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Opposition in a Changing Political Environment: Leadership and the Conservative Party, 1997-2010

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Abstract

This thesis examines the changing nature of opposition within the British political system through a study of the balance of power between the Conservative Party and its leader in their most recent period in opposition from 1997 to 2010. A literature on the place of the opposition within the British political system was developed as part of post-1945 studies of the Westminster Model. However, despite dramatic changes in the political environment and the increasing rejection of the Westminster Model, more recent discussion has neglected systematic study of opposition. More recent writing on the Conservative Party has not been used to examine claims about the changing form and function of opposition, but has assumed the importance of the decisions of particular actors. In order to study the recent Conservative Party with a view to developing our understanding of opposition and the expectations upon its leader, the thesis identifies the change in the political environment as central. It suggests dealing with this by utilizing a conceptual framework derived from Presidentialisation theory. This offers a conceptualisation of the political system as a whole, identifying the increasing importance of leadership at its heart. Adapting this to the study of opposition suggests examination of three crucial components of leadership activity: the relationship between the party and the leader, the place of the leader within general elections and the place of the leader and opposition within the wider political environment including executive actions. Examination of these areas highlights the substantial ways in which power has moved from the leader to the party alongside the additional resources which the leader can command. It concludes that whilst the changing political environment may have served to make the leader of the opposition appear more powerful and prominent, there are significant structural constraints which prevent the exercise of this power.

Opposition in a Changing Political Environment: Leadership and the Conservative Party, 1997-2010

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Contents

List of Illustrations

List of Abbreviations

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BES	British Election Studies
EPP	European Parliament European People's Party
ERM	Exchange Rate Mechanism
EU	European Union
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MP	Member of Parliament
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NHS	National Health Service
PMQ	Prime Minister's Questions
SDP	Social Democratic Party
UKIP	United Kingdom Independence Party
UN	United Nations
US	United States of America
WTO	World Trade Organisation

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Acknowledgements

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my family, my mother and father and brother Jamie, for all their support.

1 Introduction

1.1 Problematic

For an organisation that has traditionally been portrayed as the 'natural party of government', the Conservatives' spell in opposition from 1997-2010 was unprecedented in the modern era. It appeared to many that they had lost their historic skill of winning and retaining power, and that there was a significant possibility they might never hold office again. At the same time the Conservative Party appeared to struggle with the role of being the opposition. In part this may have been because their extended period in office from 1979 meant the party was more geared up for governing than opposing. However, it was also clear that the changing political environment impacted on the activity which the opposition needed to undertake. Just as features such as a rolling news cycle and an increasing political focus on the Prime Minister had significant implications for the government, so it had implications for what was required from the Conservatives to oppose it.

In recent years an increasingly exclusive focus on the politics of government has led to a serious neglect of the opposition in the literature. Further compounding this, despite its history of much greater electoral success in the twentieth century, relative to the Labour Party, the Conservative Party outside of government has been rather little studied. What studies there have been of the recent Conservative period in opposition have focused primarily on the individual agents and the interplay between them. This guides much of the literature towards a concentration on the problems caused for the Conservatives by the incompetence of individual actors and conflicts between them. While this is undoubtedly an important facet of the Conservatives' experience during this time, it pushes into the background consideration of the structural factors that influenced the trajectory of the Conservatives during this period. Thus not only institutional constraints but the different structures within the wider political environment in which the party operated tend to be neglected.

From this starting point the thesis analyses the Conservative Party from 1997 to 2010 with the aim of not just understanding the dynamics of that organisation but also with a

view to raising questions about the balance of power between the leader and the party, the role of opposition in modern politics, and the impact of changes in the political environment on the opposition.

1.2   Research Questions

These research questions are guided by the problematic, the findings of the literature review, and the conceptual framework. They themselves guide the structure of the substantive chapters, and inform the data and methods used to answer them. They provide more detail about the general questions and themes posed by the problematic, about the balance of power within the Conservatives, the role of opposition, and the leader of the opposition's relationship to changes in the political environment. Different chapters and different sections relate to different elements of the structural constraints on, and place of the leader of the opposition, as detailed in the problematic. The first substantive chapter relates to the balance of power within the Conservatives, as do the first two research questions in the second substantive chapter. The last section of the second substantive chapter and the third substantive chapter relate to the place of the leader of the opposition in British politics, and his relationship to changes in the political environment. In the modern political environment, it is difficult to place this period of opposition for the Conservatives in context, if we do not consider the inter party relationships and the wider place of the leader of the opposition, for they are both significant in dictating his place and success.

- Did the balance of power between the leader of the opposition and the Conservative party favour the leader? Did the formal or informal balance of power within the Conservatives change in favour of the leader of the opposition, and how permanent were these changes between different leaders? Did the leader of the opposition claim the political mandate, or were there other figures within the Conservatives, or the Conservative party as a whole, able to plausibly claim the mandate or water down the leader's claim to it? How much power was concentrated in the leader of the opposition's office - were other figures within the Conservatives able to challenge or defy the leader's office?

- How prominent a role did the leader of the opposition take within general election campaigns, and how did it compare to other figures within the Conservatives? Has the leader of the opposition become more prominent among the media? Have leaders of the opposition had significant effects on the voting intentions of the electorate?

- What techniques did the leader of the opposition use to persuade people they empathised with them, and were strong leaders? Did the media create an independent leadership dimension? How did the leader of the opposition relate to the way internationalisation of politics and the growth of the state was affecting the Prime Minister's office and the Cabinet, and what place did they have within state and international networks? What form of organisation did the leader of the opposition use for his own Shadow Cabinet?

1.3   Rationale and Structure

This thesis seeks to explain how the structural environment has contributed to the trajectory of the Conservatives in opposition from 1997. Doing this will give insight into the place of opposition in modern times and the place of the leader within the Conservative party. To do this we will use Presidentialisation as a tool for analysing the different Conservative leaders of the opposition. Presidentialisation is a theory which has had to take account of changes in the political environment, many of which apply to the leader of the opposition, the interplay between the leader of the opposition and the office of Prime Minister, and the different media and social pressures that the leader of the opposition is subjected to, meaning it is suitable as a base for the conceptual framework.

The thesis contains seven chapters which contribute towards answering the problematic. This introductory chapter lays out the general outline of the methodology and framework the thesis will use, and the resulting structure. This then leads into two chapters which set out the reasons for studying this topic, and the detail of the framework that will be employed in answering the problematic. The first of these chapters is the literature review. It starts from a concern with the place of the Conservative party in opposition and the place of opposition in British politics. The chapter contains a review of literature about opposition in British politics, a summation of how the political environment and

the main theories about it in Britain have changed, and a review of how the Conservative party in opposition since 1997 has been treated by the academic literature. The review takes a range of books and journal articles and looks for trends in their treatment of opposition, and how these have developed relating to changes in the political environment. This chapter aims to put the literature about the Conservative party in opposition since 1997 in context and into different schools, to see what different areas are extensively covered and which areas could benefit from a different approach. From this analysis it was concluded that much of the literature either views the opposition with an agent centred mindset (either the leader or other personnel) taking less account of structural considerations or either focusing on single leaders, or aspects of the Conservatives in opposition. It was therefore concluded that a framework that provided a structural analysis of the Conservatives in opposition since 1997 would be able to make a contribution to a literature centred around events and agents.

The third chapter is all about constructing this structural framework. It was concluded that Presidentialisation would be the best tool to use in tackling the problematic and the research questions. Despite its association with leaders of the executive, Presidentialisation is as much, if not more, about structure and the environment that politicians work in, making it suitable to apply to opposition in a continually evolving political environment, where the leader has to relate closely to other institutions and the changing environment. This chapter looks at the development of Presidentialisation as a term, the main causes and effects of the concept, and how it could be applied to this thesis. It does this by reference to the main works that have developed conceptualisations of Presidentialisation, and comparison of their main points. It then goes through each of these main points and judges how suitable they are to be applied to a thesis about opposition. This chapter finds that there have been three main works that have applied theories of Presidentialisation to the British political system. They are by Michael Foley, Anthony Poguntke and Paul Webb, and Anthony Mughan. While a large proportion of their studies are applied to the Prime Minister and the Executive, they do cover the opposition in some ways, and many of their points of analysis are equally applicable to the leader of the opposition. In analysing and relating them to the opposition, the chapter takes the decision to apply the extensive framework developed by Poguntke and Webb in their study of Presidentialisation in western democracies, with the addition of elements from Michael Foley's *The British Presidency*. Poguntke and Webb deploy an extensive framework which covers four major changes in the political environment, changing

media coverage, electoral dealignment, the growing size of the state, and the internationalisation of politics, which impact three areas, relations between a leader and his party, relations between the leader and the electorate and between the leader and the executive. While relations with the executive, the growing size of the state and the internationalisation of politics are difficult to directly apply to the leader of the opposition, they are still important indirect considerations for the leader of the opposition, in that there is still an interest in how the leader of the opposition *reacts* to them. The dealigned electorate, changing media coverage, and changing relations with electorate and party can be directly applied to the leader of the opposition. However, even after including all of this, we are still missing something, which refers back to the opposition's interaction with the Prime Minister. This leads us to consider Michael Foley's conception of leaderland, which is a way of conceptualising how the opposition relates to the government and the wider political system, and the environment especially - merging it with the conception of the executive to form a concept of the political environment, a network of influences that the leader of the opposition can only indirectly control, and is often in a reactive pose towards. This section is necessary as it is important to take account of the arena of leadership and the Prime Minister when starting out with an analysis of opposition, because it is hard to make judgements about the leader of the opposition ignoring them.

Having established this framework, the thesis then moves onto three substantive chapters which will follow the framework and provide the base for the conclusions. The first of these substantive chapters is based closely upon Poguntke and Webb's first 'face' of Presidentialisation, the party face. This is concerned with the balance of power between the leader and the party, and specifically whether there has been any move of power towards the leader of the Conservative party. This is done through analysis of the formal and informal balance of power within the Conservative party, of whether the leader was allowed to claim the mandate from the party, and how much power was concentrated within the leader's office. We gleaned this information through speeches by leaders, newspaper reports, and internal party documents. This enables us to construct a clear picture of how power has shifted between leader and party. In this chapter we see that although there were formal changes to the structure of power within the Conservative party that in theory gave the leader of the opposition more power, in reality successful usage of these powers depended on the leader maintaining popularity, a clear strategy, and stable relations with a volatile party that was able to exploit a greater media

preoccupation with 'splits' to make life awkward for the leader, in a way they had not been able to during previous periods of opposition.

The next chapter deals with the second of Poguntke and Webb's 'faces', the electoral. Again, it is centred around the balance of power between the Conservative party and its leader. The chapter uses poll data, speeches, newspaper and television coverage to assess what the leader of the opposition's role was within the campaign compared to other Conservatives, how prominent he was within the media, and how much effect leaders of the opposition had on the voting intentions of the electorate. Again, the position of the leader of the opposition was precarious, with the leader and the party (especially in 2001) often reluctant to personalise campaigns. But despite this media coverage and public impressions were often personalised around the leader, leading to expectations that were not always fulfilled.

This leads onto the sixth chapter which also covers outside expectations, and the political environment. It uses media coverage, speeches, and academic works to look at what techniques leaders use to persuade people they emphasised with them, but were at the same time strong leaders. Also analysed in this chapter is whether the media created an independent leadership dimension. The second part of the chapter is about how the leader of the opposition has interacted with the internationalisation of politics and the growth of the state, two factors that have affected the Prime Minister. This is where the conceptual framework modifies Poguntke and Webb's own framework, greatly expanding the 'executive face'. This is because of the different starting points of Poguntke and Webb, and this thesis. It relates to the 'leaderland' Michael Foley defines as a separate space where leadership becomes an independent issue. This space is made up of the main political leaders and is defined in large part by the expectations generated around the office of Prime Minister. So Poguntke and Webb, by the nature of their studies which are mostly concerned with leaders of the executive, are able to take account of the expectations generated by the office, while in this thesis we need to take a broader approach that fuses the features of the leader of the opposition in the leadership arena with the office of the Prime Minister. Applying the Poguntke and Webb framework as a whole would ignore one important difference. Their study is about the leader of the executive, not the leader of the opposition. As has been mentioned previously, the main task of the leader of the opposition is to win an election and secure the office of Prime Minister. Part of leaderland is that the leader of the opposition becomes judged against

the requirements of the office of Prime Minister. To do this, we need a lot more reference to the Prime Minister himself, meaning taking account of *both* leaders is so important, not just seeing things from the perspective of the leader of the opposition. Given the importance of the office of Prime Minister to the conception of leaderland and the tactics leaders have to use to demonstrate their suitability for the office, it is very hard to exclude the Prime Minister and their actions from a study of the leader of the opposition in the same way that Poguntke and Webb are able to devote the vast majority of their work to leaders of the executive. This section came to the conclusion that the leader of the opposition was influenced by the expectations generated by the office of Prime Minister, especially what we called the 'could you see him as Prime Minister' test, and struggled to fulfil the requirements of a leadership arena that demanded the ability to show strong leadership and still seem a 'man of the people'. The two aspects of leadership are separated because it focuses on the interplay between voters and elites needing to be persuaded of the concept and a self sustaining leadership arena being created. The second section of this chapter was about the way the leader of the opposition related to the way the internationalisation of politics and the growth of the state was affecting the Prime Minister, and the opposition. It was found that the leader of the opposition had a difficult time establishing control over international developments, although often it was a tricky area for the Prime Minister as well.

This then leads to the question of whether this can be done within Poguntke and Webb's 'faces', or whether leaderland needs to be given a separate chapter. It is contended that it still needs a separate chapter. As has been covered, leaderland is based on an independent arena of leadership that revolves around the office of Prime Minister, and therefore requires balanced consideration of not just how the leader of the opposition conducts himself in this leadership arena, but how he compares to the Prime Minister. Doing this within the 'faces' would over-complicate the framework and make it very difficult to operate, and it would take the focus away from the place of the leader of the opposition in the Conservative party and the place of opposition in the system. At some points, especially in the party and electoral chapters, it would create unwieldy three way comparisons between the leader of the opposition, the Conservative party and the Prime Minister that would not give firm conclusions.

The final chapter is all about the conclusions the thesis has drawn, bringing together all the material from the substantive chapters and assessing them in light of the framework

assessed in terms of the conceptual framework. It finds that the structural place of the leader of the Conservative party, was undermined by a party that had become more volatile and was empowered by the media to speak up against the leader, although the leader personally possessed more formal powers and prominence. This often undermined the attempts of leaders to personalise Conservative politics round themselves and take power and a mandate over the rest of the party. When they were not able to do this it undermined their overall political position, as there was a leadership environment that placed great expectations on the leader of the opposition to fulfil multiple leadership roles and be seen to fulfil the requirements of the office of Prime Minister. The changing structural position of the leader of the Conservative party in opposition has reflected higher expectations around the leader of the opposition without much of the increased power to the leader from the party that one would think would be entailed.

1.4   Methods and Methodology

In outlining the methodology of the thesis, this section will first consider issues in general before moving on to consider the individual methods employed by each chapter. It uses a wide variety of sources and this requires the use of different methods. Overall, the thesis is concerned to investigate the relationship between structures and agency, rather than simply assuming that all political activity is the work of individuals by asserting that politics is not just the product of agents interacting with each other. It also takes the perspective that decision making is shaped by underlying structural imperatives, which are not directly observable, and require a degree of analytical interpretation. The thesis is also informed by a rejection of the idea that there is a single unilinear developmental trajectory which can be established by precise calculations and deductions based on quantitative data. Whilst not rejecting quantitative analysis out of hand the thesis is primarily concerned with the interpretation of texts to establish meaning. Thus, although the thesis makes some use of quantitative material, most is qualitative. The sources are primarily biographical books, speeches by Conservative leaders, polling data, newspaper articles, internet videos and interviews conducted by the author with politicians. Using data from each of these sources requires individual approaches that apply to different parts of the thesis.

In the body of the thesis the main sources are approached from a number of different perspectives. In the first place they are analysed to establish a broad framework of events, where the combination of the primary sources of the thesis with the established academic literature is of particular significance. The aim of this is in part to outline the key features which defined the relationship between the leader and his party, and enable us to outline the formal structures of power within the party. The second phase of the analysis moves on to develop a clear understanding of the precise motivations and meanings of particular actions. Original speeches and interviews with party insiders and former leaders are particularly important in this respect in the early stages of the thesis where the emphasis is on internal party meanings. We may know generally what happened at certain times, but may require more detail about what happened (say the vocabulary of a speech) and why it happened (insider testimony). Using full texts of speeches enables us to take the whole of what was said, and can throw different light on what may have become consensus or partisan media or party interpretations of key speeches. Questioning insiders can also help us probe these assumptions. A similar approach is also taken towards the analysis of media, newspaper and archive television coverage, for how it presented the leader of the opposition, in terms of headlines, television pictures, and narrative. Again the method of working here is highly interpretive, comparing and contrasting different coverage of key events.

The main use of quantitative data relates to the effect of the leader of the opposition on voters, where polling data and data from the British Election Studies (BES) are used. By nature the mode of working here relies inevitably on statistics and the guidance of the BES controlled studies of leader effects. Although this is different in method from the approach taken to the other research questions, it is consistent with the general approach of the thesis because it remains concerned with issues of interpretation and meaning.

2   Review of the Literature about Opposition

This chapter will conduct a review of the literature on opposition in British politics from the post war period onwards. It looks at how opposition has been covered by academic writers, and how these authors' works have interacted with the political environment of the time. The chapter is divided into different sections relating to opposition and the changing political environment. The first section focuses on the development of the 'Westminster Model', what implications it had for the conduct of opposition, the place opposition itself had carved out within this model, and the main features of it. We then move onto a section looking at the development of the British political system, and how changes in the political environment threatened the established conventions of the Westminster Model. This is followed by a section that reviews the literature written about the Conservative party in opposition since 1997, and in what way this literature has taken account of the changed political environment and the threats to the Westminster Model.

2.1   The Development of the Westminster Model and Opposition

The development of political opposition and the Westminster Model have been intertwined with each other historically. The Westminster Model was based around the fundamental principles of parliamentary sovereignty, and adversarial, competitive politics.[1] These principles governed the development of opposition. Recognition of the right of politicians in Parliament to oppose, criticise and seek to replace the government emerged between 1721 and 1784. 1826 saw the first recorded use of the term 'Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition'. 1841 provided the first example of a party taking power after winning the election standing as an alternative government. The second Reform Act in 1867 ushered in something like the modern organised party, with a need to appeal to the greatly expanded electorate. By the late 19th Century it had become common practice for leaders defeated in the election to come together as an informal committee to discuss parliamentary and political tactics, and this process developed, with both parties formally appointing advisory committees to the leader. In the Ministers of the Crown Act 1937 the opposition was formally recognised, officially institutionalizing opposition within the

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[1] Mark Bevir, 'The Westminster Model, Governance and Judicial Reform', *Parliamentary Affairs,* Vol. 61(4), (2008), p.561.

British political system. In 1955 Clement Atlee appointed a Shadow Cabinet of Ministers shadowing the government's responsibilities and Ministers underneath them shadowing the responsibilities of Junior Ministers. Since then it has become commonplace for the Leader of the Opposition to appoint a Shadow Cabinet closely mirroring the division of responsibilities amongst the Cabinet, that looked very much like a 'Shadow Government'. Since 1975, opposition received 'Short Money' from government which it could nominally use to research topics relating to government. This gradual recognition of the place of opposition had occurred within the Parliamentary system, and the Westminster Model. The House of Commons showed the "clearest evidence of the special role of the opposition" in its privileges in debates, committees and short money, all of which made the opposition party recognisably a shadow government, and militated against smaller parties. Opposition had been "institutionalised within the parliamentary system as an alternative government and this defines a set of roles which the principal party opposed to the majority in office is expected to perform."[2] Opposition was recognised by the state, adversarial and acting as a 'Shadow Government'. But what place did this concept of opposition have within the study of British politics?

The concept has been more important to British politics than in many other polities, precisely because of how it developed within Parliament. In lots of other countries, there does not exist an official opposition at all, let alone one based so closely and extensively around the government. The system was defined by parties, and conflict within the parameters of the constitutional system. It relied on "coherent and essentially unified parties" that do not work together in any substantive way, but presented competing alternative political visions.[3] Opposition in Britain was "institutionalised for the modern electorate as the standing possibility of an alternative government to replace the one in power." Such a competitive, adversarial system had "necessarily encouraged and sustained a two party system." Chief among the roles that the parties were expected to fulfil was the way they were supposed to *oppose,* to attack most of the government's activities and policies, not find consensus with the government. It had helped embed a highly adversarial kind of politics that tended to exaggerate disagreement, and disregard small parties, but at the same time had been remarkably effective in enabling the electorate to change the government, and prevent oligarchies developing. When the

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[2] Nevil Johnson, 'Opposition in the British Political System', *Government and Opposition,* Vol.32, (1997), pp.487-509.
[3] Phillip Norton, 'Making Sense of Opposition', *The Journal of Legislative Studies,* Vol. 14(1), (2008), pp.236-244.

system worked as advocates of the Westminster model believed it would, producing frequent alteration in office between the two main parties, then it could be "taken to mean that the opposition has successfully discharged a function of governing control," and that they had enabled a large part of the electorate to believe elections were a real opportunity to take part in choosing the next government.[4] Most voters thought they had a stake in the system. The Westminster Model had been a great influence on the way the opposition conducted its politics, and in turn the opposition had been an important part of the model, and in fact was integral to it. The style of opposition in Britain would not have been possible without the political environment that existed. It was a two-way relationship, as opposition had also become an important part of the system that sustained it, and helped to hold up some of the key aspects of the system that were supported by the shape of the surrounding political environment. The literature about opposition demonstrated this by reflecting and linking closely to the political environment that the opposition existed in. The model was sustained by the nature of society around Parliament. It was characterised by heavy class and as a result, party alignment. Parties were so important in "giving meaning to contests in individual parliamentary constituencies in Britain that for many voters candidates have no identities other than their partisan one."[5] The 'big two' Conservative and Labour parties gained overwhelming majorities of the vote, and the adversarial debate amongst them dominated most political discourse.

Much of the literature about opposition in the post-war period reflects an environment that was able to sustain a class based, strong, two party system. Many of the works share a similar appreciation of the structure of the British political system and oppositions' place in it. Perhaps the phrase which most encapsulates this conception of a system is by Allen Potter, 'opposition with a capital O'. Potter meshes most of the features of the post-war system and the Westminster Model that were detailed above, into a conception of opposition in Britain. Increasingly the leader of the opposition was being treated as "Her Majesty's alternative Prime Minister." He took account of the large social and class cleavages in British society and how this affected voting, and then the extra parliamentary forms of opposition that were starting to develop in Britain. Porter was mainly dismissive of these 'oppositions with a little o', saying that they would be able to

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[4] Johnson, 'Opposition in the British Political System', pp.487-510.
[5] David Butler and Donald Stokes, *Political Change in Britain: the Evolution of Electoral Choice,* Second Edition, (London: Macmillan Press, 1974), p.9.

achieve little of their aims, and that opposition in Great Britain "is by politicians, offering an alternative government in accordance with the conventions of the parliamentary system - opposition with a capital O".[6] The opposition was clearly identifiable, and situated within Parliament, which became the main area of focus for politics. It was a politics that was defined by the social and economic cleavages in society, which had created a party system based around them. Although there was some discussion about the increased role and prominence of the leader of the opposition, it was clear that the position of the leader was constrained by the conventions of the parliamentary system, and the large social and class cleavages that affected voting. They dominated the conduct of politics for the opposition, as in a system governed by these cleavages it was instrumental for parties to associate themselves with class blocs. When the actual activities of the opposition were studied, it was found they were very much influenced by the environment, and the features of the Westminster Model. The opposition was portrayed in these studies as "office seeking, loyal, single party, Parliamentary."[7] Two clusters of opinion competing for parliamentary supremacy was absolutely central for the system to work, for just having one cluster meant that it would not have worked at all, while more than two would have made the system unstable. Opposition was important to upholding the system.

But the integral place of the opposition in Parliament did not mean the leader of the opposition was seen to have great power himself, and he was actually quite constrained by his MPs. The leader of the opposition was not at the apex of as many institutions as the Prime Minister was. He was in command of relatively little, and was forced by the essentially parliamentary nature of opposition to continually react to what the government was doing. It was very little institutional power with comparatively large amounts of responsibility. The Conservative leader, in opposition and in government, was charged with the "sole ultimate responsibility" for the Conservative electoral programme and policies, and traditionally was seen as presiding over the party with relative impunity. But in times of opposition the party still retained the option of rebellion in Parliament which would embarrass the leader. Looking at it this way, McKenzie deduced that the powers of the Conservative leader were "more precarious

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[6] Allen Potter, 'Opposition With A Capital O', in Robert Dahl (Ed.), *Political Oppositions In Western Democracies,* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1966), pp.14-23.
[7] R.M.Punnett, *Front Bench Opposition: The Role of the Leader of the Opposition, the Shadow Cabinet and Shadow Government in British Politics,* (London: Heinemann, 1973), p.9.

and less invulnerable," than may have seemed on an initial analysis.[8] The theoretical absolute power which the Conservative leader possessed, could in most realistic circumstances, not be employed, as the threat of a revolt from within the party, especially from within the body of MPs, had to be balanced against the nature and amount of power the leader exercised, and his general political direction. Although a leader could sometimes rise above them, MPs retained absolute decisive power as a group, and any leadership policy had to first and foremost start from a base of satisfying their MPs. This shows the prevailing treatment of leaders by academia. Although they were prominent, they were not regarded in the same way as US Presidential candidates, largely independent of party. They were creatures produced by a party in a sovereign Parliament, and their political futures depended largely upon what they did in that Parliament.

In practice there was little that even the most charismatic leader could do to rise above the party because of the hold the Westminster Model had over the political environment. Perceptions of a leader were nowhere near as big an influence on voters as perceptions of their party. Voters' perceptions of a leader were at best marginal to the political and electoral process, and ultimate political power therefore rested in the hands of party institutions. As it was the leader could not show he was more important than the party to electoral victory. Government largely controlled the domestic agenda and the nature of politics - it was governments that controlled the major power resources, and it was up to them to lose an election, not the opposition to win it. The opposition were on the "outside looking in".[9] This was despite the fact more people as politics entered the 1960s were seeing the leaders through Television. But if the personality of the individual leading the office was increasing in importance, this was only to a point. The actual campaigns in the 1950s and early 1960s, were issue dominated, and it was said that the notion that the election was a choice between rival political teams or leaders was pushing things too far. Even if attention was turning away from specific policies as determinants of voting behaviour, "people were voting for the parties much more than for their leaders." Leaders were little utilised in any of the parties' posters or television broadcasts. [10] Class was still the most important determinant of voting behaviour in what was a relatively rigid

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[8] Robert McKenzie, *British Political Parties,* (London: Heinemann, 1955), pp.21-67.
[9] Punnett, *Front Bench Opposition*, pp.105-389.
[10] David Butler and Richard Rose, *The British General Election of 1959,* (London: Macmillan, 1960), pp.1-73.

electorate.[11] Although a leader of the opposition could be viewed as an alternative Prime Minister, he or she found they were in a relatively weak position to influence events, and impose their personality on politics in the style of an American presidential candidate. Most political attention was focused on Parliament and the institutions the government controlled. Political coverage of Parliament gave much attention to other political actors as well as the leaders.

A conception of opposition highly centred around the Westminster Model gained such widespread recognition in academia and had become the established standard, that there was little attempt to move beyond it to a new conception of opposition. This meant that Dahl's work from the 1960s had remained a largely unchallenged reference point for the study of opposition, and most subsequent works shared his focus on Parliamentary opposition.[12] This met with the environment of the day, although as we shall see it is a conception which does not fit as neatly to a changed environment today. This respect for the Westminster Model was also seen internationally, and this has continued through to the modern day. Although some international commentators found the 'yah-boo' element of British politics puzzling, many international political scientists still saw the model as the "basis and epitome of western democracy thanks to the way it facilitates peaceful government succession." The "greatest common denominator of western democracies" was the recognition and integration of the opposition into the parliamentary and institutional system that revolved around a "fundamental axis" of competition between the government majority and the opposition in Britain.[13] But overall, despite the seeming hegemony of this model, there were criticisms emerging, which will form the basis of our next section. Although analysis of opposition by political scientists had a long tradition, many complained that it had been an "inadequately explored" concept, with much of the existing analysis concentrating on the outcomes of legal processes, not behaviour of the opposition as a political actor, and advanced less than other factors.[14]

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[11] Seymour Lipset and Stein Rokkan, *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives*, (London: Macmillan, 1967), p.81.
[12] Ludgar Helms, 'Five Ways of Institutionalizing Opposition: Lessons From the Advanced Democracies', *Government and Opposition,* Vol.39 (1), (2004), p.24.
[13] Clive H.Church and Adrian Vatter, 'Opposition in Consensual Switzerland: A Short But Significant Experiment', *Government and Opposition,* Vol. 44(4), (2009), p. 430.
[14] Jean Blondel, 'Opposition In the Contemporary World', *Government and Opposition,* Vol. 32(4), (1997), pp. 462-486;

Respect for the Westminster Model dictated the style, tone and above all content of the various literatures written about the opposition. It dictated the areas of inquiry, and limited the space for independent action that the leader of the opposition had. But what was this environment? British politics was an adversarial form of politics between two main parties. Voting, and many policies, were class based. Other prominent figures in politics enjoyed nearly as much media coverage as the leaders of parties. The bulk of the literature was therefore centred on parties and as such did not make the analysis of the leader their main focus. Sections that deal with the outside elements, such as the media or elections, were briefer than the sections on party which were much more exhaustive. The emphasis was still more on the power structure within parties and within the parliamentary system, than outside them. But while these works do not show much concern with areas outside parties, by doing this they reflect many of the priorities of the age. The literature reflected the stability and hegemony of the Westminster model, of which opposition was an integral part. And yet it was a hegemony that would be challenged by developments in the political environment, and in academia.

2.2 Challenges to the Westminster Model

This section deals with the challenges to the Westminster Model, and the place of opposition within it. The environment that sustained the Westminster Model did not last, and as it changed there began to be fissures in the Westminster Model that showed how intertwined it had been with the political environment. In turn this led to a challenge by academia to the fundamental precepts of the Model. In this section we explore the main changes in the political environment, how they impacted upon the Westminster Model, and their implications for opposition.

2.2.1 Changes in the Electorate

The shape of the electorate had been a crucial sustaining factor of the Westminster Model. Two blocs of partisan and identified voters, broadly split by class, sustained the two main parties in hegemonic positions. The fact that there were enough floating voters in the middle to occasion frequent changes of government between the two main parties meant that there was a mix of stability and promise in the system, stability in that regional and class factors dictated that there were a multitude of safe seats for the two main parties, and promise because there were enough floating voters for both parties to

harbour realistic chances of winning, and voters realised this. But this perception was not sustained throughout the 1980s, as Margaret Thatcher racked up comfortable majorities (including a landslide victory in 1983) and a third party, the Alliance of SDP/Liberals, gained serious amounts of voters (although not seats) in 1983 gaining a near identical vote percentage to Labour. Even a closer election in 1992 did not prevent informed speculation that Labour had no hope of winning power again, and that the Conservatives would maintain effective one party rule. [15] Even after Labour then won by a landslide in 1997, and won two elections subsequently, it did not then prevent despairing speculation amongst Conservatives that then *they* would never be able to return to government because of changes in Britain and the colonisation of the centre ground by New Labour.[16] The 'equilibrium' of regular changes in government had been replaced by starker shifts to long periods of domination by one of the main parties. This had immediate consequences for the opposition, as it undermined their claim to be part of a system where most felt they had a genuine chance to vote in a change of government. The fact that this no longer seemed realistic meant that all sorts of other institutions were suddenly claimed to be the 'real opposition', some outside Parliament - the media, business, trade unions, pressure groups and so on. The threat from the third party was felt acutely by the two main parties. But what was underlying the more volatile behaviour of the electorate?

It had origins in the process of electoral de-alignment, which had been first mooted in the 1970s. Some academics theorised that class no longer 'froze' the electorate to the point where the election winner would be determined by who mobilised the most supporters from 'their' class base. Short-term influences were becoming a far greater and potent influence on the electorate than the "persisting social structure of society."[17] Previous class and family based voting was being split up as people moved around more, and traditional industries that sustained class consciousness began to decline.[18] Relationships between an individual's social class and their voting behaviour, while still existing, were carrying far less weight than before. More voters were 'up for grabs' by either of the main parties, with less firm partisan support than previously.[19] Butler and Stokes thought

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[15] Helen Margetts, *Turning Japanese: Britain With A Permanent Party of Government,* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1994).

[16] John Curtice, 'The Electoral System: Biased to Blair?', *Parliamentary Affairs,* Vol. 54(1), (2001), p.807.

[17] Richard Rose and Ian McAllister, *Voters Begin to Choose: From Closed Class to Open Elections in Britain,* (London: SAGE Publications, 1986), pp.9-11.

[18] Denver, 'Great Britain: From Opposition With A Capital O To Fragmented Opposition', in Eva Kolinsky (Ed.), *Opposition in Western Europe,* (Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1987), p. 108.

[19] Bo Sarlvik and Ivor Crewe, *Decade of Dealignment: The Conservative Victory of 1979 and Electoral Trends in the 1970s,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp.332-334.

that this was down to a new generation of voters, brought up in a more affluent, less class conscious environment then their ancestors.[20] Partisan dealignment became a much more popular part of the academic literature in the 1980s. Richard Rose claimed that the electorate was "wide open to change" - according to his figures three quarters of the electorate were no longer tied to a single party determined by family and class.[21] Class based voting began to fragment, with the 'wrong' class supporting the 'wrong' party, voting based on their interests and concerns. But why had the previously hegemonic system of two parties supported by class blocs become more fragmented? In the 1980s, as the Labour party split, the correlation between increasing government unpopularity and increasing opposition popularity had began to decline, with Thatcher winning elections through a recession and over three million unemployed.[22] The changes in the British electorate, which had gained popular attention by the 1980s, were labelled as moving from 'opposition with a capital O' to a 'fragmented opposition', where parties had to appeal to floating voters, not the traditional blocs. Thatcher was able to convert a great number of the C2 class, traditional Labour voters, to vote Conservative. The reasons for the decline in class as an indicator of voting were many. It was said it was down to the way class was less important in determining life chances, new post-industrial social cleavages, the increased popularity of single issue movements, values cross cutting the importance of class, and a growing middle class.[23] However not all of the literature agreed that this would mean leadership would become a more prominent factor for voters, with even works that thought that class alignment was declining saying that other factors were more important to voting. But leaders were featured more in parts of the academic literature. A look at the standard Nuffield election review texts shows the incorporation of electoral dealignment into the analysis of parties and the meshing of leader activities, the media and party strategy. Their review of the 1983 election which returned Thatcher to power is a contrast to earlier reviews. A major part was how "one figure stood dominant" - Thatcher - and this showed that the "traditional bases of the British party system and of British political ideas were in ferment."[24] Voting had become less class based and more volatile, shown by polls taken during the 1979-1983

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[20] David Butler and Donald Stokes, *Political Change in Britain: The Evolutions of Electoral Choice,* Second Edition, (London: Macmillan, 1974), p.208.
[21] Rose and McAllister, *Voters Begin to Choose,* p.1.
[22] Denver, 'Great Britain', p.90.
[23] Geoffrey Evans, 'Class Voting: From Premature Obituary To Reasoned Appraisal', in Evans (Ed.), *The End of Class Politics: Class Voting In Comparative Context,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp.8-9.
[24] David Butler and Dennis Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 1983,* (London: Macmillan, 1984), p.1.

Parliament. Even though Thatcher was not overwhelmingly liked, her strong leadership was valued by voters and crucial to her positioning of herself. She also benefited from her image as an outsider to the Conservative party, and her better use of modern marketing techniques than the Labour leader Michael Foot. She "became the main bearer of the Conservative message."[25] But leaders had certainly not assumed a hegemonic position over parties. Although leaders were being perceived by the electorate in an increasingly personalised way, they were "easily outweighed by other issues and events of concern to the public, including the movements of the economy."[26] If the 1983 election was a powerful demonstration of the tendencies in the electorate which had been 'bubbling under', then they were tendencies which did not go quiet throughout the following decades. A lot was made of how a new Labour leader needed to capture the new dealigned voters with more aspirational policies. Although they did not win an election during the 1980s, the progress of the Labour party was indicative of the changed landscape politicians had to interact with. After Foot's disastrous campaign in which he had been thoroughly 'out marketed' by Thatcher, his successor, Neil Kinnock, took a very different approach, personalising the 1987 election around himself, and attempting to recognise some of the aspirations of Thatcher's new voters. Blair had great success in winning over these voters and 'Middle England'. The rise of Blair created an interest in Conservative leaders' need to win back the liberal, educated Middle Class, whose bonds of party loyalty were seen as very weak.[27] The notion of 'floating voters' and capturing them was a key part of the political discourse. The idea that an election was for the government to lose began to be challenged. More recent studies referred to the need for a unified, electorally appealing, politically renewed and credible opposition party before the government could be defeated at an election.[28] As we shall see in our section about the Conservative party since 1997, these changes in the electoral environment have continued and even intensified.

2.2.2   Valence Politics and the 'Centre Ground'

The new shape of the electorate also threatened to have a profound effect on what the purpose of a political party was. Elections under the old political environment had been

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[25] Butler and Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 1983,* p.274.
[26] Butler and Stokes, *Political Change in Britain,* p.368.
[27] Mark Garnett and Ian Gilmour, 'The Lessons of Defeat', *The Political Quarterly,* Vol. 69(2), (1998), pp.127-128.
[28] Timothy Heppell, 'The Degenerative Tendencies of Long Serving Governments...1963...1997...2008?, *Parliamentary Affairs,* Vol.64 (1), (2008), p.581.

mainly judged through the Downsian modal, where voters cast their vote based on an analysis of what party was closest to them on a right/left continuum.[29] Increasingly, as parties needed to be seen as united around a strong leader, and 'extreme' policies were 'exposed' and whipped up into intra-party rows by a sceptical media, fundamental ideas or discrete policies where the public took different sides -'position' issues- became more difficult for the system to accommodate. Valence issues became more important, where voters largely agreed on the desirable ends to be pursued, such as economic growth, or reducing crime, and judged the parties on their relative competence to achieve the desired ends, or evaluated the performance of government in achieving them.[30] An important sub element of this model was the way parties could benefit differentially from the 'salience' of particular issues. This referred to the importance they were regarded with by voters, and meant a key part of party competition was to impose their issue agendas upon 'rival' issue agendas, and move 'their' issues up the 'pecking order'.[31] Valence politics had made the party leadership crucial, as it took away many of the unique selling points of parties (their ideologies) and made the leaders more prominent.[32] Three factors had coincided to make valence politics possible - the significance of judgement and competence ratings, the decline in association with left and right among the public, and the perceived convergence of the main parties. In addition, this occurred at a time of gradual consensus among the voters.[33] As people lost interest in politics, it made increasing sense to use the leaders in a heuristic fashion, as cognitive shortcuts, letting the public judge the rival leadership teams on their integrity and judgement.[34] It was argued that valence politics had helped put Blair and Labour in such a dominant electoral position, for on arguably the most important valence politics issue of all, the economy, Labour had an apparent record of continuous success that was very hard for the Conservatives to refute in a simple way.[35] There also existed an issue agenda where 'Labour' issues such as health and education were ranked by the public above 'Conservative' issues like immigration or Europe. Of course there has been debate about whether such valence politics was really new, but what was beyond question was that it faced less opposition from an ideological conception of British politics, which was firmly

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[29] Paul Whitely et al., 'The Issue Agenda and Voting in 2005', *Parliamentary Affairs,* Vol.58 (4), (2005), p.803.
[30] David Denver, 'Valence Politics; How Britain Votes Now', *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations,* Vol.7, (2005), p.293.
[31] Whitely et al., 'The Issue Agenda and Voting in 2005', p.805.
[32] Tim Bale, 'Review: Take Your Pick', *Parliamentary Affairs,* Vol. 62(2), (2009), p.364.
[33] Denver, 'Valence Politics', p.630.
[34] Whitley et al., 'The Issue Agenda and Voting in 2005', p.16
[35] Denver, 'Valence Politics', p.296.

receding by the New Labour era. The end of the ideological era in British politics seemed to have heralded a new era of politics based on competence, a drier form of politics that rested less on ideas than ability to govern, and had a lot more time for leaders than ideology.

2.2.3 Changing Media Coverage

If the nature of the electorate that the parties were trying to garner votes from had changed, then it meant that the methods parties used to appeal to them, and the way the media covered them, had changed immensely as well. The changing role of the media was taken in confluence with the changing electorate to provide a set of reasons why the parties should follow a new model of relations with the electorate. During the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s, the style and content of media coverage changed significantly. Although television has been traditionally 'blamed' for the change, we will see that the changes also occurred in other sections of the media like newspapers. This necessitated a different style for politicians in dealing with the media.

Through the decades, television displaced newspapers as the place most people went for political news. But although television had been around in the post war years, it had changed from the 1960s onwards. Political coverage had been deferential, mostly about policies, and gave politicians the chance to put their point of view across unhindered. But from the 1960s onwards, a new generation of interviewers were more challenging of politicians, confronting them about the deficiencies or inconsistencies in what they were doing. Today there is a generation of interviewers who are adept at 'catching them out'. This scepticism has not just been confined to interviewers - especially since the 'era of spin' under Tony Blair, news organisations have taken a much more sceptical tone to coverage and analysis, with promises to 'fact check' politicians.[36] News broadcasts frequently now give much more broadcast time to reporters' interpretation of what was said than the delivery of the speeches themselves. Rarely will politicians speak without their motives, strategy and what they 'are not saying' being questioned.[37] This practice is used on 24 hour news channels, alongside the more comprehensive coverage they are able to give to speeches and press conferences. These rolling news channels have also

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[36] Jay G.Blumer and Michael Gurevitch, 'Public Service in Transition? Public Service Journalism at the BBC, 2001', in John Bartle, Roger Mortimore and Simon Atkinson(Eds.), *Political Communications: The General Election Campaign of 2001,* (London: Frank Cass, 2002), p.218.
[37] Ludger Helms, 'Governing in the Media Age: The Impact of Mass Media on Executive Leadership In Contemporary Democracies', *Government and Opposition,* Vol.43 (1), (2008), p.43.

encouraged the development of 'instant' or 'rapid rebuttal', where scandals or differences between the parties are constantly fed by new statements during the day. Despite the televising of Parliament in the 1980s, and the establishment of a 24 hour parliamentary channel, it has struggled to keep up with television's heuristic focus on leaders, and Prime Ministers Questions is often the only time Parliament makes TV news independently, aside from close votes, which have become rarer, though not extinct, in an era of larger majorities. On mainstream television, there has been the most visible demonstration of the personalisation of politics as leaders appear on 'light entertainment' shows and take questions from members of the public, and will even debate each other. Because of the way TV coverage of politics was filmed, it had more of an immediate impact on viewers than reading a political story in a newspaper. Close ups and reaction shots elicited more personal reactions from viewers.[38] With the 'dis-engaged' part of the electorate increasing, the onus was on parties and the media to 'dumb down' coverage in an attempt to communicate politics to them. Most commentators decried this, with only a minority view holding that 'dumbing down' political coverage was an essential part of engaging an apathetic audience.[39] Broadcasters and print journalists felt a need to move coverage away from an increasingly unpopular Westminster, but instead of replacing this with more coverage of regulators, quangos and international institutions, they focused on human interest stories, which tended to obscure 'big-picture' arguments over policy even more.[40] Stories did not truly dominate unless they could be moulded round a personal angle, or a threat to the individual viewer.[41] The way leaders were treated highlighted a smaller boundary between the public and private, with obstinately private matters being used to judge leaders that would probably never have been reported in the post war era.[42] The media had not passively accepted the parties' attempts to dominate the dissemination of messages, and became more aggressive itself. The tabloid press have exhibited a fascination with using leaders as heuristic shortcuts, and the 'personal', not political aspects of leadership. More worryingly, for many, the broadsheet papers have exhibited similar tendencies. By the turn of the millennium, the days when papers would publish reams of reports about the events, debates and speeches within Parliament on dedicated

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[38] Dianan C.Mutz, 'Effects of 'In Your Face' Television Discourse on Perceptions of a Legitimate Opposition', *American Political Science Review,* Vol.101 (4), (2007), p.633.
[39] Mick Temple, 'Dumbing Down is Good For You', *British Politics,* Vol.1, (2006), p.257.
[40] Peter Riddell, 'The Rise of the Ranters: Saving Political Journalism', *The Political Quarterly,* Vol.76 (1), (2006), p.75.
[41] Matthew Watson, 'Headlong Into the Polyian Dilemma: The Impact of Middle Class Moral Panic on the British Government's Response to the Sub-Prime Crisis', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations,* Vol.11, (2009), p.427.
[42] Stewart McAnulla, 'Explaining the Forced Exit Of Charles Kennedy: Pushing the Public-Private Boundary', *Politics,* Vol.29 (1), (2009), p.37.

