Defending Democracy

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Defending Democracy

All around the world, voters are defying the expectations of pollsters, academics and commentators. Loyalty to one political party, stretching over the course of a citizen's lifetime, can no longer be taken for granted. In the UK, of those who voted in the 2005, 2010, 2015 and 2017 general elections, only around 40% voted for the same party each time. Increasing numbers of people describe themselves as 'politically homeless'.

Exisiting democratic processes and traditional parties of government no longer seem fit for purpose. As a result, new political parties have come into existence, such as the Brexit Party in the UK and the Five Star Movement in Italy. Elsewhere, existing parties have changed from within. In the US, the Republican Party under Donald Trump is very different from previous incarnations. These changes are driven, in part, by a growing sense of disconnect between each nation's political class - politicians, civil servants, lobbyists and journalists - and the people they represent and govern. In the UK, the vote to leave the EU was won on the slogan 'Take Back Control'. This spoke to many voters who felt distant not just from Brussels-based bureaucrats, but also from politicians and decision-makers closer to home.

The debate around Brexit has brought longstanding problems with taken for-granted democratic systems out into the open. It has shown that there is a demand among people to have more of a say in determining the course of their own lives and the direction of their nation. Yet, in response, British politicians have spent three years debating whether Brexit should be diluted or abandoned altogether. We are now in the midst of a general election with the Labour Party unwilling to discuss Brexit, the Conservative Party unable to present a positive vision of Britain under Boris Johnson's deal with the EU and the Brexit Party pushed into an awkward compromise with the Conservatives.

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Many voters are demanding better representation of their views. People want more democracy, but this is a demand that cannot be met by our existing political class. Instead, it has become acceptable to criticise openly the very idea of democracy and actively seek ways to limit the input of citizens into the running of their societies. Academics and commentators from all sides of the political sprectrum not only denigrate the ability of

voters to grapple with seemingly complex issues but also question the desirability of them being allowed to try.

Criticism of democracy has existed in parallel with each democratic advance and has taken a new form in each political era. Currently, anti-democratic arguments are primarily focused on a fear of populism. The Right imagine populism driving a resurgent socialism and the Left fantasize about it ushering in a new age of fascism. In reality, neither Soviet era communism nor Nazi era fascism came about as a result of democratic decision making. The exact opposite is the case: both necessitated preventing or limiting the intervention of ordinary people in political processes. Nonetheless, panic about a rise in populism is used to justify calls to limit the powers of national governments.

Fear of populism often simply masks a fear of the electorate or, more precisely, a fear that they might define their interests differently from those of the elite. This fear has, throughout history, shaped opposition to advances in democracy. From the Levellers, to the Chartists and through to the Suffragettes, the struggle for the right to vote was waged across four centuries. Yet the demand to extend the franchise was resisted by the political elite at every turn. Whenever reforms were begrudgingly made, qualifications were added, such as a requirement for people to own property or be over the age of thirty. Right up until 1948, people affiliated with a university could vote in their university constituency as well as where they lived and where they owned property, thereby allowing more votes for the supposedly better educated.

The Representation of the People Act that gave all adults in the UK the right to vote is only ninety years old. People fought so hard for suffrage because they wanted a way, individually and collectively, to shape the kind of society they lived in. Significantly, in the first decades of full franchise, voting in elections was not the limit of many people's political engagement. Union membership stood at 12.8million in 1980; it is less than half this number today. Voter turnout topped 80% in the general elections of 1950 and 1955, by comparison it fell to below 60% in 2001.

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In the past, grand narratives of Left and Right focused on how society could best be organised. This animated politics and shaped political parties. Democracy was meaningful despite - not because of - the formal processes in place. The UK's first past the post system worked in the context of just two dominant parties. Representatives had a connection to the community and society through a set of ideals and interests. The gap between the political class and the masses was not as vast as it is today. Formal, democratic systems

were not perfect, but they were made to work by a politically-driven public determined to make them count for something.

For the past three decades this limited system of democracy has been slowly but steadily eroded of meaning. The end of the Cold War exposed a shared exhaustion of political ideas on both Left and Right. From Margaret Thatcher's pronouncement that There Is No Alternative, to the managerialism of New Labour, politics became technocratic and emptied of any substantial choices capable of capturing the imagination of voters. The professionalisation of politics exacerbated a growing distance between Members of Parliament and those they claimed to represent, leading to the ascendency of expertise in place of politics, and outsourced decision making to the EU. The Brexit vote challenges these trends, and has drawn the rage of many invested in the status quo.

Today, democracy needs defending once more. There is a pressing need to challenge the new wave of anti-democrats, in all their guises, before they succeed in overturning the democratic gains that were so hard won.

The essays gathered here provide an excellent starting point for both analysing what is wrong with our current political situation and reflecting on what needs to change. Betz, Hodges and Smith examine the social and political impact of the rapid globalisation of finance and technology. Ben-Ami considers how a deep-rooted anti-nationalism explains why the German middle calss are so hostile to Brexit. Finally, Hodgson explores how our electoral systems reflect the democratic values we wish to institutionalise in our politics.

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Creating a Climate of Crisis: Democracy in the Age of Climate Alarmism and Digital Serfdom   David Betz, Simon Hodges, M.L.R. Smith

'All the pieces matter', stated the character of Detective Lester Freamon in *The Wire*, David Simon and Ed Burns' enthralling TV drama of life and death in the Baltimore drugs war at the turn of the twenty-first century. The phrase captures something of the miasmic atmosphere of our own times and the deracinating events that have occurred over the past two decades: the new millennium itself, ushered in on a wave of consternation over a potential Y2K meltdown of digital infrastructure; the September 11 attacks and ensuing Global War on Terrorism; the financial crisis of 2007-8; the unexpected rejections of the status quo at the ballot box, first by Britons voting for Brexit and then again by Americans

electing Trump; the rise of China; the 'migrant crisis'; the hypothesised 'climate catastrophe'; and much else besides. Seemingly disparate on the surface, these occurrences, and the consequences they have wrought are, on investigation, not unrelated. They are all connected. And all the pieces matter.

The connecting thread that links these phenomena is the rapid globalisation of finance and technology that has, in a remarkably short space of time, re-moulded economics, politics and society across much of the developed and developing worlds. Since the market reforms in the 1980s capital has gone steroidal. Labour and industry have been disembedded from the nation state consequent with the rise of huge multinational corporations and global financial interests that shift production and money from one country to another with ease (sometimes within the literal blink of an eye). In the process a transnational elite of financiers, intellectuals, and technocrats has arisen in whose hands wealth and power is increasingly concentrated.

