

## **The Rhetorical Premiership: a new perspective on prime ministerial power since 1945**

Richard Toye, University of Exeter

ABSTRACT: The longstanding debate about the power of the British prime minister has focused excessively on formal instruments of control exercised within Whitehall. By contrast, not enough attention has been paid to the ways in which prime ministers use rhetoric, formally and informally, to maintain themselves in power and to achieve their policy aims. The term ‘rhetorical premiership’ is used here to denote the collection of methods by which prime ministers since 1945 have used public speech to augment their formal powers. Set-piece oratory remained consistently important throughout the period, in spite of new technology and the rise of the sound-bite. However, parliamentary rhetoric underwent some important changes, and prime ministers spoke outside the Commons with increased frequency. Historians of the premiership should draw instruction from those scholars who have studied the rhetoric of US presidents, although caution must be exercised when drawing comparisons. Future study of the rhetorical premiership should involve close textual analysis of prime ministerial speeches, but this should not be at the expense of archival sources, from which important insights into the speech-making process can be gleaned.

For many years, the debate about the nature and extent of prime ministerial power was dominated by two alternative models. In 1963, Richard Crossman made the famous suggestion that ‘the post-war epoch has seen the final transformation of Cabinet Government into Prime Ministerial Government.’ Developing arguments made previously by others, he claimed that the prime minister’s control of patronage and of the cabinet agenda, already amounting to ‘near-Presidential powers’, had been progressively increased by the centralisation of the party machine and of government bureaucracy.<sup>1</sup> This perspective is well summed up by the title of Michael Foley’s *The Rise of the British Presidency* (1993). The other point of view, often called the ‘chairmanship’ model, was advanced by G.W. Jones, who wrote that the prime minister ‘is not the all powerful individual which many have recently claimed him to be. [...] A Prime Minister who can carry his colleagues with him can be in a very powerful position, but he is only as strong as they let him be.’<sup>2</sup> In the 1990s, a more rounded approach to the problem emerged. This emphasised that senior actors in government do not possess and deploy a fixed stock of power are mutually interdependent; their power depends on context, circumstance and the use that they make of their varying resources.<sup>3</sup> Yet although it reflected a much more sophisticated approach to the problem, this development did not expand the scope of the debate beyond the machinery of government and the functions of the core executive. This article suggests that more attention needs to be paid to the public role of the Prime Minister and in particular to the rhetorical functions of the office. Any occupant of 10 Downing Street needs not only to operate the levers of bureaucracy and party, but also to present themselves, through various forms of rhetoric, as a party and above all national leader. This phenomenon, to which scholars of the recent past have paid insufficient attention, may be designated ‘the rhetorical premiership’.

The inspiration for this idea lies in the concept of ‘the rhetorical presidency’, pioneered by Jeffrey Tulis and others in the context of the United States. Tulis saw a strong contrast between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He argued that whereas earlier presidents had been reticent in their use of oral communication, ‘Since the presidencies of Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, popular or mass rhetoric has become a principal tool of presidential governance. [...] Today it is taken for granted that presidents have a *duty* constantly to defend themselves publicly, to promote policy initiatives nationwide, and to inspire the population.’<sup>4</sup> The same could be said about the role of British Prime Ministers. One could even argue that the ‘duty’ of public rhetoric is taken more for granted in Britain than in America. For, whereas in the USA the phenomenon of presidential rhetoric is the subject of intense study, in Britain the issue of *why* prime ministers speak in public, and what they hope to achieve by doing so, is undoubtedly neglected. The same can be said about the recent history of rhetoric in British public life in general. Indeed, many who write about political language often appear hostile to the very concept of rhetoric. They take the term, which has long held very negative connotations, to mean ‘just empty words’, a contrast to ‘substance’.<sup>5</sup>

There are exceptions. H.C.G. Matthew’s short survey of developments in the 1860-1950 period was an important attempt to reclaim rhetoric as ‘an essential concomitant of representative politics’ and to describe the conditions that facilitated its exercise in the great era of the mass meeting. He believed, though, that the healthy late-Victorian rhetorical culture had in the end wilted in the face of new political and technological developments.<sup>6</sup> Philip Williamson’s study of Stanley Baldwin, which focuses on his

use of public language in order to engage with the electorate, is another notable contribution.<sup>7</sup> Unsurprisingly, Churchill's rhetoric has also received considerable attention.<sup>8</sup> Within the literature on prime ministerial power, two contributions stand out. Dunleavy et al carried out a pioneering empirical analysis of patterns of prime ministerial speech in parliament. They demonstrate a long-term decline in prime ministerial activity in the Commons and conclude that this has led to a decline in accountability. Implicitly, they argue that prime ministers have increased their own powers (through the avoidance of scrutiny) by speaking less; they do not consider any positive benefits that may accrue to prime ministers from public speaking, nor do they consider speech outside parliament.<sup>9</sup> Foley, by contrast, does engage with the phenomenon of politicians 'going public' – that is, cultivating public opinion via personal appearances, TV interviews, speeches, and so forth.<sup>10</sup> His observations about the increased tendency of prime ministers to do this, which in his view support his 'presidentialisation' thesis, undoubtedly have some validity. There remains considerable further scope, however, to assess the role of prime ministerial speech, and to examine the ways in which post-war premiers have used rhetoric to augment the power of the office. As Alan Finlayson has observed, 'At the very least we have to acknowledge that politics under democratic constitutions is about some people trying to persuade the rest of us of their virtues or the virtues of their political position.'<sup>11</sup> Yet for post-1945 prime ministers, rhetorical analysis – explicitly conceived as such – is in short supply, notwithstanding some interesting if rather narrowly-focussed work from within the discipline of linguistics.<sup>12</sup> Although it can only scratch the surface of what is potentially an enormous field of study, this article is intended to help remedy that deficiency.

It will argue that the scholarly neglect of modern British political rhetoric is a product of the questionable assumption that rhetoric has declined as an art form, having fallen victim, in consequence of technical innovation, to the age of the sound-bite. In fact, it will be argued here, the set-piece prime-ministerial speech has remained surprisingly important up to the present day. The impact of technology, so often demonized, has not always been negative or uniform.<sup>13</sup> The article will also highlight some key features of the rhetorical premiership, and how it changed over time. Its evolution was conditioned not solely by technology, nor by the rhetorical characteristics of individual prime ministers, but by institutional and cultural factors. This can be illustrated by comparison with the rhetorical presidency in the United States, with which it shares some but by no means all features. Finally, the article will suggest an agenda for future research, and offer some methodological pointers regarding how the rhetorical premiership should be studied in the future.

