Political Leadership and Statecraft in Challenging Times

Annual Meeting of the PSA Political Leadership Research Group
The Council Chamber, Council House, University of East Anglia
Friday 17th January 2013

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**Political Leadership and Statecraft in Challenging Times**

Political leaders are confronting challenging times.

International financial austerity has had dramatic consequences for leaders around the world. Leaders have often had to campaign for (re)election and govern with significant public deficits, stagnant growth and public unrest. The rapid evolution of social media has affected the way in which leaders communicate to citizens, and how citizens communicate to each other about leaders. In many democracies electoral support and membership of the main political parties has been in long-term decline.

What are the consequences of these and other emerging challenges for political leaders and how (successfully) have they navigated through these challenges? In some cases the political capital of leaders has been challenged and drained by these developments. However, some leaders may successfully adapt. Moreover, new challenges also open up new strategic opportunities for other leaders to gain political power. Leaders from outside of the political mainstream have emerged and gained momentum in many political systems.

It is not just national leaders who have been affected. Political leadership comes in many forms. The financial crisis has had consequences for Prime Ministers and Presidents, but also Chancellors of the Exchequer, Finance Ministers, Mayors and Governors of large cities and leaders of regional or international organisations.

This workshop will focus on:

- What new challenges have leaders faced and what have their consequences been?
- How have political leaders sought to respond to these challenges, in terms of communication, rhetoric, policy and statecraft strategy?
- How successful have leaders, at different levels of government and governance, been at responding to the emerging challenges?
- What concepts and frameworks best help to theorise the changes that leaders are facing and the ways in which they are responding?

**Publication plans**

We have had expressions of interest from book publishers and journals about publishing an edited volume from the workshop. Please inform Toby James whether you would like your paper to be considered for inclusion in this volume.

**PSA Political Leadership Group**

The Workshop is organised by the Political Studies Association sub-group on Political Leadership. If you are interested in receiving more information about the group please join, free of charge via our website: [http://politicalleadership.org/membership/](http://politicalleadership.org/membership/).
9.30: Registration and Coffee (Council House Foyer)

10.00: Introductions Rt. Hon Charles Clarke and Toby James (Council Chamber)

10.15-11.00: Keynote: If opposition is an art, is Ed Miliband an artist? Tim Bale (Queen Mary, University of London) (Council Chamber)

11.00-12.30: Conceptual Frameworks for Analysing Political Leadership 1 (Council Chamber)

- Chair: Kevin Theakston (University of Leeds).
- Leadership Capital: Measuring the Dynamics of Leadership. Mark Bennister (Canterbury Christ Church University), Paul ‘t Hart (University of Utrecht and Netherlands School of Government), Ben Worthy (Birkbeck College, University of London).
- Assessing Prime Ministerial Performance: Governing Contexts and Political Statecraft. Jim Buller (University of York) and Toby James (University of East Anglia).
- Political Leaders, Rhetoric and Performance. Alan Finlayson (University of East Anglia).

12:30-1.15: Lunch (Council House Foyer)

1.15-2.45: Conceptual Frameworks for Analysing Political Leadership 2 (Council Chamber)

- Chair: Toby James (University of East Anglia)
- What makes a good political leader? Reflections from organisational psychology. Jo Silvester (City University of London).

1.15-2.45: Leadership Beyond National Government (Council Committee Room 1)

- Chair: Nick Wright (University of East Anglia)
- Local political leadership takes a post-political turn. Alex Marsh (University of Bristol).
- A new model Presidency: Jose Manuel Barroso’s leadership of the European Commission. Hussein Kassim (University of East Anglia).
- Reluctance and Bandwagoning: The Complete Failure of Western Leadership vis-à-vis the “Arab Spring” Kleanthis Kyriakidis and Petros Siousiouras (University of the Aegean).