Parliamentary pages had long gone. Politics still got in the broadsheets, but the style of the coverage was more centred around opinion, and heuristic shortcuts. The print press severely reduced its reporting of process and procedure, favouring an approach which prioritised hunting in packs for scandal, dealing with big issues in great detail for a short time, and increasingly allowing comment to seep into the news in the manner of tabloids.[43] An intra party row may be reported one day as if it would have seismic consequences, then completely forgotten a day or two later.[44] One commentator said there had been an evolution of politicians and the media from the age of deference to journalistic disdain and the age of contempt. [45] Its scepticism meant that often the media was not reporting on politics, but being an active participant in it, increasing the "dependency of both politicians and voters on the media and the messages they provide."[46]

The changes in the media put a different onus on the parties and the leaders in the way they conducted election campaigns. If the existing forms of parliamentary politics were not getting through to as many of the public, then parties and leaders needed to do something different, publicise themselves to the floating voters, and the more diverse range of media outlets. To do this they brought in a set of professionals, many of whom had become established in the marketing industry, not politics, and did not much care for waging great ideological and philosophical campaigns. The 'marketing' of candidates, often treated with suspicion by academics and politicians, was now taken seriously and had been turned into a new area of analysis. Indeed politicians, from a sceptical position about the ethics of such practices, now had embraced technology and often were at the sharp end of new technologies, because they perceived them to be a competitive advantage in winning elections, and could not afford to ignore them.[47] The use of marketing itself was nothing new in modern politics but it had intensified due to the contextual environment of realigning and dealigning voter bases and more sophisticated media technology.[48] Political marketing was not just "purely about the use of sales techniques in election campaigns" but something that was integral to the conduct of

[43] 'Tony Blair's Media Speech: The Commentators', *The Political Quarterly,* Vol.78 (4), (2007), p.489.
[44] Riddell, 'The Rise of the Ranters', p.73.
[45] Steven Barnett, 'Will A Crisis In Journalism Provoke A Crisis In Democracy?' *The Political Quarterly,* Vol. 73(4), (2002), pp.401-405.
[46] Jay G.Blumer and Michael Gurevitch, *The Crisis of Public Communication, (*London: Routledge, 1995), p.3.
[47] Martin Rosenbaum, *From Soapbox to Soundbite: Party Political Campaigning In Britain Since 1945,* (London: Macmillan, 1997), p.275.
[48] Heather Savigny, 'Focus Groups and Political Marketing: Science and Democracy as Axiomatic?', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations,* Vol.9, (2007), p.130.

politics.[49] There were three types of options for parties - to become a product, sales, or market oriented party. A product oriented party develops policies internally and then argues their merits to the voters, with the policies defining the party. The sales oriented party uses communication techniques from the business world to sell policies to voters, recognising this is electorally necessary, but still developing those policies internally, albeit with the help of market intelligence. The market oriented party was totally different however. It used information on voters' preferences to design a product that will satisfy voters' demands, meet their needs, be supported and implemented by the party, and deliverable in government.[50] They do not "attempt to change what people think, but to deliver what they need and want." Activities of this nature, such as Blair's 'New Labour' project, led to accusations that politics was just being treated as a material commodity. This meant politics would become less about rhetoric and more about cultural empathetic performances.[51] Some insisted that 'market testing' devices like focus groups, actually increased democracy and showed that the parties were listening to the public. But this ignored the fact that they were not open to all - only a few 'tactically important' voters would have the (mis)fortune of having the opportunity to participate in a focus group. They were potentially valuing the opinions of a minority, inhibiting democratic debate and depoliticising politics.[52] There was a danger as well that the parties, by targeting the more apathetic floating voters, would overlook their own voters, precipitating a breakdown of the relationship with party loyalists and threatening the long term future of these parties, possibly meaning they had to re-orient themselves to become sales oriented parties again.[53]

As elections, and indeed politics, became a subset of the brand positioning of politicians and parties, political marketing techniques gradually spread their tentacles beyond election times. Margaret Thatcher had been portrayed as a strong leader at election times, but efforts to present her in this light did not just stop when she was Prime Minister. The efforts to portray Tony Blair as an 'ordinary kind of guy' were a great concern at most times for Labour. Professionals continually agonised about the right way to present Gordon Brown. It often presented competing, and sometimes contradictory, imperatives

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[49] Jennifer Lees-Marshment, 'Political Marketing Theory and Practice: A Reply To Ormrod's Critique of the Lees-Marshment Market-Oriented Party Model', *Politics,* Vol.26 (2), p.119.
[50] Robert P.Ormrod, 'A Critique of the Lees-Marshment Market-Oriented Party Model, *Politics,* Vol.26 (2), (2006), p.110.
[51] Stephen Coleman, 'Review', *Parliamentary Affairs,* Vol.60 (1), (2006), p.184.
[52] Savigny, 'Focus Groups and Political Marketing ', pp.132-134.
[53] Darren G.Lilleker, 'The Impact of Political Marketing on Internal Party Democracy', *Parliamentary Affairs,* Vol.58 (3), (2005), p.571.

that leaders have to fulfil. In leadership studies there had been a tendency detected whereby leaders in Western democracies, particularly in the US, had had to develop skills similar to actors, because they were faced by a dual construct of public opinion. A sizable majority of the public claimed that they disliked fakery, yet a large majority also insisted that their political leaders were able to project "warmth, strength, likeability and relaxed sincerity." Leaders had to carefully hone their self-promoting, likeability and leadership attributes while at the same time trying not to show that they were doing this as much as possible, and that it was all somehow 'natural'.[54] A by-product of this mode of operating was the notion of the 'permanent campaign'. As the political marketing model held that the election would merely be the culmination of years of effort in successfully placing the party in a position to best satisfy the requirements of the consumer, then there was a 'permanent campaign', with the main parties attempting to ascertain and then appeal to the wants and needs of consumers, gradually building up this reputation over time. Governments concentrated on the business of 'relationship marketing', which for companies was the practice of maintaining customers' brand loyalty between purchases. However, this did not necessarily take account of the different context of governing and how a party would still relate to members and ideology. Critics maintained that political marketing was far too close to the methods applied in business, and was inappropriate to politics, especially the business of government. Political parties were criticised for being controlled by polls, focus groups and marketing professionals. [55]

2.2.4   The Decline of Parliament

The end of an ideological style of politics, and the increasing importance of competence in government and dealings in international politics, threatened the place of parliament. No longer could it convincingly claim to be the fulcrum of debate and politics in Britain. Parliament could not hope to control the more complicated strands of international politics, governance and finance.[56] Another threat to this reputation was parliament's declining power over government. With governments in the 1980s having large majorities, and the party whip being so effective on a body of MPs that was gradually

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[54] Thomas E.Cronin, ' 'All The World's A Stage...' Acting and the Art of Political Leadership', *The Leadership Quarterly,* Vol.19, (2008), p.459.
[55] Catherine Needham, 'Brand Leaders: Clinton, Blair and the Limitations of the Permanent Campaign', *Political Studies,* Vol.53, (2005), pp.343-357.
[56] Richard Heffernan, 'Exploring (and Explaining) The British Prime Minister', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations,* Vol.7, (2005), p.607.

becoming less independent and more careerist, there were fewer close votes and government bills rejected. There was a view that Parliament was beginning to become irrelevant, a debating chamber that was a sideshow to the real business of politics. It was derided as "not fit for purpose," parliamentary sovereignty now being a myth in a Parliament that contained fewer politicians with a philosophy beyond climbing the ministerial ladder.[57] As well as having less power, the British political elite had become far less respected, especially affecting Parliament, which the public were far less interested and knowledgeable about.[58] A series of scandals had undermined the reputation of parliament, while the institution had been criticised for its outdated practices on hours, speaking and expenses. The expenses controversy set the whole of the political class against taxpayers, as the incidences of expenses fiddles had been so widespread as to significantly undermine trust in MPs.[59] Recently there has been growing public disdain for what was a political class that seemed more obsessed with centrism and winning the day's tactical battles than fixing British politics. Politicians were variously accused of following, not leading, public opinion, exploiting their families, undermining institutions, group thinking, speaking their own private language, and then deploying populism and correctness to masquerade as the 'masses'.[60] The way opposition worked within Parliament had also begun to change. In modern political conditions the control functions of the opposition had to be exercised in constant public confrontation with the government, not in parliamentary business. In practice public confrontation had to be extended to the media, which of course had broadened its coverage of politics way beyond parliament.[61] The media had now become the unofficial forum for interrogating politicians and making announcements.[62] What the opposition was doing outside of Parliament became increasingly important to their success. Personality, and the politics of presentation and conflict drove communication activity, Parliament had not been very effective at promoting itself in the media against personality, while the media had not made a comprehensive element to present Parliament's legislative and scrutiny

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[57] Graham Allen, 'Government and Media Dance as Parliament Dies', January 2010, *Parliamentary Brief.*
[58] Susana Kalitowski, 'Parliament for the People? Public Knowledge, Interest and Perceptions of the Westminster Parliament', *Parliamentary Affairs,* Vol.62 (2), (2009), p.355.
[59] Alexandra Kelso, 'Parliament on its Knees: MPs Expenses and the Crisis of Transparency at Westminster', *The Political Quarterly,* Vol.80 (3), (2009), p.336.
[60] Michael Kenny, 'Commentary: Taking the Temperature of the Political Elite Two: The Professionals Move In?', *Parliamentary Affairs,* Vol. 62(2), (2009), pp.336-345.
[61] Johnson, 'Opposition in the British Political System', p.490.
[62] Virginia Gibbons, 'Lights Camera, Inaction? The Media Reporting of Parliament', *Parliamentary Affairs,* Vol.60 (4), (2007), p.705.

functions.[63] There were new incentives for oppositions - winning Parliamentary battles and debates would now struggle to capture the media agenda or public attention, making candidates outside Parliament much more important. This would only change at infrequent 'set-piece' occasions when the government had a small majority or lots of rebels, and there was a big issue at stake, like over the Maastricht Treaty, or Iraq.

2.2.5   The Retrenchment of the Westminster Model

The developments that are detailed above conflict with the central properties of the Westminster Model that we detailed in the last section, and by themselves were taking the centre of politics away from where it had been under the Westminster Model. The movement against the Westminster Model gathered pace in academia throughout the 1980s. There was a 'repositioning' of opposition and its place within the model, as many commentators began to re-evaluate the traditional British model which had often seen regular changes of government.[64] There were wider changes in academia that meant the study of purely British politics was becoming less popular, with comparative and international studies including Britain increasingly taking their place, and squeezing coverage of the Westminster Model.[65] New models like the networked governance model had exposed the limitations of the Westminster Model, and Parliamentary Sovereignty.[66] The EU especially had changed the Westminster Model fundamentally.[67] The amount of legislation that the EU started passing in the 1990s, which was often not scrutinised by the House of Commons, challenged Parliamentary sovereignty. The Thatcher years had led the Westminster Model to be rethought, and the damage done to the reputation of the Westminster model by the governance thesis, expressed in the differentiated polity model, offering a view of British politics as based around policy networks, power dependencies and exchange relationships. Some thought this supplanting had been down to the deficiencies of the Westminster Model, and its "central concern with examining the narrow mechanics of British central Government," producing "highly static, overly empiricist and largely descriptive accounts of formal institutional processes and political behaviour," with the Prime Minister, the Cabinet, the Civil Service and the workings of

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[63] Aeron Davis, 'Evaluating Communications in the British Parliamentary Public Sphere', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations,* Vol.11, (2009), pp.293-294.
[64] Geraint Parry, 'Opposition Questions', *Government and Opposition,* Vol. 32(4), (1997), p.458.
[65] Peter Kerr and Steven Kernell, 'In Defence of British Politics: The Past, Present and Future of the Discipline', *British Politics,* Vol.1, (2006), p.5.
[66] Bevir, 'The Westminster Model, Governance and Judicial Reform', pp.559-563.
[67] Amir Abedi and Thomas Carl Lundberg, 'Doomed to Failure? UKIP and the Organisational Challenges Facing Right Wing Anti Establishment Parties', *Parliamentary Affairs,* Vol. 62(1), (2009), p.75.

Parliament to the fore."[68] In more recent times the Westminster Model has acted as what one commentator called a "smokescreen for changes in electoral politics" where people did not realise the irony of relating tales of the Blair presidency, while at the same time portraying British governance as fragmented with several decision makers. Presidentialism was the 'smokescreen' that preserved the fiction of the Westminster Model, behind which there was widespread acceptance of the governance narrative. The government had been said to have pursued a governance narrative in practice, governing through networks, while leading in a presidential fashion. But even after the Blair years, respected commentators like Lord Norton called for a return to the Westminster model.[69] The idea that the actions and fortunes of the government were dictated by the opposition, that had held sway under the Westminster Model, was at odds with modern developments. Modern commentators like Heppell outlined six factors why a government could lose an election, with the dependant variable being whether there was the evolution of a universally appealing, renewed and credible opposition.[70] The opposition was not necessarily just a passive observer as it had been under the Westminster Model.

This sums up the way literature on opposition progressed from the post war period to the 1990s. The post war literature had been heavily influenced by the political environment that existed around it, of a two party politics defined by class, and dominated on many levels by parties. But changes which had arguably started in the 1960s, and become most apparent in the 1980s and 1990s, had called this system into question. With a dealigning electorate, the dominance of the parties in the media and among the electorate could not be taken for granted. What these changes seemed to do was threaten the old mode of British politics, and by definition opposition. It had rested on the twin pillars of party primacy in politics and elections, and two blocs of class and social based voting. There was a different way in which the media treated parties and leaders, and a process of electoral dealignment which had become increasingly apparent in the 1980s, with both changes being long-lasting and durable. But while this had been recognised, it had led to a varied series of debates, many of which did not directly influence opposition, and which did not attempt to unify the changes which had taken place in British politics. No major unifying theory had filled the gap, with discussions being mostly centred on the

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[68] Kerr and Kernell, 'In Defence of British Politics', pp.8-11.
[69] Mark Bevir and R.A.W.Rhodes, 'Prime Ministers, Presidentialism and Westminster Smokescreens', *Political Studies,* Vol.56, (2006), pp.671-683.
[70] Heppell, 'The Degenerative Tendencies of Long Serving Governments', p.580.

governance thesis. But, while dealing with many of the questions of procedure and policy the old style of literature liked, they did not engage with many of the new developments. In our analysis of the literature on opposition, we have seen that the post war literature was biased towards the structural and institutional effects of opposition. They are system based accounts, and the system they draw out is an adversarial one that divides most questions into two competing views. But the effects of electoral dealignment especially, have served to question this conception of opposition, as have long periods of one party rule. They have also introduced new ways of working that draw the analysis of opposition away from processes and institutions. These changes in working have made the Westminster Model harder to maintain in its existing form. The unabashed parliamentary sovereignty that it had been based upon was being challenged. The decline in the amount of attention given to parliament was a cause and effect of parliament's declining reputation. Declining amounts of the public paid attention to, or respected, Parliament, and the accusation was that Parliament was greatly unrepresentative. Greater power in the hands of global traders and the EU meant that Parliament was not even in control of large amounts of the laws and politics of Britain. The changes in the political environment and the place of Parliament and the Westminster Model raises questions about how opposition would work under the new dispensation. In the next section we look at the literature about the most recent party in opposition, the Conservatives since 1997, look at the main themes of this literature and how they have related to the changed political environment.

2.3   The Conservatives in Opposition Since 1997

So far, we have looked at the way opposition developed in Britain, how it evolved and how it came to be seen as an integral part of the 'Westminster Model', the British two party system, and the political environment which sustained it. We have also seen that there have been changes in the elements of the political environment that sustained the Westminster Model. Now we will move onto the literature that covers the Conservative party since it has been in opposition since 1997, whether this literature has reflected the changes in the political environment and how interested they are in the study of opposition. Especially in the initial years of the Conservatives being in opposition, there was not a great amount of literature produced about them. This has changed since the Conservatives have looked more likely to be elected under David Cameron, but there is

still less literature written about the opposition than the government. Most accounts are not centred around "conceptualised explanations derived from comparative politics that allow" understanding of the Conservatives and apply to other parties.[71] Most studies concern themselves with the Conservative party, and specific aspects of the Conservatives' development. To this end most of the studies are less concerned with a structural approach, but one that prioritises the thoughts and actions of individual agents, and the detail of individual events. A variety of themes guide what has been written - intra party battles, electoral struggles, ideology and leaders.

2.3.1   Electoral Struggles

A concern, perhaps the prime concern, of the literature on the Conservative party since 1997, is how and why they have not succeeded in winning an election, and indeed have been so far from winning an election. More than any other factor, this has guided analysis of the Conservative party during this period. The Conservatives fell to a landslide defeat in 2001. In 2005 they gained over 30 seats, mostly through an efficient and clever operation in target seats - although share of the vote only went up by 0.5%. The electoral system made it very difficult for the Conservatives to win, with most specialists estimating that they would have to have over a 5% lead over Labour to even consider the possibility of an overall majority.[72] The scale of the challenge influenced much of what was written about them.

The size of the task led to a consensus among most academics that the Conservatives badly needed to be in a position where they could reach out beyond the 'core vote', barely 30% of the electorate, not enough to take the Conservatives near an overall parliamentary majority. Most academics thought that the best hope for the Conservatives was for them to appeal to the 'centre ground', where most voters' theoretically were. The definition of this centre ground seemed fairly uniform. Britain had moved leftwards, especially in the later years of Conservative government, and many thought that 'hardline' politics 'of the right' on public spending, Europe and immigration would repel sufficient numbers of liberal, educated, middle class voters for it to be almost impossible

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[71] Bale, 'Review: Take Your Pick', p.369.
[72] David Butler and Dennis Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 2001,* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2002), p.332.

for the Conservatives to win a majority.[73] The Conservative leadership during 1997-2001 was accused of showing "an electoral deathwish almost unprecedented in the modern era," with their reluctance to accept that Thatcherism was now mistrusted by much of the public.[74] The Conservatives had been incapable of understanding the fact that "voters had banked the gains made from the rescue and liberalisation of the British economy under Thatcher and were now concerned to ensure sufficient investment in public services.[75] Their attempts to create 'clear blue water' on Europe and the economy had been a failure and the Conservatives had appeared to be a "single issue party that was talking to itself."[76] Little of the literature gives consideration to the opposing view that the party had a secure base of voters, and only needed to wait for the Government to make errors, oppose it in Parliament and secure the small amount of swing votes needed for victory. Instead, reflecting the environment of electoral dealignment, the emphasis is on how the party can appeal to a wide, broad majority of voters, especially a middle class that was drifting away from them.[77]

Much of the literature about the 2005 election also prescribed how the Conservatives could have appealed to the centre ground. The Labour Government had been unpopular and exceptionally vulnerable, but the Conservatives were not seen as appealing to enough of the centre ground.[78] Although the policy areas had shifted - in 2001 they were Europe and the Euro, whereas in 2005 it was immigration - the literature paints a picture of a Conservative party that was not merely unappealing to 'middle ground' voters, but actively 'scared them off' by taking a hardline approach and shrill tone about issues that appealed most to those who were already voting Conservative or not voting at all.[79] Again, the election reviews are much closer to their 2001 predecessors in their analysis of Conservative fortunes preceding and during the 2005 election, showing the same concern with a dealigned electorate. The party still needed more fundamental change to

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[73] Phillip Cowley and Jane Green, 'New Leaders, Same Problems: The Conservatives', in Andrew Geddes and Jonathan Tonge, *Britain Decides: The UK General Election 2005*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2005), p.67.
[74] Mark Garnett and Phillip Lynch, 'Introduction', in Garnett and Lynch (Eds.), *The Conservatives In Crisis,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p.5.
[75] Tim Bale, *The Conservative Party From Thatcher to Cameron,* (London: Polity, 2010), p.76.
[76] Andrew Geddes, 'In Europe, Not Interested In Europe', in Geddes and Tonge *Labour's Second Landslide: The British General Election of 2001,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p.161.
[77] David Denver, 'How Britain Voted', in *Labour's Second Landslide,* pp.22-25.
[78] Phillip Norton, 'Cameron and Tory Success', in Simon Lee and Matt Beech, *The Conservatives Under David Cameron: Built to Last?,* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2009), p.34.
[79] Anthony Seldon and Peter Snowdon, 'The Conservative Campaign', *Parliamentary Affairs,* Vol.58 (4), (2005), p.725.

overcome a huge image problem.[80] Conservative politicians had, in the opinion of some, been "unwilling or unable to act in a way that might have given them more hope of winning or at least losing less badly."[81]

The actions David Cameron has taken since he became leader have been received in a very different way. Cameron has obstinately taken much of the academic advice. As he often said during his leadership bid, he was all about taking the Conservatives back to the centre ground. His message discipline, big tent approach and pragmatism in refusing to be separated from moderate policies, even during periods of rebalancing, were contrasted with past leaders.[82] Many of the articles draw a contrast between the pragmatism of Cameron and the power of his party's right wing.[83] Cameron had left the party in much better shape to win an election than the strategies of the other leaders.[84] Cameron 'ticked the boxes' of most academics for his attempts to resurrect the Conservatives' electoral fortunes, and the common factor between the academics seemed to be approval of his attempts to move the party towards the centre ground, although there was scepticism about precisely how far Cameron would be able to carry this process forward due to his hands being tied by local Conservative associations and the balance of power in the party.[85] Cameron had minimised position issues that had undermined the party's claim to be serious, sensible and centrist, like the Euro.[86] The rationale was that the educated and liberal middle classes were growing, who didn't see things in black and white. They were often promoted by the politics of correction - seeing one party had strayed too far from what was sensible or centrist and then dragging the country back.[87] Voters would bank the good things a government had given them and look to the other party to deliver them from the bad things.[88] What the literature largely does not ask is if Cameron, elected during a time of seemingly continuous growth and affluence, was the appropriate leader at a time when the British model of 'Privatised Keynesianism', where individuals and

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[80] Cowley and Green, 'New Leaders, Same Problems', pp.66-67.
[81] Bale, *The Conservative Party From Thatcher To Cameron,* p.1.
[82] Tim Bale, 'Cometh The Hour Cometh The Dave: How Far Is The Conservative Party's Revival All Down To David Cameron', *The Political Quarterly,* Vol. 80(2), (2009), pp.326-330.
[83] Tim Bale, Sean Hanley and Alexs Szcerbiak, ' 'May Contain Nuts'? The Reality Behind The Rhetoric Surrounding British Conservatives' New Group In the European Parliament', *The Political Quarterly,* Vol. 81(1), (2010), P.86.
[84] Norton, 'Cameron and Tory Success', pp.40-41.
[85] Tim Bale, 'A Fractured Alliance', December 2009, *Parliamentary Brief*, http://www.parliamentarybrief.com/2009/12/a-fractured-alliance.
[86] Tim Bale, 'Between A Soft and a Hard Place? The Conservative Party, Valence Politics and the Need for a New 'Eurorealism'', *Parliamentary Affairs,* Vol. 59(3), (2006), pp.385-396.
[87] Tim Bale, 'Getting Into Number 10', July 2008, Parliamentary *Brief*, http://www.parliamentarybrief.com/2008/07/getting-into-no.10.
[88] Bale, *The Conservative party From Thatcher To Cameron,* p.369.

government stimulated the economy through debt, had seemed to utterly break down.[89] The rhetoric of the broken society or sharing the proceeds of growth was not necessarily relevant to a future of low growth, nor did theories of the post bureaucratic state provide an easy and clear way to direct Conservative responses to a global financial crisis.[90] Cameron was under threat of losing supporters who were cynical about the entire political establishment, providing a powerful message for UKIP that only they could be trusted to deliver truly right wing policies.[91] Smaller elements of the literature concluded that 'decontamination' would not necessarily lead the Conservatives to victory. Studies showed that the Conservatives would have benefited by 5% in 2005 from a move to the centre ground, a better vote share but one that would not have been enough to deliver them victory. To win a majority, they probably needed to change some people's attitudes as well.[92]

2.3.2   The Leaders

The treatment of Conservative leaders since 1997 by the literature naturally follows on from the last section, in that many of the works use this concept of the centre ground to judge the leaders, and introduce a great deal of anecdotal material into their studies of leaders, about the leaders themselves and the agents around them. Instead it is dealt with in a mostly ad hoc fashion, with events, the struggle to be on the centre ground, the influence of personality and interactions with other agents dictating much of what is written.

The traditional conception of the Conservative leader as all powerful still holds true in the modern literature. He is the only person to have the "right to pronounce authoritatively on what constitutes Conservatism in any particular period". The Conservatives had an "essentially presidential set up" where the Shadow Cabinet had at best a consultative role. While this provided benefits to the leader, it also meant that the leadership became "highly contingent on results, actual and potential." A winner could pretty much do what they liked, but someone who looked like a loser would be under threat, especially in the event of electoral defeat, which was not seen as a corporate act,

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[89] Colin Crouch, 'Privatised Keynsiasm: An Unacknowledged Policy Regime', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations,* Vol.11, (2009), p.392.
[90] Patrick Minford, 'In The End It's About Trust', 29th October 2008, *Parliamentary Brief.*
[91] Richard Hayton, 'Towards the Mainstream? UKIP and the 2009 Elections to the European Parliament', *Politics,* Vol. 30(1), (2010), p.32.
[92] Thomas Quinn, 'The Conservative Party and the 'Centre Ground' of British Politics', *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion, and Parties,* Vol.18(2), (2008), p.195.

but something for which someone had to be responsible.[93] The Shadow Cabinet was taken to be a "handful of helpers" that was not particularly well respected as an institution, was too big to fit in the proper Cabinet when in power, and had no appreciable say over the leader of the opposition's strategy.[94] This conception dictates much of the literature's attitude towards the Conservatives, although there is little of the literature that attempts to place it in a wider context of opposition and the leader's place in British politics.

There was a countering view that whatever the leader of the opposition did, it was not near as important as what the Government did - this is seen in academic analyses of William Hague's leadership. Ball thought the state of the Government overweighed all other influences on the opposition's fortunes, including the leader, the unity and vigour of the opposition, its general image and its stance on the most important issues of the day. The Conservatives had made successful progress from opposition to government with unpopular leaders, a view which classes leadership as unimportant.[95] As many of the accounts of the Hague years asserted, a more effective leader might have avoided a landslide, but not defeat. This was due to the popular leadership of Labour by Tony Blair, who the Conservatives had great difficulty in deciding how to oppose. Blair and Labour, and the comparison with the Conservative leader, guide many of the studies, not the Conservative leader by himself.

Against this powerful force, the efforts of one leader seemed inadequate, especially when they were a leader like Duncan Smith who had been ridiculed for his lack of charisma and had been a surprise victor in the Conservative leadership race. Snowdon and Collings thought Duncan Smith had been ineffective, and he had not been taken seriously as Prime Minister, resulting in his stock falling so far with the press and the public that he struggled to be heard. The "fundamental weaknesses of personality counted too heavily against him."[96] One article criticised the system of election which had contributed towards this surprise victory, and had led to a parliamentary party split, and a legitimacy problem among the MPs which he led, which was to disrupt and ultimately end his

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[93] Bale, *The Conservative party from Thatcher to Cameron,* p.17.
[94] Tim Bale, 'A New Shadow Cabinet is not The Real Thing', January 2009. *Parliamentary Brief,* http://www.parliamentarybrief.com/2009/01/a-new-shadow-cabinet-is-not-the-real-thing.
[95] Ball, 'The Conservatives In Opposition, 1906-1979', in *The Conservatives In Crisis,* p.14.
[96] Anthony Seldon and Peter Snowdon, 'The Conservative Campaign', *Parliamentary Affairs,* Vol.58 (4), (2005), pp.740.

leadership.[97] Even the general party histories that refer to Duncan Smith tend to write him off as an era best forgotten, even when there was substantial policy work done during his premiership that arguably contributed towards future increased popularity. Like Hague, but to an even greater extent, most of the failings of Duncan Smith's leadership are put down to failings of personality, and an inability to be taken seriously in a more presidential age (even though few call it this).

The next leader after Duncan Smith, Howard, was criticised for strategic errors. It was held that under Duncan Smith and Howard the Conservatives had learnt all the trivial lessons from New Labour but not the major lesson that power was gained by capturing the centre ground. Duncan Smith had realised this but had not the personality to impose it, while Howard had been "tactically and strategically inept" in developing an alternative to Labour."[98] It is the suitability for an electoral environment that was heavily centred around valence politics and the centre ground that dictates much of the academic judgments about Howard, a different style of assessment to the other leaders.

It is noticeable that since the accession of David Cameron to the Conservative leadership, there is again an ad hoc concern with prospects of electoral success and the notion of the centre ground. The election of Cameron has been taken to be an important aspect in broadening the party's appeal, tackling the twin problems of "viable leadership and electoral credibility." Unlike the other leaders, there was a belief that he had a genuine chance of becoming Prime Minister.[99] Cameron was seen as a "presidential politician happy to provide journalists with arresting and intimate visuals and to talk about...his family life," and Bale thought, in contrast to his predecessors, he was a "politician who is recognisably a human being despite his highly privileged background." The general debate about the consensus and whether he borrowed more from Blair or Thatcher was one that informed some of the articles written. He had only started to talk tough on immigration and Europe when the Conservatives had "earned 'permission to be heard'

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[97] Keith Alderman and Neil Carter, 'The Conservative Party Leadership Election of 2001', *Parliamentary Affairs,* Vol.55, (2002), pp.584-585.
[98] Jennifer Lees-Marshment, 'Mis-Marketing the Conservatives: The Limitations of Style over Substance', *The Political Quarterly,* Vol.75 (4), (2004), p.394.
[99] Peter Kerr, 'Cameron Chameleon and the Current State of Britain's Consensus', *Parliamentary Affairs,* Vol. 60(1), (2007), pp.46-48.

and passed the 'dinner party test'," despite the accusations he was 'betraying' Thatcherism. [100]

Some thought the Conservative resurgence in the polls had been "largely due to the charisma, character, and more substantively, the political moderation of David Cameron."[101] Some of the different authors engage with some base elements of the political environment in a way that did not largely happen with the other leaders - Cameron's focus on presentation and image, how it played with voters, how his image was separate from his own party's. But others had begun to frame this leadership as something independent, and give voters and the media credit for recognizing Cameron as such. They do not assume it will be subsumed within the image of his party. They are able to separate policy positions that may be associated with him or his party. And they recognise the party's instrumental interest in letting this happen. Overcoming the numerous challenges that faced the Conservatives would depend on Cameron. [102]

There are two pieces of literature that, while focused on the specific area of Conservative leadership selection, reflect the importance of leadership, and almost uniquely, comparative study of leaders. They also attribute independent and decisive effects to the leader of the party. Heppell challenged existing theories, saying that the method of election did influence the result.[103] Denham and O'Hara differ. They contend that the mandate from the leadership election was of "limited extent and significance," and Conservative MPs evaluating the leader's performance remained the "ultimate source of legitimacy for an incumbent leader."[104] Heppell makes a convincing case for the central role of the leader in the fortunes of the party, and the critical need to choose a party leader that appealed to a sufficiently large number of dealigned voters to win an election. Each leader was different, but they all had to deal with a similar syndrome, "at whose core is the need to secure election.....the main measure whereby leaders are judged and ranked." He pinpoints the time after 1997 as a time when, unlike any other, the Conservatives managed to select leaders "so unsuitable and unattractive in electoral

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[100] Bale, *The Conservative Party From Thatcher to Cameron,* pp.320-382.
[101] Matt Beech, 'Cameron and Conservative Ideology' in *The Conservatives Under David Cameron*, p.18.
[102] Simon Lee, 'Introduction: David Cameron's Political Challenges', in *The Conservatives Under David Cameron,* p.2.
[103] Timothy Heppell, *Choosing the Tory Leader: Conservative Party Leadership Elections From Heath To Cameron,* (London: IB Tauris, 2007), p.209.
[104] Andrew Denham and Kieron O'Hara, *Democratising Conservative Leadership Selection: From Grey Suits to Grass Roots*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), p.1.

terms." That instability showed the relationship between the leader of the Conservative Party and the Parliamentary party was dependent on leaders' electoral success - if a leader was an electoral asset then their authority as leader was enhanced. If the leader was not an electoral asset the ties of loyalty to the leader for the party would be weakened. This is a theory much of the other literature implies but does not centre itself around. Heppell contrasts the stability and relative success of the old, undemocratic system of appointing the leader, to the new one which has led to more instability and a "cultural predilection" among Conservatives for engaging in political assassination of their leaders. There had been failures of process in devising sound leadership election procedures, failures of outcome whereby the legitimacy of leaders' elections was questioned, and a large failure in selection criterion - where the Conservatives placed ideology above what Heppell thought should have been their biggest priority, the election of a leader who could successfully "acquire and maintain power." This reflected a new political environment where ideology was less important in achieving success than the leader. Heppell distils the three essential characteristics of a newly elected leader as to be able to unify the party, to be an electoral asset to the party, and to be able to demonstrate administrative capacity, being ideologically, electorally and administratively acceptable. In these elections Hague and Duncan Smith did not even secure superiority in two of these three areas, although David Cameron did. The leadership election that Cameron won was the portent of a more stable era for the Conservatives, less dominated by ideology.

2.3.3   Feuds at the Top

The attribution of problems to the mix of different personalities at the top of the Conservative party since 1997, and the feuds between them, is a large and recurring part of the literature about the Conservatives, because of the often anecdotal, episode- and agent-led focus of the literature. This encompasses feuds between personalities in the Shadow Cabinet, ex Ministers, within a leader's office, and with MPs. These feuds were often bitter and particularly affected the leader's ability to exercise his authority. This was partially because the party had never agreed on the real reasons for the large defeat in 1997. There had not been consensus over whether it had been a result of becoming out of touch with the majority on issues like the public services, or whether John Major had forced millions of 'natural Conservatives' to abstain by not being right wing enough about Europe and the size of the state. The 1992-1997 Conservative Government had

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been famous for being disunited and almost dysfunctional over Europe, but the division that was really to define the 1997-2001 Parliament was the 'mods and rockers' dispute, between social 'modernisers', and 'traditionalists'. Much of the literature seems to take the modernisers side but does not explicitly state this. The literature documents how Portillo and Francis Maude reportedly had frequent behind the scenes fallings out with Hague and his Director of Communications, Amanda Platell. The revolt over 'Kitchen Table Conservatism', was undermined by hostility from the Shadow Cabinet and party grandees.[105] Criticism from grandees was worst in Hague's time (a whole book, *Tory Wars,* was built on the backbiting at the top), but it also occurred under Duncan Smith, Howard and Cameron, with figures like Portillo, Clarke and Tebbit speaking out against the leader. A significant dimension to these feuds has been the development of what Tim Bale calls the 'party in the media'- the "editors, commentators, and journalists who have a huge impact on Tory strategy, or whatever passes for it." Bale is the first author to make this distinction explicit. The media had as much power to influence political decision makers as the voters, or the party grass roots. How a leader handled these feuds was a key part of his performance for many of the academics. Generally Hague was not seen to have controlled his party or his private office very well, and Duncan Smith was seen in much the same way. Howard however, was widely praised by the literature for the way he managed to establish an efficient and largely united central team, and managed to frighten most MPs into not disagreeing with the leadership. Cameron has continued in the same mould, with his organising of his central office being praised, although the close knit nature of his team means that he has been exposed to criticism that he is not liked by his own party and is letting disunity develop. But overall the party Cameron has worked with is now more "malleable and manageable" than the party his predecessors' led.[106]

2.3.4   Policy and Ideology

Historically the Conservatives had "shown considerable unity as an institution" accommodating all sorts of politicians from different ends of the political spectrum, and at times has appeared to be united not by ideology but a "commitment to statecraft, with a primary concern of winning elections and then maintaining a governing competence so as to retain power," but in the judgement of many they had lost this ability. Certainly the

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[105] John Bartle, 'Political Developments, 1997-2001', in *Political Communications: The General Election Campaign of 2001,* p.25.
[106] Bale, *The Conservative Party From Thatcher To Cameron,* pp.2-378.

tensions over Europe during the 1992-1997 Government, and the struggles over Europe and social policies afterwards, certainly served to question this conception of the party and ideology.[107] There is little consensus among academics about whether ideology has played a significant or peripheral role in Conservative politics since 1997, an era that some have thought is based around 'post-ideological' politics. In one author's words "ideology is an important factor when evaluating the implosion of the Conservative party in the immediate post-Thatcherite era."[108] But this is not universally agreed with, and since 1997 comparatively little attention has been paid to Conservatism and ideology.[109] Different authors have different views about the relationship between the Conservatives and the series of principles and policies which had made up Thatcherism. Because of this it has led the literature down a road of framing most discussion about ideology through its relationship to Thatcherism, and again the question of how the party should adapt its ideological principles and policies to have the best chance of winning an election. There was a divide between Thatcherites who were most concerned with economic liberalism and those who were most concerned with social authoritarianism.[110] Although this is strongly disputed by other writers about Conservatism who think Thatcherism had attempted to recast the Conservatives as a party of economic liberalism, national independence and moral authoritarianism.[111] Both sides of the divide in the Conservatives were accused of mishandling the development of Thatcherism. The left were accused of not having a strategy beyond listening to focus groups, while the right was accused of being obsessed with the market.[112] But if there was a place for ideology in Conservatism, what set of principles did it entail? Hickson's *The Political Thought of the Conservative Party Since 1945*, Ball and Seldon's work on the Conservative party in opposition, and Kieron O'Hara's two books deal with what ideology should underpin Conservative politics. But even in these works, electoral considerations tended to guide them. O'Hara worries about how the Conservative position in the present electoral system, was "dire" and the Conservative needed to become a home for at least some

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[107] Mark Garnett and Kevin Hickson, *Conservative Thinkers: The Key Contributors to the Political Thought of the Modern Conservative Party,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), pp.145-146.
[108] Timothy Heppell and Michael Hill, 'Ideological Typologies of Contemporary British Conservatism', *Political Studies Review,* Vol.3 (2005), p.340.
[109] Kevin Hickson, 'Introduction', in Hickson (Ed.), *The Political Thought of the Conservative Party Since 1945,* (London: Macmillan, 2005), p.1.
[110] Norman Barry, 'New Right', in *The Political Thought of the Conservative Party Since 1945,* p.34.
[111] Heppell and Hill, 'Ideological Typologies of Contemporary British Conservatism', pp.338-339.
[112] Andrew Taylor, 'Economic Statecraft', in *The Political Thought of the Conservative Party Since 1945,* pp.145-147.

disaffected left wingers to win a majority.[113] The electoral angle trumped pure analysis of ideology. Right wing ideology frequently became the fall guy for bad performance at general elections. One of those works that are centred around the Conservative party and ideology even insists that the Conservatives had to change their policies and rhetoric to express more confidence in the state and ditch most of the "consumerism" that had been associated with Thatcherism, in order to win back support. It was paramount above all else to not relent from the task of changing the perception that the Conservatives were not a party of the rich,[114] and to NOT seem they were a party driven by New Right ideology, which had sometimes tended towards market fundamentalism.[115] However the Conservatives had accepted policy convergence with Labour in many areas. The Conservative Manifesto project showed they had moved slightly to the left since 1997 and converged with Labour. But Cameron's repositioning of the party had caused complete confusion among some commentators, who accused him and George Osborne of not even upholding basic pro business and market principles.[116] The economic meltdown had left the Conservatives without a strategy in their view.[117] There was a paucity of alternative ideas about the financial crisis, that indicated the parties wanted things to remain as they were before the crisis, even with the high levels of public and private debt that had reigned. This stalled the development of ideological literature. Even in such a severe crisis, there was little perception ideology was shaping Conservative responses, or even that this would be desirable.[118] There has been a realignment of the parliamentary party, with economic liberalism, social conservatism and euroscepticism predominating among MPs.[119] Cameron to this end has consistently attempted to portray himself as a non-ideological politician, and demonstrates obvious comfort with moderate Blairites and Liberals.[120] Ideology bubbles under, but has not been viewed as defining importance to the fortunes of the Conservatives during since 1997.

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[113] Kieron O'Hara, *After Blair: David Cameron and the Conservative Tradition,* (Cambridge: Icon Books, 2007), pp.3-9.
[114] O'Hara, *After Blair,* p.377.
[115] Kieron O'Hara, *After Blair: Conservatism Beyond Thatcher,* (Cambridge: Icon Books, 2005), p.18.
[116] Patrick Minford, 'In the End its all About Trust', October 2008, *Parliamentary Brief,* http://www.parliamentarybrief.com/2008/10/in-the-end-its-about-trust.
[117] Tim Bale, 'Brought Back Down to Earth', October 2008, *Parliamentary Brief,* http://www.parliamentarybrief.com/2008/10/brought-back-down-to-earth.
[118] Andrew Gamble, 'British Politics and the Financial Crisis', *British Politics,* Vol.4, (2009), pp.458-461.
[119] Heppell and Hill, Ideological Typologies of Contemporary British Conservatism', p.352.
[120] Francis Elliott and James Hanning, *Cameron: The Rise of the New Conservative,* (London: Fourth Estate, 2007), p.148.