The social and political effects of this transformation are so enormous that comprehending them, putting them in their relevant context, requires a wide historical perspective. The homogenizing forces of globalisation seek to integrate distinctive societies into one universal conglomeration wherein diverse cultures and traditions are 'liquefied' as the sociologist Zygmunt Baumann put it, reducing the vast majority of people to the status of crass consumers of cheap plastic commodities and even cheaper ideas in the form of ubiquitous political spin and the pornification of the mainstream of cultural life. Even debt is now packaged and sold as a 'service'. The implications for democratic self-understandings of these seemingly disconnected, but ultimately unified, trends are profound, and will be dissected in the following analysis.

Of anger and atomisation

The public sphere in many western societies is characterised less by thinking citizens possessed of 'self-evident' individual rights and responsibilities to themselves, their families, and their nation in accordance with a predictable moral conscience, and more by the ever-shifting moods and tribes of identity politics. Society is now multipolar, dominated simultaneously by online outrage mobs and mass virtue-signalling 'clicktivism' on the one hand, and atomised, powerless, individuals despairing quietly on the other. Ironically, the explosion of social media has coincided with a precipitate collapse of social capital.

Geographers use the term 'placelessness' to describe an attitude of lack of attachment caused by the homogenizing effects of modernity. Mass consumption, standardisation, the triumph of global brands in music, clothing, and food, alienation, the glorification of speed and the prioritisation of movement above all—all combine to render one place much like any other. Such is the default condition of contemporary life: placeless yet rootless, connected yet isolated, satiated yet hungry.

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The modern condition assumes the form of a new kind of serfdom, a term used in this essay precisely to describe a condition of debt bondage plus servitude within a socio-political context that nullifies any meaningful notions of 'freedom'. People today may have vastly more stuff than did mediaeval peasantry but the social cleavage that divides the power magnates of the world, the politics-cum-infotainment complex that serves them, and the general *hoi polloi* is not much different now than it was in the days of feudalism between serfs and masters. In fact, the multinational tax-avoiding behemoths of the 'knowledge economy' such as Google and Facebook, hoovering up and monetising personal data, and the ubiquitous Amazon—a marketing and supply algorithm served by lowly-paid human stackers and packers—have a degree and sophistication of control of their empire that Genghis Khan might have admired.

There are many parts of the puzzle, and they all matter.

Globalisation, anti-democracy, and peasant revolt

If the rise of transnational corporations and their associated technocratic political and commercial elites comprises the surface manifestation of the domination of the neo-liberal order, it does not go unanswered. Action produces reaction. Every contagion generates its antidote. It is a lesson that applies to the social order that elites today wish to forget or perhaps refuse to learn in the first place. The mediaeval era from where we draw the concept of serfdom, for instance, was – contrary to any popular stereotypes – far from static and politically passive. Rather, it was a time of regular peasant rebellions almost all of which were ultimately characterised by extreme violence.

The immediate cause of the most serious of these rebellions was nearly always action by the landed-classes, or governments, or both, to substantially alter customary relationships, i.e., the 'social contract', or which seriously disappointed normal expectations to the detriment of the peasantry as a whole. While the imposition this or that tax, requisition, or occasional depredation might not cause a revolt, it might do in the context of otherwise strained social relationships. The point is not mere historical trivia: peasant rebellions are essentially *conservative* not radical, at the beginning at least; it is not radical change to the rules of society that they seek, rather they transpire where there is apparent abandonment of the rules by the ruling clique.

In this regard, resistance to the standardising and regimenting effects of globalisation have been slowly taking shape for decades. Early precursors were observable in the rise of the 'Asian values' debate in Southeast Asia, which railed against the encroachment of decadent western morals in the early 1990s, and even the violent Islamist defiance of modernity from the mid-1990s onwards. For example, in an essay entitled 'Knights Under the Prophet's Banner' the *Al Qaeda* propagandist and leader (after Osama bin Laden's death) Ayman Al-Zawahiri wrote of the threat of western forces that are 'hostile to Islam'. Amongst the 'tools' that he said they had deployed against the Muslim world he listed:

> …the United Nations; the servile rulers of the Muslim people; multinational corporations; international communications and data exchanges systems; international news agencies and satellite media channels; international relief agencies and non-governmental organisations, which are used as a cover for espionage, conspiracies, proselytising, and arms smuggling.

Opposition to the homogenizing influences of globalisation, however, has now also reached western societies themselves, which—among other things—can be detected in such phenomena as the Brexit vote in 2016 to leave the European Union and the election of Donald Trump, the rise of 'populist' parties across Eastern and Western Europe, and the *gilet-jaunes* protests in France. All of these examples in one form or another are contesting the elite-driven, one-size-fits-all, programme of financial globalisation and wealth accumulation, and may be construed as forms of rebellion against the expectations of the elite political classes.

The process inherent in the globalising project necessarily seeks to eliminate customs, cultures and traditions. In this, it is fundamentally undemocratic in nature in that it de-links political accountability from a naturally coherent polity like the nation state. Instead, the structures of the European Union and the bureaucratic technocracy that it emboldens are palpable demonstrations of anti-democratic forces, which are, *inter alia*, quite openly trying to flout the electoral mandate of the 2016 Leave vote in the UK, a tactic, it may be noted that the EU has practiced many times before in Ireland, Denmark, France and Greece.

The globalising project is fundamentally undemocratic in nature in that it de-links political accountability from a naturally coherent polity like the nation state.

It is no secret that the dilution of national sovereignty under the auspices of the EU is a colossal experiment in the creation of a post-national polity. In the aftermath of the Brexit vote, perhaps feeling that they no longer needed to guard against the sensitivity of the British public to such things, ardent proponents of the 'European Project' such as Guy Verhofstadt have dropped any pretence, labelling the EU as an empire in the making. Obscured from view—a fact tacitly understood rather than voiced—is the paramount

necessity of the 'project' to the aspirations of Germany, which because of its bloody and fascistic modern history is unable to operate on the world stage, as would a normal state of its size and power.

