

Ruling the Informational Void: Ideational Infrastructure and Party Democracy in the United Kingdom



John Christopher Bick
European Institute

A thesis submitted to the European Institute of the
London School of Economics and Political Science
for the degree of *Doctor of Philosophy*

London, September 2024

Declaration

I certify that the thesis I have presented for examination for the MPhil/PhD degree of the London School of Economics and Political Science is solely my own work other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others. The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. Quotation from it is permitted, provided that full acknowledgement is made. This thesis may not be reproduced without my prior written consent. I warrant that this authorisation does not, to the best of my belief, infringe the rights of any third party. I declare that my thesis consists of 98,988 words.

Abstract

This thesis casts new light on the state of contemporary party democracy and contributes to ongoing debates about party decline and possibilities for renewal. Most accounts of party decline tend to explain the struggles of contemporary parties by analysing exogenous factors, such as deindustrialisation and class dealignment, shifting voter preferences and the rise of individualism, or the rise of new communication technologies that render traditional modes of political organising obsolete. While all of these approaches offer important perspectives, they often miss the question implied by these declinist narratives: Why did parties let this happen? To address this question, I argue that the challenges facing contemporary party democracy cannot be properly understood without looking inside the parties themselves to understand how they have responded to changing external circumstances in the past and why they appear to be struggling to do so today.

To do so, this project explores how party ideas — an essential but often overlooked aspect of party democracy — are developed, how processes of ideational development have evolved over the twentieth century, and how these changes contributed to what Peter Mair described as the "void" between parties and voters. This thesis develops the concept of *ideational infrastructure* — networks of organisations both inside and outside the party that facilitate the production and dissemination of political ideas — to develop a comparative historical analysis of the U.K. Labour and Conservative parties. It finds that over the course of the twentieth century, both parties underwent a process of ideational outsourcing, shifting responsibility for the production and distribution of their policy platforms from central party researchers to networks of party-external political professionals. Building from this historical base, it then examines how these externalised ideational infrastructures impact contemporary British party democracy. Using a combination of network analysis and interview research, it finds important deficits in the externalised ideational infrastructure of both parties, with Labour struggling to articulate broad programmatic appeals and the Conservative Party poorly equipped to engage in substantive, evidence-based policymaking. I conclude that this leaves both parties unable to properly function as democratic institutions, albeit for distinct reasons.

Acknowledgements

The list of people to whom I owe a debt of gratitude for helping me get the project over the line is immense. I do my best to thank as many as possible, but I will inevitably leave some names off the list. It is with this sense of guilt, therefore, that I would like to thank anyone I forgot to mention.

More directly, I would first like to give my sincerest thanks to my supervisors, Abby Innes and Jonathan Hopkin. My unflinching ability to overthink every detail and my glacial writing pace no doubt made this PhD a frustrating one to supervise, but Abby and Jonathan's clarity of thought, brilliant insights into British politics, and, most of all, supportive patience were invaluable for helping me complete this journey.

I also owe thanks to figures from across the broader LSE community, and in particular mention Robin Archer, who gave me valuable insights into the project's direction at various points throughout its development. Jacob Lypp, Neil Warner, Sacha Hilhorst, and Cristóbal Garibay-Petersen are also due special mention for providing feedback on various parts of the project -- as are Colm Murphy, Patrick Diamond, Tommaso Crescioli, Dustin Voss, Toon van Overbeke, Virginia Crespi de Valldaura and Paul Kindermann for thought-provoking discussion on political economy, party politics and democratic theory.

The EI's PSS team is also due my thanks, and especially Adam Judge and Samson Yeung, who were always incredibly generous with their support—despite the fact that, after all this time, I still consistently message the wrong email addresses.

Of course, completing a PhD requires more than just intellectual support, and I would like to thank everyone from the European Institute and beyond for their unflinching comradeship and friendship. In particular, I would like to mention, Asha Herten-Crabb, Andréa Delestrade, Melanie Erspamer, Sarah Gerwens, Halie Zola, Noa Krikler, Daniela Movileanu, Gianmarco Fifi, Daphnée Papiasse, Yonatan Levi, Benedetta Morari, Nilüfer Güneş, and Elena Pro -- in addition to several of the names mentioned above. Your good

cheer and well-timed messages of support made more of a difference than you could ever know.

My family also deserves enormous thanks for their support through this process. My mom, Trudi, dad, Tom, and brother, Andrew, have been a constant source of support despite the distance between us. It was always an immense source of comfort to know that, even in the darkest points of the project, you were all only a phone call away.

Finally, I owe my partner Sarah the greatest thanks of all. Through the moments of joy and despair, Sarah was there with unwavering support and clarity of thought. Thank you for putting up with me; I am quite certain it would have been impossible without you.

Table of Contents

Table of Contents

<i>Lists of Tables and Figures</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Chapter 1: Introduction</i>	<i>10</i>
1.1: Party Ideas and the Sources of Renewal.....	14
1.2: Parties, Ideas, and Democracy: An Underspecified Relationship	15
1.3: The Study of Party Ideas Over Time: The Concept of Ideational Infrastructure.....	20
1.4: The Study of Ideas in Party Politics: The Concept of Party Platforms.....	23
1.5: Sick Notes: British Parties as a Critical Case Study	26
1.6: The Argument in Brief	28
<i>Chapter 2: The Emergence of Party-Centric Ideational Infrastructure</i>	<i>34</i>
2.1: Labour's Long 1930s and the Rise of Party-centric Ideational Infrastructure	35
2.2: Background: Ramsay MacDonald and the Importance of <i>Party</i> Ideas	36
2.3: The 1930s and the Formation of Party-centric Ideational Infrastructure	40
2.4: Labour and Ideas During the War	49
2.5: "Chamberlain's Private Army": Mass democracy and the founding of the CRD	62
2.6: Stasis and Reincarnation: The CRD and the Second World War	66
2.7: Opposition Years: The Conservative PCII Beyond the CRD.....	72
2.8: The CRD and the Road Back to Power	75
<i>Chapter 3: PCII in Opposition and Power -- Institutionalisation and the Challenge of Party Government</i>	<i>78</i>
3.1: Constructing a Party Platform in Labour's New Jerusalem	79
3.2: Revisionism and the Abuse of PCII.....	87
3.3: PCII and Factional Strife — Wilson's Balancing Act	96
3.4: The Conservative Research Department and Rise of Conservative PCII.....	104
3.5: Lessons from Churchill's Second Term	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.6: Macmillan and the institutionalisation of PCII	112
3.7: Masters of the Programme	115
<i>Chapter 4: The Advisory Elite and the Executive Centralisation of Party Ideas...117</i>	
4.1 The White Heat of Technology, the Civil Service, and the "Upward" Consolidation of Ideational Authority	119
4.2: Wilson, the Civil Service, and Labour's PCII.....	120

4.3: The Wilson Government and Labour's PCII: From Neglect to Hostility	127
4.4: External Crisis, Internal Turmoil.....	132
4.5: Conservative Leaders and Ideational Consolidation	137
4.6: Homes Indifference, Heath's Frustration.....	138
4.7: Taking After Wilson: Heath's Experiments with Governmental Policymaking	146
4.8: Building the Labour's Programme 1973: The Leftward Turn of Labour's PCII	150
4.9: Wilson's Return to Power: SpAds and the Party in Public Office.....	159
4.10: Leader-Centric Ideational Infrastructure, redux	167
4.11: PCII and the Winter of Discontent	172
4.12: Labour in the 1980s: Party Democracy and Left's Ideational Domination	177
Chapter 5: Think Tanks and the Rise of External Ideational Infrastructure (EI) .	183
5.1: Thatcher, Joseph and Externalised Ideational Infrastructure	185
5.2: The Institute for Economic Affairs Comes in from the Cold.....	186
5.3: Centre for Policy Studies and the Battle for the Conservative Party's Soul.....	190
5.4: Thatcher in Power: Think Tanks and Party Discipline	198
5.5: Thatcher, Think Tanks and the Policy Unit.....	201
5.6: New Labour's New Think Tanks	203
5.7: Kinnock and the Communicative Turn	205
5.8: Kinnock's Paradox: Communications with Nothing to Say.....	212
5.9: Labour Discovers Ideational Outsourcing: IPPR and the Commission on Social Justice.....	215
5.10: New Labour: Blair Completes the Revolution.....	222
5.11: Connecting the Frontbench to External Expertise: The Importance of Ministerial Advisers	229
5.12: New Labour's "Anti-Learning Practices", Anticipating the Shortcomings of Externalised Ideational Infrastructure?	235
Chapter 6: Party Ideas in an Age of Externalised Ideational Infrastructure.....	238
6.1: Policy Networks and the Study of Externalised Ideational Infrastructures (EIs) .	239
6.2: Mapping Externalised Ideational Infrastructure: The Centrality of SpAds in Contemporary Party Policy Networks.....	243
6.3: Findings: The Divergent Fields of SpAds/PAds	249
6.4: Interpreting Networks: Fields and Ideational Supply.....	263
6.5: Discussion: The Divergent Policy Networks of Britain's Two Primary Political Parties	264
6.6: Discussion: Externalised Ideational Infrastructure and Programmatic Renewal..	270
6.7: Conclusion: EI and Contemporary Party Ideas	274

<i>Chapter 7: Conclusion: Externalised Ideational Infrastructure and the Democratic Void</i>	<i>275</i>
7.1: Externalised Ideational Infrastructure, Party Democracy, and the Future of Economic Governance — Contribution to Existing Accounts of Party Democracy	281
7.2: Broader Contributions	286
7.3: Where do we go from here?	290
<i>Network Appendix:</i>	<i>293</i>
Appendix 1: Unfiltered Overview Networks, Coded by Background Industry	293
Appendix 2: Unfiltered Overview Networks, Coded by SpAd Expertise Type	298
<i>Bibliography</i>	<i>302</i>
<i>Party Archival Materials:</i>	<i>338</i>
Labour Party:.....	338
Conservative Party:	340

Lists of Tables and Figures

Figures:

Figure 1.1: The Rise of Challenger Parties and the Decline of the Mainstream (Page 12)

Figure 5.1: John Hoskyn's Wiring Diagram (Page 195)

Figure 6.1: Example of Simplified Employment Network (Page 245)

Figure 6.2: Conservative Party, Importance of Party Work (Page 250)

Figure 6.3: Labour Party, Importance of Party Work (Page 251)

Figure 6.4: Conservative Party, Top-10% Most Influential Node Network (Page 256)

Figure 6.5: Labour Party, Top-10% Most Influential Node Network (Page 257)

Figure 6.6: Conservative Party, Top-10% Most Influential Node Network (by policy-producing organisations) (Page 259)

Figure 6.7: Labour Party, Top-10% Most Influential Node Network (by policy-producing organisations) (Page 260)

Tables:

Table 3.1: Relative Size of Party Organisations in 1970 by Staff Number (Page 114)

Table 5.1: Number of SpAds per party in government, Total and Policy Unit (Page 231)

Table 5.2: Shore Money Allocations 1997-2015, (Page 233)

Table 5.3: Short Money Funding for Leader of the Opposition's Office (Page 234)

Politics does not reflect majorities, it constructs them.

Stuart Hall, 1987

Chapter 1: Introduction

Peter Mair famously declared that political parties were defunct. Indeed, following a lifetime of study, his final statement to the party literature was that the institutions that had dominated the institutional landscape of 20th-century democracy no longer existed as commonly conceived. Parties have become, he argued, “so disconnected from the wider society, and pursue a form of competition that is so lacking in meaning, that they no longer seem capable of sustaining democracy in its present form” (Mair, 2013: Maudling 1978 p. 1).

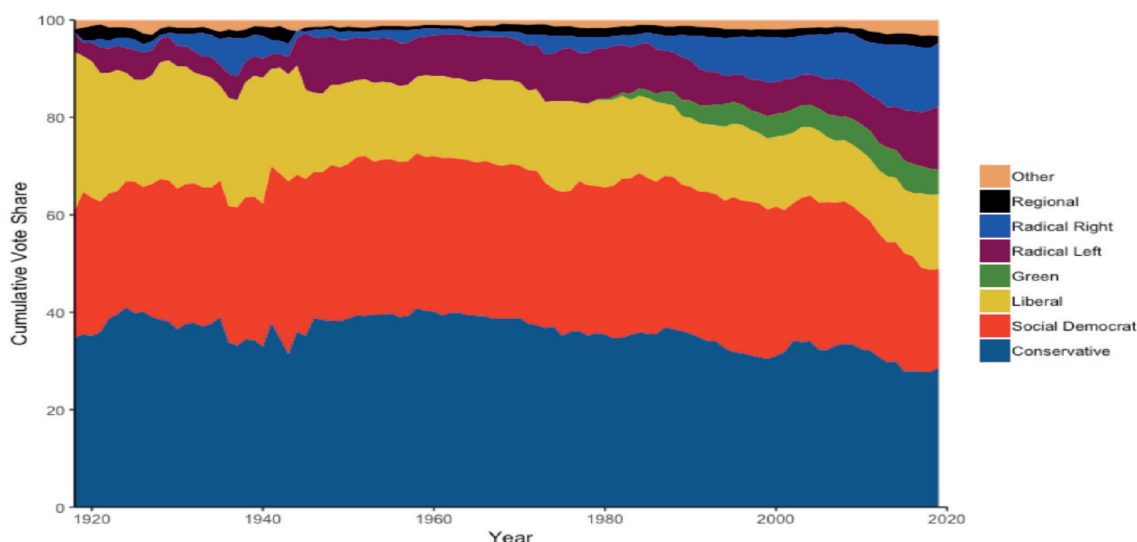
His conclusions are striking: in advanced capitalist democracies, parties have shifted from representative institutions into something entirely different, effectively rendering input from ordinary citizens meaningless. In short, “as parties fail, so too does popular democracy...with the decline of parties, popular democracy can no longer operate in the way we have known and accepted it” (*ibid.*, p. 13). Nevertheless, in most cases, parties remain the primary means by which citizens interact with the political sphere, but these interactions have become rote and performative. A retreat from ideological convictions and political vision has reduced electoral competition to something largely superficial. As the “politics of depoliticization” (*ibid.*, p. 51) takes hold, party elites and the electorate have turned away from the institutions that shaped democratic politics throughout the twentieth century, leaving a void where meaningful representative democracy once stood. Parties, as democratic institutions, persist in form but no longer in function.

This project is an exploration of this process of democratic atrophy, one that advances an analytical approach that focuses on a frequently overlooked aspect of party democracy: their ideas. More specifically, the project focuses on how parties develop the

ideas they present to voters, how these developmental processes have changed over time, and how these changes have contributed to the democratic malaise described by Mair and others.

It is easy to see why Mair and colleagues might be pessimistic about the future of political parties. Indeed, since at least the mid-1980s, scholars have been tracking, by various measures, what is described as the decline of the political party as an essential feature of political life (Katz, 1990; Selle & Svasand, 1991). By almost every conceivable metric, parties appeared less robust at the end of the twentieth century than at any point since they emerged to organise the emergence of mass democracy at its onset (Mair, 2013) – and these trends, for the most part, have only accelerated into the twenty-first century (van Biezen et al., 2009). Party membership rates have plummeted from post-war highs, with less than five per cent of the European voting public belonging to a political party (Maftean, 2024). Of those that remain, a decreasing proportion counts amongst the ranks of “active members”, as defined by regular participation in party activities (Mair, 2003). Even by the weaker ‘party identification’ measure, declines are evident and uniform (Mair, 2013: p. 35-40). These declines are also reflected in opinion data, with Europeans reporting feelings of increasing disenchanted with political parties, which are seen to be no longer concerned with citizens’ demands and more concerned with self-preservation in an era of ever-shrinking vote share (Ignazi, 2021). These trends are particularly pronounced for the ‘legacy’ political parties of the centre left and centre right, which, with few exceptions, have ceded vote share to newly emergent challenger or “anti-system” parties (Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1: The Rise of Challenger Parties and the Decline of the Mainstream



Source: De Vries and Hobolt, 2020: p. 16

Unsurprisingly, political scientists, sociologists and even some adventurous economists have focused on understanding this decline (Colombo & Dinas, 2023; Gherardini & Giuliani, 2022; Benedetto et al., 2020; Piketty, 2020). The most general explanations set the problem beyond the scope of parties and in the realm of democracy itself, seeing a world in which nation-bound democracy has been left behind by globe-trotting capitalism (Streeck, 2014; Crouch, 2005; Boix, 1985). Building from this viewpoint, a host of explanations focus on the role that structural economic changes have played in upending the traditional class cleavages that structured 20th-century party democracy (Gingrich & Häusermann, 2015; Oesch, 2006; Kitschelt, 1994; Lipset & Rokkan, 1967). This, in turn, spawned a range of studies that aimed to explore these shifts by tracing how changes in voter behaviour might explain the decline of the parties that emerged in the twentieth century to represent voters with different sets of motivations and values (Chwieroth & Walter, 2019; Kriesi et al., 2008; Kitschelt, 1994; Przeworski & Sprague, 1986; Inglehart, 1977). Others have pointed party-systemic dynamics to explain these struggles, tracing how the breakdown of traditional cleavages has made room for entrepreneurial “challenger” or anti-system parties (De Vries & Hobolt, 2020; Hooghe & Marks, 2018; Abou-Chadi, 2016). Still others look to the destabilising effects of neoliberalism, especially since the 2008 financial crisis and subsequent embrace of austerity, to explain how policy decisions of the past have created untenable political

contradictions in the present (Hopkin, 2020; Hopkin & Blyth, 2019; Grzymala-Busse, 2019).

1.1: Party Ideas and the Sources of Renewal

All of these studies offer vital insight into the changing face of party democracy in an era of radical uncertainty and “polycrisis” (Lawrence et al., 2024; Bronk & Jacoby, 2020; Zeitlin et al., 2019). However, with notable exceptions (Kiefel, 2022; Mudge, 2018; Buckler & Dolowitz, 2009), few have attempted to open up the black box of party organisation to try and understand the next obvious question raised by this decline — why have parties been so ill-equipped to adapt to these changes? In other words, the puzzle now becomes not so much why parties are in decline but why they have struggled to reinvent themselves.

As noted above, this project proposes to unpack this puzzle by looking inside party structures to understand the processes by which they develop and articulate their primary tools of connection to voters – their ideas. More specifically, it seeks to examine how the process of party-ideational development has changed as parties and voters have pulled away from each other in their “mutual withdrawal” (Mair, 2014: p. 2013: p. 16), and what this means for the prospects of contemporary representative party democracy. To do this, it develops a historical analysis of Britain’s two main political parties, Labour and the Conservatives. Focusing on critical periods of institutional instability in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, it analyses how both parties changed their approach both to developing ideas and communicating these ideas to the voting public in response to a perceived need to renew their offer. Using a combination of historical process tracing, network analysis, and qualitative analysis of party documents and interview data, the thesis develops an organisational approach to the study of party ideas to examine how parties in the UK have changed their relationship with ideas and, subsequently, their functionality as democratic institutions.

The remainder of the chapter will proceed as follows. First, I will weave together the literature on party democracy and organisational change to make the theoretical case that party ideas — and thus the processes by which these ideas are developed — play a key role in understanding parties' unique ability to represent the public and govern the state. Put more simply, I argue that a party's democratic potential is closely tied to how it develops and distributes its ideas. I will then specify my research design, clarifying key concepts and methodological choices as I go, explaining in particular what I mean when I talk about 'party ideas' and why the U.K. represents a good case study for studying the impact of these ideas. It will conclude with an expanded outline of the road ahead for the rest of the thesis.

1.2: Parties, Ideas, and Democracy: An Underspecified Relationship

Before proceeding further it is first necessary to build a working theory of party ideas' role in representative democracy. Strangely enough, there has traditionally been little mutual engagement across the scholarly literature on democratic theory and party politics. As van Biezen and Saward (2008) show, much of this had to do with a process of mutual disengagement during the mid-twentieth century. In the party politics literature, the behaviouralist turn caused empirical party scholars to look outward towards voters to explain the shifting dynamics of political life. Thus, while 'classic' party scholars had a profound appreciation for the fact that "democracy is unthinkable save in terms of parties" (Schattschneider, 2003), the interest in the dynamics of party democracy faded to a significant degree through the 1960s and 1970s. This is not to say that party scholars became uninterested in democracy per se, but rather that they let questions of what democracy is and how it should work fall into the realm of background assumption, focusing instead on the meso-level features of the structure, functioning, and behaviour of parties (and their voters) themselves. At the same time, democratic theorists frequently fell into the trap of 'overlooking' parties as they concerned themselves with macro-level democratic theorising that saw parties as procedurally necessary (even if a necessary evil) but not something worthy of serious exploration. Following Van Biezen and Saward,

it becomes clear that this mutual disengagement impoverishes both fields. Without normative guidance, party scholars risk failing to address important questions about the legitimacy and democratic functions of political parties. Similarly, without engaging with empirical realities, democratic theorists risk offering abstract or impractical models of democracy that fail to account for parties' vital role in linking citizens to the state.

Fortunately, more recent years have seen scholars on both sides of the disciplinary divide make serious efforts to overcome these gaps, in no small part driven by the alarm that Mair and others raised about the representative crisis emerging as party politics began to atrophy. Starting with the democratic theorists, White and Ypi's (2016) normative defence of partisanship represents a significant intervention for understanding why parties should have a privileged place in our understanding of how democracy works in theory. This is because parties (and by extension the ideas they nurture) can be understood to be vital in stabilising representative democracy over time. To this end, White and Ypi argue that parties provide a platform for partisans to commit to a shared political project by tying contemporary partisans to a common cause with those in previous and future generations (White & Ypi, 2016; White, 2017). Here, party organisation becomes crucial for the inter-generational pursuit of a partisan project and allow the democratic horizon to extend beyond the cyclical logic of regular elections (White, 2017). Beyond this, parties must make external justifications for these claims to be seen as legitimate – they must justify why the ideas they champion about “which interests and identities are worth pursuing and why” are crucial for advancing the collective good as opposed to narrow sectional interest (White & Ypi, 2016: p. 108; see also: Herman, 2017). In this way, party ideas become vital for ensuring democratic stability, as this external justification assures electoral ‘losers’ that governing parties operate within acceptable practice, thus ensuring their continued commitment to the democratic process. As we will see, we can understand party ideas as essential for understanding these democratic functions.

Party scholars, too, have recently taken significant steps to bridge the divide with political theorists, with scholars from both political science and political sociology

articulating several approaches for the role of political parties in making democracy “work”. One particularly useful approach in this regard is the literature on party ‘linkage’, which illuminates the two-sided role that parties play in the organisation of modern democracy, in so far as they both organise the electorate and run the state (Dalton et al., 2011). In a similar vein, Mair describes how parties are uniquely important in the landscape of democratic institutions because they simultaneously act as the representatives of the interests of civil society and responsible governors of the state. In this sense, parties can be understood as bridging institutions between citizens and the state – articulating public interests, aggregating diverse demands, and translating these inputs into coherent political platforms—and work as state-governing bodies (or potential state-governing bodies), using their platforms to govern on behalf of their constituencies and the broader public (Mair, 2003). This dual-facing role makes parties uniquely important organisations for making representative legitimacy ‘work’ because “the same organisation that governed the citizenry also gave that citizenry voice, and the same organisation that channelled representation also managed the institutions of the polity” (Mair, 2009: p. 6). This, indeed, is the essential insight of the ‘mandate-based representative democracy’ approach to party democracy, which argues that the central determinant of a party’s democratic capacity is its ability to use the ideas put forth in a successful electoral manifesto to guide its actions in government (Jakobsson & Kumlin, 2017; Przeworski et al., 1999: Ch. 1).

Party ideas are vital for understanding both of these roles. On the representative side, they function as what Beland and Cox (2016) call “coalition magnets”, stable heuristic frameworks that allow for the coordination of the vast number of political actors and civil society groups that comprise political coalitions. At the individual level, this works because party ideas provide “conceptual maps”, “issue frames”, or “cues” for voters and organisations, helping them to understand how best to pursue their interests in an increasingly complex world and easing the information costs associated with political activity (Brader et al., 2013; Nicholson, 2012; Slothuus & de Vreese, 2010; Achen, 2002; Budge, 1994). Political sociologists from the articulation school have formulated a similar perspective, albeit from the macro-level perspective. Here, ideas and ideologies function

as a crucial part of parties' "articulative" toolboxes that allow them to "suture together" dominant coalitions by (re)shaping dominant voting cleavages while navigating various coalitional and structural constraints (Eidlin, 2016; de Leon et al., 2009). In this sense, ideas play an essential role in allowing parties to perform their democratic function because articulation effectively describes the functional application of party ideas — that is, "it identifies the practical way in which they use ideas to mobilise groups" (Kiefel, 2022: p. 33).

This is similar to Stephanie Mudge's concept of "refraction", in which parties, via the ideas and experts that they embrace, can redirect (like a prism refracting light) how voters understand their interests (Mudge, 2018: p. 8). Here, parties become "vehicles for the making of political ideology, venues of hegemonic struggles, and organisational tools through which categories, actors, and ethics are injected into governing institutions" (ibid., p. 18). As such, parties, and more specifically party ideas, allow scholars to overcome the "party-society problematic" in which the study of parties and party change is reduced to a market-like supply and demand problem: either parties react to voters or voters react to parties. The problem with both approaches, according to Mudge, is that neither can appreciate the true role of parties in democratic society which comes from the interaction of these two fields: "Parties have to represent, and they have to lead; there is no separation between the two" (ibid., p. 20).

Party ideas are also vital for this capacity for parties to 'lead' in the sense that they give the party and its leaders an agenda to execute should their articulation of ideas prove successful enough for them to win government. To this end, ideas became the essential feature of the democratic mandates that party governments bring with them into power, providing party elites with a blueprint for how to proceed once they get access to the levers of state power (Thomassen, 2020). Thus, a party's role in facilitating effective democratic governance cannot be meaningfully understood without referencing the ideas it develops and "carries" into the electoral arena (Vassallo & Wilcox, 2006; Mair & Mudde, 1998). In a related sense, party ideas also give voters the capacity to hold the party accountable. Here, ideas allow parties and their leaders to make 'promises' to voters, who

can then hold them to account should they fail to realise these promises. Thus, ideas afford political parties what Jens Beckert (2020) calls “promissory legitimacy”, which refers to the credibility political actors gain by projecting convincing promises about future outcomes, such as prosperity or stability. When these promises fail to materialise or lose credibility, the legitimacy of those in power erodes, leading to a potential crisis of trust. Thus, ideas allow voters to reflect on how faithfully a party’s past promises were kept, which becomes a vital ingredient for democratic accountability.

Focusing on ideas thus allows us to evaluate party democratic effectiveness by examining three key criteria. First, are the ideas presented to voters socially legible and accessible? Do they enable voters to effectively understand how their interests are best served in the electoral arena? Second, do they allow for effective party governance? Are the ideas expressed during elections capable of reshaping the mechanisms of state power to address the problems they claim to solve effectively? Third, have the ideas been articulated with enough clarity for voters to reasonably assess whether or not they have been delivered upon? In this sense, vague or unfalsifiable party ideas will contribute to a sense of democratic deficit.

Finally, following White and Ypi’s work on the importance of the “party in time”, we might ask about a party’s capacity to update these ideas over time. Here, if a critical element of democratically effective partisanship is the ability to link different generations of political actors together in a common cause, how can we ensure that the ideas necessary to realise this cause are updated to reflect changing circumstances? Indeed, as Mudge (2018) shows, the historical development of political parties as we know them has been contingent on their ability to renew their ideational offer in response to both exogenous and endogenous circumstances. In this sense, if representative democracy is dependent on the ability of parties to develop and articulate ideas in the process of electoral competition, then parties’ continued democratic effectiveness requires them to update these ideas as policies fail or prevailing economic and social circumstances change.

1.3: The Study of Party Ideas Over Time: The Concept of Ideational Infrastructure

Given the latent role of ideas in prevailing explanations of party democracy, it is perhaps unsurprising that relatively little research has been conducted on how parties develop ideas in practice (see Mudge, 2018; Panebianco, 1988). This critical aspect of party democracy has been overshadowed by the behaviourist turn, with most scholars focusing on voters to explain the emergence of new political ideas and trends, assuming that parties will simply reflect shifting preferences in a near-automatic fashion. Consequently, the dominant approach to studying political parties often treats them as unitary actors—organisational 'black boxes'—where internal debates over social problems or strategic issue framing remain largely unexamined.

This is a significant oversight because, as we shall see, parties are not monolithic entities. In reality, a political party comprises multiple actors, each with distinct interests and preferences regarding the party's direction and behaviour (Mudge, 2018). In this sense, parties are critical sites of ideational contestation, where the ideas (or cues, or frames) that ultimately form the platforms that parties bring to the electoral arena emerge from internal procedures and debates (Invernizzi-Accetti & Wolkenstein, 2017; Panebianco, 1988). Moreover, the nature and structures of this contestation will change over time due to internal dynamics (for instance, a shift in the balance of factional power) and external conditions (for example, the emergence of new technologies of ideational development and communication).

Thus, to understand how parties develop and update their ideational offer, we must interrogate how these processes of ideational production shift along with changes in party organisational structures and conventions of decision making. Indeed, the literature on modern British political history has recently catalogued how the shifting organisational terrain of party-ideational production has precipitated shifts in the country's political-economic paradigm. Colm Murphy, for instance, grounds his analysis of the "modernisation" of the Labour Party in a similar approach to the study of ideas, focusing

on the “networks, sites, and practices” that make up the “rich, energetic, and internally fractious “ecosystem of the left” from which competing discourses of Labour Party modernisation emerge (Murphy, 2023: p. 22). Similarly, Patrick Diamond frames his discussion on the emergence of Blairism as part of a general shift in how ideas were developed in centre-left parties across the advanced capitalist world. In his words, this was a process by which a whole family of parties learned to make policy via “fluid networks and connections linking together politicians, intellectuals, policy entrepreneurs and research institutions across countries” (Diamond, 2021: p. 127). As we will see, the shifting ‘locations’ of party-ideational production will play a key role in the changing power dynamics inherent in parties and, ultimately, their democratic potentials. Indeed, while Murphy and Diamond’s studies focus on the recent history of British party politics, I adopt a longer-term perspective to explore how shifts in the processes that shape how British parties generate ideas have influenced their behaviour as democratic institutions.

However, analysing these long-term changes presents a challenge as the ‘sites’ of party-ideational production have shifted significantly over the twentieth century. While parties’ need for ideas has not diminished, the processes, professionals and organisations with which they work to develop them have undergone profound changes as parties have redefined their relationship with civil society and the state (Mair, 2014). As such, overcoming this challenge requires the development of conceptual tools capable of capturing the historically dynamic, and at times informal, nature of ideational development. To provide such a concept, I will turn the concept of *ideational infrastructure* to explore the landscape of ideational production across two distinct parties over an extended period.

Put simply, I define ideational infrastructures as the dynamic array of organisations (and professional relations between these organisations) that facilitate the development and distribution of ideas. These organisations may exist within the party structure (such as policy research units or communications offices) or independently of these structures (such as ideologically aligned think tanks, political consultancies, and specialised polling firms). These infrastructures serve both an outward-facing role—that is, how parties

convey their ideology or ‘sell’ themselves to members and potential voters—and an inward-facing role that allows parties to draw information from civil society and thus craft ideas and policies that can account for the challenges and concerns of constituents and public at large. To this end, ideational infrastructures can be understood as the organisational and professional networks that enable the two-way exchange of information necessary for parties to perform their unique dual-facing democratic function.

Further, as suggested above, ideational infrastructures are not static and instead evolve in tandem with the broader organisational structures and power distributions of the political parties in which they are embedded. As such, we can understand ideational infrastructures as aligning with the various party-organisational ‘types’ that scholars have identified over the twentieth century. Following Katz and Mair (1995), the changing organisational structures of twentieth-century political parties can be broadly typologised based on the mediating role that they play between civil society and the state.

To expand on this briefly, where once mass parties were closely linked to civil society, the party-political history of the twentieth century can be broadly characterised by party movement ‘away’ from civil society and ‘towards’ the state. This would eventually see them converge on a ‘cartel’ model of organisation in a bid to close off the electoral marketplace from new entrants and ensure uninterrupted access to state resources. As this has happened, the internal balance of power within political parties also shifted. Katz and Mair (1993) explain these changes with reference to the three classic ‘components’ of party organisation: the party on the ground (grassroots members), the party in central office (the party bureaucracy), and the party in public office (the parliamentary party and the leader’s office). During the mass party era, party power was structured by the relationship between the party’s grassroots and the party in the central office, with the party in parliament largely acting as an agent of the party in the central office, which was, in turn, beholden to the party on the ground. In the contemporary period, by contrast, a model of the ‘cartel party’ emerged concomitantly with a shift in authority towards the party in parliament and the party leader’s office (see also van Biezen, 2014).

While Katz and Mair point to party external factors — and especially the pressure of globalisation and post-industrialisation — to explain these changes, the concept of ideational infrastructure allows me to explore the internal party correlates to these exogenous dynamics. Indeed, one of the primary motivations for party leaders to concentrate power in the offices of the ‘party in public office’ was concerns about the electoral implications of the ideas produced by other party ‘faces’. As we will see, during the stagflationary crises of the 1970s, leaders in both parties grew frustrated with the ideas produced by party-centric ideational infrastructures and endeavoured to disempower these bodies in a bid to take control over their party’s ideational renewal.

1.4: The Study of Ideas in Party Politics: The Concept of Party Platforms

Before embarking on this history, however, it is first necessary to clarify what exactly I mean when discussing ideas in the party political context. The turn of the twenty-first century saw the emergence of a group of scholars that began to look at ideas as one of the primary explanatory variables in the study of political life. While these self-styled ideationalists examined the importance of ideas from a variety of organisational and historical perspectives, they shared a common point of departure, “that ideas shape how we understand political problems, give definition to our goals and strategies, and are the currency we use to communicate about politics” (Béland & Cox, 2010: p. 3). Such a viewpoint turned on its head the notion — predominant across a cross-section of mid-century academia — that the interactions of actors with stable sets of interests govern the political world. Ideationalists, by contrast, understood these interests as unstable and contingent. How political actors comprehended their world and the problems these conceptualisations present will structure how political actors understand what constitute ‘their interests’ and which of their potentially cross-cutting interests are best addressed in the political realm. This, in turn, meant that political action was necessarily predicated on myriad shifting ideas about an actor’s own needs, fears and ideals (Béland & Cox, 2016; Béland & Cox, 2010; Blyth, 2013; Crouch, 2005; Blyth, 2002; Schmidt, 2002).

Building on the work of early influential adopters, particularly Hall (1993), this new generation of scholars began cataloguing the various ways ideas influence the political world. Soon, this literature had coalesced to the point that Vivian Schmidt could argue that their collective approach constituted a fourth 'new institutionalism' (with reference to Hall and Taylor's (1996) "three new institutionalisms"), an approach that made no qualms about the claim that ideas "exert a causal influence in political reality" (Schmidt, 2008: p. 306).

However, this increased interest in the role of ideas in politics has come at the cost of a certain lack of conceptual clarity about what precisely scholars mean when discussing the political application of ideas and the best ways to analyse them. Indeed, as Alan Finlayson (2004, p. 530) argues in his overview of the field, the so-called ideational turn can be accused of a kind of collective conceptual slippage in which a variety of different concepts "are used interchangeably and seemingly imagined to substitute for or to be synonymous with, 'idea': norm, belief paradigm, value, habit, tradition, narrative and even culture". In many ways, this resulted from an ad hoc embrace of ideas that scholars reached to fill the theoretical gaps in dominant approaches to understanding political and political institutions (Blyth, 1997: p. 229). It was also the result of a defensive posture that many ideationalists felt necessary to establish the claim that "ideas matter" from dismissal by scholars working in more positivist and functionalist traditions like rational choice, historical institutionalist or some Marxist accounts of political change. Whatever the case, it speaks to a certain conceptual weakness in much of the literature on political ideas, and suggests that before proceeding further it is necessary to clarify what exactly I mean when I discuss the role of 'ideas' in politics.

Fortunately, the work of contemporary ideational scholars have provided some helpful ways forward in this regard. First, recognising the weakness of this lack of definition, several ideationalists have developed classificatory frameworks for understanding the different 'types' of ideas that are important in politics. Schmidt, for instance, catalogues three different "levels of generality". These levels run from the most specific policy ideas through a more general middle level of "programmatic frames of reference" or "problem

definitions” to the most expansive concept of worldviews or political philosophies (Schmidt, 2008; Schmidt, 2002; Schmidt, 2000). Jal Mehta (2010) proposes a similar tripartite framework for understanding how ideas influence politics, which ranges from specific “policy solutions” to broader “problem definitions,” which shape how issues like homelessness are framed, and finally, to overarching “public philosophies” or assumptions that guide both problem definitions and solutions, such as views on the role of government versus the market.

Using these typologies, it is then possible to develop useful models to understand how different ‘levels’ of ideas interact within the political arena to drive change or maintain stasis. For instance, Schmidt introduces the concept of “discourse,” which she argues is a “more versatile and overarching concept than ideas” as it encompasses both the content of ideas and the interactive processes through which they are conveyed by different actors in various spheres (Schmidt, 2008). In this framework, ideas form the dynamic building blocks of discourses, enabling political actors to influence change. Schmidt identifies two types of discourse: coordinating discourse, which occurs between political elites, and communicative discourse, which occurs between elites and the public. The former involves political actors collaborating to develop and justify shared ideas or best practices, while the latter consists of the process of presenting and legitimating political ideas to the general public. Political leaders, then, are tasked with uniting these two forms into a cohesive “master discourse,” providing a vision of the polity’s current state, direction, and future aspirations (Schmidt, 2008: pp. 310-311).

These kinds of typologising exercises are undoubtedly helpful for showing the different ways that ideas impact politics. However, as Schmidt’s drive to discussion discourses over and above the category of ideas suggests, it also comes with the risk of missing the forest for the trees because ‘actually existing’ representative politics will almost certainly take place across many different ideational levels simultaneously. Indeed, as the foregoing discussion of the literature on party democracy suggests, the ability to combine different ideational ‘levels’ is an essential part of what makes parties so vital for facilitating democratic politics. Parties can organise constituencies around broad public ideologies

by assessing social issues and developing problem definitions and policy solutions to address these problems (Goes, 2021; de Leon, 2014). Thus, they simultaneously operate across the different ideational categories that scholars have identified as important for understanding the role of ideas in politics, imbuing complex, technical changes to how the state functions with the imprimatur of democratic legitimacy by framing the need for these changes in particular problem definitions and normative ideological frameworks. This suggests that understanding the importance of party ideas to representative democracy requires a holistic view of these ideas, which accounts for their multilevel nature.

To this end, when I speak of ideas in a party political context, I am referring to the various components of a party's overall *party platform*, defined as the overall package of ideas that parties offer to voters and will invariably cut across different ideational 'levels'. To provide a more formal definition, a party platform can be understood as the collection of policy ideas, problem definitions, and guiding philosophies that shape the party's political message to voters, often communicated through manifestos and policy papers. These platforms serve a functional role, both in that they help voters interpret the political landscape, identify key issues, and understand how those issues can be addressed, and in that they establish the specific policies solutions that parties would use to translate these voter preferences into changes to state policy.

1.5: Sick Notes: British Parties as a Critical Case Study

Having established the concepts of ideational infrastructure and party platform, we can now turn to a justification for UK parties, in particular, are a good case study for examining long-run changes in party democracy. There are two reasons for this.

The first is a general sense that British politics appears to be unable to conjure the ideas necessary to address the country's mounting economic and social problems. Indeed, the United Kingdom finds itself once again described as the "sick man of Europe" (Pabst, 2023; Lynn, 2023; Keegan, 2022). The economy appears to be in a state of

constant flirtation with recession, and productivity and wage growth have lagged for decades (Romei, 2024; *The Economist*, 2022). This is the unhappy baseline that made the decade of austerity cuts imposed in the wake of the global financial crisis bite especially hard (Boseley, 2020; Toynbee & Walker, 2020; Yekaterina, 2020). The country also proved particularly maladroit at handling the challenges of an increasingly unstable world, enduring a post-COVID cost-of-living crisis that was more severe and more protracted than most of its advanced industrial peers (Weldon, 2022). To this end, in the nearly two decades since the global financial crisis, the UK has come to have nine out of ten of the poorest regions in Europe, while rates of material deprivation and childhood poverty have skyrocketed (Cuffe, 2024; Francis-Devine, 2024; Inman, 2019).

Perhaps even more concerning than these cloudy economic figures, however, is the seeming lack of ideas about what to do to right the country's floundering economic model. Indeed, consternation over the lack of innovative political and policy ideas has become a common refrain in newspaper opinion pages, which frequently bemoan a sense that "British politics is out of ideas" (Bell quoted in Eaton, 2023; see also: *Guardian Editorial* 2023; Hinsliff, 2022; Lambert, 2022; Stewart, 2022; Coman, 2021). Political scientists, for their part, have grown increasingly concerned about the emergence of political discourses that appear increasingly divorced from political and economic reality (3Marshall & Drieschova, 2018; Hopkin & Rosamond, 2018; Rose, 2017). While, at the time of writing, there was an initial sense of optimism that the recent election, which saw the Conservative Party dispatched after 14 years in power, would bring in a Labour government with new ideas, early indications are not encouraging, with the dark clouds of a return to austerity looming over the government's first budget (Dunn, 2024; Narwan, 2024).

Second, the UK also provides a helpful case study for examining long-run changes to party-ideational development. This is because its electoral system, which combines single-member plurality voting with a parliamentary system, means that the party competition is primarily structured around the interaction of the two main political parties, a pattern which remains remarkably stable over time (Neto & Cox, 1997; Duverger, 1954). Because the party system discourages new entrants, for ideational innovation to occur

within the party system, it must be articulated via changes in the platforms of one of the two major parties. To this end, even when minor challenger parties introduce new ideas (as they will be incentivised to do), the chances that these ideas are translated into changes in state policy will remain a function of their ‘absorption’ by one of the two possible parties of government (Orellana, 2010). This differs from countries with proportional electoral systems where new parties have a greater chance of achieving office, meaning that party transformation is more likely to occur through the rise of new parties at the expense of legacy parties.¹

In sum, it is reasonable to expect that in the U.K., the impulse to introduce new ideas to party platforms will be borne out in within-party struggles, as opposed to via the formation of new challenger parties, at least over the medium term. This, in turn, means that by looking at British parties, we are able to examine long-run shifts in these parties’ processes of ideational development because we can hold the threat of new entrants relatively ‘constant’. For a project that seeks to open up the black box of the party organisation, this is a clear advantage.

1.6: The Argument in Brief

The core argument that the thesis advances is that as parties and voters have moved away from each other, parties have become more elitist, less socially embedded, and ultimately less democratic in their processes of ideational production. This, in turn, has made it more difficult for them to renew their ideational offers in a democratically informed way and thus has seen them struggle to articulate political platforms that are perceived as legitimate.

To show this, I first develop a historical analysis of how both major British parties (Labour and Conservative) progressively changed the processes they used to develop and articulate their ideas over the twentieth century. Using archival research, I show how

¹ The role of minor parties is, of course, an important dynamic for understanding the relationship between parties and ideas, but it is one that remains beyond the scope of the present project.

both major British parties transformed their ideational infrastructures ‘upwards’ and ‘outwards’, in the process shifting ideational authority from the party in the central office to the party in parliament.

To expand briefly on this point, in the post-war period party ideas were developed and distributed by organisations embedded within party bureaucracies, which, from now on, I will refer to as *Party-centred Ideational Infrastructures* (PCIIIs). These PCIIIs, interlocking networks of research departments, propaganda offices, and policy committees, became the primary arbiters of both the Labour and Conservative party platforms. To this end, they worked to shape the party’s overarching ideology and first principles, craft policy in line with these principles, and communicate these ideas to memberships and the broader public. In both parties (to greater or lesser extents), these processes were grounded in a two-way exchange of ideas with the party on the ground and aligned civil society groups. Beyond this, PCIIIs also served as forums for consensus-building among party coalitions and their various factions and, at the height of this influence, played important roles in keeping factional strife to a minimum.

While the consensus-based policy development processes that defined PCIIIs support cohesion in both parties (despite, at times, bitter factional tension), it also tended to empower moderates in both parties (although ‘reformists’ in the Labour Party would eventually move towards the party’s right). This quickly translated into an ideological convergence between the two parties, and the synthesis of these ideas became the foundation of the Keynesian consensus that would define the post-war period. This, in turn, meant that PCIIIs became closely associated with the post-war model, which made them powerful sources of epistemic authority so long as Keynesianism continued to deliver the goods. So strong was this consensus, in fact, that party leaders would periodically express frustration at party-centred ideational production’s constraints on their ability to influence manifesto content. However, so long as the affluence generated by robust post-war growth facilitated a comparatively stable social settlement across the democratic capitalist world (Streeck, 2014), there was little incentive to try and change things.

However, signs of tension emerged as early as the 1960s, as economic turbulence, changing social structures, and class dealignment left leaders in both parties feeling that they lacked the ‘new ideas’ necessary to woo an electorate that had changed markedly since the end of the war. By the 1970s, Keynesianism’s apparent exhaustion amid a stagflation crisis meant that party leaders had grown desperate to find new ideas to appease an increasingly fractious electorate. As is frequently the case when a prevailing paradigm enters crisis, space emerges for political entrepreneurs to push for alternative ideas that had previously been shut out of political acceptability (Blyth, 2002; Hall, 1993). Thus, with the Keynesian ideas advocated for by entrenched players in both parties’ PCIs no longer able to deliver results (either in terms of solving the problem of stagflation or in terms of electoral results), more ‘radical’ perspectives would gain credence in both parties.

However, how this ‘radicalisation’ influenced each party’s ideational infrastructure was starkly different. In Labour, the party’s left-wing used Harold Wilson’s shock defeat in 1970 to partially take over the party’s existing ideational infrastructure and captured key policy committees and the Labour Party Research Department (LPRD). This allowed them to shift the party’s ideational output firmly to the left, first with the 1973 document Labour’s Programme and then with the 1974 election manifestos – the first of which observers dubbed the “most left-wing manifesto in 30 years”. Wilson (who had survived as party leader) was “totally hostile” to the left’s proposals, fearing that the electorate would reject the left’s proposed solutions (Hatfield, 1978: p. 150-155). Such anxieties were not entirely unreasonable, and the 1974 manifesto produced decidedly mixed electoral results. Whether or not this was the product of the factional bickering that this leftward shift stoked as much as any concern about the contents of the manifesto is a matter of some debate, but with Labour only able to form a minority government while losing the popular vote to Edward Heath’s hapless Conservative government, the election piled pressure on both the Labour Party and its leadership. While Labour was able to consolidate its position a few months later in the second general election of 1974 (gaining a bare majority of three seats), Wilson had become convinced that the left’s takeover of the party’s policy

apparatus would fundamentally limit his ability to campaign on ideas that would appeal to the broader electorate.

Thus, Wilson faced an impasse that he attempted to circumvent by significantly expanding the use of a new type of political professional: the Special Advisor (SpAd). Nominally a special kind of civil servant, SpAds were, in reality, a special breed of ‘party’ operative, one that was able to provide specialist advice to Wilson and his frontbench while remaining firmly loyal to the leader’s political project (Gains & Stoker, 2011). This approach enabled Wilson’s government to develop ideas independently of the traditional policy-making structures and to centralise control over the party platform within the leader’s office. However, challenges related to scale soon emerged, making this newfound ideational control difficult to manage effectively. What had once been the responsibility of hundreds of party researchers and volunteers was now the concern of significantly smaller teams of advisors housed in the offices of the party leader (Klein & Lewis, 1977). This meant that while Wilson could wrest some control over Labour ideas away from the left, he struggled to produce convincing alternatives about how to solve the country’s economic woes – a task made especially difficult by the 1976 IMF crisis (Byrne et al., 2020).

This was not a problem in the Conservative Party, where the turbulent 1970s started with Edward Heath’s doomed Prime Ministership, which, like Labour, failed to find any convincing solutions to stagflation despite a series of high-profile party-led policy reviews. This cleared the way for Margaret Thatcher’s rise after the disastrous 1974 elections. Central to this ascendancy was that Thatcher and her allies could present a coherent diagnosis of the crisis, and it was thus that neoliberalism was first introduced into the British party-political space.

As in the Labour Party, Thatcher’s reign was characterised by an antipathy towards her party’s PCII – with some of her allies going so far as to claim that the Conservative Research Department was complicit in the country’s decline into ‘socialism’. In contrast to Labour, however, Thatcher and her “court wizard”, Keith Joseph, had long operated in

a network of party-external think tanks and thus had a base of ideas from which to operate beyond the boundaries of the party organisation. These think tanks were funded by wealthy benefactors for the express purpose of introducing market-oriented reforms into the public discourse (to impact the “climate of public opinion”). This gave Thatcher a repository of ready-made ideas that expressly critiqued the Keynesian consensus. The Centre for Policy Studies (CPS) was critical in this regard, founded in the run-up to Thatcher’s leadership bid with the explicit aim of arming the would-be leader with neoliberal ideas (Denham & Garnett, 1998).

Through the 1980s and 1990s, both parties would embrace the other’s innovations, with Thatcher further expanding the use of SpAds to gain operational independence over her party’s ideas and subsequent Labour leaders turning to think tanks to develop a ‘third-way’ ideas. The leaders of both parties were consequently able to consolidate control over their parties’ ideational production by side-stepping PCII, centralising ideational power in their own offices, and embracing party-external experts. To this end, it was the marriage of these two innovations in the development of party policy – the institution of the SpAd and the party-external think tank- that would come to define a new type of *externalised ideational infrastructure* (EII).

Having established these long-term shifts in both parties’ ideational infrastructures, I then shift my attention to understanding how these EIIs influence the ideas that parties develop in the contemporary period. Building from lessons from the policy network literature, I examine how these EIIs shape the ideas that the Labour and Conservative Parties introduce into the political sphere. To do this, I use network analysis to compare the types of organisations both parties engage with during the production and distribution of their ideas. I find that while both parties have, to a significant degree, ‘outsourced’ their ideational infrastructures to networks of professional political organisations (such as think tanks, public relations and communications firms, and the new media), the specific organisations with which each party works operate with two very different logics. More specifically, I argue that Labour’s EII predisposes the party to put forward platforms with a high degree of polity specificity but that struggle to play these policy specifics in

overarching frameworks or ‘big ideas’. By contrast, the Conservative network produces ideas developed for media consumption, excluding substantive consideration of the ‘facts on the ground’ — meaning that it excels at messaging but struggles to articulate realistic proposals for solving existing social problems.

I then conclude by reflecting on what these different logics of externalised policy production suggest for the functionality of British democracy. Building from the extant literature, I argue that both parties suffer a deficit in their capacities for programmatic renewal and struggle to perform as effective democratic institutions as a result. However, these democratic deficits emerge from equal and opposite reasons. Labour’s EII excels at bringing new policy perspectives into the party but operates at a communicative disadvantage relative to the Conservative Party. This means that it will struggle to place these policies in broader political frames. The Conservatives have retreated to a highly communications-focused approach to ideas, which makes them a highly effective electoral machine but ideationally ill-equipped to govern. In other words, it is a party that is quite good at selling its vision to voters but relatively poorly equipped to ensure its ideas adequately address the country’s actual existing problems. In concert, this produces a party system in which neither of the two primary parties are capable of developing and communicating the ideas required to fulfil their the ‘dual-facing’ democratic role articulated above.

Chapter 2: The Emergence of Party-Centric Ideational Infrastructure

Chapter 2 examines the emergence of party-centric ideational infrastructure (PCII) in the Labour and Conservative Parties in the 1930s and 1940s. It explores how reformers in both parties successfully created new, party-internal organisations to develop and distribute ideas to negotiate the challenges associated with the rise of mass democracy. However, it also accounts for how convergence on PCII occurred against the party's two very different backgrounds. In the Labour Party, PCII emerged via a process of amalgamation as a loose confederation of allied trade unions and socialist societies slowly (and not without characteristic interfactional tensions) came together to form a coherent party-based process of ideational production and distribution. The Conservative Party took the opposite path towards a PCII, building up a robust ideational capacity in the party in the central office as it transitioned from an elite party-in-parliament to an organisation that could extend its reach into civil society and, in so doing, participate in mass democracy. As we will see, while this saw the party's ideational infrastructures converge towards functional similarity, it also meant that lasting differences would persist across each — differences that continue to shape the development and renewal of party platforms into the present day.

By the 1950s, both parties had converged on a party-centric model of ideational production. This, in turn, enabled a consensual process of ideational development in which operatives in central party offices constructed party platforms by drawing insight from across wider party movements and the different 'parts of the party structure. This included not only balancing the inputs of the party on the ground with the concerns of the party in the public office but also drawing ideas from ideologically aligned external political organisations. This, ultimately, allowed researchers in powerful party-based research departments to craft a coherent party platform that was at once capable of attracting a stable coalition of support but could also meaningfully address the social and economic problems as they existed 'on the ground'. In this sense, we can understand the rise of PCII as a process by which the party in the central office became the primary arbiter of the party's long-term ideational direction during the era of mass politics.

2.1: Labour's Long 1930s and the Rise of Party-centric Ideational Infrastructure

The first part of Chapter 2 explores the emergence of the Labour Party's first party-centric ideational infrastructure (PCII) through the 1930s and 1940s, highlighting the significant challenges the party faced in transforming itself from a loosely connected movement into a cohesive organisation capable of winning elections and governing with a unified vision. That this would occur at all is in itself remarkable. The 1930s was a bleak decade for Labour, beginning with the party's near destruction in the machinations of elite Westminster politics and ending with the country facing an existential threat from the Nazi war machine. From the false dawn of two minority governments in 1924 and 1929, the party would suffer abandonment by its charismatic leader, Ramsay MacDonald, who would leave the party in 1931 to form a national government at the outset of the Great Depression. The Labour Party would not see power again until 1940 and would not lead the government again until 1945.

In retrospect, however, this period of electoral wilderness can be understood as essential for the party's maturation into the country's first proper mass party. As we will

see, it was only in the wake of the 1931 debacle that the surviving party leadership realised that the party's rebirth would require the capacity to link the philosophical principles of the various strains of socialist thinking that swirled in the party's intellectual milieu to an articulated programme of action for improving the lives of the working class voters it sought to represent. During this period, in other words, the party finally committed seriously to the need to construct a coherent *party platform* and the mechanisms for communicating these ideas to a mass movement. Correcting this deficit would require the Party to recraft itself, both organisationally and ideologically, and in the process, produce a robust party-centric ideational infrastructure (PCII) that could unite its disparate intellectual traditions, overcome factional tensions, integrate the union movement, and convince voters that it was the best party to lead the country forward from the shadow of WWII.

2.2: Background: Ramsay MacDonald and the Importance of *Party Ideas*

In the early 20th century, Labour was a nascent party composed of disparate and often conflicting groups, including intellectuals, trade unionists, journalists, and artists. These groups shared a common goal of advancing working-class interests in Parliament, but they had little agreement on what this entailed or how to achieve it. This led to a decided lack of cohesion when it came to developing what set of ideas the party should stand for, with different factions advocating for— at times— wildly different conceptualisations about the type of socialism that the party should advance. Thus, early efforts at ideational consolidation had to negotiate many different intellectual traditions, including the gradualist socialism of the Fabian Society, the quasi-religious ethical socialism of the Independent Labour Party (ILP), the radical Marxism of the Social Democratic Federation (SDF) and the more immediate pragmatic focus of the trade unions “labourism” (Foote, 1997: ch. 2).

As Cruddas (2024: pp. 32-34) notes, the early years were thus marked by a degree of ideational disarray, which allowed it to gain a foothold in the parliament but largely failed to consolidate these gains. Indeed, while the party's diversity allowed it to appeal to a wide range of constituencies, from trade unionists to left-wing intellectuals and disaffected Liberals (Dagut, 1993), it also hindered its ability to craft a coherent and compelling narrative necessary to attract 'mainstream' (that is, non-activist) elements of the voting public, and thus to compete with the established Tory and Liberal parties (Bevir, 2011; Foote, 1997).

The outbreak of the First World War began to shift this dynamic. The demands of the war required a degree of state intervention in the economy that resonated with ideas already circulating within the party, particularly among the Fabians. Spurred by the general embrace of economic planning by figures across the political spectrum, the Fabians moved to develop a more centralised base of party ideas with which to generate the specific policy proposals necessary to guide these planning efforts. This led them to create the first party research department – the aptly labelled Labour Research Department (LRD) (Lyddon, 2010; Saville, 1986). The war also underscored the need for more effective party propaganda to attract a broader constituency to its cause. This prompted efforts to refine the party's communication strategies to allow it to articulate its ideological positions more clearly, although these efforts remained hampered to some extent by the party's loose organisational coherence and decentralised resource allocation (Beers, 2009).

The process of ideational consolidation continued in the post-war years as Labour sought to define itself against the rising threat of communism and the collapsing Liberal Party. This defensive manoeuvre was essential for policing the boundaries of the party's ideology and maintaining organisational coherence (Sigoillot, 2023; Campbell & McIlroy, 2018; Foote, 1997). To this end, the publication of key documents like *Labour and the New Social Order* and the 1918 Party Constitution marked significant steps in this process, linking labourism with British socialism and establishing a more centralised party structure for the sake of foreclosing communist entryism (Foote, 1997: pp. 70; Minkin,

1978: p. 8). Despite these efforts, the challenge of coordinating around a shared set of ideas persisted, notably as the party continued to rely on the unions for much of its ideational development and unions— with their pragmatic focus on the proximate concerns of the working class (wages and working conditions) – had little interest in constructing a more overarching party platform (Cruddas, 2024: p. 52).

Into this vacuum, as has so frequently been the case in the history of party politics, stepped a charismatic leader (Michels, 1927) in the form of Ramsay MacDonald. The self-styled ‘poet of socialism’ (Nairn, 1964: p.46), MacDonald’s unique political talents, a “strange blend of charisma and compromise” (Hargreaves, 1978) that played an essential part in enabling the party to make steady electoral progress through the 1920s despite the ambiguities of its political thinking (Barker, 1976). Key to these efforts was MacDonald’s unique brand of parliamentary socialism, which combined (somewhat awkwardly) the language of class conflict with the Fabian embrace of gradualism and reliance on using capitalist growth to finance the transition to socialism. While this made MacDonald an acceptable compromise amongst all factions of the party (Thompson, 2006: p. 64-67; Marquand, 1997; Barker, 1976), it left the first Labour governments dangerously exposed to the vicissitudes of the market cycle.

Indeed, the naiveté of basing a gradual transition to socialism on the rationalisation of continual capitalist growth would be fatally exposed by the outbreak of the Great Depression in October 1929, shortly after MacDonald began his second term leading a minority Labour government. The Depression brought any optimism about Labour’s slow progress to an abrupt end. Unemployment, already running high through the 1920s, expanded from 1.16 million when Labour took power to over 2.5 million at the end of 1930, driving a wedge between the Labour government and its working-class constituency. MacDonald was caught in a vice of the ‘responsible’ commitment to the gold standard and the support of a working class that faced rapidly degrading living standards. The problem, as Cruddas elucidates, could ultimately be traced to the limitations of the gradualist idea set that defined the party’s outlook:

The macroeconomic orthodoxy that gradualism embraced — free trade, balanced budgets and a stable currency — viewed with scepticism the case for major public works, whilst the vagueness of pre-election policy development provided limited resources for the party to draw on. The outcome was an overreliance on the Bank of England to resolve the crisis and inertia on the part of the government (2024: p. 61).

Labour lacked, in other words, the means to develop an alternative set of ideas to respond to the exogenous crisis of the Great Depression. The party's proto-ideational infrastructure, marked by its decentred nature and dominance by the Fabians, was simply incapable of producing any policy response other than a meek embrace of the prescriptions of the prevailing economic orthodoxy. This is not to say there were no other ideas in the party's coalition. Indeed, MacDonald's deference to the Bank of England outraged many within Labour to the extent that the government faced a series of ministerial mutinies. However, there was no mechanism to coordinate the various alternative ideas about how to respond to the crisis in such a way that could force MacDonald to listen.

Without any centralising ideas or the organisational infrastructure to develop them, the government was ultimately frozen in a state of indecision. The Cabinet repeatedly failed to agree to either spending cuts or new tariffs, which, in turn, caused further deterioration in the markets. As the threat of capital flight mounted, the government finally agreed on £56 million in spending cuts – a move that not only failed to resolve the economic crisis, but that also further enflamed political tensions by upsetting both the TUC (because it would result in a retreat from hard-won social protections) and the opposition parties (because it did not cut nearly enough to address the crisis adequately). Subsequent discussions amongst government ministers produced a narrow agreement (eleven for, nine against) for a ten percent reduction in employment benefits to secure the requisite loans from Wall Street to stabilise the currency.

When news of this deal leaked, the party was thrown into chaos as conspiracies of “bankers’ ramps” cast the government as allying with international finance capitalism over the domestic working class (Brooke, 1992: p. 17). Already operating with a minority government and with the Cabinet at open war with one another, the situation rapidly became untenable, and the government officially resigned on 24 August 1931. To widespread shock, MacDonald then announced his intention to form a national government with the Conservatives and a small group of Liberals (Cruddas, 2024: p. 62). He was duly expelled from the Labour Party, but the damage had already been done. After parliament was dissolved in October of that year, the subsequent election resulted in a landslide for the National Government. Labour had almost no time to react and was nearly annihilated, retaining only 52 seats (Brooke, 1992: p. 12-13).

MacDonald’s defection has gone down in Labour Party mythology as the ultimate betrayal. He is cast as a man whose marriage into a middle-class life and taste of parliamentary niceties nurtured a lust for power so great that he would abandon his erstwhile comrades for the sake of a coalition with the hated Conservatives. While it is probably true that MacDonald’s ascendancy to the height of parliamentary politics changed his outlook on socialism and how best to achieve it, just as important in his turn to the national government was the lack of coherent ideas coming from the party about what should be done in the face of acute capitalist crisis. Indeed, Cruddas argues that the outrage generated by MacDonald’s defection “usefully disguised the policy limitations within Labour’s own orthodoxy [and] the consequences of gradualism...there were few intellectual resources and no radical economic strategy to turn to” (2024: p. 62-63).

2.3: The 1930s and the Formation of Party-centric Ideational Infrastructure

Thus, while Labour had been able to rely on a charismatic leader to deliver it to power for the first time, it lacked the ideational infrastructure necessary to establish a coherent alternative with which it could hold this leader to account. Indeed, it was the trauma of

MacDonald's betrayal that would ultimately catalyse the formation of the party's ideational infrastructure. While surviving Labour figures publicly circled the wagons around their moribund party, moving quickly to vilify MacDonald's infidelity, there was a quiet acknowledgement that the party had been let down by its ideational machinery. To this end, party intellectuals like R. H. Tawney argued that this breakdown occurred because the party lacked a coherent creed or a political purpose. In this diagnosis, Labour lacked the first principles necessary to bring coherence to its political programme. As Tawney put it, the party had been the "author, the unintended and pitiable author, of its own misfortunes", the victim of "pernicious anaemia producing general futility" that lacked "any ordered concept of its task" (Tawney, 1932).

To this end, the 1931 defeat catalysed a process of organisational consolidation regarding the party's ideas to define this task. The National Executive's Report for 1931–1932, for instance, called for this explicitly by stating that it "is imperative that the Party should work out its general programme of national economic and social planning, in that the various parts may be seen in proper perspective, and so that the essential unity of the programme may be emphasised" (quoted in Brooke, 1992: p. 13). MacDonald's defection also had the effect of discrediting the Fabians as the party's primary court wizards, with figures across the party (both fairly and unfairly) linking the liberal socialism of the Fabians to that maligned former leader and casting the entire episode as a "betrayal of the intellectuals" (quoted in Minkin, 1978: p. 17). This helped facilitate a leftward shift and reaffirm the party's commitment to a more radical form of socialism (Brooke, 1992: pp. 15-16; Labour Party Conference Report, 1931).

Within weeks of the 1931 debacle, Labour began to rebuild precisely by focusing on the organisational capacities to begin to "work out" this programme. Far from demoralisation, the broader party movement responded with a "riot of research, policymaking and propaganda" (Williamson, 1992: p. 462). Countless pamphlets, articles and policy ideas emerged to address how the party should address both the external crisis of capitalism and the internal party crisis of electoral catastrophe. As importantly, this intellectual explosion was explicitly tied to efforts to strengthen the party's mass

organisation. Thus, the most notable feature of “British politics during the 1930s was the extent to which the Labour Party was able to, whilst in Opposition, bring together the different groups in its organisation to reach broad agreement on a comprehensive programme for the future” (Taylor, 1977: p. 7). It was the first time the party would develop a coherent party platform, and doing this would require a level of organisational coherence that would have been unimaginable in the years prior to MacDonald’s defection.

This work began as early as December 1931, when the National Executive took steps to reform the party’s committee structure. The haphazard and under-resourced network of leader-centric advisory committees that shaped party policy through the 1920s was dismantled. In its place, an eight-person Policy Committee was established, comprised entirely of figures from the NEC (a structure which reflected a lingering mistrust of the parliamentary party). The Policy Committee was subdivided into sub-committees on industrial reorganisation, agriculture, trade, finance, and constitutional matters (Brooke, 1992: p. 13). At the same time, the Party undertook root and branch reorganisations of its outreach and propaganda efforts, launching a “Million New Members and Power” initiative (which ran from 1931-1932) and the subsequent “Victory or Socialism” campaign (which ran from 1933-1935) (Redvaldsen, 2011). Just as importantly, these efforts were joined up as the policy committee structure was explicitly connected to the propaganda materials produced for these campaigns (Williamson, 1992). The importance of these reforms to the processes of party ideas production cannot be understated. Indeed, as Brooke (1992: p. 13) argues, this “overhaul of policy-making was the most important structural change within the Labour Party after the electoral defeat.”

This was not only because this redevelopment of the party’s ideational infrastructure allowed it to construct the platform that it so sorely lacked in 1931 but also because it helped establish a policy development process that was embedded in the party’s democratic structures. To this end, ideas produced by the Policy Committee were tied to the party’s primary institution of deliberative democracy: the Party Conference. This occurred both via committee inputs into the Conference (through the formation of

conference proposals) and through the Committee's work to translate the 'will of the Conference' into research outputs. This had the effect of grounding the centralised machinery of party-ideational production in a body with constitutionally codified representation of the party's 'on the ground' constituencies — in particular, the unions. This, of course, had technically been the case before 1931 as well — but the relative weakness of the NEC's policy apparatus combined with MacDonald's general disdain for Conference sovereignty meant that, hitherto, conference had little measurable impact on the production of party policy documents (Minkin, 1978: pp. 13-20).

The process of ideational centralisation played a crucial part in broader ideational convergence as factions coordinated around an increasingly clear set of party 'first principles'. Of course, much of this convergence can be explained by the departure of right-wing figures in the PLP and left-wing figures in the ILP (which formally disaffiliated in 1932). However, significant ideational differences persisted in the party, especially between the right-leading union leaders such as Ernest Bevin and Walter Citrine and the left-wing Socialist League, the latter of which emerged as elements of the party were radicalised by the ongoing Depression. Indeed, the Depression saw a resurgence (or, perhaps more accurately, a 're-legitimisation') of Marxist thinking, with figures such as Harold Laski and G.D.H Cole — calling for more direct attention to class conflict in the party programming. Against both this conflictual political Marxism and the traditional conservatism of the trade unions were communitarian socialists like Tawney, who pushed for a socialist vision grounded in broad social unity, and Fabian-influenced thinkers like Douglas Jay and Hugh Dalton, who began publishing pamphlets in the mid-1930s that aimed at countering the proliferation of Marxian texts in party networks (Thompson, 2006: Ch. 10). Thus, while there was agreement across these various intellectual tendencies about the need for a coherent economic programme, there was no guarantee that this shared realisation would result in a cohesive party platform (Foote, 1997: p. 146).

Developing a well-defined party machinery for generating ideas was crucial in shaping such a platform, and the fact that the party coalition did not disintegrate further can largely be attributed to the emergence of this clearly articulated process of collective ideational

production. When the conference passed a motion in 1932 committing the party to the development and advocacy of socialist ideas, the party machinery threw itself behind the task of developing a programme in a way that would have been inconceivable in the 1920s. In less than half a year, the reinvigorated Policy Committee produced reports on transport, agriculture, financial policy, and electricity (Brooke, 1992: p. 17). Moreover, these ideas represented an aggregation of the party's different factional perspectives, which eschewed the naive optimism of the MacDonald era and embraced the importance of planning as the North Star of socialist political economy. It also meant that the internecine factional infighting that had (and would again in the future) undermined the party's electoral effectiveness was, if not eliminated, significantly reduced. Indeed, Labour thinkers as intellectually diverse as Barbara Wootton, Douglas Jay, Harold Laski, and E.M.F. Durbin would collectively articulate a newfound appreciation for the importance of planning through the 1930s to achieve economic rationalisation necessary to achieve economic growth without being left exposed to the vicissitudes of global capitalism.

To this end, Labour's was an essentially Polanyian (1944) vision in which market mechanisms did not have to be eliminated necessarily but would have to be rendered subordinate to the rationalising influence of a socialist state (Thompson, 2006: pp. 108-115). This, of course, had parallels to new thinking emerging from thinkers associated with the Liberal tradition — most notably the work of J.M. Keynes — but it incorporated and expanded upon this liberal approach to fundamentally reimagine the relationship between the economy and the state. It was thus that through the 1930s, the Labour Party, led by its emergent PCII underwent a process of profound ideational renewal, in the process transforming British Socialism was transformed into what Foote (1997: p. 174) has identified as the much more programmatic “corporate socialism.” This represented a synthesis of “syndicalist and Keynesian” thinking which proved capable of uniting “Right and Left...on the fundamentals of a minimum programme of social and economic reform which would reshape British Capitalism in the 1940s” (sic). Here was a vision of corporate socialism that aimed to deliver radical ends by taking control of the ‘commanding heights’ of the economy by harnessing the power of an expansive British state to reshape the institutions of British capitalism (Thompson, 2006: Ch. 10). Gone was the evolutionary

and deterministic language that animated the 1918 party documents. In its place the party, aided by the purposeful formation of a robust ideational infrastructure, was developing a new party programme that married a long-term, aspirational worldview with the policy specifics to realise this worldview.

Developing a functional ideational infrastructure was essential to these efforts, and early articulations of this new approach to socialism can be found in party documents like the 1933 *Socialism and the Condition of the People* and the 1934 *For Socialism and Peace*. Both crafted by the Policy Committee, these documents revealed a profound reconceptualisation of the party's first principles. *For Socialism and Peace*, for instance, opens with an overture to the British public to realise the failure of Liberal and Conservative ideas to make capitalism work for the ordinary citizen: "The choice before the nation is either a vain attempt to patch up the super-structure of a capitalist society in decay at its very foundations or a rapid advance toward a Socialist reconstruction of the national life". To deliver this rapid transition to socialism, the document proposed "full and rapid Socialism economic planning", necessitating the public ownership of vast swaths of the economy, including banking, iron and steel, transportation, water, coal and other forms of energy. On top of this, it called for setting up a National Investment Board to direct industrial development across the country, the legal codification of the 40-hour work week and the repeal of the hated Trade Dispute and Trade Unions Act of 1927 (Labour Party, 1934). That same year, the Conference passed a motion proposed by the Socialist Medical Association (SMA) supporting the establishment of a National Health Service, which would serve as the foundation for similar ideas articulated in the famous Beveridge Report (Cruddas, 2024: p. 80). After Conference endorsed *For Socialism and Peace*, the party's ideational machinery turned its attention to the impending 1935 election. This was carried out through the NEC's "Victory of Socialism" programme, which, while failing to return Labour to power, did at least return it to health, with the party gaining over 100 seats (Taylor, 1977: p. 15).

A comparison with the previous decade's process of party policy and manifesto production is illuminating regarding the increased importance of the *party's* role in

producing ideas. In 1918, the TUC/Labour Party Joint Committee was responsible for *Labour and the New Social Order*, with most ideas emerging from discussions between the Fabians and unions. In the 1920s, it was the party leader, with MacDonald effectively holding the whip hand over the production of party policy documents. In the 1930s, by contrast, party ideas were developed almost exclusively by the NEC Policy Committee before being ratified by the Party Conference. This does not suggest that the unions were no longer massively influential over this process — the union vote was still dominant in the Conference system. However, it reflects that the party had emerged as an independent ideational force over and above a mere reflective instrument for union preferences or, worse yet, a vehicle for the personal political aspirations of a charismatic leader. Indeed, it quickly became a key site of ideational power within the party, effectively becoming a nursery for future party leadership.

The 1931 disaster robbed the party of MacDonald and several other intellectual leaders from the party's formative years, such as Philip Snowden and J.H. Thomas. To make matters worse, the leaderships of Arthur Henderson and George Lansbury, who attempted to fill the void left by MacDonald, were short-lived and ineffectual. Thus, by 1935, it was time for a new crop of party leaders, and this second generation emerged very much concomitantly with the party's revamped ideational infrastructure. To this end, Brooke (1992) identifies Arthur Greenwood, Clement Attlee, Stanford Cripps, Hugh Dalton, and Herbert Morrison as the 'vanguard' of the second generation of party leaders, each of whom had some relationship with party-based ideas production. Attlee took over as party leader in 1935, which made him a leading figure on the Policy Committee. Ever the mediator, Attlee's presence on the Policy Committee was pivotal for ensuring policy proposals were developed with an eye towards balancing different factional perspectives. As noted above, Greenwood was the long-standing head of the LRD, which positioned him as a critical fulcrum point in the exchange of ideas between the party and the unions. After losing his seat in 1931, Morrison turned his attention to building a base of support at Transport House, where the party's headquarters were located. These efforts would eventually translate into membership on the Policy Committee, the Local Government and Social Services Subcommittee, and the Reorganisation of Industry Subcommittee —

the latter of which would see him massively influence the party's thinking on public ownership. Dalton also lost his seat in 1931, after which he split his attention between a lectureship at LSE and "throwing his considerable talents and energy into the work of the National Executive and the Policy Committee" (Brooke, 1992: p. 25). He also served as the chairman of the Finance and Trade Subcommittee, a position in which he would play a key role in integrating party ideas with those of his former Cambridge classmate, J.M. Keynes.²

Through their roles on the Policy Committee, this group would be responsible for drafting the most important document produced in the 1930s, *Labour's Immediate Programme*. The impetus for the project came from Conference after the Railways Clerks' Association put forward a successful resolution calling for a state of the party's 'immediate priorities'. It was felt that while the party had successfully redeveloped its long-term priorities, the 1935 defeat reflected the fact that these priorities had yet to be articulated as a coherent party programme that could be presented to voters outside the party's existing coalition (Taylor, 1977: p. 15-17). In response, the Policy Committee set up a drafting committee consisting of Attlee, Greenwood and Dalton, who were given the task of developing what would come to be seen as a "book-end to the post-1931 policy initiative...an agenda dealing with both proximate concerns and ultimate ends, shaped by the contemporary issues of unemployment and economic failure and by the party's obsession with gaining control of what was perceived to be a hostile system" (Brooke, 1992: p. 31). Alongside the efforts, the NEC also formed a Distressed Areas Commission, run by Hugh Dalton and staffed by George Dallas, Barbara Ayrton Gould and Grant McKenzie (the latter of whom was the assistant secretary of the LRD). The Commission aimed to understand how unemployment and economic malaise impacted different parts of the country, and its findings were published in the *Distressed Areas: A Programme of Immediate Action* (1937).

² Cripps, one of the few Labour frontbenchers to retain his seat in the October 1931 election, would have been in a prime position to play a leading role on the Policy Committee had it not been for his focus on organising the party's left-wing, first through the Socialist League and later through the Popular Front movement (the latter of which would eventually see him kicked out of the party). He also used his considerable fortune as a patent lawyer to launch *Tribune* magazine, which would become the bastion of the party's left-wing (Pimlott 1971).

Drawing ideas developed by the sub-committees, the National Council of Labour, and the LRD, these efforts resulted in a party programme that reflected the blend of radicalism and reformism that defined the movement's various ideational currents (Taylor, 1977: Ch. 1). In the *Programme*, Labour finally had something approximating a party platform that it had so sorely missed in the preceding decades. Indeed, the document read like a rallying cry, promising voters that the party would "without hesitation or delay take the first steps to reorganise the economic life of our country" by taking control of "the main levers which control the economic machine" (Labour Party, 1937). But, thanks to the *Distressed Areas* report, this was a rallying cry informed by a profound understanding of the country's situation 'on the ground', one that could speak to voters' immediate concerns in a country that remained deeply but unevenly impacted by the Great Depression. *Labour's Immediate Programme* was approved unanimously by the 1937 Conference in Bournemouth, making it "one of the most successful ever held" and a reflection that the party was "more united than at any time since 1931." (Taylor, 1977: p. 19). Building from this party-democratic imprimatur through 1938 and 1939, the Policy Committee filled out the legislative and administrative details necessary to translate *Labour's Immediate Programme* from party platform to state policy. It also established a *National Campaign*, a propaganda exercise to win voters over the party's new perspective by publishing over 25 pamphlets and leaflets (*ibid.*).

Thus, by the end of the 1930s, the Labour Party's ideational infrastructure had developed to such an extent that it could update the party's ideas in a way that reflected the dominant trends in the movement's thinking and that was grounded in a well-informed understanding of the challenges facing British voters after nearly a decade of economic turmoil. What is more, this infrastructure was proving capable — at least for the time being — of uniting the party's divergent factional interests. Most importantly, there were indications that Labour's PCII had given the party the capacity to articulate a coherent party platform it could take into the electoral arena. As Cole put it, the party now could establish "a clear indication of what a majority Labour Government would set out to do" (quoted in Taylor, 1977: p. 16). Indeed, there were early signs of optimism that these

efforts were beginning to pay off electorally, with the party winning six seats from the Conservatives in 1938 bye-elections. Party leaders looked ahead to the 1940 election with optimism that had not been seen in nearly a decade.

2.4: Labour and Ideas During the War

Given the party's growing ideational confidence and nascent electoral gains, we can only speculate what might have happened had the Second World War not upset Labour's carefully laid plans. The party would have to rethink its immediate priorities to reflect the transformation total war would impose on the country. As Taylor puts it, "Labour's policies were formulated in peace-time and were designed to be implemented in peace-time" (*ibid.*, p. 42). However, this should not be understood as a claim that Labour's pre-war ideational development would go to waste. The ideational infrastructure it had developed through its decade in opposition would allow it to navigate the crisis that the war represented. Thus, while Britain's entry into the war in September 1939 would frustrate the specific plans that the party had developed through the latter half of the 1930s, the party could now update its thinking and eventually take ownership of the politics of reconstruction. In other words, they had the ideational blueprint they needed to respond to the wartime crisis and the ideational infrastructure required to articulate these ideas as a coherent party platform.

