), decentralised supply, and renewable sources, provided naturally that, in each case, the carbon footprints as well as the economics of all relevant artefacts are correctly treated. For what it is worth, my own greatest hope among the renewables is of tidal power, whether in barrage or free standing form, since this renewable is both predictable and potentially substantial. Really to let my prejudices show, I believe that only for better reasons than I have yet seen should we not proceed with some version of the proposed Severn Barrage.

I am also, however, a comfortable member of the middle classes, who wants his descendents to enjoy at least the same level of affluence and access to energy as he currently does, and wants them to do this on a planet whose temperature is stable. Furthermore, I am someone who can see no reason why all

human beings should not aspire to precisely the same advantages as I enjoy, and in a timeframe which is not excessive.

I am making here, of course, what seems presently by far the safest working assumption in respect of global warming, that mankind needs to tackle it with substantially more commitment and urgency than we are as yet demonstrating. I am also moved in passing to observe that since, on only a little more extreme warming projections, the room in London where this lecture is being delivered could itself sooner rather than later be under water, significant defensive steps will eventually be needed outside, as well as within, the energy field.

Unfortunately, many of us, having examined the contemporary dilemma facing Britain and the world, remain unconvinced that energy efficiency, decentralised supply and renewable energy sources between them, however hard they are pressed, can guarantee energy security, at least on the requisite timescale. Energy security here, of course, implies both absolute supply and freedom from political problems in relation to access. Britain in particular faces a somewhat tight energy situation in a relatively short period and, with new energy facilities mostly having long lead times, has correspondingly limited room for manoeuvre. And like it or not, much of a rapidly growing world electricity demand over the next century, above all in China and India, is going to be met either by generation from coal, with carbon capture only if we are very lucky and the requisite technology advances more rapidly than currently seems likely; or else by nuclear power. It is against this domestic and international background that it seems to me both responsible and prudent for the British Government to have made the general provision in respect of nuclear power which it has now done: better even as late as this provision was, than never.

So much by way of preamble, necessary I feel if you are to be in a position properly to judge the credibility of what follows: in the balance of the 30 minutes allowed me, let me turn properly to my topic, the real lessons from the history of British civil nuclear power.

### Public acceptance

For nuclear power to have a successful future in Britain a first vital lesson to be drawn from

its past in this country is that nuclear policy must be 'owned' by the public to a much greater extent than it ever was in the past. This does not, and realistically could not, mean that everyone must be in favour of nuclear power. It does mean that there is brought about, as a minimum, a broad public acceptance that nuclear power is a rightful part of the way forward. I therefore believe it essential that those who espouse nuclear power take the trouble to ensure that at least this minimum acceptance comes about. Unfortunately, nothing like enough such trouble was taken in respect of the Magnox or Advanced Gas-cooled Reactor (AGR) programmes, or as regards the later introduction of light water reactor technology into Britain. It also needs to be recognised that public inquiries like those at Windscale in 1977–78 and Sizewell in 1982–85 are, at best, tangential to this objective.

One hundred and forty years and two World Wars separated Waterloo and the announcement of the Magnox programme. Nevertheless, British government in 1955 remained permeated by many who would fully have shared the Duke of Wellington's strong disapproval of soldiers cheering, as being too nearly an expression of opinion. Even constructive criticism was unwelcome in the 1950s and 1960s, as I know from direct experience. In my book I described the politics of British nuclear power in its first decades as essentially 'private' to the institutions concerned, the Atomic Energy Authority and British Nuclear Fuels, the electricity generating boards, the construction consortia, the Nuclear Inspectorate and the various associated government departments. Only in the 1970s did the politics of nuclear power become genuinely 'public', to both the dismay and the disadvantage of those who until then had conducted only the 'private' form.

The nuclear industry's worst single failure in regard to public attitudes was undoubtedly its handling of the nuclear waste issue. In respect of the science and technology underlying this problem, the industry was doubtless right in the position which it took: the radioactive waste volumes being generated were perfectly manageable with the ad hoc arrangements in place, and it was best to delay the adoption of any final solution to the nuclear waste

## TIMELINE OF UK CIVIL NUCLEAR ENERGY

### 1908

British physicist and future Nobel Prize winner, Frederick Soddy proposes potential importance of atomic power in lecture at Glasgow University, subsequently published as *The Interpretation of Radium* (John Murray, 1909): 'The energy in a ton of uranium would be sufficient to light London for a year'.

### 1945

July. Labour Party elected to government.

August. Explosion of two US atomic bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

15 November. Cabinet discusses draft of telegram to be issued that day by US President Harry Truman, British Prime Minister Clement Attlee, and Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King, promising utilisation of atomic energy for peaceful and humanitarian ends, and disclosure of 'detailed information concerning the practical industrial application of atomic energy just as soon as effective enforceable safeguards against its use for destructive purposes can be devised. ... It was explained that the present statement was confined to the disclosure to other countries of information possessed by the United States, Great Britain and Canada.' CM (53) 45; National Archives, CAB 128/2

22 November. The Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, reports to Cabinet that talks with Truman mean 'there was no question of any restriction on our liberty to exploit the industrial application of these researches into the use of atomic energy.' CM 55 (45); National Archives CAB 128/2

### 1946

1 January. Dr John Cockroft establishes the 'Atomic Research and Experimental Establishment' at Harwell on former RAF site, near Oxford.

17 January. 'The Prime Minister informed the Cabinet of a statement which he was proposing to make in the House of Commons on the 22nd January regarding the establishment of an organisation under the Ministry of Supply for the production of fissile material required for the development of the Government's programme for the use of atomic energy. This would make it clear that the Government's object in establishing this production plant was to make available as speedily as possible fissile material in sufficient quantity to enable us to take advantage rapidly of technical developments as they occurred, and to develop our programme for the use of atomic energy as circumstances might require. He would announce at the same time that Marshal of the Royal Air Force Lord Portal of Hungerford had been chosen as head of this production organisation; and that Professor J. D. Cockroft had been selected for the post of

## TIMELINE OF UK CIVIL NUCLEAR ENERGY cont

Director of the Research and Experimental Establishment at Harwell.' CM 6(46); National Archives CAB 128/5

6 November. Atomic Energy Act gives authority for atomic power to Ministry of Supply.

GLEEP (Graphite Low Energy Experimental Pile) is constructed at Harwell, Europe's first reactor (operated for isotope production at 100 kW, but for most of its life at 3 kW). Went critical 1947.

Construction of BEPO (British Experimental Pile 0) of 6000 kW begins. Used natural uranium, graphite moderator and air coolant. Went critical July 1948.

### 1947

Beginning of design of Pippa (Pressurised Pile for Producing Power and Plutonium).

### 1951

October. Conservative Party elected to government.

### 1952

30 September. Paper by the Paymaster General [Lord Cherwell] presented to Cabinet proposes transfer of atomic energy out of civil service to a nationally owned corporation. 'The exploitation of atomic energy is the most important step taken by man in the mastery of nature since the discovery of fire. In civil life it offers us the prospect of supplementing, during the next few decades, our straitened coal resources. Less than 100 tons of uranium yearly may generate the whole of the nation's electricity. In the military sphere it will soon dwarf all other weapons and perhaps effect changes in international relations as great as those once wrought by gunpowder in the political structure of Europe.' C (52) 317; National Archives CAB 129/55

3 October. Britain conducts successful test of an atomic bomb.

### 1953

26 January. Minister of Supply [Duncan Sandys] announces British nuclear programme.

White Paper on the 'The Future organisation of the UK atomic energy project' proposes non-departmental Atomic Energy Corporation. Established as the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) in 1954.

March. Government announces first 50 MW reactor based on Pippa design optimised for plutonium production to be built at Calder Hall.

### 1954

16 December. Lord President of the Council [Lord Salisbury] presents to the Cabinet a memorandum on 'The Trend Report', the



Figure 1. Key documents: the 1955 White Paper 'A Programme of Nuclear Power'; the 1965 Appraisal of Dungeness B; the 1976 Flowers Report on 'Nuclear Power and the Environment'.

problem as long as possible, so that that solution, when eventually it was selected, could benefit from the most up to date technical knowledge. This position, however, had the disadvantage of leaving nuclear power vulnerable to exactly the criticism made by the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution in its 1976 report, the famous, or notorious, Flowers Report (Figure 1). This Royal Commission wanted a major commitment to nuclear power 'postponed as long as possible, in the hope that it might be avoided altogether', and in one of its most quoted passages stated that 'it would be irresponsible and morally wrong to commit future generations to the consequences of fission power on a massive scale unless it has been demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt that at least one method exists for the safe isolation of these wastes for the indefinite future.' The nuclear community took this stricture ill, its earlier neglect of this dimension having left it quite unprepared to respond properly to such a charge. But, one might say, all that was thirty years ago and the lessons have long since been learned: perhaps they have, and then again, perhaps they have not. This waste issue needs now to be put to rest in the only way in which that can be done: by saying to the concerned public 'There, in all necessary detail, is the watertight solution which we will apply, and we will move from that solution if and only if at some time in the future we discover an even better solution.'

There are in fact three main aspects to the nuclear waste issue: settling upon a technology, determining a site or sites for final disposal, and ensuring the provision of the necessary finance. With the creation of the Nuclear Liabilities Financing Assurance Board, the government has moved to provide for the third of these aspects. Echoing the Royal Commission of 1976, it would not be unreasonable, a full third of a century after that Commission reported, to argue that, urgent as may be the need for new nuclear stations, none should be approved for construction until the first two aspects have been equally firmly assured.

To meet the public concern about the waste issue, and any other concerns like it, what ideally there would be in the energy field is an institutional source capable of holding the public's trust as ministers, and governments, come and go, a bastion against both the inevitable tide of challenging events and the undercurrent of distrust now all too evident in most things governmental. Here, for example, are just four important points which a really trusted source, but only such a source, might usefully make immediately about nuclear power:

First, we do not create a major new waste problem by building further nuclear stations. We already have that problem, whether one characterises it as major or otherwise, as a result of our nuclear weapons programme and the nuclear power stations we have

already built. Another way of presenting the waste problem is to note that new nuclear stations will both produce much less waste than those they replace, and will also generate revenue to help fund whatever approach is judged best for dealing with all the waste, old as well as new.

Second, we do not wholly avoid whatever hazards there still are in contemporary nuclear reactors simply by building no more of them, because France, which currently generates 80 per cent of its electricity from the atom, will certainly persist with nuclear power, many French nuclear sites are located along the Channel coast, and in the event of an accident the prevailing winds are from the west. Nor, it should be recalled, were we untouched by the much more distant disaster at Chernobyl in 1986. What is more, if Britain is to help ensure the highest possible standards of construction and operation in nuclear facilities worldwide, then this is not something we can expect to be able to do from the sidelines.

Third, nuclear weapon proliferation and nuclear power should no longer be bracketed together because, even if all nuclear power development were halted worldwide, the nuclear genie is anyway long out of the bottle and in consequence proliferation has for some years been much more dependent upon political will than it has been upon the availability of technical knowledge. The human race will have escaped lightly if Hiroshima and Nagasaki end up the only instances of nuclear weapons being used in anger, but even if one day these weapons are used again, nuclear power per se will not be to blame. Indeed, one might equally well advance precisely the opposite argument, that a world from which nuclear power has been banned, and which is short of energy, or experiencing uncontrolled global warming, is likely as a result to exhibit a greater propensity for conflict.

Fourth, we have in Britain, and throughout the world, communities which have now lived in proximity to nuclear facilities for, in some cases, more than half a century. This is a fact of considerable social and political significance. Furthermore, while these locations tend naturally to be the first places considered when new nuclear facilities are being proposed, this should not be taken as

meaning that such locations constitute an already exhausted set.

More points like these four could, and should, be made, but let me now turn back to other lessons from the British nuclear story.

### Healthy scepticism

Hardly less important than a real public ownership of nuclear power policy is for policy makers to resolve to be completely honest with themselves, and also adequately sceptical about all claims made by whatever agency. Once again, it was not so in the past. The worst single example here was the announcement in May 1965 that, in a nominally fair competition, the British AGR had decisively beaten off the challenge offered to it by American light water reactor technology. Politics being what it is, it was perhaps forgivable for the minister responsible to claim publicly that this was 'the greatest breakthrough of all time'. And it was also understandable that, conscious of their responsibility as a shop window for British technology, the electricity authorities had the outline of their comparative reactor appraisal translated into six languages. But those close to the decision had no business fooling themselves as to the imperfect integrity of the assessment process which they had gone through, with its highly dubious, and as it turned out in some instances plain wrong, assumptions. I have quoted the Duke of Wellington once already in this lecture. Let me do so again. It seems that a Mr Jones, secretary of the Royal Academy, was occasionally mistaken for the Duke but that on one occasion it happened the other way round, a minor civil servant in Pall Mall raising his hat to the Duke and saying 'Mr Jones, I believe', to which the great man immediately replied 'Sir, if you will believe that, you will believe anything.' So certainly it was with the AGR decision of 1965: if you believed that you really were capable of believing anything. Inevitably too, the self-delusion behind this decision had to be paid for, the Dungeness B station, the initial prize which the AGR's controversial win had secured, taking 20 years to complete.

Though this was the worst single example of British wishful thinking, it was regrettably far from unique. In the same category must be included the persistence with all-purpose

## TIMELINE OF UK CIVIL NUCLEAR ENERGY cont

report of an interdepartmental committee, chaired by Burke Trend, on 'the production of power from nuclear energy'. The generation of electricity by nuclear methods can now be accepted as technically feasible and has a good chance of proving, within the next 10 years, competitive with electricity generated by conventional methods. C 54 (395); National Archives CAB 129/72

21 December. Lord President of the Council [Lord Salisbury] brings plan for civil nuclear programme to Cabinet. Asks for £50 million for two power stations to be completed by 1960. The Chancellor of the Exchequer [R.A. Butler] 'said that the successful development of atomic power for civil purposes was of crucial importance to the future of the national economy', and welcomes proposal. The Cabinet agreed. CC 90 (54); National Archives CAB 128/27.

### 1955

4 February. The Lord President of the Council [Lord Salisbury] presents to the Cabinet the draft white paper 'A Programme of Nuclear Power'. Proposes 4 commercial stations on Calder Hall pattern, followed by 4 more Advanced Gas-cooled Reactors (1963-64), followed by 4 liquid-cooled reactors. 'Nuclear energy is the energy of the future. ... Our civilization is based on power. Improved living standards both in advanced industrial countries like our own and in the vast underdeveloped countries overseas can only come about through the increased use of power. The rate of increase required is so great that it will tax the existing resources of energy to the utmost. Whatever the immediate uncertainties, nuclear energy will in time be capable of producing power economically. Moreover it provides a source of energy potentially much greater than any that exist now. The coming of nuclear power therefore marks the beginning of a new era. ... The stakes are high but the final reward will be immeasurable. We must keep ourselves in the forefront of the development of nuclear power so that we can play our proper part in harnessing this new form of energy for the benefit of mankind'. C 55 (31); National Archives CAB 129/73.

### 1956

July-November. Suez crisis and British/French takeover of Suez Canal. Oil crisis.

17 October. Queen opens Calder Hall, proclaimed as the world's first civil nuclear power station.

### 1957

Advanced Gas-cooled Reactor prototype design approved.

28 February. Cabinet approves trebling of nuclear power programme: 'the unit cost of electricity from the earliest nuclear power

### TIMELINE OF UK CIVIL NUCLEAR ENERGY cont

station might prove to be slightly higher than that from conventional stations; but technical development, which might be expected to be rapid, should succeed in eliminating this excess cost.' CC 14 (57); National Archives CAB 128/31

1 August. Following a recommendation that the government borrow from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development [part of the World Bank] to fund nuclear power, the Minister of Power [Lord Mills] tells Cabinet 'a decision to borrow from abroad on behalf of our nuclear power programme, which had become a symbol of our industrial leadership in the post-war period, would be a considerable shock to public opinion.' C.C. 60(57); National Archives CAB 128/31

October. Fire at Windscale Pile, next to Calder Hall.

#### 1958

Concentration on four types of reactor: Steam Generating Heavy Water Reactor (SGHWR), Advanced Gas-cooled Reactor (AGR), Fast Breeder Reactor (FBR), High Temperature gas-cooled Reactor (HTR).

nuclear construction consortia to build the stations, no less than five having initially been encouraged to form. This was wishful thinking because the competition to which the consortia gave rise, when not outright spurious, tended to produce expensive diversity rather than efficient design replication. The consortia system also led to a 'Buggins' turn' principle which, when it failed, caused much political embarrassment, notably over the second reactor at the Wylfa station, and then that affair's knock-on effect at Dungeness B. Competition is well worth the having, but only when it is genuine, and in the context of high technology, competition's scope will often be quite limited. This again is something to remember for the future.

Some would also describe as wishful thinking the long British persistence with gas-cooled reactors, but there is a more important lesson of contemporary relevance which this persistence illustrates. It is well understood that Britain felt pushed into gas-cooled, graphite-moderated, natural uranium reactors by the circumstances which the country faced in the late 1940s. Plutonium

was urgently needed for the weapons programme; the United States had abruptly ended war-time atomic co-operation; enriched uranium was not readily available as fuel, nor was heavy water as moderator; and light water reactors, being then thought less safe, were judged to need remote sites, a difficult problem for a small country like the UK. But despite these reactors initially being off-limits, the underlying attractions of water cooled reactors did not go unrecognised in Britain, and the 1955 White Paper which announced Britain's first nuclear power programme (Figure 1) in fact looked to the last four stations of that programme possibly being liquid cooled, with the liquid likely being water. What then changed was that as the first programme got underway, the potential of gas-graphite reactors began to look much better, so that by the time that first programme was effectively quadrupled, in 1957, it had been decided to standardise on these gas-graphite reactors. Even so, as the increased availability of enriched uranium began to make enriched, as opposed to natural, uranium a more feasible fuel, a switch might have been made to water cooling for a second nuclear programme. By then, however, the Atomic Energy Authority was well along with research on an enriched uranium gas-graphite reactor, the Advanced Gas-cooled Reactor, and after the 1965 Appraisal, which was undertaken to compare the AGR against light water reactor designs specifically for the Dungeness B site (Figure 1), it was of course the AGR which was used for Britain's second nuclear power programme (Figure 2).

Instructively, France, like Britain, also began with gas-graphite reactors, but switched much sooner, and far more decisively, to light water ones. Sizewell B, completed in 1995 (Figure 3), remains Britain's only light water reactor station, and as things currently stand, when the last AGR closes in 2023, Sizewell B will then be the only nuclear station still operating in Britain, supplying some 3–4 per cent of total UK electricity demand.

### The international mainstream

Whatever the wishful thinking about the virtues of gas-graphite in this two decade saga, the really significant consequence was that Britain's choice of gas-graphite cut it off from the international mainstream. By

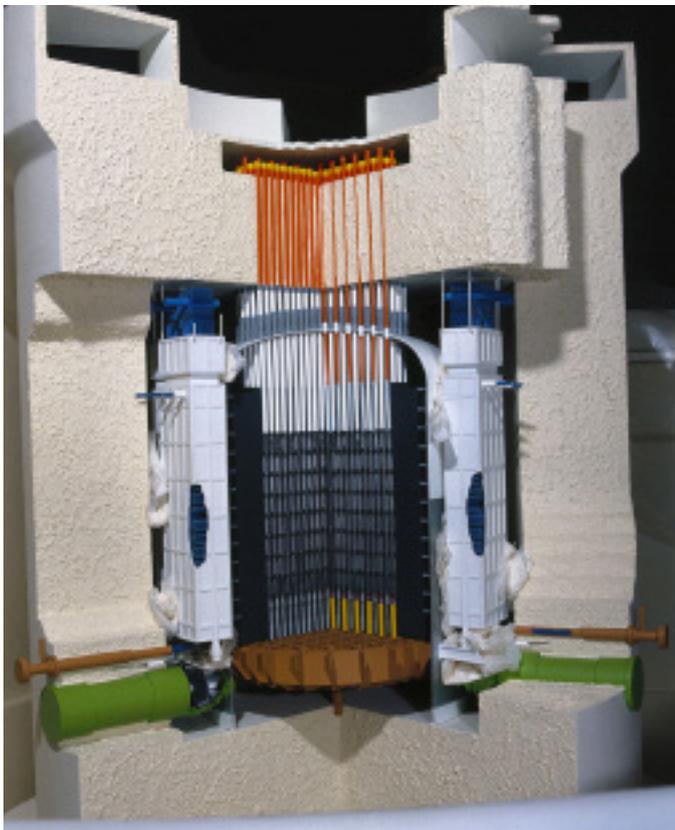


Figure 2. An engineering model of an Advanced Gas-cooled Reactor, at Heysham II. Photo: Science Museum/SSPL.