As part of a federalising European project – one which it utterly dominates – Germany is able to transcend the old sins of military belligerence and racial superiority and exert itself in a way that would be otherwise highly uncomfortable to its neighbours. A further appeal of the EU to its members is that it can, somewhat paradoxically, assert itself as a counterweight to other forms of globalisation. If EU members, so it is argued, could be cajoled into a United States of Europe able to 'stand up' against the likes of America, China, and India, then Europeans would be better able to shape the network flows of globalisation to their benefit. In other words, although the forces of transnationalism, post-nationalism and nationalism are complex, it is plausible that a nation would pursue post-nationalism for classic reasons of realpolitik.

Such strategies, though, are characteristic of a mandrinate class that cherishes subtle diplomatic manoeuvring. This is itself a serious problem because many highly educated people who have thrived thus far out of transnational placelessness have convinced themselves that diminishing the liberty of their more nation-and-soil-based compatriots – in other words the modern peasantry – is a good thing for everyone. In *The Road to Somewhere* (2017), David Goodhart presents this as a dichotomy between 'anywheres', people who can take their businesses and relations from one place to another without detriment or difficulty, and 'somewheres', for whom a specific place and associated identity are integral to their social wellbeing. The former have had the rule of the West for a generation, the latter are now rapidly and angrily awakening to how thoroughly they have been done over.

How does this clash of the rootless, post-national political class and the latter day peasantry play out on the contemporary canvas? The focus of the remainder of this article seeks to address this question by analysing two case studies by which these transnational forces that attack democracy and personal sovereignty can be well illustrated, namely, the financialisation of the 'climate crisis' and the digital revolution.

The tyranny of TINA

Pay attention to the language that surrounds the debate on climate change, the roll out of 5G networks, the so-called Internet of Things, and Artificial Intelligence (AI), and you should begin to notice a number of common themes. Although the natural tendency is to treat these issues in isolation, they are on closer examination part of a broader social and political structure that shares similar agendas, pushed along by the same remorseless anti-democratic interests outlined above. Hidden behind these agendas are dangerously authoritarian impulses. This can be discerned because although the specific pretexts might

be different (technological changes and the putatively existential environmental threat posed by carbon dioxide emissions), the direction of the overall argument they serve and the strategy and techniques of convincing people of it have been seen many times before.

A first and rather sinister factor is the supposed ineluctability of these social, economic and political forces that are always presented to the public in terms of a *fait accompli* to which there is no option to resist. There Is No Alternative. There remains only the possibility to accept them as either the inevitable consequences of neo-liberal economics, or just part and parcel of the technological progress that is leading us to the fourth industrial revolution. All are pushed through under the rubric of 'crisis': the climate is in crisis—the world will end in 12 years! We will be an impoverished nation that has irrevocably lost competitive advantage if we fail to roll out 5G as soon as possible. Brexit will cause *catastrophic* economic crisis, business will flee Britain *en masse*, infrastructure will grind to a halt, and the country will run out of everything from medicines to sandwich fillings… so, of course, there is no alternative but to remain in the European Union.

Everywhere, society is assailed by the rhetoric of disaster, emergency, catastrophe and apocalypse, and all escorted with the same tyrannical message: *there is no alternative*. But 'there is no alternative' is a totalitarian philosophy. There can be no equivocation on this point. The pieces can be connected and the alarm bell sounded about the undemocratic and dehumanising monsters that will inexorably have to be confronted if society is to retain any sense of liberal democratic purpose.

Rebellion extinction

In late April 2019 street protests by the climate change protest movement calling itself Extinction Rebellion blocked roads and disrupted traffic across central London, causing inconvenience to hundreds of thousands of people. As part of the protests the 16-year Swedish climate activist, Greta Thurnberg, addressed a crowd, where she declared: 'We are now facing an existential crisis, the climate crisis and ecological crisis which have never been treated as crises before, they have been ignored for decades.'

Later she gave a speech to government ministers and Members of Parliament who sat enrapt and doe-eyed as Thunberg pronounced: 'Around the year 2030, 10 years 252 days and 10 hours away from now, we will be in a position where we set off an irreversible chain reaction beyond human control, that will most likely lead to the end of our civilisation as we know it.'

If the cult of Greta Thunberg seems somewhat choreographed, that's because it is.

Quite why a 16-year-old, with no obvious qualifications or expertise in science and energy policy, should be regarded as having the authority to deliver *ex cathedra* pronouncements was unclear. How was it, moreover, that she possessed the wherewithal to move around from one international forum to another—from Stockholm to London, to Brussels, Berlin, New York, Strasbourg and Davos—with extraordinary access to politicians, business leaders, grandees and dignitaries? If the cult of Greta Thunberg seems somewhat choreographed, that's because it is.

The Greta phenomenon did not appear out of nowhere. It is of a piece with a large, well funded, and well-organised movement practising a number of recognisable rhetorical devices. Having established a *casus belli* of an all-engulfing crisis the next step is to redirect the energy unleashed toward other aims. An example of this was the May 2019 debate between the Brexit politician Nigel Farage and the then Liberal Democrat leader Vince Cable, a staunch Remainer on the eve of the European elections. Pressed by Farage on the point that the 'Bollocks to Brexit' campaign platform of the Liberal Democrats was in defiance of a democratic referendum, Cable replied that the country must cancel Brexit in order to 'get on with tackling the climate emergency'.

The technique of launching loud, emotional, moralising calls for redress of some sham or irrelevant grievance is a diversionary tactic used to arouse guilt feelings in others. Cable was using a bait and switch, a redirection of the argument from one with a logical premise to a different one with an emotional premise. There is something suspicious when individuals overtly declare their own purity and honest innocence. Hence the immortal line in Shakespeare's Hamlet 'the lady doth protest too much', shorthand for doubting the sincerity of another and for thinking some hidden agenda is at work.

Which brings us back to the emergence of Extinction Rebellion (or XR) along with its poster child, Greta Thunberg. XR has incurred the suspicion of the more radical anti-capitalist end of the environmental spectrum. A detailed analysis by investigative journalist Cory Morningstar, published online by the environmentalist collective *Wrong Kind of Green*, entitled 'The Manufacturing of Greta Thunberg', held that her celebrity was carefully massaged into existence by an opaque web of family connections, non-governmental organisations and business interests. For Morningstar the 'common thread' was to be discerned in the creation of a 'non-profit industrial complex' that functions as a façade to obscure the 'assignment of money to nature'.