2.45-3.00: Coffee

3.00-4.30: David Cameron, Austerity and Leadership in Britain (Council Chamber)

- Chair: Jim Buller (University of York)
• Austerity as Statecraft. Andrew Gamble (University of Cambridge).
• The Economic and Electoral Consequences of Austerity Policies in Britain. Paul Whiteley (University of Essex), David Sanders (University of Essex), Harold D. Clarke (University of Texas at Dallas) and Marianne Stewart (University of Texas at Dallas).
• Assessing David Cameron as Prime Minister. Mark Bennister (Canterbury Christ Church University) and Richard Heffernan (The Open University).

4.30-4.45: Coffee

4.45-6.15: Ed Miliband, Austerity and Leadership in Britain (Council Chamber)

• Chair: Alan Finlayson (University of East Anglia).
• The Labour Party under Ed Miliband. Thomas Quinn (University of Essex).
• Communicating One Nation Labour – An Oratorical Challenge. Andrew Crines (University of Leeds).
• Red Ed and the Loony Left. Ivor Gaber (City University London).

4.45-6.15 Comparative Challenges for Political Leaders (Council Committee Room 1)

• Chair: Toby James (University of East Anglia).
• Facilitator and constrainer: How the EU has impacted on British and German leadership efforts in responding to Iran’s nuclear programme. Nicholas Wright (University of East Anglia).
• Examining Jewish and Muslim parliamentary representation: Early Day Motions on minority issues, Ekaterina Kolpinskaya (University of Nottingham).
• Uniting and dividing the political space: Lessons from Syriza’s founding conference. Marina Prentoulis (University of East Anglia).

6.15 Round-up and publication plans / drinks (Council Chamber)

7.00 Dinner at The Library, Norwich.
**Paper Abstracts**

**11.00-12.30 Conceptual frameworks for analysing political leadership 1 (Council Chamber)**

- Leadership Capital: Measuring the Dynamics of Leadership. *Mark Bennister (Canterbury Christ Church University), Paul ‘t Hart (University of Utrecht and Netherlands School of Government), Ben Worthy (Birkbeck College, University of London).*

This paper argues that the extent to which political office-holders can effectively attain and wield authority is a function of the stock of their ‘leadership capital’. Drawing on the concept of political capital, we define leadership capital as aggregate authority composed of three sub-capital dimensions: skills; relations; and perceptions of a leader. Leadership capital is dynamic and contingent, shaped by context and the key groups who influence its trajectory - leaders and allies, the media and the public. Leadership capital ebbs and flows over time within a trajectory of acquisition, spending and decline. We present a Leadership Capital Index (LCI) that systematically maps out the three broad areas combining concrete measures with interpretive aspects. This can be used as a tool for systematically tracking and comparing the political fortunes of leaders in a way that is both more nuanced and robust than exclusive reliance on the latest approval ratings. We offer a series of paths for future development of the LCI.

- Assessing Prime Ministerial Performance: Governing Contexts and Political Statecraft. *Jim Buller (University of York) and Toby James (University of East Anglia).*

How should we assess Prime Ministerial performance? As many scholars note, it is important to appreciate the context in which leaders govern when making a judgement. However, many existing approaches used to assess Prime Ministers have not considered at length what the nature of that structural context is, either epistemologically, ontologically or empirically. This article develops the concept of the governing context for the statecraft approach so that it can be used by scholars seeking to assess political leaders. It then applies the approach to Gordon Brown’s Premiership. Brown faced a governing context that mostly imposed strategically selective disadvantages, but many of these were partially the result of his own agency and he made key strategic errors meaning that his leadership deserves criticism.

- Political Leaders, Rhetoric and Performance. *Alan Finlayson (University of East Anglia).*

A feature of all political regimes/cultures is the establishment (sometimes formally and sometimes through the force of tradition) of regular, ritualised moments at which a political leader can or must speak to an audience and be judged by them. The universality of this phenomenon is balanced by the many varied and particular ways in which it takes place. In this presentation I will argue that these occasions (the rules that shape them, the genres of thought and talk they induce, the relations between leaders led they establish) should be a concern of leadership studies and that further investigation requires the field to make use of insights from research into rhetoric (from "rhetorical political analysis"), and of concepts developed in 'performance studies'.

