Tony Blair’s New Labour
- rather ‘New’ than ‘Labour’?

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Summary

In British politics, the New Labour era was marked by a multitude of reforms and an attempt to re-launch the Labour party as a different and politically more centre-focussed party. Lead by Tony Blair, the party distanced itself from old Labour values, focussing especially on the middle-class electorate instead of, as previously, mainly the working class.

This paper set out to explore the radicalism of the reforms introduced during the era, exemplified in the areas of education and law and order; with the purpose of judging the extent of the move away from left-wing politics towards the centre ground.

As the architect of a great part of the reforms introduced, Tony Blair was the object of a specific analysis; his party loyalty, his motivation and conviction, as well as the means he utilised to both initiate and control the changes, were looked at.

Based on the work of a number of social scientists, the reforms, as well as some of the reactions they caused within both Blair’s own party and the opposition, were described. Furthermore, the efficient, but rather discredited, media management and New Labour’s relations to media were studied; and finally, Blair’s governing style was investigated. Where relevant, Blair’s own comments and conviction, as described in his biography, were quoted in order to offer an explanation or present a motive for the reforms he introduced.

The analyses showed that New Labour introduced a range of reforms, whose overall approaches were considerably more centrist or even right-wing than what Labour had previously represented. The diversity in types of schools, including private schools initiatives, contrasted traditional Labour preference for comprehensive schools; and in universities, tuition fees were introduced and later toughened in order to supply adequate funding, not least with the purpose of enabling the universities to compete with US elite universities.

In law and order, Blair was most vehement in his call for crime prevention and strengthening of the police, again in stark contrast to old Labour attitudes. Blair’s social democratic attitudes and sense of justice were detectable in parts of the proposed reforms, although his conviction at times seemed also to be influenced by what he sensed that the electorate wanted.
A top-down government style characterised the Blair governments, based on tight control, partly carried out by the many special advisors employed in the No. 10 Office. At least in the first term, he had an unprecedented majority in the House of Commons, and Blair’s government style was informal, but with much authority; an authority which was almost only restricted by the power allocated to Gordon Brown. The relationship between the two was complicated, partly damaging the Cabinet work during the era.

On leaving the office in 2007, Blair left the reins to Brown, who was not, however, able to keep the New Labour project going after the 2010 election.

The paper concludes that the radical reforms, introduced by Blair, were liberal to such an extent that they have subsequently been adopted largely unaltered by the present Coalition government. Blair was not Labour at heart, but based his policies on his own conviction, a social democratic sense of justice, and the attitudes he sensed that the electorate was expressing. His gifted use of media served as a means of communication to both the party and the public; and the No. 10 Office attempted to control media coverage through a constant flow of news releases; succeeding to such an extent that the amount of spin reached completely new dimensions in the decade.

Finally, the paper concludes that Blair moved the overall political approach of New Labour considerably towards the right, a conclusion which is backed by both the testimony of a few interviews with present Conservative opponents, and by the present Coalition government’s attempt to win some of New Labour’s issues back.

Analyses show that since the early 1990s, the overall political centre ground has turned towards right, and therefore, even though Miliband wants a more socialist Labour Party than that of the Blair decade, he dares not turn as far back left as to the position of the pre-1994 Labour party, simply for fear of losing the votes from the middle-class voters, an electorate which all the parties focus on today.
1 Introduction

This bachelor's thesis will deal with Tony Blair and 'New Labour' (henceforth NL), primarily focusing on the years 1994-2007, a period when took over the leadership of the Labour party and later became Prime Minister in a Labour government.

In my research, I was intrigued by the radicalism of Blair's modernising reforms. All parties who have been in opposition for any length of time will take to modernise and adapt their programme to improve their appeal to the electorate, who after all have voted them out of office. The Labour Party in the 1980s was no exception. It started a comprehensive policy review under Neil Kinnock and John Smith.

But Blair's reforms left the party policies so radically different from those of the previous Labour leaders that it triggered my interest to investigate the apparent mismatch between the socialist Labour party and its media-managing, modernist leader Tony Blair. Tony Blair was a politician, certainly; a moderniser, certainly; but was he Labour? Or did he take the Labour party hostage to pursue his own designed policies?

With these questions in my mind I set out to investigate the following problem statement:

I want to explore Blair's radicalism, focusing on education and law and order reforms, and analyse why and to what extent his reforms have moved Labour's policies away from socialism to liberalism.

With focus on two of the reforms introduced by NL, where Blair's heart and hand were most acutely felt, education and law and order, I want to find evidence that he acted in accordance with his own conviction without much reverence for old Labour values; and that his attitudes were carefully tuned in towards the British middle class, rather than the working class. Together with a small group of supporters he succeeded in taking control of the party in a given period, helped by audacity, strong media-management and Zeitgeist.

The party that Blair took over was a disillusioned and frustrated party that had been in opposition for 18 years and had lost four consecutive elections to the Conservatives. Perhaps it was prepared to adopt ANY leader with an appeal to the electorate who could lead them out of the wilderness?
Tony Blair was a most charismatic person, who firmly believed in the NL idea, and when you look at the ideas and the reforms introduced in the Blair years, the hand of an idealist, acting from conviction, is easily detected. Towards the end, however, wars and scandals ran him down, and within his own party, Gordon Brown and the left wing opposed him even more fiercely than the official opposition in Parliament. He had to leave the helm, but could his project go on sailing on its own?

When analysing what was new in the NL era, it is important to view the changes over time. Blair was in office for three terms, the first was marked by optimism, energy and a multitude of reforms; yet, in the eyes of the world nothing much happened, most was under preparation; the second, where everything was to be launched, was marked by wars and the war on terror; and the third was Blair’s race against time to ensure the survival of his project under Brown’s wings.

My data collection will be the work of a range of modern, British social scientists and commentators and their analyses of the era. The description of the more recent political developments will be based upon a number of articles from various papers and magazines.

Comparing Blair’s own analysis of events and reforms as described in his biography *A Journey* with the literature above, I will look for answers to the question ‘why’ in the problem statement, and I will contrast the more objective analyses of contemporary commentators with the subjective comments from Blair’s own hand.

Finally, two written interviews with Conservative opponents, living in Britain and having experienced the NL era personally, form the last part of my data collection. The interviews are written questionnaires, dated April 2011, and are enclosed as appendices 1-4. My purpose was to find out how present representatives of the Conservative party judge Blair’s legacy, and to get an impression of the effect the reforms have had on today’s education and law and order politics, seen through the eyes of a few political opponents.

As to the structure, ch. 2 offers a few comments on some of the major milestones and keywords that we still today associate with the NL era.

In ch. 3 and 4, I look more detailed at the political approach in the education and law and order reforms; education was one of the policies closest to Blair’s heart; whereas law and order was a reform whose political approach was much more Conservative than traditional Labour.
In ch. 5, I look at the very special relations that NL had with the media, after which a
closer look at Tony Blair as a person and a Prime Minister is attempted in ch. 6.
Who was he, what was his motivation, and how did he manage? I look into his
attitudes, his style of leadership, and not least, his successor Gordon Brown and the
very special relationship the two men shared, and finally into Blair’s legacy as
described by the social scientists.

