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The Last Utopia: the Demise of Social Democratic Britain (since 1979)

Hassan Gerry

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Gerry Hassan

Gerry Hassan is a writer, commentator and policy analyst. He is author or editor of fourteen books, including *Radical Scotland: Arguments for Self-Determination, The Modern SNP: From Protest to Power and After Blair: Politics after the New Labour Decade*. Gerry is a Demos Asssociate and was Head of the Scotland 2020 and Glasgow 2020 futures projects which produced Scotland 2020: Hopeful Stories for a Northern Nation and The *Dreaming City: Glasgow 2020 and the Power of Mass Imagination*. He is an Honorary Senior Research Fellow at the University of the West of Scotland, where he is researching his Ph D on political communications. Gerry's writing and research can be found at: www.gerryhassan.com. He also runs a very popular blog: www.gerryhassan.com/category/blog/

"The question that hovers above the Iraq inquiry is – since the evidence on Saddam Hussein's weaponry was so flaky and the post-war planning so atrocious – why on earth Tony Blair did it. One theory, albeit not the one likely to be offered by Mr Blair himself, is that his militarism and messianism, the mix of responsibility and entitlement that he evinced, are part of the inheritance of all post-imperial British leaders ….

If Empire is the backdrop of Britain's foreign entanglements, it is also implicated in the country's exposure to another great debacle, the financial crash. The City and the Empire grew up symbiotically. Imperial trade and investment made London a world financial centre; the City became vital to the British economy, while at the same time, preoccupied as it was with foreign deals, largely separated from the rest of it. The Empire thus bequeathed commercial habits, and an overmighty financial sector, which British taxpayers now have cause to regret."

Bagehot, *The Economist*, December 3rd 2009

"On the domestic front Mr Blair still holds extraordinary sway. His public service reforms, which sometimes had a chaotic quality in their more limited manifestations, are now being fully realised by David Cameron. Senior Tory ministers idolise Mr Blair. But in terms of the calculations that led to the nightmare of Iraq, he is a ghostly figure from another age."

Steve Richards, *The Independent*, January 20th 2011.

Introduction

The British state is currently in flux: one of crisis, challenge and doubt. Concerns abound about British economic decline, social malaise and 'Broken Britain'. The end of declinism trumpeted by Thatcherism and Blairism has proven illusory.

In many respects this is part of a general Western and European sentiment: of declinology books such as 'Germany Does Away with Itself' (Sarrazin, 2010) and 'French Melancholy' (Zemmour, 2010). Forthcoming is Jean-Pierre Chevènement's 'Is France Finished?'. Even before the crash book shelves were crammed with titles such as 'Can Germany Be Saved?'

(Sinn, 2007) and 'The Last Days of Europe' (Laqueur, 2007). At the same time British writers were producing books with a sense of self-belief titled 'The End of Decline' (Brivati, 2007).
Where does the British story fit into this picture: this seemingly remorseless journey of anxiety, fear and uncertainty about economic power and globalisation, the future of Europe, and of power shifting eastwards and southwards?
There is a very British experience which this paper will attempt to address. It will locate recent British history in a longer timeframe and address three core concepts:
Addressing the character of the UK – and its state, economy and culture - in a longer-time frame;
Analysing the neo-liberal nature of the British state;
And addressing the intertwining of this with the territorial dimensions of the British state.
The Long Now: Empire State Britain
The current state of Britain needs to be explained in a long view – which goes beyond Thatcher, the 1960s, the post-war settlement or the cost of the Second World War: the usual culprits trotted out to explain away decline.
Instead, I am going to look briefly at the legacy of Empire and the influence of the City, the anti-industrial ethos of establishment Britain, and the nature of the UK state, at home and in its global influence.
First, Empire has left a significant influence and shadow across Britain domestically to this day which is seldom understood. What people often ignore or fail to grasp is that Empire remade large swathes of British life – economically, socially and culturally.
Empire and the financial nexus of the City of London grew up hand in hand, one supporting and defining the other. This can be seen in the patterns of imperial trade, investment, preferment and protection which made London into the first world city: the centre of 'the world system' of Empire (Darwin, 2009). This process resulted in the City becoming the cornerstone of the British economy; yet at the same time as it looked abroad it became separated from the rest of the economy. The City 'crowded out' the prospect for the UK to become an economy shaped by industry or having a developmental state.
Instead, the City became a pillar of the Empire State – and in its evolution and success it sprang from and gave sustenance to the anti-industry ethos of the British ruling class. Industry was just not the sort of appropriate livelihood for a gentleman who instead had the elite playground of the Empire or City to choose from. These values persist to this day – aided by Thatcher's 'Big Bang' and New Labour's collusion with the City, the burgeoning size of Britain's financial industries pre-crash, and the culture it has spawned (Bagehot, 2009).
Britain as a 'World Island'
Britain has to be understood geo-politically and an appropriate place to start is Churchill's 1946 speech which put Britain at the centre of three circles: Empire, Anglo-America and Europe. Today as Andrew Gamble has set out there are four circles: British Union, Commonwealth, Anglo-America and Europe (Gamble, 2003).
This is the idea of Britain – or more accurately at points England as 'a world island' – a place at the centre of a series of complex inter-relationships. It also locates Britain in the context of 'the Anglo-sphere' – by which I mean the six countries of the English speaking democracies of advanced capitalism. These are as well as the UK: the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Ireland.
Each of the six has had very distinct neo-liberal experiments unleashed in them not found anywhere else in the Western world. The specific values and policies of 'the Anglo-sphere' can be summarised as having:
A pronounced culture of individualism;
Liberty seen as first and foremost as an economic idea, before it is viewed in a social or political context;