Indeed, while the war would cast doubt on the future of British socialism — and even on Britain as a country — Labour figures were quick to direct their horror at the outbreak of another European war towards the pursuit of a more just future. Mere months after Britain entered the war, Harold Laski, through NEC's Labour Book Series, would publish *The Labour Party, The War, And The Future*, in which he gave voice to the movement's desire to ensure that capitalism, which had once again cast Europe into conflict, would not be allowed to go untamed upon the war's conclusion. "New conceptions are possible," he wrote, "a new manhood can be shaped fit to direct that world. But the condition of their realisation is the victory of the Labour Party" (Laski, 1939: *n.p.*). Greenwood (1940)

shared a similar sentiment, albeit in more policy-specific language that reflected his emergence in party circles as the head of the LRD:

During the progress of the War, the obvious social injustices ought to be remedied. Old age pensions, dependant's allowances, workmen's compensation, the lot of the lowly paid worker, the professional man and the shopkeeper who falls on evil days ought to be a special case.

Labour figures, buoyed by the confidence in their party's ideas, understood the historical position into which they had been thrust and set about ensuring that the destruction of war would not (this time) be allowed to pass without the creation of a new social order in its wake.

Labour would join the wartime National Government to create a united government in the first against the Nazis. In the background, however, the party's policy committee continued apace, now working to build a vision for reconstructing a socialist Britain. In early 1940, the NEC published *The War and After: Labour's Home Policy*, which amounted to a "restatement of Labour principles and domestic policy, in light of the War and probable post-War condition" (Labour Party Conference Report, 1940: p.38). Thus:

The Labour Party calls upon the nation to recognise that the day of the old order is done. It declares that only a bold, socialist planning of the foundations of our system can give us the faith and the power to meet the claims of those who will bring us victory. They are entitled now to the assurance that they will not make their sacrifice in vain (Labour Party Conference Report, 1940: p. 191-192).

This statement was approved at the 1940 Party Conference along with *Labour, the War, and Peace* (1940), which linked the wartime expansion of state control of the economy to Labour's vision of socialist planning. It argued that "instead of regarding each item of state control as a temporary infringement of the normal, the occasion should be seized to lay the foundations of an efficient economy system," and thus that "the organisation of victory cannot be separated from the post-war tasks of reconstruction. The ideas which inspire the conduct of war are bound to set the frame within which the change to peace conditions

is effected” (Labour Party Conference Report, 1940: p. 6). For the majority of British voters, the war revealed that the prevailing institutional order was not fit to deliver peace and prosperity. For political elites it demonstrated that state planning could be used to rationalise the economy to provide both – and the Labour Party, with its rapidly maturing ideational infrastructure was best placed to translate these sentiments into a coherent party platform.

Indeed, the party quickly set about reinforcing its ideational infrastructure to press this point home and to update its ideational offer to reflect shifting wartime sentiments. The LRD was restructured, and the Policy Committee was reinforced with new members, including Dalton (as Chairman), Attlee, Morrison, A.J. Dobbs, Barbara Ayrton Gould, George Ridley, also with Greenwood and Grant McKenzie as joint secretaries (Labour Party Conference Report, 1940: p. 39). To promote this work, the party’s Press and Publicity Department was also sent into overdrive, producing 35 leaflets, pamphlets and booklets between April 1939 and March 1940, of which it claims to have sold over 6 million copies (650,000 pamphlets and 5.6 million leaflets) (Labour Party Conference Report, 1940: p. 43). The party combined this with expanded efforts to keep its membership engaged by “providing an opportunity for discussion on Party Policy at a great many Regional Conferences”, which in 1940 included 38 colloquia discussing “Peace Aims”, 39 on the specifics of “Home Front Policy” and 25 on “Democracy and Reconstruction” (Labour Party Conference Report, 1941: p. 17).

The following year, the party expanded on these efforts to meet the “increased volume and complexity” of the work involved with developing ideas in the rapidly shifting wartime context (*ibid.*). Most significantly, this involved the formation of the Central Committee on Reconstruction Problems, which would meet for the first time on 30 July 1941 and rapidly become the most important body for the production of party ideas during the war (Brooke, 1992: p. 105). Labour’s Reconstruction Committee was an initiative of Harold Laski’s (and chaired by fellow left-winger Manny Shinwell) but was purposely set up to include thinkers from across factional and organisational lines, including many already on the NEC’s Policy Committee or union research bodies. This cross party staffing was mirrored by a

sprawling remit. Throughout the war, Labour would establish sub-committees to produce outputs on nearly all aspects of post-war party policy, including: “Social and Economic Transformation in Great Britain, Post-war Finance, Land and Agricultural Reorganisation, Coal and Power, Machinery of Central Government, Machinery of Local Government, Transport, Social Services Re-organisation, Education, Public Health, Housing and Town Planning, Social Insurances and Assistance, Family Allowance and International Relationships” (Labour Party Conference Report, 1942: p. 23).

Labour’s Post-war Reconstruction Committee proved vital for taking the party beyond the *Government’s* Reconstruction Committee, which Churchill had established in the same year (Labour Party Conference Report, 1941: p. 291). Laski was particularly concerned that because of the wartime coalition, Labour would have its ideas co-opted by the Conservatives and thus be seen as little more than a minor appendage to the government. These fears were overblown, as the Government’s Reconstruction Committee had relatively little power (despite its inflated status in some of the historiography of the period), and Churchill’s general lack of concern with the specifics of domestic policy (see Chapter 4) meant that it never became a rigorous ideas-producing body. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that Labour’s Reconstruction Committee successfully allowed Labour to capture the political zeitgeist by marrying the ideas developed in *Labour’s Immediate Programme* to the language of reconstruction (Taylor, 1977: pp. 50-53).

The Committee’s most significant output was *The Old World and the New Society*, which quickly came to be “regarded as the most complete statement of intentioned principle of the war period” (Taylor, 1977: p. 48), and it would go on to become the “rhetorical framework on which to hang more specific policy” right through to the 1945 election manifesto (Brooke, 1992: pp. 107-108). Drafted primarily by Laski, the document would advance a nuanced diagnosis of the crisis of WWII as the result of the German and Italian capitalist classes willingness to sacrifice democracy to maintain capitalism. It then married this analysis to the ideas about nationalisation that the party had been developing over the last decade. Thus:

We have learned in the war that the anarchy of private competition must give way to ordered planning under national control. That lesson is not less applicable to peace. The Labour Party, therefore urges that the nation must own and operate the essential instruments of production; their power over our lives is too great for them to be left in private hands....common ownership will alone secure that priority of national over private need, which assures the community the power over its economic future (Labour Party Conference Report, 1942, p. 2).

It is worth highlighting that, despite its authorship, the policy specifics outlined in *The Old World and the New Society* reflect its provenance as a fundamental party document. A far cry from the Marxist approach that characterises much of Laski's work, the document couched its call for nationalisation as the means for much more liberal socialist ends — the achievement and maintenance of full employment, the establishment of a “social service state” (complete with a national health service), comprehensive public school system, and the enhancement of old age pensions. Thus, despite Laski's undeniable influence over the formation and direction of the Reconstruction Committee, the policy produced by the various sub-bodies that constituted it “demonstrates the pluralist nature of policy-making the Labour Party” (Brooke, 1992: p. 109).

An equally important feature of this wartime ideational consolidation was a renewed focus on publicising the ideas that the party had developed. Transport House was keenly aware that while the public's mood was open to radical shift, this would not automatically redound to the support of the Labour Party. For instance, the Labour Party National Agent George Shepherd would remark in March 1943 that “the position seems to be that although there is undoubtedly a body of Leftist opinion, thinking largely in our terms, it is not at the same time thinking about us, the Party seems, in fact, to be contemptuously disregarded...If the Party is held in contempt, disastrous results may follow” (quoted in Brooke, 1995: p. 9). Gaining separation from Churchill and the Conservatives was understood to be essential for avoiding this contempt, and in 1943, the NEC's press and publicity committee successfully pressed for a renewed focus on literature production.

This was no easy task, and the early years of the war saw the production of party literature fall, thanks primarily to the introduction of paper rationing (Labour Party Conference Report, 1942: p. 25). Given this, the fact that the party decided to redouble its efforts at literature production in 1942/1943 *despite* these increased costs reflects the importance that the NEC placed on these propaganda efforts. In 1943, the party (with technical support from Odhams Press, the publishers of the *Daily Herald*) introduced a series of pamphlets with titles such as *Your Home* and *Your Future* that aimed to highlight Labour's policies on healthcare, housing, worker's control and "the new world order" (Beers, 2009). This was followed up with an effort by the organisation committee to reinforce lines of communication with the party on the ground through the "intensive development of Party activity commencing the autumn, considering of policy conferences, public meetings and the promotion of study and discussion groups" (quoted in Beers, 2009: p. 682). These efforts would prove vital for Labour's ability to distinguish itself from the national government and thus to 'own' the ideas emerging from the popular Beveridge Committee.

Finally, the party also moved to reinvigorate the research support available to this committee structure. Through the 1930s, LRD had become increasingly marginalised as it moved sharply in a pro-communist direction along with the guild socialist movement that comprised most of its researchers. By the decade's end, accusations that the organisation was a vehicle for communist entryism saw party intellectuals move away from the LRD. As a result, by 1941, the Research Department had seen a significant reduction in staff, with the departure of Grant McKenzie's (to help Attlee in the coalition government) a particular blow (Labour Party Conference Report, 1941: p. 32). It soon became appreciated that LRD's unreliability was holding back the development of party ideas, and because the organisation could no longer be trusted to provide (recalling Cole) the "facts that were the sinews of the propagandists' war", then some other body would have to be established to do so. Thus, the decision was taken to proscribe the LRD and form the Labour Party Research Department (LPRD) in its place. Laski was duly given control of the new department, which allowed for linked-up thinking between the LPRD and the party's Reconstruction Committee (Labour Party Conference Report, 1941).

Thus, from 1942 onward, the party could boast its own dedicated research staff in Transport House that was independent of (although responsive to) the union movement (Lievonon, 2019: p. 14). Although small, the LPRD would quickly become an essential feature of Labour's ideational machinery, connecting the various 'parts' of the party and ensuring ideas were developed with due consideration of the multiple perspectives that defined the movement's broader ideological currents. To this end, the LPRD's role was not necessarily meant to be one of ideational production but was instead fundamentally infrastructural — facilitating the ideational coordination between the various parts of the party and enabling the 'two-way' movement of ideas required for effective democratic representation.

To expand here briefly, a 1945 Conference Report catalogued the Department's work as follows:

- a) Provision of secretariat to the Policy Committee and its Sub-Committees, e.g. Joint Committee with the T.U.C. on Trusts and Cartels
- b) Maintenance of full records for information purposes
- c) Provision of information on policy matters to M.P.s, candidates, Labour Parties, Trade Unions and other affiliated organisations, writers for the Press, individual members of the Party, etc.
- d) Provision of information and advice on all aspects of local government and the maintenance of contact with Labour Groups on Local Authorities.
- e) Editing and publication of Labour Bulletin, Handbooks, e.g. General Elections Speaker's Handbook, 1945, and Local Government Handbook 1945-46, and any Policy Reports that may be called for.
- f) Preparation and publication of topical educational pamphlets in the Labour Discussion Series, and of advice on methods of making the best use of these

pamphlets, including suggestions about syllabuses for wee-end and summer schools. First six subjects are: Rise of the Labour Party, Shortages, Coal Nationalisation, Bank of England and Investment Control, Exports, and Local Government Reform, but other will follow at regular intervals.

g) On the assumption that the Department takes responsibility for further Labour Party publications, e.g. Speaker's Notes, Labour Year Book, possible Local Government Bulletin, Labour diary, and election and campaign material, the work of the Department will be considerably augmented (Labour Party Conference Report, 1945: p. 1).

This description depicts the LPRD as the central node in the party's ideational infrastructure. The Department was tasked with information gathering and record collection, which gave the party an up-to-date understanding of the country's situation 'on the ground' (see also: Labour Party Conference Report, 1942: p. 25). It then fed this information to the party's high-level policy committees, particularly the Reconstruction Committee and the National Council of Labour, in which LPRD researchers played an integral secretarial role. It was also facilitated for the 'downward' movement ideas produced in Transport House to the constituency level of the party, both by publishing regular information bulletins aimed at keeping individual members abreast of the party's policy development and by taking over the party's regional conferences programme, working with "Party Correspondents on Local Authorities" to establish a Labour perspective on local issues (See also: Labour Party Conference Report, 1943: p. 43-45). It also connected the party to ideas emerging from civil society partners (i.e. the unions), endeavouring to ensure that the party's policy outputs accounted for the preferences of these groups. These ideas were also connected to the party's parliamentary arm as the LPRD established relationships with the party's parliamentary arm, thus ensuring coordination between the party-in-parliament and the broader movement. Finally, to ensure that this all occurred with respect to the norms of intra-party democracy, the LPRD played a crucial role in translating the decisions made at the conference into party policies. This involved assisting in drafting policy proposals before the conference and

recording discussions and amendments during the Conference to update the party's policies accordingly (Minkin, 1978: pp. 49-55).

Thus, by the early 1940s, the LPRD was quickly becoming the beating heart of a process of policy formation that connected the local concerns of the constituency parties, the priorities of the unions, the strategic considerations of the PLP, and the communicative functions of party propagandists. This centred the party's ideational infrastructure on the executive body but structured it in such a way as to ensure that the party programme was developed and updated in a way that was socially embedded and democratic informed. Milburn provides a valuable summary of this process:

The system of program-making which the Labour Party used...began to evolve after 1940. In practice... the N.E.C. has presented to each conference a program which was reworked from a preliminary draft suggested by the Secretary and the Policy Subcommittee of the Research Department of Transport House; and was commented upon by a week-end conference composed of representatives from the N.E.C., the Economic Committee of the Trade-Union Congress and the Co-operative Society. The annual conference has had the final authority to approve these programs, and pass upon resolutions for changes suggested previously to the Conference by the affiliated groups and consolidated by the Executive (Milburn, 1958: p. 332).

Perhaps the best indication of the LPRD's role as arbiter of the party's platform was its role in manifesto drafting. Here, the Department was the chief architect of the 1945 document *Let Us Face the Future* and the accompanying policy documents that went into its formation. Here, the job was one of aggregation— pulling ideas that the movement had produced over the preceding decade and crafting them into a coherent platform that could capture the British public's revolutionary sentiment. Much of the specific drafting work fell to the LPRD's new Secretary, Michael Young, who was brought in as Research Secretary in early 1945 as Laski turned his attention to campaigning (Minkin, 1978: Ch. 2).

In *Let Us Face the Future*, the importance of an adequate ideational infrastructure becomes clear for that other vital institutional function of political parties: winning elections. Indeed, *Let Us Face the Future* was essential in Labour's shock landslide on 5 July 1945, less than two months after VE Day. Not only was the Research Department essential for aggregating the thinking of a broader movement into a party platform, but it also provided essential support to the candidates who worked to sell the vision of this platform to the British electorate. It was the first time in history that Labour had won a majority of seats and a plurality of votes, taking 393 seats to the Conservatives 197. Upon taking power, the party would use this mandate and the ideas its PCII had developed during the long 1930s to fundamentally reorder British society (Francis, 1997: Ch. 1).

Armed with the ideas produced by Labour's refurbished PCII, the Attlee government made remarkable progress towards creating its promised "New Jerusalem". Indeed, in the words of one historian, Attlee's Labour government was one that "took ideas seriously and sought to apply them to the exercise of power" (Francis, 1997: p. 30). It enacted *Let Us Face the Future* almost in its entirety, in the process nationalising key industries, including the Bank of England, the railways, key parts of the energy sector and steel, on their way to scaling the "commanding heights" of the British economy. The foundations of a robust cradle to grave welfare state were built, with the National Health Service (NHS) at its heart. The socialist planning that defined much of the party's ideational output in the 1930s became a central feature of how the British state worked (Thompson, 2006: Ch. 11). Even more impressively, this was accomplished against the headwinds of severe economic instability as the destruction of the war and the need to pay back American loans after the abrupt termination of the Lend-Lease Act undercut the country's financial position (Cruddas, 2024: Ch. 6; Porter, 1995). Indeed, the capacity of the Attlee government to follow through on the commitments laid out in the (LPRD-crafted) party platform makes it difficult to think of a better real-world example of Przeworski et al.'s (1999) ideal of mandate-based representative democracy. In the 1945 Labour government, mass party democracy had arrived on British shores, and neither British politics nor the British state would ever be the same again.

2.5: Crisis and Response: Rab Butler Rebuilds the Conservative Research Department

After Labour's shock victory in 1945, the Conservative Party found itself in a state of existential shock. A government that had declared victory against Nazis Germany just months before the election had managed to lose in a landslide. As recriminations abound, a small group of up-and-coming party actors concluded that the problem was ideational – or, more accurately, that it related to a lack of ideas. Soon, figures like Rab Butler reached similar conclusions about the necessary reforms the Conservative Party would have to endure to survive in a new political era as Tawney had reached about the Labour Party a decade prior. According to this logic, the Conservative Party had lost because it lacked the adequate party platform necessary to compete in modern mass politics, and, worse yet, the resurgent Labour Party had a massive head start in developing the ideational infrastructure required to produce such a platform. The Conservatives had let their party organisation fall into disrepair during the war, and they had paid the price for it (Fawcett, 2022).

In the second half of Chapter 2, I detail how, with remarkable speed, the Conservative Party corrected this deficit in ideational capacity primarily by emulating Labour's marriage of mass political organisation with a robust party-centric ideational infrastructure (PCII). Indeed, under the tutelage of Rab Butler, the Conservative Party rapidly developed its ideational machinery, centred on two organisations that were established at the heart of the Tory Party machine — the Conservative Research Department (CRD) and the Conservative Policy Centre (CPC) — which would work under the umbrella of a refurbished Advisory Committee on Policy (AC) to help the party emulate (if synthetically) the mass party ideational infrastructure that had just carried Labour to its shock victory. It was through these bodies that party reforms would be given (or claim) authority over the development of a new guiding philosophy for the party and eventually all aspects of Conservative Party ideas, rapidly gaining such a strong influence over the party's ideational offer that they could rival even Churchill's preferences (at least when it came to domestic policy) (Ramsden, 1980: Ch. 1). Indeed, the ascendance of the new Tory PCII

proved so rapid that it would set off fierce battles in the Conservative Central Office (CCO). Thanks to Butler, these new organisations of party ideas would win their independence and, by 1951, would come to stand “head and shoulders above the opposition” and would soon become “a model for other right-wing political parties in Western Europe” (Kavanagh, 1989). Closer to home, these changes would redefine the trajectory of the Conservative Party for a generation, both in organisation and ideology. In the words of one historian, the party would undergo “a wholesale institutional reform of the party structure, led by Butler and the CRD” (Lockwood, 2020: p. 365). As will become apparent, these changes were driven by a fundamental reassessment of British political economy and, much to the chagrin of many in the party, “result in an avowed repudiation of ‘laissez-faire’ politics” and a newfound appreciation for the role of the state (*ibid*).

Given this, it is perhaps surprising how easily the CRD was overlooked in the histories of the Conservative Party. For one, much of the scholarship on the role of ideas in British politics is focused on the impact of the think tanks that drove the Thatcherite revolution of the 1980s, thanks in no small part to the fact that many of the think tankers involved would go on to write academic accounts of their experience (Harris & Seldon, 2005). Beyond this, the CRD was keen to be left out of the spotlight, purposely avoiding close media contacts and firewalling itself from Conservative Party donors to retain its ideational independence (Ramsden, 1980: p. 129). Perhaps most of all, the CRD tends to be subsumed in discussions of how power is distributed in the highly centralised Conservative Party. Here, the tendency is to sweep all debate on the party’s internal workings under the rug of ‘rule of the leader’. That is, because Conservative party leaders are uniquely influential, especially vis a vis their Labour Party counterparts, there is a tendency to assume that the machinery of the central party operates exclusively or inalterably at their behest. This obscures, however, essential changes over time in the relationship between the Tory party and its leader — especially regarding the development and distribution of the party’s ideas. As such, while it’s certainly true that unlike the LPRD (which was beholden to the Labour NEC), the CRD was statutorily the agent of the party leader (Gamble, 1979), over the years since its founding, the influence and operational independence of the CRD vis a vis the leader’s office would fluctuate.

To this end, the rise and fall of the CRD is a particularly helpful lens both for elucidating the history of the Conservative Party and for understanding the changing nature of British party democracy more generally. Not only did it help stabilise the party after the tumult of the Second World War and the rise of the welfare state, but it remained the authority on Conservative thought for the better part of three decades and thus helped forge the 'Butskellite consensus' of post-war Britain (Clark & Kelly, 2004).

Indeed, as John Ramsden makes clear in his sweeping and authoritative history of the Department, at the height of its power, the CRD wielded such a degree of influence over the party's ideational output that it could be claimed that "almost all that is said, published or broadcast in the name of the Conservative Party is affected by the Department's work, and much of it is written there" (Ramsden, 1980: p.1). This, in turn, imbued the Department with the ideational power to claim a position at the heart of the Conservative PCII. As Ramsden claims, "the [CRD's] central position is vital, for it is only in the Department and in the Leader's private office that all the threads of Party advice on policy can be tied together" (*ibid.*, p. 8). While this did not typically mean that the CRD had the authority to overrule the party leader on matters of policy (it could only give them the ideas its researchers thought best reflected the party's long-term goals), it did grant the department the power to determine what ideas the leader would sift through in the process of choosing a policy course. This gave it a powerful upstream capacity to determine what constituted 'true' Conservative Party thought.

Beyond this, the Department developed significant influence through its capacity to generate consensus on the party's ideational direction. It was thus crucial for uniting party actors outside the leadership (MPs, candidates and members), especially after the stunning loss in 1945. This was primarily accomplished by publishing research materials for various party constituencies, running a question-and-answer service for Conservative operatives during elections, and hosting various seminars for figures at every level of the party. Outside the party organisation, it became a particularly effective communicator of Conservative ideas central to the party's publicity efforts (*ibid.*, pp. 57-58). The combined

effect of these roles gave the CRD its ultimate source of ideational power: control of the party platform, exercised primarily via the drafting of party publications and electoral manifestos.

2.5: “Chamberlain’s Private Army”: Mass democracy and the founding of the CRD

The CRD’s ability to claim territory at the heart of post-war PCII materialised from its role in the reincarnation of the Conservative Party as an institution of mass democracy. As the franchise was gradually expanded in the early decades of the twentieth century and a new class of British citizens gained the vote, the Conservative Party was confronted with the challenge of having to construct electoral platforms that would appeal to voters beyond the narrow interests that constituted the Conservative Party-in-Parliament (Ziblatt, 2017). Before the expansion of the franchise, the notion of committing resources to the production of party ideas would have been seen as unnecessary and even inappropriate – politics was the domain of the gentleman amateur, and this meant that the proper place for political ideas to emerge from was informal conversations at dining clubs and members’ associations. Indeed, it was a point of pride for Conservative MPs that they were not full-time politicians, and it is reasonable to assume that establishing formal bodies to conduct party research was simply not something that would have occurred to them. As a result, to the extent that the party developed electoral manifestos, they were “singularly unrevealing” and backwards-looking documents that prospective leaders published to demonstrate their past accomplishments and their aims for “conservation” (Ramsden, 1980, p. 12). When policies needed to be worked out, this was done on an ad hoc basis by the leadership of the day with little consultation with the party with which it was affiliated (McCrillis, 1998).

Before long, however, the weight of electoral necessity began to push old hands to one side. The Labour Party, with its connection to the union movement and proto-think tanks like the Fabian Society, was emerging as a serious electoral threat by offering the voters a deeply considered vision of the future and the policy proposals to achieve them. In the

face of this new threat, reform-minded Tories like Joseph Chamberlain quickly realised the importance of coherent, well-articulated party ideas to succeed in the new political world of mass democracy. As Ramsden puts it:

The opposition to Labour could only compete with a working-class party if it too could offer advanced programmes of social reform ... Chamberlain appreciated the political wisdom of linking the evolution of policy, the education of his party, and the preparation of propaganda to convert the nation (1980, p. 16).

However, more traditional Conservative leaders like Bonar Law and Stanley Baldwin were resistant to changing the status quo of party thinking. These figures and most of their colleagues had gained their rank via informal party networks, and they had little interest in ceding the initiative to a new generation of political professionals who had no experience with the delicate social dynamics behind the formation of party policy (Ramsden, 1987). Beyond this, party grandees expressed real antipathy towards the proposal to develop and articulate specific ideas for electoral strategy, fearing that pre-emptive exposition of the party's plans would render it a hostage to fortune (McCrillis, 1998; Beichman, 1974).

However, reformist arguments gained momentum as Labour made steady political gains through the 1920s. Soon, up-and-coming party operatives such as Neville Chamberlain and Harold Macmillan joined the call for a professionalised approach to party ideas to connect with an electorate that appeared to be growing by the day. Indeed, it was a paper written by another of these reformers, John Buchan, from which the idea of the Conservative Research Department first appeared (Beichman, 1978). The issue came to a head after the 1929 election, during which Baldwin explicitly rebuffed reformers' calls for a formal committee to establish party policy. Staff in Baldwin's office were suspicious of Buchan's proposal, arguing (not without reason) that such a department would diminish the leader's ability to set policy. As a result, Baldwin insisted that all manifesto drafting take place in his office, with the predictable result that the final product was a sloppy and at times contradictory document.

When Ramsey MacDonald led Labour to the most seats in a hung parliament (accompanied by solid gains from the Liberal Party), Conservative reformers were predictably furious. Macmillan was particularly incensed, writing scathingly (in what contemporaries understood to be a less-than-subtle dig at Baldwin) that “the fundamental weakness of the Unionist Party today lies in its present confusion of thought. It has no clear policy of immediate problems; it has no clear goal towards which it feels itself to be striving. It has too many 'open questions' and too many closed minds” (quoted: Ramsden, 1980: pp. 31-32). In other words, it was losing ground to rival parties due to its unwillingness to generate the intellectual resources needed to compete in the emerging arena of mass politics, and the 1929 result firmly shifted the balance of power between ideational reformers and aristocratic incumbents. Baldwin could simply no longer ignore the voices calling for the formation of a coherent party-based ideational machinery without facing open rebellion, and the decision to set up the CRD was taken at a Shadow Cabinet meeting on 23 October 1929 (Beichman, 1978).

The CRD's first years played out as might be expected given Baldwin's half-hearted embrace. It was extremely limited in scope, consisting of only a director and a staff of four. However, it quickly gained traction when Neville Chamberlain simultaneously took charge of both the CRD and the Party Chairmanship. Learning from his father, Chamberlain was one of the first Conservative operatives to realise the potential power that lay in control over party ideas. As one contemporary recalled: [Chamberlain] wanted a group of men who would 'devil' for him or would at least work out the applications of measures which would be given then as the Party's policy” (quoted: Ramsden, 1980: pp. 43). He thus used his position as Party Chair to funnel resources towards the Department and his position as head of the CRD to control its research agenda to suit his political interests. As a result, under his leadership, the Department expanded its ideational output considerably, largely thanks to the formalisation of the committee system that it used to collate ideas. By the summer of 1931, committees had been formed to study various issues, including the House of Lords reform, the economy, tariffs, agriculture,

unemployment, over-production, imperial affairs, industrial foundations, clean milk, the post office, and sugar.

Before long, Chamberlain's use of the CRD to advance his political position became so effective that the Department became known as "Chamberlain's private army" (*ibid.*, p. 56), and unsurprisingly, he quickly established himself as one of the party's primary thought leaders. This meant that when Baldwin retired in 1937, Chamberlain was seen as his natural successor – a development that reflects how, even at this early juncture, control over the party's research body could serve as a source of influence. For the first time, Conservative MPs had an ideational machinery with which they could engage to develop forward-thinking policy ideas, and Chamberlain's position at the heart of this process made him appear an indispensable agent of the party's future. Thus, after nearly a decade of crisis-induced national government, Chamberlain was seen as the only figure in a leadership position with the new ideas necessary to take the party (and country) forward, and the King duly appointed him Prime Minister at his predecessor's recommendation (Ramsden, 1987; Ramsden, 1980, pp 40-44; 79-81; Beichman, 1978).

However, while the CRD's role in Chamberlain's ascent is an early example of its capacity to dispense ideational power (and thus offer a path to political power in a more traditional sense), this does not necessarily mean that in this early period, the CRD *itself* could be said to command ideational power. It was, for all intents and purposes, an appendage of the party leader and (now) Prime Minister, and this lack of institutional independence would soon prove to be as much of a millstone as an advantage. Indeed, while the CRD's status grew along with Chamberlain's career that it helped to propel, it also ran the risk of being pulled down along with its benefactor when his career prospects diminished – and this is precisely what happened at the outbreak of the Second World War and Chamberlain's infamous decision to attempt to appease Hitler and his Nazi war machine (Macklin, 2006).

2.6: Stasis and Reincarnation: The CRD and the Second World War

The outbreak of WWII and Winston Churchill's ascent to No. 10 spelled a loss of initiative for the CRD. Churchill brought with him a deep-seated mistrust of the party apparatus. While this did not amount to an aversion to political ideas as such, it did mean that he closely guarded control over the ideas that his government espoused. Thus, "[Churchill] revolutionised the Government's attitude to research and expert advice, but he carried out his revolution within the Government machine and not within the Party...planning post-war reconstruction within the all-party machinery of the Government's Reconstruction Committee" (Ramsden, 1980, p. 95-96). To make matters worse, Chamberlain succumbed to cancer soon after leaving office, leaving his private army bereft of a patron. The most significant challenge, however, was the war itself. Mobilisation robbed the CRD of most of its researchers, almost all of whom would leave to bring their analytical talents to the war effort (Ramsden, 1987). Given the confluence of these factors, it is unsurprising that by June 1940, Churchill ordered the CRD to be shuttered for the duration of the war — a fateful decision that, as discussed previously, would aid the Labour Party in seizing the ideational initiative (Middlemas, 1990).

The short-sightedness of Churchill's hostility to the CRD would become apparent as the war concluded and attention shifted to the challenges of reconstruction. The fact that Churchill's Reconstruction Committee was a cross-party operation meant that all parties involved could reasonably claim the ideas it produced. It is unsurprisingly, then, that when the parties produced their post-war manifestos, the media quickly noticed that, in terms of policy specifics, all three major parties had relatively similar platforms (Pelling, 1980). As such, the challenge that the 1945 election presented to the each party was to use the specific policies produced by the coalition government to craft a coherent party platform that would differentiate the party from its competitors. In other words, it was an election that required parties to have 'big ideas' to engage in a discursive contest over competing visions of the country's future.

This was good news, as we've seen, for a Labour Party that had quietly kept its ideational operations running throughout the war (Middlemas, 1990). The Conservatives, by contrast, found that their lack of party thinking left them badly on the backfoot when the election arrived. More directly, the Conservatives simply lacked the staff necessary to produce a convincing manifesto. As a result, the entire effort fell to Henry Brooke, one of the only CRD staffers who had returned to the Department after the War's conclusion (Bale, 2012: p. 22). While Brooke was undoubtedly capable, the scale of the undertaking made the job simply unrealistic. Churchill fell on old habits to fill the gap, turning to an informal network of friends for advice about his communicative strategy (chief among them Lords Beaverbrook, Cherwell and Bracken). It was thought that these Tory grandees, with their links to newspaper empires, could put the Conservative's offer in a broader political framework. However, owning the means of communication was not the same as having ideas to communicate, which meant that this turn to these Conservative Lords would be, to quote Ramsden, "disastrous" (1980: p. 102-103). As such, the 1945 Conservative Manifesto did little to convince a revolution-minded British public that the party would not betray the spirit of the Beveridge Report that a well-functioning Labour Party PCII had dexterously wrapped around Clement Attlee (Bale, 2012, p. 38; Beers, 2009). The result, as we know, is that the Conservatives ran headlong into electoral disaster.

The loss shocked most observers, who predicted Churchill would easily win re-election after seeing the country through its darkest hour. For reformists who had come to appreciate the importance of ideas — and particularly Butler and fellow reformer Harold Macmillan — the loss proved a vindication (Ramsden, 1980: p. 102). As early as 1941, these figures had successfully agitated for the formation of a Post-War Problems Central Committee (PWPPC) to facilitate the party's plans for demobilisation and reconstruction (Page, 2015: Ch. 2). It was while working on this committee these Butler and Brooke became aware of the Labour Party's expansion of its PCII, prompting fears that the Conservative Party was falling behind in preparations for the coming 'war of ideas' (CRD 2/28/1, 1941; CRD 2/28/3, 1941). Unfortunately, for these reformers, no one was listening. For one, the PWPPC would quickly find itself hopelessly mired in the party's executive

policy committee structure, which frequently saw proposals (on both policy and organisational reform) sandbagged by the bewildering number of veto players that inhabited the process. The result, predictably, was a retreat towards the lowest common denominator, meaning that most of the committee's proposals were "too unexciting to compete with much chance success against such ideas as those of Beveridge" (Ramsden, 1980: p. 98). The other problem is that Churchill remained largely suspicious of efforts to catalyse party-based research, and even if he had been, it is doubtful that any wartime Prime Minister could have given significant attention to the concerns of long-term party research. As a result, the PWPCCC atrophied considerably by 1943, precisely when the Labour's post-war Reconstruction Committee was coming into its own.

However, as had been the case in the 1930s, the defeat and resulting crisis of confidence amongst party traditionalists meant that reformists could press home their case about the importance of a coherent party platform during the inevitable post-election post-mortem (Beichman, 1978). Better yet, Butler and Brooke had plans near at hand with which they could help the party reestablish its ideational capacity. Although Labour had established a more robust organisational capacity to generate new ideas, these figures were determined to ensure that the Conservative Party quickly closed this gap. To achieve this, they deliberately imitated the most successful aspects of Labour's operation. Indeed, the functional similarity between the proposed CRD and the LPRD was no accident. His interactions with Herbert Morrison during the wartime government, where he observed the impressive publicity and propaganda capabilities that Labour's ideational infrastructure afforded, were participially important for shaping Butler's vision for the Department. Thus, when it came time to develop the Conservative Party's own PCII, Butler used the Labour model as his blueprint. As he later recounted in his memoirs, upon being appointed director of the nascent CRD, he "carefully examined what [Morrison] had done for the Labour Party before and during the 1945 election and told my staff that I wanted to do the same for the Conservative Party" (quoted in Beers, 2009: p. 682). This highlights how Labour had initially outpaced the Tories in the battle of ideas and illustrates how purposeful imitation led to the convergence of functionally similar models of PCII.

To this end, a 1944 document (produced by Brooke) had already laid out the basic contours of how the CRD would work as both an ideational repository and gatekeeper. In language strikingly similar to how Labour Party researchers described the role of the LPRD, the report suggested that:

No party research department can possibly possess the resources for extensive original work. What it can and must do is to keep a systematic watch on other people's ideas, analyse them, sift the good from the unsound, warn the policymakers of the Party against the latter (however attractively dressed up), and think out means of weaving the former into the texture of a programme. This kind of research work, if it is to be of any use, must always be directed towards the building up of material that might form part of a future election programme (quoted in Ramsden, 1980: p. 101).

Brooke continued by tracing how this gatekeeping role (what he calls "sifting") would work in some detail. Thus:

"In this sifting of ideas, there must be four criteria: (i) is it in harmony with Conservative philosophy? (ii) is it in practicable form? (iii) Will it be acceptable, or can it be rendered acceptable, to the Party? (iv) Does it meet a real want?"

To this end, this gatekeeping function was grounded in a claim to a specific kind of ideational power, one that was formed out of the collation of ideas explicitly for the purposes of forming a party platform and thus the authority to declare what did and what did not constitute "real Conservatism". To this end, Brooke would claim: "It is regrettable that it should be necessary to include (iii) as well as (i), but unfortunately, there seem to be numbers of people calling themselves Conservatives who have confused and sometimes conflicting views about the true nature of the Conservative attitude" (*ibid.*).

Thus, in the wreckage of the 1945 defeat, the CRD would begin to take shape as an organisation with its own claim to ideational power independent of any other traditional centre of party power. This was by design, as the leadership void meant that the formation of the CRD and the definition of its relationship with the rest of the party was left primarily

to Butler. Recalling the trouble that the Department ran into in the wake of Chamberlain's political implosion, Butler was careful to ensure that the Department would not be held hostage to the fortunes of a single benefactor or shifting factional interests. Thus, measures were taken to ensure that other centres of Conservative power could not unduly influence the CRD, be they within the party or from the outside. To this end, not only was its administrative structure such that it would have "all the independence it would need" from both the central party and leader's office, but it was also forbidden from fundraising from sources outside the party for fear that industrial interests might influence the ideas it produced (Ramsden, 1980, p. 129). As Bale (2012, p. 39-40) notes, the reincarnation of the Research Department is notable for its *lack* of involvement of the standing Party leader.

This move was vital for ensuring that the CRD could function (at least in theory) as an ideational ballast for the party, one that could keep it heading towards the 'north star' of proper Conservatism. As such, the newly formed Department's remit was extensive, as was reported to the National Party at the end of 1946: "The Research Department ... is available to assist all departments of the Party ... The main duty of the Department is to undertake the preparation of material as a basis for future policy on all subjects referred to it" (PWPC report, 1946, quoted in Ramsden, 1980: p. 107). Butler's first objective with his new department was equally ambitious: to redefine the party's overarching philosophy. In 1947, he directed David Clarke to write *The Conservative Faith in the Modern Age* and Quintin Hogg to write *The Case for Conservatism*. In Butler's own words, these efforts were undertaken "at an early stage under the aegis of the Research Department so as to restore the whole faith and philosophy of the Conservative Party" (quoted Ramsden, 1980: p. 108). The move to first address the need to reform Conservative ideas at their 'highest level' was shrewd because it further imbued the department with the power to determine which problems and policies should be prioritised in constructing the party's political offer. To this end, it allowed the CRD to claim the party platform almost immediately via the publication of publicity materials that couched this redefined philosophy in the language of post-war British patriotism (Ball, 2013: Ch. 5; Cragoe, 2007).

Indeed, the CRD soon moved to translate this refurbished political philosophy into a coherent party platform. Churchill, who remained party leader despite the defeat, was sceptical of Butler's efforts, preferring instead the traditional, informal means of Conservative ideational development. However, the National Union had explicitly called for reform of the party's ideational infrastructure. This, combined with the enthusiasm that the CRD generated from the party's backbenches, was such that the embattled party leader had little choice but to begrudgingly embrace the reforms pushed by his junior colleagues (Lockwood, 2020; Beichman, 1974). Thus, in 1946, he allowed for the formation of a high-powered committee to study industrial policy, which, while nominally an initiative of Churchill's, reflected the ideas produced by Butler and the CRD (Ramsden, 1980: p. 110). It was from this body that the famous *Industrial Charter* would emerge, a document that moved the party so firmly in the statist direction that the *Daily Express* would quip that the Conservatives were going "into the political battle against Socialism with the Socialist banner" (CRD 2/7/31a, 1947). This was not entirely fair on Butler or the CRD. While the *Charter* did certainly reflect Butler's embrace of the state as a "trustee for the interests of the community" (quoted in Lockwood, 2020: p. 365), this was not the state as envisioned by Laski or Crosland. It was instead a state that would strive to "balance the interests of indelible social classes and interest groups, rather than attempting to efface or reconstruct social hierarchies" (*ibid*). However, regardless of the type of state envisioned, the CRD's new statist ideas would fundamentally shape the future contours of the party's PCII. If the state were to become the Conservative Party's tool for economic governance, then the party would require its own civil service to understand better how to direct it — and this is precisely how CRD researchers saw themselves (Beichman, 1978).

Beyond this, the *Charter's* eventual adoption as party policy provides more evidence of the CRD's claim to power over the party's ideational renewal, even at this early stage of its reincarnation. Indeed, while the committee responsible for the *Charter's* drafting was formed out of a void of Churchill's indifference, its passage into party policy was achieved in spite of the party leader's active hostility (Willetts, 2005). To this end, Churchill and the

party's right, disturbed by the document's reception in the conservative press, snapped out of their post-1945 malaise and quickly attempted to cast off on their party's pending interventionist shift. As Churchill moved to spike the *Charter's* adaptation as official party policy, Butler and Macmillan leaned on the CRD to generate publicity supporting the document. Thus, "the research apparatus was used to give publicity to what was intended, not only in speeches but also in leaflets [and] Party magazines" (Ramsden, 1980: p 113). Alongside this, the Charter was leaked to the press, and coordinated speeches by Eden, Bulter, and Harold Macmillan generated significant buzz around the Conservative's new intellectual direction (Willetts, 2005). This effectively forced Churchill's hand, and the *Charter* was integrated into the party platform despite the fact that Churchill, in his own words, "did not agree with a word" of it (Maudling, 1978: pp. 45-46).

2.7: Opposition Years: The Conservative PCII Beyond the CRD

The successful acceptance of the *Industrial Charter* signalled the CRD's arrival as a powerful player in the party's internal politics. However, it was far from the only innovation to the party's ideational infrastructure advanced by Butler and his fellow reformers. Indeed, the five years between the 1945 and 1950 elections saw a significant consolidation of the party's ideational capacities in parallel to the formation of the CRD (Beichman, 1978). Most significantly, the Conservatives sought to emulate Labour's ability to coordinate around the ideas produced by the CRD, albeit in a far more centralised, top-down manner that reflected its transformation from an elite parliamentary party. This was accomplished by massively expanding its support for membership deliberation and education capacities, primarily via Butler's second major institutional innovation, the Conservative Political Centre (CPC). If the CRD was the party's brain, the CPC can be understood as akin to the party's nervous system, communicating ideas to and from the centre to the party. It worked to facilitate the "two-way movement of ideas" via "a network of constituency discussion groups linked through regular meetings into a national framework for the explanation and testing of policy ideas among the Party activists" (Ramsden, 1980: p. 106). Thus, "Conservative Constituency Associations would keep those at the top of the party abreast of public sentiment, while CPC publications

would disseminate Conservative thought to a mature and well-informed public” (Lockwood, 2020: p. 367).

In this sense, the CPC was the Conservative Party’s response to Labour’s initiatives to coordinate ideas at the constituency level, and it played an integral part in driving the party’s mass-political communicative capacities. Indeed, it was formed explicitly to “wrest the initiative of the battle of ideas from the Socialists” at the local level of the Conservative’s new mass party organisation (Cuthbert Alport quoted in Bale, 2012: p. 22; Norton, 2013). It thus helped to ensure that the ideas developed by the central party were informed (and to a lesser extent were informed by) the party membership. The CPC quickly established operational independence from the Central Office and began to operate as a satellite of the CRD, with the latter drafting almost all of the discussion programmes for the former. The CPC would open its own publishing imprint to facilitate this process, and the ideas circulated in these publications were drawn almost exclusively from the CRD (Ramsden, 1980: p. 107).

It must be said this two-way movement existed more in theory than in practice. Reflecting that party’s traditions of organisational hierarchy, the local Conservative Associations primarily played the role of passive receivers of ideas produced by the CRD. Real ideational power tended to be consolidated in the CRD, where the detailed work of policy formation tended to crowd out a strict observance of the preferences of the Associations. Thus, in reality Conservative members were mostly told what ideas represented the party line as opposed to being active participants in the formation of these lines. However, the participatory process that the CPC engendered in the formation of policy ideas at least gave the *impression* of the collective development of the party’s long-term thinking—and this intent lingered well after Butler’s time at the helm of the CPC. When Angus Maude took over as director of the CPC in 1951, for instance, he was adamant that policy should be developed organically by embracing the process by which social issues were articulated to the party through the CPC process. “The instinct of our people,” he claimed, “tend to be far more nearly correct than their leaders give them credit for” (quoted in Lockwood, 2020: p. 367).

At the executive level, too, reforms were implemented to streamline the party's PCII. Key were changes recommended by the 1947 Maxwell-Fyfe committee, which would split the unwieldy Advisory Committee on Policy and Political Education (ACPPE) into two bodies: the Advisory Committee on Political Education (ACPE) and the Advisory Committee on Policy (ACP). Reporting practices were then reformed so that the CPC and CRD would report to each organisation, respectively, making it much easier for information to flow between the CPC/CRD and the party leader's office (also facilitating this was the fact that Butler was able to get himself installed at the Chairman of both the ACPE and the ACP). This new structure was key for facilitating the intra-party movement of ideas, both vertically (between the party on the ground and the party executive) and between different elites at the national level. It is worth quoting Ramsden at length on this point:

The new system reflected ... the success already achieved by the CPC, for its local groups, were so numerous as to need careful handling within the Party organisation if they were not to become a disruptive force....But most of all, on the policy side, it was felt that a different and more formal method of testing the views of the Party on evolving policies was needed. Thus, although Bulter was made chairman of the new Advisory Committee on Policy (ACP) when set up in 1949, its members were chosen by the National Union and by MPs and Peers rather than by the chairman, and they were chosen specifically because they represented different elements in the Organisation....The existence of the ACP in this form ensured that the representatives of the National Union, the Young Conservatives, the Conservative Trades Unionists, and Conservative Women would all feel that they were involved in the making of policy; at its most negative this made it unlikely that policies would be disowned by any of these sections of the Party (Ramsden, 1980: p. 131).

As was the case of the relationship between the LPRD and the executive committees in the Labour Party, the CRD was an integral partner of the ACP, with the CRD providing secretarial support to the ACP. This was ensured by the provision the Director of the CRD would always be the secretary of the ACP, and the interaction of these bodies would guide the direction of party ideas from the late 1940s onwards (Willetts, 2005).

Finally, the CRD was essential for guiding the party's relationship with civil society organisations. Thus, just as the LPRD was responsible for liaising with the trade unions in the policy development process, the CRD quickly established relationships with various trade groups. This became especially important during opposition years when Labour's nationalisation plans were being carried out. Here, CRD researchers played a central role in organising the party's response to be in line with various external interests that ran the risk of being nationalised (this was especially the case with transport and the Road Hauliers Association) (Ramsden, 1980: p. 119).

Thus, by the late 1940s the Conservative Party was well underway to catch up to Labour's innovations in the organisation of party ideas. It was rapidly converging towards a PCII that was capable of defining the party's long-term ideational direction, engaging in a two-way exchange of ideas with local party members, producing the propaganda necessary to 'sell' the party's ideas to non-members, and using all of these considerations to shape the programme that the party would present to voters during elections. At the centre of this infrastructure, in many ways, the CRD already exceeded the relative influence of the LPRD in the Labour Party. Along with these multiplying roles, the Department's size expanded accordingly, soon reaching more than fifty staff (half of whom were researchers and half support staff). This increase in staffing resources dwarfed that of the LPRD and vastly increased the ideational output that the Conservative PCII could aspire to.

2.8: The CRD and the Road Back to Power

The CRD's ability to shape the Conservative Party programme is further emphasised by its role in shaping the 1950 election manifesto. Indeed, no sooner was the Industrial Charter published than Bulter for the Department to work on developing a new party programme based on this vision. Once again, these CRD ideas defined the party platform despite Churchill's reservations.

Churchill's suspicions of the Department were only enhanced by the experience with the *Charter* and he showed little enthusiasm for the ideas emanating from the CRD's manifesto drafting efforts (an insouciance likely enhanced by his preference for matters of statecraft and foreign policy) (Charmley, 2015; Thompson, 1987). By this point, however, the ideas produced in a series of CRD policy papers, of which over 1,000 were produced between 1947 and 1951 (a rate of more than one per day that Parliament was sitting) had afforded the CRD an ideational heft that left Churchill little choice but to accept the Department's control over the party's ideational offer. Most important in this regard was the 1949 document *The Right Road for Britain*, which Ramsden argues was vital for establishing the consensual process of ideational production that would give the CRD control over "a whole family of manifestoes and policy statements in the future" (Ramsden, 1980: p. 140).

This is not to say that Churchill's office was uninvolved with the manifesto preparations, but rather that this role was primarily relegated to that of an editorial rhetorician. In terms of substance, almost all ideas in the 1950/1951 manifestos originated from the CRD, suggesting that the Department could claim an ideational influence that was at least as significant as that of the party leader. Indeed, by 1951, Churchill had almost no substantive input into the production of party policy documents or the manifesto that would draw from them. Thus, while the press would praise the "Churchillian prose" of the manifesto, they largely ignored the substance of the document in the full knowledge that the meat of the party's programme would emerge from the CRD-produced policy document *Britain Strong and Free* (which was published a month after the manifesto) (Ramsden, 1980: p. 161). Further, once the manifesto was written, the Department played a vital role in the party's campaign process, using its position at the centre of the PCII to distribute its ideas across all corners of the party.

Thus, only five years after its post-war reconstitution, the CRD could claim to be the primary authority over the Party's platform. It had become, in Ramsden's estimation, "close to the all-embracing information and research organisation that Chamberlain had envisaged in 1930 but which had never come into existence before the War" (*ibid.*, p.

132). By the early 1950s, it could be said that Butler had rebuilt the Conservative Party's PCII from the ground up, and with it, he would carry out a similarly comprehensive reconstruction of Conservatism that would embrace the statism that has come to define the post-war period. With this model of ideational production — aided by a significant resource advantage over their Labour counterparts — the Conservatives would set out “to prove themselves better managers of Social Democracy than the Labour party” (Gamble, 1979: p. 31). They would succeed beyond expectation, winning three elections in a row and solidifying this party-centric model of ideational production until 1979 (Kavanagh, 1989).

Chapter 3: PCII in Opposition and Power -- Institutionalisation and the Challenge of Party Government

The five years from 1945 to 1950 would involve a massive transformation of the British state, economy and society, with changes to the British party system at the heart of these changes. The shocking success of the Labour Party at the end of the Second World War would usher in a new era in the relationship between the British public and the parties that shaped their relationship with politics. The era of mass politics had arrived, and with it, the institutionalisation of a new kind of party organisation. As we have seen in Chapter 2, an essential element of both parties' ability to engage with mass politics was the development of robust, far-ranging party-centric ideational infrastructures, complete with powerful research departments, well-organised means to communicate ideas to members and forums for getting membership inputs in policy development processes. While the Labour Party was the first mover in developing these ideational innovations, by 1951, the Conservatives had successfully – and effectively – imitated its counterpart's embrace of PCII.

Heading into the 1950s, we turn our attention to the institutionalisation of PCII in both parties. We will examine how PCII continued to influence their respective party platforms and the new challenges that emerged when the ideas that they helped to develop succeeded in putting their party into government. The process of ideational renewal was a much easier proposition for parties in opposition than for parties in power, and in the 1950s, leading figures in both parties PCII would learn the challenges of shaping a party platform in the shadow of a friendly government. Indeed, what we might call the 'circadian' exchange of ideational authority that occurs when parties enter and leave the

government would see the demands of governance require ministers to develop policies in response to immediate social problems and with reference to the interest of the country as a whole as a reference point. This meant that, as a matter of course, the party's ideational infrastructure had less influence over the development of short-term policy when the party is in power relative to the influence it has when in opposition, and the attention of party operatives turns to longer-term considerations.

However, it would not be accurate to say that PCIs became dormant when their party was in power. Indeed, as we will see, over the post-war period, party-research infrastructures – in many cases despite the odds – retained control over the *overall* party programme, guiding the party's long-term thinking and, crucially, commanding primary authority over both party's manifesto content. Thus, it was the *party*, as opposed to the *party leader*, that remained the ultimate arbiter of how the party developed its offer to voters and, crucially, how this offer was updated to reflect the changing circumstances of post war politics.

3.1: Constructing a Party Platform in Labour's New Jerusalem

Richard Crossman described the experience of the 1945 Attlee government in typically poetic language: "All that talk about 'capturing the bastions of capitalism', and then nobody resisted...those who manned the defences of Jericho could not have been more surprised than those socialists who saw the walls of capitalism tumble down after a short blast on the Fabian trumpet" (Crossman, 1950). Indeed, the ease with which Labour was able to translate manifesto ideas into action once they got into power caught even the most optimistic Labour operatives off guard. For those operating the party's PCI, it even proved to be a double-edged sword. While there was an earnest celebration at the tremendous speed at which the government succeeded in implementing key elements of *Let Us Face the Future*, party researchers soon found themselves struggling to keep up. The Attlee government was burning through ideational ammunition at an alarming rate and transforming the political terrain on which British politics stood in the process.

It quickly became apparent that the government's success in transforming British capitalism would necessitate a subsequent updating of Labour's approach to socialism. Thus, those in the party's PCII concerned with the need to renew the party's ideas soon found themselves in the wholly unexpected position of having to update the party's programme in light of a *successful* Labour government (Thompson, 2006: ch. 12; Callaghan & Tunney, 2000).

They would soon find that this success would breed a whole host of new ideational challenges. At heart, these challenges were related to what Richard Rose (1974) has famously described as "the problem with British party government". That is, once the party wins power, its leadership becomes the government and, as a result, becomes operationally separated from the party vehicle that brought it power. This was a particular challenge for those concerned with the party's ideas. Not only did the imperatives of governance imply distinct pressures and shorter time horizons than the party's long-term ideological commitments, but government operatives are exposed to many different sources of ideas when they are in power as opposed to when they are in opposition. Thus, at the very time that figures in Labour's PCII realised the imperative to update the party's thinking to maintain the party's momentum, they found themselves far more constrained in these efforts than they ever had been while the party was in opposition.

No place were these frustrations more apparent than in the LPRD, where Young's exasperation quickly became clear for all to see. Such tension was likely inevitable given Young's intellectual disposition. His time at the head of the LPRD, although massively influential on the trajectory of the party's PCII and Labour's ideas more generally, reflects a marriage of a fiercely independent thinker (Young would go on to have a successful career as an academic) and an ideational infrastructure that was embedded in a collective, and in many ways mechanistic, process of party-ideational production (Meredith, 2016). The role of the Research Secretary was not to develop ideas for ideas' sake, as is the case in academic research, but to develop ideas that are politically actionable and thus suitable for inclusion in a party's political programme (Rose, 1974: p. 180). Further, it was subject to a host of constraints emanating from Labour's unique

constitutional design and from interactional dynamics that are present in all parties. There would have been little scope for the Secretary of the LPRD, however intellectually wilful, to meaningfully input their own independent thinking into the party's programme given the structural responsibilities that the Department had to other elements of the party and broader movement (Hennessy, 2005).

This is not to say that Young did not try. For instance, his 1949 book *Small Man, Big World: A Discussion of Socialist Democracy*, published through the LPRD, would lay the groundwork for his later academic work. He also made a major push for closer integration between scientific research and methods and the formation of social policy at the level of both the party and the government, efforts which would eventually translate into the formation of the Social Science Research Council (Butler, 2020). However laudable these aims were, they typically had little direct relevance to the party's policy platform. At the end of the day, the LPRD was a vital component of the party's PCII, but it was vital as a *utility* — that is, as a body that could connect the ideas produced across a big tent mass party, but not a place where robust original research was expected to be conducted. This ultimately made the relationship between the Department and arguably its most successful director an awkward one, and Young would recall feeling that he contributed little to party policy in terms of original thinking. These feelings clouded even his reflections on the massively successful *Let Us Face the Future*, which he recalled “sort of wrote itself” based on “centuries of socialist propaganda” (quoted in Butler, 2015: p. 204).

Nevertheless, there were few in the party or broader movement more aware of the need to update the party's thinking now that there was a Labour government, and Young's frustrations would only mount as it became clear that it would be significantly more difficult for the LPRD to perform its ideational ‘switchboard’ duties now that the party was in power. As early as 1946, Young would call for the Department to redouble its efforts at updating the party's long-term vision, writing in a 1946 report on the LPRD's research programme that:

It is clearly not too early to begin thinking about the Party's programme for the next

General Election. Labour's goal is democratic socialism. But this long-term aim needs to be broken down into immediate aims from time to time. The end of the Labour Government's first term of office will mark a decisive stage on the road to full socialism and call for a wide-ranging reformulation of policy (LPNEC, LPRD Series 1-32, 1946).

These efforts would quickly be frustrated as the LPRD found it increasingly difficult to gain the ears of ministers who now occupied themselves with the administration of the state (Francis, 1997: pp. 40-45). Governing responsibilities imposed high costs on diaries and mental loads, which made it much more difficult for these figures to meaningfully contribute to NEC policy committees. This resulted in the paradoxical situation in which, just as the NEC committees and LPRD became the centre of ideational gravity in the *party*, they became less well attended by the party leaders who were now government ministers. As a result, it became increasingly difficult to produce new ideas without adequate input from those in the party who had the most direct access to the levers of state power.

Even worse, while ministers were absent from committee meetings, they were exposed to a competing source of ideas in the form of civil service (Lievonon, 2019: Ch. 1; Polsby, 2001). It soon became apparent that this was a competition in which the LPRD was severely outgunned, and as Young conceded:

The functions of the Department are bound to be different from those it performed when the Party was in opposition, since the Ministerial members of the Party have at their disposal in the Ministerial capacity civil service staff who can, indeed in the normal course of their work have to, devote attention not many of the problems which will inevitably figure the next election programme. These civil service teams will usually have advantages in ease of access to facts and size of staff which will be denied to the Research Department or any other body outside the government. (LPNEC, LPRD Series 1-32, 1946).

In theory, this need not have made it more difficult for Young and the LPRD researchers to update the party's programme. Freed from the need to act as the "party's civil service" (Lievonon, 2019: p. 323; Clark & Kelly, 2004), the LPRD might well have been more able to focus on the party's long-term thinking. Young himself proposed a division of labour along these lines, arguing that the Department should persist with its core functions of ideational aggregation while allowing the civil service to advise on the day-to-day functions of the state. This would have allowed the LPRD to shepherd the party's long-term ideational renewal without diverting scarce resources (that is, the attention of Department researchers) towards the more immediate challenges of day-to-day governance. To this end, he argued that:

A start should be made on the research work for the party's next election programme. But the Research Department should not usually attempt to undertake studies already being tackled inside the government machine; and should be confined to problems whose outlines in 1949 can already be clearly discerned or on already current and bound to be continuing problems...The Department is, despite these limitations, in a position to undertake research (i) on request from a Minister who wishes to obtain assistance on a particular [long-term] problem, (ii) on certain matters which are strictly Party-political, and (iii) on matters of common concern to the Party, the T.U.C. and the Co-op) (LPNEC, LPRD Series 1-32, 1946)

The problem with this plan was that with Labour ministers, now operating a degree of removal from the party's PCII, it became increasingly difficult for the Department to do any forward planning for fear of inadvertently constraining ministers' future policy choices. Beyond this, LPRD researchers constantly found themselves on the back foot regarding statistical information, given that Whitehall's data-gathering capacities far outstripped the party's own. In combination, this made it much more difficult for the party to develop ideas to update the party platform — both because they had less productive interaction with ministers (as opposed to shadow ministers) and because the influence of the civil service meant that party researchers frequently felt themselves 'one step behind' (Francis, 1997).

This was all compounded by the LPRD's own waning productivity. This was in part due to a brain drain that occurred as several of the most senior party researchers left the Department to join the civil service to aid Labour's transformation of the British State from the inside. Soon, permanent departmental staff shrunk to only two research assistants, and while the LPRD could also rely on "voluntary workers, including M.Ps., members of the Fabian Society, ... and individual members of the Party", the remaining members of the permanent staff were so overstretched that they could not adequately manage those who offered to help (LPNEC, LPRD Series 1-9, 1945). Thus, before the LPRD could depart on even its limited mission of updating the party's long-term thinking, it would have to increase headcount substantially, with Young calling for the recruitment of four new researchers "at a minimum" (*ibid.*). This would happen only slowly, a reflection of the poor state of the party's finances in the immediate post-war period. As a result, while the LPRD would eventually expand to as many as 13 full-time researchers, along with support staff, this would only happen by 1959, leaving Young and his colleagues overstretched and struggling (LPNEC, LPRD Series 1-30, 1959; LPNEC, LPRD Series 195, 1960). A persistently small staff size meant that for the entire period of the Labour government, the departure of a single researcher could – and frequently did – halt the research progress on an entire policy area until a replacement could be recruited (Lievonon, 2019: ch. 1).

For an organisation that bore the responsibility of renewing the party's long platform, this presented a potentially serious deficit. As such, Young would resort to creative means of enhancing the party's research capacities while attempting to overcome these limitations. For the most part, this would involve informal networking with external organisations that produced work considered relevant to the party's research priorities, especially in areas where the Department lacked research expertise itself. This, essentially, meant extending the LPRD's 'ideational repository' function at the expense of in-house research, and the Department quickly became reliant on research being conducted by ideologically aligned experts who worked outside of the party movement proper. As such, the late 1940s saw the LPRD develop relationships with friendly academics at the Oxford Institute of Statistics and the Department of Applied Economics at Cambridge, as well as proto-think tank organisations like Political and Economic

Planning (P.E.P.) (where Young had been Director between 1941 and 1945) and the National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR) (LPNEC, LPRD Series 1-32, 1946; see also Mudge, 2018). This, as we will see in Part II, would mirror a similar process of ‘ideational outsourcing’ driven by both Labour and Conservative party leaders in the latter decades of the twentieth century, all be it one motivated by a very different set of concerns than would be the case decades later.

More substantial were the links that Young helped to forge between the Department and the Fabian Society, which, in some respects, became a functional extension of the LPRD (Davis, 1963). The Fabians had become relatively moribund through the 1930s as the Great Depression and MacDonald’s defection prompted the party’s leftward turn and the discrediting of Fabian’s technocratic gradualism. This began to change after 1939 when G.D.H. Cole took an interest in reviving the organisation and engineered a merger with the New Fabian Research Bureau (NFRB), which until then had operated as an independent organisation that was not formally affiliated with the Labour Party.³ The Fabian Society was a natural partner for the LPRD. For one, Young was a long-serving member and would have been on familiar terms with the Fabian researchers. More importantly, however, it also had ‘spare’ research capacity, which could be called upon to reinforce the LPRD’s efforts at Transport House (Callaghan, 1997; Davies, 1963). This is precisely what Young proposed when he called for the party to make a “grant” of £500 to the Fabians to engage in research projects on behalf of the LPRD (LPNEC, LPRD Series 1-32, 1946). He also called for the Fabians to be incorporated into the party’s local-level data-gathering operations (*ibid.* p. 5) and for the formalisation of organisational linkages between the Fabian Society and the LPRD, successfully lobbying for party representatives to be installed on the Fabian Executive Committee, Home Research

³ The fact that this was an option available to Young is noteworthy when comparing the emergence and maturation of Labour’s PCII relative to the Conservative Party’s. Here, the LPRD’s relationship with the Fabians reflects the (relatively) decentralised nature of Labour’s PCII compared with the Torys. Labour was born as a coalition of different ideational forces, and even as it matured into a mass party, it retained a tradition of decentralised nodes of ideational influence in the form of various societies, clubs and book groups that sought to exert influence over the party’s dominant ideational direction. This is a stark contrast to the Conservative Party, which emerged as an aristocratic cadre party and retained a more highly centralised structure as it transitioned to the era of mass politics — a verticalism that would inform the shape of its ideational infrastructure.

Department Committee and the International Bureau Advisory Committee (Milburn, 1958).

Other than the 1945 manifesto, Young's move to formally link the LPRD to the Fabian's was perhaps his most significant contribution to Labour's ideas. This is not, in the main, because the Fabian Society contributed significantly to party ideas in the late 1940s — only two Fabian-based research projects (on "Commercial Insurance" and on "Policy for Leisure") were referenced in LPRD reports on subsequent research programmes (LPNEC, LPRD Series 1-222, 1948; LPNEC, LPRD Series 1-32, 1947). However, the reconnection of the LPRD with the organisation that birthed its predecessor (the Fabian Society formed the LRD in 1912, which, after a period of proscription, would be reformed as the LPRD) reflects a reincorporation of one of the party's founding bodies into the process of party-ideational production. This, in turn, meant that the Fabian Society once again moved into a privileged position in Labour's PCII, an increased influence that would help pave the way for the rise of revisionism as a dominant ideational trend in the party after Labour ran into electoral trouble at the turn of the 1950s (see below).

In the meantime, however, it must be concluded that Young's efforts to update the party programme were faltering. Faced with the challenges of distracted or ambivalent ministers, an under-resourced Department and a growing sense of personal and professional disillusionment, Young played a bad hand as well as he could but ultimately stood little chance of success. When Herbert Morrison, then the Party's Deputy Leader and Chair of what was then called the Policy and Publicity Sub-Committee, met in 1949 with Young and other LRPD researchers to develop the party's manifesto, he complained (much to Young's irritation) that the party was "not looking forward enough" (quoted in Batrouni, 2020: p. 14). It was becoming apparent to all involved that the party needed to renew its platform, but by this point, it was far too late. While Morrison and LPRD researchers endeavoured to replicate the standards set by the 1945 manifesto, the lack of intellectual spadework made this task impossible (LPNEC, LPRD Series 1-338, 1949). The 1949 policy statement *Labour Believes in Britain* and the 1950/1951 manifestos were

conservative and underwhelming, largely reflecting a ‘lowest common denominator’ dynamic that fell back on agreed-upon themes from the 1945 programme (Milburn, 1958).

The Party had failed to update its platform, and it showed in its 1950 manifesto. Young would call the document “a pretty tawdry thing,” which focused far too much on questions of the economic utility of the party’s nationalisation programme and far too little on making the case of the social importance of the party’s ideas (Cruddas, 2024: p. 119-120). His opinion of the 1951 document would hardly differ.

3.2: Revisionism and the Abuse of PCII

Given the staleness of the party’s policy outputs, it can hardly be surprising that Labour began to struggle at the ballot box. On top of this, as we have seen, the Conservative Party was rapidly expanding its own research capacities through the late 1940s, in the process not only embracing the post-war paradigm but proving capable of producing a party programme that could convince voters that it was the best party to manage the state under this new paradigm. Thus, in 1950, Labour barely held onto power after seeing its majority reduced from 146 to five MPs. This caught most Labour leaders by surprise, with the exception of Young, who redoubled his efforts to convince colleagues of the need to advance a post-1945 platform. Through the LPRD, he would publish an impassioned “Plea” for the party to take seriously the need to update its thinking. Using language which anticipated the rise of revisionism by half a decade, he would write:

This is a plea for widening the scope of the discussion of the Manifesto for the next Election. It would be a great pity if the discussion were limited to the question of nationalising this or that industry. Nationalisation is a means, not an end. What is needed now is a consideration of the great aims which nationalisation and every other instrument of socialist policy are designed to promote. The Manifesto could then be presented as part of a coherent, integrated approach to the problems of building the socialist way of life. Now is the time for a restatement of the approach of British socialism, which will attempt to do in 1950 what ‘Labour and the New Social

Order' so significantly achieved in 1918. Now is the time for summing up the massive achievements of the Labour Government since 1945, and for charting the course for the future in the light of the socialist purpose (LPNEC, LPRD Series 1-353, 194949).

This “restatement of the approach of British socialism” was not forthcoming because the party’s ideational infrastructure was simply not up to the task. Beyond this, the 1950 result had stirred up factional tensions, meaning that key party leaders on the NEC policy committees were too concerned with sectional manoeuvring to give serious attention to Young’s appeals for the need for a unifying policy review. Another reason was likely that Young himself was on the verge of leaving the LPRD, having that same month (April 1950), circulated a memo explicating his desire to leave his post after the next general election to pursue his own independent research on “long-term problems for socialist policy” (LPNEC, LPRD Series 1-353, 1949). This meant that in the LPRD as well, there was only muted enthusiasm for existential reflection that might have otherwise been generated by the Research Secretary’s call for reflection.

Even if the party’s PCII had been functional, Attlee’s decision to call a snap election in October 1951— just 18 months after the 1950 election — would have given party researchers far too little time to substantive update the party’s programme from the previous election. Thus, the 1951 manifesto proved to be little changed compared with the 1950 document, and partially because of this stale ideational offer Labour was voted out of office in 1951 (Thompson, 2006: ch. 12).

As we have seen, nothing quite stirs the impetus for reform like electoral pain, and soon, figures on both the left and the right were mobilising to redefine Labour’s programme, which suddenly appeared once again open for debate (Batrouni, 2020: p. 15). On the left, the *Keep Left* group of MPs emerged in 1947 around Aneurin Bevan and Richard Crossman (and including future Prime Minister Harold Wilson), with the support of *Tribune* magazine under the editorial oversight of Michael Foot. After 1951, this group became known as ‘Bevanites’ and advanced an interpretation of the loss as evidence that the party needed a more radical offer if it was to continue the progress that it had begun in Attlee’s government. This largely amounted to doubling down on an expanded

programme of nationalisation combined with an anti-imperial approach to foreign affairs—the latter of which immediately caused friction with nationalist elements of the trade union movement (Cruddas, 2024: pp. 108-110).

On the right, a group of academic economists associated with the Fabian Society (via the NFRB) became particularly influential after the defeat (Mudge, 2018: pp. 150-155). These *revisionists*, which included Hugh Dalton, Evan Durbin, Hugh Gaitskell, James Meade, and Douglas Jay, in their own factionally-aligned journal, *Socialist Commentary*, advanced an argument that bore a marked resemblance to Young's *Plea*. According to revisionist interpretation, the Attlee government's success in transforming British capitalism was so significant that it fundamentally reordered British class politics. A general rise in affluence had rendered the cloth-capped manual labour a relic of a pre-war working class that had changed fundamentally. Services were becoming an increasingly important part of the economy, and "intermediate classes" of white-collar workers now represented a growing part of the electorate. As the composition of the working classes was changing, so too were their political preferences, meaning that "education, style of life and occupational status" were rapidly becoming more important than concerns about who owned the means of production (Fielding, 2007). For the party to survive this dynamic of class decomposition, it would have to fundamentally change its political programme by prioritising "personal freedom, happiness and cultural endeavour" (quoted Cruddas, 2024: p. 113 see also: Wickham-Jones, 2007; Jones, 1996: Ch. 2). Based on this reading, revisionists called for the party to establish a more permanent embrace of the mixed market and to shift its focus from nationalisation to more ethical socialism that focused on inequality and the expansion of social welfare (Cruddas, 2024: p. 111; Batrouni, 2020: p. 15-17; Jones, 1996: ch. 2).

With the party returning to opposition and factional tensions on a knife edge, it would have seemed an ideal time for a well-functioning PCII to step in and develop an updated party platform capable of re-establishing a cross-factional accord (as had been the case during the 1930s years of opposition). Unfortunately, after five years of relative neglect in the shadow of a Labour government, the party did not have a well-functioning PCII.

Indeed, the extent to which the party's ideational infrastructure had been allowed to atrophy while Labour was in government rendered it much less effective than it had been at reconciling the ideational differences between the party's various factional perspectives. Part of the challenge in this regard, as reflected by Young's proto-revisionist *Plea* and the Fabian Society's historical relationship with the revisionists via the NFRB, was that both organisations aligned with the revisionist perspective. This meant that while the party machine was shifted rapidly towards revisionist priorities, its ability to work towards inter-factional reconciliation was limited. The Fabians did attempt to make overtures towards a genuine debate about the future of Labour's socialism—for instance, in the *New Fabians Essays* that brought together thinkers on the left and right to address what Cole called the “dangerous hiatus” in socialist thinking (quoted in Schlesinger et al., 1953: p. 200) — but ultimately the Society quickly (and more or less accurately) came to be seen as a vehicle for revisionist thought.

A similar dynamic occurred in the LPRD, where Young made good on his promise to resign while complaining bitterly that the party had “run out of ideas” (Meredith, 2016). He was eventually replaced by David Ginsburg, an external candidate and expert in market research and polling from the Government Social Survey Department. Ginsburg's appointment was controversial, as the Labour left harboured a longstanding critique of the use of marketing and advertising in politics—or indeed in any context (Black, 2003). These concerns were not unfounded: Ginsburg brought with him a distinctly revisionist approach, embracing polling as a tool for generating ideas, and while forward-thinking, it shifted the Department's focus away from fostering intra-party consensus and toward gauging how the party's ideas resonated with the broader public.

In 1956, Ginsburg convinced the party to commission an experimental survey on voters' attitudes on major issues facing the country and to assess the party's “image” to these voters (LPNEC, LPRD Series 2-463, 1955). These efforts were then extended to the constituency level, where a small number of party agents were trained to conduct their own surveys as tools for fighting in bye-elections (Abrams, 1963). While these efforts were rather limited — indeed, by the 1959 election, it appears that the party's polling

capacity had not advanced further than collating polls published by newspapers — it changed the LPRD's focus in two important ways. First, it made the Department more myopic, focused not on the party's long-term ideational direction but on the shorter-term considerations of 'image' and a concern for identifying those ideas that would best equip it for success in the next election as opposed to those that advanced some collectively determined vision of socialism. This polling-led approach to political research was even more factionally fraught because it was seen by the left to represent betrayal of the party's *educational role* — that is, the necessity to convince voters of the necessity of socialism (Wring, 2005: p. 56). It also, of course, brought the Department's output into natural alignment with the revisionists, whose primary argument against the party's left was that the rising working-class affluence would make it electorally counter-productive to double down on the radical elements of the post-war programme (i.e. nationalisation) (Gaitskell, 1956). In aggregate, this would see the LPRD become an effective evangelist for revisionism (which, as we will see, would become particularly important after the 1955 election) but less effective than it could have been at both the forging of inter-factional consensus and communicating with the party's constituency organisations.

If the party's PCII could not subdue factional tension, Attlee fared little better. He had remained a leader after 1951, but his powers of reconciliation, seen by many to be his greatest leadership attribute, appeared to have waned after 1951. This was, in part, a consequence of his refusal to concede there was a problem in the first place, arguing instead that the factional strife was without substance and amounted to individual grievances. The fact that this was, more or less, a correct assessment of the situation — much of the infighting was driven to a significant extent by personal animus — the effect of this infighting was to divert significant energy towards factional point scoring which was ultimately do the detriment of productive consideration of the party's programme. This was not only an issue on the high-power policy committees (which frequently descended into argument), but it also made the job of the LPRD more difficult because "disputes within the Labour Party... made the preparation of policy statements in opposition a difficult political balancing act" (Rose, 1974: p 182). The upshot, as Batrouni puts it, was that "this infighting and lack of ideas on both sides produced a Labour Party manifesto,

Forward with Labour, for the 1955 general election that was an unedifying and incoherent compromise” (2020: p. 18).

As in 1951, fighting an election on an unedifying and incoherent compromise led Labour to defeat, and the loss would finally shake the party into action. Attlee resigned and was replaced by arch-revisionist Gaitskell. The revisionist rise was then hastened by Bevan’s decision to reconcile with his erstwhile rival, forcing the rest of the left into retreat. A year later, Anthony Crosland published *The Future of Socialism*, a book that quickly became the revisionist bible. Thus, by the mid-1950s, the struggle to define the direction of the Labour Party’s socialism had been decided, with the revisionists firmly able to impose their worldview on the party’s policy platform.

While the movement was led politically by Gaitskell and intellectually by Crosland, the revisionist influence in the party’s ideational infrastructure would be the key to ensuring that the revisionist ascendancy would be reflected in the party’s political programme (as had been the case with corporate socialism in the 1930s and 1940s). As noted above, revisionist ideas were percolating through the LPRD at least as early as 1950, as it had a natural affinity to Michael Young’s sociological approach to democratic socialism. Beyond this, the rise of revisionism occurred concomitantly with a renewed focus on the organisational basis of party ideas. Most directly, this meant an increase in the ideational authority of the NEC after the 1955 Conference granted the executive the prerogative to conduct a policy review in which “all measures would have to be considered not only in terms of their relevance to ultimate Socialist goals but also in relation to the contemporary hopes and wishes of the electorate” (Rose, 1974: p. 388). This was, in all likelihood, a factional powerplay as we can assume the revisionists knew they dominated the NEC policy committees and wanted to minimise the potential for Bevanite holdouts in the constituencies to disrupt this ideational reorientation at Conference.

Having done this, the Policy Committee then tasked the LPRD with developing a “Programme of Future Policy” to integrate revisionist insights into the party programme. As Ginsburg reported:

The Policy Committee has given consideration to the problems of policy-making which face the movement in light of the recent General election, and has initiated a number of [LPRD] research projects. The aim is to place before succeeding annual conferences statements of policy on the main social and economic issues and to show the contribution which a socialist philosophy makes to their solution. These statements, while drawing on the Party's wealth of past experience, will be designed to take account of changes and developments in our way of life and form the basis for a new party programme and manifesto for the next election (Labour Party, 1955).

Reflecting a revisionist framing, these projects focused on a certain electoralist approach to party ideas insofar as it aimed to update the party's policy positions to reflect what was perceived as changing class politics in an age of affluence. Thus, Ginsburg proposed "that there should be some serious thinking about policy for a General Election in 1960. By that time, living standards in Great Britain will have risen considerably. The object of this study would be to put over a policy to the country which showed the relevance of Socialist programme in an expanding and developing economy" (Labour Party Conference Report, 1955: p. 5). The catalogue of topics to be studied reflected the revisionists' embrace of issues such as equality and social protection at the expense of traditional Labour concerns about the ownership of the means of production. Thus, to clarify the 'kind of society' the party envisioned, the LPRD would set about conducting studies on: "Equality, the State and Industry, Security and Old Age, Education, Housing, Agriculture, Bureaucracy and Liberty, and The Atomic and Automative Age" (*Ibid.*).

To aid these efforts, the LPRD was reinforced in two important ways. First, it finally got the staff it needed, reaching a roster of 13 researchers by 1959 (LPNEC, LPRD Series 2-57, 1960). Second, an update to departmental procedure gave it considerably more leeway in developing and undertaking research projects away from the micromanagement by the NEC committees (and, more importantly, from interference by the MPs who sat on these committees). This was borne out of the realisation that the party's policy committee system, "which could be quite complex in structure", had overburdened the LPRD in the early 1950s. It was decided that the Department remained too small— despite the increased funding and staffing resources — to effectively manage

the (frequently unfocused) discussions in the sub-committees, especially when meetings became the venue for factional bickering. To rectify this, LPRD researchers were granted more or less free reign to conduct research in their specialist areas and develop reports based on this research. Only then would these reports be presented to the relevant sub-committee for discussion and final sign-off before being presented to Conference for democratic approval (Labour Party Conference Report, 1955, Table 1: Relative Size of Party Organisation, 1970). This gave LPRD research far more autonomy over the direction of research projects than had previously been the case (although it is unclear whether or not similar reforms would have been put in place had it not been clear that the Department largely shared the revisionist perspective of leading figures in the PLP).

The changes also drastically cut down on the time that LPRD researchers had to commit to the Department's secretarial duties, freeing them up to do long-term research and develop party literature for the sake of member education. Indeed, revamping the party's literature programme was seen as essential in the wake of Labour's other significant post-1955 reforms campaign: the famous Wilson Report on Party Organisation. Launched after an outcry from local campaigners who felt that the party's on-the-ground organisation had contributed to its poor performance at the polls, the Wilson Report would have several indirect impacts on the party's PCII. The Report found that Labour's NEC had allowed its local-level organisation to degrade significantly and highlighted the challenges that local-level agents' faced while conducting campaign activities. For the most part this redounded to challenges associated with poor pay and inadequate access to vehicles and secretarial support (especially compared with the far better-resourced Conservative Party).

However, it also pointed to problems that had emerged within the party's local-level ideational infrastructure, effectively showing that the national party's connection with its constituency counterparts had frayed to the point of nearly breaking down entirely. As a result, there was concern that the informational linkage between NEC policy decisions and local level agents had been severed. The primary culprit was that the regional conference system and distribution of party education materials had become ineffective,

mainly because overstretched LPRD researchers could not provide regular, timely support. This made it impossible for a “full discussion or any two-way exchange of ideas” between local/regional agents and those from the NEC (Labour Party Conference Report, 1955, 1970p. 9). This not only handcuffed local campaigners when they attempted to communicate the party’s ideas during election time, but also made it more difficult for the LPRD to get a read on the ‘situation on the ground’ at the constituency level. To rectify this, the Report called for a programme of reorganisation that essentially amounted to reinforcing the party’s informational capillary system to reconnect Labour’s London operation to the rest of the country (*ibid.*, p. 6-10, 31-34).