### **Frequency of prime ministerial speech since 1945**

Before examining how rhetoric acts as weapon in the prime minister's armoury, we need to consider long-term trends in the practice of British political rhetoric.

Matthew's account focused on extra-parliamentary speechmaking. In the culture he described, politicians made 'long, serious, detailed, well-informed' speeches to public meetings. These speeches were then relayed to a wider public via lengthy (and often verbatim) reports in the newspapers. This, made possible by new technology such as the telegraph, in turn facilitated great national debates, often conducted over periods of several weeks. Later, however, modernity played a less benign role, as Matthew saw it. In response to the growth of the popular press and the advertising techniques associated with it, speeches were increasingly 'packaged for consumption' by

journalists as reporting of them was cut back. In this analysis, the mature, rationalistic processes of debate were further damaged by the rise of radio, film and television.<sup>14</sup> Many commentators on post-1945 political communication appear to share this view. Television, it is suggested, undermines eloquence and reasoned argument, using spectacle and imagery to pander to the viewers' short attention-spans.<sup>15</sup> The effect on oratory is often seen as fundamentally sinister: 'Political speeches [...] delivered in the pseudo-event environment of a televised party conference, attempt to satisfy the journalists' needs for easily-reportable "bits" of political information, in such a way as to set the news agenda in the politicians' favour.'<sup>16</sup>

This negative picture requires some qualification, especially when the whole period is considered. Early on, film and broadcasting did allow politicians to deliver sustained arguments to voters unmediated by editorial interference. During the 1945 election, Labour and the Conservatives were allowed ten broadcasts each, of between twenty and thirty minutes, which reached on average 45% of the population.<sup>17</sup> These broadcasts were also transcribed in the press, sometimes with a degree of journalistic interference.<sup>18</sup> It was estimated that Churchill's election film shown in the cinemas (a speech delivered straight to camera) would be viewed by 20 million people; presumably a similar number saw Attlee's.<sup>19</sup> This meant that many more people had a chance of actually hearing what they were saying than in the days when politicians relied on mass meetings alone. As Matthew himself shows, although Victorian and Edwardian meetings might be attended by thousands, the more people turned up the less likely it was that all of them would find the speeches audible; and not all of those who missed out can have read the reports the next day.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, the advent of television in time brought more sophisticated political coverage than that to be found

in the bland packages provided by the newsreel companies; nor did the introduction of televised campaigning in 1959 instantly kill off the mass meeting. (The watershed appears to have occurred during the 1970s.)<sup>21</sup> During the 1964 election, Wilson successfully combined the mass meeting with the exploitation of TV. At the point during his nightly speeches when he knew that he was being broadcast live on the evening news, he would switch to a prepared passage that he was determined to get across to the nation.<sup>22</sup> Although improvements in editing technology made it easier for broadcasters to fillet speeches to suit their own convenience, live broadcasting of some major events, such as party leaders' conference speeches, did continue. Tolerably full parliamentary coverage in the broadsheets continued into the 1980s, although the eventual televising of the Commons may have been the death-blow. Later on, however, transcripts of parliamentary speeches were easily available from the Hansard website, and the texts of other speeches were often posted on newspaper, party or government sites. The rise of video-sharing websites now makes it possible to view many speeches online,<sup>23</sup> and true aficionados can watch BBC Parliament, launched in 1998.<sup>24</sup> Arguably, it is easier for those who wish to do so to access politicians' rhetoric today than at any previous time, even if the interaction is electronic rather than face-to-face.

Against this background, we must examine how patterns of prime ministerial speaking have changed. Tables 1 and 2 offer a snapshot of the speeches of each post-war prime minister during a single month – the March of the year after they entered Downing Street.<sup>25</sup> (March was selected as a month during which parliament was always sitting.) Any such snapshot must of course be treated with caution.

Furthermore, the parliamentary data is compiled using a prototype Hansard website

which uses potentially problematic character-recognition software. The extra-parliamentary data is substantially compiled using articles in *The Times*, which may not, of course, have reported all instances of prime ministerial speech, and which almost certainly became less likely to do so over time. Nevertheless, we may have some confidence in the broad picture that emerges, especially given that it confirms that established by Dunleavy et al for parliamentary speech in the period to 1990.<sup>26</sup>

[Table 1]

Table 1 Column 1 shows the number of separate days within the month on which the prime minister spoke in the Commons. By the end of the period there is a marked decline in this figure, doubtless attributable in part to the shift under Tony Blair to a weekly rather than bi-weekly basis for prime minister's question time. This may lend weight to the case that the importance of parliament has declined, although this should be qualified with reference to Column 2, which shows the number of oral contributions each prime minister made within the month. This, it should be noted, is a very crude measure: for these purposes a contribution is any discrete body of text, possibly even a single word. A speech that was interrupted several times by other MPs would therefore count as several contributions. This should not matter for the purposes of comparison, unless there was reason to think that some prime ministers were interrupted significantly more than others. (However, it is emphatically not a measure of the *length of time* for which the prime ministers were actually speaking, for which a precise calculation is probably impossible.) The figures show a marked increase in contributions in the later 1950s; Macmillan spoke nearly twice as often as Attlee and Churchill did. A high-point was reached during the Wilson-Heath-Callaghan era. A decline followed, although neither Thatcher nor Blair fell back to the level of Eden, and both Major and Brown contributed roughly as often as Macmillan



did. It would seem that the changes can be explained by later prime ministers answering more parliamentary questions than the early ones, whilst making fewer set-piece debating speeches.<sup>27</sup>

The evolution of prime minister's question-time, indeed, was the key development in terms of the parliamentary rhetoric of the period. A fixed time for prime minister's questions was adopted in 1961, following the report of a select committee on procedure two years earlier. (Prior to this, questions to the prime minister came quite far down the order paper, so that sometimes only one or two were answered before the hour allocated to questions had elapsed.) In the Home-Wilson period the institution quickly developed its modern characteristic as a 'duel' in which the prime minister and the leader of the opposition vied with each other in systematic impoliteness.<sup>28</sup> It is notable that this occurred significantly before the start of regular radio broadcasts from parliament in 1978 and the televising of the Commons in 1989. The new character of the exchanges may have been driven by the quest for favourable press coverage, but it cannot be blamed on broadcasting technology.