Similar scepticism was expressed by the anti-capitalist grouping Winter Oak, which questioned what Extinction Rebellion really stood for. Noting XR's desire to form a business arm, the group's bulletin, *The Acorn*, stated that the XR Business site was 'a declaration of Rebellion Extinction. This is now officially an ex-Rebellion, shorn of all pretence of radicalism'. Elsewhere, the anti-5G campaigning group, Annie Logical, observed that for a purportedly anti-establishment movement the founder of Extinction Rebellion, Gail

Bradbrook, seemed remarkably well connected within influential business and political circles. According to Annie Logical, she:

> epitomises the new generation of 'professional activists', having positioned herself at the epicentre of the revolving door between big business, government bureaucracies and establishment-friendly NGOs, campaign groups and charitable organisations, all of which increasingly function as the public face of international corporate and financial power.

The climate change industry is undoubtedly big business. As of 2015, according to the *Climate Change Business Journal*, the industry was amongst the fastest growing sectors of the economy and already worth $1.5 trillion annually across sectors ranging from climate consulting, to renewable energy, carbon trading, capture and storage, bioenergy, energy efficiency, 'green' building, and climate change adaptation.

As her last act as Prime Minister Theresa May enshrined into UK law a commitment that the country would reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050. The cost to the economy, according to the estimates of the Treasury, are likely to be around £1 trillion—and will be especially burdensome on energy-intensive manufacturing. Carolyn Fairbairn, the head of the Confederation of British Industry, enthusiastically endorsed the plan, declaring that it would 'drive UK competitiveness and secure long-term prosperity'.

The prosperity of whom, one might ask?

The NGOization of the political economy

What we appear to be witnessing, in part, is a split within the environmentalist camp between a neo-liberal faction that is fully behind Extinction Rebellion and is seeking to monetise climate change, and those other groups that believe there is only so much room for economic growth in a world of finite resources, which thus requires looking at strategies that de-privilege GDP growth, and aim at stable state economies whereby production and consumption are held in check.

The radical critique is that the 'NGOization' of environmental activism through hypothetically non-profit groups like XR enables the 'financialization' of nature. These groups aim to liberate the vast reserves of pension funds, and via carbon trading and payments for ecosystem services, to finance the huge infrastructure supposedly necessary to fight climate change. Rather like corporate 'wokeness' that celebrates every kind of social justice cause yet exploits low paid, zero-hours contract workers while avoiding anything more than paltry rates of corporation tax, Extinction Rebellion is seen as a smoke-screen for global capitalist rapacity.

For Annie Logical, groups like XR are simply 'proxy organisations' that obscure the hand of big government and big business. Its critical appraisal continued:

> NGOs and charities tend to be seen as more caring and less corrupt than their corporate sponsors; and are presented as such in the media, even when their staff and financials reveal them to be entirely monetarily dependent on the corporate entities and supranational bureaucracies that they covertly campaign on behalf of.

In this endeavour, Greta Thunberg and other activist youth groups function as useful pawns in the game. For those like Cory Morningstar the overall impact is deeply insidious. Opening her series of articles on Greta Thunberg she presented a quotation from the Japanese artist Hiroyuki Hamada, who averred that: 'What's infuriating about manipulations by Non Profit Industrial Complex is that they harvest good will of the people, especially young people'.

He went on: 'Those organizations and their projects which operate under false slogans of humanity in order to prop up the hierarchy of money and violence are fast becoming some of the most crucial elements of the invisible cage of corporatism, colonialism and militarism'. The agents of globalisation are, in other words, following an old political maxim established by Lenin that the 'best way to control the opposition is to lead it ourselves'.

Your future is managed, and you will want it that way

One question that the Extinction Rebellion protests and the phenomenon of Greta Thunberg illustrates, is why young people in particular, seem bent on surrendering themselves to corporatist globalism without a second thought? In *World Without Mind* (2017) Franklin Foer warned about the existential threat posed by global tech corporations. He suggested that the space for contemplative introspection was being progressively eroded. 'We've all become a bit cyborg', he argued. 'Our phone is an extension of our memory; we've outsourced basic mental functions to algorithms; we've handed over our secrets to be stored on servers and mined by computers'. He cautioned, however, that: 'What we need to always remember is that we are not just merging with machines, but with the companies that run the machines'.

What if intelligent machines can predict optimal policy outcomes with high levels of accuracy? Why then bother with democratic accountability?

In this sense, youngsters are being prepared to have their lives fully managed for them and, moreover, they are being conditioned to want it to be that way. As David Martin Jones notes in his article 'The New Techtopia or Thomas More Meets Big Data' (2018), Artificial Intelligence (AI) is likely to be able to 'analyse individuals in such intimate detail that it will know them better than they know themselves'. As a consequence, the 'reasons for listening

to our inner voice will be extinguished'. This has, as Jones argues, profound implications for notions of personal autonomy and liberal democratic practice.

What if, for instance, intelligent machines can at some point predict optimal policy outcomes with high levels of accuracy? Why then bother with democratic accountability? Once governments accept electorates can benefit from the workings of algorithms that produce 'correct' policy solutions then 'as if by an invisible hand', we shall 'enter a condition of techno tutelage', Jones argues. AI stands, in this respect, to challenge ruling assumptions across the board, replacing even patrician ideas of expert-elites with a 'machine-elite'. Through such means, he continues, even the 'psychological utility of voting' will be rendered redundant. Indeed, one might ask, would it even be permissible to 'vote against the machine?'

Should anyone doubt this possibility then one should consider that this vision of the future has been entertained at least once before. To see this we need to go back to the Bolshevik enterprise to replace the free market model with a 'rational' planning system. Quite obviously, this was an enormous undertaking—in fact it was an ambition without precedent in modern history. The world had seen command economies before, especially in times of war, but never one this complete or monolithic.

Welcome to Computopia

The agency with the key role in this scheme was known as GOSPLAN, the state planning commission. It began its work in April 1921 with a staff of thirty-four 'learned technicians and professors whose names enjoy a deserved reputation'. Championed first by Lenin and then by Trotsky, who emerged as the most enthusiastic advocate of central planning, GOSPLAN's job was to work out the logical economic consequences of policies made above and to reconcile them consistently with demands from below, an intrinsically complex task made even more challenging by the intersection of various political power plays amongst leading Bolsheviks—and at the same time all of this being dynamic, all variables constantly in play.