Page 5 of 14
British government and politics face a crisis of legitimacy. Falling election turnouts coupled with low public trust in politicians and officials have resulted from a series of developments that have resulted in mass disillusion with the political system. They include an attenuated view of citizenship as equivalent to a shopper rather than a participant in government, despite the availability of new means of participation, the neo-liberal failure to recognise a collective public interest and the resultant abandonment of public service ethics. Further problems are the demise of public sector education and training in our universities and elsewhere and lastly the loss of the desire to seek a vision of a good society whose decisions are not guided solely by market forces.

The political leadership matrix developed by Howard Elcock and John Fenwick might be used to analyse these problems and the nature of the political and managerial leadership needed to overcome them. The Matrix enables us to review the formal, informal and personal attributes needed by leaders capable of restoring public trust in politics and government, together with analysing the governmental, governance and allegiance roles that such leaders must undertake. The outcome could and should be a blueprint for recovery of public interest and trust in its government and governors. It leads on to suggest a series of measures that could be taken to restore the legality and integrity of government but in the end, leaders must change the value slope of British society away from individualism and reliance on markets by their own examples and conduct.

What makes a good political leader? Reflections from organisational psychology. Jo Silvester (City University of London).

Politicians are a notoriously difficult group to access for empirical research (Simonton, 1998) and, as such, relatively little is known about the individual qualities, skills and knowledge needed for good political leadership. There have also been few attempts to integrate theory and learning across different disciplines. Industrial-organisational (I/O) psychologists, in particular, have paid very little attention to politicians as political workers despite a considerable body of research on performance at work that could inform understanding about factors that influence campaigning and performance in political roles.

This paper addresses this notable gap by presenting findings from two studies: one with local politicians, and one with parliamentary candidates from a UK political party. Building on selection theory from I/O psychology, both studies employ a longitudinal empirical design with the aim of (1) identifying shared latent constructs of performance in political roles, and (2) testing hypothesised relationships between politician self-rated characteristics (i.e., personality, Machiavellianism, political skill and political efficacy) and subsequent political performance. In study one self-ratings were obtained from local politicians (n=225) who also received performance ratings from political colleagues and officers (n = 1044) via a 360-degree review system. In study two parliamentary candidates (n = 210) provided self-ratings three months before the 2010 general election, and these were compared with subsequent electoral performance and observer ratings from political colleagues (n = 1047).

Both studies found evidence of a shared agreement about the behavioural competencies required to perform political roles. Regression analyses of politician self-rated characteristics...
also document a significant association with colleague ratings of in-role performance (study 1), and electoral outcome (study 2). The implications of these findings for identifying and developing aspiring political candidates, and supporting incumbent political leaders will be discussed.

- **Statecraft: Culture, Institutions, and Performance.** The case of France and Syria and the chemical weapons crisis, 2013, *John Gaffney (Aston University)*.

The paper will examine this old and new concept, statecraft, and the way in which current conditions of executive political leadership raise questions of political trust and allegiance. This is particularly important as alternative vectors of political emotion have emerged, namely, the strong presence of populism and the political extremes. We shall integrate into our analysis of statecraft recent theoretical developments in the politics of performance, itself a strongly emerging sub-discipline in leadership studies. We shall examine the standard contemporary context of the leadership framework: TV, meetings, reporting, party activity generally; but the new social media, and media developments generally, have intensified/ altered two particular ‘conditions of production’ of political performance, namely (political) emotion, and the idea of the leader’s relationship to the public. These issues have been further heightened – and arguably altered - by the increase in political personalisation throughout the media. Moreover, in the case we shall be examining, France, the configuration of political institutions, as well as historical and cultural contexts, have strongly encouraged the personalisation of politics. We shall examine statecraft from this particular angle, and call it ‘performance’ (of action, discourse, and image rather than of policy), but performance within a particular cultural framework (and other crucial frameworks: institutional, historical, linguistic, etc.). We are not looking, therefore, just at what we ‘see’ (or hear) but at what we see and imagine (we shall also focus upon the iconographic). The case of France and in particular the ‘performance’ of the French President, François Hollande, from September-December 2013 in the context of the Syria crisis, will be examined as a ‘narrative’ within the theoretical framework of leadership performance and its institutional and cultural contexts.
1.15-2.45: Leadership Beyond National Government (Council Committee Room 1)

- Local political leadership takes a post-political turn. Alex Marsh (University of Bristol).

