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This has been a dramatic year in British Politics. In May, distinguished careers ended and exciting new ones began as the Conservatives romped to electoral victory, Labour sagged back into opposition, and the Liberal Democrats virtually disappeared from the House of Commons. The year ahead promises to be even more eventful with a government freed from coalition, a new look Labour Party, the arrival of the SNP in Westminster, and geopolitical crises deepening in the middle east and Europe.

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Just five months ago, Jeremy Corbyn, Michael Meacher, and a couple of other “left” MPs were sitting in a room discussing the pressure we were under to put up a candidate for the Labour Party leadership election. After much debate, all eyes turned to Jeremy and we said to him, “It’s your turn”.

To begin with, he didn’t want to do it. He wasn’t keen, but he eventually agreed: “All right, if you believe I can do it,” he said.

That’s the sort of leader I want – someone with a sense of duty to the people they serve and who will do what needs to be done for the greater good of all.

What the establishment don’t understand is that we have a different concept of leadership to anything seen before. We come together as a collective, as a community, as a class, and that’s the way we make decisions. True leaders don’t make decisions in isolation; they follow and listen to the collective call and the community.

We made it to the final day and won by the largest mandate in the history of the Labour Party. I believe this was because there was a hunger and a thirst for a more honest, and a straight talking, way of doing “politics”. Ideas – not just told to people, but discussed with people, together as a collective, have made the difference. “Honest talking, straight politics” ended up being our campaign slogan.

Of course, we’re still working through the Labour Party to ensure we build it up as a force that can win elections. The reality is that an electoral force cannot succeed unless there is support. Support from people, from the movement and from outside the parliamentary process. Throughout the campaign we discussed how we needed to transform the Labour Party and the Labour movement into a social movement — to remember the values set out when the Labour Party was first founded. It wasn’t just about winning elections; it was about bringing communities together to empower them to determine their own futures.

We want to see communities discussing and raising their own understanding and awareness of the world they operate in. It is vitally important to develop our party into a movement that can transform society for the better — at every level: from local communities to a national platform, and then linked to others across the world in a way that will transform our country and our world for the better. That’s what this whole project is about.

Jeremy’s leadership election campaign strategy involved building a momentum that could then launch a social movement, which could respond to the need to transform society at
CREATIVE COMMONS

every level. That’s why we launched the organisation, “Momentum”.

We are presented with a real opportunity to engage and mobilise many non-voters. That’s probably why those who oppose us are throwing everything at us. Everything. Negative media is coming at us all the time.

Jeremy’s family – indeed all of our families – have been persecuted by certain media. We are standing up against this, solidly, bravely and courageously, and we will not engage in negativity. I don’t believe anything I read in the Daily Mail and the fact that 70 per cent of the UK’s newspaper circulation is owned by three wealthy families is an indication of the scale of the task we have in building a fairer, more plural society in this country.

It is not just the media. Others also are doing all they can to undermine this movement, and will no doubt continue to do so – whatever we say or do.

First, those against us will try and divide us; next they will try to destroy us.

But what’s really fascinating this time round is the show of determination people have exhibited.

With social media as an asset, which helps us to generate positivity and hope, something feels very different this time round. This movement, with support, has the potential to win the general election and lead our country down a better path to the future.

We’ve already shown that from a small number of people sitting in a room together to select a candidate, we can build a movement that can win the leadership election of a major political party. That movement has held meetings all over the country bringing thousands and tens of thousands of people together – people who want to decide their own futures instead of leaving it up to the establishment.

Over the summer, within days of announcing events and rallies around the country, they were sold out. We found we needed venues with two or three times the available capacity. Once, Jeremy had to give a speech from the top of a fire engine parked outside to a crowd of more than 100 supporters who hadn’t got tickets for the event and had showed up anyway.

The thirst and desire for a new way of doing politics is certainly out there and is very tangible. But what I have found to be even more exciting is that people seem to want to transform society more widely, and that these people will not be defeated by media harassment or by politicians denouncing what they say.

This project was never going to be easy. Over the coming hours, days, weeks, months and hopefully years, whatever negativity is thrown at us, we are going to display a huge amount of strength and determination.

This is going to be one of the most significant periods for politics this country has seen for a century. It’s a story we can all be part of.

John McDonnell MP is Shadow Chancellor
Northern lights

Decentralising from London and harnessing the power of the North is central to the vision of a stronger and more robust UK economy, according to James Wharton MP

For too long UK economic growth has been dominated by London and the South East. It is time for this to change. The Northern Powerhouse is our vision for a stronger economy, bringing cities and regions across the North together so they can be a bigger and better offering than on their own. We will help the North reach its potential as the driver of growth, creating more jobs, encouraging enterprise and innovation, and improving culture, skills and transport for those who live here.

For the last 150 years we have become too centralised, with power with resources constantly taken away from local leaders and put into the hands of ministers and officials in Whitehall. As the capital emerged as a global city, the former industrial towns and cities of the North found the transition to a modern economy more difficult. There are deep-rooted challenges to overcome; a skills shortage; and a transport infrastructure which undermines potential. All too often, our leading universities in cities, such as Manchester, Liverpool, York and Durham, succeed in attracting the brightest minds from across Britain but lose them upon graduation to the lure of London and the South.

Removing barriers will unleash the truly huge potential the North has to offer. Today, the Northern economy is worth £50bn and is home to more than a million businesses and many of the world’s finest universities and research institutions. It is home to 15 million people – more than Tokyo, New York or London – and a new job is created every five minutes. The opportunity is huge. If the North grew at the same rate as is forecast for the rest of the UK, we could add £37bn to our nation’s economy by the end of the next decade.