2.4 Conclusions

The opposition literature post 1997 is different to the old 'opposition with a capital O' literature, and deals with a whole set of concerns outside Parliament. The older literature was heavily influenced by the environment in which it was written. This environment was about two parties, class, cleavage and party dominated politics, where party was unquestionably a bigger influence than the leaders. It was conceptualised in terms of the Westminster Model, in which opposition played a key part in upholding, and was remarkably integrated into the model. But underlying changes in the political environment, as diverse as electoral dealignment, different media coverage, the rise of valence politics, and a decline in respect for Parliament, meant that the Westminster Model was impossible to sustain in its original form, and this idea has been much talked about in academia. Quite naturally, one would think that this has affected the place of opposition in British politics and how it must act. But as we see from our review of the literature about the Conservative party in opposition since 1997, although parts of this literature reflected a different environment, there was little overall attempt by any of this literature to integrate the changed political environment into the conceptual frameworks of their studies. They deal with elements of the changed political environment, they do not group these around one overarching framework. Instead, notions of electoral success dictate most of the studies, especially what were the 'right' strategies. Due to the anecdotal, event and agent based nature of many of these accounts, or the fact they are based around specific micro areas of policy, mean that often the place of opposition in a structural sense and in relation to the political environment is not the priority. Even works which are centred around specialist topics, such as ideology, mostly come back to the question of what the party should have done to win an overall majority. The end point for most of these works is not opposition and its place in the political system, but the Conservative party, and usually specific aspects about the Conservatives. Instead, most studies come back to the 'mistakes' the Conservatives made that denied them electoral victories. Most of the works are largely about specialist areas of policy, electoral position, or collections of different specialist articles. The lack of concentration on the changed political environment, and the structural place of leadership and opposition within British politics directs us to look at theories which have attempted to incorporate these two factors into their frameworks. These are the works on the Presidentialisation of politics, and they are what we look at in the next chapter, while attempting to utilise these theories to construct a workable conceptual framework for this thesis.

3   Conceptual Framework

As we have detailed in the last chapter, the literature about the Conservative party in opposition since 1997 has covered this period in an agent centred way, and would benefit from a study that makes its main focus the structural constraints on opposition, with especial reference to extreme changes in the political environment. Is there a framework that can plausibly allow this kind of analysis? Can we use Presidentialisation as a framework for analysis of the leader of the opposition in this changing political environment? Specifically, can we use Presidentialisation as a theory relating to the political system as a whole and not just the Prime Minister, as it has been often regarded? This is despite the way Presidentialisation theory has developed from being a theory of the political system and political conduct within it. To help formulate an answer to this, we must decipher how the term developed, what different authors have defined Presidentialisation as, what framework they had developed around this meaning, and how they apply it. What of the conceptual framework of their studies has possible applications to this thesis? Having done this, we will then attempt to construct our own conceptual framework of Presidentialisation and devise a way of applying it to leaders of the opposition since 1997.

3.1   The Development of Presidentialisation

In this section we will assess the development of Presidentialisation. To do this, we must take up the story after the post war hegemony of the Westminster Model, and the changes in the political environment that emerged from the 1960s onwards. As we have seen, in different areas like the media, electoral alignment and the place of parliament, the political environment significantly changed. Thatcher's decade in power was a very visible demonstration of some of these changes. But this did not lead to widespread attempts to develop new theories, and the debate was conducted around terms developed during the heyday of the Westminster Model, despite an increasing concern with aspects of politics that may be termed 'presidential'. Although Presidentialisation, at first, was never the term used, an increasing concern with different leaders and leadership styles, and the changing elements of the political environment, showed an increasing receptivity to similarities with the US. There was the genesis of Presidentialisation theory, if not the whole. Thatcher had sparked renewed academic interest in the study of leadership. She

had offered a pure, visible, demonstration of leadership that her predecessors had not, giving "purpose, meaning and guidance to collectives by articulating a collective vision that appeals to ideology, values, motives and self-perceptions of followers".[121] Thatcher was described as a 'Weberian' charismatic leader[122], the type that has been popular in leadership literature.[123] But this image was largely not channelled into studies of Thatcher's leadership. Some of the interest was instead funnelled through the theory of Prime Ministerial Government. Indeed the increased amount of debate about leadership seemed to centre around the Prime Minister far more than the leader of the opposition, and was hung on the poles of the Prime Ministerial/Cabinet Government schism, a rift that had derived from the Westminster Model. This debate had "provided the context for the study of executive power since the early 1960s". Unlike dealignment or the role of the media, this debate revolved around one institution, the Cabinet, and was based around the perceived primacy of the Cabinet in the British constitution, that had endured through the establishment of the office of Prime Minister. In this conception of British Government, most decisions had to go through the Cabinet, the prime decision-making body in government, with the Prime Minister being 'first among equals' with the other Cabinet Ministers. But the changing post war role of government had raised questions over this conception of executive authority. In the 1960s John Mackintosh and Richard Crossman had asserted that there were long term trends that were inflating the power of the Prime Minister at the expense of the Cabinet. Prime Ministerial authority over the Cabinet had been increasing by virtue of a Prime Minister's power to choose members, agenda, committees and ultimate decisions of the Cabinet. Ironically, as the role of government expanded after the War, and Cabinet departments greatly expanded their fiefdoms of control, the growth of the state that had occurred throughout the twentieth century meant that Cabinet was unable to debate and deliberate at length on all the big issues of the day. For many decisions it was reduced to the role of a rubber stamp, with decisions already taken by Ministerial Committees, or the Prime Minister, before being formally approved by the Cabinet. Because of this, there was a greater need for central direction from the Prime Minister, giving him more power. The process had even gone so far that isolated voices like Tony Benn and James Margarech, in the 1970s, raised the spectre of 'Presidential Government', and how there were now many similarities between

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[121] Anthony Ammeter et al., 'Toward A Political Theory of Leadership', *The Leadership Quarterly,* Vol. 13, (2002), pp.753-756.
[122] Robert J.House, 'Weber and the Neo-Charismatic Leadership Paradigm: A Response to Beyer', *Leadership Quarterly,* Vol.10 (4), p.563.
[123] Michael Mumford et al., 'Charismatic, Ideological and Pragmatic Leadership: Multi-Level Influences On Emergence and Performance', *The Leadership Quarterly,* Vol.19, (2008), p.146.

the style of a Prime Minister and a President. [124] But the theory of Presidential Government was not widely taken up, even in the years after the rise of Thatcher. There was a general view that the President of the United States was a much more powerful and more individual figure than the British Prime Minister, and was a figure that would not fit into the British system. The US President was head of state, head of a superpower, took part in individual nationwide elections, and was surrounded by numerous and powerful central staff. None of this applied to the British Prime Minister. Although these accounts may have overestimated the power of the US President, institutional differences between Britain and the United States prevented the term 'presidential' gaining repeated application to British politics. The bulk of the academic debate was still between Prime Ministerial and Cabinet Government, and it was this debate that rode the wave of the increasing awareness of leadership questions Thatcher brought. Thatcher transcended traditional definitions of leadership that emphasised how institutional structure would affect behaviour. She was an individual who routinely operated outside the conventions of the institutions she headed. Prime Ministerial Government was still the most obvious way of explaining Thatcher's strong leadership in terms of the existing institutions. This was a framework derived from the existing institutional structure, and it was assessing a change in the balance of power between institutions (the Cabinet and the Prime Minister) not a re-definition of these institutions or activity outside them. It was conducted through the Cabinet, just with power between the protagonists being distributed differently. In turn, the proponents of Cabinet Government used the workings of the institutions to define their theories as well. They thought that powers the Prime Minister could exercise outside the Cabinet had been exaggerated, and that for every opportunity social and technological changes had opened up for Prime Ministers, there was a corresponding collective restraint. Television had helped opponents to become more prominent, leaders were still prisoner to the image of their parties, and the Prime Minister was only as strong as institutions of the Cabinet and senior colleagues allowed him to be. Any changes Thatcher had brought to the office would pass away with her exit from Downing Street, and had been completely contingent on her personality and style. The influence of personality was temporary, while the institutions and the power maps they dictated were permanent. Thatcher's individualistic leadership style had stretched the elastic of Cabinet Government, but that elastic would 'snap back with her'. Remember after all, the Cabinet

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[124] Michael Foley, *The Rise of The British Presidency,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993) pp.13-15.

was instrumental in removing Thatcher from office in 1990. [125] But the terms of this debate ignored much of what had been unique about the Thatcher premiership. She had been able to remain Prime Minister for 11 years while governing past her party, and her own Government, achieving what some would say were her most significant successes while appearing to revel in the way they split her party and Cabinet. Aspects of her leadership had shown the potential of an individualistic, somewhat maverick leadership style, what Kavanagh called a 'mobilizing' style that flew in the face of the traditional limited and parliamentary leadership of peacetime Prime Ministers. [126] Many of Thatcher's ideas had not been original, but the push and drive she gave them while in office had been very new.[127] The rise to power of the less confrontational John Major, with his promises of a more collegiate style of government, and more consultation with the Cabinet, seemed to confirm the enduring collective nature of the British system, and a re-assertion of some of the principles that made comparison with the US Presidency so unlikely. In many ways the difficulties Major faced during the latter days of his Government, struggling to establish personal authority over a divided party, a Parliament with a slim Conservative majority, and a Cabinet that limited his freedom to manoeuvre on many issues, seemed to confirm how British politics was defined by Cabinet, the Westminster Model and Parliament. The advances that Thatcher had made through her determination and strong personality could not be sustained permanently with a weaker leader. But underneath all this, many of Major's problems had been down to a perceived failure to match up to the imperatives of leadership Thatcher had established. There were signs that Thatcher's premiership had inculcated a high regard for strong leadership within the British system, not least shown in the growing analysis of Major's weakness through his own leadership deficiencies, and inability to 'dominate' Cabinet and party like commentators thought a 'true leader' should.[128] The place of leadership was seemingly changing, and as we shall see in the next paragraph, Presidentialisation theory attempted to provide a whole conceptual explanation for this change.

Michael Foley's *The Rise of the British Presidency* in 1993 took a new, and radical, direction compared to the other literature. Despite the arguments over Prime Ministerial Government, the impact of changes in the political environment, and Thatcher on

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[125] Foley, *The Rise of The British Presidency,* pp.16-21.
[126] Dennis Kavanagh, *British Politics: Continuities and Change,* Second Edition, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p.64.
[127] Kavanagh, *British Politics,* (London: Macmillan, 1990), p.88.
[128] Foley, *The Rise of the British Presidency,* pp.149-150.

leaders' place within the system, Foley's was the first coherent and extensive attempt to rationalise all this and create a framework which alluded to the growing parallel paths of development with the United States and its President, as had been referred to by Benn and Margach decades before. It attempted to tie together some of the changes in British politics, in something approaching a unified and coherent theory, mapping out their causes and effects in the system. Unlike the other studies, these causes and effects were largely outside the Westminster/Cabinet core. Unlike the other authors, Foley took Thatcher's Premiership to be the illumination that helped us understand deeper changes in the system, that went beyond its institutions. He placed great emphasis on what the previous decade had seen, in his view a Prime Minister whose pre-eminence had been only comparable to Churchill during World War Two, and who had in effect become the "face of Britain" and created a government "largely synonymous with Margaret Thatcher's persona." Government had plausibly been the "institutional embodiment of her personal ideas and drives." But while her domination encouraged respect and awe, it had led to her being held accountable for most social and economic ills, on the grounds "of her sprawling personalisation of Government." In this fulsome appreciation of the power of Thatcher's personality, Foley was not alone. But what was different about Foley's Presidentialisation theory was that he did not tie these developments to Thatcher's personality in any substantive way, or even to a type of leadership. She was merely a powerful example of many things that would have happened even if she had not been Prime Minister, a "visible outlet and register of a set of underlying and previously concealed dynamics."[129] Foley's concept went far beyond a personality-led explanation, and was developing a concept that attempted to link fundamental changes in the system to the new politics of leadership that had been created. But in doing this Foley was questioning the old way of perceiving the system largely through its institutions. Foley explicitly turned on their head older notions of party hegemony and the Westminster Model, in a way that works on electoral dealignment and other topics had alluded to, but not explicitly done. By setting the British premiership on a 'parallel line of development' to the US Presidency, Foley was placing the British system alongside one where parties were weaker, there was less of a tradition of class based voting, and leaders attained a higher profile with media and public. By claiming that there were still large structural differences between the two states, and that what he called the Presidential dimension was a method of understanding, Foley was not advocating constitutional change, or

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[129] Michael Foley, *The British Presidency: Tony Blair and the Politics of Public Leadership,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp.2-22.

saying there had been constitutional change. Instead he was saying that such fundamental changes as there had been, had occurred below the surface of the constitution or institutions. Foley did not deny there were structural differences between the British and American systems, but thought the US system could increase the understanding of changes in the British system, and both had followed parallel paths of development. Among the parallel tracks were: spatial leadership, the cult of the outsider, designer politics, the weakening of parties, and the capture by leaders of election campaigns.[130] An integral part of objections to Foley was that the American presidency was alien to the British Parliamentary system, which could simply not accommodate an all powerful president. This was the way of seeing British politics through its institutions. But Foley thought that this had not done justice to the concept and was based on a "highly inaccurate and even distorted view of the American Presidency" that attributed to it misleading 'Imperial powers', and ignored the comprehensive checks and balances that existed. Foley was tracing a change that was largely taking place *outside* institutions. The British executive was "extremely powerful," in comparative terms. While presidentialism underplayed the degree of collegiality in the British system, it also ignored the fact that a Prime Minister had more leverage over the executive and legislature than any President.[131] Foley thought that the Presidential analogy could throw fresh light on the Prime Minister's general position, and the new opportunities for leadership that had been opened up, and tackle the "erosion of serious thinking" about the Premiership since Major had replaced Thatcher. [132] While other academics tended to play down the fundamental changes in the British system, and cite personality as a factor that was making the changes seem to have more impact on the system than they really did, Foley was doing the complete opposite. There were the "existence of deep set shifts in the nature of the political system…..that have allowed the personal nature of leadership to have a powerful bearing upon the wider fields of personal perception, evaluation, and discourse" making a comparison with the US Presidency far more pertinent. The underlying changes in the British system had been of such a scale, that the current premiership was closer to the presidency than the old premiership. But this theory was not left unchallenged, and attracted a lot of criticism from other parts of academia. A strong challenge came to it from the relatively new field of core executive theory, that argued Presidentialisation was a gross simplification of the power structures within

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[130] Foley, *The British Presidency,* pp.263-270.
[131] Richard Heffernan, 'Why The Prime Minister Cannot Be A President: Comparing Institutional Imperatives In Britain and America', *Parliamentary Affairs,* Vol.58 (1), (2005), pp.68-69.
[132] Foley, *The British Presidency,* pp20-21.

government, and concentrated far too much on one man, to the exclusion of the many individuals that made up power networks. Although some were more important than others in these power networks, in practice all actors were interdependent on one another. Although the balance of power within the Core Executive had changed, it was not true to say that a 'British President' had emerged, and superseded the core executive.[133] Although there was an executive office 'in all but name', they thought this was not a sign of the emerging British Presidency, but modernisation of Cabinet Government. This was despite the direct replication of many of the institutions of the White House inside Downing Street, such as a Chief of Staff, a Strategic Communications Unit and a Performance and Innovation Unit. These initiatives were an enhancement of the capacity of the Core Executive, making it "increasingly coordinated and coherent, and increasingly proactive and performance driven". But they did not prevent the collective exercise of power. Collective Government was able to operate on specific policies (with the Chancellor having an unprecedented degree of autonomy and control), even under a strong Prime Minister like Blair. Britain was said to have "neither a Presidential institutional structure, nor a Presidential institutional capacity." [134] Although bouts of Prime Ministerial dominance may have infected the system temporarily, it was never sustainable because the system was not in essence presidential and was not designed to support the Prime Minister. There had been change in balance between the Prime Minister and the collective Cabinet, but not a revolution that had firmly tipped the constant oscillation between the two. Foley was criticised for not taking account of the "power dependencies found within any system of collegial Government." The Prime Minister was only one actor among others sharing power in structured networks. Heffernan thought Foley's theory overlooked the fact that the British Parliamentary executive was more powerful than the US President, and ignored the institutional differences - the President was directly elected, located within a constitutionally limited federal system, separate from the legislature, and was not the leader of their party, but head of a personalised executive. The fact that the British system was parliamentary gave the Prime Minister powers which the President could only dream of.[135] Richard Rose acknowledged media and international constraints had fundamentally changed the nature of the Prime Minister's job, but thought that the "fashionable" talk that the Prime Minister has become a President was not valid when the Prime Minister bases his

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[133] Martin Burch and Ian Holliday, 'The Blair Government and the Core Executive', *Government and Opposition*, Vol.39 (1), (2004), p.1.
[134] Burch and Holliday, 'The Blair Government and the Core Executive', pp.20-21.
[135] Heffernan, 'Why The Prime Minister Cannot Be A President', pp.54-59.

authority on his Parliamentary majority, and is less influential internationally than the US President.[136] Foley's argument, that the US President was not as all powerful as everyone thought, was used against him. This shows the fluidity and confusing nature of the debate, that the same argument can be used to support both sides of the argument. It also shows how the previous casual use of the term could create confusion about the precise nature of the US Presidency. Also it must be noted that not all of the arguments that had been used in favour of Presidentialisation were actually agreed upon. There was a section of the literature that disagreed with the proposition that class voting had not actually declined.[137] There had not been the substantial realignment by class voters in the opinion of some that there had been in the US.[138] The origins of Presidentialisation were disputed. However, what is definite is that over the 1980s increasing attention was paid to the power of the Prime Minister. Although Thatcher, with her personal and individualistic style, had made many changes to British politics, and intensified the debate about leadership, it had been mostly centred around the traditional terms of its effects on the executive, the terms that had existed before she came to power.[139] So there is maybe not as much space between the protagonists in the debate as the titles and conclusions suggest. And of course the way the core executive theory was structured meant that the debate did not refer much to the opposition, which also took a back seat in the accounts of Presidentialisation.

Despite the criticism of Foley's concept, it has been employed and developed in other academic works since 1993, and the concept has gained some traction and has not been ignored. Anthony Mughan's more limited study based on Presidentialisation, about whether leaders had become a decisive effect on voters during general elections, was published in 2000. There has been a wider study by Poguntke and Webb, which took a comparative approach to Presidentialisation by studying it in several different western states. Foley also published a second edition of his work in 2000, and has subsequently written articles about Presidentialisation theory relating to Blair and Brown. Many other works have referred to the concept. The theory of Presidentialisation, while it has certainly not become an all encompassing standard for the study of British politics (and

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[136] Richard Rose, *The Prime Minister In A Shrinking World,* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), p.16.
[137] John D.Goldthorpe, 'Modelling the Pattern of Class Voting In British Elections, 1964-1992', in Geoffrey Evans (Ed.), *The End of Class Politics?: Class Voting in Comparative Context,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp.78-79.
[138] David Weakliem and Anthony Heath, 'Resolving Disputes About Class Voting in Britain and the United States: Definitions, Models and Data', in *The End of Class Politics?,* p.305.
[139] Kavanagh, *British Politics,* pp.82-223.

certainly not related to opposition) has become established, with a place inside the academic debate, and has been developed upon.

The work by Mughan is most limited in scope and coverage, but is a work centred around the main points of Presidentialisation. He deals with the question of whether or not the process of Presidentialisation meant that elections were turning away from the parliamentary model, which was "devoid of the individualistic element found in regimes where the office of president is the main prize to be won by an individual." He took as his starting point an ideal type Parliamentary system where party had been an impersonal entity, fully determining the behaviour of party supporters, with the leader having no electorally separate and meaningful influence on voting behaviour. The conventional view of Parliamentary elections had been that "they are contests between parties representing cleavage groupings" with the personalities of candidates "electorally irrelevant in situations where party systems have been shaped by deep and historically rooted antagonisms that all but monopolize the battle for public office." This reflects many of the aspects of the environment we highlighted in the previous chapter, the environment Foley was saying was outdated and had been supplanted by evolutionary change. Mughan set out to test the hypothesis that "leaders matter, and matter now more than they used to."[140] He did this by content analysis of newspapers and television broadcasts since the 1950s and 1960s. He concluded that the presentational aspect of leaders had increased in importance in the time period he studied. Mughan wanted to see if, as Presidentialisation would imply, the system had become more like the US model, with an independent electoral impact for leaders becoming stronger with each election. He asserted that the electoral impact of leaders was becoming stronger, and had proved decisive in some elections. Like Foley, Mughan thought that the traditional way of looking at the system had become a misrepresentation. The traditional institutionalist view could "easily overstate the impact of the institutional environment on the dynamics of election campaigns, individual voting choice and electoral outcomes" and precluded recognition that "exogenous forces, like television based election campaigning, appear capable of bringing presidential and parliamentary systems of government to look more like each other in some of the ways that they operate."[141] Presidentialisation comprised two dimensions, presentation and impact. The Presidentialisation thesis implied some

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[140] Anthony Mughan, *Media and the Presidentialization of Parliamentary Elections,* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), pp.1-19.
[141] Mughan, *Media and the Presidentialization of Parliamentary Elections,* pp.130-132.

reorientation of our traditional party based understanding of the dynamics of electoral competition and Government accountability" and had "received nowhere near the scholarly attention that its widespread currency and it's theoretical implications would indicate that it merits" closely echoing one of Foley's main concerns.[142] Evolutionary changes, not formal changes, to British political institutions were dictating the change in nature of the British system, but these changes had been under-represented in an academic discourse that had become heavily slanted around institutions.

Many of the themes enunciated by Foley in his first volume were repeated in his second version, *The British Presidency: Tony Blair and the Politics of Public Leadership.* This followed a similar style and argument to the previous version, but with the addition of material on more recent events, especially the performance of Tony Blair as leader of the opposition and then the Government. But the main thrust of the work was the same - that there had been a fundamental change in the British political system that went beyond the personalities of individual leaders. Blair had been the very public exhibitor of the underlying changes in the system Foley had highlighted in his first book, and the methods it was becoming imperative for politicians to use in response to these changes. Blair had acted as an outsider to his own party, and attempted to push it towards the people, not vice versa. Leadership had become a significant political issue standing alone from party, assigned it a high priority by the public and the media. From a referendum of members over Clause IV, to the expansion of the Prime Minister's Office, Blair had used 'Presidential' techniques, many of which were directed at increasing his personal power and prominence over the upper echelons of the party. [143] For Foley, the Blair phenomenon only added to his conviction that there had been fundamental change in the British system, which could be explained and interpreted with reference to developments in the US Presidency. Like his first work he did not argue institutional change had taken place, but that there were sub-institutional changes in the system that paralleled the development of the US presidency. There was also some analysis of the impact on opposition leaders, like Blair, Kinnock and Hague, descriptions of their projections of leadership independence, and how they formed part of an independent politics of leadership, along with the Prime Minister. But the overwhelming amount of material in the book was about the leaders of the executive in Britain and America. Latterly Foley has analysed the series of leadership crises that have embroiled Blair's successor as

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[142] Mughan, *Media and the Presidentialization of Parliamentary Elections,* p.8.
[143] Foley, *The British Presidency,* pp.23-320.

Prime Minister, where all financial and government uncertainty became an "aggregate crisis that centred largely upon the figure of Gordon Brown," and brought associations of culpability, generic responsibility and direct accountability. Brown had attempted to ride the wave of the politics of leadership, emphasising his parents and moral background, but the 'backstory' of having a joint leadership role within the government in Blair's day undermined his claims of renewal. Additionally Brown had looked uncomfortable in the "high exposure and high expectations culture of contemporary leadership politics" and with the "persistent monitoring of his performances in a variety of conspicuous dimensions relating to leadership assessment and evaluation." When an individual becomes Prime Minister there is a "qualitative change in both the terms of his or her political existence and in the context in which that individual is expected to operate." The Prime Minister became the "primary medium through which a profusion of negative experiences, grievances and anxieties could find an interpretive unity in the common theme of a flawed leadership." Critical analysis often began with Brown's personality and character traits.[144] Brown's attempts to appear an 'outsider' leader were never seen as truly credible. This showed the difficulty of being Prime Minister in an environment where the office attracted a massive amount of responsibility and blame, perhaps unrealistically, and political analysis was centred around personality. This takes Foley's theory of Presidentialisation even further, and shows how all encompassing it had become, with particular reference to the expectations it had generated around the office of Prime Minister.

Another significant text in the application of Presidentialisation theory has been Thomas Poguntke and Paul Webb's collection of essays, *The Presidentialisation of Policies in Western Democracies.* In particular the study was unique for its rigour and structure. They set up an extensive framework, which was applied across all the chapters on the different countries by the different authors. In creating this framework the authors brought together many of the influences and effects we have already talked about and mapped them together into an overall framework, the structure of which we shall see in the next section. Most relevant to this thesis was the chapter on Presidentialisation in Britain. Heffernan and Webb's review concluded that there had been a process of Presidentialisation in British politics since the 1960s. Heffernan has voiced criticism of Presidentialisation theories in the past, and he does not mention why he has been

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[144] Michael Foley, 'Gordon Brown and the role of compounded crisis in the pathology of leadership decline', *British Politics,* Vol.4, (2009), pp.500-511.

associated with a study about Presidentialisation, and whether it fits with the networked governance standpoint he has penned other works from. The deliberate changes Blair had made to the Prime Minister's Office, and the self conscious way it was pursued were evidence of the phenomenon of Presidentialisation. One confusing aspect of the analysis is the way they use the obvious power of the Treasury under Gordon Brown, as evidence of the increasing power of the centre, despite the many times Brown has been reported as actually obstructing the will of the centre. But this is glossed over, although they did admit that Brown's institutional power resources and political capital meant he could constrain Blair. Overall, the authors found evidence of Presidentialisation. Like Foley, emphasis is placed on the way Blair and Conservative leaders have resorted more to plebiscitary democracy, thereby by-passing party activists. Especially under Labour, the writers had discerned much evidence of campaigns centred around the leader, from Blair to Kinnock, with publicity overwhelmingly concentrating on the leader. It was shown in the pattern and style of media coverage as well. This is a common theme that most of the contributors on other countries found. They found that in elections there was evidence of individual and aggregate level effects, and the potential of them was enough to make parties conduct election campaigns that were much more centred on the leader. This led them to conclude that leaders were "increasingly at the heart of everything the electoral professional party does" and were now a "key feature of contemporary democratic politics." This gave the leadership power but only provided it could deliver electoral popularity and policy success. The three main phenomena observed in their study as being more candidate centred election campaigns, parties being relegated to support of the leader, and the potential for exertion of Prime Ministerial power within the executive being larger.[145] There was a process that was empowering leaders, especially successful ones, at the expense of parties and the executive.

We have seen in this section that the concept of Presidentialisation has been moved on apace over the last thirty years. Before this, it had been a fringe theory, easily dismissed by those who said it was unfeasible, because of differences between American and British institutions, and overshadowed itself by institution-led explanations of power. But with a work that took account of the extreme changes in the political environment in the 1960s and 1970s and conceptually linked it to an idea of evolutionary change, Foley re-

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[145] Richard Heffernan and Paul Webb, 'The British Prime Minister: Much More Than 'First Among Equals'', in Thomas Poguntke and Paul Webb, *The Presidentialization of Politics: A Comparative Study of Modern Democracies,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp.33-56.

established a place for Presidentialisation, which has been taken up by other authors. However, this position is not dominant within academia, and indeed is still a minority, albeit a powerful one. Institutional explanations, and especially the more recent development of core executive theory, challenge many of the central tenets of Presidentialisation theory and are still in a more influential position in academia. But while we cannot say that Presidentialisation theory is dominant, we can at least say that it is a theory that attempts to incorporate the changes in the political environment that we talked about in the literature review. In the next section we shall analyse in detail how these changes were incorporated into the conceptual frameworks of the main works on Presidentialisation.

3.2   Conceptualising Presidentialisation

In the last section we traced the development of the theory of Presidentialisation, from its ostracism on institutional grounds to its increased popularity in parts of academia. We have seen the overall place different authors think they are occupying, relative to Core Executive and other theories. But what have been the detailed conceptions and frameworks the different authors have used to define Presidentialisation? Specifically, what do these authors define as the meaning of Presidentialisation, the causes of Presidentialisation, and the effects of Presidentialisation?

3.2.1   The Meaning of Presidentialisation:

The actual term Presidentialisation is somewhat of an umbrella term for what different authors think are the meaning of their concepts. Indeed, there is not even unified agreement on the term that should be used. Ironically, being the academic most associated with the 'umbrella' term, Michael Foley has attacked 'Presidentialisation', saying that it has been open to misuse, and that his allusions of a British presidency are not the same as implying a "presence of a process of Presidentialisation." Foley prefers instead to talk of a 'presidential dimension'. The existence of what he called the 'British presidency' did not infer that there was a process that would culminate in a full presidential system, and the validity of the British presidency phenomenon did not depend upon this happening. The British Presidency he talks of was a hybrid, and not a "transitional process from one pure form to another." The presidential dimension was something short of a full blown transition from a parliamentary to a presidential system.

Foley associates this full blown transitional process - which would include constitutional and institutional change - with Presidentialisation. The case he advocated for a 'presidential dimension' in British politics was not the same as the "case for the 'Presidentialisation' of British Government." Attempts to substantiate a 'presidential' element in British politics had merely served to delay recognition of the existence of a 'presidential dimension'. Attempts to couple presidential phenomena with "electoral behaviour and party choice, or with the formal configuration and resources of the core executive" were a hindrance to the recognition of a presidential dimension. Foley did not take the presidential dimension to mean a "set of closed theories and absolute properties." Presidential systems were just as evolutionary as the parliamentary system, and the parliamentary system could accommodate "gradual change, or the graduated production of radical change." The emphasis was on the area responsible for producing extensive change - the "ramifying dynamics of the relationship between party leaders and public expectations," the assimilation of new roles by leaders and Prime Ministers in particular. [146] Such change was evolving and constant. None of the other works that we have seen made similar attempts to differentiate the conception of the term 'Presidentialisation', and indeed use it freely. Foley's two main problems with the term seem to be that it is too inflexible, and that it groups together other properties which are not necessarily relevant, thereby weakening the central points of the argument, which is that parliamentary systems are evolving in such a way that makes them more like, not the same as, presidential systems. But Poguntke and Webb, and Mughan, use the term in a way which does not necessarily corroborate with these concerns. Poguntke and Webb, although arguing that there has been evolutionary change in the political system, freely use the Presidentialisation term. Their discussion of the levels of power afforded to leaders of different constitutional types produced three main findings, about presidential regimes, which fed into their concept of Presidentialisation in western regimes. They found that "the logic of presidentialism provides the head of Government with superior executive power resources" emanating "directly from the fact that he or she is not responsible to Parliament," as well as being directly legitimated and having the power to form a Cabinet and govern, without large interference from other institutions. The second main finding was that presidential regimes had more leadership autonomy vis-a-vis their own party but one that was contingent on electoral success. This led onto the third finding, which was that there had been a personalisation of the electoral process flowing directly from a "natural focus on the highest elective office" with the implication that "all

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[146] Foley, *The British Presidency,* pp.352-353.

aspects of the electoral process are decisively moulded by the personalities of the leading candidates." This provided the basis for them dividing the effects of Presidentialisation across three 'faces', party, electoral and executive. Although they are not arguing that the parliamentary system will become like this overnight, there is an evolutionary change towards becoming more like the presidential system. A "de facto Presidentialisation of politics" which can be understood as the development of increasing leadership power resources and autonomy within the party, affecting "three central arenas of democratic government" - executive, party and electoral. This is from factors "other than those flowing directly from the formal constitutional structure." [147] Mughan also couples 'electoral behaviour and party choice' with the concept of Presidentialisation, going against Foley's argument that this weakens the concept. But then it can be argued that he is not going much beyond what Foley himself has done - Foley alludes to an increased prominence and role for leaders over the electorate. All the main accounts think that Presidentialisation/the presidential dimension is down to a mix of factors occurring, not giving any one special prominence. What unites these works is not so much a belief that these issues had not been considered by the academic literature on an individual basis - indeed there is a copious amount of literature on some of them - but there has not been enough consideration or acknowledgement that these changes formed a unified whole, that they were changing the nature of British politics. As we have seen in our assessment in the previous chapter on the literature about the Conservative party in opposition, the facets of the 'Presidentialisation' theory are often disregarded or not taken together as a whole. Not enough attention had been paid to substantial changes in the system, with people simply seeing the US Presidency as an end point far from the constitutional powers of the Prime Minister, condemning the changes on formal grounds as an alien intrusion to British politics, and using them as a politically motivated criticism of the office holder and the Government. This had been seen with Thatcher and Blair. This flavour of academic and political debate meant that the word and concept was in danger of becoming a political term, one of abuse or praise, while still possessing a meaning few found clear or relevant. Previous conceptual use of the terms Presidentialisation or British Presidency, while dismissing its validity as a rounded concept, also do sometimes not treat it accurately, giving it somewhat exaggerated properties to support arguments on various topics. While not denying the significant structural differences between the US President and the British Prime Minister, Foley thought a presidential allusion would

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[147] Thomas Poguntke and Paul Webb, 'The Presidentialization of Politics in Democratic Societies: A Framework for Analysis' in *The Presidentialization of Politics,* pp.5-19.

lead to an improved understanding of the presidency and the premiership, and alert researchers to general trends in underlying properties of political leadership, and reveal the "nature and extent" of changes to the "conditions and expectations of political leadership…..that have made the Prime Minister's position amenable to presidential terms of description." [148] The other two main authors agree with this. Mughan approaches his question of whether there has been Presidentialisation in much the same way as Foley approaches the question of the presidential dimension. Mughan thought the traditional institutionalist view that still held sway in many places could "easily overstate the impact of the institutional environment on the dynamics of election campaigns, individual voting choice and electoral outcomes." The focus on discrete constitutional terms had overshadowed and blurred the importance of sub-constitutional factors at work. This was evident in the neglect of the increased importance of the leaders of the two main parties in Britain to understanding electoral results. To "overemphasise the differences between parliamentary and presidential systems of government risks overlooking theoretically interesting and practically consequential similarities between them." The crucial question was not whether institutional structures prevented elections from being personalised, but "rather what are the conditions under which they do so."[149] "Exogenous forces, like television based election campaigning, appeared capable of brining presidential and parliamentary systems of government to look more like each other in some of the ways that they operate. Moreover an institutional perspective does not necessarily preclude recognition on this kind of convergence." An institutional approach to the study of politics was not necessarily wrong but it had to encompass the changes that were happening outside of the central institutions. On the face of it this is very similar to Foley's concept. Recognition of the many differences between presidential and parliamentary systems did not preclude the fact certain forces were making them more alike in certain areas, and analysis of the development of presidential systems could shed light upon the nature of the change in the British parliamentary system. Although there is some disagreement over the use of the terms Presidentialisation and presidential dimension, and exactly what the term covers, we can see that all the main authors here agree that it is a process taking place without formal constitutional changes, because of a variety of factors, many of which are outside institutions, and that these changes are giving more autonomy, power and prominence to leaders.

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[148] Foley, *The British Presidency,* pp.15-23.
[149] Mughan, *Media and the Presidentialization of Parliamentary Elections,* pp.130-132.

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Another common theme of these works is their conception of the old norms and rules which governed British politics in the days when Parliamentary politics reigned supreme, and the factors that began to challenge this dominance. Mughan's starting point was that parliamentary politics is a particular party politics that is "devoid of the individualistic element found in regimes where the office of president is the main prize to be won by an individual" who "to a substantial degree runs for office on the basis of his own qualifications, experience, personality and promise." Traditional parliamentary elections had been between parties representing cleavage groupings, where party systems "shaped by deep and historically rooted antagonisms" crowded out the chance for leadership personalities being the decisive impact on voting choice for significant numbers of voters. But there had been developments in the 1960s and before that threatened this structure. Partisan dealignment foresaw a great reduction in the mass class and denominational parties, foreseeing their replacement by a less ideological, more centralised, less class and more interest based type of party. [150] Presidentialisation implied moving away from collective to personalised Government, away from governmental and electoral politics dominated by political parties, to the leader becoming a more autonomous force, converging on the "individualist American model." It was "personalisation of electoral politics that on the one hand occurs within the parameters of an unchanging parliamentary constitution and on the other persists over time." The nature of parliamentary systems could be changed even if the rules that governed them didn't. Poguntke and Webb used a continuum to demonstrate this, with a regime's location determined by the shift of political power, resources and autonomy from parties to individual leaders, and their place in what they call the three faces of Presidentialisation. This conception of Presidentialisation tells us a lot about how the authors think the concept should be used and where in the political system it should be applied to.

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[150] Mughan, *Media and the Presidentialization of Parliamentary Elections,* pp.1-7.
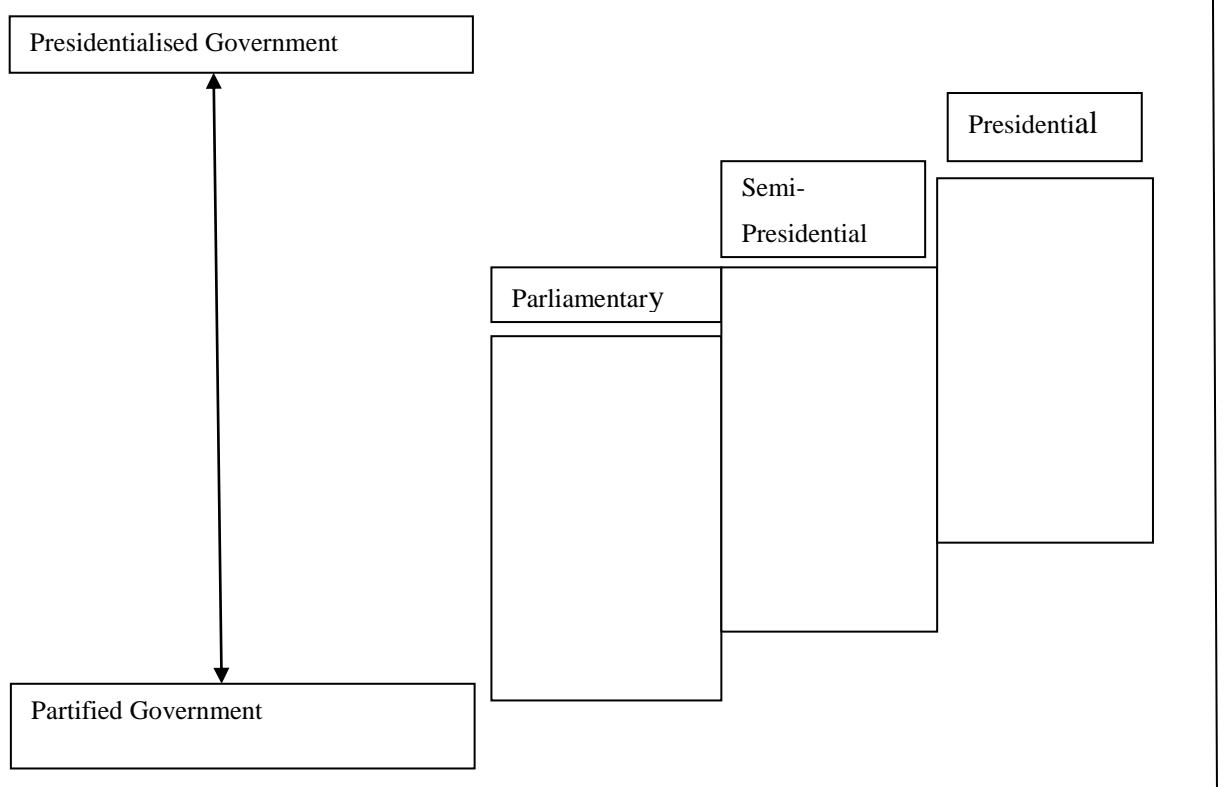
Figure One: Presidential and Party Regimes (Poguntke and Webb)[151]

The authors are not very interested in the formal legal-constitutional classing of a state, as symbolised by the horizontal dimension here. The distinctions here are clearer and less flexible, as states cannot gradually shift towards other formal types. However, the focus of the study is much more on the vertical dimension, a continuum, which is not a "rigidly portioned set of discrete categories." States could move in both directions down the continuum due to "structural and contingent political characteristics which determine the degree of personal visibility, autonomy and power resources which national political leaders have." The location was more precisely determined by the "shift of political power resources and autonomy to the benefit of individual leaders and a concomitant loss of power and autonomy of collective actors like Cabinets and political parties." Poguntke and Webb drew this from their Weberian conception of power which was "the ability to achieve a desired outcome, even against resistance." If so, then autonomy was an 'important' precondition of power - as it meant a lesser likelihood of resistance, and a larger sphere of action protected from outside interference. Overall power was a combination of growth of the leader's zones of autonomous control, and a "growing capacity to overcome resistance by others" through greater resources. [152] At this point we

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[151] Poguntke and Webb, 'The Presidentialization of Politics in Democratic Societies', p.6.
[152] Poguntke and Webb, 'The Presidentialization of Politics in Democratic Societies', pp.6-7.

may consider this theory of zones of autonomous control, in comparison to Foley's *The British Presidency*. Foley thought while the Prime Minister's constitutional and institutional situation would probably never emulate the position of the US President, the President could act as a "lever" to open up the Prime Minister, via the "interpretive and explanatory potential" of the President.[153] It is change occurring within the contours of the parliamentary system, and change that the parliamentary system has thus far been able to absorb. Surely Foley's theory of the 'presidential dimension' leaves open the potential for the leader of the party to increase their zones of autonomous control, and a growing capacity to overcome resistance by others? After all the entire premise of spatial leadership is of a viable way for the leader to overcome resistance by institutions by appealing to the people. And the centralisation of activity around the leader's office and the increased independence of the leader from party elites are surely increases in the zones of autonomous control. Of course, as we shall see, Foley's theory does not rest as much on power but the electoral and political imperatives for parties to promote strong leadership. But it still cannot be claimed that some of the tactics Foley says have become imperative for political parties to use are not concerned with the exercise of political power. This dispute over the meaning of the terms Presidentialisation or presidential dimension is actually largely over semantics, for fundamentally the different authors are agreed that they are covering a process which has involved great sub-constitutional change, to institutions that remain parliamentary, that have been prompted in changes in the political environment since the 1960s, which have mirrored developments in America.

3.2.2   Causes of Presidentialisation:

We have seen a measure of agreement over what Presidentialisation means, and an overall conception of what Presidentialisation meant for politics, but what did the different authors think the causes of Presidentialisation were? Did they think the causes were somewhat similar or did they differ about the causes of a process of Presidentialisation? Did they have a genesis in changes in the political environment?