Figure 3. *An engineering model of the Pressurised Water Reactor at Sizewell B. Photo: Science Museum/SSPL.*

‘international mainstream’ here, of course, one really means ‘American’, because it was above all the American commitment to water reactors which made them the world standard. The result is that today two-thirds of world capacity is based on the Pressurised Water Reactor, with another quarter based on the other water reactor version, the Boiling Water Reactor. This is not to imply that had the Americans opted instead for gas-graphite, then gas-graphite would have become the world standard, because the deeper point is that, with greater freedom of choice than Britain initially enjoyed, it was for water reactors that the Americans decided. Intriguingly, according to Lord Hinton, outstandingly the initial architect of British nuclear power (Figure 4), there was at the beginning an informal understanding with the Canadians that, if their heavy water reactors proved better than Britain’s gas-graphite ones, then Britain would switch to them, and if the reverse happened, then the Canadians would make the switch. In sharp contrast, as regards US light water reactor technology, there was always in Britain towards it something of the ‘not invented here’ syndrome.

These early years were indeed what Lorna Arnold has called Britain’s ‘era of illusion’. They underline that international isolation must definitely be avoided in any nuclear future. Circumstances happily have much diminished this particular risk, almost now to the point where it could be described as negligible.

### A stable commercial future

With mention of Britain’s first and second nuclear programmes we encounter other unhappy features of the country’s nuclear story, its rigidity and ‘lumpiness’. The basic cause of these features was that this was a tale written, and rather badly written, by government. The core lesson is that if nuclear power is to be part of UK energy supply over the next half century and beyond, then nuclear construction wants to be much more commercial than political, with companies taking commensurate responsibility. A new beginning after the long interval will obviously impose extra costs and create its own problems – as regards regulation as well as construction. In sharp contrast to the 1950s, adequately qualified manpower in particular is likely this time to be initially in

## TIMELINE OF UK CIVIL NUCLEAR ENERGY cont

### 1959

HTR becomes international Dragon project.

White paper ‘Control of Radioactive Wastes’. Leads to the ‘Radioactive Substances Act’ of 1960, which establishes national control of discharge of radioactive waste.

### 1960

2 June. Minister of Power [Richard Wood] told the Cabinet that ‘the original ten-year programme announced in 1955 for the development of civil nuclear power had been accelerated in 1957, with the object of providing 5,000-6,000 megawatts in commission by the end of 1966. There had since been changes in the fuel position, and it was now estimated that conventional fuel supplies would be adequate for ten to fifteen years, even if no nuclear power stations were ordered in the next few years. The capital costs of nuclear generation had been higher than had been expected, but the cost of generating nuclear power was now falling faster than the cost of generating electricity from conventional fuels. A nuclear power programme on the 1957 scale was therefore no longer necessary, but it was essential to find out as soon as possible how to build a fully competitive nuclear power station and to provide for an industry which would in due course be capable of expanding at the necessary rate. It was proposed to spread the nuclear power programme over a longer period, by proceeding at the present rate of ordering which was roughly one station a year. This would provide 3,800 megawatts by the end of 1966, and 5,000 megawatts in 1968. It would fully maintain the rate of technological

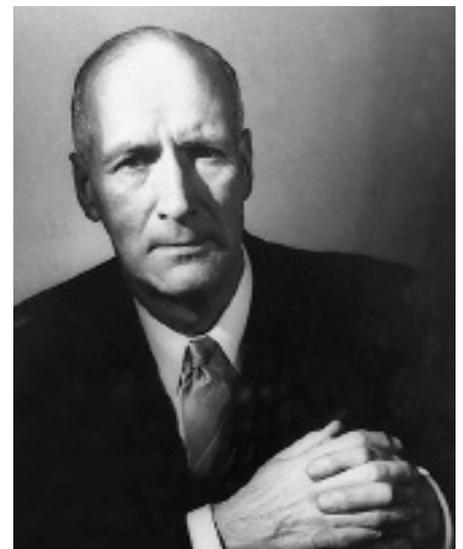


Figure 4. *Christopher Hinton (1901–1983). Photo: The Institution of Mechanical Engineers.*

## TIMELINE OF UK CIVIL NUCLEAR ENERGY cont

development, and would be sufficient to keep three industrial consortia employed.' CC 34(60); National Archives CAB 128/34

### 1963

US companies claim cost breakthrough in light water reactors.

### 1964

10 April. Minute by the Chancellor of the Exchequer [Jim Callaghan] to the Prime Minister: 'The Nuclear Power Programme'. 'The Economic Policy Committee was troubled by the possibility that an announcement that we were willing to contemplate reactors of American design would kill the prospects of our own nuclear power industry and involve us in writing off the very substantial sums of money which have been devoted to nuclear power research in the past. They took the point that if, at this stage, no nuclear system was competitive with the latest conventional power stations the choice should lie between a British nuclear system, even if this were more expensive than an American alternative, and conventional power.' Supports draft white paper which said that the Central Electricity Generating Board would 'issue an enquiry for tenders for an Advanced Gas-Cooled Reactor station' but also be ready to consider tenders 'for water-moderated reactor systems of *proved design*'. The decision for the first choice of the next generation of reactor systems would be deferred. CP (64) 86; CAB 129/117

October. Labour Party elected to Government.

### 1965

May. The AGR developed by the Atomic Energy Authority chosen as the basis for the second generation of British nuclear power stations. An AGR to be built at Dungeness B.

11 October. Minister of Power [Fred Lee] circulates to Cabinet draft white paper entitled 'Fuel policy'. 'Although the earlier expectations about the economics of nuclear power have proved premature, there has been a steady fall in the capital costs of successive stations in the first nuclear power programme, and the tender (an Advanced Gas-cooled Reactor - A.G.R.) recently accepted for the second nuclear station at Dungeness (1,200 MW) suggests that it should give cheaper base-load electricity than future coal-fired stations on the present price of power station coal... The programme will be based on the Advanced Gas-cooled Reactor developed by the Atomic Energy Authority, but at this stage the possibility of another reactor type making a contribution is not excluded. It is estimated that on these assumptions, and with further developments in nuclear technology and expected increases in the size of stations, a total of 8,000 MW might be in commission under the second nuclear power programme by 1975.' C (65) 130. National Archives CAB 129/122

short supply. Nonetheless, the clear aim should be to achieve in due course a steady state, with the nuclear component of energy supply, and thus nuclear construction, changing only gradually thereafter. One would not normally prefer soap opera to drama but the record makes clear that in the nuclear case, the soap opera of business is much to be preferred to the drama of politics.

This leads on to the economics of the various forms of electricity generation. It is natural to ask that competing energy sources be compared on the same basis. Regrettably, it is difficult to ensure genuine comparability, complications arising in respect of subsidies, operating assumptions and a wide range of externalities. It is also legitimate for governments to take a broader view, for instance putting their own valuation on security of supply, or deliberately choosing to set an international example, or insisting upon a mixture of energy sources rather than allowing economics alone to determine policy. What were not in evidence in the past were efforts to make the economic and political dimensions absolutely explicit. This again should be rectified in the future. Specifically, these dimensions must include rigorous consideration of all carbon footprints, and in the nuclear case, the financial implications of full decommissioning and waste disposal as well. Only with all the economic and political assumptions made completely transparent will it be possible to have confidence in UK energy policy and its evolving options.

## Safety

If the lessons I have so far suggested from Britain's nuclear past all seem rather negative, there were also positive features which fully deserve re-emphasis in any nuclear renaissance. Outstanding among them is the country's nuclear safety record. To see this in context we should begin with the international picture. From the start, nuclear engineers have had to live with the discipline that, unlike most other technologies, theirs is not one which dare rely on the principle of learning mainly from its mistakes. With civil reactors the resulting safety figures are now highly impressive: in 12,000 reactor years of operation in over 30 countries there has been only one commercial reactor accident where the

consequences were not effectively contained within the reactor itself: including naval operation would double this figure. That one accident, Chernobyl in 1986, was though, as we all know, devastating, with 47 immediate deaths and around 10 child deaths so far from thyroid cancer, plus an unknowable number of additional cancers to date and to be expected over coming decades, and these right across Europe. As is also well known, this accident occurred with a reactor type which would not have been licensed in the West, and which in addition was at the time being operated improperly. Both Chernobyl and the world's second worst nuclear accident, at a reprocessing facility in 1957, took place in the Soviet Union, a country where the safety culture was especially poor. After these Soviet accidents the next two in order of gravity have been Windscale in the UK in 1957, and Three Mile Island in the US in 1979. Windscale involved a primitive air-vented, and thus uncontained, military reactor, there were no immediate deaths but there was a significant radiation release, though fortunately less than a thousandth that at Chernobyl. At Three Mile Island there were again no immediate deaths and in this instance only a relatively minor and short-term radiation release. Still smaller radiation releases occurred at reactors in the US in 1961, Switzerland in 1969 and France in 1980.

But this lecture is being given on 6 May. This is the date on which in 1626 Manhattan Island was bought for the equivalent of \$24, and to demonstrate the power of political pressure, I will, a little mischievously, recall just one more nuclear disaster. What happened at Shoreham on nearby Long Island was, however, only a financial calamity and not really a nuclear one at all. Here the utility company concerned decided in 1966 to construct a nuclear plant for an estimated \$75 million. The plant was duly completed in 1983 but then, under continuing political pressure, was finally abandoned in 1989 without its having generated a single unit of electricity, and this at the staggering cost of \$6 billion: a much worse case even than Dungeness B!

The Chernobyl accident helped significantly to bring down the Soviet Union, and that at Three Mile Island severely blighted the American nuclear industry. The event at

Windscale, which like Chernobyl has been described as ‘an accident waiting to happen’, was certainly nasty and could easily have been much worse, but it at least had the advantage that it happened at the outset of commercial reactor construction in Britain. Its impact on the UK’s nuclear safety culture was therefore both far-reaching and lasting. Precisely because there has been no recent nuclear construction in the UK, it is vital that the country’s former safety culture be fully reasserted. Categorically, this must not be taken for granted. In addition, unlike construction, safety and its regulation are, in the last analysis and completely inescapably, government responsibilities.

### Confidence

What seems to me another positive feature of Britain’s nuclear past may seem in conflict with the negative point in regard to self-delusion which I made earlier, but it is not really a case of entering the same item on both sides of the ledger. This is the confidence with which, in the early decades, so many difficult nuclear goals were tackled simultaneously. Thus in reactor development alone, apart from Magnox and the AGR there were also developed the High Temperature Reactor, the Steam Generating Heavy Water Reactor and the Dounreay and Prototype Fast Reactors. There was much other civil work too, on enrichment, reprocessing and waste disposal, all spun off the original military programme. Britain may have had no business investing so heavily or so soon in so much nuclear technology. That is a political issue. On the ground, however, the striking aspect was the almost Victorian *élan* with which the scientists and engineers carried forward their work. Britain needs to rediscover more such self-belief, and beyond as well as within the nuclear field, provided only that it does not again tip over into self-delusion.

I have now mentioned the fast reactor. Capable of either burning plutonium or breeding it for later burning, this is an elegant reactor concept, but technical problems, low uranium prices and politics between them derailed the American, French and German fast reactor programmes in the 1990s, as well as the British. The Russians and Japanese, however, continue with the technology, and also India with its thorium near-breeder. The

fast reactor’s day may yet come, though it will not be soon.

Over and above my initial caveat about drawing conclusions from history, is the world now so different as to invalidate even the most well-founded historical lessons? On the one hand, this century seems still more favourable towards complicated technology than was the 20th, above all because of the remarkable strides in computing power, which benefit both the design and the operation of complex facilities. But on the other hand, there has been one wholly malign 21st century development, the emergence of major international terrorism. Incidents of the 9/11 kind were just not part of orthodox thinking before that date. Happily, studies since 9/11 have shown that nuclear plants are unattractive targets for even sophisticated terrorists. A fully-fuelled jumbo jet crashing into a modern reactor or waste facility would be an extremely unpleasant event, but it would not lead to a nuclear explosion, or in all probability to anything like the loss of life more easily achieved, as unhappily has been demonstrated, against much softer targets. Historically, nuclear reactors were provided with containment against substantially worse accidents than experience suggests are now likely to occur, and of course that containment would work equally well against human evil.

To sum up, no inventory of lessons from the history of UK nuclear power can be definitive, but at best only suggestive, so let me, in forty words, summarise mine:

- take the public along with the policy
- be sceptical towards all claims
- get in the international mainstream
- strive to make decisions commercial
- be scrupulous about the economics
- aim for steady state
- firmly re-establish a culture of safety
- recover *élan*

This prescription will not guarantee success second time around, nothing could do that, but after reflecting at length on the past, it represents my own best shot.

### TIMELINE OF UK CIVIL NUCLEAR ENERGY cont

#### 1966

Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor at Dounreay ordered. Seen as potentially key component of third generation of nuclear power stations.

#### 1967

23 October. ‘Fuel Policy’ Draft White Paper submitted to Cabinet. Affirms 1965 plans. ‘Nuclear power stations cause no air pollution. They can be sited near areas of consumption without affecting the cost of generation, and so there is less need for additional high voltage transmission lines. A regular sequence of new nuclear stations is desirable if the full development potential of this new technology is to be realised.’ C(67) 165; National Archives CAB 129/133

#### 1970

June. Conservative Party elected to government.

#### 1972

8 August. Statement in Parliament approved by Cabinet. Secretary of State for Trade and Industry [John Davies], entitled ‘Future of the Nuclear Industry’. He summarises the paper to Cabinet: ‘It emphasised the Government’s intention to press ahead rapidly with the development of the fast breeder reactor (FBR) in the hope of placing the first full scale order for it in the late 1970s and of using it thereafter for the major part of nuclear generating plant orders from the mid-1980s onwards.’ The statement itself begins ‘Decisions in the field of nuclear reactor policy have immense importance for the future strength of British industry and for the security and cost of energy supply. The government is resolved to build upon the major achievements of the AEA in the past and to ensure the development of a powerful capability for the future in which the AEA will continue to play a vital part. We have decided therefore to intensify the installation of nuclear plants as far as technological progress, environmental constraints, industrial capability and generating plant requirements permit.’ Presentation, CM (72) 40; National Archives CAB 128/50/41. Statement, CM (72) 90; National Archives CAB 129/164/15

#### 1973

20 March. Cabinet agrees to formation of a National Nuclear Corporation established with dominant participation by GEC. The Secretary for Trade and Industry (Peter Walker) confirms that ‘The Electricity Council, the CEBG and the AEA had confirmed their view that GEC were the only company at present capable of leading the new organisation’. CM 17 (73); National Archives CAB 128/51/18

October. ‘Yom Kippur’ War in the Middle East leads to oil shortages and four-fold price rise.

## TIMELINE OF UK CIVIL NUCLEAR ENERGY cont

December. CEBG tells Parliament of plans to order 32 PWR reactors over the subsequent decade.

### 1974

28 February. Labour Party elected to government.

13 June. Secretary of State for Energy [Eric Varley] reports, 'No option commanded general agreement, and any choice would entail some commercial risk; but in his view the primary considerations were safety, reliability in operation, and the need to support British technology, and on these grounds he considered that the Steam Generating Heavy Water Reactor (SGHWR) should be adopted for the next nuclear orders. In this judgment he was fortified by the fact that the [Cabinet Office's] Central Policy Review Staff had independently reached the same conclusion; and although the weight of argument had seemed compelling even before the recent disaster to the chemical plant at Flixborough, that event further reinforced the need to ensure that the Government's choice of nuclear reactor would command public confidence.'

10 July. Secretary of State for Energy [Eric Varley] announces SGHWR chosen as basis for third nuclear programme

### 1976

Nuclear Power and the Environment, Sixth Report of the Royal Commission on the Environment chaired by Sir Brian Flowers (Flowers report), expresses anxiety about environmental dangers of plutonium.

June. Pound Sterling reaches record low against the dollar.

19 July. As part of general public expenditure cuts, SGHWR programme put on ice. 'In discussion it was argued that the deferment of the SGHWR could mean the collapse of the industry itself, which employed some 25,000 people. Deferment of the SGHWR would revive demands for its cancellation, although on present plans the reactor was needed in Scotland and could not be replaced.' CM 16 (76); National Archives CAB 128/59/16

December. British Government forced to borrow from IMF.

### 1978

January. SGHWR cancelled. Two AGRs ordered.

Windscale Inquiry under Justice Parker gives green light to Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant (Thorp).

### 1979

March. Accident at the the Three Mile Island reactor near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

## Sources

The only direct quotations are from Lorna Arnold, *Windscale 1957* (London: Macmillan, 1992): 'era of illusion', p. 159 and 'an accident waiting to happen', p. 124; and Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution, 6th Report, Cmnd. 6618, September 1976, *Nuclear Power and the Environment*, paras 181 and 511.

I have naturally relied heavily on my own book: Roger Williams, *The Nuclear Power Decisions* (London: Croom Helm, 1980).

Britain's first nuclear programme was announced in the White Paper *A Programme of Nuclear Power*, Cmd. 9389 of February 1955; and *An Appraisal of the Technical and Economic Aspects of Dungeness B Nuclear Power Station*, published by the Central Electricity Generating Board in May 1965 led on to Britain's second nuclear power programme.

The House of Lords inquiry for which I was a specialist adviser reported as Select Committee on Science and Technology, Session 1988–89,

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*BETWEEN 1976 and 1980, Richard Wilson was the assistant secretary within the Department of Energy responsible for nuclear power policy, including thermal reactor choice, fast reactor policy, and the financing of the UK atomic energy authority. Now Lord Wilson of Dinton offers his own list of lessons from the past.*

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AFTER HIROSHIMA AND NAGASAKI, scientists and politicians who had been involved in the development of atomic energy felt a 'dark foreboding'.<sup>1</sup> This was succeeded by a desire to use the new science to generate electricity for peaceful purposes. A Government White Paper of the early 1950s described atomic energy as the most important development since the discovery of fire, and led to a surge of research and construction which made Britain's nuclear programme a world leader into the 1970s. Stations in the original Magnox programme are, amazingly, still in use.

Increasingly, however, the programme aroused strong passions. Some were carried over from opposition to nuclear weapons. Some reflected environmental concerns which carried increasing weight after the Flowers Report in 1976, reinforced by the Three Mile Island and Chernobyl incidents. Witnesses at the Windscale Inquiry expressed deep anxiety about radiation. And within the nuclear industry, the long debate about the relative merits of American water-cooled technology and British gas-cooled technology had not much less intensity than a war of religion.

2nd Report, *Research and Development in Nuclear Power* (London: HMSO, December 1987), HL Paper 14-I.

On global warming, where the literature is now huge, I have been particularly influenced by Gabrielle Walker and Sir David King, *The Hot Topic* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2008).

For up to date figures, other than the internet I have mainly used Ian Hore-Lacy, *Nuclear Energy in the 21st Century* (London: World Nuclear University Press, 2006).

For Shoreham I have relied upon David P. McCaffrey, *The Politics of Nuclear Power* (London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991).

Among other sources to which I owe a debt is W.J. Nuttall, *Nuclear Renaissance* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2005).

*Professor Williams retired as Chairman of the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales in May 2008. He is a former Vice Chancellor of the University of Reading.*

Any new programme of nuclear power stations will have advantages not available thirty years ago. There is now far more operating experience of all types of nuclear reactor than in those early years; and the debates about thermal reactor choice have been settled decisively in favour of pressurised water technology. But experience with these earlier programmes still offers lessons for contemporary policy makers.

## Political will

Perhaps the first lesson is the importance of political commitment and drive. Each nuclear power station is a huge construction project, very expensive and technologically complex. Given their potential for controversy, new nuclear power stations will not be built unless there is single-minded political will behind them, whoever builds them and however they are financed. The first nuclear power programme of Magnox stations, announced in 1953–55, had that support. It also benefited from strong leadership under Lord Hinton and a sense of excitement exemplified by The Queen opening the first Magnox station Calder Hall in 1956. Even so, it needed all these favourable conditions to carry it through a host of

problems, including design changes (such as the switch to on-load refuelling), escalating costs and delays in construction times.

A nuclear power programme without continuing political drive will not be built. The Thatcher government committed itself in 1980 to the construction of one new nuclear power station order each year for a decade. After Sizewell the commitment evaporated without comment, for a variety of reasons.

### Established design

A second lesson is the importance of having a reliable established design whose safety case can be demonstrated and which can be replicated. Although the UK's early nuclear programmes based on gas-cooled technology and the breeding of fuel in the Fast Reactor were intellectually elegant, they were bedevilled in practice by the difficulty of having too many construction consortia building different designs.