The North does not currently work as one economy. Connecting the Northern regions is therefore central to the vision of a stronger and more robust economy, which is greater than the sum of its parts. Transport has a key role to play in this. Faster journey times and increased capacity will allow more commuting between cities and regions, meaning people have a greater choice of job opportunities and businesses are able to access the skills they need. Businesses can share knowledge and expertise, sparking new ideas and generating more products. Regions will be brought together to create the critical mass needed to compete effectively on the global stage and attract international investment.

Transport for the North has been established to bring together all Northern local transport authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships and, along with government, is playing a key role in pushing forward vital transport schemes. These include the electrification of the transpennine railway and High Speed Two – the first new railway line north of Birmingham in 120 years. There are also proposals for a high speed east-west rail line which could bring benefits across the whole of the North, from Liverpool to Hull, Sheffield to Newcastle.

Real change depends on strong leadership. No two places are the same and the people who live, work and do business in each place are best positioned to know what is needed for their area. Devolving power from Whitehall brings decision-making closer to people. This gives leaders who know their areas best the power to create the right conditions for them to prosper. Devolution deals and the introduction of directly-elected Mayors have already been agreed with Manchester, Sheffield, Liverpool, the North East and Tees Valley in exchange for local control over transport, skills and business support. It is hoped more places will follow.

Enterprise, innovation, and culture are key features of the Northern Powerhouse vision. Enterprise zones across the North create jobs, encourage investment and boost growth, while investments in tech hubs and hortpots support small businesses and start-ups. Major new investments in science and technology already include the cutting-edge Cognitive Computing Centre in Darlington, while efforts to boost culture and tourism, have seen the Granada TV studios in Manchester transformed into a contemporary theatre and arts venue.

Our vision for the Northern Powerhouse covers all aspects of the North – all business, all industries and all areas, from the biggest metropolitan cities to the most rural of villages. This provides a challenging but exciting opportunity; to create a powerful Northern economy that delivers jobs, prosperity and security for the North and the UK as a whole.

James Wharton is Minister for Local Growth and the Northern Powerhouse
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History comes in two modes. In one of them, the gimbals on which power is mounted are steady, stable and unchanged. These are predictable times, times when we can look ahead with confidence and know what will happen. They are not necessarily peaceful times but they are at least not bewildering times. Then there is the second mode - the times of change, when power shifts. These are turbulent times, puzzling times and, all too often, bloody times. We are living in the second mode. All is changing, although you would not think so to look at our foreign policy or our defence policy, for they are anchored firmly in the past and pay no attention to the new world now emerging.

Power is shifting from those nations and institutions which we are used seeing holding it, to those we are not – and it is doing so in two significant ways.

First, we are experiencing a vertical power shift. Power is now migrating out of the institutions of the nation state, onto the global stage. This is because today’s world is interdependent in a way it never has been before. When there is swine flu in Mexico, it is a problem for Aberdeen in the next few hours. When Lehman Brothers collapses, the global economy suffers. Fires in the Russian steppes cause food riots in Africa. The irresponsible burning of fossil fuels in the West drowns Bangladesh. We are deeply interconnected. We used to pretend there were issues which were domestic and others which were foreign. There is no domestic issue that does not have a foreign policy quotient to it.

On this global stage, the institutions of democratic accountability are non-existent and the institutions of legality are very weak. The modern powers that are growing have no reference to the frontiers of nation states. They may be things which we like, such as the internet; free trade, global media and global finance but we must acknowledge and be wary of the lack of accountability in each of these areas. Of course, we also see things we do not like, such as Isis, international terrorism and global pandemics. What these phenomena have in common is that they each represent a new arena, impossible to control through national law.

Historically, the powerful have been relaxed about the existence of lawless spaces. Indeed, they have often benefited because they can exert their power to define the rules themselves. We as a nation have experience with this. However, sooner or later, unwatched lawless space is occupied by destroyers. With the degradation of the power of national law brought about by globalisation, this is exactly what has happened.

From this history of the nation state in the 20th century, we can see that where power goes, governance must follow. In what looks to me like a deeply turbulent age, our capacity to create greater stability rather than greater turbulence will depend on our ability to bring governance to the global stage. We need to abandon isolationism and realise it is entirely in the interests of a medium-sized country which needs stability and security, such as the United Kingdom, to strengthen governance around the world.

For stability to be achieved, we will have to act. It will not be sufficient to stand on the sidelines and have a proliferation of further multilateral UN institutions. The world needs the UN as an international forum; as the developer of international law; as the legitimiser of actions – but when it comes to taking difficult action in non-permissive circumstances, my belief is that coalitions of the willing will have greater practical effect.

I know this from my own experience. As High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, charged by the international community with maintaining stability after the conflict in that region, I reported twice a year to the UN Security Council for the conduct of my mandate. But my managing board was the Peace Implementation Council – a body made up of those who had committed troops and resources to peace in Bosnia.

Governance on the global stage is most likely to be created through the growth of new, treaty-based, institutions. These will by necessity not be multilateral, as the UN is but they will be more effective. We have seen some already emerging:
the WTO is one; the International Court of Justice is a second; and the G20, which is not quite a treaty but has quasi-treaty powers, is a third. Kyoto is a fourth.

As a medium-sized nation, it is in our interests to play our part in the creation of these institutions. Yet this idea of a rule-based world order features nowhere in the government’s foreign policies. British civil servants and diplomats were the people who created the United Nations; we have the ability to make an immense contribution here. But our response is instead to cut the Foreign Office budget.

The second great power shift is, of course, that from west to east. We have come to accept this in terms of the new economic power of the Pacific basin. What we may not realise is that this will transmute into political power and military power in due time.

We are moving from 50 years of a monopolar world dominated by the United States to a multipolar world in which the role of our foreign policy and defence will be wholly different. For a model of what comes next, do not look to the last century as we often so myopically do; look rather at the Europe of the 19th century, which, with its many viable powers, is a far better model of today’s situation than the bi-polar arrangements of the Cold War. In those times Britain’s role was not fixed; we always played to the balance. This was a period of much more subtle foreign policy. Lord Palmerston, twice prime minister in the 1800s, once said: “We have no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those interests it is our duty to follow.” Contrast that with our present policy in which we cleave to the old, simple certainty that we need to do no more than cling to the United States.

