



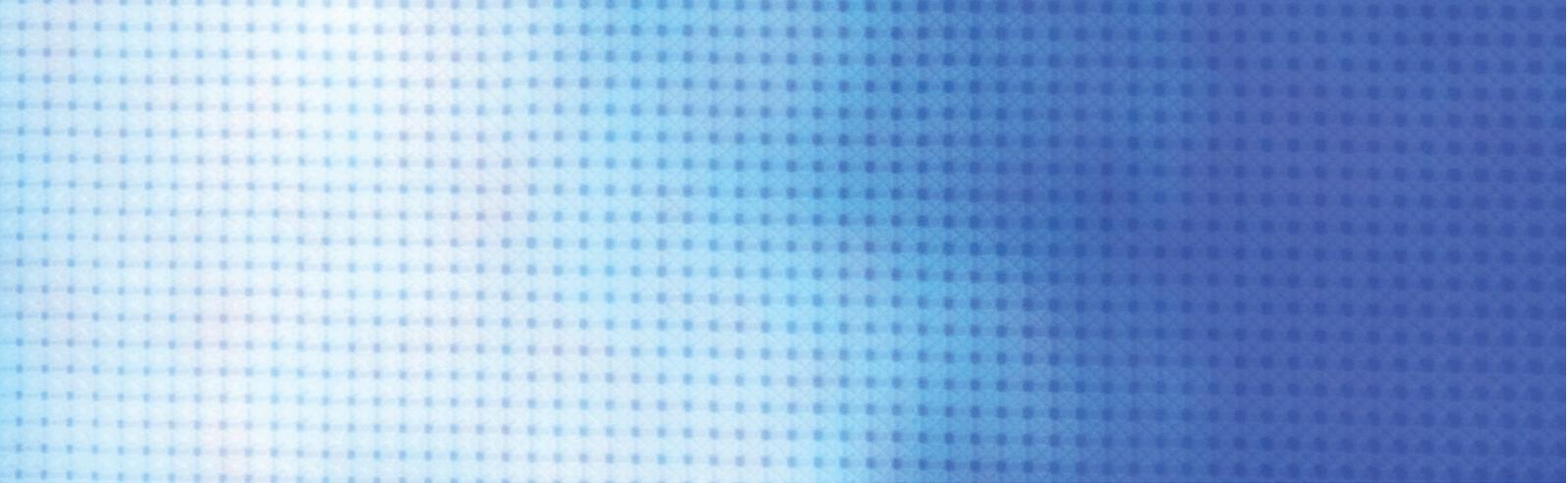
The Osborne Supremacy

Why progressives have to develop a
hegemonic politics for the 21st century

Ken Spours

Foreword by Eliane Glaser





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The Osborne Supremacy

Foreword

The concept of hegemony has fallen out of fashion. It conjures smoky Seventies seminar rooms and the beard-stroking abstractions of Leftist ‘old politics’. But we neglect it at our peril, because it’s more relevant than ever. Hegemony is what elite power looks like in the 21st century, in an age of apparent freedom, transparency and empowerment. Hegemony is not the clenched fist; it’s the earnest gaze and the arm around the shoulder. It’s the carrot rather than the stick, the public consultation, the apology, the admission of guilt or vulnerability, the open invitation to ‘Call me Dave’. Hegemony is neoliberalism’s embrace of progressive values. It’s blue-collar conservatism’s posturing in hard hat and hi-vis jacket. It’s the Centre for Social Justice and Iain Duncan Smith’s double fist-pump at the announcement of a national living wage. It’s fake e-Democracy and fake devolution of power to cities; top-down masquerading as bottom-up. Above all, hegemony denies its own existence: if you can see it in action, it’s failed. And that’s why this think piece is so essential: it exposes the scaffolding behind the speeches delivered without autocue and the casual spontaneity of appeals to ‘common sense’.

In an attempt to appear up-to-date, practical and vernacular, the Left has largely ceded the analysis of concepts like hegemony to the Right. The Right, for its part, continues to scoff at the Left’s Marxist theorising, while behind the scenes busily brushing up on the insights of Jean Baudrillard and Isaac Deutscher. Michael Gove has acknowledged his

intellectual debt to Antonio Gramsci. Silvio Berlusconi’s media strategist was once asked where he learned the tricks of his trade. He replied without hesitation: ‘From Guy Debord’.

What Ken Spours shows here is that hegemony is not a natural or inevitable force, like the weather. Nor is it solely the product of prodigious financial investment – although that helps. It’s a careful and deliberate construction. In the brave new world of WhatsApp, YouTube and network theory, it’s tempting for the Left to believe that hegemony can be improvised from the ground up, like slime mould. And it’s true that some modern political phenomena – like Corbynmania – do appear to emerge unprompted as a groundswell of popular support, channelled by social media. But as the Right knows only too well, the challenge is making it last. That requires coherent purpose, strategy and coordination. The Right has adopted the trappings of grassroots decentralisation and used it to package its retrogressive programme of monopolistic capitalism and social control. And they’ve made it seem effortless.

Knowing Thine Enemy means understanding not only neoliberal message-making, but also the mechanisms by which those messages are disseminated. We have all become obsessed with what people bring up ‘on the doorstep’, as though political views are inherently and organically held. But politics is made, not born. We are still heavily, if subtly, influenced by an oligarchical press, a craven BBC, an army of neoliberal think tanks and the narrow version of ‘reality’ that passes for political discourse. Neoliberal hegemony happens to dominate our particular period in history. It doesn’t have to be that way.

Eliane Glaser

The contours of the Conservative political project

The outcome of the 2015 general election was arguably the worst political defeat for Labour and the progressive Left in modern times and part of a wider chronic, multi-layered and cumulative crisis of European social democracy. In contrast, the Conservative Party now commands a majority not just in the House of Commons, but also in the wider political landscape. It holds the political loyalty of expanding and powerful voting constituencies, such as the retired population and private sector businesses and their workers. It is dominant in English politics outside the largest urban centres, and it has ambitions to consolidate its position in the South West and to move into the ‘Northern Powerhouse’. Most ambitiously, it aims to detach irreversibly the skilled working classes from allegiance to the Labour Party, something that was attempted by Thatcher in the 1980s. Its goal is a new political hegemony that might be termed the ‘Osborne supremacy’, after its chief strategist.

Much ink has been spilt on why Labour lost the general election and the crisis it now faces. But far less attention has been paid to the Conservatives. What lies behind their political strength? What secured their victory and what they are doing in its aftermath to cement their political hegemonic position? Put another way, when you have been defeated on the field of battle, you ask not only what you did wrong, but also what your adversary did right.