[Table 2]

Table 2 shows trends in prime ministerial speech outside the Commons. Spoken remarks are included whether trivial or otherwise; brief, off-the-cuff comments made to journalists will count as an 'episode', as will a formal interview or a set-piece speech. Written statements and published letters and articles are excluded. It is clear that, throughout the 1940s and 1950s, prime ministers were quite restrained in terms of how often they spoke outside parliament. Churchill went for the whole of the surveyed month without doing so at all; this is probably explained by his age and state of health at the time. Douglas-Home was very loquacious by comparison with his

predecessors, which may partly be explained by the fact that 1964, unlike any of the others examined here, was an election year. (His tally included five whistle-stop speeches made during a tour of the South-West; he had originally intended to make more.) Wilson, perhaps surprisingly, appears to have reverted to previous practice. There was, however, an increase under Heath, more or less sustained under Callaghan. There was a further increase under Thatcher, the data here being gathered from the seemingly comprehensive Thatcher Foundation website.<sup>29</sup> (Her former speechwriter Ferdinand Mount comments: ‘It is interesting in retrospect to note how few “political” speeches she gave each year, compared with the never-ending roster Tony Blair submitted himself to.’)<sup>30</sup> The figures for Major and Blair, compiled from *The Times*, may well be too low, as a consequence of under-reporting.<sup>31</sup> This may be guessed from the minimal coverage of Brown’s remarks in *The Times* in contrast to that on the Downing Street website, from which twenty-two separate sets of remarks can be gleaned.<sup>32</sup> (The paper did, however, report one speech to the Scottish Labour conference which, like all ‘political’ speeches, was excluded from the Downing Street site.) It is also possible, though, that Brown has genuinely been more rhetorically active than Major and Blair. It is clear that he, like other recent prime ministers, has not been able to rely on substantial direct press reporting of their words, and his high levels of extra-parliamentary speech may reflect a scattergun approach aimed at overcoming this.

### **Changes in audiences addressed**

It is also interesting to note changes in the contexts in which prime ministers spoke. Given the limited number of times that the early prime ministers spoke within a month, one would need to survey a more substantial period in order to make a formal

quantitative analysis meaningful. There are, however, some interesting indications to be derived from the existing data. (The following remarks apply *to the snapshot period only*; that is to say, for example, that although it was Macmillan who was the first prime minister to give a TV interview, such an interview does not appear in our survey before 1971.) Out of all the prime ministers, only Attlee made a formal ministerial broadcast (on radio). Some of the later premiers' speeches reported in *The Times* may also have been televised, but it was not until Heath that a TV interview with a prime minister was reported. Callaghan appeared on TV too, in a *Nationwide* programme billed as the first televised Q & A session with a British prime minister, with the public contributing questions.<sup>33</sup> Douglas-Home is the first of our prime ministers to be reported as giving a press conference. Gordon Brown is the first reported to have been interviewed by schoolchildren. Speeches at public luncheons or banquets, a common feature in the 1940s and 1950s, fell somewhat out of favour thereafter. There were also some significant continuities. All the prime ministers except Callaghan, Major and Churchill (the latter of whom did not speak at all) spoke at some kind of party event. Several of them spoke abroad. Thatcher's activity can be taken as a fair proxy of the pattern that had become fairly constant by the end of the century: during the month, she gave one lecture, two speeches at party events, one speech at a formal dinner at a conference in Germany, one joint press conference with the West German chancellor, two TV interviews, two interviews for publication, made one party-political broadcast, and made three minor sets of remarks to journalists.

Of course many, if not all, speeches are delivered in effect to multiple audiences. This tendency is particularly acute with modern party conference speeches, because the

audience of party activists within the hall may have a very different agenda to that of the mainstream voter watching on TV. The leader needs to target both, attempting to get a warm reception from the physical audience that will look good on the news, whilst also presenting to the outside world an image as a 'national' rather than a party leader. Prime ministers may choose to lecture their parties, as in Callaghan's 1976 warning about trying to 'spend your way out of recession': 'I tell you in all candour that that option no longer exists'.<sup>34</sup> Thatcher's famous 'lady's not for turning speech' of 1980 distanced her from only a part of her party: the Heathite wing that wanted her to change her economic course. Blair's conference speeches as prime minister were replete with a delicious tension. On the one hand, he cheered Labour party members with reminders of his government's political successes. On the other, he repeatedly pointed out that these had only been achieved by the sacrifice of many of the nostrums that his listeners had themselves held dear. 'Tony's assumption is that he loses his unique appeal if he becomes just another Labour leader who the party are comfortable with', suggests former Blair speechwriter Peter Hyman. Hyman also argues that the purpose of the conference speech is to 'gain momentum', setting the political agenda in order to prevent media and Opposition criticism from gaining a toehold.<sup>35</sup>

### **Functions of prime-ministerial rhetoric**

The capacity of the lengthy set-piece speech to serve different audiences may help explain its survival into the media age. On the face of it, this is surprising, if it is true media and voter attention-spans have become shorter in the face of new technology. It is certainly true that (even though the text and video footage could be posted online) a prime minister's speech was very much less likely to receive full traditional media

coverage in 2009 than in 1945; so why bother to continue to deliver lengthy orations at all? It is at this point that we need to consider the functions of the rhetorical premiership, that is to say, the differing ways in which public speech can be used to enhance a prime minister's power.

The first function, of course, is helping an individual to become prime minister in the first place. Although Attlee's reputation does not rest on his rhetorical skill, he could be a very effective speaker. His calm and measured broadcast response to Churchill's notorious 'Gestapo' gibe is widely credited with helping him win the 1945 election. Douglas-Home owed his surprise elevation to the premiership in 1963 in part to a strong party conference speech, which was rapturously received. The counterpart of this was the failure of the speeches his rivals, R.A. Butler and Reginald Maudling; at the same time, many thought that the supporters of another contender, Quintin Hogg, were *too* enthusiastic, and that Hogg himself played up to this in an undignified way.<sup>36</sup> John Major, like Douglas-Home, won the premiership between general elections, but when successfully fighting to retain it in 1992, he bolstered his image as a man of the people by addressing crowds from a soap-box. The prime purpose of this, of course, was to get TV channels to broadcast excerpts of his reception by the crowds; but this would hardly have been so successful had he merely performed a series of 'bits' for the cameras rather than engaging in a sustained way with his immediate audience. Jon Lawrence has shown how Major turned even hostile crowds to his advantage by depicting the protesters as 'the ugly, intolerant face of the Labour Party'.<sup>37</sup> Although Major himself thought that the soapbox might, in a close-fought election, have swung at least one marginal, we must be cautious about its effect on the outcome as a whole. The electorate's doubts about Labour's economic competence

probably outweighed other factors and, in terms of public speaking, Neil Kinnock's misjudged performance at his party's Sheffield rally may have been at least as significant as Major's more successful efforts. But the experience certainly invigorated Major himself, and he recalled that 'for me it worked to infinitely better effect than any toothpaste photo-opportunity could have done.'<sup>38</sup>

When in power between general elections, prime ministers still need to use rhetoric in order to stay there. During Churchill's second premiership of 1951-5, many of his senior colleagues became increasingly desperate for him to retire. After his stroke in 1953, he used speeches, at which he could still sparkle, to demonstrate that he was still up to the job. 'Churchill's performance on Nov 3<sup>rd</sup> was really remarkable', noted Macmillan in his diary that year, adding: 'he was complete master of himself and of the House. It seems incredible that this man was struck down by a second stroke at the beginning of July.'<sup>39</sup> Wilson and Callaghan's strong Commons performances against Thatcher helped preserve their respective governments in the face of weak or non-existent majorities. They did not need so much to persuade their own MPs of the merits of their policies as inspire them to keep going through the arduous parliamentary battles.