A concept of political economy based upon a distinctive idea of the free market;
A narrow model of corporate governance, responsibility and finance;
A specific way in which the role and place of the state is understood.

Many of the pronounced neo-liberal actions were undertaken by supposedly centre-left parties. In this New Labour is part of an international phenomenon found at its most pronounced in 'the Anglo-sphere'. As well as Tony Blair and Gordon Brown's embrace of market fundamentalism, there has been Bill Clinton's New Democrats, Bob Hawke's and Paul Keating's Australian Labor, 'the Rogernomics' of New Zealand Labour, and the Canadian Liberal administration of Jean Chretien.

It would seem that 'the Anglo-sphere' model of capitalism is one whose origins and roots can be traced back to the UK; the distinctive economic, social and political sphere that formed around the Enlightenment. This is sometimes called 'the Scottish Enlightenment' of Adam Smith, David Hume and William Robertson. In recent years, some writers have tried to claim that 'the Scots invented the modern world', and even that the Declaration of Arbroath led to the US Declaration of Independence (Herman, 2002). It would instead be more accurate to say that in ideas and people the UK had a defining role in the creation of 'the Anglo-sphere'.

Empire also matters in the retreat from imperial citizenship to a Commonwealth, the path from the Nationality Act 1948 to the Nationality Act 1981. This has left the Queen head of sixteen independent states around the world – while retaining a Britain outside the UK which is seldom explored: ranging from the Isle of Man, Jersey and Guernsey to the fourteen British Overseas Territories (BOT). This latter group have a colonial relationship with the mother country while none have direct representation in the British Parliament (Mycock, 2010).

It is not an accident that some of the territories of Britain beyond the UK are among the top tax havens of the world. Places such as the Isle of Man, Jersey, Guernsey, the Cayman Islands and Bermuda have become key financial and business centres for the liquid modern capital world. These black holes in the global economy have an enormous distortive effect – and the UK's collusion and encouragement of this has aided US debates on deregulation, tax avoidance and capital flight (Shaxson, 2011).

Then there is the nature of the UK internally: the notion of the British state as a unitary state – which happens to be completely inaccurate.

Unitary state Britain is a powerful, potent version of history which has been told and retold through the ages and which plays on British exceptionalism. Once upon a time it carried widespread popular support – the long march of parliamentary sovereignty and liberty and the story of Britain standing alone in World War Two. This later period – 1940-41 and 'our finest hour' - has become a crucial part of the British popular imagination and what Jonathan Freedland has called 'our founding story' (2011).

The UK is a 'union state' or even as James Mitchell has advocated 'a state of unions' (Mitchell, 2009). The former is now institutionalised in the multi-layered governance and devolution of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. And yet as the UK has fragmented and the post-war settlement collapsed our political classes have grown more and more dogmatic in their narrow interpretation of unitary state Britain.

The Tory and Labour stories of Britain once carried significant popular acclaim, and the Tory one at least – in the times of Baldwin, Churchill and Macmillan – had an implicit understanding of Britain as a union state (Hassan, 2008b).

No more is this the case. There is a direct link between the reaffirmation of the unitary state, the omnipotence of the political centre and Empire State Britain, and the neo-liberal revolution of the last thirty years.