Several advanced industrialised countries, in Europe and beyond, have over the last two decades moved to a model of local governance structured around the elected Mayor. Intriguingly, it has also recently been argued that Mayors represent the future of governance not just at local level but also globally. The non-partisan pragmatism of Mayors can achieve policy progress where negotiations between national governments end in stalemate. The case for elected mayors in England was first made 30 years ago. Support for the idea recurs. Most recently the Localism Act obliged England’s major urban areas beyond London to hold referendums on elected mayors in May 2012. Enthusiasm for the idea in Westminster and Whitehall went unmatched locally and only one city – Bristol – voted in favour of moving to an elected mayor. Nonetheless, the Heseltine review almost immediately reiterated the case for Mayors.

Why has the idea of mayors proved both popular and resilient? And why has it seemingly failed to take root in England? Much of the local political leadership literature on mayors frames the discussion in terms of institutional imperatives, increased legitimacy and accountability, and the reinvigoration of local representative democracy. These issues are undoubtedly relevant to developing an adequate explanation for the continuing enthusiasm for mayors. And an understanding of local political dynamics is important in explaining why the push for mayors in England has been frustrated, for the time being at least.

But the focus of much of this literature is rather too narrow. We need to (re)connect this discussion with broader debates about the increasingly urban nature of spatial development in a globalised economy; the entrepreneurialisation of the city; the disempowerment of state actors in a liberalised economy; and the putative fragmentation of local governance and increasing reliance upon networked governance.

This paper develops the argument that the mayoral model of governance - with its emphasis upon narrative, vision, and symbolism, and its reliance upon soft powers and persuasion - is perceived from the political centre as an attractive local governance fix, given the presumed constraints on state action. Whether it is, in practice, an effective model of local governance is a separate, and under-researched, issue.

- A new model Presidency: Jose Manuel Barroso’s leadership of the European Commission. Hussein Kassim (University of East Anglia).

Historically, the high profile of the European Commission Presidency has been inversely related to the scant resources available to the office. Since 2004, however, the European Commission has seen the emergence and operation of a new presidential model. Although the Commission has previously known strong leaders, the Presidency of José Manuel Barroso is significantly different. As well as the inheritance of expanded formal powers granted under a series of treaty reforms and of coordinating instruments introduced under his predecessor as part of a process of administrative reform, Barroso has turned the Secretariat General into a personal service of the Commission President, delivering a detailed grip and control over policy that no previous incumbent has enjoyed. This paper examines the new Presidency and explains its development. It argues that the new model of presidential leadership is best explained not in terms of a lengthy institutionalization of the office, conscious constitutional engineering on the part of member governments or wider processes of presidentialization
witnessed across liberal democracies, but by entrepreneurialism on the part of Barroso. Drawing on original data, it shows, moreover, that the strengthening of the Presidency is regarded with ambivalence by managers and others in the organization. It also draws out the implications for the organization and the EU system more broadly of a powerful Commission President.

- Reluctance and Bandwagoning: The Complete Failure of Western Leadership vis-à-vis the “Arab Spring”. Kleanthis Kyriakidis and Petros Siousiouras (University of the Aegean).

The West and its spearhead, the sole superpower, had a golden chance to alter once and for all the popular feeling towards its policies, during the recent Arab revolutions. A long history of colonialism on the eastern part of the Atlantic and one-sided pro-Israeli stance on the western part, could have been washed apart, if the European leaders and the Obama administration had shown the courage to exercise true leadership. Instead, a non-orientalist approach of the Middle East reveals the utter failure of both American and European policies pertaining to the ‘Arab Spring’.