Now, if we want to operate in the world, we have to bring in other partners, including the Chinese. Of course, we do not share their values but in many cases we do share their interests. Think of the 3,700 Chinese serving the UN. Think of the problems of the Somali pirates off the Horn of Africa, where the Chinese provide the largest naval unit that is fighting the pirates. Why? Certainly not out of charity. They want to keep the sea lanes open, just as we did in the days of our mercantile power. We must recognise this is in our interest as well, whether we share values or not. These are the kind of relationships we should begin to develop.

In the modern age, the most important part of what you can do is what you can do with others. The most important thing about our structures, whether nations or any other organisation, are not their vertical capacities but are rather the interconnectors, the docking points, that help us to build the wider coalitions that create the networks that produce effective outcomes.

We will, of course, rely on the Atlantic alliance and Europe as our primary alliances, but we have to build alternatives and new coalitions beyond that. Where we do that is where we will succeed, and where we do not do it is where we will fail. We must shed some of our recent geo-political instincts. We see a problem in the world and our first response is to bomb it. We believe we live in a kinetic age, but we do not. We live in the new age of diplomacy, in which our capacity to build wider coalitions to achieve the interests of our nation, not necessarily coalitions of values but coalitions of interest, will define success or failure.

Paddy Ashdown is a Liberal Democrat peer and former leader of that party. He served as the international high representative to Bosnia between 2004 and 2006.
This year’s election result was the most disproportionate in UK political history. Never before did the result bear so little relation to votes. Consider a few things: Labour’s vote went up by 1.5 per cent. Yet their number of seats fell by 26, because of the distortions of Britain’s single-member constituency system of voting, known as First Past the Post (FPTP). UKIP got nearly four million votes and just one MP, while the Greens got over a million votes – and again, just one MP. That is despite the Greens nearly quadrupling their vote on 2010. Are these the results of a fair voting system?

For voters, the last election looked more like a lottery than a genuinely democratic process. Smaller parties were crushed, with the two main parties getting 67 per cent of the vote (compared to 98.8 per cent in 1955) but over 86 per cent of the seats in parliament. And while it took an average of just 34,000 votes to elect a Conservative MP, it took 291,000 to get a Liberal Democrat MP. The power of your vote depends entirely on whether or not you are lucky enough to live in a marginal seat. It’s a postcode lottery, and if you are a Tory in Teesside or a Labourite in Leamington, well, tough luck.

Before the election, most were predicting a hung parliament based on the strong performance of smaller parties compared to the big two. The fact a single-party majority emerged has been used by some to argue that multi-party politics isn’t here to stay after all. They are wrong. The Conservatives’ 12-seat majority is the smallest a single-party government has enjoyed since 1974. The fact it was heralded as some kind of grand return of majoritarian politics just shows how much politics has changed recently. And don’t forget that this majority was based on just 37 per cent of the vote and 24 per cent of the electorate. It is hardly a ringing endorsement of one-party rule.

People have changed dramatically over the past few decades. No longer do people identify their party through their social class or cultural background. We have become political consumers – we shop around, we are more diverse, we identify with dozens of categories and none. This more individualised Britain should make room for multiple parties to reflect voters’ wishes – but they are being snuffed out by an unfair voting system that creates hundreds of safe seats while casting millions of people’s votes onto the electoral scrapheap.

Of course, it doesn’t have to be like this. After the election, nearly half a million people signed petitions calling for a fairer voting system, handed in by leaders of five parties – the Greens, UKIP, the SNP, Plaid Cymru and the Lib Dems. Scotland already uses proportional systems – where seats more closely match votes – for its local and Holyrood elections. The Additional Member System for the Scottish Parliament “tops up” the disproportionality of FPTP with a proportional regional list. And since 2007, the Single Transferable Vote (which is the Electoral Reform Society’s preferred system) is used for local councils in Scotland – with fantastic results for the health of local democracy. STV is also used for elections in Ireland and Northern Ireland and is being looked at in Wales.

STV is pretty simple – you have multiple representatives in your area, and you rank them in order of preference. If your first preference doesn’t have enough support for one of the seats, your second choice is counted instead. What it means in practice is that small parties can be fairly represented, and everyone’s vote counts. It is not much to ask in a 21st century democracy.

One way or another, the long-term trend of multi-party politics is going to blow First Past the Post apart – arguably it is doing so already. The dust may have settled since polling day, but if 2020 turns out to be a repeat of the democratic disaster that was 7 May, the demands for reform are going to become deafening.

Darren Hughes is deputy chief executive of the Electoral Reform Society
School Kingston University London

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Doom and gloom
Can existing political parties survive into the future or is the 20th-century model of big political parties coming to an end?

Will the next five to ten years of British politics be characterised by mounting misery and despair, or is the 20th-century model of big political parties coming to an end? Will the next five to ten years of British politics be characterised by mounting misery and despair? Are we in fact all doomed?

In May the Conservatives won a surprise parliamentary majority, their first since 1992. But while this majority was unexpected, it was by no means enormous. Ahead of polling day, the Conservatives were keen to avoid relying on half a dozen UKIP MPs holding the balance of power. However, some might argue that this is precisely what has occurred, it just so happens that the UKIP MPs were elected wearing Conservative rosettes.

With a referendum on the UK’s membership of the EU ahead, will the Conservatives be doomed to internal divisions more damaging than the early 1990s? Labour risk divisions of their own. Corbyn’s leadership bid was supported by only a small minority of his fellow MPs, with notable figures refusing to serve in his shadow cabinet faster than it took for the cheers of his supporters to die down.