It is only in this context that you can explain the strange state of the centre-left and social democracy in Britain. The terrain, culture and soil of the UK were never conducive to an

enduring social democratic settlement, despite all the years of left hope and Labour Party chauvinism.
Britain has become a symbol and outrider for post-democratic politics – a new alignment of the elites and powerful which has aided a deep erosion and dilution of what passes for the centre-left internationally. This is part of Zygmunt Bauman's observation – when he asks, 'do indeed social democrats hold a utopia of their own? I doubt it.'
And goes on: 'social democracy has lost its own separate constituency – its social fortresses and ramparts' (Hassan and Bauman, 2011). It has been humiliated and defeated by neo-liberalism – the last modernist utopia left standing in the Western world.
It is to the consequences of this in Britain which I will now turn too.

The Neo-Liberal State and its Context

The Neo-Liberal State

The character of the British state has been transformed over the last thirty years – to a degree which is barely understood by the British political classes.
This is the cumulative effect of the Thatcher and Blair revolutions – which are now being built upon and extended by the Cameron Conservatives in coalition with the Liberal Democrats. The UK state has become a neo-liberal state – one which has changed how it acts in the UK and globally (Hassan and Barnett, 2009).
The neo-liberal state has a transformed political centre; one which at the core and highest echelons of British government now prioritises marketisation, corporatisation and outsourcing, and economic relationships which aid this. The political centre has been captured by entrepreneurs of the state, corporate interests, and the accountancy firms.
The old Whitehall mandarins have been caricatured by 'Yes Minister' – an account the Thatcherites and Blairites thought accurate in describing them as obstacles to change, stuffy, high bound to tradition and Oxbridge dominated. This has been used to push through a supposed opening up – with more diversity in terms of women and ethnic minorities, concealing a new ossified social order and even more virulent conservatism.
The mantra is now about modernisation, change and reform, 'the status quo not being an option' and lots of other cliches. This leads to a culture of constant change as the narrative and a lack of continuity with only 23% of senior civil servants having been in their post for four years or more, with an average time in post of 2.9 years, leading to a 'limited remembrance' of the past and 'hazy organisational memory' (Brindle, 2009).
Older values such as 'public sector ethos' are openly disparaged and scoffed at as 'out of date'. This is Steve Robson, then a Treasury official, who guided through British Rail and London Underground privatisation, in evidence to the House of Commons Public Administration Committee:

> … the public sector ethos is a bit of a fantasy, it is rather like middle-aged men, who fantasise that beautiful, young women find them attractive. (*Sampson*, 2004, 120)

When Robson left government he took up himself like many of the new British mandarins a number of lucrative corporate directorships including Royal Bank of Scotland and JP Morgan.
The UK policy agenda has entailed the first big privatisations by the Thatcher Governments and the 'choice' agenda of the Blair Government giving sizeable parts of the public sector to private interests (Craig and Brooks, 2006). And now comes the Cameron reforms – opening up the NHS to private health care companies, privatising the Forestry Commission, and introducing 'free schools' – all in England – and all accurately presented by Tory ministers as 'Blair, better' (Forsyth, 2011).
The Tony Blair memories are the bible of 'the Cameroon Conservatives' – on how they implement public service reforms, not make war (Blair, 2010); while the Thatcher memories

were read cover to cover by the Blairites as a guide on how to govern and succeed (Thatcher, 1993). Here is a description of Michael Gove, Education Secretary, in the Cameron Government:

> The Education Secretary, for his part, devoured the Blair memoirs and during the Tory conference slept with them by his bed. Often, if someone challenges Gove on an aspect of his policy of school reform, he will refer to his copy of the Blair bible. (Forsyth, 2011)

At an international level the UK, even under New Labour, was a leading advocate for privatisation across the world often under the guise of international development. The UK Government funded the right-wing Adam Smith International to preach the virtues of privatisation across Africa. Even Clare Short, a left-wing Labour Minister for International Development, who resigned in the aftermath of the Iraq war in 2003, made the case for privatisation:

> Privatisation is the only way to get the investment that poor countries need in things like banking, tourism, telecommunications, and services such as water, under good regulatory arrangements. (Hassan, 2008a)

The UK has been remade by this revolution. A huge industry has grown up around the Big Four accounting firms: Ernest and Young, KPMG, PwC and Deloitte Touche. Then there are the top law firms – Allen and Overy, Linklaters, Freshfields – who have become the world's top law firms.