This was illustrated by the 1965 decision on Advanced Gas-cooled Reactors (AGRs) which turned out to be disastrous. The Minister for Supply, Fred Lee, told the House of Commons 'we have hit the jackpot ... we have the greatest break-through of all time.'<sup>2</sup> But the wish for competition in design and speedy construction led to the adoption of inadequately worked-up designs. Consortia began construction too soon, technical problems emerged, costs escalated and companies began to collapse. The first station, Dungeness, suffered major delays because of problems with the containment, pressure vessel and boilers: making it work was 'watch-making by the tonne' as one participant observed. It was ordered in 1965 for completion in 1970–71 and eventually came on stream in 1983, thirteen years late. The fact that the station did eventually generate electricity – and is still doing so – was a considerable achievement for British engineering, but not the sort which is easily advertised.

Linked to the importance of a settled design is the need to avoid escalating costs. The eventual cost of Dungeness B was four times the original estimate, after allowing for inflation. The Steam Generating Heavy Water Reactor (SGHWR), chosen in 1974 for the next generation of nuclear power stations, was similarly abandoned two years later because of the excessive cost of the design, a message conveyed bravely by the late Sir John Hill, chairman of the UK Atomic

Energy Authority, to Mr Tony Benn, the new Secretary of State for Energy, in the summer of 1976.

Establishing the economics of nuclear stations is difficult. Even with the co-operation of all parties and determined political support from the Thatcher government, it was very hard in 1980 to establish reliable figures. What is clear is that having a tested design which can be replicated does much to help contain those costs and the risk of delays in construction.

### Public consultation

A third lesson is not to promise more by way of public consultation than can realistically be delivered or afforded within the planned timescale. Sir Roger Williams is of course right to emphasise the desirability of trying to take the public along with policy, and one can sympathise with his wish for nuclear power to be 'owned' by the public. But it is easier said than done.

Tony Benn, faced with the demand to choose a new thermal reactor system for new nuclear power station orders after Sir John Hill's demarche, wanted a major public consultation exercise.

- He took evidence from every interested party, ranging from departmental officials through all industrial interests to environmental groups.
- He consulted the French Government as they embarked on a major sustained programme of building Pressurised Water Reactors (PWRs). (When asked how they conducted public consultation, their Minister replied: 'We have a saying: when you are draining the swamp, you do not consult the frogs.')
- He was open with the press, and published an extensive Thermal Reactor Assessment which compared the designs, costs and relative safety cases of the Advanced Gas-cooled Reactors, Pressurised Water Reactors, and the Steam Generating Heavy Water Reactor.
- He held a summit over several days at Sunningdale to which all parties, including environmental groups such as the Friends of the Earth, were invited.

Despite his political gifts, it is not clear that this effort really made much difference to public opinion. The same may be said of the Sizewell Inquiry, which the Thatcher Government intended should be finished before the end of

## TIMELINE OF UK CIVIL NUCLEAR ENERGY cont

May. Conservative Party elected to government.

December. Secretary of State for Energy [David Howell] announces to Parliament programme of 10 reactors over decade from 1982 laid out by CEGB with support of the government.

### 1981

Iran-Iraq War causes oil price to increase from \$14 a barrel in 1978 to \$35 a barrel.

### 1986

First half of year. Oil price collapse to about \$11 a barrel.

Inquiry on establishing the first British Pressurised Water Reactor at Sizewell reports.

April. Explosion in the Soviet Union's Chernobyl plant leads to radioactive contamination of British soil.

### 1987

Sizewell B, the first British PWR, ordered. The last nuclear power station of the 20th century in Britain.

### 1989

CEGB privatised, but nuclear power stations withdrawn from privatisation because of anticipated costs of decommissioning.

### 1990

Nuclear Electric born as nationalised government-owned company.

### 1996

Non-Magnox reactors (AGRs and PWR) transferred to British Energy which is floated on the Stock Exchange, and Magnox reactors transferred to the government-owned British Nuclear Fuels Ltd (BNFL).

### 1997

May. Labour Party elected to government.

### 1999

British production of oil and gas peaks.

### 2006

Steep rise in world price of energy.

### 2008

January. White Paper on Nuclear Power proposes 'new' nuclear power programme.

### 2009

2 February. Two former sites of the UKAEA, Harwell and Winfrith, combine to become one company, Research Sites Restoration Limited (RSRL). (Harwell Press Release)

**Timeline prepared by Professor Robert Bud (Science Museum and Queen Mary University of London) and Professor Peter Hennessy FBA (Queen Mary University of London).**

1982 but which lasted three years longer than that, until 1985. Three Mile Island and Chernobyl had more impact.

On the other hand, fifty years of safe operation of nuclear power stations may perhaps have a more positive influence on public opinion than anything which governments may say. So too may concerns about global warming and about the prospect of a shortage of electricity generating capacity. If nuclear power is understood to be the best hope of meeting demand for electricity without making global warming worse, the public may come to 'own' it in a way which government exhortation on its own could not achieve.

In short, one may sympathise with the desire to secure public acceptance of nuclear power, and governments must make the effort to achieve it; but there may be a limit to what governments can do unless events happen to be moving their way. Here as elsewhere, timing is all.

### Timescales

A fourth lesson is that the construction of nuclear power stations tends to take longer from announcement to commercial operation than governments expect. The White Paper of 1955 announced that twelve Magnox stations would be on stream by 1965: in the event the last station came on stream in 1971. The AGRs announced in 1965 aimed at completion of the last station in 1975, whereas the last one was in fact connected to the grid in 1983 and the stations were not all in commercial operation until the late 1980s. Admittedly these first programmes were handicapped by the fact that stations were often prototypes. The two further AGRs announced in 1978 came into commercial operations at around the same time as stations in the first programme, demonstrating the importance of standardising design.

Planning too may contribute greatly to delay. Sizewell B, announced in 1980, did not come on stream until 1995, largely due to the planning process. Its actual construction was to time and cost.

Past experience suggests that as a rule of thumb construction of a nuclear power station in this country takes at best a decade from announcement to commercial operation if conditions are right and can take much longer if there are problems, for instance with planning or design.

One advantage enjoyed by earlier programmes but not available now was the good supply in this country of scientists and engineers with the experience of building nuclear stations. The generation who built the earlier programmes of nuclear power has largely died out. One can sympathise with Sir Roger Williams's wish for a new generation of engineers and scientists with élan, but it takes time to generate such a breed. In the meantime there is a skills shortage to be overcome, probably from abroad.

### Safety

A fifth lesson is the need for government to ensure that sufficient resources are devoted to safety and radioactive waste management.

One potential area for delay for instance is the need for the Nuclear Directorate of the Health and Safety Executive to be satisfied with the safety case for a station and to give a site licence for its construction. The availability of sufficient resources in the Directorate's predecessor, the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate, was a serious headache in the past and may be so again. The main problems in the past related to the availability of qualified staff, but they can also require a strong capability to do research in support of the safety case. Even with a settled design, questions requiring research can unexpectedly arise.

The need to resolve the issue of the long-term disposal of radioactive waste is a further area where government involvement is inevitable. Sir Roger Williams summarised the position. It is a problem that will not go away.

### The role of Government

In conclusion, it will be clear from all the above that government has a central role in the development of nuclear power.

- Building new nuclear stations requires sustained and determined political commitment on every front.
- Although the public has tended to be immune to government pronouncements about nuclear power in the past, there is a duty on government to articulate the case clearly, in terms of both energy policy (not least at any planning inquiry) and climate change. It may be that the public may give the case a fair wind now.
- The timescale for building new nuclear stations tends to be longer than expected and is a trap for the unwary Minister. Planning,

design changes and lack of skilled manpower can all contribute to delay. Asking the private sector to build competing designs was a serious mistake which consumed much ministerial time in earlier programmes.

- The public holds government responsible for the safety of nuclear power stations. A strong research capability is important to underpin the nuclear programme, not least the safety aspects.
- There has to be progress on the long-term disposal of highly radioactive waste. Underestimating the importance of environmental issues was another mistake of the 1970s.
- The scale of finance for nuclear stations, including the cost of decommissioning, is great. Governments usually come under pressure to support the private sector in the end.

### Notes

- 1 Margaret Gowing, *Britain and Atomic Energy 1939-1945* (Macmillan, 1964), p. 386.
- 2 *Official Report*, 25 May 1965; Vol. 713, c. 237-8.

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Lord Wilson of Dinton is Master of Emmanuel College, Cambridge.

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# How Green Politics Went Mainstream

**W**E are preoccupied at the moment with the global financial crisis. This has meant that people's minds have been rather taken off what I regard as the much more serious environmental crisis in the background, which is going to have much bigger effects on all our lives in the future. All I would say is, don't be deceived. The current problems are very preoccupying; we look at the gyrations of the stock exchange with, in my case, some amusement – others as well may feel that it is a very bad joke. But put that out of your mind, because I want to discuss the much bigger crisis which now lies behind it.

There is a long and rickety bridge between the world of science, academia and research on one side, and that of public understanding and policy-making on the other. People don't usually manage to get their messages across in the right way at the right time. The crossing is never easy whatever you do. The process of getting information from one side to the other is usually slow, although perhaps at the last few moments it can speed up and create a measure of bewilderment.

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On 6 November 2008 at the British Academy, Sir Crispin Tickell gave the second in the series of 'Politics and Energy' lectures, jointly sponsored by the British Academy, the Mile End Group of Queen Mary, University of London, and the Science Museum.

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In the case of green politics, there have been a number of developments and key documents which have so informed the background that people are perhaps, in the last few months, more aware of these issues than they ever have been before. When you now talk to a politician about some of the things that are going on, they aren't completely uncomprehending.

## Key moments

Let me mention some of the key elements in the history. There was the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment in 1972. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development – the 'Earth Summit', held in Rio in 1992 – produced the

Framework Convention on Climate Change. Then there was the Kyoto Protocol in 1997. These things were very educative events, and all who attended them felt greatly influenced by them. In the late 1980s, partly as a result of the Bruntland Report,<sup>1</sup> the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change was set up. This has produced assessment after assessment, most notably the Fourth Assessment Report, *Climate Change 2007*, which brought everything up to date and brought together the world's scientists to make the scientific case.

There was also the 2001 Amsterdam Declaration on Global Change – again frequently neglected – when people from the four great global research programmes came together and produced a document which stated, 'The Earth is currently operating in a no-analogue state. ... The accelerating human transformation of the Earth's environment is not sustainable'. In 2006 in the famous Stern Review, Nicholas Stern looked into the social and economic impacts of climate change (Figure 2).<sup>2</sup> As it happened, I was in Beijing



Figure 1. Sir Crispin Tickell lecturing at the British Academy, November 2008.



Figure 2. Sir Nicholas (now Lord) Stern FBA is flanked by Chancellor Gordon Brown and Prime Minister Tony Blair during a presentation of his report on climate change at the Royal Society on 30 October 2006. Photo by Peter Macdiarmid/Getty Images.

shortly after the publication of this report and it was very interesting to find that the Chinese already had copies of it and were looking at it very carefully.

For the moment, we have what is called the Global Leadership for Climate Action, which is a collection of former presidents and prime ministers. You have the successive meetings of the 'G8 + 5' countries all talking about these things. You have the Conferences of the Parties (COP) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, of which the most important was that at Bali in December 2007. And you have preparations for the next big event, which is Copenhagen, December 2009. The Copenhagen Climate Council is going to put together a successor to the Kyoto 1 Agreement, which we hope very much will have better effects. I am a member of the Copenhagen Climate Council. We are having our next meeting next month, and it is very interesting to see how progress is being made.

### The environmental crisis

Climate change is perhaps the most prominent issue at the moment. I prefer to refer to 'climate destabilisation', because it is not the fact that the climate is changing, which always happens; it is much more the destabilisation which is causing the problems. But the climate is only one of the major issues which our small animal species has to cope with.

You may have seen a recent book published in the United States called *Something New Under the Sun*.<sup>3</sup> To make sense of the scale and character of the whole impact we are making at the moment, on the surface of the Earth and on all living creatures, we have to reckon not only with climate change, but with such issues as: the multiplication of our own species; the degradation of soils; the consumption of resources; the accumulation of waste that people don't know how to deal with; the pollution of water, both fresh water and salt water; how we generate energy and how we use it; the destruction of bio-diversity, which is perhaps the least understood of these various problems. Lord Rees, the President of the Royal Society, has argued that the prospect for our civilisation surviving the 21st century is no more than 50 per cent.<sup>4</sup>

### Natural change and human-driven change

The evidence for the crisis we are now facing is not in serious dispute. This is not the place for looking at the science in detail, but I just want to run through the great distinctions between natural change, which takes place all the time, and human-driven change. That distinction goes to the heart of the debate about green politics.

Natural change is constant. Those of you who have followed a bit of palaeohistory will know that the last 11,000 years has been a very warm period in the history of the Earth, after the last ice age. What we look for are the little variations, so-called tipping points, in which one climate regime can move into another. That has happened a good deal during this last warm period, the Holocene.

We have to try and watch what is going on to make certain that these natural changes don't go too far and don't have effects that we can't predict. One of the points where we put our stethoscopes is the state of the Amazonian rainforest, at present in some disarray, with more droughts there than usual. We look at the direction of the North Atlantic currents as they move from the Gulf of Mexico, north eastwards to Britain and Iceland. We look at the patterns of the Indian monsoon, also highly variable; we are having discussions with the Indians about that at the moment. You have the release of methane, a very powerful greenhouse gas, from different parts of the world, like the Siberian tundra, or even the ocean bed. And you have the frequency and the intensity of the two little opposites called El Niño and La Niña, in the Pacific Ocean. Last, much reported on is the state of the Arctic and the Antarctic ice shelves, both at the moment melting quite fast.

That is natural change, taking place naturally in different degrees. But then you come to human-driven change, and that is really where our responsibilities begin to get most important and where the political elements come in. First of all, carbon dioxide is a very powerful greenhouse gas, and there is a relationship between carbon dioxide and the temperature of the Earth. At the moment there is more carbon dioxide in the atmosphere than during the last 650,000 years. In ice age times, it was roughly 190 parts per million of carbon dioxide. In the warm period of the last 11,000 years, it has

been hovering around 280–285 parts per million. It is now 385 parts per million and going up every year.

I mentioned methane, which is a 20 times more potent greenhouse gas. The amount in the atmosphere has also increased enormously. The pre-industrial level was 715 parts per billion, it is now 1,770 parts per billion. Nitrous oxide, another great greenhouse gas, is greatly increased again.

The warming of the oceans has proceeded. We can't always tell when the effects of ocean warming are going to take place – there is usually about a 30-year time lag – but global sea levels are now rising by around 3.5 cm a year, and that rate of progress is accelerating.

And the increasing acidification of the surface of the ocean is damaging all living organisms that are used to a rather different regime – affecting fishing, corals and all the rest.

### The impact of environmental change

What are the results of this combination of the natural and the human-driven effects? There is the prospect of changes in weather everywhere, with more extreme events. There is accelerated melting of the Arctic and the Antarctic ice. The rise in sea levels will affect coastal cities all over the world, and there are an awful lot of them. The melting of the Andean and Himalayan glaciers will have effects on the water systems of South America and of China and India – about which, I assure you, the Indians and Chinese are very worried. The late Head of the United Nations Environment Programme said he thought that shortages of fresh water were likely to be the most frequent triggers for any kind of conflict in the 21st century. There is the increasing competition for natural resources. And there are changes in eco-systems: we are part of the living environment in a very real sense, and we must remember that the effects of species extinctions are often unpredictable.

All this leads to the potential undermining of current social and, in particular, urban infrastructure – reservoirs, sewage, buildings, industry, public services, and all that. And the European Commission, to its credit, has suggested that all this could lead to heavy movements of environmental refugees, both within countries and between countries, as

people move around to avoid environmental hazards.

That in a very few words is the scientific background. As I say there is now no real doubt about it.

### Science and politics

The nature of science and the nature of politics are very different. Scientists work on different degrees of uncertainty and they work also on probabilities. They have to cope with problems of paradigm shift, when suddenly everything changes and we are looking in a different scientific direction – like Darwin 150 years ago, like the theory of tectonic plate movement. These things cause a complete change in the way that we look at things. Coping with ‘phoney science’ is very important. For example, creationism arouses a good deal of emotion – not least in America where I think that a few people believe that Joan of Arc was Noah’s wife.

Some people like to lock themselves into specialities. One of the diseases of our time is that people in one box don’t like to know what is going on in other boxes. This is a particular shortcoming of many scientific communities. In different parts of the world we are trying to put this right: I am involved in a number of universities – at Oxford, Arizona State University, Columbia and elsewhere – where we are trying to create institutions which will move people out of their bunkers so that they can understand what others are doing. And all scientists face difficulties in converting the vocabulary of science into the vocabulary of politics.

Few politicians have scientific backgrounds, or understanding of scientific problems. That is one of the things that Margaret Thatcher found most trying: she was the only person in her government to have a scientific background. If I may be allowed an anecdote, I once persuaded Margaret Thatcher that she ought to have an all-day Cabinet meeting on climate change. I was brought back from New York, where I was then Ambassador, to speak at this conference. She really wanted me to be there in order to look at the mandarins, because I am an ex-mandarin myself. After an interesting meeting in which I briefed her about what she was to say, as she walked into the room and saw all these ministers sitting

there in a long row, she wagged her finger at them and said, ‘You are here to listen, not to speak.’ This, of course, was typical of Margaret Thatcher. I remember it had quite an impact.

And the civil servants who operate the mechanics of the system are usually not scientific; they are mandarins of commendable intellectual power, but they are not the people who will necessarily understand science.

Contrast that today with the government of China, which is heavily staffed with engineers and they do understand science in a way that most people in the West don’t.

Politicians, at least the democratic ones, usually operate within an electoral cycle: this means that they are more concerned with the short-term problems than the long-term problems. And politicians want black-and-white answers, not shades of probability. And the relevance of science to policy is not always apparent. Scepticism or exaggeration can lead to perverse results, including sterile and emotional debates and poor decision-making. I have been a witness to all those things in my own forays into the world of politics.

### The questions facing politicians

A lot of the current greening of politics, and indeed of business, has been called ‘greenwash’, because the talk has so far greatly exceeded the action. Any progress will depend on how politicians will respond to the following questions.

The first is, in the broadest sense, what should be done about climate change at all levels, global, national and local? Can we lower greenhouse gas emissions in time to avoid drastic changes in the atmosphere, with the kind of effects that are described in the Stern Review?

More specifically, what are the prospects for suppliers of water from current sources? I chair a group for South-East England, and we are trying to look into the effects for the next 20 years of changes in rainfall pattern. Are the reservoirs in the right places? Are the sewage systems in the right place? If they are not, as is the case more often than not, what are we going to do about it? What would be

the effects of any change in reservoirs and storage capacity? Are we going to be able to have the water we need?

What restrictions should we place on carbon emissions from cities? At present, the energy consumed by buildings worldwide accounts for around 45 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions. I talked the other day to the Royal Institute of British Architects about the relationship between all this and urban design and architecture, both in the city and outside it.

Should we move more quickly to renewable sources of energy? – wind, tide, solar, geothermal, biofuels, etc.? And should we possibly move to new nuclear technology? – ranging from the pebble bed reactors that are now being built in China and in South Africa, to fusion as the longer-term prospect?

What new technologies should be applied to transport in its many forms – cars, ships, aircraft, etc.?

How are we going to ensure the supply of food if current supplies overseas get into difficulties, or their prices rise to levels that we can’t meet? Even if we did not go for self-sufficiency, should we do more to ensure a measure of self reliance in this country? I chaired a meeting in Oxford about two weeks ago on this very subject, in which we brought in the whole agricultural community to see what we could do if we tried. Are other essential commodities going to be in short supply?

What should governments do about sea level rise? Building up sea defences on a large scale is impossible, because it is going to be a very widespread rise. And we are not only dealing with environment change here: South-East England is gradually sinking at the same time as sea levels are rising.

How should town planning be dealing with these things? How are we going to cope with urban breakdown? Anyone who has studied history knows that cities are very vulnerable.

Could we predict changes in the world of micro-organisms on which we all depend? Again cities are vulnerable to epidemics where people come together. What new as well as old diseases are likely to change in current circumstances?

## How politicians have reacted

It is very hard for anyone to answer those questions. I am not sure that many politicians could give coherent answers to any of them. I have had experience in dealing with governments and politicians on some of these issues over the years. Different countries have of course reacted very differently – if they have reacted at all. Many people don't want to hear about this, they prefer to look in another direction. Even when you consult people studying at universities in areas which you think would be relevant, even they say, 'Well, don't do anything yet until it is absolutely certain. We prefer to think about it. Let's act a bit later

*Figure 3. A farmer walks on a dried-up riverbed on the outskirts of Zhengzhou, Henan province, 12 February 2009. China, the world's largest wheat producer and consumer, is experiencing what it calls its worst drought in 50 years in its central and northern parts, which produce more than 80 per cent of the country's winter wheat. Photo: Reuters/China Daily.*

when we know.' That is not a viable way to carry on.