To put the era into a historical context, ch. 7 takes a brief look at what followed at
the end of the Blair era after the handing over to Gordon Brown, and on the political
stance of the Labour party after the election lost in May 2010. The results of a few
interviews with Blair’s political opponents are analysed in ch. 8, and finally, ch. 9
will conclude on my findings.

1.2 Delimitations
With a governmental period as long as that of NL, there was a wide range of reforms
to choose from, and other reform areas could have been just as relevant, but scope
has forced me to be selective in my choice of reform to explore. Further, in the area
of law and order, I focus on domestic approaches, crime and punishment, rather
than on the laws introduced in the wake of terrorism.

Constitutional reform and devolution were probably the most important and radical
legacy of the Blair era, but besides being reforms started by John Smith and as such
not conceived by Blair, they deserve to be dealt with at length and will not be
covered within the limits of this paper.

Foreign policy and Blair’s wars are certainly important, and although the wars in
especially in Iraq and Afghanistan distanced Blair from his electorate, his reasons
for entering them and for the foreign policies in general are determined by external
factors that could not have been known beforehand, and therefore they will not be
covered.

Below Blair will be described as the one responsible for actions and decisions, and
although he was most dominant and autocratic, ‘Blair’ will also be synonymous with
‘Blair and the inner circle’, ‘No. 10’, ‘the Prime Minister’s office’ or ‘Cabinet’.

In the paper, Middle England will express the conservative middle class, which Blair
addressed as the new group of target voters, see also ch. 6.
2 New Labour characteristics

This chapter will take a short glance at some of the characteristic keywords of the NL decade: ‘Third Way’ and ‘modernisation’, as well as the important milestone of abolishing the socialistic Clause IV.

It is important to note that Blair alone was not responsible for the radical change of the party, in fact the long haul back from radical left to the centre ground started in the 1970s, at first under Kinnock, then Smith, and therefore, when Blair introduced NL, he was actually only continuing, although strongly intensifying the trend. His predecessors had effectively reduced the power of both the unions and the ultra-left, not least through the one-member-one-vote rule, thus facilitating his way to the party top.

Social scientists question the issue of ‘new’ contra ‘old’, claiming that NL politics were a mixture of politics from both New Right and traditional Labour; thus, the expression New Labour, allegedly invented by Alastair Campbell as part of a slogan, is critically called ‘all style and no substance’. Historians looking at the development of the Labour Party over time point at other periods where the term could equally justifiable have been used to describe ideological and political commitments, and as such they seem to regard NL as being ‘primarily an electoral marketing device’.

But to Blair it was important to distance the Labour party of 1997 from that of the previous post-war governments. In this light, old Labour came to represent the heritage from former governments, which was now rejected: ‘looney left’ local governments, state intervention, tax-and-spend politics etc. NL thus became a signal of a modern, changed party.

At the Labour Party Conference in 1994, Blair introduced both the new slogan: ‘New Labour, New Britain’ and, daring what others before him had attempted, but not succeeded, proposed the symbolic discard of old Labour and the shift to NL by introducing an amendment to the Clause IV in the Labour Party Constitution, originally striving for

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2 Driver & Martell, p. 16
4 Driver & Martell, p. 17, Casey, p. 119, Seldon, p. 54
...common ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange...' as well as ‘... popular administration and control of each industry or service5.

This pledge to socialism, written in 1917, Blair found politically devastating6, and he introduced a new version aiming at

... a community in which power, wealth and opportunity are in the hands of the many, not the few. Where the rights we enjoy reflect the duties we owe5.

A sacred Labour relic so unsentimentally dismissed by Blair was evidence of his distance to the Labour inheritance. He confirms this distance: ‘

Part of the reason that I took so easily (...) to dismantling some of the sacred myths of the Labour ideology, was because of how I came to politics. As a student I had nothing to do with the Oxford Union, wasn’t a member of the Labour club and took virtually no part (...) in student politics7.

Already then Blair was able to utilise media for his purposes, and through press coverage of the Conference he made sure the change was widely broadcasted, and soon signs of public enthusiasm for such a change further supported his case. Still, the Clause IV amendment caused a major internal row before it was finally accepted, leaving the left wing and the unions in fierce opposition to Blair; certainly not for the last time they accused him of ‘giving in to Thatcherism and its neo-liberal politics’8.

‘Third Way’ politics are inseparably linked to the NL programme. They describe Blair’s and NL’s centre-ground politics and the pragmatic way of compromising between radical left and conservative right. Blair used the expression rhetorically whenever he wanted to signal novelty and improvement.

‘Modernisation’ was also a NL keyword and implied finding alternatives to the present systems, in order to make them more efficient9. This approach is in line with Blair’s rather pragmatic attitude to politics (further described in ch. 6): ‘... a large measure of pragmatism is essential. As I say continually, what matters is what works...'10.

2.1 Discussion of ch. 2

It was vital for Blair to distance his Labour party from that of previous leaders and make it appeal to Middle England. Putting ‘New’ before Labour signalled such a

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6 Blair, p. 76
7 Blair, p. 77
8 Driver & Martell, p. 14
10 Driver & Martell, p.50
distance and using words like ‘modernisation’ and ‘Third Way’ implied an alternative to well-known politics. On realising that the socialist approach of Clause IV was putting Middle England off, he abolished the objective of nationalisation, but also risked his relations to the party; clearly an evidence of his lack of party loyalty.

Blair’s comment above on his lack of political schooling illustrates the distance to Labour, and this is further supported in the following comment: ‘That is why I was and remain first and foremost not so much a politician of traditional left or right, but a moderniser\(^\text{11}\).’

\(^{11}\) Blair, p. xvi.
3 Educational reforms

‘Ask me my three main priorities for government, and I tell you education, education, and education’ – Blair said shortly after being elected, illustrating his passion for the area. A public service reform comprising both health and education was one of the first reforms introduced by NL. In this chapter focus will be only on reforms in the educational system, with special attention on areas where the radicalism was most obvious.

All post-war governments have put a high priority to education, and in 1976, Callaghan laid the basis for the later reforms in his introduction of governmental control with a national curriculum and a more centralised administration of education in a response to a hefty debate on selection vs. comprehensivisation and growing bureaucratisation of the local governments; and in 1988, Thatcher further introduced national tests, target settings and league tables, as well as increased financial autonomy for schools, urging them take over control from the local authorities.

Blair adopted most of the above concepts in his reform of the educational system, carefully planned before the 1997 election and launched very soon after his entering office. Characteristic keywords of his approach were targets, choice, delivery and diversity, all of them ideologically rather far away from social democratic principles of equality. Also important were private/public partnerships, e.g. in both building and maintenance of schools.

Another aspect of the reform was more on par with the convictions of traditional Labour: to Blair, education was also a means to obtain social justice, and programmes of e.g. inclusion of disabled into ordinary classes, initiatives to keep young people in education, mentors against truancy etc. were introduced together with free neighbourhood nursery centres, but as the approach of these was mainly social democratic, the limits of this paper prevent further investigation, and the following will concentrate on secondary schools and university funding.