The central observation of ‘The Osborne Supremacy’^[1], is that from 2005 the Conservatives did their homework on New Labour and carefully built a comprehensive political and intellectual strategy with supporting structures. This paper and the project more generally, are based on the theoretical work of Antonio Gramsci. Widely recognised as the leading Marxist theorist of politics and ideology, his insights into the exercise of power, particularly the ways in which the dominant class gains consent by building economic, political, social and cultural alliances, are as important today as they were when he wrote Prison Notebooks in the late 1920s and early 1930s.^[2] While leading conservative thinkers have not seriously engaged with the logic of his work (although Michael Gove claims that his reforms are a reflection of Gramsci’s thinking on education), they act as if they have done. Labour thinkers on the other hand, with one or two notable exceptions, behave as though they have little or no understanding of hegemonic politics. If they hope to win in future this has to change.

This Compass thinkpiece represents the first output of the ‘21st Century Hegemony Project’. Problematising what it means to build a progressive political hegemony in this day and age, the paper uses a number of related Gramscian theoretical concepts – the dimensions of hegemony,^[3] the concept of a dominant ‘historical bloc’,^[4] the role of ‘organic intellectuals’^[5] and the processes of ‘passive revolution’^[6] – to undertake an initial mapping of the new Conservative hegemony. In doing so, a distinction is made between the Conservative Party as the dominant intellectual and political organising force, a modern version of Gramsci’s The Prince,^[7] and how it functions as part of a much broader neo-liberal hegemony. The article also employs extensive use of spatial and military metaphors that seek to appreciate the dimensions of conflict and inter-relationship of opposing economic, political and ideological forces.^[8]

The provisional analysis laid out here is intended as an invitation for all progressive forces in British politics to examine and appreciate what the Conservatives have built over the last decade, which helped them to an unexpected election victory in May 2015. It is also hoped that this sobering assessment will help to bring different political actors together to discuss the kind of progressive political, ideological and economic counter bloc that has to be built not only to win elections, but to bring about a permanent transformation of the terrain on which both blocs operate.

To assist with this I focus, in particular, on the concept of the historical bloc. While this is used as a specific way of thinking about the economic, political and ideological alliances that the Conservatives have created (referred to here as the Conservative bloc), it has wider application. The concept of historical bloc provides a means of thinking about neo-liberalism and its relationship to class and politics within the UK and beyond. Although the term is often used lazily and without precision, neo-liberalism can be seen as a strategic project of recent decades that aims to cohere the dominant economic, social, political and ideological assemblages of the latest stage of capitalism both nationally and globally (the wider neo-liberal bloc).

The exercise of hegemony involves not only the exercise of coercion, but also the incorporation of elements of the agenda or constituencies of the opponent by making concessions in order to passify opposition. Gramsci referred to this process as 'passive transformism', which the late Stuart Hall termed a 'double shuffle'^[9] in reference to New Labour's politics. In the case of New Labour, it was represented in the combination of dominant neo-liberal and subordinate social democratic agendas through the process of top-down politics. Here I will argue that Cameron and Osborne have, since 2005, been conducting a conservative version of the 'double shuffle' in which an increasingly dominant neo-Thatcherite economic and political approach has been combined with a subordinate social liberal agenda. This particular dominant-subordinate relationship in the Conservative political strategy is constantly shifting.

The final part of the paper explores the potential tensions and fissures in the Conservative bloc and the challenges posed by the strengths and weaknesses of the new Conservative hegemony for the Labour Party and the wider Left.^[10]

From the wilderness years to political domination

It is impossible to fully understand the new Conservative hegemony without an appreciation of its two precursors – intellectual and political. The intellectual groundwork was laid in the decades following the Second World War when Fredrick Hayek and Milton Friedman and their followers were developing a new liberal market philosophy in what for them were the depths of the Keynesian winter. Their ideas around the deregulation of business and dismantling the welfare state were put into practice through the Thatcherite political domination of the 1980s and the transformations it set in motion – Big Bang and financialisation; the defeat of the miners' strike and the curtailment of trade union power; the winning of Conservative leaning working class voters; and the extensive privatisation of the state. The Thatcher era also saw the further advance of neo-liberal thinking as it shifted the focus from being a worker and citizen to being a consumer with individual choices to be made.^[11]

Yet by the mid-1990s this particular Right project was exhausted, due not only to its own contradictions and implosions such as the Poll Tax riots and Black Wednesday, but also because it was being left behind by a more liberal, ethnically diverse and optimistic Britain, in which demands for a decent public realm and democratic reform were growing, and to which New Labour gave electoral expression in 1997. By 2005, after a decade of New Labour's dominance, the Conservative Party was weak to non-existent as a political force outside its southern and middle England strongholds, cut off from liberal, cosmopolitan and youthful Britain in the main urban centres, but stronger (and getting stronger) among older voters and swing middle class voters who had lent their votes to New Labour in 1997 and largely stayed with the party in 2001. At the 2005 election, however, the fissures in the Labour vote (declining turnout, rising anti-immigration sentiment and post-Iraq losses among liberals) were beginning to show.

Taking 2005 as the substantive starting point for this analysis, the movement of the Conservatives from the wilderness to apparent political domination can be seen in three phases:

- 2005–2010: the building period – drawing on previous piecemeal Conservative modernisation efforts to extend the party's social and political reach, embracing progressive trends and boosting intellectual (think tank) capacity
- 2010–2015: in coalition – extending aggressively into public service reform, shifting to a new internal party settlement on Europe, and moving to the right on the economy
- 2015: unexpected majority rule – showing a new confidence and with it an ambitious and aggressive hegemonic strategy.

The new social and civil liberalism

In 2005, following a third consecutive Conservative election defeat, Lord Ashcroft published what would prove to be a seminal report: *Smell the Coffee: A Wake-up Call for the Conservative Party*. Of the many revelations in this document, a key passage states:

Though none of the parties inspired the devoted admiration of the public, the Conservatives were thought less likely than their opponents to care about ordinary people's problems, share the values of voters or deliver what they promised. Majorities in key marginal seats thought the party was out of touch, had failed to learn from its mistakes, cared more about the well-off than have-nots, and did not stand for opportunity for all.^[12]

Taking this painful message to heart, in the period 2005–10 there was a concerted effort to extend the Conservatives' political and cultural base involving the development of civil society, social justice and environmental political agendas in dialogue with charities, community groups and progressive businesses. It was articulated through the ill-fated but strategically astute Big Society agenda. Symbolic moments included Cameron's 'hug a huskie' trip and Iain Duncan Smith's 'Easterhouse conversion'. This period also saw the development of the Centre for Social Justice think tank and the extension of Policy Exchange's policy work on public services, notably school reform, together with the establishment of networks of non-state public service

providers like the New Schools' Network, and a renewal of the Burkean strand of conservative thinking and political practice (the little platoons of the country), which a socially liberal Cameron managed personally to embody and symbolise. He also brought his personal life into the political arena as a personification of a 'New Dad' and promoted the Tories as a party of the modern family, embracing flexible working and childcare as policy goals, and reaching out to modern media carriers of this agenda, like Mumsnet. The Conservative leadership also embraced social and civil liberalism, harnessing widespread hostility to New Labour's centralist statecraft and repositioning the party on totemic issues, such as gay rights. It also cautiously fed off concerns about the growth of the security state, which had not only alienated metropolitan, 'Guardianista' liberalism, but had generated strong counter-blasts from civil libertarian Tory party figures such as David Davis MP, and spawned a new breed of libertarian right organisations, such as Big Brother Watch.

