



The
Progressive
Conscience

DAMIAN GREEN MP
on whether the European
Union has changed Britain

PETER HITCHENS
argues that Great Britain
is a nation in decline



From Global Empire
to the Global Race:
modern Britishness

Contents

- 03 Editor's introduction
James Brenton
- POLITICS**
- 04 Director's note
Ryan Shorthouse
- 05 Why I'm a Bright Blue MP
George Freeman MP
- 06 Replastering the cracks in the North
Professor Tim Bale
- 07 Time for an English parliament
John Redwood MP
- 08 Britain after the referendum
Rupert Myers
- 09 Patriotism and Wales
Stephen Crabb MP
- 10 Unionism in a time of devolution
Michael Kenny
- 11 London and Britain:
necessary partners
Alexandra Jones
- 12 Reclaiming Britishness
from the Far-Right
Vidhya Ramalingham
- 13 The great generational divide
Dr Robert Ford
- CULTURE**
- 15 What Britain means to me
Paul Uppal MP
- 16 Them and us no more
Sunder Katwala
- 17 The Bright Blue dictionary
of Britishness
- 18 Daniel Hannan: To define
Britain, look to its institutions
James Brenton
- 20 Is Britain still Great?
Peter Hitchens and Ryan Shorthouse
- 23 Painting a picture of Britain
Alan Davey
- 24 What's the problem with
promoting British values?
Michael Hand
- 25 Multiple loyalties are easy
Damian Green MP
- 26 Influence in the Middle East
Ross Cypher-Burley
- 27 Winning friends in India
Emran Mian
- 28 Different down under?
Nick Cater
- 29 The Commonwealth vs the EU
Austen Saunders
- BOOKS AND ARTS**
- 30 *Inequality and the 1%*
by Danny Dorling
Will Emkes
- 31 *How to be conservative*
by Roger Scruton
Austen Saunders
- 32 *East is East* by Ayub Khan-Din
Meera Sonecha
- 33 *Turner, Kiefer, Ai Wei Wei*
Alexander King

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Editor's introduction

Britishness may be hard to define, but it includes certain traits that keep cropping up



JAMES BRENTON is the editor of *The Progressive Conscience*

If you were to search for the adjective that occurs most frequently throughout this edition of *The Progressive Conscience*, with its focus on British Identity, it's likely that the result would be one of either "tolerant", "open-minded" or "accepting." In exploring the contours of "Britishness," these are the words of description or aspiration our contributors most often turn to. The best illustration of these values that I've yet seen is the fact that, in the course of working with so many different contributors, not once did any of them suggest it was odd that the editor of the magazine was himself obviously not British. It may be best ascribed to British tact that nobody suggested that I might not be the ideal candidate, but many of our contributions seem to suggest that it's partly because "Britishness" is an inherently inclusive idea.

There's nothing in the world less British than claiming to know the exact nature of Britishness

Since moving to London several years ago, I can't recall ever feeling disadvantaged for being an outsider – immigration queues at Heathrow being a possible exception. This is similar to the experience of **Paul Uppal MP** (Page 15) who explains how Britain has steadily grown into a more accepting place for his children than he recalls as a youth. Several contributors describe how Britain has also grown more confident in its self-image, with **Damian Green MP** describing how Britain's membership in the European Union creates no issues of divided loyalty for him, while other contributors tell us that Wales (**Stephen Crabb MP**, Page 9) and London (**Alexandra Jones**, Page 11) remain inseparable parts of Britain. That does not mean that the union is static, as the writer and

barrister **Rupert Myers** (Page 8) explains in his assessment of post-referendum Britain, and **John Redwood MP** (Page 7) is emphatic that the time has come for an English parliament. Britishness and the idea of the Commonwealth also maintain their influence around the world: **Emran Mian** of the Social Market Foundation describes Britain's current relationship with India, while **Nick Cater** of Australia's Menzies Research Centre tells us why the campaign for a republican Australia was doomed to fail.

Of course, not everyone believes that the future for Britain is rosy. In a recent interview, **Daniel Hannan MEP** (Page 18) told me of his concern about the negative impact that he believes European Union membership is having on British culture. Meanwhile, in a fascinating letter exchange with our Director, **Ryan Shorthouse**, Daily Mail journalist **Peter Hitchens** (Page 20) expresses some pessimism about the future of the nation, culturally and economically. With further contributions from **Alan Davey**, Chief Executive of Arts Council England, (Page 23) on the role of the arts in British culture, **Sunder Katwala** (Page 16) of British Future on the subject of immigration and **Professor Michael Hand** (Page 24) on teaching British values, there are enough different perspectives to allow readers to form their own assessment of the state of modern Britain.

For a bit of intellectual exercise, we asked each of our contributors to suggest succinct definitions of "Britishness" for a separate section of the magazine (see the results on Page 17). As we should have expected, the majority ducked the question. Perhaps this is because there's nothing in the world less British than claiming to know the exact nature of Britishness. While it may not be possible to condense such an idea into a ten-word definition, we hope that our readers will find in these pages a better sense of how contemporary Britain sees itself. ●

Ryan Shorthouse on celebrating an inclusive and inspiring Britishness



RYAN SHORTHOUSE is the
Director of Bright Blue

From time to time, our political leaders talk about the need to identify and defend British values and Britishness.

Gordon Brown did so in a speech in 2007 to the Fabian Society, subsequently commissioning a new book of essays on Britishness that was edited by Bright Blue's new chair, Matthew d'Ancona. Recently, the former Education Secretary, Michael Gove, asked all schools to teach British values after Operation Trojan Horse in Birmingham, where some individuals tried to take over several state schools and teach an Islamist ethos.

This political focus in recent decades on carving a distinct and positive British identity, which has attracted cross-party support, has been driven by several trends. First, increased immigration – especially since the 1990s – has led to growing public concern that some ethnic groups are not integrating sufficiently with other Britons, thus generating social tension and anxieties.

Related to this is a second trend: since 9/11, there has been deep worry about the emergence and extremism of Islamists here in Britain, who promote a political ideology that loathes and, in some instances, seeks to terrorise Western civilisation, which Britain is obviously a central part of. As Munira Mirza, now Deputy Mayor of London, highlighted in a 2007 Policy Exchange report she co-authored entitled *Living apart together*, the real worry is a minority of younger Muslims who are increasingly attracted to Islamism.

Many of them have now decided to fly to Iraq and Syria to join the brutal and hellish ISIS.

Third, New Labour's devolution of powers to different countries within the United Kingdom – though it was the right thing to do – has enabled separatists to grow stronger, particularly in Scotland. Hence the recent referendum on Scottish independence, which the unionists won more narrowly than they first assumed they would. The recent Smith Commission promises sweeping new powers for Scotland. But it will not be enough to satisfy the increasingly popular SNP; they have not given up on independence yet. Unionists will have to work hard to convince those north of the border that being British is worth it.

Thinkers from across the political spectrum are increasingly recognising the importance of the nation-state and an inclusive nationalism for mitigating social and especially religious division

Finally, the European Union – a project that seeks “ever closer union” between member states – has extensive powers over Britain's laws, triggering frustration among parliamentarians and the public that Britain's identity and power is being diluted. There is a desire for Britain to re-assert greater control on key policy areas: immigration and justice, most notably. Renegotiation of, and a referendum on, EU membership

are essential if Britain is ever going to be comfortable with being part of the club.

Nationalism has a bad reputation, thanks to the World Wars in the twentieth century and, here in modern Britain, its association with the far right. But thinkers from across the political spectrum – from the communitarian Professor Michael Sandel to the conservative Professor Roger Scruton – are increasingly recognising the importance of the nation-state and an inclusive nationalism for mitigating social and especially religious division, helping to build alternative sentiments to excessive individualism which is on the rise in modern societies, and building crucial public institutions that support the vulnerable.

So flying the national flag need not be surprising, as the Labour MP Emily Thornberry thought it was when canvassing in Rochester. National pride ought to be much more commonplace.

Positive nationalistic feelings among the British public are simmering. They surface during major sporting events or during celebrations relating to the Monarchy. And, as British Future have shown, it is ethnic minority groups who are often more likely to be proud to be British.

Politicians are right to keep talking about Britishness. Our nationalism can be uniting and inspiring, celebrating Britain's unique institutions and a culture of open-mindedness and industriousness. This is a great country: hundreds and thousands of people travel miles each year to try and come live here. Millions more have died for it. We can be proud of Great Britain. ●

COLUMNISTS

This issue, **George Freeman MP** tells us why he's a Bright Blue parliamentary supporter

WHY I'M
A BRIGHT
BLUE MP



GEORGE FREEMAN *is the MP for Mid Norfolk, Minister for Life Sciences and co-founder of the 2020 Group of Conservatives*

The Times recently held a debate pitting Tim Montgomerie against Matthew Parris, trad versus mod, the Conservative party a house divided against itself. Indeed, it seems to be received wisdom that our future is a divided one, a repeat of Labour in the eighties. But I profoundly disagree. I am a Bright Blue MP because I believe the most successful political party in history can draw on the best instincts of our liberal and conservative families and build a Progressive Alliance for our generation which is relevant to the profound challenges we face, a new Gladstonian vision of reform. Indeed, as a great great great nephew of the Grand Old Man, I can't help but agree with Margaret Thatcher, who once said: "I would not mind betting that if Mr. Gladstone were alive today he would apply to join the Conservative Party."

This means the Modernisation 2.0. Bright Blue has so eloquently set out. I believe the ongoing economic crisis of debt, structural deficits, cost of living and social mobility can still be our opportunity for a much more profound and unifying modernisation and renewal that unites social liberals with social conservatives around a new Progressive Alliance. As well as the divisions over issues like gay marriage, we have seen examples of how all wings of the party can unite around the most progressive measure of this Parliament: taking the lowest-paid out of income tax – achieving progressive ends through conservative means.

Seen through this lens, it quickly becomes apparent that economic modernisation is not just a potential election strategy, but a geopolitical necessity. I think it is no exaggeration to say that the financial crisis signaled the death-throes of the post-war model of growth, fuelled by ever-bigger Government and blind to the challenges from the emerging world. It was a historic wake up call for the UK economy. The Brownite con – fuelling a false boom through the steroids of debt and a wave of cheap migrant labour – was the last gasp of a broken economic model.

The most successful party can draw on our liberal and conservative families

It called first for a rescue, helping retain the confidence of the bond markets. But it also called for a new vision for the economy. Now, in the light of the worst financial crisis in a century and the certainty of further fiscal crises in decades to come, we can show in 2015 how our rescue operation has moved to a truly modernising view of a more innovative British economy fuelling a more mobile British society.

Progressive economic modernisation insists that you can have both innovation in economics and a politics of belonging – economic wings and social roots, in David Willetts' terms, the two great strands of Conservative thought – brought together, tackling the "hollowing out" of the British economy and society of which the Prime Minister spoke so powerfully in his leadership campaign.

The world faces huge structural challenges in the decades to come: in health, welfare, pensions and credit-addicted economies. Indeed, the challenges of the twenty-first century will be first and foremost economic. As the West slowly begins to lose absolute dominance in the race for resources, the global race for food, energy and medicine will intensify, something I spend my days tackling as the first ever Minister for Life Sciences at the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and the Department of Health.

As Bright Blue has pointed out, the Right always has to be reminded that the Left doesn't have the monopoly on optimism. Punching the Labour bruise on debt will be a vital element of a successful election strategy for 2015. But creating an Innovation Economy and Opportunity Society based on increased social mobility, productivity and competitiveness is the only way to put money in people's pockets and drive a really sustainable recovery, one of the central missions behind the 2020 Group of Conservatives I co-founded in 2010.

As the Prime Minister set out in his once-in-a-generation conference speech in September, it is only the Conservatives who have a vision for what Britain can look like in 2020 and beyond. An economy based on scientific discovery, innovation across the public and private sectors, world-beating infrastructure and a global outlook. It is both modernising and optimistic.

I am a Bright Blue MP because I believe, as the Prime Minister highlighted, that all wings of the Conservative Party can unite around a Progressive Politics which delivers #GrowthForAll in 2015. ●

Re-plastering the cracks in the North

Professor Tim Bale explains how the Tories need to start focussing on the North, and how electoral reform may be necessary



TIM BALE teaches politics at Queen Mary University of London and is the author and editor of three books on the Conservative Party

Quite what Lord Howell meant when he called the north – or at least the eastern half of it – “desolate”, we can’t be altogether sure. But if he’d been referring to a land largely denuded of Tory representation many would have agreed with him.

Yet there are, lest we forget, Conservative MPs who win seats there – some of them very big beasts indeed, William Hague and George Osborne being the stand-out examples. Their presence, and the characteristics of their constituencies, highlight the fact that the primary problem for the Tories in the north isn’t so much one of longitude and latitude as a failure to persuade people who live in its urban conurbations to even consider voting Conservative.

The party suffers from an even more severe “neighbourhood effect” in the north than Labour does in the south. In other words, even those people whose lifestyle, education and income would, if they lived south of London (or even Birmingham), very likely see them voting Conservative are much less likely to do so if they live instead in, say, Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield or Liverpool.

The problem is just as bad in local as it is in parliamentary elections. It also affects not only people’s propensity to vote Tory but their enthusiasm (or, more accurately, their *lack* of enthusiasm) for joining the party at the grassroots – one reason why the Conservative Party on the ground is, in large parts of the urban north, utterly moribund.

So what’s the solution? Some would say there isn’t one. Just as some businesses have to admit they’ve been beaten out of a particular market or are simply unable, despite their best efforts, to enter it, perhaps the Conservatives should just cut their losses, forget all about what looks like a fool’s errand, and concentrate instead on sweating their considerable electoral assets in the South?