This has resulted in the UK becoming a world centre for legal contracts and accountancy, for making deals, doing business and oiling the wheels of the global economy (Barnett and Hutton, 2011). All of this has repercussions for the make-up of British society and politics, and in particular for London and the South East of England.

Neo-Liberal Culture

Secondly, from this flows the promotion of neo-liberal culture: a culture which is based on celebrating the cult of the individual, selfishness, greed and the validation of winners. I want to choose two emblematic examples: British TV culture and football.

The success of TV programmes such as 'The X Factor' and 'The Apprentice' is deeply revealing – and often sees programme formats made which are sold around the world.

Such programmes are more complex and nuanced than traditional commentators from 'The Daily Mail' and 'Daily Telegraph' acknowledge. They do have entertainment value, and they do show a way in which in a media-saturated, communication society people want to find voice, be visible and public, and that this is a form of validation and acceptance. There is in these kind of programmes a mass appetite for people desiring to become actors in their own lives and wanting to seek an audience.

All of this is in a very constrained, controlled environment. These programmes are not the heralding of a new participative democracy - something 'Big Brother' was lauded as when launched in 2000. It soon became a cliché that more young people voted in 'Big Brother's' final than voted in the UK general election; it didn't matter that you could vote as many times as you wanted in 'Big Brother' - changing the value of a vote.

These shows are symbols of the crisis of public service broadcasting and the rise of a ruthless manipulative populism – which sees popular culture and music as ephemeral, disposable and inherently worthless; and has a similarly low opinion of the audience.

Then we come to the world of English football. The English Premiership is regularly celebrated as 'the best league in the world' and is a significant promoter of England across the world (Radcliffe, 2000).

Ten of the twenty clubs in the Premiership this season are foreign owned (Beckett, 2010); fourteen of the clubs have offshore financial arrangements: Birmingham City are registered in the Cayman Islands, Tottenham Hotspur in the Bahamas, Sunderland in Jersey. This allows

clubs to pay less UK tax and overseas football stars coming to England to have substantial proportions of their earnings as image rights and not incur full UK tax (Watts, 2010).
More than half of all debt in European football – 56% - is in the English Premiership (Conn, 2010). The English game is not a metaphor for 'Fantasy Island Britain' and the illusion of 'the bubble'; it is directly a creation of it.
This is presented in the British media as a natural development: as the equivalent of the product of nature when it is a direct result of the open door policy of British capitalism. This results in no restrictions on foreign ownership of any of the strategic parts of the British economy from the major airports to nuclear power stations.
The ultimate destination of this is 'the world island' of England literally moving shop. Harry Redknapp, manager of Spurs commented:

> Soon I believe every Premier League Club will be owned by a foreign billionaire and they will want the same thing – the title. (Redknapp, 2010)

Then we have the clamour for a final round of Premiership games – the so called '39th game' – played in somewhere supposedly glamorous such as Dubai – all to increase TV rights, revenue and sponsorship.
Redknapp has said:

> I am absolutely convinced down the line Premier League games will, take place all around the world. (Redknapp, 2010)

This is a vision of football bereft of the people's game, fans, supporting a club linked to place, family and tradition: the ultimate extension of neo-liberal culture.

The Neo-Liberal Self

Finally, in this triptych is the emergence of the neo-liberal self. Any revolution worth its name has to aspire to remaking the notion of 'the self': its equivalent 'new workers' of the new order. The nature of the neo-liberal self is one who is supposedly the all-powerful and sovereign consumer, narcissistic, selfish, superficial and instrumental in how and who they choose to have relationships with.
The neo-liberal self is the modern day version and recreation of Marcuse's 'one dimensional man' (Marcuse, 1964) – a self which is increasingly isolated, atomised and without voice and power, and permeating and penetrated by the unrelenting logic of consumer capitalism, advertising, marketing and the power of brands.
It is true that shopping and consumerism have given people more choice, a degree of liberation, and one with a gendered story; there is play, fun and visibility to be found in shopping for many people which is often ignored by critics (Lawson, 2009); yet ultimately the neo-liberal self is a world shorn of many of the most profound things which make us human.
This is the terrain in which Britain has evolved in recent decades; one which has been advocated by the Thatcher and Blair eras, but which was only possible because of the nature of British society, capitalism and the state. Without that long story the far-reaching changes we have witnessed so far would not have been possible.