By the late 1950s, there were signs that the party’s platform was beginning to be updated to reflect this revisionist thinking. Factionalism had also been subdued, although this was less due to efforts to reconcile the ideas of the left and right and more due to the revisionists’ dominance of the national party’s ideational infrastructure. In 1957, the LPRD drafted, and Conference approved, *Industry and Society: Labour’s Policy on Future Public Ownership*. This document drew directly from Crosland’s work and presented a redefined vision of common ownership, which shifted the party’s focus away from traditional nationalisation strategies. Indeed, the document largely reflected revisionists’ acceptance, and even embrace, of post-war British capitalism as it was constituted after the success of the 1945 government. Thus, in a passage that would vex the party’s left, *Industry and Society* would argue that private-sector companies, “with increasingly professional managers,” were “as a whole, serving the nation well” and Labour “had no intention of intervening in the management of any firm which is doing a good job” (quoted in Thompson, 2006: p. 174). Instead of nationalisation, the revisionists offered a programme of “influence”, “direction”, and “control” of the private sector, both via traditional Keynesian demand management techniques and through the formation of a National Investment Board imbued with light-touch powers to “review and co-ordinate all forms of capital expenditure...[and] point up under and over-investment in particular industries.” In aggregate, this translated into a revisionist vision of the role of the state as that of a “watching brief” that was only responsible for “creating the general conditions in which industry can be expected to prosper (quoted in *ibid.*, p. 175).

Over the next year, the LPRD, led by Ginsburg, would expand on these efforts, ultimately producing *Britain Belongs to You*, the thoroughly revisionist manifesto for the 1959 manifesto that promised Britons a focus on “Education”, “Housing”, “Health”, and “Leisure” and “no other plans for further nationalisation” besides renationalising steel and haulage (Labour Party, 1959). After spending most of the decade in opposition, Labour leaders were once again approaching a general election with confidence. Gaitskell had succeeded in pushing the party towards his brand of revisionism, thanks in part to a renewed focus on party organisation and an acquiescent PCII led by an ideological ally in Ginsburg.

3.3: PCII and Factional Strife — Wilson’s Balancing Act

This confidence made the 1959 defeat all the more painful. Not only had the party failed to oust a Conservative Party that was itself beset by factionalism and scandal, but Labour had lost ground compared with 1955. Once again, the loss reignited factional sparring, with the left, the revisionists, and the unions casting recriminations in all directions. Crosland and Crossman, as was becoming tradition, took to hurling barbs at each other in a series of Fabian Society pamphlets (Batrouni, 2020: p. 20). What Cruddas calls the “death question” had once again reemerged, and there was a real fear that if the party had managed to lose in 1959, it was possible that it would not survive at all (Cruddas, 2024: pp. 4-10). The fact that, despite these concerns, Labour would find itself in office four years later was, as had been the case in the 1930s, was in part based on the capacity of a now-functional PCII to unite the party’s different factions and provide a coherent update to the party platform. Indeed, in the background behind the post-election finger-pointing, Labour’s PCII, refreshed after the post-1955 reforms, began to analyse the party’s struggles and develop a research agenda that would balance the perspectives of both left and right by leaning on the promise of technological change – and it would accomplish this with remarkable alacrity, in the process, returning the party to power for the first time in 13 years.

That it did this is especially remarkable given the revisionist fury at the 1959 defeat. Gaitskell drastically changed his approach to party management, replacing guarded conciliation with outright confrontation and crusading against what he saw as the party's unelectable ideational baggage. Gaitskell's primary target in this regard was Clause IV of the party's constitution, which committed the party to pursuing public ownership of industry. These efforts would go nowhere and would reveal how, despite their best efforts, the revisionists had been unable to wrest control away from the party conference. The combined might of the left and the unions, both in the Joint TUC-Labour Party Committee and in Conference, would force the embattled leader into a humiliating climb down. Gaitskell followed this up by picking a fight with the leftover unilateral nuclear disarmament. He successfully navigated having to drop a US nuclear deterrent from the party's national security plan, but only by burning through significant amounts of political capital and, ultimately, dooming his leadership (Heppell, 2012: ch. 4; Epstein, 1962).

Gaitskell's decision to kick the factional hornet's nest also convinced figures in Labour's PCII of the need to revise the party's ideas as a means of reestablishing party unity. Key amongst this group was Peter Shore, who replaced David Ginsburg as Research Secretary in 1959 after the latter successfully stood for parliament. Shore was adamant about the need "to get out of the trenches of the '40s and 50s" (quoted in Jones, 1996: p. 65) and wasted little time pushing for a research programme that could appeal to traditional revisionist and leftist concerns. Shore was perhaps uniquely well placed to do this, given his position as an inter-factional actor, and thus, his ascendancy to the top of the LPRD in the late 1950s can be seen as particularly auspicious.⁴ As Research Secretary, he soon began to work closely with Harold Wilson, the long-standing Shadow Chancellor and Chair of the NEC's Sub-Committee on Finance & Economic Policy. Wilson and figures like Crossman and Thomas Balogh shared Shore's desire to square Labour's factional circle by crafting a set of party ideas that could facilitate a detente. Over the next few years, this group, which Nicholas Ellison has labelled the "Centre-Left Technocratic Group" (Ellison, 2002), would use their positions in

⁴ He had been an acolyte Gaitskell's through the 1950s before splitting with him over the issues of nuclear disarmament (Pearce, 2001). He had also established a good working relationship with Bevan, after the latter became Chair of the Home Policy Committee before the latter's untimely death in 1960.

Labour's PCII to develop this new ideational direction, enacting a "successful transmutation of ideological differences into consensual technological radicalism" (Rustin, 1981).

As in the past, this approach was purposefully synthetic, seeking to diverge from both Croslandism and the "fundamentalism of the Old Left" by blending the most convincing elements of both into a new approach to socialism (Favretto, 2000). The result was indeed revisionist — Croslandite concerns about the changing patterns of class voting in an age of affluence still animated a perception of the need to 'revise' the party's socialism — but this was a revisionism that would embrace the left's traditional North Star of nationalisation. The solder alloy of this union would be what Wilson would famously call the "white heat of technology" on his way to becoming party leader and then Prime Minister in 1964 (Batrouni, 2020: 21).

While the renown of this speech means that Wilson gets credit as the brilliant party manager who, for the first time since Attlee, managed to unite the party (if only temporarily), the ideas that made this rapprochement possible very much emerged out of Labour's PCII. To this end, while Wilson (who had always been one of the party's sharpest intellects) was a key player in the shift towards technological radicalism, it was his position in the party's broader ideational infrastructure that allowed for ideas about technocratic socialism to develop and become an integral part of the party programme.

Indeed, efforts by the party's PCII to push the party in this direction well preceded Wilson's 1963 speech. The earliest iteration of this vision of technology-driven socialism can be seen in a speech written by LPRD researcher (and future Secretary) Terry Pitt for Hugh Gaitskell during the days of his conciliatory approach to party management (Wickham-Jones, 1996: p. 47). These ideas were then expanded on in subsequent LPRD research. In 1960, Shore and Morgan Phillips, Labour's General Secretary, drafted *Labour in the Sixties*, which advanced a new "framework of principle" that aimed to harness the "scientific revolution" of post-war capitalism to advance socialist ends (Labour Party, 1960). When Ray Gunter presented the document to Conference (while standing

in for Philips, who was ill), he justified it as emerging from the need to “project our thoughts away” from factional strife (quoted in Fielding, 2007: p. 317). This was expanded upon in the more public-facing 1961 document *Signposts for the Sixties*, also drafted by the LPRD and also reflecting an embrace of nationalisation as a means of ensuring an efficient distribution of the nation’s resources. Thus, in such a period of “scientific revolution”, Labour offered a means of “assuring that national resources are wisely allocated and community services humanely planned” (Labour Party, 1961: p. 7).

According to these documents, the essential problem facing British society was that private industry had been allowed to accumulate a degree of economic power that was both inequitable and inefficient. Overcoming these challenges would require a return to the power of economic planning, which would, in turn, require the expansion of public ownership in “the goring points of the British economy”. That is, those deemed to be strategically crucial for increasing economic efficiency and in underperforming industries considered to be over-reliant on state aid for their survival (*ibid.*).⁵ This was not nationalisation for nationalisation’s sake but rather as a means of ensuring that a Labour government could direct investment to the most productive sectors of the economy (or, conversely, that the most unproductive sectors were adequately uprated). By taking control of the most productive parts of the economy, Labour, to quote Wilson, would be able to unleash “planning on an unprecedented scale,” directing investment to craft an “alliance of science and socialism” (quoted in Ziegler, 2010: p. 93). The inter-factional logic here is clear: Wilson and the centre-left technocrats would address traditional revisionist concerns about the changing economic voting patterns (the shift towards consumerism) by using the preferred policy tools of the party’s traditional left. Through the rationalising hand of nationalisation, the desire to put a washing machine in every home need not be mutually exclusive to Labour’s sacred cows.

⁵ Further, efforts were made to rehabilitate nationalisation by arguing that any public misgivings towards it were the result of an industry-financed anti-nationalisation public relations blitz that amounted to nearly £1.5 million in advertising spending by trade groups and in the Institute of Directors (LPNEC, LPRD, Political Advertising, Series 3-154, 1961).

Significantly, this reconsideration of the party's platform with an eye towards factional reconciliation was accompanied by a change to the process by which the party's ideas were developed. As in the past, these efforts were driven by the LPRD and largely amounted to a restoration of the functionality that the LPRD had in the run-up to the 1945 election. In May 1960, Shore, in a document making the case for more staffing support by underlining the essential need for the Department:

No individual can hope to keep abreast of changing developments in all the different fields of politics. Consequently, there is a need for the services of those who specialise in particular fields and can be relied upon to digest and interpret the information available. This is the basic reason why, in modern conditions, it is almost inconceivable that a political party should not have a research department (LPNEC, LPRD Series 2-57, 1960).

He would continue by outlining the importance of the LPRD both when the Labour was in power and when it was in opposition:

Even when the Party is in office, a research staff is necessary, for it has to assist the N.E.C. In the preparation of future policy and it has also to assist in keeping the Movement in the country fully informed of the problems and achievements of a Labour Government. When the Party is in Opposition, however — and when the period of opposition is as long as ours has been — the Research Department must not only help its political leaders in their policy making but must act, as best it can, as a shadow civil service as well (LPNEC, LPRD Series 2-57, 1960).

Beyond the party executive, Shore's statement underscores the importance of the LPRD's utility function, operating as a central node in the passage of ideas between the party's various 'parts'. To this end, the document details plans to expand on the Department's connections with the PLP, including an "Information Series" for circulation "to the whole Parliamentary Party" and "extensive briefing of Front Bench speakers and groups for Parliamentary debates." At the constituency level, the LPRD expanded its "Local Government Briefing" efforts, which included a "new and substantial Local Government Handbook" and an annual "Local Government Conference". The Department also aided

in airing the party's ideas to non-members, primarily by producing "much of the information which both the Press Department and, to a lesser extent, the Television and Radio Unit, need for their propaganda activities". Finally, it also called for the party to reinforce its connections to sources of thinking outside of the party proper, with Shore arguing that the Department had a "clear duty at least to keep in touch with the many research centres (which are often manned by Labour supports) in the universities and elsewhere which are doing create research work," which was essential to "ensure that the results of independent research are brought to the notice of the Department and when required, to the Policy Committee. This is very important and requires a patient and persistent cultivation of personal contacts with outside researchers" (*ibid.*).

This was also combined with efforts to increase the deliberative inputs of the membership. In a report to the Home Policy Committee, Shore was keen to emphasise that embracing rapid technological change would require the party to redouble its efforts to educate both the party membership and the wider public. "The speed with which our society is changing faces us with a very urgent need to familiarise both our Party members and the wider public with the emerging politician issues of the 1960s" (LPNEC, LPRD Series 2-34, 1960). However, the top-down (or, more accurately, 'centre-out') approach to ideational distribution evinced by the revisionists had stripped Labour's PCII of much of its deliberative vitality. Thus, much of the party's educational publication had been "robbed of a good deal of their potential interest because Party members are being invited to discuss policy, not before but after it has been finalised...." (LPNEC, LPRD Series 2-34, 1960, emphasis in original).

As a result, there was a growing realisation that the party had failed to 'take the membership with it' as it pursued revisionist adjustments to the programme, thus enflaming factional tensions and undercutting the morale of the volunteer army that it relied on to spread its gospel during the 1959 election. To rectify this, "Assuming that we do not wish to repeat the experience of 1956-1959", the LPRD launched a new publication series, *Looking Ahead*, designed to stimulate discussion in the broader "Movement" on the "major new problems that are likely to engage Parliament and the public in the next

few years". The aim was to stimulate the 'two-way movement of ideas', the absence of which Wilson had so lamented in his 1955 Report, and to publicise the party's thinking to the broader public. Thus, the series would serve to "stimulate the political education activity of the Party; identify the Party in the public mind with new and important issues, and increase the pool of ideas upon which, at the appropriate time, the Home Policy Committee could draw for policy purposes" (LPNEC, LPRD Series 2-34, 1960).

Thus, upon taking over at the LPRD Shore immediately set about reestablishing the LPRD's role as an ideational intermediary, capable of connecting the deliberative inputs of the party membership to the policy formation process. The Department was once again back to its status as the functional heart of Labour's PCII, and a 1962 memo from Shore on the Department's work that year reflects a breadth of ideational influence at least as significant as in 1945. To this end, the Department had drafted over 300 Conference resolutions and amendments; 99 briefs for the annual Women's Conference; serviced the Home Policy Committee and 13 other sub-committees, working parties, and commissions (primarily via the preparation of research papers); responded to at least 100 requests for research support from the PLP, including help with preparation for speech and BBC interviews; responded "to similar (or greater?) number of telephone enquiries" from local level party agents and ran the party's Annual Local Government Conference; published over 130 documents for research and propaganda purposes and the successfully held the party's annual summer school (LPRD Shore/4/30, 1962). Thus, by 1963, the LPRD had developed to such an extent that Robert McKenzie could observe that if party researchers felt the need to be "sufficiently persuasive and able", they could substantially influence the direction of policy development (McKenzie, 1963: p. 570).

This place of influence also gave Transport House the capacity to play kingmaker for reform-minded politicians who hoped to develop their brand as party intellectuals en route to power. To this end, Labour's PCII played an important role in Harold Wilson's ascent to party leader and eventually No. 10. Wilson's interaction with Labour's PCII primarily came via his role on various NEC policy committees, and it was here that he formed a close relationship with Shore. As noted above, this was initially on the Finance &

Economic Policy sub-committee, although to the extent that this experience overlapped with Wilson's time as Gaitskell's Shadow Chancellor, it largely preceded significant policy reorientation beyond traditional (Croslandite) revisionism. However, this began to change after the 1959 election, when Wilson (not one to pass up a political opportunity) wrapped himself in the flag of technocratic socialism. At the 1960 Conference, he was a vocal advocate for *Labour in the Sixties*, declaring that the document represented a "return to Socialism" and could show "the relevance for the 60s of our Socialist faith and convince our fellow electors of it." It refuted, he argued, (in a barely disguised dig at Gaitskell) claims advanced by "the Tory and Liberal press, and perhaps by some of our own comrades, that socialism and public ownership are out of date" (Labour Party Conference Report, 1960, p. 149).

Wilson would enhance his bona fides as a 'revolutionary moderniser' the following year when he became Chair of the powerful Home Policy Committee. Here, the LPRD and Wilson's shared interest in planning became symbiotic. Effective planning would require an effective civil service, and as the party's 'civil service,' the LPRD helped Wilson to flesh out the details of Labour's vision, some of the details of which emerged in *A Four Year Plan for Britain* which Wilson published in the *New Statesman* that same year (Thompson, 2006: p. 177). In 1962, the Research Department declared that its policy-making focus was complete with *Labour in the Sixties* and *Signposts for the Sixties* and that it would turn its attention to election preparations (Rose, 1974: p. 390). From his perch at the head of the Home Policy Committee, Wilson would also work closely with LPRD researchers to do this. It was here that he would help to draft the 1964 manifesto, *The New Britain*, with additional support from the ever-prolific Crossman and Michael Young, the latter of whom was lured back into an advisory role after being impressed by the party's technocratic turn (Cruddas, 2024; Butler & King, 1966). This helped consolidate his support from the party's left and 'soft left' contingents, which gave him a key base of support from which he successfully stood for leader after Gaitskell died in 1963 (Heppell, 2010). It also meant that, come election time, the LPRD was well placed to help draft Wilson's campaign speeches, in which he skilfully convinced the British public of the capacity for technology to deliver a "new Britain" (Thompson, 2006: p. 178).

This was an idealised, almost utopian, vision of Britain in which targeted investment in key sectors had produced the productivity gains necessary to transcend the growing class conflicts emerging as the post-war paradigm ran out of steam. It was “an economy driven forward by scientifically knowledgeable, technocratic, public officials who, in co-operation with the private sector, would promote the restructuring, technological advance a general modernisation of Britain’s manufacturing base” (Thompson, 2006: p. 180-181). In 1964, Wilson skilfully deployed this vision of the white heat of technology to become Prime Minister, in the process ending 13 years of Labour opposition. The victory was a slim one, with Labour claiming an outright majority of only four seats. It was also largely circumstantial, with the Conservative Party’s decision to elevate the waspish Alex Douglas-Home to leadership undoubtedly contributing to Labour’s narrow victory. Yet it is unlikely that without the efforts of figures like Peter Shore in the LPRD to help Wilson reimagine the party’s socialism, the party would have been able to quiet the factional strife that had held it back through the 1950s.

3.4: The Conservative Research Department and Rise of Conservative PCII

In the Conservative Party, the 1950s presented an entirely different ideational challenge to those confronted by Labour. As noted in Chapter 2, we can think of PCII in the Conservative Party as on a catch-up trajectory to that of the Labour Party, having been manufactured in the late 1940s and delivering an updated party platform and electoral victory in the early 1950s. This meant that while Michael Young, David Ginsburg and Peter Shore were busy reconstituting Labour’s PCII after their party had returned to opposition, researchers in the CRD were learning for the first time the difficulties of running party-based research in the shadow of a Conservative government. Indeed, while the CRD and the rest of the Tory PCII played a central role in bringing the Conservative Party in line with the Keynesian consensus between 1945 and 1951, it would soon find that influencing the ideas of an opposition party was an entirely different challenge than ensuring that the government implemented these ideas when that party won power.

The CRD, like the LPRD, had become hugely influential as the party's thinking machine but now had to contend with a host of new rivals for ideational influence. Thus, with some crucial differences, the CRD, like the LPRD before it, now had to learn similar lessons about the difficulties of shaping the party's long-term thinking while constrained by myopic government ministers and an intrusive civil service.

The most proximate challenge for party-based researchers in the Conservative Party emerged from the fact that much of the party's leadership remained wedded to traditional "Conservative" approaches to the development of party policy. That is, they felt that it was unnecessary. Churchill was the worst offender in this regard, and when he returned to No. 10, so too did his deep-seated mistrust of the central party apparatus. He wasted little time in reigning in the CRD, insisting that the Department should not "duplicate work done by Government departments" (quoted Ramsden, 1980: p. 167) but instead focus on the big-picture ideas that would define the party's offer in the medium- to long-term. While this was not nominally out of keeping with Butler's original vision (and was indeed very similar to the conclusion that Michael Young reached about the LPRD when Labour was in power), it soon became clear that this would functionally limit the CRD's control over the party platform. Churchill's ambivalence signalled to ministers — especially those predisposed to dislike a party research body — that they could ignore it (Beichman, 1978). This, in turn, meant party researchers had little visibility over the *Conservative government's* policy plans, which made any political statements by the party almost impossible for fear of constrain the government's flexibility or, even worse, result in the Department's statements being directly contradicted by the government (Ramsden, 1980, pp. 165-172).

The move strengthened Churchill's hand internally, but was not without criticism. The decline in the CRD's influence quickly sparked fear that the Party would once again lose the intellectual initiative to Labour, and party operatives began signalling that they felt outpaced by both Government actions and Labour's responses to them. A November

1951 letter from CRD researcher Michael Fraser to Butler, for instance, lamented: “Both Central Office and the Research Department are now unable to deal expeditiously with Socialist propaganda, and the questions from our own supporters which inevitably result from it, because no regular channel exists, as it did before the General Election, between our own Front Bench and ourselves” (quoted *ibid*: p. 169). Seen in retrospect, Fraser’s fears about a loss of initiative to Labour were largely overblown. As discussed above, the Labour Party in the early 1950s was riven with factional strife after the dual shock of the 1945 Attlee government’s unexpected success and his subsequent defeat in 1951 (see also: Thorpe 2015, p. 139-143). However, for Conservative Party researchers who had only just managed to pull the party back from the disaster of 1945, Churchill’s retreat to tradition would have appeared to be dangerously complacent – and, of course, Fraser’s sentiment reveals a legitimate concern amongst party reformists that their recourse to ideational power was being dissolved.

Indeed, as was the case in the Labour Party, CRD researchers now had to compete for the ears of their relevant ministers. In the first instance (and again mirroring the experience of the LPRD), this was because Conservative ministers now had access to the civil service and would naturally lean on this new source of research capacity for support in the day-to-day governing process. Here, on the one hand, CRD researchers likely had a relatively easier time than their Labour Party counterparts, as Churchill brought with him to the office a more sceptical eye towards the civil service than the departing Attlee government (Fry, 1986). He undertook the unsuccessful experiment of recreating the wartime governance structure by appointing “overlord ministers” to coordinate multiple departments, which made it more difficult for individual ministers to retreat into ministerial fiefdoms where party researchers might have had a difficult time reaching them. On the other, these overlords ended up creating a significant degree of ambiguity and confusion about the chain of command in ministerial decision-making — a process which ended up alienating *both* civil servants and party-based researchers as organisational chaos set in over the government’s policy formation processes (Hennessy & Welsh, 1998).

Perhaps a more significant challenge to the CRD emerged as other organisations sought to emulate its success as figures across the party gained a new appreciation of the importance of political ideas. This prompted the proliferation of attempts to expand the Conservative PCII through semi-formal debating organisations and ginger groups. Chief among these was the Bow Group, which was formed in 1951 by Conservative university students with the explicit aim of further imitating the Labour Party's ideational infrastructure by providing the party with its own version of the Fabian Society. Thus, the Bow Group's founding constitution states that it aims: "(1) To provide a channel of constructive thought and research on political and social problems of interest to the Conservative Party and the general public. (2) To combat the influence of the Fabian Society. (3) To publish from time to time the results of work undertaken by members of the organisation working in committees or groups" (quoted in Rose, 1961: p. 866). Like the Fabians, the Bow group quickly established an impressive research capacity and began producing publications through its in-house journal, *Crossbow*. The journal would soon gain readership amongst reformed-minded ministers and other party operatives, thus providing a source of both inspiration and competition for CRD researchers. For the most part, this was a friendly competition, but not one viewed without a degree of circumspection that reflected the fact that the CRD would now have to compete with this new junior sibling. As Butler would describe this relationship (with characteristic wit), the Bow group was "The beehive...from which we obtain honey as well as an occasional sting" (*ibid.*).

Despite these challenges, the CRD fared much better at holding its ground in the Conservative Party PCII landscape than the LPRD did in the Labour Party's. As with most points of comparison between the two organisations, these divergent fortunes can largely be explained by resourcing. To this end, while Young was desperately calling to expand the LPRD to more than nine researchers, the CRD had already surpassed 30, and while this would dip slightly throughout the Churchill government, the CRD's nadir would still be 25 full-time researchers (Ramsden, 1980: p. 164). Relatedly, the CRD faced far fewer challenges regarding staff retention relative to the LPRD's experience for the simple reason that more resources translated into larger paycheques and more job security.

To a significant extent, this simply made the CRD more difficult to ignore than the LPRD — the Conservative Party had invested considerable resources into its research capacities and sidelining such an investment so soon after it had been made would have been an unpopular proposition (Kelly, 2000). This redounded to a situation in which a “rough and ready concordat” emerged that would allow the CRD and the CPC to retain a significant degree of its influence, at least in terms of the party’s medium-term outlook (Ramsden, 1980: p. 152). Here, it was decided that the CRD should be given free rein to work on policy ideas to allow the party to “be prepared even for eventualities that few Conservatives wished to see” (*Ibid.*). Alongside this, the CPC was allowed to continue the publication of discussion documents without the approval of the party leadership, provided it was made clear that the documents did not constitute a commitment to the ideas under discussion. This meant, ultimately, that the party’s PCII remained responsible for crafting the Conservative approach to major political decisions of the day, such as denationalisation, the NHS and housing despite a relative decline in influence over specific policy ideas (Ramsden, 1980: p. 150-160).

Equally important to the CRD’s ability to maintain its influence over Conservative ideas was its role in advancing the careers of party members associated with it. Butler is the obvious example here, whose ingenuity in reconstructing the CRD (and the rest of the party’s PCII) would see one contemporary retrospectively brand him “the guide and patron of every intellectual elite group concerned with furthering the fortunes of the Conservative Party” (Abrams, 1963: p. 12). Widely seen as “the best Prime Minister the country never had” (Jago, 2015), from his position at the head of the Tory PCII, he would launch a career that would see him become Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lord Privy Seal, Leader of the House of Commons, Party Chairman and Home Secretary. Moreover, once he was in these leading positions in Conservative governments, he would continue to rely on ideas developed by CRD, giving the Department a direct influence over the front bench (Kelly, 2000).

Beyond Butler, the list of CRD alumni is notable for the powerful positions that these figures would take up in the party, and the CRD quickly became known as a training ground for future party leaders (Beichman, 1974). To this end, notable CRD alumni include Iain Macleod, Reginald Maudling, Enoch Powell, Michael Fraser, Henry Brooke, David Brooke and Ted Heath. While not formally alumni, the CRD also attracted the devotion of Harold Macmillan, who would prove to be “most helpful” for maintaining the influence of the Department through the period of government) (Ramsden, 1980:p. 165). To the extent that these CRD alumni were able to use their pedigree as ‘thinking Tories’ to advance their careers, they proved important allies who were willing to defend the Research Department once they climbed the party ranks (Middlemas,, 1986). Even as late as 1989, after a decade of Thatcherite assault on the Department (see Chapter 5), five members of the Cabinet had CRD research on their CVs, including a former CRD Director in Chris Patten (Kavanagh, 1989). As a result, it is hard to disagree with Ramsden’s claim that no other factor contributed more to the CRD’s enduring influence than its ability to give young Tory hopefuls a pathway towards power within the party hierarchy (Ramsden, 1980, p. 5). This also stands in contrast to the LPRD, where researchers had a much less defined path to a political career. While some LPRD researchers, such as Ginsburg and Shore, did go on to become MPs after leaving the department, the proportion of CRD researchers who rose to senior positions within the party far exceeded that of their LPRD counterparts.

Combined with Churchill’s stubborn ambivalence towards domestic policy questions, these factors meant that the CRD enjoyed a far easier time weathering the challenge presented by the Conservative Party’s ascent to power. It did, as was the case in the LPRD, fix its attention to ‘more distant horizons’ than it had in opposition, but it was able to do so a much closer relationship with government Ministers than had been the case for the LPRD between 1945 and 1950. A major innovation that aided this process was the formation of the Liaison Committee, which was set up at the suggestion of Michael Fraser and Butler and functioned as a kind of ideational “clearing house” which was designed to “give guidance to Members of Parliament, candidates and others on the interpretation of Government policy and to take such action as, in their opinion, is

necessary to sustain public confidence in the Conservative Administration” (quoted in Ramsden, 1980: p. 166). For the CRD, the Liaison Committee was seen as a critical connection point with the Conservative front bench that allowed it to develop long-term policy and expeditiously deal with “socialist propaganda” about government policy without fear of contradicting ministerial discretion (*ibid.*).

The upshot was that when it came time to produce the next manifesto, CRD researchers found it easy to start up the party’s ideational machinery (at least compared with Young’s pleading). Indeed, research for the manifesto started early in Churchill’s second stint in power, although this was initiated at Butler’s insistence and not the Prime Minister’s. To do this, Butler set up a subgroup of the CRD, the Research Study Group (RSG), which consisted of CRD researchers plus fellow frontbench alumni Brookes and Macleod. With the RSG, the Department first deployed an innovation that would give it a critical edge in the party-internal struggle over the content of the party’s political offer: political polling. While rudimentary by contemporary standards, the Group’s use of polling was ground-breaking in that it gave CRD researchers the ability to monitor voter sentiment and develop policies to match the political imperatives that this information uncovered. Indeed, in a striking parallel to the approach of some revisionists in the Labour Party, the Group’s focus was intensely electoral, and ideas were constantly developed with an eye towards the explication of how Conservative priorities could match public sentiment (Wring, 1996). To this end, soon after the group’s formation, polling was produced that showed voters were becoming less interested in “political issues” and more interested in “material ones”, and these findings were quickly integrated into the party platform (CRD 2/49/27, 1951; Ramsden, 1980: 173-176).

Armed with CRD polling data, reform-minded figures could then use the RSG to push past any dissent from more traditionally-minded frontbenchers because they could convincingly make the case that they had unrivalled insights into the electorate’s thinking. This meant that the RSG (and, by extension, the CRD) ended up having vast discretion to formulate the overarching agenda that would inform the 1955 manifesto, which focused on “increased prosperity”, including middle-class issues such as tax relief and private

healthcare. As in 1950/1951, the CRD could then exploit its position at the heart of the party's ideational infrastructure to take command of the Conservative party programme, and soon, "increased prosperity" became the Conservative's central campaign theme (Ramsden, 1980: p. 176).

Before the next election could be held, however, circumstances would arise that would underscore the importance of the CRD's long-term thinking to the party's electoral stability. Slowed by rapidly degrading health, Churchill resigned from office in April 1954. When Party Chairman Anthony Eden was appointed his successor, he immediately called a snap election to gain an electoral mandate for a Conservative Party that, for the first time in nearly 15 years, was not led by Churchill. The need to rapidly develop and deploy a manifesto meant that Butler, the CRD, and, ultimately, the party at large were well served by the preparedness that came with the department's focus on long-term thinking as the department could step in with a well-researched political platform gave the party a sense of continuity of ideational direction at a time of change at the top. Beyond this, it also exercised its (now well-rehearsed) capacity to ensure that individual candidates were aware of the party line throughout the campaign via a robust question-and-answer service (Ramsden, 1980: p. 177). This gave the party a decisive edge over a Labour Party in which tensions between the Bevanites and revisionists had made it difficult for the LPRD to play a similarly unifying role. The fact that the Conservatives were able to avoid this fate at a time when the party's leadership was in flux is at least in part a testament to the CRD's utility both as a force for ideational coordination across the party and for ideational continuity over time.

As such, the 1955 election proved a smashing success, and the Conservatives became the first party since the 1867 Reform Act to increase its majority after a term in office (Bale, 2012, p. 52). Indeed, the CRD's role in the 1955 election gained several admirers amongst the ranks of the party elite. Future Prime Minister Edward Heath, for instance, at the time the party's Chief Whip, was effusive in his praise for the CRD, writing that its contribution was "an improvement on '50 and '51. I liked having so many points of policy sent to me in addition to answers to questionnaires as such. Its contents were

admirable, and the machine delivered them unfailingly. I'm sure it makes an enormous difference to candidates knowing that they are backed up by this sort of service" (quoted in Ramsden, 1980: p. 177).

3.5: Macmillan and the institutionalisation of PCII

The CRD's capacity to generate ideational continuity would prove to be an advantage again two years later when Eden was forced to resign after becoming embroiled in the Suez Crisis. Replacing him was long-time CRD enthusiast Harold Macmillan, who was placed at the head of the party, and the country, by the Queen (at the time, the Conservative Party lacked any statutory rules for electing a new leader, so the Queen was tasked with appointing a new Prime Minister, and thus a new Party Leader). The fact that it was not Butler to take the throne shocked many observers, who had assumed that the CRD Chair – who on many occasions had been trusted to act as stand-in Prime Minister for both Churchill and Eden—would be next in the line of succession. However, Butler had been embroiled in the uproar of Suez to such an extent that he was deemed unacceptable to the party's right flank. As such, when the Queen elicited Churchill's advice about who next should lead the party, she was told that Macmillan offered the best chance of unity, and Macmillan was duly selected (Howard, 1987: pp. 246-247).

There was concern that Macmillan's ascent might spell the end of the CRD's influence — the Department had been so important for crafting Butler's position in the party that the new Prime Minister might well have seen it as a threat (Kavanagh, 1989). Fortunately, Macmillan's long-time association with the Department and his desire to claim the mantle of a 'thinking Tory' meant that it would continue to play a prominent role. Macmillan had long appreciated the importance of ideas to a successful political career and, as a Shadow Minister in Churchill's cabinet, had maintained a close relationship with the CRD even when many others had turned to the civil service for their research needs. This loyalty paid off handsomely for Macmillan when, "as Minister of Housing, he had benefited greatly from the [CRD's] preparation for office, and his housing drive of 1951-1955 was probably the political success that made him Prime Minister" (Ramsden, 1980: p. 191).

The relationship between Macmillan's government and the CRD was helped, too, no doubt, by Butler's professionalism. After a bruising leadership contest during which Butler was said to be "utterly dumbfounded" at being passed over for the top job (Jago, 2015), he rather magnanimously swallowed his pride and gave his full backing to Macmillan. As such, "from 1957 the Chairman of the Research Department was again the Prime Minister's right-hand man" (Ramsden, 1980: p. 192). It was thus that during the Macmillan's tenure as Prime Minister that the CRD enjoyed the most influence over Conservative ideas *when the party was in government* relative to any other period in its history. Not only were its reports sent directly to the Prime Minister's office, but ministers deemed uncooperative with the Party's research body were quickly reprimanded – Macmillan, as Ramsden notes, "was always ready to remind his subordinates that the Party rather than the Civil Service was the basis of their tenure in office" (Ramsden, 1980: p. 191). Beyond this, Macmillan was happy to give the Department vast influence over his government's communicative capacities and readily turned to the CRD to draft political speeches (*ibid.*, p. 192).

With CRD support, Macmillan fundamentally shifted the party's approach to economic management. While the Conservatives had reluctantly moved left since 1945 on issues like nationalisation, Bretton Woods, and unions, it was under Macmillan that the party fully embraced the state's role in post-war economic management. Consulting with the party's PCII, Macmillan aimed to boost public spending to drive four percent annual growth and maintain full employment (Williamson, 2015: p. 29). This led to a major clash with the Treasury, where Chancellor Peter Thorneycroft opposed the spending increases. Backed by the CRD, Macmillan prevailed, leading to Thorneycroft's resignation along with junior ministers Enoch Powell and Nigel Birch and a rapid rise in public expenditure (*ibid.*).

Macmillan's faith in the CRD paid off during the 1959 election when the Conservatives managed to win, in come-from-behind fashion, for a third time in a row despite having suffered the embarrassment of the Suez Crisis two years prior. As it had during the previous two elections, the CRD played a key role in the victory. Not only was the CRD

the primary drafter of the 1959 manifesto, but it also produced its usual *Campaign Guide* to provide “the backbone of the Party's speaking campaign in the constituencies” and give “Conservative candidates and speakers... all the raw materials with which to construct their speeches and letters to the press” (Ramsden, 1980: p. 207).

Beyond this, it also broke new ground in its efforts to find novel ways of communicating the party's ideas to the public. This was borne out of necessity as it proved challenging to inject many new ideas into the manifesto of a party that had been in power for over a decade. As such, much of the CRD's intellectual focus during the election went towards making the party appear dynamic and forward-thinking while offering relatively few new policy details. It accomplished this via close control over the planning, content, and writing of all speeches by prominent party figures and by redoubling its efforts to research and attack Labour Party policy proposals — both efforts bolstered by an expanded use of voter polling data. Here, CRD-commissioned polling revealed that an upwardly mobile working class could be wooed by the promise of increased spending on material goods and home ownership — findings that, as we have seen, had cast the Labour Party into a frantic debate between the Revisionists and the technocrats. Armed with this information, CRD researchers worked with Macmillan to successfully pressure the reluctant Chancellor of the Exchequer, Derek Heathcoat Amory (who replaced Thorneycroft), into an expansionary budget to reinforce these feelings of prosperity (Turner, 1995).

Macmillan was effusive with his praise of the CRD after the election, and this enhanced status was matched by a significant increase in funding, with the Department's budget more than doubling from £52,789 to more than £110,000 between 1955 and 1962. This increase was partially driven by an acknowledgement that the CRD represented the Party's best talent recruiter, which in turn necessitated the equalisation of departmental salaries with equivalent positions in the civil service to avoid losing its brightest stars to Whitehall (Pinto-Duschinsky, 1972). By the end of the decade, senior CRD researchers frequently had to take a minor pay cut when they jumped to parliament (Interview with Former CRD Researcher “1”). However, it also reflected the real ideational power that the CRD had come to hold as the gatekeeper of Party ideology.

As a result, by the late 1950s, the CRD had returned to its central position of influence in the Conservative PCII, and this renewed ideational authority allowed it to overcome the challenges of party government in a way that the LPRD never fully accomplished. Not only had CRD alumni and admirers advanced to the highest reaches of the party hierarchy, but the ideas it developed and distributed in drafting three straight successful manifestos had a demonstrable record of unlocking the primary source of party-political currency: votes (Jago, 2015). This translated to an influence that was exercised either directly, via influence over ministers, or indirectly via a series of interlocking Liaison and Steering committees which were run by CRD researchers to ensure harmonisation between government and party ideas (Seldon & Lowe, 1996; Ramsden, 1980: p. 199-206).

3.6: Masters of the Programme

Thus, by the 1950s, both the Labour and Conservative Parties had converged on a model of party-centric ideational production defined by powerful research departments that led to a consensual model of policy development that sought to incorporate input from across the party structure. These infrastructures allowed the development of party platforms that reflected an aggregation of input from across the various ‘faces’ of the party (Katz & Mair, 1993), working to integrate input from organised memberships, ginger groups, parliamentary party organisations, and party-aligned experts from academia into a coherent offer to voters. This was not always straightforward. As we have seen, particular challenges arose when a PCII succeeded in helping a party get into power during which ministerial attention was more challenging to hold, and the civil service presented a rival source of policy input. Despite this, the post-war period saw PCII slowly gain influence, learning to negotiate the challenges of party government while asserting and reasserting their influence over their parties’ long-term ideational directions.

Party research departments were essential to these efforts, acting as ideational hubs for ideas moving across and through other elements of the party organisation and

providing the essential informational ammunition to publicity departments to engage in the communicative battles necessary to attract unaligned voters. Additionally, they worked to incorporate the ideas of external experts and activists into the party's electoral offers. Thus, by occupying this central role in their party's ideational infrastructure, research departments became essential for updating party platforms, ensuring that new ideas were integrated in response to new political and economic circumstances while remaining aligned with the party's long-term ideological commitments.

It is hardly surprising, then, that by the turn of the 1970s, party research departments in both parties constituted proportionately the largest constituent parts of each party's executive bodies by 1970, in both cases constituting at least one-third of all staffers based in party headquarters (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Relative Size of Party Organisations in 1970 by Staff Number

Organisation	Conservative Party	Labour Party
National Headquarters (Executives)	10	9
Research Department	31	19
Publicity Department	15	7
Finance Offices	15	3
Administrative Support	24	12
Regional Offices	41	38
Constituency Offices	390	135*
Total (Central Office)	95	50
Total (All)	526	229

*Does not include volunteer campaign workers

Source: Rose (1974)

With this size came considerable influence over party ideas, and while the specific contours of this authority depended on the unique organisational power structures and

resourcing constraints inherent in each party, functionally, both the LPRD and the CRD had reached a point where they could exert significant influence on the ideas that each party presented to the public. They had become, to this end, masters over their respective party programmes.

Chapter 4: The Advisory Elite and the Executive Centralisation of Party Ideas

In this chapter, I examine how the deterioration of the institution of post-war Keynesiansim pushed both Labour and Conservative leaders to consolidate ideational authority in the hands of their own offices and, in the process, undermined the PCIs that had been so important for the formation of the post-war consensus. Before embarking on the details of this transformation, it is first worth pausing to highlight the similarities and differences in how this played out in both parties. As we will see, the Conservatives under Heath followed a remarkably similar path to Labour before the two diverged sharply in the mid-1970s. As in the Labour Party, the late 1960s was defined by a leadership (Heath's) that moved to consolidate control over party ideas in the leader's office. He also attempted this consolidation of ideational authority via a series of innovations to the government's policy machinery, and as with Wilson's governments, these efforts were deemed to have failed. And also similar to what occurred in the Labour Party, the perceived failures of these efforts to restore managerial Keynesianism instigated a shift toward the political extreme in the Conservative Party as the longstanding certainties of economic management evaporated in the face of stagflation.

Thus, we can summarise the changes we see in both parties can be in the language of ideational renewal. Entrepreneurs in both parties had grown concerned that the post-war paradigm had broken down and began to look for new ideas to carry the country out of its perceived economic decline. The ultimate result of these efforts, in both parties, would be the radicalisation of party programmes. Crucially, however, where the parties would differ was in *how* they shifted to the right and left (respectively). The organisational

means by which these Conservative and Labour reforms would go about developing and articulating these alternative ideas would diverge significantly. In the Conservative Party, Heath would give way to Margaret Thatcher, who would build on her anti-bureaucratic instincts to fundamentally reform her party's ideational infrastructure in what would amount to an outsourcing of ideational authority to a series of external ideas-producing and -communicating organisations like think tanks and public relations consultants. In the Labour Party, by contrast, the left's rise to prominence would occur via a takeover and strengthening of the *traditional* organisations of the party's PCII — the LPRD and the NEC policy committees — in a bid to strengthen the party's commitment to movement democracy and, through this, a much more radical socialist vision than had been on offer through the revisionist heyday.

Party-organisational legacies were critical to these divergent paths. Unlike the high-centralised, top-down Conservative Party, Labour's democratic structure, embodied by the tradition of Conference sovereignty, would direct the party's response to the breakdown of the post-war consensus towards a reversion to the institutions of the mass party. To this end, the unions and constituency-level organisations continued to play outsized roles at the Conference and in the NEC, and primarily due to the deteriorating economic climate these bodies moved markedly to the left through the late 1960s. This leftward swing of the trade unions and CLPs give prerogative to the left in NEC policy committees (the unions were vital for capturing the intellectual momentum encapsulated by the annual party conference). With revisionism, in both its traditional or technocratic guise, found wanting, the Labour Right's inability to command a coherent political philosophy made it appear rudderless precisely at a time when working-class voters were looking for answers. Thus, when leftists in the PLP pushed towards power after Wilson's 1970 defeat, it was incentivised to do so by doubling down on the party institutions in which it now had factional advantage. As was the case after the party's near-collapse in the early 1930s, this would take the form of a reassertion of intra-party democracy as a guiding principle — something which would drive a wedge between the party's existing party-based ideational infrastructure and an increasingly electoralist Wilson and lead the

party down nearly two decades of intense and internecine factional warfare (Minkin, 1992: ch. 7).

In an age of class dealignment and rapidly changing technologies of communication, this split would fatally undermine the party's ability to compete with the Tory's media-savvy free market revolution. Indeed, while Margaret Thatcher certainly had to navigate inter-factional tensions in her rise to ideational supremacy over the party, in the far more hierarchical Conservative Party, this was accomplished much more adroitly than in Labour. Combined with a revolutionary approach to party communications that embraced the latest techniques in advertising to 'sell' the party's new approach to political-economic governance, the Conservatives were rapidly able to shift the terms of economic debate while the Labour Party floundered. It was not until the turn of the century, after decades of internecine faction infighting, that Labour leaders would imitate Thatcherite innovations and shift away from party-centric ideational production — in the process, imitating the former's efforts at consolidating ideational authority in the party in public office at the expense of the party in central office.

4.1 The White Heat of Technology, the Civil Service, and the "Upward" Consolidation of Ideational Authority

In the early 1960s, a pervasive public sentiment had emerged that Britain had stagnated. As Financial Times journalist and future Labour advisor Michael Shanks would summarise of the general mood, the country was seen to have become "a lotus island of easy tolerant ways, bathed in the golden glow of an imperial sunset" (quoted in O'Hara, 2006: p. 79). Britain seemed to be lagging in almost every meaningful category of economic dynamism, and there was real concern about the country's ability to compete in a world that was rapidly becoming more global. The country was crying out for new ideas, and Harold Wilson, fresh off of using his vision on the 'white heat of technology' to unite Labour's warring factions, would seize the opportunity to supply them. His calls for "change, dynamic, exciting, thrilling change" (Wilson, 1964) would return Labour to power for the first time in 13 years, and with him came a renewed focus on economic planning as a central feature of Labour's plans for state power.

As discussed in Chapter 3, by working closely with Labour's party-centric ideational infrastructure (PCII) and, more specifically, with the party's civil-service-in-opposition (the LPRD), Wilson advanced a regime of selective nationalisation to ensure that the white heat of technology could be harnessed to ensure increased standards of living that would be distributed across classes and regions. The first step in realising these lofty ambitions would be a significant reorientation of the machinery of government policy-making. If the state was going to guide British capitalism to the promised land of high-tech productivity, it would have to develop a capacity for long-term thinking that Wilson felt it hitherto lacked. Motivated by a deep-seated mistrust in the civil service, which Wilson saw as conspiring to hold back his technocratic socialist revolution, these efforts centred on creating new governmental bodies and a new breed of advisers to guide these bodies.

Wilson's plan to transform the British economy would ultimately fall short. However, his changes to the policy formation process would undermine the PCII that had been so instrumental in bringing him to power in the first place. This was not so much because Wilson wanted to undermine his party's policy apparatus, at least not in the 1960s. Rather, it was because his innovations would create a set of policy institutions that would largely replicate the functions of key organisations like the LPRD, thus rendering the latter redundant and starving it of experienced staff. By the end of the decade, the consequences of Wilson's turn away from party ideas would manifest in a series of policy decisions that would bring down his government and threaten to tear the broader movement apart.

4.2: Wilson, the Civil Service, and Labour's PCII

In May of 1963, Tony Benn — a rising star in the PLP and, at the time, a mentee of Wilson's — would meet with Thomas Balogh, an Oxford economist and veteran adviser to the NEC policy committees who had recently become Wilson's economic adviser. The conversation was focused on Labour's plans for power and, specifically, how the policymaking machinery would be reformed to ensure that Whitehall could not hold the

party back from its grand designs. The enthusiasm for the moment was clear from Benn's diaries, where he would recall that he "had tea with Tommy Balogh and we talked about building up the necessary brains trusts to take over each department after the Election (sic). There is all the excitement for a revolutionary movement, with plans for this and that already afoot — just as if we were partisans poised for victorious assault upon the capital" (Benn, 1988: p. 53). This enthusiasm would translate into an attempt to "overhaul of the state apparatus of historically immense proportions" (Blick, 2006: p. 41). While it was an overhaul would ultimately fail to deliver Benn's revolutionary moment, this new approach to policy development would have a lasting effect on how Labour leaders came to understand their relationship with the ideas produced by the party's policy machinery.

The primary motivation for these changes was a sense that the institutions of economic governance as they were constituted in the early 1960s were being rendered ineffective by a dominant civil service in the Treasury and Bank of England. The dominance of this bureaucracy meant that economic reforms were inevitably pared back as civil servants who had been socialised in a tradition of amateur generalism would fall back on to established best practices at the first sign of economic headwinds. As a result, the economy was subject to a cyclical 'start-stop' dynamic of fiscal stimulus followed by restrictive monetary policy, which would, in turn, induced a self-defeating cycle in which lack of investment would depress the economy's productive potential (thus necessitating more government spending and, eventually, more defensive monetary policy).

To counteract this dynamic, Wilson and his advisers endeavoured to break the chokehold of the civil service and allow the government to pursue its productivity-enhancing public investment initiatives. Chief among these innovations was the famous Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), established in October 1964 under the directorship of George Brown at the prodding of Balogh and Patrick Blackett (the latter a left-wing physicist and another one of Wilson's personal advisors). The DEA emerged directly out of Wilson's embrace of socialist planning with the mandate of directing the government's long-term economic planning. Via the DEA, the Wilson administration was tasked with implementing Britain's first National Plan in September 1965, which aimed to

increase national output by 25 percent and investment by 38 percent by 1970 — although these figures would prove to be wildly overambitious (Thompson, 2006: pp. 179-180).

The DEA was far from the only innovation that Wilson would introduce in pursuit of the white heat of technology. Later that year, the Ministry for Overseas Development (ODM) was established under the leadership of Barbara Castle. In 1965, the National Research and Development Corporation was expanded alongside the formation of a new Ministry of Technology (Mintech). In 1968, an amalgamation of existing ministers produced the Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS), led by Crossman, and the Ministry of Labour was rebranded as the Department for Employment and Productivity (DEP), with Castle redeployed to see through the government's planning efforts in this area. Even Tony Crosland was returned to the fold in 1969 when he was made Secretary of State for Local Government and Regional Planning, responsible for an infrastructure and housing brief that was designed with an explicit efficiency-enhancing angle (Blick, 2006: p. 41). While Wilson would stop short (at least in his first government) at creating a "prime ministerial department", as suggested by Balogh, he would surround himself with the "most extraordinary unconventional collection of personal advisers" that would help push this administrative transformation (quoted *ibid.*: p. 52).

To help staff these new initiatives, Wilson would also soon pursue significant civil service reform under the auspices of the Fulton Committee on Civil Service. The Committee's June 1968 report identified and critiqued what it called the "philosophy of the amateur" that was claimed to pervade Whitehall and create an impulse towards generalism amongst the civil service, as well as decrying the overpowered role of the Treasury in governing the state's economic policy. As intended, this painted a picture of a state bureaucracy fundamentally unsuited for carrying out Labour's vision of transformative technocratic socialism, and while few of the specific reform measures from the Fulton Committee were ever fully implemented, the report gave Wilson rhetorical cover to significantly expand the use of outside advisers (or "irregulars" as they were called at the time) to help the administration properly take control of the levers of state power.

Thus emerged a new figure in the story of party ideas, the special advisor (SpAd). Indeed, it was in the wake of the Fulton Committee report that “at Downing Street, the Treasury, the Home Office and elsewhere, special advisers were employed for the first time (at least as they are understood today — politically appointed, temporary civil servants, working to individual ministers)” (Blick, 2006: p. 42). Crucially, in their early iteration, SpAds were considered critical for protecting the party programme from interference from a (small-c) conservative civil service. As Shore would recall, SpAds were seen as the “guardians of the manifesto”, who could ensure that the “habits of mind and surmountable obstacles” of an outdated civil service would not “present the working out” of Labour policy (quoted in Blick, 2006: p. 46). As we will see, however, this understanding of the SpAds as the protector of party-produced ideas fundamentally differed from the role that these figures played in the 1970s after Wilson’s relationship with his party’s PCII had soured. Even in the 1960s, Wilson’s newly formed “army of irregulars” became a point of concern for those who remained attached to the party’s ideational machinery (recall that Shore had departed for Parliament).

This was for good reason, for while Wilson’s early reforms were not purposefully meant to reduce the efficacy of the party’s PCII, this was the unintended effect. For one, this new coterie of advisers significantly enhanced the now-familiar process by which party-based researchers became isolated from the government they had helped deliver to power, as SpAds constituted a new ‘layer’ between the party’s policy machinery and ministerial decision-makers. To make matters worse, in one of his last acts as Research Secretary, Shore downgraded the status of the NEC policy committees to that of “advisory” bodies, a change that was aimed at reducing their influence over the policy decisions of the party leadership. Many in the NEC suspected this was done on Wilson’s behalf to save the leader from “embarrassment” should the NEC committees produce policy measures that ran counter to his preferences (Hatfield, 1978: p. 41).

Most significantly, however, was a dynamic in which the development of the *government’s* thinking machinery precipitated a brain drain from Labour’s PCII. This was

most dramatically exemplified by Balogh and Kaldor –the two most veteran economists on the NEC policy committees who departed to join the DEA as SpAds (Blick, 2003) – but impacted all levels of seniority at the LPRD. Less than two months after Wilson became Prime Minister — the Home Policy Committee received a report from the party’s General Secretary, Len Williams, detailing the pressures that the Department faced early in Wilson’s tenure. Williams had long been an admirer of the LPRD and had worked with Shore before his departure to advocate for increasing the resources available to the Department (LPNEC, Shore/4/30, 1962) and now felt the need to intervene on the Department’s behalf with a letter reflecting concerns the emergence of SpAds was depriving the Department of its most experienced researchers. This was especially true in the case of John Allen and Stuart Greenstreet, who served at the LPRD for six years each. Along with two other departures of more junior researchers, this left the Department with eight research staff, only one of whom had been with the Department for more than one election cycle. Along with the need to hire a new Research Secretary (after Shore’s departure for parliament), this left the LPRD severely shorthanded, a situation that Williams hoped to address “as quickly as possible” (LPNEC, Shore/3/71, 1964).

Figures in the LPRD also pushed back on this perceived separation between government and party, advocating for more direct ties with the Wilson government. In November 1964, for instance, Jim Northcott, the LPRD’s remaining senior researcher, circulated an ambitious document entitled “The Future of the Research Department”. Northcott, who had recently published a popular account of Labour policy, was the heir apparent to Shore (especially after the departures of Allen and Greenstreet). The document amounts to a stirring defence of the LPRD as integral to the party’s long-term interests, highlighting in particular the essential role that the Department played in manifesto development, and laying out a plan for integrating the Department into Wilson’s proposed reforms to the government machinery. It also underscored the LPRD’s place at the centre of the party’s broader ideational infrastructure and its unique capacity to develop a party programme that could account for the various factional perspectives the party had to balance in order to win power. The LPRD was essential, from this perspective, because it could collect ideas from across the movement and articulate these

perspectives into a coherent offer to voters. To this end, “The trade unions, the Fabians, the universities and the research institutes will continue doing research into all manner of questions, but much of this is likely to be politically irrelevant, or unused unless someone is harnessing it systematically to political purpose” (LPNEC, Shore/3/71, 1964).

Building from this perspective, Northcott then proposed to expand the LPRD’s role by articulating a “new role for the Research Department” in order to address concerns about the changes that Wilson had made since becoming Prime Minister. Under this formulation, the LPRD would continue to act as a nodal conduit for ideas from across Labour’s PCII, but, in recognition of Wilson’s concerns about the civil service, it would now also interface directly with the revamped government policy machinery. To this end, Northcott agreed with the sentiment that the civil service could not be trusted to carry out Labour’s proposed reforms but argued that the power of Whitehall should be checked by expanding the *party’s* ideational reach, as opposed to the construction of government-centred policy machinery. Thus, “With its full-time staff, its network of contacts inside and outside the Party, and its close integration with the Party’s policy-making committees, the Research Department would seem to be uniquely well placed to act as a clearing-house for policy ideas, helping to meet the research needs of the Labour government.”

To perform this clearinghouse function, Northcott advanced a detailed list of proposals to increase the LPRD’s influence over the flow of ideas through the party. These included: 1) Expanding the regional conference programme to keep members engaged, 2) working with Parliamentary Committees directly to ensure the PLP and Transport House were aligned, 3) convening working parties with front and backbenchers and outside experts to make up for the reduced attendance by ministers to NEC policy committees, 4) executing individual research projects to integrate university research in the party’s programming, 5) funding overseas trips to the research departments of ideologically aligned parties to integrate lessons from “socialists in other counties”, 6) create a “Digest of Ideas” to keep Labour minister abreast of new ideas that were uncovered during all of these activities (LPNEC, Shore/3/71, 1964). This was to be accompanied by a general reorganisation of the LPRD to address growing frustrations that, after *Signposts for the Sixties*, the Department had been unable to do the kind of long-term research it typically carried out, becoming instead something much closer to an information service. These frustrations, paradoxically, were largely a function of the esteem that many party figures continued to hold the Department, as numerous requests for support from MPs, other departments at Transport House, and the press tended to crowd out the Department’s long-term work. Addressing these challenges would require an organisational

rationalisation, and Northcott recommended splitting the LPRD into two sections, one focused on information services and the other on long-term research, and, above all, more funding to increase the number of researchers and the salaries that could be offered to them (ibid.). The latter had been a long-standing concern, with Shore making repeated efforts to change the salary structure of the LPRD to increase researcher retention (Labour Party, LPRD, Shore 4/30about P(Pitt, LPRD Review, 1966), 1961).

The proposal was, in other words, an effort to reassert the LPRD's role as a vital institution for the party's ability to 'update' ideas programme and, ultimately, renew its offer to the British public. It was also an opportunity not taken, as none of these changes would be forthcoming. This was in part due to circumstance, as Labour's razor-thin majority in Parliament (of four MPs) was so precarious that Transport House felt the need to stay on an election footing, pushing questions of organisational to the back burner. In part, however, it was also because Wilson and his advisors insisted that the LPRD should focus on 'selling' the government's policy to the broader party movement. The movement already had its ideational North Star in the group of experts in No. 10, and any efforts to pull more ideas from the party movement would only muddy the waters. In whichever case, there was little time or energy for substantial organisational restructuring and even less enthusiasm for diverting new funding to the Research Department. This news would ultimately prompt Northcott to turn down the vacant Research Secretary position, but not before leaking his complaints to *The Times* (Rose, 1965).

In his place, fellow researcher Terry Pitt was appointed, who at the time was a relatively junior researcher who reported having had no qualms with focusing the LPRD's efforts on "expounding the thinking behind Labour's present programme and dealing with policy problems on an ad hoc basis as they arise" (ibid.). Pitt was able to pursue some minor changes to the policy development process that helped to minimise the short-term responsibilities faced by LPRD researchers, primarily by reducing the number of NEC sub-committees to four broad groups to cut down on the amount of time the Department would have to give to secretarial functions. This made life in the Department somewhat less frantic but did little to change the general dynamic in which the LPRD facilitated a "one-way flow of ideas [from the leader's office to the movement at large]" without

reciprocal interest from Wilson in the Department's input on major policy decisions (ibid.). To this end, a year into the Wilson government, Pitt would report that the LPRD had largely busied itself "concentrating largely upon the task of explaining the Government's case in pamphlets and by its contribution to speeches, etc," but had done little by way of developing new ideas or policy proposals (LPNEC, Annual Report of the Research Department, 1965).

4.3: The Wilson Government and Labour's PCII: From Neglect to Hostility

It is worth reiterating that this does not mean that the LPRD was *purposefully* relegated to a lesser status in the party's policymaking hierarchy, at least not initially. The fact that it was so busy with publicity efforts and short-term research support to the other parts of the party reflects that it remained a key informational hub in its ideational infrastructure. Wilson might have preferred ideas to come from his new set of government advisers, but he still valued the Labour's PCII as an essential organ of party coordination.

However, concerns that the enthusiasm of Wilson and the other reformers for establishing government-based machinery for long-term planning would 'crowd out' the party's influence over the ideas of the Labour government soon proved prescient. By the October 1965, presumably based on his experience leading the Department for several months, Pitt's willingness to compromise on the role of the LPRD appears to have run dry. In a meeting with James Callahan and Colin Pepworth, he would call for the formation of a small group of specialists within Transport House to facilitate "a more effective link between the Ministries to which they were connected and to the T.H. [Transport House] Researcher Dept (sic)" (LPNEC, Pitt/C/59, 1965). It was hoped that this would re-establish the LPRD's ability to inform policymakers of how voters on the ground responded to their reforms. Thus, as Pepworth would report in a memo to Tony Crosland:

Mr. Pitt and I both feel that T.H. would be a less frustrated and frustrating place, and that Ministers and their professional and civil servant advisers would be better

informed of public reaction and the opportunities of favourably influencing it, if this small group were to come into being, as adjuncts of relevant departments rather than as merely additions to a system already deficient in communication as between decision-makers, party publicists and researchers, and the electorate (ibid.).

This was, of course, functionally very similar to Northcott's suggested package of reforms, reflecting a change of heart on Pitt's behalf and a growing realisation that Wilson's push to reform the government's planning machinery was pulling resources and responsibilities from the LPRD.

From Wilson's perspective, however, there would have been little reason to change course. Despite initial concerns that his technological revolution might run aground after two by-election defeats in 1965 had further diminished the party's margin of power, Labour significantly strengthened its majority when Wilson decided to call a snap election in 1966. Nothing in party politics quiets internal criticism like winning votes, and it would have been hard for figures in Labour's PCII to argue that Wilson's approach was not working in this regard (Heppell, 2013). However, the 1966 victory can be attributed at least as much to Conservative disarray as to a popular endorsement of Wilson's economic reforms, and worse yet, it masked real problems that were emerging both in Wilson's economic programme.

Those at Transport House hoped the party's victory margin would allow the party to address the growing tension between its PCII and the government's attempts to consolidate control over the ideas it brought to the functioning of the state. In June of 1966, the NEC launched a review of LPRD, which was primarily concerned with returning long-term policy research to the remit of the Research Department and the party's PCII more generally. This review amounted to a reassessment of the "total framework of party policy" that asserted the LPRD's role as the arbiter of the party's overall ideological direction and demanded that the Department be given more leeway to pursue this research. To see the significance of this project, it is worth quoting the report at length:

We feel that the Party will soon be in need of a new statement of faith. Already (even

in two Manifestos merely 18 months apart), the Party's 'critique' has begun to be overtaken by events. If this continues, the result will be that its programme becomes a list of commitments rather than a set of measures based upon a coherent analysis of society. In 1964 our analysis was the Galbraithian 'private affluence and public squalor' (spice where necessary with the paradoxical and politically volatile existence of private squalor) from which we proposed to escape by harnessing science, etc. No one doubts that such an intellectual framework is an essential basis for the Party's programme, and few will doubt that the 1964 analysis will have little value by 1970. The problem, therefore, is to keep up the pressure in evolving a relevant critique.... A task such as this is obviously a fairly lengthy one, but we hope that the result will be a "Signposts for the Seventies" draft for Annual Conference either in 1967 or 1968 (LPNEC, LPRD Review, 1966)

This was felt to be essential for handling the eventuality in which the "Government reaches the completion of political programmes agreed by the Party in Opposition" (*ibid.*). To provide this party-based long-term thinking, the review instructed the LPRD to set up several working parties to prepare draft policy statements for a series of member conferences on "Regional Development Policy", "Industrial Democracy", and "New Towns Policy", with the goal of using input from these exercises to inform new policy formation (LPNEC, Report on LPRD Report on , 1966). It also began a series of self-initiated longer-term projects with an eye towards the 1970s, including considerations of the party's posture towards the E.E.C., the tracking of the demographic trends that would shape future politics, the need for transport infrastructure, considerations about the future direction of taxation, and the private financial institutions (*ibid.*).

In a parallel document, the NEC also reasserted the LPRD's importance in connecting the party in parliament to the broader movement. A document entitled "A New Political Education Effort" proposed that the Research Department should take more control over the party's education efforts, particularly regarding the party's literature programme. These efforts were primarily driven by the concern was that the party was suffering due to an overreliance on the press to propagate its ideas. This was a problem insofar as "the British Press completely fails to reflect the view of its readers" and, worse still, "times can

easily arise when no national newspaper is willing to reflect a Labour viewpoint” (LPNEC, Political Education, 1966, emphasis in original). To address these distortions in media coverage, LPRD researchers argued that the party needed to produce materials independently to ensure that its ideas were propagated in good faith. This was, of course, always the point of the party’s publication programme, but the Department made the case (in a thinly-veiled critique of Wilson’s nascent electoralist turn) that in recent years these efforts had been too focused on “short-term propaganda work,” which made the party’s communication of its ideas seem myopic and opportunist. To fill the gaps, the LPRD proposed increasing the temporal horizons of the party’s publishing programme by producing material on the party’s history and its long-term vision and plans for the country’s future, to be complemented by material on socialist theory from the party’s perspective and longer-form paperbacks that could be marketed to the broader public (ibid.). Indeed, these efforts at revamping the party’s literature programme were already underway with the launch of two monthly newsletters, *Partnership* and *Action*, designed (in a move that Northcott would surely have approved of) to help sell the Wilson government’s policies to the Movement at large. Two other new publications, *Economic Bulletin* and *Discussion Pamphlets*, were to be more explicitly educational and interactive to allow the LRPD to take the temperature of the broader movement in anticipation of updating the party platform (Pitt, Report on LPRD, 1966).

This push to reinvigorate the Research Department would ultimately stall. By the end of the year, Pitt would report that the LPRD had made little progress on either its new research agenda or its proposed organisational reforms. Its ideational output remained focused on the short-term, with the Department “mainly engaged in public relations work defending and publicising the new Government’s actions” (Pitt, Update on LPRD staff report on , 1966). New ideas still primarily emerged from government departments and the army of irregulars that advised them, with the LPRD and NEC relegated to a reactive role. In the first instance, this lack of reform movement could be blamed, as had been the case many times before, on a lack of funding. There continued to be considerable turnover in the research staff, a symptom, no doubt, of the fact that the party struggled to offer a competitive salary to retain senior talent. As a result, despite a spate

of new hires, by late 1966, the Department could still only boast a 9-person research staff, including a frustrated Pitt who continued his predecessor's calls for more headcount (Pitt, Research Department Staff Review, 1966).

However, party-based figures increasingly began to articulate in the open a concern that the Labour government was wilfully sidelining the party's PCII, happy to let the party's thinking machine atrophy now that it could rely on ministerial research initiatives that frontbench MPs could closely control. Shore did little to calm the mounting tensions between the LPRD and the government when he published *Entitled to Know*, in part a retrospective on the state of the Research Department in which he claimed that Labour ministers had become "largely, if not wholly, dependent on their official advisers" at the expense of party advice (Shore, 1966: p. 153). By the following year, the tension between the LPRD and the Wilson administration had descended into outright hostility to a point that one contemporary would describe as "astounding" and with Wilson forced to publicly repudiate a statement produced by the Department accusing ministers of acting as "tools of their departments a good deal of the time" (Beichman, 1974: p. 111).

These tensions were certainly not helped by the fact that the latter half of Wilson's first government was defined by increasingly stiff economic headwinds, which would have done little to encourage him to loosen his grip on the party platform. Indeed, by mid-1967, figures across Labour's PCII were becoming increasingly concerned that the National Plan was at serious risk of running off the rails as overly optimistic projections for productivity and economic growth failed to materialise. This, ultimately, forestalled any ability for the government to pursue a significant portion of the commitments made in *Signposts for the Sixties* – a failure that soon translated into a sense of betrayal among party operatives and activists who had helped craft these platforms. In his 1967 review of the Research Department, for instance, Pitt complained that Wilson's government was not living up to its manifesto commitments thanks to two interrelated problems. First, the LPRD was finding it impossible to play a "watching brief" role in the rollout of the National Plan, meaning that "the main work of short-term economic and social planning research must be the work of the Department of Economic Affairs with the Research Department

playing a limited role (Pitt, Report on LPRD, 1967). Second, while “research within individual Government Departments”, both in the DEA and elsewhere, was expanding, the collective output of this work suffered from a lack of coordination. This meant that significant gaps had opened in the government research programme and that this research was increasingly short-termist. The overriding problem this presented, as Pitt would put it, was that:

Although individual Departments may produce extremely useful work, there is no Government agency concerned with the coordination and development of the total policy research programme. No Government agency knows what work is being done throughout the Government machine and what gaps exists (*ibid.*).

Thus, despite all the rhetoric about the importance of planning in Wilson’s technocratic revolution, the government’s newly formed policy apparatus was proving to be demonstrably bad at it. Worse yet, the limitations of the government’s ability to produce joined up thinking was actively undermining the ability of party’s PCII to produce an updated party programme. Pitt’s recommendation to address these issues, as might be expected, was that the LPRD should be tasked with the “Coordination of Government-Party research programmes”, cataloguing the promises made in *Signposts for the Sixties* and the 1964 and 1966 manifestos and assessing the progress towards these promises (*ibid.*).

4.4: External Crisis, Internal Turmoil

Whether or not any progress towards addressing these concerns would have been forthcoming is impossible to say, as external events decidedly overtook the party’s internal argument. The post-war model of British capitalism had been slowly running out of steam for at least a decade, and in 1967, shortly after Pitt published his review, the first cracks in this institutional facade would emerge in the form of an acute balance of payments crisis. The UK’s persistently lagging productivity meant that its trade deficit was constantly abutting the point of instability. This was, of course, the very productivity stagnation that Wilson’s policies were supposed to address, and the fact that they were not lead to a

series of increasingly speculative severe attacks on the country's currency (Thompson, 2006: Ch.13).

The 1967 devaluation is one of the more hotly debated topics in British political historiography, with significant disagreement about whether or not the decision to devalue in 1967, as opposed to when Wilson first took office in 1964, ultimately doomed Wilson's first stint in power. It is not possible to settle the score here (see Newton, 2010 for a helpful overview of this debate), but what is generally less controversial (and, indeed, more relevant for our purposes) is that the episode seriously stalled Wilson's efforts to construct a leadership-based policy machinery, and ultimately doomed the DEA (Seldon, 1987). To this end, while the acute nature of the crisis would momentarily dampen internal dissent from Transport House, it would fatally undermine Wilson's efforts at creating a leadership-based ideational infrastructure. This primarily occurred as disagreements about how best to manage the situation saw a rift between the DEA, which called for a devaluation of the Pound, and the Treasury, which staunchly opposed it. This came to a head on November 18, 1967, when James Callaghan, then the Chancellor, announced a 14 percent devaluation (Brittan, 1987).

This did not, however, redound to the benefit of the LPRD, as Wilson chose to double down on his reforms to the machinery of government instead of picking up on Pitt's call for closer integration of government and party policymaking. The DEA would limp along until, in April 1968, much of it was folded into the Ministry of Labour to form the Department of Employment and Productivity (DEP), headed by Barbara Castle. Through the DEP, the Wilson government would generate its second ignominious episode — the controversy surrounding the infamous *In Place of Strife* white paper. By the late 1960s, decades of tight labour markets and a general rise in affluence gave way to a period of economic stagnation that produced a spike in industrial action, led in particular by a rise in unofficial strikes by local-level militants. As lost working hours piled up, industrial relations became an increasingly salient political issue, and Wilson (fresh off the humiliation of the devaluation) was keen to show that he retained influence in at least

some aspects of the economy. The solution that emerged in January 1969 was *In Place of Strife*, which Castle held out as a charter of trade union rights and responsibilities.

Unfortunately for Castle, this was not how the unions saw it. Over the same period, the unions moved sharply leftward, with four out of the country's five major unions empowering left-wing leaderships between 1967 and 1969. This dramatically changed the dynamic at party Conference by inverting the traditionally pragmatic union vote and putting the union movement in general on a more confrontational footing vis-a-vis the Labour government (Minkin, 1992: Ch. 5). Thus, while *In Place of Strife* embraced a raft of new protections for the unions, it also violated one of the unions' sacred cows by granting powers to the Secretary of State to intervene in industrial negotiations. These measures included the power to order strike ballots before official strikes and "conciliation pauses" involving a mandatory return to work period of 28 days in the case of wildcat strikes, enforced under the threat of penalty. It also established an Industrial Board to enforce resolutions in industrial disputes (Taylor, 2004). With the unions far less disposed to compromise in 1969 than they had been when drafting first began on the document, the episode "came closer to splitting the Labour movement than (sic) any event since Ramsey MacDonald formed his national government" (Tyler, 2006: pp. 462). The proposal would divide Wilson's Cabinet and infuriate the TUC. Callaghan (now Home Secretary) flatly opposed it, and the TUC felt compelled to publish its own industrial relations proposals in its *Programme for Action*. Wilson was eventually forced into a U-turn, adding further embarrassment and undermining the party's ability to claim that it was best suited to handle the trade union's concerns (ibid.).

The episode reflects the shortcomings of Wilson's closed-off approach to policy formation — namely that by insulating authority over ideational development, he cut the government off from input from insights from the broader movement. Indeed, *In Place of Strife* was drafted largely in secret by Castle, Wilson and DEP advisers (both civil servants like John Burgh and special advisers like Jack Straw) (Pyper, 2015). Notably absent from the drafting process was meaningful input from the unions themselves or from LPRD researchers who would have had some understanding of the union's position via Liaison

Committees (as would be the case when the party returned to opposition between 1970 and 1974 (Minkin, 1992: ch. 5-6)). Relatedly, one of the overriding interpretations of the document and its reception was that it was drafted with far too great an eye towards Westminster politics – a “short-term political fix, as a way of seeing off the Tories” (Perkins, 2003: p. 324) as opposed to policy formation that was in keeping with the party’s representative responsibilities to the organised Labour movement. This is slightly unfair as Castle first developed the white paper to establish a *starting* point for debate instead of any attempt to railroad the unions into accepting a policy that they felt cut against their interests (Tyler, 2006). However, the fact that the unions felt sufficiently blindsided by the document that the TUC felt compelled to produce its own counterproposal (*Programme of Action*) reflects the fact that Wilson’s reformed machinery of governmental policymaking had become problematically detached from a key element of the broader party movement (Darlington & Mustchin, 2019). While union leaders Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon would eventually defuse the situation in the form of a “binding and solemn” agreement to address wildcat industrial action, the episode had badly weakened Wilson and his government, especially after it backed down and abandoned its proposal to introduce penalties for unsanctioned strike activity (Cruddas, 2024: p. 132; Darlington & Mustchin, 2019).

By challenging long-held principles of trade union autonomy and voluntarism, Wilson’s modernisation agenda managed to strain the party’s relationship with the unions to the point of breaking. To make matters worse, he also quickly the party’s left flank, a group which up until this point he had been able to assuage, also disavowed him. As was the case around the world, the late 1960s saw the emergence of a “New Left” that sought to bring nuance to the traditional class-based appeals around which Labour (be it the Labour left or the Labour Right) had traditionally grounded its platform. In the background of the Vietnam War and the struggles for decolonisation, the New Left sought to introduce demands for equality around race, gender and ethnicity (Cruddas, 2024: p. 129). Subsequent criticism of Wilson from the party’s left would be carried forward into the 1970s in the pages of a resurgent Tribune magazine, which figures like Michael Foot and Eric Heffer would use as a base to launch barbs at Wilson (Hatfield, 1978: p. 39).

This might not have been such a problem for the embattled leader had it not been for the fact that the party's executive in Transport House had also been moving steadily to the left during the late 1960s. In 1964, when Wilson first won office, the factional make-up of the NEC was such that there were twenty 'moderates' to eight members of the party's left. By 1970, this distribution had shifted to such an extent that there were fifteen moderates to twelve left-wingers (Hatfield, 1978: p. 23). Beyond this, the steady rightward drift of Wilson's front bench through the latter years of his government saw the attendance of these Labour ministers at NEC meetings decline, which meant the left typically had the upper hand on most committee groups. This did little to ease the mounting tension between Wilson and the LPRD, a friction that would become particularly important in the run-up to the 1970 election when it came time to draft the party's manifesto. Reflecting the NEC's leftward slide, the 1969 policy document *Labour's Economic Strategy* reflected a somewhat awkward blend of defensiveness and radicalism, at once attempting to explain away the shortcomings of the incumbent Labour government while embracing elements of the left's critique of that government (Wickham-Jones, 1996: 48-50).

Wilson and other elements in the PLP were sickened by this leftward lurch, fearing that it would fatally undermine the party's electoral efforts (*ibid.*). He pressed Pitt to moderate the document, arguing that the party's long-term interest lay in maintaining middle-class buy-in to his brand of technocratic socialism. In the first of nearly a decade of clashes between the LPRD and the leader's office, Pitt rejected this request, decisively reasserting the LPRD's independence from the Party Leader (Panitch & Ley:: 2001). As such, the 1970 manifesto, *Now Britain's Strong — Let's Make It Great to Live In* (as its prolix title suggests), was marked by an awkwardness that reflected a party internally divided about how to respond to the mounting problems of the post-war paradigm.

Indeed, even if the manifesto had been strong, it would have been unlikely to save the Labour government. Wilson had demonstrably failed to address the economic stagnation that his technocratic revolution had promised to reverse, ultimately sealing the fate of his

first Prime Ministership (Wickham-Jones, 1996: Ch. 2). His government lurched from crisis to crisis before being duly defeated in the 1970 election.

4.5: Conservative Leaders and Ideational Consolidation

The structural problems facing the Butskellite consensus impacted the Conservative Party much as it did Labour. Thus, at the same time as Wilson began his crusade to consolidate ideational authority in the PLP and the Leader's Office, the Conservative Party began to undergo its own processes of ideational consolidation. Unlike in the Labour Party, however, where the party's constitution and normative commitment to intra-party democracy meant that Wilson would have to undergo intense and often internecine struggles with party activists and the NEC in his efforts to gain purchase over ideational authority, leaders in the top-down Conservative Party could instigate organisational and procedural reform with relatively few constraints – which ultimately meant the ideational consolidation process was relatively more straightforward. For one, there was less consolidation needed for Conservative leaders compared with their Labour counterparts, simply because Tory leadership started from a greater position of authority than was the case in Labour. More importantly, however, there was no statutory mandate or cultural expectation of intra-party democracy, meaning that efforts at consolidation, while potentially unpopular amongst party traditionalists, did not erupt into the kind of internecine factional strife that would characterise the process in Labour.

This is not to say that figures like Heath and Thatcher had things entirely their own way. On the contrary, the success of the CRD in influencing the Conservative Party platform catalysed the proliferation of several so-called ginger groups, pressure campaigns, and research bodies that aimed to represent different factional interests and challenge both the CRD and the Leadership's influence in the Conservative PCII (Desai, 1994; Feulner, 1985). Thus, by the 1960s, a healthy ecosystem of Conservative ideas producers emerged that operated beyond the purview of party leadership. Further, the CRD played a central coordinating role in this network with organisations and quasi-independent bodies such as the Bow Group, the Inns of Court Conservative Association,

the Selsden Group, the Public Sector Review Unit (PSRU) and the Conservative Systems Research Centre (CSRC) all working in (relative) harmony under the coordination of the CRD (Rose, 1961). Indeed, as we have seen, Butler embraced the formation of sibling ideational organisations, happy to provide a central coordinating node for a growing network of Conservative ideas producers.

However, this embrace was always a guarded one, and Butler was keen to reinforce the Department's privileged position at the heart of the Conservative ideational infrastructure. Thus, in a bid to strengthen the Research Department's claim to ideational power, Butler and his deputy, Michael Fraser, used their expanded budgetary firepower to put the Department through a reorganisation in the early 1960s – a shake-up was quite explicitly aimed at redoubling the Department's influence relative to the rest of the Conservative PCII. Fraser was particularly vociferous about his desire to see the CRD retain its centrality in the party's ideational network, arguing for the need to widen the departmental "octopus" by spreading "its tentacles into the Parliamentary Party, the CPC, the Bow Group, the university Conservatives, Swinton College, and such unofficial bodies as the Inns of Court Conservative Association" (quoted: Ramsden, 1980: p. 260). These efforts were no doubt at least partially defensive, for the pair were keenly aware that the CRD's success had bred a widespread appreciation, and in some cases resentment, amongst Conservative leaders (CRD 3/9/10, 1964; CRD 3/9/15, 1964). So long as CRD ideas remained largely in accord with those of the party leader, the Department's coordinating and consensus-building capacities made it a valuable feature of party management. As we will see, however, when the ideas of the Department diverged from those of the leader, clashes over who had authority over the party's ideational offer inevitably ensued.