The Conservatives are going to find it very difficult to win a convincing (or at least comfortable) overall majority unless they up their game (and their gains) in the north

That may be tempting but it would be a bad idea, and not just because it would undermine the party’s claim to represent the whole of the country. For one thing, what happened to the party in Scotland should serve as a dire warning to those who think that, even if things are unlikely to get better for the Tories in the north, they probably can’t get any worse. Well, they can and they will – unless something is done and done soon.

Although Labour’s difficulties in the South are serious, it can nevertheless win elections – as it showed in 2005 – without picking up many seats in the home and coastal counties of the South-East, primarily because there are plenty of Midlands marginals and because it has a lock on large parts of London. The Conservatives, on the other hand, are going to find it very difficult to win a convincing (or at least

comfortable) overall majority unless they up their game (and their gains) in the north.

The problem is that doing something about all this requires a long-term perspective from a bunch of people with short attention spans and even shorter time-horizons. Unless the party realises it will take as long to unwind what’s happened as it did to create the mess in the first place, then all the initiatives it tries – and there have been many over the years – will come to naught.

Of the recent suggestions on how to improve matters, there are at least a couple which may actually make a difference. One is George Osborne’s attempt to show he cares by talking about improving transport links: easy to sneer at but I suspect it stands at least a chance of beginning to thaw attitudes – as long, that is, as he eventually puts his money where his mouth is.

The other is more daring but is, I think, a nettle that simply has to be grasped. The party should embrace electoral reform – at least for local elections. People aren’t stupid. They understand that right now a vote for the Tories in many areas is a complete waste of time, so they simply don’t bother. Give them at least a slither of hope by introducing, say, the Single Transferable Vote, and they may gradually begin to feel they can make a difference. Once Tories can get elected in northern cities at a local level, then it raises the possibility that they can get elected to parliament too – even if only in the more affluent, suburban constituencies they used to represent.

All this will be a long, thankless, but hopefully not fruitless, task. Better start sooner rather than later – because later may be too late. ●

Time for an English parliament

John Redwood MP on why we need English Votes for English Laws, mirroring the Edinburgh model



JOHN REDWOOD is the MP for Wokingham and Chairman of the Conservative Economic Affairs Committee

When I asked who speaks for England in the Commons, I was asking about an injustice that has persisted since devolution was given to Scotland at the end of the last century.

Labour's "settlement" for the country was to give first class devolution to Scotland, second class to Wales and Northern Ireland, and nothing to England. It was never stable. The Scots decided to use their new Parliament to campaign for more powers and for independence, culminating in a referendum on whether they should leave the union altogether. England just had to watch, with no vote and no voice on the future of our once united country.

When a Labour MP asked how it could be fair that Scottish MPs could come to Westminster to speak and vote on English health, English schools and English criminal justice, but could not speak or vote on those matters for their own constituents, there was no answer. Labour tried to answer this devastating "West Lothian" question by offering devolution to English regions. They gave the people of the North East a referendum on the establishment of a devolved government for themselves. They chose the North East as an area of traditionally very strong Labour support, well away from London with a reputation for independence. They lost the vote 4 to 1 against. Regional government was dead, as it was probably even more unpopular elsewhere. Liverpool has no more wish to be governed from Manchester than Sunderland has from Newcastle.

Today the Westminster Parliament wishes to honour the pledges of the three main party leaders that more powers should be transferred to Scotland. This will include the right to decide how much income tax to levy. The passage of such a fundamental power to the Scottish Parliament means the problem of England (and of Wales and Northern Ireland) has to be settled at the same time. English voters will not accept the idea that Scottish Parliamentarians in Edinburgh will decide the Scottish income tax rate, whilst Scottish members of the UK Parliament will help settle England's income tax rate. Imagine the sense of injustice if a majority in the Union Parliament pushed a higher rate of income tax onto England when the majority of English MPs in the Westminster Parliament wanted a lower rate. Today's sense of unfairness in England over Scotland having no tuition fees for university and a better deal on care for the elderly would be magnified by differential tax rates.

People ask how will we define an English issue? That is simple. It will be defined by what is a Scottish issue. This is already defined, and such matters pass naturally to Edinburgh to handle

I propose that the Westminster Parliament moves immediately to English votes for English issues. Wales and Northern Ireland also need to say if they want full devolution to their Assemblies or some other arrangement

through the Union Parliament. This could be done as soon as Parliament assembles. Scottish MPs at Westminster could agree not to vote on English matters. We could pass a change to Standing Orders stopping MPs voting on devolved matters if they come from a part of the country where such a matter has been devolved. This would deal with the immediate injustice.

It will also mean, of course, that Ministers in English departments like Education and Health will need to command the majority of English MPs. In those rare Parliaments where a different party has a majority in England from the one with a majority in the Union as a whole, this will mean Ministers of different parties. It will be similar to Scotland, where a SNP government in Edinburgh has to work alongside a Labour or Coalition government in Westminster.

People ask how will we define an English issue? That is simple. It will be defined by what is a Scottish issue. This is already defined, and such matters pass naturally to Edinburgh to handle.

Some say you could not have different parties controlling Union departments and English departments. Why ever not? Again, it works in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales at the moment.

It is time to speak for England. As we willingly give more powers to Scotland, so we must willingly do the same for England. Devolution to smaller parts of England is not the answer. It has been rejected before. England will want a single rate of income tax, which may or may not be the same as the one Scotland chooses. Someone needs to speak and decide for England. ●

Britain after the referendum

Does the United Kingdom need constitutional reform?

Rupert Myers investigates



RUPERT MYERS is a barrister and writer who writes for a wide range of UK publications on politics and society

In a recent debate on the union, one of my fellow panelists spoke of the large number of “Yes” voters who had voted “regardless of the practical outcome.” During the campaign itself, I became convinced that there is an aspect to human nature that means that if a group of people are taken to the top of a cliff and told that in two years they will hold a referendum on whether to jump off, debate will eventually break out. They would begin with consensus, but the press, bored of reporting the same story about it being “madness” to jump would seek out voices of dissent. Opportunists would forge lucrative careers from their columns as contrarian pro-jump activists, and eventually some section of the population would grow sick of “experts” telling them what sort of a fall they can and cannot survive. It isn’t for elites to determine our fate, some would say, and you know what? They reckon they could make it. Come the vote, there would be some who would cast their ballot “regardless of the practical outcome.”

The danger for the United Kingdom is that the outcome of the Scottish referendum hasn’t been the dissipation of a populism untroubled by prosaic economic and political reality, but the growth of it. In Rochester and Strood, UKIP proudly displayed billboards assuring voters that only Mark Reckless could solve the traffic problem, suddenly empowered by leaving the party in government to join a group with – at the time of writing – one MP. This doesn’t matter to some voters,

not compelled by the cause and effect mentality with which those involved in politics often approach the psychology of the ballot box.

Populist parties provide an answer to the feeling many have that their vote does not matter. By turning the vote into a broader act of political expression, parties with distinct messages, from environmentalism to just being on the side of the working class provide a reason to go out on election day. In the post-referendum political landscape, there seems to be ever-growing unease with the main political parties, hampered as they are by the rise of separate political movements within the UK’s constituent parts.

The bias inherent in the way boundaries are currently drawn should be removed

For the main Westminster parties, the easier challenge is to meet the difficulty of forging an emotional – perhaps even tribal – reason to vote by ensuring that the both the messages and the political messengers themselves resonate with the electorate. The harder challenge is to evolve the political framework to ensure that voters in all parts of the UK see their vote working for them in a fair and transparent system. The bias inherent in the way boundaries are currently drawn should be removed. From English votes for English laws (EVEL) to an elected Senate, there are a host of modifications to be considered. I expect that Liberal Democrats go to bed and dream of little else besides new ways to alter the UK constitutional arrangement. An elected

upper chamber to replace what is now the second largest legislative assembly in world after the Chinese National People’s Congress, over-filled as it is with hereditary peers and party donors, might be part of how we restore the “cause and effect” of voting, or it might lead to US-style gridlock.

The Scottish Referendum reminds us that the law of unintended consequences applies treacherously to constitutional tinkering. Devolution wasn’t intended to produce a strong SNP government capable of taking Scotland to the brink of independence. It is unclear how the current government’s proposed Bill of Rights will apply outside of England & Wales, with the Scottish set to stick with the Europeans in the event that the Bill is considered incompatible with ECHR membership. Whilst parties hone arguments and select messengers capable of meeting the rise of populist politics, the longer project of constitutional reform to the United Kingdom needs thoughtful consideration. A Royal Commission into whether the UK now needs a written constitution would focus minds on a whole series of reforms currently being floated.

It cannot be left to political parties to campaign piecemeal on their own preferred political reforms, or our constitutional arrangement will grow increasingly more camel-like in appearance. When it comes to the changes being proposed, it is not just the voters, but the politicians proposing them who need to have serious regard to the practical outcomes, which have in the past proved themselves to be surprising. The future of the UK must therefore include slow, steady, cautious reform of our constitutional arrangement. ●

Patriotism and Wales

Being Welsh goes hand in hand with being British. **Stephen Crabb, MP** for Preseli Pembrokeshire and Secretary of State for Wales, explains why



STEPHEN CRABB is the MP for his home constituency of Preseli Pembrokeshire and Secretary of State for Wales

During the weekend of the Diamond Jubilee celebrations in 2012 a radio phone-in programme in Wales invited listeners to comment on whether they were surprised to see so many Union Jacks on display outside Welsh homes.

All across Wales the British flag was flying proud, very often alongside the red dragon. It seemed remarkable to some that such a comfortable expression of dual national pride could spontaneously be awakened in Wales in 2012 – even after more than a decade of devolution and the ‘nation-building’ project.

For people outside the narrow Welsh commentariat, the only thing remarkable about this debate was that it was happening at all.

For most people in Wales – so passionate and vocal about their Welsh national and cultural identity – there is no tension or discomfort at all with also feeling totally relaxed about being British. And at key moments that British identity surfaces without prompting.

In 2013 when Sam Warburton, the dynamic Welsh rugby captain (and also captain of the British & Irish Lions), told an interviewer that on the Lions tour to Australia he would describe his nationality as British, he sparked a political row. One Welsh nationalist MP said it was a disgrace for a Welsh captain to utter such a thing. Fortunately such mean-spirited attitudes are rare among the people of Wales whatever Plaid

Cymru politicians may say and do to suggest otherwise.

The fact is that this dual identity – which comes so naturally to many Welsh people – is perfectly consistent with the very essence of what Britain is.

Britain is a family of individual nations – proud in their own cultural and social distinctions – brought together by virtue of sharing the same islands for a thousand years, during which time conflict and struggle were replaced by cooperation and common cause. In an era when the modern European nation states were being born, Britain came together to form the most successful political and economic union the world has ever seen.

As one of the core of ancient celtic nations, Wales lays claim to some of the earliest roots of what Britain was and what Britain became. In fact the very idea of Britain belongs as much to the people of Scotland and Wales as it does to the people of England with whom it is more often associated. Without either Wales or Scotland, Britain becomes a hollowed-out and meaningless concept.

Beyond these deep cultural and historical antecedents, there are all the practical day-to-day factors of economic and social life that continue to bring the people of Wales and England closer together rather than act as a wedge of division.

Half of the Welsh population live within twenty five miles of the border between Wales and England. When it comes to daily patterns of work and leisure and usage of public services the border becomes, for many people, meaningless.

The vast Deeside Industrial Estate in Flintshire, for example, which

provides employment to thousands of Welsh and English people, is part of a highly integrated economic sub-region which straddles North West England and North East Wales. On the factory floor at Toyota, where Welsh and English engineers work side-by-side, there is plenty of national pride and competitiveness on display – but also huge pride in the British manufacturing success story this plant helps to represent.

Not without risks, and in Wales we started out on this road very cautiously, devolution has given political expression to this dual national identity. If done properly, devolution had the potential to offer the best of both worlds – satisfying the aspiration for a greater voice and control over each nation’s own affairs but offering also the security and strength that comes from being inside a strong political and economic union.

Far from serving as a platform for a stronger and more strident Welsh nationalism, as so many of us feared fifteen years ago, devolution has actually dampened this tendency within Welsh politics. The most recent opinion poll in Wales suggests that a record low of just 3% of Welsh people want to see an independent Wales.

But it would be a mistake to interpret this as a signal that Welsh voters are ambivalent about the identity of the parties and politicians they vote for. It has never been more important for the parties to have a specific Welsh identity to help demonstrate commitment to Wales and empathy with Welsh aspirations and needs. For those looking to understand the Welsh Conservative renaissance since 1997, this is a vital starting point. ●

Unionism in a time of devolution

Rethinking Britishness and Englishness.

By Michael Kenny



MICHAEL KENNY is an Associate Fellow at the IPPR, and the author of *The Politics of English Nationhood* (Oxford University Press, 2014)

Britishness was one of the major themes of the politics of the New Labour governments – from “Cool Britannia” to the Dome through to the efforts of Gordon Brown to champion a civic, multi-cultural British patriotism. Under the Coalition Britishness has been enunciated in a lower key, but it has resurfaced in the wake of the “Trojan Horse” affair.

What is most striking about this continuity of national discourse in high politics is how out of kilter it is with the shifting dynamics and patterns of national identity which have been gathering pace in Scotland and Wales, but also in England. In the case of the largest national community within the UK, there has been a major shift in the terms and focus of national consciousness since the early 1990s. More and more of the English have begun to identify with, and find meaning in, the imagined national community of England.

But while cultural practitioners, ordinary people and a growing number of commentators have been magnetically drawn to the practices and symbolism of England, these gathering currents have found few echoes in the language of mainstream politics. There, a fear of making concessions to narrow nationalism and a pervasive worry about the illiberal, “ethnic” nature of Englishness continue to reign.