First of all the West applied once more its double standards policies as regards the Arab dictators. In the beginning, it was reluctant to support the genuine rebellions in Tunis and Cairo and rather late welcomed their results. At the same time, it was too eager to get rid of Gaddafi but not Assad and of course has fully supported the monarchies in the area. What is even worse, when Muslim Brotherhood got a grip on Egyptian power, the West had no problem to support once more a military coup, which deposed the elected leader.

It should be very clear that any political outcome in the Middle East will somehow include Political Islam. The more we persecute it, the stronger it gets and the “moderate” Islamists turn to hard-line Salafists. Moreover, in the aftermath of the ‘Arab Spring’, Islamic terrorism was in a decline and evolutions such as the regime change in Egypt or the civil war in Syria have already started to reignite its fire. Last but not least, Palestine remains the mantra and the West should abandon its double standard policies and be engaged as an honest broker for a peaceful and enduring agreement.
3.00-4.30: David Cameron, Austerity and Leadership in Britain (Council Chamber)

- Austerity as Statecraft. Andrew Gamble (University of Cambridge).

The Coalition Government formed after the 2010 General Election in the UK committed itself almost immediately to a programme of austerity which it justified as necessary to avoid a sovereign debt crisis in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crash. This paper examines how the language of austerity was used both to bind the coalition partners together and put the blame for the state of the economy on the previous Labour Administration. The new government sought to reframe the economic debate and set out the conditions for economic recovery, which it hoped could also deliver future electoral success. It encountered serious political difficulties when the recovery did not happen as expected, but it managed to survive these, the coalition did not break down, and by 2013 the government had succeeded in establishing its narrative of the crisis as the new common sense.

- The Economic and Electoral Consequences of Austerity Policies in Britain. Paul Whiteley (University of Essex), David Sanders (University of Essex), Harold D. Clarke (University of Texas at Dallas) and Marianne Stewart (University of Texas at Dallas).

The aim of this paper is to examine the electoral impact of the economic strategy pursued by the Coalition government in Britain since it came to power in the May 2010, and to study the role of the economy in influencing voting support for political parties over time. Immediately after the general election there was a great deal of support for the proposed austerity programme, with widespread agreement among elites and public alike about what should be done. However, public attitudes have subsequently evolved with increasingly sharp disagreements emerging over the Coalition's austerity policy. The paper investigates the relationship between inflation, unemployment and public attitudes to the economy and their links to voting support using aggregate time series methods and also multi-level modelling with British Election Study data. The evidence shows that there is a close relationship between the state of the economy and voting intentions, but it is not a simple relationship. The coalition government parties have lost support as a result of continuing economic stagnation, but at the same time Labour has not benefitted from this loss of support. Instead UKIP appears to be the beneficiary of economic discontent and increasing euroscepticism among the voters.

- Assessing David Cameron as Prime Minister. Mark Bennister (Canterbury Christ Church University) and Richard Heffernan (The Open University).

Although the Coalition has had its ups and downs under David Cameron’s leadership, he remains the predominant figure in British politics. Cameron has experienced defeat on Syria and the ignominy of a significant chunk of his party voting against the Queen’s Speech. Though undoubtedly weakened by having to work with and through the Liberal Democrats and manage an increasingly recalcitrant Conservative party his position as party leader is solid. This paper considers to what extent we can still regard Cameron as a predominant prime minister 18 months in advance of next election. Has he managed to utilise the institutional and personal resources available to him? How have the structural constraints that impact on all prime ministers affected the Cameron premiership? What are the significant aspects of the Cameron premiership that should be considered by prime ministerial scholars, particularly in relation to a prime minister accommodating a junior coalition partner? Is the prime minister still less constrained that he would be by having a powerful intra-party rival? This paper,
buildings on previous research, provides an over flight of the Cameron premiership in assessing its impact on the office and British politics.
4.45-6.15: Ed Miliband, Austerity and Leadership in Britain (Council Chamber)

- The Labour Party under Ed Miliband. Thomas Quinn (University of Essex).