Nominally, of course, ministerial speeches in the Commons are supposed to lay out a case for whatever measure or motion is at hand. Yet it is difficult to think of very many cases since 1945 when MPs' minds have been changed by the course of debate in sufficient numbers to make a difference to the outcome. The 1986 Westland affair is, perhaps, one example, although Thatcher's survival then was due not so much to her own strong performance in debate but to the weak speech by the leader of the

opposition, Neil Kinnock. Another example may be Blair's March 2003 Commons speech in favour of the imminent war with Iraq, which, contemporary media reports suggested, helped sway the views of wavering MPs. For example, *The Economist* observed: 'Had many MPs not already promised their constituency parties that they would vote for the anti-war amendment if there was no second [UN] resolution, the rebellion might have been smaller.'<sup>40</sup> It is of course very difficult to isolate the effect of a single speech on a parliamentary vote; Blair's private efforts to persuade MPs and the efforts of the whips surely had an impact too. On this particular occasion, Blair knew at the outset that he would win the formal vote, given that the Conservatives had already pledged their support. What his fluent performance may have helped avoid – although this cannot be proven conclusively - was the humiliation of having to rely on the Tory votes in order to do so.

Prime ministers, if they wish to remain such, need to massage their support continually, even when no landmark debate is on the horizon. Speeches to the parliamentary Labour party (PLP) or the Conservative 1922 committee assist with this process. The meetings of these bodies are not open to the public or to journalists, but they may often be described as 'semi-public' because it is likely that accounts will appear in the newspapers. Thatcher's famous description of the miners' leaders as 'the enemy within' was made to a supposedly 'private meeting' of the 1922 committee; as was doubtless intended, her speech was reported quite fully in *The Times* the next day.<sup>41</sup> Tony Blair's regular and consistently good-humoured performances before the PLP suggest that he understood well how to damp down back-bench dissent.<sup>42</sup> Such occasions could be used to address specific concerns. In the early 1950s, Conservative unrest over negotiations with Egypt led to a stormy backbench gathering; the Chief

Whip summoned Churchill who (in spite of his own doubts on the issue) carried the meeting in favour of the government line.<sup>43</sup>

Of greater national prominence are the annual conference speeches that prime ministers give in their capacity as the leaders of their parties. (There are also various other party functions to speak at: women's conferences, Scottish conferences, and so forth.) These, of course, were not a new phenomenon in the post-war period. Ramsay MacDonald's clash with Oswald Mosley at the 1930 Labour Party conference was over a substantive point of policy, that is, how to deal with unemployment. (The prime minister's reassuring speech helped him win the day narrowly.) More normally, prime ministers offer a *tour d'horizon* and some jabs at the opposition: during Wilson's first premiership, a standing ovation at the end started to become part of the ritual.<sup>44</sup> Yet although there is rarely anything specific immediately at stake prime ministers tend to treat these occasions with great seriousness. One of Thatcher's speechwriters, the playwright Ronald Millar, described them as 'the highlight and hazard of the political year'. He recalled: 'Whenever I was asked how it got written I would say, "I don't know. In fact I am in a constant state of amazement that the Conference speech ever does get written."' <sup>45</sup> Similarly, Alastair Campbell's diaries testify to the chaotic and frenzied atmosphere that surrounded the drafting of Blair's conference speeches.<sup>46</sup> The evidence suggests that prime ministers are right to submit themselves to the stress of the process. Brown's 2008 speech was widely billed as a last chance to save his leadership. His comparatively strong performance appeared to put paid to the possibility of a challenge from within the party. In general, however, Brown serves as an example of how some prime ministers (another example is



Edward Heath) have been weakened by poor rhetorical/communication skills, a trait often portrayed in the media as a lack of ‘warmth’ or charisma.

### **Prime ministerial rhetoric and ‘national’ values**

Thus far, we have mainly considered rhetoric as a method for prime ministers to win and hold onto power rather than as a means to secure specific policy goals. The two things are of course related, given that a prime minister who is popular both nationally and within the party will find it easier to get his or her way on difficult topics. Yet it is clearly crucial for prime ministers to address concrete issues, with a view to shifting the climate of opinion. In the late nineteenth century, British politicians such as Palmerston and Gladstone used speeches to bring public opinion to bear upon parliament.<sup>47</sup> But in the years that followed, party leaders gained increased control of their MPs, rendering this tactic decreasingly necessary. This is a significant difference between the rhetorical premiership as practiced recently in Britain and the rhetorical presidency in the United States. A prime minister can only stay in power so long as he or she commands the confidence of the Commons. As the executive is drawn from the legislature, the possibility of office is an inducement to MPs to toe the government line. In the USA, the separation of powers creates a different dynamic. A president may well face a hostile or unbiddable Congress, and cannot hold out the lure of office in the same way. In this situation he (or perhaps someday she) may seek to appeal to the voters over the heads of Congress, as in Woodrow Wilson’s failed bid to secure support for the League of Nations, or in President Obama’s recent efforts to generate support for his domestic policies. This may well mean trying to generate pressure on lawmakers within their own party as well as those of the opposition. Post-1945 prime ministers have not needed to use public opinion in quite this way.<sup>48</sup>

Rather, prime ministers' rhetoric has served different, but often inter-related functions. First, they have used it to present themselves as national leaders, transcending party. (Williamson has shown this for Baldwin in the earlier period.) The clash between Attlee and Churchill at the 1945 election, for example, was in part a debate over which of them could lay claim to British values and over which side was most representative of the nation as a whole. Churchill, whose short-lived 'caretaker' government included Liberals and non-party men as well as Conservatives, claimed the 'support of all throughout the country who sincerely put the nation first in their thoughts.' He added 'This is a National Government.'<sup>49</sup> Attlee carefully distinguished 'between Winston Churchill, the great leader in war of a united nation, and Mr. Churchill, the party leader of the Conservatives.' He further argued that not only was the government a Conservative one, but the Conservative Party was 'a class Party' which had rarely drawn any MPs from 'the ranks of the wage-earners' and continued to represent 'property and privilege'. Moreover, the Labour party was 'the one party which most nearly reflects in its representation and composition all the main streams which flow into the great river of our national life.'<sup>50</sup>