Yet neither of these attitudes holds water. The predominantly civic caste of the nationalism that has prospered in Scotland is one illustration of the

inadequacy of this attitude. And there is no reason to think that Englishness could not be shaped and developed in a similar manner. Evidence suggests that more people from a diversity of social and ethnic backgrounds are inclined to feel patriotically proud about England as the place to which they belong, while my own research highlights the variety of different political ideas with which Englishness has become associated.

More and more of the English have begun to identify with, and find meaning in, the imagined national community of England

At the same time, it is also clear that English and British traditions and identities are indissolubly interwoven. This is a consequence of the manner in which the English have submerged themselves since the eighteenth century in a state-focused sense of British patriotism which served both to incorporate and obscure the English cultural lineage. But the latter has never disappeared entirely, surfacing again and again in the last century through the arguments and ideas of figures as disparate as Stanley Baldwin, John Betjeman and George Orwell – and most recently in the work of Roger Scruton. Rather tellingly, a drive to distinguish a more conscious boundary between what is English and what might be British has been a notable feature of the growing English self-consciousness of the last two decades.

Englishness is rising, but Britain and Britishness have not gone away. And the question of what kind of common identity and shared sentiments are going to unite us across our national differences is more important than ever. Yet it raises real difficulties for the two main political parties. Labour’s formerly expansive and confident sense of civic Britishness has shrunk back to a defence of the values associated with the UK-wide welfare state which it thinks remains a vulnerable issue for the Conservatives. But while the NHS remains a focus of popular affection, this stance is hardly likely to underpin the kind of ambitious, patriotic story which Ed Miliband once thought would allow him to reach across different electoral constituencies.

And the Conservatives are now going to have to face the challenge of articulating a new kind of unionism in the light of their commitment to a fairly radical form of income tax devolution in Scotland and their growing interest in “owning” the question of English devolution. How the party can speak to and for Britain when it appears more and more rooted in the experiences and outlooks of southern England is a major challenge – of both an existential and electoral kind.

The imperative to reboot Britishness matters greatly in a situation where profound devolutionist dynamics are in play and the question of what form of overarching patriotism can offer a commonality across the UK is pressing. Without some meaningful and popular expression of shared purpose, social values, and cultural inheritance, the underpinning solidarity which a looser union would require could wither on the vine. ●

London and Britain: necessary partners

Alexandra Jones tells us why London and the rest of the nation need each other



ALEXANDRA JONES is the CEO of Centre for Cities

Tension between a dominant London and other parts of the UK goes back centuries. William Cobbett, champion of rural England, wrote in his 1830 work *Rural Rides*: “But, what is to be the fate of the great wen of all? The monster, called, by the silly coxcombs of the press, ‘the metropolis of the empire?’”

Fast-forward a century, and in 1940, a report by the Royal Commission on the Distribution of the Industrial Population said: “London acts as a continual drain on the rest of the country both for industry and population, and much evidence points to the fact that it is already too large.”

Debate about whether London’s global success is a boon for the whole UK has become increasingly polarised since the financial crisis, blamed by many on the excesses of bankers in London and other centres. The capital’s economy got off relatively lightly in the recession and has recovered faster than most of the rest of the country.

Some complain that London sucks the life out of the UK, while others say the rest of the nation is a drain on its buoyant capital. There is even wild talk of London becoming an independent “city state”.

Such polarisation is unhealthy. While the economic gap between London and other cities has been widening, they are dependent upon one another far more than people appreciate. Both need more power and better funding to thrive – and with heightened interest in UK devolution since Scotland’s

independence referendum, there may now be a realistic chance of achieving it.

The widening economic gap does make it hard to get people to see how London’s growth benefits everyone. In 1997, London and the south-east accounted for 35 per cent of the British economy; it increased to 38 per cent by 2012. And as our Cities Outlook 2014 demonstrated, London accounted for the vast majority of private sector job creation between 2010 and 2012 as the country emerged from recession.

The widening economic gap does make it hard to get people to see how London’s growth benefits everyone. In 1997, London and the south-east accounted for 35 per cent of the British economy; it increased to 38 per cent by 2012

For people outside London, it can be difficult to see how or why they benefit from government’s big investments there, such as Crossrail or Tech City.

According to a recent YouGov poll commissioned by Centre for Cities and Centre for London, 66 per cent of adults outside London think the capital has a positive impact on the national economy). But only 24 per cent think London has a positive effect on their local economy – which drops to single figures in some northern cities such as Hull (8 per cent), Sheffield (8 per cent) and Liverpool (9 per cent).

The truth is a stronger London does indeed benefit the economy. Cities thrive through connections between them: those outside London benefit via

business contracts from the capital, jobs created by London-based businesses and by London’s tax revenue surplus being distributed as public spending – although other cities pay a price in talented young people leaving for the capital. London’s success depends on attracting business, people and money from other parts of the country.

The problem is not that London performs too well, but that other cities do not perform to their potential – which is holding back the national economy. As the City Growth Commission chaired by former Goldman Sachs economist Jim O’Neill noted, raising output in the 14 largest “metros” or city regions outside London to the UK average could boost the economy by £79bn a year by 2030, or about 5 per cent of gross domestic product.

London and other cities share one big problem: a pitiful lack of powers compared to their international counterparts. The UK remains one of the most centralised developed countries in the world: in 2009 local government raised just 17 per cent of its income from local taxation compared with the OECD average of 55 per cent, leaving cities with few levers to pull to meet their specific requirements.

Sensibly, they are making common cause. Last autumn Boris Johnson, London’s mayor, joined forces with the Core Cities group of large cities outside the capital to press for control of the revenues from all property taxes, such as stamp duty, council tax and business rates.

Cities need to work together, fill the leadership gap that the public perceives in national politics, and demonstrate that local flexibility can lead to better outcomes. ●

Reclaiming Britishness from the Far-Right

Vidhya Ramalingam tells us how we can create an inclusive Britishness



VIDHYA RAMALINGAM is Research and Policy Manager at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue – she oversees Far-Right Extremism and Intolerance

A number of critical moments have shifted the political and media narratives on national identity in Britain in the past few years. In 2014, the lifting of EU labour market restrictions, the European Parliament elections, and the Scottish referendum all raised hotly debated questions about the settlement of European migrants and about British identity. In addition, international conflicts and British foreign policy – from Gaza to Syria – have resonated in local communities, and concerns surrounding the travel of British citizens to Syria and Iraq to fight for Islamic State have raised questions about the resilience of belonging in Britain. Under the guise of nationalism the far right has been quick to pick on the issues that divide Britain, rather than those that unite the country.

Far-right movements, whether street-based or political, are particularly adept at mobilising support during times of local or national trauma. One need not look further than the English Defence League’s campaigns around support for British troops following the murder of drummer Lee Rigby in Woolwich in May 2013; or the public demonstrations by Britain First across the country following the discovery of child grooming gangs. They find success not only by rallying around what Britishness is not, but around simplistic visions of what Britishness is – a mix of poppies, Union Jacks, and quotes by British heroes like Winston Churchill.

The challenge for those seeking to reclaim Britishness from the far right

is that a shared British identity is most clearly understood when defined in the negative. In other words, it is much easier to identify signs of failure (e.g. crime, anti-social behaviour, terrorism). Research following the 2011 riots indicated a sense of marginalisation among the rioters, with less than half feeling “part of British society”, as compared with 92 percent of the population as a whole. Research on motivations to join extremist movements has consistently shown that those who are most vulnerable to these groups are often lacking a sense of belonging. There is thus a clear sense of what failure to identify with Britishness looks like, but not success.

Initiatives to reclaim and promote Britishness must be tailored around individual experiences, and involve active roles for people to shape what Britishness means to them

There has been a recent focus in Britain on citizenship tests and ceremonies for new immigrants and ethnic minorities focusing on British values and on loyalty to the nation. National surveys have repeatedly shown the characteristics the general public believes constitute being “truly British.” However, Britishness is simply a word. Debates on what constitutes Britishness – and publicly reasserting the values underpinning British identity – can distract from what Britishness looks like in practice: shared values and common ground between citizens.

Political rhetoric and promotion of national celebrations alone will not be sufficient to build common ground. Indeed, research following the Queen’s Jubilee and the Olympics showed no growth in public identification with Britishness as a result of the events. Identities are not simply constructed by political rhetoric, but by daily experiences. Initiatives to reclaim and promote Britishness must be tailored around individual experiences and involve active roles for people to shape what Britishness means to them.

Britishness can be most effectively reclaimed from the far right by initiatives led at the local level – from the bottom up. Local and regional authorities can be instrumental in building a city or regional sense of belonging which citizens can buy into precisely because it is tailored to their local experience. This will need to begin with initiatives to rebuild and restore trust in local institutions. When people trust their local institutions they are more likely to feel that they belong and that they can influence decisions locally.

A shared sense of belonging is most thrown into disorder during local or national traumas, including riots, organised crime, and even far right demonstrations. In places like Luton and Rochdale, local councils and police have piloted innovative methods of involving the community in dialogue and mediation and promoting a sense of unity following divisive local events. Rapid response mechanisms at the local level can ensure communities remain tied together and not driven apart at such times. Britishness will be best reclaimed at the local level, where people can experience Britishness in action. ●

The great generational divide

Dr Robert Ford analyses the outlook of different generations and examines how this is affecting political parties



DR ROBERT FORD is Senior Lecturer in Politics in the School of Social Sciences at the University of Manchester

These are turbulent times in British politics – support for UKIP has been surging for several years, with record breaking results in local and European elections and a huge by-election win in Clacton, Rochester and Strood. Now the Greens are on the rise as well, overtaking the Liberal Democrats and threatening to add further confusion

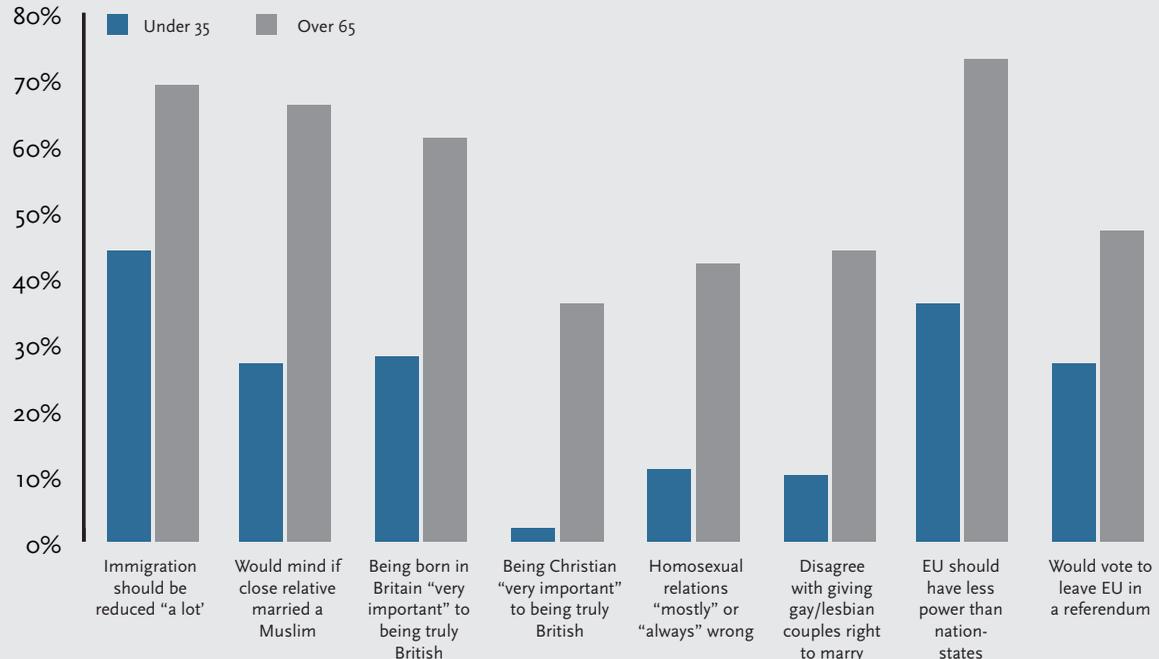
to the most fragmented and chaotic election in recent British political history. The surge in support for UKIP and the Greens are two very different expressions of the same fundamental shift – the growing political importance of the value differences which divide the nation's old and young.

Figure 1 shows how this generational divide plays out across a range of issues. Britain's young have grown up in a diverse, secular, socially liberal and outward looking society, and their values reflect this. The under 35s are

comfortable with diversity, accept high immigration and reject interpretations of Britishness which exclude the foreign born or non-Christian. The young want a Britain at the heart of Europe, supporting the EU, which they would vote for by a two to one margin in a referendum.

Britain's pensioners are a world apart from their grandchildren on all of these issues. They grew up in a socially homogenous country, where differences in language, dress or religion were rare, and where migrants were people who

Figure 1: Value divides between old and young



Source: British Social Attitudes Survey 2013



Source: xlflickr

came from the next county, not the other side of the world. They find the dramatic shifts of the past fifty years unsettling, as the country they knew has transformed into something they struggle to recognise or accept. These older voters still hold to the traditional sense of Britishness, one which does not easily accommodate newcomers from abroad or differences in religion. British pensioners find ethnic and religious difference unsettling and are much more ambivalent about gay rights (though most do support these). British pensioners, who grew up in a Britain which looked to the Commonwealth rather than to Brussels, are profoundly sceptical of the European Union – they want its powers reduced, and if this is not possible, they want to leave.

The generational divide has many sources including differences in social and economic experiences growing up,

the rapid expansion of higher education, the long running trends towards secularism and social liberalism found in most developed democracies, among others. It also has deep roots – many of these divisions between young and old have been visible in social survey data for decades. But three key changes have mobilised it into the heart of politics.