This paper uses polling evidence to examine the impact of Ed Miliband’s first three years as Labour Party leader. It shows that, although Labour has frequently led the Conservatives in the opinion polls, its lead has been soft. Miliband’s personal ratings have been poor and compare unfavourably with other recent opposition leaders. Some of the leader’s problems are down to personal factors, but others concern Labour’s weaknesses on economic credibility and issues such as welfare reform, which is apparent in polling evidence. The paper explores the reasons for Miliband’s adoption of an apparently suboptimal strategy and situates them in his party’s post-New Labour ideological contours.

- Communicating One Nation Labour – An Oratorical Challenge. Andrew Crines (University of Leeds).

This paper will analyse Ed Miliband’s oratory, with a particular focus on his attempts to articulate a cohesive message surrounding One Nation Labour. To do this I will focus upon how Miliband is communicating this message by examining his speaking style at the 2012 and 2013 Labour conferences. Alongside this will be an appreciation of how these audiences received his speeches. Such an examination necessitates an understanding of the oratorical devices which can be employed by political actors. These oratorical styles include judicial, deliberative, and epideictic. Each represents a distinctive style of oratory which can be used to communicate political rhetoric. Moreover within these styles are specific oratorical devices which can be also be used to influence the audience. The contemporary challenge faced by Miliband is in his ability to ensure this message resonates beyond the conference chamber. He is, broadly speaking, an effective communicator within the confines of the conference, but beyond that the rhetoric tends not to resonate because of his deliberative and judicial oratorical style. Put simply, this holds Labour’s message of renewal back because of Miliband’s lack of epideictic oratory. This is a necessity for non-aligned audiences. This can be electorally damaging for the Labour Party because the audience expects the opposition to be present in the debates. If the leadership suffer from communicative difficulties, then their presence may not be felt by the all important median voter. As such I will conclude that Miliband and Labour’s message is being held back because of a misapplication of communication that is, to a large extent, attributable to the leaders oratorical deficiencies.

- Red Ed and the Loony Left. Ivor Gaber (City University London).

In the 1980s it is well-documented how a sustained campaign by the Conservative-supporting press and (as I have argued elsewhere) elements within the Labour Party, established in the public mind the notion of the ‘loony left’ as a threatening reality. It appears that a similar campaign is underway, this time using the tag ‘Red Ed’ to brand the Labour leader as a ‘dangerous leftie’. Since Miliband’s election to the Labour leadership in September 2010, a cuttings database search of stories that associate ‘Red Ed’ with Miliband reveals that these terms have been linked in 353 stories in the Sun, 155 in the Daily Mail and Mail on Sunday, 105, in the Daily Express and 104 in the Mail Online. This paper will trace the origins of the nickname - in fact first used publicly and promoted by supporters of Ed Miliband’s brother David - and then taken up enthusiastically by Conservative-supporting newspapers. The campaign, if it can be so-called, bears striking similarities to the earlier ‘loony left’ campaign and, if recent opinion polls are to be believed, with what could be similar success.
• Facilitator and constrainer: How the EU has impacted on British and German leadership efforts in responding to Iran’s nuclear programme. **Nicholas Wright (University of East Anglia).**

The disclosure in 2002 that Iran had established secret nuclear facilities in breach of its commitments under the Non-Proliferation Treaty began an international crisis that continues to this day. In the absence of meaningful American leadership, in 2003 Britain, Germany and France as the so-called ‘E3’ (or EU3) claimed leadership of the international response, and in doing so assumed the prerogative of speaking for the EU as a whole. Their efforts at resolving the crisis were ultimately unsuccessful, and the E3 has now been superseded by the E3+3 (including the US, Russia and China). However, the E3 states continue to claim leadership of the European component of the negotiations, insisting, moreover, that the comprehensive sanctions regime imposed by the EU on Iran remains more rigorous than that of the UN.

Focusing on Britain and Germany, this paper examines their efforts at leadership in the response to Iran, asking to what extent the EU has acted to constrain or facilitate these, and its impact on their foreign policy statecraft. Drawing on evidence from a range of policy documents and interviews with officials in London, Berlin and Brussels, it argues that while both states have sought to instrumentalise the EU in developing an effective international response, their credibility as international actors is linked directly to their membership of the EU. Thus, the EU has acted as both facilitator and constrainer of their foreign policy. This in turn raises important questions about the ability of individual states to exercise meaningful political leadership in the context of complex multilateral organisations, and how such organisations can shape and influence the practice of statecraft in foreign policy.