4.6: Home's Indifference, Heath's Frustration

As had been the case in the Labour Party, the collapse of the post-war consensus quickly eroded the legitimacy of the Bustskellism and catalysed a search for programmatic renewal (Toye, 2013; Hall, 1993). It was in this context that Conservative

leaders would come to see the CRD not as an asset but as an adversary and, in the process, pull ideational authority away from the broader party into their own offices. Indeed, Butler and Fraser were right to be concerned, for dark clouds loomed on the horizon for the party and its Research Department. After the success of the 1950s, the CRD's ability to make the party's ideational offer appear innovative collided with the need to defend the record of three straight Conservative governments. As the CRD's output became increasingly backwards-looking, the party's ideational offer quickly appeared stale to a British public that had rediscovered a concern about the country's economic future (Tomlinson, 2002). Public perception of the Macmillan government turned to outright contempt, with voters feeling that the party represented only out-of-touch "Old Etonians" who were uninterested in the concerns of average citizens (Bale, 2012: pp. 53-54).

Somewhat ironically, it was a new CRD polling initiative, the Psephology Group, that was able to identify what had hitherto been undetectable political beliefs and class perspectives, and the CRD pulled few punches in delivering home truths to a party that had perhaps grown complacent after three straight election wins. Where once the public had identified with a Conservative Party that seemed to represent an aspirational viewpoint, the party was now seen as out of touch and incompetent (CRD 2/21/6, 1960). These findings sparked panic in the party and were no doubt the impetus for the infamous "Night of the Long Knives" in July 1962, during which Macmillan sacked a third of his cabinet (Bale, 2012: pp. 53-54), a move that did more to reveal his anxiety than it did demonstrate his receptiveness. Soon, a sense of crisis initiated a push for reform, and these changes threatened to loosen the CRD's relative monopoly of ideational influence.

Trouble began as early as 1963 when Sir Alec Douglas-Home succeeded Macmillan as Prime Minister. Home won his leadership bid at the expense of Butler, who the party's right still saw as a tarnished figure in the wake of the Suez Affair (Bale, 2012) (the appointment of Prime Minister remained a royal prerogative, and Macmillan had advised the Queen that Home represented the best compromise candidate). Unlike the previous leadership contest in which Butler lost to a fellow reformist in Macmillan, however, Home,

a former hereditary peer, hailed from the party's 'anti-policy' tradition and thus shared far less appreciation for the utility of party ideas than his predecessor. This might not have been an issue had it not been for the fact that in the behind-the-scenes manoeuvring that determined what signals the party would send to the Queen about who was best suited to succeed Macmillan, the network of CRD old boys had all thrown their backing behind Butler. This had the effect of freezing much of the CRD's alumni network out of ministerial positions (at least initially) and fostering a sense that the Department was a factional adversary to the new leadership – tension that fed Home's natural distrust of any party programme with clearly articulated ideas (Ramsden, 1980: Ch. 8).

This new friction between the party leader and Research Department, it should be made clear, occurred at a much lower register than would be the case during Thatcher's leadership, and Home's frustrations with the CRD were born more of apathy than open antipathy. Home, of the Churchillian statesman tradition, was too unbothered by the ins and outs of domestic policy (or ideas in general) to see the Department as anything more than a minor annoyance (Leonard, 2005). Ultimately, the CRD would retain much of its influence, and even continued to produce content for the Prime Minister's speeches on top of its other coordinating functions such as working with the CPC. This was likely for no other reason than that it was far too well established to be sidelined completely without the significant expenditure of political capital.

It did mean, however, that the Department's influence over the *substance* party programme was somewhat diminished — or perhaps more accurately, that the programme was to be less substantive overall. While CRD researchers were well aware in the run-up to the 1964 election of the need for new ideas to attack the perception that the party only spoke for the wealthy by articulating Conservative policies for addressing the country's economic challenges, they proved unable to convince the new leadership of this imperative. In meeting after meeting, the Department would produce a series of ambitious and detailed manifesto proposals only to have these initiatives scaled back in liaison meetings with the Prime Minister's office. This, again, was not because Home was necessarily opposed to the Department's proposals but rather that he was averse to

detailed policy ideas *in general*, feeling that they would render him a hostage to fortune in power. This meant that while the campaign embarked on a furious publicity campaign aimed at discrediting Wilson's dirigiste platform, it largely lacked the ideational ammunition to offer anything that resembled a positive counteroffer (Thorpe, 1997; Ramsden, 1980, pp. 228-230). This proved fatal in an election defined by the public weariness of the Conservative government, and the party was unseated (narrowly) for the first time since 1945.

As in 1945, the loss prompted a sense of crisis and existential reflection amongst Tory ranks. Many in the party, including soon-to-be CRD Director Brendon Sewill, concluded that the Conservatives "had lost the confidence of the public because we had run out of ideas" (quoted in Ramsden, 1980: *ibid.* p. 235), and a general sentiment prevailed that the party needed to update its ideational operation (Heath, 2010; Maudling, 1978). Butler (who was heading for retirement) was relieved of his position at the head of the party's PCII and was replaced as both the Chair of the ACP and the Research Department by Ted Heath (himself a former CRD researcher) in October of 1964. Heath immediately launched a policy review with the coordinating support of Michael Fraser and James Douglas (the CRD's two most senior researchers). Home, his position now uncertain, begrudgingly allowed the review to continue, although (characteristically) without taking any personal interest in its supervision (Hill, 2012).

The motivation behind the review, which took explicit inspiration from the CRD's work in developing the *Industrial Charter* in the 1940s, was "to educate the Party into a more up-to-date way of thinking" and to "make the Conservative Party more intellectually respectable" (Heath, 2010; Lindsay & Harrington, 1979). Home's supporters in the parliamentary party quickly grew concerned that Heath's role leading the review was undermining the former's position as leader because Heath was able to establish himself as the "modern face of the Conservative Party (Hill, 2012: p.76). They were right to be concerned, as Home, whose position was already severely damaged by the election defeat, would soon resign in favour of Heath to "preserve the unity of the Conservative Party (Ramsden, 1996: p. 236).

Crucially, and against the expectations of party grandees, Heath would choose to retain the chairmanship of the CRD upon taking power to maintain oversight of the Policy Review. This proved to be a double-edged sword for the Research Department. On the one hand, it restored the Department's prestige and influence. Heath's desire to maintain his position as the head of the CRD reflected his enthusiasm for the Department, which would ensure its continued centrality in managing the Policy Review — and, ultimately, its authority over the renewal of the party platform. Indeed, from 1964-1970, the CRD and CRD-affiliated party figures would be seen to dominate the production of Conservative Party ideas, reaching a pinnacle of influence that surpassed even that of the Butler era (Williamson, 2015: p. 31). However, this increased influence came with a marked loss of independence (Lockwood, 2020). The Department was now largely seen, not without reason, as an appendage to the leadership. This ultimately led to a situation in which Heath had “a more personal monopoly of authority in the Party than any Leader since Neville Chamberlain” (Ramsden, 1980: p. 239). The problem this presented was that as the factional tide shifted against Heath, it would drag the CRD out to sea along with him.

This can be seen in the frustrations emerging around the Policy Review, which quickly descended into chaos after Heath's ascent to leadership. For one, it became expansive and swelled significantly in scope, increasing from 20 review groups to 36 in a matter of months (Lockwood, 2020; Garnett, 2005). The fact that the policy review groups would all meet under the auspices of the Advisory Committee on Policy meant that they required secretarial support from a Research Department that was also expected to continue its day-to-day duties (supporting the efforts of front-benchers, the CPC, and the party's publicity initiatives, etc.). This quickly became untenable, as even the relatively well-resourced CRD could not respond to such a significant increase in demand for its workload. The initial response to these challenges was to significantly increase the Department's size, with the number of researchers rising by more than 50 percent (from 23 to 35) along with a comparable jump in support staff (Rose, 1974: pp. 390-400). When even this proved inadequate for supporting a policy review that was becoming more

unwieldy by the day, the party turned to a series of ad hoc and quasi-external solutions to keep the review from folding altogether.

There was also a notable lack of coordination across these groups, a consequence of Heath's insistence that they focus their attention on policy specifics instead of first establishing an updated Conservative philosophy to serve a declaration of first principles (as had been the case during the 1945 Review). This was compounded by the unrealistic six-month timeframe that Heath put on each policy group. This put enormous pressure on the CRD, which, on top of its usual responsibilities, had to furnish a secretary for each of the committees to collate the various ideas under discussion to "sift" good ideas from bad ones before sending the former to the ACP for approval (Rose, 1974: pp. 392-400). The composition of the policy groups further complicated the situation. These groups comprised a mix of MPs, party activists, university academics, and non-partisan technical advisors to broaden the scope of the ideas they developed. While this diversity was not inherently problematic, the significant presence of non-political thinkers exacerbated the Review's coordination challenges. Many participants were not affiliated with the Conservative Party, leading some committees to produce reports that violated longstanding party commitments and thus had no chance of being integrated into the final programme (Gamble, 2002).

The result, predictably, was chaotic. Still, while few tangible policy ideas were produced, the CRD was heroically able to produce *Putting Britain Right Ahead*, a document that Ramsden describes as "the key document of 1964-1970" (Ramsden, 1980: p. 241-242). When Wilson caught the Conservatives off-guard by calling a snap election in early 1966, this document would make up the bulk of the party's manifesto content. However, given the rushed nature of the drafting process (another consequence of an over-stretched CRD), the actual manifesto, *Actions Not Words*, appeared under-considered and largely failed to paint a coherent picture of what a Conservative future might look like (Williamson, 2015: Ch. 2; Ramsden, 1980: Ch. 9). As we have seen, Labour's 1966 manifesto expanded on its 1964 offer by filling out details of its plans to expand its nationalisation programme by leaning into technological change, and was thus

seen as a far more coherent document by both media commentators and the general public (Jacobs & Hindmoor, 2024). This clarity of thought that would help propel Labour to landslide victory.

Despite the loss, figures in the CRD remained optimistic, feeling that above and beyond the actual ideas produced, the exercise's capacity to promote coordination would make the chaos worthwhile. Thus, Douglas wrote to Fraser, "The most valuable product of the exercise...will probably not be hard policy proposals but education. In a party such as ours, which is based on consensus rather than dogmatic discipline, the dividing line between political education and policy formation is always thin" (CRD 3/24/9c, 1965). This sentiment reflects a belief, no doubt born out of a career working with Butler, that one of the primary functions of the CRD and the ideas it produced was to coordinate across the party's factional divides to ensure a degree of unity. This, indeed, was central to the CRD's role in facilitating ideational renewal in an era of PCII. By interacting with figures from across the party's different factions and integrating their ideas into a broader framework, the Department could update the party programme in such a way as to both respond to external events and facilitate a degree of intra-party harmony. Seen through this lens, the short-term loss (of the election) would have been a small price to pay for the long-term payoff of reestablished party unity and a new ideational direction.

However, the letter suggests that Douglas was surprisingly oblivious to the threat posed by the party's right wing, which had grown increasingly frustrated with the lessons imposed upon them in the policy review and, with it, the consensual approach to ideational development embodied in the CRD. Here, the CRD's perceived loss of independence meant that it came to be seen as an object of factional combat as opposed to a neutral referee over this combat. This made it difficult to deny the charge that the Department was a den of 'Heathite Wets'. Consequently, the CRD came to be seen (somewhat unfairly) as a tool for shutting out the ideas of Heath's factional opponents, and soon, these opponents began to look for an alternative source of ideas with which they could challenge the CRD's ideational power.

For many of these politicians, the shambolic policy review process only reinforced these feelings of intellectual alienation. Most prominent among these aggrieved right-wingers was Keith Joseph, who, in 1966, was the Chair of the Policy Group on Trades Unions that was tasked with resolving the long-standing issue of contract enforceability. The main area of contention on the issue revolved around how much the government should enforce cooperation in dispute resolution. In what would have amounted to a major change in policy emphasis, Joseph and Nicholas Ridley (a fellow economic liberal) stridently pushed for a minimalist role for the state. Others on the committee, including the CRD secretariat, balked at the pair's proposal, claiming this amounted to a significant reversal of the Department's work over the previous two years. Given the Department's influence, the proposal was quickly shelved, and, in February 1967, the committee produced a proposal that would *increase* the Government's power to intervene in industrial disputes by instituting a compulsory cooling-off period, and Joseph would soon resign in frustration (Ramsden, 1980: p. 267). Beyond this, the Policy Review also consisted of so many uncoordinated committees producing so many new proposals that the aggregate effect of the exercise appeared to some (most notably Margaret Thatcher) to be a massive expansion of state spending (CRD 3/24/13, 1966-1968). This only reaffirmed the right's long-standing suspicions about Heath's statist outlook (Ramsden, 1980: p. 234).

Thus, while Heath would go on to win in 1970, he did so in the context of an incipient revolt on his right flank, which threatened to subsume a Research Department that was now seen as a factional player in this intra-party struggle. To make matters worse, Heath never stood on particularly solid electoral ground thanks to the hollow nature of the Conservative Party victory, which defeated an unpopular and deeply divided Labour Party by a slender margin. As Sewell would articulate a common feeling amongst Conservative figures when he said that "the surprising thing is not that the Conservatives won the election but that, after five and a half years of Labour Government which even impartial observers would recognise as dogged by failure and unpopularity, we so nearly lost" (CRD 3/9/85, 1970). Thus, far from engaging a process of "political education" as Douglas had predicted, the Policy Review of the late 1960s pushed disgruntled figures on the right to

look elsewhere for new ideas that could fundamentally alter the Conservative Party's economic offer. Fortunately for figures like Joseph, Thatcher, and Angus Maude, a new network of ideational organisations had started to emerge in the late 1950s that would give them access to a new source of ideas that existed far beyond the reaches of the consensus-driven ideational production of the CRD: the think tank (see Chapter 5).

4.7: Taking After Wilson: Heath's Experiments with Governmental Policymaking

1970-1974 proved seminal years in the struggle between party moderates and a new generation of economic liberals. Starting from a position of weakness, Heath's time in government went from bad to worse. There were many reasons for this, but most were rooted in the perceived ambiguity of Heath's attempts to address the country's mounting economic challenges (Holmes, 1997). Indeed, a growing realisation that the traditional mechanisms of economic management were becoming ineffective prompted figures in both parties to question the efficacy of the civil service and reconsider the processes by which party policy was translated into state policy outputs. To this end, once in power, Heath followed the current elite opinion on the need to reform government policy machinery and moved to consolidate control of policy development in No. 10. As had been the case in Wilson's first government, this would, inadvertently, come at the expense of the CRD, which found itself at an added degree of separation from the party leader. Thus, while Heath continued to express his appreciation for the Department, the natural operational distance between No. 10 and the CRD, combined with a chorus of new advisory voices, quickly drowned out the input of party researchers.

This is best demonstrated by the establishment in 1971 of the Central Policy Review Staff (CPRS). The CPRS, unofficially called 'the think tank', was initially conceived of in the latter stages of Wilson's first stint as Prime Minister but not implemented until Heath took power. This continuity of reformist impulse reflected the fact that leaders in both parties were facing similar structural challenges when it came to finding new ideas to address the ongoing crisis of the post-war paradigm. As its name suggests, the CPRS

was a small, multidisciplinary unit established in the Cabinet Office to advise on government policy. Its specific mission was to introduce a degree of scientific process into the formulation of government policy. As laid out in the 1971 White Paper, *The Reorganisation of Central Government*, it was thought that doing this would allow ministers:

To take better policy decisions by assisting them to work out the implications of their basic strategy in terms of policies in specific areas, to establish relative priorities to be given to different sectors of their programme as a whole, to identify those areas of policy in which new choices can be exercised and to ensure that the underlying implications of alternative courses of action are fully analysed and considered (quoted in James, 1986: p. 424).

As this language suggests, the Review Staff was conceived of as a highly technocratic and politically neutral organisation, partly driven by Heath's continued embrace of the CRD as a repository for overtly political thinking that should drive the party's long-term vision. Thus, Heath would successfully push for the CPRS to be headed by a scientist to increase the economy's productive potential by harnessing scientific innovation. This move bore striking similarities to Wilson's embrace of technology for similar purposes. The role was eventually filled by Lord Rothschild, a scientist (and self-professed socialist) who had previously been in charge of research at Shell Oil and how modelled the CPRS "in his own intellectual image" (*ibid.*).

Rothschild's inclusion as the head of the CPRS ensured that the organisation remained politically neutral, as the erstwhile scientist insisted on approaching research with a rigorous approach that embraced the scientific method. Described as "independent, radical and terse", it was initially praised for being the "deliberate antithesis of Whitehall circumspection, reflecting Rothschild's stated concept of policy analysis: political impartiality and intellectually honest, analysing all evidence without concession to ministerial preconceptions, always reaching firm conclusions, never fudging a compromise" (*ibid.*, p. 425). In the early years of Heath's government, these principles

were held as sacrosanct, and twice a year, figures in the CPRS would meet with ministers to give feedback on the government's performance on critical issues. As Douglas Hurd (then Heath's political secretary) would recall:

These were extraordinary occasions. Ministers would gather upstairs at Chequers around a long table. At one end sat Lord Rothschild, flanked by the more articulate members of his team. Taking subjects in turn, they would expound, with charts and graphs, the likely consequences of government policy. Their analysis was elegant but ruthless. They made no allowances for political pressures. They assumed the highest standards of intellectual consistency. They rubbed ministers' noses in the future (Hurd, 1979: p. 39).

Heath felt this was necessary to ensure the CPRS was not derailed by short-term expediency. However, in the face of the brewing economic crises of the early 1970s, this largely happened anyway, and the Review Staff was pulled into short-term firefighting work against its will. By 1973, it produced roughly 50 "collective briefs" annually, designed to provide ministers with disinterested information on a range of pressing problems (James, 1986).

The sheer volume of policy advice from a source outside the CRD made it difficult, if not impossible, for the Research Department to focus on generating long-term ideas. This was because the CRD could not produce any statements that might contradict a sitting Conservative government, and any government decision was subject to the interpretation of Heath's think tank. The CPRS thus amplified the challenges of party government from the perspective of party researchers, who found themselves fighting yet another bureaucratic body (on top of the traditional civil service) as they attempted to influence the party's long-term programme. Through the CPRS, the Heath government also began contracting with outside specialists to aid policy development. For instance, in late 1972, it hired the consulting firm McKinsey to help develop its framework on social affairs and seconded McKinsey employees to help produce individual reports (Lewis, 2011). This further weakened the CRD's claim to ideational authority and created a precedent of using outside specialists as legitimate sources of policy ideas. Thus, while the CPRS did not

make much of a long-term impact (it was abolished by Margaret Thatcher in 1983), its formation did weaken the CRD's claim to ideational power.

Beyond this, Heath's consolidation of ideational production in the government saw him expand on the use of SpAds. A product of Wilson's desire to consolidate his authority over Labour's ideational offer (see previous section), SpAds were technically temporary civil servants but were, in fact, political appointees brought in to assist ministers in the explicitly political aspects of their policy work (Kakabadse & Kakabadse, 2020). Beyond yet another replication of the CRD's founding functions, the institutionalisation of SpAds also precipitated a brain drain in the CRD (for instance, see the conclusions of the Hildreth Report: CCO 20/49/11, 1983). To this end, several of the CRD's brightest stars left during the Heath government to become SpAds. As Ramsden catalogues: "Stephen Abbot moved to the Department of Employment to help draft the Industrial Relations Bill, Miles Hudson went into the Foreign Office, and Christopher Patten to the Cabinet Office; Michael Wolff, Douglas Hurd and Brian Reading all went direct to Downing Street, either to the Cabinet Office or to the Prime Minister's personal staff" (1980: p. 286). This created a new pattern of professional advancement for up-and-coming Conservative politicians, and as CRD researchers left to join the ranks of SpAds, the institutional loyalty that shaped the behaviour of a previous generation of CRD alumni was diminished. This was partly because career progression (and thus loyalty) was now tied to the individual minister that a SpAd worked for. More important, however, was the fact that SpAds were technically civil servants, which meant that they were statutorily and culturally expected to keep a professional distance from party political bodies like the Research Department. As Hurd, a CRD staffer-turned-SpAd, put it, "the Official Secrets Act and (far more important) the entrenched habits of Whitehall turn the familiar friend into an occasional acquaintance" (sic) (quoted Ramsden, 1980: p. 287).

As a result of these developments, a chasm opened between Heath and the CRD, "and it was not until the government was fighting for its life at the end of 1973" that anyone attempted to repair the relationship (*Ibid*, p. 288). By the time the CRD's committee work began in earnest, there was not enough time or initiative to produce the ideas necessary

for the Department to perform its traditional pre-election preparations. This proved particularly harmful given the crisis conditions that prevailed in the early 1970s, exactly when the voters were calling out for explanations of why Keynesianism appeared to be failing (Blyth, 2002; Gamble, 1994). The fact that the Labour Party was similarly struggling to provide such answers provided a degree of insulation against the electoral downsides of this separation. The Conservatives lost power only to a minority Labour government in February 1974. This would further deteriorate to a Labour majority government in October of that year, but even then, Wilson could only claim a majority of three. The post-war consensus had run out of steam, but neither party seemed capable of mustering the ideas necessary to convince voters that they had the answers to bring the country forward.

4.8: Building the Labour's Programme 1973: The Leftward Turn of Labour's PCII

By the 1970 election, Wilson's experiment in technocratic economic governance had run aground. Having alienated himself from the unions, the labour left, and even the LPRD, one might have expected Wilson to be less surprised by the humbling defeat into which he led the party in the June election. With this said, it is perhaps fitting that Wilson's misplaced confidence came from expert pollsters whose predictions proved significantly wide of the mark, with a 12.5 percent Labour polling lead evaporated into a seventy-six seat loss. With Edward Heath entering No. 10, alarm bells sounded across Labour's factional divide and would eventually usher in a fundamental shift in the basis of ideational authority in the party. Wilson's experiments in leader-centric policy development were, for the time, deemed to have been a failure, and power over the party programme would return to Labour's PCII — a shift that would occur concomitantly with a sharp leftward turn amongst both the unions and the Constituency Labour Parties. It was this return to party-based ideational authority that would define how the party responded to the crisis of post-war Keynesianism and attempted to renew its ideational offer to British voters (Bell, 2004: Ch. 1). The left would begin what John Gyford has described as a “long march through the institutions and constitution of the Labour Party” (quoted in Minkin, 1992: p. 195). The PCII was to be their primary route of travel, and within three years of Wilson's

first defeat, the party would produce what Tony Benn would dub “its most radical manifesto since 1945” (Quoted in: Wickham-Jones, 1996: p. 53).

The left’s desire to conquer the party’s PCII was apparent as early as the party’s 1970 Conference in Blackpool. As was becoming tradition, the factional battleground along which the left would advance was based on how the party was to interpret the need for nationalisation and what portion of the UK economy should be brought under direct state control. A central organising player in these debates was Ian Mikardo, the long-standing leftist stalwart on the NEC who suddenly found himself surrounded by ideological fellow-travellers having weathered the revisionist storm for nearly two decades (Hatfield, 1978: pp. 23-25). Mikardo would use his position as the Conference Chair to inject a call for an “undiluted socialist programme” in his closing address and would foreshadow the approach to achieving this programme by declaring that “we have picked ourselves off the floor. We have looked around to survey the damage, and we have got the tool kit ready to do the job of rebuilding” (quoted in: Hatfield, 1978: p. 25). Over the next two years, it would become clear that this tool kit to which Mikardo referred was centred primarily on the party’s PCII.

Mikardo’s vision of nationalisation was framed as an attack on Wilson’s technocratic approach to socialism. The problem that Wilson ran into, according to Mikardo’s analysis, was that a technocratic approach to nationalisation was born out of the wrong justifications, focusing on the need to improve the efficiency of critical industries instead of the more fundamental purpose of ensuring social justice. This effectively depoliticised a defining feature of the party programme, leading it down sterile and cyclical debates about whether or not a given industry was efficient enough to warrant nationalisation and distracting from attempts to make the normative case for public ownership. In the first instance, this was ineffective as a communicative use of the idea, as any political effort to make a case for socialism was lost in an endless cycle of charts and economic projections. It also meant that (as the experience of the Wilson government attested to) Labour mostly backed outdated and inefficient industries. While Labour could correctly claim that these were the parts of the economy most in need of remediation, it was a

politically costly approach because it allowed the Conservatives to claim that nationalisation killed efficiency and generated losses. Against this approach, Mikardo called to advance a programme of nationalism justified on explicitly leftwing grounds, arguing for the need to extend “economic democracy as a counterpart to the extension of political democracy, by removing from small groups of largely self-selected directors, who were virtually accountable to nobody, the power to take decisions which affected the welfare of millions of people and transfer that power to ministers who could be called to account for their exercise of it” (quoted in: Hatfield, 1978: p. 27-28). This approach could also be expanded to arguments about equality (ensuring that the gains of capital appreciation could be distributed justly across a community) and on the grounds of public service.

However, if Mikardo provided the necessary political vision to chart a new course for the party’s approach to nationalisation, it was hardly sufficient. Mikardo had been the PLP’s beating heart of socialism for more than two decades and, over this time, had succeeded in gaining little more than the contempt of prominent revisionists. Indeed, it was only after party’s PCII moved towards Mikado’s position that the latter’s vision of nationalisation would find its way into the party programme.

For this, the LPRD was key. Throughout the late 1960s, party researchers had become increasingly concerned with the direction of travel under Wilson. Membership plummeted between 1964 and 1970, falling from 830,000 to 680,000, and along with Wilson’s ‘executivification’ of policy development, there was genuine concern that Labour’s mass party model was under existential threat — and along with it, the Research Department’s place of influence in facilitating the democratic production of ideas. This brought party researchers at Transport House into a natural alliance with left-wing figures in the PLP, who, after years of struggle, were keenly aware that winning rhetorical battles at Conference was not enough to translate their ideas into changes to state policy. Thus, they sought to “pin down a future Labour Government to a specific party programme”, and this meant that “the rhetoric of the ‘sixties had to be replaced by the detailed research of the ‘seventies” (Hatfield, 1978: p. 36).

Fortunately for the left, they had a willing accomplice on this mission at the heart of the party's PCII: Terry Pitt. As with others in the party, Pitt had gone through a gradual leftward shift through the latter 1960s as it became clear to him that the revisionist model of managed capitalism had become untenable. This, combined with the severe deterioration in the Department's relationship with Wilson between 1964 and 1970, meant that Pitt's political inclinations and his interests as the leader of the Research Department were aligned in such a way as to provide a real incentive to break with party leadership. He soon became "the chief internal protagonist for the left" (Batrouni, 2020: p. 22), using his position as Research Secretary to reassert the influence of the LPRD in the party's ideational infrastructure and helping "steer the party on its leftward course" (Hatfield, 1978: 52). Thus, by the time Mikardo was seizing the reins of the 1970 Conference, the LPRD had already been hard at work laying the ideational groundwork for a radical reinterpretation of the party programme. A month after Wilson's defeat, Pitt and other colleagues at Transport House circulated a paper to the NEC stating the Department's intention to move to the left. "Our defeat at the polls," it argued, "means a radical recasting of the research programme now being undertaken by the Home Policy Committee" (quoted in: Hatfield, 1978: p. 36). Pitt would expand on this vision in *Building Socialist Britain*, the party's first post-election policy document, which included a rather scathing critique of why the party had lost the election. In what was seen as a direct indictment of Wilson's reform efforts, the paper accused the party of being inadequately prepared to press for its ideas in office against an intransigent civil service — an accusation which implied that Wilson's efforts to consolidate ideational control over the party programme had failed on its own terms. Because of this, it was argued that it now fell to the NEC and LPRD to redevelop the party programme in such a way that could demonstrate "a strong political will" and thus "prepare ourselves again for the most difficult subjects of government" (quoted in: Hatfield, 1978: p. 38).

As this wording suggests, Pitt would push to combine this leftwing research programme with fundamental reforms in the party's policy formation process to return ideational authority to the PCII and make the LPRD and NEC committees more efficient.

Recognising the threat for what it was, Wilson vehemently resisted pressure to move the party programme leftward, declaring that “there will be no lurches of policy from what we did in Government” (quoted in: Dorey, 2015: p. 56). However, given the multi-front battle that he had to fight against both leftists in the PLP (that is, Mikardo and Benn), the LPRD, a union movement that was sliding steadily leftwards, and the ever-radical CLPs, there was only so much that Wilson could do to hold off a formal reconsideration of the course he had pursued during the previous six years. The following year, Conference would pass a resolution instructing the NEC to develop a policy programme designed to “extend social ownership and control of industry and land by Socialist planning” and to “develop industrial democracy and the role of the trade union movement in industrial, political and economic affairs.” (quoted in: Hatfield, 1978: p. 40).

With the NEC largely supportive and the party back in opposition, Wilson was significantly constrained in his efforts to water the motion down. Thus, the LPRD embarked on a process of policy development, and the authority of the party platform swung back to the party. The “gargantuan task of formulating policies after Conference” (*ibid.*) was duly assigned to the Home Policy Committee. In a relatively short period, several subcommittees focusing on financial and economic affairs, industrial policy, regional and local government, science and education, social policy, and agriculture were established. Consequently, the party's ideological shift to the left began to materialise into substantive policy initiatives (*ibid.*).

Pitt's experience at the heart of Labour's PCII was vital for ensuring that this happened despite continued resistance from the leader's office. In the wake of the 1970 Conference, he would manoeuvre to increase the power of Labour's PCII significantly. Most directly, he successfully pushed to drop the “advisory” label that Shore had put on them in 1964 and ensured that committee output would have a more binding impact on the party platform. He also intervened directly in the day-to-day functioning and debate of the committees by setting the agenda for each committee meeting, preparing background papers and establishing a “programme of work” for each (*ibid.*). Finally, he would influence committee output after the fact by shaping the tone of post-meeting reports, endeavouring

to draft these documents in such a way as to organise the often unfocused discussions into a coherent, left-leaning framework (Batrouni, 2020: ch. 1; Cronin, 2004).

Pitt also used his position as Research Secretary to shape the composition of the sub-committees, handpicking experts and party operatives that he knew would be aligned with the left's priorities (Batrouni, 2020: Ch. 1; Bell, 2004). To this end, he ensured that figures like Richard Pryke (a former LPRD researcher who had departed for academia), Stuart Holland, Judith Hart, Mikardo, and Benn were represented on the key subcommittees — like the Financial and Economic Affairs and Industrial Policy Committees — from which the bulk of the left-wing document Labour's Programme 1973 would emerge. Mikardo, ever the organiser, was a keen conspirator in this regard and worked with Pitt to land a seat on no less than six policy sub-committees, twice as many as any other member of the NEC (Hatfield, 1978: p. 52). It was Holland's inclusion, however, that would prove to be Pitt's most impactful move for reshaping Labour's ideational direction. Holland was an academic economist and former adviser to Wilson who, like Pitt himself, had made the intellectual journey from technocratic revisionism to earnest socialism through the latter 1960s. Holland and Pryke were brought into the Industrial Policy Sub-Committee after the 1971 Conference, where he would immediately make waves by drafting a paper making the case for a state holding company (the 'National Enterprise Board' (NEB)). A second Holland paper on economic planning soon caught the eye of Geoff Bish — an LPRD researcher who would soon replace Pitt as Research Secretary — and Holland was duly drafted in to help on the Industrial Planning Sub-Committee as well (Wickham-Jones, 2013).

Building from this broad base of influence across key policy sub-committees, Holland would then expand on the theoretical grounding for these policies and, in the process, articulate a broad vision of the British political-economic landscape that would guide Labour's thinking for the next decade. In late 1972, he produced a paper for the Industrial Policy Committee that focused on the role of large multinational firms in British capitalism. Holland argued that in each sector of the economy, the tendency towards monopolisation had eroded the competitive dynamics that characterised the Keynesian market economy

of the post-war period. To address this, a properly motivated government would take ownership of critical firms (via Holland's proposed NEB) in each industry to ensure that competitive pressures were reintroduced. By doing this, "A socialist government can harness the market power of its own companies as an instrument for the planned transformation of the economy, both making internal company profits and promoting external social and regional benefits" (quoted in: Wickam-Jones, 2013: p. 127). This also presented a convincing (or at least coherent) explanation for the stagflation crisis (the combination of stagnant growth and inflation) already gripping the economy by 1972. The heart of the problem was not, as Heath was arguing, overpowered trade unions pushing prices through wage demands but rather monopolistic firms that were at once pushing prices up while removing themselves from the need to innovate due to competition. Energised by this new line of thinking, Pitt and Bish soon created a Public Sector Group as a sub-unit of the Industrial Policy Sub-Committee. In April 1973, the Group published an opposition green paper on the NEB that called for a future Labour government to nationalise one profitable company per industry, which would translate into taking twenty to twenty-five of the country's most significant companies into public ownership (*ibid.*; Hatfield, 1978: p.52-53).

Building on this new interpretation of British capitalism and its ills, the LRPD would combine Holland's ideas with similarly radical proposals emerging from the other policy subcommittees to produce Labour's Programme 1973, the most coherent articulation to date of the sharp left turn that had been engineered in the party's PLII. This document was, almost in its entirety, the produce of Labour's PCII, and it reflects the extent to which the left had successfully taken control over the party's policymaking machinery. Thus, in LPRD's 1973 Conference Report, Pitt would report that "the work of the Research Department and the Home Policy Committee has this year been almost entirely devoted to the revision of 'Labour's Programme for Britain'" (LPNEC, LPRD Conference Report, 1973). Tony Benn, who like Pitt had made the journey from Wilsonite to leftist and played an active role on the NEC policy committees, was keen to credit the hard work of the party's policy machinery, saying, "It is a remarkable development of view that we have achieved in three years of hard work" (quoted in *ibid.*). The document made no illusions

about its approach to the party's economic approach, asserting the primacy of "the principles of democracy and Socialism above consideration of privilege and market economies" (Labour Party, 1973). Wickham-Jones places the scale of the change in terms of Hall's model of institutional change, arguing that "with the publication of Labour's Programme 1973, the party had changed not only the settings of its policy instruments and the tools that it deployed (first- and second-order change). It had...shifted the hierarchy of goals to which policy was aligned" (Wickham-Jones, 2013: p. 129). It was, in other words, a fundamental alteration in the programme the party would present to voters, one that would remain more or less consistent until at least 1983 (Wickham-Jones, 1996: p. 77). The left had completed its march through the party's institutions and had taken a commanding position at the heart of the party's ideational infrastructure.

When Labour's Programme was accepted at Conference later that year, "Labour's leftwingers were jubilant at its adoption" (quoted in Wickham-Jones, 1996: p. 1). The party's right — the traditional revisionists — however, were dismayed. Crosland, especially, scorned the NEC policy committees, lamenting publicly that the document had been "written by people who didn't live in the real world" (quoted in Wickham-Jones, 1996: p. 1). At a Fabian Society conference on housing (reflecting the role that the Society continued to play as a venue for factional mudslinging), he launched a broadside of the new policymaking procedures, declaring that "no one can say the party is in sight of reformulating a better set of policies than we had in June 1970, when we were dismissed from office" (quoted in *ibid.*, p. 57). In anticipation of the push towards the think tank movement in the 1980s, he followed this up with a call for a new centre of Labour Party research that could "tap resources such as foundations and trusts which at present were not available to the party's research department at Transport House." Research from this new department could then be sent directly to a small cadre of Shadow Cabinet and NEC members, who would be deputised as a policymaking steering committee. This was a proposal to cut the party's PCII out almost entirely. Pitt and Tom McNally (the secretary of the party's International Department) felt so threatened by Crosland's remarks that they publicly rebuked them in a *Guardian* article, essentially accusing the revisionist grandee of sour grapes. There is probably some truth in this rebuke, for however much criticism

Crosland had of the party's policy machinery, he had made several attempts to join it, trying and failing three times to be elected to the NEC before largely withdrawing from party activity (Hatfield, 1978: p. 45-58).

Despite these protestations, Wilson and the revisionists found themselves fighting against the intellectual current of the rest of the party, which by 1973 had largely been convinced of the left's approach. Here again, responsibility can be traced to Pitt and his efforts to re-establish the coordinating function of the LPRD, pushing to reconnect the party's policy machinery to elements of the broader movement. In conjunction with Callaghan, he worked to strengthen the links between PLP backbench discussion groups and the policy groups, thus providing a more efficient exchange of ideas between the party's executive and its Parliamentary arm (Batrouni, 2020: p. 26). Further, in a move that was explicitly aimed at avoiding the mistakes of the In Place of Strife debacle, each sub-committee had to include subject specialists and representatives with responsibilities in the trade unions and the party's parliamentary wing, ensuring that these bodies could continually provide feedback to the specialists' proposals before they were published in working paper form. The connection with the unions was further reinforced by establishing a special NEC-TUC Liaison committee to integrate union-based research on industrial democracy more directly into the party's offer.

On top of this, Transport House party launched a Participation series in 1969, which (much like the CPC in the Conservative Party) aimed to incorporate the input of party members directly into the process of ideational development on issues deemed particularly important to the party's future direction (LP Conference Report, 1971). This was accompanied by reform to political education efforts, which primarily focused on increased funding for a "Political Education Service" for constituency Political Education Officers (LPNEC, LPRD Conference Report, 1974) — the logic here was that the party's expanded policy output required the party to redouble its efforts to keep its constituency-level machine informed for these changes. These efforts continued throughout the 1970s, with the Home Committee and the LPRD experimenting with several ways of bolstering the participation of the broader movement in the policy formation process. Particular

attention to how to ensure the involvement of party actors based outside of London, where most policy committee meetings were held, by setting up regional versions of different committees, expanding funding for travel reimbursement, and building on already existing trade union networks (LPNEC, LPRD Series 7-1390, 1977). There was even consideration of a total reorganisation of the research bodies at Transport House to facilitate these efforts, which would have seen Pitt become “overload of the research, information and international departments (and thus probably the most powerful official in the party)” (*The Economist*, 1973: pp. 22).

To make matters worse for the party’s right, revisionist thinking could offer few alternatives to a policy approach that had been tried and found wanting. As Heath was learning simultaneously, the spectre of stagflation meant that an economic paradigm based on Keynesian demand management was ill-equipped to deal with the crisis. Thus, while figures on the party’s right could bemoan the retreat of the leading revisionist theorist, they had little to offer by way of alternative at a time when alternatives were desperately needed. With the left in control of the LPRD and the policy committees, they could do little to stop *The Programme* from being accepted as official party policy at the Conference. Once this happened, the party wasted little time publishing *Labour’s First Five Years*, which would form the basis of the next manifesto. It was from this document that the collection of policies that supporters would dub the Alternative Economic Strategy (AES) would emerge (Hatfield, 1978: p. 224-225). The set of ideas amounted to a sweeping refutation of revisionism, which, in addition to a new approach to public ownership, laid out a radical vision in areas of planning, price controls, industrial democracy, and import controls (Wickham-Jones, 1996: p. 53). Thus, when Heath finally buckled under the weight of the grinding economic crisis and called an election for February 1974, the Labour Party went into battle with a reconstituted PCII and the raft of left-wing proposals it produced.

4.9: Wilson’s Return to Power: SpAds and the Party in Public Office

Wilson was at no point enamoured by either the new policy process or the ideas it produced. In fact, according to Hatfield (1978, p. 155), he was “totally hostile” to Labour’s Programme 1973, fearing that the radical turn would undermine the party’s electoral standing. While he had little choice but to accept the input of the PCII, it is unlikely that he ever had any real intention of implementing the policies it developed in the early 1970s. The manifesto, *Let Us Work Together - Labour's Way Out of the Crisis*, was drafted by Pitt with input from Benn and heavily influenced by Holland’s work for the Industrial Policy Sub-Committee. The document ended up being more moderate than Labour’s Programme 1973, a move by Pitt to preempt conflict with the shadow cabinet. He may as well not have made the effort, as it soon became apparent that Wilson and the right-wing members of the shadow cabinet hated the document (Sandbrook, 2011). While this dissent was kept under wraps to show a united front to the electorate, the disdain was made clear behind the scenes (*The Times*, 1974). As Michael Meacher, a left-wing MP, would later recall of the front bench’s approach to the manifesto, “There’s no question now that they never agreed with it, never wanted it and made no attempt to implement it.” Wilson’s biographer would offer a similar assessment, describing the Prime Minister as “ignoring” the manifesto once in power (quoted in: Wickham-Jones, 1996: p. 95).

The two elections in 1974 did little to neutralise the mounting vitriol in the party. The February poll returned a hung parliament (the first since 1929), and after coalition negotiations between Heath and the Liberal Party failed, Wilson returned to power, leading a minority government that lasted for six months before a second election was held on October 10. As we have seen, Labour would secure a majority of three seats at the second time of asking, and these indecisive returns meant neither that the Labour Left could claim that its manifesto was an electoral winner nor that the Labour Right could declare it a loser. It did mean that Wilson could never feel comfortable with his position, and his leadership was defined by a constant apprehension that the party’s radicalism would see him cast out of office. This would only reinforce his instincts to consolidate control over the party’s ideational offer, which he would pursue by expanding on the innovative vigour of his first term in No. 10. Indeed, in many ways, Wilson’s approach to policy ideas during his second Prime Ministership can be understood as a continuation of

the dynamic he began in his first. As in 1964-1970, his 1974 government was defined by a push to consolidate ideational authority amongst the front bench, something he would attempt to do by introducing innovations to his government's policy machinery at the expense of Labour's PCII. However, the two Wilson governments differed in the *explicit* attitude taken towards the party's policy machinery. In 1964-1970, the Wilson government's undermining of the LPRD and NEC policy committees was largely accidental. After 1974, this antagonism was intentional, and the changes that Wilson would pursue were very much designed to insulate the government from the PCII, fearing that the ideas produced by the party would cause Labour to "trip over ideology" and undermine his efforts to govern (Hatfield,, 1978: p. 191).

As Wilson began to take action to isolate the party's left flank by consolidating ideational authority, the tension that had been submerged by the two election efforts once again broke into public view. The flashpoint of this fracture centred on the industrial strategy that the LPRD had made a central feature of the party programme. This became apparent almost immediately after the February election when Benn and Heffer began to draft a white paper, *The Regeneration of British Industry*. This was presented to the government Industrial Development Committee in June, where ministers from the party's right wasted little time in attacking it. Most of the concerns revolved around the NEB, which was said to be given too much power and not enough accountability. However, Wilson, with one eye on the election that everyone knew to be inevitable, was primarily concerned with the electoral implications for the Benn-Heffer paper, calling it "a sloppy and half-baked document, polemical, indeed menacing in tone" (quoted in: Wickham-Jones, 1996: p. 144). He would then redraft the proposal along with key advisers, substantially changing its intent and ambition. Benn and Heffer were horrified by the new draft, the former calling it "absolutely crazy" and accusing Wilson of abandoning the manifesto commitments on which his mandate rested (Hatfield, 1978: p. 239.). Most of the rest of the cabinet, which by now was majority-populated by figures from the Labour Right, sided with Wilson, and *The Regeneration of British Industry* was published in its reduced form.

This was the first in a series of clashes between Benn (representing both the left and party's policy preferences) and Wilson on industrial policy issues. This culminated in a significant shift in the run-up to the October election in which Wilson intervened to take control of the manifesto drafting process in several areas, including industrial policy. As Benn would recall, "Wilson, in the manifesto for October 1974, transformed its contents from being based on the policy of the conference to being based on the decisions of the government in the previous six months. He was able to weaken it substantially" (quoted in *ibid.*, p. 145). Nor did Wilson relent after returning power in the October election. To quote Holland this time, "The dilemma of relying on support from Wilson was later evidenced when, in October 1974, within days of Labour winning the second election that year with a small majority, he declared that the manifesto commitment to a National Enterprise Board as a state holding company would be dropped and substituted by a National Investment bank" (Holland, 2013: p. 115). The Industry Bill, published in early 1975, was drawn substantially from a white paper drafted by Wilson's office with no input from the LPRD or NEC, and a series of frontbench-orchestrated amendments would weaken the document even further.

Wilson's ability to override the party platform on industrial policy was predicated on two important organisational changes in the government's policy formation processes: the use of special advisors (SpAds) and the expansion of government-centred policy organisations such as the Policy Unit (the latter of which will be expanded on below).

As noted above, SpAds had been introduced during Wilson's first government and expanded slightly by Heath, but these early deployments were minimal and primarily aimed at reforming the function of government vis a vis the civil service. In 1974, however, "Wilson formalised and institutionalised the system" (Klein & Lewis, 1977: p. 1), this time motivated both by a desire to push back against the power of Whitehall and to pull ideational influence away from the party machine and the activists that occupied it (Lowe, 2005). Thus, while the number of SpAds never reached more than ten between 1964 and 1970 (Blick, 2006), in the February 1974 government, there were more than 30, and by 1975 this number had grown to 40 (Mitchell, 1978).

The expansion of SpAds as an institution can be understood as part of a search for a source of ideas and expertise that was independent of the party's ideational infrastructure and, thus, that could be trusted to incorporate electoral considerations into policy formation and avoid 'tripping over ideology'. As noted above, SpAds were chosen directly by the minister with whom they would work (with Wilson having the final say over all appointments), meaning that these advisers owed their professional status and loyalty to the front bench as opposed to the party itself. As Klein and Lewis found in a survey of SpAds in 1977, while SpAds could come from a variety of backgrounds, their "first qualification is undivided personal loyalty" to their minister and the government they represent (Klein & Lewis, 1977: p. 3). To this end, SpAds were understood as a source of ideational support — figures who were capable of blending policy and political expertise — whose primary point of reference was their minister's personal career and came to be seen as "the minister's other half" (*ibid.*, p. 5).

It is worth underscoring how significantly this new understanding of the role that Spads should play departed from Shore's understanding of these advisers as the "keepers of the manifesto" in the 1960s. This change reflected both the general technocratic drift of Wilson's economic thinking and his desire to insulate his project from the influence of broader party movement (Hatfield, 1978: p. 41). Indeed, this process of insulation was further facilitated by the 'linking up' role that SpAds' came to play across different government ministries. As Klein and Lewis identified, "Ministers have, special advisers apart, few alternative sources of advice on collective government decisions," and SpAds quickly became an essential part of ensuring that the government could roll out coherent policy ideas across departments in the absence of any coordinating body (such as the LPRD) (Klein & Lewis, 1977: p. 6-7). It is thus hardly surprising that the number of SpAds increased substantially between Wilson's first and second stint in No. 10 -- their number never reached more than ten between 1964 and 1970 (Blick, 2006) but increased to 40 in 1975 (Mitchell, 1978).

The institutionalisation of SpAds had a deleterious effect on the party's PCII, although these effects would take some time to become apparent. For one, Wilson's efforts to create his policy machinery at the governmental level meant that the expanded use of SpAds quickly created a functional overlap between the type of work that we carried out by advisers and that which was undertaken by the LPRD. For instance, Wilson would describe the function of SpAds to other Commonwealth Heads of Government as primarily focused on the kind of ideational aggregation and long-term thinking that would have traditionally been the domain of the LPRD. To this end, SpAds collectively were to function:

As a seive, examining papers for politically-sensitive or other important problems; as a deviller, chasing ministers' requests or instructions; as a thinker on medium and long-term planning...as a pressure group contact man; and as a speech writer (Mitchell, 1978: p. 87).

This was explicitly separate from the party's research capacities, and indeed, SpAds were also tasked with "keeping in touch with the party's own research department" (*ibid.*), which was relegated to just another voice among many as opposed to the body responsible for formalising and articulating the ideas of the broader movement. Even this was likely a euphemism that obscured another important role for the SpAds — keeping an eye on the left. To this end, "keeping in touch" with the LPRD was likely as much about protecting Wilson from unwanted surprises from Transport House as it was about a genuine consultation with the Labour's PCII. In a similar vein, SpAds from the leader's office were also frequently seconded to ministries headed by those left-wing MPs who Wilson felt he could not omit from the front bench due to the balance of power in the NEC. This primarily meant Benn, who was allowed to return to his post at the Department for Industry, but only on the grounds that he accepted a member of Wilson's newly formed Policy Unit, Richard Graham, as one of his SpAds (Wickham-Jones, 1996: p.143-153).

Another critical change that drove the institutionalisation of the special advisers was a series of reforms aimed at expanding opposition parties' access to these figures (Lowe, 2005; Blick, 2003) – and these reforms are especially important given their indirect effect

on party research departments. The idea to provide opposition front benches first emerged in the early 1970s when funding from the Rowntree Social Service Trust allowed the (then) opposition Labour Party to recruit several advisers on a fellowship basis, and many of these “Chocolate Soldiers” would go on to become SpAds when Wilson returned to power (Yong & Hazell, 2014: p. 18). Funding for opposition advisers would be formalised in 1974 with the advent of taxpayer-funded Short Money (named after Labour MP Edward Short, at the time the Deputy Leader of the Party and Leader of the House of Commons). The idea behind Short Money, quite clearly, was to extend the use of SpAds to the opposition front benches, and while it is unclear whether the advent of Short Money was explicitly aimed at weakening party-based research departments, it certainly had an effect.⁶ This is because it effectively created a new professional field of party advice by providing a stable career trajectory and better pay to the highly unpredictable career of young partisan researchers who previously would have likely worked in either party or union research departments. Soon, employment as a SpAd became seen as an essential CV-bolstering stop for the career trajectories of ambitious politicians, catalysing a ‘brain drain’ effect in the LPRD. This is best illustrated by Terry Pitt himself, who left his post as the party’s Research Secretary to become a SpAd for Short in 1974 — although he lasted only six months in the role before resigning in frustration (Hatfield, 1978: 190).

The impact of this dynamic was not immediate. The LPRD continued to employ skilled and left-wing researchers through the mid-1980s. Pitt, for instance, would be replaced by Bish, who proved at least as capable and ideologically resolute as his predecessor. Further, while low pay would continue to make recruitment a challenge, this was not necessarily more of a challenge than it had been throughout the Department’s history. Indeed, there was an unspoken expectation that party researchers would be willing to replace material security for ideological commitment, and as long as the LPRD was understood to be a central proponent of the AES, a steady stream of young left-leaning intellectuals were willing to make this trade-off.

⁶ Today, opposition advisors are known as ‘Political Advisers’ or ‘PAds’

However, the recruitment impact of the emergence of SpAds did become an important dynamic in the party's ideational infrastructure over the medium term. This was because the institutionalisation of advisors attached to individual MPs and the funding to keep these roles when the party returned to opposition meant that the LPRD's ability to resume the role of the 'opposition's civil service' was made more difficult by the lack of availability of former government irregulars looking for policy work with the party. To this end, the emergent professional field of the government adviser (that is, the ability for aspiring politicians to work as a SpAd/PAd) meant that these could reasonably expect to continue advising their ministers even if the party was thrown out of office. There was no need to return to underpaid party-based research when in opposition — and indeed, the Research Department came to be seen as a relatively undesirable post. In a similar vein, it also made it much more difficult to recruit staff from academia to NEC policy committees, as it soon became commonplace for 'university dons' to accept secondments to work as SpAds in both parties — a dynamic perhaps best exemplified by Holland's departure to work as a SpAd, first for Judith Hart and second for Tony Benn (Holland, 2013). Thus, as had been the case during the first Wilson government (albeit at a lesser intensity), establishing this new career trajectory for ambitious party operatives immediately put pressure on the LPRD's ability to recruit and retain researchers (Lowe, 2005).

The consequence, intended or otherwise, of the emergence of SpAds was the degradation of the party researcher's influence over the ideas that made up the party programme. To this end, we must caveat the insights of executive studies researchers who identify the role of SpAds as allowing for partisan advice to ministers in the executive branch of government (Shaw & Eichbaum, 2018). While this is certainly true in the sense that the SpAds are concerned with providing political or ideological support to ministers compared to the civil service, this advice is not necessarily 'partisan' in the sense that it was derived from party organisations and movements these organisations helped to structure. Instead, the 'partisan' nature of SpAds/PAds can be more accurately described as a reflection of the perspective of party leadership, as understood as something qualitatively distinct from the collective wisdom of the party as a larger democratic institutions.

4.10: Leader-Centric Ideational Infrastructure, redux

Wilson's expansion and institutionalisation of SpAds occurred concomitantly with two expansions of previously developed organisational innovations to the organisational determinants of government policy development — the formation of the Central Policy Review Staff (CPRS) and the No. 10 Policy Unit (PU).

As noted above, the CPRS was proposed in the latter stages of Wilson's first stint as Prime Minister, but was not implemented until Heath took power. It aimed to introduce an element of scientific proceduralism into government policymaking and was thus held out as an explicitly non-partisan and even non-political body. As the collapse of the post-war consensus accelerated, however, this technocratic neutrality became increasingly difficult to maintain, and the CPRS found itself either pulled into political firefights or (if it refused to be drawn into such conflicts) simply ignored. This dynamic would only become more difficult for the CPRS when Wilson returned to power in 1974. During this period the CPRS found itself caught in the crossfire between Transport House and the leader's office, frequently attacked by the party's left as yet another instrument of Wilson's betrayal of the manifesto and from ministers as a pedantic drain on time that would be better utilised fighting the economic crisis (Rogers, 2009: pp. 100-102).

This translated into ministers showing either apathy or antipathy towards the CPRS, depending on the perceived importance of the issue under discussion. Topics of long-term technical importance were deprioritised (and largely ignored) while more 'live' political matters were subject to intense political polarisation that made it almost impossible for the CPRS to provide disinterested advice without being attacked from both flanks (Benn was a particularly vociferous opponent of the CPRS). Thus:

After 1974, economic crisis, the dominance of political expediency, political polarization and the decline of Cabinet collectivity progressively eroded the Staff's central role. Labour ministers, half-suspicious of Mr. Heath's magical think-tank, and

half-disappointed that it failed to conjure up brilliant solutions, ignored it, and then complained that it was ineffective (James, 1986: p. 431).

However, what most significantly damaged the CPRS's standing was a competing base of ideas that emerged from within the government's policy machinery, one that was far more suited to the politicised nature of post-crisis politics: The Number Ten Policy Unit (PU).

The formation of the PU in 1974 primarily reflects Wilson's turn away from the kind of disinterested, scientific advice that CPRS was designed to produce (and which animated his thinking during the 1964-1970 period). It had its antecedents in the group of advisers that would join Number Ten to work with Balogh after 1964 and came to be known colloquially as 'Balogh's Unit'. It was thus closely associated with the 'SpAd revolution' in the party policy development (Graham, 1996) and similarly drew its funding from public sources and functioned as a temporary body of civil service (Donoghue, 2006: p. 110). Its primary focus was on issues related to economic policy and response to the crises of the 1970s, a focus which immediately concerned Rothschild, who feared that the PU was meant to replace his CPRS (Willetts, 1987). Indeed, Bernard Donoghue, a SpAd and polling specialist who would be put in charge of setting up the PU, would expend significant energy through 1974, placating Rothschild's concerns that this would be the case (Donoghue, 2006: Ch. 2). This was, of course, more or less exactly what happened, as the functional overlap of the two organisations made it unlikely that there would be enough ministerial engagement to keep both of them relevant. It should be said, however, that this was unlikely a wilful misdirection on Donoghue's part. The PU was founded with the specific aim of advancing policies that aligned with the political interests of the government (and, more specifically, Wilson), which was contrasted explicitly with those of the party and the civil service (Donoghue, 1996). Thus, it was designed to concentrate ideational authority in No. 10, which, in theory, was not incompatible with the CPRS' purely scientific approach to policy.

The problem that Donoghue's attempt to assuage Rothschild failed to account for, however, was that as part of the government's policy infrastructure, the CPRS was entirely

beholden to the prime minister to exercise influence — and Wilson had become altogether uninterested in any policy that did not speak directly to his immediate political circumstances. As Donoughue would later recall, “[Wilson] is only sporadically interested in policy — and then mainly for its political implications, electoral or inner-party” (Donoughue, 2006: p. 121). Indeed, it would soon become clear that Wilson and his allies on the Labour front bench were uninterested in having their “noses rubbed in the future” (James, 1986). The embattled Labour leader felt he needed new ideas as a matter of political expediency and thus had little patience for the wonkish purposefulness of the CPRS. In the Policy Unit, he had a loyal base of expertise that could provide the government with the ideational ammunition he felt he needed to respond to the shifting landscape of British politics amid the stagflation crisis. Thus, in the prime minister’s attention economy, the CPRS would quickly lose out, persisting in the background until it was closed down early in Margaret Thatcher’s time in government (James, 1986).

The conflict between PU and the LPRD, on the other hand, was more directly fractious. This antagonism was led by Donoughue, who was far less concerned with appeasing the party’s research secretaries (first Pitt and then Bish) than he was with Rothschild (Donoughue, 2006: Ch. 2). Wilson was in a political fight with his own party, having been convinced that the survival of his government relied on stripping away the radical image that was associated with Labour’s Programme, and Donoughue, playing the role of the loyal SpAd, was to become a leading general in this struggle via his foundational role at the head of the PU. He would recall that “Wilson wanted the Downing Street policy unit to work on popular policy ideas that would contrast those Labour had developed out of office”, and he worked to ensure that this was possible by setting up the PU with the explicit aim of isolating the LPRD (Wickham-Jones, 1996: p. 96). Thus, the PU was— at least in part— developed to insulate the prime minister from the party manifesto that delivered him to power. It was, as Donoughue would recall, “primarily an instrument for the prime minister’s power” (Donoughue, 1996: p. 115), and it would soon constitute a separate source of ideas for the party leader that was purposely crafted to be separate from that of the party. This was especially important with regard to Wilson’s (and later Callaghan’s) incomes policy, which, according to Donoughue, “was an area where the

Policy Unit's intervention actually changed the nature of a major British policy area" (*ibid.*). As we will see, this would have major implications for Labour's relationship with the unions and, perhaps more significantly, for the public's perception of its relationship with the unions.

It also further enraged the left, which was quick to pick up on the fact that their hard-won climb through the PCII was being circumvented, a process that they claimed (not without reason) amounted to an effort to sideline the party's democratic policy formation process. As Bennite MP Brian Sedgemore would claim, Wilson had "systemically worked for [the AES'] destruction" with the PU central to these efforts (quoted in Wickham-Jones, 1996: p. 157). Castle, Benn, and Holland would all record similar sentiments. The rift would only intensify after Wilson sacked Benn as Secretary of State for Industry and radically altered Labour's approach to industrial policy, primarily to respond to the concerns of the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) — which, the left claimed, had been able to influence the Wilson government through the network of SpAds that have emerged around the leader's office (Hatfield, 1978: 248-251). These tensions would likely have been manageable had it not been for the government's inability to address the country's mounting economic problems, which in turn only reinforced Wilson's electoral insecurities and the left's ambitions for its radical programme.

Despite initial hopes to the contrary, relations would deteriorate further when Callaghan replaced Wilson as leader and prime minister in early 1976. While Wilson had unofficially endorsed Callaghan as his heir apparent, Callaghan had campaigned and won as a unity candidate, inspiring some hope in the party that he might cool factional tensions and reengage with the party's programme. These hopes were short-lived, however, as it soon became apparent that Prime Minister Callaghan would represent a continuity in Wilson's opposition to the AES and with his desire to consolidate ideational authority in the front bench at the expense of the PCII. He was absent during the drafting of the party's new policy programme, *Labour's Programme 1976*, and would openly contradict the document less than a week after the Conference had endorsed it. It soon became clear that the Labour Party's ideational insight would have even less impact on a Callaghan-

led Labour Government than it had during Wilson's leadership. As Wickham-Jones puts it, "Ministers resolutely refused to accept the arguments developed in Labour documents — including those from the Liaison Committee to which they were a party" (Wickham-Jones, 1996: p. 150-157). Predictably, this further inflamed tensions between the frontbench and the NEC, and by 1977, the LPRD was openly criticising the government's positions on key elements of economic policy. As a June 1979 Research Department paper would reflect, Callaghan's time as leader was one in which "The government displayed little serious interest in the policy-making effort of the NEC and the party except, that is, on occasion to repudiate publicly certain of the proposals put forward" (Quoted in *ibid.*).

Thus, heading into the 1979 election, Labour's ideational infrastructure was defined by a bifurcation. The left-controlled PCII, centred on the LPRD, produced one set of markedly left-wing party policy documents, and a small group of SpAds, centred on the PU, produced an alternative set of proposals for the Labour government. This ideational schizophrenia not only made it difficult for the party to broadcast a coherent message to the electorate but also raised serious questions about the state of internal party democracy. If the party's ideational infrastructure was structured around securing internal democratic assent for party policy (via Conference sovereignty), then the formation of a parallel process of policy production around the leader's office that was explicitly aimed at sidestepping this infrastructure gave the impression that Labour ministers had turned their backs on the broader party movement.

This came to a head when it came time to draft the manifesto. The LPRD and the policy committees had been hard at work for more than two years to produce a document that could integrate a defence of the government's record with the radical policy vision of the left. In April of 1979, the party Conference passed a proposal to use the documents produced as the basis for the manifesto. However, Callaghan overruled this motion, deciding instead that the manifesto would be drafted by two SpAds, Tom McNally and David Lipsey, who subsequently produced a decidedly less radical document (Lipsey, 2012). The left was furious with move, with Bish calling it "appalling" in that it dismissed

“entire chapters of party policy, it over-turned and ignored many of the agreements which had been laboriously hammered out in the NEC/cabinet working group” (quoted in Wickham-Jones, 1996: p. 161).

As had been the case during Wilson’s leadership, these tensions might have been easier to dismiss had it not been that the government’s economic policies were perceived to be failing to address the country’s mounting economic problems. The Callaghan government persisted with Wilsonian-style revisionism that sought to support corporate profits to stimulate investment. The demonstrable failure of these policies to address the simultaneous plagues of inflation and unemployment undercut the Labour Right’s continued attacks on the AES as potentially economically damaging. As the LPRD would recall of the “very real divergence” between its policy proposals and the policies that emerged out of the Labour government, “the government seems willing to see a return to the relatively high profits (and especially retained profits) to encourage investment. This seems to run very much against party thinking” (*ibid.*). The economic institutions that revisionists on the Labour Right had helped to build were misfiring, and they seemed to have few other ideas about how to address what would soon be recognised as a systemic crisis. Much to the chagrin of their left-wing counterparts, however, they refused to countenance the new ideas proposed by the party’s PCII (Castle, 1980).

4.11: PCII and the Winter of Discontent

Despite this protracted economic destabilisation and the breakdown in the relationship between the Labour government and the PCII that had helped deliver it to power, Callaghan could have reasonably argued that his approach was working as an electoral strategy. Opinion polls in December 1978 showed the two main parties in a dead heat, as had been the case for most of the decade. Given the economic headwinds, this was seen as something of an accomplishment for an incumbent government. By the end of January 1979, however, the Conservatives held an 18-point lead in the polls, thanks primarily to an intense wave of strike action immortalised in the British political memory as the ‘Winter of Discontent’ (Hay, 1996). The conflict would doom the Callaghan government, which

limped on until March before succumbing to a vote of no confidence in the Commons. Labour would be defeated in early May by Margaret Thatcher's Conservative party, a loss which would make the beginning of 18 years in opposition.

A full discussion of the Winter of Discontent is beyond the scope of our interests here. What is relevant, however, is to understand how the breakdown of Labour's PCII contributed both to the series of miscalculations that Callaghan would take in the run-up to the 1979 election and to the dissolution of the party's image as the best option for negotiating with the country's unions. Indeed, the breakdown in relations with the unions was arguably the most important consequence of Labour's bifurcated ideational infrastructure. As noted above, the In Place of Strife debacle and Wilson's subsequent defeat in 1970 catalysed efforts by the LPRD to reinforce the relationship between the TUC and the party's ideational infrastructure. The result was the reformation of the TUC-NEC Liaison Committees, which constituted a tri-lateral policy committee (made up of the TUC, NEC, and the shadow front bench), which worked to establish an industrial relations platform that could reunite the party and union movement. Thanks to these efforts, the unions significantly influenced the manifesto's pledges on industrial relations and industrial democracy (see, for instance: Labour Party Conference Report, 1974), with the famous 'Social Contract' emerging from this committee between 1972 and 1974.

The Contract was meant to replace Heath's hated Industrial Relations Act — which imposed mandatory wage restraints as a means of dampening inflation — with a combined series of price controls (most importantly rent controls and food subsidies) and voluntary wage restraint policies, the latter of which were to be agreed upon with the TUC (Cruddas, 2024: p. 135; Hay, 2009). These agreements were critical for Wilson's return to power in 1974 when the Heath government had been brought to its knees by the Miner's Strike in 1974 after imposing a three-day week to conserve energy. With the Social Contract in hand, Wilson could convincingly argue that the Labour Party was uniquely capable of working productively with the unions. As Colin Hay puts it: "that Labour was returned to office in 1974 (twice, as it happens) was almost entirely down to its perceived capacity to work with the unions in a way that the Conservatives had long

since demonstrated they were unable to do” (Hay, 2009: p. 545-546). However, as with the nationalisation issue, Wilson’s fidelity to the Social Contract would prove elusive once he transitioned from party leader to Prime Minister. Heath’s hard wage restraints were duly withdrawn in July 1974; however, by August 1975, in the face of nearly 27 percent inflation and a potential run on Sterling, the government’s commitment to voluntary wage restraint was jettisoned. British corporatism was “dead on arrival”, and in its place, a £6 wage ceiling was imposed (Cruddas, 2024: p. 135) after intervention by the Treasury with consultation from Policy Unit (Rogers, 2010; Donoghue, 1996).

Callaghan’s rise to No. 10 after Wilson’s surprise resignation the following Spring did little to improve the situation, and it soon became clear that the Labour Party had become alienated from the union movement which had birthed it. We should be careful not to overstate the claim here – a this is not to say that relations became openly hostile or that communication between party and unions had ceased. There was a fairly high degree of coordination between the party’s PCII and the unions via the regular meeting of the NEC-TUC Liaison Committee, and once the Social Contract was established, the Liaison Committee would continue to meet periodically (although irregularly) to assess emerging challenges in industrial relations and issue shared declarations of priority. Moreover, the recurrent deterioration of Sterling’s position in foreign exchange markets saw union leaders soften their opposition to non-voluntary income policies at various points through the latter half of the 1970s in order to give Callaghan more room for manoeuvre (Wickham-Jones, 1996: p. 150).

However, Callaghan’s time as Prime Minister was marked by the steady decline in any understanding of the ‘situation on the ground’ in the union movement, a product, there at least in part, of the deteriorating relationship between the party leader and Transport House. The LPRD’s role as ‘lead negotiator’ during Social Contract discussions put it in a natural alliance with the unions as the latter moved to the left and Labour Prime Ministers proved unfaithful to the terms of the negotiations. Beyond this, the TUC had endorsed elements of the AES through the late 1970s, meaning that while union leaders could sympathise with the government’s position, they would have been hard-pressed to

go along with Callaghan and Healey (then the Chancellor of the Exchequer) as they publicly repudiated the party's policy outputs. Even when union leaders were sympathetic to the economic constraints facing Labour governments (there was real concern in the TUC that although unions were not happy about some government decisions, criticism should be tempered to avoid harming Labour's electoral chances), they were also careful not to agree to anything on voluntary wage restraint that they could not realistically deliver (*ibid.*). Union bosses were well aware that since at least 1970, the movement had been characterised by a process of decentralisation in which authority over industrial bargaining had moved significantly to the shop floor at the expense of national executives (Gourevitch, 198,6). Given that TUC-NEC Liaison meetings were very much the domain of the national-level union representatives, the extent to which union bosses could credibly commit to the policy commitments was doubtful given that they had a significantly diminished capacity to sanction unauthorised industrial action relative to previous decades. Thus, while union leaders were concerned about avoiding clashing with Labour ministers, they also could offer little by way of active partnership in the Labour government's desperate attempts to revitalise corporatist industrial relations (Dorfman, 1983).

Given this, it is likely that the dysfunctional relationship between Callaghan and Labour's PCII made the Prime Minister less aware of the danger lurking in the union movement's radical grassroots or the broader political implications that a public breakdown in the relationship between Labour and the unions might auger. This, in turn, contributed to a series of strategic blunders, most prominently his mistaken belief that he could wait out the winter of 1978 before calling an election. When widespread strike activity broke out in December, Callaghan was not only caught off guard but was unable to effectively counter the narrative emanating from Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Party that "Britain was under siege" abandoned by a Prime Minister who had unable to control the unions and, worse yet, had the temerity for going on holiday while "bodies remained unburied" (Hay, 1996).

Indeed, as Hay convincingly argues, the Winter of Discontent is largely an example of crisis-narrative construction. Contrary to popular myth, the Winter of Discontent was not borne from the overweening power of the trade unions to bring the British government to heel (*ibid*). Nor, in fact, was it all that much of a ‘crisis’ in the sense of a drawn-out period of chaos. While the bins were not collected for a few weeks, the period of industrial action was resolved relatively quickly. Instead, the Winter of Discontent reflects the ability of Margaret Thatcher’s Conservative Party to articulate the period of unrest of a crisis and, just as importantly, the inability of Callaghan to defuse this narrative. As we will see, Thatcher and her allies had spent the latter years of the 1970s hard at work redeveloping the Conservative Party’s ideational infrastructure in such a way as to be especially adroit at influencing the ‘climate of public opinion.’ Moreover, led by figures like John Hoskyns, this reformed ideational infrastructure proved highly adept at producing a narrative economic decline that placed the trade unions at the centre of the country’s long-run economic malaise and disseminating the message through contacts in the media and with cutting-edge public relations techniques (Hoskyns, 2000: pp. 2-3). Whether or not this narrative was ‘true’ or simply constructed, it was, without a doubt, effective at influencing how British voters understood the country’s economic challenges (Shepherd, 2016: Ch. 8). This, combined with the Labour government’s demonstrable lack of understanding of the local dynamics of the union movement it was supposed to be able to influence meant that Callaghan’s attempts to diffuse the sense of crisis — “I don’t think other people in the world would share the view [that] there is mounting chaos” (BBC, 2005) — only succeeded in making him seem more ignorant of the conditions facing the country.

Labour’s ability to claim a special relationship with the unions, the defining feature of their appeal to voters in 1974, was shattered. Unsurprisingly, they could do little to stand up as Margaret Thatcher, buoyed by a new Conservative approach to the development and articulation of ideas, was swept to power in 1979.

4.12: Labour in the 1980s: Party Democracy and Left's Ideational Domination

Unlike defeats in the past, the 1979 loss did not catalyse a reconsideration of the party's ideas or the processes by which it developed them. Instead, more than a decade of mounting tensions between the party's left and right flanks — tensions that centred on control of key organisations that made up the party's ideational infrastructure— gave way to a degree of internal strife not seen since the 1930s. It was, as Peter Shore would recall, “an orgy of venomous recrimination” (quoted in Wickham-Jones, 1996: p. 159). The experience of the 1979 manifesto drafting became a lightning rod for the party's left, and the battle lines of this new conflict emerged around the new ideational authority that both Wilson and Callaghan had sought to consolidate in the leader's office. The former Labour leaders had sought to isolate themselves from a left-controlled PCII in the name of political expediency, and these efforts had failed on their own terms. Now the left, which had strengthened its hold on the party's internal ideational machinery, began a new campaign to reassert the constitutional authority over the ideas of a future Labour government. Benn would explicate the motivation for this movement clearly when he complained at party Conference in 1980:

I have seen policies develop in the sub-committees, come to the executive, go to the unions for consultation, be discussed at Liaison committee, be endorsed [by Conference]; then I have seen them cast aside in secret by those who are not accountable to this movement (Labour Party Conference Report, 1980).

Benn's complaints were not without basis. The NEC-Cabinet Working Group on the Manifesto had met on an almost weekly basis in the first three months of 1979 in the run-up to the election, only to have these efforts sidelined at the last minute by the leader's office (LPNEC, LPRD Conference Report, 1979: p. 61). The left had finally managed to capture the party's ideational infrastructure, and now it demanded that the ideas it produced with it would be used to craft policy for a future Labour government. For the remainder of Margaret Thatcher's first government, the Labour Party would be consumed

by the left's struggle to ensure party leadership could never ignore the party's policies again — and the right's struggle to retain any influence over party ideas whatsoever.

The left's efforts in this regard were embodied in the work of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD). The CLPD was formed in 1973 by a group of grassroots activists and about ten MPs to check the consolidation of power in the leader's office that Wilson had initiated during his first period in power (Avril, 2015: p. 174). After 1979, the CLPD intensified its efforts to reform the distribution of ideational authority in the party by explicitly linking these efforts to a defence of the AES and the PCII that had produced it. As Frank Allaun, a left-wing MP and founding member of the CLPD, would argue, "We had a fine programme which was not carried out. Our job now is to find a way of so democratising the movement that the parliamentary leaders implement the decisions" of the broader movement as articulated by Conference (quoted in Wickham-Jones, 1996: p. 159). The CLPD focused its efforts on three primary demands: an amendment to Clause V of the party's constitution that would give exclusive control over manifesto drafting to the NEC, mandatory reselection of MPs from election to election, and reforms to the process of leader selection (Wickham-Jones, 1996: p. 161-163). The LPRD played a key role in coordinating these efforts, drafting a series of discussion papers around each issue following the election defeat (LPNEC, LPRD Conference Report, 1979, p. 61). In July 1979, the NEC formally agreed to address these issues and decided it alone should control the manifesto content. Callaghan (still the party leader at the time), deeply resented this decision, labelling it as a 'deplorable' attempt to ram through sweeping changes to party authority without consultation with the PLP or the broader movement (Wickham-Jones, 1996, p. 162).

Given Callaghan's own perceived transgressions against party democracy, he found little sympathy for this line of argumentation at the 1979 party Conference. Indeed, the proceedings were dominated by invectives against the embattled Leader of the Opposition from both party activists and trade unionists who believed that he had betrayed the movement's collectively agreed-upon policy course and, worse yet, lost power in the process. Ron Hayward, the party's General Secretary, even went so far as

to suggest that the Winter of Discontent had resulted from the leadership's failure to engage with Labour's PCII: "Why was there a winter of discontent? The reason was that, for good or ill, the cabinet, supported by MPs, ignored Congress and the conference decisions" (Labour Party Conference Report, 1979). Although this accusation may have been somewhat unfair— as we have seen Callaghan's primary mistake before the strike wave was more about misreading the mood of the unions and the nation rather than a failure to engage with the TUC leadership—adherents to Labour's traditional policy development processes were in no mood to give Callaghan any reprieve. Riding the wave of discontent, the left successfully pushed through two of their three proposed changes: mandatory reselection of MPs and NEC control over the manifesto (although the latter decision was later reversed). The following year, the Conference voted to establish the third, a new electoral college for selecting the party leader, removing this power from the PLP.

His position no longer tenable, Callaghan resigned shortly after to be replaced by Michael Foot, a nominal leftwinger who had moved towards the party's centre over the course of the Wilson and Callaghan governments and thus represented yet another attempt to find a leader that could bring some measure of unity to the beleaguered party. In the end, however, his rise to power could more accurately be described as a 'worst of both worlds' move that failed to win the support of either the Labour Left or Right. On the Left, Foot lacked a close relationship with either Benn (now the Left's undisputed thought leader) and had largely failed to develop a strong presence in the party's PCII after having only limited engagement with the NEC policy committees (Labour Party Conference Report, 1979). On the right, Foot's ascent to the leadership — at the expense of former Chancellor Denis Healey, the right-leaning favourite for the position—proved to be yet more confirmation that they would be locked out of the institutions of influence within the party. This came to a head when, in March 1981, four high-profile right-wingers (Roy Jenkins, David Owen, Bill Rodgers, and Shirley Williams) issued the Limehouse Declaration and defected from Labour to form the Social Democratic Party (SDP) (Chamberlain et al., 2021). By October of that year, 31 Labour MPs had resigned the whip to join the SDP.

This defection on the right only strengthened the leftward tilt among remaining Labour operatives, and by 1981, it can be argued that the Left had taken near-hegemonic control of the party's PCII. Further, learning lessons from the 1979 experience Bish was quick to use his influence to both reinforce the left's relationship with the unions (and their decisive Conference block vote) and to increase the role of the LPRD in shaping the composition of the NEC policy committees. By 1983, the LPRD's influence became so great that Sam McCluskie (the party chair) would bemoan that "the impact of the research department was so overpowering that one could not even criticise drafts without the criticism being taken as personal" (LPNEC, LPRD Conference Report, 1983).

There were even efforts to change the manifesto drafting process to ensure that the party leader could not exert undue influence on the ideas that the party presented to voters. The most notable effort in this regard was the 'draft manifesto' plan. Initially conceived of by Benn, the idea behind this plan was to produce a draft manifesto on an annual basis to ensure documentation of the latest party thinking "would always be available and it would not be possible for a leader to railroad his or her own version through as short notice" (Wickham-Jones, 1996: p. 170). This proposal was duly supported by the Home Policy Committee and the LPRD, with Bish particularly enthusiastic about the idea, saying, "The draft manifesto...should become the focus for all serious policy-making in the party, and it would provide a firm basis of the work of the next Labour government" (quoted in *ibid.*). Needless to say, the PLP and shadow cabinet were horrified by the proposal. The idea would eventually wither on the vine after Conference overturned its decision to give the NEC exclusive control over the manifesto. However, the fact that the proposal was even considered reflects the extent to which the Labour Left controlled the party's ideas in the early 1980s.

This influence persisted even as the composition of the NEC began to turn against the Left after 1981. Indeed, somewhat surprisingly, given the recent SDP defection, 1982 saw the balance of power in NEC slowly begin to shift away from the Left. The number of rightwingers on the NEC steadily increased, and by the end of the year, Benn had been

replaced as the chair of the Home Policy Committee and Denis Healey began to manoeuvre to reassert the Shadow Cabinet's control over the party policy (Panitch & Leys, 1997; Wickham-Jones, 1996: p. 162-163). Despite this, however, the left's reinforced position in key hard points in the PCII meant that it ultimately retained control of Labour's ideas. As Wickham-Jones argues, "the continuity in Labour's economic proposals after the NEC had decisively shifted to the right is indicative of the persistent influence of the party's policy-making committees and of its research department officials such as Geoff Bish. As during 1972-1974, these bodies continued to be a key determinant of the content of economic policy" (Wickham-Jones, 1996: p. 171). To this end, the Home Policy and Liaison Committees, along with Bish and his colleagues at the LPRD, produced a number of decidedly left-wing policy documents. As a result, during each of the party's conferences between 1979 and 1983, a series of resolutions, often moved and seconded by senior trade unionists, endorsed the updated version of the AES (*ibid.*). These efforts would culminate in the 279-page Labour's Programme 1982, which formed the basis of the 1983 manifesto *New Hope of Britain* (Batrouni, 2020; Shaw, 1994).