Firstly, the traditional divides of class and ideology which defined “left” and “right” in Britain have lost the force they once had. Politicians in all the mainstream parties have converged on a consensus on the big issues of free markets and public services, creating space for other arguments to move to the fore. Secondly, arguments over immigration and Europe have persisted for over a decade, eroding voters’ faith in the traditional parties’ solutions to these problems. Thirdly, the mainstream parties themselves are

now dominated by younger university graduates who may differ on some elements of the value divide (particularly the EU) but who tend to share the socially liberal, outward looking world view of the rising young.

UKIP have established themselves as a major player in the political system by becoming the voice of the grey end in this value divide. Almost all of UKIP’s positions – from immigration restriction to Euroscepticism, from grammar schools to law and order – reflect the world view of the grey voter. The Greens and, to some extent, the SNP are looking to mobilise the other pole into politics – cosmopolitan, Europhile, pro-immigration, and liberal.

Both mainstream parties have struggled to respond to this new division because both have traditionally built political coalitions across generations. They are now hamstrung in trying >>

What Britain means to me

Britishness is difficult to define as it is an evolving concept. Paul Uppal MP describes his experiences as a British Sikh



PAUL UPPAL is the MP for Wolverhampton South West, and is a member of the Number 10 Policy Board

What is Britain and what has it come to represent? For me British culture is not static, it never has been and never will be. Our culture is forever evolving, and it is important we embrace this. We should remain a tolerant and respectful nation welcoming people from across the globe who will enrich the culture of our beloved nation.

If we see Britain through halcyon glasses we lose one of the best qualities of our nation – our culture and values are forever evolving and we cannot stop that progress, rather we should embrace it. Not to do so would be counterintuitive – Britishness is not something we should be longing to return to but helping to shape.

The importance placed on our multicultural society is part of what Britishness means to me. We have many people of different races, religions, and nationalities living here, diversifying our nation. Whilst we have many cultures living side by side, I believe we have a very strong British culture that is embraced by many. I am a product of this successful multiculturalism, proud to have a forename of Christian origin and a surname of Sikh origin. I am a Sikh, of East African descent, brought

up in Smethwick – but none of this hinders me from identifying myself with this country or describing myself as British.

For me Britain is epitomised by the collaboration of communities at a time of need. It happened to my maternal grandfather in India and now I witness it here. I am especially proud of how the trustees of the Sri Guru Teg Bahadur Ji Sikh temple in Wolverhampton donated £5,000 to the development of the atrium at Springdale Methodist Church and Community Centre. This shows that it does not need Parliament to pass any laws to get people to support each other and in doing so to celebrate their Britishness.

After I was selected to fight Wolverhampton, I spoke to Enoch's widow Pam Powell about what drove him to make his infamous speech at the Midland Hotel – a speech that is embedded into the fabric of British political discourse. Was it about power, was he raising his genuine concerns or was he following Peter Griffiths who fought the Smethwick by-election some 50 years earlier? My reading of it was that he feared communalism after the partition of India where families and communities were ripped apart. When there is a perception of division in any community then that will be exploited. What he saw was Indian and Pakistani nationals pitted against each other. He

feared that when these migrants came to Britain these same nationalistic tendencies would continue.

Thankfully, in the main, these fears have not come to fruition. I think a positive consequence of Enoch Powell's "Rivers of Blood" speech was to put the focus of multiculturalism on Wolverhampton and the West Midlands in particular. Subsequently, I feel all community groups have made a conscious effort to be involved in an exchange of shared values. I think the reality today is that Wolverhampton can be held up as an example of British multiculturalism at its best, with all ethnic groups harmoniously co-operating under a group British identity.

The Britain that I know now, that which my children know, is different to the Britain that I grew up in during the 70s. Routinely I was told on my journey to school that I should go home. It soon dawned on me that "home" referred to the Indian Subcontinent and not the terraced house a few yards down the road. Equally perplexing was the accusation that the lifestyle I was leading was essentially foreign and alien despite the fact it embraced many British values. Even against this backdrop of rejection, I've learnt to take the best of both worlds, defining myself as British first and foremost but intertwined with traditional Indian values. ●

>> to compete with the insurgents, as any appeal to one side of the generational divide risks alienating the other. A full throated Conservative appeal to UKIP voters may bring short term gain but would be a long term disaster,

alienating the ethnically diverse, cosmopolitan rising electorate who the party must win if it is to have a future fifteen years from now. Similarly, Labour may be tempted to embrace the cosmopolitan young agenda, and see off

the Green challenge, but they know doing so could put at risk the many Labour seats, like Heywood and Middleton, where the party relies on greying Old Labour voters for victory. ●

Them and us no more

Sunder Katwala explains how we must stop seeing immigration through a “them” and “us” lens for it to work



SUNDER KATWALA is
Director of British Future

“There are too many of them.” “They’re taking our stuff.” “They’re not like us – and they don’t want to be.” “We’re not even allowed to talk about it – or we get called racist”.

The populist case against difference – whether it is about immigration, ethnic minority citizens or Muslims and minority faiths – revolves around this “them and us” narrative, linking themes of numbers, resources and cultural identity with the charge of an elite metropolitan conspiracy to sweep it all under the carpet. In this populist account, the relationship of immigration to Britishness is simply one of threat: from the fear of being “swamped” to the existential threat long ago posed by Enoch Powell, where every new Commonwealth migrant was just one more stick on the funeral pyre of a nation. Any mainstream party which seeks to govern Britain today needs to challenge such existential pessimism about the society we now are.

Yet, when seeking to counter this “them and us” populism, liberal modernisers often make several avoidable mistakes.

The “let’s celebrate difference” response to concerns about culture – that diversity has made us more vibrant and interesting – and the “net contribution” response on resources – “actually, I think you’ll find they pay more into the pot than they take out” – have something in common. However benignly intentioned, arguments that “they are good for us” remain stories

of “them and us”. People may well naturally respond “but what about us?” A more successful approach would ask instead “how do we make the ‘new us’ work”?

The good news is that there is very broad agreement on the fair deal that Britain should offer to migrants who want to join the club. You don’t have to be born here to fully belong to Britain. We can think of extraordinary examples, from Mo Farah to Prince Phillip. Many of us will think first of one of millions of stories rather closer to home, such as those of my mum and dad, who came from Ireland and India to work for the NHS.

There are some things that we should expect. Integration works when people learn English, play by the rules and seek to contribute positively – as long as we all accept that people who join our society get to be fully and equally part of it

But there are some things that we should expect. Integration works when people learn English, play by the rules and seek to contribute positively – as long as we all accept that people who join our society get to be fully and equally part of it, which means fair opportunities and no discrimination against them or their children. British Future’s research finds people support this fair deal on integration by 83% to 3% – including over 90% of Ukip voters. Strikingly, by two to one, we

prefer migrants to settle and become British than to return home after a few years.

Yet this shared sense of the “new us” should never be a question for migrants or ethnic minority citizens alone. It has to be about all of us – and the responsibilities we share, as citizens, if we want a shared society, not a divided one. If we want a democratic and liberal society, what legitimate demands does our common citizenship make of us all? One weakness of post-war multiculturalism was that, although it gave non-white Britons a strong sense of their claim to British identity, it always remained a question for ‘them’, of minorities, for minorities and about minorities, for most people.

There is a tendency to mock immigration concerns in places like Clacton or Norfolk, if they have comparatively low levels of immigration. Yet cultural change in Britain has an important impact on people’s sense of belonging everywhere. The evidence that personal contact often has a positive impact on people’s perceptions of immigrants explains why a sense of dislocation may be felt most by those who see and feel rapid population changes a few miles up the road, without experiencing the personal contact which often mitigates that. If we rightly note that identity matters, to migrants and minorities, then surely we need to acknowledge that it matters to majorities too. Britain’s history of integration has often been one of migrants finding a confidence about their place in the society they have chosen to join. Our future as an inclusive and welcoming society requires a sense of the ‘new us’ which resonates for new and old Britons alike. ●

The Bright Blue dictionary of Britishness

We asked our contributors for their definition of Britishness. Here's what they told us:



“Love of our history. Suspicion of ideology. Openness to innovation.”

George Freeman MP



“Being part of an ancient, quirky but highly successful family of nations.”

Stephen Crabb MP



“Not wanting – or being able – to define exactly what Britishness is.”

Professor Tim Bale



“Britishness is good humour, compassion for all and a healthy disdain of earnestness.”

Ross Cypher-Burley



“Generally confused about identity, but tolerant of that.”

Will Emkes



“Rarely seen for long enough in good light to define.”

Emran Mian



“Aspiring to tolerance, mutual respect, freedom and weather resistance.”

Damian Green MP



“Britishness consists largely in discomfort with the idea of Britishness.”

Professor Michael Hand

Daniel Hannan: To define Britain, look to its institutions

Daniel Hannan MEP talks to James Brenton about British values and anglosphere exceptionalism



DANIEL HANNAN is a Member of the European Parliament and the author of *How We Invented Freedom & Why It Matters* (*Head of Zeus*, 2013).

Immediately upon sitting down with Daniel Hannan, the thoughtful Member of the European Parliament and prominent eurosceptic, he begins to explain his current project: a plan to erect a new landmark at Runnymede, where Magna Carta was signed almost exactly 800 years ago. It was an unabashedly patriotic introduction that set the tone for the interview to follow. The transcript below has been edited.

You've previously criticised certain British institutions, such as the NHS, that others would consider inseparable from British life. What would you say are Britain's essential institutions?

"My criticism of the NHS is simply that we could be doing better. I mean on most metrics, we are lagging behind most other comparable developed countries. It's not the worst system in the world, but if you look at, let's say, the OECD countries, this is a bad place to get cancer, heart attack, stroke. We are not at the bottom, but low in most categories, and we could be doing a lot better. Nobody else would dream of copying our system. That seems to me a sad state of affairs, though I'm realistic enough to accept that that is where the public is.

There is nothing wrong with defining your nation through institutions. Gordon Brown used to say "values". Because he was so ludicrously oversensitive to the charge of not being English, he used to go on and on about "British values", "our values". When he was called on to define them, he would say "fairness", "tolerance." Fine. Great. And they are presumably also the values of Ecuador and Finland. How does that define Britishness?

The truth is, to some extent a nation's identity does reside in its institutions. And I would allow that the NHS is one of them. But also counties, army regiments, universities, parliament, Inns of Court, all of the things actually, weirdly, that Gordon Brown was kicking away while saying this. Institutions build up an organic existence, an accretion of legitimacy, generation by generation. They become then, intertwined with values, inseparable from them. The values and the institutions become

the peculiarity of the country. I think that a huge thing in shaping the British outlook is our legal system, the presumption of legality, of residual rights. The idea that you don't have to apply for a license to do things, which is still a huge, huge cultural difference between us and a lot of Europe. The peculiar emphasis, which again comes in law as well as in custom, on the individual rather than the family. The individual rather than the collective of any kind. The individual rather than the state. These are values that foreigners recognise and through the centuries have written about as peculiar characteristics of ours and they're tied up in our institutions. If you mixed up a British and an Italian baby in the maternity ward, they would grow up with the values of their adopted place, because we're all shaped by the values of our institutions."

If you're skeptical of a values-based definition of Britishness, can there be any merit in teaching British values in the classroom?

"I'm a big fan of teaching British history in the classroom, and I think that is what will instill values and habituate people, wherever their parents were born, in a collective consciousness. There is something slightly, kind of, third-worldy about teaching patriotism. If you have as good a story as we have to tell, with all of our faults, with all our crimes broad blown and flush as May, we still have a better story to tell than most. We got the big calls right. We ended slavery. The number of countries that were on the right side in the two world wars and in the cold war is a short list, but it does contain the Anglosphere. It's not a bad story to tell compared to other people, with all the pluses and minuses.

Just telling that story will instill good values in people, it will hold up examples of what you can do and it will automatically teach people that Britain is not just a random collection of individuals born to a different random collection of individuals, but wherever their grandparents were from, they are now heirs to this collective inheritance."

Your most recent book is titled “How We Invented Freedom & Why It Matters.” Taking part of the subtitle for the US edition as a summary of the thesis, you argue that “the English-speaking peoples made the modern world”. Isn’t that an oversimplification, and ignoring many influences from Europe and elsewhere? For example, Germany’s history of religious toleration, or Switzerland’s direct democracy, which you’ve elsewhere claimed to admire.

“I’ve never claimed that Britain invented democracy. The Athenians were casting different coloured stones into voting urns when the remote fathers of the English were still grubbing around with pigs in the cold soil of northern Germany. Nor do I contend that we invented the law. I mean, there were Sumerian law codes, Egyptian law codes, Assyrian law codes, even before Moses came down from Sinai there were law codes. What we invented was constitutional freedom, the idea that parliament is a guarantor of property and liberty, rather than simply an instrument of majority rule. This makes us very different from the continental tradition, which is much more statist, and in practical terms has been much more brutal because it’s based on the kind of ideas that derive from Rousseau of the general rule of the people rather than the Lockean idea of the compact among individuals and of contingent legitimacy bestowed on the state by individuals.

Scotland has been voting Labour for longer than anyone can remember. The referendum made everyone go back to first principles

At no time in the 20th century was there any popular support in any anglosphere country for fascism or communism. Of how many countries in the western tradition can that be said? Again, I don’t see how you can divorce that from our institutions, because the legal and political structure habituated people in a particular attitude. It made them much less ready to accept state authority than in France, Italy, Germany, or Poland.

There were two things that distinguished anglosphere culture early: one, the elevation of the law above the state, Magna Carta, etc., and, two, the elevation of the individual above the collective. And those two things are linked.”

You mentioned recently in your blog for the *Telegraph* that the current conversation about devolution after the Scottish referendum will “change everything”. For the better, or for the worse?

“For the better. The referendum in Scotland was an exceptional example of the Lockean original compact in action. In how many countries in the world are people free to decide by a bal-



Source: Charles Clegg

lot whether to walk away or whether to stay? In some, but not in many. Not even in the US, certainly not in France, Spain or Italy. Because the state is more than a contract among the individuals that comprise it in those places. It was a lovely, timely reminder of the anglosphere conception of government, which is ‘we agree to this, and we aren’t bound forever by a decision that our ancestors made.’