Many other instances could be given, from Wilson and Blair's respective efforts to associate themselves with visions of a progressive, technologically dynamic nation, to Major's evocation of Britain as a land of cricket grounds, warm beer, and old maids bicycling to holy communion through the morning mist. To adapt Benedict Anderson's terminology, prime ministers (and other politicians) imagine communities, and then depict themselves in their speeches as uniquely qualified to lead them.<sup>51</sup> Doing this successfully may well form a key to winning elections, and a

prime minister who seems likely to win the next election will most likely be secure from challenge from within his or her own party. The technique may also help when dealing with specific crises. The psychologists Stephen Reicher and Nicolas Hopkins, who have analysed the rhetoric of Thatcher and the Labour leader Neil Kinnock during the 1984-5 miners' strike, argue that 'both speakers construe the nature of the event such that their party is representative of an ingroup which encompasses almost the entire population and such that their policies are consonant with the definition of the ingroup identity.'<sup>52</sup> Put more simply, both Thatcher and Kinnock defined their own values as national values and then defined their opponents as transgressors against these. On the face of it, it would seem that Thatcher was the more successful of the two, given public attitudes both to the strike and to the two leaders at the time.<sup>53</sup> The contribution that her rhetoric made to the defeat of the miners' strike is of course unquantifiable. We may surmise, however, that prime ministers believe that they derive benefits from speaking out on such issues, and know that they risk being heavily criticised if they avoid commenting on issues of perceived national importance.

The very fact of being prime minister gives the occupant of 10 Downing Street advantages that do not accrue to leaders of the opposition, especially those ones who have never held the office. Prime Ministers' involvement in international affairs gives them a platform for speaking in a way which may also bring them domestic advantages. A prime minister speaking abroad will normally do so as an honoured guest at a prestigious event and venue. He or she is unlikely to be directly challenged by the hosts, and may well enjoy genuine foreign policy successes that those out of power cannot emulate. (It was said of Thatcher that the further one got from Britain,

the more she was admired.) Perhaps the most famous example is that of Macmillan, who liked to present himself as a world statesman above the ‘little local difficulties’ posed by domestic politics.<sup>54</sup> This is not to say that speeches abroad are necessarily easy ones to make. In his ‘winds of change’ speech to the South African parliament in 1960, Macmillan faced the challenge of satisfying those in Britain who wanted him to criticise the Apartheid system, whilst at the same avoiding provoking the South Africans into leaving the Commonwealth.<sup>55</sup> As he wrote in his diary afterwards, ‘I had to comfort those [South Africans] of British descent; inspire the Liberals; satisfy home opinion; and yet keep on good terms – at least outwardly – with the strange caucus of Africaner politicians who now control this vast country.’<sup>56</sup> In a rhetorical *tour de force*, he succeeded in challenging the supporters of Apartheid without insulting them, helping to cement his position both at home and abroad.

### **Agenda-setting and rhetorical failure**

Macmillan’s private secretary later argued that the ‘winds of change’ speech contained ‘nothing startling or novel’, noting that one of the most effective passages was a quotation from a speech made by the foreign secretary, Selwyn Lloyd, at the United Nations the previous year.<sup>57</sup> What Macmillan achieved, then, was not policy change, but policy definition. His speech struck a chord in a way that Lloyd’s did not. This was in part a product of the unique context in which it was delivered and in part a consequence of his special authority as prime minister. This potential power to set the political agenda is not of course restricted to prime ministers, but they are more likely than others to be able to exercise it. For example, the sentiments in Callaghan’s speech on educational standards at Ruskin College 1976 would surely have drawn significantly less attention had they come from any lesser minister. Although his

criticisms of modern teaching methods did not lead to any immediate shift in policy, the speech is generally seen as having helped trigger the subsequent adoption of the national curriculum in schools. Twenty years later, he was able to reflect that the concerns he had expressed had become staples of political debate.<sup>58</sup> Arguably, this sort of reflection on grand themes is a task for which the premiership is ideally suited. Speeches of this nature may have more impact in the longer run than do multiple interventions aimed at the micro-management of particular immediate issues.

Above all, rhetoric can enable prime ministers to set the tone of their governments, for good or ill. One Mass-Observation diarist, for example, commented after a speech by Attlee that ‘The more I hear the man, the better I like him. Sober, calm, dignified, just what we need for this time of pulling up our socks.’<sup>59</sup> An entire era was encapsulated by the 1957 speech in which Macmillan declared, ‘Let’s be frank about it; most of our people have never had it so good.’<sup>60</sup> (It is true that he went on to warn about the dangers of inflation, so the speech cannot be seen as a simple celebration of affluence.<sup>61</sup> He was, in fact, sending out a double message: on the one hand, seeking credit for the rising living standards of the 1950s and, on the other, presenting himself as a prophet of economic responsibility.) The reassuring tone of Callaghan worked well for some time, but, as industrial conflict mounted in 1978-9, he risked looking complacent. Although he never actually said the words in question, the *Sun* headline ‘Crisis? What Crisis?’ appeared a politically fatal summation of his attitude.<sup>62</sup> Thatcher’s strident and uncompromising tone (encapsulated by the ‘not for turning’ speech) alienated many, but its advantages were crystal clear. The frequent observation that ‘you may not like her, but you know where you are with her’ was a testament to the reluctant admiration she often compelled. Tony Blair’s almost

messianic speech to the 2001 Labour party helped define the 11 September terrorist attacks as ‘a turning point in history’ – and in his own premiership.<sup>63</sup>

The rhetorical premiership is crucially important at such times. The entire cold war period, of course, represented an ongoing crisis. Prime ministers (and foreign secretaries) faced a tough balancing act. They needed to be seen to take a firm line, and to prepare the British people for the possibility of a long and arduous struggle, but they had to do so without needlessly antagonising the Soviet bloc or closing the door on the possibility of *détente*. It is notable that the most significant rhetorical cold war landmark, Churchill’s 1946 ‘iron curtain’ speech, was actually delivered by an ex-prime minister. Whilst his personal reputation lent considerable weight to his words, Attlee and his foreign secretary Ernest Bevin, who had not been consulted in advance, avoided official comment, sheltering behind the fact that Churchill was, strictly speaking, merely a private citizen delivering a speech in the USA. Attlee, who did not feel able to speak out in a similar way at the time, was probably grateful to Churchill for what he said, once he had been reassured that President Truman approved of the speech.<sup>64</sup> This suggests some limitations on prime ministerial rhetoric: just as some things may only gain attention if a prime minister says them, there may be others that prime ministers in office are unable to say.