Senior Labour insiders say they won’t make the mistakes of the past and break away. In doing so they could commit their party to years of backbiting and infighting that will make Brown vs Blair look like brotherly love.

The challenges faced by the Liberal Democrats are clear to anyone who can count. With only eight MPs the party chose to elect a new leader who has been accused of being “illiberal” by previously saying abortion is wrong and abstaining at a third reading of the gay marriage bill, they are potentially doomed to perpetual electoral obscurity.

Perhaps the surge of support for the Scottish Nationalist Party can bring an end to the doom, but with 56 seats, beyond the dreams of almost all, can they be sure that each of their newly-elected members are of sufficient calibre? Are there problems around the corner for the inexperienced and ineffective among their ranks?

Does SNP business spokesperson Michelle Thomson’s resignation due to “irregularities” in her property deals mark the start of their impending doom?

Having said all this, I may be wrong. Everything might be all right after all. Joe Twyman is head of political and social research at YouGov

Much vexation over representation
Upcoming local elections using proportional voting systems put pressure on an outmoded means of deciding general elections.

At the 2015 general election, the Green Party won more than one million votes. If we had a proportional electoral system, like those in the rest of Europe, there would be 24 Green MPs in parliament. Instead, Caroline Lucas remains on her own.

May 7 was a historic night for the Green Party; we won four times more votes than ever before, and party membership more than trebled. We retained 13 deposits, compared with the six we saved in 2010, and won second place in four constituencies, which includes Bristol West where we had a historic upswing of 23 per cent.

But that outcome doesn’t show in the Commons. We’re not the only party to suffer, for this was the least proportional election result in British history. The First Past the Post system—which always leaves many feeling their vote doesn’t count in “safe seats” where MPs have a job for life almost no matter how bad their performance—is now clearly past its use-by-date in the age of multiparty politics.

No wonder that since election day the campaign to replace our antique system—the last significant reform in Westminster was women getting the vote in 1918—has gathered in strength and determination.

Next year we will have a chance to see the alternative in action. There are elections in London, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, all under a fairer proportional system. The Green Parties of these regions are looking to grow their representation in all of them.

A similar system is what we want for the next general election—although given the fragility of the current government’s majority, and its detachment from the views of the electorate on issues ranging from tax credits to energy policy to railways, we really can’t wait until 2020 for that.

We’re continuing to work with civil
The Brexit is a Brexistential crisis
Could a vote to leave the EU be the death knell of the Union?

Prediction is a dark art, a terrain onto which political scientists should venture only rarely, if at all. But the temptation to predict is irresistible. After all, what is the point of analysis if it cannot offer us some warnings as to credible future scenarios we need to strive to avoid?

The following remarks should be set in this context. They constitute less a prediction than a warning, and one I hope we heed.

The brutal reality is that Cameron’s Conservative administration may, quite simply, prove to be the last of both Britain in Europe and Britain as a united entity. We are on the verge of a “Brexistential” crisis, the prospect of which should worry us all.

David Cameron has so far failed to get much from his attempted EU renegotiation – certainly not enough to appease southern England or Tory backbenchers. Supposing he does not win any material concessions he might either, as he has already hinted, throw in the towel and campaign full-on for an “out” vote or, while still timidly campaigning for the status quo, quietly concede that the terms of EU membership are not really worth fighting for. Either way, a failed renegotiation decisively recasts the balance of a Brexit vote already on a knife edge.

With both Labour and the Conservatives internally divided on the issue, UKIP, widely perceived as the only genuinely anti-Westminster party and the “authentic” voice of middle England, will undoubtedly follow. Pandora’s box is now opened… Brexit… Break-up… Brexistential crisis… An accident for us to sleep walk into or the will of the people? And if so, the people of which nation?

Professor Colin Hay is co-director of the Sheffield Political Economy Research Institute (SPERI)

A vision of beauty
The shape of government needs to radically change so that when decisions are made they are better for everyone.

On the day gender parity within parliament is achieved, our daughters and sons will flourish in a democracy that makes better decisions for everyone.

We hope that parliament is already, or if not soon will be, breaking down the barriers that have kept women out of political life. Life in Westminster needs to include flexible working and electronic voting. It needs to be an efficient, modern workplace in order to tempt talented women into politics.

The government needs to move towards liberating the economy and the corporate world from the white, male minority that has run both so unimaginatively for so long, and boost Britain’s growth by accessing the talents of brilliant women who have so far been struggling to gain access to so many of the top jobs.

When parity is achieved, parliament will be able to fully consider women’s experiences and needs when legislation about crime, policing and justice is being written. Women will no longer have to walk in fear on Britain’s streets as a result.

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We also envisage that parliament, in fully welcoming the other half of the population, also maintains the same attitudes towards people from different socioeconomic and racial backgrounds, and more from the LGBT community. Only then will the seat of our democracy finally look like the rest of our country.

If we achieve all this, the Women’s Equality Party will have made a difference by giving the millions of Brits who are fed up of living with gender inequality the chance to vote for a party that did something about it.

Sophie Walker is leader of the Women’s Equality Party

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Irreverant, but never intimidated

Belief in the nationalist cause prompts an unexpected return to Westminster for Tommy Sheppard MP

I remember the first time I entered central lobby. I was a student in 1980 and I was meeting the then Labour MP for Dundee West, Ernie Ross. Gesticulating at the ornate arches and vaulted ceilings of this magnificent gothic foyer he opined that the architecture was truly remarkable in that it had been harnessed by the ruling class to intimidate the common people and make them know their place. Ernie went on to become a foot soldier for New Labour which I dare say must have taken the edge off his seditionist tendencies, but I always remember the comment.