As we have seen in the literature review, a major part of the concept of Presidentialisation is a reaction against the old, party dominated, cleavage and class controlled system. The nature of the old system had been "cautious, sensitive and

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[153] Foley, *The British Presidency,* pp.24-30.

collaborative," bound by a need to comply with party loyalty, electoral support and constitutional conventions. In this environment, as we have seen, parties were far more prominent influences over voters, and although leaders could be impressive figureheads, they were still that: figureheads, bound to the image of their parties and not able to develop their personas and stand independently. Any leaders that were able to free themselves from these shackles were only able to do so temporarily, due to the extenuating and extreme circumstances of World Wars, until Margaret Thatcher broke the post war mould. This provides the starting point for the works of Poguntke, Foley and Mughan. The changes in the political environment, that had occurred, especially since the 1960s, were not isolated, or temporary, but could be seen as part of a more profound and deep seated series of changes in Western polities. The authors cite many of the changes we saw in the literature review, about dealignment, changes in the media and Parliament. The central question for Poguntke and Webb was "whether there are contingent and structural (as opposed to formal-constitutional) factors at work that push modern democracies towards a more presidential mode."[154] Poguntke and Webb lay out their conception of the causes of Presidentialisation in a section called 'The Dynamics of Presidentialisation'. They outline three faces of Presidentialisation, intra-executive, intra-party and electoral. The 'faces' are where the visible manifestations of Presidentialisation become evident, the manifestations that result from structural and contingent causes that make up the concept of Presidentialisation. They demonstrate this in a diagram (Figure Two) of cause and effects of Presidentialisation.

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[154] Poguntke and Webb, 'The Presidentialization of Politics in Democratic Societies', p.5.
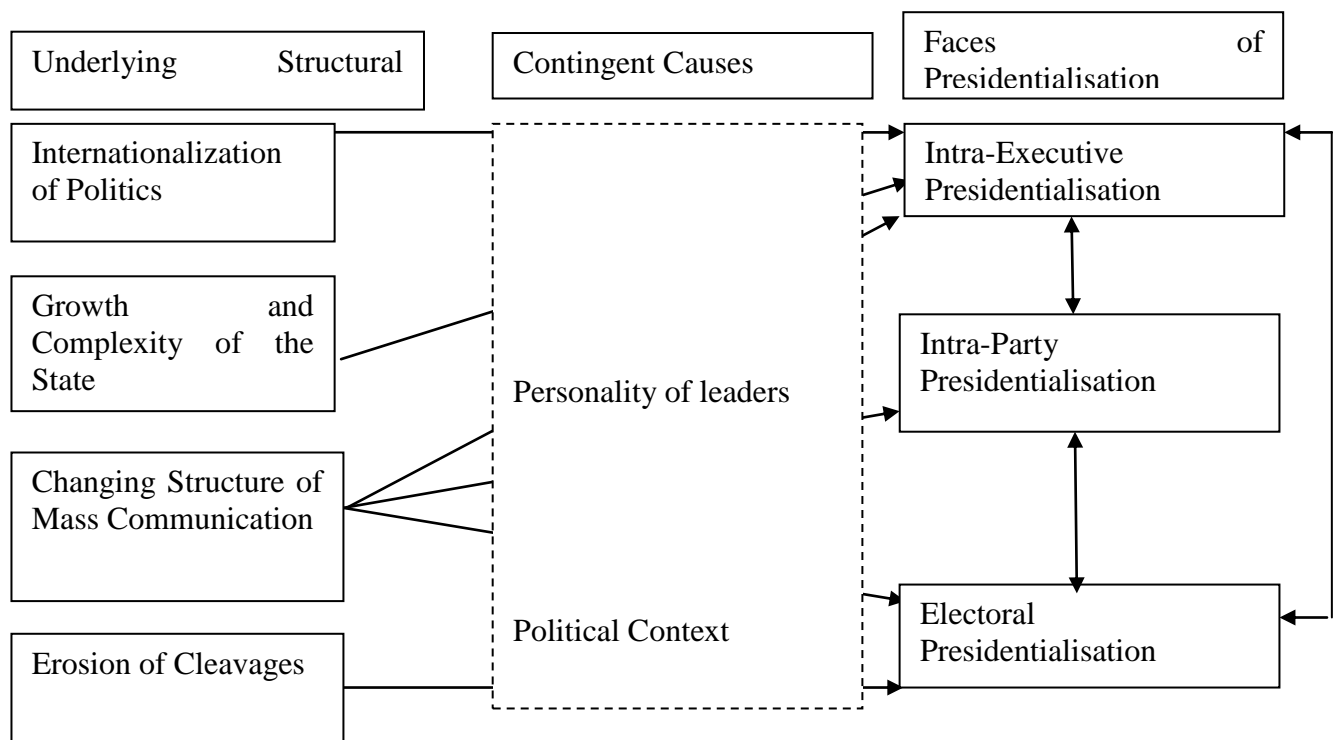
Figure Two: The Causes and Faces of Presidentialisation (Poguntke and Webb)[155]

We initially see two issues which have been cited by all the authors mentioned as key causes of Presidentialisation. The first of these is the erosion of traditional electoral and social cleavages. Poguntke and Webb state that the influence of the erosion of cleavages has been clearly shown in some areas, like in the marked decline in party memberships, and electorates becoming more "socially and ideologically heterogeneous." A more fluid electorate would mean the "personal qualities of actual or prospective heads of government may become relatively more important for the conduct of election campaigns" as the importance of party and social alignments gradually drifted away. They traced the 'end of ideology' debates of the early 1960s, and the associated interpretations of party transformation in the West as a time in which "traditional links between mass parties and their bases of social groups support have eroded." Traditional parties had struggled to maintain the strength of their relationships with core constituencies, and counted less and less of them as firm bedrocks of support.

The second structural factor listed by Poguntke and Webb is the changing structure of mass communications since the early 1960s. Naturally, television - which had become

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[155] Poguntke and Webb, 'The Presidentialization of Politics in Democratic Societies', p.16.

people's first source of political information - tended to "focus on personality rather than programme in order to reduce the complexity of political issues, and politicians frequently respond by concentrating on symbolism, rather than substance or detail." This was also an area that affected newspapers, with more reporting driven by personality, and less coverage of the legislature. But Poguntke and Webb also emphasise there was a conscious choice by politicians to exploit the way the media worked for their own ends.

The next of the structural causes that Poguntke and Webb list is the growth and complexity of the state. Poguntke and Webb point to how the "growing complexity and competence of the state" has generated a variety of responses, such as the centralisation of power, undermining of collective responsibility, and the core executive reducing the scope of their direct responsibility for government, while enhancing a coordinating ability in other areas. There was a consensus that there had been a move towards reinforcing the political core executive in most advanced industrial countries and within the core executive, and there had been an "increasing centralisation of authority around the person of the chief executive" to give coordination and direction to the sprawling mass of government.

The fourth structural cause is the internationalisation of politics. This has been maintained and increased during the last decade - the integration of the EU has been furthered, and varied issues like terrorism, pollution, asylum, trade and finance have created new work and areas of competence for organisations like NATO, the G8, G20, World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the UN. These extra responsibilities have given international leaders more opportunities to meet, interact with, and make agreements with other international leaders, and gain a lot of coverage in their domestic media. The key part for Poguntke and Webb is that with a greater number of issues shifting to being dealt with by inter governmental negotiation, "this shifts power to the heads of governments and some of their key advisors or governmental colleagues" increasingly leaving Parliaments, and sometimes Cabinets, to be able to only "ratify the decisions that have been taken elsewhere." In the case of the EU, it meant a whole tranche of domestic politics was decided in an international political arena, with leaders and senior government members, not Cabinets, Parliaments and parties. [156]

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[156] Poguntke and Webb, 'The Presidentialization of Politics in Democratic Societies', pp.13-16.

This list of causes is very specific, and the clear integration into a diagram that links it to the effects of Presidentialisation is testament to the detail that Poguntke and Webb have included in their conceptual framework. The other two main works on Presidentialisation do not go into as much detail, but they do outline causes of Presidentialisation. Foley does not lay out a systematic list, but refers often to big changes which have affected the political landscape, like electoral dealingment, the different way the media treats politics, or different way leadership politics is seen. But his study of spatial leadership in the United States also raises some causes which may be applicable to Britain. He lists them as partisan dealignment and voter volatility, ticket splitting, the rise of candidate centred campaigns and personalised mandates, disaggregation of voter blocks, public concern with politicians' abuse of power, and declining public trust in the central Government.[157] Although there is little opportunity for ticket splitting to happen in Britain due to the electoral system, the core causes of partisan dealignment, leader centrality and public scepticism of politics all do happen, and indeed they are applied by Foley throughout the book, treated as de facto causes of Presidentialisation. These accord very closely to Poguntke and Webb's list of causes, and the significant changes to the political environment which occurred during the 1970s and 1980s. Mughan also highlights many of the same concerns in his book about the Presidentialisation of parliamentary elections. Mughan thinks that the "exogenous forces" of television based campaigning and electoral dealignment have caused Presidential and Parliamentary systems to look more like each other in some of the ways they operate. Television was better suited to projecting leaders rather than issues. From the 1960s, leaders have been treated by the media as serious players in their own right, and television had replaced papers as primary source of news. Like Poguntke and Webb, Mughan thinks declining party membership, itself partially a result of electoral dealignment, meant the parties needed to use the media, as it was one of the few ways they could 'talk' to large numbers of their own, and potential, supporters. Mughan did think that partisan dealingment moved in tandem with the increasing effect of leaders, but was not a complete explanation of Presidentialisation.[158]

We can see between the main authors there are quite a lot of similarities between them about how they regard the main causes of Presidentialisation. There are small differences like Mughan not completely seeing the case for partisan dealignment, or Poguntke and

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[157] Foley, *The British Presidency,* p.47.
[158] Mughan, *Media and the Presidentialization of Parliamentary Elections*, pp. 23-132.

Webb laying out the causes in a different way to the others, but overall they are very similar. They all lay heavy emphasis on two changes which we talked about in the literature review, the differing way politics was covered by the media, and partisan and class dealignment. Those, combined with other causes, were fuelling Presidentialisation, but what were the effects of this process?

3.2.3   Effects of Presidentialisation:

We have looked in the last section at what the authors think the causes of Presidentialisation are, but what exactly do they think have been the effects of the Presidentialisation process on British politics? How would a process of Presidentialisation actually change British politics? Again we see similarities between the different authors.

All the main authors share the opinion that the old party system would survive in its basic physical form, and be largely untouched constitutionally, but it would show the ability to absorb change which would make it in practice more like a presidential system. For Mughan, convergence could take several forms, being the product of constitutional change, evolutionary change in the absence of constitutional change, and transient political circumstance. What the Presidentialisation theory asserts will happen is evolutionary change in the absence of constitutional change. Presidentialisation for Mughan's electoral study would mean a system where leaders could have an influence that would either gain or lose their party votes. It had two dimensions - presentation and impact - the leader increasingly becoming the public face of the party, and the behavioural effect party leaders have on the voting pattern of citizens. Mughan used polls that asked whether a party would have done better or worse under a different leader, and found the leaders did have an effect. As Mughan argues, "the culmination of evidence confirms that recent British general elections have indeed presidentialised in terms of both presentation and impact."[159]

In contrast, Poguntke and Webb use their detailed framework to judge if states had shifted location towards the 'northern' (presidentialised) axis of their typology diagram. Since the "underlying questions on which the project is based are concerned with change" contributors were asked to assess given indicators for a sense of change from a

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[159] Mughan, *Media and the Presidentialization of Parliamentary Elections,* pp.11-117.

given baseline. The use of indicators was complicated by the fact that different indicators might not travel well from one country to another, given that the authors wanted "functionally equivalent indicators instead of simply using identical ones." They suggested an indicative list which could capture the phenomenon of Presidentialisation in each of the three faces. In the executive face, the objective was for the authors to provide a "sense of the changing power resources and autonomy of leaders within government." The indicators in the executive face were the growth of resources at the disposal of the chief executive, an integrated communications strategy controlled by the chief executive, increased centralisation, control and coordination of policy making by the chief executive, more personal polling, growing tendency to appoint more non-party technocrats or politicians without a large party base, more Cabinet reshuffles, and invoking a personalised mandate based upon their electoral appeal. In the party face, the authors focused on "potential changes which may indicate the development of a more personalised form of party leadership" and in addition to contingent gains of leadership power resources and autonomy, there were a number of "structural changes which permanently strengthen the role of leaders and make them more independent of middle level party elites."[160] They are rule changes which give party leaders more formal powers, the growth of leaders offices in terms of finance and personnel, the capacity of leaders to forge programmes autonomously of their parties, use of plebiscitary modes of political communication and mobilisation, evidence of personalised mandates (people becoming leading candidates despite not being the most senior politicians), and the institutionalisation of direct leadership elections. In terms of the electoral face, they wanted the authors to focus on campaign style (the prominence given to the leaders), media focus on the leaders, and leader effects on voting behaviour.

In their conclusions, they said that there had been considerable contingent Presidentialisation within the executive face, but also that in every case, leaders' power resources and autonomy within executives had increased or were already at a high level. There was strong evidence that there were long term structural developments that would not be soon reversed, and there was "ample evidence of structurally induced Presidentialisation." It would mean a greater capability for leaders to act, although not one that necessarily furthered their ability to achieve desired outcomes, and increased a tendency for leaders to govern past their parties and the most important social forces which support them, with skilful use of mass communications becoming an important

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[160] Poguntke and Webb, 'The Presidentialization of Politics in Democratic Societies', pp.18-20.

resource for this strategy, and the recourse to a personalised mandate making modern leaders simultaneously both stronger and weaker - they could go it alone with support of public opinion, but do little without. In the executive face, contingent factors had been very important, for example in Spain, Sweden and Britain, with the power of the executive swinging around according to the personality of the leader in office. In the party face there was a clear cut trend towards the growth of leaders' power within, and autonomy from, their parties. Empowering the grass roots had bypassed the activists in the parties. In the electoral face, leader centred campaigning had generally been increasing, but it was "less certain that voters are behaving more as if they were in a presidential system, with something approaching a direct accountability relationship with the head of the government" with parties still preponderant in voter assessments in parliamentary elections, and it being "probably the least convincing aspect of the Presidentialisation thesis," although leader effects on voters were significant or increasing in eleven of the fourteen cases they examined. But there was a media perception that leaders had a large effect that convinced strategists to centre campaigns round leaders, furnishing leaders with legitimacy and a plausible claim that only the leader could deliver the vote. The leaders' relationship with their parties had fundamentally changed, and there was a complete change in the shift from a collective to an individual exercise of power and accountability. [161] There had been an increase in leader effects on the vote, with the public mapping character, not party traits, to the offices of state.[162] In a table they list in the concluding chapter, Poguntke and Webb show that in almost all the countries studied, indicators of executive and party Presidentialisation changed in the expected direction, and did so, albeit less overwhelmingly, for electoral Presidentialisation. They found there had been a process of de facto Presidentialisation, a "shift in the direction of the typical presidential mode of operation" within the constraints of a parliamentary system.[163] This brings it into stark contrast with Mughan's study. Other studies differ as well, such as Helms' work on Presidentialisation in Germany, where he found "precious little empirical evidence" to support a decisive impact of individual leaders on election campaigns.[164] But if the case for the electoral impact of leaders was not completely convincing, it was still patently a big factor in the minds of politicians, and clearly a big influence on campaign strategists.

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[161] Paul Webb and Thomas Poguntke, 'The Presidentialization of Contemporary Democratic Politics: Evidence, Causes and Consequences', in *The Presidentialization of Politics,* pp.343-352.
[162] Mughan, *Media and the Presidentialization of Parliamentary Elections,* p.63.
[163] Webb and Poguntke, 'The Presidentialization of Contemporary Democratic Politics', pp.344-346.
[164] Ludgar Helms, 'The Presidentialisation of Political Leadership: British Notions and German Observations', *The Political Quarterly,* Vol.76 (3), (2005), p.434.

In the party face there had been a trend to leader centred inter party politics driven by the modern mass media and facilitated by loosening party loyalties. Another was the growing role of the electronic media, which focus on personalities rather than programmes. There had been overwhelming evidence in favour of Presidentialisation - a "shift in the direction of the typical Presidentialisation mode of operation." There was still a party system, but the mass party of old was obsolete. De facto Presidentialisation was eroding the traditional party system although not supplanting it. Leaders could act with such power and autonomy, with a considerable focus on them, that under certain circumstances they could be thought of as akin to a President, and there was "indisputable evidence" of a shift in structural factors which generated greater potential for this Presidential working mode. [165]

Foley is vaguer in his conclusions about the effects of Presidentialisation, saying it will lead to a politics that is more centred around leadership, where it becomes a key determinant of voting attention and the media agenda, and where it becomes an imperative for leaders to keep on top of, utilizing Presidentialisation strategies which may seem at odds with some of the imperatives of the old British collective system. Although the list of indicators Foley uses is not so extensive or exact, it does show many of the same features - leader centred campaigns out of utility, increased media focus on personality not policy, bypassing party elites, and a strengthened central structure around the leader. But it is the factor of 'leaderland' that Foley uses that goes somewhat beyond other conceptions of Presidentialisation, and supplies the difference that makes his concept of the presidential dimension unique. But what is this concept exactly? It is definitely a concept that impacts upon the leader of the opposition, as it relates to leadership becoming an issue across the political spectrum, and indeed can affect minor parties as well. The development of a presidential dimension relates to the conception of the old working of the system. As Foley puts it, even with a strong, popular leader, they were still constricted to being the projection of their party, and relied on the parties own hierarchy for their position. But leaders were "no longer simply a front organisation for a party." To "meet the requirements of contemporary political leadership" and be able to win elections and gain the day to day approval that was now crucial to them doing their jobs, leaders had to reveal more of their personalities to an electorate that was more interested in personalities than institutions. All leaders were working to establish leadership as a political issue, as a "separate criterion of political evaluation, and thereby

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[165] Webb and Poguntke, 'The Presidentialization of Contemporary Democratic Politics', pp.344-346.

as a forum for personal advancement." They had to prove they were worthy as leader of the British public, "within the constraints of what is still primarily a party competition for Government." Thus contests of leadership had assumed a distinctive, and divergent, identity with its own style, that explained the popular interest in political leadership and a closer convergence between connotations of public and nation on the one hand and properties of individual leadership on the other. The presidential dimension was the existence of the *need* to have good leadership qualities, and be able to demonstrate them, and have them publicly appreciated. Leaders had to not merely appear in public, but show they had the qualities to claim to lead the public, and identify closely with them, through personalised interventions, outsider politics and spatial leadership. The media was responding to, and intensifying these demands, stretching leaders from their party by leadership centred analysis and polling, generating a leadership agenda and allowing leaders to appeal across weakening party lines. The fears of competitive disadvantage in the next general election was the "pole star" that allowed leaders to push such strategies independent of the parliamentary party system. And this was not a ridiculous fear, it was based on the reality of a media that was structured around the news value of making leaders the central topic of a lot of the news, and devoting burgeoning resources to analysis of issues in terms of leadership. Leaders were regarded as encapsulations of the news. Leadership was a political issue, "employed as an evaluative category of political judgement and one to which substantive political effects are readily attributed." One of the central factors to Foley's concept is that the presidential dimension would be able to act as an independent variable, which it hadn't been able to before. The debate in Britain had largely missed the point, it being "good politics" to accuse the other side of having a presidential style, and not concentrating on the real issues, but missing the development of a "highly advanced and self-conscious politics of leadership." His analysis of trends on the last 20 years of British politics, incorporating media, polling and primary data, made Foley assert that the public had become exposed to and conditioned by leaders, and "radiates a leadership dimension throughout British politics, but draws obstinately unrelated issues into its orbit" and "itself has become a political issue" which had created an "unprecedented public dimension to the perception of the political process and the nature of political conduct" which politicians had to condemn at the same time as secretly embracing and stimulating.[166] There had been a world created called 'leaderland'. This is one concept that colours the work of Foley and Mughan, more than Poguntke and Webb. That voters or elites need to be exposed to aspects of the concept,

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[166] Foley, *The British Presidency,* pp.119-343.

and them absorbing them in turn creates the fertile ground where Presidentialisation can occur, creating a reinforcing circle, where its growth encourages politicians and media to regard politics as presidential, which then reinforces voters in doing the same. Presidentialism was not "by and large synonymous with gullible voters being taken for a ride by unscrupulous politicians and image makers and a consequent enfeeblement of democratic choice." Personality had become an 'information shortcut'.[167] Presidentialisation was an effect on and had been affected by, the cycle. The main parties had acted as "primary sponsors of a form of leader centred politics" in which individual leaders expected to project organisational integrity and programmatic intent and also provide conduit for reception and dispatch of political communications, be the main agents of electoral identity in a "volatile politics and electoral market place," in which effective operators at this form of politics become key political assets. High performance leaders were valued, becoming defining strategic choices for parties.[168] Certainly Foley's explanations of Presidentialisation go beyond these authors in his conception of an alternative space that would be created independent of the old norms in politics.

The main authors show greater differences in their conceptions of the effects of Presidentialisation than the causes. There is general agreement that the process of Presidentialisation will cause a large degree of evolutionary change in the British political system, that it will give more power to leaders (subject to them being able to demonstrate ability to win elections) and it will intensify the development of a political, media and public environment that is centred around leaders. But there are differences in the scope of these effects - while Foley says it will lead to the grand vision of leaderland, Poguntke and Webb are more circumspect.

3.2.4   Relevance to this Thesis

At this point we will analyse how relevant the different concepts of Presidentialisation are to the proposed theme of the thesis, leaders of the opposition since 1997 and their place within British politics and party in a changing political environment. There is substantial common ground between the accounts of Presidentialisation we have reviewed. Presidentialisation is conceptualised as a theory of political systems, not just a theory of political executives, even if most of its applications thus far have been to

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[167] Mughan, *Media and the Presidentialization of Parliamentary Elections,* pp.146-150.
[168] Foley, 'Gordon Brown and the role of compounded crisis in the pathology of leadership decline', pp.498–513.

leaders of the executive. While the term for some implies a dangerous and unnatural obsession with the American Presidency to the detriment of the British constitution, all the writers reviewed are clear about the way their conceptions of Presidentialisation draw heavily on the development of the US Presidency for inspiration and guidance. They do not afford any other state the same prominence in moulding the concept, even states that have presidential constitutions themselves. America is the analogy that these authors look to. They also agree that a focus on the institutional side of politics may have obscured the significant changes happening outside these institutions, even though the structure of the institutions were largely formally unchanged. All the studies start at the parliamentary system, and maintain that the British system remains Parliamentary. The British system may be moving closer to the US system, but through the informal mode of operation. They think that such changes as will be wrought by the Presidentialisation process will not result in substantial changes to legal and constitutional rules, or even institutions. The changes will instead occur on a sub-constitutional level, and have more of an effect on leadership relations and interactions with those aspects of the political process conducted through outside institutions - with the media, with voters, with party and so on. The fact that it is a general area of agreement that Presidentialisation is not dependent on changes in the formal constitutional setting is relevant to the leaders of the opposition, and the structural constraints on them, in two ways. Firstly, the British constitution, notwithstanding early changes by Tony Blair to the House of Lords and Scottish and Welsh devolution, has undergone remarkably little change for a very long period, and being uncodified, such changes that have occurred, have been evolutionary. This manifests itself most obviously in the changes in the political environment that affect so much of what the leader of the opposition does. Secondly, very little of these changes can be taken to have changed the leader of the opposition's formal role. R.M.Punnett, in 1973, defined the job of the opposition leader and his team as providing an office seeking, loyalist, single party, parliamentary opposition, in the style of an alternative government. On the surface, not much has changed about these roles.[169] Thirdly, the leader of the opposition is actually in many ways a more flexible and isolated position than the Prime Minister, not possessing the extensive institutional apparatus around him, the direct power of the Prime Minister in areas like when to call an election, representing the nation at summits, or power over Ministers with large departments and responsibilities. So the establishment of a connection with public and media, and electoral success, is not accompanied by the institutional and governmental apparatus

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[169] Punnett, *Front Bench Opposition,* pp.9-93.

that surrounds the Prime Minister, and all the inherent duties and responsibilities that are dictated by the shape of the formal institutions. The connection is more immediate, and less affected by the office he occupies.

This shows a great deal of relevance to the leader of the opposition. But what about the developments in the political environment that were causing these changes? Are they relevant to the leader of the opposition? The old assumptions that limited the power of leaders in Britain - that a Prime Minister was constrained by the Cabinet, that parties were far more important influences on voting decisions than leadership personalities, that voters voted largely according to class and social cleavages - are threatened by a changed political environment. There is substantial agreement between the authors on the causes of this new environment. All allow that contingent factors, such as a leader's personality, can to some extent control the phenomenon, even though these will not be of much use in explaining the long term trends and reasons for Presidentialisation. It is the structural factors that are most important in explaining the process. Electoral dealignment, and the larger influence of the media, are two reasons which feature prominently in all of their conceptions of Presidentialisation, and appear to be most relevant to the leader of the opposition, because they can be shown to be directly applicable to him. Poguntke and Webb also offer the internationalisation of politics and the growth of the state, which are less directly relevant to the leader of the opposition, although in some ways there is a relevance that is mediated through the government. There are some ways in which the growing internationalisation of politics has been seen to impact upon politics. Leaders of the opposition also make some international visits and also attend meetings with groups of other similarly minded international leaders, and as Foley gives examples of, sometimes attempt to use these to gain publicity and improve the image of their leadership. The second factor that has the most direct impact is that the EU has led to more matters being decided in Brussels, impacting upon domestic politics, presenting complications and requiring responses from, the leader of the opposition. But the publicity bonus that EU leaders enjoy will not flow to the leader of the opposition in the same way. But even if the internationalisation of politics was not something that gave more direct power to the leader of the opposition, it was an influence he had to react to, and forms part of the political environment that the leader of the opposition existed in. The authors agree that these structural changes cannot be ignored by leaders, as coping with them successfully would be an immense help in achieving electoral success. This is a huge incentive and creates a self-reinforcing environment where the adoption of

Presidentialisation strategies by successful leaders encourages other leaders to do the same. This in turn conditions the media and public to treat presidential politics with great importance, especially by their focus on leadership questions - this is especially important for Foley, and a key part of the concept. But even if there are leaders who do not benefit from the process, it does not necessarily undermine the concept of Presidentialisation, as if it can be shown that their failure to adapt to a presidential environment has reduced their ability to compete in presidential politics then it still says many different things about the environment. It is this concept which hangs the structural changes together, and quite obviously is very relevant to the leader of the opposition, indeed, if true, it is a concept he cannot possibly avoid. Presidentialisation is, as we have seen, an overall conception of evolutionary change in the system, and of course the opposition cannot be ignored here, for if what Foley theorises is actually to happen, then the opposition must play some sort of role for there to be a presidential dimension, or fully fledged leadership politics. Just like the United States, it is only the assimilation and driving forward of the politics of leadership by leaders other than the head of the executive that can hope to perpetuate it. If there are non-institutional changes in politics, then opposition is just as open to them as the executive.

But it is important to note that there are some parts of Presidentialisation theory that are very difficult to apply to the leader of the opposition. The place of the leader of the opposition is a unique one. While he resides in an adversarial, majoritarian system, and has to compete electorally to gain power, his influence over the Government and the machinery of power is usually not direct. We see some of the features of the majoritarian system, in that the leader of the opposition is not often working within an alliance, or enjoying direct influence with the machinery of government. But the leader of the opposition is not within the definition of a consensual system, and the actual environment he occupies does not exactly match the one described by the authors here. This is because of a bias towards the executive leader, shared by most of the works on Presidentialisation. At this point we have to ask ourselves why this bias exists and if it precludes the possibility of applying Presidentialisation theory to the leader of the opposition. Undoubtedly the Prime Minister is in a more prominent position and receives the majority of academic attention. Some of the aspects of Presidentialisation like the internationalisation of politics or an expanding state, realistically only apply to the leader of the executive. But can the fundamental principle of Presidentialisation apply to the leader of the opposition? We would contend that it would. Presidentialisation, as we have

seen, refers to a process by which there is sub-constitutional change, leading to greater prominence and autonomy of action for leaders. As we saw in the literature review, leaders of the opposition were, in their way, an important part of the political system. Despite their lack of power over government, it did not prevent opposition having definite interaction with the principles that defined the system - it formed one of the large power blocs that were supposedly crucial to maintaining the system, and were an established part of Parliamentary workings, maintaining scrutiny and adversarial politics. The opposition was affected by the system and could affect it. Can we say this is true today? With qualification, yes. Qualification because the range of areas opposition participates in is somewhat different. There are areas like the internationalisation of politics, and the growth of the state, which have not had as much of an impact directly on the leader of the opposition. But there are many aspects of the change Presidentialisation represents that do impact upon the leader of the opposition, especially in what Poguntke and Webb call the electoral and party faces, which can be applied almost verbatim to the leader of the opposition as they are to the leader of the executive. As Presidentialisation is a theory which exists mostly outside institutions, and prioritises leadership above party, it is surprisingly flexible in its potential application to leaders not in the executive. Elements of the executive face can be also applied as part of the other two faces as well, like an integrated communication strategy, more personal polling, and invoking a personalised mandate. The causes of executive Presidentialisation, the internationalisation of politics and the growth of the state, are influences that the leader of the opposition has to constantly react to. In addition, his own 'Shadow Executive' of the Shadow Cabinet has to work in accompaniment with the leader of the opposition and react to his authority.

Poguntke and Webb produce a comprehensive list of effects of Presidentialisation, but on their own they do not tell the whole story of a leader of the opposition and his place in the political system. It is Foley's leaderland which helps do this. Even if leaders do not benefit from it, they will still be sucked into 'leaderland'. Because a leader's personality was so much more prominent in determining the fortunes of the parties at elections, a leader whose struggles were undermining the poll position would be more vulnerable to a restless party and media. In leaderland, most political issues tended to be seen through the prism of the two main leaders, no matter how little control they had over these issues. The personality traits of leaders were a far bigger cue for editorial and electoral agendas. The debate that Foley flags up between Presidentialisation and the presidential dimension

is largely a side issue. Ironically, by blazing a trail with the theory that 'the British presidency' was not a process that would turn the British political system into an institutional replica of the US presidency, and creating an environment where other authors have used this definition, to now think of Presidentialisation in these terms is not as realistic as it may have been in 1993, when Foley wrote the first edition of *The British Presidency.* We can allow that there have been changes to the structural environment that leaders exist in that are not the result of formal changes to state institutions. As we have seen, there are definitions and conceptions of Presidentialisation that allow us to apply this concept of a leadership dimension to the leader of the opposition. It is vitally important to do this as it is a concept that is potentially a guiding principle by which the leader of the opposition does his job, and the debate about semantics should not be one which stops it being included in this thesis.

The authors' conceptual frameworks include some contingent factors that are prone to change. In Poguntke and Webb's diagram of their framework they list these as the leader and the political context that exists in a nation's politics at one time. Obviously the political context will be always relevant to any study of politics. But how should we view the role of the leader, when the proposed timescale of the thesis includes so many different leaders? As Foley and Poguntke maintain, the process of Presidentialisation offers political leaders opportunity to increase their prominence and power over other political actors, but, and this is a large qualification, only if they are able to demonstrate to their political allies and others that they are going to win an election, or at the least seriously have the potential to lead their party to electoral victory. As Foley points out, a leader that is not able to prove this may actually find himself even weaker than he would have been under the old environment - witness the struggles of John Major after the Conservative party regressed significantly in the polls, his two immediate successors as Conservative leader as they struggled with low and static poll ratings throughout their tenures, or the tough times Gordon Brown endured since pulling out of calling an election, fearing he would not win. The nature of evolutionary, but fundamental, change in the system does not just offer the opportunity for some leaders to profit out of it, but raises the possibility that leaders with a style more suited to the old conception of the system will be net losers. This new law in the political system increases the self-interest of parties in picking leaders that have the attributes required to deliver success in the new system. In turn this helps create a politics which is unashamedly centred around leadership, and has an independent space where the leaders compete against each other,

separate from party. The losers out of this leadership space are just as important as the winners in relevance to the Presidentialisation concept and a changed political environment.

We posed the question at the start of this section as to whether Presidentialisation was a suitable tool to use in analysing the fortunes of Conservative leaders of the opposition from 1997, in a way that was based around structural concerns and not just agents, and that reflected what changes in the political environment had done to these structural concerns. It has been found that Presidentialisation suits most of these objectives. In relation to the political environment, it is a theory that has had to take account of the changes in the political environment in the broadest possible way, often outside the institutions of the British state, which is what most opposition studies had been traditionally constructed around. Presidentialisation is also a theory that is based around leadership, and additionally the interaction of leadership with the outside environment and other leaders. Significantly the construction of Presidentialisation theory, and especially the emphasis of interaction between leaders and the creation of an autonomous sector of leadership, provides a way of conceptualising the position of the leader of the opposition relative to his more powerful counterpart, the Prime Minister.

The studies here and their conceptions of change in the political environment - the media and electoral causes of this, the way the change worked outside institutions - are very relevant to the leader of the opposition. But these studies do not on their own provide the framework for this thesis to assess Conservative oppositions since 1997. Despite Foley's protestations that his study concerns leadership in general, many of his references orbit around the Prime Minister and many of the references use the Prime Minister as a yardstick. This is the same in the Poguntke and Webb study as well. Mughan is more balanced but only applies his work to elections and not beyond. How would a study work that incorporated the institution of Prime Minister but made its main focus the study of the Conservatives in opposition, recognising the importance of this end and the study of opposition?

3.3 The Conceptual Framework of This Thesis

In the previous section we looked at what elements of different authors' conceptions of Presidentialisation we could conceivably utilize in a thesis about the leader of the opposition. Having done this, now we must establish a conceptual framework. What are the basic principles of it, and how will it apply to the leader of the opposition?

This thesis will assert that there have been fundamental changes at a sub constitutional level in British politics since the breakdown of the hegemony of the Westminster Model. These changes have not produced recent literature on the Conservatives in opposition that takes account of these changes and uses them to form their conceptual frameworks. Indeed no one conceptual framework has emerged and the literature focuses on agent-centred networks. Although the changes in the political environment have not occurred 'deliberately', at the behest of one actor, or for the same reasons, they have had a similar set of causes and effects to events surrounding the US Presidency and can be called 'Presidentialisation'. This is a process whereby electoral dealignment, change in the media, the growth of the state and the internationalisation of politics, have had effects on the executive, party and electoral areas, and created an overall form of political competition that is defined by leadership, where leaders have more power and autonomy.

The thesis will be based on providing a coherent way to study different opposition leaders in the modern political environment. It recognises that although structure is a focus of the study, this extends to the political environment, and that institutional explanations of the political system do not help us construct the framework, for most of the changes in the political environment have occurred outside the institutions of the British system, of which the opposition is a formal part. But what are the changes in the environment that have altered the nature of the political system, leading to the development and discussion of Presidentialisation theory, that thus far has been mostly applied to the executive? We judge this by looking back to key points academics used to define the Westminster Model. That environment was characterised by high levels of class alignment that dictated voting preferences, a respect and focus on Parliament, a media that was reluctant to engage in personality politics, and a Cabinet that could control most state activity. All of these aspects have changed, especially voter dealignment and greater media focus on leaders. These changes have convinced party strategists there is a need to promote their leaders more and give them more autonomy.

These imperatives apply just as much to the leader of the opposition. The political environment of old encouraged the opposition to win debates in parliament, and win elections on the minute of policy. This framework contends that the new environment requires the opposition to select a leader who can gain enough independent support, disassociate themselves from party when they need to, and put their leadership to the fore as an issue, which requires interactions with other leaders and ability to set the agenda over them. This is what is central for the leader of the opposition. But the leader of the opposition cannot just be assessed by themselves, they need to be assessed in conjunction with the overall place of leadership within the political system, for this forms the bridge between the wider political environment and what the leader of the opposition does.

We have seen in the previous section that there are large amounts of the conceptual framework of each work that we have detailed that are relevant to opposition, and most specifically its leader. In Poguntke and Webb's work, almost all of the party and electoral faces can be applied to the leader of the opposition, while some of the executive face can be applied to the leader. Foley's concept of leaderland is definitely relevant to the leader of the opposition, as it is an important way in which to broadly conceptualise the changed political environment that the leader of the opposition is affected by, and affects. The Mughan study, while more limited in conceptual scope, reaffirms the points that the other works make. Although the studies that we have looked at spend most of their time analysing the executive, they provide a way of conceptualising the radically changed political environment that has been little developed in recent works about opposition. Thereby, by combining and modifying parts of the Foley and Poguntke frameworks, we can form a picture of what a study about the leader of the opposition would look like. The thesis will utilize many similar principles to the three authors. There has been fundamental change in the British system, but within the contours and rules of a still intact, but evolved, parliamentary system. Overly institutionalist explanations of this system are a hindrance to proper explanation of it, especially when so much of the evolutionary change is happening outside the central institutions - and this applies even more to the leader of the opposition. But the structural constraints that exist outside these institutions are becoming increasingly important. We have seen that the structure and concept of Poguntke and Webb's party and electoral faces still allow for manifestations of Presidentialisation by the opposition, as the structural influences of an increasingly dealinged electorate and the mediatisation of politics are still direct influences on the leader of the opposition. While the whole extent of the executive face is not applicable

due to the different constitutional and political position of the leader of the opposition we can establish the extent of the leader's influence across his central team, and his *reactions* to the growth of the state and the internationalisation of politics. The concept of the presidential dimension that Foley talks about, how conditioned the public and media are to Presidentialisation, and how much they have come to expect, or want, leaders to use Presidentialisation strategies, and how fertile the ground is for the employment of these strategies, truly goes to the nub of the issue. For it equally affects the leader of the opposition, perhaps even more so than the Prime Minister. If politics creates and sustains this leaderland, this continual battle for public leadership, it then should become the only way for the leader of the opposition to achieve his goals, and becomes instrumental for the party to allow this in the pursuit of electoral victory. This is why we have to include a section, alongside the influence of the executive, that assesses whether there is an independent political space for leaders, and whether it really is a concept that governs political strategies at the top level, as it is the best way of encapsulating the entire political environment as a whole, a key part of the thesis. This will be informed by the overall work of the thesis undertaken within the other faces, and will form part of the overall conclusions of the thesis and the overall framework.

Therefore we have multiple levels to this framework. It is a framework constructed to assess the leader of the opposition, and how he is affected by major changes to the political environment. It starts with these major changes to the political environment, as they are the bedrock of the framework. The changing structure of mass communication and the gradual erosion of partisan and social cleavages are hugely important to the political environment that the leader of the opposition faces. The internationalisation of politics and the growth of the state also affect the political environment, but they are less direct, and are mediated by the political context, especially the actions of the government. These changes affect three 'faces' of Presidentialisation for the leader of the opposition, electoral, intra party and executive. These faces affect, and are affected by, the creation of a leadership space. Was an independent area of politics created centred around leadership, and did the leaders of the opposition exhibit the characteristics of 'presidential' leaders and translate them to the political agenda? Ultimately do leaders of the opposition have to abide by the principles of a presidentialised environment, or has this been a mirage, only applicable to the Prime Minister as a framework of analysis? The arena of leadership does not exist in a vacuum, it is at the same time a potential spur to Presidentialisation in each of the three faces and potentially changed by continuing

Presidentialisation in these three faces. Ultimately, it has to be the nature of this relationship, and the detail of Presidentialisation in three faces, that we derive our conclusions from. In terms of how this feeds into the overall structure of the thesis, we can now envisage three substantive chapters, informed by the Poguntke and Webb framework, with the concluding chapter taking account of Foley's conception of a presidential dimension that brings more of an overall picture of the state of British politics. The chapters on the party and electoral faces can be applied almost as exactly as they were by Poguntke and Webb, being as relevant as they are to the leader of the opposition as to the leader of the executive. The party chapter is about an analysis of the relationship between the leader of the opposition and his party, to see if there has been a shift in intra party power to the benefit of the leader. It is based around four main sections: the structure of power in the party, the intra party balance between party and leader (formal and informal), whether the leader competes for the electoral mandate, and the concentration of power resources in the leader's office. It will utilise the flowing indicators: rule changes which give the party leader more formal powers, the growth of the leaders' offices in terms of funding and personnel, the capacity of leaders to forge programmes autonomously of their parties, the use of plebiscitary modes of political communication and mobilisation, evidence of personalised mandates and the institutionalisation of direct leadership elections. The chapter about the electoral face is also split into four sections: an overview of the 2001 and 2005 campaigns, dynamics of election campaigning and leadership, media coverage of politics and the leader of the opposition and significance of leader effects on voting behaviour. It will use the following indicators: amount of media coverage focused on leaders, leadership focus in party publicity material, increased leader effects/ salience on voters. The chapter on executive Presidentialisation cannot be directly applied, as the leader of the opposition does not control the state apparatus that the Prime Minister does. Instead we must consider something wider – the political environment, and a network of influences that the leader of the opposition cannot directly control, but has to interact with and respond to. This encompasses a global level of Foley's leaderland, looking at the efforts leaders of the opposition made to promote their formal and informal qualities of leadership, while also considering if the media treated leadership as an independent dimension. There is a micro level of executive actions and structure, which the opposition also has to respond to. The concluding chapter brings together the structural influences on the leader of the opposition, and assesses how they have affected the leader of the opposition against his party and his wider place in British politics.

Underlying Structural Causes	Contingent Causes		Presidentialisation Faces

Changing Structure of Mass Communication

Personality of leaders

Political Context

Erosion of Cleavages

Growth and Complexity of the State

Internationalization of Politics

The Political Environment

Intra-Party Presidentialisation

Electoral Presidentialisation

Presidentialisation of the wider environment (Arena of Leadership, Effects of Executive Presidentialisation)

Conclusions

Figure Three: Framework of Thesis

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So the overall conceptual framework this thesis uses has been established. It treats Presidentialisation as a concept that may make the parliamentary system look more like the U.S Presidential system, but will not change it in a legal-constitutional sense. It starts and ends in analysis of a parliamentary system but one that has experienced a huge change in the environment it exists in from the class aligned, parliament centred, Westminster Model which had prevailed post-war. It has created structural constraints on the leader of the opposition that have large potential impacts on his relationship with his party and his place in British politics. Integrating Presidentialisation theory in the conceptual framework is a coherent way of bringing the main changes together and applying them to the leader.

4   Parties and Leaders

This chapter covers the relationship between the leader of the opposition and the Conservative party since 1997, following the structure of the conceptual framework. It touches on a debate which has increasingly become more prominent in British politics, that to be successful, a leader has to separate themselves from their party, because so much political and electoral attention is focused on leaders. This forms a key part of the argument of those who say that British politics is undergoing a process of Presidentialisation, for it takes power away from parties (albeit on a short term, volatile basis). But this is not a position that is universally accepted. Some accept there was a move of power and prominence towards leaders, but contend it has not fundamentally altered the nature of a system still based around parties, who still dictate most voting preferences and give the Prime Minister and the leader of the opposition their respective status in Parliament. However Presidentialisation theorists have explained this by saying that as more responsibility accrues to leaders for the party's electoral position, then if the leaders do not produce near instant success in the polls they will be vulnerable to challenges from the party. Most challenges to leaders now are not based on ideology or policy, but personality and an unwillingness to tolerate a leader who is unpopular with the public.[170]

In this chapter we assess the question of whether Presidentialisation and a changed political environment have brought a shift in power from the party towards the leader. To help do this we will start off by establishing what the structure of power was in the Conservative party prior to 1997, and how these leaders were elected by the party. The next analysis splits into three main areas, following the conceptual framework. The first is the shift in intra-party power to the benefit of the leader, with the leader having growing autonomy from the dominant coalitions of power within the party, via personalised mandates. This is divided into structural and informal ways of changing the balance of power. The next is a shift towards recognition by the party that it is the leader rather than the party competing for a popular mandate. The last section is about a concentration of resources in the leader's office, devoted to enhancing the leader's personal standing, not controlling the party machinery. And all in mind of the

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[170] Foley, *The British Presidency,* pp.116-343.

overarching theory that leaders will be stronger when electorally successful, but more vulnerable when defeated.