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12 BBC News on Blair’s speech on education (2007, November 2) found 2011, March 26 at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2kAhChC_qxU
14 Seldon, p. 361
15 Seldon, pp. 366-372
16 Driver & Martell, p. 126
17 Seldon, p. 372
3.1 Secondary Schools

A main objective for Blair was to reduce the number of children unable to read, write and add, at the time they left school. Monitoring teaching and introducing tests and national targets for numeracy and literacy in both primary and secondary education were some of the instruments introduced. The problems facing the secondary education were not least a shortage of teachers and erratic teaching quality in many schools. Having adopted the Conservative diversity agenda, Blair put special focus on a private/public partnership strategy, able to supply further funding.

Diversity meant a range of different types of schools, besides the comprehensive. Grammar schools, selecting their pupils, posed an ideological dilemma: popular with the voters and making impressive results, Blair wanted them kept, whereas traditional Labour members, loathing academic selection, wanted them abolished. With the mantra ‘standards not structures’, Blair managed to defuse the party opposition and the schools were kept.

In accepting independent schools, he also accepted parents paying school fees, another issue traditionally hated by Labour. But acknowledging their high levels of education, he made it his ambition to improve quality of the comprehensive schools in order to be able to compete with the independent schools, and through target schemes showing the improvement of the state schools, he wanted to convince middle-class parents that they should shift from private to state education.

Specialist schools and city technology colleges, or ‘city academies’, were another Thatcher heritage. Specialist schools focussed on a specific topic, e.g. technology, sports or art, and funded by both state and private sector sponsors, they aimed at raising the overall performance. A lot of schools turned into specialist schools; to the government it was an instrument of improving teaching quality, but critics claim that the specialist focus took away the real free choice for the parents for geographical reasons, apart from the fact that few parents knew what would be the best choice for their 11-year-old son or daughter. Thus, the variety of schools and the absence of a uniform set of admission criteria turned out as a nightmare for many parents.

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18 Seldon, p. 366-369
19 Ibid., p. 379
20 Ibid., p. 362
21 Ibid., p. 371
23 Seldon, p. 370
24 Kavanagh & Seldon, p. 270
City academies were another thorn in traditional Labour’s side. An independent school concept aimed at replacing failing schools in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, they were funded by the state together with a private sponsor, who in return was given control of the curriculum, the staffing and the land and buildings. Although criticised for not delivering improved quality\textsuperscript{25}, city academies became a vital part of Blair’s reform programme\textsuperscript{26}.

Grant-maintained schools, originally a Conservative initiative, were abolished when NL went into office, but their concept was re-introduced in Blair’s third term under the names trust school or foundation school\textsuperscript{27}. The introduction of this latter type of schools was severely opposed by Labour backbenchers, and ultimately only accepted with Conservative support, another indication of the degree of right-wing turn in Blair’s reforms.

### 3.2 Tuition fees in universities

The most controversial issue in NL’s politics on universities was the question of tuition fees. A report from a higher education inquiry, set up under Thatcher, recommended just after the 1997 election a fee to cover part of the costs\textsuperscript{28}.

The higher education sector of 1997 was in severe need of funding following Thatcher’s budget-cutting years; further cuts were feared to threaten the educational quality. In 1997, Blair introduced a universal upfront tuition fee with a rebate for less well-off students. Furthermore, before 2010, Blair wanted 50% of the population by the age of 30 to have been in higher education\textsuperscript{29}, impossible to finance without tuition fees. Blair and Brown agreed on wanting wider admission to universities, but they disagreed on the focus: Blair favoured access through talent, Brown wanted equality in admission via socio-economic ‘guidelines’\textsuperscript{30}.

The second step in funding higher education through fees followed in 2001, when Blair was convinced that increased, but variable, top-up fees were necessary to further improve quality of teaching. In spite of a promise in the 2001 manifesto not to introduce top-up fees\textsuperscript{31}, in 2004, NL introduced a bill giving universities access to

\textsuperscript{25} Driver & Martell, p. 130  
\textsuperscript{26} Seldon p. 370.  
\textsuperscript{27} Driver and Martell, p. 131 + p.124  
\textsuperscript{28} Seldon, p. 460-472  
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., p. 474  
\textsuperscript{30} Kavanagh & Seldon, p. 275  
\textsuperscript{31} Driver & Martell, p. 132
cover their full costs through replacing the very unpopular upfront fees with ‘top-up’ fees, income-related and to be paid after graduation\(^{32}\).

The debate on this bill was intense and very nearly cost Blair his premiership. The proposal was finally agreed with a surplus of five votes, a narrow margin considering Labour’s majority of 161 seats, and with a number of amendments aimed at ensuring the equal access to education\(^ {33}\).

Seldon asks: ‘Why, when his mantra of ‘education, education, education’ focused so tightly on schools and nurseries, did he risk the future of his administration on a half-hearted reform of university funding?’, suggesting either ‘misjudgement, stubbornness or genuine radicalism?’\(^ {34}\), but Blair hints another explanation: an ambition to compete with American universities, able to top the ranking lists due to their fees:

... their financial flexibility meant that they could attract the best academics. Those who paid top dollar got the best. Simple as that.\(^ {35}\)

And Blair comments rather philosophically on changes:

It is an object lesson in the progress of reform: the change is proposed; it is denounced as a disaster; it proceeds with vast chipping away and opposition; it is unpopular; it comes about; within a short space of time, it is as if it had always been so\(^ {36}\).

Like the question of the diversity and targets, the tuition fees were also issues placed on the right side of the centre on the left-right scale. Oddly, the Conservatives did not back him in this question and Blair comments on the Conservative dilemma:

Michael Howard had inherited opposition to tuition fees from Duncan Smith. Of course, the Tories knew perfectly well that they should support the measure, and the reason why they didn’t do so is an interesting reflection on the art of good Opposition. (...) In fact, if Michael had backed me, it would have done me real damage with my own side; done him a power of good with sensible, informed opinion; and not changed the result. But he didn’t. And that helped me\(^ {37}\).

### 3.3 Discussion of ch. 3

Remembering that education was one of his top priorities on entering office, how did Blair then perform?

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\(^{32}\) Seldon, pp. 476f
\(^{33}\) Driver & Martell, p. 132
\(^{34}\) Seldon, p. 468
\(^{35}\) Blair, p. 483
\(^{36}\) Ibid., pp. 481f
\(^{37}\) Ibid., pp. 488f
Adopting many of Thatcher’s reforms, supporting private initiatives and calling for targets and leagues in schools, Blair’s ambition was to improve education and to offer middle-class parents a wide range of schools to choose from. He was not afraid of putting part of the public service in the hands of private enterprises; pragmatically, he felt that the decision of delivery had to be taken ‘on the basis of what worked and not on what was ideologically correct’38. Critics, however, claim that the differences in quality of schools eventually turned the secondary education into a problem of providing equal opportunities for all children, and thus diversity and choice turned into a question of ‘more (...) selection than choice’39 due to certain popular schools’ limited intake of students.

In universities, tuition fees were adopted and enhanced by the Coalition, and like schools (ch. 3.1) it is evidence of the right-wing turn of Blair’s reforms.

Conservative interviewee Sarah Davis40 (see ch. 8) points out that Blair would have gone further in his reforms, had he not been held back by his party. This view is backed by The Economist41, saying that Blair never succeeded in persuading the Labour backbenchers of the importance of parental choice, and as soon as Brown took over, the diversity approach was downplayed and even directly opposed.