It’s also great that, in Scotland, it has made people rethink their politics from first principles. I wish people would do that more often. Nothing is more corrupting for a political party than taking its voters for granted. Scotland has been voting Labour for longer than anyone can remember, and people didn’t stop and think about it. It was just what you did. The referendum made everyone go back to first principles, because for the first time everyone was talking politics. Everyone was registered to vote. And, I think a number of people have been saying to themselves, ‘you know what, I have been voting Labour all my life, so has everyone else, and look at the state of this place!’ It’s great. I wish that would happen more often.”

The subject of this edition of *The Progressive Conscience* is British Identity. How would you define “Britishness”?

“I would define it by our national characteristics. Understated. Calm in a crisis. Not making a fuss while behaving exceptionally. Those are anglosphere characteristics, they’re not just UK ones. If you were trying to define Britishness in a way that was different from New Zealand-ishness, you would be hard pushed.” ●

Is Britain still Great?

Peter Hitchens and Ryan Shorthouse discuss



PETER HITCHENS is a journalist, broadcaster and author who currently writes a weekly column for the Mail on Sunday



RYAN SHORTHOUSE is the Director of Bright Blue

Dear Peter,

As conservatives, we believe in the importance of patriotism in helping to forge a national culture underpinned by secular law that can mitigate social division.

We should and can be proud of modern Britain. Look at the people who want to be part of it. The Scots recently voted decisively to stay part of this great nation. Hundreds and thousands of immigrants come to this island each year to contribute to and enjoy British life. The overwhelming majority are enthusiasts for, and enrich, British institutions and values.

Economically and socially, Britain is a better place to live than some decades ago. Though there are of course problems among some, our citizens are generally better educated, healthier and more tolerant. They experience lower crime rates, higher living standards and more opportunities. The evidence shows that people prioritise and support family and community life just as much as in the past. A major contributor to these successes has been the implementation of policies based on conservative insights and principles: supporting civic engagement, competitive markets, low taxation and public service reform, for example. Without doubt, today, you're lucky to be a British citizen.

Best,
Ryan

Dear Ryan,

In a free country it is surely odd to suggest that anyone "should" be proud of anything. Pride is in any case a sin, and famously comes before a fall. Shouldn't we rather be free to choose what to approve of, and what to criticise? As a conservative, I believe above all in the Christian religion and in man's need to subject himself to divine law. Nations are simply the largest societies in which it is possible to be effectively unselfish, beginning with the voluntary acceptance of the primacy of law over power, wealth and force.

I have very little idea of why individual migrants come here as I've seen no reliable research on the subject. They must have many different reasons. I have no way of knowing whether they do so because they admire our traditions of liberty under the law, or whether it is because they quite reasonably appreciate the ordered prosperity which has in the past been the result of those traditions. Since our own governments have for many

years been (to put it mildly) careless about liberty and law, and have openly switched their allegiance to revolutionary concepts of "rights" and "equality", migrants who come here because they admire our traditions may have made a bad mistake. Even the modern concept of the "citizen" is alien to our history (I was born a British subject, and would prefer to have remained one).

Our relatively good living standards are not a permanent feature of our lives, but a temporary consequence of circumstances which seem to me to be coming to an end. The "insights and principles" you list appear to me to be liberal and materialistic, not conservative. Finally, if you believe that crime rates are genuinely lower, then you will believe anything. These figures have been shown over the past year to be wholly unreliable. The Scottish vote to remain in the UK was far from "decisive", and I would be surprised if it is not held again, with a different result, within 20 years.

*Yours sincerely,
Peter Hitchens*

Dear Peter,

I do not regard national pride as sinful. Rather, I see it as an essential ingredient for achieving two key social goals. First, for enabling a civilized and constructive political system that does not collapse as a result of the existence of socio-economic, ethnic or religious differences. Second, for building and improving institutions that protect and enhance the lives of fellow citizens, especially the vulnerable.

In fact, I believe national pride can be a manifestation of a critical part of conservative thinking. Namely, that real freedom and value emerge when we look out from the self, and become responsible for, respect and love others. Incidentally, another element of conservative thinking – personal responsibility – does actually draw on the liberal tradition: as you have just argued, freedom of expression and the legal protection of individual liberty are essential.

Our nation state is not "simply" like any other nation state, able to protect people from abusive power, both domestically and internationally. This nation is unique, in its history, values and institutions.

And, on the whole, I believe it is a rather good place to live. For a start, your ability to express and practice your Christianity would, to put it mildly, be very difficult in many

other nations across the globe. Your writing elsewhere suggests the contrary – that immigration, the decline of religious practice, the EU, our divorce laws, to name a few, are eroding our way of life. But I've provided evidence to suggest British identity and experience has strengthened and improved for most people. Yes, such progress is not inevitable. It will continue to depend on the goodness, ingenuity and industriousness of our people.

Best wishes,
Ryan

Our 'socio-economic system' has not yet collapsed. There is, as Adam Smith said, a lot of ruin in a nation. But it is in severe decline

Dear Ryan,

You miss half my point. I objected mainly to being told that I was under any obligation to have positive feelings about my country. The very idea seems totalitarian to me. A properly self-confident country would be content to contain any number of critics who both loved their country and thought it was in (as it is) a rather poor and worsening state.

Our "socio-economic system" has not yet collapsed. There is, as Adam Smith said, a lot of ruin in a nation. But it is in severe decline, living on a more prosperous and stable past, our current levels of public and private debt are unsustainable, as is our negative trade balance with the world. This doesn't have to end with some sort of Hollywood apocalypse. A more likely end would be a gradual fraying of morals and obligations, trust, standards and law; this might be combined with a sustained fall in real wages, a threadbare welfare state which is both increasingly unaffordable and increasingly unable to meet its obligations. Our institutions – whether you include Parliament, the schools and universities, the media, the police or the civil service, have never been so weak. "Pride", in such circumstances, would be a complacent mistake.

*This nation *was* unique. But it has consciously decided to cease to be so. We became a debtor instead of a creditor nation in 1916, and have been ever since. Our particular form of Protestant Christianity (the basis of our uniqueness above all things) has effectively ceased to exist. The tradition of limited government dating back to Magna Carta, and reinforced by the Bill of Rights, has been superseded by a Jacobin doctrine of "Human Rights", which turns freedom into the conditional gift of the state rather than man's birth-right. We have lost or given up our independence in foreign policy and in many domestic policies, notably all those now governed by the EU. My ability to express and practise my Christianity is increasingly*

constrained by the doctrine of Equality and Diversity, which (through the Equality Act, itself an EU directive) specifically displaced Christianity as the basic doctrine of this country, and relegated it to the same level as all other religions.

Christian adoption societies have already been driven out of existence. Christian marriage has been relegated from the standard to a lifestyle choice (and may be further limited). Christianity is increasingly side-lined in schools. I could, as you well know, go on. It is the last refuge of a bad argument to say that it could be worse elsewhere. Of course it could. Then the point is that it was better here, and is now worse, through our own choice.

Does "personal responsibility" draw on the liberal tradition? I rather though it drew on the Christian tradition. In any case, our society doesn't believe in it, especially in criminal justice.

I do not know what "progress" is, nor do I seek it. Its use seems to me to be an attempt to portray all change as good. Human history, especially the astonishingly cruel and bloody 20th century, suggests that there is no such thing. The conservative idea is surely that change should be judged on its merits, and rejected if needless or unwelcome.

Yours sincerely,
Peter

Dear Peter,

I'm afraid the anger you have about the state of our nation is not supported by facts. The following evidence may help you with understanding progress.

Death rates – especially child mortality and from infectious diseases – have plummeted: from over 20 per 1,000 of the population per year in the middle of the nineteenth century to fewer than 10 per 1,000 per year at the start of the twenty-first century. Life expectancy continues to rise.

The average period spent in school and literacy rates have risen dramatically since the mid twentieth century with more young people now getting the necessary grades to partake in the modern labour market.

As Dr Max Roser from Oxford University has shown, average food intake has risen, levels of malnourishment and hunger are down, air and river quality have improved. The cost of most essential and luxury goods – electricity, gas, food, cars, holidays, computers – have fallen since the mid twentieth century.

GDP per capita – the average prosperity of each member of our nation – has risen since the mid twentieth century, and is higher now than all Europe apart from Germany. Lord Matthew Ridley, author of *The Rational Optimist*, has the evidence to demonstrate how reported well-being has actually improved as prosperity levels have.

Even since the recession, we have seen economic growth return, rising fastest compared to the rest of the developed world, and unemployment – especially youth unemployment – falling dramatically. Our levels of volunteering and

charitable giving have also increased, and are higher than previous generations.

Evidently, Britain is not a nation in decline. Most of our citizens enjoy a higher quality of life than previous generations. You talked about institutional decline. Let's look at the facts in three examples you cite. First, the Church. A majority of Britons still say there are Christian. And faith schools, especially Church of England or Catholic schools, have risen in recent years. Second, universities. Four of the world's top ten universities are in the UK; we are the country that takes the second highest proportion of international students, illustrating their prestigious reputation. Third, Parliament. Our political system is more representative of our national population than in the past; MPs are more accessible and work harder, 69 hours a week according to Hansard. Abuse exists; but it is a small proportion of parliamentarians. In the past five years, as the OECD shows, trust in our government has actually increased. I am not blind to the fact that there are still major problems. Our public and private debt is still higher than it should be, you are right. Poverty remains stubbornly high. Inequality has risen. Productivity is falling. Extremist ideologies still warp the minds of too many young people.

But it is on our hands to change these problems. For example, you mentioned the welfare state: well, the evidence suggests that the reforms this coalition government have made have reduced long-term unemployment and the size of the welfare budget.

Problems have been solved in the past through good policymaking, social action and effective leadership. They will be again, drawing on the talent and tenacity of Britons – scientists, teachers and, yes, even politicians. To say Britain is a mess is an insult to the people who work hard day in and day out to make sure Britain isn't, and won't be. I passionately believe we ought to respect what our ancestors have built, have a sense of perspective, and consider ourselves lucky to be British.

Thank you for the exchange.

Best wishes,
Ryan

To say Britain is a mess is an insult to the people who work hard day in and day out to make sure Britain isn't, and won't be

Dear Ryan,

Some facts are not the whole truth. Material gain, though welcome, is not enough and in any case may not endure if the civilisation which provides it lacks the moral will to sustain it. We cannot continue forever to live on the legacy of Victorian and Edwardian engineering genius. We live, in terms of wealth, institutions, public health and infrastructure, on the legacy of generations before us who deferred gratification for

the greater good. They built so well that 50 years of increasing greed, self-indulgence and ignorance have not yet destroyed everything they put in place. But that is no reason to suppose that the legacy of our forebears will last forever, while we spend and spend and spend.

The difference between us is also perhaps that I am not a materialist, and regard such things as inadequate measures of a nation's health. "Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey, where wealth accumulates and men decay".

Child mortality continues to fall as it has for many decades (the rate fell from 140 per thousand births to 20 per thousand in the period 1900–1965, and the decline since, though welcome, has been small by comparison). But if one included the 180,000 healthy unborn babies, slaughtered each year in legal abortions, as part of the infant mortality figures, they would have been rising since the early 1970s. Similar terrible things have been happening to marriage, increasingly a disposable lifestyle option. It has in fact been rather a rough time for children, who have taken second place to adult selfishness on a scale not seen since the 19th century.

Would you rather be born, or violently killed before you were born? Which would you rather have in every home – a flat-screen TV, or a father? Under your formula, the increase in material goods is all you need to examine. But this is not so under mine. A people which forgets the moral covenant which underpins its prosperity will not remain prosperous.

*I am touched by your willingness to believe government statistics, and to believe that empty figures contain a deeper meaning. Time spent in school is useless if the school is an undisciplined chaos where nothing can be learned. Literacy rates may have risen, but many more people now cannot (and do not) write coherently or read anything beyond street signs and advertising posters, which makes one wonder what a "literacy rate" is. Unemployment *figures* have certainly declined. But there is, to say the least, some dispute about whether the number of unemployed *people* has fallen. I do not know how one can measure the accessibility of an MP, or how hard he works. The problem is that, while he may be accessible, your MP works not for you but for his party leader, and that when you gain access to him, he may be able to help you with your drains or your parking (a job which councillors, not MPs, ought to do) but he will generally ignore your political desires unless you are already rich and powerful.*

*Before I head home through potholed streets to take my grotesquely expensive museum-piece train (which can be relied upon to be delayed) past hundreds of square miles which used to be filled by productive factories and are now crammed with cramped and over-priced housing, and disfigured with unchecked graffiti, I would say to you that to claim this country is *not* a mess is an insult to the intelligence.*

Yours sincerely,
Peter

Painting a picture of Britain

The arts are inextricably linked to British culture, and we should continue to invest in them, argues **Alan Davey**



ALAN DAVEY is BBC Radio 3's new controller and departing Arts Council Chief Executive

Being British, or any other 'ish' for that matter, is inextricably bound up with culture. From Shakespeare to Turner or The Beatles, any survey of what other nations think about us lists some or all of these after the Queen and Winston Churchill. Our national culture is a vital and continuing tradition, a huge resource of creative energy and intellectual achievement that has helped shape and sustain the history of this country.

It is through a kind of conversation with our cultural past and present that we develop as individuals, as communities and as a nation. Austen, Dickens, or Wilfred Owen helped people reflect on their own culture just as artists like Steve McQueen do today.

But today we know that people enjoy or interact with art and culture in all kinds of different ways and it provides all kinds of different value.