4.1 Power in the Party

To establish the dominant alliances of power within the party, we must look at the structure and attitudes of the Conservative party before 1997, and how they changed since 1997. The Conservative party traditionally showed deference to the leader, without much of the fractiousness of Labour. But they had belied this reputation for unity, and acted in an exceptionally fractious way, during the 1992-1997 Parliament. Rebellions, plots, and even a shock leadership election revealed a party split over the economy, the legacy of Thatcherism, and especially Europe. The disunity made the Conservatives look even less electable. The structure of the party, ill-suited to preventing the indiscipline, partially contributed towards this defeat. The rebellion over the passing of the Maastricht Treaty in 1993 showed the problems the leader had in establishing effective control. During its passage, there was a band of over twenty rebels who consistently voted against the treaty. The Government was only able to pass it by desperately linking it to a vote of no confidence. The Government's progress after this event challenged some of the assumptions of Presidentialisation theorists. The Prime Minister and Conservative party leader, John Major, had entered office with a high personal rating. While this had shattered in the aftermath of the ERM debacle in 1992, the Conservatives had won a General Election that year. Major's personality had been extolled during the campaign, with the Conservatives producing a political broadcast about his humble upbringings, and the newspapers calling him 'Honest John' thanks to his simple (although planned) style of addressing the public standing on an improvised wooden soapbox.[171] Going by Presidentialisation theory, we might expect that the claim to a personally won mandate might have had some sort of hold over the parliamentary party. Instead, over Maastricht, there were MPs willing to make Major look weak, and imperil his leadership of the party, over an issue of policy and ideology, not primarily of personality. Major had constant difficulties applying discipline, to voluntary, parliamentary and professional wings of the party that were not even formally united. Major had difficulty in offering carrots, or sticks, to rebellious characters. Although he withdrew the party whip from the most persistent offenders, the independence of local party associations meant that he could not

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[171] Foley, *The British Presidency,* p.166.

have these MPs deselected. Most discussions of the Conservative leader were inseparable from the state of chaos in his party, with Blair putting it most succinctly - 'I lead my party, he follows his'.[172] This, and the ruthless way the Conservative party had brought down Thatcher in 1990, demonstrated that the Conservative party could wield extreme power over leaders, and was partially shielded from the leader's ire by the messy organisational structure of the party. The resulting disunity had not helped the Conservatives at all before the 1997 general election.

There was no sign that this febrile state would change, and if anything the return to opposition seemed like it would make it worse. Even before the general election campaign had finished, there were stories of plotting by the main leadership candidates. A series of ideological fault lines in the party had developed. The Conservative parliamentary party emerged from 1997 much smaller, wounded by division, and unsure whether to move on from, or unite around, Thatcherism, some never quite having come to terms with deposing Thatcher in 1990. On one level, Thatcher had been a stunningly successful leader, winning three general elections with a style of leadership that relied more on her personality than previous leaders. She had broken acceptance of the post war consensus, had an 'ism' named after her, presided over a great British move up the international competiveness league tables, greatly reduced the power of trade unions to wreck businesses through strikes, and facilitated a massive increase in home and share ownership.[173] But for many others she was also the Prime Minister who great swathes of the population had hated for her ideological and confrontational nature, who had only won elections due to the split in the British left, and had been guilty of abandoning the steady pragmatism and caution which had made the Conservatives so electorally successful. As we see from Heppell's ideological categorisation of MPs, the infighting of the 1980s had mutated into three main areas of division. One was the divide between Eurosceptics and Europhiles. Another was between economic liberals and 'wets'. And the third was between social conservatives and liberals.[174] Each divide was inextricably linked to Thatcher herself. Despite various arguments about whether she really had promoted 'her' values, and to what extent, Thatcherism was generally associated with euroscepticism, economic liberalism and social conservatism, and Thatcher herself was very concerned that the party would continue to promote them. Despite some

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[172] Phillip Norton, 'The Party In Perspective', in Norton (Ed.), *The Conservative Party*, (Hemel Hempstead: Prentice Hall, 1996), pp.64-67.
[173] Peter Riddell, *The Thatcher Era and its Legacy*, (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1991), pp.206-245.
[174] Heppell, *Choosing The Tory Leader,* p.118.

inconsistencies, she was personally associated with these three modes of thought, and became even more hardline in advocating them after leaving office. After 15 years of her leadership, the party had become more receptive to them, and this had been reflected in the constant challenges to Major over Europe and tax, and the springing up of Thatcherite groups like No Turning Back. The 1997 election ushered in a more Thatcherite parliamentary party.[175] Since Thatcher had been deposed as Prime Minister, her stature had risen, with many reflecting that she really had changed British politics. Even Labour had publically accepted many of her main reforms.[176] The fact that she remained publically active in politics meant that any leader of the opposition post 1997 faced an immediate dilemma. How would they establish an independent and credible political position and image that would not lead to the accusation that they were a puppet of Thatcher's, or alternatively that they were trashing the legacy of a visionary leader? Following the assumptions of presidential politics, this problem became even trickier for any leader. If politics was becoming more about the leaders putting a vision of their own personalities across, it would surely not help to have one of the giants of post war politics 'leading' the actions of many in the Conservative party who proudly declared themselves Thatcherites. And this was against the knowledge that Thatcher, unlike many former Conservative and Labour leaders, would often not opt to keep quiet to save her party embarrassment if they had done something that she did not like. Indeed, this had gone as far as Thatcher inciting Conservative members to vote against the Government during the passing of the Maastricht Treaty.[177]

But while the place of Thatcherism within the Conservative party may have been very strong after 1997, it was not unchallenged. There were still vocal rumps of pro-Europeans, economic wets and social liberals, who claimed to represent 'traditional' conservatism, and who often appealed to the 'One Nation' wing of the party. This provided the context for the leadership election in 1997 that took place after the general election. After Major's desperate attempts to hold the middle line between the right and the left of the party, especially over Europe, the expectation was that the leadership election would be decisive. As we shall see, the 1997 election effectively turned into a faceoff between the Thatcherites and the left, with the left still strong enough to send a

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[175] Dennis Kavanagh, *The Reordering of British Politics Under Thatcher,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp.160-170.
[176] Simon Jenkins, 'Thatcher's Legacy', *Political Studies Review,* Vol.5, (2007), pp.161-168.
[177] Margaret Thatcher, 'HL S [European Communities (Amendment) Bill]', 7th June 1993, http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/108314.

candidate through to the final round. So any Conservative leader after 1997 attempting to gain more power for themselves in relation to their party, faced the challenge of a party that had become much more guided by Thatcherism, but not united by it, had grown accustomed to plotting, ideological battles and infighting, contained vocal minorities, independent local associations, and a constitution that offered the leader little opportunity to communicate directly with members.

4.1.1   Leadership Elections and the Changing Power Structure of the Party

This section looks at the context that the leaders of the Conservative party since 1997 have had to wield power in. This encompasses two main areas, how the leaders won power, and what this said about the make up of the Parliamentary and extra-parliamentary party. We will also look at changes to the formal structure of the party, as this also affects the context that leaders exercise power in.

The Conservative leadership elections provide a gauge of the Conservative parliamentary party, the membership, and an indication of leaders' power bases within the party. Of the four leaders of the Conservative party during this era, only three were actually elected in a full scale leadership election - Michael Howard acceded to the leadership unopposed in 2003. William Hague won a contest purely among Conservative MPs in 1997, while Iain Duncan Smith and David Cameron won mixed contests between MPs and all party members in 2001 and 2005 respectively. Both Hague and Duncan Smith suffered from the limited nature of their wins in their leadership contests, and the impact that had on their relations with the dominant wing of the party, the Thatcherites. Heppell's typology of the MPs who voted in Conservative party leadership elections finds that in respect to the parliamentary Conservative party, 80% were economically liberal, 90% were eurosceptic and 80% were socially conservative, matching the Thatcherite stance.[178]

Under Hague, it became apparent from early on in his leadership that he would have to deal with a high volume of criticism from both ideological 'sides' of the party, varying in their source, often according to what Hague was doing or what his political strategy appeared to be. It would be expected that whichever one of the camps gained control, there would be a proportionally bigger amount of public dissension from the 'disenfranchised' group. But both sides of the ideological divide subjected him to intense

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[178] Heppell, *Choosing the Tory Leader,* pp.151-152.

criticism and scrutiny. In looking at why this was, we first must consider the 1997 leadership election and how and why Hague won it.

The leadership election in 1997 was one that was conducted in a fiercely hostile atmosphere. Passions on both sides of the ideological divide towards each other were "personalised, ideologically divisive and traumatic."[179] To add to the atmosphere of chaos, there was no runaway favourite, all of the candidates seeming to possess significant drawbacks. The perception prior to the 1997 general election was that the leadership election would turn into a showdown between the unofficial leaders of the Eurosceptic Right and the Pro European Left, Michael Portillo and Michael Heseltine. But due to Portillo losing his seat, and Heseltine's health problems, both did not participate. Both sides of the internal divide had been robbed of their totems. Although Clarke seemed to fill the gap for the left, this did not happen with the Eurosceptic right, which fractured in three different directions, around Michael Howard, Peter Lilley and John Redwood. In this environment, Hague possessed some key advantages. His status as the "least unpopular and the most inoffensive" of the candidates on the right, and his relatively low profile meant he had the fewest enemies. Despite starting the contest with a relatively small bunch of supporters, most of them party centrists, he was in a strong position to pick up votes from defeated candidates in subsequent ballots. One other piece of good fortune for Hague was the pact between Kenneth Clarke and John Redwood before the final ballot. Such an alliance, far from being seen as a welcome portent of the party beginning to unite again, was seen as implausible, alienating the right and the left. It made the atmosphere worse, spurring the public intervention of Margaret Thatcher - "I am supporting William Hague for the same kind of principled government which I lead," - and drove many from the firm right of the party to Hague, who won. There was a perception of Hague as a default leader due to the fact Heseltine and Portillo had been unable to participate. It was begrudging support and a shallow mandate. Hague suffered because he was "insufficiently identifiable with the Thatcherites to articulate a new narrative of Conservatism that transcended Thatcherite Conservatism." The votes that had taken him to victory were at best third preference votes, reflecting the cautious, incremental and pragmatic measure of the support Hague had slowly built throughout the election. Ultimately, the last ballot had largely been about what was termed getting a leader who was not Clarke, and Hague had happened to be that anyone, elected not so much for what he stood for (his previously low public profile and cautious statements

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[179] Heppell, *Choosing The Tory Leader,* p.116.

during the campaign had not done much to enlighten) as what he was not, and what he could stop. It meant that Hague started his term with the dual problem that he was seen as a "default leader" who had won due to luck, and a leader that could not lay claim to a large body of supporters bound to his vision and leadership. This would store up problems for Hague's relationship with his party in the four years that followed.

Much the same analysis applied to Duncan Smith, four years later. Duncan Smith won the leadership after finishing second in the final ballot of MPs and then beating Clarke in the final vote among all members. Duncan Smith's support among MPs was ideologically defined - all of his supporters were economically liberal eurosceptics, while all but one was a social conservative.[180] This was a contrast to Clarke and Portillo, who had managed to attract eurosceptics and social conservatives. This meant that from the start Duncan Smith was the creation of the Thatcherite right. With the ballot of members, of course it is not possible to categorise all members' views so precisely, but it is possible to discern from polls taken at the time that the membership was overwhelmingly Thatcherite, even more so than the parliamentary party.[181] Duncan Smith's history as one of the Europe rebels meant he stood very clearly in the public and party mind as on the Thatcherite wing (an impression Duncan Smith did little to dispel by his frequent skirmishes with Clarke during the contest).[182] Despite a rise to Shadow Defence Secretary, he was very inexperienced, and extremely unknown to the public. Clarke was the choice of more of the general public. Duncan Smith had been helped by a number of high profile endorsements in the final stage of the campaign, including Lady Thatcher who declared Clarke was not the right man, due to his sympathies to the European Union, and praised Duncan Smith for his qualities and ability to defend much of the Thatcherite agenda.[183] The perception, which had been abetted by the leadership election, of Duncan Smith as on the extremities of Thatcherite Conservatism, meant that the moves he made in his opening months as leader to move away from Thatcherism "managed to antagonise traditional pure Thatcherites." On the other hand, modernisers, while welcoming these moves, were still deeply suspicious of Duncan Smith's authenticity as a moderniser, "an implausible indicator of the modernisation and inclusivity agenda," and still remained ready to criticise the leader. When Duncan Smith

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[180] Heppell, *Choosing The Tory Leader,* p.116-151.
[181] http://www.icmresearch.co.uk/pdfs/2006_august_telegraph_conservative_party_membership_poll.pdf
[182] Andrew Sparrow, 'Iain Duncan Smith - I'm a man you can trust', 21st August 2001, *The Daily Telegraph.*
[183] James Landale, 'Duncan Smith wins Thatcher's backing', 21st August 2001, *The Times.*

switched back to a more Thatcherite position during the second year of his leadership, then he was truly stuck, having completely antagonised the modernisers, being forced into moving to a harder position to shore up support with the dominant Thatcherites who were lukewarm supporters of him.[184] The impression was that Duncan Smith had sneaked through as leader thanks to the new Conservative electoral system that put the deciding vote in the hands of all the party members.[185] Stephen Dorrell said that the election of Duncan Smith "should never have happened....it was a dead end....crude." The leadership rules in 1997 had militated against Clarke, and he had been defeated by the party's ideological obsession with Europe. By 2001 Dorrell opined that the party was beginning to tire of these obsessions, but "by then the party in the country had become involved in this great ideological debate as well," and was so captured by it that it did not recognise the "relative non-importance of European issues to the electorate" leading to electoral marginalisation."[186]

The way Michael Howard won the leadership was very different to Hague or Duncan Smith. Unlike them, there was no long, gruelling leadership campaign, with the different sides of the party bad mouthing each other. Indeed the way Howard was elected can be traced to the desire to avoid this type of campaign, for the fear of having a fractious battle in the middle of a parliament, one that could tip the party over the financial precipice (large donations had dried up under Duncan Smith's leadership), and a contest under the 'Hague Rules' of leadership selection, which had lost some credibility after the election of Duncan Smith.[187] So characterising Howard's rise to the leadership in the same ideological terms as the 1997 and 2001 changes of leadership does not fully explain it. Howard stood as a unity candidate, emphasising his ability as a safe pair of hands to unite the party at a difficult time, and build up to an effective election campaign. Having been a minister heavily associated with the authoritarian right, he now echoed the calls of modernisers for the party to become more inclusive and as Shadow Chancellor had argued against the wishes of many Thatcherites to promise large income tax cuts. He was the first candidate since 1997 not to have an endorsement from Thatcher, indeed Thatcher did not intervene publically in the contest at all. Although David Davis, a committed Thatcherite, considered standing, he did not in the end for fear that it would

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[184] Heppell, *Choosing The Tory Leader,* p.172.

[185] Dennis Kavanagh and David Butler, The *British General Election of 2005*, (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 2005), p.251.

[186] Stephen Dorrell, Interview with Ben Harris, 4th June 2008.

[187] Anthony Denham, 'Far From Home: Conservative Leadership Selection From Heath to Cameron', *The Political Quarterly,* Vol. 80(3), p.384.

lead to more infighting in a fruitless cause, and that he would be blamed for it. Michael Portillo and Kenneth Clarke, the only two senior figures of comparable stature to Howard, decided not to stand. Instead, Howard was ushered into the leadership 'by acclamation', with him being the only candidate, and no vote occurring either among MPs or ordinary members of the party. But Howard still owed his leadership in some way to the different sides of the divisions within the party. The modernisers had created the conditions for Howard to march unopposed to the leadership, by bringing out into the open and fanning the scandal that was the pretext for deposing Duncan Smith in the first place. And although the right did not oppose him, with their in-built majority among both wings of the party it is inconceivable that they would not have put forward a candidate to challenge Howard if senior figures on the right had not been satisfied with his candidature. The unity in electing Howard was ignoring the ideological fault lines in the Conservative party, not ending them for good.

The experience of David Cameron is a somewhat different one. He was able to use a different approach in winning the leadership. By 2005 the centrality of Europe had diminished, with main divide being between the modernisers and traditionalists. This led to a 'right wing primary' between David Davis and Liam Fox, and a 'left wing primary' between Ken Clarke and Cameron. After the boost of his impressive speech to conference, Cameron defeated Clarke in the 'left wing primary', and was able to attract many votes from the right as well, especially among eurosceptics. He subsequently achieved an overwhelming victory over Davis in the members' ballot, gaining 67.7% of the vote. Cameron possessed a mandate to lead the party far in excess of his predecessors, coming first amongst both Conservative parliamentarians and the party membership. He secured the support of nearly half of Conservative parliamentarians, unlike Duncan Smith, and unlike Hague a significant proportion of this was granted as 'first choice' votes. These votes were from a broad range of ideological wings within the party. After he was elected leader he was able to draft leading figures on the right like Hague and Davis into his Shadow Cabinet team, an opportunity that had been denied to Hague and Duncan Smith with relation to the left. Cameron had also been advantaged by the changed nature of the dominant Thatcherite tendency within the party. Although Thatcherism had not obviously relinquished its grip over the parliamentary party in 2005, the priorities of the Thatcherites had changed. Instead of upholding Thatcherism, the priority was getting the party elected again after such a long time out of power. Thatcherism was a much more implicit and subtle influence, and one that was beginning

to become subordinate to the task of selecting a leader who would possess all the necessary attributes to appeal to a more flexible electorate and a more presidentialised way of conducting politics. [188]

The intriguing thing is that, in three cases we have studied, there was an actual leadership election, but in none of them the most popular candidate with the general public at the outset of the campaign actually won the leadership. In 1997 and 2001 Ken Clarke was more popular than William Hague and Iain Duncan Smith respectively. In 2005, Clarke started off the most popular, although Cameron's explosive speech to conference was his breakthrough with the public, and after Clarke was put out in the first round, Cameron was unquestionably the most popular candidate. This showed the difficulty starting off as the front runner in leadership races. But aside from that, in the cases of Duncan Smith and Hague, the eagerness to prevent the most popular candidate among the public (Clarke) showed the power of ideological considerations. With Cameron, this did not occur, Cameron being a popular candidate himself, despite doubts he would uphold the dominant ideology of the party. Hague and Duncan Smith both won swing support from Thatcherites, as the 'Stop Clarke' candidate, and the manner of their elections questioned their legitimacy and, as we shall see, constrained their space to pursue modernising strategies in the initial stages of their leadership. Cameron, by contrast, while dealing with much the same majority Thatcherite party body, was able to draft significant levels of support from both right and left, and MPs and members, based on a modernising platform which he was consistent in pursuing from the beginning of his leadership.

In terms of the formal structure Conservative leaders had to work within after 1997, this changed radically. Many changes were made in the immediate aftermath of the 1997 election defeat. This is not really surprising, as there was general acceptance that the party would have to change its mode of organisation. The acceptance stemmed from three main factors which in different ways threatened the stability of the party as a credible fighting force. The first was a declining membership, and the lack of new members being attracted to the party to join, and eventually replace, the ageing membership base. If continued, this would create extreme difficulty for the party in conducting local activities, especially during a national election campaign. The second was the unruly way the party had conducted itself in the 1992-1997 Parliament, and the

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[188] Heppell, *Choosing The Tory Leader*, pp.179-192.

imperative to construct a system that the centre could control, inspired by the disciplined regime that New Labour had imposed upon MPs in their years in opposition. The third was also inspired by Labour and how they had established, under strong central direction, a slick and nimble media operation at the core of the leadership structure that made stringent efforts to ensure the leader would get good media coverage and that the rest of the party would be disciplined in repeating the messages of the leader. Of course, as we shall cover in the next section, some factors and the solutions to them are contradictory. The Conservative party faced a need to make membership of the party more enticing, while at the same time establishing a regime that subjected these members to a greater level of central control and reduced their power over the central leadership, in theory making party membership less enticing. So any direction with regard to party reform that was undertaken after 1997 had to balance these two difficulties.

The Conservative party now is very different structurally from what it was in 1997 in the immediate aftermath of the general election. But this was not through a traditionally Conservative, piecemeal, incremental approach to change. Instead most of the change happened in the aftermath of the defeat, under William Hague, and has been largely consolidated by subsequent party leaders. Hague's leadership campaign heavily emphasised the need for the party to change its organisation and how this would help the party achieve electoral success. A series of proposals were published under the Blueprint for Change document presented to the 1997 party conference. They attempted to deal with all of the problems that have been mentioned previously. To change the organisation of the party nationally, it proposed that the three wings of the party – the parliamentary party, voluntary wing and the professional staff, should be united as one body with a single constitution, rules and a national membership, not remaining separate formal entities.[189] A centralised board meeting six times a year would potentially give more power to the leadership to centralise initiatives, and impose discipline upon the party in disseminating central initiatives. Central Office would take control of a drive to recruit more members, communicating with members nationwide, and holding information about all these members in a centralised database. Such responsibilities had hereto been carried out by the local party associations. There was also more power for members. They would have the opportunity to play a part in deciding who became the leader of the party. Instead of the leader being decided by the parliamentary party, MPs would now vote to whittle leadership candidates down to two, at which point there would

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[189] Peele, 'Towards 'New Conservatives?', pp.144-145.

be a nationwide ballot of party members. There would be a one member one vote system in voting for association chairmen. Changes to the rules would allow for ballots of the membership on key party policies.[190] Although the power of local associations was pared down by the Hague reforms, they gave more power for ordinary members over the central activities of the party. This tallies with the framework, the influence of the middle level management of the party reduced, at the same time the influence of 'ordinary members' was apparently increased.

Thereafter, the Conservative leaders mostly consolidated the new structure. Iain Duncan Smith made little formal changes to the structure of the party. Michael Howard did attempt to, but failed. He challenged the rule that party members should have a decisive role in choosing the party leader. In the summer of 2005, Howard attempted to change the system of leadership election to a more complicated arrangement, where the final vote would be among MPs, with the only involvement in the process for ordinary party members being indirect, through the National Conservative Convention (a body made up of senior figures from the voluntary wing of the party) who would rank the candidates in order, with the top candidate being automatically sent through to the final round of the vote among MPs. But these proposals did not gain enough support in a constitutional college in the autumn of 2005, meaning that the 2005 leadership election was conducted under the 'Hague Rules'. So it is in their entirety that these rules still provide the context of the formal structure within which leaders of the opposition conduct their relationships with the Conservative party.

From our general analysis of the Conservative party before and after 1997, we see that it has been a party in transition. In its formal structure, it has moved on from the magic circle, and to some extent the parliamentary party, and gives the final say to its members in electing a leader. In theory, the membership has the power to be consulted and vote on central leadership initiatives. On the flip side, the leadership now can utilize possible areas of control and consolidation over the parliamentary and voluntary wings of the party, which are now one legal entity instead of a mish mash of individual local associations and groups. This has been a party where Thatcherism was the strongest of factions within the Conservative party, but not so dominant over competing factions that it achieved hegemony. The party was defined by, but not necessarily united by,

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[190] Daniel Collings and Anthony Seldon, 'Conservatives in Opposition', in Pippa Norris (Ed.), *Britain Votes 2001,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp.62-63.

Thatcherism. But how have the party leaders interacted with this party base, and how have they actually utilised the formal and informal powers granted to them? It is this we shall explore in the next section.

4.2   The Intra Party Balance Between Party and Leader

This section deals with the intra party balance of power, between the leader and the rest of the party. This has to be divided into two parts. The first part is what formal changes were made to the balance of power within the party, and what actual effect these had. How did the different leaders actually use the powers granted to them by the formal structure they were working within? The second sub section is about the informal changes in the balance of power within the party, the extra constitutional methods the leader may have employed to increase his power relative to that of his party. Did he attempt to bring in outsiders? Was he able to exclude key party groups from decision making and influence? Did he appeal directly to the voters and use a connection with the voters to get his way with the party?

4.2.1   Formal Changes In The Party

Any of Hague's changes were revolutionary in themselves, but presented as a package they did fundamentally change the formal make up of the Conservative party. But did they make any substantial difference to his power relative to other members of the party? Firstly it must be said that these organisational reforms had not played a major part in his leadership election victory. Hague had identified organisational reform as one of the main priorities of his campaign to win the leadership.[191] Hague said his reform of the party would be based on the principles of unity, democracy, decentralisation, involvement, openness and integrity. He wanted to increase the power of existing members of the party who had been somewhat neglected by the central party - "I want to give you power." By doing this they would attract new members, especially from groups that had traditionally not become involved in the Conservative party.[192] In practice, while

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[191] Gillian Peele, 'Towards 'New Conservatives'? Organisational Reform and the Conservative Party', *The Political Quarterly,* (1998), p.143.
[192] John Kampfner, 'Hague unveils ambitious plan for change ', 8th October 1997, *Financial Times.*

giving the base level of members more power, the proposed changes actually gave Central Office and the central leadership team more opportunity to centralise power and control over what had traditionally been a fragmented and autonomous network of local party associations and members. But did this actually work? Although it never reached the level of the chaos of the Major years, Hague had to deal with episodes of party disunity and disloyalty where it was not obvious that the increased powers the new party constitution gave him helped him exert control over elements in the party who were opposed to his position.

Hague had a readymade inspiration in place, Blair and New Labour. Party reform had founded Blair's image as a reformer. But Hague's victory was predicated more on the past, and his support from Thatcher, rather than future reforms. Hague taking over the Conservatives was very different to Blair taking over Labour - throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the Labour system had come to be seen by some as archaic, favouring undemocratic internal votes over letting the leadership get on with implementing their strategy and policies. In contrast the Conservatives were trying to counter an accusation that they had left their party membership without any meaningful say in the running of the party. Although it was accepted by the commentaritat and academics that there was a need for the Conservatives to change their organisation, there was little evidence it had been a decisive issue during the leadership election. And Hague's analysis of Blair's success was arguably based on a fundamental misunderstanding - Blair had provided evidence of a commitment to change before reforming the organisation of the party. The ground work for changing the party's image was done before, with party reforms being the symbol to the public that New Labour would be more than temporary. Did changes in the institutional structure create a more powerful leader, or were they the consolidation of a stronger leader's position? They certainly had little effect on their own. Hague had publically stated that he hoped that one of the effects of the reforms would be to treble membership of the Conservative party to one million. This was not without some grounds, as this expectation flowed from the belief that being a member of the party would be a more attractive proposition after the reforms were enacted. There had been a rise in membership of the Labour party after Blair's reforms. But despite a large marketing campaign exhorting people to join the party, Conservative membership stayed largely static.[193] Organisational reforms in themselves were not enough to increase the leader's power. If Hague had been able to attract more members to the party then it

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[193] Butler and Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 2001,* p.55.

would have been a boost to his leadership, as these new converts to party membership, like the influx of new members to New Labour, would have initially at least been great fans of the new leader, provided a solid base of support for Hague in any votes he conducted, and created a belief that some of the membership was directly dependent on Hague remaining as leader. But this did not happen, and the fact it did not happen is not a surprise politically. Hague's personal popularity ratings were very low, as were those of the Conservatives. The lack of a rise in membership would only have been surprising if the reforms had been accompanied by a surge in Hague's popularity. Organisational reforms in themselves were not enough to achieve the objective of more members.

Hague was consistently caused problems by party MPs or members rebelling over sensitive topics and causing him embarrassment. Since taking over the leadership of the party Hague had introduced a structured series of meetings, reports and targets that the Shadow Cabinet were supposed to operate to, a culture that would supposedly be an improvement over the Major years, where cliques developed in a divided Cabinet, and some Ministers ended up doing largely 'their own thing' with little input or consultation with the Prime Minister or the team at Number Ten. Again, the new structure at the top was not in practice a help to Hague, despite the theoretical improvements it offered. The lack of stature and popularity Hague had was part of the problem. The row over tougher sanctions for using cannabis at the 2000 party conference showed this. This was caused when Shadow Home Secretary Ann Widdecombe made a speech at the conference calling for much tougher enforcement of the law about criminal penalties pertaining to the use of cannabis. This was immediately undermined by the anonomyous disclosure of most of the Shadow Cabinet that they had smoked the drug in their youth. Despite Hague's support for the policy, the disagreement of most of the Shadow Cabinet and clandestine admissions that many of them had smoked the drug left it open to ridicule, and led it to be dropped as party policy.[194] This was at a turbulent time for the party in general, with splits over Europe, and the 'modernising' and 'traditionalist' way of viewing the world out in the open. It was seen over the next few months in the run up to the general election, where Hague struggled to keep control of the party. The furore over the Conservative MP John Townend in 2001 showed this difficulty. The extra control he had over the local parties did not lead to any control over what Townend said, when he came out with comments that allegedly had racist overtones. Hague had little power over

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[194] Paul Eastham, 'Tory Retreat Over: Rethink on Cannabis Crackdown As Police Refuse to Support It', 5th October 2000, *Daily Mail.*

Townend, a departing MP, and faced the fact that the local association were protective over their MP. But the initial reluctance to take action against the renegade MP led to criticism of Hague, and insinuations that he was not able to control the more extreme sections of his own party. Another example of Hague's tenuous grip over his own MPs was when Kenneth Clarke and Michael Heseltine appeared with Tony Blair on a public platform appealing for Britain to join the Euro, a direct contradiction of their party leader's strategy.[195] Although Hague fulminated against this in public, he had little concrete options to punish and discourage the two men. Now that they were backbenchers, Hague could not throw them off the front bench, and though he could have withdrawn the party whip, this would have created an immediate confrontation with the media and the local party branches. The fact that Hague had centralised control over the local party branches did not change the fact that Heseltine and Clarke were figures whom it would be very hard to move against. The increased powers that Hague had over the party branches may have given him more power over the information that flowed to local party members, but the use of this power seems most useful in the long term, not in the short term game of establishing immediate power over the party. And even if it did, a lot of this power rested upon the personal standing of Hague, which was never strong throughout his leadership. This was a theme that was continued throughout his leadership.

One of the most eye catching initiatives relating to party democracy and openness was introducing policy plebiscites. In theory this was supposed to establish Hague's power over dissidents in his own party, as he would be able to easily refresh the leadership's mandate over key policy questions. But it is doubtful whether the reform really worked in this fashion, and also questionable whether it really achieved the aims of increased democracy and accountability of the leadership that was the public aim of such a reform. It must be noted that the way this system worked was not systematic, but in a flexible way that was skewed in the leadership's favour. There was no prescription of what the leadership had to ballot the membership on, or if they had to do this on an annual or any other timeframe. Instead the situation was that the leadership could ballot the membership on any issues or policy programmes they desired, but on a subject and at a time of their choosing. This above all has probably contributed to the experiment being used in a piecemeal and irregular fashion. If it had been an annual 'test' for the leadership's plans, it would have maybe become an annual political 'event', bringing

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[195] David Hughes, 'Blair Accused of a Euro Cover Up', 15th October 1999, *Daily Mail.*

more discussion and debate about the leadership's strategy, although of course taking the chance that the leadership could be defeated on an important issue, or that the party would be exposed as fundamentally divided, something that the Labour party had experienced during the 1980s with a system that often prioritised internal party democracy, even when it wrecked the plans of the leadership. As he was entitled to, Hague used the device sparingly. The first time it was used was in 1998 when Hague took a party vote on the leadership's policy on joining the European Single Currency.[196] Ruling out membership of the Euro for the duration of the next Parliament was approved by an overwhelming majority. By staging this vote, Hague hoped that internal critics of his European policy would be forced to accept a clearly expressed will of the party membership. And indeed, Hague did find it reduced the intensity of the European arguments, as when party members defied him on the European issue, he was able to now credibly claim that they were defying the democratically expressed will of the party.[197] But despite this, Hague did not use the device for another two years. When a vote was taken on a mini–manifesto *Believing In Britain* in 2000, the results were much less impressive. Only 16.7% of the Conservative membership bothered to vote, although 98% of them voted for the document.[198] In this case, the usefulness of the referendum was lessened, as Hague couldn't claim a ringing endorsement from the party when well over 50% of the membership hadn't voted. Unlike the referendum on the Euro, there is little evidence that Hague referred to it as a reason to back his leadership. Although he had won on paper, there is little evidence that this win either helped him establish control over those in his party who were being difficult, or that it reinforced his mandate to lead the party. There was a natural constraint to such referenda - if it was not on a topic that excited the membership there was the chance little would vote, which would make the 'endorsement' seem less worthwhile. But asking questions about too many issues and ending up with one that was unpopular with the membership, led to the chance it could be rejected. Other issues may have been harder to pass, and carried the potential for a large amount of trouble, as even approval by a small majority could have been damaging to Hague. So even though the Euro plebiscite was successfully used by Hague (although it did not certainly end all European divisions), it was not a tool he was able to apply throughout the term of his leadership. This was the problem with many of the main

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[196] Collings and Seldon, 'Conservatives in Opposition', p.63.
[197] David Butler and Dennis Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 2001,* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2002), pp.41-47.
[198] 'BBC Is Predicting One Third Turnout for Built to Last Referendum', *ConservativeHome,* http://conservativehome.blogs.com/torydiary/2006/09/bbc_is_predicti.html

Hague reforms to the party - they increased the scope of potential influence for the leader over the party but the powers were dependant on the political success of the leader, who needed to be in a politically strong position to actually utilise them.

This informed the attitude subsequent leaders took to the formal rules that governed their relations between the leader and the party. Hague had made significant changes to the formal relationship between the leader and the party, but they had not brought electoral or political success, and it had not stopped the party causing him moments of severe discomfort, and actively rebelling against him. Not surprisingly, since it had been shown to be an inadequate panacea for the Conservative position, little significant formal changes were made after 2001. Duncan Smith, when he first took over the party leadership, had a radical agenda that hit upon relatively new ground for the Conservative party. But there were no plebiscites on his policies, even though Duncan Smith released a document outlining the principles that the party should stand for in 2002.[199] There was no massive drive to recruit more members either. Much of what Duncan Smith did relating to the Shadow Cabinet actually moved away from the Hague model of giving the members more power. Duncan Smith insisted that his style of conducting the Shadow Cabinet had been very consensual, with the Shadow Cabinet members taking positions of some power in being able to block or delay Duncan Smith initiatives. Duncan Smith drew attention to the way when he started as leader he set up a special policy unit who had a responsibility to look at policies, and commission papers about them. Duncan Smith had a policy board with members of the shadow cabinet and guest members, proposed policies would go to Shadow Ministers, who would bring them through for approval by the policy board, and then the Shadow Cabinet. Duncan Smith said Shadow Cabinet had to approve policy and the policy board "would make final decisions about it."[200] There was no place for the party referendum devices during Duncan Smith's leadership, instead the Shadow Cabinet had a high degree of veto over plans before they even got to be publicised to the wider party membership. So while other devices like the central dissemination of information and the centralised membership scheme were consolidated upon during the Duncan Smith years, some of the devices Hague had made provision for in his party reforms lay relatively dormant. Ironically, although he had departed as leader, it was Hague who had the largest impact on the relations between the leader and the Conservative party. Why was this? It was because Duncan Smith was the

[199] David Charter, 'Blueprint Has Echoes of Thatcher Approach', 11th October 2002, *The Times.*
[200] Iain Duncan Smith, Interview with Ben Harris, 6th June 2008.

biggest beneficiary of the 'Hague Rules' for leadership elections and would have struggled to win without the final membership vote. But the way he was elected affected Duncan Smith's leadership; MPs were less inclined to give him space to carry out his programme, as the parliamentary party had never given him a conclusive mandate. Duncan Smith's mandate had been from the members, and in this sense it is surprising that he did not utilise the devices Hague had bequeathed him to communicate with and consult members more, given that his mandate had been from them. The nature of his relationship with the parliamentary party was perhaps always destined to be tense, but could Duncan Smith not have built upon his relationship with the members more to counterbalance this?

Michael Howard did not make many formal changes to the structure of intra-party relations. During his short period as leader, most of his energies were focused on the relatively immediate prospect of a general election, not changes to the party constitution. Howard achieved many improvements and efficiencies in how the central leadership team operated and how they were able to impose their will upon the party, but this was not through new formal changes to the party constitution. What Howard did share with Duncan Smith was a further move away from consulting the grassroots membership. He did not have any votes of the membership on his policy or strategy, and of course the nature of his accession to the party leadership was to some extent casting the party membership aside. Although the fact that he was able to rise to the leadership unopposed deprived the opportunity for the parliamentary party to take their part in the process of electing the leader, there were some differences with the situation of the party members. The parliamentary party had implicitly agreed to Howard taking the leadership (albeit in a coerced/peer pressure situation) as by definition if any of them had stood against Howard the full leadership election process would have been necessarily triggered. Many of the public justifications by leading public figures in the party of not having an election concentrated on the time, effort and most importantly expense, that an election would have cost. But when we think about this, this was stressing the unsuitability of the membership element of the contest most. With ballots of the parliamentary party, the cost and time for the party was relatively low, as the contest could be commenced quickly, and all MPs balloted centrally at Westminster. In contrast, the membership election required the expense, and two or three months of effort. While all MPs did not have a direct role in the election of Howard, they had an opportunity to contribute to and to veto in some way his unopposed election, which most actively decided to wave through. In

contrast the membership were not consulted, and powerless to have their say when the party declared that there was only one candidate for the leadership and that he was being waved through. The most significant tinkering Howard made to the formal constitution, ironically, was a change he did not make, as it had implications for the election of David Cameron. Howard's first use of a plebiscite was during his 'lame-duck' period, to change the process of electing the leader to one that would contain more involvement for the MPs. Howard said his main concern was "I was keen that there should be a long process" because he didn't want people saying that the new leader had been a snap judgement - "I wanted the party to have a good long look at all the candidates..... they won't be able to say we rushed into....it made it much more difficult to snipe at my successor." Certainly, despite not getting his new system of leader selection through, Howard achieved this, the time taken to draw up the new system and vote on it causing a considerable delay, Cameron not being elected until December. Howard said that even the eventual muddled way of using the old system had worked much better than the 1997 election. [201]

David Cameron marked some sort of renewal with the Hague policy of engaging the party membership. But although his whole leadership had been based around the need for the party to change, he did not go to the same level as Hague in making formal changes to the party constitution. For Cameron, changing the party was as much about portraying himself as a changed Conservative, and bringing in a new membership who would change the internal dynamics of the party. He did conduct a vote on a document named 'Built to Last'. This was a document that chimed with the platform he had won the leadership on, with some traditional Conservative aims like encouraging entrepreneurship in society, or defending national institutions, but others that decidedly resembled New Labour in the language they were couched in. One was to "fight social injustice and help the poor by building a strong society." Another was to "enhance the environment and increase general well being." The party also pledged itself to respect diversity by encouraging reverse discrimination in selecting parliamentary candidates, and to take the lead in the fight against global poverty. The introduction also repeated Cameron's claim that there was such a thing as society, it was just not the same thing as the state.[202] Despite the apparent challenge to Thatcherism, the document was passed overwhelmingly by a vote of the party membership, giving an extra mandate to Cameron's pledge to change to the party. Cameron's attempts to bind the party into his

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[201] Michael Howard, Interview with Ben Harris, 14th July 2009.
[202] *Built To Last: The Aims and Values of the Conservative party,* (London: Conservative party, 2008).

mainstream values were accompanied by efforts to alter the party to make it look more like the nation. The most formal attempts to do this were through promoting the A-List of parliamentary candidates. Indeed, the A-List was the measure that attracted most controversy within the party, with successful attempts to overcome or subvert it attempted by local associations. An 'A' list would promote women candidates, split 50/50 between women and men.[203] This was a temporary measure that had no defined precise end point or date, and had not been voted on nor enshrined in the party constitution or rules. It threatened local party autonomy, and was the scene of the largest revolts, and was partially prevented by some local associations. The party had real structural power and was able to use it to obstruct Cameron.

Hague is certainly unique among the four leaders that are the subject of this study, in the scale or extent of his formal changes to the party. His internal changes to the workings of the party were the largest in a generation, and nothing as big was attempted by the subsequent three leaders. But as we have seen, these changes alone did not win Hague more independence from dominant alliances within the party, and while shifting power towards him, did not appreciably allow him to exercise it effectively. So this leads us to the second part of this question, whether a leader could gain more power and independence within a party by other, more subtle, methods?

4.2.2 Other Ways of Altering the Intra Party Balance

What about the other proposition of our conceptual framework, that leaders had devised a series of ways to communicate with members and voters that increased their power relative to their party base, independent of the structural changes we outlined in the previous section? By nature this section is less precisely defined than the previous section, we are not measuring the precise changes in formal rules, but more nebulous distinctions. Was the party leader able to establish more power over his party by recoursing to other methods apart from changing the formal rules - communicating directly with members, or claiming a mandate with the electorate that gave them power to change the nature of relations with their party?

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[203] David Cameron, 'Until we're represented by men and women in the country, we won't be half the party we could be' 12th December 2005,
http://www.conservatives.com/News/Speeches/2005/12/Cameron_Until_were_represented_by_men_and_women_in_the_country_we_wont_be_half_the_party_we_could_be.aspx

There were techniques Hague used to try and change the party to match his own early style. A tactic he used, and all the leaders since 1997 have used to some extent, was to place emphasis on the need for the party to change, especially in the area of economic and social policy. This has to be placed in the context of the 1997 leadership election, which had shown the Thatcherites were in a dominant position numerically within the party. Much of the rhetoric concentrated on the split between the aspirations of the electorate, as most visibly demonstrated by the 1997 election, and the aspirations of the Thatcherites. This defied the large body of Thatcherites within the party that thought they just needed 'one more heave' to return to government. Hague made it clear that he did not accept this analysis, and that the worst option for the party would be to stay the same. He told MPs and local activists that they had to look afresh at the reasons for the Labour general election landslide "without any trace of self-delusion....No change is not an option." [204] If Hague wanted his party to absorb some of the lessons from the landslide election defeat, and act accordingly, then this could not be compelled through formal measures. He would have to do it through non formal measures. He had to offer a carrot of electoral success and make the whole process fit his image as a leader. The message of change matched the initial attempts by his central team to portray Hague as youthful and in touch with modern Britain. Telling the party to act more like him was a natural extension to this. It would show off Hague's youthful image and contrast him to the rest of the party, and would establish his power over Thatcherites in the party. He acknowledged that his party had created the impression that it was "obsessed with economics" and implied that in future it would seek to fight on other fields, notably cultural and social values. He vowed to rebuild the party as a "fresh, open, clear, clean, out-going, listening" outfit.[205] His first conference speech distanced himself from the party's previous emphasis on laissez faire, and Europe, and apologised for the way "Our Parliamentary party came to be seen as divided, selfish and conceited."[206] He was setting the party challenges; if he could cajole or incentivise the party into passing these tests, then he would have demonstrated his ability to be an effective leader, respected by his own party. The stress was on the short term popularity of the leader, and his vulnerability to challenge without demonstrating his popularity and authority, even if they were not permanent. The first test was for the party to absorb and learn the lessons of 1997. The

[204] John Kampfner, 'Hague to spell out overhaul of party', 23 July 1997, *Financial Times.*
[205] 'Hague's identity - Strong themes will achieve little without policy detail - Leading Article.', 20th January 1999, *The Times.*
[206] William Hague, 'Conservative Conference Speech', 10th October 1997,http://www.lgcplus.com/news/hagues-speech-full-text-part-2/1487627.article

second test, was to apologise for the way the party had come to be seen as arrogant, and establish a more open minded culture in the party. And the third was to end the damaging and vicious divisions, and stop the public perception that the party was completely divided. Although the second test could be somewhat achieved by the formal changes to party membership, which may have incentivised new individuals from different backgrounds to join, all three needed Hague to change his party's behaviour through non-formal methods. Analysis of Hague's time as leader shows that he was largely unsuccessful at establishing a sense of authority over the party by the non formal appeals he made to the party, and shifting the balance of power towards himself and away from the rest of the party.