GOSPLAN was, in effect, a colossal national spreadsheet, which for any given year in a five-year plan was meant to specify how much of thousands of primary products—steel, copper, cement, wool cloth, minerals, wheat, corn, and so on—would be generated; and then determine which of tens of thousands of secondary products—tanks, planes, trains, clothing, toothbrushes, beer bottles, etc.—would be produced from them and in what quantity. Any change in the plan, say a decision that more tanks were needed, or any shortfalls in supply, say barley for beer (as was often the case) would require thousands of other changes in response.

Soviet cyberneticists recognised the potential for computing to improve the planning and management of the economy very early on, soon after the field was invented in the West by Norbert Weiner, the vast but ever inadequate efforts of thousands of human calculators working to balance GOSPLAN's gigantic spreadsheet could be replicated far more economically by tireless and faultless electronic machines.

The vision, however, went beyond simple electronic accounting. In October 1961 the Cybernetics Council of the Soviet Academy of Sciences published a series of volumes entitled *Cybernetics in the Service of Communism*. In these texts, the Soviet economy was reconceptualised as a 'complex cybernetic system, incorporating an enormous number of various interconnected control loops'. Its authors proposed wiring up the whole Soviet economy, creating interlinked regional computer centres collecting, processing, and redistributing economic data from producers to retailers for planning and management in a 'single automated system of control of the national economy'.

As it happened, this hypothesized digital 'machine of communism' never came to pass. The reasons for this were both technological and political. It is not just that the sophistication of Soviet computing, which lagged up to 10 years or more behind that of the West, but by the time of the USSR's collapse in August 1990 neither would the top-of-the-line Western systems have been up to the challenge of the proposed bureaucratic 'computopia'. On top of that there were substantial domestic political hurdles that proved insurmountable, despite the intrinsic attractiveness of the vision of the economy as a cybernetic system to many Soviet leaders who were increasingly technocratically inclined.

On the one hand, the entrenched economic hierarchy of industrial managers and bureaucrats opposed this level of computerisation because they feared it would expose their inefficiency and feared that it was aimed at making them redundant. On the other hand, more liberal market reformers who became ascendant in the Gorbachev era opposed it too because it seemed just another way to undermine the development of small, innovative, and autonomous enterprises that they saw as the key to the revitalisation of the stagnant centralised economy.

The failure of Soviet computopia does not diminish its salience as an example of a state choosing to wire itself up in a way that it might operate as a cybernetic system, placing degrees of decision-making beyond human control: that is to say, forbidding citizens to vote against the machine. Technologically, it was beyond the USSR, but from Lenin to Gorbachev the utopian ideal of a truly unified and dynamic, yet fully integrated, plan encompassing the entirety of the national economy gripped the Soviet imagination. The potential reinvention of society by these means still holds a fascination for both tech entrepreneurs and governments.

While it is doubtful that Soviet style command economics will make a come back, with the advance of AI technology the project is increasingly plausible. The idealistic urge to create a heaven on Earth through rational planning, profiling, and surveillance is more likely to stem from different progressive preoccupations—preserving the environment, mitigating wealth imbalances, improving public health, managing resource depletion, and in particular securing nominally open societies against terrorist threats.

In the words of one prominent researcher:

> If you could see everybody in the world all the time, where they were, what they were doing, who they spent time with, then you could create an entirely different world. You could engineer transportation, energy, and health systems that would be dramatically better. It's this history of thinking about signals and people together, and how people work via these computer systems, and what data about human behaviour can do, that led me to the realization that we're at a phase transition. We are moving from the reasoning of the enlightenment about classes and about markets to fine grain understanding of individual interactions and systems built on fine grain data sharing.

Few are blind to the Orwellian potential that accompanies such grand 'big data' driven social planning. It is just that the allure of doing potentially inestimable good with all of this power is very strong. Like the One Ring in *The Lord of the Rings*, declared on its reverse face 'one ring to rule them all…and in the darkness bind them', the danger arrives insidiously via the desire to do right.

In short, there is no reason to expect that states will not seek to apply artificial intelligence to the task of solving myriad 'wicked' problems as soon as it is viable for them to do so. On the basis of past experience there is every reason to believe that they will accelerate the existing process of ceding powers to machines that decide, often more effectively and reliably than people can, whether or not they actually think in a human-like manner.

There is no alternative to your future

David Martin Jones speculates that intelligent machines therefore are unlikely 'to make our lives easier'. Instead these systems will be 'capable of participating' in a constant 'feedback loop with humans' in a way that manufactures consent for algorithmic preferences. Already we can see that through such message reinforcement populations are fed propaganda telling them that there are no alternatives and that they should blindly accept the totalitarian futures they are presented with. There is no alternative to the death of democracy and personal sovereignty, which is being replaced with corporate globalist supra-nationalism. There is no alternative to neo-liberal economics. There is no alternative

but to surrender to surveillance capitalism and rule by a 'transnational plutocracy' and automated technocracy.

As an increasingly 'unaccountable left-coast technocracy mines personal data and acts as the universal arbiter of political speech', Jones proclaims, democracy, personal autonomy and civil liberties, are set to become nostalgic things of a lost past as people find themselves standing in line to be chipped by their employers or the state. As James Bloodworth exposed in *Hired: Six Months Undercover in Low-Wage Britain* (2018), Amazon is already routinely accused of operating dehumanising work practices and totalitarian systems of surveillance to monitor employees, who can be fired by computational rote. For good or ill Uber drivers are managed not by a person but an algorithm. It seems that even now we are living in an era of de-personalisation, which is being forced upon the populace in the name of a seemingly inescapable 'progress'.

There is no alternative to enthusiastically backing the fourth industrial revolution. There is no alternative to 5G and enforced partaking in the Internet of Things. Because many of these 'advances' are backed by supposedly non-governmental/non-profit organisations, they are taken to be benign, innocent and objective: this is the Greta Thunbergisation of politics and society.

Automated us

As the radical environmentalists allege, NGOs are, of course, more than capable of embedding themselves within the globalist deep state of networked interests that serve a privileged and manipulative minority, which dominates mainstream media, big-tech, corporate interests and the political class generally. Information emanating from a great number of NGOs is thus no more impartial, trustworthy or reliable than that produced by any number of other hypothetically independent, open source investigation outfits and news platforms, from Wikipedia, to Bellingcat to BuzzFeed.

Furthermore, social media, especially Facebook and Twitter, explicitly condition users into seeking approval, validation and social endorsement, as they find themselves repeating the same themes and mantras: constant virtue signalling arising from a desperate need to be virtually 'liked'. It is as if the process is intentionally designed to induce obsessive-compulsive disorder in users.