The Territorial Dimensions of the United Kingdom

The Same Old Story

The territorial dimensions of the UK are despite devolution – often ignored or diminished by the British political classes, academia and media accounts – which cling to a unitary state politics. Esteemed commentators such as Anthony King, Peter Kellner and Vernon Bogdanor articulate a complacent, self-congratulatory manner and content.
Anthony King in 'The English Constitution' addresses in the conclusion all the many concerns and calls for reform of the UK constitution and asks, 'What, then, is to be done?'

and then states, ‘The short answer is nothing’. Reform is ‘likely to fall on deaf ears – and deserves to fall on deaf ears – for six separate reasons’ (2007, 363) which he then lays out:

1. That there is no need for a written constitution.
2. There is no popular demand for either a convention or a written constitution.
3. A broadly agreed draft constitution would probably not in fact emerge from the proposed convention.
4. There is a high probability, though not a certainty, that any agreed constitution that did emerge from the proposed constitutional convention would be a bad one, possibly a very bad one.
5. Even if men and women of comparable statute could be attracted, it is not at all clear that attending such a convention would be the most profitable use of their time.
6. Finally, but not least, the UK has already undergone – even since the late 1960s– a period of intense and unremitting constitutional change. Good sense would seem to suggest that the time has come to pause …. Enough is enough, one might think – if not forever, then at least for the time being (King, 2008, 363-65).

Peter Keller in his ‘Democracy: 1,000 Years in Pursuit of British Liberty’ opens with the statement, ‘Liberty is Britain’s gift to the world’ (2009, 1).

Vernon Bogdanor writing in the ‘New Statesman’ last year illustrates the contemporary power of the Whig like story of progress and 1945 and all that reviewing a book by Paul Addison stating:

> Addison surely goes too far when he assumes that the social-democratic settlement has been fatally undermined …. The Attlee settlement dug deep. Indeed, the history of postwar Britain often seems a mere coda to it. The Thatcher revolution, by contrast, was more superficial. (Bogdanor, 2010)

The English Dimension

Central to this is the issue of England, which seems to have turned its back for the time on any notion of territorially rebalancing itself through regional decentralisation. This would not have directly addressed ‘the essential asymmetry of the UK’ (Keating, 2009, 178), and in particular the over-concentration of wealth and power in London and the South East of England which disfigures British society and politics.

While we have had lots of attention and books looking at Scotland or posing Scottish public spending as the problem – not one high profile book has been written on the South East problem and power in the UK. Reform could have offered the prospect of beginning a differentiated territorial politics in England which explored these issues; yet the silence – not just in political elites – is deafening.

The failure of an English counter-story has had numerous consequences (Hassan and Ilett, 2011). First, the British political classes belief that the British constitution remains fundamentally unaltered and untouched by constitutional change and devolution has to be recognised. They remain committed to the unitary state story of Britain, and seem to have no interest in rethinking and radically changing the British state.

Second, the continuation of this approach is likely to eventually encourage massive change in the form of the more overt assertion of a unitary state England that will lead inexorably to a new set of relationships across the UK. There has long been an assumption north of the border that the future of the UK will be decided by the Scottish dimension, but it is more than likely any decisive shift could occur in England.

Third, there is the European dimension and the Tory Eurosceptic mindset of trying to entrench British parliamentary sovereignty and the belief amongst many of this persuasion that continued EU membership is ultimately incompatible with the British constitution. Then there is the current Euro crisis, institutional sclerosis, democratic deficit, and lack of progress in the Europe of the Regions.

It is too late for a political project of nation-building built around Britishness. Instead, all of the rhetoric expended by Gordon Brown (2006), David Cameron (2011) and other politicians on this subject is manifest of the problems and crisis; and is not the solution (Nairn, 2006; Hassan 2009).

The late British project is an attempt to address multi-national, multi-cultural concerns in a modernist narrative which is focused on universal values: fair play and democracy, along with institutions such as the NHS.

David Cameron's recent excursion into this terrain drew together an analysis of the end of multiculturalism, the security agenda and need for British values in an agenda which mixed Blair and Brown's concerns on Britishness (2011). It was as empty and threadbare as their interventions – with no evidential foundations for most of its assertions and containing few real policy proposals. Even less was there any sign of new thinking at the heart of British Government.

The underlying sentiment of the British debate is that British national identity is superior: pluralist, proper and legal, whereas other identities are mono-cultural, less meaningful and not legal. The UK Government's 'The Governance of Britain' Green Paper published in 2007 makes no apologies about this:

There is room to celebrate multiple different identities, but none of these identities should take precedence over the core democratic values that define what it means to be British. (Secretary of State for Justice and Lord Chancellor, 2007, 57)

This brings us back to the English dimension, the British state and neo-liberalism. England is the territory and space for the neo-liberal experiment moving on to its next stage.