In the decades that followed I spent a lot of time going in and out of the building as a Labour councillor and party official. By the turn of the century, the Labour Party had left me and I focused on building my business, politics relegated to a casual interest. Then came the Scottish referendum. It rekindled my passion for a politics of change. I was consumed once again by politics and along with 80,000 others I joined the SNP as it consolidated its position as the main social democratic party in Scotland. Offered the opportunity to be a candidate for the party I seized it with both hands. And so, at the age of 56, I headed once again for the Palace of Westminster.

By now, with iconoclasm and irreverence my specialist subjects, there was little left to be intimidated by. And of course the scale of the SNP victory meant we arrived with heads held high, given strength with a popular mandate.

There is a phenomenal solidarity among the SNP group and a collective strength drawn from the knowledge that our common endeavour is making history. Most of us had never met each other before the election and many thought – even on polling day – they wouldn’t be elected. But within days friendships were built and we got down to business.

It was hard to start with. You arrive as a new MP without a place to live or a place to work and a job description that you make up as you go along. I guess my experience equipped me well for the challenge. Running a business teaches you how to get things done. I made a priority of getting an office up and running, recruiting people straight away on temporary contracts and funneling everything through them so that it could be triaged and prioritised, allowing me to see the wood for the trees.

The SNP believes the people of Scotland should govern themselves. I dare say that leads many to suspect our motives. I think some of our opponents may have begun to believe their own propaganda expecting us to turn up in metaphorical kilts and claymores and lay waste to the procedures of the mother of parliaments. I hope, though, that we have shown by our deeds that our intention is otherwise.

We aim to make ourselves redundant. But while Scotland remains in the union we will make sure that its voice is heard loud and clear and we will also argue for progressive change for the UK as whole. That means, even while we are not independent, Scotland’s representatives have an interest in making sure that the UK parliament works. In truth, it is barely fit for purpose and I hope we can play a part in stimulating a debate about
widespread reform. Proportional representation needs to be re-visited and the House of Lords abolished. We will, of course, argue for more power and responsibility to be devolved to Scotland, but this should happen within England too.

And the place and procedures are badly in need of reform. It is time to end the pantomime: to abandon the costumes and customs of the 18th century and embrace those of the 21st. If religion is to feature at all then there should be room for faiths other than the Church of England. The rules of debate are archaic too: why can’t I call a colleague by name, or applaud if I agree with someone? And why do I spend hours each week waiting to give my name to a polling clerk when I could just press a button on my iPad?

I sometimes think legislation gets made in spite of the process. The process of debate is designed to divide proposals along party lines rather than establish common agreement. People can talk for hours and say nothing – at least nothing of relevance to the subject under discussion.

Most of all the legislature is poorly equipped to hold the executive to account. Prime, and other ministers, questions are a poor substitute for accountability. Rather than the Punch and Judy show that is PMQs, a cabinet select committee being able to grill the Prime Minister in depth might shine the light or accountability into the murky reaches of government.

It has been a rollercoaster of a year for many of us, barely pausing for breath as the referendum gave way to selection and then election. But we have made a good start and are well equipped to play a big role in this parliament in the years ahead.

Tommy Sheppard is the SNP MP for Edinburgh East
The European continent is a fascinating place filled with different cultures and with an amazing history. Those of us who want to see a ‘Leave’ vote in the forthcoming European Union referendum want out of political union, but we love Europe. It is the political institutions of the EU that we have a problem with. And why? Because the EU is bad for our economy, bad for our democracy and bad for our security.

Far from wanting to retreat or turn our backs on the world, it is those of us who want to leave the EU who wish to embrace the world. Inside of the EU for instance, the United Kingdom is banned from agreeing its own bilateral trade deals with big emerging world economies such as China, Brazil or India. We are not allowed to represent ourselves on the top table of the World Trade Organisation; the EU does this on our behalf. Our representatives are told to leave the room!

By comparison, tiny Iceland, outside of the EU and free to negotiate its own trade deals, was the first European nation to sign such an agreement with China. That is the kind of forward-thinking, dynamic global future I want for Britain. By leaving the EU our country can improve relations across the world by representing our own interests and striking our own deals on our own terms, doing what is best for our country.

Other countries that are outside the EU include Norway and Switzerland. No one would argue these countries are not still engaged with the rest of Europe, but they are free to look after their own national interests. Indeed, the people of those countries overwhelmingly favour remaining outside of a tired, rigid, outdated EU. The daily EU membership fee is an eye-watering £55m and on the increase. Though we get a slice of that back, the EU then tells us how and where we can spend it. I don’t know about you, but that doesn’t sound like a very good deal to me.

Instead, I want our money spent here in this country on our hospitals, schools and infrastructure to make life better here for people in our own country. The EU is also fundamentally anti-democratic. While the majority of our laws are made in the EU, our own British parliament is effectively superseded and does not have the final say. To make matters worse, it is unelected EU Commissioners who propose EU legislation. Elected Members of the European Parliament are not allowed to do so and thus have very little power indeed.

I believe that democracy is vital. It is what so many over two world wars gave their lives to protect. If we in this country, locked inside the European Union, can no longer get rid of those who make our laws at the ballot box then our democracy is clearly severely diminished. I want to see our own laws made in our own sovereign parliament so that if we disagree with decisions made, the electorate can vote out and get rid of those accountable. We can only do that by leaving the EU and making our own laws here. Then there is the issue of security. Inside of the EU we simply do not control our borders. We cannot decide who can and can’t come into our country from within the EU.

An Australian-style points-based system where we can issue work permits to those we need to come and contribute to our economy is what I want to see. But instead we have an irresponsible, open door policy that means that we have no control over the quality nor the quantity of those who come to Britain. I don’t believe that is good for the cohesion of our society nor do I believe it is good for the security of our country.

A ‘leave’ vote in the forthcoming referendum will mean that our country can represent itself on the world stage. It will mean a United Kingdom that makes its own laws in the interests of its own people. And it will mean that we can control our borders and help ensure the prosperity and safety of our citizens.