> **Even nature itself will be financialised for the benefit of a transnational elite.**

What is the underlying purpose of creating legions of dopamine-addicted social media junkies? According to Jones the 'internet oligopoly' and 'techno managerialism through the

manipulation of choices, fears and desires' threatens to undermine the liberal concept of the sovereign individual and replace it 'with a servile dependent'.

Further, when coupled with the mass surveillance capabilities that are also inherent in AI technologies, it is but a short leap from the addictive 'like-seeking' habituation of social media to acquiescence to systems of social credit scoring such as that which is already emerging in China where citizens are now being programmed to accumulate government 'likes' and 'points'. For Shoshana Zuboff the intent of it all is clear enough: 'Democracy has slept, while surveillance capitalists amassed unprecedented concentrations of knowledge and power… It is no longer enough to automate information flows about us; the goal now is to automate us'.

Already many of these dystopian themes are latent in every sphere of life. The loss of democratic control to supranational bodies, markets and corporations is accompanied by the loss of consumer sovereignty and fundamental human self-determination. Effectively people will cease to be autonomous over their own money, political decisions and lifestyle choices. Technology and 'possessions' will be locked-in so that products can only be purchased from authorised suppliers. The monetisation of people and data will gather pace, and as we have seen from the corporate backers of Extinction Rebellion, even nature itself will be financialised for the benefit of a transnational elite.

All of these things will be stated as unalterable facts to which there is no democratic alternative either as nation states or as individuals. Likewise, all of these things will be contextualised in terms of the inescapable march of progress. 5G networks are being rolled out and extolled as 'vital' to the UK's digital future. Yet there is no evaluation as to the benefits or the health risks. 5G networks necessitate the heavy concentration of microwave radiation transmissions within the higher millimetre frequencies. These waves can only transmit over very short distances (estimated at about half a mile at most) and therefore require very large numbers of wireless repeaters, particularly in urban areas. Why, it may be asked, is this technology being presented in terms of being essential for the future viability of society, with little attention paid to whether people want it, need it, or whether it is safe or not?

Rage against the machine?

If the ultimate goal of big tech is to 'automate us', as those like Shoshana Zuboff contend, human decision makers will be required to design the parameters within which AI runs its automated outcomes. The implication is that once these are decided no one will be able to appeal against the decisions made by a computer because the machines will be taken to be infallible. Even today, the insidious effects of 'machine judgement' are permeating aspects of life.

Take for example Personal Independence Payments (PIP) in the UK, which have replaced disability living allowances. PIP introduced a hard rule into benefit payments that determine that only wheelchair bound applicants would receive the full amount. This takes no account of the fact that many disabled people endure great pain and difficulty in walking in order not to have to use a wheelchair. The decision to cut benefits is now purely a computational assessment outsourced to a whole new level of formal bureaucracy that is now hidden in the private sector.

Privatising government is not the same as reducing the size of government and its intrusive and unnecessary activities.

In privatising governmental services, democracy, responsibility and accountability is lost among the agencies, which end up blaming each other for their failures or resultant social injustices. Privatising government is not the same as reducing the size of government and its intrusive and unnecessary activities. GPs are more than adequately informed to make decisions as to which of their patients should be entitled to disability assistance and there was never any need to create a whole new layer of bureaucracy to service such requirements. This is just more unnecessary simulated labour adding to the strain on the economy, transport infrastructure and ultimately the environment.

The expansion of officialdom via the back door of the private sector has led to the increased size and spending of the public sector and leaves the system as a whole less democratic and less transparent. The introduction of AI now facilitates this covert expansion in the bureaucracy because now all parties can effectively distance themselves from independent machine-made judgments. Aficionados of black comedy will find in the work of Terry Gilliam's film *Brazil* or *Little Britain's* mocking skits where 'Computer says no' a great deal of prophetic insight.

Building the infrastructure of global alliances

The background fusion between the government and the public sector on the one hand, and NGOs and corporations in the private sectors on the other, carries on developing in disturbing directions. In March 2019, a controversy erupted in Britain when the government announced that the Chinese technology firm, Huawei, widely suspected of being involved in industrial espionage and of being inordinately close to the Chinese government, would be allowed to supply components of the UK's 5G infrastructure.

However, the controversy itself masked the broad network of global partnerships and coalitions being put together behind the scenes. The massive network involving billions of sensors and processors that will be required to construct the 5G structure and to connect the Internet of Things will require, in Huawei's own words, the formation of 'broad alliances

and joint innovation. Manufacturers, operators, vendors, developers, research institutes, and government agencies each play a part in making the IoT work for us'.

Creating 'value' out of data thus entails the establishment of new coalitions of government, NGOs, big tech, finance houses, manufacturers, research institutes and other quasi-official bodies along with the mainstream media. There is obviously a great deal involved in making the Internet of Things work for 'them', which is then artfully presented as a benefit for us.

Digital democracy? Not if governments can help it

Is it not at the very least questionable that, given all these technological advances, not a single step has been taken or a single improvement implemented toward making political systems more democratic or participatory? Why, for example, do governments take a tech free approach to pen and paper ballots that take a £100+ million to organise when the technology resources exist to make democratic expression frequent and virtually free?

Technology is embraced everywhere except apparently for democratic purposes. The only concession to digital democracy that the UK government has kindly offered its citizens is an online 'petition' mechanism to raise issues that can be debated in parliament. If government and parliament is not even prepared to follow the will of the people following the full democratic referendum of 2016 – then what hope can one invest in the petition process to offer any other than a fig leaf of accountability or consultation? Decisions are made prior to the public consultation and the public's opinion is routinely ignored.

So there we have it: zero progress on democracy and a headlong rush to digital enslavement and global corporate capture of the whole world including nature itself. Another question is why the traditional advocates of environmental causes, local democracy, and big business scepticsm, like the Green Party and the Liberal Democrats, appear so supportive of it all? Why have they sold out? Are they, too, prepared to shill for the transnational elites of the major tech companies and the financial interests of surveillance capitalism? We should again, perhaps, recall the dictum: the best way to control the opposition is to lead it ourselves.

To do, or not to do... the right thing?