One of these failures was decisive in the eventual breakdown of his leadership, his confrontation with the party over 'kitchen table conservatism'. This showed that Hague was in too weak a position to make the party learn the lessons of the 1997 defeat as he saw them, and was unable to prevent the divisions and power bases within the party overriding the will of the leadership. Kitchen table conservatism was a philosophy heavily influenced by focus groups, which had found the Conservatives to be seen as out of touch and obsessed with economics and Thatcherism. It was an attempt to make the Conservatives talk less about dry economics, and change their style to one that was more concerned with the median voters' concerns. It was to be integrated into policy, publicity and communication activities. It was admitted the Conservatives had not had a proper strategy for a long time, and that "People still don't have a clear impression of William Hague, what sort of person he is, his background or what he stands for, so they continue to project all the party's negatives on to him." To counter this the document said that the party must talk and look more like the rest of Britain, "neutralise our vulnerabilities on key issues" like health and education and restore a reputation for economic competence, all accompanied by "10,000 volt initiatives" designed to prove that it was for "bold, decisive and often confrontational" moves against groups such as the Carlton Club.[207] But when the message was put into a Peter Lilley speech on the 20th anniversary of Margaret Thatcher becoming Prime Minister, it attracted fury on the right, not least from Thatcher herself. By pledging to "emphatically accept that the free market has only a limited role in improving public services like health, education and welfare", Lilley, at Hague's behest, was attempting to neutralise a Conservative weakness on health and

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[207] Rachel Sylvester, `Our position is more serious. We are running out of time', 23rd April 2001, *The Daily Telegraph.*

education where they regularly trailed Labour in the polls.[208] But it was a strategy Hague was unable to carry through the rest of his leadership and this was down to the aggressive challenge of the Thatcherites. Although Thatcher did not publically intervene or make a statement against the speech, there were plenty of stories in the press that expressed her disquiet at the situation. There were fractured and angry Shadow Cabinet meetings.[209] The policy was deeply unpopular with the majority of the party membership.[210] This stunned Hague into returning to attacking the Government on Europe, the Euro and lower taxes, with little of the ideas of kitchen table conservatism. [211] The most visible example of Hague's 'surrender' to the Thatcherites was the sacking of Lilley.[212] It appeared as if Hague had been railroaded into a more Thatcherite stance.

This backdown had an adverse effect on Hague's ability to assert that he was gaining more power over his own party. It forced him down a policy and presentational direction that rendered much of what he had been saying in the first couple of years of his leadership redundant. In such circumstances, it was very hard for Hague to make it look like he, and not the rest of the party, was gaining power, and it indeed emboldened the elements of the party that had forced him to back down. The fact that it changed the style of his leadership meant that it became a lot harder for the party to pass another test that Hague had set it early on in his leadership, that it should show an openness to outsiders and change its internal culture, because Hague had effectively stopped setting that test altogether. Suddenly, from saying how the party had been wrong in the past and faced a need to change, he was now saying it had been right all along, that he was proud of its values and what it had done in the past. This was symbolised most acutely by the way that Hague took Tony Blair's phrase about the 'Forces of Conservatism' and enthusiastically made it part of his pitch to the party at conference, associating himself with the base opinions of the party.[213] In turn this meant that the initiatives that had been intended to further greater engagement by the party with outside groups were largely cast aside, and logically so, for if they had been kept they would have conflicted with Hague's rhetoric that the party had got the big questions right in the past. The most prominent example of Hague's willingness to establish closer connections with the world

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[208]'Hague backs Lilley as Tory revolt erupts', 21st April 1999, *The Times.*
[209] Andrew Pierce, 'Ballistic' Thatcher zeroes in on Hague', 24th April 1999, *The Times.*
[210] Tim Hames and Andrew Pierce, 'Hague retires, bloody and confused - In the Tory bunker', 1st May 1999, *The Times.*
[211] William Hague, 'Speech to the 1999 Conference', 7th October 1999.
[212] 'Changing of the guard - The Tories need fresh ideas from a new Shadow Cabinet ', 16th June 1999, *The Times.*
[213] William Hague, 'Speech to the 1999 Conference', 7th October 1999.

outside the party had been the 'Listening To Britain' scheme, that involved Shadow Cabinet members travelling around the country, to events with non-party members[214], which appeared to have had little influence on Conservative policy, or the culture of the Conservative party in any significant way before it was dropped. Plans for a new party name and logo were dropped.[215] Such a volte face on strategy was a major concession to, even a defeat of, the Thatcherites. And the Thatcherites were still the dominant force in the party precisely because Hague had failed in his objective of broadening the party membership, and attracting many outsiders, with many of the sub-formal initiatives he had in place to attract them being quietly sidelined.

It was difficult to see that there had been a firm shift in intra party power to Hague. As more protracted battles like the one over kitchen table conservatism showed, Hague was not able to unite both wings of the party, but also was faced with the unedifying prospect of making U-turns on key policies only to then find he was now taking flak from the opposite side of the party. There appeared to be no way to square the circle. Whatever Hague had tried, whether it had been apologising for mistakes in the early part of his leadership, being a kitchen table conservative, or acting against the liberal elite in the latter part of his leadership, he achieved no significant breakthrough. At no point did Hague have the option of using the polls as a weapon against dissidents, being able to accuse them of derailing genuine prospects of election victory in the near future.

Duncan Smith to a greater extent than Hague relied on a more subtle series of statements, which attempted to entice the party into changing its way of doing things. As Duncan Smith himself admitted, if the party had any chance of being elected, it needed to counter the charge that it was obsessed with a couple of Thatcherite issues, especially Europe and the Euro.[216] But any attempt to move the party away from these values was impacted by the same problems as Hague had faced, that it would require threatening the Thatcherites within the party. But successfully doing it, or at least having the party acquiesce, without divisive fault lines appearing, would increase the perception that Duncan Smith was gaining power over the party. The series of attempts to subtly distance the party from the Thatcherite consensus which had dominated the Hague Conservative party since 1999 were largely subtle, like when he reportedly banned Thatcher from attending where no

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[214] John Kampfner, 'Hague unveils ambitious plan for change ', 8th October 1997, Financial *Times.*
[215] 'Hip Tories' bid binned by Hague', 20th August 1999, *The Sun.*
[216] Iain Duncan Smith, Interview With Ben Harris, 5th June 2008.

doubt she would have been rapturously received by members.[217.] Duncan Smith said that the Conservatives needed to prove they were actively engaged in finding examples of how public services were well run in other countries. Polling showed the public services, especially health and education, were a priority issue for most Conservative voters and identifiers already.[218] Duncan Smith said that "Mrs Thatcher was a phenomenal success..... But she was dealing with problems that were relevant to when she was Prime Minster.....times were different when she came in."[219] In one speech he claimed that "We must first understand the way life in Britain is lived today, and not the way it was lived 20 years ago. Yes, it is right to be proud of the past, but it is wrong to try and live in the past. This country has moved on and so must we" and "We made people financially better off, but money isn't everything and in other ways the quality of their lives declined.....beyond this hall people too often remember the hurt we caused and the anger they felt......Until people see that our party has learnt the lessons of 1997, we will go on getting the result of 1997."[220] The strategy was clear enough, but there was one inconsistency. Despite his protestations to the contrary, Duncan Smith had been elected on a platform of defending Thatcherism from Clarke, and had relied on the votes of Thatcherite MPs to make it through to the final ballot. Now Duncan Smith was arguably attacking them. Duncan Smith said that although he agreed with those like Thatcher who said that Britain had an "inherent clash of aims," with the EU, he did not think this should become the sole focus of the Conservatives. Indeed he said he wanted to avoid another Hague leadership, which had become in his words, "dominated" by the question of Europe. To do this Duncan Smith made an early decision to rule out membership of the Single Currency, not subject to any circumstances whatsoever - Hague had left open the possibility of joining after one parliament of Conservative Government. "I feel as strongly as the next person about Europe, but I don't think we should be dominated by it all the time, because the public doesn't see it as the number one dominant issue...they think we only care about Europe, every now and then immigration and tax reductions."[221] The strategy here was very explicit, to end the perception of the Conservatives as a eurosceptic, sub-single issue party, and get them to talk about the issues that rated as primary concerns for most of the public. But although the strategy was very clear, there

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[217] 'Iain Duncan Smith Speech In Full', http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/1591680.stm, 10th October 2001.
[218] http://www.icmresearch.co.uk/pdfs/ 2001_august_telegraph_conservative_leadership.pdf
[219] Iain Duncan Smith, Interview with Ben Harris, 5th June 2008.
[220] Iain Duncan Smith, ' Leadership with a purpose, Speech to Conservative Party Conference 2002', 10th October 2002, http://www.iainduncansmith.org/article.aspx?id=10&ref=94
[221] Iain Duncan Smith, Interview with Ben Harris, 5th June 2008.

was a clash with the way Duncan Smith had been elected, mainly due to the issue of Europe, which he had not been afraid to use it as a weapon when debating Ken Clarke (he admitted to me that he had been afraid Clarke as leader "would have split the Conservative party" on the issue).[222] Duncan Smith's Shadow Cabinet was seen as favouring the Thatcherite Eurosceptics within the party. Maintaining and reinforcing this Thatcherite and Eurosceptic status quo appeared to be confirmed by Duncan Smith's list of Shadow Cabinet appointments, and it was covered this way by the media.[223]

As during Hague's leadership, a difficulty in moving the party's focus away from Thatcherism was the continued public prominence of Thatcher herself.[224] Personally Thatcher was using even more strident language on Europe, saying Britain faced an "intense struggle," with Europe over a "clash of aims and ideals."[225] But even figures who were key to the Thatcher project like John Redwood, were adamant that Thatcherism was a 1980's project, a product of its time, and it had been a mistake to give the impression under Hague that the party was wedded to every aspect of it.[226] There was a larger space opening up in the party for those who wanted to reassess its relationship with Thatcherism.

There was much less trouble from the Thatcherite, or the pro-European wings of the party over Europe in general. But if the European issue was less fractious, and was less of a challenge to the leader, then there was another schism that had opened up in the party that caused Duncan Smith serious trouble, the debate between 'modernisers' and 'traditionalists', often called the debate between the 'Mods and Rockers'. This was between social conservatives and a more socially liberal wing of the party. Michael Portillo's defection to the moderniser camp, and the controversy his confidants had engendered around their alleged attempts to undermine Hague's leadership, spilled over into Duncan Smith's term of leadership with a vengeance, especially in his second year. Many of his initiatives as leader were characterised as modernising or traditionalist. Duncan Smith said the debate between modernisers and traditionalists was a "complicated, artificial one," and the modernisers with their "buzz phrases" could often

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[222] Iain Duncan Smith, Interview with Ben Harris, 5th June 2008.
[223] BBC News, 'Eurosceptics Prosper Under Duncan Smith', 14th September 2001, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/1543765.stm.
[224] Philip Webster, 'Thatcher - Britain must start to quit EU', 18th March 2002, *The Times.*
[225] Margaret Thatcher, *Statecraft: Strategies For A Changing World*, (New York: Harper Collins, 2002), pp.321-424.
[226] John Redwood, Interview with Author, 26th May 2008.

be "puerile and childish." This raised questions - had he felt forced into the modernising agenda, or less likely, unwittingly fallen into it, or was he just bitter at those who had removed him? For whatever reason, the modernising agenda became a much less prominent part of his leadership from late 2002 onwards. Duncan Smith suffered from not enjoying the benefits of his early modernising position by his change of tack and the earlier alienation of the traditionalists, and not being able to demonstrate electoral success to either. Especially after the local elections in 2003, and symbolised by the removal of key modernisers from his staff, his leadership became much more aggressive. Suddenly he started talking of a "fair deal for the middle classes," which included building more roads, putting 40,000 more police on the beat, giving head teachers more powers, and cash vouchers for hospitals.[227] As poll ratings had declined and panic and criticism within the party increased, Duncan Smith was forced to move towards Thatcherism again, which meant his leadership began to float from issue to issue with little discernible focus.

The event that most publically encapsulated Duncan Smith's problems reconciling the modernising challenge to the larger Thatcherite wing of the party was a bill to legalise gay adoption. This was typical of the constraints the moderniser/traditionalist debate put on him - he was hard pressed to satisfy either side. Although traditionalists were dominant within the party, the modernisers were a vociferous and well-organised group that was able to call Duncan Smith's powers into question, and destabilise him enough to get the media speculating about his leadership. Duncan Smith imposed a three line whip to vote against a bill that allowed unmarried and gay couples to adopt. In itself this was a strange move for an opposition to impose a three line whip, especially on an issue that had the potential to be decisive, and was not one of the main planks of Duncan Smith's plans. After all, with the Government's massive majority there was no hope of the Conservatives preventing the bill passing even with a three line whip, and every chance of a rebellion. Eight Conservative MPs defied the leadership and voted for the Bill. But more significant than the relatively small numbers, was the identity of those who voted with Labour. Seven of the eight were former Cabinet or Shadow Cabinet members. And two of them were Duncan Smith's two closest challengers for the leadership, Michael Portillo and Ken Clarke. Also voting against was John Bercow, who resigned as Shadow Work Pensions and Secretary on the day of the vote. To make matters even worse, during

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[227] Iain Duncan Smith, 'A fair deal for everyone', 16th March 2003,
http://www.iainduncansmith.org/article.aspx?id=10&ref=73

the debate Portillo launched a withering attack on Duncan Smith, asking why there had been a three line whip and quoting back at him his conference speech where he had delivered the line about recognising life as it was lived in Britain today, not twenty years ago.[228] This was a demonstration of the line Duncan Smith had to straddle between the two sections in the party, and the consequences if he got wrong. And among the wider public, there was quite strong support for the bill - 76% to 19% wanted to allow unmarried couples to adopt.[229] Duncan Smith appeared to be taking the side of the right, and going against majority opinion. At first Duncan Smith took on the rebellion.[230] He issued a stark challenge to his critics - he called some MPs "the enemy within," and appealed to the party to "unite or die" or it would be "sabotaged by self indulgence or indiscipline." He also claimed he had "begun to reconnect the party with the views and attitudes of contemporary Britain" and that the party "elected me to lead it in the direction I am now going." This was somewhat hard to understand given he had been elected on a rightist platform, much of his leadership had progressed along a modernising path, and now he was having a massive falling out with the modernisers.[231] As the speculation and criticisms mounted, Duncan Smith was forced into a public apology to the party, admitting that he had made errors in insisting on a three line whip.[232] This exposes some idiosyncrasies in the Conservative approach to opposition at this time. Firstly it exposes a concern by the leader that he should show firm leadership on a broad range of issues, even those that were not necessarily closely related to the main points of the Conservative platform. Secondly, the memory of his past disloyalty to Conservative leaders dogged him, and made it more 'justifiable' for his party to rebel against him, and harder for him to make appeals to party loyalty. The battle to achieve cohesiveness in government took over much opposition activity as well. He emerged with worse relations with both sides in the party, and a very public demonstration that even a minority in his party could throw his leadership into crisis, even over what had at first seemed a minor issue.

In fact, reviewing the episodes of the Duncan Smith years, it is possible to argue that in these two years there had actually been a shift of intra party power *away* from the leader.

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[228] Philip Webster and Greg Hurst, 'Tories In Revolt As Portillo Turns The Knife', 5th November 2002, *The Times.*

[229] http://www.icmresearch.co.uk/pdfs/ 2002_november_telegraph_ poll.pdf.

[230] Philip Webster, 'Tory Leader Stumbles over Traitors', 6th November 2002, *The Times.*

[231] Iain Duncan Smith, 'The necessary and sometimes painful process of modernisation', 5th November 2002, http://www.iainduncansmith.org/article.aspx?id=10&ref=91

[232] George Jones, 'Quiet man fires back with words of passion', 9th November 2002, *The Daily Telegraph.*

Often both sides of the 'moderniser traditionalist' debate would use Duncan Smith's decisions to paint him as an extremist or surrender to Labour. Despite his protestations that it was an "irrelevant" debate, it appeared to lie behind much of what made his leadership so difficult to establish authority over the different factions of the party. Duncan Smith faced the same problem as Hague, in that what he did as leader was often appreciated by one side of the ideological divide in his party, but rarely both, and the 'disaffected' side were often not deterred from being very vocal with their criticisms of Duncan Smith, undermining his claims to strong leadership. The fact he appeared to row back from his policy of persuading the party to make social justice its number one priority in the second year of his leadership was very confusing and damaging to his attempts to show that he was establishing more power over the party, as like Hague it appeared that he had given in to the party.

Michael Howard followed a similar pattern to Hague and Duncan Smith. He started out his leadership promising to change the party's outlook, and relate it more closely to what Britain was really like, and listen to people around the country. But this was not accompanied by internal changes, but more the mix Duncan Smith had used of making personalised appeals to the party to change, and trying to provide firm leadership. He promised to make the party look more like Britain and campaign on the issues most prioritised in his initial speech, which as he acknowledged in an interview with the author, was worked on in close consultation with leading moderniser Francis Maude.[233] But the divide in the party was a problem, as it had been with Duncan Smith. Howard admitted at the time of his first speech that "I was not a wholly committed moderniser" but it was an "attempt to try and position the Conservative party in the centre of the political spectrum." The ambiguity of both actions increased the suspicion and volatility of both sides. Howard said "I would lead this party from its centre" and that "Twenty First Century Conservatives must show they understand twenty first century Britain"[234] Certainly, although Howard professed to be not a wholly convinced moderniser at the time, the speech has to be seen closely in the modernising pantheon, and was received this way by most elements of the media at the time. Howard wanted to emphasise that the general aim of his first speech as leader was not "centred around changing the Conservative party in any way shape or form" and born more out of a desire to make

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[233] Michael Howard, Interview With Ben Harris, 14th July 2009.
[234] Michael Howard, 'Speech by Conservative Party Leader Michael Howard', http://www.michaelhowardmp.com/oldsite/sp061103.htm, 6th November 2003.

clear that he was not a tribal element in British politics. At that stage, Howard thought the "Conservative party needed to broaden its appeal and that's what I was trying to do." Howard draws the distinction between changing the party and broadening its appeal, although in some ways this is a misnomer as broadening its appeal could have had an impact on the nature of the party, such as the need to attract and keep new voters, or attracting a new membership. Again, using the concept of the tests that Duncan Smith and Hague had set their party, it is unlikely at best to conclude that Howard was not challenging the party to change, or at least acquiesce in his attempts to carve out a different image for it. Even though Thatcherism was not necessarily incompatible with this attitude, the fact that Thatcherites were in such a powerful position within the Conservative party, with effective power to depose any leader if they acted as a united body, meant that any attempt to change the nature of the party, and 'move on' from the Thatcher years of government was always presented as a struggle of power between the Thatcherites, which of course makes the conflict such an effective barometer of the power division between leader and party.

Assessing the whole of his leadership, we can assert that, like Hague and Duncan Smith, his style and tone of rhetoric was significantly different at the end of his leadership than it had been at the start. "Leading the party from the centre" and "measured criticism" seemed to be two parts that had fallen by the wayside. The Thatcherite wing of the party loomed large in his calculations. While he had started off his leadership with pledges to make the party look and feel different, he was quickly forced to return to more traditional Thatcherite issues like tax and Europe as his poll situation worsened. For Howard a particular catalyst to this change in tone was the 2004 European elections, in which the Conservatives were pushed hard by a flourishing UKIP. With many expressing astonishment at the fact that the Conservatives were not leading the polls due to Blair's bad reputation over the Iraq war, Howard bound the Thatcherites in with tougher rhetoric. Conservative leaders since 1997 had started off with hopes of moving the party to the centre ground, but had always had to placate the Thatcherite base as the poll position refused to improve. But Howard denied that, saying the rise of UKIP in summer 2004 "did not have any influence on our policies at all" although it did harm their electoral prospects, and made it more difficult to persuade the media they could win. Howard said it ruined a whole series of plans he had to launch keynote policies on the reform of the public services after these elections. Health and education were highly individual services, and they needed to guarantee everyone's right to choose, with money

following patients and pupils. Labour did not "own the freehold of the debate on this issue" and Howard said he would invest an extra £49 billion a year to prove the Conservatives would as well.[235] But these comments didn't get the attention he had hoped for, undermining his attempts to look a centrist.[236]

What Howard did do, and do a lot more convincingly than Duncan Smith, was promote the idea that all MPs should be tightly 'on message' at all times, to not undermine his platform of restoring trust. Unlike Hague and Duncan Smith, he was able to impose sanctions on individuals who stepped out of line. His ruthless treatment of Boris Johnson, and particularly Howard Flight, showed this. Johnson was sacked from the Shadow Cabinet for making what Howard deemed were offensive remarks towards the people of Liverpool. This was done despite the fact that Johnson was popular with the right and a well known figure nationally. Prospective Parliamentary candidate Danny Kruger was also prevented from standing in the general election when it was revealed he had made statements on public spending that were deemed too hawkish by the leadership.[237] The Flight episode was arguably even more ruthless than what had happened to Johnson. An unaware Flight had been secretly recorded telling party members that the Conservatives were looking forward to making larger public spending cuts than they had promised if they won power. This had played up to Labour attacks that the Conservatives were planning savage cuts to public services that they would not make public until they won power. Howard agreed that his treatment of Flight had been harsh. "It was rough on Howard Flight" but he felt it conflicted with the overriding goal - "my job was to do everything I could to win the election."[238] However, one thing for sure is that whatever Howard had done, after Flight's comments he would have been exposed to severe criticism from at least one side of the party, which would have been used aggressively by the media, who as we have noted, increasingly prefer controversy and personality clashes to detailed policy arguments. In the same way as happened to Duncan Smith and Hague, this have would undermined Howard's claims to be a strong leader in control of his party. Howard had managed to establish a degree of greater control in what party members said, even if they were Thatcherites. As he said, his overriding goal was to win the election, and to do that he needed, in the political environment that pertained, to

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[235] Michael Howard , 'The right to choose: How to deliver first class health care and education', 15th June 2004, http://www.michaelhowardmp.com/oldsite/sp150604.htm

[236] Michael Howard, Interview With Ben Harris, 14th July 2009.

[237] Ferdinand Mount, 'By Following Labour's Lead, The Tories Are Back in the Game', 4th May 2005, *The Daily Telegraph.*

[238] Michael Howard, Interview With Ben Harris, 14th July 2009.

appear a strong leader, who could control dissidents in the party. Although this had been at the expense of decisions he regretted, it seemed to have had some kind of effect. Although there was still the usual anonymous briefing against him in the media, there are not as many examples of individual MPs or other party members speaking out publically against the Howard regime as there had been during the Hague and Duncan Smith years, suggesting Howard had achieved some sort of success in bringing power to himself and away from the party, however dependant and temporary the success may have been.

David Cameron may have been expected to build upon this, but he would have to do this from a different starting point. As has been noted previously, David Cameron took on the leadership with a different relation to the dominant Thatcherites than the other leaders. Also unlike them, he had been consistent in elaborating a modernising direction *before* he became leader. Cameron's first speech, while not being a direct challenge to the Thatcherites, certainly appeared like an indirect challenge to the hegemony and orthodoxies they had built up over the years in the Conservative party. Most of the content of the speech was directed at the party and the need for it to change. He set his face against a "move to the Right", saying that would turn the Tories into a fringe party, never able to challenge for government again. He said that at the next election the Tories must have a relevant message - "that shows we love this modern country" - and must understand "that the quality of life mattered as well as the quantity of money." Telling the party that they must give up a "pathetic" resistance to change, he said "We have got to change our culture so we look, feel, think and behave like a completely new organisation." Stories emerging that Cameron had proudly used the 'I am the heir to Blair' phrase, gave the impression that the opinion of Conservative members was not his top priority.[239] Despite regularly attacking policies which had long been held to be important to the Conservatives, polls of grassroots members showed his ability to win an election and appear convincing in the media was valued more highly.[240] Unlike the previous leaders, Cameron had not been picked for his ideology, but his electability. And in the context of how we have analysed the balance of power that held sway under the other leaders, it is clear that Cameron was very much taking the position that he would set his party 'challenges'. They were in essence the challenges that every party leader had set, but extended and linked to what Cameron saw as many of the good points of New

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[239] Andrew Pierce, 'Horror as Cameron brandishes the B-word', 5th October 2005, *The Times.*
[240] Anthony King, 'A Cameron-Fox contest is what most grassroots Conservatives want', 20th October 2005, *The Daily Telegraph.*

Labour and Tony Blair, which none of the other Conservative leaders had gone as far to say before. It must be noted that Cameron knew he would not be under the pressure of having to fight Blair at the next general election, but it would still have been near impossible to imagine a previous Conservative leader taking the same attitude. Cameron's attitude was certainly a challenge to Thatcherites, whose critique of New Labour had been largely based on the assumption much of it was a mirage, purporting to accept the Thatcherite analysis on the economy while on the sly undermining Britain's competitive advantage in global business and markets, and increasing the size, but not effectiveness, of the state. [241]

In the first stage of his leadership, Cameron generally emphasised issues that previous Conservative leaders had not brought up at all, emphasising his differences with the Thatcherites, as they had become synonymous with a narrower range of subjects. Cameron pointed out that climate change was a concern the Conservatives had previously neglected, and that he would not shirk from the "tough decisions" that were needed to combat the danger.[242] He even showed personal support for green living, ordering a wind turbine for his roof.[243] The recruitment of individuals like Bob Geldolf and Zac Goldsmith to the Conservative policy review groups indicated a willingness to include people whom many members had regarded with scepticism.[244] He dropped the plan to impose immigration limits to Britain[245], and ruled out immediate tax cuts.[246] But this contradicted senior figures on the right like John Redwood, who thought that there had been a sea change in public opinion since 2005, and that the public now believed there was massive waste in government, and it could be cut.[247] Cameron even ruled out a move to a mixed, insurance model of funding the NHS, which had been held open as a possibility under Duncan Smith, and had actually become more popular.[248] Could being

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[241] Garnett and Hickson, *Conservative Thinkers,* pp.142-143.
[242] George Jones, 'Cameron pledges tough measures on climate change', 10th December 2005, *The Daily Telegraph.*
[243] Robert Booth, 'Cameron plans wind turbine for his roof', March 6th 2006, *The Independent.*
[244] Michael White, 'Cameron recruits Geldof to aid Tory rethink on poverty', January 2nd 2006, *The Guardian.*
[245] Patrick Wintour, 'Tories drop hardline stance on migration in new policy shift: 'Useless' scheme excludes thousands from economy: Controls on asylum seekers to be reviewed', January 4th, 2006, *The Guardian.*
[246] David Cameron, 'General Well-Being speech', Thursday, 20th July 2006, http://www.conservatives.com/News/Speeches/2006/07/David_Cameron_General_Well-Being_speech.aspx
[247] John Redwood, Interview With Ben Harris (By Telephone), 26th May 2008.
[248] David Cameron, 'Improving our NHS' Wednesday, 4th January 2006, http://www.conservatives.com/News/Speeches/2006/01/Cameron_Improving_our_NHS.aspx

pictured in the North Pole viewing the effects of climate change really increase the Conservative share of the vote? Stephen Dorrell thought that the significance was in the image it projected - not of an environmentalist or a socialist, but a man who was "comfortable in his own skin and comfortable in his own party" and not constrained by the dynamics of the debate within his own party, unlike his predecessors. [249] Dominic Cummings thought that taking the line of least resistance, and a desire to impress the BBC and other 'mainstream' media was behind Cameron's language. By doing this he would decontaminate the brand of the Conservative Party and show it was not just obsessed with the same issues.[250] But by decontaminating the brand, Cameron had to deviate from the Thatcherite world view on many occasions.

One immediate announcement Cameron made was that he would set up groups that would review and write reports on Conservative policies. This had the dual effect of binding in representatives of both sides of the ideological divide and non-members of the party into the Cameron machine. Although the groups were headed by experienced Conservative politicians like John Redwood, Stephen Dorrell and John Gummer, they also contained outsiders selected by the Conservative leadership, and of course their opinions were filtered into the reports by the report chairmen. Once the reports were concluded, Cameron conducted media events with the report authors and decided what areas would be included in the manifesto. The members whom we spoke to emphasised that the policy groups were independent. Dorrell said that for the working of his group, on health and social services, he had employed a test, that any policy proposal must be practical and would reinforce the Conservative ability to win an election, not the opposite - as he put it, "that's the job of a university."[251] Baroness Perry said the "groups were all given a free hand, but in considering recommendations, the authors tried to be realistic about the degree of expense involved".[252] John Redwood disagreed however - he said that public opinion was not considered, and the committee had a "blank cheque" to conduct analysis.[253] Iain Duncan Smith also emphasised his independence, in his case the organisation that conducted the report (the Centre for Social Justice) was independent of both parties.[254] When I spoke to him (June 2008) he said that the party had adopted about 50 out of 190 policies his report had proposed, but he expected a lot more to be adopted.

[249] Stephen Dorrell, Interview With Ben Harris, 5th June 2008.
[250] Dominic Cummings, Interview With Ben Harris, 15th March 2007.
[251] Stephen Dorrell, Interview with Ben Harris, 5th June 2008.
[252] Baroness Perry, Interview with Ben Harris (By Telephone), 6th May 2008.
[253] John Redwood, Interview with Ben Harris (By Telephone), 26th May 2008.
[254] Stephen Dorrell, Interview with Ben Harris, 5th June 2008.

The most happy was Redwood who said he was "delighted" at the "magnificent" policy of cutting inheritance tax unveiled at the 2007 conference, and the other policies from his report also adopted about deregulation, transport, and competition.[255] It is relevant to question how much of a reaching out the groups really constituted given that outside forces were mediated and to an extent controlled by the party, and that it was very hard to quantify how much of an impact the interaction with the outside actually had on the implementation of the reports. However, it is certainly evidence of at least a willingness to interact with people the Conservative party may not have in the past, actually prove for the first time to these groups that the Conservatives were serious about certain issues like health - Dorrell thought that "it wasn't primarily a media event, we got, we got I think in the health field quite good coverage in the health specialist press....recognition of the value of the work we were doing. I think in the education world it was quite noticeable we had a dialogue with people the Conservative party hadn't really had for some time. It was more valuable than at a 6 o'clock news level."[256]

The biggest structural changes in the intra-party balance of power were conducted under William Hague, and they served to give more power to voluntary members and take power away from middle level elites. But while representing more power in theory for Hague, in practice the changes did not produce it, as he was not able to assert his independence from dominant alliances within the party, especially after his defeat over kitchen table conservatism. Hague was relegated to a core vote strategy that would firm up his position with party elites after the election. Iain Duncan Smith and Michael Howard did not conduct the same internal changes, but faced the same problems, trying to effectively balance the triumvirate of appealing to the electoral centre ground, the dominant Thatcherites and the noisy modernisers. Both faced a credibility gap, as they turned from Thatcherites to modernisers, and then had to turn back again. David Cameron did not face this problem, being elected as a moderniser in changed circumstances. He was the biggest challenge to the existing structure of the party since Hague, with his proposals to change how the party looked backed up by concrete measures like the A list. The party were made to vote on Built to Last, although like Hague, Cameron's reliance on plebiscitary methods waned after the initial part of his leadership. But he did not face as many constraints on his leadership as the other three leaders. Unlike them, he offered the realistic prospect of winning an election. And he was

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[255] John Redwood, Interview With Ben Harris (By Telephone), 26th May 2008.
[256] Stephen Dorrell, Interview with Ben Harris, 5th June 2008.

consistent with the modernising platform that he had stood for the leadership on. But there seems a common pattern. While leaders started off with plans to engage the membership more, bind them in with votes, and expand the membership base, often these efforts fell by the wayside as cultivating party elites became more important. Little of the formal balance of intra party power between the leader and the party changed in the period we have been assessing. However there was an informal balance of power, which was dependent on the leader being able to offer a genuine prospect of winning the next election. In practice, this defined the maximum width of the operating window in which a leader of the opposition could depart from beliefs held by the majority of his party members, usually to move closer to the centre ground. This is seen by the way Hague, Duncan Smith and Howard were overwhelmed by party opinion on key initiatives, and were always under assault from both sides of the ideological divide in the party. This is in contrast to Cameron, who despite going further than the other three leaders in disassociating himself from the mainstream of his party and challenging his party to change, was afforded an easier ride by the party. The only time when the atmosphere turned febrile as in the past, and talk of Cameron's removal began to surface, was when Cameron suffered a decline in the polls to Brown, and it looked like the Conservative party was about to imminently lose an election. The modern environment, with the leader being the conduit for how many see the party and intend to vote, does appear to go along with a willingness by parties to give the leader more power and mute itself, even if it is not in the interests of the members, but this power is contingent on the realistic power of electoral success.

4.3   Leader Competing for the Mandate

This section is an extension of the previous section, based on the second condition of the conceptual framework. Was the leader competing for the electoral mandate, and not the party? Was the leader able to construct his own set of reasons for voting for 'him', independent of his party? Given the nature of the question, we must look for instances where the leader's image has moved beyond that of his party's, and became independent of it. To do this, we must discern what the main constituents of a leader's personality and values are, and what we would expect if they were to become independent. Were the four leaders granted significant freedom by their party to pursue agendas that were individual to them, and to rebrand the electoral proposition in their own image?

The problem with assessing what Hague's personality and values were was that the portrayal of them varied so much during his leadership. When Hague was first elected, his media team tried to portray him as a modernising, youthful candidate. But this completely conflicted with the picture Hague tried to portray in the last two years, when he painted himself as a rebel towards the liberal establishment. Hague still stuck to elements of the old kitchen table strategy, for example in a keynote speech where he gave a guarantee that the NHS would not be privatised and said he found it "offensive" that anyone would think the Conservatives had plans to do so[257], but overall these became isolated examples, in a sea of speeches about Europe, crime and asylum. The public picture of Hague was therefore muddled, and unclear. And he did not feature much in Conservative advertising, which was overwhelmingly negative and critical of Labour, as we shall see in the next chapter. The ferociousness of the plotting against him, and the backing of Portillo as a better candidate, indicated that they did not think the leader trumped the party, and the polls indicated this. But Hague had not given the party a clear picture of what he was all about, with the wildly varying messages he sent out during his leadership. If the leader was competing for the mandate, it was unclear what exact mandate Hague was competing for - as a modernising Conservative, or insurgent against the liberal elite. Whichever persona he tried, he was not given autonomy from criticism by his party. Was this because of his status as a compromise candidate? And the difficulty was Portillo appeared to stand for such a cohesive mandate himself.

Duncan Smith was another leader who found it a struggle to gain autonomy from the different factions within the party. He had two main ideas to change the perception of the Conservative party and make it more popular. The first was talking a lot more about the public services, learning from European examples and having extensive plans to improve the public services.[258] The second was to do much more for the least well off, 'Helping the Vulnerable'. Duncan Smith maintained that the inspiration had been a visit to the Easterhouse estate in Glasgow during early 2002, one of the poorest estates in Britain, although it must be noted that fliers given out promoting his leadership campaign mentioned the subject, so it was clearly not out of Duncan Smith's mind before this, but this probably shows us the rhetorical narrative politicians are obliged to put on keynote policies as much as anything. He frequently talked about the spirit of Easterhouse in his speeches, giving examples of the personal suffering and poverty he had witnessed in the

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[257] 'Statement by the Rt. Hon William Hague MP', 18th January 2000.
[258] Iain Duncan Smith, 'Speech to the CBI Conference', 5th November 2001.

area and that renewing areas like these was a "mission fit for the new century."[259] Shadow Cabinet members were mandated by the leader to spend time with public service workers and the poor, shadowing them for a day, to persuade them that in the leader's words they understood people's hopes and fears.[260] But 'mission' implies a deep commitment, something that will be pursued at all costs, and the only inconsistency in Duncan Smith's attitude to the process was that he did not keep up the emphasis on the programme throughout his leadership. Dominic Cummings, Duncan Smith's former Director of Policy, did not think this happened, saying that Duncan Smith was too easily distracted by other events, and a need to appease the right of the party and the media.[261] But even if it had not been sustained across all areas, if Duncan Smith had kept Helping The Vulnerable as the main part of rhetoric right through his leadership, would he have been afforded autonomy by the party? The conclusion has to be he would not, judging by the reception to the policy. The right were deeply sceptical, and did not see how it fitted with their world view. They were sceptical of the policy, if not the man. Modernisers in the party, however, welcomed the policy, but were sceptical of the ability of the man to carry it out, and his suitability for leadership in a presidentialised age. Again, the party did not give him autonomy to put his personality to the public, more concerned with imposing their own factions and policies on him. Like Hague, Duncan Smith did not have the prospect of election victory to demonstrate to the party, if the leader was the real competitor for the mandate then the Conservatives had leaders that were appreciably less popular than Blair. By the end of the Duncan Smith leadership, there had not been much change in the ratings for the Conservatives. Although the appreciation for Labour had declined, it had not been replaced by appreciation for Duncan Smith's policies at any point during his leadership. The approval for Conservative policies on key issues like the public services or the economy stubbornly refused to rise much above 20%, if at all, with Duncan Smith's Helping the Vulnerable strategy, or his later more aggressive style, not appearing to make any impression.[262] If the leader was securing the mandate, then Hague and Duncan Smith did not have any good news to show the party. While Duncan Smith had more of a personal story to tell, it did not appear to bring success in the polls. And in common with Hague, Duncan Smith had not been offered much autonomy to carry the strategy forward.

[259] Melissa Kite, 'Tory leader tells members to be more passionate', 25th March 2002, *The Times.*
[260] Philip Webster, 'Tories told to speak up for the vulnerable', 10th May 2002, *The Times.*
[261] Dominic Cummings, Interview with Ben Harris, 15th March 2007.
[262] http://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/poll.aspx?oItemId=869

Michael Howard used his personal background and life a lot in his speeches, and admitted there was a conscious decision to use him in the election campaign and before, and he certainly overshadowed his Shadow Cabinet colleagues to a greater extent than Hague or Duncan Smith. The factionalism in the party, the public expressions of it anyway, significantly declined, and Howard proffered this as one of his greatest achievements, that the party was reasonably united and gave him the autonomy to carry out the style of campaign he wanted.[263] Howard put a lot of effort into emphasising the contrast between the duplicitous and lying 'Mr Blair', and the honest, accountable Howard. But it is questionable whether this was able to merge with the leader's personality in any way, given the widespread distrust of politicians. When asked if he had ever lied himself in a television interview, Howard had to say "not knowingly," a frustratingly vague answer, summing up the difficulty in tying himself to the strategy.[264] Could it ever have been more than a series of negative attacks on Blair? However, it is notable that the party gave him far more autonomy to carry this strategy out than they had ever give Hague or Duncan Smith. In some ways the Howard leadership was the opposite of the Duncan Smith years. Duncan Smith had a more extensive idea of what his personal mandate would be, but was given little autonomy by the party to carry it out, and had to move away to subjects that would be more enthusiastically received by his own party. In contrast, Howard, probably helped by the ad hoc way he had taken over the leadership from Duncan Smith in the middle of the parliamentary term (it would have been nearly unthinkable for the Conservatives to change their leader again before the 2005 general election) was given more autonomy by the party to carry out his strategy (there was less overt briefing against him than there had been with Duncan Smith), but had a less clearly defined concept of how his personality and policies would mesh together into a coherent whole.

David Cameron has incorporated the 'modernising elements' of Howard and Duncan Smith, having a clearly defined idea of what his political personality was, while being given autonomy by the party to carry it out. Certainly, unlike Duncan Smith, this was consistent with the way he had been elected as leader. Compared to the other leaders, Cameron defined the party's marketing and publicity efforts in a way they had not. Under Cameron, there was a concerted effort made to make people aware that he did not fit the picture of a traditional Conservative. His frequent references to his personal life,

[263] Michael Howard, Interview With Ben Harris, 14th July 2009.
[264] Peter Riddell, 'Up Close and Personal: Why I have Come to Detest Blair', 27th April 2005, *The Times.*

his respect for society as it was, and his determination to change the party all highlighted this. With the policy reviews constraining Shadow Cabinet Ministers in terms of making and announcing new policy, Cameron was able to dominate the Conservative agenda in policy, media and personality terms. There was little challenge or confrontation from the Shadow Cabinet as there had been under previous leaders. The change of the party logo to a tree reflected Cameron's concerns over the environment. Initiatives like WebCameron increased the separation between him and his party. Extensive efforts were made to not make the WebCameron initiative seem like it was in any way part of the Conservative party, with no visible Conservative branding on the site, and all the focus on Cameron himself. He was given autonomy to do this by the party, and was able to roll it out across the party in a centralised way, which the Hague reforms perhaps made it even easier for him to do. The two areas where he ran into resistance were over the A List and the re-branding of the party in a by-election as 'David Cameron's Conservatives', which backfired as the Conservatives lost heavily. In the case of the A List the party actually had the power to resist Cameron's changes, and did until he was forced to water them down. It must be noted that the trouble about this only started after it had been an electoral disaster. Largely Cameron was given autonomy to pursue modernising strategies as long as he was doing well in the polls. And it was a reasonable supposition that more of this was down to him than the party. And of course this was very much grist to the mill of the Cameron leadership strategy and style, which was all about reaching out to those groups that had never traditionally felt at home in the Conservative party. Significantly, despite a high net approval rating for his leadership, most agreed with the proposition that Cameron was a new face but the party had not really changed much at all.[265] It seems here is a leader who was given the autonomy by the party, despite the fact he was often at odds with them. Most of them were not impressed with his tax policy, thinking that 'sharing the proceeds of growth' would not lead to smaller taxes and a smaller state. But, as per Heppell's analysis, the Conservatives had elected Cameron not for empathy or ideology, but to win. By recognising this, the party had made a concession to the leader competing for the mandate. They also showed this in their attitudes towards Cameron's forays into unconventional issues. They largely left him undisturbed to carry out these changes. There was little protest or resignations, with the only constant criticism coming from those like Norman Tebbit. There was much less talk of leadership challenges than there had been under the three previous leaders, even during Cameron's wobbly phase when

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[265] http://www.icmresearch.co.uk/pdfs/november_news_of_the_world_cameron_poll.pdf

Brown was in the ascendancy. Over hoodies, redistribution, sharing the proceeds of growth, the campaign for the NHS and other issues, the party was surprisingly quiet about opposing this desire. The most serious row came in an impassioned debate about grammar schools. David Willets had made a remark about there being little evidence to support the theory grammar schools helped those from a poorer background. After criticism by party members, Cameron came out aggressively against the right, saying he would be not be dragged into a "pointless debate" about creating a new generation of grammar schools. But Conservative activists were sparked into uproar, and Willets was savaged in front of a 1922 meeting of MP's.[266] Shadow Minister Graham Brady resigned over the leadership stance.[267] In some ways the affair was bizarre, as the Conservatives had not created any new grammar schools during the 1979-1997 period of Government. There were those on the left of the party, like Stephen Dorrell, who thought that the real issue was to get more high performing schools, not ration them.[268] But among the right of the party (and indeed in the right wing press) there was a strong emotional bond towards Grammar schools. Despite his strong talk, Cameron was eventually forced to back down over the affair, allowing that new grammar schools could be created in areas that already had them, and eventually reshuffling Willets away from the education brief.[269] After this Cameron endured an awful summer, with his rebranding of the party as 'David Cameron's Conservatives' only leading to a miserable by election in Ealing, in a performance that gave many critics ammunition to say that he was trying to mould the party in his own image far too much.[270] And it had spectacularly backfired in Ealing. This refers us back to the theory at the centre of the conceptual framework, that power over the party was dependent on the (prospect of) electoral success. When the personalised branding and focus on new issues was working in the polls, Cameron was given autonomy, but when a personalised campaign, like in Ealing, failed, the criticism was savage. Cameron's only shaky moments over personalised branding had been when he had been looking like he would imminently lose an election in the autumn of 2007. But notwithstanding, at the conference of that year, despite the party chatter about his reputation, his personalised speech to conference won many plaudits, and was

[266] Graeme Wilson, 'Tories rebel as Cameron rules out grammar schools revival: Cameron defies Tory backlash over grammar schools revival', 17th May 2007, *The Daily Telegraph.*

[267] Colin Brown, 'Shadow minister quits as Tories' poll ratings are hit by schools row', June 1st 2007, *The Independent.*

[268] Stephen Dorrell, Interview With Ben Harris, 4th June 2008.