### *Britain*

In Britain, there is a long and honourable record of attention to environmental and, in particular, climate change issues. I was an informal adviser to Margaret Thatcher and, after she had gone, to John Major and Tony Blair. And I acted for six years as the founder and chairman of a body called the Government Panel on Sustainable Development, where I was succeeded by Jonathan Porritt in a somewhat different format a few years ago. So I know roughly how politicians in Britain react to all this.

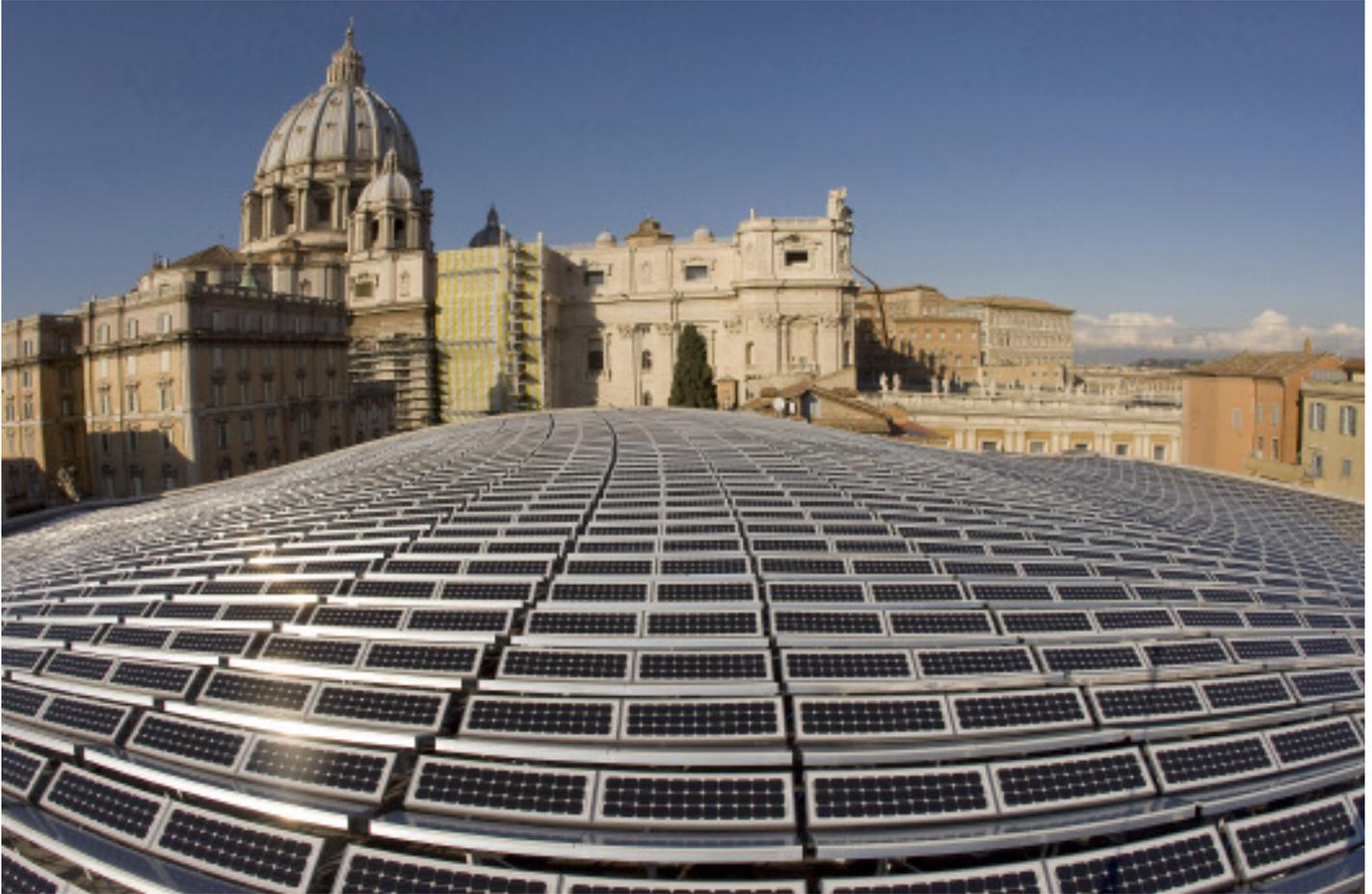
There is now, as you know, broad all-party agreement on the need for action. A Climate Change Bill is going through its last stages in parliament. It will set up a Committee on Climate Change with remarkable powers to enforce respect for targets. It will be in some respects not unlike the role of the Bank of

England, because the government can't tell it what to do, and it can in fact make life very difficult for the government if targets aren't met. This new Committee on Climate Change is a very interesting constitutional development.

Last month the government created a new Department of Energy and Climate Change, which caused some dislocation in Whitehall. Ed Miliband is in charge of it, and we will see how he can put it all together. I don't think that Gordon Brown has the same personal, intellectual and emotional interest in climate change that his three predecessors had. But I am encouraged by the creation of this new Department, because that is going to be a great force for good if it can really get going.

Next month there will be a major report on energy efficiency in terms of town planning and the construction industry. Towns, especially London, have worked out detailed plans for their own future. At the same time





there has been blanket coverage of environmental issues in the press and on radio and television.

That is what is going on in Britain at the moment. We are not particularly good at reducing our carbon emissions. Nonetheless there is a ferment, and I think things will change quite a lot in the future.

#### *Europe*

In Europe, the scale of the problem has long been recognised, and the European Union has given practical leadership. For example, progress has been made under the Emissions Trading Scheme, which went into operation in 2005 and is now the largest Cap and Trade system for reducing carbon emissions. Improvements for that have now been worked out: there is a mandatory commitment to reach a 20% target for renewable energy. The current debate within the European Union is over the degree to which measures to lower carbon emissions across the economy can be reconciled with the continuing dependence of certain countries,

like Poland, on coal supplies for their energy – and with the general economic crisis.

#### *United States*

In the United States, which is by far the biggest single per capita emitter of greenhouse gases, the administration of George Bush has been the villain of the piece, and it has been used as an excuse for nearly everyone not to do what otherwise they might have tried to do. Although the administration of President Clinton signed the Kyoto Protocol of 1997, which was largely designed by Al Gore, neither it nor the current administration decided to put it to the Senate for ratification. Even before the last G8 meeting, things had begun to move and President Bush recognised climate change – he described it as ‘a serious long term challenge’. Individual US states and cities, particularly those in the north-east and along the west coast, especially California, are already far ahead of the administration. And with a new president things are going to change pretty fast.

Figure 4. Solar panels cover the roof of the Paul VI hall near the cupola of Saint Peter's Basilica at the Vatican, on 26 November 2008. On that day, the Vatican was set to go green with the activation of a new solar energy system to power several key buildings, and a commitment to use renewable energy for 20 per cent of its needs by 2020. Photo: Reuters/Tony Gentile.

#### *China and India*

In China and India, there is growing awareness of vulnerability, particularly over water supplies. For 15 years I belonged to a body called the China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development, which gave me access to the Chinese leadership. I can assure you that they all understood very well, whatever their diplomats might say, that the aquifer depletion and the melting of the glaciers in the Himalayas are going to have terrible effects.

In India it is the same story. The Indian government has just produced a bit of paper about the effects of climate change in the monsoon. I co-chair a body called the High-

Level India-EU Dialogue, and we are at the moment trying to work out the effects of all this in India.

### Global

Then the global debate continues. The Clean Development Mechanism, a product of the Kyoto agreement, has been widely applied and now accounts for almost half of emissions. But the global mechanisms for 'Carbon Cap and Trade' and 'Carbon Capture and Storage' really have yet to be worked out, and that is what we are going to be trying to do in the Copenhagen Climate Council in December 2009.

### Economic development

The pressure to act is on all governments, even those who fear that measures to deal with the environment are going to inhibit their future economic development. That in turn has caused a debate about what future economic development really means, and whether it means what people have thought it meant in the past.

My own view has always been that we ought to create something much more ambitious, perhaps in the form of a 'World Environment Organisation' to balance and be a partner of the World Trade Organisation, and to bring together the 200 or so limited environment agreements, which frequently overlap and in many cases have turned out to be ineffective. It would bring order to a rather messy system. However, as a former British Ambassador to the United Nations, I know how extremely difficult it is to create anything new in the international area, and I don't hold out much hope this will happen. I was very pleased to see that the former President of France, Jacques Chirac, made a strong plea for something like this.

Perhaps our most fundamental difficulty, which I am sure you are all aware of, is the need for us all to think differently across the spectrum – in particular, to look at current economics and the ways in which we measure wealth, welfare and the human condition in terms of the Earth's good health. We need to replace consumerism as a goal and to bring in a wider assessment of true costs. We are still obsessed with such misleading measuring devices as 'growth' and GNP or GDP. We need to tackle the problem

of carbon emissions from a global rather than a national point of view.

Here the Chinese may be somewhat in advance of others in seeking to apply the principles of what they call 'clean, green growth', and in working out new methodologies which surprisingly fit remarkably well with the recommendations made by Lord Stern in 2006. That really means trying to measure true costs, and looking at the problem in a longer scale than you can ever get from just measuring productivity.

In all this there is a particular responsibility for governments and politicians to give the right incentives and disincentives, and to put market forces in their appropriate place within the framework of the public interest. You will hear in some of the discussions going on at the moment that 'We must stick to a free market'. But as we all know, there is no such thing as a free market; the only question is how you regulate it and when you regulate it, and how you identify the public interest in doing so.

At present there is a strange mixture of out-of-date, often perverse subsidies which distort markets, as well as negating the public interest. We all suffer from the disease that has been called 'conceptual sclerosis'. Politicians are as subject to it as anyone else, if not more so. True change is brought about usually by somebody giving leadership from above, pressure from below, and – perhaps less welcome – benign catastrophes, when something goes relatively wrong and you can say 'This happened because that happened'. I remember being present in China in 1998, when I expressed condolences at the loss of life from the Yangtze floods. I was stopped by the premier of the day who said, 'No, it was all our fault. We cut down the trees, we had destroyed the top soils, we had filled in the lakes. And so when the storms came, as storms have a habit of doing, then we had these disasters.' He said, in a way that no British prime minister or no president of any other country perhaps can easily say, 'I have stopped timber cutting in the upper Yangtze since yesterday.' Benign catastrophes can often play a useful role – provided of course that they don't affect anyone you know!

I leave the last word to someone whom you may have heard of, a good friend of mine called Brian Fagan, and he wrote

*If we have become a supertanker among human societies, it is an oddly inattentive one. Only a tiny fraction of the people on board are engaged with tending the engines. The rest are buying and selling goods among themselves, entertaining each other or studying the sky or the hydrodynamics of the hull. Those on the bridge have no charts or weather forecast – and cannot even agree that they are needed. Indeed, the most powerful among them subscribe to a theory that those storms don't really exist, or if they do, their effects are entirely benign – and the steepening swells and albatrosses can only be taken as a sign of divine favour. Few of those in command believe the gathering clouds have any relation to their fate or are concerned that there are lifeboats for only one in ten passengers. And no one dares to whisper in the helmsman's ear that he might consider turning the wheel.<sup>5</sup>*

That is what we have to do.

**Question from Professor David Marquand, FBA:** Could you say a bit more about the fetish of growth? It does seem to me that this is very central – not only amongst politicians, but also amongst the bureaucracy, and amongst opinion formers in the serious press. Growth is a great force. The glamorous attraction of using growth as a decisive factor in making policies is that it is extremely simple. It isn't really simple at all, in fact: it is the product of a whole mish-mash of assumptions, many of which are rather dubious. But these gentlemen sitting in the bowels of the Treasury or the Bank of England can work away and they can produce you a figure, and they can say, 'We need to have growth at 2.5 per cent, or 3.8 per cent', or, 'How shocking it is that growth is now going to go down to only 1 per cent', or 'We might get negative growth'. This is a simple thing: politicians need simplicity, they need a little tool which can tell them whether they are doing the right things or not.

Surely it isn't beyond the wit of man to devise an alternative measuring rod which would

take in the things that you are talking about. It might be equally as questionable in some ways, but it would produce you a different set of figures. I think you need something hard, or something that looks hard. I can't understand why the economics profession and others haven't yet made a serious attempt to produce an 'index of gross domestic welfare', for example. Perhaps the British Academy can start this process: it doesn't have to be done in government.

**Sir Crispin:** As of yesterday I believe that the new ruler of Bhutan in the Himalayas was crowned, and his measurement is GDH, 'gross domestic happiness', which is in some respects quite an interesting thing to try and achieve. What you say is perfectly true. It is very interesting that Keynes, whose ghost is now returning to haunt us, was also as sceptical about growth and GDP/GNP. As you correctly say, the temptation is that it is nice and simple, and you can produce measurements that look convincing: there is nothing like flourishing the statistics at people to make them feel that they are out of their depth. Growth has been described to me as a cancer of the economic system.

The fact that you have to keep on growing all the time suggests that something is profoundly wrong in the way that you measure it.

What about working on producing new measuring devices? The Chinese have been doing so, the World Bank has been at work on the subject, the European Union has been at work on it. There are institutions in Britain that are trying to work out new ways of doing it. The answer is we don't yet have a comparable system for measuring economic welfare – above all, in the long term. Partha Dasgupta (University of Cambridge; Fellow of the British Academy) has done a lot of work on the subject and others have too. But it is all slow in coming. There are indices of this kind, but they haven't caught on in what you call the bowels of the Treasury. As it is, the bowels of the Treasury continue to serve up some rather nasty stuff, as bowels have a habit of doing.

#### Notes

- 1 In 1987, The World Commission on Environment and Development published a report called *Our Common Future*. It was chaired by the Prime

Minister of Norway, Mrs Gro Harlem Bruntland.

2 *Stern Review: The Economics of Climate Change* ([www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/sternreview\\_index.htm](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/sternreview_index.htm)). Lord Stern is a Fellow of the British Academy.

3 J. R. McNeil, *Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth-Century World* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000).

4 Martin Rees, *Our Final Century: Will the Human Race Survive the Twenty-first Century?* (London, 2003).

5 Brian Fagan, *The Long Summer: How Climate Changed Civilization* (New York: Basic Books, 2004).

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Sir Crispin Tickell has been a diplomat, a Permanent Secretary, and the British Ambassador to the UN. He was one of the first commentators to illuminate the dangers of man-induced climate change in his text *Climate Change and World Affairs* (1977), and he is credited with alerting Margaret Thatcher to the issue in 1984.

He is currently Director of the Policy Foresight Programme at the James Martin 21st Century School, University of Oxford.

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## MIDDLE EASTERN POLITICS and OIL

**W**E ENTERED 2009 feeling nervous. We have been through a blizzard of analysis and forecasting; predictions have lain in drifts across the road. Snow-blinded by advice, it's been hard to see the way ahead; and tempers have not been improved by the hindsight know-alls.

Still, we keep trying to see ahead – our natures demand it. We cannot care nothing for tomorrow. So we try to stay close to the signs of the times – they reconnect us with the fundamentals, the underlying grammar of events. And that was my experience when the Warsaw Pact was breaking up and, later, when 9/11 happened. The calm voices we listened to then were the ones which said, 'Let's get down to the hard elements of what is going on.' In this article I want to offer my sense of the underlying themes in the politics of the Middle East and what they may mean for the energy scene.

The depth of today's uncertainty is evident in the new attention we are now giving to energy – something which we have long taken for granted. I remember ten years ago, being invited to a very senior

meeting of officials dealing with the Middle East. We started early in the morning and at tea time there was a break. Across the rim of my tea cup, I saw the very senior official who was chairing the meeting. He remarked that things seemed to be going along very well and asked 'Don't you think so?' I replied that I thought so too, of course, though it was odd that there was one monosyllable which had not been uttered during the first eight hours of discussion. The very senior official made one of those interrogative nose movements. I said, 'Oil. Nobody has mentioned oil.'

Rather embarrassingly, at the start of the next session, the chairman observed that Mark had made an interesting point during the break which was that nobody had mentioned oil. 'And I suppose,' he went on, 'that's because we all know really that it underlies everything that we've been discussing.' With affirmatory nose movements, all the senior officials agreed with that; and then we continued an earlier argument about the programme of ministerial visits for the year ahead. I call that taking oil for granted.

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On a wintry 4 February 2009, Sir Mark Allen, one of the world's leading Arabists and a special adviser for BP, gave the third in the series of 'Politics and Energy' lectures, at the Royal United Services Institute in London.

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Figure 1. Rabigh Refining & Petrochemical Co. facilities, 120 km north of the Red Sea Saudi city of Jeddah, November 2007.  
Photo: Hassan Ammar/AFP/Getty Images.

Since the crisis of the early 'seventies, we have taken energy for granted. It is so essential to the way we live now. Our civilisation is utterly dependent on it – light, heat, mobility depend on energy. Only recently have we moved from a long tradition of simple irritation at price rises (remember 'a pound a gallon?') to worrying of late and at last whether there is enough energy and whether we shall get the share of it we think we need. Recently, we have even had to worry whether our use of energy is not itself existentially dangerous. Energy saving, sustainable energy, energy security are clichés which are sobering signs of the times. Climate change, carbon sequestration and alternative energy are expressions which, only a generation ago, would have meant little to most people; today they capture our anxiety.

Our anxiety is not ill-founded: oil is not so predictable, rational, scientific and technological as it might seem. Many so-called energy facts derive from recondite judgements or the official reporting from governments not given to frankness. We have to read the packet carefully. There is a disturbing lack of transparency in official information. At a distance, the price of oil seems as reliable as mood swings.

Oil, to a great extent, is found in greatest quantities at a distance from its main consumers. So, worries about energy must include worries about the owners of the oil fields, the others whom we do not know as well as we think we do.

The study of 'The Other', a 21st century successor discipline to ethnography, is growing apace. This is hardly surprising – and, in the world of oil, it is 'The Other', people who are different from us, who

have what we want. And dealing with them means politics. In the oil industry, it's a home truth that there are just as many problems above ground as there are under the ground.

In the politics of dealing with 'The Other', we confront a counter-intuitive experience. In so far as globalisation links people closer together, in so far as we see development as '*them*' becoming more like '*us*', we have tended to see the modern world as integrative. Experience, however, is now suggesting that divergence seems as much of a likelihood as convergence. Our brave new world has dissonant voices, voices which dissent and disagree. Foreign cultures turn out to have enduring confidence and powerful personalities. Our new world turns out to be a world in which we had better be brave indeed – brave also because the voice of 'The Other' asks us questions about ourselves, searching questions about our beliefs, behaviour, motives and our interests. Once confident of our convictions, we now find ourselves uncertain, questioning ourselves about assumptions that were once so natural we hardly noticed they were prejudices.

In short, the globalisation of immediacy is easily mistaken for homogenisation. And in that mistake we can lose touch with the contours of cultural differences. Coverage of a bombing in Baghdad or Kabul, of an air raid in Gaza, quite properly engages our human sympathy with what is happening. It does not help us to understand the deeper drivers of what is going on. The Middle East is a region where all these uncertainties seem to interact and together they challenge our unpreparedness.

## Politics in the Arab world

The Arab world has always been notable for its strong personality. Across its broadest sweep, from Morocco to Muscat, as we step out of the aeroplane, we at once sense an atmosphere which is unmistakably Arab. The ancient Persians and Old Testament writers spoke of the same impression. For all its many varieties and internal differences, the personality of Arab culture is powerful.

In a book a few years ago,<sup>1</sup> I tried to describe the elements which, in differing proportions, constitute this powerful personality in each individual Arab. The last of these, after the important influences of blood, Arabism and religion, was the most difficult and that was the Arab experience of politics. By our notions and preferences, the political experience of the Arab world has been unhappy. We cannot then be surprised that the intersection of concern about energy and the politics of the Middle East makes for a tricky passage.

Not only are the politics of the Middle East characteristically authoritarian, but they cleave, inevitably, to the exclusivities of blood – family loyalties – and to religious choice. The ancient Arabian tradition of participation and consensus has been overlain by what today we should call a *narrative* of justifying exclusive rule, by pointing to the dangers of social disintegration if power were to slip away from its safe mooring in the regime. The relentless circularity of this argument is only occasionally broken by an intervention (which may, or may not, be violent) by a relative or somebody else on the inside who thinks he can control things better. And from this conditioned inclination to tight political control spring other characteristics: restraint on information, education, judicial independence and, ultimately, restraint on free choice and a notable absence of accountability.

As a consequence, in the lives of the people, already focused on the interests of family, there is a tendency to be detached about political freedoms and extremely sophisticated in managing problematic relations with the centre of power.