The other interviewee, Mark Beckett42, finds that Britain today may have a shortage of skilled workers due to so many going to universities instead of seeking apprenticeships, and he goes on to say that due to the easier access to universities, the status of having a university degree may have decreased somewhat.

Furthermore, The Economist43 describes a secondary school system as ‘deeply flawed’, very unequal and experiencing decreasing quality. Fearing the threat of closure in the event of delivering poor quality, the schools have tended to decrease the quality levels of tests and exams to such an extent that universities today set up their own admission tests because they cannot rely on GCSE results.

On the basis of the above, at least it is fair to conclude that Blair’s results did not compare with his ambitions, and that one of the reasons was the opposition in the Labour party, resisting being dragged so far to the right.

38 Blair, p. 119
39 Kavanagh & Seldon, p. 281
40 Appendix 3
42 Appendix 4
43 Economist (24.04.2010)
4 Law and Order: Tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime

With Blair’s mantra\(^{44}\) above as point of departure, this chapter takes a closer look at the law and order politics with dual focus on the efforts to combat crime itself as well as the underlying, often socio-economic causes of crime.

Historically, crime was not a hot political issue until the 1970s; until then it was seen mainly a case for the courts, but with the rising number of incidents of crime and disorder during this decade, Conservatives and Labour each took a stance on the subject\(^{45}\).

Labour’s close relations and tolerant approach to both rioting unions and political protest movements, often committing civil disobedience, led to widely held police antipathy within the party, and the Conservatives succeeded in accusing Labour of being soft on crime and not defending the rule of law.

However, with the gradual turn back towards the centre ground, Labour tightened up rhetoric on crime prevention, and in 1992, when Blair became Shadow Home Secretary, he adopted Conservative views, rejected Labour’s previous habits of excusing delinquency with social factors and called for more law and order with the mantra cited in this chapter’s headline. This was in fact a major step towards liberalism.

When the Conservatives introduced minimum sentences, they met no opposition from Blair, and later Labour only reluctantly supported Liberal opposition to a Conservative bill, allowing police to break in and bug both offices and private homes. In the 1997 election campaign both parties tried to outdo the other in being tough on crime, asking for more police, more legislation and quicker and longer sentences.

A measure of how far Labour really entered Conservative home ground in the battle of ‘Middle England’ was seen in 1997, when the Labour manifesto declared that ‘Labour is the party of law and order’\(^{46}\).

4.1 Crime

An overall look at the NL law and order policies shows Blair’s distinct personal interest in the issue. He played a major role in policy making, occasionally bypassing

\(^{44}\) Seldon, p. 324
\(^{45}\) Driver & Martell, pp. 108f
\(^{46}\) Driver & Martell, p. 109
normal parliamentary routine, e.g. in replacing civil servants in the Home Office with policy teams and special advisors reporting directly to himself and not the Home Secretary\(^{47}\).

To tackle crime and social disorder, a large number of acts and measures\(^{48}\) were introduced, of which this paper only focus on a few. The approach in general was a break with previous Labour attitudes; Blair declared ‘zero tolerance\(^{49}\)’ on crime and introduced several initiatives, e.g. ‘crime and disorder reduction partnerships’, making police and local authorities work together to reduce causes of crime and to prevent offenders from making further offences, and ‘anti-social behaviour orders’ (ASBO’s), civil orders to be imposed when incivilities were not punishable, but still disturbed law and order. In Blair’s own words, the ASBO’s were a measure to stop small offences before they were followed by bigger ones: ‘You create a culture of ‘anything goes’, of disrespect, of tolerating the intolerable’\(^{50}\), but critics warn of a tendency to criminalise what was previously a social problem\(^{51}\).

Throughout the era police have been considerably strengthened - both in numbers and in powers, some even suggest at the peril of civil liberties and human rights\(^{52}\). This was especially the case after 9/11 and later the 2005 London bombings. Measures included detention without charge for thirty-six hours for all arrestable offences, numerous grounds for stop-and-search, listening in on communications, and testing orders for drug-dependent offenders etc\(^{53}\).

With increased focus and media attention on crime and punishment, the courts responded by issuing longer sentences\(^{54}\). There was a decline in the issuing of cautions from the courts, only to see an increase in custodial sentences. This effect put a strain on British prisons, many of which became overcrowded. NL responded rather pragmatically with an increase in prison capacity through private partnerships, although private prisons were difficult for Labour to put up with; and they introduced a range of rather creative forms of custody to take pressure away from prisons: home detention curfews, Custody-Plus, Custody-Minus, early release, electronic tagging, and Intermittent Custody\(^{55}\).

\(^{47}\) Seldon, pp. 332f
\(^{48}\) Ibid. pp. 330ff
\(^{49}\) Driver & Martell, p. 109
\(^{50}\) Blair, p. 278
\(^{51}\) Seldon, p. 331
\(^{53}\) Seldon, p. 327
\(^{54}\) Ibid, p. 336
4.2 Causes of crime

Traditional Labour tended to identify the causes of crime in social causes, and also NL identified poor family patterns and poverty as causes of crime and saw prisons as ‘institutions for social learning’.56

To break the patterns of hereditary delinquency, Blair and Brown introduced the New Deal for Communities57, a regeneration programme of £2 billion, designed to combat unemployment, poor housing and poor physical environment; factors commonly agreed to lead to criminality.

Preventing re-offences was a major aim, and a number of measures were introduced, e.g. enabling courts to issue Parenting Orders: practical counselling and guidance sessions for the parents of young offenders, who were also ensured access to programmes preventing re-offending. Also in-prison education, literacy and numeracy programmes for prison inmates, and drug treatments were introduced in order to give offenders a better chance upon release58.

4.3 Discussion of ch. 4

A commentator suggests that NL may have been most at ease with the sternness of the first half of Blair’s ‘mantra’59, and that their efforts to fight the causes of crime seem to have been less stern. In spite of his actual efforts to combat the causes of crime, it was the ‘tough on crime’ issue that Blair used to make the party popular among the ‘Middle England’ voters.

However, his constant emphasis in the media, often through short sound-bites suited for the tabloids, of the need to revise policies, to strengthen and modernise police and to increase punishing led to a general impression that society had deteriorated, crime threatened everywhere, and therefore fear increased60.

In fact, during the NL era, the overall crime level fell substantially, although the level of murder and severe crimes went up61. But with NL creating new offences, punishing harder and especially criminalising low-level incivilities, what Seldon62 calls ‘hyperactive in the law-and-order-sphere’, the number of offenders in prison has increased rapidly.

56 Ludlam & Smith, p. 180
57 Ibid, pp. 180f
58 Casey, p. 102
59 Seldon, p. 339
60 Ibid., p. 333 – see also ch. 5.
61 Ibid., p. 323
62 Ibid., p. 335
The Conservative interviewees are generally pleased with the law and order reforms of NL. Mark Beckett\textsuperscript{63}, refers to the general decrease in crime levels and appears pleased with not least the programme on drug addicts. Sarah Davis\textsuperscript{64}, calls the possibility of detention without charge a measure which ‘changed the basis of the British justice system’, apparently much opposed by politicians, but popular with the public; and she goes on describing the dilemma for the Coalition of whether to roll back this act, fearing the public reaction in case of another tragic attack.