Popes, kings, dictators and democratic governments have always funded art and culture, from Michelangelo and Shakespeare to *War Horse*. Even JK Rowling needed an £8,000 grant to write her first *Harry Potter*. Yet it's sometimes hard to pinpoint why we do it. That's why we have developed a framework to help us think about what culture does for us all, and we've pulled together some of these conversations into a magazine: *Create*, published in November.

Let's start with what we often take for granted: the sheer thrill and enjoyment we get from great art, the life-enhancing, entertaining and inspirational, what we instinctively know is

the inherent value of culture. A Britain without arts and culture would be a dreary place indeed. Without the shared memories in museums; school orchestras; local choirs; the show at your local theatre; books from our libraries; outdoor festivals and paintings to reflect upon we'd be automatons moving from home to workplace with no levity in between. What could be less British than that?

But there's more to it. We are beginning to see how the arts can complement health care and improve our wellbeing. As Professor Dr John Ashton says in *Create*, art and culture "should be regarded as essential to the functions of life in the same way as food and water, and like health and wellbeing, they should not be seen as a cost but as an investment in a thriving society and economy."

We know taking part in culture improves educational attainment. Literacy levels improve when children do drama and library activities; and they achieve better results in maths and languages when they've taken part in structured musical classes. This is one of the reasons that the Department for Education is including arts subjects with the core subjects in the first round of reformed GCSEs. It's why the Arts Council believes every child has a right to see, take part in and talk about the best of art and culture whatever school they go to.

Of course, economic value isn't why we fund the arts, but it certainly helps to make the case for doing so. There is an increasing understanding of how the cultural sector is shaping the identity and complexion of our economy too.

The arts are worth £5 billion per year to the UK economy, and are the

rocket fuel for our £71.6bn creative industries where we genuinely lead the world. Arts and culture drive growth, investment and tourism and have a direct impact on local economies. The Lowry centre itself is worth £26m a year to the North West economy. Meanwhile tourists who took in cultural activities spent £7.3bn here in 2011.

It cuts across political divides. Former Chair of the Arts Council, William Rees-Mogg, talks in his memoirs of how Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister would tell him to make sure our national institutions like the Royal Opera House and the National Theatre were well funded to attract wealthy investors. Her most famous speech referenced Christopher Fry's 1948 play *The Lady's Not For Burning*. Many years ago I worked with Peter Brooke to bring in the National Lottery and ensure additional funds for the arts. He and John Major wanted to do that because they understood how culture weaves further into our everyday lives than many other better funded ministries. When Chris Smith took over their Department for National Heritage he picked up the baton and through the newly minted Department for Culture, Media & Sport focused more on nurturing the creative industries.

As Grayson Perry has so eloquently articulated it in recent interviews for his programme and exhibition on identity; "Our sense of ourselves feels constant but our identity is an ongoing performance that is changed and adapted by our experiences and circumstances over time." Art and culture allow us to express our identity and join a shared conversation about those experiences. ●

What's the problem with promoting British values?

Michael Hand explores what we mean when we want British values to be taught at school



MICHAEL HAND is Professor of Philosophy of Education at the University of Birmingham, editor of the *IMPACT* series, and author of *Patriotism in Schools*

Teachers, teacher educators and educational theorists are worried by the requirement to promote British values in schools. The most oft-heard expression of their anxiety is the question, uttered with varying degrees of indignation and incredulity: “But what *are* British values?”. That question is not unreasonable, but it is in some ways unfortunate; the government has in fact been remarkably consistent in its specification of the four political values to be promoted. They are democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs.

It is entirely appropriate for schools to promote these values. The suggestion that promoting them is unjustified when some people are theocrats or anarchists is analogous to the suggestion that teaching evolution is unjustified when some people are young earth creationists. Where the arguments stack up overwhelmingly on one side of a dispute, there is no requirement on schools to remain neutral. To the contrary, they have an obligation to help students follow where the strongest arguments lead.

It is, moreover, entirely *normal* for schools to promote these values. Schools routinely both advocate democracy, law, liberty and respect, and expect staff and students to

exemplify these political values in their treatment of one another. They endorse campaigns to encourage voting and democratic participation; they impose severe sanctions on students who break the law; they make students aware of the freedoms they enjoy and the battles fought to secure those freedoms; and they consciously model recognition and respect for people of all religions and none. Naturally, some schools do these things better than others, and there is always room for improvement; but let there be no doubt that the promotion of liberal democratic values is already a well-established feature of the United Kingdom’s education system.

What, then, is all the fuss about? Why have the government’s strictures caused such consternation in the educational ranks? The problem lies, I think, in the oddity of dubbing these political values “British”. It is plain that democracy, law, liberty and respect are not *originally* or *exclusively* British: they are not British in the sense that Trinitarian beliefs are Christian or peyote rituals are Native American. They are British only in the sense that Britain, like rather a lot of other countries in the world, is a liberal democracy; and, as Michael Rosen notes in the last of his open letters to Michael Gove, “that’s not how we use adjectives, is it?”.

I can think of two possible explanations for the government’s attempt to classify liberal democratic values as British. One is that it doesn’t have much confidence in the arguments for liberal democracy. If one doubts

that democracy is a demonstrably better bet than dictatorship, or that the rule of law can be shown to have more going for it than arbitrary government, and if one nevertheless wants to win converts to the liberal democratic cause, playing on tribal loyalties may look like a promising strategy. In the absence of good reasons, national sentiment must be a tempting lever to pull. But if this is the government’s thinking, it is much too pessimistic about the justification of liberal democratic values and much too ready to replace education with indoctrination.

The other possibility is that the government sees things the other way round. Perhaps the thought is that, with a little sleight of hand, the rational appeal of liberal democratic values can be used to motivate national sentiment. Liberty and democracy are an easy sell, love of Britain a tough one, so why not hitch the wagon of patriotism to the star of liberal democracy? Well, for a couple of reasons. First, a good case for cultivating national sentiment in schools has yet to be made. And second, even if such a case were forthcoming, realising the aim by linguistic trickery would hardly be educationally defensible.

The designation of democracy, law, liberty and respect as British values is a crude attempt to bundle up political principle with national sentiment in the education of children and young people. That’s why the policy has been met with such suspicion by educators and educationalists. The solution to the problem is easy: just stop calling these values British. ●

Multiple loyalties are easy

Can one not be both British and European?
Damian Green MP thinks we can



DAMIAN GREEN is the MP for Ashford, and Chairman of European Mainstream

Writing about Britain and Europe in the context of a wider discussion on British identity is refreshing. It forces us to address matters which can easily be neglected in the day-to-day debates over Europe. At the root of the extreme forms of anti-EU feeling is the idea that it is impossible to be a patriotic Brit and to want Britain to remain a member of the EU. I still receive the odd letter accusing Ted Heath of committing treason, notwithstanding the legally crucial fact that he is dead, and I note that when Lord Hill was questioned by the Commons European Scrutiny Committee on taking up his role with the Commission he was asked how he could take both the Commission Oath and the Privy Council oath. Clearly deep passions are stirred.

I have not observed the French losing their sense of amour propre in the past sixty years

At a personal level I find the idea of multiple loyalties an easy one to cope with. As a Welshman representing a Kentish seat in Parliament I can remain patriotically Welsh while standing up for English interests. The two are entirely compatible both intellectually and emotionally. Mae Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau will raise the hairs on the back of my neck when sung at the right event, but so will God Save the Queen. Perhaps as a result of this dual loyalty, which comes naturally to millions of

UK citizens who have moved from one UK country to another, or have ancestry which is shared between different countries, I find it easy to reconcile British identity with a sense of being European.

Given that we are living at a time when the emotional attack on any kind of European identity is at its strongest for decades, it is ironic that so many people have recently confronted another problem of dual loyalty, that to Scotland and the UK, and have come down on the side of wanting both. Indeed one of the notable aspects of those bizarre last few days of the campaign was how the English were finally stirred into proclaiming their affection for a UK that contained Scotland.

In the wake of the Scottish Referendum it should now be reasonable to ask English Eurosceptics to acknowledge that, just as it is possible to be a patriotic Scot and want the Union, so it is possible to be a patriotic Brit and want the UK to remain part of the EU.

For those who are willing to look beyond their own front doors, this combination of identities is obviously possible. I have not observed the French losing their sense of amour propre in the past sixty years, nor the Germans their *selbstliebe*. Even the hard core EU members are as different in their national ways as ever. The ever-closer union among the peoples of Europe which the Treaty of Rome aspired to ("among the peoples" is always left out when this country debates the issue) palpably does not entail the creation of a homogeneous European people. Unlike in Britain, where it would be depressingly difficult if dropped in one of our big cities to know on first sight which part of the country you were



Source: Eric Fischer

in, if you did the same throughout the EU you would always know which country you were in.

We can therefore dismiss, as part of the in-or-out debate, the fear that Britain will in some way disappear if we remain inside the EU. The identity of any UK citizen is a complex one, and that complexity is now reflected in the tortured debates we are having about the political institutions required to give legitimacy to our identity. While Britishness may be hard to define, it is easy to recognise. Most importantly, it is almost impossible to imagine the circumstances in which it would be dissolved.

We can have the European debates, about the economy, trade, the strength of our voice in the world and the desirability of not alienating our friends and neighbours, without any nagging anxiety about the future of British values or identity. If you want us out of the EU I believe you are profoundly wrong, but I do not question your patriotism or your sense of Britishness. What would be truly British would be to continue this debate calmly and tolerantly. ●

Influence in the Middle East

Ross Cypher-Burley examines Britain's historical links with the Middle East, and why British influence is more important than we think



ROSS CYPHER-BURLEY was Spokesman to the British Embassy in Tel Aviv from 2012–2014 and now works for Portland Communications

Travel around Israel and the Palestinian Territories, and the remnants of Britain's imperialist past are all around. Not just in monuments, in street names in Jerusalem or the commonwealth graves in Ramallah or Gaza, but in the minds of the people. On both sides of the green line, street vendors, academics, politicians, refugees and settlers – all have an opinion on Britain's historical impact on the present. Many across the region genuinely believe that Britain is still a global world power of enormous strength, second only to the United States in influence. The problem is, we don't.

Try talking to a Hebronite, for example, about what they think about "Britishness". Chances are you'd be subjected to a lengthy history lesson. The historic actions of our leaders have consequences that live in the collective memory. I remember getting lost once in Ramallah, and telling my Palestinian friend that I was going to pull over and ask a group of stall vendors for directions. She urged me to be careful; my British accent would cause trouble during what was a time of heightened tension. Rather than get criticised for the actions of my government, I was instead mocked for being a Tottenham Hotspur supporter. But as I returned to the car, one of them shouted in Arabic a less than polite reference to General Wauchope, a hated British figure from the Arab Revolts.

This historical legacy leaves many politicians in Britain uncomfortable. Some argue that we should hang our

heads in shame at the geopolitical destruction we wrought over the region. Historical shame can lead to paralysis over policy, as we worry about speaking too loudly about foreign policy issues for fear of summoning the colonial ghosts of the past.

We cannot run from our past, but we should recognise our influence on events today

Israel is a good example. Few countries stir the emotions like Israel. For some, a key democratic ally in the heart of the Middle East. For others, an apartheid state subjugating the Palestinian people and the cause of much regional discontent. What is undisputable is Britain's historic ties with the country. Balfour's famous Declaration that the British Government viewed "with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people" changed the course of history. The Declaration was brief, the letter short, but the principle enunciated of huge significance and of lasting consequence, paving the way to the creation, in 1948, of the state of Israel and victory for the Zionist movement.

We should be proud of our historical ties to Israel. Balfour's legacy was not just in the creation of the State of Israel, but in its nature and character. The Mandate shaped key aspects of the embryonic state. For example, it introduced legislation based upon English common law and equity principles from which Israel built its court procedure, criminal law and civil code. Israel built on this foundation, evolving its own judicial character into

what is, despite specific controversy around the Occupation, now one of the world's most respected legal systems.

Britain's colonial past defines our identity and has influenced the character of others'. Our shared experiences with countries like Israel gives us a stronger voice. The irony is that we refuse to use it. Israelis and Palestinians *want* to hear the UK's voice. Palestinians may still harbour anger over historical injustices, but they believe our voice in the international arena holds weight – more weight than even we would ascribe to it. During 2013, the UK was happy to let Secretary Kerry do all the heavy lifting of making progress on the peace process. But though the U.S. has a powerful voice in Israel, their words often fail to cut through on the streets on Ramallah. In the spring of 2013, Palestinians discreetly sounded out the possibility of a UK, France and Germany peace plan as an alternative to the Kerry plan. It failed to materialise as the UK assumed it would anger the Americans and cause diplomatic fallout.

Israelis and Palestinians get angry at our inconsistency more than our history. The UK Government will slam Hamas for launching rockets, but in the same breath will criticise the Israelis for settlement construction, infuriating Tel Aviv. We call for settlement freezes countless times each year, but clumsily bolt on criticism of Palestinian incitement in the West Bank.

If we are to make an impact in the Middle East, our actions should reflect our role in the history of region. Our identity is shaped by our history. We cannot run from our past, but we should recognise our influence on events today. ●

Winning friends in India

Does the shared history between India and Britain matter now, or are both sides just playing an economic game? **Emran Mian** explores



EMRAN MIAN is the Director of the Social Market Foundation

“We are two great democracies that face many of the same challenges,” said David Cameron recently of Britain and India, “we need more economic growth, we need more investment in trade. We both have to fight extremism and terrorism.” Cameron’s agenda for the relationship – boosting economic growth and trade, fighting extremism and terrorism – is well chosen but pursuing a progressive version of these aims is incredibly difficult.

Let’s start with defence contracts. The Modi government is concluding the purchase of new fighter jets to boost its capabilities vis-a-vis Pakistan and China. The French firm, Dassault, is in pole position. The UK is in the competition via the Eurofighter programme, but the nature of the contract – notably, that the majority of the aircraft are to be built in India – suggests that Indian decision makers are seeking more independence in their future military strategy. They may believe that the French will be easier partners than the UK; after all, France was the one major Western country not to impose sanctions on India after the nuclear weapons test in 1998.