Importantly, control of the principal resources, hydrocarbons and the surplus revenues they generate, stay in the tight grip of regimes. And the state sector of the economy has a corresponding preponderance. The state remains the significant employer, though often only offering shadow jobs in Potemkin departments of government, large armies and security forces. People find it pays, literally, to soldier on.

Identifying what does seem to be a salient and robustly enduring theme is not to deny that change is afoot. But the changes which are occurring are subtle. It is not easy to read their impact on the status quo, still less the timing of that impact. And this is a great concern to regimes. They do not necessarily find it any easier than we do.

## Demographic pressures

The really significant change which it is easy to overlook is demographic. Taking a view of the wider region which encompasses the Arab world (less Sudan), Israel, Turkey and Iran, we are looking at a space which in 1950 had a population of just under 104 millions. By the end of the century, however, this figure had quadrupled to 400 millions. The UN's median projection for the middle of our new century gives a total population of 692 million people. Within this total, we can note that there may be 61 million Iraqis in 2050; 58

million Yemenis; 10 millions living in the Palestinian territories; 49 million Algerians and 121 million Egyptians. Turks may number nearly 99 million and Iranians 100 million. There may be 45 million Saudi Arabians. Already today, according to government sources, 75% of Saudis live in the kingdom's four main cities.

These are statistics which propose formidable challenges to social and security policy, to water supply, economic competitiveness and, indeed, energy policy (energy consumption in the GCC states<sup>2</sup> is already growing fast). And absent population reduction due to appalling disaster or major war, these population figures seem inescapable. Demographers like to point out, as though it had escaped the rest of us, that people do, in time, breed. The figures I have given have already taken into account falling fertility rates and shifting attitudes to family size. But with median ages of the population across the states of the wider Middle East ranging only between 17 and 31 years, the fuse which will deliver this slow-motion population explosion, has been lit for some time.

As a consequence, in Saudi Arabia, 200,000 young people enter the job market each year. The government is the major employer, providing the vast majority of jobs, but it only has about 80,000 new jobs to offer. In Oman, out of a total labour force of 500,000, the private sector labour force is estimated at 50,000 – just 10%. In Saudi Arabia, it is estimated that 83% of jobs in the private sector are held by foreigners. And these figures are mainly concerned with the men.

Education is bringing a new generation of women to the borderlands of employment. The region as a whole needs to create as many jobs in the next 15 years as it has in the last 50; and that projection does not include an increasing demand driven by women who want to be allowed to fulfil their educations in work.

These figures illustrate a number of pressures, but importantly a disturbing overhang of postponed action to secure the non-oil economy and the private sector and to ensure their international competitiveness while creating work for the young.

## Cultural changes

Accumulating questions about how the young are to find their place in these societies, range across the ideological commitment of the young – whether to the status quo or to radical change – through to how the unemployed young may afford to marry in a culture which still sets a high price on a marriage contract.

The changes are subtle and long wavelength, but they are nonetheless real. The percolation of women from the private space of the family to the public space of employment is increasing in flow. The proliferation of internet access to information abroad which is not otherwise readily available at home, seems unstoppable. The renewal of religious commitment as a main driver of identity is challenging governments and regimes to answer questions about legitimacy, equity, justice and religious observance. This religious commitment has a penetrating insistence which is changing many social attitudes, all the way from dress to fasting, investment preferences and, of course, attitudes towards 'The Other', which in their case often means *us*.

Increasingly, it seems to me that the secularising vision of modernity which reached a high point of aspiration in the mid-20th century, is

being gradually consigned to a compartment of exception in the region's long history. The Iranians, the Turks and the Israelis, each in their own way, are also participating in this rediscovery of identity through religion.

The religious register allows what seems to us a political discourse, to be continued without being labelled as political. In a culture so impregnated with religious idiom, this is not a binary discourse about faith or lack of faith, but about the implications and practice of beliefs which are generally accepted facts of life. And, all the while, the room for manoeuvre for regimes is slowly more tightly constrained. As 'Islamic' becomes a more preferred category, so the definition of what is acceptable behaviour, clicks, like a ratchet, tighter.

A pattern in events suggests itself all too easily. The immobility of regimes in the face of challenging change corresponds with a tendency to radicalism at the extremities of the disaffected and the young; their discourse about the legitimacy of authority is obscure to us – whether the domestic politics of ruling clans in Kuwait or Saudi Arabia, or abstruse debates about religious observance; Western interventions demonstrate our impatience with the ambiguities and the soft shading of the region's 'politics of no politics'; Arabs and Muslims react adversely to these interventions; previous assumptions about regional security and national interest are dislocated; and

regimes seek new friends; they come to think of market conditions as being the *other* side of the cultural divide (and the consequence of our inferior culture); a new enthusiasm for investment inside the region grows stronger; volatility, finally, in the price of oil illuminates and strengthens these drivers.

These factors and drivers are awkwardly interlaced, and together have done much to promote suspicion and even hostility between producers and consumers of oil and gas. At any international conference about oil and gas, one senses two sets of references: the facts and figures based, economic exchanges on the industry and the self-editing attitudes of home truths about power at home and attitudes to 'The Other' – to us.

### Exploitation of oil resources

As consumers, we need to recognise we were long thought of as bad partners in developing the natural resources of oil-rich Arab states. At the beginning of the 1970s, the Seven Sisters, as they were known then, and now in a less chivalrous world simply as 'Big Oil', controlled 75% of the world's oil production. It was the Libyan leader, Qadhafi, who broke 'Big Oil's' hold by breaking off negotiations with Exxon and inviting Armand Hammer of diminutive Occidental to take their place. From there, control of and participation in production became possibilities. The Shah of Iran embraced the opportunity, and by the

Figure 2. Delegates attending the opening session of a summit on the soaring international price of crude in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia on 22 June 2008. Photo: Hassan Ammar/AFP/Getty Images.



time of the Iranian revolution, the price of oil in 2007 dollars had surged to just under \$100 a barrel. The story of National Oil Companies was begun and would in time reach further and further up the value chain of the industry's processes. In 2008, National Oil Companies (NOCs) controlled 80% of world production.

NOCs have done a very good job. There can be no doubt about that. They have kept a dangerous industry running, and in some cases, like Libya, have shown great inventiveness in keeping going despite serious difficulties. In Saudi Arabia, Saudi Aramco has achieved world-class levels of expertise and performance.

Their privileged circumstances, however, have not been an unmixed blessing. Have regimes been more interested in revenue than in greater efficiency? Have NOC staff played safe, rather than recommend the hazard of new projects to mercurial political bosses? In some respects, they have fallen behind the game. Their in-house experience has been largely limited to the local scene. Some of the major reservoirs which have yielded the greater part of production for decades, may now be ageing and need different techniques to coax along established levels of output. Critically, resource nationalism has deprived the NOCs of competition, the opportunity to renew and grow against a wider set of experience and standards.

A significant part of the international oil companies' offer has traditionally been finance. The offer of finance reduces government risk, and also brings good technology, experience and project management. In the Middle East, local confidence in the status quo and, in my own view, some inability to integrate the policy variables of the oil industry into a wider and more coherent approach to national security, have made the international oil companies' offers seem less and less attractive.

The successful example of Saudi Aramco sustains a bias in favour of independence and autarky among NOCs. The biggest reserves in the world, after Saudi Arabia and Iran, are in Iraq. As Iraq tries to open up its fields to foreign support and investment, its invitation to the international oil companies has not included production sharing agreements, but a conservative schedule of what amount to fees. This is unlikely to hold long-term attraction for the companies which could help Iraq. Some commentators argue that such resource nationalism, while of course understandable, does not actually further the interests of the Iraqi state, nor of its people.

### Oil pricing

Superficially, anxiety today is centring on the price of oil and gas. Pricing, of course, is a mystery. Its main component factors – supply, demand, technology and market sentiment – are individually recognisable, but they are unstable in compound.

There has been a rapid but patchy growth in *demand*. Since 2000, 96% of demand growth has been outside the OECD area, notably in countries which subsidise energy prices to consumers. An underlying contraction in demand in OECD countries has been tightened by rising oil prices. In September 2008, the fall in consumption in the United States was the equivalent of India's total consumption. Overall, however, that growth in global demand was not matched by increases in *supply*. OPEC production (43% of world production) actually con-

tracted in 2007, as did production in all other areas, save the former Soviet Union. Middle Eastern states hold 61% of proven reserves, but only produce 30.8% of world output (for gas, the figures are 41.35% and 12.1%). Last autumn, analysts were forecasting that, given a 1.1–2.4% growth in global GDP, demand for oil would outstrip supply in 2017. Such bald assessments are more striking than informative. The detailed outlook for demand always depends on many uncertainties and so remains opaque, but the broad trend is clear: modernisation and development need energy and more energy is needed to achieve an increase in GDP than is the case in developed economies.

The significance of *technology* for the price of oil lies in the possibility of increasing the efficiency of exploration, extraction and delivery. Today's technology allows approximately 35% of discovered oil to be recovered. 'Enhanced oil recovery' may offer increases in production, perhaps by harnessing carbon sequestration to maintain pressure in the reservoir. Technology associated with unconventional oil resources, like shale/tar sands can lift production and so may affect price. Today's low prices, however, constrain investment in innovation in unconventional operations.

Arab producers, notably the King of Saudi Arabia, have blamed market *sentiment* for much of the price increases in 2008, with speculators getting most of the opprobrium. It must be true that when oil becomes a hedging commodity during a period of cheap money, speculators can accelerate trends which are already in place. They can also exacerbate nervousness about political developments. But still the best advice seems to be that speculators follow and amplify price trends, rather than ignite them.

At home in the Middle East, high prices, for the beneficiaries of the status quo, are just what is wanted. In Saudi Arabia that may mean a price somewhere between \$54 and \$75 a barrel. Large financial reserves help steady budgetary instability. But not all oil producers are rich with revenue surpluses. Iran, like Venezuela, maintains pressure in OPEC to keep prices high. They need to cover lack of investment in the economy and consequent inefficiencies and the cost of extensive social programmes and subsidies as well. A fortnight ago, the Libyan leader, Qadhafi, announced to some Georgetown students that Libya may well break ranks with OPEC in order to maximise its short-term revenues.

The pressure of concern about climate change has been set back as more immediate anxieties press down on governments. But these concerns will resurface, not least because they are strongly voiced by the young – they have more to lose from inaction today. The taxes which might be applied to the energy industry as part of a programme of carbon regulation represent a further uncertainty.

At present, the best we can say is that long-term prices for oil are likely to be robust, if (and today this is a significant condition) major economies recover and grow.

The structure and behaviour of highly centralised governments, the challenges they face, especially with demographic pressure and popular expectations, leave them vulnerable when trading deficits arise. Drawing on reserves is a palliative, not a sustaining structural adjustment. Thus a sustained downturn in demand could accelerate long-term problems in the so-called 'petro-states'. As forward defence,

Middle Eastern regimes are trying now to establish a floor for oil prices to cover regime expenditure and promote stability for investment planning. This can only be done by restricting supply. This will entail some tough talking in OPEC between members whose circumstances vary greatly and whose political interests differ sharply, like Iran and Saudi Arabia. There must be a high probability that OPEC discipline will be patchy, and oil prices will prove as difficult to forecast and manipulate during a downturn as they have in the past.

Further ahead, if today's low levels of investment reinforce high prices, when demand picks up, Middle Eastern producers will face awkward policy questions, if economic stability is perceived to be threatened by their insistence on low production. Ahead of the eventual integration of alternative sources of energy, these policy tensions could prove intense. And the economic wisdom that high prices incentivise efficiencies and innovation is unlikely to cool tempers.

### Long-term uncertainties

When we take all these considerations, together with estimates for when much of present power generation capacity may have to be renewed, the third decade of our century appears to contain uncertainties, rather too many for comfort. It's true that today we have a global reserves-to-production ratio of 41.6 years<sup>3</sup> and new exploration successes continue to be scored, but the riddles of politics and global development throw long shadows ahead.

So the great fears of producer regimes must lie above ground – in the politics of their region. Across these time lines of decades, it is possible to imagine that Iraqi production could climb steeply and create a new political, economic and military reality at the head of the Arabian peninsula. This, taken with some resolution of pressures on Tehran, could propose a 'northern tier' of wealth and economic activity. It could be linked with Trans-Caspian and Central Asian resources and prove a sharp competitor for GCC states with their smaller populations. The Shi'ite temper of such a new tier of development would likely intensify the sense of competition.

Saudi Arabia's problematic trend in relations with the United States may be another long-range source of uncertainty. Another could be Iranian success with its military nuclear programme. This could inaugurate a sinister new boardgame of multi-polar deterrence stretching from New Delhi to Tel Aviv. And that game could open ahead of the rules being written and agreed.

And all the while, accumulating pressure to deliver in a harsh environment a tolerable life style (and adequate water) to growing populations will make increasing inroads on economic balances and reserves of domestic political good will.

The reductions in sovereignty which globalisation is imposing on all states must be a risk for those which have changed the least. Already,

it is notable that vitality and effectiveness are most evident in structures below the level of state: the tribes, resistance and terrorist organisations, religious movements and ethnic groupings. The static model of statehood, in a region with such a transnational culture, is in need of deep reassessment and renewal, if it is to keep ahead of the challenges. The policy and executive paralysis in Kuwait is a sign of the scale of these challenges.

Misfortune under any of these headings could spell trouble for regimes.

The world, however, will continue to be dependent on Middle Eastern oil for decades to come. Even when, as I am confident must eventually happen, the energy mix is altered by new technologies and scientific discoveries, oil will continue to be a commodity of great value. Its extraordinary and energy-releasing properties assure it of a long-term future. The middle ground, the scenery between here and there, is full of surprises and imponderables. As we have seen in Iraq, even regime changes contain fearful hazards, as those new to power gain experience and old scores are settled.

In my view, our interests require us to engage with this part of the world to understand it better. A slow-moving drama of political resistance to change, demographic explosion, unsteady pricing deriving from ill-matched supply and demand and continuing low trust in producer-consumer relations, all promise more than enough difficulty.

We can rely considerably on market forces to rebalance the account. But we can make matters considerably worse – by repeating the mistakes of the past and making assumptions based on inadequate knowledge and experience. Nobody can suggest that establishing trust and co-operation will be easy. It is just that we have no welcome alternative.

### Notes

1 Mark Allen, *Arabs* (London: Continuum, 2006).

2 Gulf Cooperation Council states: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates.

3 In Saudi Arabia 69.5 years, and in the UAE 91.9 years. A reserves-to-production (R/P) ratio gives the confirmed reserves divided by the last year's production.

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Sir Mark Allen studied Arabic at Oxford and worked for the diplomatic service from 1973 to 2004. For many years he lived in the Middle East, serving in the UAE, Egypt and Jordan. During his extensive service, he developed a keen sense of the unique nuances of each of the cultures of the region.

This was the third in the '*Politics and Energy*' series of lectures, organised by the Mile End Group, Queen Mary University of London, in partnership with the British Academy and the Science Museum.

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# Public Opinion, Public Diplomacy and Peace Making

Dr Colin Irwin explains how public opinion polls can be used in long-running conflicts to help the pursuit of peace.

## The People's Peace

Social and political conflicts are a major source of instability in the post-Cold War world. They affect not just the countries in which they occur, but very often engulf their neighbours and have a potential to throw entire regions into turmoil. Even if settlements are reached, they often remain unstable, resulting in a return to violence or necessitating ongoing intervention by the international community. But the potential for the success of peace processes can be greatly increased when all sections of society are provided with opportunities to become active partners in their own peace process. Imposed solutions and deals done 'behind closed doors', backed up with international pressure and force, may bring temporary relief to apparently intractable problems. But 'home grown' solutions that have the widest possible support amongst the various elements that make up a society are essential for progress towards long-term stability and peace.

In the modern political world of international norms, globalisation, mass media and an increasingly well-informed electorate, solutions to political, economic and social problems require a discourse and decision-making process that engage with the leadership, civil society and the population at large. Achieving such a process in divided societies is problematic and requires every possible assistance and support. However, by taking advantage of some features that characterise and shape contemporary societies, it is possible to initiate a process of communication and decision-making that can bring divided communities closer to a consensus as to how they can best manage their affairs. By pro-actively testing public opinion as part of the search for compromise and common ground, it is possible for negotiators to build consensus and strengthen the potential for political stability, economic prosperity and the degree of social cohesion necessary to sustain them.

## Northern Ireland

To this end, nine surveys of public opinion were conducted in support of the Northern Ireland peace process between April 1996 and February 2003. Critically the questions for eight of these polls were drafted and agreed with the co-operation of party negotiators. The aim was to enhance the peace process by increasing party inclusiveness, developing issues and language, testing party policies, helping to set deadlines and increase the overall transparency of negotiations through the publication of technical analysis and media reports.

In so far as it was possible, the parties were given 'ownership' of the research so that they would take the results seriously. Each party to the negotiations nominated a member of their team to work with me on the polls. Questions were designed to test party policies as a series of options or preferences from across the social and political spectrum. The moderating voice of 'the silent majority' was thus given expression, while extremist positions were demonstrated to be marginal with little cross community support. All questions, options and preferences had to be agreed as not being partisan or misleading. From the drafting of these questions, to

sample design, ethics, timing and publication, the programme of research was decided by all the parties, and they were encouraged to take the work in any direction that they believed would be helpful to the peace process.

The focus of the research was on problems, solutions and policies for conflict resolution, as opposed to inter-community attitudes and values. Questions were 'pitched' at what most people could understand most of the time, not at the lowest common denominator. All relevant issues were covered, and no irrelevant issues. All the results were also made publicly available, effectively giving the wider community a 'seat at the negotiating table', and exposing the research to the highest standards of peer review and public scrutiny. There was no 'cherry picking' of the results. Everyone had to deal with all the issues that were raised as part of what became a 'pre-negotiation problem-solving exercise'. This inter-track activity, which extended across the political spectrum to all the major parties, civil society and the public at large, helped to build a consensus for the Belfast Agreement, which led to a successful referendum and a subsequent period of increasing stability and peace. For example, the 5th poll in this series tested the

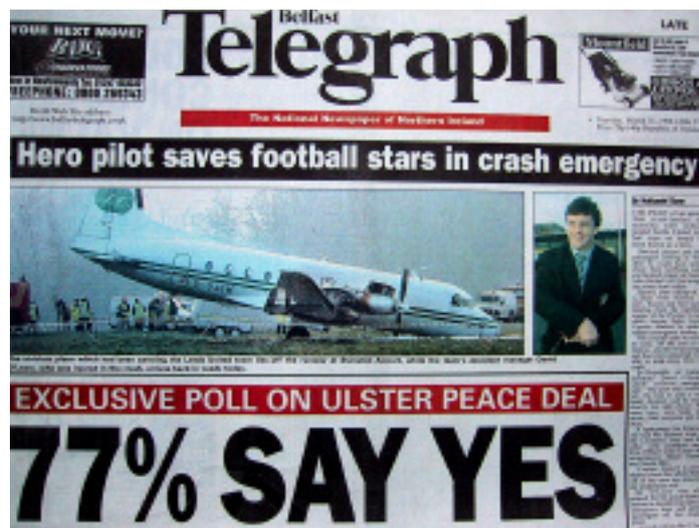


Figure 1. Headline from the Belfast Telegraph of 31 March 1998, reporting the result of an opinion poll that tested a comprehensive settlement 'package'.



Figure 2. Kashmir, October 2007: Colin Irwin meets Molvi Mohd Abbas Ansari, chief of the All-Party Hurriyat Conference.

Agreement against public opinion two weeks before it was made on Good Friday 1998, so all the parties knew they would be able to carry a referendum before 'the deal' was done and no one had to risk political suicide (Figure 1).<sup>1</sup>

### Going international

All the work in Northern Ireland had been funded by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (JRCT). Irish Republicans were suspicious of any involvement by the British State, and Unionists were similarly opposed to the Irish State having any control over the purse strings of research. Without the commitment and resources of an independent charity like JRCT it is unlikely that such a politically sensitive project could have been the success that it was. Following the signing of the Belfast Agreement, Atlantic Philanthropies provided me with a two-year grant to try and internationalise the work. A good start was made with feasibility studies completed in Israel, Palestine and Cyprus, and a series of what were then being called

'peace polls' across the Balkans in Macedonia in 2002, Bosnia Herzegovina in 2004, and Kosovo and Serbia in 2005. These polls were supported by a small independent Greek NGO based in Thessalonica, the Centre for Democracy and Reconciliation in South East Europe (CDSEE). Critically no major agencies would step in to support the work internationally throughout the Bush years.