The manifesto, famously dubbed the "longest suicide note in history" by right-wing Labour MP Gerald Kaufman, clearly articulated the left's desire to break with the Keynesian past to make for more avowedly socialist horizons. The problem was that the bulk of the PLP was decidedly unconvinced of this approach. Thus, the bifurcated nature of the party's ideational infrastructure persisted even though Foot, as leader, would be far less antagonistic to the party's approach than his predecessors. The end result, as Bish would complain, was twofold. The first was the persistence of a policy process defined by two separate — and often antagonistic centres responsible for policy development, the NEC and leading figures in the PLP. This, understandably, "caused confusion, lack of mutual commitment and distrust" and made it exceedingly difficult for voters to understand the party's policy platform (LPNEC, LPRD, *The Future of Policy Development*, 1983). Relatedly, because the party did not trust the parliamentary leadership to remain faithful to its ideas once in power, the policy documents that were produced in the run-up to the election (including the manifesto) were overburdened by a convoluted series of highly detailed proposals and binding commitments meant to tie the hands of a future Labour

government (*Ibid.*). This further inhibited the communicative impact of Labour's ideas and reinforced an insularity in a policy development process in which voters were rarely considered (Shaw, 1994: p. 109-110).

Thus, with the unions onside (mostly) and a pliant Foot in the leader's office, the Labour Left finally captured the policy process and presented voters with a thoroughly left-wing manifesto. They had successfully driven a response to the crises of the 1970s that would radicalise the party's programme by capturing, and indeed reinforcing, the party-centric ideational infrastructure of the post-war period. However, the scars of the internecine battles between the NEC and the PLP that defined the 1970s made this victory a pyrrhic one. To ensure that they would not be betrayed when the party returned to power, they produced a manifesto incoherent to the voters they needed to convince if the party would win power in the first place. In the face of competition with a Conservative Party that was in the process of revolutionising the role of political communications in the battle of ideas, this would prove fatal, with the party suffering one of the worst defeats in its history in 1983 after claiming less than 28 percent of the vote. Benn lost his seat, and Foot resigned almost immediately (Batrouni, 2020). The exact cause of the defeat, as with most points of Labour Party history, is the subject of intense debate. While it is certainly the case that the presence of the SDP, which nearly replaced Labour as the second party in parliament, severely damaged Labour's electoral standing in the country's first-past-the-post electoral system, the intensity of feeling around Labour's factional divide was such that most of the opprobrium for the defeat was placed at the feet of the Left's manifesto (Minkin, 2014: p. 52).

It would be the last time the Labour Left would wield such a degree of power in the party until Jeremy Corbyn's leadership started in 2015. It would also spell the end of Labour's PCII as the primary source of party ideas. Indeed, as with the rise of the Left through the 1970s, the party's ideational infrastructure would be a central battleground for the fightback of the Labour Right and the reassertion of the ideational authority of the (shadow) cabinet and the PLP. As we will see, this would be a struggle that would fundamentally change the nature of the party's ideational infrastructure as Labour, now

on the back foot in the party's political war of ideas, would move to imitate the Tory innovations in the production and distribution of ideas.

Chapter 5: Think Tanks and the Rise of External Ideational Infrastructure (EII)

Having traced the consolidation of ideational authority in the offices of party leaders and their front-bench colleagues, it is now necessary to turn our attention to a concomitant shift in the *source of ideas* to which both Labour and Conservative party leaders turned as they sought to isolate themselves from the mass party ideational infrastructures of the post-war period. To do so, this section examines how party leaders began a process of 'ideational outsourcing' in the development and communication of their parties' ideas, helping to shape emergent networks of external ideational organisations in the process.

Particular attention will be paid to think tanks, given their particular importance to this process. While think tanks have been a feature of the British political landscape since the 1884 founding of the Fabian Society, a new type of think tank emerged in the mid-twentieth century that would have profound implications for the production of political ideas. These organisations often labelled "advocacy think tanks" (Stone & Denham, 2004; Weaver, 1998), might more accurately be described as *new politics think tanks*, reflecting the political era they helped shape. Unlike their predecessors, these think tanks sought not merely to advocate for specific positions or provide publicly available data but to reshape the entire framework of political debate in British politics, something which they achieved by forging close ties with public relations firms, communications professionals, and the media, all with the (at times explicit) aim to shift the country's 'climate of public opinion' (Denham & Garnett, 2006; Kandiah & Seldon, 1996; Cockett, 1994).

Although interesting in their own right, these organisations are vital for understanding the long-run organisational changes to how parties in the UK and abroad approached their relationship with the ideas they incorporated into political platforms. First in the Conservative Party, and subsequently in the Labour Party, the turn to this new type of organisation gave party leaders a party-external source of expertise that would not only allow them to draw on new and often radical ideas (to “think the unthinkable” (Cockett, 1994)) but in the process to sideline the mass-party organisations that had shaped party thinking throughout the post-war period.

5.1: Thatcher, Joseph and Externalised Ideational Infrastructure

Heath’s defeats in 1974 signalled the beginning of the end for the Conservative Party’s participation in the ideational coalition of the post-war era. Thatcher’s rise to power in the Conservative Party would bring about new ideas about the relationship between the British state and the market — an intellectual transformation that would be predicated upon profound changes to the party’s ideational infrastructure. As Thatcher toppled the sacred cows of the post-war era, so too would she destroy the influence of the party institutions that helped build it, starting with the Conservative Research Department. In the process, she would do two things. First, she expanded on Heath’s efforts towards ideational consolidation in the party leader’s office. Second, she would tap into an emergent ‘market’ for ideas emerging from a network of think tanks that aimed to use close ties with the media to influence the “climate of public opinion” from outside the confines of the party itself (Denham &

Garnett, 1998). As had been the case with the rise of the CRD, this process happened remarkably quickly, at least compared with a Labour Party that was beset by a factional civil war. By 1979, the battle between Thatcher and the CRD was all but over, a victory signalled by Thatcher’s push to sell off the Research Department headquarters at Old Queen Street and incorporate it into the Conservative Central Office (Kavanagh, 1989).

Where the post-war period saw Rab Butler construct a Conservative party-centric ideational infrastructure (PCII), Thatcher’s neoliberal turn would occur concomitantly with

a turn towards externalised ideational infrastructure (EI). This would be accomplished by changing the organisation site of party-ideational production, with the fading CRD replaced by an interlocking set of organisations, such as the Centre for Policy Studies (CPS), the Institute for Economic Analysis (IEA), and the Adam Smith Institute (ASI) as the party's primary source for ideas about how to govern the British economy. These organisations would become essential for supporting Thatcher's concentration of ideational power in the leader's office, playing an essential role in providing ideational ammunition to an expanded Policy Unit after 1979. The rise of this new type of ideas producer was significant in the history of party ideas and catalysed a new outsourcing dynamic in the formation of party ideas. Combined with an embrace of politically oriented public relations and communications professionals, Thatcher's reforms would amount to a qualitative shift in the Conservative Party's ideational infrastructure.

5.2: The Institute for Economic Affairs Comes in from the Cold

At the time when Joseph was growing frustrated by Heath and the CRD, one organisation in particular, the Institute of Economic Affairs, was far and away the most significant of this new type of ideational organisation. No doubt, part of the attraction of the IEA was that it represented a network of economic thinkers who had found themselves in the ideational wilderness in the post-war consensus and had banded together to demonstrate the folly of mainstream political parties. It was founded by Anthony Fisher in 1955, when the CRD was approaching its most influential – and most interventionist – position in the Conservative Party. Fisher was a staunch believer in the work of Friedrich Hayek and was so moved by the latter's *The Road to Serfdom* (1944) that he engineered a meeting with the professor in his LSE office to get advice on how best to address the encroachment of statism and the destruction of liberty that supposedly followed. Fisher's first impulse was to pursue a political career, but Hayek advised against this, arguing that most British intellectuals had fallen under the sway of socialism, with the country's political institutions following suit (Kandiah & Seldon, 1996).

What Hayek meant by this in practical terms was that the *party-political* climate of the 1940s and 1950s would prove impermeable to his brand of free market thinking. The Labour Party was an apparent dead end, and the Liberal Party, which some of Hayek's disciples had hoped to reclaim from its statist turn, had continued its slide into electoral irrelevance after the political tumult of the 1930s and the Second World War (Muller, 1996). Worst still, the Conservative Party, an erstwhile bastion of old-school liberalism, was firmly under the sway of interventionist "One Nation" Conservatives like Butler, Macleod and Macmillan. Before this party-political lockout could be broken, economic liberals would have to find a way to change the thinking of the elite decision-makers in the institutions that governed the British political economy. While it took almost a decade, Fisher eventually took his intellectual mentor's advice and set up the IEA, settling for a long-term strategy of influencing the underlying assumptions of how the British public understand the relationship between the state and economy.

For support, he could rely on a network of disenchanted economic liberals who (as Hayek had predicted) had grown increasingly frustrated with British politics. Hayek himself was key to these efforts, both due to his ties with the international network of the Mont Pelerin Society and because of his influence in the Economics Department at the London School of Economics, which came to be something of a sanctuary for Hayekians who felt alienated by the dominance of Keynesianism in the discipline. Here, a group of academics (such as Jack Wiseman, Alan Peacock, George Schwartz, Graham Hutton and Alan Walters) and students (most notably Arthur Seldon), having discovered Hayek's work and their frustrations at these ideas' lack of political traction, were essential for giving the fledgling IEA the imprimatur of specialist expertise (Harris & Seldon, 2005). Hayek's network also provided practical advice for those attempting to construct an alternative basis of ideational power. Chief among this group were figures like Oliver Smedley, who had set up several smaller advocacy organisations and could thus assist Fisher with the practicalities of running his new organisation. Even more importantly, Smedley allowed the IEA to operate out of facilities owned by his company, Investment and General Management Services, freeing the think tank to focus all its financial resources, drawn

from an array of individual and corporate donations, on ideational production and distribution (Denham & Garnett, 1998; Muller, 1996).

Slowly, IEA developed a capacity to influence the climate of public opinion by creating a network of opinion formers that operated outside of the remit of party politics proper. Here, the media figures were significant (Muller, 1996). As Radhika Desai argues, the IEA's ability to 'speak economic common sense' made the real difference in its ability to define economic liberalism in practice. This was not only because authors had to submit their work for review by the IEA executive committee, which then worked with the author to bring the work more closely in step with the Institute's view on a certain topic, but also because its position at the centre of a network of dissident economists afforded it a certain coordinating power. Thus, "what the IEA succeeded in doing was to channel and combine, in a concentrated and identifiable form, what would have otherwise been more disparate interventions from a great diversity of theoretical directions without a readily apparent ideological connection between them" (Desai, 1994). In this sense, we can understand the IEA as developing a kind of party-external ideational power – one predicated on the power to act as the gatekeepers for 'true' economic liberalism that derived from its position at the centre of a network of diverse perspectives on the subject. Thus, the IEA did much of the early spadework to increase the legitimacy of Hayekian liberalism amongst a critical subset of the British intelligentsia (Denham & Garnett, 1998).

In confirmation of Hayek's predictions, however, the reaction to the IEA's formation amongst party operatives was at first quite minimal. The Institute's ideas were deemed wildly out of line with conventional economic thinking, and the party already had a ready supply of proven, election-winning ideas emerging from the CRD and CPC. Indeed, the only MP who showed an interest in the new organisation was Freddie Gough, and this had more to do with the fact that Gough and Fisher were neighbours than any meaningful intellectual curiosity (Cockett, 1994: p. 133). As a result, the IEA failed to make substantial inroads into Conservative Party policy output for the better part of two decades, a period which spanned three Conservative leaders and a significant amount of inter-factional instability. This was, of course, partially by design. The IEA fiercely guarded its

independence from any political party (Denham & Garnett, 1998: p. 98; Kenny, 2013: p. 12). Even when this began to change as innovators like Powell and Joseph began to 'see the light' of economic liberalism (or, as they would put it, the folly of post-war managerialism), it was largely only after relatively prolonged attempts at reform the existing PCII (Turner, 2007; Seldon & Collings, 2000; Hartwell, 199). Joseph, for instance, had to be introduced to the IEA twice, once after the 1964 defeat and again when Heath lost (twice) in 1974 (Denham & Garnett, 1998: pp. 118; Cockett, 1994: p. 130-134).

There was good reason for Joseph's cautious approach: the CRD still wielded a significant degree of ideational power, and attempts to undermine the ideas it helped produce could have real professional consequences. Indeed, early attempts to push economic liberalism into Conservative policy were quickly dashed against the walls of party power relations. In the late 1960s, for instance there was real frustration towards the IEA in the party executive, where it was felt that the party had enough challenges convincing voters of its suitability for power without the upstart organisation and its outriders in the party kicking up the ideational dirt. As a result, Heath would sack Angus Maude, a party veteran who had come to embrace a liberal economic position, from the Shadow Cabinet for speaking too publicly about the shortcomings of the Conservatives' attachment to post-war statism (Denham & Garnett, 1998, p. 98). Even, through much of the 1970s, even including Thatcher's first several years as party leader, most Conservative MPs remained unconvinced by the arguments put forth by the IEA (*ibid.*, p. 101).

After the failures of the Heath government, however, this began to change. Indeed, despite the lengthy policy review and major new expenditure on polling initiatives (Ramsden, 1980: p. 267), it appeared to some in the party that the CRD had lost its ability to deliver the ultimate source of ideational power: votes. For figures like Joseph, Howe and Thatcher, the time had come to challenge the CRD's problem-solving approach to political ideas by developing an alternative basis of ideas that could reasonably impact the way the *party* thought about economic issues. To do this, however, it was decided a new organisation would be required. The IEA's staunchly independent identity (and,

indeed, total willingness to publicly attack the Conservative Party) was not viable for the kind of ideational entryism necessary to displace the CRD as an established centre of ideational power. While several individual Conservative MPs had been drawn to the IEA's work, the fact that the Institute was relentlessly focused on producing ideas without any consideration of their political impact meant that these ideas could do little to alter the *ideational infrastructure* of post-war Conservatism. As Simon James put it, the IEA "was and remains a purist body, reluctant to alloy its ideology with the demands of politics". What Joseph and Thatcher needed was a "more pragmatic, sharp-edged body" with which they could challenge the consensual mentality still dominant in the party (James, 1993: p. 495). And so, they created one, the Centre for Policy Studies (CPS).

5.3: Centre for Policy Studies and the Battle for the Conservative Party's Soul

As we have seen, for Joseph and those around him, two things were clear: first, the party's way of thinking had to be brought in line with their vision of economic liberalism, and second, the entrenched machinery of party thinking, and especially the CRD, would make such a transformation difficult to accomplish. The CRD's position as the arbiter of true Conservative thought would have to be confronted, and this meant that a new source of ideas would have to be found. Fortunately for this band of ideational insurgents, a new model of ideational production that was independent of party entanglements had been quietly operating at the fringes of the party's ideational infrastructure for more than a decade – and soon Joseph turned to the Institute for Economic Analysis (IEA) to acquaint himself with its approach to influencing the "climate of public opinion" (Denham & Garnett, 2006; Kandiah & Seldon, 1996; Cockett, 1994).

While his work with the IEA confirmed to him that monetarism offered solutions to the seemingly intractable problems facing the UK economy, Joseph also quickly realised that the IEA's strategic approach to the popularisation of economic liberalism would be ill-suited for breaking the CRD's hold on the Conservative Party's ideational offer (Denham and Garnett, 2002). The IEA's fierce defence of its party-political independence and

related willingness to publicly attack the Conservative Party had made it few friends amongst Conservative Party powerbrokers. Indeed, while several individual Conservative MPs had been drawn to the IEA's work, there was simply no way these Conservative operatives could publicly embrace an organisation that was so willing to attack the party's ideational history. A more subtle approach to influencing the party's ideas would have to be found if Joseph and Thatcher hoped to achieve their aim of renewing the party's desired ideational approach (Schmidt, 2022: p. 260).

The first step in this process would be forming the requisite organisational capacity to interface with the party's existing ideational infrastructure. To provide such an organisation, Joseph and Thatcher joined forces with Alfred Sherman to create the Centre for Policy Studies (CPS) in 1974. The new think tank was, in fact, the brainchild of Sherman, a former *Daily Telegraph* writer and economic liberal firebrand who began to write speeches for Joseph and Thatcher in the early 1970s. After the trio grew convinced of the need for the "privatisation" of the party's ideational functions (quoted: Harris, 1996: p. 51), they decided to form a think tank styled after the IEA but with the explicit aim of "converting" the Conservative Party to economic liberalism. Sherman took charge of the Centre's research capacities and left Joseph and Thatcher to leverage their influence in the party to grow the think tank's network (Denham & Garnett, 2002: p. 239-240). However, given its explicit focus on influencing the party, the project would need to gain Heath's permission before the CPS could officially produce research materials, and this initially proved to be a real obstacle. The CPS was, arguably, the first direct challenge to the central party's ideational power since the end of the Second World War, and Heath met the proposal with due suspicion, knowing full well that Joseph and Thatcher had rekindled their connections with the IEA (Denham & Garnett, 1998: p. 119). Joseph eventually convinced Heath of the project's merits by pitching the think tank as a vehicle for the study of West Germany's economic strength, a topic about which both men shared an interest and which the CPS would go on to do almost no research into. Indeed, the CPS' prompt about-face on the study of European capitalism was so sudden that Heath's allies quickly began leaking to the press that Joseph had deceived the embattled party leader. While Joseph denied ever "tricking" Heath, claiming his diminished interest in

Germany represented an earnest intellectual journey, it is indeed the case that the CPS had soon departed from this original mission (Seldon, 1987).

Heath's blessing also came with the caveat that the CRD's Adam Ridley would be appointed to the Centre's advisory board. This was done with the explicit aim of allowing the Department to monitor the upstart think tank, a move that further betrayed concern within the party that the CPS constituted a threat to the CRD's influence (Denham & Garnett, 2002: p. 239). Unlike previous external organisations in the Conservative ideational infrastructure (such as the Bow Group), the relationship between the CPS and the CRD turned frosty almost immediately. This largely had to do with the perception of those at the CRD (typically speaking anonymously to lobby journalists) that the CPS was starving the Party's primary research body of resources (Keegan, 1984), a complaint which emanated from the fact that long term party donors appeared to be switching their allegiances to the CPS in significant number. While this is impossible to verify given the CPS's long-standing lack of transparency about its funding, it is certainly the case that the Centre's ability to fundraise without limitation (recall that the CRD was statutorily barred from private fundraising as a means of maintaining its independence) gave it real heft in its mission to influence the party's ideational infrastructure (*ibid.*, pp. 243- 244).

Joseph would stiffen his resolve to revolutionise the party's economic thinking with the CPS at his back. Starting with his famed Upminster speech in June 1974 (written with significant input from Sherman), he launched a series of forceful critiques of the Heath government as a co-conspirator in the "socialist" consensus (Cockett, 1994). The broadside came at a terrible time for Heath, who desperately tried to portray the party as united against a dangerously radical Labour Party. In fact, the speech drew so much consternation that Heath allies urgently tried to intervene, with prominent "Wet" Jim Prior personally asking Margaret Thatcher to convince her ally to soften his speech to avoid damaging the Party's electoral prospects (Prior, 1986). This plan backfired as Thatcher found the speech so compelling that she and Joseph decided little should be changed when they met to discuss it (Thatcher, 1996).

Tensions only heightened in September of that year when Joseph delivered a speech on inflation at Preston, this time written by Alan Walters (of the IEA) and Samuel Brittan (a *Financial Times* journalist who moonlighted at the CPS), which again took aim at the Heath government's approach to economic issues. It argued that inflation was "threatening to destroy the economy" thanks to successive governments' attempts to address their fears of mass unemployment (Denham & Garnett, 2002: p. 256). Citing CPS statistical work, Joseph claimed these fears of widespread joblessness were overblown because the official figures cited by both the civil service and the CRD significantly overrepresented the incidence of frictional unemployment and thus gave the impression that joblessness was higher than what it really was. It was this misunderstanding of the facts on the ground, he argued, that had prompted past governments (both Labour and Conservative) to drive inflation and further weaken the economy by intervening to prop up labour markets (*ibid.*).

While Joseph received most of the attention for the speeches, behind the scenes they marked a watershed moment in the history of the Conservative Party's ideational infrastructure. By attacking the empirical basis on which the CRD claimed to understand the domestic economy, Joseph's speeches vitally undermined the Department's ability to claim that it was a reliable source of information that the party could depend on for information about what was happening across the country. The speeches also landed at a particularly inopportune time for the CRD, which had just published its *Campaign Guide*. The *Guide* aimed to counter Labour's criticisms of the inadequacies of Heath's anti-inflation policies, and many in the CRD felt that Joseph's onslaught against the Department's approach to inflation-fighting catastrophically undermined the document amongst both local activists and influential media figures (CRD/D/7/1, 1973; CRD/D/6/35, 1973). It was the beginning of the end of the CRD as a centre of ideational power.

Of course, it must be pointed out that the thrust of Joseph's argument about frictional unemployment was, at best, logically inconsistent. Indeed, the academic think tank Political and Economic Planning (PEP) released a report asserting that the claims that Joseph (and, by extension, the CPS) made about the "real" unemployed appeared to be

pulled from thin air (Denham & Garnett, 2002, pp. 255). However, the details of Joseph's claim mattered far less than its influence on party discourse. The economy and the party appeared to be in a state of crisis, and an increasing number of party operatives were willing to be convinced by economic liberal precepts that seemed to have answers where traditional approaches were faltering. To this end, as would become a theme during the Thatcherites' rise to power (Schmidt, 2002: p. 260-261), the specifics of the CPS figures mattered little for Joseph's ability to exercise the ideational power he gained from citing them. Soon, other ideational organisations in the party's ideational infrastructure were calling for a change of stance on inflation. The Selsdon Group, for instance, lauded the Preston speech and called for Joseph to be given the keys to the Treasury upon the Conservatives' return to power. Heath himself was quickly forced to concede ground to his rogue Home Secretary, admitting that on inflation, "we may have lessons to learn from our past experience. We will not be too proud to make them" (quoted Denham & Garnett, 2002: pp. 257-260).

This is not to say that the right had won the argument outright, and many One Nation Conservatives bristled at Joseph's attacks on his own party's record. Heath, in consultation with the CRD, would ultimately revert to interventionist type, despite including vague promises to avoid price controls in the party's October manifesto (Kavanagh, 1981; CRD/B/9/2, 1973). The episode demonstrated, however, that a new model of external expertise had gained currency at the expense of the Conservative PCII, and New Right think tanks would only gain influence after Heath lost the October 1974 election and subsequently stood down as party leader. By this point, Joseph's prestige as a figure with new ideas had appreciated so significantly that many in the party called for him to run for leadership. After some consideration, he would eventually decline, ostensibly for family reasons — although, in reality, this likely had as much to do with a disastrous speech he gave in the run-up to the election (Macnicol, 1987). In his place, Thatcher ran and won, meaning the party was led by its right flank for the first time in the CRD's 98 existence (Ramsden, 1980: p. 311). Thatcher's rise proved to be a point of serious consternation for many CRD old guards, who feared that the Research Department would be superseded by the CPS or dismantled entirely. Such anxieties were not without cause,

and even Party Chairman Lord Thorneycroft expected the CRD and the CPS to be officially merged into one body. While this never happened, thanks mainly to pushback from within the CRD (CRD/D/8/16, 1979), from 1975 onwards, tension between the Department and the new party leader would slowly mount (Denham & Garnett, 2002: p. 302-303; Denham & Garnett, 1998, p. 136)

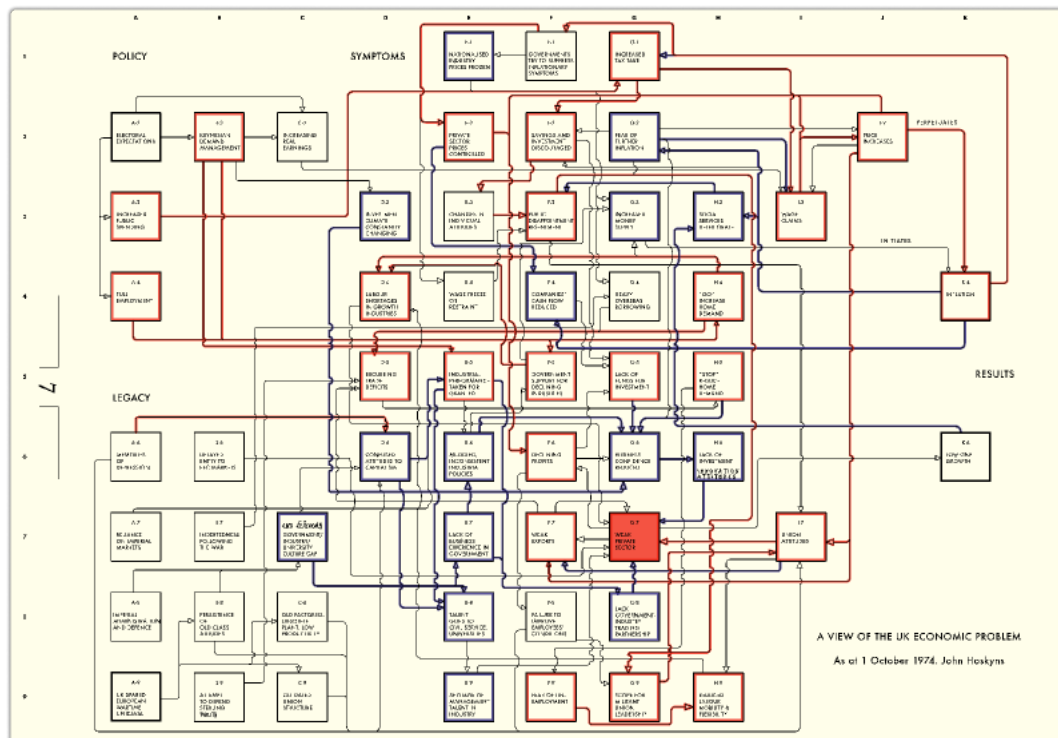
Thus, while eliminating the CRD was out of the question — at least for the moment — Thatcher was sure to take a firm grip on the Department by appointing Angus Maude as Chairman of the CRD instead of Heath ally Ian Gilmour. Even more significantly, she gave Joseph a roving role with ultimate authority over the Party's policy and research capacities. This meant that Joseph could not only return to working with the CPS, thus injecting the think tank's ideas directly into party policy, but it also gave him jurisdiction over the CRD, where he would work to ensure that the Department produced policy materials that were consistent with the party's new ideational direction (Todd, 1991). To some extent, this move was likely motivated by a desire to smooth tensions between the two bodies, but it did little to stop a steady drip of anonymous press briefings from CRD staff that aimed to push back against the right-wing incursion (CRD/D/8/16, 1980a). Indeed, many of the CRD's old guards were furious with the continued erosion of the CRD's standing within the party's ideational infrastructure and saw the CPS as a corrupting influence over the party. These feelings of hostility were mutual, and Alfred Sherman would frequently criticise the department in public, at one point calling it a "den of low calibre opportunists" (Denham & Garnett, 2002: p. 303). Although always more tactful in her criticism, Thatcher certainly also held the CRD (and indeed the entire Conservative Central Office) in low esteem after becoming party leader. As Denham and Garnett show, this disregard emanated from a perception amongst Thatcher and her supporters that CRD researchers "thought differently" than they did and that their backward thinking reflected an attachment to previous party leaders (1998, p. 136).

Despite these feelings, there was a general sentiment that things could not change too quickly in the party's ideational infrastructure, especially not in the latter half of the 1970s before Thatcher could claim the authority of a proven election winner. As such, it would

be incorrect to say that Joseph and Thatcher felt the need to disband the CRD at this point (Sherman, for his part, would undoubtedly have preferred this option). Instead, it is more accurate to say that Joseph and Thatcher sought to relegate the Research Department to junior status relative to the CPS and the network of think tanks within which it operated. This was accomplished via an ideational colonisation process in which the CPS gradually moved in on the ideational ambit of the Research Department. Through the late 1970s, Sherman (still Director of Research at CPS) was in regular contact with his counterparts at the CRD to monitor the research the Department was conducting, information that he would report to both Thatcher and Joseph — frequently with complaint about its statist predispositions (CRD/D/8/16, 1980b; CRD/D/8/18, 1980). By the late 1970s, the influence of the CPS was so significant that it soon displaced much of the CRD's briefing roles entirely, and it became common practice for shadow ministers and their advisers to attend relevant CPS study groups, which were seen as more relevant for understanding Thatcher's thinking.

Tensions escalated after the 1978 publication of the *Stepping Stones* report, a strategy document written by the CPS-affiliated John Hoskyns. The document advanced an entirely alternative vision of the economy and its ills, one that was significantly out of step with the outlook of the CRD and the party's Butskellite old guard. To make matters worse, Hoskyns and his co-author Norman Strauss were political outsiders — businessmen with backgrounds in the technology sector who had turned an amateur interest in economic policy into an intellectual presence in the network of think tanks emerging around Thatcher's leadership. Particularly important in Hoskyns' ascent to influence in the world of New Right think tanks was his 'wiring diagram' that created a map of the British political economy and its dysfunctions (See Figure 6.1). From the vantage point afforded by this "complete model" of the economy, he developed a vision of the British economy that placed the unions as the primary obstacle to economic growth, and Hoskyns would then set about developing a political strategy and policy proposals necessary to root out this entrenched power (Hoskyns, 2000).

Figure 5.1: John Hoskyn's Wiring Diagram



Source: Ashenden (2020)

The problem that this presented to the party's old guard was two-fold. First, it flew in the face of nearly two decades of CRD-developed party policy, which, following the Butskellite consensus, had made peace with a strong union movement. Second, the fact that Hoskyns and Strauss did not have a background in politics or policy threatened to upset the career aspirations of CRD-based researchers, which through the 1970s continued to be an impressive item to include on the CV of any aspiring Conservative politico. As a result, by late 1978, tensions between the CRD and the CPS boiled over, with figuring on

both sides began briefing the press. CRD researchers correctly felt that their hold of the party's ideas and strategies around how they should be communicated was being diluted, and they began leaking to friendly journalists (especially at *The Economist*) that the party's policymaking process was being degraded (Hoskyns, 2000: p. 65). For their part, figures affiliated with the CPS would turn to contacts at the *Financial Times* to lament the enervated thinking at the Research Department (Ashford, 1997).

5.4: Thatcher in Power: Think Tanks and Party Discipline

When CPS figures inveighed Thatcher to defend the *Stepping Stones* project, the CRD's fate was sealed — it was decided that the CRD would have to stop being functionally independent from the leader's office. Thus, the Department's wings were further clipped when, in May 1979, it was moved out of its Old Queen Street residence and formally integrated into the Conservative Central Office Building in Smith Square. Simultaneously, the role of the CRD Chair was transferred to the Party Chairman, officially ending the CRD's status as an independent research body (Ramsden, 1980: p. 311-312). This proved a bridge too far for CRD traditionalists, who finally broke under the pressure building against the Department. This was especially the case of former CRD Director and newly elected MP Chris Patten, who, in the words of one observer, “blew his top” at the erosion of the Department's autonomy (Kavanagh, 1989). He quickly mobilised the support of other CRD alumni and wrote such a forceful letter to senior colleagues demanding the CRD be returned to its independent status that it almost tipped the government into crisis as soon as it had been elected. Ultimately, the only thing the episode accomplished was temporarily derailing Patten's career — by this point, Thatcher's new ideas and the organisations that provided them had proven their worth in the electoral arena, and there was little appetite in the broader party to soil the party with disunity.

In 1979, Patten was replaced by Alan Howarth, one of Thatcher's ‘dry’ factional allies. Six months later, he was made Vice Chairman of the Conservative Party Organisation. This latter role gave him responsibility for “assisting the [Party] Chairman to identify and

establish priorities of Central Office and the Party Organisation; Coordinating Departments in day-to-day activities; Budgeting and financial control... [and] election preparations" (CCO20/49/10, 1980). This dual role gave him sweeping powers to reimagine the distribution of authority regarding policy production, a position of influence that he would use to render the CRD to a subservient role relative to the CPS. This was primarily accomplished through a process of assimilation of the CRD into the CPS' network of influence. In a 1980 letter to Thatcher, Howarth would report his plans to keep the CRD nominally in control over the party's longer-range thinking but (as noted above) this was to be done under the oversight of a host of "consultant Directors" from the CPS, including the current CPS President Hugh Thomas as well as Peter Lilley and Peter Uteley (CCO20/49/10, 1980; see also Desai, 1994).

Thus, soon after Thatcher won the 1979 election, it was the CPS, not the CRD, that had come to be seen as the party's intellectual home. Indeed, as James notes, it was "the Centre for Policy Studies, not the Conservative Research Department, [that] produced the key Stepping Stones policy documents" that would shape the entire Conservative Party platform and strategy through the 1980s (James, 1993: p. 495). In terms of the *substance* of Conservative Party ideas, the CRD was a weakened machine (Interview with former CRD Researcher "1"). The baton of long-term thinking had passed to a new type of organisation, and the CRD would never again regain its former glory. In fact, the CRD was slowly left to wither on the vine. Towards the end of Thatcher's first term in office, a steady sequence of budget cuts had led to chronic under recruitment and, in general, a loss of esteem amongst the New Right brain trust that now drove Conservative Party thinking. By 1983, Peter Cropper would report that "four or five posts of section head" were vacant, on top of "a number of gaps among desk officers" (CCO 20/49/10, 1983). In fact, there were serious discussions about closing the Department down, and soon Jan Hildreth, a business consultant, and former Director of the Institute of Directors, was called in to evaluate the CRD as a going concern (CCO 20/49/11, 1983).

Those behind the decision to consult Hildreth may well have hoped he would conclude the Department should be shuttered. He was, after all, a fellow traveller in the world of

New Right think tanks (Boswell & Peters, 1997) and would have likely harboured similar resentments towards an organisation broadly seen as the ‘party’s civil service’. These figures would be disappointed, however, as Hildreth’s report proved to be enthusiastic about the Department’s new role. For one, Hildreth was keen to see the CRD continue its close relationship with the CPS, which was seen as a good contact point for the broader party to learn about the think tank’s ideas. The report also underscored the importance of the CRD in helping the Conservative Party act with one voice, especially during election times (CCO 20/49/11, 1983) — an important vote of confidence for the CRD’s coordinating capacities, a function that Thatcher would soon begrudgingly admit herself. This, ultimately, is what saved the CRD – and while for the next several decades it would be relegated to a supporting role in the hierarchy of Conservative policymaking, by 1989, it was described by one Westminster reporter as “a dormant policy-making wing of Conservative Central Office” (Hencke, 1989). It would eventually regain some of its prestige, but only after being folded into the party’s new communications and election infrastructure and thereby shedding much of its capacity to produce new ideas into the Conservative ideational infrastructure (Interview with former CRD researcher ‘1’).

However, by the end of the 1980s, it was clear that the Department’s days as the primary arbiter of the party platform were over. As Kavanagh (1989) put it in an op-ed on the development of Conservative Party manifestos:

For much of its history the CRD stood alone as the propagator of Conservative ideas. Ironically, at a time when ideas count more than ever, its role has been privatised: it is no longer ‘primus inter pares’...the policy-making world has become more professional, and the CRD now has many rivals; it has to compete and co-operate with a solar system of right-wing think tanks promoting policies and trying to influence the climate of opinion.

Indeed, the government’s policy output quickly began to show evidence of a shift towards externalised ideational production, with a growing number of citations to this solar system of ideas producers. Scholars have traced impactful Thatcherite policy ideas relating to

privatisation, deregulation, contracting out of local services, Personal Equity Plans (PEPs), abolition of the Inter London Education Authority (ILEA), schools opting out, and some of the trade union legislation to think tanks – and in particular the IEA, CPS and Adam Smith Institute. By turning to these organisations, Thatcher would exercise a significant degree of leverage over a party that was slow to warm to her radical approach. In this sense, they acted as a kind of “collective ginger group which Mrs Thatcher invokes to push ministers” (Kavanagh, 1989). This disciplining role should be emphasised, as Thatcher made a point to ensure that think tankers were a visible presence in No. 10 (Oakley, 1990). She would also frequently carry think tank reports into meetings and toss them in front of intransigent ministers or other party officials should there be any dissent about a policy proposal (Kavanagh, 1989).

5.5: Thatcher, Think Tanks and the Policy Unit

The increased influence of think tanks in Thatcher's government was also aided by her embrace of several Wilson innovations to the machinery of government policymaking. Despite campaigning against Wilson's expanded use of Special Advisers as an example of Labour's largesse, she embraced SpAds and the Policy Unit when she got to power (Cardwell, 2022). The Policy Unit became a key site for CPS ideas to be brought directly to the heart of the government's policymaking process (Pemberton et al., 2018). Indeed, one of Thatcher's first moves upon taking power was to appoint Hoskyns as her first director of the Policy Unit, along with Norman Strauss. They would use this position to lead an (ultimately unsuccessful) charge to develop a 10-year economic strategy for Thatcher to follow over subsequent governments — especially as it concerned public sector pay and the Prime Minister's relationship with Chequers (CCO 20/68/5, 1981a). This was followed up by the recruitment of Alfred Sherman and Hugh Thomas, who were brought in as SpAds to advise on trade union relations in 1980 (Harris, 1996).

With these figures in place, the CPS could then continue to develop policy ideas (efforts that continued to be guided, in many instances, by insights from the Hoskyns wiring diagram) and feed these ideas directly into government policy outputs. Indeed, it set up

something of an 'ideational infrastructure in miniature' to do this, establishing a series of study groups on issues that were determined to be critical to the success of Thatcher's radical new government — focusing especially those areas that were felt to be at most risk from being derailed by foot-dragging by the civil service. Initially, these consisted of groups working on issues of health (and particularly the introduction of 'market mechanisms' into the NHS), energy and trade union reform. These efforts were subsequently expanded to include groups focusing on education, global government reform and efforts to facilitate wider share ownership. Radical ideas about pensions were also imported from the CPS' Personal Capital Formation Group into government proposals for pension reform (Pemberton et al., 2018). In almost all instances, the ideas developed by these groups were introduced into the government's thinking on a given topic by figures from the Policy Unit. Indeed, the most influential of these bodies was the "Forward Strategy" group (also known as the "first eleven" group — a reference to the starting eleven players on a football team). This group comprised a select group of senior ministers, several members of the Policy Unit, and CPS researchers and leading figures from CPS. It was essential for driving the policy formation process in the early days of Thatcher's government and emphasised "the ability of the CPS to push its ideas to the heart of the government" (Harris, 1996: p. 54).

The Policy Unit also began to play a key role in directing resources for the party's research activities. A particularly notable incident in this regard occurred in 1980 when Lord Rothschild sought to fund a significant research project for the Conservative Party. However, he was unwilling to donate directly to the Party and preferred to keep his involvement confidential. He initially made contact via the CRD but was redirected to the Policy Unit, where it was decided the funds would best be used on a research initiative focused on assessing the level of economic literacy among the electorate. The project was commissioned through Marplan, a polling firm with ties to the party, with Lord Rothschild providing the funding indirectly via a third party. The Economic Literacy Project was completed in April 1981, with the final report presented in July 1981 (CCO 20/68/5, 1981b).

This is not to suggest that the CPS and the broader network of think tanks to which it was attached had exclusive influence over government policy. Indeed, figures like Sherman were continually frustrated by what he saw as the government's continued reliance on "modest policy advance through the traditional party machine", especially during Thatcher's first government when elements from the party's traditional one-nation faction continued to exert irrepressible influence (Harris, 1996: p. 55). Even still, by acting as a clearing house for ideas emerging from the broader New Right think tanks network, the CPS would use its position of adjacency with key advisers to shape the ideas emerging from the Thatcher government. Its status was reinforced in 1983 when, after Hoskyns' departure, John Redwood, another CPS researcher who had led research efforts on the nationalised industries and privatisation, was appointed as his replacement (Harris, 1996: p. 59).

The appointment would signal the think tanks' continued influence around key 'big picture issues' that would define Thatcher's reformation of the country's institutional architecture. To this end, on top of specific policy contributions, it was essential for Thatcher's ability to make the *normative* case for free market capitalism by developing a framework to combine and embrace the market with traditional Conservative values like the "Victorian values" of hard work and self-improvement (its work with dependency theorists like Charles Murray and Lawrence Mead was particularly important in this regard) (Harris, 1996: p. 57). In this sense, the CPS-Policy Unit nexus was the essential location for the formation and maintenance of a distinctly Thatcherite political platform, which, by the second Thatcher government, had more or less succeeded in supplanting the traditional party platform and the dissenting voices that continued to embrace it.

5.6: New Labour's New Think Tanks

Much like the New Right, the rise of the "New Left" within the Labour Party was driven by a reliance on external expertise to resolve internal disputes over which factions held the authority to shape the party platform. As in the 1940s, when the Conservative Party emulated Labour's innovations in ideational infrastructure, Labour leaders from Kinnock

to Blair adopted a similar strategy, embracing the emerging think tank model to bypass entrenched factional opposition and consolidate control over the ideas that would form the foundation of the New Labour programme.

Indeed, the success of these conservative think tanks during the 1970s and 1980s had left Labour struggling to maintain its reputation as a party of innovation and intellectual leadership (Bentham, 2006). By the late 1980s, innovators in the Labour Party were moving to address this deficit in the form of left-leaning think tanks like the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) and Demos, which, following Denham and Garnett, can be understood as the left's "belated response" to the dominance of New Right think tanks (Denham & Garnett, 2006). Indeed, that is how the British political press understood it, with one lobby journalist suggesting in 1989 that "there is no question that the Opposition - which has just set up its own think-tank - will need to copy some of the methods of the right-wing institutes if it wants its ideas to be translated into reality by an alternative government" (Hencke, 1989).

These organisations would sit at the centre of a decisive shift in Labour's ideational infrastructure, one that would see a consolidation of authority in the hands of the leader's office and the front bench. Ultimately, it would also help return Labour to power after years in the political wilderness. Thus, as was the case in the 1940s when the Conservatives imitated Labour's innovations in party-based ideational production, by the end of the 1980s, Labour modernisers had become convinced that they, too, needed to use think tanks and professional communications to compete with the dominance of Thatcher's Conservatives.

This was easier said than done. For one, the upfront capital required to establish such organisations was much less readily available in Labour circles than for Conservative ones. More importantly, however, was the fact that Labour's constitutionally codified democratic structure made it much more challenging to alter the party's policymaking processes than the much more hierarchical Conservative Party. For Labour leaders, starting with Neil Kinnock, the search for 'modern' ideas had to navigate a series of veto

players—many of whom were staunchly opposed to departing from the party's traditions. Thus, for Labour's 'think tank revolution' to succeed, reformers had to resolve longstanding internal conflicts over who held the authority to shape party ideas. It would not be until the late 1980s and the cooling of nearly 20 years of open factional strife that 'New Left' think tanks would begin to emerge (Denham & Garnett, 2004). To understand this rise of think tanks in Labour's ideational infrastructure in the 1990s, it is necessary to understand the deeply internecine factionalism that the party descended into in the 1980s.

5.7: Kinnock and the Communicative Turn

The 1983 election was a thunderous defeat for the Labour Party. The loss catalysed a deep existential crisis across the party's factional divide (Whiteley, 1983). With the right seemingly out of ideas, the left had finally manoeuvred to take control of the party platform — and had been soundly rejected by the British public. Foot resigned almost immediately and was replaced by Neil Kinnock, a figure from the party's emergent 'soft left' contingent. Kinnock would have been keenly aware of the challenges that he would inherit. The party was severely divided along ideological lines, albeit between two factions that both seemed to lack the ideas necessary to counter the advance of Thatcherism. Worse still, it was a party defined by a long-standing mistrust of the leader's office and an inherent desire to constrain the ability of a leader to determine the party's intellectual direction (Shaw, 1994: Ch. 2).

However, the scale of Kinnock's victory — he won significant support from across the party, including the unions, the constituency parties, and affiliated organisations — would give him a real impetus for change. Kinnock would use this initiative to fundamentally alter the party's ideational machinery. In the process, he would finish the work started by Wilson and Callaghan to ensure that the leader's office had a dominant role in formulating party policy. Before this could happen, however, he would have to directly confront the party's PCII— which still remained firmly in the hands of the party's left. As Batrouni recounts:

For [Kinnock's reforms] to happen, a change to the traditional policymaking process had to take place. The system of NEC sub-committees administered by party officials was unlikely to yield a significant shift in policies, for the left's ideas were now institutionalized. Instead, Kinnock sought to centralize policy development or, more precisely, he endeavoured to re-establish the position of the leadership to change policy (Batrouni, 2020: p. 31).

In contrast to previous efforts in the 1970s, this strategy came directly at the expense of party headquarters (now located at Walworth Road after it has been moved from Transport House in 1980).

While Wilson and Callaghan had certainly undermined Labour's party-centric ideational infrastructure (PCII), this had been, for the most part, unintentional and indirect. Kinnock, in contrast, pursued a deliberate campaign to diminish the influence of Labour's party in central office. This amounted to a concerted effort to re-establish what Kinnock and his supporters would label 'effective party governance' and what detractors described as an authoritarian consolidation of power in the leader's office (Smith, 1992). Central to this strategy was the removal of traditional activist elements that, in their view, had contributed to the party's decline. The most frequently discussed of these efforts involved an aggressive campaign to marginalise the party's radical left, particularly the Trotskyist Militant Tendency movement (Jobson, 2024). Arguably much more impactful for the future of the party's and its ideas, however, were efforts to "[bring] the NEC to heel" and in so doing marginalise the left in the party's ideational infrastructure (Shaw, 1994: p. 30). This was no easy task, as the left's hold on the party's policy machinery had remained strong, even as the NEC shifted rightward. The first two years of Kinnock's leadership were marked by largely unsuccessful attempts to undo the gains made by the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD) only a few years earlier (see Chapter 4). For example, he sought to dilute the influence of local activists, who tended to be more left-wing than the median party member, by introducing a One Member, One Voter (OMOV) system for selecting MPs (which would shift power from constituency parties to the general membership). The left, however, leveraged their union allies to block the proposal at Conference. Kinnock also faced challenges during the 1984 miners' strikes, when the left

and the NEC pushed the party to officially support the strikes. From the outset, Kinnock was wary of this stance, correctly predicting that the Thatcher government would try to link Labour to militant union leaders like Arthur Scargill (*ibid.*, p. 33-34). His attempt to move the party to a more neutral position at the 1984 Conference was overruled, leading Heffernan and Marqusee to conclude that, up until 1985, Kinnock remained “the prisoner of the left” (Heffernan & Marqusee, 1992: p. 43).

However, in the background, Kinnock was making subtle changes to the party’s ideational infrastructure that would, eventually, free him of these constraints. Most directly, he established the Policy Co-ordinating Committee (PCC), consisting of representatives from the parliamentary front bench, the NEC (including Bish), and “party members with expertise in relevant fields” (Kinnock, 1994: p. 539). As this composition suggests, the idea behind this body was to give the Shadow Front Bench a more direct influence on party policy formation while not upsetting the senior figures from the party’s traditional policymaking apparatus. It is fair to say the party’s left did not appreciate this gesture. As Kinnock would recall, “There was a fear in parts of the NEC that a new edifice of power was being created in [these committees]” (Kinnock, 1994: p. 539) and this “paranoia” meant that the PCC had only limited influence for the first several years of its existence (Minkin, 2014: p.74). However, this began to change over time, largely thanks to Kinnock’s successful recruitment of Bish into the PCC process. Bish, arguably the most important figure for maintaining the leftward tilt of the party’s ideational infrastructure, had been deeply troubled by the 1983 experience and subsequently became convinced of the need to reform the party’s ideational infrastructure to counter Thatcherism. He was thus predisposed to Kinnock’s efforts to harmonise the policy formation efforts of the Shadow Cabinet and Walworth Road (Shaw, 1994: p. 109-110).

A second significant factor in Kinnock’s ability to shift ideational power from the broader party to his office was the increased use of Short Money. As previously mentioned, the introduction of Short Money played a crucial role in institutionalising the use of SpAds and PAds as a source of ideas that were distinct from traditional, body-based ideational infrastructures. This was primarily because it created a professional

environment for emerging politicians centred around the (shadow) frontbenches, effectively isolating them from PCILs. As Shaw puts it:

Unlike Head Office officials, whom they increasingly outnumbered, they were not employed by or under the authority of the NEC but were selected and paid (mainly from their allocation of the publicly provided 'Short' fund supplemented by contributions from the unions) by members of the Shadow Cabinet and the Leader to whom their primary loyalty was due, and upon whom the retention of their posts and their future careers was dependent (Shaw, 1994: p. 112).

Indeed, concerns that this new funding source would create an alternative basis of policy expertise that would undermine the authority of the party's research apparatus emerged as early as 1981, when party officials pushed to give the NEC exclusive control over Short funding allocations. These efforts were ultimately thwarted at the Party Conference by more moderate unions concerned that the NEC was becoming too doctrinaire (Minkin, 2014: p. 49).

This ultimately proved enormously fortuitous for Kinnock's future leadership because retaining control over Short Money allowed Kinnock to discreetly build an independent policymaking capacity by recruiting a coterie of frontbench advisers — even as his immediate policy preferences were overruled at Conference (Batrouni, 2020: Ch. 1). Notable policy appointments funded by Short Money included Dick Clement and Charles Clark, along with advisers focused on communications and press relations — most notably Philip Gould — all of whom would go on to play significant roles in the rise of New Labour (Minkin, 2014: p. 51; Shaw, 1994: Ch. 2). This group of advisers (and further Short Money funds) would subsequently facilitate the formation of the Campaign Strategy Committee (CSC) in 1983, which also included friendly members of the NEC, the Shadow Cabinet and senior trade unionists (Shaw, 1994: p. 54-55). The explicit aim of this group was to make the party more responsive to public opinion and more adept at managing media relations (Cruddas, 2024: p. 150). This was, ostensibly, meant to be purely functional support, a kind of communications clearing house that would facilitate the broader movement (including the unions) in coordinating its messaging without having

substantive input into the content of what was being communicated. In reality, however, it was driven by political considerations “as Kinnock intended to use the new body to short-circuit the NEC and thereby reduce the role of its still influential left-wing contingent” (Shaw, 1994: p. 55). As such, it would quickly become highly influential over the party programme, and was soon given explicit control over campaigns, opinion research and party broadcasts.

This communicative shift accelerated two years later when Peter Mandelson was recruited to run the newly established Campaigns and Communications Directorate (CCD). This body, answerable exclusively to the party leader, sought further to consolidate the party’s communications efforts under one roof and thus transfer responsibility for campaigning and communications from the party to the front bench. Mandelson, a former television producer, was thoroughly convinced of the importance of modern communications and advertising techniques in the post-Thatcher political world and set out to revolutionise the party’s approach to ideas accordingly. One of his first acts in charge of the CCD was to commission a report from a former colleague and advertising executive Philip Gould on the state of the party’s communications. Like Mandelson, Gould was convinced that Labour could only return from the electoral wilderness if it imitated the Conservative Party’s embrace of public relations and marketing methods (Wring, 1995).

The 64-page report he used to justify this claim painted a picture of a party stuck in the past, too wedded to the defence of a cloth-capped male worker that had ceased being politically relevant. According to Gould, the root of this problem could be traced back to Labour’s ideational connection with the party on the ground and the unions. According to this view, “too much effort was dispensed on localised campaigning using outmoded techniques like leafleting; campaigning was too often geared to Party activists rather than the wider public” (Shaw, 1994: p. 56). In an age in which public relations professionals had unlocked the ability to observe the ‘will of the voters’ (via polling and focus groups), and advertisers had mastered the art of influencing opinion formation, Labour was being left behind due to its continued reliance on the ‘volunteer army’ of activists that had engendered Labour’s ideational infrastructure in the era of mass politics.

Thus, if the communicative turn engendered by Kinnock's reforms would disrupt Labour's traditional processes of policy development, it would also upend its traditional approach to ideational communication. Explicitly drawing inspiration from the Conservative Party's relationship with the advertising firm Saatchi and Saatchi, Gould recommended that Labour should address its communications deficit by recruiting (on a voluntary or expenses-only basis) advisers directly from the advertising industry (Stewart, 2010). Mandelson readily agreed, and soon, several "highly rated top advertising executives" were brought into the fold, collectively forming what became known as the Shadow Communications Agency (SCA) (Shaw, 1994: p. 55-58).

The combination of the CCD and the SCA would form what Shaw (1994: p. 57) labels a "new strategy-making community" and become the basis of Kinnock's leadership-based ideational infrastructure that would emerge through the 1980s. Indeed, this group — which included communications specialists like Mandelson, Gould, Deborah Mattinson, and Chris Powell; policy specialists like Clarke and Patricia Hewitt; and MPs like Robin Cook and Bryan Gould — can be understood as an integrated body of ideational specialists that collectively provided Kinnock with a 'modern' means of producing, updating, and communicating a political platform entirely independently from Labour's PCII. Moreover, this 'community' would soon push to take control of what remained of the party's ideational infrastructure to ensure that the leader's office had sway over Labour's ideas. Thus, "Mandelson extended the influence of Campaigns and Communications Directorate within Walworth Road, which thereby gained an increasing share over the Party's slim resources and came to supplant the much older [LPRD] as the most powerful body at Head Office" (Shaw, 1994: p. 58).

This decline is further exemplified by the transformation of the LPRD, which in 1985 was folded into the newly formed Labour Party Policy Directorate (PD) (which continued to be headed by Bish). This renaming was symbolic of its relegation from a centre of intellectual activity capable of shaping the party's policy direction to, essentially, a statistical service and political attack dog, which worked to provide shadow departmental

spokespersons with the facts and figures necessary to rebut Tory claims about the country's economic performance (for instance, see LPNEC, Policy Directorate Research Note 75, 1985). For one, the size of the research staff available to Bish was slowly and steadily reduced over the late 1980s. Those that remained were removed from positions of influence on the policy committees, and "rather than operating as secretaries of study groups providing a specifically NEC policy output, they increasingly worked closely with research from the front bench and the Leader's Office within a policy process under the aegis of the Shadow Cabinet" (Shaw, 1994: p. 110). As a result, the party's research body's influence on the party platform was significantly reduced compared with the 1970s, as evidenced by the quantity and substance of its research output. To this end, there was a precipitous decline in the production of policy documents through the 1980s. In 1982, for instance, the LPRD was responsible for publishing (in conjunction with the NEC subcommittees) no less than 569 research papers (LPNEC, LPRD, Admin: 62, 1982). By 1991, the Policy Directorate produced only 75 such documents annually, and of these, many were simply touched-up reports originally produced in the PLP (LPNEC, LPPD, File 1 Index, 1992). The once-powerful Home and International policy committees were also defanged, only engaging with policy development once most of the initial drafting had been completed in the Shadow Cabinet. Thus, by 1986, most of the responsibility for Labour's ideational production had shifted to the Shadow Cabinet and the team of advisers that supported it (Minkin, 1992: p. 409).

Thus, in a few short years, Kinnock succeeded in "changing the culture of the institution that had kept the left's ideas alive...the last bastion of the left was being neutered, cementing the leadership's control over policymaking in the process" (Batrouni, 2020: p. 32). Nearly a decade after a similar process played out in the Conservative Party, the beginning of the end of Labour's PCII was in sight. Along with it, the party's relationship with the ideas that it stood for was being reimagined almost in its entirety. For the first time, the value of an idea was assessed based on its electoral impact, as determined by polling data on voter responses, rather than on their alignment with the party's long-term ideological goals (such as the pursuit of socialism). As we've seen, the party had engaged with psephology experts since at least the 1950s, but in these earlier

iterations, polling was used to help the party determine how well it was convincing voters of its political perspective. Starting in the 1980s and accelerating through subsequent leaderships, polling data became an essential ingredient in the development ideas in the first place to ensure Labour's platform would accommodate as wide a spectrum of the population as possible (Holden, 2002). This, what Shaw calls a "new strategic paradigm", constituted a shift towards "symbolic politics" that understood policy ideas not as a means of achieving some broader political vision once in power but as "products" to be sold in pursuit of that power (Shaw, 1994: pp. 59-62). More pragmatically, Panitch and Leys argue that the successful shift towards this leader-centric approach to ideational development, combined with an emphasis on communications, was a turning point at which the parliamentary socialist concept of the party as the "shaper and leader of opinion" was finally abandoned (Panitch & Leys, 2001: p. 221).

5.8: Kinnock's Paradox: Communications with Nothing to Say

Having neutralised the party's ideational infrastructure, Kinnock faced a new challenge — he was creating a modern communications infrastructure centred in the leader's office but had few ideas to communicate. Having aligned himself firmly with the party's right, he embraced a faction that largely failed to fill the ideational void left by the collapse of revisionism. Polling data might indicate which proposals and issue framings voters were responsive to, but this presupposed the existence of developed proposals and framings in the first place. Here, the leader and his new coterie of advisers found the cupboards barren. Thus, "although Kinnock had successfully reoriented the policymaking process by integrating the PLP and ensuring a dominant position for the leader's office, the ideas that shaped policy were slow to emerge" (Batrouni, 2020: p. 32). This was partly due to Kinnock's relative aversion to "big ideas", which he saw as antithetical to effective governance and electability (*ibid.*). *ibid.* Attempts by the (now avowedly centrist) NEC to fill this gap by setting up an 'Aims and Values' group ultimately stalled out after Kinnock rejected several drafts. This meant that although the leader's office had hitherto unprecedented control over drafting the 1987 manifesto, *Britain Will Win*, there were few new ideas to fill the document out. While it was undoubtedly a less radical manifesto than

its immediate predecessors, this was due to a moderation of existing left-wing policies instead of the introduction of new alternatives (Webb, 1992). The electoral return on Kinnock's reform efforts was marginal, with Labour picking up only a handful of seats between 1983 and 1987.

It was an important lesson for the emergent group of Labour modernisers, including a young Tony Blair. While the 1987 campaign was celebrated for its updated approach to communications and professionalism — at least, that is, by the party's new communications professionals (Gould, 1998) — it was clear for many in the PLP that new ideas were necessary if the party was going to make a positive case to British voters. The latest and greatest communications and public relations techniques might have been essential for getting Labour's message to cut through, but these efforts were mute without something meaningful to say with these tools. To find this meaning, Kinnock and the advisors that made up his new brain trust would, once again, look towards the Conservative Party for inspiration, initiating a process of ideational outsourcing that would define the rest of his leadership and his successors.

To see how this happened, it is first necessary to understand Kinnock's frustrations with the combined efforts of the NEC and the Shadow Cabinet to develop the new ideas lacking in 1987. In the immediate wake of the defeat, Kinnock pushed for a thorough reevaluation of the party platform, and in September 1987 the Conference agreed to a two-year Policy Review. This comprised seven joint NEC-Shadow Cabinet Review Groups, although it soon became apparent that the SCA, not the Policy Directorate, would be the primary coordinating organisation in the process. In November of that year, Mandelson and others from the SCA would "set the scene" for the Policy Review by presenting a report, *Labour and Britain in the 1990s*, to the NEC that explicated how shifting social and economic patterns in the British electorate had rendered traditional Labour ideas electorally inviable. This was a subtle message to party traditionalists that sweeping changes would be necessary to party ideas and that no attempts to return to the radicalism of the 1970s would be tolerated (Shaw, 1994: p. 81). In the Review, the practice of ideational-development-by-public-relations was formalised, and the goal of

‘rebranding’ the party’s ideas to better align with the aspirations of the so-called ‘floating voters’ was made explicit (Cruddas, 2024: p. 156; Hayter, 2005). From this point onwards, Labour’s “communication strategy could no longer be detached from its policy prospectus” (Hughes & Wintour, 1990: p. 42).

Central to these efforts was research presented by the SCA depicting the extent of class dealignment that had occurred as the era of Fordist production had given way to deindustrialisation. As this occurred, it was argued, collectivist values had withered as a critical mass of voters shifted towards an emphasis on individual choice, personal wealth generation and consumption (Shaw, 1994: pp. 81-84). The challenge that Labour now faced was to update its platform to align with this new reality.

However, realising the need for new ideas and having new ideas are two different challenges, and it soon became clear that Labour’s new strategic community largely lacked an aspirational economic vision to sell to this new breed of consumer citizen. If the party’s new campaign professionals hailed from the world of advertising, they would need a ‘product’ to sell in the form of new ideas. The Policy Review was meant to fill this void but was frustrated by several factors. First, the immediate threat of an election had been relaxed, meaning several of the Policy Review Groups that constituted the review process felt encouraged to take policy discussion beyond where the Shadow Cabinet was comfortable. Second, the ‘soft left’ support for the exercise — and for Kinnock more generally — began to wane through 1988 as the reality of the moderniser’s push to consolidate power in the CSC and Leader’s Office became clear. With frustrations mounting, Kinnock dispensed with the veneer of a ‘consensual’ policy development process and vested power over the production of Policy Review reports in a small group of senior frontbenchers and, crucially, their political advisers — a group which Labour Left critics would dub the “Inner Core Elite” (Heffernan, 2001: p. 79).

To this end, despite Kinnock’s subsequent claims to the contrary, it is difficult to dismiss the criticisms that the Policy Review would become a largely performative exercise, a process of rubber-stamping policies that had been developed elsewhere (see

Batrouni, 2020; Minkin, 1992). For one, frontbench advisers replaced Policy Directorate officials as the Policy Review secretariat (Shaw, 1994: pp. 111-112), thereby removing a crucial point of party influence over the ideas generated by the Policy Review Groups. Second, it became evident after the review that the Leadership was prepared to disregard any reports that did not align with their vision of a ‘modern’ and ‘forward-looking party’, as advocated by figures like Gould and Mandelson (Gould, 1998). The hope was that the Policy Review would yield, as Kay Andrews (one of Kinnock’s Political Advisers) put it, “a few key policies which will, because they are appealing, sensible and plausible, help us win the next election” (quoted in Batrouni, 2020: pp. 36). Instead, they found that many Policy Review Groups were overly focused on revisiting major political economy issues rather than proposing specific, pragmatic policies. Thus, Kinnock and his team of strategists faced a familiar challenge, and although the Policy Review officially concluded in the summer of 1989, substantial changes to Labour’s economic platform continued into the early 1990s, reflecting Kinnock’s dissatisfaction with the process (Batrouni, 2020: pp. 35; Wickham-Jones, 2000).

The lessons this group of Labour ‘modernisers’ drew from the 1987 election and the subsequent policy review were clear: the party needed fresh ideas to project an image of managerial competence. Labour had lost the intellectual high ground because it had failed to keep pace with the organisational innovations behind the production of political ideas (Bentham, 2006). A modernised centre-left intellectual community was needed to produce new policies and ideas capable of solving problems caused or ignored by free marketeers without alienating a moderate electorate (Ruben, 1996). Thus, the New Left’s think tanks would take a wholly different approach to political ideas than what had come before, and it would come at the expense of the party’s traditional means of ideational production. In think tanks (and organisations like them) Labour reformers would find the raw material to redevelop the party’s offer to British voters (Diamond, 2021: p. 130).

5.9: Labour Discovers Ideational Outsourcing: IPPR and the Commission on Social Justice

In 1987, Clive Hollick, a businessman, media mogul, and longstanding Labour supporter, penned an informal letter to Neil Kinnock, suggesting Labour should establish a counterpart to the right-wing think tanks to fight back in a war of ideas where Labour was clearly in retreat. This led to a meeting with John Eatwell, Kinnock's economic adviser, who, convinced of this approach, secured Kinnock's support. The first challenge was to obtain funding, and they soon began reaching out to potential benefactors. A board of trustees was assembled as known Labour modernisers were brought on board through personal connections. Through no small effort, the fledgling group raised about £200,000 for the new project, with Hollick particularly important for leading the effort to secure support from friendly corners of the business world (Pautz, 2012). The unions, for their part, were initially very hesitant to contribute — they had their own research operations and had little interest in adding yet another competing voice to the chorus that was trying to influence Labour policy. Yet despite these limited resources, this initial funding was believed to be sufficient to sustain a new think tank for its first two years, and the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) was launched in December 1988 (Ruben, 2008).

James Cornford, Professor of Politics at Edinburgh University, was brought in as director. Cornford had previously served as director of a Joseph Rountree Foundation initiative, unofficially dubbed the “Outer Circle Policy Unit”, and thus had a keen appreciation of the emergent field of professional ideational production that was becoming increasingly influential in British politics. To this end, he emphasised that the success of IPPR would depend more on its approach to operations than on its fundamental principles. What he meant by this was that IPPR would act as a node in a much broader network of ideas producers and, in so doing, amplify the organisation’s impact far beyond what it would have otherwise achieved on its minimal budget. “The secret,” as he would put it, “is to act as a secretariat for a much larger network of interested people” (quoted in Ruben, 2008: p. 67). Thus, many early recruits to the organisation, such as David Miliband and Anna Coote, brought with them a network of like-minded intellectuals that helped enhance the IPPR’s profile across the policy specialist and media space. However, the think tank’s most important recruit was Patricia Hewitt, who would step away from Kinnock’s strategy team to join as Deputy Director, vastly increasing the fledgling

organisation's credibility (and fundraising potential). Under Hewitt's influence (and against the wishes of Cornford), the IPPR began to function "as an outsourced part of Labour's Policy Unit" (Pautz 2012: p. 53), working to advance the interests of the party leadership (first Kinnock and then his successor, John Smith).

Indeed, from her position as a 'political adviser on the outside', Hewitt would have a major impact on the Policy Review and provide critical external support for Kinnock as he tried to imprint his stamp on Labour's ideas (Gould, 1998). To this end, as with the CPS during Thatcher's bid to take control of the Conservative Party's ideational infrastructure, IPPR's utility came precisely from its hybridity (Ruben, 2008). It was at once recognised as an initiative to provide new ideas to the Labour leadership while remaining nominally independent of the party and the front bench. This allowed it to develop ideas and formulate political connections that would have caused untenable inter-factional consternation had they been floated by formal bodies such as the Policy Unit. As Minkin puts it, IPPR was hugely helpful to Kinnock's initiative because it could claim to be "formally independent" while working "in close and discreet cooperation with the Leader" and thus giving the front bench "a platform for serious outriders for new policy initiatives, new political relationships and various initiatives" (Minkin, 2014: p. 70). It was an "external motor for change" (*ibid.*) that would become a vital resource for modernisers who felt that the party's sacred cows were holding back their efforts to create a party capable of competing in a 21st-century media and communications landscape (see also Pautz, 2012: p. 53).

Although it was in the early stages, the process of renovating the party's ideational infrastructure was well underway, with figures in the SCA effectively running the party's policy formation process, up to and including the manifesto drafting process (with only minor support from the Policy Directorate) (Labour Party, (Labour Party, LPRD, Report on Labour Political Education, 1966, emphasis in original)

Policy Directorate, 1992). Further, there were growing grounds for optimism amongst the ranks of Labour advisors that efforts might start to pay electoral dividends. Thatcher resigned in 1990 as recession and subsequent inflation fatally undermined her claim to be the stalwart guardian of the British economy. She was replaced by John Major, whose mild manner and air of moderation the Conservatives hoped would provide a welcome

contrast to the outgoing Thatcher. By most accounts, however, he came across as weak and ineffectual, giving Labour leaders hope that Thatcherite fever had broken (Heppell, 2007). This was supported (as opposition advisers would have been keenly aware of) by polling, with several sources predicting a significant swing towards the opposition (Jowell et al., 1993). Thus, despite the frustrations of the Policy Review, modernisers were confident heading into the 1992 election — and these heightened expectations would make the 1992 defeat all the more painful. While the party had achieved some degree of progress, claiming a 3.6 percent swing in vote share and 42 additional seats, this was not nearly enough to come close to overturning the Conservative Party's overall majority (Wilder, 1992).

Despite this setback, modernisers were quick to offer an interpretation of the loss as a vindication of their approach. The party was making progress, but the pace of change was too slow and constrained by the party's institutional legacy. They had successfully neutralised the electoral liability presented by a left-controlled PCII but were yet to find a way to bring in the alternative ideas they felt were necessary to present voters with an updated party platform. Given the connection through Hewitt, the IPPR was seen as a natural partner to help fill this gap. In fact, at this early stage of its development, the think tank (no doubt under Hewitt's strategic guidance) had been hard at work developing and advocating a new centre-left approach to economic governance: the "third way". Third-wayism amounted to a reimagining of the British political economy that could account for how the changes wrought by globalised capitalism placed unavoidable constraints on traditional social democracy. To this end, IPPR authors argued that the country needed a new economic model, one that was capable of transcending the limitations of both Thatcherism and traditional Labourism by going "beyond a static model of market/state relations and instead bind the two in close interrelationships, weaving together social interest and market dynamism" (Blackstone et al., 1992:: p. 3).

A change at the top gave the modernisers a clear avenue to integrate these ideas into the party's programme. After the 1992 defeat, Kinnock resigned to be replaced by his Shadow Chancellor, John Smith. By this time, Kinnock had become a figure of scorn, "a

man synonymous with failure and a desperate desire to win at any cost” (Fielding, 1994: p. 589). Smith ensured his election as leader by aligning himself explicitly with the modernisers (Pautz, 2014). Experience made Smith a natural ally for the modernisers in general and the IPPR specifically. During the 1992 campaign, he had come under fire for the party’s tax and spending plans, and as a result, decided to make the reconsideration of these policies a central plank of his leadership campaign.

He was also keenly aware that changing the party’s longstanding commitment to a robust welfare state would be an immense challenge. He was, therefore, drawn to the modernisers’ approach to ideational innovation that relied on an appeal to external experts to push through controversial reform. Thus, “Remembering the frustrating process of the Policy Review, his advisors convinced him that driving forward programmatic reform required an external push, that Labour could no longer afford the current pace of modernisation and that a wide-ranging overhaul of their positions on social policy was required” (Pautz, 2012: p. 54). On Hewitt’s suggestion, it was decided the best way to do this would be to form an independent commission — later given the official title of the Commission on Social Justice (CSJ) — to reconsider the party’s approach to welfare and social policy. To run the Commission, Hewitt offered IPPR services, with significant funding from Hollick and fellow businessman David Sainsbury. This was a major coup for the fledgling think tank, which used the exposure generated by working with the shadow frontbench to raise significant funding that would ensure a hitherto unimaginable degree of organisational longevity (Pautz, 2012).

The arrangement was also beneficial for Smith, who could lead a wide-ranging review of the policies he hoped to change while maintaining a degree of plausible deniability that would shield him from criticism from the party’s left. It also allowed him to consolidate further authority over the party’s ideas, a goal which continued to be central to modernisers’ plans. To this end, Smith directly set the CSJ’s terms of reference, and the body was to report to him exclusively, not the broader party (*ibid.*). The IPPR’s official responsibilities with the Commission were similar to that of the LPRD vis a vis the NEC policy committees — it was to provide secretariat support with control over personnel. To

this end, 14 commissioners were recruited from across academia, party politics (both Labour and the Lib Dems), trade unions, business, and other think tanks. In addition, it was staffed by two paid IPPR researchers with oversight from David Miliband, “an ambitious IPPR analyst keen on developing a new centre-left philosophy and on re-engaging Labour with those intellectuals whom it had alienated in the previous decade because of its leftward shift” (*ibid.*: p. 55). In terms of composition, the CSJ was markedly similar to one of the NEC policy committees that dominated the policy formation in the days of PCII, with the obvious distinction that it had no connection to any part of the Labour Party besides the leader’s office.

Ostensibly, the Commission was formed to “analyse the relationship between social justice and other goals, including economic competitiveness and prosperity” (Commission on Social Justice, 1994: p. 412). Under the surface, however, it was clear to participants that it was as much about limiting the party’s influence over the policy process, to instigate broad changes to party policy and to “ditch a whole lot of Labour Party baggage” (Pautz, 2012: p. 56). As Pautz elucidates, building from interview data with CSJ participants, “Commissioners knew that their work effectively outmanoeuvred the left and union wings of the party” to “keep the party out” of policy formation and thus “not make the mistakes of the Policy Review again”. This was justified by a desire to supply “an effective Labour government” with “practical” recommendations for power, a change which was seen as essential if the party was to “demonstrate to the electorate that the party leadership was willing and able to think outside supposedly traditional, and therefore obsolete, ideological parameters and connect to the whole of society” (quoted in *ibid.*: p. 56-57).

Hewitt’s role was essential in maintaining the connections between the Commission, the shadow frontbench, and the IPPR, a role which foreshadowed the crucial ‘linkage’ role connecting party leadership to external ideas-producers that frontbench advisers would come to play during the Blair years. She was appointed deputy chair and thus acted as a point of contact between the three entities, enabling an essential flow of ideas and funds that allowed each to meet the needs of the other. In other words, the IPPR, because of its relationship with Hewitt, was in an excellent position to “guide the commission’s

activities in the interest of the party leadership”, especially when it came to producing specific policy proposals (Pautz, 2012: p. 57). The party leadership, again via Hewitt, could funnel essential visibility, and thus fundraising initiative, towards the think tanks and the CSJ. The importance of this latter point should not be underestimated. Compared with the think tanks of the New Right, the IPPR — and the other New Left think tanks that would emerge soon in its wake — operated in a significantly more constrained fundraising landscape. This makes ‘exposure’, or the demonstrable ability to funnel ideas into positions of power, essential for attracting limited resources from relatively meagre donation pools. Thus, with Smith widely seen as the presumptive future Prime Minister, the IPPR’s ability to claim a close relationship with the Labour leader became essential for attracting support from industry and wealthy donors (Ruben, 2008).

To this end, while the impact of the CSJ on Labour Party policy would be minimal in terms of specific policy output, due in large part to Smith’s untimely death in May 1994, its impact on the party’s ideational infrastructure was significant. Here was proof of concept that Labour too could successfully “contract out” its policy development and that left-of-centre think tanks could have a demonstrable impact despite significant funding constraints (Batrouni, 2020: p. 43). On top of this, the Commission did prove essential for introducing a number of “big ideas” (such as the ‘third-way’ concept) into New Labour thinking, many of which would make their way into the party platform to some degree or another under Tony Blair. More generally, the CSJ would instigate a shift in policy focus toward an emphasis on equality of opportunity as opposed to equality of outcomes, marking a significant divergence from the party’s traditional focus on wealth redistribution. Downstream from this, the Commission also produced several ideas to reconceptualise the party’s relationship with the welfare state. For instance, via David Miliband, the Commission introduced the “Social Investment State” concept, which argued that the welfare state should be reimagined as a “springboard for economic opportunity” instead of (solely) as a social safety net. This involved emphasising education, training, and employment as primary tools for social justice rather than relying on traditional welfare provisions. Similarly, a host of ideas such as “flexicurity”, “welfare-to-work”, and “lifelong learning” were introduced as a part of a broader reimagining of the state’s role in

unemployment insurance, shifting the focus from the direct provision of income support to the expansion of educational opportunity and upskilling to help individuals navigate volatile labour markets themselves (Pautz, 2014; Pautz, 2012).

Smith combined this ‘external push’ for an ideational renaissance with notable changes to the party’s internal policy development processes. This was a much more nuanced approach to party ideas than that advanced under Kinnock insofar as Smith combined the centralising tendencies of his predecessor with a pronounced effort to integrate democratic norms into this process of leader-led ideational production (and with more respect for the NEC). To this end, Smith introduced two key reforms to Labour’s ideational infrastructure: the Joint Policy Committee (JPC) and the National Policy Forum (NPF). The JPC was established as a liaison body between the NEC and the shadow cabinet and was given authority over the production and publication of all policy documents (Minkin, 2014: p. 109-110). While it was nominally under the purview of the NEC, it was chaired by Smith himself, an arrangement that would prompt Shore to observe that “no previous leader has enjoyed such personal and institutionalised control over party policy” (quoted in Batrouni, 2020 p. 42). At the same time, however, Smith also initiated the National Policy Forum (NPF), which aimed to be a new forum for the membership to debate and develop new ideas. The development of the NPF, at least as it was conceived of under Smith, very much cut against the centralising impulses of Kinnock (and subsequently Blair). With the support of Roland Wales, the new head of the Policy Directorate who replaced Bish in 1992, the NPF succeeded in generating a significant degree of goodwill amongst party operatives, who had grown accustomed to a straightforwardly antagonistic relationship with the leadership under Kinnock (Minkin, 2014: p. 111-112).

5.10: New Labour: Blair Completes the Revolution

Given these innovations, it is difficult to say what the party might have looked like had Smith been allowed to complete his reforms to the party’s ideational infrastructure. His untimely death, however, would mean that his innovations would be taken forward by his

successor, Tony Blair. Blair would immediately set about completing the modernisation process based on his understanding of what constituted an appropriate approach to party management. As Mandelson would recall, the work of Blair's predecessors came to be seen as a "ground-clearing operation", allowing Blair to impose his new vision for the party — what would ultimately come to be known as New Labour (Mandelson & Liddle, 2002: p. 2).

& Liddle

Like party reforms of the past — from Butler to Wilson to Joseph — this effort was driven by an appreciation of the fundamental importance of ideas to the coherence and success of any party-political project. It was an effort to renew Labour's relationship with ideas in both substance and development and, in the process, deliver the party from its electoral banishment. As Gould would recall:

Tony Blair was obsessed with winning the battle of ideas. He believed New Labour would be nothing, could be nothing, without ideas at its heart. If a political party is not founded on ideas which have the power to dominate the political agenda, it is unlikely to win a convincing or suitable electoral victory (Gould, 1998: 231).

However, compared with the efforts of past reformers, the Blairite embrace of party ideas might be described the final inversion of means and ends. In the past, a foray into the battle of ideas was motivated primarily by a desire to win power to advance some set of normative or ideological commitments. Under Blair, the goal was to develop ideas for the sake of winning power. As Blair would put it: "*In order to keep winning*, we needed to create a core of ideas, attitudes and policy that was solid, sustainable and strong" (Blair, 2010: p. 85, emphasis added).

Blair signalled his intent three months into his leadership when he announced in his first leader's speech, "New Labour, New Britain," his intention to overturn Clause IV of the party's constitution, in particular the part of Clause IV that committed the party to pursuing the public ownership of the means of production. By attacking one of the party's sacred cows as one of his first initiatives, he purposefully kicked a factional hornet's nest that Labour leaders had avoided since Hugh Gaitskell's failed attempt in 1959. For Blair and

the modernisers, attacking Clause IV was essential for signalling that he was serious about finally disposing of the 'old Labour baggage'. Perhaps even more importantly, it demonstrated that he wielded enough power over the party to do it. To this end, one of Blair's first acts was to directly attack the party's tradition of democratic policy development. This was undoubtedly on the advice of figures like Mandelson, who had long seen the party's democratic policy development process as "not a satisfactory way to make policy" and the source of "unrealistic positions adopted by the party in the 1970s and 1980s [that were] put into the party programme" (quoted in Batrouni, 2020: p. 46). By this, he meant the ideas of the party's left, the dominance of which Mandelson and Blair saw as the primary cause of the party's electoral misfortunes.

However, the modernisers also took aim at the unions, feeling that in the era of class dealignment, institutional attachment to organised labour meant tying the party to a rapidly shrinking constituency (Minkin 2014: pp. 103-111). As Batrouni notes, "the traditional actors of the internal, formal policymaking process would be circumvented...In its place, the leader and his team would take precedence on policymaking matters, drawing on policy details and ideas from actors outside the formal structure of the party" (Batrouni, 2020: p. 46). The first step in doing this was ensuring that the party could not undercut the leadership's messaging by putting forward policy ideas independently from the party leadership. This involved building Kinnock's leader-centred approach to policy production and, more subtly, the subversion of Smith's pluralising innovations. This ultimately resulted in a situation in which, as Minkin argues, all ideas that would go into the party programme during the New Labour regime would go through one of three men: Blair, Gordon Brown, or Peter Mandelson and the "Inner Core" advisor elite that surrounded them (Minkin, 2014: p. 117). Thus, "Blair and a small group of individuals around him were more significant than any formal policymaking structure in the party. This was true both in and out of power" (Batrouni, 2020: p. 47).