This social modernisation was held in uneasy tension with an increasing electoral focus on older voters. The over-55s were the first to start peeling off from the New Labour coalition in 2001, switching to the Tories rather than abstaining. By 2015, this shift had become electorally decisive. After 2010, Osborne protected older voters from cuts, defended the NHS with more spending, and substantially increased the Basic State Pension. In his 2015 pre-election budget, he gave pensioners greater flexibility over their pension pots as an added inducement. In addition to these material policies, the Tories skillfully played the English identity card with older voters, not by embracing Farage's noisy populist and anti-immigrant Euroscepticism, but by raising the threat of Scottish domination of English politics under a weak Labour Government. They were amply rewarded: 47 per cent of the over-65s voted Conservative in 2015, a 5.5 per cent swing from Labour, which picked up only 23 per cent of this key section of the electorate, whose turnout rate in 2015 was almost double that of 18–24 year olds.

The state and the economy

– austerity as the organising principle

After first tacking to the centre and embracing Labour's fiscal policies, the Conservatives shifted to the right after the 2008 financial crisis and secured widespread media and public support for austerity, using classic tactics of the construction of 'common sense' – 'Labour had maxed out on the country's credit card' and 'had failed to fix the roof when the sun was shining'. They subsequently spread the burden of austerity unevenly, thus protecting their core voting blocs. At the same time, however, the party embraced the language of fairness (now styled 'one nation' again, after Labour let its theft of this Disraelian terminology lapse) and economic rebalancing, and overhauled the regulation and taxation of the banking sector. Nevertheless, the fundamental weaknesses in the UK economy – extensive financialisation, current account deficits, huge private debts, sector and regional imbalances and continued low productivity – have not been addressed. These will produce ongoing contradictions and tensions.

Austerity, as an organising economic and political strategy, has also been used to shift workers out of the public sector, where they are more likely to be unionised and Labour-leaning, into the private sector, and to reduce the dependency of Northern cities and counties on public sector employment and income transfers. Osborne is now using the so-called 'National Living Wage' (a new, higher rate of the National Minimum Wage for the over-25s) to advance aggressively into Labour territory and to harvest skilled working class voters as Thatcher did. This is the main strategic goal of Blue Collar conservatism, which is to attack Labour at a key 'C2 point' of vulnerability rather

than to reach non-voting DE classes, who can be split off and categorised as welfare dependent. The Left has all but lost public support for working-age social security, which is now a major point of strategic weakness.

Alongside the dominant austerity strategy the Conservatives have woven a far-sighted and ideologically appealing strand of thinking through engagement with the tech community. Via Steve Hilton and Rohan Silva, they developed strong networks among tech entrepreneurs in opposition, such as Silicon Roundabout pioneers, and surfed the wave of techno-libertarianism embraced by the likes of UKIP MP Douglas Carswell. Open data, 'big data' and tech start-ups all found a place in conservative politics and statecraft that was very successfully prosecuted by Francis Maude in the Cabinet Office between 2010 and 2015 and could be readily allied to a free market, anti-big-state and anti-corporatist agenda (for example, Maude cancelled big Whitehall consultancy contracts and created the Government Digital Service to outsmart the big IT companies). But here too the Conservatives have been shifting, this time towards support for technological platforms of global giants, such as Uber and Google, presenting them as the realisation of the Hayekian dream of a mass private 'sharing economy',^[13] while others argue that they are, in fact, features of monopolistic 'platform capitalism'.^[14]

At a more global level, amid a fundamental ambivalence about membership of the EU, Eurosceptic sections of the Conservative Party entertain the idea of recreating a new commonwealth outside the EU – an Anglosphere Alliance of English speaking countries with historic ties to the UK and compatible legal and political systems. However, this project is marked by a glaring strategic weakness: the USA is not interested in it, preferring the UK to remain in the EU.

Political and intellectual resources

– binding the bloc together

Arguably the most impressive aspect of the Conservative bloc has been the role of its political intellectuals who attempt to promote and align its different elements. Extending the social and cultural base was accompanied by the building of the conservative intelligentsia and opinion formers via the creation of new think tanks, such as Policy Exchange, the cultivation of commentators and bloggers, and the embrace of useful intellectual fads like 'Nudge Theory'. At the same time, it tacitly supported the opening up to a penumbra of campaigning groups like Migration Watch and the so-called TaxPayers' Alliance, while all the time keeping the free market right and its magazines and think tanks within sight.

Right think tanks

The Conservative intelligentsia and opinion formers have played a prominent role in developing ideas and policies through no fewer than 20 think tanks.^[15] They include long-established organisations (e.g. the Bow Group, the Adam Smith Institute, the Institute of Economic Affairs and the Centre for Policy Studies) together with more recent creations (e.g. Policy Exchange, Reform, the Centre for Social Justice, ResPublica, the Social Market Foundation and Civitas). Invariably described as independent, these produce research and publishable material that tends to promote the virtues of the 'free market' and ways of shrinking or privatising the state while, simultaneously, helping to broaden the social appeal of the Conservatives. Of these Policy Exchange and the Centre for Social Justice have been the most influential, helping to mould 'a post-Thatcherite style of liberal

conservatism, fusing neo-liberalism, New Labour and One-Nation Toryism'.^[6] Well resourced and housed, Conservative think tanks have multiple connections with City finance^[7] and often close ties to Republicans in the USA. But crucially, these entities are closely integrated with other groupings of Right organic intellectuals in the UK and find it relatively easy to find outlets via bloggers, conservative media, right-wing networks and campaign organisations. They have also formed a close relationship with the Conservative parliamentary party itself by providing springboards for careers as special advisers and MPs. Representatives of these think tanks are regularly brought together with other 'political intellectuals' in the Conservative firmament and, crucially, not only articulate new conservative thinking, but also provide criticism in order to improve the workings of the bloc.

Campaigning attack organisations

Apparently independent of the Conservative Party are campaigning organisations situated on the pivots of modern conservatism. Notable key attack formations, created in response to New Labour, are the TaxPayers' Alliance and Migration Watch, which hail 'popular common sense' and are highly effective opinion formers. These exist alongside prominent and influential blog sites, like Guido Fawkes, that break stories and engage in cyber politics. Each has a close relationship with the conservative broadsheets that serve to popularise and communicate their messages.