• Examining Jewish and Muslim parliamentary representation: Early Day Motions on minority issues. **Ekaterina Kolpinskaya (University of Nottingham).**

Fair minority parliamentary representation improves the quality of democracy and the state’s performance in Western democracies, including the UK (Gutmann, 2003; Saward, 2011). Approaches to improving minority representation vary from increasing the number of minority MPs to creating a more minority-friendly parliamentary environment (see inter alia House of Commons, 2009; OBV, 2008; Durose et al., 2011; Saalfeld and Bischof, 2013; Claire et al. (eds), 2013). Underpinning many such attempts is the assumption that increasing the number of MPs from minority backgrounds will improve the representation of minority interests. There is little evidence, however, to suggest that this is the case.

This paper explores one side of the problem – whether or not minority parliamentarians address minority-related questions when they are not constrained by party discipline, and so actually improve the representation of minority interests when they are able. Drawing upon content analysis of the Early Day Motions tabled by Members of Parliament with Jewish, Muslim and non-minority backgrounds between 1997 and 2012, the study examines whether religious minority identity has any impact on the frequency with which minority background MPs engage with minority-related topics.

The analysis shows that the impact of religious minority background on the level of interest to minority-related issues is insignificant; rather MPs tend to sponsor minority-related motions triggered by important domestic and international events rather than consistently representing interest of a certain minority. There is no evidence that increasing the number of MPs from a
religious minority background in the House of Commons has seen an increase in the representation of issues specifically relating to minority groups.

- Uniting and dividing the political space: Lessons from Syriza’s founding conference. 
  Marina Prentoulis (University of East Anglia).

After the economic crisis, Alexis Tsipras leader of the Greek Syriza (Coalition of the Radical Left) managed to bring his party within striking distance of government and to become the most promising leader of the European left. The electoral percentage of Syriza soared from under 5% in 2009 to 27% in June 2012 and with government in sight, Tsipras called the founding conference of the party as a unified entity in July 2013.

The involvement of the two dominant political parties of Greece (ND-conservative/right; PASOK-social-democratic/centre) in the ill-conceived political and economic decisions leading to the memorandum agreements between troika (IMF, EEC, ECB) and Greece and their support for the draconian austerity measures, effectively created the opportunities for the electoral popularity of Syriza. Nevertheless this did not minimize the new challenges Syriza has to navigate through in order to convince for its adequacy to lead as a unified, modern, leftish party.

The challenge for Syriza is twofold: First, it has to convince, both its own members and the public, that it can operate as a ‘unified’ political actor, despite the plurality of voices within the party. A difficult preposition since Syriza started as a coalition of twelve leftish organizations, still demanding relative autonomy and impact on the decision making process within the party. Second, Syriza has to create a broader social coalition, appealing not only to the left (or part of) but also to the centre and even the right. It has to become the champion of diverse social strata with diverse grievances and ideological priorities.

These challenges are relevant for a discourse analytic framework focusing on two major theoretical considerations: First, the difficulties in articulating an equivalential chain between diverse groups which, in turn, will be the basis for the emergence of a new hegemonic agent. Second, the challenges in establishing a clear political frontier, thus dividing the political space in two antagonistic camps, in our case, pro and anti-memorandum.

The political manifesto of the party as it was negotiated and shaped before and after the conference in July 2013 will demonstrate the strategic opportunities available to Tsipras and his responses to these challenges as they have been shaped so far. Nevertheless, these challenges are not unique. A number of contemporary European leftish parties (Izquierda Unida/Spain; The Unity List/Denmark) are the product of coalitions of smaller parties, have enjoyed greater electoral support since the economic crisis and they are trying to articulate a new political programme against the austerity measures and the economic inequalities within the European Union. The next phase of this research is to think the modern European leftish leadership within different national contexts and compare the emerging challenges and opportunities they face.