The Cameron Conservatives are now implementing the next stage of extending neo-liberalism in Britain: opening up the NHS to private health companies, handing of state schools and colleges to the private sector through 'free schools' and 'academies', and privatising the forests. All of this is a very English revolution with several other sales planned for the future.

What is fascinating in this is the juxtaposition of the messianic management triumphalism of remaking institutions, and the hesitant, deliberate silence on territoriality; when Cameron talks of 'this country' with 'European levels of health spending' without 'European levels of success in our health service' - he means without ever saying it - England (Beckford, 2011).

This conundrum can be seen across all British politics. For example, Lord Goldsmith's Report 'Our Common Bond' – a government report on citizenship – talks about 'citizenship education' but does so nearly exclusively in relation to English education. It recommended an Oath of Allegiance to the Head of State with only the most token acknowledgement how this might fare in Scotland and Northern Ireland (Goldsmith, 2008).

Previously the British governing classes would have known better than this kind of 'collective amnesia' about what the United Kingdom is. No longer can that be said and that carries huge consequences.

British Futures

The character and nature of Britain is going to increasingly come to the fore: the union state realities of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland; the unitary state politics of the British political establishment; and the English dimension.

This will find form and expression across politics, about policy, institutions and values. Pivotal to this is the English issue. Can England become a completely Thatcherised–Murdochised playground for neo-liberalism? Or can England save itself from the forward march of neo-liberalism?

Is it possible for England to shift from a unitary state mentality? And if not - will Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland – slowly detach themselves from the centre?

I want to conclude with three plausible British futures which could emerge from this:

A politics of the imperial centre: the Thatcherite and Blairite revolutions are consolidated and extended by the Cameron Conservatives;
The entrenchment of the English unitary state: with Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland slowly beginning to detach themselves from the centre;
The emergence of an English national voice and notion of union politics leading to a fundamental reconfiguration of the UK.
The most likely future over the next 20-30 years lies probably between the second and third options. And indeed that we could probably pass from the first to the second and eventually the third.
In this the inter-relationship between the constitutional make-up of the UK, territorial politics and political institutions and values is crucial. Post-social democracy – the form of neo-liberalism – its advance by the British state in England – and its lack of advocates at a Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish level – will be one of the key determinants of how the future maps out.
One of the biggest weaknesses in addressing these issues – along with the concentration of power and influence in a new establishment – is the British left and its inability to think about the nature of the British state, the nations and relations of the UK, and issues of nationalism. This is true of most of the British left – including some of its most enlightened parts such as the Compass group and the 'London Review of Books'.
Sadly the British left seems to have a complete disconnection from these issues. A recent Compass piece by Neal Lawson and John Harris had only a cursory mention of politics outside Westminster (Lawson and Harris, 2010). A 'London Review of Books' by Peter Mair went even further dismissing concerns for the state of the British body politic (Mair, 2010).
After declaring that, 'The UK has generously provisioned local parliaments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland', he goes on to dismiss concerns about corruption in British politics writing that, 'By most standards the levels of corruption exposed by the expenses scandal in the UK are relatively modest'.
He then writes of MPs that, 'Nor is the job very well paid', before putting the plight of the British parliamentarian in its full context:

> … since they spend most of their time mixing with the great and the good, and with ministers, financiers, journalists and TV personalities, all of whom earn substantially more than they do, it is easy to understand their sense of relative depravation. (Mair, 2010)

This is the voice of the thoughtful, intelligent, international minded British left: one that is making excuses for the debasement of our politics, the interweaving of politics in a post-democratic order, that is silent on England, complacent on the nature of the British state, and nervous about the European dimension and its challenge to the British political system.
The British left in this is just part of a wider predicament about politics, the nature of our elites, the scale of change we have experienced in recent decades, and the character of the state. Our political class – of left, centre, and right - still has the self-importance to usher some of us to be grateful for our 'generously provisioned' Parliaments. And its heart beat races in the belief that the British constitution is the envy of the world, a body politic held in reverence and deference the world over; that may seem a risible outlook to anyone outside the British political classes, but that is how out of touch, insular, arrogant and lacking in radical imagination they are.
This is the state we are in. The future of the UK is inextricably linked to the future of the neo-liberal state; neither is likely to continue in their current form for that long. But to begin with we have to stop making excuses for this state of affairs.
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