Conservative media – the press, blog-based commentators and websites

While the ideological dimensions of the Conservative bloc have diversified in the digital age, conservative supporting newspapers still play an important role by framing much of the 'popular mood music'. This established dimension is particularly good at articulating and mobilising a reactionary 'common sense'. Alongside these is a new generation of leading conservative commentators, who have often played formative roles in the right-wing think tanks (e.g. Janan Ganesh and Danny Finkelstein) and key websites, the most successful of which is ConservativeHome, established by the prominent conservative Tim Montgomerie, with Lord Ashcroft's funding.

The Parliamentary Party – a connective force

Since 2005 the Conservatives have brought on a new cadre of MPs that increasingly resemble and represent modern Britain. The Tory backbenches are no longer almost exclusively white and male, as they were before 1997. This has been achieved through a new candidate selection processes, experimentation with primaries and aggressive use of promotions. Since 2010, in particular, Osborne has grown an extensive patronage network among MPs and ministers. This looks set to secure him the leadership of the party and ideological command of its agenda. There also appears to be a high level of integration between MPs, think tanks and campaigning organisations through sponsored meetings and less public gatherings such as 'supper clubs'. Conservative MPs also assume leading roles in a range of political intellectual bodies and devote considerable intellectual and political energy to popularising policy and projecting this through the extensive ideological apparatuses at their disposal.

Interventions on the terrain of society and mobilising 'common sense'

These political intellectual forces not only produce policy and engage in the political process, they interpret the everyday societal and economic terrain and mobilise popular 'common sense'. Gramsci understood common sense as bits and pieces of ideas, 'stratified deposits', that slowly settle into a popular philosophy. Accordingly, Hall and O'Shea define common sense as 'everyday thinking that provides a framework of meaning in order to make sense of the world ... that expresses itself in the vernacular, the familiar language of the street, the home, the pub, the workplace and the terraces'.^[18] The conservative political intellectuals described above are particularly skilled at 'mining' these deposits, helped at key moments by the expertise of sympathetic advertising agencies. A notable ideological skill lies with suggesting that 'common sense policy' is going with the grain of human nature. At the same time, they have also aggressively attempted to reframe and reduce the 'healthy nucleus' of common sense – 'good sense'. A notorious example of this was Osborne's divisive use of the key term 'fairness' when contrasting the behaviour of 'shirkers' who lie in bed on benefits compared with 'strivers' who have to leave the house early for work.

The election machine and the 40/40 strategy

Any 'war of position' ultimately involves a 'war of manoeuvre' and, in liberal democratic societies, elections constitute such moments. Hardly anyone expected the Conservatives to win outright on 7 May but, in reflecting on victory, the key features of a successful election machine and strategy have been dissected by their own forces. Despite an ageing and static membership, the Conservatives managed to conduct a highly effective campaign comprising more and less visible features (an election version of the double shuffle). The most visible part was ideological, personal and ruthlessly political. They promoted a strong economic narrative that stated simply that the Conservatives had rescued the economy and had a 'long-term economic plan' while continuing to remind everyone that Labour 'crashed the economy' in 2008/9. They also focused on the personal role of David Cameron (who continued to outpoll his party) and contrasted his capacities with the perceived weakness of Ed Miliband. During the election campaign itself the Conservatives exploited the role of the Scottish nationalists with the accusation that Miliband 'would dance to an SNP tune'. While the role of Crosby and Messina, who crafted a disciplined and carefully targeted campaign, was well known, the details of the operation were conducted largely beneath the radar. Deploying what was termed the '40/40 strategy' to deliver a majority (defending the 40 most vulnerable seats and attacking the most promising 40 Labour and Liberal Democrats seats based on local information), they used social media and volunteers beyond the Conservative Party (Team 2015) to substitute for the lack of 'boots on the ground'. Labour, by way of contrast, depended on the visibility of an elaborate and well-organised 'ground war' while lacking a central ideological message to win over voters. The so-called 'Obama Playbook', and the way in which it was interpreted by Miliband's campaign team, failed to translate in the UK context.

Third force components

– the outer territories of the Conservative bloc

The outer fringes of the political bloc are important because, while unstable, they represent opportunities for bloc expansion. It is possible to see Blairism, coalition government and UKIP as different forms or stages of what Gramsci termed 'Caesarism' or 'Third Force' politics. Caesarism occurs where the two opposing fundamental forces are deadlocked. A 'Caesar' is not necessarily a great personality (in Gramsci's case it was Mussolini and Italian fascism), but can be a party, faction or alliance, representing some form of compromise between the historical blocs. Caesarism as 'third force' can play a progressive or regressive role in relation to tipping the stalemate between the fundamental classes.

Blairism, for example, inserted itself into British politics as a result of the electoral weakness of Labour in the 1980s and the exhaustion of the Thatcherite project in the 1990s. Promoting a presidential agenda Blair, as a political personality, represented a historic compromise between Labour aims and values and neo-liberalism as he sought to secure the electoral middle ground and to isolate the Conservatives. Blairism straddled the relationship between the respective political and ideological blocs but failed to transform either the economy or the state. Blair's passive transformism^[20] is one of the reasons why his political achievements have been deeply admired by Cameron and Osborne as they have sought to emulate him from a conservative perspective.^[21]

Gramsci argued that coalition governments can represent the first stage of Caesarism, even though they are commonly seen as bulwark against it, because they represent an inability of a dominant force to be able to carry through its political will on its own. In the UK context, the Liberal Democrats as the subordinate party in the Conservative-led Coalition could be seen to represent outlying and often unstable territories of the Conservative bloc. The 'decapitation' of the Liberal Democrats in the South West in May 2015 was both a triumph and a challenge for the Conservative Party. It no longer has to compromise with Liberal Democrats, but is now compelled to bring back into its bloc the social liberalism 'franchised out' to Clegg and his colleagues between 2010 and 2015, hence the significance of the social and civil liberalism still being pursued within the shell of neo-Thatcherite economic policy.

UKIP represents a third type of third force politics in the English context. Its rise in 2014 and 2015 could be seen to represent the inability of both Miliband's Labour Party and the Coalition Government to transform the economic life of sections of the working and middle classes, thus fostering the rise of an isolationist English nationalism. While it was assumed that the rise of UKIP was a Right split that would disproportionately hurt the Conservatives, this did not prove to be the case. In the approach to the election, the Conservatives played up the threat of the SNP (an appeal to a narrow English nationalism) and promoted Euroscepticism to bring UKIP defectors back into the fold. This twin strategy paid dividends because UKIP, having polled over three million votes by taking them from all the major political parties, hit Labour particularly hard in the key marginals. As one UKIP organiser recalled in relation to the Conservative victory in Warwickshire North, 'We rode into the flanks of the white working class and captured them. I had Tory workers coming up and hugging me.'^[23] A narrow Thatcherite nationalism that came through the Conservative election campaign meant that the third force nature of UKIP diminished and elements of this growing political force returned to the fringes of the Conservative bloc.