But in 2007 I was awarded a Small Research Grant from the British Academy that allowed me to travel to a number of unresolved conflicts around the world. The relationships between public opinion, public diplomacy and peace making were explored through a programme of private and public discussions, seminars and conferences in Cyprus, the US, Switzerland, Israel, Norway, Palestine, Germany, India and Sri Lanka. These discourses included the parties to conflicts, public opinion researchers and organisations, NGOs and UN negotiators and peacemakers.

In Cyprus, meetings were held with representatives of the Presidents Offices of both the North and South of the island in Nicosia (Lefkosia). Legal counsel to negotiations were met with in Ramallah, Palestine. In India meetings were held with representatives of the government responsible for Kashmir, and in Kashmir the political leaders of various parties to the conflict were interviewed (Figure 2). Discussions were held with organisations undertaking public opinion work in support of peace processes in Cyprus, Israel, Palestine, Delhi and Colombo (Figure 3), including conferences on this topic in Jerusalem and Berlin organised by the World Association of Public Opinion Research (WAPOR).



Figure 3. Colin Irwin with the Social Indicator research team, in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in October 2007. The Social Indicator team completed a peace poll that was published in the Daily Mirror of Colombo.

With regard to major NGOs and the UN, seminars and meetings were held with the US Institute of Peace (USIP), National Democratic Institute (NDI) and Academy for Educational Development (AED) in Washington, all of whom use polling in support of their peace research. In Israel and Palestine meetings were held with UNDP/Interpeace in Jerusalem and Ramallah. And with regard to negotiators and peacemakers, seminars and meetings were arranged with the UN in Cyprus and New York with the departments of Political Affairs and Peacebuilding. These engagements led to further meetings in Geneva with the UNDP/Interpeace and Humanitarian Dialogue (HD), which in turn lead to an invitation from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to present at and attend the Oslo Forum 2007 – an annual event for world mediators and peacemakers.

### Change at last

This programme of research and consultation helped to create a better understanding and wider acceptance of public opinion research as an aid to public diplomacy and conflict resolution. This was done in terms of: advances in best practice, social science theory, setting new international standards, and the wider application of these methods to other conflicts.

*Best practice.* Following a presentation to the Department of Political Affairs at the UN in

New York, I was invited to help them draft a set of operational guidance notes on the use of public opinion polls as a tool for peacemakers. These notes have now been published on the project website at [www.peacepolls.org](http://www.peacepolls.org) with the three central principals incorporated into a critical review of research ethics and peace making.<sup>2</sup> These principles for best practice are:

1. All the parties to a conflict should draft and agree all the questions.
2. All the communities and peoples to the conflict should be asked all the questions.
3. All the results should be made public.

*Theory.* By extending the principles developed by Donald T. Campbell for the epistemology and methodology of applied social science to public opinion polls and peacemaking, it has been possible to detail the theoretical principles upon which peace polls can most effectively be made. Essentially this requires bringing *adversarial stakeholders* into all aspects of the design of the research and interpretation of the results. Thus the ethical principle that ‘we make peace with our enemies’ in this context becomes ‘we make peace research with our *adversarial stakeholders*’.

*International standards.* Following the drafting of operational guidance notes for the UN and

various papers on peace polls presented at WAPOR conferences, the World Association of Public Opinion Research decided to set international standards for peace polls. This is at the working draft stage and a sub-committee will be established to agree and monitor these standards over the coming years.

*Application.* Following the presentation of the peace polls methods at the Oslo Forum 2007, I was invited to make a submission to representatives of the international community to undertake programmes of applied research in a number of different countries in an effort to help analyse and resolve their conflicts. These applications were successful, and in 2008 I started to work in Sri Lanka with the All Party Representative Committee (APRC) to test policies for a new constitution that could deal effectively with the problems of their past.

Following the election of President Obama to the White House and the appointment of Senator George Mitchell as Special Envoy to the Middle East (previously Chair of the Northern Ireland ‘Talks’), funds for new peace polls became available for Cyprus, Israel and Palestine from both international and private sources. The lean and difficult years of the Bush Administration seem to be over and I will be meeting up with colleagues<sup>3</sup> from Cyprus (North and South), Israel, Palestine, India (Kashmir) and Sri Lanka to report and

Figure 4. *The divided City of Jerusalem. OneVoice in Israel and Palestine invited Colin Irwin for consultations on problems relating to public opinion research, public diplomacy and peace making, in September 2008. Meetings were held in Tel Aviv, Ramallah and Jerusalem, including a seminar at the Arab World for Research and Development offices in Ramallah.*



share experiences of new peace polls undertaken in all these key conflicts this year, at the WAPOR Annual Conference in Lausanne, Switzerland (11–13 September 2009).

It has taken ten years to implement the Belfast Agreement<sup>4</sup> and it also seems to have taken the same ten years to learn and apply some of the most important lessons of that peace process to other conflicts around the world. In this I must extend my thanks to the British Academy who supported me when others would not. During all my years of research I

can't recall when such a small grant (£7,071) has achieved and led to so much. A little money in the right place at the right time can sometimes accomplish very great things.

#### Notes

1. For a review of the political impact of these polls, see Colin Irwin, *The People's Peace Process in Northern Ireland* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002).
2. Colin Irwin, 'Research Ethics and Peacemaking', in *The Handbook of Social Research Ethics*, ed. D. Mertens and P. Ginsberg (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2008).

3. These include Alexandros Lordos and Erol Kaymak from Cyprus, Nader Said-Foqahaa from Palestine, Mina Zemach from Israel, Yashwant Deshmukh from India, and Pradeep Peiris from Sri Lanka.

4. See Marianne Elliott, 'The Good Friday Agreement, Ten Years On', *British Academy Review*, issue 12, January 2009.

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Dr Colin Irwin is Senior Research Fellow in the Institute of Irish Studies at the University of Liverpool. More on Peace Polls can be found at [www.peacepolls.org](http://www.peacepolls.org)

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# Democracy in Palestine and the Middle East Peace Process

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*As part of a wider British Academy-funded project on democracy in the Arab-Mediterranean world, Dr Michelle Pace conducted a number of interviews in Palestine, including with representatives of the Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas). Here Dr Pace provides an account of those interviews, and goes on to discuss ways in which external actors such as the European Union may rethink democracy-building efforts.*

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**D**URING September 2007, as part of my British Academy-funded project on 'A "Modern" Islamic Democracy? Perceptions of democratisation in the Arab-Mediterranean world', I embarked on a two-week fieldtrip to Palestine to interview various Palestinian academics, representatives of NGOs, political party activists and parliamentarians (including Islamists), and journalists. From *Hamas*, I interviewed officials from its political wing in Gaza and Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) members in Nablus.

*Hamas* achieved electoral victory in the January 2006 elections (which were declared free, fair and transparent by international observation missions), which many Palestinians described as a protest vote against *Fatah* for its corrupt practices and its failure to secure any political solution to the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories. Elaborate efforts to forge a common political position between *Hamas* and President Abbas on the new government's programme appeared to have yielded results in February 2007 with the formation of a National Unity Government (NUG).

However, both *Hamas* and *Fatah* found it extremely challenging to share power. Although Palestinians – across the political spectrum – accept democracy in principle, they have a hard time accepting the idea of power sharing. Therefore, a big gap emerged between, on the one hand, the belief in democracy and the rhetoric of agreeing on it, and on the other hand, accepting each other and sharing power. This gap culminated in bloody clashes in Gaza, with a subsequent military takeover of the entire Strip by *Hamas* forces in June 2007.

## Interviews: the perspective of *Hamas*

*Hamas* officials told me that what the movement had been confronted with since its victory was a set of forces opposed to their efforts at governing – including *Fatah* (their long-term internal rivals), Israel, the US, the EU and the international 'community', as well as Arab leaders. Following the results of the 2006 elections in Palestine, the international community boycotted *Hamas*, and imposed three conditions on the movement. Although *Hamas* rejected these demands outright, stipulating that the Middle East Quartet (UN, EU, Russia and United States) always placed conditions solely on the occupied but not equally on the occupier, they were prepared to discuss these same demands with the international community. However, because *Hamas* is on the US's and the EU's terrorist list, external actors could not enter into any discussions with *Hamas* about these conditions. *Hamas* officials insisted to me that, despite all the constraints on the movement, *Hamas* had in effect *implicitly* accepted all three conditions: 'The international community asks us to stop using violence. As long as they accept our right to self-determination and to resist the occupation, we will do so. They ask us to recognise the Israeli state. Well, apart from the question of which borders do they want us to recognise, Israel is a reality next door. They ask us to comply with previous agreements. We agreed to have President Abbas represent us ... so that indirectly means we accept that as well. However, it is the occupying power which continues to break all international agreements and laws – but they are never given any conditions. That is the model of democracy we have next door to us!'

When asked specifically on their views on democracy, *Hamas* officials responded by arguing that they see democracy as a means rather than as an end in itself. The problem for *Hamas* has been that they were not allowed any possibility to prove their efforts at using this instrument – that is, at governing the territories. I asked them in particular about their autumn 2005 election manifesto entitled ‘Change and Reform’, which appeared to be a very different document from the 1988 *Hamas* Charter (which stipulates the ‘liberation of Palestine’ through the individual duty of *jihād* leading to the establishment of an Islamic state as its core goal).

*Hamas* officials explained to me how the movement had developed from its inception and more so since 1988. *Hamas* emerged from the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) whose Palestinian branch was founded in 1946 in Jerusalem. *Hamas*’s roots as a social movement can also be traced in the MB’s main institutional embodiment, the Islamic Center (*al-mujamma’ al-islami*) in the Gaza Strip. Formally legalised in 1978 by the Israeli military administration, the *Mujamma’* became the base for the development, administration, and control of religious and educational Islamic institutions in the Gaza Strip. From the late 1960s

Figure 1. Elections in Palestine, 25 January 2006. Top: An elderly Palestinian man shows his finger after voting at a polling station in the Khan Younis refugee camp south of Gaza Strip (photo: Reuters/Ibraheem Abu Mustafa). Bottom: Palestinian local observers start to count votes inside a polling station in Gaza Strip (photo: Reuters/Mohammed Salem).



to the mid-1980s, the MB benefited from the Israeli government’s support of non-violent Islamist, Palestinian factions. Israel then saw some benefit in having a useful counterweight to secular, nationalist Palestinian groups (then hijacking airplanes and conducting commando raids into Israel from neighbouring Arab states) like the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO). Israel thus played a ‘divide and rule’ tactic by legalising the Islamic Center in the hope that it would emerge as a competing movement to the PLO. (Ironically it succeeded, with the culmination of a huge rivalry between *Hamas* and *Fatah*.) Following the first *Intifada* of 8 December 1987, the MB’s Palestinian branch established *Hamas* as a subordinate organisation specifically to confront the Israeli occupation.

The *Hamas* 2005 electoral programme, however, makes no reference to the State of Israel and instead focuses on the people’s needs: ‘When the people voted, they voted because they expected reform and change and we had a political programme to achieve this: to address the corruption, the chaos, the lack of law and order. So first, we aimed to enhance the state of law and order. That is one thing we managed to achieve in Gaza. We also had plans to make our people less dependent on the Israelis by ensuring that we produce the basic needs of our people. We also planned to make Gaza cleaner and greener by planting more trees etc. This is important for Gazans’ psychological and mental health too.’ Progressive elements within *Hamas*’s political wing thus advocate a social, welfare democracy based on the response of political representatives to people’s basic and political needs. When asked whether, as many secular Palestinians feared, *Hamas* had intended to establish Shar’ia law, they responded by insisting that such a law would be impossible in the Palestinian territories, and moreover that Palestine is neither Sudan nor Saudi Arabia nor Iran.<sup>1</sup> They acknowledged that a large number of Palestinians are either secular Muslims or Christians. Furthermore, they insisted that Palestinians share an Islamic culture. ‘So we are not intending to have an Islamic state here: It is better to have a democratic state and culturally we are guided by Islam.’

*Hamas* had previously boycotted the elections of 1996: the leadership of the movement then felt that doing so would lend legitimacy to the PNA (the Palestinian National Authority), which was created out of what they considered as unacceptable negotiations and compromises with Israel. But *Hamas* left the door open for the movement’s participation in future elections. Some might view such a take on the electoral process as a tactical move from *Hamas*, which had rightly read the Palestinians’ discontent with *Fatah* in the run up to the 2006 elections. *Hamas* officials themselves are quick to point out that democracy is not just about elections. ‘Because we are not an independent state, we agreed to share power with *Fatah* in order to achieve our goals. It is better to have consensus among Palestinians than to have a strong party voting for one initiative or the other. But *Fatah* was not prepared to surrender power easily. We also wished to have good institutions because unfortunately most of the institutions here – including Human Rights organisations, charity organisations, NGOs – are politicised. As in the West, we wanted to have a check and balance system to ensure that every citizen abides by the law. But democracy here also means fear from injustice, from poverty; and free media – here the media is biased. So this is another institution that we needed to reform – the media. One of the things we had hoped for was to emphasise that international

actors monitor funds they give to NGOs, and we wanted to also propose that we need projects to develop people's understanding of democracy through regular training programmes. We have a very complicated perception about democracy – people here live under a constant siege mentality. We had arranged for members of our Parliament to travel to Europe to see the British, Swiss and French parliaments in action. But now the people think that democracy is nonsense. If they vote *Hamas*, *Hamas* will be sieged. If they vote *Fatah* they vote for corruption which is what the West really wants. So you will see, in future elections here, fewer people will go out to vote.'

### Palestinian factions today and perceptions in Europe

Palestine is an exceptional case study in that the Palestinians inhabit occupied territories and most policy makers work on the basis of an illusion of a 'state' or a pseudo state. Thus, one cannot focus on the perceptions of any Palestinian faction on democracy without taking into consideration the Middle East conflict between the Palestinians and Israel. The Palestinians have a long history of civil society activism, a core pillar of any transition to democracy. This is largely due to an embedded democratic ethos in Palestinian society. Democracy is a way of life, accepting the word of the majority. Palestinians are currently working together, via Egyptian mediation, on the details of a national government of consensus – but they must learn to accept each other. The PLO actually misrepresents the Palestinian population in its current structure and badly needs to be reformed. *Fatah* is fractured within. The critical and reflexive voices inside *Fatah* must be heeded by the old guard, although old habits die hard. *Hamas*, with its external and internal divisions, its military and political wings, its young and old guards, must continue to look at Sinn Féin and the IRA for important lessons to learn. It also needs to rein in ('other') militant groups launching rockets on the Negev and neighbouring areas.<sup>2</sup>

The problem, thus far, has been that both *Fatah* and *Hamas* see greater costs than benefits in reaching a compromise, but they need to prioritise their national interest.<sup>3</sup> Although some forms of democratic politics may be practicable even under occupation, grassroots forms of democratic politics may hold some promise for the peace process too. What Palestinians and the international community, the US and the EU in particular (if they want to engage), need to do is to focus on people's political rights and needs and on reconciliation between the various Palestinian factions. The international community in particular must not repeat its mistake of not recognising a Palestinian NUG – although, as far as this author is aware, only a technocratic, Palestinian, national government of consensus (with the sole purpose of preparing for the expected January 2010 elections) will be as far as the external actors will go this time round.

However, following the Israeli incursion into Gaza during December 2008–January 2009 (with its strong media images broadcast across the world), as well as the results of the Israeli elections of February 2009, at the time of writing there appears to be a significant, albeit slow shift in the US's and the EU's Middle East policy. There is now a stronger cohort of external actors' officials calling for a dialogic engagement with the *Hamas* movement. For the EU, the challenge remains that some member states, like the Czechs who currently hold the EU Presidency, remain ardent supporters of Israel. Another challenge faced

by EU officials in particular is that they are often confused about messages coming from different voices within *Hamas*. The movement thus also, for its part, needs to get its act together and get organised in order to relay one message to the international community rather than competing discourses from different members. EU officials need to understand *Hamas* – how it is composed, who are the progressive voices within and without, their historical trajectories (many members emerged from refugee camps) and the challenges faced by a national liberation movement within the context of an occupied nation. Furthermore, violations and abuses of human rights (including unlawful arrests, torture and killings in detention of political rivals from *Fatah*) make a mockery of *Hamas's* claims to uphold rule of law and order in the Gaza Strip and should not go unheeded by the international community.

On the part of Israel, a shift in thinking is needed – one that sees a radical move from an insular, military-minded and short-term focus on security (which some may feel has created an Israeli society based on fear and lack of trust of 'others'), to a wider and longer-term conception of what is really needed to safeguard the future of its own citizens and their right to live in peace: that is, a political solution to the Middle East conflict. For the sake of future generations in both Israel and Palestine, an acceptance of either side's rights and the required political negotiations are what the Middle East urgently requires.

### A final note: challenges for researchers

Referencing/describing the views of *Hamas* interviewees as their 'perceptions' allows me, as an academic researcher, to highlight their views of the situation in Palestine and also to draw attention to notions of how they perceive third parties to view them. This in turn allows for some cognitive dissonance on both sides. Moreover, the difficulties and practical challenges confronted by a researcher in seeking to conduct work on this subject, and especially conducting fieldwork in Gaza, cannot be underestimated.

#### Notes

- 1 When it took over Gaza, *Hamas* in fact did not impose Shar'ia law or the wearing of the veil by Muslim women.
- 2 *Hamas* accepts the presence of other resistance groups within the Occupied Territories. They say they are prepared to rein them in once a ceasefire is agreed; to deny them the right to resist in the absence of an 'hudna' would start a civil war.
- 3 *Fatah* does see a great cost in not reaching an agreement with Israel, unlike *Hamas*.

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In 2007, Dr Pace was awarded a British Academy Larger Research Grant for a project on 'A "Modern" Islamic Democracy? Perceptions of democratisation in the Arab-Mediterranean world', to undertake research in Palestine and Egypt. (Dr Pace's recent fieldwork in Brussels was supported by her complementary ESRC project.) The British Academy-funded project concluded with a conference held at the University of Birmingham on 6 March 2009. Dr Pace's report of this may be found at [www.eumena.bham.ac.uk/docs/marchreport09\\_final.pdf](http://www.eumena.bham.ac.uk/docs/marchreport09_final.pdf)

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## ***Restorative Justice on Trial:* Reconciliation in Kosovo through the Reconstruction of Serbian Orthodox Heritage**

*At the British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship Symposium on 22 April 2009, Dr Alice Forbess contributed to a discussion on how scholarship can offer perspectives on 'global interactions'. Here she describes how a failure to understand local culture has complicated a well-intentioned initiative aimed at fostering reconciliation in Kosovo.*

Half way through my journey from Belgrade to Kosovo in October 2008, I glimpse the front page of *Kurir*, the Serbian equivalent of the *Sun*: 'War in Kosovo' screams the headline, over a fuzzy picture of men in balaclavas. As our bus nears the border, people grow thoughtful, families with children, friends and strangers huddled in a compact community behind the driver. 'Who do you work for?' asks a gypsy man dressed like an American Indian street fighter, eyeing me suspiciously. I am a social anthropologist, on my way to research how the Serbian and Albanian communities have received an international initiative for reconciliation, through the reconstruction of Serbian monasteries and churches destroyed in Albanian revenge attacks after the 1999 war.

A few months earlier, on an August evening, the Italian soldiers in their bulletproof shack at the gates of Dečani Monastery (in Western Kosovo) had witnessed an unusual spectacle. A gaggle of monks, all over six foot tall, emerged from the courtyard dragging a kicking and screaming monk from Gračanica monastery, lifted him up bodily and threw him in his jeep like a sack of potatoes – screaming that he was barred from entering Dečani. The monk was the favourite adviser of bishop (*Vladika*) Artemije, the leader of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Kosovo, and he had come on an errand to depose vice bishop Teodosije, the leader of Dečani. Granting the world a unique glimpse into the difficulties of his job, *Vladika* Artemije next published a detailed online account of the 'insurrection at Dečani', and an article accusing the Serbian Orthodox Church's Holy Synod (central council) of working for the Americans. At the centre of this conflict was a restorative justice initiative known as the Memorandum of Understanding.

My research focused partly on the two grandest 13th century Serbian royal foundations, Gračanica and Dečani, and their leaders' conflict over the Memorandum. *Vladika* Artemije, the bishop of Kosovo (a prominent diocese with over 1000 monasteries and churches), is a famous reviver of the monastic tradition, who re-populated numerous monasteries abandoned since the 1940s. He came to Gračanica in 2004, forced to abandon his palace in Prizren – later torched and left to smoulder for fifteen days. One of his monks was kidnapped and decapitated, and monastics now travel only under KFOR guard. Gračanica monastery (Figure 1) is at the centre of a cluster of villages



Figure 1. Gračanica. From top to bottom: the monastery; musicians from Macedonia who drive up weekly to play for wedding parties dancing outside the monastery; a godfather tries to offer the soldiers who stand guard at the monastery gates a bottle of rakija (moonshine). Photos: Alice Forbess.