Far from turning our back on the world, by leaving the EU we can think globally and act in our own national interest. Nigel Farage is leader of UKIP
The greatest question for a generation

The referendum on European Union membership is one of the biggest decisions our country has faced in recent times. As a young person, it is certainly the greatest question my generation has been asked to answer. We would certainly feel the impact if we were to leave, and would be able to reap the rewards if we stay. At its core, this referendum is about the future. The question facing us is a simple one: “Should we stay, or should we go?” but it is, with no doubt, the question of a lifetime.

We need to ensure that students and young people have their voices heard at every stage of this campaign. The National Union of Students, which I lead as national president, has made it clear we believe in making the positive case for Europe. We are not afraid to stake our claim, to rise above the battle of figures and costs. We know Britain will be stronger as part of Europe than on our own. Unlike some of our opponents in this campaign, students do not fear a modern, diverse world. We are internationalists.

For students here in Britain and across the continent, the world is becoming a smaller place. Our lives are increasingly global, and online. Breaking down the barriers between our country, the rest of Europe and the world is our aim, not creating new ones – or in this case, reconstructing unnecessary ones.

We are a generation that instinctively wants to work together. We believe in finding security in partnerships and unity with others. Whether that is tackling climate change, fighting poverty or giving sanctuary to refugees; it is this principle of cooperation on which our union is built and should grow ever stronger.

Opponents of Britain’s membership of the EU say we can negotiate new deals to be like Norway, Iceland or Switzerland. Some of them suggest that we could opt out of Europe entirely and just remain a member of the World Trade Organisation. But I don’t want us to ape any of those countries, I want us to be Britain; confident about our future as part of a united Europe, with students feeling assured about their opportunities and chances. Those opportunities include the hundreds of thousands of British students who have directly benefited from the Erasmus programme and the opportunity to work and study in Europe. They include more than three million British jobs that are linked to trade with our European partners. When we get into work, we expect four weeks of paid holiday a year, maternity pay and the right not to face discrimination at work, which came from European legislation. These are rights that the students I represent will never take for granted.

We should also not forget that EU funding currently provides an additional 15 per cent on top of the UK government’s own science and research budget, promoting the creation of high quality tech and science jobs.

As I lead a campaign across the country to cut the rising costs of study and living that students face, I am reassured that, according to the CBI, being in Europe is worth £3,000 a year for every family. These facts shouldn’t be flippantly ignored. This is evidence of the economic security and cultural solidarity that comes from working together. British apprentices, students, graduates and learners which my union supports require us to consider that. When the consequences are so unclear for this generation, leaving Europe represents a leap into the dark.

My union wants us to safeguard and improve the chances for students; making jobs greener, with greater flexibility in companies that are more sustainable.

This campaign is about the kind of country we want to live in. We will ensure that students stake their claim on the future in this question of a lifetime; by staying in Europe.

Megan Dunn is a board member of the Britain Stronger in Europe campaign and national president of the National Union of Students.
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abdn.ac.uk/pir
Head of department
Dr Mervyn Bain
Aston University
Politics and International Relations
School of Languages and Social Sciences
Aston Triangle
Birmingham
B4 7ET
0121 204 3777
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Head of department
Professor Nathaniel Copey

University of Bath
Department of Politics, Languages and International Studies
1 West North
University of Bath
Bath
BA2 7AY
01225 383019
admissions@bath.ac.uk
bath.ac.uk/polis
Head of department
Professor Bill Durodie

University of Bristol
School of Sociology, Politics and International Studies (SPaIS)
1 Priory Road
Bristol
BS8 1FU
0117 331 7577
spa-is-msc.enquiries@bristol.ac.uk
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Professor Gregor McLennan

School of Languages and Social Sciences
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**University of Chichester**  
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School of Politics, Philosophy, International Relations and Environment

Why choose Politics and International Relations at Keele University?

• for an excellent learning experience a community of learning, top-rated for teaching and research.
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• for breadth an innovative approach to education to meet employers expectations. Politics and International Relations can be taken on their own, together or in combination with a vast range of other subjects from the arts, social science or science subjects including Philosophy. Plus don’t forget about our dual honours route in Environmental Studies.
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School of Politics, Philosophy, International Relations and Environment, Keele University, Staffordshire
Why study politics at Warwick?

As a hub of international excellence in teaching and research, Politics and International Studies (PAIS) is positioned to deliver the kind of teaching and supervision that will stretch your understanding while also supporting you along the way. With world-leading experts in a huge range of topics within politics and international studies, this is the place to continue your academic journey with some of the best mentors – and peers – the world has to offer.

warwick.ac.uk/pais/study
Universities and their various programs offer a wide range of options in the field of politics and international relations. These programs are designed to enhance students’ understanding of today’s world, providing them with the skills and knowledge necessary to excel in a variety of roles within intelligence, security, conflict, diplomacy, and governance. Whether studying on campus or online via distance learning, students can join a vibrant and thriving scholarly community composed of recent graduates and professionals from around the globe looking to develop their expertise.

Distance learning programmes include:
- MA Diplomatic Studies
- MA Human Rights & Global Ethics
- MA Intelligence & Security
- MA International Relations & World Order
- MA International Security
- MA Politics of Conflict & Violence
- MA Politics in the EU

We also offer a range of leading campus-based undergraduate, postgraduate and research degrees in the field of Politics and International Relations. To find out more, visit the university’s website or contact the appropriate department directly.
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Make your own impact on the issues that matter and interpret our changing world.

University of Newcastle
School of Geography, Politics and Sociology
5th Floor, Claremont Tower
Newcastle
NCl 7RU
0191 208 3923
politicsadmissions@ncl.ac.uk
ncl.ac.ukgps/politics
Head of school
Professor William Malone

University of Northampton
Politics
School of Social Science
Park Campus
Boughton Green Road
Northampton
NN1 7AL
0800 358 2232
charlotte.cros@northampton.ac.uk
northampton.ac.uk
Executive Dean of Social Sciences
Chris Moore

University of Northumbria
Faculty of Art, Design and Social Sciences
Squires Building

About the school
The School of Social & Political Sciences aims to combine high-quality teaching and learning with high quality research.