Churchill’s speeches in 1940 were of course crucial in rallying the nation and – although he did not care for this idea himself – were perhaps his most significant contribution to winning the war. Since then there has been neither a comparable war nor comparable speeches. Nevertheless, prime ministerial rhetoric has played a role in post-1945 military conflicts. There is reason to believe that rhetoric can be helpful in

shifting public opinion. On the basis of polling evidence, Paul Baines and Robert Worcester make the following argument with regard to Iraq in 2003: ‘Contrary to the commonly held notion that politicians follow public opinion [...] a UK Prime Minister managed to persuade, through various rhetorical devices and a complicit media, an initially sceptical electorate that a war with Iraq, in conjunction with the USA, was in the country’s best interests.’<sup>65</sup> There are, however, significant limits to the power of rhetoric. After the Iraq war, further fluent Blair speeches were insufficient to rebuild public trust in the face of the failure to find weapons of mass destruction. Earlier, Eden’s broadcast at the start of the Suez war was ‘one of the best speeches of his life’, but the diplomatic consequences of the military action were catastrophic.<sup>66</sup> Conversely, Thatcher’s rhetoric did not win the Falklands war – but it did help her associate herself with the victory, to her immense political profit.

Finally, in considering the impact of the rhetorical premierships, we need to consider the importance of rhetorical failure. Poor rhetoric can help doom a premiership, just as strong rhetoric can enhance one. Churchill’s ‘Gestapo’ speech may have contributed to his loss of the 1945 election; Wilson’s ‘pound in your pocket’ devaluation broadcast may not have been utterly fatal, but it was a sign that he was losing his touch. Some rhetorical calamities, such as Blair’s speech to members of the Women’s Institute in 2000, have been the product of simple misjudgement. A speech which would have been unexceptional had it been given to another audience was judged too overtly political by his listeners, and he was interrupted by slow hand-clapping. Some other disasters may have been a symptom of underlying political difficulties rather than the cause of them. One of the last nails in Thatcher’s coffin prior to her political down-fall in 1990 was the Commons speech in which she set her

face against further measures of European integration: ‘No. No. No.’<sup>67</sup> The style that had once appeared as an admirable firmness now struck many as mere intransigence, and within weeks her own MPs had forced her from No. 10. Certain kinds of silence may also be considered as contributing to broad rhetorical failure. To take Blair again: it seems that after his victory in the 2001 election, he seriously intended to begin speaking out in favour of British entry to the single European currency, prior to a referendum on the issue around the middle of the parliament. According to Alastair Campbell, ‘He really believed we could turn the debate.’<sup>68</sup> Yet when it came to the point he shied away from committing himself in public, and the referendum never occurred. It is by no means clear that a powerful rhetorical commitment by him could have swung opinion in favour of the Euro; it is however certain that his failure to make such a commitment guaranteed that entry would not take place.

## **Conclusion**

Where, then, does this leave the debate on prime ministerial power? The existence of the rhetorical premiership could give a degree of comfort to both the ‘presidentialisation’ and the ‘chairmanship’ schools. Foley argues that the modern ‘emphasis upon public leadership in public arenas, which is now strong enough to politicise the most mundane of official engagements, has very clear parallels with the contemporary condition of the American presidency.’<sup>69</sup> The evidence presented here of the increased frequency of prime ministerial extra-parliamentary speech might be thought to bear this out, although, as has been suggested here, there are reasons to be cautious when making the parallel with the US. On the other hand, the ‘chairmanship’ model rightly emphasises the prime minister’s need to persuade.<sup>70</sup> This is generally couched in terms of the need to convince ministerial colleagues, a point that is also



highly relevant if we accept the model that emphasises the interdependence of senior actors. Rhetorical skills are a potential resource on which any of the actors can draw, whether they are trying to persuade each other directly or are trying to get other groups (and public opinion more broadly) on their side. Whether or not prime ministerial rhetoric is considered ‘presidential’, it is undoubtedly – together with other communications techniques - an indispensable tool of governance. As Bernard Donoughue, head of the Downing Street policy unit, wrote of Wilson in 1975:

He sees politics through speeches – reading facts into the record; committing himself and his government in public in advance so he can alter refer back to what he said earlier; perhaps to prevent himself from weakening and retreating later; attacking people he does not like. [...] Most of his political life has been spent rhetorically – in Opposition inevitably, and in government as leader, without a department.<sup>71</sup>

Rhetoric may have been more important to Wilson than to some other prime ministers, and it is not, of course, a substitute for action. It has, however, been central to the way that the modern premiership has operated.

How, then, is the rhetorical premiership best studied? There is much that can be learnt from American scholarship on presidential rhetoric, provided that scholars are sensitive to the institutional and cultural differences that affect how political language is delivered and received. It is important to analyse texts closely, if necessary employing the terminology of classical rhetoric to identify the different parts of speech. (This is not an end in itself, but the results can be thought-provoking.) This is not a licence to avoid the archive, however. Where they are preserved, the examination of variant drafts, and associated notes and memoranda, may allow for a rich understanding of the speechwriting process. Above all, scholars should be careful

not to read into modern rhetorical developments a story of deterioration, in which technology plays the role of the villain. Before World War I, Lord Curzon cautioned against superficial explanations of ‘the apparent decline of British eloquence’. He argued:

The reason is not that a particular fountain of human genius has been dried at its source, never again to be revived, but that it flows into new channels, and irrigates a fresh soil. Or, if the metaphor be varied, men’s souls are still capable of being set on fire by the spoken word; but the spark is otherwise kindled, and it lights a less radiant and consuming flame.<sup>72</sup>

The rhetorical premiership, we may to deduce, will continue to evolve, just as it has since 1945. In order to fully understand prime ministerial power, we need to be alive to the sparks that it has so often kindled.

## Tables

Table 1: Prime ministerial speech in parliament, 1946-2008

Source: <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/>

Prime Minister	Month / Year	Number of days on which PM spoke in Parliament	Oral contributions by PM in Parliament
Attlee	Mar-46	16	82
Churchill	Mar-52	11	82
Eden	Mar-56	13	99
Macmillan	Mar-58	8	163
Douglas-Home	Mar-64	9	140
Wilson	Mar-65	9	223
Heath	Mar-71	11	222
Callaghan	Mar-77	11	210
Thatcher	Mar-80	8	118
Major	Mar-91	7	162
Blair	Mar-98	4	113
Brown	Mar-08	5	159

Table 2: Prime ministerial extra-parliamentary speech, 1946-2008

Sources: *The Times* (Times Digital Archive/Nexis UK); [www.margaretthatcher.org](http://www.margaretthatcher.org); [www.number10.gov.uk](http://www.number10.gov.uk)

Prime Minister	Month / Year	Episodes of extra-parliamentary speech
Attlee	Mar-46	3
Churchill	Mar-52	0
Eden	Mar-56	3
Macmillan	Mar-58	3
Douglas-Home	Mar-64	12
Wilson	Mar-65	2
Heath	Mar-71	9
Callaghan	Mar-77	7
Thatcher	Mar-80	13
Major	Mar-91	7+*
Blair	Mar-98	8
Brown	Mar-08	23

\**The Times* of 4 March 1991 reported that Major had given a series of interviews to Soviet journalists based in London. These have been counted here as one contribution.