Blair took a most radical turn to the right in defending law and order, and Cameron’s subsequent efforts to win back this issue is evidence of NL’s success in capturing this area in public opinion\textsuperscript{65}.

Many of the law and order programmes have been carried forward by the Coalition, although the financial crisis has forced budget-cuts in this area as well, and recently Ed Miliband accused the Coalition government of cutting down police forces too rashly. Under the headline ‘Bluff on crime and bluff on the causes of crime’, thus utilising Blair’s old sound-bite, Miliband accuses David Cameron of ‘going too fast and too far in reducing the deficit’ in their proposal of cutting the police budget by 20\%\textsuperscript{66}. Miliband also criticises the coalition government of being ‘out of touch with the public’ in their budget-cutting, at the cost of the feeling of safety among the public. He further calls for ASBO’s and more police community support officers on the streets, as well as ‘decent youth services and crime prevention programmes’, measures which he concludes caused a decrease in crime by 43\% during the previous Labour government.

Such an article from the present leader of the supposedly more left-wing Labour Party in opposition is clearly proof of Blair moving the Labour party to the right, compared to its stance before 1997.

\textsuperscript{63} Appendix 4
\textsuperscript{64} Appendix 3
\textsuperscript{65} Casey, p. 7, Seldon p. 339
\textsuperscript{66} Miliband, E. (2011, February 15). Tories bluff on crime and bluff on causes of crime. The Sun
5 Media Management

In the introduction Blair was called ‘a media-managing modernist leader’67, and this chapter will elaborate on his media strategy and media relations.

Media coverage and media attention were vital instruments in the NL communication strategy. From his early start as leader, Blair had considerable focus on spin or media management68. With the UK news world offering 24-hour news service, journalists from papers, TV, internet-channels etc. were constantly chasing news. Together with his Press Secretary from 1994-2003, Alastair Campbell, Blair was always focussed on utilising this attention to his best advantage.

In government, NL’s comprehensive media strategy worked along several lines; the most important were strict focus on control of media coverage69 and top down control of communications70.

A number of institutional changes in No. 10 resulted in several new units and offices, with the Strategic Communications Unit (SCU) as one of the most important. Under Campbell’s leadership, the unit focussed on coordinating policies and messages; constantly shaping positive media coverage of the new government. The coordination implied control of all ministers, an upfront approval by the Press Office of all interviews, press releases and speeches, naturally causing some tension between ministers and Labour MPs.

Blair was always pressuring his ministers for ‘eye-catching initiatives’71, and with each initiative Blair ‘wanted to be associated with as much possible’ in order to appear active and dynamic. SCU was responsible for the weekly media presentation of stories, ‘the grid’72, to be used in the planning of media coverage.

Alastair Campbell, having a tabloid background, was famous for his bullying of the newspapers73; if media did not act as anticipated, he would not hesitate to phone journalists or editors, scolding them for not having acted as supposed, not carrying an article he had delivered or carrying an article he disagreed with. Journalists hated this, but they depended on the benevolence of Campbell, who knew how to play the

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67 Page 5
68 Seldon, p. 123
69 Ludlam & Smith, p. 91
70 Seldon, p. 125
71 Kavanagh & Seldon, p. 16
72 Ludlam & Smith, p. 91
73 Ibid., p. 93
journalists out against each other, serving exclusive stories to sympathetic journalists on a kind of tit-for-tat basis.\textsuperscript{74}

As mentioned in ch. 2, Blair also utilised media for his own purposes, the sound-bite culture of the tabloids suited him\textsuperscript{75}, and media was his instrument in getting his way with the party. He refers a situation during the Northern Ireland peace treaty in which he had decided a new policy on neutrality:

‘I knew I could never get a policy change through the party’s usual policymaking machinery – certainly at that time – so I’m afraid I just popped up one morning on the Today programme not long after becoming leader and announced we would henceforth have a new policy...’\textsuperscript{76}

On entering office, Blair was met by a very favourable press, even the traditionally Conservative, Murdoch-owned \textit{The Sun} changed sides to back Labour immediately before the 1997 election, allegedly caused by a fall-out between John Major and Murdoch\textsuperscript{77}. Campbell had convinced Blair of the importance of the tabloids\textsuperscript{78}, and \textit{The Sun} in particular, who were given ‘preferential treatment’. Blair counted Rupert Murdoch among his friends, and a No. 10 Press Secretary described Murdoch’s influence on the government as ‘second only to that of Blair and Brown’\textsuperscript{79}. Similarly, Blair used the Murdoch press as a platform for many articles published in his own name\textsuperscript{80}, in return for leaving Murdoch’s media empire alone?\textsuperscript{81}

Only in the second half of the NL era, when it turned out that the great political expectations were not delivered, the editors of several papers, including that of \textit{The Sun}, backed off their support, saying that ‘six years of promises have turned out to be empty’.\textsuperscript{82}

\textbf{5.1 Spin}

The NL team utilised media in their communication directly to Middle England, and in the early years this was a major part of their success, but with the constant flow of news releases not always quite true, their credibility diminished over time. From their initial promise to ‘be purer than pure\textsuperscript{83}’ at the time of entering office, NL wore

\textsuperscript{74} Seldon, p. 126
\textsuperscript{76} Blair, p. 158
\textsuperscript{77} Tunney, pp. 113f
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid, p. 113
\textsuperscript{79} Seldon, p. 10
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., p. 126
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., p. 130
\textsuperscript{82} Ludlam & Smith p. 104, Tunney, p. 113
\textsuperscript{83} Seldon, pp. 11-12
out the public patience with an endless stream of spin, promising future action, boasting of achievements, misquoting statistics etc. They succeeded to such an extent that NL were ultimately accused of ‘being obsessed by spin’.

5.2 Discussion of ch. 5

Doubtlessly, the Blair/Campbell partnership was unprecedented in its efficiency of managing the media, but it is also clear that they could not control all events in a political party as large as Labour in this decade. Efficient damage control helped suppress some of the negative stories, but others, both lies, scandals and blunders were impossible to neglect, and in the end journalists grew tired of being manipulated and started digging into such stories. Spin was not invented during the Blair years, but without doubt it became inextricably linked to NL.

The Conservative interviewees both attack the spin; Sarah Davis says that partly due the aggressive media strategy and the enormous amount of spin, the NL government has caused ‘increased cynicism about politicians’ and Mark Beckett refers to a ‘negative mood towards politicians’ coming from a government that ‘will be remembered more for spin and style than actual substance,’ ‘which promised so much, delivered so little and left the country in financial ruin’.

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84 Ludlam & Smith, p. 89
85 Seldon, p. 128,
86 Kavanagh & Seldon, p. 515
87 Appendix 3
88 Appendix 4
6 Tony Blair – a man of conviction

Son of a Tory, public school educated and a barrister from Oxford - Tony Blair was not the typical Labour member. After Oxford he somewhat haphazardly joined the Labour Party, where he met his wife Cherie, already a Labour member, and only after 3-4 years working at the bar did he start working seriously for the party. In 1983 he became MP, elected in Sedgefield.