The English post-election political landscape – a new ambitious hegemonic strategy

Osborne's strategic vision and concept of political realignment

The Conservatives have been extremely active since their election victory in May, enacting a confident hegemonic strategy that combines both consensus and coercion. The most audacious raid into Labour territory has been Osborne's proposal for a 'National Living Wage', grabbing the terminology of a favourite progressive policy while asking some of his closest business supporters to make modest sacrifices to secure a smaller welfare bill and a smaller state. Similarly, his concept of a Northern Powerhouse based on a collection of northern cities working collectively on economic innovation is a massive challenge to Labour. This concept, together with proposals to devolve more powers to cities, has allowed Osborne to claim that Labour civic leaders are on his side.^[24]

Osborne's hegemonic vision also involves the identification of the next stage of market-centred social and economic liberalisation. He is very interested, for example, in the use of new technologies (e.g. phone apps Uber and Airbnb), seeing them as driving forces that link consumers to 'independent workers' in the growing 'freelance economy'^[25] and the use of consumer and minor property goods (e.g. cars and spare bedrooms) as capital goods. He aims to get to these nodal points before anyone else does and make them public so that his political opponents accept this stance as The New Normal. In Osborne's own words:

The best things are when you get your opponents to end up agreeing with you because then you've really won the argument. When you finally agree – that's when it's going to last, that's when you've won'.^[26]

While Osborne has earned a reputation for being a neo-liberal ideologue, the reality in 2015 is more complex. Having oft made reference to Blair as the 'master', he is making a pitch for the centre ground of English politics:

I don't think the Conservative Party's response to the Labour Party's lurching to the left should be a lurching to the right. I think it's a huge opportunity and responsibility for us to hold the centre of British politics. Now, the centre doesn't mean you can't change the centre, you can't shape the centre, and I would say things like the education reforms from Michael Gove and Nicky Morgan, some of the things we're doing on apprenticeships, where we're introducing the apprenticeship levy, the National Living Wage, the whole argument about the country living within its means: these are shaping the new centre of British politics.^[27]

The Good Right

While Osborne is undoubtedly the current leading strategist of the new Conservative hegemony, it does not solely revolve around him. The very complexity of conservatism, its different wings and tendencies, provide it with vitality and appeal. A controversial development within conservatism was the launch of the 'Good Right' project. Established by Tim Montgomerie and Stephan Shakespeare in early 2015, the Good Right is an attempt to remake a moral case for conservatism and to shift it to the middle ground by acts of political and ideological borrowing from the Left. The Good Right has asserted that 'the Left doesn't deserve the best words' and is seeking to reinterpret the terms fairness, equality and social justice in order to 'fill them with conservative meaning'. As part of this appropriation, Montgomerie also maintains that the state has a constructive role to play in people's lives. Rather than being confined to 'picking up the pieces', it should seek to reduce the demand for

welfare and health services for example through the promotion of healthy living and building more houses. While sparking sharp responses from the Conservative free-market Right Montgomerie is not a lone outsider within the Conservative Party, having been actively assisted by Boris Johnson, Teresa May and Michael Gove.^[28] This suggests that the Good Right is not an isolated initiative, but integral to the conservative political project. While the Left routinely sees conservatism as mean spirited, Martin Kettle reminds us that many people will have voted Conservative in May because they saw a positive side – competent, decent and patriotic.^[29] Above all, there is a new confidence that encourages an intellectual flexibility (or at least the co-existence of different strands of thinking) that allows the conservative political intellectuals to interpret everyday life and to offer ‘solutions’ that sit on the boundaries of their political project.

Conservative coercion

However, in true Machiavellian style, and interacting with this consensual strand, is a highly aggressive and coercive conservatism. Even though they do not have a strong parliamentary majority, the Conservatives are no longer restrained by the Liberal Democrats. They have, therefore, opted for a strategy of coercion to erode the remaining political bastions of the Left with proposed legislation against trade unions, attacks on charities with social missions, reform of the Human Rights Act, and measures to make it more difficult for trade unionists to affiliate to the Labour Party. Coupled with proposed boundary changes and English Votes for English Laws (EVEL) in the House of Commons, these are aimed at crippling the organisational capacity of Labour and the wider Left.

The strengths and limits of the Conservative bloc

In 2015 the conservative political-ideological bloc constitutes an extensive and well-organised array of ‘ramparts and earthworks’ geared to fighting successful political and ideological ‘wars of position’ and occasional ‘wars of manoeuvre’.^[30] This contrasts sharply with the ramshackle political and ideological ‘trenches’ of Labour and the Left, which could be characterised as fragmented and in a state of serious disrepair.

The terrain of the Conservative bloc is not impregnable, however, having potential fault lines and weaknesses that might be exploited by a committed and skillful adversary. Nevertheless, an initial analysis suggests that it could expand further in the very near future if opposing forces remain disorganised. It is important, therefore, to distinguish between short-and longer-term tensions and fissures.

Austerity and its effects

While the Conservatives can regulate the pace and extent of austerity they may overreach themselves by pursuing what could be seen as an ideologically driven agenda rather than economically necessary measures. Osborne is acutely alive to this risk. Any sharp deterioration of services, particularly to the NHS, and cuts to tax credits for working families, could quickly fracture support from the social groups that have thus far bought into austerity.

European fault lines

Britain's membership of the EU is a potentially massive fault line that could expose divisions not only within the Conservative Party (although it is now overwhelmingly Eurosceptic), but more significantly increase tensions with its sections of its economic bloc. Large companies, in the main, want to remain part of the EU. The rapidly growing refugee crisis is also fuelling new tensions within conservatism, but the ways in which this crisis might unfold further has unpredictable dimensions. Although the Conservatives saw off the threat from UKIP at the general election, helped by the chronic disproportionality of the First Past the Post electoral system, the danger of rupture over Europe is ever-present. However, Labour is also not immune from such tensions.

Limits of the social strategy

The current focus on the older generation, sections of the middle class and the conservative working class could be seen as constituting a social 'holding pattern'. While going with the grain of an ageing society, the Conservatives are not building up support with young people, urban and most black, Asian and minority ethnic voters. This makes it difficult to extend its hegemony into the major cities, where much of the political and economic dynamism of the country now resides. The use of English identity as a wedge issue to detach voters from Labour and the Liberal Democrats also carries high risks, not just because it threatens Conservative unionism but because it can become insular and reactionary, bleeding into xenophobic sentiment.

A new economic crisis?

The fundamental structural features of the economy as the result of financialisation – current account deficits and huge private debts, sector and regional imbalances and continued low productivity – are not being seriously addressed despite the rhetoric on productivity or visions of a Northern Powerhouse. As this paper is being penned in early September, there are signs of a continuing chronic global economic crisis marked by a marked slow-down in the Chinese economy, Eurozone instability and threats of a new financial crash. These aftershocks of the 2008 global financial crisis pose huge risks, not least because global central banks have used up most of their monetary policy armory, while further fiscal stimulus is ruled out – leaving the strategy of austerity exposed. The Conservatives are also seriously locked into the City and global companies, which could put a strain on the party's relationship with start-ups, entrepreneurs and small businesses, which are particularly susceptible to changes in demand within the economy. Given that another economic crisis is inevitable, the question is which political force will be able most successfully to frame the potential solution. So far, the Conservatives have shown themselves to be far more adept at this framing process than Labour.