**Keywords:** rhetoric, prime ministers, British constitution, speechmaking, oratory.

---

<sup>1</sup> R.H.S. Crossman, 'Introduction', in Walter Bagehot, *The English Constitution* (1963; first published 1867), 51-2. For a useful summary of the debate, see Peter Hennessy, *The Prime Minister: The Office and Its Holders since 1945* (2000), 55-7

<sup>2</sup> G.W. Jones, 'The Prime Minister's Power', in *The British Prime Minister: A Reader*, ed. Anthony King (1969), 190.

<sup>3</sup> *Prime Minister, Cabinet and Core Executive*, ed. R.A.W. Rhodes and Patrick Dunleavy (Basingstoke, 1995); Martin J. Smith, *The Core Executive in Britain* (Basingstoke, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> Jeffrey K. Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency* (Princeton, NJ, 1987), 4. Emphasis in original. Although the traditional/modern dichotomy has been challenged, the concept of 'the rhetorical presidency' has not. See, for example, Ryan Lee Teten, 'The Evolution of the Rhetorical Presidency and Getting Past the Traditional/Modern Divide', *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 38 (2008), 308-314.

<sup>5</sup> Norman Fairclough, *New Labour, New Language?* (2000), vii. Other recent examples include Jamie Whyte, *A Load of Blair* (2005), Peter Osborne, *The Rise of Political Lying* (2005), and Steven Poole, *Unspeak: Words are Weapons* (2006).

<sup>6</sup> H.C.G. Matthew, 'Rhetoric and Politics in Britain, 1860-1950', in *Politics and Social Change in Modern Britain*, ed. P.J. Waller (Brighton, 1987), 34-58.

<sup>7</sup> Philip Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin: Conservative Leadership and National Values* (Cambridge, 1999), esp. the methodological statement at 13-18.

<sup>8</sup> For example, Manfred Weidhorn, 'Churchill the Phrase Forger', *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 58 (1972), 161-74; David Cannadine, *In Churchill's Shadow: Confronting the Past in Modern Britain* (2002), Chapter 4; Patrick Wright, *Iron Curtain: From*

---

*Stage to Cold War* (Oxford, 2007); and John Lukacs, *Blood, Toil, Tears & Sweat: The Dire Warning* (New York, 2008).

<sup>9</sup> Patrick Dunleavy and G.W. Jones with Jane Burnham, Robert Elgie and Peter Fysh, 'Leaders, Politics and Institutional Change: The Decline of Prime Ministerial Accountability to the House of Commons, 1868-1990', in *Prime Minister, Cabinet and Core Executive*, ed. Rhodes and Dunleavy (Basingstoke, 1995), 275-97.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Foley, *The Rise of the British Presidency* (Manchester, 1993), Chapter 4.

<sup>11</sup> Alan Finlayson, *Making Sense of New Labour* (2003), 16.

<sup>12</sup> Jonathan Charteris-Black, *Politicians and Rhetoric: The Persuasive Power of Metaphor* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, 2005). Some valuable insights are also to be found in Max Atkinson, *Our Masters' Voices: The language and body language of politics* (1984). It is significant that one of the few examples of rhetorical analysis of post-1945 prime ministerial speech is by a US scholar: Frank Myers, 'Harold Macmillan's "Winds of Change" Speech: A Case Study in the Rhetoric of Policy Change', *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 3 (2000), 555-575. There are some signs, however, of growing interest in rhetoric from British historians, notably Finlayson, *Making Sense of New Labour*, and Ben Jackson, 'The rhetoric of redistribution', in *In Search of Social Democracy*, ed. J. Callaghan, N. Fishman, B. Jackson and M. McIvor (Manchester, 2009).

<sup>13</sup> This point is shown by Jon Lawrence in *Electing Our Masters: The Hustings in British Politics from Hogarth to Blair* (Oxford, 2009).

<sup>14</sup> Matthew, 'Rhetoric and Politics'.

<sup>15</sup> Foley, *British Presidency*, Chapter 4.

<sup>16</sup> Brian McNair, *An Introduction to Political Communication* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1999), 135.

<sup>17</sup> Lawrence, *Electing Our Masters*, 133.

---

<sup>18</sup> See the following examples of the coverage of Churchill's first broadcast: "'Vote National, Not Party'", *The Times*, 5 June 1945; 'Churchill's Crazy Broadcast', *Daily Herald*, 5 June 1945; and 'Churchill Claims He is Leading National Govt.', *Daily Mirror*, 5 June 1945.

<sup>19</sup> Geoffrey Lloyd to Ralph Assheton, 29 May 1945, Winston Churchill Papers, Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge, CHAR 2/556/19. The films themselves can be found at [www.movietone.com](http://www.movietone.com).

<sup>20</sup> Matthew, 'Rhetoric and Politics', 42.

<sup>21</sup> Lawrence, *Electing Our Masters*, 166-7, 188-9.

<sup>22</sup> Michael Cockerell, *Live from Number 10: The Inside Story of Prime Ministers and Television* (1988), 106.

<sup>23</sup> In April 2009, Gordon Brown drew comment when he delivered an important statement on the issue of MPs' expenses via an online video rather than in the Commons or at a press conference.

<sup>24</sup> It superseded the cable-only Parliamentary Channel launched in 1992.

<sup>25</sup> Harold Wilson's second premiership is omitted.

<sup>26</sup> Dunleavy et al, 'Leaders, Politics and Institutional Change'.

<sup>27</sup> This is also suggested in the memoirs of Roy Jenkins, who detected a sea-change in the late-1970s: *A Life at the Centre* (1991), 565.

<sup>28</sup> 'Prime Minister Willing', *The Times*, 25 Oct. 1961; Hennessy, *Prime Minister*, 277; Sandra Harris, 'Being Politically Impolite: Extending Politeness Theory to Adversarial Political Discourse', *Discourse & Society*, 12 (2001), 451-472.