Not bound by party loyalty and with no political schooling in his youth, his views on politics were based on moral and ethics, instinct and a set of convictions about a communitarian society marked by solidarity, respect, justice, compassion and responsibility.

As the number of working-class voters had shrunk in Britain since the 1970s and far more people tended to consider themselves middle class, Blair had realised that Labour could not win an election in Britain by only appealing to the working class. The new ‘target voters’ were ‘... female, in the south-east, home-owners, and among the aspirational working class who had switched to Margaret Thatcher’. Therefore, in the 1997 election campaign the British electorate saw a young, energetic, charismatic, eloquent and sympathetic leader of a hitherto not very widely appealing Labour party, addressing ‘Middle England’ and not the usual core voters: the blue-collar workers and the poor.

Blair describes his own aspirations:

... my drift, politically and intellectually, was clear: Labour had to be radically reformed, and not by an adjustment or a shift of a few degrees, but in a manner that changed profoundly its modus operandi, its thinking, its programme and above all its attitudes.

And he further describes his ambition to radically change the party:

The thing that mattered most was getting the New Labour programme through (...) I saw this as the supreme fulfilment of my mission: to show how progressive politics, itself modernised, could modernise the nation; to escape from Labour’s hide-bound and time-bound fixation with the past.
Blair was a competent negotiator and doubtlessly a very eloquent and rhetorically skilled PM, a gift he was aware of: ‘...Whereas I had a tendency to think I could persuade anyone of anything provided I truly believed it...’\(^9\) He could communicate with the public with an instinct for demonstrating empathy when needed and ‘presenting himself as a regular guy’\(^10\).

His personality was mixed: Extremely pragmatic in his approach to solving what obstacles he met, cf. the ‘what’s best is what works’- attitude \(^10\), in other respects incredibly impatient and with no understanding for the inertia in the governmental system\(^10\).

6.1 Prime Minister Blair

When Blair entered office in 1997, he and his team were very inexperienced in Parliamentary routines. Blair had never even held an official political post. Apparently therefore, he continued to run the government like he had run the Labour party in opposition: ‘heavy on communication, light on policy and progress’\(^10\).

Blair’s leadership style was an atypical, top down governed parliamentary style, named ‘denocracy’ by Seldon\(^10\). Soon, organisational changes were introduced; Cabinet Office was expanded, a number of units were introduced with the purpose of strengthening Blair’s control over government. The No. 10 staff increased considerably in numbers through the recruitment of a formidable number of special advisors and aides from outside Cabinet and party\(^10\).

With this huge intake of special advisors, Blair broke the tradition of using the civil service of the Cabinet and the No. 10; he thought them traditionalists, too occupied with procedures and accused them of inertia\(^10\). Blair wanted to set the agenda, and through his base, he was able to pull the strings and influence governance\(^10\). He held weekly Monday morning ‘Tony meetings’\(^10\), a conference in the ‘den’ with his staff, where the actions for the upcoming week would be discussed ‘and action taken on points he has thought of over the weekend’. In contrast, Blair held only bi-monthly meeting with his ministers.

\(^9\) Blair p. 486
\(^10\) Kavanagh & Seldon, p. 17
\(^11\) Casey, p. 301
\(^12\) Seldon, p. 649
\(^13\) Casey, p. 166, Kavanagh & Seldon, p. 10
\(^14\) Seldon, p.6
\(^15\) Blair, p. 17, p. 19
\(^16\) Kavanagh & Seldon p. 13
\(^17\) Kavanagh & Seldon, p. 9
Blair comments on the top down government accusations:

Partly because much of the reform had to be driven from and through No. 10, I knew that we had to strengthen the centre of government considerably, and I made major changes. It is a feature of modern politics that nothing gets done if not driven from the top108.

Further features of Blair’s leadership were a well developed ear for public opinion, partly through focus groups and opinion polls, instead of listening to the party institutions, and a very informal leadership style characterised by ad hoc groups and bilateral relationships at the cost of Cabinet work109. Many important decisions were made in what is termed ‘sofa government’: ‘a loose, fluid group which takes momentous decisions over coffee in the ‘den’ and does not trouble with such bureaucratic, old Labour formalities as taking minutes”110.

Also, Blair only seldom appeared in the House of Commons; this side of government apparently did not interest him a lot. No other PM before Blair has given so much priority to aspects of the premiership outside of Parliament, but in the early stages of government he was allowed to do so, given his large majority as well as his popularity111.

Blair was an autonomous leader, although constrained by Gordon Brown, especially in the domestic policies112. Their relation is called a ‘dual leadership”113, with Brown and Blair forming two occasionally competing teams, the ‘Blairites’ and the ‘Brownites’. Brown had been handed full control of economy, but was also very dominating in domestic politics, welfare and health. The tensions between the two damaged an otherwise ‘very formidable partnership”114.

Unfortunately, both Blair’s strongly controlling and uninvolving leadership style and the constant competition between Blair and Brown reduced the engagement and collective ownership of the Cabinet. Especially in the first two terms, ministers and senior civil servants were unsure of policies and priorities and confused about Blair’s intentions, which lead to informal alliances and ‘a decline in the quality of decision-making in the ‘den’”115.

108 Blair. p. 337
109 Seldon. p. 7
110 Seldon. p. 122
111 Kavanagh & Seldon, p. 8
112 Ibid., p. 9, Casey. p. 166
113 Kavanagh & Seldon, p. 9
114 Ibid., p. 9 – see also next chapter
115 Ibid., p. 10
6.2 Tony Blair and Gordon Brown

While still in opposition, Blair and Brown worked very closely together on Labour politics for the coming election. They agreed on the major principles of the reforms, and only later their rivalry became substantial. Obviously, a deal was done at the Granita\textsuperscript{116} meeting, making Brown step down from the leadership contest, but much of the intentions were loosely formulated and not set down in writing, hence the tension later on.

In their agreement Brown was granted control of the economy, and throughout the Blair decade, Brown governed autonomously in this area, making all the decisions and announcements to such an extent that it was generally perceived that Blair was without influence in the area. Even the entry to the euro, so much wanted by Blair, Brown labelled an economic decision and as such solely the decision of the Chancellor\textsuperscript{117}.

Brown had the image, especially in the first terms, of prudence in his economic policies. However, after his first two years observing the Conservative spending targets\textsuperscript{118}, the rest of his Chancellory was marked by increased taxation and borrowing, although he promised that NL would be ‘wise spenders, not big spenders’\textsuperscript{119}.

Over time, with this the so-called ‘dual premiership’\textsuperscript{120}, the tension between the two men increased, and it would have been natural for Blair to remove Brown. Blair’s inner circle urged him to do so, but he refrained, a testimony of Brown’s power. Blair describes this dilemma; apparently he realised that Brown was the best candidate for Chancellorship, and forced himself to go on, despite his frustration: ‘The Gordon problem – the combination of the brilliant and the impossible – remained’\textsuperscript{121}.