Mandelson, especially, was central to institutionalising the dominance of the party's top-level advisers. He was promoted to a much higher position than he had been under either Smith or Kinnock, and he used this position to reinstate a regime in which control

over ideas was paramount. To the extent that figures from the NEC were privy to policy discussion, it was under strict supervision, with formal, party-based policy development processes reduced to rubber-stamping exercises for decisions already made by the Inner Core. This was especially the case with the NPF, which came to be seen by detractors as little more than a legitimisation device for upstream policy decisions. Thus, as Minkin puts it, initiatives started under the NPF framework came to function as “one-way” devices, which would allow the leadership to “educate” the rest of the party without any expectation that meaningful feedback would be given in the other direction (Minkin, 2014: pp. 300-305). Minority or dissenting opinions, to the extent that pre-meeting management manoeuvring even allowed them to surface, were rarely even recorded (Avril, 2016).

To this end, Blair’s time as Leader of the Opposition was defined by the formation of a series of initiatives that were advertised as important reforms to democratise the party’s policy development process but were, in actuality, designed to allow the leadership close control of every aspect of the party platform. In 1995, figures like Roland Wales (the Director of Policy) began to warn the NEC that the deliberative promises of the NPF were little more than cover for the imposition of New Labour management techniques (Minkin, 2014: p. 674). These concerns would be borne out in the “Road to the Manifesto” initiative, which established a series of committees that nominally allowed social partners, trade unions, and local constituency bodies to provide feedback on policy proposals. It soon became apparent, however, that the lines of feedback from these consultation committees were disconnected from anyone with authority over what actually went in the manifesto. Road to the Manifesto committees were asked to discuss policy decisions that had either already been made or would be made in the future with no reference to their input. Reflecting the feeling of futility that defined the project, Wales resigned from his post at the Policy Directorate by late 1995, penning a statement upon doing so that “barely disguising the fact that it was because his job had become pointless” (Leys, 1996: p. 27). There was almost no coverage of it in the press, as it was clear to anyone who was paying attention that the Policy Directorate — and, for that matter, the NEC Policy Committees — were no longer relevant to the development of Labour’s ideas. This view was vindicated

when the production of the 1997 manifesto, *New Labour, New Life for Britain*, was drafted almost exclusively by Blair himself (Minkin, 2014: 277).

Blair's smashing success in 1997 meant that this dynamic would only accelerate when Labour returned to power, for instance with the widely-promoted with the Partner in Power initiative. Here again, the promise was for greater party input into policy developments of the Labour government. The motivation for such an approach was Blair's concern that a potential ideational gap between the party and his future Labour government might lead to critical resolutions at party Conferences or unfavourable press briefings, which "would be a gift for a hostile media and the party's opponents" (Minkin, 2014: p. 200). As with Road to the Manifesto, the highly choreographed nature of these exercises revealed a unidirectionality to the flow of ideas, with the composition of these committee bodies closely controlled by the Inner Circle and with pre-meeting briefings commonly used to smooth over any possible dissent before it could be aired to broader party (Minkin, 2014: chs. 7-8). Thus, we can understand these initiatives as a means of overcoming the challenges associated with the separation between the ideas of the *party* and those of the *party government* by ensuring that the former was rendered entirely subservient to the latter. As early as 1997, the "'Partnership' had already become in great measure managed subordination" (Minkin, 2014: p. 672).

This totalising approach to party management gave Blair and his advisers a degree of control over the party platform that would have been unimaginable to previous Labour leaders. Further, learning from Kinnock's failures, Blair was also successful at expanding the party's relationship with a growing list of external policy specialists to allow him to develop a positive political offer independently of the party. Indeed, the ability to reference the authority of external experts was vital for making this approach to policymaking function because it allowed Blair to claim an interest in 'what works', contrasted with the 'ideological' approach that had defined the party's traditional policy processes. As Mandelson would put it, the "big difference in policymaking [compared with previous approaches] is that the shadow cabinet consults extensively with outside interests in the development of policy — often helped by commissions established by sympathetic think

tanks” (quoted in Batrouni, 2020: p. 48). To this end, between 1994 and the election in 1997, Blair embraced and expanded on Smith’s approach of outsourcing the development of new ideas. This was primarily accomplished via informal exchanges between Blair’s top political advisers and a network of left-of-centre think tanks formed in the wake of the IPPR’s initial success in the CSJ, an arrangement which allowed Blair and his team to fill the ideational void that emerged as they defanged the party’s traditional ideational infrastructure (Ball & Exley, 2010) and to inhibit internal (left-wing) dissent by bypassing the party’s formal policymaking apparatus (Batrouni, 2020: p. 49).

Panich and Leys (2001) identify four organisations that are particularly important in shaping New Labour’s platform in these early opposition years. The first was the aforementioned IPPR, which played an essential role following Blair’s ascension to the party leadership before diminishing somewhat when Hewitt and Miliband departed for political consultancies. Demos, founded by Martin Jacques and Geoff Mulgan, was perhaps more important given its lasting influence over Blair. Indeed, it was through his relations with Mulgan (and by extension with Demos) that Blair could fill out much of the detail of his post-ideological vision of politics while still presenting voters with an overarching vision of the future by pulling ideas “from outside the political mainstream” (Panitch & Leys, 2001: p. 243). To this end, Demos was founded explicitly with a mission to advance a “postmodern” approach to policy formation, which was defined against what was described as the dogmas of both Old Labour and Thatcherism. It thus consciously embraced an avant-garde approach to ideas meant to be seen as going “beyond left and right”, an outlook that fit well with the particular image of ‘centrist radicalism’ that New Labour was trying to cultivate. Further, unlike the IPPR, which focused on detailed policy proposals, Demos was more concerned with generating “big ideas” that could capture the public imagination and provide a broad intellectual framework for New Labour. Just as importantly, it was particularly adept at presenting its ideas in a media-friendly way. This made them particularly useful to the Labour leadership because they provided an air of intellectual nous and the ability to influence public discourse without being bogged down by the specifics of policy proposals that could be critiqued for their cost or feasibility (Pautz, 2011).

Two other organisations worthy of mention are Charter 88 and Nexus. The former, Charter 88 (named after its founding year, 1988), was not a think tank in the traditional sense but rather a pressure group that organised around constitutional reform and democratic renewal. Its focus was primarily on countering what was seen as the erosion of civil liberties under the Thatcher government through a series of initiatives to enhance the country's democratic vitality, including the introduction of a Bill of Rights, electoral reform and devolution (Vizard, 2010). New Labour embraced these ideas to create a progressive image that could be distinguished from the Old Labour's concerns over economic democracy (Pautz, 2011). Nexus was also not a think tank but more of an advocacy coalition of intellectuals and policy specialists that formed to provide expertise for Blair's policy development efforts. As Batrouni puts it, this turn to external networks of expertise is indicative of New Labour's alienation of the party's traditional ideational infrastructure and was "emblematic of the policymaking process ... now dominated by the 'Inner Core Elite' who engaged directly with actors outside the formal policymaking structures" (Batrouni, 2020: p. 50).

Like Demos, this broader network of thinkers, united by their shared commitment to democratic reform, became a significant source of ideas for New Labour during its opposition years. One notable concept was stakeholder capitalism, which Batrouni (2020: pp. 53-56) traces to journalist and political economist Will Hutton and his 1995 book *The State We're In*. The central idea — that the economy functions more effectively when everyone feels they have a stake in it — aligned naturally with New Labour's communitarian ethos. Just as importantly, it provided the party with a "big idea" or an overarching framework to support a broader political platform. As a policy adviser, David Miliband played a key role in introducing these ideas into the leader's informal policymaking process. However, like communitarianism, stakeholder capitalism failed to gain traction. Key figures around Blair, notably Gordon Brown, became concerned about its corporatist approach and its potential impact on Labour's relationship with the business community. Relatedly, there were also fears it could lead to accusations that the party was subtly working to increase trade union influence.

However, while the specific ideas that defined Blair's time as Leader of the Opposition largely failed to survive Labour's return to power, the processes behind the development of ideas would have a lasting impact on Labour's ideational infrastructure. In fact, in many ways, the *process* of ideational development engendered by Blair's Labour Party can be understood as the *cause* of this lack of commitment to the ideas that it seemed so attached to in opposition. For modernisers, the ideological legacy of the party's social democratic past had been tarnished, and with it, the processes of ideational production that had defined the post-war era. Labour leaders, like their counterparts in centre-left parties around the advanced capitalist world, had come to see traditional sources of ideas, be they party research outfits or the civil services, as a priori retrograde (Mudge, 2018; Pautz, 2012). The result was a reflexive insistence on the superiority of ideas emerging from non-traditional sources, a sentiment well captured by Mulgan's claim that the ideas that would lead the country into the 21st century were not going to come from governments, parties, or bureaucracy but from "a management consultancy, or a multinational, a laboratory, a small inner-city project, a green campaigning group; anywhere but politicians" (quoted in Diamond, 2021: p. 129). In the first instance, this meant that there was much less accountability on the leadership to follow through with an idea it had proposed in the past for the simple reason that, unlike in earlier eras, there was simply no institutional force in the party to keep track of promises kept and broken. Beyond this, as the network of organisations that New Labour 'contracted' to develop new ideas matured, new organisations would emerge to offer new policy ideas. This resulted in a 'fast fashion' approach to political ideas — since there were always new ideas to reach for, there were few reasons to faithfully follow through with those embraced in the past.

5.11: Connecting the Frontbench to External Expertise: The Importance of Ministerial Advisers

As discussed in Chapter 4, a new breed of political advisers sat at the heart of this network expertise. Blair had finally found an alternative means to develop the ideas

necessary to update Labour's political platform in the "broader policy network outside the party" (Batrouni, 2020: 56). This network was connected to the leader's office via a policy advisory team, funded by Short Money and owing their professional and personal loyalty to the leader and not to the party. The overarching shift, as Fielding describes it, was a transformation from a situation in which "power was [once] dispersed between members, trade unions and the Westminster leadership, [but] now only resides in the leader's hands. In effect, 'New' Labour is run by a handful of professionals based in London who owe loyalty to Blair rather than the party" (Fielding, 2003: p. 116). The influence of Labour's PCII had mostly been eliminated, and Blair, as party leader, now had free rein to present the British public with a party programme as he saw fit (Avril, 2016).

This amounted to the formalisation of the networked approach to policy formation — centred on an Inner Elite circle of advisers with ties to party-external professional political organisations. In many ways, this was the inevitable outcome of the near-total subjugation of the party's policymaking apparatus. Without an effective PCII, the natural process by which the party's ideational influence was reduced when Labour took power had no counterweight. In the absence of figures like Pitt and Bish in positions to insist that the institutions of party policy development continue to be respected, there was little to stop them from being ignored or, worse yet, co-opted entirely. However, the consolidation of policymaking-by-advisor-elite also had its own momentum, driven by a shared culture of 'modernising vanguardism' in which front-bench advisers came to understand themselves as the "leader's Praetorian Guard" (Shaw, 2016: p. 155). Thus, the No. 10 Policy Unit, and SpAd corps generally, came to see themselves as possessing a "special historic purpose" to save Labour from itself, reinforced by "their awareness that New Labour 'true believers' formed only a thin layer of the party membership" (*ibid.*). This translated into a shared frustration — and frequent contempt — for anything to do with "Old Labour" and, conversely, a premium being placed on anything that appeared to have the appearance of 'innovation' when developing new ideas.

Along with this sense of vanguardism, the New Labour SpAd corps also increased in numbers and resourcing. Indeed, the expanded institutionalisation of front-bench

advisers was an essential part of the New Labour government, both in terms of its increased use of SpAds and the expanded resources of opposition parties that it oversaw during its first stint in power. 53 new advisers were appointed in the first few weeks of Blair's government, increasing to 75 within a year — double the number under the previous Conservative administration — and by the end of New Labour's stint in power (1997-2010), 297 SpAds were employed, compared with 181 SpAds in the preceding Conservative governments of Thatcher and Major (1979-1997). Most of these increases were concentrated in the No. 10 Policy Unit (see Table 1), a reflection of Blair's consolidatory instincts and the importance placed on maintaining the appearance of ideational innovation once in power (Pyper, 2001).

Table 5.1: Number of SpAds per party in government, Total and Policy Unit

Government Cohort	Number of SpAds	SpAds in No. 10 PU	% Total PU
Conservative, 1979-1997	181	19	10.50
Labour, 1997-2010	297	50	16.84
Coalition, 2010-2013	148 (106C, 42 LD)	19	12.84

Source: Reproduced from Yong and Hazell, 2014

Under Blair, SpAds were also given a broader remit and encouraged to engage in more 'blue-sky thinking' than under previous administrations. This reinforced the premium placed on previous work outside the party. To this end, as Yong and Hazell show, the career backgrounds of newly appointed SpAds shifted appreciably under New Labour compared with previous governments, with markedly more emphasis on recruiting think tankers, public affairs and communications professionals, and media figures (Yong & Hazell, 2014: p. 44-45). Perhaps the most notable example of this was the recruitment of Mulgan from Demos, who "within five minutes of Blair winning... had been offered a senior job in Downing Street" (quoted in Pautz, 2011: p. 195). Mulgan would also retain his position as Demos director until 1998, and thus, similarly to Keith Joseph's position at the head of both the CPS and CRD, he could inject ideas developed at Demos directly into Labour government policy via the newly-created Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) within the Policy Unit (Pautz, 2011; see also Blair, 2000).

This process of ‘ideational outsourcing’ was also a key demand driver that allowed for the development of the professional policy ‘market’, which continued to influence party leaders well after Blair left power. Indeed, as this new system of policy production was formalised, there was a proliferation of “new politics” think tanks that would emerge along with new party leaders as efforts were made to reimagine the party’s offer in the wake of defeats. To this end, think tanks like Reform (founded in 2001), Policy Exchange (founded in 2002), and ResPublica (founded in 2009) made key contributions to the ideas that David Cameron would articulate in a party platform that focused on the “Big Society” and on returning the Conservatives to power in 2010 (Williams, 2015).

Similarly, think tanks would play an essential role in helping Ed Miliband develop ideas once Labour had returned to opposition, with organisations like Policy Network (founded in 2000) and the Resolution Foundation (founded in 2005) working alongside the IPPR to help shape key elements of Labour’s platform, including ideas around redistribution and entrenched inequalities (Batrouni, 2020: chs. 4 & 5). As Pautz (2011) details, SpAds were essential for facilitating this new ‘market’ as they provided think tanks with critical access to ministers – access that was vital for these organisations to gain the exposure needed to attract fundraising resources. Additionally, think tanks provided fruitful recruiting grounds for new advisers who were well-versed in the latest thinking of different policy issues, and work as a SpAd became a highly coveted career stop for think-tank analysts. Through the 2000s, it became increasingly common for young think tank researchers to spend time working as a SpAd before returning to more lucrative research jobs outside the party (or, in some cases, continuing on a parliamentary career themselves) (Orchard et al., 2023).

Perhaps even more critical for institutionalising a reliance on frontbench advisers was a drastic increase in resources available for research support for opposition parties in parliament. Indeed, Short Money had become a steadily more significant source of research funding through the 1980s and had played an important role in facilitating Kinnock’s transformations of the party’s ideational infrastructure. To this end, it was

uprated in 1978, 1980, 1985, and 1988, and in 1987 the cap on the maximum amount of Short funding allowed to each party was scrapped (a change that redounded primarily to Labour's benefit as by far the largest party in opposition). A 1993 decision to increase Short Money resources and index this funding to annual inflation was even more significant because it gave far more certainty to parliamentary research budgets. This not only meant that opposition parties (again, primarily Labour) could hire more advisers, but it also helped to entrench work as a political adviser as a helpful career stop for aspiring politicians (Kelly, 2014). In May 1999, following a report published by the Committee on Standards in Public Life, Short Money allocations were significantly increased, this time by a factor of 2.7. Provisions were also made to directly fund the Leader of the Opposition's Office on the grounds that the primary opposition leader played a unique constitutional role that came with specifically onerous demands (Kelly, 2014; see Tables 2 and 3). As Yong and Hazell note (2014: p. 44), these changes were vital to increasing the "supply" of willing advisers to both government and opposition parties in parliament because they created a stable pool of funding for adviser roles.

Table 5.2: Short Money Allocations 1997-2015 (£)

	Conservative	Labour	Liberal Democrat	Scottish National Party	Plaid Cymru	Ulster Unionist Party	Democratic Unionist Party	Social Democratic and Labour Party	Green	Total
Short Money Allocations (£), 1997/1998-2014/2015										
1997/98	1,075,129.65	Government	405,311.23	50,301.74	23,110.45	51,841.26	12,659.40	20,215.02	-	1,638,568.75
1998/99	1,112,889.69	Government	419,559.87	52,070.47	23,921.74	53,660.30	13,103.96	20,925.09	-	1,696,131.12
1999/2000	3,377,670.28	Government	1,084,895.59	134,629.26	61,852.66	138,735.36	33,867.63	54,106.29	-	4,885,757.07
2000/01	3,465,131.69	Government	1,112,906.04	138,106.31	63,454.86	142,333.03	34,744.20	55,505.93	-	5,012,182.06
2001/02	3,439,066.23	Government	1,155,583.33	117,088.75	68,252.79	103,968.52	71,017.22	54,844.25	-	5,009,821.09
2002/03	3,459,536.50	Government	1,174,410.37	113,091.76	69,897.25	95,832.96	80,017.07	55,112.74	-	5,047,898.65
2003/04	3,566,927.49	Government	1,210,901.83	116,605.78	72,067.46	98,807.51	82,500.73	56,824.20	-	5,204,635.00
2004/05	3,666,885.49	Government	1,244,855.74	119,875.44	74,087.32	101,576.29	84,812.57	58,416.99	-	5,350,509.84
2005/06	4,206,057.88	Government	1,536,220.92	129,257.23	62,406.99	10,080.56	140,842.05	55,152.11	-	6,140,017.73
2006/07	4,343,068.75	Government	1,596,867.38	132,662.51	62,232.48	-	149,689.05	55,788.84	-	6,340,309.01
2007/08	4,534,000.79	Government	1,667,009.30	138,491.26	64,967.46	-	156,271.26	58,241.92	-	6,618,981.99
2008/09	4,715,453.55	Government	1,733,771.54	144,035.82	67,568.05	-	162,524.14	60,572.91	-	6,883,926.01
2009/10	4,757,906.12	Government	1,749,385.30	145,332.53	68,175.91	-	163,986.90	61,118.24	-	6,945,905.00
2010/11	467,172.96	5,197,038.79	171,768.04	159,880.41	68,779.42	-	145,351.04	60,833.04	51,325.79	6,322,149.49
2011/12	Government	6,024,340.74	Government	168,794.55	71,970.02	-	149,822.57	63,561.02	59,501.11	6,537,990.01
2012/13	Government	6,155,514.00	Government	171,885.00	73,288.00	-	152,569.00	64,725.00	60,589.00	6,678,570.00
2013/14	Government	6,509,319.85	Government	182,386.15	77,763.99	-	161,883.86	68,677.82	64,292.71	7,064,324.38
2014/15	Government	6,684,794.15	Government	187,297.34	79,858.37	-	166,249.65	70,528.29	66,019.67	7,254,744.45
Source: House of Commons Operations Directorate										
Note: Totals comprise: general funding for Opposition Parties; travel expenses for Opposition Parties; and, from its introduction in April 1999, funding for the Leader of the Opposition's Office.										

Table 5.3: Short Money Funding for Leader of the Opposition's Office

Funding for Leader of Opposition's Office	£
1999/2000	500,000.00
2000/01	513,000.00
2001/02	524,799.00
2002/03	531,621.39
2003/04	548,101.65
2004/05	563,448.50
2005/06	583,169.00
2006/07	595,999.00
2007/08	622,223.00
2008/09	647,112.00
2009/10	652,936.00
2010/11	668,606.00
2011/12	700,699.00
2012/13	734,333.00
2013/14	757,097.32
2014/15	777,538.48
Source: House of Commons, Department of HR and Change	

Further, the debate and subsequent funding increase highlight the extent to which, by the turn of the century, responsibility for producing ideas had shifted from the party to the leaders' office and parliamentary parties. Indeed, the separation of parliament-based

research activities funded by Short Money from party operations was codified in late 1999 when former Labour MP Fraser Kemp raised concerns that the Conservative Party was improperly diverting funds intended for parliamentary purposes to finance party research and campaign operations. This prompted House of Commons Authorities to seek assurances from the Conservative Party's auditors, PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), that the party had "not misused its Short Money to fund party political activities" (Kelly, 2014: p. 6). When PwC responded by asking for clarification on the proper use of these funds, it was made clear that the substantial money available for parliamentary research support should not be used to support party-based research or campaign initiatives, thus codifying the separation between the opposition parties and *opposition parties in parliament* when it came to the distribution of state resources.⁷

5.12: New Labour's "Anti-Learning Practices", Anticipating the Shortcomings of Externalised Ideational Infrastructure?

With ideational power now firmly in the hands of the party leadership, New Labour had succeeded in renovating the party programme and returning to power. Given its short-term electoral aspirations, then, it is hard to see these changes as anything but successful. As we will see, however, a medium-term perspective renders this legacy far more ambiguous because, in the process of consolidating power, New Labour appears to have hindered the party's ability to update this new platform going forward. Indeed, no sooner did New Labour complete its conquest of the party's ideational infrastructure than concerns emerged about an increasing insularity in the party's thinking. Blair's new management practices had indeed succeeded in stamping out much of the internecine

⁷ To this end, we can understand that the institutionalisation of state funding for frontbench advisers can be seen as an important ideational corollary to Katz and Mair's discussion of the cartel party (1995). Katz and Mair argued that, during the twentieth century, political parties in advanced capitalist economies shifted from popular, civil society-based organisations to elite, state-based entities. Initially, mass parties emerged to organise newly enfranchised voters and convert civic power into parliamentary influence. However, by the century's end, declining membership and changing electoral 'marketplaces' led these parties to "cartelise", moderating and converging their political platforms to secure access to state funding (ibid.). As the significant sums that became available to both government and opposition parties suggest, a key element of this process was giving front benches and leaders' offices the capacity to develop and communicate ideas independently of vestigial mass party structures (and, more importantly, the ideological baggage entrenched in these structures).

factional warfare that had hampered the party for the better part of two decades. However, for political scientists concerned with the party's intellectual vitality, it began to appear that he had done so at the cost of the party's collective ability for critical thinking. Indeed, as early as 1994, Shaw, assessing the changes that the party had undergone since 1979, was expressing concern about Labour's "dwindling organisational vitality and ideological exhaustion" (Shaw, 1994b: p. 166).

As Avril (2016) argues, this was ultimately the unintended consequence of New Labour's relentless electoral focus — the short-term promise of power was embraced at the long-term cost of ideational lassitude and the inability to update the party's programme. To this end, in the medium term, an ideologically sanitised party can be just as electorally laggard as a fractured one, as voters become turned off by the perceived indistinguishability of the overall electoral offer and as party activists that might otherwise simulate enthusiasm amongst the broader public become enervated and disengaged (Mair, 2014). Worse yet, the changes that are required to rid the party of ideational baggage can destroy its ability as an organisation to update its political offer should future circumstances demand it. As Avril puts it, "The quest for consensus in the shaping of the New Labour party may therefore have been severely misguided from an organisational learning perspective" (Avril, 2016: p. 10).

Unwittingly, New Labour's approach to management was creating an organisational dynamic in which it was increasingly difficult to update the party's thinking on certain topics — a deeply paradoxical situation given the leadership's near-obsession with discourses about innovation (Ball & Exley, 2010). To this end, New Labour's approach to party management amounted to a kind of "wilful blindness" to the fact that for any given political problem, there exists a universe of potential solutions (Minkin, 2014: p. 709). Avril explains this process by turning to the sociology literature on organisational learning using Argyis's (2012) model of "skilled unawareness". Here, an organisation becomes captured by "people who overrate their ability to make the right decisions, who are in complete denial of any discrepancies, are not able to see the warning signs, and who tend to blame any failures on external factors" (Avril, 2016: p. 10). The result of this is a high degree of

groupthink in which the inventiveness of the ingroup is vastly overvalued while dissenting opinion is treated with undue hostility. This creates a dynamic in which the organisation's leaders "learn not to learn", in the process putting the organisation in existential peril (Albrecht, 2003). In this sense, Avril likens Labour under New Labour to Goleman's concept of the "toxic organisation", which has "closed itself to new ideas for fear of having to question its own assumptions" (Avril, 2016: p. 11). This, ultimately, this leads her to agree with Minkin's assessment that in its haste to visibly break with the party's past, new Labour had turned its back on "the accumulated wisdom of past experience" and embraced "anti-learning practices" that made it functionally impossible for it to develop the meaningful new ideas that were central to its discursive offer (Avril, 2016: p. 12; Minkin, 2014: p. 715). After its initial successes, the mid-range consequences of this ideational consolidation have been "an inability to learn from mistakes and the systematic corruption of the party's internal democracy", the upshot of which "was to alienate both the members and the voters" (Avril, 2016: p. 12).

However, as we have seen, this consolidation process that concentrated authority over the party platform in the leader's office was part of a parallel process of ideational outsourcing in both the New Right and the New Left turn to external organisations as a means of replacing the PCIs that drove party renewal in the post-war period. Given this, it seems possible that, while certainly a dereliction of party democratic norms, outsourcing ideational renewal to external professionals might still make for an overall successful (partisan) strategy. Might this process of outsourcing provide a path forward for party renewal? In Chapter 6, we turn our attention to the dynamics of these party-external ideational infrastructures to understand their relative limitations in this regard.

Chapter 6: Party Ideas in an Age of Externalised Ideational Infrastructure

In Part 2, I explored how the rise of neoliberalism marked a significant shift in the ideational framework of both major British political parties. For both Labour and the Conservatives, adopting new ideas was closely tied to changes in how these parties generated and communicated their political and economic ideas to voters. This shift can be broadly understood as a transition from a party-centric ideational infrastructure (PCII) to an externalised ideational infrastructure (EII). Under the party-centric model, the authority to develop and disseminate ideas was concentrated within the party organisation, particularly in its research departments, which served as hubs for information within both parties' corporate structures. In contrast, the externalised model saw this authority shift upwards toward the party leader's office and outwards to emerging networks of professional organisations specialising in the production and distribution of political ideas and policies. This process of 'ideational outsourcing' was crucial for leaders in both parties to bypass entrenched actors in party bureaucracies and offer alternative ideas to voters after it became clear that the post-war model had broken down. In both the Labour and Conservative parties, entrepreneurial leaders recognised that new ideas about managing the British political economy were needed, and these new organisations emerged to help them develop and articulate these ideas without relying on slow-moving or hostile party bureaucracies.

In this chapter, I turn my attention to a closer examination of these externalised ideational infrastructures (EIIs) to understand better the constraints on developing party ideas in contemporary British politics. How might a turn to externalise ideational production impact the type of ideas that these parties incorporate into their political

platforms? I begin by discussing the literature focusing on network-based policy production. Here, I will briefly engage with the policy network literature to make the case that it provides a helpful lens for understanding the development of party ideas in a period in which parties have largely outsourced their ideational development processes to external experts. Using the policy network literature on think tanks as a guide, I then develop a network analysis of the EIs of both the Labour and Conservative parties, structuring these networks on the professional histories of frontbench advisers, given the importance of these figures in the process of ideational outsourcing (see Chapter 5). I then offer an interpretation of these network findings, engaging with the extant literature, interviews with both think tanks and party actors, and the historical evidence discussed in preceding chapters to draw conclusions about how each of these networks shapes the ideas of the respective parties to which they are attached.

6.1: Policy Networks and the Study of Externalised Ideational Infrastructures (EIs)

In recent decades, the increasingly de-centred or ‘polycentric’ nature of policy production processes has drawn the attention of scholars across the political science, public policy and sociology literature (Homsy & Warner, 2015; Koenig-Archibugi, 2010; Bundgaard-Pedersen, 1997). An important subset of these approaches includes a growing body of literature on the increasing importance of ‘policy networks’ for state administration and policymaking (Raab, 2002; Dowding, 1995). The central insight of this literature is that policymaking processes, both in the state and beyond it, have experienced a qualitative shift in the latter half of the twentieth century, moving from structured bureaucratic processes to de-centralised, informal and networked ones (Rhodes, 2006: p. 426). Here, policy network scholars have catalogued how policies emerge from the relationship between civil servants and specialist interest groups (Richardson & Jordan, 1979), how the relationship between the central and local governments informs policy rollout (Rhodes, 1986), or how “epistemic communities” can form to develop new ideas and advance shared policy preferences (Haas, 1992).

Such approaches had a particular resonance for scholars of the British state, where the concept of policy networks was used to explore how the country's archetypically "closed and hierarchical" civil service-based policymaking processes gave way to the influence of a variety of actors beyond the formal sphere of the state through the latter decades of the 20th century (Ward et al., 2024; Diamond, 2020; Marinetto, 2003). Early attempts in this regard tended to focus on networks of industry players and state policy actors as the Thatcher government attempted to reshape the relationship between the public and private sectors (see, for instance, Döhler, 1991; Kenis, 1991). This soon spread to the study of how innovations in policy networks helped drive new political discourses and how these discourses fundamentally changed the institutional terrain of British (and international) politics (Amberg, 2022; Slobodian, 2018; Mirowski & Plehwe, 2015). Inevitably, this led network scholars to the role of think tanks and the strategies these organisations used to capture the discursive high ground as the post-war consensus became dysfunctional. Using a combination of interviews and policy analysis (and, in many cases, first-hand experience), these studies explored the specific strategies that these organisations deployed to influence the "climate of public opinion" amongst British voters and intellectual elites (Denham & Garnett, 1999) and how these networks feed back into the parties with which they interact (Ball & Exley, 2010).

Given that the last several decades have been characterised by ideational outsourcing in both the Labour and Conservative Party, such approaches offer an intriguing way forward for the study of EIs. Indeed, the concepts and tools of policy network analysis have been helpfully deployed to study the recent changes that both parties and the governments that they form have endured in recent decades. For scholars of British political economy, this has primarily consisted of two approaches. The first is closely related to the work cited in Chapter 5 and focuses on the impact of policy networks on shaping macro-political trends and discourses. Such approaches essentially amount to a "supply side account of ideology" (Desai, 1994) and attempt to explain a political phenomenon (a paradigm shift, a party movement, a contentious policy change, etc.) by identifying the universe of relevant actors and demonstrate how these actors exerted ideational influence on one another to affect the outcome in question. For instance,

scholars have developed policy network approaches to describe how think tanks have influenced the Conservative Party's embrace of austerity in the wake of the global financial crisis (Pautz, 2018); the role that policy networks played in updating the Labour Party's understanding of social democracy (Pautz, 2013); and the emergence of new network actors in the politics of Brexit (Beech, 2022).

One of the core observations of this literature is that contemporary policy development and governance processes are, at the same time, much more complex and more challenging to trace empirically (Peterson, 2003). In the past, policy formation was shaped by formal, bureaucratic and hierarchical processes that left a clear empirical trail for scholars to follow using traditional social science methods (for instance, archival research and historical process tracing) (Hall, 1993). Today, however, policies emerge from the (relatively) informal interactions of various policy actors operating much more horizontally across many different venues, meaning that tracking how a specific idea translates into state policy is more challenging. Here, tracing the emergence of ideas and policies becomes a much trickier empirical challenge (Sandström & Carlsson, 2008) – how can we ‘see’ processes of ideational development processes if these occur in informal (and infrequently recorded) conversations in the offices of government and frontbench advisers?

One of the most common ways network scholars have attempted to address this challenge is through network analysis. Indeed, network scholars have successfully deployed both qualitative and quantitative network analysis while describing organisational groupings that contribute to policy processes in the UK and worldwide (Zhang et al., 2023; Tchilingirian, 2021; Kenis & Schneider, 2019). This approach is especially prevalent among scholars concerned with understanding how think tanks contribute to the policy process (Almiron et al., 2023; Faul & Tchilingirian, 2021; Salas-Porrás, 2018) but has also been usefully applied to studies of the charity sector (Mikkelsen, 2006) and the more diffuse concept of “advocacy coalitions” (Ingold, 2011; Matti & Sandström, 2011). The use of network analysis to study party-specific policy networks is less common but does have some uptake in the literature on parties in the United States. Here, scholars have used

network analysis to catalogue changes in campaign finance networks (Nyhan & Montgomery, 2015), “ideas-producing organisations” (Skinner et al., 2012), and campaign professionals (Koger et al., 2009; Knoke, 1990).

As with most academic literature, significant disagreement exists about how best to deploy network analysis. This disagreement essentially arises from the fact that its primary utility – that is, it is loose enough to capture the information of contemporary policy development – means that it is difficult to determine where it moves from descriptive the analytical and the appropriate line of demarcation between these uses should be (Rhodes, 2006). Traditionally, most policy network scholars understand these networks as closer to descriptive metaphors capable of revealing essential and otherwise submerged data about the dynamics of elite interaction and policymaking processes (Knoke, 1991; Knoke, 1990; Elkin, 1975). More recently, however, scholars have attempted to apply statistical methods to make more causal claims using this network data. While promising, these approaches have run into various problems. Most significantly, while formal statistical theory assumes that experimental units are independent of one another, this is an impossible assumption in network contexts – in networks, units are, by definition, interdependent. In the past decade, a host of new and innovative methodologies such as quadratic assignment procedures, exponential random graph models (ERGMs), and stochastic actor-oriented models have emerged in attempts to overcome this challenge and facilitate inference from network models (see, see for instance, Robins et al., 2012), but this largely remains work in progress.

As such, the present study will embrace the approach of network ‘traditionalists’ and use policy network models as a conceptual lens that, while descriptive, is highly revealing insofar as it describes essential features of contemporary party policy development that would otherwise go unnoticed due to their informality. Such an approach will thus generate valuable data from which inferences can be drawn using traditional methods of social scientific analysis. In particular, interview data will be used to interrogate core trends across both party policy networks. To generate this interview data, I interviewed a small collection of current and former think tankers, party advisers, and former research

department staffers. The motivation for these interviews was twofold. First, I needed to get a ‘sense check’ of my network maps to ensure that they accord with how these insiders understand these recruitment dynamics. Second, these interviews allowed me to place my network data in the broader context of party ideational development. Each interviewee was granted anonymity to ensure they would feel comfortable speaking freely without concern about future career implications. To this end, they will be identified with their role, a number, and (if applicable) their organisation’s relationship to one or the other two political parties in question (for example: “Interview with Think Tank Researcher “1” (Conservative-adjacent)”).

6.2: Mapping Externalised Ideational Infrastructure: The Centrality of SpAds in Contemporary Party Policy Networks

The first step is to generate an observable network. To do this, it is necessary to consider how best to construct a network that captures the inter-organisational and interpersonal nature of externalised ideational infrastructure. The preceding historical explication of the importance of front-bench advisors in Chapters 5 offers a ready-made answer: SpAds and PAds.

To this end, as discussed previously, front-bench advisors can be understood as operating at the nexus of front-bench policymaking bodies (such as the No. 10 Policy Unit) and networks of key external organisations like think tanks and public relations firms. Indeed, as Gains and Stoker (2011) demonstrate, the value of these advisors to their ministers derives from their ability to operate simultaneously across multiple professional networks -- that is, they will be specialists in one or another aspect of the production and distribution of political ideas and will also be able to navigate the intricacies of the party political field. This capacity to “boundary span” allows them to fulfil a unique role as ideational “brokers” or “middlemen”, drawing upon expertise from one set of party-external policy specialists to develop ideas for the party platform and collaborating with another set of “communications professionals” to disseminate these ideas. In a political environment where robust party-based research capacities have diminished, SpAds

become vital in transmitting ideas from what Gains and Stoker describe (drawing on Kingdon's (1984) concept) as the "policy primordial soup" (Gains & Stoker, 2011: p. 485). Thus, the role is an interstitial one, with the ability to develop and maintain "strong relationships inside and outside government" an essential element for success as a Special Advisor (Durrant et al., 2020: p. 5; see also Yong & Hazell, 2014: p. 30, 63).

Given this interstitial position, the study of SpAds/PAds represents a unique opportunity to examine how contemporary parties (or, more accurately, contemporary party leaders) interact with ELLs at the point of contact. Moreover, since these individuals are recruited, at least partially, based on their previous professional experience, a systematic analysis of the recruitment patterns of each party's SpAd/PAd advisers can serve as a helpful indicator of the types of ideas that these advisers allow their respective parties to access. Interviews with current and former SpAds support this notion, with multiple advisers noting that a defining factor of their utility to the minister with whom they work is based on non-party professional expertise, whether policy-based or communications-based (Interview with former Labour Party SpAd "1"; Interview with former Conservative Party SpAd "1"; Interview with former CRD researcher "1"; see also: Pautz, 2011). As one former Treasury advisor put it, advisers typically specialise in either "policy development or communications" and are recruited directly by the party leader or frontbencher based on having "the right kind of skills" gained from connections with "the right kind of people" and with the "right kind of experience" (Interview, Former Conservative Party SpAd "2").

Thus, I construct the following network maps by tracing the career trajectories SpAds and PAds of all Conservative and Labour SpAds/PAds that worked for either party between 2016 and 2023. Using employment history as a primary data source for network construction is an increasingly common strategy for scholars interested in the study of policy networks (Johnson & Chew, 2021), especially those interested in understanding how professional dynamics might influence the formation and influence of these networks (see especially, Salas-Porras, 2018). Further, the movement of personnel is a useful proxy for the movement of ideas into and through organisations, which is otherwise quite

difficult given the challenges associated with the empirical examination of cognitive phenomena (Chwiero, 2007; Jacobs, 2015). Indeed, as Salas-Porras (2018) demonstrates, circulation between different organisations and fields entails the mobilisation of different ideas in new professional settings, allowing the transfer of knowledge from one field to another.

Looking at party professionals and their employment history also comes with the advantage of network completeness, as information about who works as an advisor for contemporary British political parties — and the employment histories of these figures — is readily available online. To this end, I first compiled a list of all front-bench advisors between 2016 and 2023 to develop the datasets on which I base the networks. This was accomplished using two sources of official government publications: annual “Special Adviser Data Releases and “Short Money / Representative Money Breakdowns”.⁸ I then corroborated the names from these documents with unofficial SpAd/PAd databases, available on sites such as PolicyMogul and GuidoFawks, that exist primarily to facilitate political lobbying efforts (and, in the case of the latter, political mudslinging). Over the eight years in question, this resulted in a large data set of Conservative Party SpAds (N= 317) and Labour Party PAds (N=277).⁹ Once individual SpAd/PAds were identified, their employment histories were compiled using online resources such as party-adjacent media platforms and professional networking sites (such as *The Mace* magazine, PoliticsHome, PRWeekly, PolicyMogul, Twitter/X, and LinkedIn).

To generate directed party networks, I recorded each adviser’s employment history sequentially, meaning that each career was mapped from beginning to end, starting with the first job out of university and ending in their current job. This completed, two networks (one for each party) were then created with nodes representing individual organisations

⁸ Available at: SpAd’s list available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/special-adviser-data-releases-numbers-and-costs>; Short Money lists available here: <https://www.parliament.uk/site-information/freedom-of-information/information-we-already-publish/house-of-commons-publication-scheme/members-and-members-staff/financial-assistance-to-opposition-parties/>

⁹ The difference in these figures is unsurprising given that the Conservative Party was in power for the entire period under observation and thus had greater access to staffing resources via the SpAd-funding system relative to the Short Money resources available to the opposition Labour Party.

(any organisation that a party staffer has worked for) and edges representing the movement of staff from one organisation to another. By way of clarification, a simplified version of a one-person network has been produced in Figure 7.1, with adviser “X” being employed at organisations “A”, “B”, and “C” before joining the party as a Special Adviser.

Figure 6.1: Example of simplified employment network



This produced a network of 626 organisations and 1582 unique organisational relationships for the Labour Party, compared with 941 organisations and 2640 unique relationships for the Conservative Party. Laying the networks out in this manner also ensured staffer anonymity, as the only names appearing in the graphs are those organisations for which advisors used to work.

Once the networks were graphed, node sizes were scaled by PageRank scores, a measure of network centrality that indicates the influence of a node on the overall network and is particularly helpful for identifying key nodes in social networks (Heidemann et al.,

2010).¹⁰ Using the network mapping programme Gephi, the networks were also laid out via a Fruchterman-Reingold force-directed layout function, with superficial adjustments to increase network visibility (primarily to ensure node labels were legible). Fruchterman-Reingold layout functions work by iteratively pushing and pulling nodes apart as if they were connected by springs, with the strength of these connections determined by edge weight -- in this case, a function of how many overlapping employment histories exist between two organisations. As such, closely connected nodes will cluster together, and the most well-connected nodes will move towards the middle of the network. It should be cautioned, however, that this interpretation should only be used to identify *relational* trends in the overall network -- the location of any individual node in cartesian space is meaningless (Hansen et al., 2011). Further, although the original dataset records the movement of advisors through individual (shadow) ministerial offices, structuring the networks in this way made them noisy and hard to interpret. To improve network legibility, all nodes representing time spent as a SpAd/PAd *outside the party leader's office* were merged into one node. While this limits, to some extent, the ability to trace *intra*-party differences in the patterns of advisor employment, it allows for a clearer picture of the type of organisations that each party recruits from, allowing for more meaningful *inter*-party comparisons.

Having set up these networks, node attributes were assigned to test for the patterns of party recruitment discussed above and, ultimately, detect the different trends in each party's advisor recruitment practices. To this end, nodes were coded in two ways: by "industry type", an inductively derived category developed from company websites and by the type of 'SpAd expertise' that might be reflected by employment in that organisation. The former consists of 24 categories in both parties, including a residual 'other' category.¹¹ The latter categorisation includes "policy development",

¹⁰ Simply put, PageRank assigns a relative 'score' to each node based on the number of connections that neighbouring nodes have (nodes with a high PageRank score will have 'many friends' that have 'many friends').

¹¹ In the Conservative Party network, these included: business consulting, civil service, other positions in the Conservative Party, corporate communications and government affairs (this category reflects work at non-communications organisations but in a communications role), primary education, finance, higher education, intra-party politics (consisting of party leadership campaign roles and party-affiliated pressure groups), law, market research and polling, the news media, "other politics" including positions in the Labour and Liberal Democratic Parties, political

“communications”, “party organisation” (to reflect a professional background elsewhere in the party structure) and a residual “other” category. These categories were developed based on interviews with current and former advisers, who explained that SpAds/PAds (to quote a former Conservative SpAd) “typically fall into one of three categories — the comms guy, the policy wonk or someone the minister worked with in their parliamentary office” (Interview with former Conservative Party SpAd, “1”; Interview with current Labour advisor “1”; see also Yong & Hazell, 2014).

To briefly expand on each of these latter categories, “policy development” organisations are those in which previous employment is likely to reflect specialist knowledge about particular social problems or ideas about how to address these problems. As such, this category can be understood as including organisations that focus on producing policy ideas. Such organisations include think tanks, higher education institutions, institutes of primary education, issue-specific political pressure groups, the civil service or other public bodies, third-sector/charity organisations, and unions. “Communications”- designated organisations reflect a recruitment logic in which the advisory expertise sought is the ability to *communicate* political ideas to voters. These organisations consist of jobs in corporate communications and government affairs, market research and polling, the news media, (strategic) political consulting, and public relations and communications consulting. “Party organisation” employment backgrounds reflect previous employment in other ‘parts’ of the party, including prior work in parliamentary offices and regional/local party organisations (including work as a local council member). Finally, SpAd/PAd recruitment patterns may be defined by something

consulting (reflecting organisations focused on strategic political consulting as opposed to communications), the police/army, public relations and communications, political pressure groups (without official party-alignment), public services (including the NHS), retail, work in the Royal Household, tech, think tanks, third-sector/charity organisations, trade groups, and a residual ‘other’ category.

In the Labour Party network, this includes business consulting, the civil service, corporate communications and government relations (this category reflects work at non-communications organisations but in a communications role), culture/sport industries, primary education, finance, higher education, intra-party politics (consisting of party leadership campaign roles and party-affiliated pressure groups), other positions in the Labour Party, law, market research and polling, news media, “other politics” including positions in the Conservative and Liberal Democratic Parties, political consulting (reflecting organisations focused on strategic political consulting as opposed to communications), public relations and communications, political pressure groups (without official party-alignment), public services (including the NHS), retail, tech, think tanks, third-sector/charity organisations, trade groups, unions, and a residual ‘other’ category.

other than the three categories enumerated above. Indeed, it is not uncommon for advisors to describe their professional journey as one in which they ‘switched careers’ into politics and that their previous careers have little direct impact on their work as advisors. To this end, the “other” category reflects employment backgrounds that do not reflect specific ideational expertise. This category primarily includes other professional jobs such as finance, tech, culture industries, sport, law, and management consulting.

6.3: Findings: The Divergent Fields of SpAds/PAds

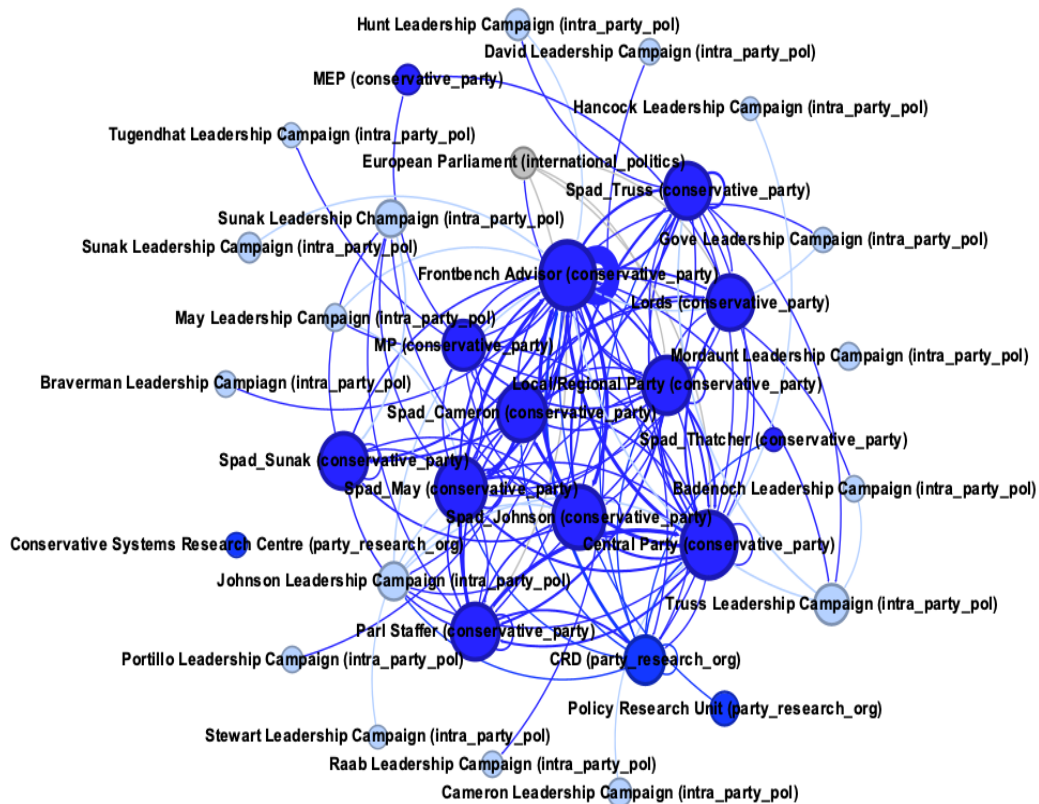
The top-line finding is that there is strong evidence that both parties, to a significant extent, recruit their advisers from external ideational organisations. However, we also see *considerable variation* between each party regarding the *type* of external organisations from which each party recruits. This suggests that although both parties rely on external networks for ideational development and distribution, the nature of the ideas each party extracts from these networks likely varies. However, it is also important to note that neither of these networks is entirely externalised. Indeed, many of the most influential nodes in both networks reflect previous experience working for the party in some capacity. This is, in part, an artifice of database construction, but it also suggests important nuance to the claim that the contemporary period is defined by an ‘upward and outward’ movement of ideas (this nuance will be discussed in due course).

There are a few different ways that these data can be explored. The most straightforward is a visual comparison between the two networks. To this end, Appendix 1 and 2 consist of a series of network graphs that display the entire party recruitment networks, colour-coded for both ‘industry’ (Appendix 1) and ‘SpAd Expertise’ (Appendix 2). We can glean some general trends about our networks from these high-level perspectives. For one, it appears that in both parties, the most impactful organisations (as defined by PageRank scores, reflected in node size) are other party organisations such as the parties in parliament, central party bureaucracies, and local/regional party bodies. However, recalling that the networks are laid out with a Fruchterman-Reingold layout, these network plots suggest that while both parties have a similar proportion of

party history in their network patterns, this type of work history has a more direct influence on the recruitment of Labour Party advisors than their Conservative Party counterparts given the clustering of these node types. Further, this overview supports the claim that Conservative Party SpAd's have a much more significant communications focus than their Labour PAd counterparts, who again appear more likely to be recruited based on policy expertise (see Appendix 2).

However, even after consolidating the SpAd/PAd nodes, the full networks are too noisy to glean anything beyond general trends. As such, it is necessary to filter these networks in various ways to identify the trends we are most interested in observing. To this end, Figures 6.2 and 6.3 display both the Conservative and Labour networks, filtered to show only party-based career stops.

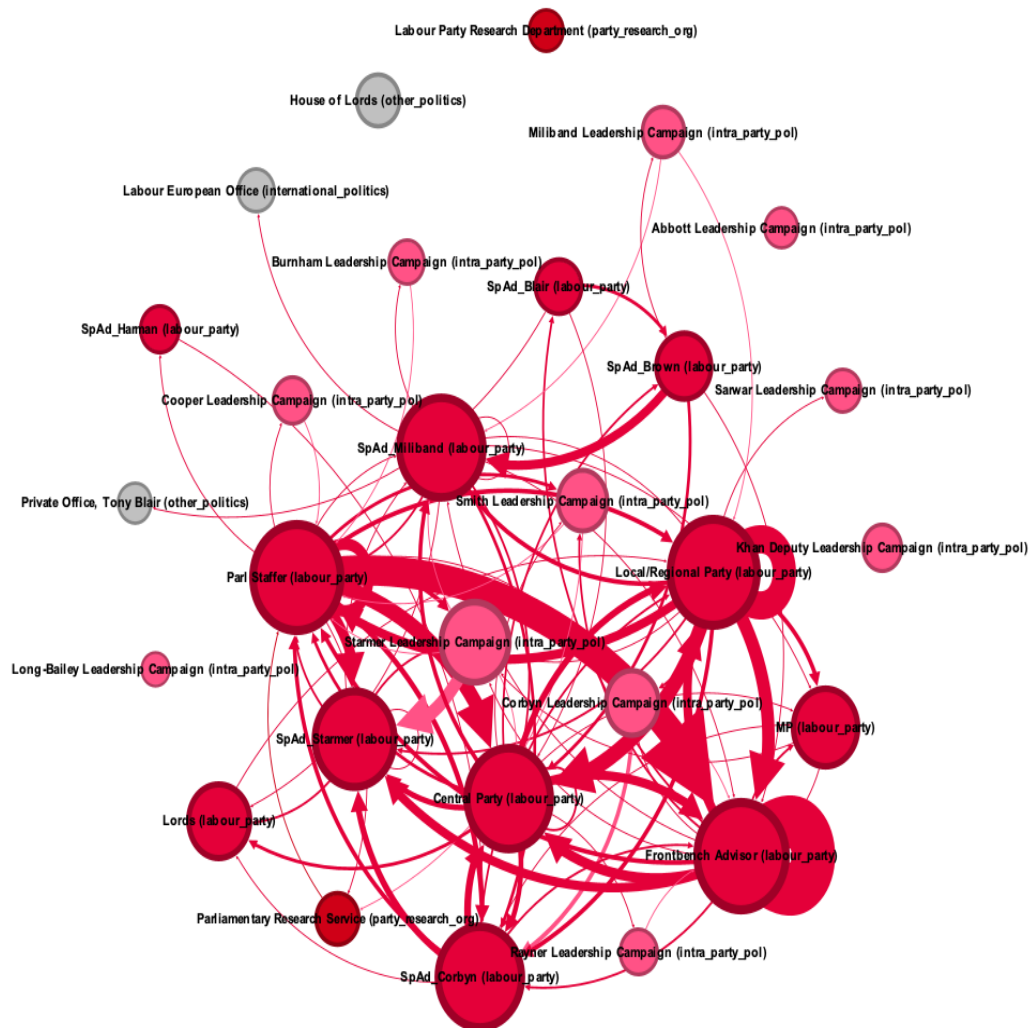
Figure 6.2: Conservative Party, Importance of Party Work



Key: Dark blue = Party organisation, Light blue = Leadership Campaign, Grey= other

Figure: 6.3

Labour Party, Importance of Party Work



Key: Dark red = Party organisation, Light red = Leadership Campaign, Grey= other

Several dynamics within these networks warrant attention. First, it is important to clarify that the prominent influence of "SpAd" nodes (representing either specific party leaders or general "frontbench advisor" roles) is, to some extent, a by product of how the network data is constructed. As noted above, because these networks are built by tracing the career paths of frontbench advisors, these roles naturally occupy central positions within the network. What is more revealing, however, is the relationship between these advisor nodes and other segments of the party. In both parties, working for the parliamentary party—often as a Parliamentary Researcher—emerges as a common stepping stone for aspiring SpAds. This indicates a close interchange of support staff between parliamentary offices and the party leader's team, which suggests that the parliamentary offices have become more important in the ideational networks that help shape the party platform. This supports Katz and Mair's (1993) claim that contemporary parties are defined by the strength of the 'party in public office'. If we recall, this represents a significant difference from what we observed during the post-war period (Chapters 2 and 3), when *party-based* researchers had a considerable influence over the direction of party policy. However, this trend is somewhat confounded by the significant role of experience at the local/regional party level in both networks, suggesting that involvement in grassroots party activities also serves as valuable preparation for future advisors. Unfortunately, further elucidation on this point is beyond the scope of this data. However, further examination of the importance of experience in local-level politics for top-level party advisers represents an intriguing avenue for further research.

Additionally, the relative importance of leadership campaigns within these networks is noteworthy. The key distinction lies in the positioning of these nodes: in the Conservative network, leadership campaign nodes tend to remain on the periphery, whereas, in the Labour Party, they are more central, particularly in the cases of Starmer's and Corbyn's campaigns. This pattern suggests that in the Labour Party, advisor recruitment is less tied to specific leaders or ministers, allowing advisors to move between different leaders' teams even if they hold divergent ideological views. In contrast, in the

Conservative Party, involvement in a leadership campaign appears more closely associated with advising that particular leader exclusively. This suggests that loyalty to a specific politician is more important in the Conservative Party than in the Labour Party, which has important implications for how willing Conservative Party SpAds might be to tell ministers ‘what they don’t want to hear’ (see discussion below).

The final point worth noting about these party-specific filtered networks is the relative importance of the LPRD and the CRD. Here, we see the marked presence of the CRD in the Conservative network. The fact that it remains influential is notable, especially compared with the Labour Party network, where the LPRD body remains only weakly influential and has no direct links with party advisory nodes. Interviews with two former CRD researchers suggest the reason for the CRD’s continued influence is largely thanks to the redevelopment as a campaign tool for the party (Interview with former CRD researcher “1”; Interview with former Conservative SpAd “2”). Particularly important in this transformation were the reforms introduced by William Hague after the party’s defeat in 1997, which would see the CRD claim an active role in party electioneering efforts after the Conservative Central Office (CCO) was rebranded to the Conservative Campaign Headquarters (CCHQ). Indeed, according to one interviewee, it was this reorganisation, even more than the friction endured during Thatcher’s leadership, that ultimately rendered the Department unable to influence the party platform. To this end, “it is now there to sell the party’s ideas — and of course attack Labour— not contribute to them” (Interview with former CRD researcher “1”). This is a crucial distinction to underscore, as the CRD’s influence on the Conservative network should not be read as an indication of its continued importance to the *substance* of the party’s ideas but rather its communicative focus. In the Labour Party, the relatively weak position presence of the LPRD is primarily a function of the party fracturing its research capacities amongst its constituent ‘parts’, with the Parliamentary Research Service developed to provide support to the PLP, the Policy Directorate tasked with running the National Policy Forum and membership engagement, and the presence of the Labour Party Research Department simply a relic of a long-serving party advisor.

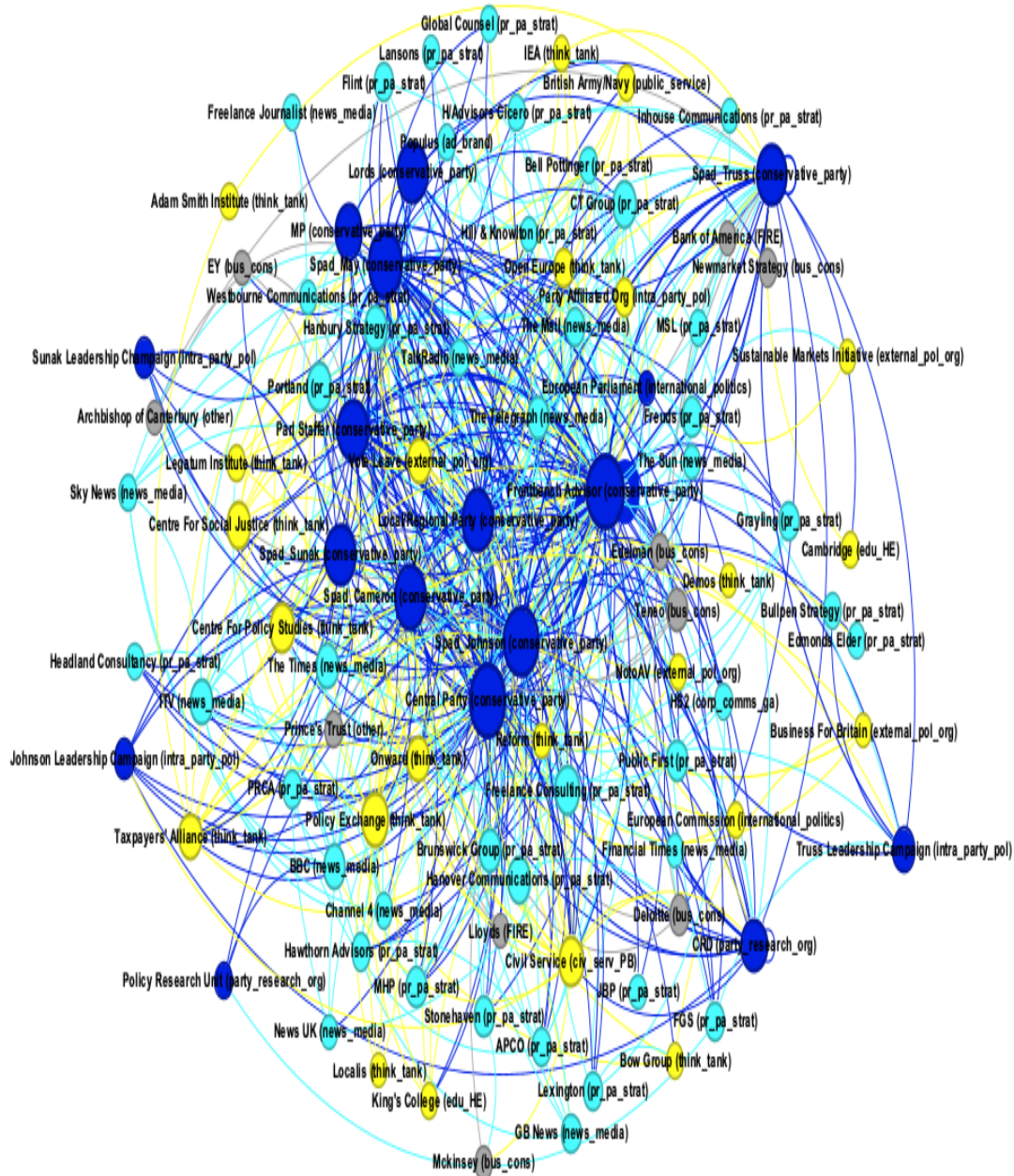
Turning our attention to party-external dynamics, we can also generate networks that reflect the non-party backgrounds of party advisors. To this end, Figures 6.4 and 6.5 represent the networks filtered to display only the top decile of organisations based on PageRank scores, with node colours reflecting SpAd expertise designations.

Here again, we see a significantly more robust presence of communications expertise in the Conservative recruitment network relative to Labour. However, we can see important details in each network at this more granular level. In the Conservative network, this communication focus is driven by a series of well-known political consultancies and public relations/communications firms, such as Hanbury Strategy (founded by Ameet Gill, a former Conservative SpAd under David Cameron); Hanover Communications (founded by Charles Lewington, a former Conservative SpAd under John Major); and the C|T Group (a communications and lobbying organisation that is notable for working with right-wing parties around the world). There are two things to note here. The first is the importance of former SpAds for ‘thickening’ the policy network around both parties by establishing new organisations. This is to say, SpAds who leave the party tend to leverage their experience to create organisations that become a recruiting ground for future SpAds, which plays a vital role in establishing the field dynamics of these professional networks. The second is the relative importance of *professional* communications companies in the Conservative network. Where Labour does rely on communications experts, it mainly recruits freelance consultants or those who have worked in ‘corporate’ communications, typically in the non-profit sector (Interview with think tank researcher “1” (Labour-adjacent)).

Turning to the news media, more differences emerge. Here, while both parties recruit from the media sector to a significant extent, the Conservatives appear to have a much closer relationship with broadsheet newspapers with traditionally conservative outlooks (such as *The Times*, *The Telegraph*, or *The Sun*) compared with Labour, which places relative emphasis on national broadcasters like the BBC or ITV, as well as traditionally liberal newspapers like *The Guardian* or *The Independent* (although *The Times* also has a presence in the Labour network). The differences here are essential as we can infer

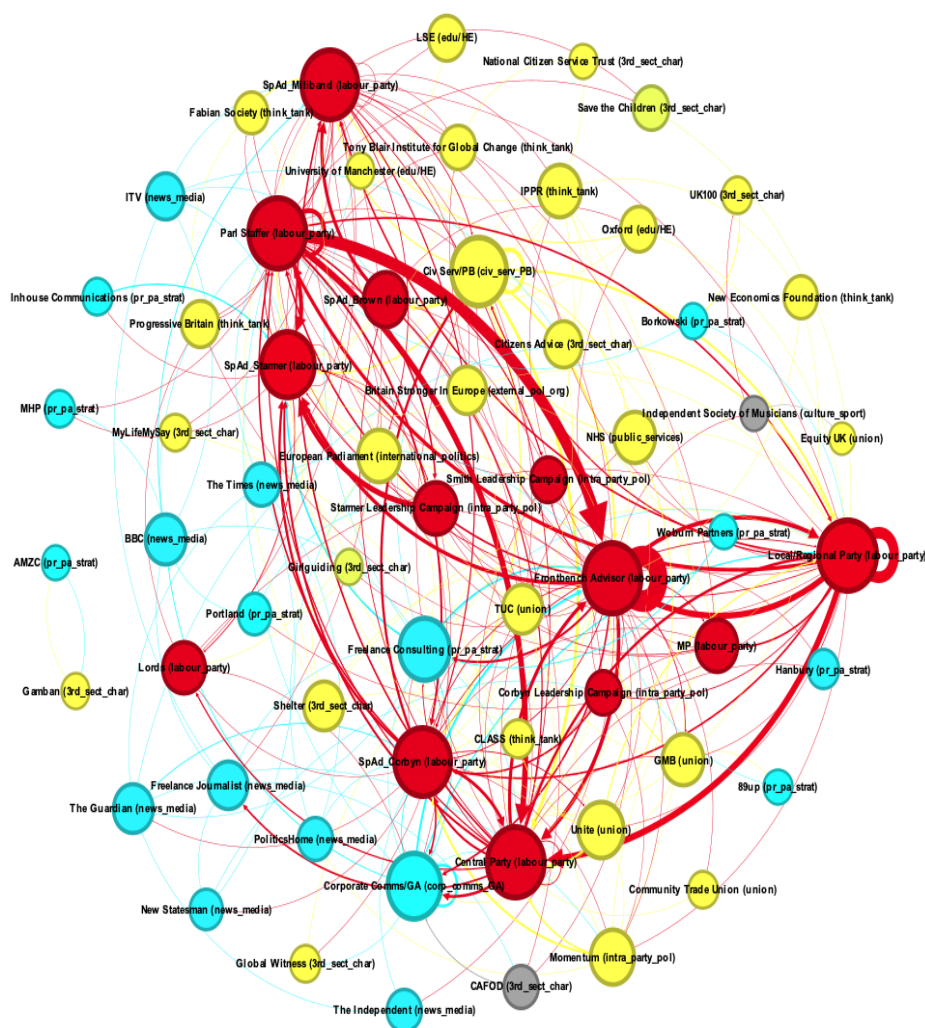
that these recruitment patterns reflect different ‘target audiences’ for each party’s communications strategies. To this end, if we can assume that communications advisers are recruited based on their past professional relationships with different outlets and thus the ability to influence the coverage provided by these outlets, we can assume that these parties develop ideas to communicate to these various audiences (de Albuquerque, 2013). With this being said, a complete analysis of the media landscapes with which these parties interact is beyond the scope of this project.

Figure 6.4: Conservative Party, Top-10% most influential node network (by SpAd Expertise type)



Key: Blue=Party Organization; Yellow= Policy Organization; Light Blue = Communication Organization; Grey=Other

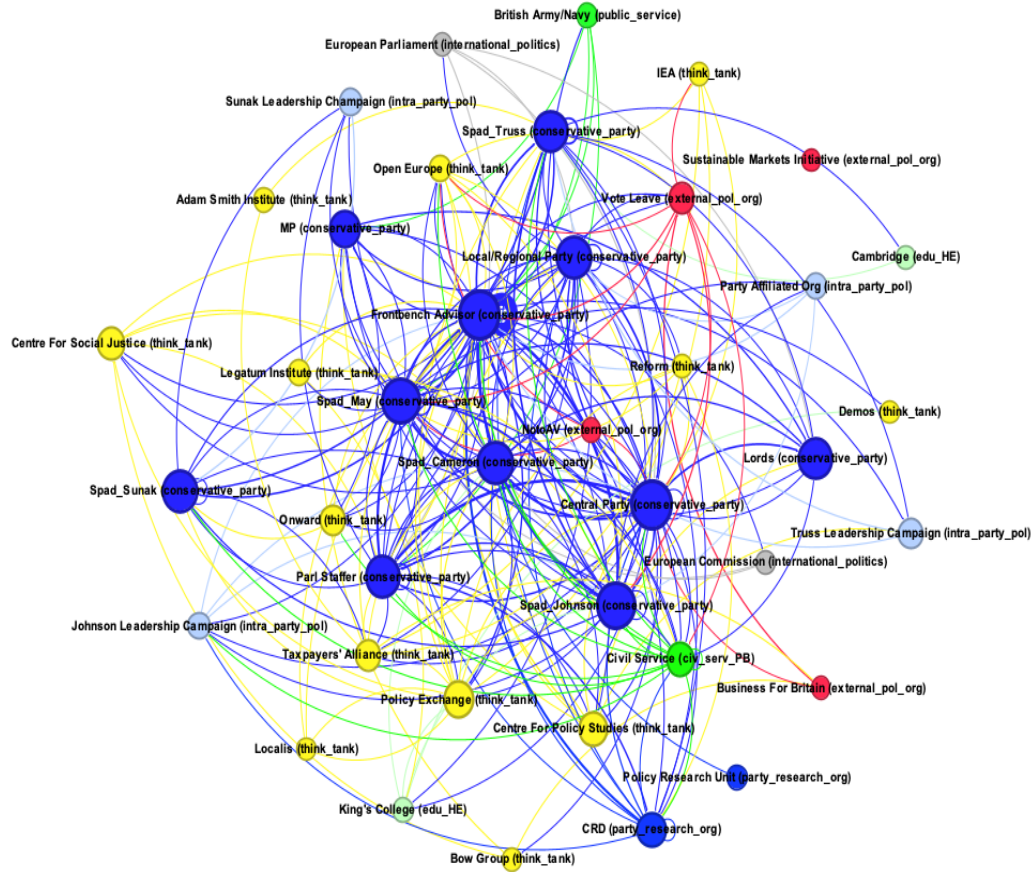
Figure 6.5: Labour Party, Top-10% most influential node network (by SpAd Expertise type)



Key: Red=Party Organization; Yellow= Policy Organization; Light Blue = Communication Organization; Grey=Other

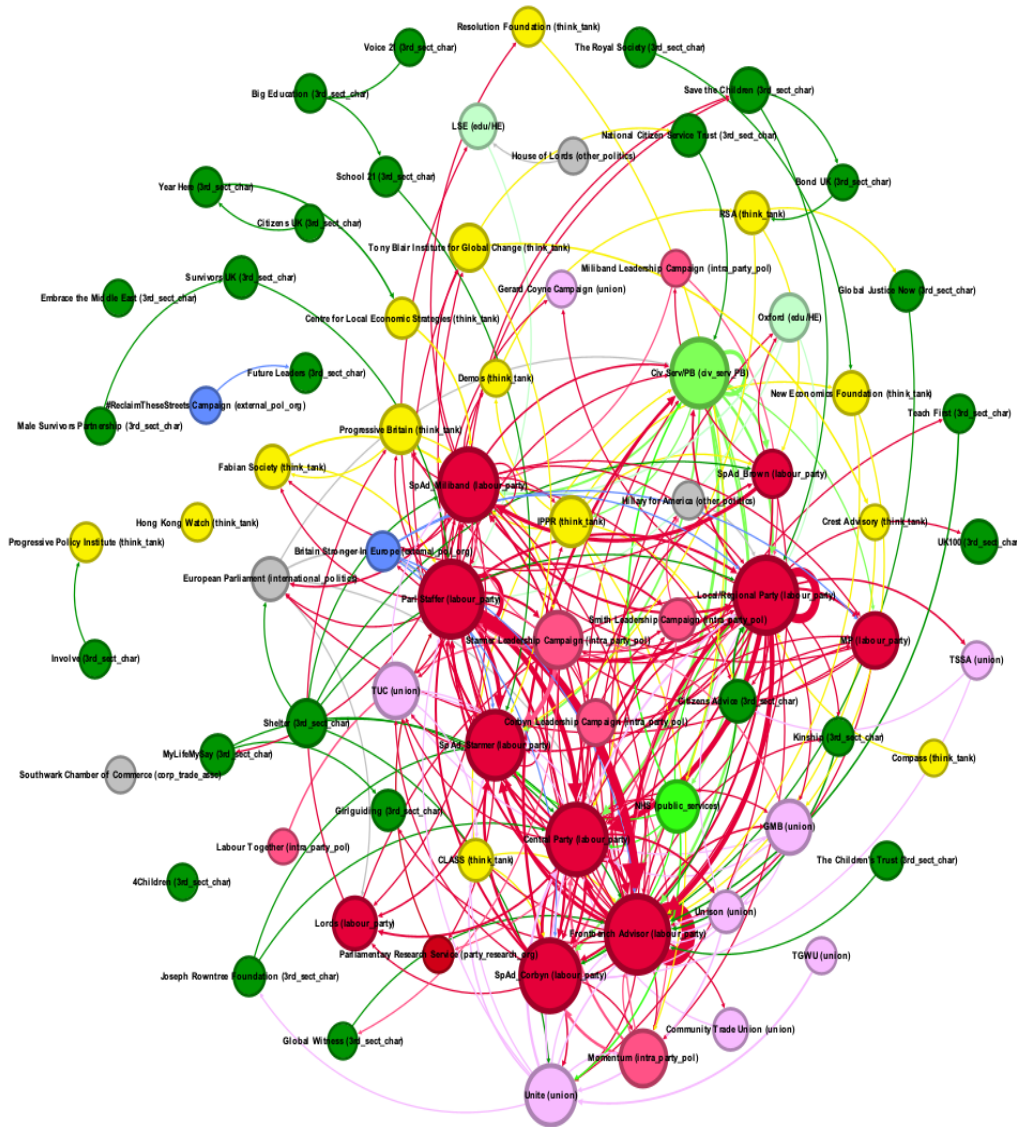
Turning our attention to the sources of ideas across these networks, we can further filter both networks to display only the “policy-producing” organisations in the top decile of each network (Figures 6.6 and 6.7).

Figure 6.6: Conservative Party, Top-10% most influential node network (filtered by policy-producing organisations)



Key: Blue=Party Organization; Yellow=Think Tank; Red = Political Pressure Group; Light Green= Civil Service; Grey= Other

Figure 6.7: Labour Party, Top-10% most influential node network (filtered by policy-producing organisations)



Key: Red=Party Organization; Yellow=Think Tank; Blue = Political Pressure Group; Dark Green= Third-sector/Charity Lime Green= Civil Service; Light Green = High Education; Pink=Union Grey= Other

Important differences are immediately apparent here. For one, the size of the Conservative network is significantly reduced, again a reflection of the communications focus in its advisor recruitment effort. Two significant groupings stand out of the policy-

producing organisations that remain: Think tanks and “outside political organisations”. As to the former, we see evidence of the continued influence of the New Right think tanks that played an essential role in Thatcher’s rise to power (CPS, the Adam Smith Institute, and the IEA). We also see evidence of the influence of newer entrants to the Conservative marketplace of ideas, with organisations like Policy Exchange (founded by current Tory frontbencher Michael Gove), the Taxpayers’ Alliance (founded by Brexit campaigner Matthew Elliott), and Open Europe (a pro-Brexit think tank that merged with Policy Exchange in 2020). Turning to the outside campaign groups, we see a significant influence of pro-Brexit campaign groups (Business For Britain, Vote Leave and the Sustainable Markets Initiative), which have ties in particular with Boris Johnson and Theresa May’s leadership teams. Taken as a whole, these organisations share a commitment to specific conservative ideals, particularly those of free market economics (Pautz, 2018). However, these claims should be tempered somewhat by the presence of more ‘broad church’ conservative organisations like Onward, Reform, and the traditionally Labour-affiliated (although recently rebranded ‘bipartisan’) Demos.

The Labour network reflects a similar melange of new and old think tanks. Here, organisations such as IPPR, the Fabian Society, and Demos have clearly retained their influence over the party. These legacy organisations are joined by relative newcomers such as Progressive Britain (an organisation created in 2021 by the merger of the Labour Right think tanks Progress with Policy Network, also associated with the Blairite wing of the party), CLASS (a now-defunct trade union-funded think tank), and the New Economics Foundation (a broadly progressive organisation that campaigns for “social, economic, and climate justice”). However, the most notable difference between the two party networks is the preponderance of third-sector/charity organisations in the Labour networks and, perhaps more surprisingly, their total absence in the Conservative network. As will become clear below, this is significant because third-sector organisations have been described as operating with unique ‘logics’ that are likely to impact the ideas and expertise that advisers bring from this professional background.

6.4: Interpreting Networks: Fields and Ideational Supply

Given these findings, what can we conclude about the source of ideas in both parties? It is worth reiterating at the onset that these networks are not supposed to generate causal claims but rather helpful descriptive data that can be used to identify otherwise submerged trends for discussion against the extant literature and interview data. One way that network scholars have increasingly used to frame this kind of network data is through the use of the Bourdieusian concept of the "field of power" to describe the self-referential logic within these networks (Salas-Porras, 2018; Medvetz, 2014; Medvetz, 2012). As proposed by Bourdieu, field theory explains how power and influence are distributed among organisations and agents competing for control of resources in distinct domains—economic, political, cultural, and symbolic (Bourdieu, 2005). Each field has a specific structure that shapes the strategies of its participants, who aim to accumulate capital based on collectively defined values. As Medvetz (2014: p. 222) explains, "The most straightforward interpretation of the role of organisations in [field] theory is that they acquire power by coordinating social action in the competitive pursuit of some specialised form of value."

Medvetz applies this framework to think tanks, showing how they gain influence not only within their own field but also across adjacent fields, such as political, journalistic, and academic spheres. Think tanks, therefore, act as "boundary organisations," leveraging their ability to operate across multiple fields to access and accumulate 'capital' that would be unattainable for actors confined to a single field. Mudge (2018) advances a similar use of this field theory to understand the shifting ideational terrain of left parties across advanced capitalist democracies, examining how intra-party dynamics and interactions with external experts shape ideological transformations. Using field theory, she demonstrates how the ideas left parties offer voters are closely tied to the professional logics of the external experts with whom parties work to develop these ideas. Similarly to our SpAds/PAds, these party experts act as ideational intermediaries, connecting political parties to different professional fields, each with their own logic of power that will imbue these actors with unique perspectives and dominant ideas of that field.

Relatedly, a subset of network scholars have sought to explain the output of policy networks by focusing on the associational and interactive nature of policy development in network contexts. Here, the structured interactions of actors in policy networks can lead to predictable patterns of influence that define what constitutes ‘appropriate’ approaches to policy development (Hoppe & Colebatch, 2016). Jordan and Richardson (1979), for instance, examined policy networks in Britain to show how network participants that are linked by some shared goal or resource interdependencies will come to form “policy communities” that are defined by shared senses of identity and culture and that delimit a clear inside and outsider status between different policy actors (thus helping to determine what constitutes ‘legitimate’ ideas in the policy formation process).

Given their parallels to the present study, these theories offer useful interpretive lenses for understanding how the network trends described above will impact the type of ideas that parties input into their platforms.

6.5: Discussion: The Divergent Policy Networks of Britain’s Two Main Political Parties

Of these trends, the most obvious is the apparent difference in a communicative focus in the Conservative Party network and a policy focus in the Labour Party network. As noted above, this is not to say that the Conservative Party does reveal a reliance on policy-generating organisations such as think tanks or that Labour has no relationship with external communications specialists. Instead, it is to point out that in a comparative sense, there are clearly different ‘focuses’ across the two networks. This suggests that the recruitment networks described above might expose each party to policy networks operating with different ‘field logics’. Specifically, we might expect Labour’s EII to be centred on policy producers that focus on generating highly specific and empirically robust proposals. In contrast, the Conservative EII emphasises the communicative impact of its ideas, with less concern for detailed policy solutions. This is to say, we might expect the Conservative EII to produce ideas designed primarily for political consumption, aiming to

enhance the party's messaging and appeal. Labour's EII, on the other hand, will be more likely to generate ideas that seek to identify and address specific social problems through well-grounded policy solutions.