<sup>29</sup> The database may, however, have gaps. Ferdinand Mount suggests that many of the speeches Thatcher delivered during the 1983 election have been lost to history. He writes that 'virtually none' of the text of them appeared in the newspapers at the time,

---

and that the speeches themselves ‘seem to have disappeared from the archives’: *Cold Cream: My Early Life and Other Mistakes* (2008), 337.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 328.

<sup>31</sup> The Downing Street website for 1998 is archived at <http://collections.europarchive.org/tna/20060403085217/http://pm.gov.uk/output/Page7.asp>

However, its coverage of prime ministerial statements then was seemingly very much less full than it is now; only two statements from March 1998, both of them major speeches, are preserved.

<sup>32</sup> It is clear that in recent years a prime ministerial TV or radio interview has not in itself automatically generated press coverage.

<sup>33</sup> In spite of the claim that it was a first, the three party leaders had been grilled by a public audience during the October 1974 election: Lawrence, *Electing Our Masters*, 237.

<sup>34</sup> James Callaghan, *Time and Chance* (1987), 426-7.

<sup>35</sup> Peter Hyman, *1 out of 10: From Downing Street Vision to Classroom Reality* (2005), 2, 11.

<sup>36</sup> D.R. Thorpe, Alec Douglas-Home (1996), 295-7; Geoffrey Lewis, *Lord Hailsham: A Life* (1997), 224-6.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 229.

<sup>38</sup> John Major, *John Major: The Autobiography* (1999), 290, 304.

<sup>39</sup> *The Macmillan Diaries: The Cabinet Years, 1950-1957*, ed. Peter Catterall (2003), 272.

<sup>40</sup> ‘What turned it for Tony’, *The Economist*, 22 March 2003 (US edition).

<sup>41</sup> ‘Thatcher makes Falklands link’, *The Times*, 20 July 1984.

---

<sup>42</sup> For descriptions of many of these meetings, see Chris Mullin, *A View From The Foothills: The Diaries of Chris Mullin* (2009).

<sup>43</sup> Interview with Julian Amery for the television series *Churchill*, c. 1991, Churchill Additional Papers, Churchill College, Cambridge, WCHL 15/2/51.

<sup>44</sup> Lewis Minkin, *The Labour Party Conference: A Study in the Politics of Intra-Party Democracy* (Manchester, 1978), 232.

<sup>45</sup> Ronald Millar, *A View From the Wings: West End, West Coast, Westminster* (1993), 282.

<sup>46</sup> *The Blair Years: Extracts from the Alastair Campbell Diaries*, ed. Alastair Campbell and Richard Stott (2007).

<sup>47</sup> Lawrence, *Electing Our Masters*, 39-40. Of course, before the advent of full adult suffrage, public opinion and the views of the electorate were not necessarily entirely the same thing.

<sup>48</sup> A possible exception was Wilson's campaign for a 'Yes' vote in the 1975 EEC referendum, which could be seen as a successful attempt to appeal to public opinion over the heads of a divided party.

<sup>49</sup> "'Vote National, Not Party'", *The Times*, 5 June 1945.

<sup>50</sup> 'Labour Case For Socialism', *The Times*, 6 June 1945.

<sup>51</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (1983, 1991), 6.

<sup>52</sup> Stephen Reicher and Nicolas Hopkins, 'Self-category constructions in political rhetoric; an analysis of Thatcher's and Kinnock's speeches concerning the British miners' strike (1984-5)', *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 26 (1996), 353-371.

<sup>53</sup> *British Political Opinion, 1937-2000: The Gallup Polls*, ed. Anthony King (2001), 199, 337.



---

<sup>54</sup> Alastair Horne, *Macmillan, 1957-1986* (1989), 74.

<sup>55</sup> On the domestic background, including the Labour party's decision to declare 1960 the 'Year of Africa', see Ronald Hyam and Peter Henshaw, *The Lion and the Springbok: Britain and South Africa since the Boer War* (Cambridge, 2003), 316-7.

<sup>56</sup> Bodl., MS Macmillan dep.d.38, Macmillan diary, 7 Feb. 1960.

<sup>57</sup> Lord Egremont (John Wyndham), 'The Wind of Change Myth', *Sunday Times*, 10 May 1964. Lloyd had rejected 'the idea of any inherent superiority of one race over another' and stated that British policy was 'non-racial'. See 'Mr. Macmillan's Appeal To South Africans', *The Times*, 4 Feb. 1960.

<sup>58</sup> Kenneth O. Morgan, *Callaghan: A Life* (Oxford, 1997), 540-1.

<sup>59</sup> *Our Hidden Lives: The Remarkable Diaries of Post-War Britain*, ed. Simon Garfield (2004), 234.

<sup>60</sup> For example, the phrase has been used in the titles of two recent books on the period: Dominic Sandbrook, *Never Had it So Good: A History of Britain from Suez to the Beatles* (2005), and Peter Hennessy, *Having it So Good: Britain in the Fifties* (2006).

<sup>61</sup> Lawrence Black and Hugh Pemberton, 'Introduction – The Uses (and Abuses) of Affluence', in *An Affluent Society? Britain's Post-War 'Golden Age' Revisited*, ed. Lawrence Black and Hugh Pemberton (Aldershot, 2004), 2.

<sup>62</sup> Morgan, *Callaghan*, 662.

<sup>63</sup> Speech of 2 Oct. 2001,

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2001/oct/02/labourconference.labour6> (consulted 21 April 2009).

<sup>64</sup> John Ramsden, *Man of the Century: Winston Churchill and His Legend since 1945* (2002), 171-2.

---

<sup>65</sup> Paul Baines and Robert M. Worcester, ‘When the British ‘Tommy’ went to war, public opinion followed’, *Journal of Public Affairs*, 5 (2005), 4–19. It is of course difficult and perhaps impossible to disentangle the role of prime ministerial speech from other aspects of government communications, such as – in this case – the published dossiers on Iraq’s alleged weapons of mass destruction.

<sup>66</sup> Tony Shaw, ‘Eden and the BBC during the 1956 Suez Crisis: a myth re-examined’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 6 (1995), 320-43.

<sup>67</sup> Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, sixth series, vol. 178, 30 Oct. 1990, col. 873.

<sup>68</sup> *Blair Years*, ed. Campbell and Stott, 553.

<sup>69</sup> Foley, *British Presidency*, 89.

<sup>70</sup> Jones, ‘The Prime Minister’s Power’, 190.

<sup>71</sup> Bernard Donoghue, *Downing Street Diary: With Harold Wilson in No. 10* (2005), 586.

<sup>72</sup> Earl Curzon of Kedleston, *Modern Parliamentary Eloquence* (1913), 8.