

Sept. 9, Intro. to Comparative Politics: Britain, Discussion Notes

Section 1: The Making of the Modern British State

- **Britain as a model: ‘continuity, gradualism, and tolerance’**
 - Why does Britain have such an enviable record of continuity and stability?
 - § Since 1688: **constitutional monarchy** and **parliamentary democracy**
- **Current PM: Gordon Brown**
 - Why is “one of the most powerful, reassuring, and successful chancellors in British history” faltering as Prime Minister? (i.e., how has Brown been transformed “from Stalin to Mr. Bean”?)
- **Ethnicity and Religion in Britain**
 - Colonial Legacy and ethnic composition
 - The Church of England / Anglican Church
 - § Two dozen bishops/archbishops sit as members of the House of Lords
 - § Secularization of British politics / party affiliation (except in N. Ireland)
- **Geography as Destiny**
 - Britain’s location as an offshore island has shaped its history
 - § Less subject to invasion and conquest (not since 1066, really)
 - § Unique cultural legacy and distance from the culture of continental Europe
- **The Industrial Revolution and Empire**
 - How does the industrial revolution change the structure of society?
 - The British Empire both depended on and contributed to the pace of industrial growth
 - Why would a stable balance of power in continental Europe following the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815) be good for Britain’s growing market economy?
 - What does it mean to say that Britain ruled as a **hegemonic power**?
- **Suffrage and the Industrial Revolution**
- **The Interventionist State (WWI-WWII)**
 - Key industries—railways, mining, shipping—**nationalized** during wartime
- **Collectivist Consensus (1945-1979)**
 - “all major political parties...accepted as a matter of faith that governments should work to narrow the gap between rich and poor through public education, national health care, and other policies of the **welfare state**”
 - Undone by **stagflation** and the ‘winter of discontent’
- **Thatcherism (1979-1990)**
 - Cut taxes, reduced social services, increased **privatization**
 - Embraced traditional cultural values in the ‘enterprise culture’: individual responsibility, commitment to family, frugality, and entrepreneurialism
 - Thatcher brought down by personal politics and her anti-EU views
- **New Labour and the Third Way**
 - Embraces collectivism’s social policy and Thatcherism’s economic policy
 - Changes since 9/11 – Blair’s focus on “**special relationship**” between US/UK

Section 2: Political Economy and Development

- **The Consensus Era: Keynesian demand management**
 - Secure low levels of unemployment
 - Expand social services
 - Maintain a steady rate of GDP growth
 - Keep prices stable
- **The Collapse of the Consensus Era: 1974-79**
 - Low growth and high unemployment
 - Clashes with unions over pay
 - 1976 – UK receives IMF bailout
 - Culminates in 1978-9 ‘winter of discontent’
- **Neoliberalism**
 - a pillar of both Thatcherism and the Third Way
 - promotes competition among firms and limits govt. interference
 - relies heavily on **monetarism** and rejects Keynesianism
- **Monetarism**
 - Assumes a ‘natural rate of unemployment’ as determined by the market’s ‘creative destruction’
 - State intervention limited fiscal/monetary policy to keep inflation low and the money supply appropriate
- **New Growth Theory**
 - Embraces globalization with a vision of highly skilled labor for high-tech jobs on a global market
 - “Brown argues that since capital is international mobile, and not subject to control, industrial policy and planning that focus on the domestic economy alone are futile. Rather, government should improve the quality of labor through education and training, maintain the labor market flexibility inherited from the Thatcher regime, and attract investment to Britain”
- **Britain in the Global Economy**
 - “**Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)** favors national systems..at rely more on private contractual and market-driven arrangements and less on state capacity and political or institutional arrangements.”
 - § What is FDI? Why does it matter?

Question: the text states that “each economic doctrine helps to justify a broad moral and cultural vision of society”? What does this mean?