The final question is always, to what end is all this leading? Any answer is inevitably speculative but on current trends the direction is very dark. In an intriguing piece of symbolism, in 2015 Google changed its hippie inspired motto 'don't be evil' to the much more corporately creepy 'do the right thing'. What constitutes the 'right thing' and who decides what and when doing the right thing is appropriate are questions that Google presumably arrogates to itself to determine or else leaves suitably vague.

If we are to peer into the future, though, we might examine one of the lesser remarked upon episodes that appeared in season two of the TV series *Black Mirror*, entitled 'Men Against Fire'. *Black Mirror* conjectures on the ways in which the rapid development of technologies might impact on the human condition and for the dystopian possibilities that they portend. 'Men Against Fire' features a post-apocalyptic world where paramilitary units hunt down gangs of grotesque mutants known as roaches, malformed survivors of a global biological war some years previously.

The members of the paramilitary squad are implanted with devices called MASS that enables them to heighten their efficiency as soldiers and to kill without remorse. After an operation the MASS implant in one of the soldiers, who is called Stripe, begins to malfunction. Instead of seeing deformed mutants he sees ordinary humans. Realising that he has been exterminating defenceless people rather than savage monsters, Stripe is confined to headquarters where he undergoes psychiatric counselling, during which it is admitted that the implant device intentionally causes distortions in perception that dehumanises the roaches, who are not mutants at all, but merely those deemed to be genetically inferior, and whom society has been taught to fear and despise through relentless propaganda.

There are a number of ways in which one can discern the allegories contained in this episode but it is not far fetched to recognise that the roaches are a metaphor for an underclass, the former working classes, rendered useless, unemployable and expendable in a world dominated by AI and the technocratic enforcers who preside over it. For that is exactly how the roaches are portrayed: marginalised, impoverished, desperate and terrified.

For a series that is widely praised for its prophetic accuracy, *Black Mirror* is credited with foreseeing, amongst other things, the rise of the social credit system, digital immortality, meme culture, and destructive social media mobbing. Someone, look us in the eye. Please tell us that what begins with assertions that ordinary folk are 'deplorables' (Hillary Clinton), 'had no idea what they were voting for' (*The Independent*) and are 'small, boring and stupid' (*Politico*), merely because they voted the wrong way against the interests of a global cartel of elites, and extends to contentions like 'Science has a dim view of Brexit voters' brains' (*The Times*), cannot end with Men Against Fire? One day, will that be seen as 'doing the right thing'?

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The struggle for democracy[1]   Daniel Ben-Ami

There are compelling reasons for democrats to support Brexit but the notion that the project of European unification is a cunning cover for German domination is unconvincing. The claim was infamously made in 1990 by Nicholas Ridley, then a minister in the Thatcher government, in an interview in the *Spectator*. After stating the move towards economic and monetary union was 'a German racket designed to take over the whole of Europe,' he was forced to resign. The argument is not heard so often nowadays although in 2017 then US President-elect Donald Trump did describe the EU as a 'vehicle for Germany' in an interview with Michael Gove in the London *Times*.

Anyone who follows European affairs should recognise such a motive as a myth. Germany may have Europe's largest economy but even now, more than 70 years after the second world war, it is strikingly reluctant to take a political lead. Indeed, Angela Merkel, the German chancellor since 2005, has become so notorious for her indecisiveness that her name has inspired a new verb in German: 'to merkeln,' meaning to be unable to make decisions or express your own opinions.

But there is another important sense in which the European Union is indeed Germanic. It is based on the widespread premise in the Federal Republic of Germany from the immediate aftermath of the Second World War that nationalism is inherently problematic. This view has of course become more widespread across Europe since then. The simplistic starting point is that the Nazis represented a kind of super-charged nationalism. It was this perspective, so the argument goes, that led to the Holocaust and a catastrophic global war. In this reading of history, the EU is a way of ensuring that Europe never again suffers such tragedy.

The deeply-rooted anti-nationalism in contemporary Germany explains why the German elite and its middle class are so profoundly hostile to Brexit.

It is unfortunate that this crude interpretation of past events is rarely challenged. For one thing it is clear that the Nazi regime had utter contempt for the right to national self-determination of the countries it invaded. In that respect it was transparently anti-nationalist. But even within Germany, the rise of Nazism was not based on building national consensus. On the contrary, it involved the use of extreme force to destroy its political opponents. Nazi Germany's emergence depended on the obliteration of public life

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[1] **This essay is a review of the recently published book by Sabine Beppler-Spahl:** *Brexit-Demokratischer Aufbruch in Großbritannien* [*Brexit: The struggle for democracy in Great Britain*] **(Parados 2019).**

within the country. The rise of the Third Reich meant the complete subordination of a large section of its population rather than its mass mobilisation.

The deeply-rooted anti-nationalism in contemporary Germany explains why the German elite and its middle class are so profoundly hostile to Brexit. From their perspective, the move to national self-determination threatens to revive the horrors of the past. Far better, in their eyes, to quell the involvement of national communities in political decision-making. The levers of power should, in the orthodox view, be kept firmly in the hands of a cosmopolitan elite.

It is in this context that Sabine Beppler-Spahl's *Brexit-Demokratischer Aufbruch in Großbritannien* [*Brexit: The struggle for democracy in Great Britain*] should be judged. Beppler-Spahl has written a brave riposte to the conventional wisdom in Germany. It is an attempt to put a liberal-democratic case for Brexit in a country where Euroscepticism is often seen as an inherently far right outlook.

Indeed, we in Britain are in a better position to understand the virulence of the EU's arch-supporters than we were a few years ago. Those who have refused to accept the democratic verdict of the 2016 referendum rarely hesitate before condemning Brexit supporters as ignorant, racist and even fascist. In that respect there is a strong affinity between 'Remaniacs' in Britain and the mainstream viewpoint in Germany.

Beppler-Spahl's democratic case for Brexit draws on three main intellectual influences. From Britain she draws on Tony Benn, the radical left Labour MP, who was a long-standing critic of the EU and its predecessor organisations. It is poignant to consider what he would have made of the contemporary debates in which Brexit supporters are routinely derided as 'far right'.

> **Brexit is a cause which all democrats, regardless of nationality, should support.**

Next there is Hans Magnus Enzensberger, one of Germany's leading public intellectuals. Sadly, at the age of 90, he is not really able to enter into the contemporary debate. However, his critique of the EU is available in English as *Brussels, the Gentle Monster: or the Disenfranchisement of Europe* (University of Chicago Press 2011).