Around the 2005 election, which again was won by Labour, although at a reduced majority, Blair felt his authority and popularity declining, and he was getting increasingly urged to fulfil his old promise to Gordon Brown, who was by now constantly at his heels to get a final date\textsuperscript{122}. One problem to Blair was that Brown wanted to freeze progress until he took over, not wanting to give Blair credit for any further reforms, and therefore became even more stubborn in the decision-

\textsuperscript{116} Seldon, p. 161
\textsuperscript{117} Seldon p. 7
\textsuperscript{118} Casey pp. 303f
\textsuperscript{119} Driver & Martell, p. 94
\textsuperscript{120} Seldon, p. 8
\textsuperscript{121} Blair, p. 340
\textsuperscript{122} Kavanagh & Seldon, p. 10
making. Blair admits that in 2004-5 he was close to giving in, and that the destiny of the NL project was what kept him from doing so:

... the nearest I got to giving up my job voluntarily was during 2004, when I thought I had had enough and would yield to Gordon, since I felt he might continue the reform agenda. And the clearest I became that I should stay despite it all was when I realised he wouldn’t, and I should therefore fight a third term...  

6.3 Exit Tony Blair, his legacy

Social scientists have widely discussed the legacy of Tony Blair, the fundamental changes initiated by NL, and although they agree that many factors need to be taken into consideration to judge his overall legacy, there is a general consensus that reform of the constitution, bringing peace to Ireland and the Iraq war are major landmarks in the political landscape.

Blair was the youngest British Prime Minister for almost 185 years; he won three consecutive elections, the first two with overwhelming majority and the third with a comfortable majority, and he managed to sit in office for 10 years. In the end his popularity diminished, mostly because he took Britain into highly unpopular wars. Still, he and NL managed to create economic growth, to reduce unemployment, to reform major parts of the constitution as well as improve public service, but critics agree that given the majority in the House of Commons, the strong economy he inherited, and the initial unique media support, he performed disappointingly little.

When discussing Blair’s legacy a point to start would be to ask if Tony Blair left any mark ideologically, like Thatcherism; did Blairism become a new ideology? Concluding his analysis of Blair’s legacy, Casey states that Blair personally did not see Blairism as a rigid ideology, but more a ‘non-ideology’, the pragmatic ‘what’s best is what works’-philosophy based on good practice. Rejecting both state-oriented socialism and economic liberalism and choosing the Third Way, he preferred communitarianism combined with economic progress.

Another way to judge Blair’s legacy is what reforms have since been conceded by the Conservatives: the Bank of England independence, the minimum wage,
constitutional changes (all beyond the scope of this paper) and the university tuition fees are examples of adopted reforms.

A wide list of initiatives was introduced. Some worked, some did not – in Kavanagh’s words the era resulted in ‘a rich harvest of failed initiatives’ within many areas, welfare, health, law and order, schools, education etc.\(^{130}\). Still he also concludes that ‘Blair has been a successful Prime Minister, who has set a new path for public services and leaves Britain a better place than he found it in 1997\(^{131}\).

### 6.4 Discussion of ch. 6

The paragraphs above answer several of the questions from the introduction.

The initial question, ‘did Blair take his party hostage to his own conviction?’ is proved in especially the quotes from his own biography on page 23. He readily admits that Labour had to be radically reformed in order to escape from old Labour’s past. Changing the target group from the poor and the workers towards the middle-class voters was taking the party towards the centre ground. He did so by means of a centralised, top down government leadership style, much helped by his inner circle.

The extent of Blair’s radicalism is confirmed by critics in ways like ‘...the New Labour project, something of a coup over the party...’\(^{132}\), and ‘...New Labour was not just a political conjuring trick... but a profound, genuine and sometimes agonizing move away from long-held positions and prejudices towards the preferences of the electorate and, where they coincided, the policies of the opponents \(^{133}\).

The question of why Blair moved the Labour party away from socialism and towards liberalism, evidently finds an answer in his conviction: His approach to politics was a mixture of his Christian morality, a sense of justice, and a social democratic mindset combined with a very pragmatic attitude. Gifted with a very well-developed antenna, he was extremely well tuned in to public opinion, and he was able to define the politics of the party to meet a large proportion of what the target voters wanted.

\(^{130}\) Kavanagh in Seldon, p. 11  
\(^{131}\) Seldon, p. 3  
\(^{132}\) Kavanagh & Seldon, p. 8  
\(^{133}\) Casey, p. 63
Within the electorate, Blair was also perceived as being a centrist politician, rather than a left-wing. Figure 1 below shows the results of a 2005 poll, illustrating this and the difference between Blair and Brown:

![Figure 1: Taken from Jones et al, Politics UK on the subject of centre politics, with this comment: 'And Tony Blair? His brilliant sense of where the centre of political gravity lies enabled him to sit astride the middle of the graph, four points to the right of dead centre']

Kavanagh supports this difference: ‘Even after 10 years in office, surveys report that voters still place Blair at mid-point of the political spectrum, which is where most voters place themselves; they locate Brown and the Labour Party to the left of the centre.’

In ch. 8, the answers from the Conservative opponents are analysed more detailed, but they both confirm that NL did turn to the right, and that Blair had gone even further to the right than his party.

As there seems to be little doubt that Blair moved his party away from the left and towards the centre, it is interesting to study figure 2 (see next page), illustrating ideological fluctuations over time. It clearly shows that since 1990, the political centre has moved rightwards, and this especially while Blair was prime minister; the centre is now deep into Conservative home ground.

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135 Kavanagh in Seldon, p. 9
Box 2.10
Ideological fluctuations, 1945-2003

Source: Jones and Kavanagh 2003: 47.

Figure 2. Ideological fluctuations.136

136 Djursaa & Werther, p. 31
7 Labour after Blair

After a long period of increasing pressure for a departing date including an ill-planned ‘coup’ in 2006 among a few junior ministers\textsuperscript{137}, Blair finally set June 27, 2007 as his last day of premiership, and Brown was his unchallenged successor. On entering office, Brown was met with high expectations, from both media and the Labour backbenchers, many of whom were just as eager as Brown to see Blair leave. Blair’s exit was accompanied by an exodus of Blairite Cabinet ministers, making the handover almost American presidential-style and certainly very un-British.\textsuperscript{138}

Brown’s first honeymoon period only lasted a couple of months with a substantial increase in the polls, before economic problems imposed themselves on him: the credit crunch, initiated by the Northern Rock crisis. Politically, he was not able to decide on the quick election which so many of his advisors urged him to call and which would have taken the Conservatives unawares\textsuperscript{139}.

Not calling the election gave him a reputation of being ‘indecisive and dithering’\textsuperscript{140}, and during the following 12 months so much went wrong for Brown: the electoral balance tipped, giving the Conservatives under Cameron increasingly better polls and Labour correspondingly lower polls; the global economic crisis started rolling; he was in a limbo towards the EU and his own image was declining fast. This tendency was further increased by a number of policy changes announced in welfare, in taxation, and in the budget, economic policies in which he seemed to ‘have lost his way and was out of touch’\textsuperscript{141}.

Brown is not the topic of this paper, and it suffices to conclude that perhaps his odds were not optimal in the beginning, taking over where Blair left, and apparently he did not succeed in taking the chances he was offered. He inherited the NL project, part of which he had been the architect of, and some of the project he did carry forwards; but perhaps his urge to put a distance to Blair was part of the explanation why his legacy is not one of furthering the general project.