Figure 2. *The monastery at Dečani. Photo: Alice Forbess.*



to which the Pristina Serbs fled after the war. Far from being enclosed, the 'enclave' is crossed by the main thoroughfare to Macedonia with traffic, both Albanian and Serbian, crawling at snail pace past the monastery's gates. Dečani (Figure 2) is contrastingly located in the hostile Dukadjin area, nicknamed Kosovo's Wild West for its gun culture and frequent inter-clan feuds. The KLA's insurrection started here in the 1990s, and in 2006 a young Albanian villager tried to hit the monastery with a rocket propelled grenade from a nearby hill. The monks picked up the unexploded projectile and threw it over the wall. Both monasteries are showcases of Serbian Orthodoxy and maintain close ties with a host of Western diplomats, generals and ministers who guarantee them protection. It must be mentioned that the destruction of shrines was not one-sided: Serbian army and paramilitaries also destroyed numerous mosques in Bosnia and Kosovo. The research reported here focused primarily on the lives of Serbian monastics, but relies also on contacts and friendships within the Albanian community.

The Memorandum, signed in 2005 by a clerical delegation to Washington DC, laid down rules for the reconstruction of some of the 150 or so destroyed churches and monasteries. It was to be funded by the Albanian government in Pristina and supervised by a five-member commission of church and government officials from Pristina and

Belgrade, chaired by a European Union representative. In the wake of the signing, *Vladika* Artemije was persuaded to drop a case brought by his diocese at the International Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg against four NATO nations whose soldiers failed to stop the destruction of churches after the end of the war. In 2008, with the reconstruction almost completed, he raised serious concerns over the quality and safety of the repairs, quoting engineers' reports that some of the rebuilt churches were too dangerous to use (in one case the roof was several tonnes heavier than the original, threatening to collapse the load bearing walls). The issues pointed out by the reports, and the use of Albanian contractors despite reassurances to the contrary, split the Church leadership, with Artemije withdrawing his support, whilst Teodosije and Artemije's superior Metropolitan Amfilohije stood by the initiative – most likely because they knew the monasteries, particularly Dečani, would not be safe without international protection (Figure 3). Artemije also raised the issue of the ownership and future custodianship of the buildings, pointing out that international agencies seemed to be re-framing Serbian patrimony as 'Kosovar' or Byzantine. Despite reassurances to the contrary, he feared Albanian involvement in the reconstruction was a first step towards the incorporation of Serbian Orthodox heritage under the administration of Pristina. The ownership of the sites by the Serbian Orthodox Church is straightforward, but the problem of state jurisdiction remains. Until

2008 the churches were Serbian state patrimony but, being on Kosovo territory, can hardly retain this status. Finally, Artemije argued that the Memorandum glossed over the issue of accountability for the damage. He viewed this initiative as a sort of 'justice lite' which denied the Serbs a chance to have 'real' justice. It was felt that, whilst Serbian war criminals were publicly branded at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), this standard of justice was not applied across the board – particularly in light of Ramush Haradinaj's acquittal, owing to insufficient evidence after a witness was assassinated. Haradinaj, Kosovo's former prime minister and a KLA leader, was accused of butchering kidnapped Serbs for organs during the Kosovo war (more than a thousand Serbs are still missing), and the evidence against him was compelling enough to be included by the ICTY's chief prosecutor Carla Del Ponte in her autobiography.<sup>1</sup> The Memorandum was equally resented by Albanians, many of whom disagreed with the implied admission of guilt. At kiosks, one could buy academic pamphlets arguing that Kosovo Albanians had a better claim to this territory than the Slavs because they were descendants of the Illyrians, the indigenous population of the region.

### Justice and honour

Restorative justice is an umbrella term referring to alternative practices of conflict resolution. It became popular in the 1990s as an alternative strategy for dealing with juvenile crime, and is being used on an increasingly large scale, particularly in processes of reconciliation and the reconstruction of communities affected by violent conflicts and mass victimisation. Whilst penal justice processes tend to ignore the victim, the aim of restorative justice is to rebuild the social trust and relations destroyed by a crime by bringing together victim, perpetrator, representatives of formal justice institutions and of 'the community'. The focus here is on the idea of social capital, and the strategy is to maintain or restore a generalised reciprocity that guarantees mutual trust and strengthens community life.<sup>2</sup> Dealing with an intractable situation in Kosovo, the European Union is promoting such initiatives, which have much to recommend them. Why then did the Memorandum fail

to achieve the intended results? Succinctly put, my argument is that such initiatives are not applied *in vacuo*. Local forms of customary law and dispute resolution practices are already in place, and ignoring these, and the cultural logics that underlie them, is likely to backfire.

Kosovo Albanians and Serbs are usually portrayed as radically different, and in some ways they are. However, the code of honour associated with traditional clan structures stretching from Bosnia to Albania is mutually intelligible and very important to both. In former Yugoslavia, ethnic identities are complex, and have been changing rapidly since the wars of secession. The story of a mother's vexation at the fact that her three sons declared themselves respectively Serb, Croatian and Montenegrin in the census is not very far-fetched. Many people are of mixed descent and have to choose an identity, whether according to their principles or opportunistically. Currently, the trend is for religious and ethnic identities increasingly to overlap: Catholic Serbs, Orthodox Croats and Orthodox Albanians are disappearing categories.

Territories like Montenegro and Kosovo may seem very distinct, but arguably Montenegro is just as close culturally to Kosovo and Northern Albania as it is to Serbia. Montenegrins are viewed as a sort of 'hyper-Serbs', what Serbs would have been without the Ottoman conquest. Evidence gathered by Edith Durham in 1908 points to the fact that some Albanophone and Serbophone clans from Kosovo, Northern Albania and Montenegro claimed common descent (saying they had come from Bosnia around the time of the Ottoman conquest) and intermarried.<sup>3</sup> Modernisation and socialism have not rendered clan structures redundant, and recent ethnographic evidence shows clans (considering themselves variously as Serbian, Croatian, Montenegrin and Albanian) still exist in Herzegovina,<sup>4</sup> Montenegro, Kosovo and Northern Albania.<sup>5</sup> Even Serbs from Belgrade use clan kinship terms (all members of a patrilineage are referred to as brothers) and can tell clan membership and geographical origins by last names. In all these societies there exist a number of different and sometimes contradictory moral registers, and people navigate these as best they can. However, I would argue that the code of honour tends to assert itself as the



Figure 3. Vladikas [bishops] Amfilohije (of Montenegro) and Artemije, at Vidovdan (the anniversary of the battle of Kosovo), June 2008. Photo: Alice Forbess.



Figure 4. A different perspective on foreign intervention: posters from Peje (Pec), reflecting Kosovo Albanian gratitude towards the United States. Photo: Alice Forbess.

appropriate register for dealing with disputes between different patrilineages or larger groups conceptualised as male brotherhoods – including those between Serbs and Albanians.

The blood revenge, a local form of restorative justice, is still common in Kosovo and Montenegro, but rare among Serbs. Regardless of such variations, these patriarchal populations share strongly-held assumptions concerning the importance of honour, which is essential to a patrilineage's ability to defend itself, intermarry and be treated as equal by other groups. They also share assumptions regarding the legitimate way of settling disputes, through highly formalised negotiations involving family heads and tribal elders (local leaders) and a focus on moral vindication, not property restitution. Honour and shame traditions exist across the globe, but their forms vary widely. For instance, unlike Pakistani 'honour' killings, practices in the former Yugoslavia would never target women (it is considered deeply dishonourable) and indeed forbid targeting a man when accompanied by a woman.

The architects of the Memorandum viewed it as a straightforward show of good will from the Pristina authorities and the international community towards the Serbian community, but in fact it meant a loss of face for both Serbs and Albanians. According to the code of honour, proper restoration has to involve moral vindication as a necessary condition, and material restoration only as a secondary and optional possibility. Whilst many Albanians resent being made to pay for the reconstruction of Serbian buildings which they openly tried to obliterate from the landscape – they are made to reverse actions which they still consider perfectly valid (in light of what the Serbs did to them), for the Serbs having their holy places rebuilt by Albanians amounts to being forced to accept a humiliating handout from an enemy who does not wish to offer it. It underlines their lack of control over their own institutions and heritage, their inability to defend and rebuild their own shrines – the opposite of the restoration of honour. It also engenders deep dissensions within the Church, and between local Serbian communities and Belgrade. The Memorandum is built on an assumption that human beings are pragmatic and act according to some form of rational choice theory, but whilst these actors are indeed perfectly rational, they act within their own cultural logics. Furthermore in the case of local leaders, they must be seen to do so if

their actions are to be perceived as legitimate in their societies. By engaging mainly with governments, the initiative undermined local leaders, including *Vladikas* Artemije and Teodosije, who are in the position to do much more to promote reconciliation and are, in clan terms, the appropriate authorities to help settle disputes (religious leaders have a long history of dispute settlement in the region).

By offering material reparation in the first instance, the Memorandum created a situation where material vindication was seen to displace the moral, the restoration of honour. This is because the things involved here, consecrated shrines and human lives, belong to a different sphere of value than money and material goods. To exchange one for the other is to trade downwards, devaluing it. A tradition of 'blood money' does exist, but only as a last resort. Material reparation is viewed as unsatisfactory compensation for loss of life (or desecration of shrines). People can be persuaded to accept it, but only through delicate negotiations. To maintain their dignity, the parties involved must clearly be seen to condescend to this solution as a sign of good will and not through any constraint. Going over their heads to engage with governments and presenting them with a *fait accompli* made this impossible.

Restorative justice initiatives often rely on Western values and ontological assumptions that may seem opaque to others. For instance, the framing of offence and reparation as individual acts makes sense in the Protestant or Catholic West, where the verbalisation of sins is a well-established technology of the self,<sup>6</sup> but in Kosovo the code of honour assigns responsibility for offense or revenge to entire kin groups. As a result, retribution is often impersonal, revenge being a duty rather than a personal choice. Conversely, responsibility for an individual's crimes also reflects on the whole group. In theory, restorative justice seems an ideal solution for the restoration of social

trust and inter-community co-operation, for delivering reparation to the victim and re-integrating the offender into society, for restoring feelings of safety and co-operation. However, they must work within the framework of local normative repertoires and understandings of community, legitimate authority, appropriate forums and procedures for dispute resolution. As it happens, being outsiders, the internationals are rather well placed to play the mediators in Kosovo, but should be wary of alienating both sides and placing local leaders who are willing to co-operate in a tricky situation.

#### Notes

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# Africa's secret success story: Cape Verde

**G**IVEN THE global economic downturn one wouldn't put much hope in the economy of a small African country that has no natural resources, little drinking water and suffers frequent droughts. Nor does one normally associate West Africa with the best democracies and high life expectancy and literacy. Yet a small archipelago of 10 islands, 300 miles off the coast of mainland Senegal, with a population of just 530,000 has, by most assessments, one of the fastest growing economies and the best democracies in Africa. How has this small island state managed to punch above its weight? Interviews conducted in late 2008 with some 30 key informants in central and local government executives and assemblies, business, the civil service, media, human rights groups, women's groups, trade unions and education suggest a striking answer. It appears that it is more than marketing sun and sea for tourists. The positive growth is in large measure due to the fact that the government has learnt that, though good governance is expensive, complex and not without political risks, it has a significant effect in stimulating development. This is not just because it makes domestic institutions more effective, but because, when 'marketed', good governance attracts inward investment.

## Background

It is often forgotten that in the wave of democratisation that swept Africa in the 1990s, Cape Verde, a socialist country from its independence from Portugal in 1975, was the first country to abandon one party rule and to hold multi-party elections – in January 1991. Today it is widely regarded as the best democratic state in sub-Saharan Africa, ahead of its nearest rivals, South Africa, Mauritius and São Tomé e Príncipe. According to Freedom House's aggregated scoring system, it was given a 1 for political rights and 2 for civil liberties between 1993 and 2003; and since then has been given 1,1 (see Table 1).

If people have heard of Cape Verde it is usually due to its rapidly growing tourist industry. Tourism has grown over the last few years between 18 and 25 per cent with

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**Professor Bruce Baker explains how one small nation's approach to government has lessons for the rest of Africa.**

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numbers especially high from Portugal and Italy and to a lesser degree from Germany and UK. Instead of the single international airport of 2004, there are now four. In 2008, 300,000 visitors were expected. The tourist sector currently accounts for about 95 per cent of foreign direct investment of 1,000 million euros. The government is well aware of the dangers of over-reliance on a single industry, especially one as volatile as tourism in a highly competitive market and in the context of a global recession. Within the sector itself it is seeking to diversify its countries of origin of investment; its location beyond the most popular islands; its tourist product from sun and sand to rural and cultural, and from cheaper to more luxury products. This may be good governance of the tourist industry, but even so, if the economy does not diversify beyond tourism it will remain a fragile economic growth. Tourism may have lifted Cape Verde from 'Least Developed Countries' (LDC) status to 'Middle-Income Country' (MIC) status, but there are very real fears that further and persistent growth is not sustainable or even desirable.

Managing the tourist industry with thoughtful strategic planning has been part of a wider government strategy that has placed value on good governance. I would like to draw attention to three areas where it seems to me good governance is proved not to be an expensive luxury that rich countries alone can afford, but a vital 'product' for developing countries.

**Table 1: Leading democracies of Africa**

Country	1999	2002	2005	2008
Cape Verde	1,2	1,2	1,1	1,1
South Africa	1,2	1,2	1,2	2,2
São Tomé	1,2	1,2	2,2	2,2
Mauritius	1,2	1,2	1,1	1,2

Source: Freedom House, Inc

## E-government

The biggest change in the mechanics of government in the last few years has probably been the electronic government project, the Information Society Strategic Programme. Driven by a desire for efficiency and transparency, and to insert itself into the global economy, the current government is rolling out a programme that is seeing the integration of government databases and their availability to the public and international bodies. It is already possible for citizens to print off copies of important documents like birth certificates, to access the government budget, to examine electoral rolls, to register companies and vehicles, and to visit an increasing number of ministry websites for information and enquiries (all valuable facilities when citizens are scattered across nine islands and without quick access to the capital). Beyond that, through integrating the financial income and expenditure of all government ministries and an increasing number of government agencies, both individual ministers and international financial institutions can track at any time the current state of the finances by sector or as a whole, according to one single set of internationally required indicators. Within government there has not only been the widespread use of computers and internet services, but an intranet that records and allows appropriate access to all important government documents and publications. According to one assessment, in Africa Cape Verde is second only to Botswana in the quality of its e-government, and 46th in world.

As an exercise in enhancing government management, government integration, government transparency, government access and government-public communication, this has been transformative. As one deputy argued, a better-informed public will know its rights better, will ask more questions, 'and will want more', thus putting pressure on parties to deliver on their promises. The commitment in terms of supportive infrastructure (not only computers and databases, but the demanding system of

electronically gathering statistics and tracking) has been expensive, but the outcome in terms of democracy is that it has been appreciably strengthened. In terms of the economy, the programme is part of a strategy to reduce transaction costs, improve global connectivity and thus overcome the handicaps of the country's size and isolation.

### The state transformation agenda

The debate about the nature and functions of the state began within Cape Verde during the democratic transition of 1990–91. Initially there was widespread agreement amongst the political elite that the way forward was structural adjustment: for the state to withdraw from the economy through privatisation and to adopt a lean administration. Yet with the failure of a process that handed the state monopoly of electricity and water to a private monopoly, it has become increasingly clear to the entire political establishment that the state must retain an important regulatory function. A debate in 2003–04 that drew in former Prime Ministers, Heads of State and other experts, established that the country must go beyond an 'aid recycling' economy. This was the origin of the state transformation agenda. The vision of state reform adopted by the current government now sees that, though there should be a smaller state, it should still be a social state. With hindsight they see that they went too far in shrinking the state. As Christina Fontes, the current minister of state reform, articulates it: 'we now want a state that creates wealth and not just one that is a good manager of aid'. Beyond that there is a concerted effort being made both to review state requirements and to ensure state integration.

Take the example of security. A defence review determined that the principal state threats were not traditional, but centred on organised crime, particularly drug trafficking from South America using Cape Verde as a transshipment point for Europe, and also money laundering. Not wanting the economy to be overcome by these elements in the way that Guinea Bissau has in recent years, the government has reformed the state defence force to meet these new security threats. It has created two main corps: the coastal guard and a national guard to



Figure 1. Cape Verde joins the World Trade Organization.

Top: Economy, Growth and Competitiveness Minister Jose Brito and the Cape Verde delegation attend the accession session of their country to the WTO, on 18 December 2007, in Geneva.

Bottom: A commemorative banner hanging from the WTO headquarters in Geneva, July 2008. Photos: Fabrice Coffrini/AFP/Getty Images.

support the police. It is also seeking to co-ordinate the response to the threats across the ministry of justice, ministry of defence and ministry of internal administration. Thus tougher laws on money laundering (2002 and 2008) have accompanied proposed reforms to the police and criminal justice system and the strengthening of the coast guard protection of the territorial waters (larger than the land area of France) in partnership with the EU. According to Christina Fontes, whereas until recently 25 per cent of cocaine from South America en route to Europe came through Cape Verde, it is now declining in attraction as a transshipment point for drug traffickers.

In the state transformation agenda the government demonstrates that it has learnt that there is value in marketing good governance. It is this that is the attraction to outside investors, IMF loans and US security ratings. As the head of the government agency Cape Verde Investments argues: 'for success in investment, governance is the most important resource'. And this is why there is a minister of state reform working in the Prime Minister's office with responsibility for the transformation agenda at the institutional level.

### International openness

Whether it was seizing the opportunities to make a living on American whaling boats when drought prevailed on the islands in the nineteenth century, or whether it was the taking of aid from both East and West in the Cold War when it was a socialist country, Cape Verde has always maintained an open international policy. Since democratisation, it has not only continued to profit from a wide range of partners, but has been careful to keep good relations with all those alliances that might benefit the country. Survival has dictated a pragmatic 'no closed doors' policy. Membership with the sub-regional political and economic union of West African states (ECOWAS) was essential, given the trade and transshipment connections with its neighbours. But for the same reason it was eager to be part of the global benefits of the World Trade Organization, which it joined in 2007 (Figure 1). And though NATO (2006) has conducted exercises in its territorial waters and the US navy has used its deep water anchorage at the port of Mindelo, the

Chinese have equally been courted for their economic investment.

Cape Verde is very insistent that it is an African country with African slave blood in its ancestry, nevertheless it is more than African. Its early inter-marriages with and its later colonisation by the Portuguese inevitably left an European imprint on the islands as well. Today the Cape Verdean diaspora population is estimated at roughly 510,000 of which 150,000 or 30 per cent live in Europe. And 60 per cent of its exports are to Europe, especially to Portugal, Netherlands, Spain and Italy. The biggest source of imports to Cape Verde is Portugal (116.79 million euros in 2007). Cape Verde's exports to Portugal were worth 4.41 million euros in 2007. And together Cape Verde and Europe share two security problems: South American drugs and African illegal migrants, whether in transshipment or destination. It therefore was strategically shrewd for Cape Verde (and Europe) to seek a closer relationship with Europe beyond the narrow economic confines of the Cotonou Agreement between the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States and the EU. The special partnership was concluded in November 2007. Regarding security it includes joint boat patrols of Cape Verde's extensive territorial waters and biometrics on passports. It also covers technical standards and other aid, investment and development issues. Once again Cape Verde has sold good governance (this time, of security) for assistance, with Cape Verde especially proud that it took the initiative and that the EU responded positively.

### The future

Ironically, the lack of resources may have proved to have been to the advantage of Cape Verde, since the determination to make the very most of what it does have has made Cape Verde turn to good governance of these few resources so as to survive against the odds in a very competitive world. The government could have played the role of worthy beggar with nothing to feed themselves with; the victim of no resources, cruel slavery, negligent colonisation and isolated location. Instead they have chosen the path of offering what so few can offer in Africa – good public management and political stability.

The government of Cape Verde demonstrates that it has learnt that there is value in marketing good governance. It is this that has formed the basis of the special relationship with the EU. It is this that is the attraction to outside investors. It is this that won the approval of the IMF and with it access to new windows of credit. It is this that won from the World Bank a \$10 million poverty reduction credit in 2007 to support good governance, develop human capital, and improve access to social services, and \$3 million in additional financing to support the implementation of the Cape Verde Growth and Competitiveness Programme. It is this that has attracted \$110 million from the US Millennium Challenge Compact (MCC) for 2005–10. As the MCC said: 'The size and depth of the program is a recognition of Cape Verde's strong record of democratic governance, intolerance of corruption, commitment to supporting and promoting private sector activity, and effective use of limited resources to address the needs of its people in a sustainable way'. It is good governance that has given them their top US rating for air security that permits airfreight to Boston direct. It is this, if anything, that will deter organised crime. Good governance is Cape Verde's most valuable product. It is a secret worth telling the rest of Africa.