We can point to a few different sources of evidence to support these claims. The most obvious is the preponderance of public relations and communications firms in the Conservative Party recruitment network, relative, at least, to its Labour Party counterpart. This suggests, to state the obvious, that the Conservatives value communications and media relations expertise to a higher degree than Labour does. There are, to be sure, other possible explanations for the differences – for instance, the data available only allows me to map the recruitment networks from 2016-2023, a period in which the Conservative Party was in power throughout. Given the fact that the party in government will naturally garner more media attention than the party in opposition, it is entirely plausible that the Conservative's relatively warm embrace of public relations and communications professions is reflective of the demands of government as opposed to any more significant reflection of the party's relationship with ideas. However, this split between a policy and communications focus persists when we examine the *ideas-producing organisations* in each network.

This divide aligns with the findings of Andrew Rich (2010), who highlights the differing roles of left- and right-wing think tanks in the United States. Rich observes that left-wing organisations typically focus on producing highly specialised, policy-oriented expertise aimed at solving specific problems. By contrast, right-wing think tanks often prioritise producing political content aligned with broader ideological goals. This fundamental difference in "operating logic" shapes the capacity of each political side to effectively participate in the "war of ideas," with right-wing think tanks better positioned to influence political discourse (Rich, 2010: p. 192). To this end, Rich argues that the organisations that make up these networks will have different "strategic priorities" as determined by different ideological backgrounds and the subsequent priorities imposed by their respective policy networks. This is to say, they are defined by their respective field dynamics (although Rich does not use the concept explicitly). Of course, it is reasonable

to suspect that think tanks in the United States, where the volume of money in politics and relatively lax regulations make it a unique ‘market’ for political ideas. However, based on interviews with current think tanks and party staffers, there is reason to think that similar dynamics apply in the UK despite the demonstrably smaller amounts of money available to conduct this kind of work. There are three reasons for this.

The first relates to the historical circumstances in which these organisations emerged across these two networks. Because fields are “arenas of struggle with their own logic and history” (Scoville & Fligstein, 2020: p. 82), the tendencies and logic imposed by early movers have the potential to persist over time, which, as we will see is certainly the case with party-adjacent policy networks in the UK. As discussed in Chapter 5, the pioneering think tanks of the New Right emerged with an explicit ideological mission – they believed absolutely in neoliberal economics and set about to bring the climate of public opinion in line with these beliefs (Denham & Garnett, 1998). In this sense, they explicitly aimed to catalyse a paradigm shift in the governing logic of the British political economy (Plehwe, 2017). This effectively set the standard for the kind of ideas (that is, ‘big’, headline-grabbing ideas’ aimed at overturning established institutional norms) that were normatively desirable, as judged by the collective field of New Right think tanks. This was indeed the concern of one of my interviewees, a former researcher in the CRD, who expressed frustration that the Conservative Party was less competent in dealing with policy ideas due to this “media-focused” approach, as compared to the past when the CRD had more influence (Interview with former CRD researcher “1”).

This is not to say that networks are impervious to changes in their field logics. For instance, the think tanks that helped develop David Cameron’s “modernising” Conservative vision indeed emphasised a degree of policy focus that was greater than their New Right predecessors (Pautz, 2013). However, even these more policy-focused organisations still had to compete in a field defined by more ideologically inclined established players. As one think tank researcher explained it, using the metaphor of an idea’s “policy readiness level” (an adaptation of the concept of “technology readiness level” from innovation studies), legacy organisations seek to exert influence using “big

picture ideas”, starting first principles and filling out policy as needed (that is, the operate at a ‘low’ policy readiness level). Younger organisations, by contrast, operate in a different “market niche” by exerting influence via the development specific policy ideas (Interview with Think Tank Researcher “2” (Conservative-adjacent)). Some think tanks, such as Policy Exchange (one of the most influential nodes in the Conservative networks laid out above), were identified as capable of doing both. However, this was seen as somewhat unusual – a function of the organisation’s founding as a ‘modernising’ think tank that was highly influential on Cameron’s leadership that has subsequently shifted towards the economic right and expanded the ‘scope’ of its arguments to include what might be described as ‘culture war’ frames. To this end, “[Policy exchange has] perfected the art of producing ideas that have maximum media impact to line up with what the government wants, and also have the policies read for ministers to run with” (Interview with Think Tank Researcher “2” (Conservative-adjacent)); see also Hernando, 2019).

An equal but opposite dynamic can be observed in the institutional legacy that organisations like IPPR and Demos have left on the field of centre-left think tanks. To this end, these organisations are associated with the “end of ideology” logic (Denham & Garnett, 2006). Here, New Labour’s concerns about negative headlines saw a ‘demand’ emerge for robust, evidence-driven policy research that a sceptical media could not call into question. This created a strong incentive for these organisations to jettison any air of radicalism they had previously cultivated in their ideational approach. This was a particular concern for Demos, which quietly reimagined itself as a ‘bipartisan’ organisation in the early Blair years after an initial flirtation with a more radical approach (Denham & Garnett, 2014). Thus, to fit in with Blair’s preferred approach to political ideas and the Third Way’s rejection of the outdated ideologies of Old Labour and Thatcherism, New Labour think tanks came to embrace the figure of the wonk -- the technocratic policy specialist that is primarily interested in developing policy that ‘works’ as opposed to pursuing any broader ideological goals (Denham & Garnett, 2006). This standard of ‘wonkery’ then came to define the field dynamics of the centre-left policy space (Hernando, 2019: p. ix).

A second interrelated reason for the differences between the Labour and Conservative policy networks is straightforwardly material. Indeed, as Medvetz argues, one of the primary ways that field dynamics structure how think tanks behave is via the funding mechanism because “to raise money, a think tank must orient itself to the market for donations by tailoring its work to the interests of potential sponsors (Medvetz, 2012: p. 24). Here, multiple interviewees expressed an impression that significantly more money was available to organisations on the political right than the political left. However, none could say this was true with any degree of confidence. Indeed, empirical comparison of the sources of think tank financing is difficult to produce given the notoriously opaque reporting practices of think tanks (especially those on the right) (Plehwe, 2015).

However, my interviews showed evidence that funding in the ‘Labour-adjacent’ think tank space is considerably less *stable* than in Conservative networks. To this end, think tankers in centre-left organisations report significantly more precarity in their workplaces than researchers from their centre-right counterparts. Stories of not being paid on time each month due to the organisation’s inability to make payroll are not uncommon (Interview with think tank researcher “1” (Labour-adjacent)). Further, researchers report that this increased variability in funding means that centre-left organisations are more dependent on funding streams that are contract-specific and less regular, which frequently means a turn to corporate or grant-making funding sources. While my interviewees were insistent that contracting with corporate funders would never mean a funder telling a think tank what ideas to produce, such funding is typically only made available for specific, narrowly defined research projects and thus may constrain the ideas that these organisations produce in the first place (Ball & Exley, 2010: p. 155).

Additionally, funding from grant-making organisations tends to come with the requirement of producing impact assessments, which frequently also compels the research organisation to produce narrow, policy-focused outputs that can have a measurable impact on policy or economic indicators (Interview with think tank researcher “1” (Labour-adjacent)). In this sense, the funding streams of Labour-adjacent think tanks will push these organisations towards more policy-oriented ideational outputs. Think tank

personnel in the Conservative Party orbit suggest that while corporate funding is common, it typically comes in the form of general research grants, which tend to come with fewer ‘strings attached’ (Interview with Think Tank Researcher “1” (Conservative-adjacent); ((Interview with Think Tank Researcher “2” (Conservative-adjacent))).

A third plausible reason Labour’s policy network might be more inclined towards specificity is the relative influence of the third-sector within its recruitment network. Organisational sociology literature highlights that the third-sector—so named because it operates in a ‘third space’ distinct from both the public and private spheres—functions according to its own field logic. This field logic, like that observed in the centre-left think tank space, tends to foster an inclination towards “technical-rationality, bureaucracy, and hierarchy” (Barman, 2016: p. 451). For instance, Koch et al. (2015) investigate the resource streams and network ties that shape non-profit behaviour, revealing that uncertainty around funding resources compels non-profits (another name for this type of organisation) to refocus their missions in ways that are more specific, “legible”, and appealing to donors. Similarly, Maier et al. (2014), in their review of the literature on non-profits and “nongovernmental organisations” (NGOs), observe a growing trend towards “businesslike” behaviour, where funding constraints and management demands push organisations to identify and occupy a distinct market niche -- dynamics which encourage them to pursue increasingly specific “missions”. Put simply, third-sector organisations tend to concentrate on specific social issues and work to develop policy solutions to address them. To the extent that these organisations are over-represented in the filtered policy network of the Labour Party and completely absent from that of the Conservative Party, we can infer that Labour’s advisers bring policy expertise that appears to be derived from less ideological contexts than we see among Conservative SpAds.

In aggregate, the networks mapped above suggest that each party’s EII privileges different types of ideas. As Rich found in his analysis of the difference between Democrat and Republican think tanks in the US, this difference can be described as one in which the Conservative Party’s EII is more likely to reward engagement with more ‘big picture’ or ideological ideas, while Labour Party’s EII is more like to extract more policy-specific

ones. Rich suggests that differences between these networks give Republicans a clear advantage in the 'battle of ideas' since articulating broad ideological formulations allows them to set the terms of the debate on a given subject and leaving policy-focused Democrats in a position of constant reaction (Rich, 2010: p. 194).

This observation is significant on its own, but when viewed within the broader context of concerns about how ideas affect the democratic potential of political parties, it highlights distinct yet crucial shortcomings in both. As previously discussed, a vital aspect of a party's democratic 'linkage' potential lies in its 'dual role'—the capacity to simultaneously represent voters and responsibly govern the state if elected to office (Mair, 2009). From an ideational perspective, this dual role is encapsulated in the concept of the party platform, where parties are expected to formulate the 'big ideas' necessary to engage voters during elections while also articulating the specific policy mechanisms required to implement these ideas if elected. However, the policy networks mapped above suggest that both parties will likely struggle to meet this normative benchmark, albeit for equal and opposite reasons. To this end, Labour's policy network appears to suffer a relative deficit in communications capacity due to its lack of interaction with the public relations profession and its emphasis on organisations that focus on policy specifics. The Conservative Party, by contrast, appears overly focused on the communication or 'selling' of its ideas, likely at the expense of robust policy formulation. Consequently, this suggests that neither of the major parties is positioned to produce democratically effective party programmes, as both struggle to fulfil their essential dual role.

6.6: Discussion: Externalised Ideational Infrastructure and Programmatic Renewal

A second essential feature of the 'outsourced' processes of ideational development described in the networks above is how they may facilitate or hinder the renewal of a party's ideas. On the face of it, the logical turn to external ideational infrastructure seems to be encouraging. Indeed, supportive scholarship on the think tanks and third-sector organisations applauds the 'ideational pluralism' that the maturation of these 'industries'

might engender (Lilyblad, 2019; McGann, 2018). However, more sceptical scholars have called this optimism into question, identifying a kind of elite-level insularity in these organisations' operations and outputs. There are two primary reasons for this.

The first is straightforwardly material and relates to the discussion about how funding across policy networks might impact the type of ideas produced within them. Here, scholars have demonstrated how competition for scarce funding resources can lead to a kind of ideational monoculture in which access to funding (and continued existence as a research organisation) is dependent on producing knowledge that is legible and normatively desirable to funding sources, regardless of their inherent scientific or objective merit. Medvetz (2012) demonstrates this by discussing how shifting streams of research funding helped drive a paradigm shift in US welfare research, characterised by a shift from a "poverty as deprivation" frame to one focused on "poverty as dependency". As more and more *funders* of welfare research grew attached to the latter frame, it became nearly impossible for knowledge producers to access funding to conduct research in the former. As such, to quote Plehwe's overview of the work, "the majority of academic and other researchers have only one choice: to constructively contribute to the mainstream, whether or not they are normatively committed to [its] the hegemonic political orientation" (Plehwe, 2014: p. 110). There are, to be certain, holdouts who defy this mainstream, but without reliable access to resources, they are rapidly selected out of the market, either being rendered obscure or forced to close.

Diane Stone (2007) makes a similar point about the material determinants of ideational homogenisation in policy networks but discusses this as emerging more indirectly from the need of ideas producers to gain 'exposure' to attract future funding. In other words, think tanks and similar organisations survive by seeking the visibility that comes from influencing policy outcomes, particularly by affecting government decisions or party manifestos. Interviewees support this interpretation, with one think tank researcher from a Labour-adjacent organisation highlighting the stark difference in funding precarity between the period when Labour (under Kier Starmer) was anticipated

to form the next government and the earlier period under Jeremy Corbyn, describing the difference as “night and day” (Interview with think tank researcher “1” Labour-adjacent).

For many organisations, winning patrons and grants becomes an end in itself, and as a result, “organisational insecurity, competitive pressures, and fiscal uncertainty” force these groups to balance material needs with normative motivations, such as producing public interest-oriented ideas (Stone, 2007: p. 270). Looking specifically at think tanks, she demonstrates how, in conditions where this funding is particularly scarce (typically amongst left-of-centre think tank networks), this can incentivise organisations to narrowly tailor their output to accord with the preferences of elected officials or party operatives to maximise the chances of their ideas being ‘picked up’. Justin Bentham advances similar observations about the constraints imposed by the need for exposure in his discussion of the London Circuit: “a widespread policy advice network of intellectuals and policy specialists linked in various ways to government and Whitehall, the major political parties, interest groups, charitable organisations, business and the media” (Bentham, 2006: p. 170). Looking at New Left think tanks in particular, he argues that the need to be seen as “close to government” became a central goal of most organisations at the expense of more rigorous policy work. This was because the need to align with the government’s political agenda enforced a kind of intellectual conformity, where more radical or critical perspectives were sidelined in favour of more politically expedient ideas. As a result, the London circuit creates a closed-loop feedback dynamic in which governments and party leaders turn to external sources of ideas and expertise to legitimise their policy decisions, and external organisations tailor their offer to what they expect these political figures to want to hear. Similarly to Stone’s analysis, Bentham underscores how consideration of the public or the problems they face tends to be absent from these discussions.

In this sense, although these networks are ‘decentred’, they are still prone to a kind of groupthink as competition for scarce resources will see ideational output converge towards a mainstream. As a result, although the number of think tanks has increased in recent decades (Pautz, 2014), it does not appear that this has dramatically increased the diversity of ideas that political actors have to draw from or the applicability of these ideas

to solving ‘real world’ political problems. This presents a problem for the networks’ potential to furnish parties or party leaders with the ideas necessary to renew their party programme, as the spectrum of potential ‘alternative’ ideas that these networks can generate will be narrowed by the field dynamics that define them.

A second reason we might be sceptical of the claim that externalised ideational infrastructures should allow parties to draw on a greater range of ideas relates to how these ideas are translated from policy network to party programme: that is, via the SpAds and PAds that sit at the nexus of ELLs and party organisations. Here, the literature on executive advisers has described these figures’ gatekeeping role in determining the flow of ideas to the ministers with whom they work (Cardwell, 2022). Gains and Stoker describe special advisers as “brokers” who mediate between different worlds—the academic, the bureaucratic, and the political — making them responsible for translating complex policy ideas into politically viable proposals. *In theory*, this means they ensure that their ministers are exposed to diverse ideas and perspectives. In actuality, however, this appears to be more complicated, as the professional and time-resource pressures of the role can frequently limit the number of new ideas that these advisers engage with.

While Special Advisers (SpAds) often downplay their role as gatekeepers to policy ideas—insisting they are open to hearing from a range of sources—external ideational professionals, particularly in think tanks, recognise that gaining an adviser’s attention is essential for any idea to gain traction. As one think tank expert noted, “The key is to read what the adviser needs at the time. If they don’t like it or don’t think it’s relevant, they won’t pick it up, and you’ll waste everyone’s time” Interview with think tank researcher “1”, Conservative-adjacent This highlights a critical issue: SpAds operate under significant time pressures and cognitive constraints, limiting their ability to engage fully with new ideas. Thus, SpAds operate in conditions of bounded rationality and frequently make decisions in complex situations without complete information, processing only what they can within the time available. Given these limitations, Gains and Stoker argue that advisers engage in selective information processing, terminating their search for solutions

once they identify an idea deemed "good enough," even if it is not the most optimal choice (Gains & Stoker, 2011).

Consequently, think tanks are incentivised to tailor their proposals to align with SpAds' immediate priorities, prioritising accessibility and relevance over comprehensive, innovative solutions (Ball & Exley, 2010). This dynamic often results in suboptimal policy outcomes, as the constraints under which SpAds operate limit their ability to engage with more complex or long-term policy alternatives. To paraphrase one of my interviewees, at times, policy advisers are prone to reaching for the 'easiest' (defined somewhat vaguely as the "most digestible") policy solutions available but do so without necessarily considering whether that is the 'best' solution for the problem at hand (Interview with think tank researcher "1" (Labour-adjacent)).

To explain this, the think tanker suggested that the advisers' need to 'sell' the policy idea to their ministers likely explained this embrace of simple policy proposals. Like the SpAd/PAd themselves, ministers will have enormously busy schedules and thus be constrained by the cognitive resources they can commit to understanding new policy (this, indeed, is one the primary justifications for the use of SpAds in the first place (Yong and Hazell, 2014)). Further, as illustrated in Figures 6.1 and 6.2, advisers' career trajectories are closely tied to the ministers they serve, especially in the Conservative Party. This creates a potential incentive for advisers to avoid offering bold or challenging policy advice and "tell ministers what they want to hear" (Haidar et al., 2004; Hare, 2004). When ministers are primarily motivated by electoral concerns, this dynamic may lead to a short-sighted focus on politically expedient ideas rather than empirically sound ones.

6.7: Conclusion: EII and Contemporary Party Ideas

This chapter has highlighted the significant evolution of ideational infrastructure in contemporary British politics, characterised by the shift from party-centric to externalised ideational production. Using network analysis (supported by interview data) to compare the recruitment patterns of PAd/PAd across both major British political parties, I have

demonstrated that both Labour and the Conservatives have, to a significant extent, outsourced their ideational development to external networks of actors, such as think tanks and communications professionals.

However, I also find that this turn to externalised ideational infrastructures has had varied effects on the type of ideas each party incorporates into its platforms. While the Conservative Party has embraced a communications-focused approach, prioritising the ‘sellability’ of ideas, the Labour Party’s externalised infrastructure leans towards policy-specific development. I then discuss the implications of these differences for how the parties develop new ideas in service of programmatic renewal. I argue that the historic collaborative policy creation seen in party-centric ideational infrastructures has largely been replaced by an expert-driven process that, while giving each party an edge in its area of comparative ideational advantage (that is, in either policy production or communications), the field dynamics of these networks have, paradoxically, reduced the range of ideas that parties can draw on to update their political platforms.

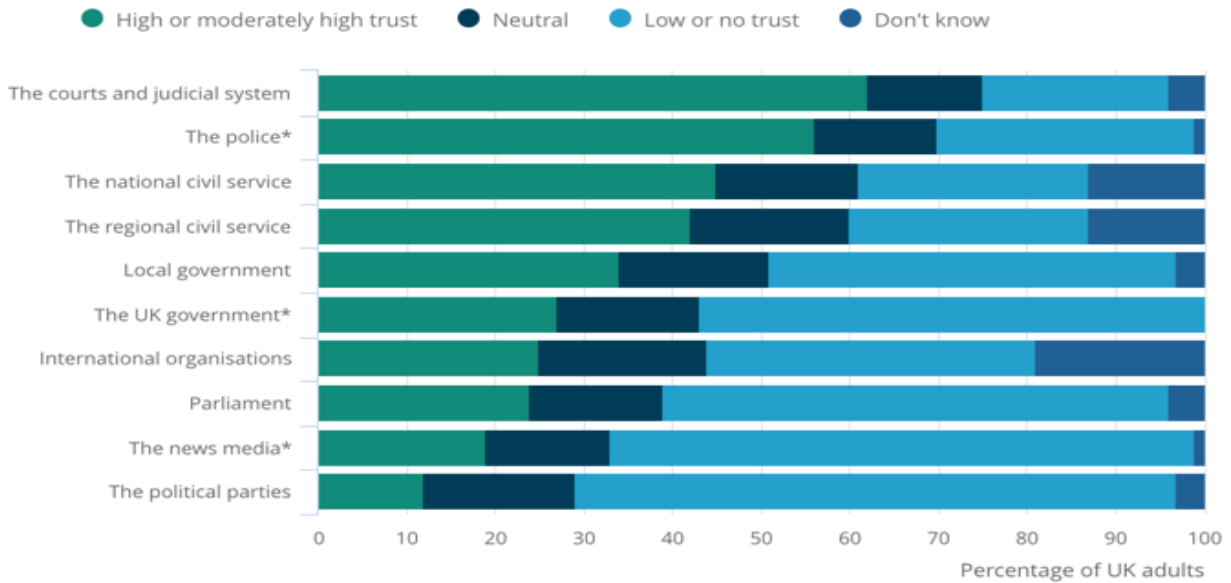
Chapter 7: Conclusion: Externalised Ideational Infrastructure and the Democratic Void

If, to once again recall Schattschneider’s famous line, “modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of parties”, then the health of contemporary British democracy should be a point for concern. Indeed, the major parties today are as unpopular as ever,

with polling suggesting that nearly 70 percent of the voting public is unsatisfied with the state of party politics — the lowest rating of any governing institution (see Figure 7.1).

Figure 7.1: Levels of trust in public institutions, UK, 2023

Levels of trust in public institutions, UK, 2023



Source: Office of National Statistics, 2024

In this thesis, I have developed a conceptual framework that helps contextualise this decline in support — and the challenges to the health of British party democracy that it implies — through the lens of party ideas. More specifically, I have used the concept of ideational infrastructure to examine how the *processes* by which the Labour and Conservative Party develop and distribute ideas have changed over the twentieth century. In so doing, I argue that the way parties develop and articulate their ideas has become more elitist and myopic, ultimately undermining their ability to renew their party platforms in a way consistent with their democratic potential.

This perspective provides a crucial and previously underexplored lens for understanding our current democratic malaise. By examining how British parties have shifted their approach to ideational development and distribution, I offer insights into how internal party dynamics have altered the ideas presented to voters and shaped how these

parties function—or fail—as democratic institutions. This approach not only adds depth to existing theories of party change but also helps bridge the gap between party politics and democratic theory. Doing so allows me to take the next analytical step in the ongoing discussion of party decline, asking not so much why party democracy is foundering but why it has failed to right itself?

To answer this question, I first developed a working theory on the role of party ideas in sustaining representative democracy. Drawing from party ‘linkage’ literature, I examined two key functions of parties in modern democratic systems. First, parties are instrumental in representation, as they organise, aggregate, and articulate citizens’ political ‘will’ into coherent political platforms. Thus, parties effectively “give voice to the citizenry” by linking civil society to the political system, grounding their actions in a solid social foundation (Mair, 2009: p. 5). Second, twentieth-century parties became indispensable for democratic state governance, as they translated representative input into state policy, reshaping the institutions of state power in the process (Dalton et al., 2011). This dual role—representing the public and governing on their behalf—positions parties as vital to maintaining democratic legitimacy and stabilising the tensions between democracy and capitalism (Berman, 2006; Lipset, 2000).

I argued that party ideas are essential for understanding both of these roles. On the representative side, party ideas act as “coalition magnets”—consistent heuristic frameworks that enable the coordination of numerous political actors and civil society groups that make up political coalitions. At an individual level, party ideas serve as ‘conceptual maps’ or ‘cues,’ guiding political actors in navigating the increasingly complex political landscape and reducing the information costs tied to political decision-making. On a broader scale, party ideas and ideologies form a critical part of a party’s “articulative” toolkit, allowing them to unite dominant coalitions by shaping and reshaping voting blocs and cleavages (de Leon et al., 2009). On the governance side, party ideas provide the party’s elected officials with a governing agenda, essentially providing a successful party with a road map for translating successful electoral platforms into changes to state policy (Vassallo & Wilcox, 2006).

I then turned to an empirical analysis of how party-ideational development and distribution processes have changed over the course of the 20th century, using the two main British parties — Labour and Conservative— as case studies. I traced how transformations in both party's ideational infrastructures played an essential part in driving the organisational changes described by Katz and Mair (1995) that defined the transition from mass party politics to the contemporary period in which these parties are largely detached from the civil society that they once helped organise and give voice to. In so doing, I provide support for their claim that the transformations that defined 20th-century party democracy can be understood as the rise in influence of the “party in public office” at the expense of both the “party on the ground” and the “party in central office” (Katz & Mair, 1993).

To do this, I first I examine the role of party ideas during the so-called golden age of mass democracy (Clarke et al., 2018). Using the two main British parties as case studies, I examined how the development of robust *party-centric ideational infrastructures* (PCIIs) allowed both Labour and the Conservatives to harness the energy of mass democracy by creating processes of ideational development that balanced the interests of the parties' constituent parts and allowed party platforms to be renewed in light of both the success (and failure) of their own policy legacies and the need to respond to exogenous shocks.

Chapter 2 examines the conditions which gave rise to these PCII. Here, I examine how reformers in both parties — driven by a realisation of the importance of party ideas in an age of mass democracy — set about developing robust, party-based research capabilities. I discuss how the Labour's PCII developed slowly throughout the 1930s and 1940s, as a squabbling network of trade unions, socialist societies, and activists slowly cohered into a structured mass party thanks in no small part to the formation of a PCII that proved capable of defining what constituted the Labour ‘party line’. The development of a more centralised and structured policy apparatus made up of a network of policy committees, a rejuvenated propaganda effort, and, most importantly, the Labour Party Research Department (LPRD) allowed Labour to synthesise the various strands of

socialist thought within the party. By the late 1930s, Labour had articulated a coherent platform with which to compete electorally. Slowly building momentum, this new ideational capacity culminated in a decisive victory in 1945, allowing Labour to use its platform to reshape the British political economy. This victory sent shockwaves through the Conservative Party, prompting reformers like Rab Butler to establish the Conservative's own version of PCII. Inspired by Labour's model, Butler sought to reshape how the party interacted with ideas to move it away from its elitist roots and adapt it to the era of mass democracy. Central to this transformation was the Conservative Research Department (CRD), which quickly became a key player in shaping the party's electoral strategy, public communication, and manifesto content. Thus, by the end of the 1950s, both parties were equipped with robust PCIIIs capable of aggregating ideational inputs from across the parties' different faces into party programmes and presenting voters with competing visions of the country's future.

Chapter 3 explores the challenges PCIIIs faced as they became institutionalised within both parties and influenced the distribution of power. By focusing on the 'problems of party government' through the lens of ideational production, it examines how PCIIIs managed the difficulties of sustaining and renewing their parties' ideological platforms *after* helping their parties achieve electoral success. A key issue was that party leaders, preoccupied with governing and competing ideas from the civil service, became increasingly disconnected from the party organisations that had brought them to power. This created frustration amongst party researchers, as long-term ideational planning was hindered by short-sighted ministers and interference from civil servants. To address these challenges, liaison bodies were formed to coordinate ideational production between party and government. Ultimately, PCIIIs in both parties successfully navigated these difficulties, retaining influence over party ideas and gradually increasing their power throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

Having traced this history, I then turn my attention to the decline of these PCIIIs and their eventual replacement by externalised ideational infrastructures (EIIs). Here, I explore how this transformation occurred in response to the economic crises of the 1970s,

which undermined the legitimacy of the post-war paradigm and, with it, the party-based research structures that helped to shape it.

Chapter 4 first looks at how, in both parties, the late 1960s and 1970s saw growing concern that party-centric ideational infrastructure had become a political liability as class voting waned and economic growth and employment stability became increasingly elusive. In Labour, Harold Wilson took steps to isolate the party's left flank, particularly within its PCII, fearing that the radical turn of both party researchers and party activists would damage electoral prospects. He did this in two ways: introducing and institutionalising special advisors (SpAds) and creating the No. 10 Policy Unit. Both of these efforts aimed to develop a political-advisory infrastructure centred in the Prime Minister's office and away from the party machinery. Similarly, in the Conservative Party, Heath began the process of ideational consolidation by asserting control over the CRD through the post-1974 policy review — a process which ultimately proved to be a chaotic failure. Thatcher, frustrated by Heath's mismanagement and the CRD's perceived inability to incorporate market-liberal ideas into the party platform, began to sideline the CRD upon taking power, expanding the use of SpAds and the Policy Unit despite previously campaigning against them.

In Chapter 5, I explore how the concentration of ideational authority in the hands of party leaders led to a concomitant process of 'ideational outsourcing' in both parties. This shift enabled party leaders to bypass traditional party structures and embrace new and sometimes radical ideas. This outsourcing process differed between the two parties, a distinction shaped by their distinct organisational legacies. To this end, the process occurred much more quickly in the Conservative Party, with Labour's approach to ideational outsourcing first having to negotiate intense factional infighting over the status of constitutionally entrenched party-based policy structures. In the context of the collapse of the prevailing paradigm of economic governance that had defined British political economy since the end of the second world war, this relative dexterity proved decisive for the Conservative Party, and helped pave the way for the Thatcherite revolution. It also created a model to imitate, and by the turn of the century Labour had its own robust, party-

external policy network from which to draw ideas, eventually helping to deliver Tony Blair (New) Labour's own period of dominance. Both parties had converged on a new externalised model of ideational infrastructure, in the process severely undermining the ideational authority of the party in the central office.

In Chapter 6, I then explore the consequences of the shift to externalised ideational infrastructure for the types of ideas incorporated into the programmes of contemporary British political parties. Through network analysis of party advisors' career trajectories, supported with interview data, I show that while ideational outsourcing remains a prominent feature of both parties' approaches to ideational development, the specific policy networks with which each party works are starkly different. To this end, I find that in the Conservative Party, there is a notable focus on generating ideas geared towards communication strategies, while Labour, in contrast, has concentrated more on policy-specific development. I argue that these differences point to equal but opposite weaknesses in the field logics of both parties' externalised ideational infrastructures that, ultimately, limit the ability of both to effectively renew their party platforms.

7.1: Externalised Ideational Infrastructure, Party Democracy, and the Future of Economic Governance — Contribution to Existing Accounts of Party Democracy

How might these findings contribute to our understanding of the current malaise in party democracy? First, they offer valuable nuance to existing theories about the democratic consequences of party-organisational change and its democratic consequences. Most obviously, they speak directly to the aforementioned discussion of the rise of the 'party in public office' at the expense of the other party 'faces' (on the ground and in the central office) (Bardi et al., 2017; Katz & Mair, 1993). As we saw in Chapters 4 and 5, the 'upward' and 'outward' movement of ideational authority that defined the latter decades of the twentieth century was very much instigated by the desire of party leaders (and their parliamentary colleagues) to sidestep the entrenched influence that parties' bureaucracies and memberships had over the ideas that parties carried into the political

arena. Thus, a key element of the rise to prominence of the party in public office was the ability of party leaders to claim ideational power from their colleagues in party bureaucracies and, by extension, the party on the ground.

As Mair (2009) shows, these changes in authority of the different party faces played an essential part in undermining the vitality of party democracy. As party leaders pushed their organisations to abandon their traditional role as intermediaries between the public and the state, the relative weight they placed on each of the ‘dual roles’ they play as democratic institutions — representation and governance — shifted decidedly towards the latter. Parties *formally* continue to contribute to democratic proceedings in the sense that they contest elections and form governments based on the results of these elections, but this behaviour has been hollowed out of any *substantive* representative quality. Parties have primarily become a vehicle for getting professional politicians elected to state office at the expense of their traditional role in articulating the ‘will of the people’, with predictably deleterious results for party support and satisfaction with democracy (Kenny, 2009). While my approach supports these conclusions, it also provides important nuance both on how this played out over the latter decades of the twentieth century and how different parties within the same system embraced different strategies for managing this “mutual divorce” between party and voter (Mair, 2013).

For one, it identifies an essential mechanism for explaining how the party facilitated effective democratic representation *before* the mutual divorce during the era of mass politics. Here, I demonstrated how both parties developed robust party-centric ideational infrastructures to lead processes of consensual ideational development that incorporate input from across different party ‘faces’ into party platforms that were then presented to the public during the electoral contests. Second, it also advances a hitherto under-discussed *party-internal* explanation for why this traditional representative role broke down in the latter decades of the twentieth century. As we have observed, the shift towards externalised ideational infrastructure enabled party leaders to bypass traditional party organisational structures in the development of ideas, outsourcing this process to

networks of professional experts — findings which support existing accounts of party-political “modernisation” (Murphy, 2023).

Beyond this, the thesis’ focus on party ideas offers a valuable lens for understanding how these institutions have negotiated the decline of their linkage functions. This is to say, it helps us understand how parties have reacted in response to the emergence of Mair’s void. Here, I identify trends in advisor recruitment patterns that suggest that Labour and the Conservatives have taken different approaches to negotiating the challenges of ‘hollowed’ party democracy.

It should be reiterated from the onset that these conclusions are largely inferential. As think tank and public policy scholars have long pointed out (Kisby, 2007; Yee, 1996; Pierson, 1993), the informal and networked nature of contemporary ideational production makes it difficult to make more definitive causal claims about the influence of policy networks on the formation of specific ideas or policy outcomes. To some extent, the very networked character of this mode of policy development means that the emergence of ideas from these networks will be overdetermined, with many different players legitimately being able to claim ‘influence’ over the formation of a political idea or set of ideas, but with none to claim that they ‘caused’ the idea. However, it is important to avoid becoming the proverbial drunk under the streetlight, looking for the truth only where the evidence is easiest to see (Marsh & Smith, 2002). Since these platforms play a crucial role in forming party ideas and, thus, how these parties function as democratic institutions, their impact on party behaviour is too important to overlook simply because casual claims are challenging to make (Berman, 1998).

To this end, we can build from the analysis in Chapter 6 to consider how the different logics of the party’s two EIs (and the ideas produced therein) might influence how these parties operate as democratic institutions. As we have seen, while both parties have outsourced the production and distribution of their ideas to external networks of ‘ideational professionals’, an empirical examination of these networks reveals important differences between them. This, in turn, suggests that each has taken a different strategy for

managing the ‘informational void’ that emerged as they transformed from organisations grounded in civil society to creatures of the state.

As the cartel party literature has detailed, the process of cartelisation has two important changes in party behaviour: the turn towards technocratic managerialism and the embrace of ‘political marketing’ to sell voters on increasingly diminishing political offers (Hopkin & Blyth, 2019; Mair, 2014; Blyth & Katz, 2005; Katz & Mair, 1995). The findings discussed above largely support this claim but suggest that — at least in a two-party system like the United Kingdom — parties will embrace different ‘comparative advantages’ in how they go about this cartelisation.

In the Labour Party, as we have seen, this amounts to an embrace of ideas that focus on the technical management of the economy and society. The Labour network is defined by a relatively high concentration of ideas-producing organisations like policy-oriented think tanks and third-sector organisations. This, in turn, suggests that Labour leaders tend to recruit advisor support with the policy expertise necessary to support this technocratic approach to party government — that is, at least compared with the Conservative Party. This, ultimately, represents a kind of indirect depoliticisation of Labour’s party platform as an increasing number of ‘big’ ideas are broken down to the level of technical policy solutions (Mair, 2005) and done so via a process that circumvents the party’s traditional democratic process for policy development.

Ball and Exley (2010) go as far as to compare the shift towards external policy networks to New Labour’s adoption of “new public managerialism,” where social change is seen as something to be managed rather than guided by genuine political representation. As discussed above, the field effects within these networks can push policy-producing organisations to operate within limited intellectual boundaries, often promoting pre-conceived ideas or those that already align with party expectations. Dissenting voices inevitably get selected out of the network as tight resource constraints, and the need to attract exposure create a powerful incentive to operate within field-defined ideational boundaries. This not only has “very contradictory implications for

democracy” (Ball & Exley, 2010: p. 165) but can also inhibit innovative potential within these networks in policy formation by drastically narrowing the scope of ideas that might be considered appropriate to address any given social problem (Pautz, 2011). The result, ultimately, is a process of party-ideational development that excels at identifying the solutions required to mend individual problems, but only within very narrowly defined parameters about what constitutes ‘realistic’ policy (Mair, 2014). This is a highly technocratic approach to ideational production that, more than likely, will struggle to place these policy solutions into broader frameworks capable of meaningful democratic articulation.

The second strategy, embodied by the Conservative party, represents the opposite side of the coin of this technocratic depoliticisation: what we might call *communicative hyperpoliticisation*. This approach focuses on the development of a communicative advantage in the electoral arena with less attention paid to policy substance. Here, the aim is to deploy political marketing to ‘sell’ the party (or, more accurately, the *party leaders*) to voters based on personal charisma or party brand. As with the managerial-technocratic approach, the point is also to win power and gain control of the state. Unlike the managerial-technocratic approach, however, taking power becomes an end in itself, with the ideas necessary for effective governance of secondary concern to the formation of campaigning discourse to deploy in the electoral “battle of ideas” (Rich, 2010). This is, indeed, a more convincing account of the Conservative Party’s experience of cartelisation, as it is difficult to argue that the Conservative governments of 2010-2024 have been guided by a commitment to effective, technocratic government in any meaningful way.

This account also accords with the extant literature’s treatment of the Conservative Party’s political approach in recent years. For instance, Gaber and Fisher (2022) analyse the Conservative Party’s deployment of ideas during the 2016 Brexit referendum and 2019 general election campaign and identify a new approach to political communications — what they call “strategic lying”. The logical conclusion of an unbalanced embrace of the more common phenomenon of political ‘spin’, strategic lies are designed not only to

mislead but also to set the political agenda. They trace the rise of strategic lying to the “expansion and increasing professionalisation of political communication professionals” (Gaber & Fisher, 2022: p. 462), an argument that certainly resonates with the network analysis described above. The point of strategic lying is to develop ideas for use as public relations strategies, with the goal of provoking rebuttal and further media coverage, and thus to ensure widespread dissemination of the original claim (in the process, reinforcing the initial false claim in the public's mind).

As this suggests, strategic lying is not necessarily driven by a wilful desire to mislead the public (although there are few qualms with doing this) but rather the logical conclusion of an approach to political ideas that privileges control over issue salience over issue resolution. It is born, that is, out of a one-sided approach to the use of party-political ideas as communicative tools as opposed to blueprints for effective governance. Indeed, the primary ideational tools of strategic lying that Gaber and Fisher identify — agenda-setting, priming, and framing — are closely related to the ‘cues’ or ‘conceptual maps’ that parties bring to the representative process discussed above. It is, however, an embrace of ideas that is stripped of any attachment to the ‘facts on the ground’, an iterant of a broader trend towards “political bullshit” in which political discourse becomes defined by “the diminishing importance of anchoring political utterances in relation to verifiable facts” (Hopkin & Rosamond, 2018: p. 642). Unsurprisingly, Gaber and Fisher see the emergence of strategic lying as highly destabilising to democratic stability.

7.2: Broader Contributions

The findings presented above also speak to a broader set of literature that briefly merits attention. For one, it largely accords with recent investigations of what might be called ‘British ideational political economy’. Here, recent work by Abby Innes identifies how the neoliberalism period can be understood as the articulation of two different understandings of neoclassical economics and how these understandings became incorporated into the political projects of the New Right and New Labour, respectively.

These two interpretations, what she calls Camp 1 and Camp 2, can be differentiated by the extent to which they believe in a first- or second-best-world interpretation of neoclassical economics. The first, those associated with right-wing articulations of neoliberal economic governance, adopt a “taxonomic approach to economics” defined by a spread acceptance of “mathematical axiomatic deductivism as an orientation to science” that rejects any divergence from the idealised world of economic modelling. This is to say, the economic models described by neoclassical economics represent the more-or-less ‘natural’ state of the economy, and any derivation from this theorised outcome will, by definition, result from some invalid intervention into the smooth function of the market. According to Camp One economic management, neoclassical economics cannot fail; it can only be failed, and thus, the job of economic policy is to introduce the market into as many social spheres as possible.

Camp Two — typified by New Labour’s approach to economic management — also understands the economic world through axiomatic deductivism and assumes economies will indeed trend towards equilibrium. However, it also leaves room for the possibility of market failure, meaning that in many circumstances, the markets will be unable to reach equilibrium on their own without well-crafted interventions from economic managers. Thus, effective economic management, according to Camp 2 neoliberalism, requires well-honed policy that can ‘correct’ failures in markets and allow them to adhere as closely as possible to the first-best world benchmarks. This approach to economic governance creates a high need for competent managers who can step in at the right moments without unduly burdening the market once it’s put back on track (Innes, 2023: p. 32-33).

As Innes catalogues, the New Right largely emerged from Camp 1, relying on faith in mathematical modelling and utopian closed-systems reasoning to pursue a policy framework that eschewed state involvement in the management of the economy. This created a paradoxical incentive for the Conservative Party — it needed to win power but not necessarily to *govern* with this power. Thus, as Hopkin and Blyth put it, “Like, in the limited, liberal state of old, the party’s job was to allow markets to govern society, not act as the agent of society governing the market” (Hopkin & Blyth, 2019: p. 205). Once

Thatcher and her allies had succeeded in putting this utopian vision in place, the Conservative Party had little need for the production of new ideas — after all, why produce new ideas when the ‘correct’ ones are already at hand? Instead, it was incentivised to focus on how best to sell this utopian vision, even as the real-world impact of neoliberalism governance made this increasingly difficult in the face of mounting economic inequality and destabilising financial crises. However, with an ideational infrastructure ‘designed’ to sell these ideas, the Conservatives were forced to double down on this strategy and find ways to “sustain a failing neoliberal revolution via other narrative means” (Innes, 2023: p. 339). They accomplished this, according to Innes, by embracing the Brexit movement (*ibid.*), a move which, as noted above, has been used as a literal case study to examine the use of strategic lying. New Labour, by contrast, operated with a second-best world logic, and was thus incentivised to recruit advisers with the policy expertise necessary to address specific market failures, but not that would question the overarching neoclassical framework. For Innes, this is the ultimate origin of New Labour’s emphasis on managerialism — a general acceptance of Camp 1’s key principles, paired with an electoral strategy positioning New Labour as more effective in executing this approach.

The present study’s contribution to this approach is straightforward: it traces the ‘practical life’ of these different approaches to neoclassical ideas, supporting the argument by showing how Camp One and Camp Two reasoning is imprinted into the EIs of the Conservative and Labour Parties, respectively. Thus, the differences in each party’s policy networks can be reasonably understood as the organisational correlates to these two approaches to neoclassical economics — with the Conservatives acting as a neoliberal salesman and the Labour acting as neoliberal stretcher-bearers.

Beyond the literature on British ideational political economy, this project makes a significant contribution to the broader field of ideational political theory, particularly the work that examines the role of ideas during crises (Crouch, 2005; Blyth, 2002). Here, by examining the importance of political parties as the “carriers of different ideas” (Vassallo & Wilcox, 2006) into the political sphere, it offers an important intervention about the

importance of understanding the *democratic* contexts in which new ideas emerge in the wake of crises. To this end, the present study can reintroduce democratic theory into a literature that has tended to focus on non-majoritarian institutions—especially central banks—when analysing the influence of economic ideas (James, 2024; Levingston, 2021; Schmidt, 2010). While this focus is understandable, given the immense power these institutions have gained during the neoliberal era, it risks neglecting the crucial role of democratic legitimacy in the processes of institutional change, especially over the long term. This is a significant oversight because democratic institutions, such as political parties, play a key role in shaping and legitimating ideas within the electoral arena and thus are crucial ‘supply side’ organisations for understanding where alternative ideas about economic governance might come from.

To this end, the study of how parties develop and distribute ideas can make a valuable contribution to understanding why certain ideas are ‘in the right place at the right time’ to be taken up in times of institutional instability and, just as importantly, the extent to which these ideas are imbued with democratic legitimacy. The long-term settlement of economic crises cannot possibly be fully understood as simply an elite game — a paradigm shift implies a new democratic settlement around a rebuilt institutional landscape. Thus, understanding the emergence of politically stable institutional change requires us to examine how the economic ideas that drive institutional change interact with the democratic sphere, even in an era in which decisions about economic governance are partially removed from democratic pressures. A focus on parties allows us to do this.

In a related sense, a focus on parties and how they ‘supply’ ideas to the political sphere can also cast light onto ideational political economy accounts of why a crisis might not instigate institutional change. This is particularly relevant for accounts of the “strange non-death of neoliberalism” (Crouch, 2011). Indeed, in the wake of the financial crisis, numerous studies emerged attempting to understand why neoliberal ideas remained so resilient despite what many saw as an event that should have triggered a crisis of their legitimacy (Lowery, 2022; Cerny, 2014; Schmidt & Thatcher, 2014, Crouch, 2011). A focus on party ideas offers a potential answer to this puzzle — party systems were ill-equipped

to supply alternative ideational frameworks, and without any democratically articulated “instruction sheet” (Blyth, 2002) to guide institutional change, none was forthcoming.

This brings me to the last significant contribution this project makes — to the party politics literature. I have already discussed how this project contributes to understanding party change and party democracy. However, it also has important lessons for the literature on populist or anti-system parties. As we saw in the introduction, contemporary party politics is characterised by the rise of anti-system challenger parties at the expense of legacy mainstream incumbents, a phenomenon that has been especially pronounced since the 2008 financial crisis (Casal Bértoa & Rama, 2020; Hopkin, 2020; Casal Bértoa & Weber, 2019). While this literature has done an excellent job examining how external factors like changing economic structures and voter preferences are leading this turn away from the legacy party democracy (De Vries & Hobolt, 2020; Hernández & Kriesi, 2016), less attention has been paid to the internal dynamics that explain the decline of traditional mainstream parties. To this end, this project helps address the question — frequently overlooked by the literature on challenger parties — of how mainstream parties *allowed their secure positions to be eroded*. Indeed, if these parties truly had cartelised to keep these new entrants out, what caused this strategy to stop working?

The answer suggested here is that as party leaders outsourced their party’s ideational processes, they made them more elitist and (paradoxically) insular, which in turn made it more difficult to update policy platforms in such a way as to meaningfully address the citizens’ concerns. This became problematic as the neoliberal policy legacies of mainstream parties were delegitimised in the wake of the global financial crisis (Schmidt, 2014). The post-crisis moment called for alternative ideas for economic management, a demand neither party could fill due to the ideational constraints of their EILs. The mainstream cartel was effectively broken when challenger parties emerged to fill this demand (Piquer & Jäger, 2020).

7.3: Where do we go from here?

Ultimately, in this thesis, I set out to demonstrate an ideational account of British party democracy. I argued that because parties provide the organisational basis through which ideas about how the world works are imbued with democratic legitimacy and translated into meaningful changes in state policy, they are uniquely important for understanding the health of any democratic system. Given this claim, what might the future hold for British party democracy?

It is, of course, impossible to say with any certainty, but we can speculate by looking at the country's most recent election. By traditional accounts, the signs are certainly positive. At the time of writing, Keir Starmer has just won a significant parliamentary majority and returned Labour to No. 10 for the first time in 14 years -- a smooth transition of power that cannot be taken for granted in a post-Trump world. However, judging by Labour's approach to its party platform, the state of British democracy appears to be in a more difficult position. Commentators widely described the party's bid for power as embracing an almost non-ideological approach to campaigning—a strategy many commentators described as the “Ming Vase” approach (Jardine, 2024; Keegan, 2024; Woods, 2024). This rather oblique reference recalls Roy Jenkin's famous description of Tony Blair's approach to campaigning in which he was so careful to avoid saying anything that could be used against him in the press that he avoided saying anything at all (thus behaving like “a man carrying a priceless Ming vase across a highly polished floor”) (Williamson, 2023). Similarly, Starmer's pitch to British voters offered little by way of specific ideas, relying instead on vague promises of competently delivering on the Conservatives' commitment to “get Britain growing again” (Meadway, 2022) while letting the moribund Sunak government dig its own grave.

Electorally, this was undeniably a hugely successful approach. As was the case in 1997, Labour was swept to power in a landslide victory, winning a majority of 174 seats. However, beneath this top-line figure lurks the spectre of democratic malaise. Concerns have already emerged that the party's highly managerialist campaign secured only a ‘negative mandate’, with voters rejecting the incumbent Conservatives without clearly articulating what Labour would offer in their place (Grice, 2024). This appears to have

contributed to a broad popular disengagement, with only 52 percent of British adults casting ballots, the lowest proportion since the introduction of universal suffrage (Mason, 2024).

Perhaps even more concerning is that, behind the scenes, the Labour opposition put in considerable work in preparing its agenda for office in the run-up to the election – only to hide these preparations from British voters. Indeed, Starmer's approach to ideas appears to adhere closely to that of New Labour, with policy development primarily farmed out to a network of specialist think tanks and advocacy groups. Reporting on the party's manifesto development reveals a significant influence of familiar organisations, such as IPPR and the Resolution Foundation, and newer influences from organisations like the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change (Jayanetti, 2023). This suggests that, like most of his twenty-first-century predecessors, Starmer's leadership will be defined by a reliance on elite networks of ideas producers to shape its path forward into government – with all the democratic concerns that might come with this.

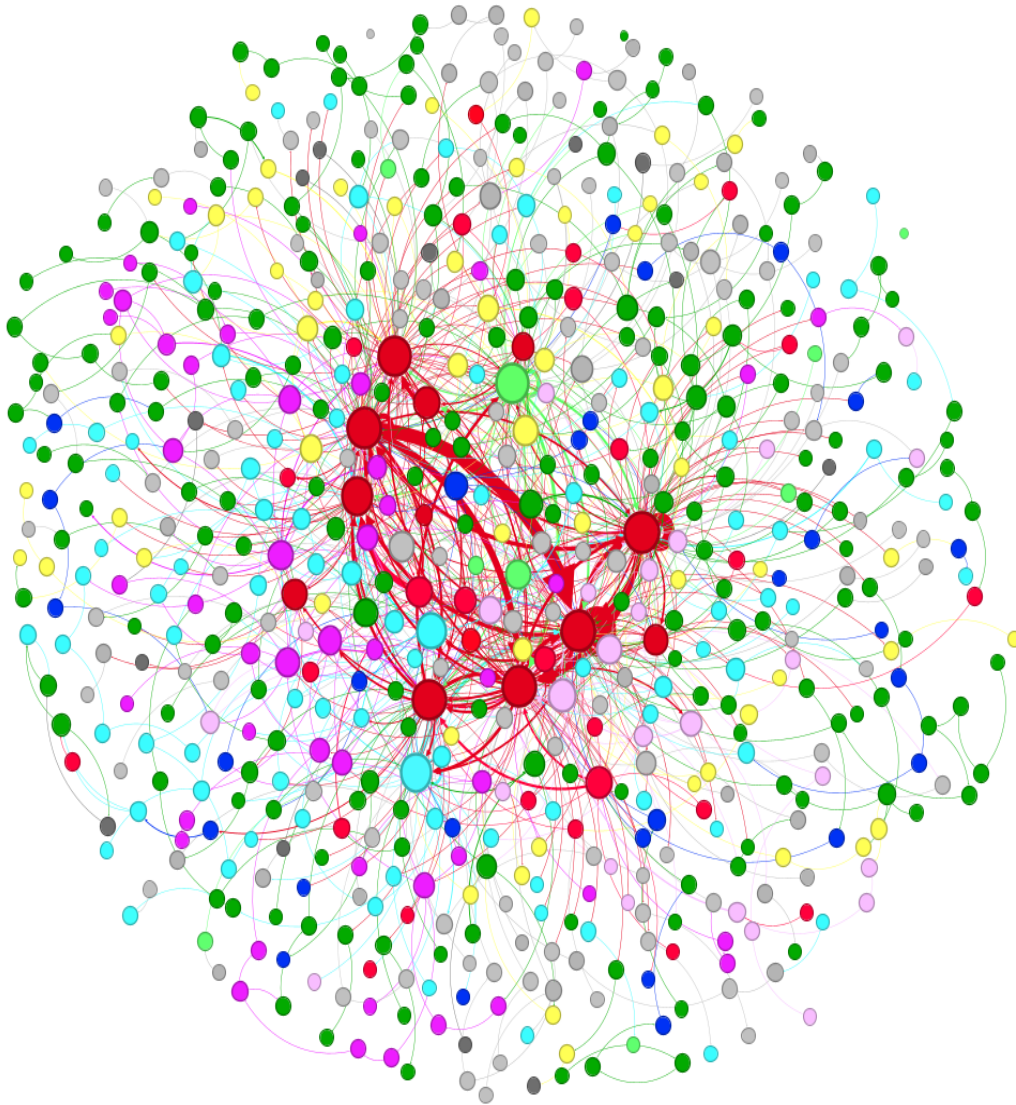
Furthermore, there are signs of innovation in Labour's policy network under Keir Starmer, suggesting a more consolidated approach to ideational development. Here, the rise of Labour Together, a group initially formed during Starmer's leadership campaign, is particularly noteworthy. Once an intra-party campaigning organisation, Labour Together rebranded as a think tank to provide Starmer with the ideas necessary to win power. Reporting by the journalist Chaminda Jayanetti (2023) suggests that Labour Together was primarily responsible for pushing Starmer's ruthlessly electoralist approach to party programmatic construction, taking cues about research topics from the Labour leadership and constructing policy proposals only after polling their impact with target voting demographics. To the extent that Labour Together represents a new 'model' of think tank – one that gains its influence by working with potential party leaders *before* they gain power, helping them with intra-party power struggles along the way – it warrants further research to understand how this might be changing the policy network around the Labour Party.

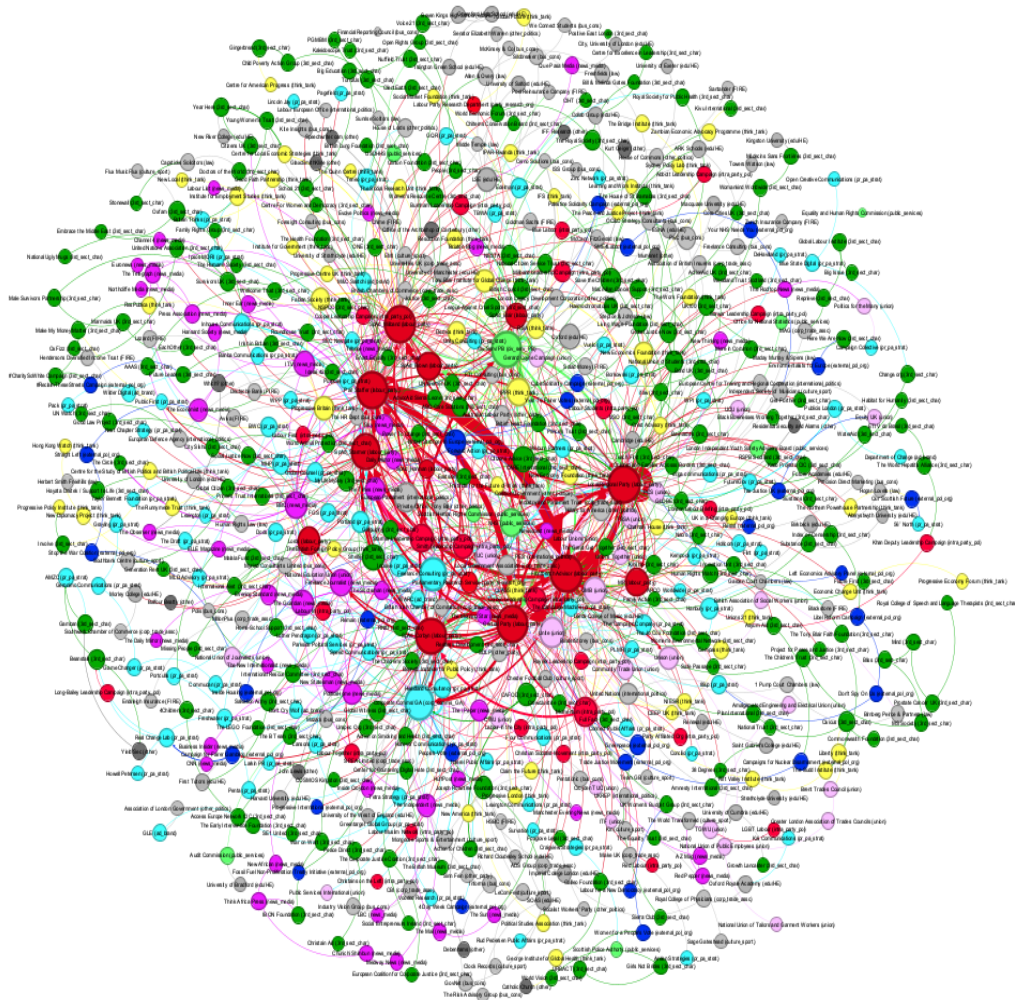
While it is far too early to interpret what these changes might mean for the specific ideas that Labour brings into office, the democratic process by which it arrived there is less than encouraging. If a clear party platform is vital for effective party democracy, Labour's strategy of deliberately obscuring the party's plans to avoid negative press should be of some concern. How can a party participate meaningfully in a mandate-based representative democracy if it does not clarify what it seeks a mandate *for*?

Network Appendix:

Appendix 1: Unfiltered Overview Networks, Coded by Background Industry

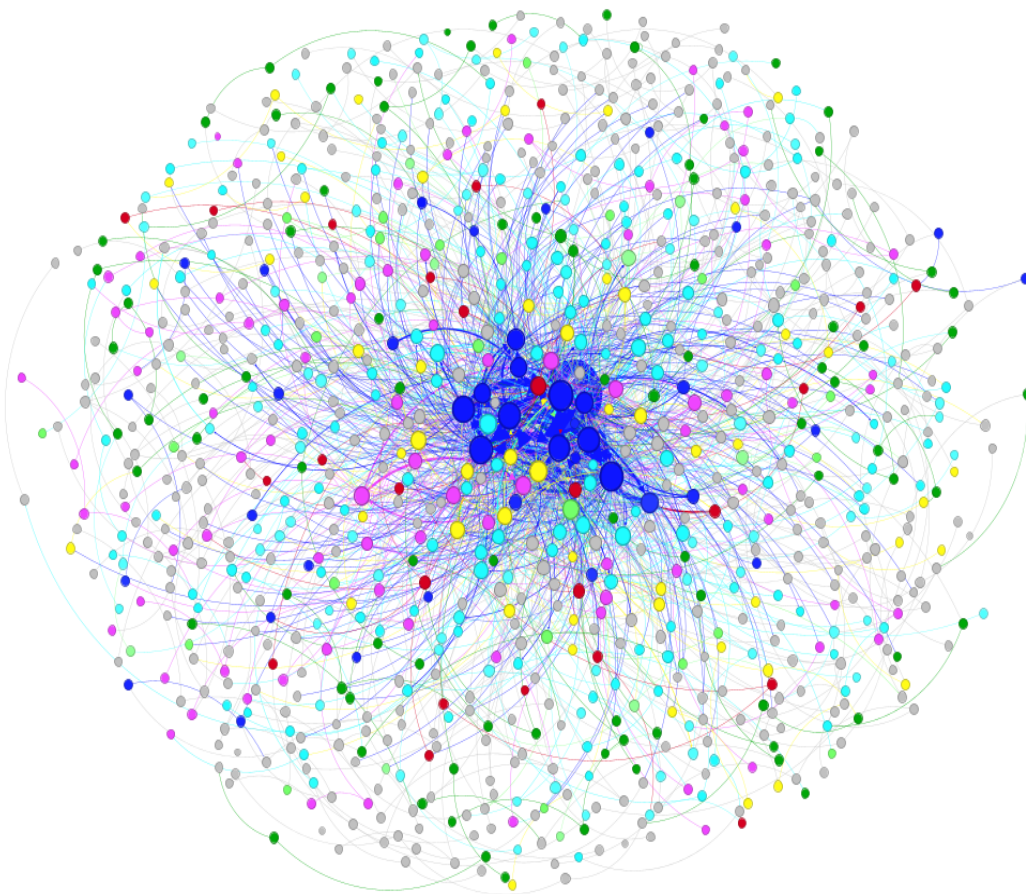
Labour Party Industry Background, overview (both with and without node labels)

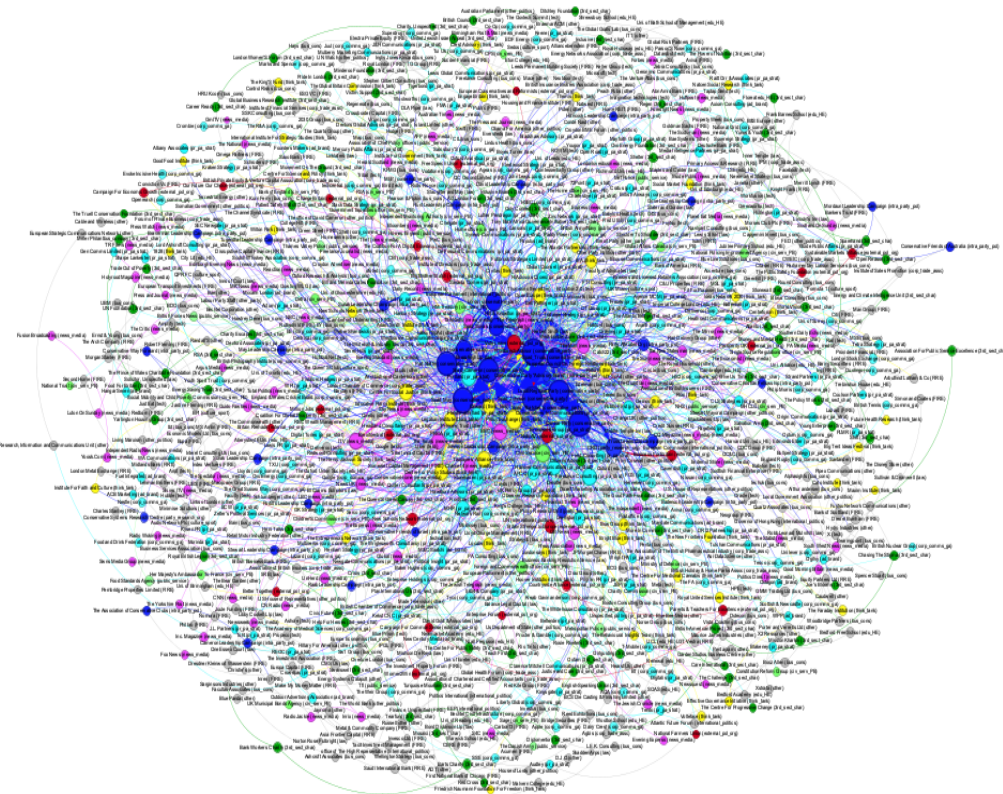




Key: Red=Party Organization; Yellow=Think Tank; Blue = Political Pressure Group; Dark Green= Third-sector/Charity Light Blue= Public Relations and Communications; Purple= News Media; Light Green= Civil Service; Pink=Union Grey= Other

Conservative Party Industry Background, overview (both with and without node labels)

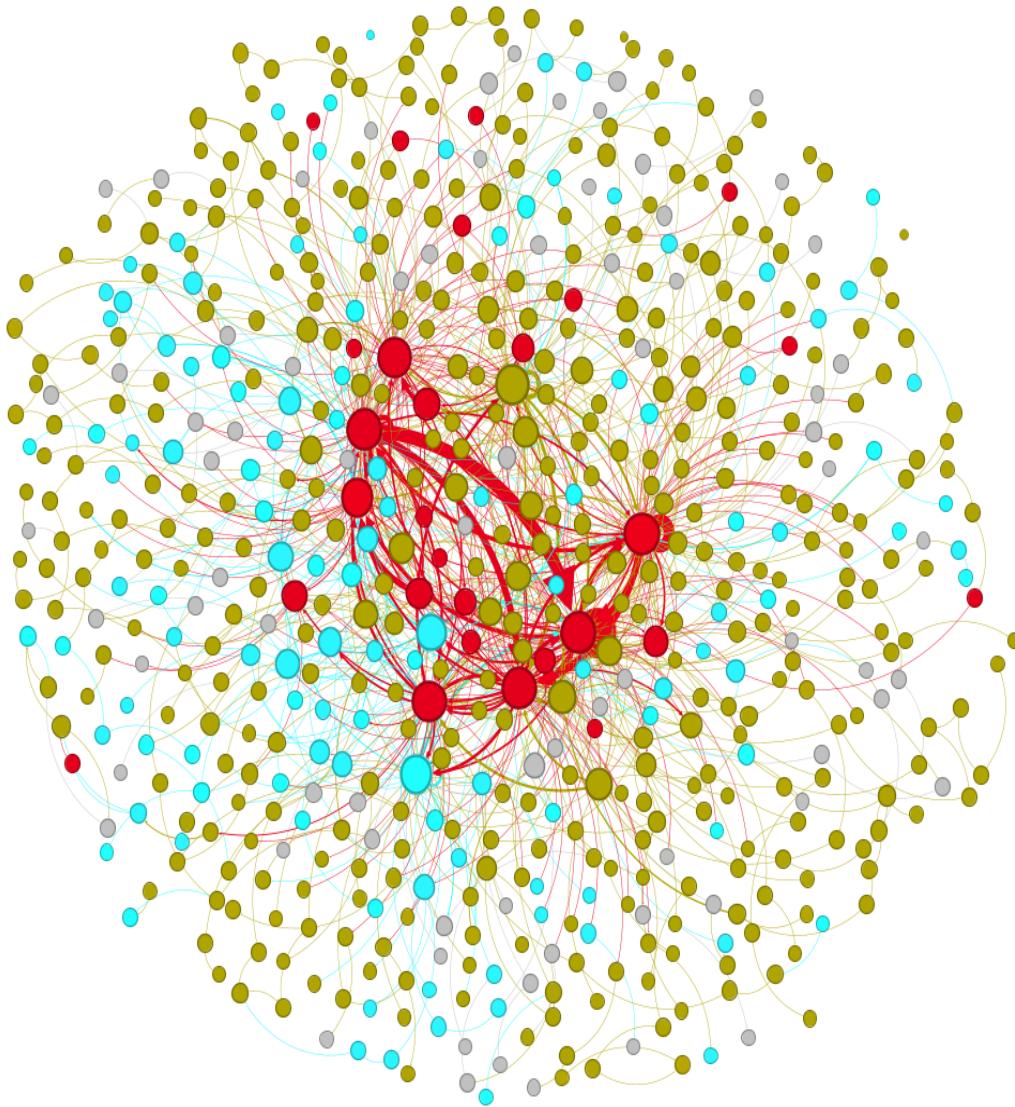


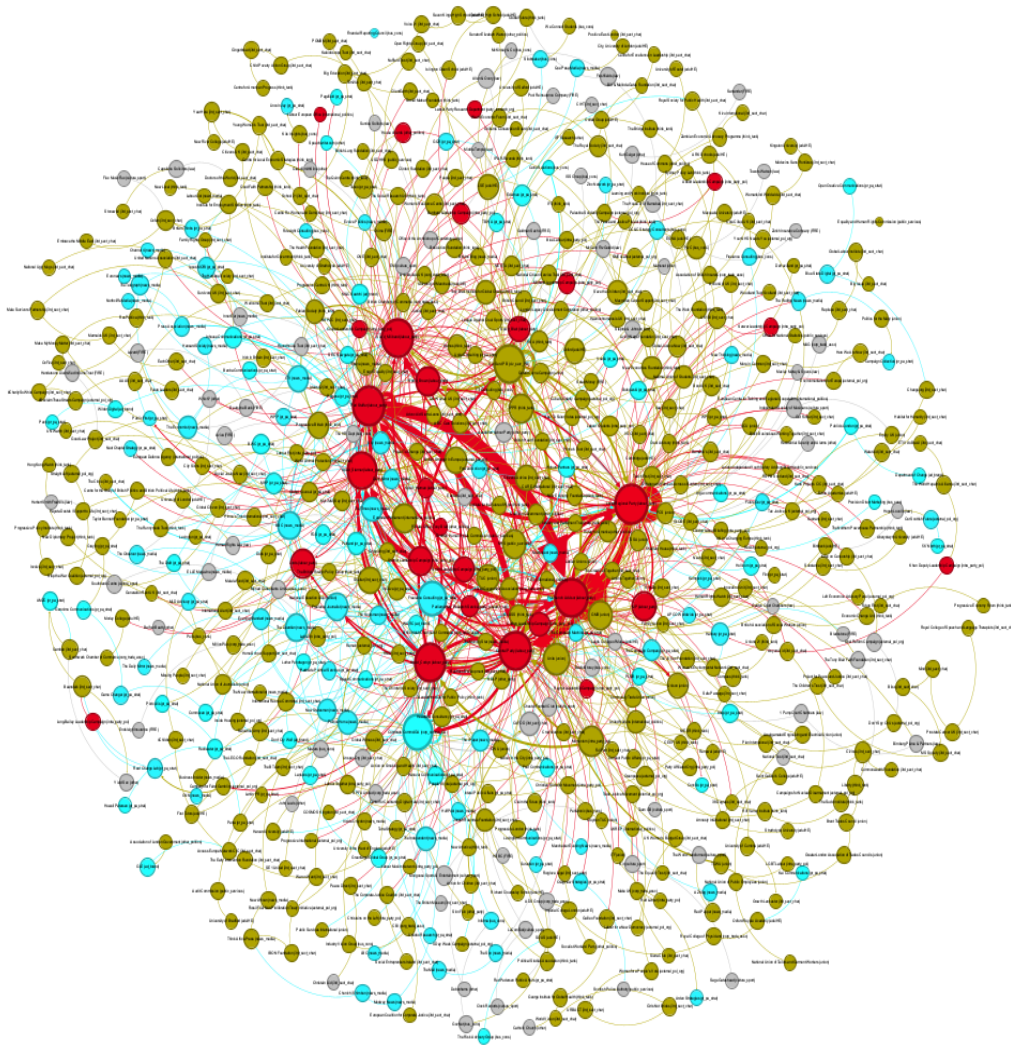


Key: Blue=Party Organization; Yellow=Think Tank; Red = Political Pressure Group; Light Blue= Public Relations and Communications; Purple= News Media; Light Green= Civil Service; Dark Green= Third-sector/Charity; Grey= Other

Appendix 2: Unfiltered Overview Networks, Coded by SpAd Expertise Type

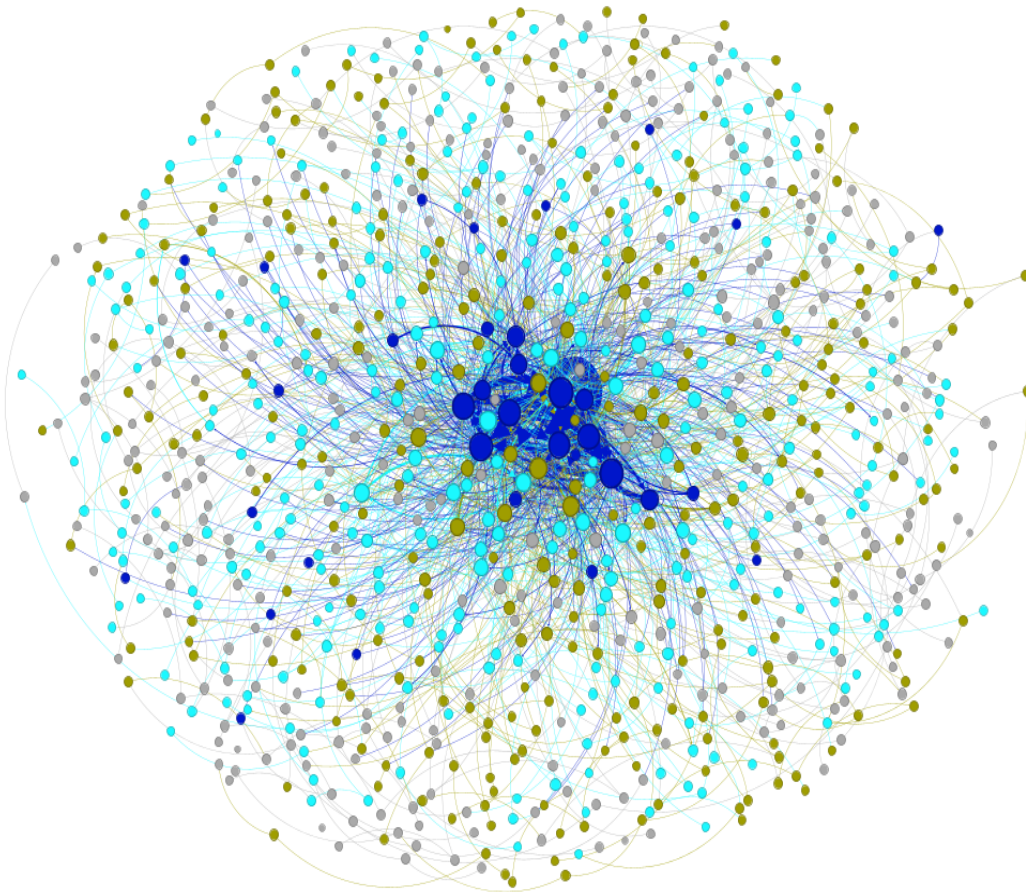
Labour Party SpAd Expertise, overview (both with and without node labels)

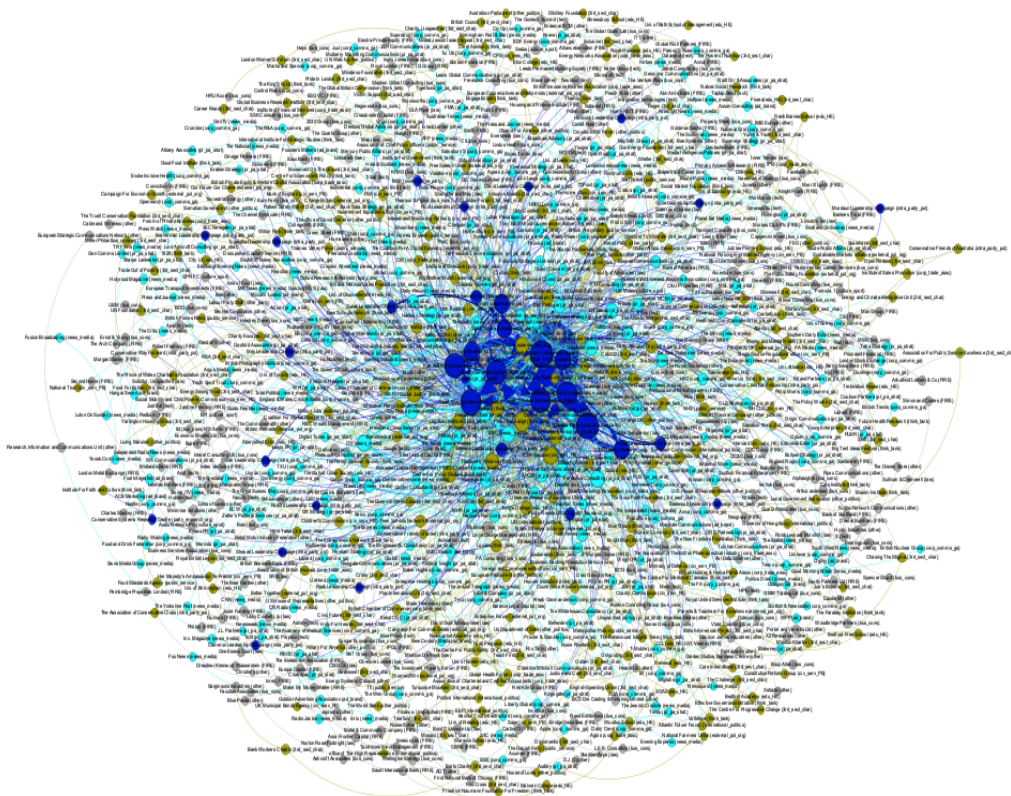




Key: Red = Party Organization; Gold = Policy Organization; Light Blue = Communication Organization; Grey=Other

Conservative Party SpAd Expertise, overview (both with and without node labels)





Key: Blue = Party Organization; Gold = Policy Organization; Light Blue = Communication Organization; Grey=Other

Bibliography

- Abou-Chadi, T. (2016) 'Niche Party Success and Mainstream Party Policy Shifts – How Green and Radical Right Parties Differ in Their Impact', *British Journal of Political Science*, 46(2), pp. 417–436. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123414000155>.
- Abrams, M. (1963) 'Public Opinion Polls and Political Parties', *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 27(1), pp. 9–18.
- Achen, C.H. (2002) 'Parental Socialization and Rational Party Identification', *Political Behavior*, 24(2), pp. 151–170. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1021278208671>.
- Albrecht, K. (2003) *The Power of Minds at Work: Organizational Intelligence in Action*. AMACOM.
- de Albuquerque, A. (2013) 'Media/politics connections: beyond political parallelism', *Media, Culture & Society*, 35(6), pp. 742–758. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443713491302>.
- Almiron, N., Moreno, J.A. and Farrell, J. (2023) 'Climate change contrarian think tanks in Europe: A network analysis', *Public Understanding of Science*, 32(3), pp. 268–283. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/09636625221137815>.
- Amberg, S. (2022) 'How Policy Models Change: Insurgent Narratives of Policy Authority since the Great Recession', *Polity*, 54(4), pp. 684–708. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1086/721232>.
- Ashenden, R. (2020) 'Thatcher's "Wiring Diagram" and why we need it once again', *The Critic*, 25 August. Available at: <https://thecritic.co.uk/thatchers-wiring-diagram-and-why-we-need-it-once-again/>.
- Ashford, N. (1997) 'Politically impossible? How ideas, not interests and circumstances, determine public policy', *Policy: A Journal of Public Policy and Ideas*, 13(1), pp. 21–25. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3316/ielapa.971010581>.
- Avril, E. (2015) 'Leadership Elections and Democracy in the British Labour Party', in A. Alexandre-Collier and F.V. De Chantal (eds) *Leadership and Uncertainty Management in Politics*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, pp. 157–178. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137439246_11.

- Avril, E. (2016) “‘Wilful Blindness’: Effects and Perceptions of New Labour’s Party Management’, *Political Studies Review*, 14(2), pp. 163–174. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1478929915623295>.
- Bale, T. (2012) *The Conservatives since 1945: The Drivers of Party Change*. Oxford University Press.
- Ball, S. (2013) *The Conservative Party and British Politics 1902 - 1951*. Routledge. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315845241>.
- Ball, S.J. and Exley, S. (2010) ‘Making policy with “good ideas”: policy networks and the “intellectuals” of New Labour’, *Journal of Education Policy*, 25(2), pp. 151–169. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680930903486125>.
- Bardi, L., Enrico, C. and Pizzimenti, E. (2017) ‘Which face comes first? The ascendancy of the party in public office.’, in S. Scarrow, P. Webb, and T. Poguntke (eds) *Organizing political parties: Representation, participation and power*. Oxford University Press, pp. 62–83.
- Barker, R. (1976) ‘Political Myth: Ramsay MacDonald and the Labour Party’, *History*, 61(201), pp. 46–56.
- Barman, E. (2016) ‘Varieties of Field Theory and the Sociology of the Non-profit Sector’, *Sociology Compass*, 10(6), pp. 442–458. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12377>.
- Batrouni, D. (2020) *The Battle of Ideas in the Labour Party: From Attlee to Corbyn and Brexit*. 1st edn. Bristol University Press. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.46692/9781529205077>.
- BBC (2005) ‘Jim Callaghan: A life in quotes’, *BBC*, 26 March. Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/3288907.stm (Accessed: 7 June 2025).
- Beech, M. (2022) ‘Brexit and the decentred state’, *Public Policy and Administration*, 37(1), pp. 67–83. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0952076720905008>.
- Beers, L. (2009) ‘LABOUR’S BRITAIN, FIGHT FOR IT NOW!’, *The Historical Journal*, 52(3), pp. 667–695. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X09990070>.
- Beichman, A. (1974) ‘The Conservative Research Department: The Care and Feeding of Future British Political Elites’, *Journal of British Studies*, 13(2), pp. 92–113.