Subject specialisms
The school offers teaching in five broad subject areas: Politics, Social Policy, International Relations, Sociology and Criminology.

At Master’s level we specialise in Globalising Justice, International Relations, Gender Studies and Social Research.

Alumni
Nine out of ten of our most recent graduates were in work or further study six months after finishing their course, with two thirds in graduate-level roles. Two of our recent alumni are now Members of Parliament here in the UK, and many others are enjoying careers in the political arena.

Research
Research is a core element of the school. It contributes to knowledge, responds to problems and enhances teaching.

Our students have the opportunity to engage in this research, informing their own study and gaining valuable transferable skills for future employment.
Manchester Metropolitan University

Politics and International Relations

Department of History, Politics and Philosophy

Geoffrey Manton Building
Romford Street West
Manchester
M5 6LL
0161 247 2000

E: HLS@proteam@mmu.ac.uk

W: www.mmu.ac.uk/hpp

Head of Department
Dr Brian McCook

Department Overview

The Department of History, Politics and Philosophy encompasses multi-disciplinary strengths in both teaching and research.

Specialisms

We specialise in:
• Political theory,
• Public policy,
• European politics,
• US politics,
• International relations

This wide range of topics allows us to offer a varied and thriving programme of study alongside a challenging culture of research.

Undergraduate programmes

At undergraduate level we offer degrees in Politics, International Politics and Public Services. You can also study either of our Politics courses as combined honours with subjects such as Philosophy and History. Public Services is available full-time or part-time, with part-time attendance one day per week.

Postgraduate programmes

Our MA International Relations and Global Communications, allows you to engage with and critically evaluate the interaction between these two distinct areas of study.

Research programmes

Our Politics staff supervise M.Phil and PhD research degrees in subject areas including:
• The domestic politics and foreign policy of the USA;
• Twentieth century British politics;
• Political theory;
• International Relations theory;
• The politics of the European Union;
• Energy policy;
• Public policy (British and comparative);
• The politics of football.

Newcastle

NE 8 5ST
0191 255 6000
course.enquiries@northumbria.ac.uk

Programme directors
Dr Farah Davies
Dr Nick Hayward

University of Nottingham

School of Politics and International Relations

Law and Social Sciences Building
University Park
Nottingham
NG7 2RD
0115 951 4862
politics.enquiries@nottingham.ac.uk

W: nottingham.ac.uk/politics

Head of School
Matthew Humphrey

The Open University

Department of Politics and International Studies

Faculty of Social Sciences

Walton Hall
Milton Keynes
MK7 6AA
01908 654 435
politics@open.ac.uk

W: open.ac.uk/courses

Head of department
Raia Prokhovnik

University of Oxford

Department of Politics and International Relations

Manser Building
Oxford Road
Oxford
OX1 3QY
01865 278 700
politics.ox.ac.uk

W: politics.ox.ac.uk

Head of Department
Dr Elizabeth Frazer

Oxford Brookes University

Department of Social Sciences

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Gibbs Building
Gipsy Lane
Oxford
OX1 0BP
01865 481 752
social.sciences@brookes.ac.uk

W: www.social-sciences.brookes.ac.uk/studying/undergraduate/politics

Head of department
Chris McDonald

University of Plymouth

Politics and International Relations

School of Government
Drake Circus
Plymouth
PL4 8AA
01752 600 600
admissions@plymouth.ac.uk

W: plymouth.ac.uk

Director of school
Professor Graeme Herd

University of Portsmouth

School of Social, Historical and Literary Studies

Millend Building
Burnaby Road
Portsmouth
PO3 3AX
023 9284 6036

W: port.ac.uk/sshls

Head of Department
Professor David Phinnemore

Queen’s University Belfast

School of Politics and International Studies

25 University Square
Belfast
BT7 1NB
028 9097 5028

W: qub.ac.uk/schools/schoolofpoliticsinternationalstudies

Head of department
Professor Brian Hughes

University of Reading

Politics and International Relations

Whitenights
Reading
RG6 6AA
0118 378 8501

W: reading.ac.uk/spirs

Head of department
Professor David Phinnemore

Politics and International Studies at Royal Holloway, University of London

The Department of Politics and International Relations is a growing and dynamic research community that inspires students to succeed in a range of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes with subjects including:

• African, Asian, British, European and Middle Eastern politics
• Terrorism, global crime, human rights and foreign policy
• Voting behaviour and the impact of the media and new technologies on politics

For more information:
royalholloway.ac.uk/politicsandir
@rhulpir
Our research areas include:

- Citizenship and Political Participation,
- Ethics, Ecology and Identity,
- Political Violence and Security,
- Middle East and North Africa,
- Pedagogy.

Our courses are research-led and informed by the latest developments. Opportunities are available for postgraduate study leading to a PhD.

**Undergraduate courses**

We offer three undergraduate courses in the areas of politics and international relations – two of which offer dual awards with a partner institution in Europe.

**Postgraduate courses**

We offer two postgraduate courses – both of which offer students a work-based learning option.

Beyond the course

Students have the opportunity to broaden their experience and gain a range of skills. They can hear directly from experts, join our lively politics society and can have the chance to study abroad with the Erasmus+ foreign exchange scheme.

We are committed to enhancing student employability, we are also building optional internships with MPs into our BA Politics course.

Other strengths

We have a strong commitment to research, and aim to integrate these interests with our teaching. A friendly, informal ethos is maintained where everyone can pursue their interests in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance and respect. As part of our commitment to enhancing student employability, we are also building optional internships with MPs into our BA Politics course.