[269] Colin Brown, 'Cameron backs down in grammar school row', June 6th 2007, *The Independent.*

[270] Ben Russell, 'Right-wing Tories demand changes after defeat', July 25th 2007, *The Independent.*

enthusiastically received.[271] But, this may have been down to the announcement of an Inheritance Tax cut which was seen as the Conservatives moving back to the right on tax, and the more partisan atmosphere engendered by the seeming approach of an election, as much as the style of the speech itself.

As he went up in the polls, Cameron seemed to have largely free rein to embark on his 'brand decontamination' of the party, despite the fact it involved neglecting the 'forgotten majority' over immigration, and accepting Labour spending totals should the Conservatives win. Leading Thatcherites remained remarkably quiet compared to their volubility in the Hague and Duncan Smith years. Figures like John Redwood have backed Cameron's leadership, saying he admired Cameron as a leader and thought that he was taking the party in the right direction.[272] But again, shields against Thatcherite criticism were at their strongest when Cameron had a secure poll lead, and depended on the issue at question. The grammar school row, and the contention created over Cameron's trip to Rwanda in summer 2007, was an example of how the Thatcherites still had the power to cause the leader embarrassment and force him to back down on some issues. Cameron's leadership showed that the party could tolerate the leader competing for the electoral mandate in a personalised way. But it was subject to the need for electoral success, and needed to be carried out in a sustained and cohesive way.

At the start of this section we posed the question of whether or not the different leaders had formed their own 'distinct' political personalities, and independent reasons to vote for them. Were any of them able to construct this set of reasons, like a US Presidential candidate can? The evidence is mixed. William Hague and Iain Duncan Smith, and Howard, after at first trying to say they would 'change' lots about their party, rowed back in behind a more traditional set of concerns. Taking Hague first of all, the U-Turn especially hurt him, because it was the most dramatic of the three, making the reason to vote for 'him' much less persuasive. He had stood at the 2001 election as a self-appointed 'common sense' warrior against the liberal elite. This would have been more coherent if he had not tried to pose as a 'caring Conservative', comfortable with modern Britain, during the first two years of his leadership. Combined with the fact that his party was obviously signed up to the main parts of 'Common Sense', meant there were not lots

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[271] Brian Wheeler, 'Cameron Fires Up The Faithful' 3rd October 2007, BBC NEWS, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/7025958.stm
[272] John Redwood, Interview With Ben Harris (By Telephone), 16th May 2008.

of obvious reasons to 'vote for Hague'. Duncan Smith took a similar trajectory to Hague, starting of wishing to 'change' his party, and then moving to the right. But Duncan Smith did identify his 'mission' to help the very poorest, a cause that had been traditionally not associated with the Conservatives. This offered more of a reason to 'vote for Duncan Smith', in the sense that he would change the party, even though it was not successful. Howard went down the other route, dropping modernisation very quickly, but emphasising his competence and prospective ability to get things done - the main reason to vote for him was not his ideas, but his competence, and how he would turf anyone out of the Cabinet who did not match to his standards of competence. Cameron has been the most enthusiastic of the leaders for carrying through policies to 'change' the party and make his own personality clear. He has even gone as far as putting them down on the ballot paper as 'David Cameron's Conservatives'. And even when incidents of his 'PR stunts' have dropped, he has held that 'changing' the party is one of his greatest achievements. There always has been a visible reason to (or not to) 'vote for Cameron'.

4.4   Concentration of Power Resources in the Leader's Office

This section concentrates on the proposition of our conceptual framework that there would be a concentration of power resources in the leader's office, and such resources would be more devoted to the building up of the leader's image than the party's. We are looking for signs that the leader was able to build up a strong central team, and was able to do this relatively unhindered by the party, and without their efforts seeping into party firefighting.

Certainly Hague had a close knit central team. Platell especially was fierce in her defence of Hague, and took on his opponents and the briefing in the Portillo camp. But were the power resources Hague had directed towards burnishing the leaders' image and not the parties? As mentioned, particularly after the recruitment of Platell, the (not entirely successful) rebranding of Hague as action man, a warrior against the liberal elite, had proceeded apace. But this went hand in hand with his affirmations that he was 'proud' of Conservatism, and his sidelining of calls for the party to change. But overall, a lot of the effort was directed away from the leader. The Shadow Cabinet were able to take control of policies over drugs. The constant murmurings of a leadership challenge from Portillo kept Hague on his toes and reduced his authority over the party. Background briefing by

modernisers affected Hague and effectively limited his manoeuvre to reshuffle individuals. There were allegations that Hague and his central team were not able to keep a tight enough rein on the Shadow Cabinet. As we have seen already, there are two main charges against the effectiveness of Hague's central leadership team. The first is that it frequently leaked details of internal discussions, often leading to embarrassment for Hague and sometimes even limiting his room for manoeuvre. On issues like the argument over drugs, the conduct of the election campaign, the tax guarantee and many more, what were claimed to be verbatim reconstructions appeared in the newspapers, often predicting what Hague was about to do before he did it. Although this may have been the fault of modernisers in the Shadow Cabinet, it raised questions about the Hague leadership team's ability to inspire respect, and exercise authority over elements opposed to the direction they had taken. The second charge was that Hague was, and his central team were, often unable to take decisive action against prominent MPs defying the party line. Again, no matter how efficiently Hague had reputedly organised his central team, its inability to discipline members of the party when they were openly defying Hague was a large question mark over the statement that power resources were concentrated in the leader's office.

Duncan Smith was even more hurt by the party, with chaos forcing him to make changes in his central team, and eventually removing him. This was doubly damaging to Duncan Smith, having the practical effect of changing the composition of his central team to one he didn't want, and effectively placing a huge question mark over how much authority the leader's office had - if it could be controlled from outside, then how could it exercise effective control over the party? He was forced to apologise to MPs for the confusion over the appointment of Barry Legg, in a 1922 Committee meeting, where he admitted he had made mistakes and "badly handled the situation." [273] It became worse when Legg's role in the homes for votes scandal was revealed, and Duncan Smith gave in to the pressure to sack him, with the Conservative board having demanded his removal.[274] This made him look weak and in hock to the party, an impression that was reinforced by him being told by an MP that he had to be "faultless" from then on to avoid a leadership challenge.[275] And of course, it was ultimately some of these modernisers who were

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[273] Benedict Brogan, 'Duncan Smith sorry for bungle', 27th February 2003, *The Daily Telegraph.*
[274] Benedict Brogan, 'Modernisers left reeling by backroom upheavals', 21st February 2003, *The Daily Telegraph.*
[275] Benedict Brogan, 'Tory leader `has to be faultless to survive plotting', 9th May 2003, *The Daily Telegraph.*

responsible for ending his tenure as leader, as they achieved enough signatures for the vote of no confidence which Duncan Smith then lost. The fact that Duncan Smith did not have the outright power to even choose who would be a part of his own office is a significant deviation from the assumptions of the conceptual framework. Presidential politics insists upon leaders having strong central teams around them, able to operate independently and be able to dictate to the middle management of the party. In contrast, during the Legg row, Duncan Smith found himself unable to assert his authority over the changes in personnel he wanted, and indeed found himself in effect dictated to by the modernisers. To some extent this shows the tensions inherent in the Presidentialisation thesis, because Duncan Smith did not come close to conforming to our expectations of a presidential leader, and indeed was pushed around by his party colleagues in a more forcible manner than predecessors from the distant past. This is seen to an extent with other leaders, and must be an integral part of our conclusions. Like Hague, Duncan Smith had not had the benefit of good poll figures to keep dissidents at bay, and the process of disillusionment within the party, a danger to an unpopular leader in a presidential age, was even more volatile, vicious, and quicker, than it had been under Hague. Duncan Smith's lack of ability to demonstrate electoral victory was plausible was undoubtedly a major factor behind this.

The man he hired as Director of Strategy, Dominic Cummings, was witheringly critical of the leadership and structure put in place with the Shadow Cabinet. He says that when he arrived there "was no plan or people to think about." And even later the only direction was to "turn up in the meetings and say what's in the papers." In Cummings' opinion there was "no attempt to think about policy," and a "machine saying this is policy and media, and how to integrate the two," did not exist. Cummings said he wanted to establish an organisation that took long-term approaches, went beyond leadership managerialism, and make a concerted effort to "move opinion in the direction we want in terms of policy and process." His first three months with Duncan Smith were spent trying to deal with these issues, but it was not matched by a similar desire in Duncan Smith to plan for the long term. This contradicts the impression that Duncan Smith gave of a plan to move away from Europe and robustly engage with the public services agenda. Indeed Cummings went further and directly contradicted this. He said he had passionately advocated "addressing head on," the perception that their Conservatives only cared about the rich, which Duncan Smith agreed with. But he says Duncan Smith would not commit to this and he says that "policy was intellectually bankrupt," and reverted to an old style

of "no more policy process than documents to hand - give a speech and the public easily forget." Cummings thought it needed a concerted effort of six or more months for most people to even notice.[276] In response Duncan Smith vociferously disagreed with Cummings' analysis, saying he was talking "rubbish," and what he had said was to do with a "bitter personal view about my administration," and saying that the whole point of leadership was sometimes to be reactive to fast moving events. He also said that Cummings had been brought in to sort many of these problems, so in a way was criticising his own conduct. Duncan Smith was at pains to emphasise the collegial nature of many of the decisions he took. [277]

In contrast, Howard had a stable and consistent central team, that stayed largely the same throughout his time as leader, with much the same individuals. Unlike the previous two leaders, the leader's office was a seat of power, and Howard was able to act quickly with 'harsh' sanction against MPs who had defined the line set out by the leadership team. This team was also noted by the press for the efficiency and discipline with which it had run the party, which, coming so soon after the disorganisation of Duncan Smith, probably helped its authority. This was reflected in a very tightly run election campaign, which was not criticised for its organisation, and did not find itself being often undermined by dissenting voices within the party, during the campaign anyway. This was the same with David Cameron, and it carried through to a long attempt to burnish the leader's image. A large percentage of resources was directed at measures which strengthened the leader's image, that were centred solely on the leader – WebCameron, his internet channel was one. Another initiative centred around Cameron was 'CameronDirect', where Cameron went around the country holding meetings in community centres open to anyone, and as the party claimed, answered unvetted questions for an hour, with the video of each event posted on the Conservative website.[278] As we saw in the last section, Cameron had persuaded much of the public that he was a changed Conservative, without necessarily persuading many that his party had changed. And his central team really was something new to the traditional conservatives. As Cummings tells us, the new team was heavily steered by Steve Hilton, a new 'socially responsible' conservative whose background was in the industry of corporate social responsibility, and steered Cameron towards a more compassionate, optimistic tone, founded on issues the Conservatives had

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[276] Dominic Cummings, Interview with Ben Harris, 15th March 2007
[277] Iain Duncan Smith, Interview with Ben Harris, 5th June 2008.
[278] http://www.conservatives.com/Home/Get%20involved/Cameron%20Direct.aspx

traditionally not talked about, like the environment or hoodie culture.[279] Although in more recent times the influence of Hilton had been counterbalanced by ex News of the World editor Andy Coulson, it still consists of the 'Notting Hill' set, like George Osborne, Michael Gove, Oliver Letwin and Frances Maude, a set of people at odds with majority opinion among Conservative members, who were able to push through the new initiatives on the environment, society and so on. Unlike the other leaders, Cameron had a broader based Shadow Cabinet, that contained leading figures of the right like William Hague, but in a strange way this strengthened Cameron, as figures from the right fell into line behind initiatives like Built to Last, with little of the briefing and plotting that occurred under the other leaders. Cameron was able to keep his central team largely free from party interference. If anything, Cameron has had the opposite problem to Hague and Duncan Smith especially, in that the central team has been so close knit that Conservative MPs have complained that they often have had no idea what the central leadership team is thinking or about to do, and the central team are blasé about keeping in regular communication with MPs and making them feel like they are important parts of the Conservative opposition. [280]

Of the four leaders here, we see markedly different ways to run a central leadership team. Hague's, despite being apparently organised on a business consultancy model, was unable to keep many key discussions confidential and impose its authority on MPs. Duncan Smith's leader's office was reputedly disorganised and chaotic, and it found it hard to impose its authority on MPs who never agreed with Duncan Smith, especially in the later years of his leadership. In contrast, Howard's leadership team was stable, organised, and got its way in power disputes with the party, a feather in the cap Hague and Duncan Smith could not claim. Howard was probably helped by the way he had only taken over as leader in the middle of a parliament, meaning that there was an increased expectation on the party to be loyal as a general election was always assumed to be close, and removing Howard was never really an option until after the election. Cameron, taking power at the start of the parliament, has largely managed to maintain these aspects in the central leadership team, at least when he is electorally popular, but at the expense of being seen as aloof by his party, increasing the possibility that he might face their wrath when his popularity deserted him. What this section shows is that situating power

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[279] Dominic Cummings, Interview With Ben Harris, 15th March 2007.
[280] James Forsyth, 'Cameron and Osborne Must Listen to Their Backbenchers – Or Face Revolt', 30th January 2010, *The Spectator*.

in the leadership office is not just about good organisation, it is about having being able to project the will of the leadership office across the party.

4.5 Conclusions

In coming to conclusions about the material covered in this chapter, we must refer back to the original premise of the thesis. In the introductory chapters, we posited that the two main tasks of the research questions were to find the balance of power between the Conservative leader and the party, and the place of opposition within the British political system. The research questions here fall into the category of the relationship between Conservative party and leader, and this must inform the overall generation of these conclusions.

In this section we have looked at the shift in intra party power to leaders, whether the leader competes for the mandate, and the structure of power in the leader's office. In the opening chapters we also asserted that this thesis would be different to most of the other literature about Conservatives in opposition since 1997 by broadening the scope of analysis to not just one centred around agents, but one which incorporates an awareness of structural influences, and is not just all about personalities or individuals. The relationship between agents and structures informs the conclusions. This interplay is shown in the first research question about whether the formal and informal balances of power changed in favour of the leader. The formal balance of power looks at the structural set up of the party, while the informal powers refers to the efforts that the leader made to bolster support for him individually. Under William Hague there was a massive amount of change to the constitution of the Conservative party, which gave the leader more formal powers over a more centralised party. However, we have seen that these formal powers are not protection from opposition within a party, and whenever any of the four leaders studied here have tried to go further than the party wants to, they then have been robustly challenged by the party. They immensely changed the structural environment the leader had to conduct politics within. In practice, Hague was not able to realise the potential of these powers, as party elites (on all sides of the ideological divides) retained the ability, status and influence to embarrass, undermine and question the leader. This happened on an even larger scale with Duncan Smith, and a lesser extent with Howard as well. To attempt to get round this, these leaders used variations on a

more subtle strategy that related to informal powers and their attempts to gain power as individuals - selling the party a message that it needed to change in order to win an election again. But all were forced by various events to largely shelve their attempts to do this, and modify their message, to mollify the party. David Cameron was able to deploy the original strategy more consistently. Unlike the other leaders, it was a strategy that was more consistent with the wing of the party he came from and what platform he stood for the leadership on. Contrary to what the conceptual framework asserts, the power to communicate directly with the party was not a panacea for the leader against strong middle level party elites. Did 16% of the membership voting for a mini-manifesto really help Hague in the dark days of a Shadow Cabinet rebellion over drugs, and the constant sniping from the 'Portilloistas'? Did the commitment to social justice and the poor endorsed by the party in 'Built To Last' really help Cameron when the Conservatives were in ferment over grammar schools? If anything, the power of this middle level band of MPs and party grandees has increased, with them enjoying a greater range of ways to bring their criticism of the leader to light. This sheds light upon the nature of opposition and how it became to be seen in the 1997-2010 era. There was a high degree of expectation on the leader of the opposition to lead an institution with the cohesiveness of a government across a very broad spectrum of social, cultural and international issues. If the leader of the opposition was not able to do this then the criticism from the party of the leader would be intense, way above what it had been in previous Conservative periods of opposition, where loyalty to the leader had held more sway. Even if it was the leader competing for the mandate, and even though the party was much smaller than it had been, it did just not lie down and become subservient to the leader, and the power to bypass levels of their party was not necessarily a great boon to the leader. This has meant that leaders have struggled to establish an independent mandate from their parties. It appears that the two choices open to a leader are establishing a mandate built on force of personality and ideas, or on competence. Hague and Duncan Smith went for the first option, but their U-turns in the face of party opposition wrecked their effective claim to a mandate. Michael Howard went for a mandate based on competence, which he was given autonomy to do by his party, although as we shall see in the next chapter, the evidence is that this 'limited mandate' of competence did not resonate with the voters. David Cameron has consistently stood for changing his party, and given perhaps the most compelling independent reason to vote for him, although in doing this he has left himself open to attack from his party, and as we shall see in later chapters, by the media as unprincipled. But there is one other tool that the perception of a leadership mandate has

given the leader of the opposition. As we have seen, especially with Cameron, a leader offering the prospect of electoral success was able to go a lot further in obstinately offending his party while suffering far less of the consequences in briefing against him, interference with his central team and so on. Once in that position, a leader can use the benefits of presidentialised politics - leader driven electioneering, strong central direction, binding the whole party in. The flip side also applies - the party was extremely jumpy at poor (potential) electoral performance, and was quick to get rid of leaders seen as not up to it. From our analysis of the media treatment of leaders in this section, we saw that the media made the test of 'could you see him as Prime Minister' an integral part of awarding their own mandate to leaders, and this played a large part in controlling the impressions insiders were given of leaders and the public profile they developed. The theory that leaders needed to offer (the prospect of) electoral success to reap the benefits of Presidentialisation rings true here. Howard and Cameron only encountered large discomfort from the party when they suffered declining fortunes in the polls. Hague and Duncan Smith were not able to offer the prospect of electoral victory, and as we have seen suffered for it, with the middle rank of the party (MPs below Shadow Cabinet level) being particularly volatile. And this impacted on their ability to drive things through from the centre, with a strong team moulded by them. As we saw in the third section of this chapter, there has not always been the concentration of power in the leader's office that Poguntke and Webb predicted. Often the leader's office has been susceptible to leaks, and unable to coordinate the party effectively, or give a clear sense of direction to the party. Under Hague, Duncan Smith, and Cameron, the credibility of certain members of the 'inner circle' has easily been discredited by those in the outside. It got to the point where under Duncan Smith he was forced to drop members of his inner circle by the party. Michael Howard ran the tightest inner circle, that was effective in imposing on party members who spoke out of line. But again, although in some ways the leader had achieved more prominence in the modern environment, the rest of the party, especially middle level MP and party ideological factions, had gained power to make life uncomfortable for the leader especially when he was not looking like he would be electorally successful.

Between these sections we can see common themes emerging. Only one leader, William Hague, made extensive formal changes to the relationship between the leader and the party. On their own, they offered the potential for the leader to be able to exert more centralised control over a historically fragmented and autonomous party, as well as

bypass party elites and communicate with, and win endorsement from, the members. But even despite these powers, and the theoretical incentives for giving the leader more power and autonomy, often the party had not done so, or demanded a very high prospect of electoral success and a solid public image as a future potential Prime Minister before doing so.

5 Leaders and Elections

In this chapter we cover the activities of leaders of the opposition during the general election campaigns of 2001 and 2005. The chapter revolves around the debate about the place of leaders within General Election campaigns. In an environment that is heavily influenced by the media and where the shape of the electorate has changed, definitions of 'electoral campaigning' have also changed. From traditionally fairly concentrated affairs, campaign activity is now intense a long time before the election. Some think the present political environment requires a 'permanent campaign', a constant sensitivity, receptivity and proactiveness towards public opinion.[281] It therefore becomes much harder to delineate between election times, and outside. As the leader of the opposition targets above all else getting elected as Prime Minister, this further blurs the analytical line between electioneering and 'normal' politics. Overlaying all this, there has been a wider debate about the role of leaders within election campaigns that has by no means settled. Presidentialisation literature has combined with the way elections have developed, to create a view that campaigns are now centred around the leaders, and that leaders have the most effect on voters. But while most experts concede that the visibility of leaders has increased, not all of them think leadership ability and image are prime effects on voters.[282]

As per the conceptual framework, the chapter will divide analysis into three main areas - the amount of emphasis on leadership appeals in electoral campaigning, the media's treatment of leaders, and significance of leader effects. Do they convince parties and campaign planners it is necessary to personalise campaigns? Here we relate the leaders and their actions to the changed political environment through the prism of Presidentialisation - in this case the increased visibility and prominence of leaders, and the increased effects, or perception of increased effects, that make it a vital part of election strategy for the parties to hand over prominence to their leaders.

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[281] Catherine Needham, 'Brand Leaders: Clinton, Blair and the Limitations of the Permanent Campaign', *Political Studies,* Vol.53, (2005), p.343.
[282] Foley, *The British Presidency,* pp.20-22.

5.1 Overview of the 2001 and 2005 Campaigns

The 2001 campaign resulted in another landslide for the Labour party. The Conservatives only achieved a net gain of one seat. The Conservatives and Labour ran very different campaigns. Labour's was based around its leader, with Blair featuring prominently in the manifesto and election broadcasts by the party. The central message was that Labour had run the economy well, and that the Conservatives would not match the massive increases in spending that Labour would be affording to schools and hospitals. There were also high profile embarrassments, most notable when John Prescott punched a voter, Blair was left looking helpless after he was confronted by an angry member of the public, and discontent between him and Brown surfaced. But these incidents did not deny Labour another landslide majority. Hague's campaign was derided for not concentrating on the most popular issues, health and education, and being a 'core vote' campaign, that had aimed to increase turnout amongst those who were already inclined towards Conservative policies. Hague had come into the campaign with all sorts of question marks over his leadership, chief amongst them the threat from Michael Portillo, who had been rumoured to be less than enamoured with Hague's 'core vote' strategy. Hague made aggressive assaults on the Government over tax and immigration, under 'Common Sense' and 'Save the Pound' branding. He warned that the election was the only chance to save the pound, and the only chance to save the country. Attempts to emphasise the Conservative commitment to the public services were made late in the day, and as the campaign drew to a close, Hague drew attention back to the Euro, launching a countdown about how many days there were to Save the Pound, urging the uncommitted that it was the last chance to vote for Britain as it was, and to send a message to Blair. Portillo at times appeared to run his own campaign, like when he toured ethnic areas saying the Conservatives should not neglect them, soon after Hague had made a tough speech about asylum. Thatcher also appeared, as she made an impassioned speech saying it would be treason for any party to consider joining the Euro, appearing to go further than official Conservative policy, leading to Labour attacks that Hague did not know what he was doing and was a puppet of Thatcher's. [283]

The 2005 campaign took place in a very different political environment. Blair's popularity with the public had waned dramatically after the war in Iraq, and as a result he was a much less prominent part of the Labour campaign. His likely successor, Brown,

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[283] Butler and Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 2001,* pp.95-263.

despite having been embroiled in a feud for years previous with Blair, was almost joined at the hip with him on the campaign trail. On the Conservative side, unlike the 2001 election, Michael Howard was not challenged by a figure in the Shadow Cabinet that was as large a threat to him as Portillo had been to Hague. There were also no appearances by Lady Thatcher in support of the Conservative campaign. Against a weakened Blair, in theory the Conservatives should have been hopeful of outright victory. But the Conservatives only polled 32.3% of the vote compared to 35.2% for Labour, winning 197 seats, an improvement on the previous election, but still nowhere near Labour's 355 seats. The 2005 campaign was characterised by a campaign on 'micro issues'. One academic has thought this is because the Conservatives realised they would not be able to turn round the big Labour leads on the public services, and instead concentrated on attacking Labour's record on individual issues like cleanliness in hospitals or discipline at schools, where they were at their weakest.[284] Howard had run a much more disciplined campaign than Hague's, revolving closely at all times around six pledges - 'lower taxes, more police, cleaner hospitals, controlled immigration, school discipline and accountability.' It was emphasised that Howard was a pragmatic and honest politician, while Blair was a liar, 'all spin and no delivery'. Howard was criticised after the election for running a 'dog whistling' campaign under the guidance of Australian campaign specialist Llyton Crosby, targeting voters who were worried about controversial subjects like immigration with subversive messages. Although the actual amount of time the Conservatives devoted to immigration was not apparently excessive, it became a byword for the campaign among the media. In 2005 both main parties gave considerable thought to how they could appeal to the floating vote, and it is likely many policies and words were constructed on the back of these efforts. The targeted seats campaign financed by Lord Ashcroft was potentially responsible for the seats the Conservatives added over their performance in 2001. The Conservatives targeted individual groups of voters, and key swing seats through new technology. In the face of the fragmentation of the 'old' media, parties put more effort into cultivating the local media in swing seats, and having the leaders make more appearances, both dumping their

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[284] Anthony Seldon and Peter Snowdon, 'The Conservative Campaign of 2005', *Parliamentary Affairs,* Vol. 58(4), (2005), p.731.

'battlebus' in favour of helicopter trips around the country. Politicians increasingly appeared on entertainment shows which never reported politics but had big audiences.[285]

5.2 Dynamics of Election Campaigning and Leadership

This section will look at the incidences of leadership appeals in election campaigning, including election broadcasts, posters, slogans, what members of the opposition appeared and where they appeared. Was there an obvious emphasis on leadership appeals at the expense of the party? We shall look at what is called the "near term campaign"[286] and the campaign itself. We will start off with an outline of the Conservative strategy for the near term and election campaigns, the use of the leader, and the issues this raised about the placement of leadership appeals within the Conservative campaign. We will do this first for the 2001 campaign led by William Hague, and then the 2005 campaign led by Michael Howard.

At the start of 2001, Hague was on a clear strategic trajectory that had been developed out of the failure of the Kitchen Table Conservatism Plan. There was a clear theme of attacks on Labour for stealthy increases in tax, that had not improved public services. In early January Hague launched a series of posters about this theme. These were more concerned with what Labour had done than with what Hague or the Conservatives wanted to do. They did not use images of the leader, instead criticising Labour's stealth taxes, under the generic strapline - 'You've paid the Tax, But where's the operation/police/schools'. But if the strategy of attacking Labour weakness in this area was relatively clear, the logical resulting point was not - what would the Conservatives do about the problem? Although Hague made many announcements during the near term campaign, they were less about his personal appeals or what he planned than about responding to Labour. Hague attempted to neutralise the Conservative weakness in the public services by a series of pledges to match Labour expenditure on transport, defence and the police as well as hospitals and schools, creating a huge volume of government spending where he would be bound by Labour plans if he won power. [287] By increasing the areas where he would stick to Labour spending plans he was limiting the scope for

[285] Dominic Wring, 'Introduction: General Election Campaign Communication in Perspective', in Wring, Jane Green, Roger Mortimore and Simon Atkinson (Eds.), *Political Communications: The General Election Campaign of 2005*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp.6-11.
[286] Butler and Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 2001*, p.73.
[287] George Jones, 'Hague extends Tory pledges on spending', 23rd January 2001, *The Daily Telegraph*.

reducing the tax burden, while not being able to offer a concrete guarantee the services would be improved. This did not match the image Hague had portrayed of himself as a tax cutter. Often, Hague had personally appealed for the need for Britain to keep in the low tax band of economies. He frequently referred to his personal travels to Florida, and countries in Asia, where they were pushing ahead with lowering taxes and deregulating to prepare for the 'internet age'. This new age would make the business environment globally ferociously competitive and make 'the unfair advantage' of lower taxes more important for states to attain.[288] It was a coherent and 'modern' vision, but not one that chimed with the desire to maintain the spending of large public sector departments.[289] This initiative was not obviously anchored to the leader's beliefs.

Although there was not a concerted attempt to personalise the early marketing around Hague, some attempt at personalisation was seen in a couple of major speeches he gave in the near campaign period in 2001. Hague had been emphasising a harsher, more direct tone that was linked to a picture of Hague and his character. This picture was of Hague as a 'common sense' crusader against the 'liberal elite', using his typically Yorkshire plain talking and common sense to say the truths that needed to be said, even if it was at the expense of short term popularity. Hague's conception of the mainstream majority had often permeated his speeches. They were people who had been too frightened to speak out against the oppressive liberal elite. This construction served two purposes, to identify himself with the majority, and to allude to the way that the media and the 'Islington' Labour elite thought that they could keep the thoughts of the 'majority' silenced. The spring conference speech was a very personal appeal, trying to bind a set of ideas with personality traits that, constructed or not, Hague had been trying very hard to demonstrate over the previous two years. But the speech also showed the difficulty of this strategy, as the 'leadership' part of the speech was not clearly separated from the leader's relationship with his party. In Hague's first speech he had said the party needed to change, because it had become out of touch with modern British society. Now Hague professed to be proud of the party as it was, and what it had done in the past. "All of us are proud to be part of this Conservative party. And the values that have shaped our past must shape our future". Members of his party had been often marginalised in public debate, but he stood with them. "Talk about Europe and they call you extreme. Talk

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[288] William Hague, 'Speech to the 1999 CBI Annual Conference', 1st November 1999.
[289] William Hague, 'New Years Message From The Right Honourable William Hague MP', 28th December 2000.

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about tax and they call you greedy. Talk about crime and they call you reactionary. Talk about asylum and they call you racist. Talk about your nation and they call you Little Englanders." Hague said "let me take you on a journey to a foreign land - to Britain after a second term of Tony Blair"- with the Euro, EU interference on tax, criminals let out of jail, more petrol tax, and cancelled operations. Hague was aligned with the traditional forces and methods that had made Britain great, drawing a line in the sand from attack by Blair and his elite. If slightly exaggerated, this was consistent with Hague's rheortric that a Labour victory would change so much of the fundamental things about Britain. But the exact reception of the speech depended on more than just the words. It was 'spun' as tough on immigration, making this the big story (somewhat out of the context of the speech) and took attention away from the whole message. Swathes of the speech talked about the public services, taxes, and crime, under the 'common sense' banner, but were little reported.[290] After the controversy engendered by the speech Hague noticeably tamed down his speeches, not referring to a 'foreign land' again.[291] This showed the difficulty of establishing a personal appeal, especially when the leader's central team had let it be so bound up in the debate within the Conservative party. What Hague said in speeches was important. However, it was not all about what Hague said, but how it was 'spun', and interpreted by the wider world.

But beyond this there was a deeper schism that unavoidably imposed itself upon the perception of what Hague did and said. There was one other figure in the Shadow Cabinet that was as prominent and had as much political stature as Hague, Michael Portillo. Many Conservative policies were not even launched by Hague. [292] A major problem for Hague was that Portillo did not feel he had to stick to an economic remit, and often proletysed about other topics. With the media excitedly speculating about what policy division there was between Hague and Portillo, it inhibited attempts to personalise the near campaign around Hague. With every policy announcement, there was speculation of what Portillo really thought, and whether he was being appeased. Effectively, this made any personalised appeals by Hague seem conditional on the approval of his Shadow Chancellor, as if his leadership was dependent on Portillo's grace. If he did not secure this approval, then he faced briefing and rumour that Portillo was unhappy, such as over the 'foreign land' speech. The division between Hague and

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[290] William Hague, 'Speech to the Spring forum in Harrogate', 4th March 2001. http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2001/mar/04/conservatives.speeches
[291] Sarah Womack, 'Hague in retreat over talk of `foreign land', 10th March 2001, *The Daily Telegraph.*
[292] George Jones, 'Portillo promises tax cut on savings' 29th January 2001, *The Daily Telegraph.*

Portillo over the 'liberal elite' strategy, meant that even though this had been woven into Hague's speeches as a personalised appeal, it was very hard for him to speak about it without threatening Shadow Cabinet stability. To make it even more difficult, not all Shadow Cabinet discussions were subject to a high level of secrecy. There were frequent leaks and unattributable briefing by Portillo supporters to the effect that Hague's liberal elite strategies were narrow minded, futile and would mean certain defeat for the Conservatives.[293] As long as Hague had a figure of comparable stature in the Shadow Cabinet who had a very different opinion on the strategy the party should take, then it was always hard for him to personalise the message of the near campaign. This affected both aspects of leadership appeals – the internal, with the extensive infighting in his office, and the external, with the impression created that Hague could not control the top of his party.

5.2.1 The 2001 Campaign

The general election campaign was generally seen as a failure for Hague and the Conservatives. The scale of the landslide meant there were plenty of theories advanced as to why the defeat had been so heavy. Commentators thought that Hague had conducted a general election campaign that did not show the voters much of his personality at all. Other debates and personalities filled the vacuum he left. The Thatcher years loomed large over British politics, and the received wisdom was that Hague had not differentiated himself enough from Thatcherite Toryism. The question of Portillo's differing vision also reared its head many times during the campaign. First in this section we must undertake some assessment of Hague's character. We must look at what Hague's personality had been shown to be before and how it was shown off during the election. In assessing this, we must look at how defined his personality was in the public eye before the campaign, and how Hague and the Conservative leadership conducted itself during the campaign. We will look at the content of his speeches and how personalised was the message that he was delivering. We will also look at the presentation of the campaign in a similar way as we did with the near term campaign - how posters and promotional material were presented, how Hague was presented, who he was with, and who made significant announcements and speeches.

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[293] Michael Gove, 'The Gloss Wears off', 21st March 2001, *The Times.*

Hague's political personality was fairly ill-defined before the campaign. He had been famous for his appearance as a youngster at the Conservative conference, and had been viewed as a rising star before the 1997 election, but had not been obviously aligned with an ideological wing of the Conservatives. It was debated whether Hague had ever successfully worked out what his political personality was.[294] This places Hague's attempts to establish a personal message around the campaign in context. Looking at the main topics of his speeches during the campaign, no one theme emerges as dominant. Europe and the Euro, and the quest to 'Save the Pound', was often key to what he was saying, but there were major set piece speeches on health, education, crime, immigration and tax. It was very hard to attribute an overall 'theme' to Hague's campaign. We can divide his campaign rhetoric into different stages, the initial stage of the campaign where he was eager to talk about saving the pound and national independence from Brussels, a second stage which flitted between a wider range of issues, and the last few days of the campaign where he was eager again to emphasise the importance of Saving the Pound.[295] Lacing all the speeches were common rhetorical flourishes - that it was time for common sense, that Hague was without Labour's spin and not afraid to speak out, that the Conservatives were the only party to stand up for national independence from Brussels.[296] To see how personalised the campaign was, we have to look at not just what Hague said during the campaign, but how it was presented and related to the marketing campaign. After reviewing footage of Hague, the conclusions one draws about the extent of personalisation are somewhat different from the conclusions taken just reading the text of the speeches. The presentation of the campaign often took the emphasis away from what Hague was saying, and potentially, the impression he was trying to give. Hague appeared at two different types of events during the campaign – morning press conferences, and rallies around the country, most of which he held under the "Save the Pound" banner. At these rallies, crowds would gather with 'Save the Pound' banners and balloons in the centre of a town. Hague would arrive and conduct a speech, often standing on a soapbox, near a van emblazoned in the 'Save the Pound' livery and logo.[297] Often Hague would hold a Pound coin up when he was speaking for dramatic effect, and remind the audience how many days there were to save it. On several news broadcasts, this made up the majority of the footage broadcast of Hague, even when he was talking

[294] Butler and Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 2001,* p.245.
[295] William Hague, 'Blair Won't Wait to Scrap the Pound', 25th May 2001.
[296] William Hague, 'Vote to Burst Tony Blair's Bubble of Complacency', 3rd June 2001.
[297] 'The BBC's Shaun Ley Looks Back on William Hague's Political Career',
http://news.bbc.co.uk/vote2001/hi/english/audiovideo/default.stm, 13th June 2001.

about another issue. Most people would have seen Hague through this footage. This was a very effective way of making the campaign seem more like a single issue "referendum" on the Euro, even when Hague's words were about something different. It conflicted with the effect Hague was trying to give of the 'common sense' man who was telling the truth about difficult issues, speaking up for the mainstream majority, in his Yorkshire plain speaking manner. If the campaign to 'Save the Pound' was meant to fit into this strategy, then there were some obvious flaws. Far from being a black and white issue that Hague could deal with in plain language, his Euro policy was more nuanced. Because of the division in his party, Hague had pledged to keep Britain out of the Euro, but only for the duration of the next Parliament. This offered room to keep both Eurosceptics and Europhiles on board, although it also ensured that the most fervent advocates on either side were unlikely to be wholly placated. It was tactics to keep his party onside, not plain speaking. The last major rally was typical of Hague's approach, where the visual symbolism of the anti-Euro message wiped out much of what he was saying. Hague made his speech in the middle of a noisy crowd holding placards (many 'Save the Pound'). The crowd were boistourous, and at one point Hague accused Labour hecklers of wanting to destroy the country. Surely the point of such confrontation was to show Hague as an honest, straight talking man of the people. But if that was the case, then why was the Euro so prominent at these events - by nature his policy was a compromise and somewhat nuanced.[298] The Euro was not also necessarily a subject closely associated with him personally. Hague had not been a prominent member of the eurosceptic insurrection during the Major years, and had owed many of the votes he gained during the leadership election to being seen as a centrist. And of course he had made a virtue of moving the party on to talking about other issues outside Europe at the beginning of his leadership. So until the European election campaign of 1999, and the Save the Pound roadshow which had started in the year 2000, the fight to stop the Euro being adopted as the national currency, or indeed the fight against the increasing power of the European Union, had never really been central to the political personality and life of William Hague. But it dominated the visual, and many of the political, aspects of his campaign. While the European policy may have been deeply important to his campaign, he was competing for coverage with figures who had longer, and more personal associations with the subject.

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[298] 'William Hague Addresses Voters In Winchester', BBC News, http://news.bbc.co.uk/vote2001/hi/english/newsid_1375000/1375189.stm

The two centrepiece slogans - 'The Common Sense Revolution' and 'Save the Pound' - did not make obvious reference to Hague. But the 'Time for Common Sense' slogan did fit with some things Hague had been attempting to put across about his personality. Hague professed to be appalled by some of the complicated schemes and laws New Labour had introduced, and was anxious to roll them back in areas where they hindered law-abiding, hard-working people. Hague claimed that this had been informed by his background, his work for his father's soft drinks business, and his chats with ordinary people. 'Common Sense' as a phrase linked to Hague's clashes with Labour and the legal system, and his portrayal of a knowledgeable and sensible majority cowed by the extremist Islington elite. 'Save the Pound' rallies round the country, speaking on soapboxes and talking to ordinary people, were designed to show him as the antithesis of the spin and slickness of Tony Blair. But Hague was also not averse to 'spinning' certain elements of his delivery either, such as when he insisted that the election was the most important for generations, and that the whole future of Britain as a sovereign nation depended upon a Conservative victory.[299] The overall impact of the message was diluted by the way Hague often changed his tone in the middle of the campaign in response to outside criticism, like about the inner cities.[300] 'Time for Common Sense' was replaced by 'Common Sense for all'. This appeared a response to criticism that the campaign was not 'inclusive' enough.[301] But it did go against the grain of the image he had been putting forward for two years, and watered down the common sense message. Although Hague was often the personal bearer of this, it did not carry through to a sense that Hague dominated the campaign. But why was this? There was some division at the top about strategy. A "schizophrenia" developed in the Conservative campaign, between the theoretical campaign and the rhetorical and media campaign. Much of the manifesto was centred around public services. But most of Hague's pronouncements were on "Europe, tax, the single currency and asylum seekers." Rather than the majority of the advertising reinforcing the central campaign message and what the leader was saying, in the end the Conservatives "ran two virtually separate and parallel campaigns."[302] This feeds into a wider theory that Hague had conducted the general election campaign as the first stage of the leadership election that was threatened afterwards. With Portillo pursuing an obvious

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[299] William Hague, 'Vote for What You Value', 1st June 2001.
[300] 'Conservative Leader William Hague Outlines his Party's Plans for Inner Cities', BBC News, 1st June, http://sportalert.bbc.net.uk/vote2001/hi/english/newsid_1363000/1363764.stm
[301] 'The BBC's Laura Trevelyan: Hague Has Broadened the Appeal of his Campaign', BBC News, 1st June, http://news.bbc.co.uk/vote2001/hi/english/newsid_1364000/1364678.stm.
[302] Andrew Cooper, 'The Conservative Campaign', in *Political Communications: The General Election Campaign of 2001,* p.101.

alternative style and strategy, it merely heightened this impression that Hague was unsure of what to do and anxious to mollify the party. Party concerns took precedence over establishing a personal mandate. The Conservative campaign of 2001 appears to be a campaign that William Hague was bolted onto, albeit in a prominent place. It was not a campaign that was designed around him, or rested upon his appeal.