Finally, and relatively little-known even in the German-speaking world, is Kurt Schumacher. He led Germany's Social Democratic Party from 1946 until his death in 1952 after surviving nearly 10 years in Nazi concentration camps. Although the EU itself was established long after his death he was a staunch opponent of early moves towards European unity including the Council of Europe, the European Coal and Steel Community and the European Defence Community. For Schumacher, these were all mechanisms to strengthen capitalist

domination of society. He also understood the anti-democratic nature of such organisations delegating decision-making on important political and economic questions to an unelected bureaucracy.

Brexit-Demokratischer Aufbruch in Großbritannien starts with a preface by Gisela Stuart, the former Labour MP and chair of the Vote Leave campaign in 2016, who was born and raised in Germany. Chapters start with a quote from the German media making an argument against Brexit and then proceed to show why this criticism is misconceived.

For example, an early chapter makes the case for national self-determination. It starts with a quote from *Die Welt*, a national daily newspaper, arguing that: 'Nationalism is like alcoholism: a momentary high followed by a persistent headache.' The underlying claim is that the EU is necessary as a guarantee against the resurgence of aggressive nationalism in Europe. Beppler-Spahl then argues that, on the contrary, the anti-nationalist ethos of the EU and its supporters embodies a deep hostility to democracy. It leads to the political marginalisation of the national communities in which the vast majority of Europeans still live and work.

Among the other topics that are tackled are the claim that the EU is a peace project, the debate about immigration and the hysteria over a 'hard Brexit'. Most of these discussions will of course be familiar to anyone who has followed the debate in Britain but it is fascinating to see how they are expressed in a German context. Indeed it would be useful to have an English-language version of the work which brought together the key pro-Brexit arguments in a single accessible text.

Inevitably, given the numerous twists and turns of the Brexit saga, the discussion has moved on in some respects since the book was originally published. Nevertheless it remains an important contribution to understanding one of the key political developments of our time. Hopefully it will help convince a larger number of Germans that Brexit is a cause which all democrats, regardless of nationality, should support.

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Electoral systems in the UK   James Hodgson

Unlike its European neighbours, Britain has been blessed – or perhaps cursed – with a tradition of majority governments, constituted by a small number of established parties. Indeed, the historical absence of coalition and minority governments has traditionally been

viewed as a strength of Britain's single member plurality – sometimes misleadingly termed 'First Past the Post' – electoral system. In the spirit of the unbearable Mr Podsnap from Charles Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend*, this system has often been viewed an artefact 'bestowed upon us by Providence,' with other, less divinely sanctioned countries simply, sadly, obliged to 'do…*as* they do'.

Our choice of electoral system reflects the choice of which democratic values we wish to institutionalise in our politics.

Why is this so? Besides complacent Podsnappery, majority governments have been traditionally perceived as advantageous because they offer democratic goods difficult to realise in other systems. In contrast to coalitions formed of two or more parties, majority governments of one party do not require politicians to be 'compromised' in offering trade-offs or bartering policies in order to secure cross-party agreements. They do not, moreover, require Members of Parliament to vote for policies they find objectionable in order to realise some portion of their platform, thus protecting politicians' integrity. In doing so, it is argued, they make politicians more directly accountable to the electorate. The familiar lament of coalitions – that 'no one voted for this' outcome – does not apply to majority governments. Ministers in such governments cannot, it is suggested, get off the hook by claiming that their breaking of electoral promises was due to the demands made by coalition partners during negotiations.[2]

There are merits to this argument, but they take us only so far. To cite one famous counterexample, Nick Clegg discovered to his cost that reneging on pledges made in public in order to enact some of his agenda by taking his party into a coalition was not a compromise the public found easy to forgive. Indeed, another common criticism of coalition governments – that minority parties will be granted disproportionate influence over policy, as they are just as necessary for forming a stable government as the larger party and can leverage this advantageous position – seems not to have held in the case of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition, with the Lib Dems proving rather hapless negotiators. Despite the pratfalls of the coalition years, however, the enthusiasm for proportional representation in many quarters does not seem to have abated.

This is not surprising, as proportional representation (PR) has its own virtues. For one thing, as we might guess, it has the virtue of proportionality. That is, it aims to match democratic inputs (votes) with democratic outcomes (seats in a legislature). So, for instance, a party which receives thirty percent of the vote will receive thirty percent of the seats in a legislature. The ambition is to mirror more accurately the political intentions of the whole electorate, rather than to institutionalise a 'winner takes all' approach to governing.

This system seeks to remedy two related problems: that of 'wasted votes' where a particular party has a stronghold in a particular constituency and any vote that counts against the

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[2] See Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1957).

winning majority can be seen as wasted; and democratic alienation, where citizens are divorced from the democratic process and do not see any point in voting as their views will not receive adequate representation. In giving voice to traditionally disenfranchised groups by making every vote count, PR systems attempt to instantiate the democratic values of inclusion and representativeness.

If we want PR, then we had better learn to love coalitions.

Smaller parties, therefore, are expected to thrive under PR systems, which tend to produce outcomes where no single party has the majority of seats required to form a government. They produce both minority governments entering into 'confidence and supply' agreements with other parties – where the smaller party agrees to vote for the elements of the government's programme which it does not find objectionable, such as the arrangement between Theresa May's Conservative administration and the Democratic Unionist Party – or more stable coalition agreements between parties, wherein politicians from the junior party hold government positions and are expected to vote on a commonly agreed policy programme. Coalition governments are very much the European norm. As Britain embarked on its own experiment with coalitions in 2010, some twenty out of the twenty-seven governments in the EU member-states (almost two thirds) were coalitions. If we want PR, then we had better learn to love coalitions.

Ultimately, our choice of electoral system reflects the choice of which democratic values we wish to institutionalise in our politics. Do we desire a system where governments are given a free hand to enact legislation and policy, or one which favours inclusion and sees some form of compromise as the norm? There are good reasons not to reject coalitions out of hand: more 'consensual' modes of government are both equal to majoritarian governments in economic management and tend to score higher in outcomes such as welfare spending, the representation of women and minorities, and lower incarceration rates.[3]

As British politics appears more and more fragmented, with smaller parties and factions within parties gaining more influence over political outcomes, we might have reason to judge our current electoral system outmoded. Perhaps the greatest irony of Britain's attempt to exit the European Union is that our politics has never been more European and shows no signs of going back.

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[3] Arend Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999).