- Beichman, A. (1978) 'Hugger-Mugger in Old Queen Street: The Origins of the Conservative Research Department', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 13(4), pp. 671–688. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/002200947801300404>.
- Bell, P. (2004) *The Labour Party in Opposition 1970-1974*. London: Routledge. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203045909>.
- Benedetto, G., Hix, S. and Mastrorocco, N. (2020) 'The rise and fall of social democracy, 1918–2017', *American Political Science Review*, 114(3), pp. 928–939.
- Benn, T. (1988) *Out Of The Wilderness: Diaries 1963-67*. London: Arrow.
- Bentham, J. (2006) 'The IPPR and Demos: Think Tanks of the New Social Democracy', *The Political Quarterly*, 77(2), pp. 166–174. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-923X.2006.00759.x>.
- Berman, S. (1998) *The Social Democratic Moment: Ideas and Politics in the Making of Interwar Europe*. Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press.
- Berman, S. (2006) *The Primacy of Politics: Social Democracy and the Making of Europe's Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511791109>.
- Bevir, M. (2011) *The Making of British Socialism*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- van Biezen, I. (2014) 'The End of Party Democracy as We Know It? A Tribute to Peter Mair', *Irish Political Studies*, 29(2), pp. 177–193. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/07907184.2014.897944>.
- Black, L. (2003) 'Political Communication', in L. Black (ed.) *The Political Culture of the Left in Affluent Britain, 1951–64: Old Labour, New Britain?* London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, pp. 155–187. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230288249_7 (Accessed: 29 August 2024).
- Blackstone, B.T.A.V. et al. (1992) *Next Left: An Agenda for the 1990s*. London: Institute for Public Policy Research.
- Blair, T. (2000) 'Tony Blair's Britain speech', *The Guardian*, 28 March. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2000/mar/28/britishidentity.tonyblair> (Accessed: 12 September 2024).
- Blair, T. (2010) *A Journey*. Random House.
- Blick, A. (2003) *People who Live in the Dark*. Politico's.

- Blick, A. (2006) 'Harold Wilson, Labour and the Machinery of Government', *Contemporary British History*, 20(3), pp. 343–362. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13619460500407020>.
- Blyth, M. (1997) "Any More Bright Ideas?" The Ideational Turn of Comparative Political Economy', *Comparative Politics*. Edited by J. Goldstein, R. Keohane, and K. Sikkink, 29(2), pp. 229–250. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2307/422082>.
- Blyth, M. (2002) *Great Transformations: Economic Ideas and Institutional Change in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge University Press.
- Blyth, M. (2013) *Austerity: The History of a Dangerous Idea*. Oxford University Press.
- Blyth, M. and Katz, R. (2005) 'From Catch-all Politics to Cartelisation: The Political Economy of the Cartel Party', *West European Politics*, 28(1), pp. 33–60. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0140238042000297080>.
- Boix, C. (1998) *Political Parties, Growth and Equality: Conservative and Social Democratic Economic Strategies in the World Economy*. Cambridge University Press.
- Boseley, S. (2020) 'Austerity blamed for life expectancy stalling for first time in century', *The Guardian*, 25 February. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/feb/24/austerity-blamed-for-life-expectancy-stalling-for-first-time-in-century> (Accessed: 13 July 2022).
- Boswell, J. and Peters, J. (1997) *Capitalism in Contention: Business Leaders and Political Economy in Modern Britain*. Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (2005) *The Social Structures of the Economy*. 1st edition. Cambridge, UK ; Malden, MA: Polity.
- Brader, T., Tucker, J.A. and Duell, D. (2013) 'Which Parties Can Lead Opinion? Experimental Evidence on Partisan Cue Taking in Multiparty Democracies', *Comparative Political Studies*, 46(11), pp. 1485–1517. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414012453452>.
- Brittan, S. (1987) '1967 Devaluation', *Contemporary Record*, 1(4), pp. 44–53. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13619468808580936>.
- Bronk, R. and Jacoby, W. (2020) 'The Epistemics of Populism and the Politics of Uncertainty'. Rochester, NY. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3539587>.

- Brooke, S. (1989) 'Revisionists and Fundamentalists: the Labour Party and Economic Policy during the Second World War', *The Historical Journal*, 32(1), pp. 157–175. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X0001534X>.
- Brooke, S. (1992) *Labour's war: the Labour Party during the Second World War*. Oxford: Clarendon (Oxford historical monographs Labour's war).
- Brooke, S. (1995) 'The labour party and the 1945 general election', *Contemporary Record*, 9(1), pp. 1–21. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13619469508581325>.
- Buckler, S. and Dolowitz, D.P. (2009) 'Ideology, party identity and renewal', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 14(1), pp. 11–30. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569310802649102>.
- Budge, I. (1994) 'A New Spatial Theory of Party Competition: Uncertainty, Ideology and Policy Equilibria Viewed Comparatively and Temporally', *British Journal of Political Science*, 24(4), pp. 443–467. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123400006955>.
- Bundgaard-Pedersen, T. (1997) 'States and EU technical standardization: Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway managing polycentric policy-making 1985-95', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 4(2), pp. 206–224. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501769709696339>.
- Butler, D.E. and King, A. (1966) 'On The Eve', in D.E. Butler and A. King (eds) *The British General Election of 1966*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, pp. 85–94. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-00548-2_5.
- Butler, L. (2015) 'Michael Young, the Institute of Community Studies, and the Politics of Kinship', *Twentieth Century British History*, 26(2), pp. 203–224. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/tcbh/hwu063>.
- Butler, L. (2020) *Michael Young, Social Science, and the British Left, 1945-1970*. Oxford University Press.
- Byrne, C., Randall, N. and Theakston, K. (2020) 'The Collapse of Keynesian Welfarism 1970–1979: Heath, Wilson, Callaghan', in C. Byrne, N. Randall, and K. Theakston (eds) *Disjunctive Prime Ministerial Leadership in British Politics: From Baldwin to Brexit*. Cham: Springer International Publishing (Palgrave Studies in Political Leadership), pp. 51–83. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-44911-7_3.
- Callaghan, J. (1997) 'The Fabian Society since 1945', in *Ideas and Think Tanks in Contemporary Britain*. Routledge.

- Callaghan, J. and Tunney, S. (2000) 'Prospects for social democracy: A critical review of the arguments and evidence', *Contemporary Politics*, 6(1), pp. 55–75. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/135697700109967>.
- Campbell, A. and McIlroy, J. (2018) "'The Trojan Horse': Communist Entrism in the British Labour Party, 1933–43', *Labor History*, 59(5), pp. 513–554. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0023656X.2018.1436938>.
- Cardwell, P. (2022) *The Secret Life of Special Advisers*. Biteback Publishing.
- Casal Bértoa, F. and Rama, J. (2020) 'Party decline or social transformation? Economic, institutional and sociological change and the rise of anti-political-establishment parties in Western Europe', *European Political Science Review*, 12(4), pp. 503–523. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1755773920000260>.
- Casal Bértoa, F. and Weber, T. (2019) 'Restrained Change: Party Systems in Times of Economic Crisis', *The Journal of Politics*, 81(1), pp. 233–245. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1086/700202>.
- Castle, B. (1980) *The Castle Diaries: 1974–76*. Book Club Associates.
- Cerny, P.G. (2014) 'Globalization and the resilience of neoliberalism', *Critical Policy Studies*, 8(3), pp. 359–362. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19460171.2014.944370>.
- Chamberlain, W., McDougall, C. and Kendall, G. (2021) *The Future of Social Democracy: Essays to Mark the 40th Anniversary of the Limehouse Declaration*. Policy Press.
- Charmley, J. (2015) 'Winston Churchill', in C. Clarke et al. (eds) *British Conservative Leaders*. London: Biteback Publishing.
- Chwiero, J. (2007) 'Neoliberal Economists and Capital Account Liberalization in Emerging Markets', *International Organization*, 61(2), pp. 443–463. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818307070154>.
- Chwiero, J.M. and Walter, A. (2019) *The Wealth Effect: How the Great Expectations of the Middle Class Have Changed the Politics of Banking Crises*. Cambridge University Press.
- Clark, G. and Kelly, S. (2004) 'Echoes of Butler? The Conservative Research Department and the Making of Conservative Policy', *The Political Quarterly*, 75(4), pp. 378–382. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-923X.2004.00638.x>.

- Clarke, N. *et al.* (2018) *The Good Politician: Folk Theories, Political Interaction, and the Rise of Anti-Politics*. Cambridge University Press.
- Cockett, R. (1994) *Thinking the Unthinkable: Think-tanks and the Economic Counter-revolution 1931-1983*. HarperCollins.
- Colombo, F. and Dinas, E. (2023) 'Networks of Grievances: Social Capital and Mainstream Party Decline', *Comparative Political Studies*, 56(3), pp. 363–394. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/00104140221100195>.
- Coman, J. (2021) 'British politics suddenly feels small – and the old order is “taking back control”', *The Guardian*, 6 December. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/dec/06/british-politics-old-order-taking-back-control-brexit-labour-tories> (Accessed: 20 March 2023).
- Commission on Social Justice (1994) *Social Justice: Strategies for National Renewal : the Report of the Commission on Social Justice*. Vintage
- Cragoe, M. (2007) “‘We Like Local Patriotism’: The Conservative Party and the Discourse of Decentralisation, 1947–51”, *The English Historical Review*, CXXII(498), pp. 965–985. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ehr/cem254>.
- Cronin, A.M. (2004) 'Regimes of mediation: advertising practitioners as cultural intermediaries?', *Consumption Markets & Culture*, 7(4), pp. 349–369. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1025386042000316315>.
- Crossman, R.H.S. (1950) *Socialist Values in a Changing Civilisation*. Fabian Publications.
- Crouch, C. (2005) *Capitalist Diversity and Change*. Available at: <https://public.ebookcentral.proquest.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=4963494> (Accessed: 28 February 2021).
- Crouch, C. (2011) *The Strange Non-Death of Neoliberalism*. 1st edition. Cambridge: Polity.
- Cruddas, J. (2024) *A Century of Labour*. 1st edition. Medford: Polity.
- Dagut, S. (1993) 'From Liberalism to liberalism: The British Liberal and Labour Parties', *South African Historical Journal*, 29(1), pp. 246–256. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02582479308671772>.
- Dalton, R.J., Farrell, D.M. and McAllister, I. (2011) *Political Parties and Democratic Linkage: How Parties Organize Democracy*. OUP Oxford.

- Darlington, R. and Mustchin, S. (2019) 'The role of the TUC in significant industrial disputes: an historical critical overview', *Labor History*, 60(6), pp. 626–645. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0023656X.2019.1624698>.
- Davies, I. (1963) 'The Labour Commonwealth', *New Left Review*, (1/22), pp. 75–94.
- Davis, J.A. (1963) 'Structural Balance, Mechanical Solidarity, and Interpersonal Relations', *American Journal of Sociology*, 68(4), pp. 444–462. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1086/223401>.
- De Leon, C., Desai, M. and Tuğal, C. (2009) 'Political Articulation: Parties and the Constitution of Cleavages in the United States, India, and Turkey', *Sociological Theory*, 27(3), pp. 193–219. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9558.2009.01345.x>.
- De Vries, C. and Hobolt, S. (2020) 'The Rise of Challenger Parties', *Political Insight*, 11(3), pp. 16–19. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/2041905820958817>.
- Denham, A. and Garnett (1999) 'Influence without responsibility? Think-tanks in Britain', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 52(1), pp. 46–57. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/52.1.46>.
- Denham, A. and Garnett, M. (1998) *British Think-tanks and the Climate of Opinion*. UCL Press.
- Denham, A. and Garnett, M. (2002) 'Sir Keith Joseph and the undoing of British conservatism', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 7(1), pp. 57–75. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569310120111691>.
- Denham, A. and Garnett, M. (2004) 'A "Hallowed-out" tradition? British think tanks in the twenty-first century', in D. Stone and A. Denham (eds) *Think Tank Traditions: Policy Research and the politics of ideas*. Manchester University Press.
- Denham, A. and Garnett, M. (2006) "'What Works'? British Think Tanks and the "End of Ideology'", *The Political Quarterly*, 77(2), pp. 156–165. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-923X.2006.00758.x>.
- Denham, A. and Garnett, M. (2014) *Keith Joseph*. Routledge.
- Desai, R. (1994) 'Second-Hand Dealers in Ideas: Think-Tanks and Thatcherite Hegemony', *New Left Review*, 1(203), p. 38.
- Diamond, P. (2011) 'Governing as New Labour: An Inside Account of the Blair and Brown Years', *Political Studies Review*, 9(2), pp. 145–162. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-9302.2011.00229.x>.

- Diamond, P. (2020) 'Polycentric governance and policy advice: lessons from Whitehall policy advisory systems', *Policy & Politics*, 48(4), pp. 563–581. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1332/030557320X15870482509817>.
- Diamond, P. (2021) *The British Labour Party in Opposition and Power 1979-2019: Forward March Halted?* 1st edition. Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY: Routledge.
- Döhler, M. (1991) 'Policy Networks, Opportunity Structures and Neo-Conservative Reform Strategies in Health Policy', in B. Marin and R. Mayntz (eds) *Policy Networks: Empirical Evidence And Theoretical Considerations*. 1st edition. Frankfurt am Main : Boulder, Colo: Westview Press.
- Donoughue, B. (1996) 'The Number Ten Policy Unit, Interview with Bernard Donoughue', in M. Kandiah and A. Seldon (eds) *Ideas and Think Tanks in Contemporary Britain Vol. 1*. London: Routledge.
- Donoughue, B. (2006) *Downing Street Diary: With Harold Wilson in No. 10*. Edited by W. Sulkin. Pimlico.
- Dorfman, G.A. (1983) *British Trade Unionism Against the Trades Union Congress*. Hoover Press.
- Dowding, K. (1995) 'Model or Metaphor? A Critical Review of the Policy Network Approach', *Political Studies*, 43(1), pp. 136–158. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.1995.tb01705.x>.
- Dunn, W. (2024) 'A painful Budget is coming, but there are ways to manage it', *New Statesman*, 4 September. Available at: <https://www.newstatesman.com/business/2024/09/a-painful-budget-is-coming-but-there-are-ways-to-manage-it> (Accessed: 11 September 2024).
- Durrant, T. et al. (2021) *Whitehall Monitor*. 8. Institute for Government.
- Duverger, M. (1954) *Political parties: their organization and activity in the modern state*. Translated by B. North and R. North. London, New York: Methuen & Co. ; John Wiley & Sons.
- Eaton, G. (2023) "'This country doesn't invest in its own future": Torsten Bell on why the UK is being hit hardest', *New Statesman*, 4 January. Available at: <https://www.newstatesman.com/encounter/2023/01/britain-invest-own-future-torsten-bell-uk-fell-rivals> (Accessed: 20 March 2023).

- Eidlin, B. (2016) 'Why Is There No Labor Party in the United States? Political Articulation and the Canadian Comparison, 1932 to 1948', *American Sociological Review*, 81(3), pp. 488–516. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122416643758>.
- Elkin S.L. (1975) 'Comparative urban politics and inter-organizational behaviour', in K. Young (ed.) *Essays on the Study of Urban Politics*. Springer, pp. 158–184.
- Ellison, N. (2002) *Egalitarian Thought and Labour Politics: Retreating Visions*. Routledge.
- Epstein, L.D. (1962) 'Who Makes Party Policy: British Labour, 1960-61', *Midwest Journal of Political Science*, 6(2), pp. 165–182. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2108837>.
- Faul, M.V. and Tchilingirian, J.S. (2021) 'Structuring the Interstitial Space of Global Financing Partnerships for Sustainable Development: A Network Analysis', *New Political Economy*, 26(5), pp. 765–782. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13563467.2020.1849082>.
- Favretto, I. (2000) "'Wilsonism" reconsidered: Labour party revisionism 1952–64', *Contemporary British History*, 14(4), pp. 54–80. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13619460008581603>.
- Fawcett, E. (2022) *Conservatism: The Fight for a Tradition*. Princeton University Press.
- Feulner, E.J. (1985) 'Ideas, think-tanks and governments', *Quadrant*, 29(11), pp. 22–26. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3316/informit.353401175088031>.
- Fielding, S. (1994) 'Neil Kinnock: An overview of the Labour Party', *Contemporary Record*, 8(3), pp. 589–601. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13619469408581317>.
- Fielding, S. (2003) *The Labour Party: Continuity and Change in the Making of 'new' Labour*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Fielding, S. (2007) 'Rethinking Labour's 1964 Campaign', *Contemporary British History*, 21(3), pp. 309–324. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13619460600825873>.
- Foote, G. (1997) *The Labour Party's Political Thought: A History*. Springer.
- Francis, M. (1997) *Ideas and Policies Under Labour, 1945-1951: Building a New Britain*. Manchester University Press.
- Francis-Devine, B. (2024) *Poverty in the UK: statistics*. 7096. London: House of Commons Library. Available at: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn07096/> (Accessed: 4 September 2024).
- Fry, G.K. (1986) 'The British Career Civil Service Under Challenge', *Political Studies*, 34(4), pp. 533–555. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.1986.tb01612.x>.

- Gaber, I. and Fisher, C. (2022) ‘“Strategic Lying”: The Case of Brexit and the 2019 U.K. Election’, *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 27(2), pp. 460–477. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161221994100>.
- Gains, F. and Stoker, G. (2011) ‘Special advisers and the transmission of ideas from the policy primeval soup’, *Policy & Politics*, 39(4), pp. 485–498. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1332/030557310X550169>.
- Gaitskell, H. (1956) *Socialism and Nationalisation*. First Edition. Fabian Society.
- Gamble (2002) ‘Edward Richard George Heath’, in *Biographical Dictionary of British Prime Ministers*. Routledge, pp. 343–349. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203194553-47>.
- Gamble, A. (1979) ‘The Conservative Party’, in Drucker, H (ed) *Multi-Party Britain*. Macmillan.
- Gamble, A. (1994) *The Free Economy and the Strong State: The Politics of Thatcherism*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Garnett, M. (2005) ‘Planning for Power: 1964–1970’, in S. Ball and A. Seldon (eds) *Recovering Power: The Conservatives in Opposition Since 1867*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, pp. 192–218. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230522411_9.
- Gherardini, A. and Giuliani, G.A. (2022) ‘What Class, What Vote? Post-Fordist Social Groups, Class Coalitions and the Mainstream Left’, *International Journal of Sociology*, 52(6), pp. 448–475. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00207659.2022.2101084>.
- Gingrich, J. and Häusermann, S. (2015) ‘The decline of the working-class vote, the reconfiguration of the welfare support coalition and consequences for the welfare state’, *Journal of European Social Policy*, 25(1), pp. 50–75. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0958928714556970>.
- Goes, E. (2021) ‘Ideas and party change: the role of predistribution in labour’s ideological renewal’, *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 26(2), pp. 180–200. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569317.2021.1894698>.
- Gould, P. (1998) *The Unfinished Revolution: How the Modernisers Saved the Labour Party*.
- Gourevitch, P.A. (1986) *Politics in hard times: comparative responses to international economic crises*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Graham, A. (1996) ‘The Number Ten Policy Unit’, in M. Kandiah and A. Seldon (eds) *Ideas and Think Tanks in Contemporary Britain Vol. 1*. London: Routledge.

- Grice, A. (2024) 'The number that spells trouble for Keir Starmer', *The Independent*. Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/keir-starmer-labour-election-corbyn-vote-share-b2569246.html> (Accessed: 15 September 2024).
- Grzymala-Busse, A. (2019) 'The Failure of Europe's Mainstream Parties', *Journal of Democracy*, 30(4), pp. 35–47.
- Haas, P.M. (1992) 'Introduction: epistemic communities and international policy coordination', *International Organization*, 46(1), pp. 1–35. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300001442>.
- Haidar, A., Nyland, C. and Pullin, L. (2004) 'Relationship Between Job Security and Fearless Advice? Evidence from Councils in Victoria, Australia and Penang, Malaysia', *Monash University Business School Working Paper Series* [Preprint].
- Hall, P. (1993) 'Policy Paradigms, Social Learning, and the State: The Case of Economic Policymaking in Britain', *Comparative Politics*, 25(3), pp. 275–296.
- Hall, P.A. and Taylor, R.C.R. (1996) 'Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms', *Political Studies*, 44(5), pp. 936–957. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.1996.tb00343.x>.
- Hansen, D.L., Schneiderman, B. and Smith, M.A. (2011) *Analyzing social media networks with NodeXL: insights from a connected world*. Burlington, MA: Morgan Kaufmann.
- Hare, L. (2004) 'Ministers' personal appointees: part politician, part bureaucrat.', *New Zealand Journal of Public and International Law*, 2(2), pp. 315–358.
- Hargreaves, J.D. (1978) 'Review of Ramsay MacDonald', *The Scottish Historical Review*, 57(163), pp. 116–118.
- Harris, M. (1996) 'The Centre for Policy Studies: The paradoxes of power', in Michael David Kandiah and Anthony Seldon (eds) *Ideas and Think Tanks in Contemporary Britain Vol. 2*, pp. 51–64. Available at: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13619469608581386> (Accessed: 6 December 2022).
- Harris, R. and Seldon, A. (2005) 'A Conversation with Harris and Seldon'. Rochester, NY. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.681141>.
- Hartwell, R.M. (1995) *History of the Mont Pelerin Society*. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund.
- Hatfield, M. (1978) *The House the Left Built*. London: Gollancz.

- Hay, C. (1996) 'Narrating Crisis: The Discursive Construction of the "Winter of Discontent"', *Sociology*, 30(2), pp. 253–277.
- Hay, C. (2009) 'The Winter of Discontent Thirty Years On', *The Political Quarterly*, 80(4), pp. 545–552. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-923X.2009.02052.x>.
- Hayter, D. (2005) *Fightback!: Labour's Traditional Right in the 1970s and 1980s*. Manchester ; New York: Manchester University Press.
- Heath, E. (2010) *The Course of My Life: The Autobiography of Edward Heath*. Politico.
- Heffernan, R. (2001) 'Modernisation: The Transformation of the Labour Party', in R. Heffernan (ed.) *New Labour and Thatcherism: Political Change in Britain*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, pp. 65–84. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230598430_5.
- Heffernan, R. and Marqusee, M. (1992) *Defeat from the Jaws of Victory: Inside Kinnock's Labour Party*. Verso.
- Heidemann, J., Klier, M. and Probst, F. (2010) 'Identifying Key Users in Online Social Networks: A PageRank Based Approach', *ICIS 2010 Proceedings* [Preprint]. Available at: https://aisel.aisnet.org/icis2010_submissions/79.
- Hencke, D. (1989) 'The think-tank engine: Right-wing think-tanks, once widely regarded as laughable loonies, are now seen as the harbingers of Government policy, largely responsible for pushing Britain back to the future faster than any country in the world', *The Guardian*, 3 October.
- Hennessy, P. (2005) 'Michael Young and the Labour Party', *Contemporary British History*, 19(3), pp. 281–284. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13619460500100500>.
- Hennessy, P. and Welsh, D. (1998) 'Lords of all they surveyed? Churchill's ministerial "overlords" 1951-1953.', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 51(1), pp. 62–71.
- Heppell, T. (2007) 'Weak and Ineffective? Reassessing the Party Political Leadership of John Major', *The Political Quarterly*, 78(3), pp. 382–391. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-923X.2007.00867.x>.
- Heppell, T. (2010) 'The Labour Party Leadership Election of 1963: Explaining the Unexpected Election of Harold Wilson', *Contemporary British History*, 24(2), pp. 151–171. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13619461003768264>.

- Heppell, T. (2012) 'Hugh Gaitskell, 1955–63', in T. Heppell (ed.) *Leaders of the Opposition: From Churchill to Cameron*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, pp. 33–47. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230369009_4.
- Heppell, T. (2013) 'Prime Minister and their Parties in the United Kingdom', in P. Strangio, P. 't Hart, and J. Walter (eds) *Understanding Prime-Ministerial Performance: Comparative Perspectives*. OUP Oxford, pp. 129–172.
- Herman, L.E. (2017) 'Democratic Partisanship: From Theoretical Ideal to Empirical Standard', *American Political Science Review*, 111(4), pp. 738–754. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055417000247>.
- Hernández, E. and Kriesi, H. (2016) 'The electoral consequences of the financial and economic crisis in Europe', *European Journal of Political Research*, 55(2), pp. 203–224. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12122>.
- Hernando, M. (2019) *British think tanks after the 2008 Global Financial Crisis*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan (Palgrave studies in science, knowledge, and policy). Available at: <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=2162396> (Accessed: 3 September 2024).
- Hill, M. (2012) 'Alec Douglas-Home, 1964–5', in T. Heppell (ed.) *Leaders of the Opposition: From Churchill to Cameron*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, pp. 68–79. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230369009_6.
- Hinsliff, G. (2022) 'This summer of discontent should be a gift to Labour – so where are Starmer's big ideas?', *The Guardian*, 23 June. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/jun/23/crisis-labour-starmer-tories-economic-weakness> (Accessed: 20 March 2023).
- Holden, R. (2002) 'Blair's Leadership: New Labour in Opposition', in R. Holden (ed.) *The Making of New Labour's European Policy*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, pp. 115–143. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230598058_5.
- Holland, S. (2013) 'Brief Encounters with Power: Some Recollections & Reminiscences'. SPERI: University of Sheffield. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QEvqLd_UbM0&ab_channel=SPERIShefuni (Accessed: 5 January 2023).

- Holmes, M. (1997) *The Failure of the Heath Government*. Springer.
- Homsy, G.C. and Warner, M.E. (2015) 'Cities and Sustainability: Polycentric Action and Multilevel Governance', *Urban Affairs Review*, 51(1), pp. 46–73. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1078087414530545>.
- Hooghe, L. and Marks, G. (2018) 'Cleavage theory meets Europe's crises: Lipset, Rokkan, and the transnational cleavage', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 25(1), pp. 109–135. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2017.1310279>.
- Hopkin, J. (2020) *Anti-System Politics: The Crisis of Market Liberalism in Rich Democracies*. New York (N.Y.): OUP.
- Hopkin, J. and Blyth, M. (2019) 'The Global Economics of European Poulism: Growth Regimes and Party System Change in Europe (The Government and Opposition/Leonard Schapiro Lecture 2017)', *Government and Opposition*, 54(2), pp. 193–225. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2018.43>.
- Hopkin, J. and Rosamond, B. (2018) 'Post-truth Politics, Bullshit and Bad Ideas: "Deficit Fetishism" in the UK', *New Political Economy*, 23(6), pp. 641–655. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13563467.2017.1373757>.
- Hoppe, R. and Colebatch, H. (2016) 'The Role of Theories in Policy Studies and Policy Work: Selective Affinities between Representation and Performance?', *European Policy Analysis*, 2(1), pp. 121–149. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.18278/epa.2.1.8>.
- Hoskyns, J. (2000) *Just in Time: Inside the Thatcher Revolution*. First Edition. London: Aurum Press.
- Howard, A. (1987) *RAB: The Life of R.A. Butler*. J. Cape.
- Hughes, C.A. and Wintour, P. (1990) *Labour rebuilt: the new model party*. London: Fourth Estate. Available at: <https://cir.nii.ac.jp/crid/1130282271892047744> (Accessed: 16 August 2024).
- Hurd, D. (1979) *An End to Promises: Sketch of a Government 1970-74*. First Edition. London: Collins.
- Ignazi, P. (2021) 'The failure of mainstream parties and the impact of new challenger parties in France, Italy and Spain', *Italian Political Science Review / Rivista Italiana di Scienza Politica*, 51(1), pp. 100–116. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/ipo.2020.26>.

- Inglehart, R. (1977) *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics*. Princeton University Press. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt13x18ck> (Accessed: 24 May 2022).
- Ingold, K. (2011) 'Network Structures within Policy Processes: Coalitions, Power, and Brokerage in Swiss Climate Policy', *Policy Studies Journal*, 39(3), pp. 435–459. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1541-0072.2011.00416.x>.
- Inman, P. (2019) 'Number of Europe's poorest regions in UK "more than doubles"', *The Guardian*, 10 December. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2019/dec/10/number-of-europes-poorest-regions-in-uk-more-than-doubles> (Accessed: 11 September 2024).
- Innes, A. (2023) *Late Soviet Britain: Why Materialist Utopias Fail*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009373647>.
- Invernizzi-Accetti, C. and Wolkenstein, F. (2017) 'The Crisis of Party Democracy, Cognitive Mobilization, and the Case for Making Parties More Deliberative', *American Political Science Review*, 111(1), pp. 97–109. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055416000526>.
- Jacobs, A.M. (2015) 'Process tracing the effects of ideas', in A. Bennett and J.T. Checkel (eds) *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool*. Cambridge University Press.
- Jacobs, M. and Hindmoor, A. (2024) 'Labour, left and right: On party positioning and policy reasoning', *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 26(1), pp. 3–21. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/13691481221099734>.
- Jago, M. (2015) *Rab Butler: The Best Prime Minister We Never Had?* Biteback Publishing.
- Jakobsson, N. and Kumlin, S. (2017) 'Election campaign agendas, government partisanship, and the welfare state', *European Political Science Review*, 9(2), pp. 183–208. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S175577391500034X>.
- James, S. (1986) 'The Central Policy Review Staff, 1970–1983', *Political Studies*, 34(3), pp. 423–440. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.1986.tb01605.x>.
- James, S. (1993) 'The Idea Brokers: The Impact of Think Tanks on British Government', *Public Administration*, 71(4), pp. 491–506. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9299.1993.tb00988.x>.

- James, S. (2024) 'Special section introduction: epistemic politics in international and comparative political economy', *New Political Economy*, 29(6), pp. 835–843. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13563467.2024.2359965>.
- Jardine, C. (2024) 'Keir Starmer has been so focussed on not “dropping the Ming vase”, he’s forgotten what politics is about', *The Scotsman*, 1 July. Available at: <https://www.scotsman.com/news/opinion/columnists/keir-starmer-has-been-so-focussed-on-not-dropping-the-ming-vase-hes-forgotten-what-politics-is-about-4684126>.
- Jayanetti, C. (2023) 'The New Wonkocracy - behind the think tanks shaping Labour policy', *PoliticsHome*, 10 September. Available at: <https://www.politicshome.com/thehouse/article/new-wonkocracy-behind-think-tanks-shaping-labour-policy>.
- Jobson, R. (2024) “‘A different species’: the British Labour Party and the Militant “other”, 1979–1983’, *Contemporary British History*, 38(3), pp. 483–509. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13619462.2024.2305434>.
- Johnson, E.M. and Chew, R. (2021) *Social network analysis methods for international development*. RTI Press.
- Jones, T. (1996) “‘Taking genesis out of the Bible”: Hugh Gaitskell, clause IV and labour’s socialist myth’, *Contemporary British History*, 11(2), pp. 1–23. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13619469708581434>.
- Jordan, J.J. and Richardson, A.G. (1979) *Governing Under Pressure: The Policy Process in a Post-Parliamentary Democracy*. Oxford: Wiley–Blackwell.
- Jowell, R. et al. (1993) 'Review: The 1992 British Election: The Failure of the Polls', *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 57(2), pp. 238–263.
- Kakabadse, A.P. and Kakabadse, N.K. (2020) 'SpAds: Political Sherpas Bridging Minister and Civil Servant', *Open Journal of Political Science*, 10(02), pp. 234–252. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4236/ojps.2020.102016>.
- Kandiah, M.D. and Seldon, A. (2014) *Ideas and Think Tanks in Contemporary Britain: Volume 1*. Routledge.
- Katz, R.S. (1990) 'Party as linkage: A vestigial function?', *European Journal of Political Research*, 18(1), pp. 143–161. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6765.1990.tb00225.x>.

- Katz, R.S. and Mair, P. (1993) 'The Evolution of Party Organizations in Europe: The Three Faces of Party Organization', *American Review of Politics*, 14, pp. 593–617. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.15763/issn.2374-7781.1993.14.0.593-617>.
- Katz, R.S. and Mair, P. (1995) 'Changing Models of Party Organization and Party Democracy: The Emergence of the Cartel Party', *Party Politics*, 1(1), pp. 5–28. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068895001001001>.
- Kavanagh, D. (1981) 'The Politics of Manifestos', *Parliamentary Affairs*, XXXIV(1), pp. 7–27. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.pa.a054190>.
- Kavanagh, D. (1989) 'Commentary: Casualties in battle of the think-tanks', *The Guardian*.
- Keegan, W. (1984) *Mrs. Thatcher's Economic Experiment*. A. Lane.
- Keegan, W. (2022) 'Brexit has made Britain the sick man of Europe again', *The Guardian*, 27 November. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/nov/27/brexit-has-made-britain-the-sick-man-of-europe-again> (Accessed: 10 May 2024).
- Keegan, W. (2024) 'This timid "Ming vase" strategy won't turn Labour into a dynasty', *The Guardian*, 23 June. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/business/article/2024/jun/23/this-timid-ming-vase-strategy-wont-turn-labour-into-a-dynasty> (Accessed: 20 September 2024).
- Kelly, R. (2014) 'Short Money'. House of Commons Library.
- Kelly, S.J. (2000) *Far from consensual: The politics of British economic policy 1950-1955*. Ph.D. London School of Economics and Political Science (United Kingdom). Available at: <https://www.proquest.com/docview/1616686692/abstract/3FB5A348F2439APQ/1> (Accessed: 19 August 2024).
- Kenis, P. (1991) 'The Preconditions for Policy Networks: Some Findings from a Three-Country Study on Industrial Restructuring', in B. Marin and R. Mayntz (eds) *Policy Networks: Empirical Evidence And Theoretical Considerations*. 1st edition. Frankfurt am Main : Boulder, Colo: Westview Press.
- Kenis, P. and Schneider, V. (2019) 'Analyzing Policy-Making II: Policy Network Analysis', in H. Van den Bulck et al. (eds) *The Palgrave Handbook of Methods for Media Policy Research*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, pp. 471–491. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-16065-4_27.

- Kenny, M. (2009) 'Taking the Temperature of the Political Elite 2: The Professionals Move In?', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 62(2), pp. 335–349. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsp004>.
- Kenny, M. (2013) 'The Rise of "The Market" in Political Thinking about Universities', *The European Legacy*, 18(1), pp. 7–23. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10848770.2013.748118>.
- Kiefel, M. (2022) *Leftism exhausted: the organisational constraints to ideological change in the British Labour party, 2010-2020*. PhD Thesis.
- Kinnock, N. (1994) 'Reforming the Labour Party', *Contemporary Record*, 8(3), pp. 535–554. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13619469408581314>.
- Kisby, B. (2007) 'Analysing Policy Networks: Towards an Ideational Approach', *Policy Studies*, 28(1), pp. 71–90. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01442870601121502>.
- Kitschelt, H. (ed.) (1994) 'Introduction', in *The Transformation of European Social Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics), pp. 1–7. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511622014.003>.
- Klein, R. and Lewis, J. (1977) 'Advice and Dissent in British Government: The Case of the Special Advisers', *Policy & Politics*, 6(1), pp. 1–25. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1332/030557378782842849>.
- Knoke, D. (1990) *Political Networks: The Structural Perspective*. Cambridge University Press.
- Knoke, D. (1991) 'Review of The Party Network: The Robust Organization of Illinois Republicans.', *American Journal of Sociology*, 96(4), pp. 1017–1019.
- Koenig-Archibugi, M. (2010) 'Understanding the Global Dimensions of Policy', *Global Policy*, 1(1), pp. 16–28. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1758-5899.2009.00009.x>.
- Koger, G., Masket, S. and Noel, H. (2009) 'Partisan Webs: Information Exchange and Party Networks', *British Journal of Political Science*, 39(3), pp. 633–653. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123409000659>.
- Lambert, H. (2022) 'Keir Starmer has Tony Blair's backing, now he needs some ideas', *New Statesman*, 3 May. Available at: <https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/labour/2022/05/keir-starmer-has-tony-blairs-backing-now-he-needs-some-ideas> (Accessed: 30 May 2022).
- Laski, H.J. (1939) *The Labour Party, the War and the future*. Labour Party.

- Lawrence, M. *et al.* (2024) 'Global polycrisis: the causal mechanisms of crisis entanglement', *Global Sustainability*, 7, p. e6. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/sus.2024.1>.
- de Leon, C. (2014) *Party and Society: Reconstructing a Sociology of Democratic Party Politics*. Cambridge, UK ; Malden, MA: Polity.
- Leonard, D. (2005) 'Sir Alec Douglas-Home: Right Man, Wrong Century?', in D. Leonard (ed.) *A Century of Premiers: Salisbury to Blair*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, pp. 227–240. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230511507_15.
- Levingston, O. (2021) 'Minsky's moment? The rise of depoliticised Keynesianism and ideational change at the Federal Reserve after the financial crisis of 2007/08', *Review of International Political Economy*, 28(6), pp. 1459–1486. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2020.1772848>.
- Lewis, J. (2011) 'The Search for Coordination: The Case of the Central Policy Review Staff and Social Policy Planning, 1971–77', *Social Policy & Administration*, 45(7), pp. 770–787. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9515.2011.00793.x>.
- Leys, C. (1996) 'The British Labour Party's Transition from Socialism to Capitalism', *Socialist Register*, 32. Available at: <https://socialistregister.com/index.php/srv/article/view/5667> (Accessed: 23 August 2024).
- Lievonen, M. (2019) *Conservative and Labour research departments, economic thought, and party policy, 1970-79*. <http://purl.org/dc/dcmitype/Text>. University of Oxford. Available at: <https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:225545f0-5e82-4822-9f84-dcd38e79dcaa> (Accessed: 22 May 2023).
- Lilyblad, C.M. (2019) 'NGOs in constructivist international relations theory', in *Routledge Handbook of NGOs and International Relations*. Routledge.
- Lindsay, T.F. and Harrington, M. (1979) 'Home to Heath, 1964–1966', in T.F. Lindsay and M. Harrington (eds) *The Conservative Party 1918–1979*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, pp. 236–248. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-16210-9_17.
- Lipset, S.M. (2000) 'The Indispensability of Political Parties', *Journal of Democracy*, 11(1), pp. 48–55.
- Lipset, S.M. and Rokkan, S. (1967) *Party systems and voter alignments: cross-national perspectives*. Free P. of Glencoe.
- Lipsey, D. (2012) *In the Corridors of Power: An Autobiography*. Biteback Publishing.

- Lockwood, C. (2020) “‘Action Not Words’: The Conservative Party, Public Opinion and “Scientific” Politics, c.1945–70’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 31(3), pp. 360–386. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/tcbh/hwz014>.
- Lowe, R. (2005) ‘Grit in the Oyster or Sand in the Machine? The Evolving Role of Special Advisers in British Government’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 16(4), pp. 497–505. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/tcbh/hwi038>.
- Lowery, G. (2022) ‘Constructing Continuity: The Discursive Construction of the Great Crash of 2008–2009 as a Non-crisis of Neoliberalism’, *Global Society*, 36(4), pp. 496–515. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13600826.2021.1924123>.
- Lyddon, D. (2010) ‘Walter Milne-Bailey, the TUC Research Department, and the 1926 General Strike: The Background to “A Nation on Strike”’, *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations*, (29–30), pp. 123–151. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3828/hsir.2010.29-30.6>.
- Lynn, M. (2023) ‘The Bank of England has made Britain the sick man of Europe again’, *The Telegraph*, 2 June. Available at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2023/06/02/bank-england-britain-sick-man-europe/> (Accessed: 13 September 2024).
- Macklin, G. (2006) *Chamberlain*. London: Haus.
- Macnicol, J. (1987) ‘In Pursuit of the Underclass’, *Journal of Social Policy*, 16(3), pp. 293–318. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279400015920>.
- Maftan, M.R. (2024) ‘Why political party membership is on the decline in Europe’, *PartyParty*, 19 March. Available at: <https://political.party/party-membership-decline-europe/> (Accessed: 5 September 2024).
- Mair, P. (1995) ‘Political parties, popular legitimacy and public privilege’, *West European Politics*, 18(3), pp. 40–57. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402389508425090>.
- Mair, P. (2003) ‘Political parties and democracy: What sort of future?’, *Central European Political Science Review* [Preprint].
- Mair, P. (2005) ‘Democracy Beyond Parties’, Center for the Study of Democracy, University of California.
- Mair, P. (2009) ‘Representative versus Responsible Government’, MPIfG working paper series, Cologne.
- Mair, P. (2013) *Ruling the Void: The Hollowing of Western Democracy*. Verso Books.

- Mair, P. (2014) *On Parties, Party Systems and Democracy: Selected Writings of Peter Mair*. ECPR Press.
- Mair, P. and Mudde, C. (1998) 'The Party Family and Its Study', *Annual Review of Political Science*, 1(1), pp. 211–229. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.1.1.211>.
- Mandelson, P. and Liddle, R. (2002) *The Blair Revolution Revisited*. London: Politico's Publishing.
- Marinetti, M. (2003) 'Governing beyond the Centre: A Critique of the Anglo-Governance School', *Political Studies*, 51(3), pp. 592–608. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9248.00443>.
- Marquand, D. (1997) *Ramsay Macdonald: A Biography*. London: Metro Books, London.
- Marsh, D. and Smith, M. (2000) 'Understanding Policy Networks: towards a Dialectical Approach', *Political Studies*, 48(1), pp. 4–21. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9248.00247>.
- Marshall, H. and Drieschova, A. (2018) 'Post-Truth Politics in the UK's Brexit Referendum', *New Perspectives*, 26(3), pp. 89–105. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/2336825X1802600305>.
- Mason, R. (2024) 'Lowest turnout in UK general election since universal suffrage, report shows', *The Guardian*, 12 July. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/article/2024/jul/12/lowest-turnout-in-uk-general-election-since-universal-suffrage-report-shows> (Accessed: 20 September 2024).
- Matti, S. and Sandström, A. (2011) 'The Rationale Determining Advocacy Coalitions: Examining Coordination Networks and Corresponding Beliefs', *Policy Studies Journal*, 39(3), pp. 385–410. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1541-0072.2011.00414.x>.
- Maudling, R. (1978) *Memoirs*. Sidgwick & Jackson.
- McCrillis, N.R. (Neal R. (1998) *The British Conservative Party in the age of universal suffrage: popular Conservatism, 1918-1929*. The Ohio State University Press. Available at: <https://kb.osu.edu/handle/1811/31709> (Accessed: 14 December 2022).
- McGann, J.G. (ed.) (2018) *Think Tanks and Emerging Power Policy Networks*. Cham: Palgrave Pivot.
- McKenzie, R.T. (1963) *British Political Parties*. Heinemann Educational Publishers.
- Meadway, J. (2022) 'Labour must stop talking about economic growth', *New Statesman*.

- Medvetz, T. (2012) *Think Tanks in America*. University of Chicago Press.
- Medvetz, T. (2014) 'Field theory and organizational power: Four modes of influence among public policy 'think tanks'', in *Bourdieu's Theory of Social Fields*. Routledge.
- Meredith, S. (2016) 'Michael Young: An Innovative Social Entrepreneur', in P. Ackers and A.J. Reid (eds) *Alternatives to State-Socialism in Britain: Other Worlds of Labour in the Twentieth Century*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, pp. 271–302. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-34162-0_10.
- Michels, R. (1927) 'Some Reflections on the Sociological Character of Political Parties', *American Political Science Review*, 21(4), pp. 753–772. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2307/1947592>.
- Middlemas, K. (1986) 'Threats to Equilibrium 1957–61', in K. Middlemas (ed.) *Power, Competition and the State: Volume 1: Britain in Search of Balance, 1940–61*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, pp. 283–315. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-10956-2_10.
- Middlemas, K. (1990) *Power, Competition and the State: Britain in Search of Balance, 1940–61*. Springer.
- Mikkelsen, M. (2006) 'Policy network analysis as a strategic tool for the voluntary sector¹', *Policy Studies*, 27(1), pp. 17–26. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01442870500499868>.
- Milburn, J.F. (1958) 'The Fabian Society and the British Labour Party', *Western Political Quarterly*, 11(2), pp. 319–339. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/106591295801100211>.
- Minkin, L. (1974) 'The British Labour Party and the Trade Unions: Crisis and Compact', *ILR Review*, 28(1), pp. 7–37. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/001979397402800102>.
- Minkin, L. (1978) 'The Party Connection: Divergence and Convergence in the British Labour Movement', *Government and Opposition*, 13(4), pp. 458–484. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.1978.tb00236.x>.
- Minkin, L. (1992) *The Contentious Alliance: Trade Unions and the Labour Party*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Minkin, L. (2014) *The Blair Supremacy: A study in the politics of Labour's party management*. Manchester University Press.

- Mirowski, P. and Plehwe, D. (eds) (2015) *The Road from Mont Pèlerin: The Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective, With a New Preface*. 1st edition. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Mitchell, J.E. (1978) 'Special Advisers: A Personal View', *Public Administration*, 56(1), pp. 87–98. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9299.1978.tb00311.x>.
- Mudge, S.L. (2018) *Leftism reinvented: Western parties from socialism to neoliberalism*.
- Muller, C. (1996) 'The institute of economic affairs: Undermining the post-war consensus', *Contemporary British History*, 10(1), pp. 88–110. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13619469608581370>.
- Murphy, C. (2023) *Futures of Socialism: 'Modernisation', the Labour Party, and the British Left, 1973–1997*. 1st edn. Cambridge University Press. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009278829>.
- Nairn, T. (1964) 'The nature of the Labour Party', *New Left Review*. 1(7), n.p. Available at: <https://newleftreview.org/issues/i27/articles/tom-nairn-the-nature-of-the-labour-party-part-i>
- Narwan, G. (2024) 'Labour won't want to be associated with austerity - but it's creeping into the debate', *Sky News*, 10 September. Available at: <https://news.sky.com/story/labour-wont-want-to-be-associated-with-austerity-but-its-creeping-into-the-debate-13212444>.
- Neto, O.A. and Cox, G.W. (1997) 'Electoral Institutions, Cleavage Structures, and the Number of Parties', *American Journal of Political Science*, 41(1), pp. 149–174. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2111712>.
- Newton, S. (2010) 'The Sterling Devaluation of 1967, the International Economy and Post-War Social Democracy', *The English Historical Review*, CXXV(515), pp. 912–945. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ehr/ceq164>.
- Nicholson, S.P. (2012) 'Polarizing Cues', *American Journal of Political Science*, 56(1), pp. 52–66. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2011.00541.x>.
- Norton, P. (2013) 'The Role of the Conservative Political Centre, 1945–98', in S. Ball and I. Holliday (eds) *Mass Conservatism: The Conservatives and the Public since the 1880s*. London: Routledge.
- Nyhan, B. and Montgomery, J.M. (2015) 'Connecting the Candidates: Consultant Networks and the Diffusion of Campaign Strategy in American Congressional Elections', *American*

- Journal of Political Science*, 59(2), pp. 292–308. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12143>.
- Oakley, R. (1990) ‘Experts on hand for every eventuality’, *The Times*, 18 July.
- Oesch, D. (2006) ‘Coming to Grips with a Changing Class Structure: An Analysis of Employment Stratification in Britain, Germany, Sweden and Switzerland’, *International Sociology*, 21(2), pp. 263–288. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0268580906061379>.
- Office for National Statistics (2024) Trust in government, UK: 2023. Annual Census Report. Office for National Statistics.
- O’Hara, G. (2006) “‘Dynamic, Exciting, Thrilling Change’: the Wilson Government’s Economic Policies, 1964–70”, *Contemporary British History*, 20(3), pp. 383–402. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13619460500407087>.
- Orchard, D., Gouglas, A. and Pickering, H. (2023) ‘Life after Whitehall: The career moves of British special advisers’, *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, p. 13691481221144228. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/13691481221144228>.
- Orellana, S. (2010) ‘How Electoral Systems Can Influence Policy Innovation’, *Policy Studies Journal*, 38(4), pp. 613–628. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1541-0072.2010.00376.x>.
- Pabst, A. (2023) ‘The sick man of Europe’, *The Critic*. Available at: <https://thecritic.co.uk/the-sick-man-of-europe/>.
- Page, R.M. (2015) ‘From war to peace: the Conservatives and the welfare state in the 1940s’, in *Clear Blue Water?* Policy Press, pp. 19–36. Available at: <https://bristoluniversitypressdigital-com.gate3.library.lse.ac.uk/monochap/book/9781847429872/ch002.xml> (Accessed: 12 June 2024).
- Panebianco, A. (1988) *Political parties: organization and power*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Panitch, L. and Leys, C. (1997) ‘The British Election: A Commentary’, *Labour / Le Travail*, 40, pp. 357–363. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2307/25144217>.
- Panitch, L. and Leys, C. (2001) *The End of Parliamentary Socialism: From New Left to New Labour*. Verso.

- Pautz, H. (2010) 'Think Tanks in the United Kingdom and Germany: Actors in the Modernisation of Social Democracy', *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 12(2), pp. 274–294. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-856X.2010.00402.x>.
- Pautz, H. (2011) 'Revisiting the think-tank phenomenon', *Public Policy and Administration*, 26(4), pp. 419–435. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0952076710378328>.
- Pautz, H. (2012) 'Think-Tanks and Labour: The British Case', in Pautz, H., *Think-Tanks, Social Democracy and Social Policy*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, pp. 52–98. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230368545_4.
- Pautz, H. (2013) 'The Think Tanks behind "Cameronism"', *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 15(3), pp. 362–377. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-856X.2012.00518.x>.
- Pautz, H. (2014) 'British Think-Tanks and Their Collaborative and Communicative Networks', *Politics*, 34(4), pp. 345–361. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9256.12056>.
- Pautz, H. (2018) 'Think tanks, Tories and the austerity discourse coalition', *Policy and Society*, 37(2), pp. 155–169. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14494035.2017.1397395>.
- Pelling, H. (1980) 'The 1945 General Election Reconsidered', *The Historical Journal*, 23(2), pp. 399–414. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X0002433X>.
- Pemberton, H., Freeman, J. and Davies, A. (2018) 'Decentring Thatcher's "neoliberal revolution": North Atlantic Conference on British Studies, Annual Meeting 2018', in. Available at: <http://www.nacbs.org/conference> (Accessed: 31 August 2024).
- Perkins, A. (2003) *Red Queen: The Authorised Biography of Barbara Castle*. First Edition. London: Macmillan.
- Peterson, J. (2003) 'Policy Networks', *Institute for Advanced Studies*, Working Paper 90.
- Pierson, P. (1993) 'When Effect Becomes Cause: Policy Feedback and Political Change', *World Politics*, 45(4), pp. 595–628. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2950710>.
- Piketty, T. (2020) *Capital and Ideology*. Harvard University Press.
- Pinto-Duschinsky, M. (1972) 'Central Office and "Power" in the Conservative Party', *Political Studies*, 20(1), pp. 1–16. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.1972.tb00693.x>.

- Piquer, J. and Jäger, A.M.M. (2020) 'After the Cartel Party: "Extra-Party" and "Intra-Party" Techno-Populism', *Politics and Governance*, 8(4), pp. 533–544. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v8i4.3444>.
- Plehwe, D. (2014) 'Think tank networks and the knowledge–interest nexus: the case of climate change', *Critical Policy Studies*, 8(1), pp. 101–115. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19460171.2014.883859>.
- Plehwe, D. (2015) 'The politics of policy think-tanks: organizing expertise, legitimacy and counter-expertise in policy networks', in. Available at: <https://www.elgaronline.com/display/edcoll/9781783472345/9781783472345.00028.xml> (Accessed: 14 September 2024).
- Plehwe, D. (2017) 'Neoliberal think tanks and the crisis', in *Liberalism and the Welfare State: Economists and Arguments for the Welfare State*, pp. 192–211. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190676681.003.0011>.
- Plehwe, D. (2019) 'Think tank networks and the knowledge-interest nexus', in Almiron, N. and Xifra, J., *Climate Change Denial and Public Relations*. 1st edn. London: Routledge, pp. 140–156. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351121798-9>.
- Polsby, N.W. (2001) 'Legitimacy in British Policy-Making: Functional Alternatives to the Civil Service', *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 3(1), pp. 5–35. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-856X.00047>.
- Porter, D. (1995) 'The Attlee Years Re-assessed', *Contemporary European History*, 4(1), pp. 93–101. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777300003283>.
- Prior, J. (1986) *A Balance of Power*. H. Hamilton.
- Przeworski, A. and Sprague, J. (1986) *Paper Stones: A History of Electoral Socialism*. University of Chicago Press.
- Przeworski, A., Stokes, S.C. and Manin, B. (1999) *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation*. Cambridge University Press.
- Pyper, D. (2015) *Trade Union Bill Briefing Paper*. CBP 7195. London: House of Commons Library.
- Pyper, R. (2001) 'Inside the Executive Territory: Central Government', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 54(3), pp. 542–546. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/parlij/54.3.542>.

- Raab, J. (2002) 'Where Do Policy Networks Come From?', *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 12(4), pp. 581–622. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.jpart.a003548>.
- Ramsden, J. (1980) *The Making of Conservative Party Policy: The Conservative Research Department Since 1929*. New York: Longman.
- Ramsden, J. (1987) "'A Party for Owners or a Party for Earners?' How far did the British Conservative Party Really Change After 1945?", *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 37, pp. 49–63. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2307/3679150>.
- Ramsden, J. (1996) 'The Influence of Ideas on the Modern Conservative Party', in *Ideas and Think tanks in Contemporary Britain*. London: Frank Cass.
- Redvaldsen, D. (2011) *The Labour Party in Britain and Norway: Elections and the Pursuit of Power Between the World Wars*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Rhodes, R.A.W. (1986) *The National World of Local Government*. London ; Boston: Routledge.
- Rhodes, R.A.W. (1990) 'Policy Networks: A British Perspective', *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 2(3), pp. 293–317. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0951692890002003003>.
- Rhodes, R.A.W. (2006) 'Policy Network Analysis', in M. Moran, M. Rein, and R.E. Goodin (eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Public Policy*. Oxford University Press.
- Rich, A. (2010) 'Ideas, Expertise, and Think Tanks', in D. Béland and R.H. Cox (eds) *Ideas and Politics in Social Science Research*. Oxford University Press, pp. 191–206. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199736430.003.0010>.
- Rogers, C. (2010) 'The Labour Government, the Treasury and the £6 pay policy of July 1975', *British Politics*, 5(2), pp. 224–236. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1057/bp.2009.29>.
- Rogers, C. (Christopher J. (2009) *The politics of economic policy-making under Harold Wilson and James Callaghan and the 1976 IMF crisis*. phd. University of Warwick. Available at: <http://webcat.warwick.ac.uk/record=b2317971~S9> (Accessed: 6 August 2024).
- Romei, V. (2024) 'UK economy stagnated for second consecutive month in July', *Financial Times*, 11 September. Available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/73ec25b9-12e9-4229-8eb3-805e314db22f> (Accessed: 11 September 2024).
- Rose, J. (2017) 'Brexit, Trump, and Post-Truth Politics', *Public Integrity*, 19(6), pp. 555–558. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10999922.2017.1285540>.

- Rose, R. (1961) 'The Bow Group's Role in British Politics', *Western Political Quarterly*, 14(4), pp. 865–878. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/106591296101400404>.
- Rose, R. (1965) 'Doubts Over Role of Transport House', *The Times*, 6 March, p. 9.
- Rose, R. (1974) *The Problem of Party Government*. Springer.
- Ruben, P. (1996) 'The Institute for Public Policy Research: Policy and Politics', *Contemporary British History*, 10(2), pp. 65–79. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13619469608581387>.
- Rustin, M. (1981) 'Different Conceptions of Party: Labour's Constitutional Debates', *New Left Review*, (1126), pp. 17–42.
- Salas-Porras, A. (2018) 'American think tank networks and expert debates around the Global Financial Crisis: Keynesian insurgents against austerity defenders', *Policy and Society*, 37(2), pp. 243–259. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14494035.2017.1397393>.
- Sandbrook, D. (2011) *State of Emergency: The Way We Were: Britain, 1970-1974*. Penguin UK.
- Sandström, A. and Carlsson, L. (2008) 'The Performance of Policy Networks: The Relation between Network Structure and Network Performance', *Policy Studies Journal*, 36(4), pp. 497–524. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1541-0072.2008.00281.x>.
- Saville, J. (1986) 'Obituary: Robin Page Arnot (1890-1986)', *Labour History Review*, 51(3), pp. 3–5. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3828/lhr.51.3.3>.
- Schattschneider, E. (2003) *Party Government: American Government in Action*. 1st edition. New Brunswick, N.J: Transaction Publishers.
- Schlesinger, A. et al. (1953) 'Appraisals of New Fabian Essays', *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, 35(3), pp. 200–210. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2307/1925918>.
- Schmidt, V. (2000) 'The politics of economic adjustment in France and Britain: when does discourse matter?', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 8(2), pp. 247–264. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501760110041578>.
- Schmidt, V. (2002) 'Does Discourse Matter in the Politics of Welfare State Adjustment?', *Comparative Political Studies*, 35(2), pp. 168–193. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414002035002002>.

- Schmidt, V. (2008) 'Discursive Institutionalism: The Explanatory Power of Ideas and Discourse', *Annual Review of Political Science*, 11. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.11.060606.135342>.
- Schmidt, V. (2010) 'Taking ideas and discourse seriously: explaining change through discursive institutionalism as the fourth "new institutionalism"', *European Political Science Review*, 2(1), pp. 1–25. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S175577390999021X>.
- Schmidt, V. (2015) 'The Forgotten Problem of Democratic Legitimacy "Governing by the Rules" and "Ruling by the Numbers"', in M. Matthijs and M. Blyth (eds) *The Future of the Euro*. Oxford University Press.
- Schmidt, V.A. (2002a) 'Does Discourse Matter in the Politics of Welfare State Adjustment?', *Comparative Political Studies*, 35(2), pp. 168–193. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414002035002002>.
- Schmidt, V.A. (2006) *Democracy in Europe: The EU and national politics*. Oxford University Press.
- Schmidt, V.A. (2008) 'Discursive Institutionalism: The Explanatory Power of Ideas and Discourse', *Annual Review of Political Science*, 11(1), pp. 303–326. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.11.060606.135342>.
- Schmidt, V.A. (2009) 'Putting the Political Back into Political Economy by Bringing the State Back in Yet Again', *World Politics*, 61(3), pp. 516–546. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887109000173>.
- Schmidt, V.A. (2011) 'Reconciling ideas and institutions through discursive institutionalism', *Ideas and politics in social science research*, 1, pp. 76–95.
- Schmidt, V.A. (2014) 'Speaking to the Markets or to the People? A Discursive Institutional Analysis of the EU's Sovereign Debt Crisis', *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 16(1), pp. 188–209. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-856X.12023>.
- Schmidt, V.A. and Thatcher, M. (2014) 'Why are neoliberal ideas so resilient in Europe's political economy?', *Critical Policy Studies*, 8(3), pp. 340–347. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19460171.2014.926826>.
- Scoville, C. and Fligstein, N. (2020) 'The Promise of Field Theory for the Study of Political Institutions', in, pp. 79–101. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108147828.004>.

- Seldon, A. (1987) 'Escaping the chrysalis of statism', *Contemporary Record*, 1(1), pp. 26–31.
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13619468708580889>.
- Seldon, A. and Lowe, R. (1996) 'The influence of ideas on social policy', *Contemporary British History*, 10(2), pp. 160–177. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13619469608581395>.
- Selle, P. and Svasand, L. (1991) 'Membership in Party Organizations and the Problem of Decline of Parties', *Comparative Political Studies*, 23(4), pp. 459–477. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414091023004002>.
- Shaw, E. (1994a) 'Conflict and cohesion in the British Labour Party', in D.S. Bell and E. Shaw (eds) *Conflict and Cohesion in West European Social Democratic Parties*. First Edition. London: Continuum International Publishing Group Ltd.
- Shaw, E. (1994b) *The Labour Party since 1979: crisis and transformation*. London: Routledge.
Available at:
<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=600621> (Accessed: 2 September 2024).
- Shaw, E. (2016a) 'Review: The Blair Supremacy: A Study in the Politics of Labour's Party Management by Lewis Minkin', *Party Politics*, 22(61), pp. 850–852. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068816663428>.
- Shaw, E. (2016b) 'Understanding Labour Party Management under Tony Blair', *Political Studies Review*, 14(2), pp. 153–162. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1478929915623296>.
- Shaw, R. and Eichbaum, C. (2018) *Ministers, Minders and Mandarins: An International Study of Relationships at the Executive Summit of Parliamentary Democracies*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Shepherd, J. (2016) *Crisis? What crisis?: The Callaghan government and the British 'winter of discontent'*. Oxford: Manchester University Press.
- Sigoillot, N. (2023) *Entryism and the Revolutionary Socialist Left in Britain*. Taylor & Francis.
- Skinner, R.M., Masket, S.E. and Dulio, D.A. (2012) '527 Committees and the Political Party Network', *American Politics Research*, 40(1), pp. 60–84. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1532673X11420420>.

- Sledon, A. and Collings, D. (2000) *Britain under Thatcher*. London: Taylor & Francis. Available at: <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/mono/10.4324/9781315840451/britain-thatcher-anthony-seldon-daniel-collings> (Accessed: 6 December 2022).
- Slobodian, Q. (2018) *Globalists: The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism*. Harvard University Press. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4159/9780674919808>.
- Slothuus, R. and de Vreese, C.H. (2010) 'Political Parties, Motivated Reasoning, and Issue Framing Effects', *The Journal of Politics*, 72(3), pp. 630–645. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S002238161000006X>.
- Smith, J.K. (2009) 'Campaigning and the Catch-All Party: The Process of Party Transformation in Britain', *Party Politics*, 15(5), pp. 555–572. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068809336396>.
- Smith, M.J. (1992) 'Neil Kinnock and the modernisation of the Labour Party', *Contemporary Record*, 8(3), pp. 555–566. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13619469408581315>.
- Stewart, D. (2010) 'The British Labour Party, "Parliamentary Socialism" and Thatcherism, 1979–1990: A Visual Perspective', *Visual Resources* [Preprint]. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01973760802042747>.
- Stewart, H. (2022) 'Queen's speech: Boris Johnson "bereft of ideas" to tackle cost of living crisis', *The Guardian*, 10 May. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/may/10/queens-speech-boris-johnson-bereft-of-ideas-to-tackle-cost-of-living-crisis> (Accessed: 30 May 2022).
- Stone, D. (2007) 'Recycling Bins, Garbage Cans or Think Tanks? Three Myths Regarding Policy Analysis Institutes', *Public Administration*, 85(2), pp. 259–278. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9299.2007.00649.x>.
- Stone, D. and Denham, A. (2004) *Think Tank Traditions: Policy Analysis Across Nations*. Manchester University Press.
- Streeck, W. (2014) *Buying Time: The Delayed Crisis of Democratic Capitalism*. Verso Books.
- Tawney, R.H. (1932) 'The Choice Before the Labour Party', *The Political Quarterly*, 3(3), pp. 323–345. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-923X.1932.tb01123.x>.
- Taylor, I.H. (1977) *Labour During the War*. LSE.
- Taylor, R. (2004) 'The Rise and Fall of the Social Contract', in *New Labour, Old Labour*. Routledge.

- Tchilingirian, J. (2021) 'Networked Intellectuals', in D.E. Abelson and C.J. Rastrick (eds) *Handbook on Think Tanks in Public Policy*. Cheltenham, UNITED KINGDOM: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited. Available at: <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/londonschoolecons/detail.action?docID=6526641> (Accessed: 16 February 2024).
- Thatcher, M. (1996) *The Path to Power*. HarperCollins.
- The Economist (1973) 'O and M out-Pitted', *The Economist*. 248th–6780th edn, 4 August, p. 22.
- The Economist (2022) 'Britain's productivity problem is long-standing and getting worse', *The Economist*. Available at: <https://www.economist.com/britain/2022/06/09/britains-productivity-problem-is-long-standing-and-getting-worse> (Accessed: 20 June 2022).
- The Times (1974) 'But What Would Labour Do?', *The Times*, 9 February, p. 15.
- Thomassen, J. (2020) 'Party government and democracy', in H. Oscarsson and S. Holmberg (eds) *Research Handbook on Political Partisanship*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Thompson, K.W. (1987) *Winston Churchill's World View: Statesmanship and Power*. LSU Press.
- Thompson, N. (2006) *Political Economy and the Labour Party, Second Edition: The Economics of Democratic Socialism 1884-2005*. 2nd edition. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Thorpe, A. (1997) 'The Surge to Second-Party Status, 1914–22', in A. Thorpe (ed.) *A History of the British Labour Party*. London: Macmillan Education UK, pp. 32–54. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-25305-0_3.
- Todd, M. (1991) 'The Centre for Policy Studies: Its birth and early days', *Department of Government, University of Essex* [Preprint].
- Tomlinson, J. (2002) 'The British "Productivity Problem" in the 1960s', *Past & Present*, (175), pp. 188–210.
- Toye, R. (2013) 'From "Consensus" to "Common Ground": The Rhetoric of the Postwar Settlement and its Collapse', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 48(1), pp. 3–23. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022009412461816>.
- Toynbee, P. and Walker, D. (2020) *The Lost Decade: 2010–2020, and What Lies Ahead for Britain*. Faber & Faber.

- Turner, J. (1995) 'A Land Fit for Tories to Live in: The Political Ecology of the British Conservative Party, 1944-94', *Contemporary European History*, 4(2), pp. 189–208.
- Turner, R.S. (2007) 'The "rebirth of liberalism": The origins of neo-liberal ideology', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 12(1), pp. 67–83. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569310601095614>.
- Tyler, R. (2006) "'Victims of our History"? Barbara Castle and In Place of Strife', *Contemporary British History*, 20(3), pp. 461–476. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13619460500407186>.
- Van Biezen, I., Mair, P. and Poguntke, T. (2009) 'Going, going, . . . gone? The decline of party membership in contemporary Europe', *European Journal of Political Research*, 51(1), pp. 24–56. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6765.2011.01995.x>.
- Vassallo, F. and Wilcox, C. (2006) 'Party as a Carrier of Ideas', in Katz, R. and Crotty, W., *Handbook of Party Politics*. 1 Oliver's Yard, 55 City Road, London EC1Y 1SP United Kingdom: SAGE Publications Ltd, pp. 413–421. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781848608047.n36>.
- Vizard, P. (2010) *What do the public think about economic and social rights? Research Report to Inform the Debate about a Bill of Rights and a Written Constitution*. Case Report 61. Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion, LSE. Available at: <https://ideas.repec.org/p/cep/sticar/casereport61.html> (Accessed: 12 September 2024).
- Ward, J., Ward, B. and Kerr, P. (2024) 'Whither the Centre? Tracing Centralisation and Fragmentation in UK Politics', *Political Studies Review*, p. 14789299241258629. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/14789299241258629>.
- Weaver, K. (1998) *The changing world of think tanks*. Washington, D.C: Brookings Institute. Available at: http://www.medientheorie.com/doc/weaver_changing_worlds_of_think_tanks.pdf.
- Webb, P. (1992) 'Britain: The 1987 Campaign', in S. Bowler and D.M. Farrell (eds) *Electoral Strategies and Political Marketing*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, pp. 43–62. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-22411-1_3.
- Weldon, D. (2022) 'Britain is once again the sick man of Europe', *New Statesman*, 15 June. Available at: <https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2022/06/britain-sick-man-of-europe-uk-zero-growth-oecd-economic-forecast-2023> (Accessed: 13 September 2024).

- White, J. (2017) 'The Party in Time', *British Journal of Political Science*, 47(4), pp. 851–868.
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123415000265>.
- White, J. and Ypi, L. (2016) *The Meaning of Partisanship*. Oxford University Press.
- Whiteley, P. (1983) *The Labour Party in Crisis*. Routledge. Available at:
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429449826>.
- Wickham-Jones, M. (1996) *Economic Strategy and the Labour Party: Politics and policy-making, 1970–83*. Springer.
- Wickham-Jones, M. (2000) 'New Labour in the global economy: partisan politics and the social democratic model', *The British Journal of Politics & International Relations*, 2(1), pp. 1–25. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-856X.00022>.
- Wickham-Jones, M. (2013) 'The challenge of Stuart Holland: the Labour Party's economic strategy during the 1970s', in *Reassessing 1970s Britain*. Manchester University Press.
- Wilder, P. (1992) 'A close run thing: The United Kingdom general election April 9 1992', *Representation*, 31(113), pp. 2–9. Available at:
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00344899238438988>.
- Willetts, D. (1987) 'The Role of the Prime Minister's Policy Unit', *Public Administration*, 65(4), pp. 443–454. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9299.1987.tb00674.x>.
- Willetts, D. (2005) 'The New Conservatism? 1945–1951', in *Recovering Power: The Conservatives in opposition since 1867*. Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Williams, B. (2015) *The Evolution of Conservative Party Social Policy*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137445810>.
- Williamson, A. (2015) 'Policymaking: Structures, Ideas and Influences', in A. Williamson (ed.) *Conservative Economic Policymaking and the Birth of Thatcherism, 1964–1979*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, pp. 26–57. Available at:
https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137460264_2.
- Williamson, A. (2023) "'Thirteen Wasted Years': A Strategy for Starmer?", *The Political Quarterly*, 94(4), pp. 642–652. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.13277>.
- Williamson, P. (1992) *National Crisis and National Government: British Politics, the Economy and Empire, 1926–1932*. Cambridge University Press.
- Wilson, H. (1964) *Purpose in Politics*. First Edition. Weidenfeld and Nicholson.

- Woods, J. (2024) 'Starmer's victory was handed to him on a plate – Britain wanted anything but the Conservatives', *The Telegraph*, 5 July. Available at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2024/07/05/keir-starmer-holborn-victory-labour-election/> (Accessed: 20 September 2024).
- Wring, D. (1995) 'From mass propaganda to political marketing: The transformation of labour party election campaigning', *British Elections and Parties Yearbook*, 5(1), pp. 105–124. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13689889508412961>.
- Wring, D. (1996) 'Political marketing and party development in Britain: A "secret" history', *European Journal of Marketing*, 30(10/11), pp. 92–103. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1108/03090569610149818>.
- Wring, D. (2005) *The Politics of Marketing the Labour Party*. Edited by D. Wring. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230597617_4.
- Yee, A.S. (1996) 'The causal effects of ideas on policies', *International Organization*, 50(1), pp. 69–108. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300001673>.
- Yekaterina, C. (2020) 'British Politics and Policy at LSE: The "lost decade" of austerity: the UK makes no progress on child wellbeing', *Politics and Policy*, 3 September.
- Yong, B. and Hazell, R. (2014) *Special Advisers: Who they are, what they do and why they matter*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Zeitlin, J., Nicoli, F. and Laffan, B. (2019) 'Introduction: the European Union beyond the polycrisis? Integration and politicization in an age of shifting cleavages', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 26(7), pp. 963–976. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2019.1619803>.
- Zhang, W. et al. (2023) 'Social network analysis and public policy: what's new?', *Journal of Asian Public Policy*, 16(2), pp. 115–145. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17516234.2021.1996869>.
- Ziblatt, D. (2017) *Conservative Parties and the Birth of Democracy*. Cambridge University Press.
- Ziegler, P. (2010) 'Harold Wilson, 1964–1970, 1974–1976', in V. Bogdanor (ed.) *From New Jerusalem to New Labour: British Prime Ministers from Attlee to Blair*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, pp. 93–106. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-230-29700-5_7.

Party Archival Materials:

Labour Party:

People's History Museum, Manchester, UK

- People's History Museum, Manchester. 1946. Labour Party Research Department report on programme. Labour Party Archive, Labour Party National Executive Committee (LPNEC), LPRD Series 1-32.
- People's History Museum, Manchester. 1948. Fabian Society research contributions. Labour Party Archive, LPNEC, LPRD Series 1-222.
- People's History Museum, Manchester. 1949. Policy review meeting with Herbert Morrison. Labour Party Archive, LPNEC, LPRD Series 1-338.
- People's History Museum, Manchester. 1955. Voter survey commission. Labour Party Archive, LPNEC, LPRD Series 2-463.
- People's History Museum, Manchester. 1959. Research staffing and expansion. Labour Party Archive, LPNEC, LPRD Series 1-30.
- People's History Museum, Manchester. 1960. Local government conference report. Labour Party Archive, LPNEC, LPRD Series 2-34.
- People's History Museum, Manchester. 1960. Departmental research projects and staffing. Labour Party Archive, LPNEC, LPRD Series 2-57.
- People's History Museum, Manchester. 1961. List of research papers (RD series) January 1982–December 1982. Labour Party Archive, LPNEC, LPRD Admin: 62.
- People's History Museum, Manchester. 1961. Political advertising: Details of expenditure by business organisations for the Conservative Party during the general election. Labour Party Archive, LPNEC, LPRD Series 3-154.
- People's History Museum, Manchester. 1961. Participation on policy making: Home Policy Committee. Labour Party Archive, LPNEC, LPRD Series 7-1390.
- People's History Museum, Manchester. 1965. Memo to Crosland from Pepworth regarding the use of advisers. Labour Party Archive, LPNEC, LPRD Pitt/C/59.
- People's History Museum, Manchester. 1966. LPRD departmental review. Labour Party Archive, LPNEC, LPRD Pitt Papers.
- People's History Museum, Manchester. 1966. Research Department staff review. Labour Party Archive, LPNEC, LPRD Pitt Papers.
- People's History Museum, Manchester. 1966. Political education. Labour Party Archive, LPNEC, LPRD Pitt Papers.
- People's History Museum, Manchester. 1966. Report on Research Department. Labour Party Archive, LPNEC, LPRD Pitt Papers.
- People's History Museum, Manchester. 1967. Report on Research Department. Labour Party Archive, LPNEC, LPRD Pitt Papers.

People's History Museum, Manchester. 1990. Non-NEC 'policy' documents: 1987 election to conference 1990. Labour Party Archive, LPPD, Policy Directorate File 2 Index.

People's History Museum, Manchester. 1991. Policy publications: A future programme. Labour Party Archive, LPPD, Policy Directorate PD2841.

People's History Museum, Manchester. 1992. Recent Labour Party policy documents: From conference 1990 to March 1992. Labour Party Archive, LPPD, Policy Directorate File 1 Index.

People's History Museum, Manchester. 1992. Policy development and the revitalisation of the Party. Labour Party Archive, LPPD, Policy Directorate PD3058A.

LSE Labour Party Archive, London, UK

London School of Economics, London. 1953–1964. Labour Party Research Department: Correspondence. Labour Party Archive, Shore/3/71.

London School of Economics, London. 1962. Papers and correspondence of Peter Shore during his time as Research Director. Labour Party Archive, Shore/4/30.

London School of Economics, London. 1974. Home Policy Committee report. Labour Party Archive, NEC Minutes.

Labour Party, Published Documents

Labour Party, 1934. For socialism and peace. London.

Labour Party, 1937. Labour's programme for Britain. London.

Labour Party, 1940. Labour Party annual conference report 1940. London.

Labour Party, 1941. Labour Party annual conference report 1941. London.

Labour Party, 1942. Labour Party annual conference report 1942. London.

Labour Party, 1945. Labour Party annual conference report 1945. London.

Labour Party, 1955. Labour Party annual conference report 1955. London.

Labour Party, 1959. Britain belongs to you. London.

Labour Party, 1960. Labour in the sixties. London.

Labour Party, 1960. Labour Party annual conference report 1960. London.

Labour Party, 1960. Signposts for the sixties. London.

Labour Party, 1973. Labour's programme for Britain: Annual conference 1973. London.

Conservative Party:

Conservative Party Archive, Bodleian Library, Oxford, UK, Special collections: Modern political papers

Conservative Party Archive, Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, 1939–1941. Correspondence and papers concerning R. A. Butler's early thoughts on post-war reconstruction. Conservative Party Archive, CRD 2/28/1.

Conservative Party Archive, Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, 1940–1945. Papers on the Post-War Problems Central Committee. Conservative Party Archive, CRD 2/28/3.

Conservative Party Archive, Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, 1947. The Industrial Charter: Publicity. Conservative Party Archive, CRD 2/7/31a.

Conservative Party Archive, Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, 1951. Economic situation 1951. Conservative Party Archive, CRD 2/49/27.

Conservative Party Archive, Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, 1960. First report of the Psephology Group. Conservative Party Archive, CRD 2/21/6.

Conservative Party Archive, Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, 1964. Papers on manifesto and sixth draft. Conservative Party Archive, CRD 3/9/10.

Conservative Party Archive, Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, 1964. Letters to Michael Fraser and R. A. Butler. Conservative Party Archive, CRD 3/9/15.

Conservative Party Archive, Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, 1965. Policy Group correspondence. Conservative Party Archive, CRD 3/24/9c.

Conservative Party Archive, Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, 1966–1968. Sir Edward Boyle letter book. Conservative Party Archive, CRD 3/24/13.

Conservative Party Archive, Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, 1970. Report on election. Conservative Party Archive, CRD 3/9/85.

Conservative Party Archive, Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, 1971–1972. Employment briefs. Conservative Party Archive, CRD/B/9/2.

Conservative Party Archive, Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, 1972–1979. Chris Patten files. Conservative Party Archive, CRD/D/7/1.

Conservative Party Archive, Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, 1973. Letter book. Conservative Party Archive, CRD/D/6/35.

Conservative Party Archive, Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, 1979–1981. Centre for Policy Studies correspondence. Conservative Party Archive, CRD/D/8/16.

Conservative Party Archive, Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, 1979–1985. CRD and Chairman correspondence. Conservative Party Archive, CCO/20/49/10.

Conservative Party Archive, Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, 1979–1981. Hoskyns correspondence. Conservative Party Archive, CCO/20/68/5.

Conservative Party Archive, Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, 1980–1981. Constitutional Convention Group. Conservative Party Archive, CRD/D/8/18.

Conservative Party Archive, Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, 1983. Jan Hildreth's Report. Conservative Party Archive, CCO/20/49/11.

List of Interviewees

Interviewees were initially approached based on their status in relevant ideas-producing organisations. Once contact was made, a snowball sampling method was employed in which I asked for referrals from my initial contacts. In each interview, I was careful to note that information that was not identified would be included in my write-up. Thus, in the following list of interviewees, I have included brief biographical information to give a profile of the individual without using identifying information. I conducted these interviews between March 2022 and June 2024.

Labour

Think tank researcher (Labour-adjacent) “1” – early career research with experience at three different “Labour-adjacent” organisations.

Think tank researcher “2” (Labour-adjacent) – senior think tanker, with leadership experience at multiple “Labour-adjacent” organisations.

Former Labour SpAd “1” – former special adviser in the Blair government, also has experience in the think tank sphere

Current Labour Advisor (PAd) “1” – current Labour adviser (at the time of interview), interviewed while party was in opposition

Conservative

Former CRD Researcher “1” – Former CRD researcher who left relatively early in their career to become a SpAd. Also has experience in the “Conservative-adjacent” think tank organisations.

Former CRD Researcher “2” – Former CRD researcher who left after becoming senior in the Department. Currently working in the public relations and communications industry.

Think tank researcher (Conservative-adjacent) “1” – relatively junior researcher at a ‘moderate’ Conservative think tank

Think tank researcher (Conservative-adjacent) “2” – former senior think tank researcher, also has experience as a SpAd