The Conservatives as an English party – is it sufficient?

Tory unionism is now a political-ideological dead letter. Political reform focuses on England – EVEL and devolution deals with groups of local authorities in the regions – as does Tory political strategy (the continued SNP 'threat'). Wales remains in the balance for the Tories. The most interesting geo-political sub-plot of the General Election outside Scotland was in the South West, where the Liberal Democrats collapsed, handing political representation of an historically liberal, non-conformist and partly Celtic region to the Conservative bloc. Osborne has responded by giving Cornwall the first rural 'devo-deal'. If he can cement the Conservative position in the South West, it will be a major political achievement because of the calculation that the Conservative bloc can be cemented from the South, the South West of England and the Midlands.

Conservative political intellectuals can be dogmatic and half-blind

By way of observing Conservative hegemony there is no wish to attribute to Conservatives capacities they do not have, but to recognise the ones they actually possess. Conservative political intellectuals are not 'all knowing' because they have their own fundamental blind spots. These include a near religious faith in the free market and a refusal to engage with critiques of globalisation; a deep-seated historical amnesia as a result of being immersed in an 'expanded present' (they call it 'reality') that cannot see that neo-liberalism is a product of historical conditions; and a resolute refusal to recognise that sections of the Left have developed a participative democratic ambition. The following is typical of right-wing commentary on the world outlook of the Left:

This [the Left] sees human beings in democracies not as people with free will and unimaginable potential, but as inanimate beings to whom things are done.[xxxi]

This myopia is, nevertheless, a challenge to Labour and the wider Left. Either they play to it by practising an old top-down politics or, by virtue of a deep-seated democratic commitment, show it to be a caricature.

Conservative hegemony summarised

The Conservative election victory in May 2015 revealed the achievements of its political and ideological bloc that had been obscured by coalition government and by a lack of analysis by the Labour Party and the wider Left. Its full nature is now there for all to see and appreciate.

Strengths lie not only in its roots in a neo-liberal economy and state, but in its adaptive character. Most prominent has been the ability to modernise the bloc through a conservative 'double shuffle': the combining of neo-Thatcherite economics and social and civil liberalism, represented by a highly flexible and cordial relationship between Cameron and Osborne. The Conservative Party has also mobilised an integrated set of highly effective political and intellectual resources that are constantly seeking new avenues of economic, technological, political and social development, able to appropriate the language of the Left and to summon and frame popular common sense. These are formidable strategies with which to cohere and expand the Conservative political bloc.

As we have seen, however, there are potential frailties. Arguably, the tectonic fault line running through modern conservatism is the type of capitalism that it has come to support since Thatcherism – the Anglo Saxon model.^[33] This has been promoted globally, particularly in Africa and the transitional economies in Eastern Europe, through transnational organisations, such as the World Bank and the OECD. Here in the UK, the Anglo Saxon model of capitalism is based on finance capital, rising property prices, personal consumption and personal debt. It performs poorly in relation to industrial and technological innovation (despite the existence of some world performing UK companies) and looks particularly vulnerable to future global shocks. Its other key features include the desire for a shrunken state, the celebration of austerity and the toleration of deep social divisions (despite political rhetoric that would suggest otherwise). As a form of capitalism it is not delivering for a sizeable and growing section of the people – wages are stagnant, there is a growing housing crisis, and anxiety and insecurity are pervasive right up through the class system.

This fault line provides an explanation for other tensions within the Conservative bloc. Fundamental disagreements over the role of the EU, for example, centre around the rejection of its more adaptive and socialised form of capitalism under the leadership of Germany and France. Further reflections of this divide can be seen in the managed tensions between those Conservatives, such as the Good Right, who see a constructive social role for the state and the now mainstream neo-Thatcherites who does not.

The new Conservative hegemony – challenges for the progressive bloc

What this analysis reveals, if we did not already know it, is that the Right is far more versed in hegemonic politics than the Left. Its ability to manage and reframe the underlying crises is the result not only of its close relationship with dominant economic forces, but also a broader understanding of the dynamics of the ideological and political terrain and how to use these to advantage. While there is over four years to the next general election, the shift to the Left in the centre of gravity in the Labour Party also presents new opportunities for the Conservatives. They think the political centre ground is there for the taking. With a sense of urgency, therefore, the final section of this paper applies the observations of and insights into the Conservative bloc to highlight the scale of the challenge facing the Labour Party and the wider Left in building an effective counter-hegemonic economic, political, social and ideological bloc.

The benefits of 'bloc analysis' – a focal point for all fractions

Surveying the growing power of your main adversary and the current balance of forces is a potentially unifying experience. It points to a long-term project to build a bloc of a new type based on a rediscovered passion for social justice and clearer sense of moral purpose, and the ability to create sustainable economic, social, political and ideological alliances.

The exercise of 'pessimism of the intellect' provides a method and language to cut across and challenge the ideological limitations of both social democracy and Left forces. For social democrats, the concept of hegemony and historical blocs involves a recognition that building a counter bloc involves much more than knocking on doors and trying to win elections. For the Left, it involves an explicit recognition that the road to power involves the careful building of economic, social and political alliances way beyond its comfort zone. This also entails engaging with the common sense of the population: how people see and interpret life now and not just as you might want them to.

The intertwining of the blocs – we are all in this together

It is critically important to understand that there is no such thing as an independent or autonomous bloc in advanced capitalist societies and democracies. Both blocs – dominant and subaltern – co-exist, intertwine and compete along different dimensions of a common economic, social, political and ideological terrain. Some of these are illustrated in Table 1, a heuristic device used to explore areas of contestation, where competing strategies seek to dominate, create alliances and incorporate and transform key features of the opponent's bloc.

Table 1 The contest of the blocs – over time progressives need to be able effectively fill this table in to counter Tory hegemony:

| Bloc dimension | Conservative bloc | Areas of bloc contestation | Progressive bloc |
|---|-------------------|----------------------------|------------------|
| <i>The 'organising narrative' Economic forces and technological and digital developments</i> | | | |
| <i>Social groups</i> | | | |
| <i>Political landscape (including geo-politics)</i> | | | |
| <i>Key policies</i> | | | |
| <i>Relationship with everyday life and popular common sense (including the use of language)</i> | | | |
| <i>Organising political and intellectual forces</i> | | | |

Bloc building through a new 'progressive double shuffle'

What follows is a brief discussion of the bloc dimensions listed in Table 1 and, in particular, the areas of contestation through what might be described as a 'progressive double shuffle', the aim of which is to wade deep into the territory of the Conservative bloc, not by randomly borrowing language and policy, but by a progressive appropriation that fills them with new active and democratic meaning.