Another sign of the renewed military confidence in India is the decision to raise a new corps of the Indian Army to be based on the border with China. The raising of this new corps is a long way from Cameron’s stated common objectives of fighting extremism and terrorism. Instead it is part of an old fashioned stand off over a border and adding 90,000 new Indian troops can only be a recipe for further instability

in the relationship between the two emerging superpowers. When Michael Fallon was in India recently though, he wasn’t talking about how to prevent this happening, he was pushing the sale of British guns that, as he put it, are “ideal” for the new corps.

Without the opportunity to get work experience in the UK as well as a degree, studying elsewhere has become more attractive

This tension between increased trade and wider political objectives is obvious in defence contracting. It emerges equally in immigration policy. As Kumar Iyer, the Director General for UK Trade and Investment in India, incidentally a Brit of Indian origin, puts it, “the UK is the single largest G20 investor in India and India invests more in the UK than in the rest of the EU combined.” The imperative for an open exchange of talent is there. Yet the number of Indian first-year students starting courses at UK universities fell from 23,985 in 2010–11 to 12,280 in 2012–13.

The rapid decrease is likely to be partly due to the perception that the UK government is exercising tighter control on the issuing of student visas. As Iyer and others suggest, this is often no more than a perception. Perhaps it can be dealt with by the countervailing increase in the size of, for example, the Chevening scholarships programme for Indian scholars – growing four-fold by 2015–16 – or by a further symbolic move like taking students out of the Conservatives’ net migration target.

However, the larger cause of the slump in student numbers isn’t perception, it’s the hard policy fact that working in the UK post-study has become much more difficult for Indian students. Without the opportunity to get work experience in the UK as well as a degree, studying elsewhere, including at improving Indian universities, has become more attractive. Dealing with this requires going to the heart of how comfortable UK voters feel about an open labour market. Not dealing with it threatens a weakening of our future economic and political ties with India.

A welcome and complementary move in restoring the relationship among young students is already underway: the British Council is aiming to get 25,000 British students studying in India. Increasingly research, industrial and cultural associations between Britain and India will start in dormitories and seminar rooms over there as well as in the UK. Equally, we might expect that a future wave of British retirees will go to India rather than Spain or Portugal to enjoy a high standard of living at lower cost.

Like in any bilateral relationship, history matters. The Indian Parliament will soon pass legislation to eliminate a part of that history – the legacy of colonial laws left over from before 1947. Police officers, for example, will no longer be required to doff their caps to royalty. On the whole, though, history isn’t the obstacle to a new relationship between Britain and India, it’s the competing strategic and economic priorities of the present day. Foreign policy and immigration are the hard cases. If those can be cracked, then there are plenty of opportunities for the relationship to mature and develop. ●

Different down under?

Nick Cater explains the British spirit of Australia, and how it has shaped the country's past and future



NICK CATER is Executive Director of the Menzies Research Centre

There was a palpable sense of relief across much of Australia when it became clear that the Scots had decided to stay. The conservative Prime Minister Tony Abbott and the Scottish-born Left wing Labour Senator, Doug Cameron, found themselves in rare agreement; Australia's distant ancestral home should remain a kingdom united.

Naturally there were a few who disagreed. The radical-nationalist, anti-colonial narrative that came to the fore when Australia celebrated the 200th anniversary of British settlement in 1988 remains strong among the urban elites.

In September 1993, then prime minister Paul Keating met the Queen in the drawing room at Balmoral and told her that her days as Australia's head of state were numbered. The monarchy, he said, "had gently drifted into obsolescence".

Six years later, when Keating's assumption was tested at a referendum, 55 percent of Australians voted for the status quo. Support for a republic has since fallen to around 40 per cent, according to the recent opinion polls, and the topic is barely raised.

How should this be read? Certainly, Australians have developed a clear sense of national identity over the last 50 years. The nation is a confident global player with an ethnically diverse population that possesses a culture and character of its own. Three quarters of Australian exports go to Asia and Abbott is committed to what he

describes as "a Jakarta focus rather than a Geneva one."

Yet Abbott remains an incorrigible Anglophile. He recently used his prime ministerial prerogative to reintroduce the honours of Knights and Dames, remembers fondly his days at Oxford University and has watched every episode of *Downton Abbey*. While it might seem like sentimentalism, it is anything but.

Australia may no longer be a British country, but it is a nation where Britishness – a civic rather than an ethnic concept – remains at the core of public life. Australia inherited from Britain the idea that governments as well as people should be subject to the rule of law. It absorbed the spirit of liberty, it thrived on the spirit of progress that stemmed from the Scottish Enlightenment and inherited civic institutions that were made in Britain.

Few in Australia would consciously call these Anglosphere values, as Daniel Hannan did recently in his book, *Inventing Freedom: How the English-Speaking Peoples Made the Modern World*. That, however, is undoubtedly what they are. They produced a system that, in Hannan's words, "on the whole rewarded production better than predation." And that is why Australia works.

"The reason that a child of Greek parents in Melbourne is wealthier and freer than his cousin in Mytilene has nothing to do with race and everything to do with political structures," writes Hannan. Characteristics the world imagines are particularly Australian – informality, outspokenness, self-reliance and an inherent suspicion of authority – are extensions of a very British idea of personal freedom.

Like Canada and New Zealand, Australia came to inherit a particularly stable kind of democracy that also copied the physical architecture of British institutions in meticulous detail. In Australia this was repeated multiple times. Six state parliaments conduct their business in chambers instantly recognizable as models of the House of Commons, each bristling with Victorian grandeur and charm. Parliament House in Canberra is less than 30 years old, and impressive in a different way, but business in its twin chambers is conducted strictly on Westminster lines.

The shape of Australian parliaments cannot easily be dismissed as mere affectations or colonial relics, as some have attempted to do. They are Australian civility made manifest. Ferocious battles take place every sitting day in the contest of ideas. Machiavellian games are played, tempers are lost and grudges held but, however heated the combat may seem, it must obey the rules. Its processes may be slow, and the results imperfect, but it is a system incapable of fathering tyranny.

While it may be unfashionable to say so, it is clearly no accident that the great civilisation of the south was built on a continent settled by the British. It is not a land that surrenders its wealth without a fight, but a British settlement, enthused with the liberating values of the Enlightenment, succeeded, and continues to succeed, beyond all expectation.

It was driven by aspiration and accomplished through grit, enterprise and inventiveness. But liberty of a peculiarly British kind was the spirit that made it possible. ●

The Commonwealth vs the EU

Austen Saunders assesses our relationship with the Commonwealth, and how it compares with Britain's relationship with the EU



AUSTEN SAUNDERS is a researcher at Bright Blue and researcher at the English Faculty at Oxford University

Have you seen the episode of *Only Fools and Horses* where Rodney applies for his own job? Concluding that membership of Trotters Independent Traders is like a timeshare in a burning building, Rodney tells Del Boy he's quitting. But when he phones a company advertising an exciting executive position, he doesn't realise that the number is Del Boy's new mobile. Del strings him along before cutting him down to size. What a plonker.

I'm reminded of that episode when I hear Eurosceptics argue that we need to get out of Europe so that Britain can trade more. The idea is that once we stop paying Spaniards to siesta until they retire at 35 we can negotiate all sorts of wonderful trade deals with countries like India with which we have strong "historic ties" (i.e. places we used to rule and then got kicked out of). UKIP claim in their 2014 European Election manifesto that "outside the EU, we can negotiate our own trade deals, but be in a stronger position". Their policy is to establish the Commonwealth Free Trade Area.

Go with it for a minute. Imagine – just imagine! – if we could convert the whole Commonwealth (including India, Nigeria, and Singapore) into a free trade zone. We'd be riding the wave of the future!

No. Trying to turn the Commonwealth into a sphere of influence for Britain founded on free trade would be like Rodney applying for his own job. The opportunities for humiliation

would be immense, the chances of success slim, and the best-case scenario would leave us slightly behind where we are now.

Just look at the numbers. In 2012 the total GDP of EU member states excluding the UK was \$14.2 trillion. That of Commonwealth countries excluding the UK was \$7.4 trillion. In other words, we're already part of a free trade area twice the size of a Commonwealth Free Trade Area. And Europe's full of rich consumers buying high-value goods and services. Malawi isn't. It's tempting to imagine how things might work out with India. But throw over Germany in search of what-might-be, and we'll soon find ourselves texting Angela in the middle of the night begging her to take us back.

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But of course it's the future that matters so let's try sketching some options out on the back of an envelope. Let's take the countries in the Commonwealth today, take their GDP from 2012, and then take the IMF's latest forecast for growth in 2015. Then let's (generously) assume that growth up to 2022 will average this same level.

The result would be an Indian economy of \$3.5 trillion in 2022. That's less than Germany now. The Commonwealth outside the UK would have GDP worth \$11.2. The EU? \$16.6 trillion.

Meanwhile, trade deals don't fall from trees like fair trade bananas. India leaves our delegations waiting in corridors just like they make everyone else wait. It's a country where supermarkets remain regulated out of the retail sector. Anyone who thinks we'll ever be able to negotiate the same trade terms we currently enjoy with Germany is nuttier than a piece of Dresden stollen.

And if it's hard enough getting France onside, imagine negotiating with twice as many countries as are in the EU now. Getting countries as different as Bangladesh and Malta to agree what day it is would be a diplomatic triumph. We've already achieved – at great effort – membership of a huge free trade zone made up of countries with whom we have close historic ties. Doing it all over again would just be showing off.

A century ago Joseph Chamberlain was campaigning for tariff reform. His idea was to turn the Empire into a protectionist block. Fearing Britain was falling behind Germany and the US, he wanted to opt out of the global race. The idea that the Commonwealth can be an economic alternative to the EU is that old idea rehashed. It's not even nostalgia. It's a wrong answer from the past.

Of course there is a free trade area which is dynamic, unified, and free. In 2022 it might have an economy worth \$22 trillion. It's called the USA. Why don't UKIP suggest we join them? ●

BOOKS & ARTS

BOOKS: *Inequality and the 1%* by Danny Dorling

Does inequality matter? Will Emkes looks for answers in Danny Dorling's book



WILL EMKES is a business consultant who writes on economics and international development

Before Professor Dorling begins his polemic against the wealthiest 1 per cent, he presents his readers with a quote from the Nobel Laureate Robert Shiller: “The most important problem we are facing now, today ... is rising inequality”. Dorling sees this as not merely a problem, but a “social threat”, one which will continue to tug forcibly at the hems of society until that which stiches us together is finally torn apart.

For Dorling, an analysis of our present state will require more than just sound economics. His book is, in part, an expression of anger towards the attitudes and social mores within which inequality has been allowed to grow, and which have allowed the interests of the 1% to ride roughshod over the wellbeing of the 99%.

This sense of anger sets Dorling's book apart from other recent books on inequality. He wants to portray the process of accumulating wealth as, in some sense, conspiratorial. Throughout *Inequality and the 1%*, the reader is constantly fed with the impression that the 1% is a homogenous block, capable of collective action and intent on advancing its own self-interest at the expense of the masses. Whereas thinkers like Thomas Piketty have sought to explain economic inequality as a feature inherent to the mechanics of

capitalism, Dorling asks us to imagine this as one large plot, throughout which the 99% have remained ignorant of their own exploitation.

In practice, we know that the picture is more complicated than this. The extreme wealth of the 1%, far from being the result of shrewd manipulation and clever subterfuge on the part of the wealthy, is merely the by-product of an economic and political consensus that took place some time ago. The British public are not simply ignorant as to the extent that this has taken place, but are, in a very real sense, content with the idea of disparities in wealth and often content with the economic policies that result in such disparities.

Most of us would agree, if pressed, that after 1980, there was a definite change of direction in the sympathies of the British public. It is often Thatcherism that is charged with inaugurating this philosophy, yet even under New Labour equality could not have been considered a governing ideal. Think back to Mandelson's intense relaxation with people “getting filthy rich”. What has changed emphatically and irredeemably is the universal acceptance of the principle of equality of opportunity and meritocracy. As a slogan, an ideology, a political programme, meritocracy is now supreme.

The term meritocracy has taken root in the British psyche and it is this that Dorling sees as at the crux of our current malaise, not the manipulations of the 1%. He writes “To believe that it

makes sense that just a tiny proportion of people deserve such a huge slice of the cake, you have to believe that there is something very special about the 1 per cent group that justifies their income and wealth. Unfortunately, many people do, even though an increasing number of people see the extent of their riches as unjustified”.

The logical question that results from reading this book is whether a reliance on meritocracy, as a means to explain disparities in wealth, is an inherently bad thing. Are we living through a period of “meritocratic extremism”, as Thomas Piketty has put it? Are we happy to extol the virtues of a meritocratic society but only on the proviso that the 1% are kept within certain predefined limits? Given that we will always have a 1%, should this group be indexed against the 99% and stopped by legislation from getting any richer?

These are not just practical questions for government policy, and ones which cannot be answered by looking at the Gini coefficient of income inequality or quoting other measures of distribution. Rather, these are questions that require us to draw upon a sense of fairness in society and our attitudes towards each other. On this account, Dorling is too preoccupied with laying the blame at the door of the 1% and not with unravelling how they got so wealthy in the first place. ●

Danny Dorling's *Inequality and the 1%* (240p, £12.99) is available from Verso

BOOKS: *How to be a conservative* by Roger Scruton

Austen Saunders asks whether Roger Scruton's ideas are applicable in today's political landscape



AUSTEN SAUNDERS is a researcher at Bright Blue

For many years now I have suffered from a pitiable predisposition which invites both condescension and ridicule. I am a Leicester City fan. Chatting with cabbies I'm inevitably led to an admission soaked in apology: "I'm afraid I support Leicester." Being a conservative sometimes feels like that. As if addicts of some exotic perversion, we feel compelled to be wary in company lest we provoke someone to throw chardonnay in our face. This is Roger Scruton's latest attempt to help us stand tall and tell the world that we're here, we're conservative, and we're proud.