Carrers

We are committed to improving student experiences, skills, attitudes and opportunities, to give our graduates the best possible opportunity to succeed during a highly competitive job market. Recent graduate destinations include: Amnesty International, the BBC, Bloomberg, British Foreign & Commonwealth Office, CNN, Italian Chamber of Commerce for the UK, the Thailand Embassy in the UK, UNESCO, UNO and Yahoo!

Alumni

MPs Esther McVey, Peter Hain and Caroline Spelman, and George Parker, politics editor of the Financial Times.
and we actively enhance employability through our Politics in Action undergraduate internship programme. This gives you the opportunity to gain experience of working in political organisations and prepares you for your future career.

Postgraduate teaching is supported by an intensive research skills training programme, five active research centres and regular seminars with guest academics and policy makers. Degree programmes include:

- BA International Relations
- BA Politics
- BA Politics and International Relations
- BA/BSc Politics, Philosophy & Economics (PPE)
- BA European & International Studies
- BA Philosophy
- Joint honours degrees with Philosophy, History, Geography or Economics
- MSc Contemporary Political Theory
- MSc Elections, Public Opinion & Parties
- MSc International Relations
- MSc Media, Power and Public Affairs
- MSc Politics
- MSc Transnational Security Studies
- MSc Geopolitics and Security
- MA by Research and PhD degrees in Politics & International Relations supported by AHRC and ESRC scholarships.

We are a growing and dynamic research community of 50 permanent academic staff, including five philosophy staff, visiting scholars and more than 30 doctoral research students. All academic staff are active researchers who will inspire you to succeed. Our expertise ranges from African, Asian, British, European and Middle Eastern politics, through terrorism, global crime human rights and foreign policy, to voting behaviour and the impact of the media and new technologies on politics.

You will be taught by leading scholars in the field of Politics and International Relations in the stimulating and challenging, yet friendly and close-knit environment that is a characteristic of Royal Holloway.

Our graduates go on to excellent careers in many fields and we actively enhance employability through our Politics in Action undergraduate internship programme. This gives you the opportunity to gain experience of working in political organisations and prepares you for your future career.

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Our graduates go on to excellent careers in many fields.
Which? University Student Best Political Scene in the UK (2014).

Sussex offers an ideal location to undertake a Political Studies course, and was voted third in the UK for the best political science in the Which? University Student Survey 2014.

Main strengths
- Politics and International Studies (PAIS) is a diverse, successful and dynamic community situated within one of the UK’s leading universities, with more than 50 academic staff and a growing community of postdoctoral research fellows producing world-class research across a wide spectrum of specialisms.
- Major research centres in PAIS include: the Centre for the Study of Globalisation and Regionalisation; the Centre for the Study of Democracy and the Centre for Ethics, Law and Public Affairs.

PAIS attracts the highest quality students from more than 50 countries onto three core and several joint undergraduate programmes, 11 core and six double Master’s programmes, and a wide range of PhD topics.

Students graduate with very good career prospects in diverse fields, including government, law, business, international organisations and the media.

Resources
- The library is a member of the SCONUL Access Scheme, which allows use of other member research libraries in the UK. It is also home to the Wolfson Research Exchange.
- Study abroad: PAIS has strong partnerships for study in the US, Hong Kong, Australia and Europe (through the Erasmus programme). PAIS also offers six Double Master’s programmes with partners in Australia, USA, Germany, Singapore, Spain and Canada.

Added benefits
- PAIS has an excellent Student Careers & Skills Service, which hosts programmes and workshops for students.
- Alumni: Include the former private secretary to the Deputy PM, James Clarke, and Shadow Secretary of State for Defence, Vernon Coaker.

Courses at Sussex
- Undergraduate (BA)
  - American Studies and Politics
  - Economics and International Relations
  - Economics and Politics
  - Geography and International Relations
  - History and Politics
  - International Relations
  - International Relations and Anthropology
  - International Relations and development
  - International Relations and French
  - International Relations and Italian
  - International Relations and Sociology
  - International Relations and Spanish
  - International Relations with a Language
  - Law with International Relations (LLB)
  - Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE)
  - Politics
  - Politics and International Relations
  - Politics and Philosophy
  - Politics and Sociology
  - Postgraduate (MA)
    - Conflict, Security and Development
    - Corruption and Governance
    - European Governance and Policy
  - Geopolitics and Grand Strategy
  - Global Governance
  - Global Political Economy
  - International Politics
  - International Relations
  - International Security

University of Warwick
Politics and International Studies
Social Sciences building Coventry, CV4 7AL

Undergraduate enquiries: +44 (0)24 715 70451 paisug@warwick.ac.uk
Postgraduate enquiries: +44 (0)24 761 50145 paispg@warwick.ac.uk

Head of department
Professor Nick Vaughan-Williams

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  - Geography and International Relations
  - History and Politics
  - International Relations
  - International Relations and Anthropology
  - International Relations and development
  - International Relations and French
  - International Relations and Italian
  - International Relations and Sociology
  - International Relations and Spanish
  - International Relations with a Language
  - Law with International Relations (LLB)
  - Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE)
  - Politics
  - Politics and International Relations
  - Politics and Philosophy
  - Politics and Sociology
  - Postgraduate (MA)
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    - Corruption and Governance
    - European Governance and Policy
  - Geopolitics and Grand Strategy
  - Global Governance
  - Global Political Economy
  - International Politics
  - International Relations
  - International Security

University of Winchester
Faculty of Humanities and Social Science
Hampshire
01903 359700
www.warwick.ac.uk
paisug@warwick.ac.uk
paispg@warwick.ac.uk

Head of department
Paul Henderson

University of York
Department of Politics
School of Politics, Economics and Philosophy
University Road
York
YO10 5DD
01904 321843
pep@york.ac.uk
www.york.ac.uk/pep

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