A new kind of economy, politics and society – move beyond the financialised, highly exploitative and underperforming Anglo Saxon model with a vision and a narrative of a more productive type of economy, society and its politics represented, for example, by the concepts of a good society and post-capitalism. Presently these remain quite abstract concepts. There is a need to develop a practical set of economic policies that appeal across different social and economic groups with a sense of fairness and that Left forces can be economically competent.

Economic forces and technological developments: a new public-private alliance – establish new reciprocal relationships between a more democratically organised state and public sector and innovative elements of the private sector (e.g. start-ups, entrepreneurs, independent workers and small and medium-sized enterprises) that provide the motors of future economic and technological development. A major battleground will be how the new digital age can be increasingly occupied by an open, progressive, public and sharing logic that is currently dominated by transnational platform companies such as Uber, Google and Facebook.

Social groups: a new type of social solidarity – overcome the social, political and economic isolation of the poor by binding different social groups, young and old, together by concepts of state protection and security underpinned by new combinations of ideas on responsibility, reciprocity and individual rights.

A progressive pluralist landscape – this may involve looking beyond single party domination to the idea of a pluralist political bloc, comprising political alliances that could become expressed geo-politically in different regions and countries of the UK.

Key policy battlegrounds that will shape the blocs – a hegemonic project will need to identify the key areas of policy contestation that will shape the relationships between the blocs in the near future. Given current developments, these will include Europe and growing international crises; productivity and the future of the economy; devolution, empowering regional and local decision-making; and issues of national identity.

Transforming everyday life and popular common sense – in a developed but distorted civil society comprising individuals, families and communities that are being constantly pressurised by the culture of consumerism, there are decisions to be made on how to conduct everyday life. Are we able to lead lives that allow us not only to enjoy the present, but also to grow capabilities that can shape a wider future through what Unger describes as ‘deep freedom’.^[34] The traditional Left, by focusing largely on the role of the state to ameliorate the ravages of capitalism, has underestimated the wider importance of being ‘the change you wish to see in the world’,^[35] thus seeing everyday life as a major political and ideological arena of struggle. Here there may be different, but possibly complementary, approaches. Some stress the need for an ideological confrontation between the realities of everyday life under neo-liberalism and the coercive deceptions spun by multinational corporations.^[36] Another approach is to mount a contest around ‘language’ and the key terms that straddle the cultures of the blocs that each side seeks to fill with meaning. These include the language of freedom, the individual, choice, democracy, responsibility, fairness, inclusion, society and innovation. These terms and the thinking behind them have the potential to represent the kernels of ‘good sense’ within a wider and more dispersed common sense in which different social groups can sense a future.

Political and intellectual capacities to organise the bloc – an initial assessment of progressive political intellectual forces is that, while they exist in great number, they do not communicate well, are not well organised, and have a very poor relationship with the major political force, the Labour Party. They are also hopelessly out-resourced by the intellectual forces of the Conservative bloc. It will be important, therefore, not only to develop a better relationship between progressive think tanks, bloggers, websites, political journalists and campaigning organisations that parallel many of the political and intellectual features of the Conservative bloc, but also to refuse to play by normal rules. This involves invoking a far more democratic idea of what it is to be a progressive organic intellectual in this day and age and, in doing so, bringing active thinkers together in their thousands and millions. To paraphrase Gramsci, ‘everyone is an intellectual even though they may not be a specialist intellectual by function’. Our task, therefore, is to help the ‘thinker’ in every one of us to become that little bit more specialised and connective. Digital technologies could play a decisive role in this process.

Corbynism as a ‘primitive bloc’

Given the preceding discussion on possible areas of bloc contestation, what does Corbynism (the movement behind Jeremy Corbyn and his leadership of it) represent? It could be viewed as a desire for disengagement from the neo-liberal project, the search for autonomy and an ideological and moral clarity focused around the rejection of austerity. In this sense, Corbynism marks the limits of Conservative hegemony insofar as Labour no longer subscribes to the dominant discourse. It also marks a severe break with New Labour that succeeded in dominating the electoral middle ground by accepting many of the tenets of the neo-liberal economic order while failing to transform them. However, the Right anticipates that Labour’s radical denial of Conservative hegemony will be electorally punished and the party forced to submit once again to the logic of neo-liberalism, as the condition for being allowed to govern.

In this regard it is very early days in the Corbyn era and the signs are ambiguous. On the one hand, a vigorous and enthusiastic movement erupted around his leadership campaign leading to a surge in Labour Party membership. He won the contest decisively and with a strong mandate. On the other, this renewal is still taking

place among a small and unrepresentative segment of the population and there is little sign so far that Labour intends to reach out – or is yet capable of reaching out – to a range of social and economic groups to create an effective counter bloc. Only time and debate will tell.

At this point Corbynism could be seen as constituting a 'primitive political bloc', designed to mobilise the Left, Greens and a new wave of young people to provide the Labour Party with a sense of vitality and moral and political purpose following a catastrophic defeat. Its primitivism lies in the combination of the enthusiasm and mobilisation for a clear anti-austerity position and the fact that its politics is not yet sufficient to build a comprehensive and effective progressive counter bloc. Moving beyond primitivism involves, among other things, recognising that bloc autonomy can only be momentary and that the real aim should not be independence and the comfort of political identity (although these may have a valid function in 2015), but the more difficult and longer-term exercise of hegemony in the conditions of the 21st century

Final remarks

From the depths of defeat there are new stirrings to harness and new crises to confront. Many of us did not foresee these things even as little as four months ago; all of a sudden, 7 May looks a bit old hat even though its aftershocks will be felt for some time to come.

But these new and fluid landscapes, while not promising any victory in the near future, do present opportunities to build something new and lasting. So there is a long road ahead. But the Conservatives travelled a long road too, having over the last 10 years built and rebuilt the political, social and ideological dimensions of the dominant bloc, which now has considerable strength. In understanding Conservative hegemony, the Left has to exercise intellectual pessimism as well as the will of urgently wanting to change. There is a lot to learn, but given the speed and ambition of the Osborne supremacy, and the convulsions taking place within Labour, there is not a great deal of time in which to do it.

Notes and references

[1] This is an extended version of an article originally published in IPPR's Juncture in September 2015

[2] Antonio Gramsci (1971 translation) *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, London: Lawrence & Wishart.

[3] The term 'hegemony' refers to the way in which dominant groups in society maintain their dominance by securing the 'spontaneous consent' of subordinate groups, including the working class, through the negotiated construction of a political, ideological and economic consensus, which incorporates both dominant and dominated groups.

[4] By 'historical bloc' Gramsci was talking about the degree of historical congruence between material forces, institutions and ideologies, and more specifically an alliance of different class forces politically organised around a set of hegemonic ideas and structures that give strategic direction and coherence to its constituent elements.