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*This is a much reduced and altered version of an article submitted to *Third World Quarterly*.*

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**Bruce Baker** is Professor of African Security at Coventry University. In June 2008, he was awarded a British Academy Small Research Grant to study 'The quality and determinants of governance in Cape Verde'. The research was conducted along with Professor Roy May of Coventry University, to whom the author is indebted for critical comments on the text.

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# Thinking Around the Box: The Work of the Bentham Project

*Members of the Bentham Project at University College London describe their work to promote the study of a profoundly influential political thinker.*

Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832), the philosopher and reformer (Figure 1), believed that the proper purpose of all human action was to promote utility – in other words, the greatest happiness of the greatest number. His so-called ‘felicific calculus’ is the inspiration for cost-benefit analysis which dominates the contemporary discipline of economics. In politics, he produced in 1789 the earliest utilitarian defence of political equality (advocating women’s suffrage before the publication of Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*), and his work on Political Tactics was the first systematic treatise on the organisation of a political assembly. Bentham was never afraid to follow his ideas to what he regarded as their logical conclusion. In this, he is an inspiration to all who value the unimpeded pursuit of knowledge.

## *The Collected Works of Jeremy Bentham*

The principal aim of the Bentham Project, part of the Faculty of Laws at University College London (UCL), is to prepare for publication the new, authoritative edition of *The Collected Works of Jeremy Bentham* (Figure 2), superseding the woefully inadequate edition published between 1838 and 1843 by John Bowring, Bentham’s literary executor. The *Collected Works* volumes, published by the Clarendon Press, Oxford, are based on works published in Bentham’s lifetime, on 60,000 original manuscripts kept in UCL Library, and on a further 12,500 manuscripts in the British Library. The volumes are fully annotated, and contain an editorial introduction, and comprehensive subject and name indexes. The new Bentham edition is read by scholars across a wide range of disciplines, including philosophy, law, economics, politics, and history.

In addition to Bentham’s works, the *Collected Works* includes all correspondence sent and received by Bentham. Twelve volumes of correspondence have so far been published.

## Recent and forthcoming volumes

Recently published volumes in the edition have included Bentham’s writings on codification, education and the law; political tactics; the poor laws; and rights, representation, and reform at the time of the French Revolution; and the penultimate volume of correspondence.

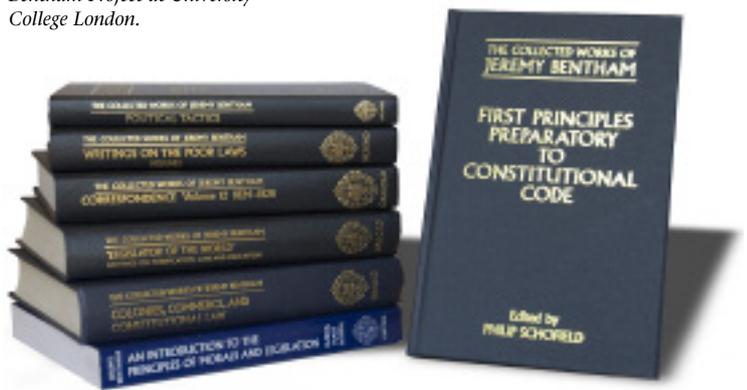
The next two years or so should see the publication of the second volume of writings on the poor laws; a volume on jurisprudence; and a work on political fallacies, by which Bentham meant the art of misleading rhetoric as practised in political debate.

Other forthcoming volumes include a work on the reform of the Church of England, which shows the correlation between Bentham’s views on organised religion and his political views, and for the publication of which in 1818 he risked prosecution for blasphemy; and a volume of writings on Spanish affairs in the turbulent period of the ‘liberal triennium’ of 1820–23, containing Bentham’s critique of a draft penal code, his comments on current legislation curtailing freedom of the press and public political meetings in Spain (see extract), and expressing his opposition to the introduction of an upper house in the Spanish parliament.



Figure 1. *Engraving of Jeremy Bentham, 1823, by James Thomson (1788–1850) after William Derby (1786–1847).*

Figure 2. *A new, authoritative edition of The Collected Works of Jeremy Bentham is being produced by the Bentham Project at University College London.*



*These are the opening paragraphs of the first of a series of four Letters to the Spanish People, with the overall title 'On the Liberty of the Press, and Public Discussion'.*

*Bentham was prompted to write the Letters by proposed new legislation in Spain (brought in by the Cortes of the 'liberal triennium' 1820–3), which curbed press freedom, and the right of the public to assemble for the purpose of political debate. The Letters were written and sent in manuscript to Spain in autumn 1820; they were published in England in 1821.*

### SPANIARDS!

THE Madrid intelligence of the prosecution of a Newspaper Editor, for comments on the Madrid system of police, and of the introduction of the proposed law against political meetings, has just reached me. I am astounded! What? Is it come to this? So soon come to this? The men being men, of their disposition to do this, and more, there could not be any room for doubt. But, that this disposition should so soon ripen into act, this (I must confess) is more than I anticipated. Neither of the issue of the prosecution, nor of the fate of the proposed law, has the intelligence yet reached me. But, that any such prosecution should have been instituted – any such proposed law introduced – that the impatience of contradiction, not to say the thirst for arbitrary power, should so soon have ventured thus far; these, in my view, are of themselves, highly alarming symptoms.

By the prosecution, if successful, unless the alledged offence have features in it, such as I do not expect to find in it, I see the liberty of the press destroyed. By the proposed law, if established, I see the almost only remaining check to arbitrary power destroyed.

Taken together, they form a connected system – these two measures. By the authors of this system, you have, of course, been told, that it is indispensably necessary; necessary to order, to GOOD order, to tranquillity: and, perhaps, honorable gentlemen may have ventured so far into the region of particulars and intelligibles, as to say – to good government, and some other good things. Spaniards! It is neither necessary, nor conducive to, nor other than exclusive of, any of those good things. What says experience? In the Anglo-American United States, of the two parts of this system, neither the one nor the other will you see. No prosecution can there have place, for any thing written against the government, or any of its functionaries as such. No restriction, whatever, is there on public meetings; in public meetings, held for any such purpose as that of sitting in judgment, on the constitution, on any measures of the government, or on any part of the conduct of any of its functionaries. Yet, if there were a country in which these restraints, or either of them, would be necessary or conducive to good government, it would be *that*. For, in that country, the people are all armed. Armed, at all times, in much greater proportion than in any other country: armed, at any time they please, every one of them.

Work is well advanced on the new edition of *Rationale of Judicial Evidence*, which was originally published in 1827 under the editorship of John Stuart Mill. This is one of Bentham's longest works, running to five volumes, each containing some seven hundred pages. In this important work, Bentham provided an exhaustive examination of the different types of evidence used in civil and criminal justice, and the different methods of extracting it.

A recent grant from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) has enabled work to begin on four volumes of Bentham's economic writings, which will consist of works composed between 1787 and 1804, most of which remained unpublished during Bentham's lifetime, and which were badly mangled in the Bowring edition. The absence of a properly authoritative edition prompted the Royal Economic Society to engage Werner Stark to edit these writings, and as a result of

his herculean labours, a three-volume edition was published in 1952–4. The new volumes will supersede the Stark edition, long regarded as inadequate, but which currently remains the standard source for scholars of Bentham's economic thought. The new edition will facilitate a proper assessment of Bentham's political economy – including his interpretation of, and reaction to, the thought of Adam Smith – which has been sorely neglected by scholars in comparison with that of David Ricardo and Thomas Malthus.

### Promoting the study of Bentham

The Bentham Project promotes the study of Bentham generally by providing help and advice to scholars and researchers. In the coming year, the Project will be host to a number of visiting academics, including a Newton Fellow, Dr Xiaobo Zhai of Peking University, Professor Douglas Long of the University of Western Ontario, Professor

Daisuke Arie of the University of Yokohama, and Dr Malik Bozzo-Rey from the Université de Paris X, who has been awarded a British Academy Visiting Fellowship. Dr Bozzo-Rey is also a member of the 'Centre Bentham' in Paris, with whom the Bentham Project has been engaged in a collaborative venture funded by the Alliance programme, administered by the British Council in Paris and the French Embassy in London, to develop a methodology to deal with the editing of Bentham's French language manuscripts.

The Bentham Project also disseminates work through conferences and seminars. The International Society for Utilitarian Studies holds regular conferences: most recently at the University of California, Berkeley, in September 2008. Forthcoming conferences will be held at the University of Pisa in 2011, New York University in 2012, and Yokohama University in 2014 or 2015. At UCL, the



Figure 3. Mourning ring bequeathed to John Stuart Mill. According to his final will, dated 30 May 1832, Bentham left to friends twenty-six mourning rings made by John Field in 1822.

Project teaches the 'Jeremy Bentham and the Utilitarian Tradition' course for the College's LLM and MA in Legal and Political Theory, and holds Bentham Seminars every year.

#### Bentham on the web

*Utilitas*, the Journal of the International Society for Utilitarian Studies, provides a forum for articles on Bentham and his thought, and there is an electronic journal on the Bentham Project website ([www.ucl.ac.uk/Bentham-Project](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/Bentham-Project)), the *Journal of Bentham Studies*, which includes some of the most recent research on Bentham. The website also includes a new database providing details of the Bentham manuscripts held by UCL ([www.benthampapers.ucl.ac.uk](http://www.benthampapers.ucl.ac.uk)).

The website is also the first point of contact with the outside world, containing a great deal of information aimed at the general public. It provides answers to questions about Bentham, and details of where Bentham texts can be found online. The website is topical –

announcing not only new publications, conferences, and seminars, but also discoveries of items associated with Bentham. The Project collects information about images: for example, two intaglio seals featuring Bentham's portrait have recently come to light, as has his dressing gown, and even a piece of his skin. All of these items can be seen on the website. Also illustrated is a Bentham mourning ring presented to John Stuart Mill, which a former UCL Laws student spotted in a shop in New Orleans, and kindly donated to UCL (Figure 3). More recently, the Project acquired the script of a radio play, written and broadcast in 1937, about Ford Abbey in Dorset, where Bentham stayed with James Mill and his family in the years 1814–1818. The Project produced a new recording of the play, which can be heard via a podcast on the website, and an engraving of the Abbey can be seen on the homepage.

Visitors to the Bentham Project homepage can now also join in a venture to contact the

wider world of scientists. Since November 2008, Bentham has contributed a blog to the London hub of Nature Network, the website of the journal *Nature*, among the most-visited science websites in the world. It is a professional networking site for scientists which disseminates information, and provides an interactive forum for the exchange of ideas. Nature Network London already had a blog written by Charles Darwin, and now Bentham has posted blogs on CCTV and ID cards, the telectroscope, food shortages, and the use of dead bodies for medical science (<http://network.nature.com/site/about>).

#### Iconic Bentham

Outside of cyberspace, the most frequent contact between Bentham and the general public is probably made via the Auto-Icon, Bentham's body, preserved in a wooden case which stands in the South Cloisters at UCL, and is open from 9 am to 5 pm Monday to



Figure 4. *The Auto-Icon. A wooden cabinet stands at the end of the South Cloisters of the main building of UCL and has been a source of curiosity and perplexity to visitors.*

Friday (Figure 4). By having his body preserved in this way, Bentham hoped, amongst other things, to attack religion by ridiculing belief in corporeal resurrection. He also hoped that people interested in the principle of utility and its founder would, by meeting by the Auto-Icon, remember him and his work. Visitors from all over the world can be seen on a daily basis peering into his box, and looking at the nearby displays on his life, works, and the work of the Bentham Project.

The Project has produced seven information leaflets about Bentham, each covering an aspect of his work. On the front, superimposed upon a handwritten manuscript, is a quotation from Bentham relating to the topic of the leaflet: on education, 'the common end of every person's education is happiness'; on religion, 'religion is an engine invented by corruptionists, at the command of tyrants, for the manufactory of dupes'; and on representative democracy, 'every individual in the country tells for one; no individual for more than one' (Figure 5). The leaflets are very popular: around 7,000 copies have been taken by the public in less than a year. The leaflets are also available electronically ([www.ucl.ac.uk/Bentham-Project/info/leaflets.htm](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/Bentham-Project/info/leaflets.htm)).

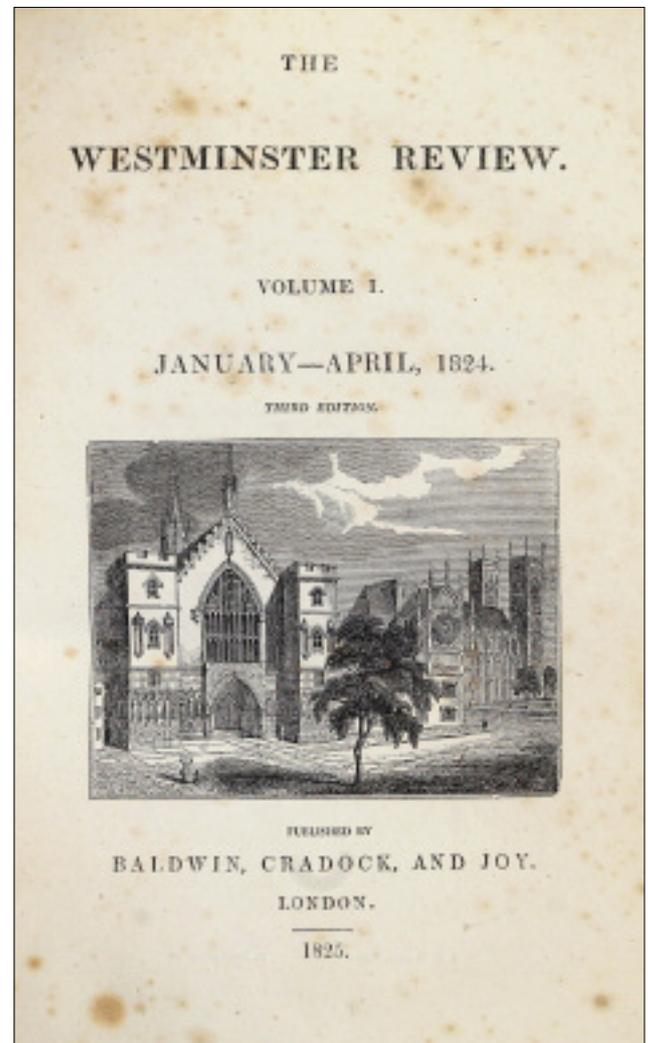


Figure 5. *This illustration of the Westminster Review is taken from the Project's leaflet on Bentham and democracy. Bentham regarded himself as the founder of the 'Radical Party', in opposition to both Whigs and Tories, and in 1824 established the Westminster Review as the mouthpiece of the party, with the aim of promoting democracy.*

Members of the Project often give interviews and information to the media. Philip Schofield, the Director of the Project, was one of the experts in Channel Four's series *Tony Robinson's Crime and Punishment*, in which he discussed Bentham's ideas on representative democracy. Professor Schofield has also recently published two books on Bentham, namely *Utility and Democracy: the political thought of Jeremy Bentham*, which won the W.J.M. Mackenzie Book Prize for 2006, awarded by the Political Studies Association for the best book published in political studies in that year, and *Bentham: A Guide for the Perplexed*, which appeared in April 2009.

The latter is intended as an introduction to Bentham's life and thought.

Thus the Bentham Project is a vibrant research community, undertaking an enormous task which is quite unparalleled in the UK in scope and significance, namely the making available previously unknown works of a major philosopher.

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The Bentham Project is one of 50 longstanding endeavours that bear the title 'British Academy Research Project'. The Director is Professor Philip Schofield.

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The huge undertaking of the *Collected Works* began with the formation of the Bentham Committee in 1959, and the projected date of completion of the edition is 2030, by which time some 65 to 70 volumes will have been published. It is hoped that by the end of 2012, 35 volumes will have appeared. To carry out this work, the Bentham Project has in recent years received grants from the Arts and Humanities Research Council, the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), the Wellcome Trust, and the British Academy.

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## In brief

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### Language matters

On 3 June 2009 the British Academy launched its latest policy report, *Language Matters*, which raises concerns that the future of the UK's world class research base might be threatened by a decline in modern language learning.



Attending the launch, the Minister for Higher Education, David Lammy (pictured), said 'A university without modern languages is a university that has lost much of its ability to look outwards. The report highlights the impact of lack of language skills in research. The study shows that language skills are not only culturally enriching and empowering for everyone, but are also practically useful in economic and international contexts. It demonstrates the interconnectedness between language learning at all levels, language research, teacher training, and wider intercultural understanding, and the impact that a monolingual approach has in our research, to our economy, and for UK researchers competing for employment with international ones.'

The launch brought together leading figures from higher education, research, business, and the National Centre for Languages to discuss the impact of the language deficit on humanities and social science research, and to consider how the higher education sector can address the language deficit, and how languages can help the UK to reposition itself at a time of economic downturn.

The report, compiled by a working group chaired by Professor Dame Janet Nelson FBA (King's College, University of London), follows a year-long study into the effect of the fall of modern language learning in research

fields, and is informed by specially commissioned research into the impact this may already be having in UK universities. The report calls for a series of measures by universities and government bodies to address this danger. These include a recommendation for the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the new Department for Business, Innovation and Skills to develop a more coherent and co-ordinated approach to the problem; and for universities to consider bringing in a language requirement for university entry, or to ensure that students at least leave with a language qualification.

Further information and the full report can be found at [www.britac.ac.uk/reports/](http://www.britac.ac.uk/reports/)

### Rescuing the housing market

The state of the housing market has dominated reports of economic performance over recent years, and this attention has intensified with the credit crisis. A public discussion held at the Academy on 31 March 2009 debated timely questions such as: Should people hold less of their wealth in their homes? Could shared ownership be the key to sustainable housing futures? Are there other ways of managing housing resources more effectively? Is there any role for financial markets? What should governments do next?

Professor Christine Whitehead (London School of Economics and University of Cambridge), Professor Gavin Wood (RMIT University, Melbourne) and Peter Sceats (Tradition Property) looked beyond the credit crunch towards more imaginative ways of sharing the benefits, and mitigating the risks, of volatile housing markets.



The meeting was convened and chaired by Professor Susan J Smith FBA (pictured); Professor Mark Stephens (University of

Glasgow) acted as discussant. The discussion was featured on BBC Radio 4's *Start the Week* and is available as a podcast via [www.britac.ac.uk/events/](http://www.britac.ac.uk/events/)

### Civil war and foreign intervention in Spain

On 2 April 2009, the British Academy marked the 70th anniversary of the end of the Spanish Civil War with a debate chaired by Professor Paul Preston FBA (pictured).



The discussion is available as a podcast via [www.britac.ac.uk/events/](http://www.britac.ac.uk/events/)

Professor Helen Graham (Royal Holloway, University of London) and Professor Ángel Viñas (Universidad Complutense de Madrid) considered three linked issues – the international dimension to the defeat of the Spanish Republic; the international consequences of the Spanish Civil War; and whether the Spanish conflict can legitimately be regarded as the first battle of the Second World War.

From the beginning of the war, western policies so favoured the military rebels and their Axis backers, that the Spanish Republic was forced to seek assistance from the Soviet Union. Despite this aid, the Axis powers, given the policy of appeasement of the western democracies, became so emboldened as to proceed to a massive realignment in the international balance of power. Much scholarship remains doggedly critical of the Soviet role in Spain, despite the fact that the most significant advances in recent research on the Spanish Civil War have been in regard to Russian policy.

The lively discussion that followed the presentations showed that this subject has lost none of its passion.

# The British Academy

**The British Academy**, established by Royal Charter in 1902, is the United Kingdom's national academy for the promotion of the humanities and social sciences. It is funded by a Government grant-in-aid, through the Office of Science and Innovation.

The Academy is an independent, self-governing body of more than 800 Fellows, elected in recognition of their distinction in one or more branches of the humanities and social sciences. It aims to inspire, recognise and support excellence and high achievement in the humanities and social sciences, throughout the UK and internationally, and to champion their role and value.

The Academy has identified four strategic priorities central to achieving these aims over the next five years:

- Advancing the humanities and social sciences by supporting research and scholarship at all levels
- Promoting these disciplines on international platforms, building collaboration and creating opportunities for UK researchers overseas
- Increasing the scope and impact of communications and policy activity, and creating events and publications that communicate new research and encourage public debate
- Strengthening opportunities for Fellows to contribute their expertise to the intellectual life of the Academy and the country.

Further information about the work of the Academy can be found on its website at [www.britac.ac.uk](http://www.britac.ac.uk), or by contacting the Academy at 10 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AH, telephone 020 7969 5200, email [chiefexec@britac.ac.uk](mailto:chiefexec@britac.ac.uk)



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