7.1 Labour in Opposition

In September 2010, the Labour Party Conference elected their new leader. Among the candidates were both Blairites (David Miliband) and Brownites (Ed Balls and Ed

\textsuperscript{137} Seldon, pp. 161f
\textsuperscript{139} Ibid., p. 10
\textsuperscript{140} Ibid., p. 10
\textsuperscript{141} Ibid., p. 12
Miliband). Although being an outsider, Ed Miliband won the leadership contest, but with an extremely narrow margin and mainly based on the votes of the unions, whereas most of the Labour MPs are reported to have preferred David Miliband and his NL business-focussed policies.\textsuperscript{142}

Miliband, ‘Red Ed’ due to his close relations to the unions, has fought the assumption of being radically leftish, realising that also he must focus on the centre ground to attract the voters unhappy with the Coalition government and its strict budget-cutting policies. On entering office, however, he dismissed the concept of NL and introduced New Generation Labour.\textsuperscript{143}

Miliband reportedly choked his party by declaring that the new party manifesto would take two years to complete, starting from scratch on a piece of white paper\textsuperscript{144}, and it is still not clear to what extent Miliband and his Labour will denounce the old policies. Bagehot\textsuperscript{145} claims that Labour is opposed to the severe budget cutting policies and prefers increased taxation on banks, the industry and the well-off. In a TV-show in January 2011\textsuperscript{146}, Miliband was apparently willing to apologise for a number of actions taken or not taken during the NL era, but he rejected any accusation of overspending during the NL decade. To Miliband, the present financial problems were solely due to the global credit crunch and were not caused by Brown’s politics of borrowing-to-spend.

Polls show that the electorate trust Cameron, rather than Miliband, to run the economy\textsuperscript{147}, so even though his programme has not been finally decided, the old leftish tax-and-spend approach will not bring Miliband closer to the centre, where he knows he has to be in order to win again.
8  Blair from a Conservative point of view

To explore the opinion of the Blair era within his political opponents a questionnaire (appendix 1) was sent to a member of the Conservative party, asking him to find a few Conservatives willing to answer the questions. Randomly selected and absolutely unrepresentative, appendix 3 and 4 show the responses from two young Conservatives. In one question, inspired by figure 1 (page 29), they were asked to estimate the extent of the political stance on a left-right scale of both Blair and Cameron as well as their two parties in different eras, and in appendix 2 their answers are plotted into the original figure.

Although they may differ on defining the centre of right/left radicalism, both put the issues in the same order: they confirm that NL did move to the right; that Blair is considered further to the right than the NL party, and that Cameron's Conservatives are perceived rather close to Blair, although more to the right, but not far right as the Conservatives under Thatcher.

Besides the issues already mentioned in the previous chapters, both agree that the financial management of NL was catastrophic and left behind the highest level of debts ever; whereas in other areas, they see real improvements. ‘A courageous stand on homosexual rights148’ and introducing the minimum wage are some of the positive weights on the scales, whereas the wars and the failure to encourage integration are some of the negative weights.

Sarah149 observes: 'Blair was occupying the centre ground so well he forced the Conservatives to go either further right or to the left! One of the reasons it took so long for Conservatives to win an election again'; and Mark150 touches the same issue: 'The recent general election saw a (...) decline for both major parties as the public looks to alternative parties to vote for...', concluding that Blair’s legacy could be that coalition governments might be the future for British politics.

To conclude on the basis of such a small survey: Blair moved the Labour party towards the centre ground, and today Cameron tries to conquer the same centre ground. This conclusion is further backed by an article in The Guardian stating that Cameron admits that ‘...his reforms are based on Tony Blair’s view that he should
have gone further and faster with his own reforms'. Speaking of an NHS reform, Cameron adopts Blair's 'modernisation' several times: ‘We need modernisation...’ and ‘Modernisation is to make the supply of healthcare more efficient...’

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9 Conclusion

This paper set out to

- explore the radicalism of Blair's reforms
- analyse the means he utilised to carry the reforms through
- look at Blair as leader and Prime Minister; focussing on his motivation and conviction
- investigate his loyalty to the Labour party values, and finally
- analyse if and to what extent the reforms had moved the Labour party from the political left towards the centre.

The radicalism of the reforms was shown in the analyses of the law and order and the educational reforms. Ch. 3 concluded that in schools, diversity and choice were prioritised, actually leading to selection caused by imbalance between applicants and intake, quite far from the social democratic approach of equality and comprehensiveness. Also basing part of the economy of schools on private funding was far from the previous Labour principle of state funding. Some proposals were accepted only through Conservative votes (ch. 3.1), and both diversity of schools and university tuition fees (ch. 3.2) have been adopted into the Coalition's educational politics, a proof of their right-wing approach.

Likewise, in law and order reforms, ch. 4 showed that Blair went far to the right, entering Conservative home ground with his call for toughness and sternness towards crime. He introduced harder punishments; created new offences; gave police further power, and even restricted civil rights to such an extent that the present government, according to one of the interviewees, contemplates rolling the most radical measures back (ch.4.3).

Another proof of radicalism was the abolishment of the Clause IV (ch. 2). Discarding the life blood of old Labour members was a most rigorous measure, and an estimate of Blair's lack of reverence.

As to the question of the means used by Blair to carry out the reforms, ch. 5 and also ch. 2 described Blair's extraordinary gift for communication and media management, talking to the Labour MPs through media instead of directly in the Commons (ch. 5), and using the opinion of the voters to convince the Conference (ch. 2). But also the top down government and strict control (ch. 5 and 6), were part of the means utilised. The disadvantages of these measures were partly the lack of
engagement and sense of direction in Cabinet (ch. 6.1), and partly the constant flow of news, backfiring into serious criticism of delivering spin rather than substance (ch. 5), a criticism also expressed by one of the Conservative opponents.

The look at Blair (ch. 6), showed a politician driven by an ambition to fight for the NL programme, pragmatic in the questions of principles; ‘what works is what’s best’ was repeatedly expressed, but most stubborn in his ambitions and his conviction, best expressed in his determination to go on instead of leaving the reins to Brown (ch. 6.2). Still, at times it seemed difficult to decide whether Blair was driven by his own conviction, or by what he perceived to be the wishes of the electorate, picked up through his finely tuned antennas (ch. 6.4).

Blair’s loyalty towards the party was shallow, even admitted by himself (ch. 6.3); he had no problems with abolishing Labour relics (ch. 2), and it could be fair to conclude that his relation to party was a marriage of convenience.

Finally, the question of whether Blair moved Labour to the right was the most difficult question to answer. He did move the party away from socialist left in his time, but the election of Miliband as new leader shows that Labour now wants to move back towards the left. But Miliband criticising Cameron for cutting too deeply in police budgets, and his asking for more ASBO’s and crime prevention programmes (ch. 7.1) show that at present, Labour is still calling for law and order, and that also Miliband is focussing on the centre ground to find his voters.

So, looking at the political situation today it seems fair to say that Blair has actually changed the political landscape. The reforms he introduced are largely carried on, the Conservative party are trying to conquer his image of being on centre ground, and even Labour, critical of the NL approach, has moved further to the right towards the centre ground, which makes the centre a rather crowded place.
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Photos for the front page of this paper, found 21.02.2011 at [www.google.com/Tony Blair/London](http://www.google.com/Tony Blair/London)