[5] An 'organic intellectual' is defined by Gramsci as a constructor, organiser and permanent persuader providing leadership to connect different cultural, social and political and groups, and to link with economic life and the ways in which lives are led (their organic role). Thus organic intellectuals are instrumental in building and binding together the historical bloc.

[6] 'Passive revolution' describes the way in which a political party can absorb popular aspirations, neutralise their specifically oppositional or class-antagonistic character, and re-articulate them in the politics of the pro-capitalist centre'. See 'Transformism', <http://wiki.theriomorphous.co.uk/doku.php?id=glossary:transformism:start> (accessed 4 September 2015).

[7] A political party acting as 'The Modern Prince' (a modern version of Machiavelli's *The Prince*) is not a 'concrete individual' or a single centralised entity, but a dynamic collective process that brings together and organises the organic intellectuals of a particular class and its allies.

[8] For further reading on Gramsci's spatial theories see Bob Jessop (2014) 'Gramsci as a spatial theorist', 31 December, <http://bobjessop.org/2014/12/31/gramsci-as-a-spatial-theorist/> (accessed 31 August 2015).

[9] Stuart Hall (2005) 'New Labour's double shuffle', *Review of Education, Pedagogy and Culture* 27 (4), 319–35.

[10] While I take full responsibility for this publication, I have been fortunate to be able to weave into this account an invaluable political commentary from Nick Pearce, Director of IPPR.

[11] For an extensive analysis of the domination of neo-liberal ideas and practices see Stuart Hall, Doreen Massey and Michael Rustin (2013) 'After neoliberalism: analysing the present' in *The Kilburn Manifesto*, London: Soundings.

[12] Michael Ashcroft (2005) *Smell the Coffee: A Wake-up Call for the Conservative Party*, www.lordashcroft.com/pdf/GeneralElectionReport.pdf (accessed 31 August 2015).

[13] Douglas Murray (2015) 'Paul Mason's postcapitalism is proof that the left is out of ideas', *Spectator*, 1 August, <https://www.spectator.co.uk/features/9596372/there-will-always-be-a-market-for-books-saying-capitalism-is-doomed/> (accessed 14 September 2015).

[14] Evgeny Morozov explains the logic of the new 'platform capitalism' in 'Where Uber and Amazon rule: welcome to the world of the platform', *Observer*, 7 June 2015.

[15] Hartwig Pautz (2012) 'Tory think-tanks' tangled web', *Red Pepper*, February, www.redpepper.org.uk/tory-think-tanks-tangled-web/ (accessed 24 September 2015).

[16] *Ibid.*

[17] Owen Jones (2015) *The Establishment: And How They Get Away With It*, London: Penguin Books, pp36–40.

[18] Stuart Hall and Alan O'Shea (2013) 'Common-sense neoliberalism', *Soundings* 5, 9–25.

[19] See Mark Wallace (2015) 'The computers that crashed. And the campaign that didn't. The story of the Tory stealth operation that outwitted Labour last month', *ConservativeHome*, 16 June, www.conservativehome.com/thetorydiary/2015/06/the-computers-that-crashed-and-the-campaign-that-didnt-th (accessed 24 September 2015).

[20] For an analysis of Blairism from a Gramscian perspective see Deborah Steinberg and Richard Johnson (2004) *Blairism and the War of Persuasion: Labour's Passive Revolution*, London: Lawrence & Wishart.

[21] Peter Osborne (2014) 'This infatuation with Blair will damage Cameron's reputation', *Telegraph*, 18 December.

[22] Gramsci (1971 translation) *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p220.

[23] Andrew Anthony (2015) 'How Ukip helped David Cameron win in the Midlands', *Guardian*, 9 May, www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/may/09/ukip-tory-tories-election (accessed 24 September 2015).

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[24] Andrew Sparrow (2015) 'George Osborne's Today interview', Politics Live, Guardian, 22 September, www.theguardian.com/politics/blog/live/2015/sep/22/george-osbornes-today-interview-politics-live#block-5600ff04e4b0c53c066a718b (accessed 24 September 2015).

[25] For an interesting discussion of the freelance economy in the US see Elaine Pofeldt (2015) 'Who's afraid of the freelance economy?', Forbes, 25 March, www.forbes.com/sites/elainepofeldt/2015/03/25/whos-afraid-of-the-freelance-economy/ (accessed 14 September 2015).

[26] Jim Waterson (2015) '24 Hours over Europe with George Osborne', BuzzFeed, www.buzzfeed.com/jimwaterson/george-osborne-in-europe#.gfl9a3BWB (accessed 31 August 2015).

[27] Extracts from the Osborne interview with Jason Cowley (2015) 'Ascent of the submarine: George Osborne mission to capture and reshape the middle ground', New Statesman, www.newstatesman.com/politics/uk/2015/09/ascent-submarine-george-osborne-talks-jason-cowley (accessed 14 September).

[28] For a good overview of the Good Right see Mark Wallace (2015) 'Here comes the Good Right', ConservativeHome, 15 February, www.conservativehome.com/thetorydiary/2015/02/here-comes-the-good-right.html (accessed 4 September 2015).

[29] Martin Kettle (2015) 'It's vital to know why Labour lost – yet more so to know why the Tories won', Guardian, 14 May, www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/may/14/vital-know-why-labour-lost-more-so-why-tories-won (accessed 4 September 2015).

[30] Gramsci contrasted an ideological and political 'war of position' likened to the trench warfare of World War 1, with the 'war of manoeuvre' reflected, for example, in the Bolshevik seizure of power in October 1917.

[31] Douglas Murray (2015) 'Paul Mason's postcapitalism is proof that the left is out of ideas', Spectator, 1 August, <https://www.spectator.co.uk/features/9596372/there-will-always-be-a-market-for-books-saying-capitalism-is-doomed/> (accessed 14 September 2015).

[32] For insights into the Cameron–Osborne relationship see Cowley (2015) 'Ascent of the submarine'.

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[34] For explanations of the concept of a good society see Compass, 'Good society', www.compassonline.org.uk/ideas/good-society/ (accessed 24 September 2015), and for concepts of post-capitalism see, for example, Paul Mason (2015) *Post-Capitalism: A Guide to our Future*, London: Penguin Books, and Christopher J. Dew (2015) 'Post capitalism: rise of the collaborative commons', <https://medium.com/basic-income/post-capitalism-rise-of-the-collaborative-commons-62b0160a7048> (accessed 14 September 2015).

[35] Roberto Unger (2013) *Deep Freedom: Why the Left Should Abandon Equality*, London: IPPR.

[36] A well-known quote from Mahatma Gandhi.

[37] For example, Eliane Glaser (2013) *Get Real: How to See Through the Hype, Spin and Lies of Modern Life*, London: Fourth Estate.

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