Conservatism for Scruton is primarily about freedom. But he also holds that freedom doesn't just mean the state getting out the way. He thinks that freedom means freedom to do something and that conservatism is all about what that *something* is. In his eyes contemporary liberalism is a shallow creed which regrettably captured the Tory party in the late '70s. In this book he tries to convince Thatcher's heirs that the things they care about can only really be protected by his sort of conservatism.

Scruton's conservatism rests on his belief that freedom has value when we can use it to participate in shared activities and institutions which give life meaning. He argues that these activities and institutions arise organically within civil society and that the job of government is to protect the conditions

which make them possible. Secular rule of law and democracy underpin healthy civil societies and the nation state is the only way to achieve these. Anything which undermines democratic national sovereignty must therefore be resisted at all costs. The main dangers are transnational jurisdictions like the EU and the presence in the UK of faith communities (such as certain forms of Islam) which won't sign up to the principles of tolerance and secular democracy.

Conservatism for Scruton is primarily about freedom

These positions are backed up with heavyweight thinking. Kantian arguments lie behind Scruton's insistence that the only real human rights are those which forbid others (especially the state) to infringe our sovereignty as individuals. Hegel chips in to explain why being self-employed can make work meaningful. Nietzsche leads to the conclusion that social mobility must be a key aim of government.

So what would Scruton's 2015 manifesto look like? Leave the EU, cut human rights down to size, and bring back grammar schools. Remind you of any buoyant insurgent parties?

And that's the problem with Scruton. His arguments are subtle, thought-provoking, and sophisticated. And yet when he tries to spell out what conservatives should be fighting for today he sounds like UKIP. Gay marriage and the internet, for example, are damned as existential threats to our shared humanity whilst a general endorsement of Gove's education

reforms is the closest we get to practical advice for what a modern conservative agenda might look like. And good luck arguing on *Question Time* that modern human rights are dangerous because they incorporate vast claims against the resources of the state and use law to transfer to government the moral duties which rightly fall upon individuals. Conservatives can't afford to give their opponents opportunities to caricature them as enemies of equality.

Despite these shortcomings, Scruton is right about the key principle which conservatives will find themselves fighting for over the coming years. That principle is the right of decent people to get on with building meaningful lives for themselves with the support of the state when it is genuinely able to help, but free of its interference when it isn't. The state can make it easier for us to make our lives worthwhile, but it can't do it for us.

In action, this means more autonomy for institutions – like successful schools – where good things happen. It means giving our top universities the financial freedom they need if they're to stay true to their essential mission of advancing knowledge (not hitting arbitrary admissions targets). It means (in my opinion) more measures like gay marriage to open up successful institutions to as many people as possible. These are all expressions of Scruton's key insight into the nature of conservatism – that conservatism is the politics of making happiness possible. ●

Roger Scruton's *How to be a conservative* (208p, RRP £18) is available from Bloomsbury Continuum

THEATRE: *East is East* by Ayub Khan-Din

Meera Sonecha explores the idea of fear of rejection from British society, and the remedy of tolerance



MEERA SONECHA is
assistant editor of *The
Progressive Conscience*

Having walked past the big banners for *East is East* in Trafalgar Studios on Whitehall a few times, I felt compelled to watch the trailer. It purported to be “one of the best British comedies of all time”. Which of course, led me to wonder how a story about a Pakistani immigrant trying to instill Pakistani values in his seven children could possibly be “one of the best British comedies of all time”.

The script has hints of a lot of “British” stereotypes: smoking, gossiping, drinking tea, casual racism, and jokes about sex. But does this make it a “British” comedy? There were, of course, a lot of Pakistani/Asian themes: the something from nothing immigrant story, arranged marriages, respect for parents, entrepreneurialism (they own a chip shop), Hindi music, and paisley blouses. But this isn’t a play about Pakistan. It is a play set in England in the 1960s. In an era when there wasn’t a large Pakistani diaspora living here and when there weren’t Pakistani lawyers and doctors. A time when we didn’t have the wonderful Sajid Javid.

It is a story of struggle. The struggles of George “Genghis” Khan, a man who is so strongly patriotic towards Pakistan that he doesn’t call Britain his country despite living here for 35 years. The struggles of a man who has married a white, liberal, British woman, but doesn’t compromise his culture for hers. The struggles of this man who could very easily shed his Pakistani skin but chooses not to. Out of fear of rejection. Because he does not feel Anglo-Indian. He doesn’t feel English



and he doesn’t feel British because of the colour of his skin. And so he rejects British culture and attempts to protect his children by imposing the culture of a different nation on them.

His children however, do not appreciate his forceful nature. They call Bradford “Bradistan”, they hate “Paki music” and they eat bacon behind his back. And this is where the Britishness comes into the play. Because it is not in the rejection of another culture that their Britishness lies, it is in their intense desire to be free. To be consulted before meeting a potential wife, to be accepted for being an art student, to be able to be a hairdresser. It is this liberty that defines Britain and it is the thirst for this liberty that makes Genghis’ children British. Being British isn’t about “drinking, making jokes about sex, thick Irish blokes,” etc, but about having the liberty to choose what to do with one’s life. So if you’re gay and you want to get married, fine; if you want to play basketball from a wheelchair, fine; if you want to wear a hideous pink fluorescent skirt; fine. You have the liberty to do so.

Another aspect of British culture shown very well in the play was through Ella, played by Jane Horrocks. She is understanding of Genghis’ wish

to preserve his own culture, but protects her own at the same time. She is able to integrate both her culture and her husband’s in the household, and speaks up when something wrong is happening. She embodies tolerance of other faiths. And even though her husband is an overbearing, patriarchal, control-freak, she maintains her own identity. It is a British quality, to welcome and love people of other nations and to let them retain their own identity. It is one that we should be proud of.

East is East is a wonderful play, one that will not only appeal to a British Asian crowd but to all British people. It is a story of both the sixties and of today, in a Britain where it is more important than ever to be Ella. If you are a Genghis, it will make you understand the importance of the liberal, tolerant Ella. If you are a Maneer, Meenah, Saleem, Sajid, Abdul or Tariq (Genghis and Ella’s children), it will make you think about the difficulties of balancing a conservative and a liberal culture. It will make you laugh, it will make you frustrated and it will shock you at times. But it is worth seeing, if only to see if it really is a “British” comedy. ●

East is East runs from 4 October to 3 January 2015 at Trafalgar Studios, SW1

EXHIBITIONS: Turner, Kiefer, Ai Wei Wei

JMW Turner, Anselm Kiefer and Ai Weiwei on one page?
Alexander King shows us how



ALEXANDER KING is a
research assistant at Bright Blue

It is often said by those “in the know”, that there are many things that improve with age. Wine and whisky, of course, but also one’s perception of the past. Things are always better when left to settle. So it was in this vein that I set off to the Tate Britain to see its exhibition on Late Turner, sponsored by Ernst & Young and helpfully titled “Painting Set Free”, so that you can be in no doubt that JMW Turner, so derided and rejected by his peers for his later work, was in truth reaching his liberated apex as an artist. I had real concerns that the entire exhibition would be an exercise in patronising a truly great artist, paintings adorned with faux hyperbole and false praise. But I should not have feared.

The exhibition celebrates Turner in all his enigmatic splendour, an artist who is somehow able to show us the narratives of history, mythology, and politics in a blaze of light on one canvas, whilst the next canvas uses that same burst of light to utterly transfix and perplex us, as we search for something beyond the natural seemingly on display. His watercolours are not limp and jaded, as might have befitted a man diabetic through corpulence and blurred by cataracts in old age, but full of vitality and suggestion. I was most struck by *Rain, Steam, and Speed*, where Turner, the first artist to really explore the new technology of steam power in paint, shows us the Great Western Railway emerging from the landscape, perhaps a technology advancing forward out of nature itself,

perhaps an alien eruption hurling itself towards us forebodingly.

If this is what senility looks like, then we can only be thankful that our population is ageing so rapidly.

The Royal Academy’s exhibition of Anselm Kiefer is another dedicated to history, divinity, and the mythological, but Kiefer is more interested in how all these themes relate to the natural, earthly sphere we inhabit at present. He attempts to make sense of and gain knowledge of the world through relating it to the celestial and the historical, whilst at the same time viewing time and space as cyclical, making his work both of this time and out of it. Kiefer’s work is both modern and ancient, at home next to Warhol as much as it is next to Van Gogh. In *Operation Sea Lion*, the German artist paints 3 chairs over a bath tub containing toy ships, giving presence to the Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sitting in judgement and derision over the planned but aborted Nazi invasion of Britain. It is a piece which perfectly encapsulates Kiefer’s motifs, that of the relationship between heaven and earth, past and present, and how he feels about his subject. He is an artist who shows us these themes quite readily, so that the intrigue comes not from figuring out what Kiefer is trying to do, but rather what we the spectator are thinking. If you’ve ever tired of hearing how every new artist is bursting with ideas that we the audience must try to discern no matter how opaque it all seems to be, that is a rare pleasure in this exhibition.

Finally, to Ai Weiwei’s exhibition at Blenheim Palace. There are a number of things peculiar to this exhibition. You could highlight the thousands of



porcelain crabs on a carpet in an opulent palace, all taking a clever potshot at the Chinese authorities in the form of a Chinese pun. Or the fact that the artist painstakingly recreated it all from his studio in China, unable, as he is, to leave his homeland. Or the whole wink-wink-nudge-nudge of a Chinese artist displaying pieces joking at the expense of a monolithic power, in the vestiges of a monolithic stately home. A trip to Blenheim is never wasted, but this exhibition is too clever by half. The Han Dynasty vase with a well-known drinks manufacturer’s logo stamped on its side is less cutting edge modern art, more bog standard graffiti artist staple. But not to worry: if the art’s not your thing, it’s in a very nice monolith. ●

Late Turner runs from 10 September to 25 January 2015 at Tate Britain

Anselm Kiefer ran from 27 September to 14 December 2014 at the Royal Academy

Ai Weiwei at Blenheim Palace ran from 1 October to 14 December 2014 at Blenheim Palace

Bright Blue Research

A note on Bright Blue's current research by **David Kirkby**



DAVID KIRKBY is a researcher for Bright Blue

Bright Blue's programme of research has developed quickly since our official launch as a professional think tank back in April. That evening, our President, Rt Hon David Willetts MP, announced our key research themes: individual power and potential, security and prosperity in the globalised world and the future of conservatism. It felt like the beginning of something bold, exciting, and full of possibilities.

Seven short months later, Bright Blue is undertaking a number of research projects, offering fresh analysis of public policy and original ideas.

We recently published our first report, *Give and take*, exploring how conservatives think about welfare. Armed with new polling data, we offer a comprehensive account of how conservatives think about welfare and what they want from it. Authored by Ryan Shorthouse and me, we propose original welfare reforms designed to

boost the effectiveness of – and public support for – the welfare system.

Our second project is in the area of immigration. Surveys show that immigration is currently voters' top concern and barely a day seems to pass without the issue featuring in the media. Bright Blue is influencing the debate with its project to develop a balanced centre-right agenda on immigration, which can reassure the public of the government's management of the system, as well as the overall economic and cultural benefits that immigration brings. The Conservative Party has been too focused upon caps and clamp-downs. This project seeks to develop alternative themes, with accompanying policy ideas, for the centre-right on immigration – competence, fairness and integration. Watch out for forthcoming reports including analysis of the attitudes of Conservative and BME voters, the themes that have emerged from our series of roundtable discussions with leading centre-right opinion formers and decision makers, and our Immigration Commission report.

Since 2000, nearly a million people have moved into self-employment,

changing the face of Britain's labour market. Policymakers are increasingly discussing the causes and implications of rising self-employment. Our third project explores self-employment and entrepreneurialism for those on low incomes. We are investigating the causes and nature of self-employment for those on low incomes and identifying what policies could support this group to have better lives and better businesses.

Our fourth research project is on the topic of social connections. Having good and diverse relationships with a wide variety of people is not only useful for university students seeking work. It is also a vital path out of poverty and a means of improving one's circumstances for many. In this project, we explore how to strengthen the social networks of different ethnic minority groups through three key local public services: nurseries, Sure Start Centres, and schools.

Bright Blue has long been a respected political voice for the liberal conservative community. Now it is producing high quality public policy research as well. And there is much more to come. ●

Join Bright Blue

Becoming a member of Bright Blue enables you to support and partake in the championing of liberal conservatism

You will be an official part of Bright Blue's network - invited to all our events and conferences, with the opportunity to meet a wide range of people who share Bright Blue's positive and open-minded view of politics. You will also have the opportunity to contribute ideas on policies and strategy in various ways - in debates, on our blog, and in our magazine.

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RESEARCH THEMES

Individual power and potential

Thirteen million Britons are in poverty, the majority of which are in low paid work. Especially when fiscal resources are increasingly constrained, Bright Blue will be exploring and devising credible and imaginative approaches to improve our welfare and education systems to ensure greater individual and national prosperity.

Security and prosperity in the globalised world

The globalised, capitalist economy has increased living standards and opportunities for millions. But the composition of communities has changed, sometimes rapidly, and pressures on our resources and environment have mounted. Bright Blue will be suggesting ways to find a better balance between maximising the benefits and addressing the challenges of globalisation – such as immigration, environmental degradation and resource scarcity – to build stable societies and sustainable economies.

The future of conservatism

Across the western world, societies are becoming more ethnically diverse and socially liberal. Bright Blue will be looking at how conservatism can modernise to remain compelling and inspiring in liberal democracies.



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