This impression was re-inforced by the way that before the election, the Conservatives went to active lengths to avoid using Hague's image in their promotional activity. Unlike Blair, Hague did not appear in many of the Conservative election broadcasts, and did not have one devoted to his personal history. The Conservative poster campaigns about the tax burden, petrol taxes, Labour being soft on crime, and seven days left to save the pound, eschewed Hague and politicians altogether. The manifesto did not make use of Hague's image like the Labour manifesto did of Blair. The party broadcasts continued this relentlessly critical theme. They consisted of constant dark, menacing sound and video that pointed to a bleak future under Labour. It was "telling" that the last broadcast was the only one to feature Hague, briefly repeating his pledge that he would give people back their country.[303] The absence of Hague indicates the lack of confidence the party had in promoting Hague, actively trying to hide their leader when they had total control.

Before the campaign, Hague could not rely on the same public profile as previous Conservative leaders, so he was vulnerable to his party. The danger of making the European policy the (visual) centrepiece of the campaign was that Hague would end up being eclipsed at certain points by those who had had invested more in the topic. This was certainly true of Thatcher's 'Mummy Returns' speech, which despite its relative brevity, had been the defining moment of the campaign for many. It instantly became the top campaign story. The actual speech contained little new about Thatcher's views that wasn't already known. It criticised the Labour Government's remorseless increases in stealth taxes and welfare dependency, and Labour's European policy. The section on Europe was especially passionate. "The greatest issue in this election, indeed the greatest issue before our country, is whether Britain is to remain a free, independent, nation state. Or whether we are to be dissolved in a federal Europe. There are no half measures, no third ways - and no second chances."[304] This related to maintaining the nation's currency

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[303] Butler and Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 2001,* pp.100-151.
[304] Margaret Thatcher, 'Speech to Conservative Election Rally in Plymouth ("The Mummy Returns")',http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=108389

- "a country which loses the power to issue its own currency is a country which has given up the power to govern itself. Such a country is no longer free. And neither is it truly democratic. To surrender the pound, to surrender our power of self-government, would betray all that past generations down the ages lived and died to defend." Even for a politician who held such strong views as Thatcher this was strong talk. In a way it did match, and support, Hague's claims that there were only a few days left to save the pound, and that abandoning it would be an insult to national history. But did this help this message to become more personalised around Hague? On balance we would have to say not. The substance of the Hague policy on the Euro was actually rather nuanced, and offered at least some nods to the pro-Europeans in his party. While Thatcher did not disagree with the substance of the 'one term no' policy in her speech, could people really believe that a politician with her long stand against the creeping power of the European Union (at least out of office), uttering such visceral language about the Euro, really agreed with what was essentially an intra party compromise measure, no matter how much it was dressed up by the Save the Pound roadshow? And in turn, this opened up dangers for Hague.

The immediate danger was that Hague's nuanced policy would be undermined when Thatcher wanted to go further than him, and Hague would then not be seen as the true and authentic voice of Conservatives. Would Hague have to match Thatcher's promises, or stick to his tight policy and look a pallid type of Thatcherite? But there was another danger, that by supporting Thatcher, he would be seen as a puppet, not an independent strong leader in his own right. This was raised in the famous Labour party advertisements that merged Hague's face with Thatcher's hair, and talked of the need to vote Labour, or 'they', (not Hague), would 'get in'.[305] The danger of bringing such a prominent figure into the campaign was that Hague's own personality would be obscured, restricting the scope for personalising the campaign. Thatcher was widely seen as a larger personality, probably the largest personality in British politics since the war. She had been admired and reviled for her willingness to speak her mind, and rebel against the 'liberal elite', two things that Hague was now trying to claim were part of his own political personality. But was Thatcher in a stronger position to exhibit these characteristics, given her strong personality and beliefs, and the freedom conferred upon her by being out of office? Arguably, she was more convincing than Hague at the political personality he was claiming for himself, and more likely to invoke nostalgia for her style of leadership than

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[305] Butler and Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 2001,* p.108.

of an appreciation of Hague's. There was a danger the campaign would turn into a debate about what returning to a 'Thatcherite' administration would mean. Hague had not been around British politics long enough, to establish the same deep association with a set of values. Therefore any personality he developed would seem weak in comparison, and even leave him open to accusations that he was being controlled by Thatcher.

The same problem applied to another strong personality that Hague had surrounded himself with - Portillo. Nominally, Hague had chosen to have a Shadow Cabinet reshuffle in 1999 soon after Portillo had re-entered Parliament, and promote him immediately to Shadow Chancellor. On face value, this was a sensible, and obvious, move that would strengthen his Shadow Cabinet, by including a substantial figure who had been so popular among the party. It was generally considered that he would have beaten Hague easily in the Conservative leadership election in 1997, had he not lost his seat in the 1997 general election and been unable to participate. Polls showed he was just as well known as Hague.[306] But Portillo's stature was part of the problem. It led to speculation that Hague had only appointed him to such an important job within the Shadow Cabinet as a stalling manoeuvre to try and stop Portillo challenging for the leadership, and that in reality Hague would have been happier not having Portillo in the Shadow Cabinet.[307] A series of policy changes by the Conservatives on the minimum wage, the Bank of England, and the tax guarantee, were treated by the media as defeats for Hague by Portillo, and there was constant speculation that Portillo would challenge Hague after the election, making his leadership seem conditional. Significantly, although Portillo had been on the hardline Thatcherite right of the party, there was evidence that his time out of frontline politics had led him to a very different personal conception of Conservative politics. Portillo founded much of his analysis around the way the party had not been seen as 'caring', especially about the public services, or embraced the more diverse aspects of modern Britain. Portillo's language and tone had changed significantly. His admission of homosexual experiences as a youth showed a more socially liberal outlook. This continued when he became a member of the Shadow Cabinet, and was shown in instances like his speech to the 2000 conference. Here he barely spent any time talking about his economic brief, and gave a Blair like performance, walking around the stage and emphasising his respect for the diversity of

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[306] http://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/poll.aspx?oItemId=2403&view=wide
[307] Phillip Webster and Tom Baldwin, 'Portillo Named Shadow Chancellor', 2nd February 2000, *The Times.*

modern Britain.[308] As his return to the Shadow Cabinet almost exactly coincided with Hague's standing up for the forgotten majority, it opened up a very public gap between the two different conceptions of the Conservatives' social policy. Portillo represented the group in the Conservative party that wanted more of a "cultural transformation," in the party and the way it related to society.[309]

Damagingly for Hague, Portillo had shown by his actions before the election that it was unlikely he would keep his doubts or his willingness to challenge Hague after the election quiet, as he could rely on a network of supporters to disseminate his thoughts on what Hague was doing wrong. And Hague did not have the option of dismissing Portillo as an irrelevance. Sacking him in the middle of a general election would have precipitated a disintegration of the campaign, and indeed sacking him at any point in the two years previous would have almost certainly precipitated a leadership election. Hague did not have many sticks that would make Portillo keep his followers quiet. And Portillo's stature among voters and party members meant that he could not be easily dismissed. All this might have not been so threatening to personalisation of the election campaign, if Portillo had not been so keen to espouse his alternative vision of how the campaign should be conducted.

This led to a division at the top of the campaign that Hague could not hide, such as when the media thought that Portillo was running a campaign within a campaign that emphasised social inclusion, and conflicted with Hague's hard line on immigration. It was symbolised in a bizarre kerfuffle about how Portillo should be photographed with Hague, Major and their wives.[310] While amusing, for some commentators it actually was a neat way of summarising the Conservative campaign's problem, that Portillo was of equal stature to Hague, and there was a perception that he was biding his time, waiting until after Hague had lost the election to run for the leadership. Hague was not helped by the fact there were often unattributed briefings appearing in the media saying Portillo was pouring scorn on Hague's frequent attacks on the 'liberal elite' and even regarding it as a personal affront.[311] How could Hague be the centrepiece of a campaign rested upon his appeal, when he was arguably not the most senior figure within his own party, and Portillo and his allies were pushing criticisms of Hague's leadership strategy, even

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[308] Michael White, 'Culture Clash At Heart of Party', 5th October 2000, *The Guardian.*
[309] Brian Groom and Robert Shrimsley, 'Portillo's Modern Conservatism', 21st May 2001, *Financial Times.*
[310] Graeme Wilson, 'The 'secret briefings' against Mr Hague' 16th July 2001, *Daily Mail.*
[311] Simon Walters, *Tory Wars: Conservatives In Crisis,* (London: Politicos, 2001), pp.104-107.

during the election campaign when unity was supposedly paramount? Of course there are certain aspects of the landscape this overlooks - if Portillo had really been intent upon challenging Hague after the election, then he would have had to be mindful of party opinion as well. And of course Portillo's political and personal personality was a complicated one - from losing his seat in the 1997 election as a hardline right winger, he had travelled towards a much more socially liberal position. Some of these policy positions may have been influenced not purely by his personality or what was popular, but by the elite discourse of New Labour, which heavily favoured socially liberal positions. It was certainly enough to constitute an alternative vision to Hague's liberal elite, and just as personally driven round him as Hague's strategy was. This clash of visions and personalities drove media coverage. The election was not so much personalised around the leader as it was the stage for a bubbling confrontation between two very different personalities about the way forward for the party. Hague's personality was not strong enough to override Portillo's in this confrontation.

At the beginning of this section, we outlined that we were going to assess the presentation of the campaign and how personalised it was, how Hague and other significant members of the party were presented, and whether he was challenged for prominence by these other personalities. We have seen that the presentation of the campaign was not noticeably personalised around Hague, in fact there were many examples where there seemed to have been an active effort to not use Hague. The presentation of Hague himself was slightly strange in that although there appeared to be a coherent conception of what personality they wanted to present, the issue chosen to do this was not necessarily the most suitable to demonstrate this personality. And behind all this Hague faced challenges from two personalities that were better known than him – Thatcher and Portillo.

5.2.2   The 2005 Campaign:

Again in this section we must look at the leader's character, the personalisation of the campaign and the presentation of it. There are some similarities with the way the campaign was presented in 2005 to 2001- most marketing literature and posters still relied on abstract messages and appeals, instead of directly referring to Howard. However, what differed is that the message referred to throughout was one that was more obviously personally identifiable with Howard - the 'Timetable for Action',

In the period running up to the election Howard made speeches on a variety of issues - international development, tax cuts, immigration, choice in the public services, council tax and terrorism. Asylum and immigration were the topics he made most speeches on, but not overwhelmingly. What is striking about these speeches is that most shared the same structure, even if they were about different topics. The speeches all followed a similar format - Howard would start with an attack on Blair, usually contrasting a promise he had made[312] with the way he had forgotten "the people who work hard, pay their dues and play by the rules."[313] Blair was "all talk." He never referred to Labour, just 'Mr Blair'.[314] Unlike Hague, Howard made many attempts to highlight his personal background - "I came from an ordinary family. I didn't have any special privileges. But Britain gave me the opportunity to get on in life." [315] As well as the personal emphasis there was a very definite structure to Howard's speeches, much more so than Hague, that made many of them seem almost identical. His speeches often ended with the line "That's what a Conservative government will deliver"[316] or "people will face a clear choice at the next election" - between 'Mr Blair' and 'the Conservatives'.[317]

During the campaign, Howard kept much the same tight emphasis on the same points, heavily based around him and the six pledges. Howard's first speech that opened the campaign would be typical of many of the speeches he made during it. Howard spoke behind a lectern which displayed the Conservative campaign slogan - Are You Thinking What We're Thinking: Vote Conservative', flanked by his wife and several casually dressed Conservative workers and officials. In the speech, Howard repeated his pledges, and said that people who had had enough of 'Mr Blair' should vote for the Conservatives.[318] Howard said he would govern by the 'hard-working values' of the

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[312] Michael Howard: 'My Government will focus on public health', 8th March 2005 http://www.michaelhowardmp.com/oldsite/sp080305.htm.

[313] Michael Howard 'People deserve to feel safe in their own homes', February 2005 http://www.michaelhowardmp.com/oldsite/sp040205.htm.

[314] Michael Howard 'Firm but fair immigration controls', 24th January 2005 http://www.michaelhowardmp.com/oldsite/sp240105.htm.

[315] Michael Howard, 'The Britain I believe in', 24th March 2005 http://www.michaelhowardmp.com/oldsite/sp240305.htm.

[316] Michael Howard, 'Conservatives will cut your taxes and give you value for money', 20th January 2005, http://www.michaelhowardmp.com/oldsite/sp200105.htm.

[317] Michael Howard, 'Firm but fair immigration controls', 24th January 2005 http://www.michaelhowardmp.com/oldsite/sp240105.htm.

[318] 'Tories Pre Empt Election Announcement', BBC News Player, http://news.bbc.co.uk/player/nol/newsid_4410000/newsid_4412000/4412087.stm?bw=bb&mp=wm&news=1&bbcws=1.

British people.[319] The campaign settled into a rhythm. In the morning Howard would give a press conference at Conservative Central Office, usually on one topic, with the relevant Shadow Minister. Significant news items often came out of these press conferences, like when Howard announced plans to cut stamp duty,[320] announced tax cuts for savings,[321] denied waging a single issue campaign on immigration,[322] and set out his plans for a managed asylum system.[323] Howard had greater involvement in the press conferences than Hague. But Howard made even more announcements 'on the road', where the events followed much the same format - Howard at a white lectern emblazoned with the campaign slogan with his wife and a crowd, or a blue background with the name of the constituency on it. Later in the campaign, the slogan on the podium was often changed to the more anodyne 'Taking a Stand on The Issues That Matter'.[324] Around the country, Howard continually announced that Blair had told lies to win elections, (and had even lost the plot).[325] The last part of the campaign marked an intensification of the themes of accountability and attacking Blair. Typically, this message was integrated across the campaign - from Howard's speeches, to a poster accusing Blair of being a liar, to a vicious advert attacking Blair's lies, and interviews Howard gave.[326] The biggest difference with Hague's campaign was the discipline of the Conservative message. While Hague had used speeches to list reams of policy commitments, and had to change various aspects of the campaign due to political pressure, Howard kept so many common themes from what he had been saying throughout the year leading up to the election, never mind the campaign. So many of the

[319] David Hughes and Benedict Brogan, 'Howard Launches Battle For Britain', 12th April 2005, *Daily Mail.*

[320] 'Tories Pledge to Cut Stamp Duty Tax', BBC News Player, 21st April 2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/player/nol/newsid_4460000/newsid_4468500/4468597.stm?bw=bb&mp=wm&news=1&bbcws=1.

[321] Tories Unveil £1.7bn pension plan', BBC News Player, http://news.bbc.co.uk/player/nol/newsid_4450000/newsid_4453300/4453313.stm?bw=bb&mp=wm&news=1&bbcws=1.

[322] 'Tories Unveil Plans to Curb Yob Culture', BBC News Player, 19th April 2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/player/nol/newsid_4460000/newsid_4460100/4460117.stm?bw=bb&mp=wm&news=1&bbcws=1.

[323] 'Howard Unveils Tory Asylum Plans', BBC News Player, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/4200761.stm.

[324] 'Tories Pledge Cleaner Hospitals', 26th April 2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/player/nol/newsid_4480000/newsid_4485100/4485151.stm?bw=bb&mp=wm&news=1&bbcws=1.

[325] 'Howard Makes Blair Lies' Claim', BBC News Player, 23rd April 2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/player/nol/newsid_4470000/newsid_4477200/4477209.stm?bw=bb&mp=wm&news=1&bbcws=1.

[326] 'Howard Attacks Blair's Character', BBC News Player, http://news.bbc.co.uk/player/nol/newsid_4470000/newsid_4478700/4478715.stm?bw=bb&mp=wm&news=1&bbcws=1.

themes Howard would determinedly repeat would be integrated into other parts of the election campaign. It was easier to distil the main messages of the campaign.

This strict 'theming' and branding of the campaign continued into the Political Election Broadcasts. The Conservative broadcasts contained more of the leader than they had in 2001, but not to the point where he dominated. The first broadcasts were more optimistic and less negative in tone than the 2001 efforts, with ordinary people explaining the reasons why they were voting Conservative, and then leading members of the Shadow Cabinet explaining why they endorsed Howard. The last broadcast was a straight to camera piece by Howard explaining why people should vote Conservative. More controversial than that was a cinema advertisement the Conservatives used which was all about Blair, over pictures of the Prime Minister, music called 'take that look off your face' played, while a narrator accused the Prime Minister, as Howard had in public, of being prepared to lie to take the country to war, and therefore probably being prepared to lie to win an election.[327]

The manifesto was an amalgamation of the tactics Howard had used before and during the election. It contained only one picture of Howard, and none of any of the Shadow Cabinet. The front page repeated the six pledges, with the main slogan of 'Are You Thinking What We're Thinking' ablazening it. The foreword to the manifesto, under Howard's byline, claimed that "Instead of rewarding families who do the right thing, work hard and pay their taxes, Mr Blair's Government takes them for granted. And after eight years in power, all he offers is more talk." Howard was the "the child of immigrants, as a state school pupil, as the first person in my family to go to university." People were "tired of politicians who talk and talk, but fail to deliver. Accountability will be our watchword. People have had enough talk, it's time for action." The manifesto then led into six sections that paralleled the six pledges, that started off with teasing questions that had formed the basis for some of the Conservative banner advertisements - such as 'I mean, how hard is it to keep a hospital clean?', 'Put more police on the streets and they'll catch more criminals. It's not rocket science is it?' and 'It's not racist to

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[327] John Bartle, 'The Press, Television and Internet', *Parliamentary Affairs,* Vol. 58(4), (2005), p.710.

impose limits on immigration'.[328] This manifesto echoed and reinforced the themes Howard had pushed throughout the year of the election.

In contrast to the last election, Howard faced a Labour party that was a lot more anxious to draft other figures into campaign activity alongside an increasingly unpopular Blair, especially Gordon Brown. However, although Blair was not popular, Howard was not particularly popular with the electorate either, as we shall see in the next section. So why had the decision been taken to place Howard centre stage? Howard himself said that it "is inevitable in a general election" that the leader of the opposition will attract far more publicity than the other Shadow Ministers, because they "are normally less well known, people are normally more interested in who's going to be Prime Minister and leader of the party than anything else." Unlike in the previous election, there was no comparable figure that would take a significant portion of media coverage away from Howard. Indeed the other Shadow Cabinet Ministers were conspicuous by their low profile. Howard had been elected unopposed to the leadership, meaning there was no 'rival' figure that he had to beat. Of the three figures that had bestrode the 2001 leadership contest, all had faded to relative degrees of obscurity - Iain Duncan Smith had kept a low profile since losing the leadership and had had his policies and ideas on social deprivation and 'Broken Britain' largely ignored by Howard.[329] Michael Portillo had given up on frontline politics after being unsuccessful in even making the final ballot of two contenders in the leadership contest, and had announced his intention to step down from Parliament at the 2005 election. And Kenneth Clarke, while remaining a candidate for Parliament in 2005, had kept a relatively low profile. During the election about immigration, overall the potential for arguments over Europe and the Euro, the subject Clarke was most associated with, had greatly reduced from 2001. The place of Margaret Thatcher was also changed within the 2005 campaign. This was partially down to the fact that the European debate on which she had weighed in so forcefully in 2001 had become less prominent, but also that after suffering a stroke in 2002, she had stood down from public speaking.[330] Her ability to rouse followers and contribute to the modern debate had greatly lessened. Howard had been the first leader who had been able to claim that he did not 'owe' his election to Thatcher. Howard was also helped by the fact that the

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[328] *Are You Thinking What We're Thinking: It's Time for Action, Conservative Election Manifesto 2005,* (London: Conservative Party)*, pp.3-20.
[329] Iain Duncan Smith, Interview with Ben Harris, 5th June 2008.
[330] BBC News, Friday, 'A lifetime of public speaking', 22nd March, 2002, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/1888444.stm.

members who were actually active in the Shadow Cabinet were not very prominent in relation to him. The three marquee positions in the Shadow Cabinet were held by Oliver Letwin, Michael Ancram and David Davis. Letwin and Ancram were widely perceived as not of leadership material. Davis was, and it was rumoured that he was plotting against Howard with an intention to challenge him after the election.[331] However, this did not come near the feverish speculation about Hague and Portillo, and Davis' vision of the future of the party was closer to Howard's in substance than Hague and Portillo were.

The personalisation of the campaign around Howard in 2005 was comprehensive but partial. It revolved around a coherent message, that was repeatedly linked to Howard's own personality, beliefs, and upbringing, albeit one that did not feature him prominently in the advertising of the message. What Howard was prominent in was the delivery of the message, with it being almost exclusive to him. Thanks to a mix of political circumstance and this focus on Howard, it meant he towered way above other Conservative politicians in terms of recognition. But there is one caveat, that this message relied as much on the personality of the Prime Minister as it did Howard - with a different Prime Minister it would have been difficult to envisage the message being the same, as Howard admitted himself. However, envisage the same Prime Minister and a different leader of the opposition and it is easy to imagine that the same strategy, or something very similar, would have been deployed. So although the outward expression of electoral appeals was tightly centred around the leader in 2005, their internal logic may have not depended on him to the same extent.

Howard allowed that it was a team effort behind the nature of the public appearances he made during the election, between Crosby, Whetstone, Saatchi and Black and Sherbourne, with Crosby having a big impact, and Saatchi having a big influence in the six messages Howard preached. He refused to say anything more about the balance of power within the campaign, saying that it was a unified team.[332] Certainly it was less prone to the detailed leaks that had dogged central office under Hague, but that did not mean it was necessarily unified, with it being rumoured that Saatchi in particular was not happy at the lack of ideological direction to the campaign.[333] During the final stage of the campaign, Howard deployed an interesting tactic which had not been used to any great

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[331] Vincent Moss, 'Davis Plot to Oust 'Ditherer Howard'', 17th July 2005, *Daily Mirror.*
[332] Michael Howard, Interview with Ben Harris, 14th July 2009.
[333] Dennis Kavanagh and David Butler, *The British General Election of 2005,* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp.36-38.

extent by Hague, and launched a series of personal attacks on Blair. Howard admitted the personality of the other leader was an influence, and was a viable weapon for his leadership team to use. [334] Undoubtedly the personality of the Prime Minister has an impact on the kind of campaign the leader of the opposition can run, and Howard admitted when he was interviewed for this thesis that if Blair had had a better reputation for honesty then the Conservative campaign would have had to be different. The leader's personality is not a weapon, but the personality of the other leader is. Of course if we take the proposition that the qualities of the Prime Minister can affect the way the leader of the opposition conducts his election campaign, then it also follows that this works in a negative sense as well. While providing the leader of the opposition with more options to attack the Prime Minister and accentuate 'good' elements of his own personality, it also may mean that certain elements of their character become redundant. For example it would have been ridiculous for Hague or Howard to accentuate the charismatic areas of their leadership against Blair, even if they may have been more charismatic than other Conservative politicians.

The personalisation of election campaigning around the leader has been rather haphazard. In Hague's case it was almost non-existent, while with Howard it was only in the message, not the marketing. In neither case was it total, despite the effect it had on some election themes.

5.3   Media Coverage of Politics and the Leader of the Opposition

This chapter will analyse the second assertion of the framework: that during election campaigns media coverage in a presidentialised environment has increasingly focused on leaders to the exclusion of other political actors and is a good reason in itself for this process to happen. The section will look at two main areas - political coverage in national newspapers, and TV news. It will be looking for the split between policy and personality, if the leader dominated coverage of their party, and the key events that affected the party. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, the newspaper industry is not a homogenous one. There is great variation between the style and amount of political coverage in each of the different styles of paper, with the broadsheets generally expected to contain most political coverage and treat it most seriously and the tabloids expected to contain the least

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[334] Michael Howard, Interview With Ben Harris, 14th July 2009.

coverage and in the most relaxed style. So we have to make allowances for the different style and tone of coverage a reader would expect from each style of paper. With television, the differences are less stark, as at election times broadcasters are covered by strict impartiality rules.

5.3.1   The 2001 Campaign

The first area we will look at is what happened, in the near term campaign. Analysis of newspaper coverage of the budget does not show that the media covered it in a way that leaders' dominated. A lot of the coverage focused on the implications for the Conservative party[335], and its overall economic impact.[336] Many stories did not assess what each measure would mean for each party, but more in terms of how it would affect the economy and the ordinary voter. The leaders of the main parties did not receive a major boost in coverage from the budget. More surprisingly, the pages of the tabloids showed much the same trend. Obviously, they were unable to devote the same level of coverage to the event as the broadsheets could. But they still filled their pages with many technical stories[337], and profiles of the chancellor.[338] If anything, with tabloids having less space, and expectations of a more undemanding style of coverage, we could have expected them to be enthusiastic to use leaders as 'information shortcuts' to giving readers an insight into how the budget had changed the political situation. But they did not, preferring to present aspects of the budget issue by issue at the expense of the leaders. The budget in 2001, to all intents and purposes a fully integrated part of the campaign, did not have the leader as a focal point of the coverage. But did this change when the actual election campaign was underway?

We see that the amount of personalised coverage increased. While it was not exclusively centred around leaders, they played a much larger role than they did with an event like the budget. The tabloids especially hung coverage on the personal promises of the leader.[339] The same was true in mid market papers, in the style of the reporting with phraseology like "William Hague came out fighting for votes yesterday," albeit with

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[335] Alice Miles, 'Spare a sympathetic thought for Tories on the doorstep', 8th March 2001, *The Times.*
[336] 'Mr Brown Deserves to hold aloft Holy Grail of economic policy', 8th March 2001, *Financial Times.*
[337] Ian Kirby, 'Gordon wields his axe on stamp duty', 4th March 2001, *The News of the World*
[338] Sion Simon, 'Bright Brown has No10 on the brain', 11th March 2001, *The News of the World.*
[339] Trevor Kavanagh, 'Hague: I'd cut tax by Pounds 8bn', 11th May 2001, *The Sun.*

some more policy detail than in the tabloids.[340] It is in analysis of the manifesto that we start to see a trend. Analysis would start off centred on policy[341] but explicitly laying the blame and responsibility for sorting things out with Hague - "what still eludes Hague is the big idea." The broadsheets were not much different, "William Hague will seize the initiative in the general election campaign"[342] was the tone of much of the coverage, but with more additional space to include the context of the campaign and the other party's responses.[343] But there was a clear split between the front page stories and leading stories which summed up the campaign developments and tended to pin things on the leader, and the more lucid series of background stories which were often written in a different style. There was still room for detailed coverage of policy especially in the broadsheets, but it was separated from the main 'story' of the campaign which revolved around what the leaders were doing, or how they were affected by certain events. But what was the split between coverage of the leaders and coverage of other personalities?

In general the rest of the coverage of the 2001 campaign was centred around William Hague. It is worth noting that most of the stories were very cutting about Hague, in a personal fashion Papers enthusiastically played up incidents like his Dad saying he would definitely lose the election,[344] and Hague's 'fourteen pints' gaffe.[345] Even articles by Conservative supporting newspapers like the Daily Mail tended to report issues like immigration and Europe relatively neutrally, mentioning Hague's name and little else, despite the fact Hague agreed with much of what they were saying.[346] It was only near the end of the campaign that glowing articles about his personality were written,[347] which tried to reveal the man within.[348] Hague lost out all ways with press coverage, not gaining the adulation afforded to Blair, but getting the blame for party disunity, policy problems and so on. The Mail gave the verdict that "William Hague failed."[349] The broadsheets were also critical of Hague's image, one saying the prospect of him as Prime

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[340] John Dean, Graeme Wilson, 'Hague: My plan for Britain; Help for families, pensioners and savers-plus 27 pence off a gallon', 11th May 2000, *Daily Mail.*
[341] Edward Heathcoat Amory, 'That's just fine, but where are the BIG ideas?', 11th May 2001, *Daily Mail.*
[342] George Jones, 'Tory pledge to cut 28p off a gallon Labour lead shrinks in first election poll', 10th May 2001, *The Daily Telegraph.*
[343] George Jones, 'Tax-cut promises would cost twice as much as Tories say, claims Brown', 11th May 2001, *The Daily Telegraph.*
[344] Nic Cecil, 'Hague's dad says he'll lose', 14th May 2001, *The Sun.*
[345] 'As likely as 14 pints, William', 24th May 2001, *The Sun.*
[346] Paul Eastham, 'Hague defies storm to state his case on asylum; Tory leader tackles the problem over our borders', 19th May 2001, *Daily Mail.*
[347] 'Decent, patriotic and intelligent: So why don't the British public get the point of William Hague?' 2nd June 2001, *Daily Mail.*
[348] Lynda Lee Potter, 'For the love of Ffion', 5th June 2001, *Daily Mail.*
[349] Edward Heathcoat-Amory, 'Why The Tories Lost', 8th June 2001, *Daily Mail.*

Minister would be Labour's greatest weapon.[350] One paper that was against Hague rated his personality as the biggest impediment to him winning the election.[351] Divisions over tax policy were presented as Hague's failure to get a grip over the party.[352] In the last section, we saw that the competition from other personalities was a big problem for Hague, and that these figures were of a bigger stature than him. Was this reflected in newspaper coverage that relied on the leaders to construct the central story of the election campaign? Stories of Portillo's dissatisfaction with Hague and a possible leadership challenge after the election did not challenge the dominance of stories about the leader, but they were a constant presence. They provided much of the context for questions to Hague or questioning his strategy, such as when Hague was asked if Portillo would make a good leader.[353] Portillo's criticisms also provided the background to long articles explaining what the motivation was for Hague to pursue a 'core vote' strategy.[354] The fact that the 'core vote' campaign theory has not been developed with the benefit of hindsight, but was a concern of the media at the time, showed the extent to which the Portillo analysis had resonated through the media. There were also a large number of leaks from the Shadow Cabinet that showed the extent of the divisions, including verbatim reconstructions of things Hague had said and instructions he had issued[355], adding to the picture that Hague could not keep control of his party.[356] During the campaign, the perils of allowing Portillo so much power became apparent in the media. The tax row, when Oliver Letwin said that the Conservatives could make £20 billion of tax cuts, was swiftly pinned on Hague, and presented as a problem for him to rectify.[357] But when the crisis was brought to some kind of end, it was not Hague who got a lot of the credit, but Portillo, for 'launching a fightback' and denying Letwin's claims.[358] Labour even mischievously claimed that they thought Hague was their greatest electoral asset, and that Portillo was the real threat, giving Portillo equal billing with Hague on

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[350] Mary Ann Sieghart, 'The prospect of Hague as PM and Widdecombe as Home Secretary is Labour's most potent electoral weapon', 9th May 2001, *The Times.*

[351] 'Hague's lack of credibility will lose', 10th May 2001, *The Express.*

[352] 'Hague looking confused as party's sums', 22nd May 2001, *The Express.*

[353] George Jones, 'Hague refuses to take the `Portillo as leader' bait', 18th May 2001, *The Daily Telegraph.*

[354] Alice Thomson, 'Just William' is playing the long game', 10th May 2001, *The Daily Telegraph.*

[355] Tom Baldwin, Philip Webster and Roland Watson, 'Tory divisions on race expose Hague weakness', 1st May 2001, *The Times.*

[356] Rachel Sylvester, 'How Hague found an answer to the Central Office revolt', 1st May 2001, *The Daily Telegraph.*

[357] Tom Baldwin Roland Watson, Sam Lister and Melissa Kite, 'Tory tax tangle gives Hague £12bn headache', 15th May 2001, *The Times.*

[358] Philip Webster and Lea Paterson, 'Portillo tries to repair damage to Tory tax plan', 16th May 2001, *The Times.*

posters mocking Conservative economic policies.[359] Portillo, being the leading candidate to replace Hague after the election,[360] had created the situation where there was excited press speculation about whether Hague would resign immediately in the event of a second Labour landslide.[361]

If the amount of coverage of the personality clash with Portillo was unwanted, then the reports of Thatcher's intervention during the campaign also posed problems. The amount of reporting inspired by the Thatcher speech was remarkable. The rapturous reception she received from the crowd of Conservative members was contrasted with the muted reception that they had bestowed upon Hague. The speech was even printed in full in some of the broadsheets.[362] Even Hague himself did not get the same treatment from the media, let alone any other members of the Shadow Cabinet. Papers on the right loved Thatcher's address, labelling it 'electrifying', and claiming that it had injected fire into the Conservative campaign.[363] But even those that loved the speech picked up on her willingness to go beyond the official Conservative line about the Euro, and asked if it would be a problem for the leadership.[364] The Conservatives were still "irrevocably split" on the Euro, and Thatcher was a "poisoned chalice" that would alienate more voters than it encouraged. [365]

Overall, the style of reporting among the newspapers is in many ways not surprising. As a total percentage of coverage, the personal (and sometimes insulting) was larger in the tabloids than the mid-market papers or the broadsheets. But this did not mean that the mid-markets or broadsheets were significantly less personalised than the tabloids. Thanks to the greater space devoted to politics, they were able to accompany personalised reporting with more detailed policy analysis, and unsettlingly for Hague, comprehensive coverage of the plots and briefing that so interfered with his leadership. What united all the styles of papers was that near the end of the campaign, when it was truly apparent that the Conservatives were not going to win the election, they were unanimous in blaming Hague for the copious amounts that were written about Portillo and his alleged

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[359] Tom Baldwin, 'Labour tries to wreck Portillo's leader prospects', 23rd May 2001, *The Times.*
[360] Philip Webster, 'Portillo takes a lead in keeping the ship steady', 31st May 2001, *The Times.*
[361] Tom Baldwin and Philip Webster, 'Defeat may leave Hague facing his own exit poll', 7th June 2001, *The Times.*
[362] 'Above all, we must keep the pound', 23rd May 2001, *The Times.*
[363] David Hughes, 'Maggie: We have 16 days to save the UK', 23rd May 2001, *Daily Mail.*
[364] Padraic Flanagan, 'Give up the pound? Never', 23rd May 2001, *The Express.*
[365] 'Iron Lady's return', 23rd May 2001, *The Express.*

plotting in the shadows, there were very few articles blaming Portillo for the campaign's downfall. Although coverage was not personalised all the time, blame almost always was.[366]

On television, both parties faced a common set of problems. Declining viewing figures for the main news programmes indicated declining interest in election campaigns. The average time politicians were seen speaking had declined, to almost twenty seconds, with more time given to journalists giving expert pronouncements on the leaders and 'real' strategies of the parties. The amount of coverage and direct quotation of Hague was almost exactly the same as Blair due to impartiality guidelines.[367] This was unlike the situation in the print media, where he received less direct quotation, around 15% of Conservative coverage. The Conservative party overall had around 35% of the total television election coverage, just like Labour. But what television could do was report the incessant speculation around Hague's leadership, and the mix of personalities and intrigue which threatened his authority. In reporting of issues like the row over cannabis at the 2000 conference, alleged plotting against Hague by Michael Portillo, and the rumpus over Kitchen Table Conservatism, television reported stories that, although they were pinned around the central concern of Hague's leadership position, often revolved around what other figures were doing and what Hague's response would be. It certainly did not give him an opportunity to put his own message across about what type or person and leader he was. Television could still focus on leaders, but with pictures of the leader, and interpretations of what strategising was behind their actions. Typical Hague quotes were in blocks of twenty seconds against larger blocks of analysis.[368] Other BBC reports centred around the confusion in the leadership strategy, raising question marks over how effective Hague really had been at leading the party.[369]

5.3.2 The 2005 Campaign

This section will also look at political coverage in national newspapers, and TV news, for splits between policy and personality and if the leader dominated coverage of their party.

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[366] Paul Harris, 'You Wondered What Maggie Would Think', 8th June 2001, *Daily Mail.*

[367] David Deacon, Peter Golding and Michael Billig, 'Press and Broadcasting: 'Real Issues and Real Coverage', in *Parliamentary Affairs,* Vol.54, (2001), pp.667-669.

[368] 'The BBC's Phillipa Thomas: Mr Hague Believes Voters See Britain Becoming the Asylum Capital of Europe', BBC News, 18th May, http://news.bbc.co.uk/vote2001/hi/english/newsid_1337000/1337035.stm

[369] 'The BBC's John Pinnear: The Signs are that Europe and the Euro will Continue to Run Through the Final Stages of William Hague's Campaign', BBC News, 30th May, http://sportalert.bbc.net.uk/vote2001/hi/english/newsid_1358000/1358891.stm

The coverage of Michael Howard in the 2005 election was somewhat different. While Hague had been relentlessly lampooned, even by the newspapers that supported the Conservatives, Howard was treated in a more detached manner, not hitting the heights of praise and lows of abuse that Hague had. Coverage of the election did not have a convincing peg to hang itself on, and instead seem to relax into a series of assertions that the two main parties were too similar.[370]

As we have seen, the style of the Conservative campaign was to place Howard at the forefront, and it did not leave a lot of room for other senior Conservative figures. The media reflected this, but there was a lot of coverage about the technicalities of the campaign and tactics, not the leaders or the political philosophies. There was a lot of speculation as to the influence Australian Lynton Crosby would have over the campaign [371] and how the new Conservative Voter Vault targeting software would work.[372] Crosby was often cited as the inspiration behind the amount Howard talked about immigration early in the campaign, although Howard denies this, saying it was a team effort. Compared to the Hague years, most writing about internal structures of power was based on speculation. The number of leaks coming out of the Conservatives was much fewer than in 2001, meaning that there was less opportunity for the media to stir the pot. In its place, they reverted to criticising policy and strategy more. There was criticism that the Conservatives had let the campaign develop around Howard so much when he was so unpopular.[373] Another strand of criticism was that, in the early part of the campaign especially, Howard had adopted far too strident a tone which would just turn people off the Conservatives while only appealing to the committed. The manifesto was criticised for being inconsistent and populist.[374] A noticeably prevalent view with the papers of the right that were nominally supporting Howard, was that his package of policies, especially tax, was far too timid, and represented a sort of surrender to Labour in policy terms. Although these criticisms had been voiced during the 2001 campaign, they had been largely drowned out by the clash of personalities at the top. Howard was blamed for the "fatal mistake" of not basing the campaign around a smaller state.[375] The majority of

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[370] Stephen Glover, 'The Head in the Sand Election', 3rd May 2005, *Daily Mail.*
[371] Daniel Finkelstein, 'How leader who survived against the odds hopes to avoid mistakes of the past', 6th April 2005, *The Times.*
[372] 'Little boxes that may hold Howard's key to No 10', 6th April 2005, *The Times.*
[373] Anthony Howard, 'How different it would be for the Tories if Clarke were leader'; 3rd May 2005, *The Times.*
[374] 'What we're thinking; The Conservative manifesto shows real progress, but more must be done; Leading Article', 12th April 2005, *The Times.*
[375] Anatole Kaletsky, 'Howard's strategic failure', 28th April 2005, *The Times.*

Telegraph coverage was about tax.[376] The Mail concentrated fire for raising taxes on Labour but savaged Howard for his tax cuts only amounting to one penny.[377] There was a general feeling on the right that Howard was flirting with the point where it would make little difference to the size of the state in electing a Conservative Government. There was a withering verdict to the four billion of tax cuts the Conservatives proposed. "Scarcely seems worth an election, does it?" And this was in a paper that had been consistently advocating the need for tax cuts.[378] The Mail accused Howard of being "bogged down" in a debate about public service reform that little understood, and pursing economic policy that was "essentially the same as Labour's."[379] Howard argued against this, preferring to assert that many had recognised his plans to reduce waste and cut taxes, for some papers it was patently a major concern.[380] But some from the right wing press like the Mail seemed to be reluctant, and expended more effort on attacking Blair and securing his removal than to extolling Howard's vision of Britain.[381]

If the broadsheets were largely antipathetic to Howard, the tabloids were even colder. In the tabloid press, the Conservatives or Howard did not really have any big cheerleaders, and indeed had to cope with the antipathy of the Daily Mirror who reserved much vitriol for Howard, reminding readers of what they thought was a bad record as a Minister, and even mocking him up as a vampire for their election front cover. The Sun was a lot friendlier towards Howard, agreeing with his policies steadfastly on issues like immigration and Europe. Despite their notable areas of agreement, the Sun backed Labour in the election, in the opinion of many because they had to be seen to back the 'winning side' to save credibility with their readers.[382] Analysis of their coverage just before and after the election showed that they were largely positive in their attitude towards Howard and the Conservatives. They produced stories saying Howard was right to propose controls on asylum and immigration as they were backed by 97% of Sun readers.[383] They forcibly debunked Blair's "scaremongering," that the Conservatives

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[376] 'Leading Article: Small government+freedom+low tax=vote Tory', 5th May 2005, *The Daily Telegraph.*

[377] Andrew Alexander, 'Howard's Billions Boil Down to Just 1p', 15th April 2005, *Daily Mail.*

[378] Andrew Alexander, 'Howard's Billions Boil Down To Just 1p', 15th April 2005, *Daily Mail.*

[379] Stephen Glover, 'Why Aren't Mr Blair's Lies the Election Issue?', 19th April 2005, *Daily Mail.*

[380] Michael Howard, Interview With Ben Harris, 14th July 2009.

[381] 'Bang the low tax drum', 20th April 2005, *The Daily Telegraph.*

[382] David Deacon and Dominic Wring, 'Election Unspun? Mediation of the Campaign', in Andrew Geddes and Jonathan Tonge (Eds.), *Britain Decides: The UK General Election 2005,* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp.216-218.

[383] George Pascoe-Watson, '97% Sun readers back curb on migrants', 26th January 2005, *The Sun.*

planned 35 billion pounds of cuts in key public services.[384] They backed Howard's sacking of Howard Flight over his spending gaffe.[385] And columnist Richard Littlejohn kept up a constant barrage of savage attacks on Blair and Labour, even if elsewhere in the paper readers were being urged to vote for Labour, and the paper as a whole backed Labour. Of course, such dissentions from the editorial line are rare in tabloids, especially in The Sun.[386] After the election, The Sun described Labour, the winners, as having had a drubbing, with the Conservatives enjoying a thrilling result that marked their path back to power - even when other papers were describing the performance in much less excitable terms.[387] They even claimed Howard had been proved right - people *did* want to talk about immigration and crime.[388]

With Howard, it was noticeable that many papers would avoid mentioning him, in favour of concentrating on Conservative policy implications. Was this because so much of Howard's leadership was established on the base of the ten word pledges, and it's simple, minimalist pragmatism? Papers like the Sun could back Blair (never Labour), while supporting many Conservative policies, and only allowing that Howard was a man of good intentions. Although on face value the paper seemed to have more in common with Howard and the Conservatives, their admiration for Blair's leadership was prioritised over policy concerns. While The Mirror often attacked the Conservative leader as a ruthless, uncaring Conservative, this was not followed by many of the other papers. Such attacks were mostly about process and policy, and less about the unsuitability of the leader, a world away from the vicious attacks on Hague and Duncan Smith. But there was little of the fulsome praise that even Hague had received from a minority of quarters for his election campaign in 2001. Was this because of a realisation that Howard would not win? Was it just because Blair had been such a big figure in British politics for the previous decade, and he was competing in his last general election? Or was it because Howard, with his limited pledges, and focused attacks on Labour over immigration, just did not give the media enough material to work with? The coverage was centred around the leader overwhelmingly, but the substance of it did largely not attempt to go behind the surface and subject his personality and suitability for the leadership to the same level

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[384] David Wooding, 'PM's new attack on spending', 19th March 2005, *The Sun.*
[385] Trevor Kavanagh, 'Labour is handed one very large stick', 26th March 2005, *The Sun.*
[386] Richard Littlejohn, 'I'd rather eat my own toenail clippings than vote for Blair', 5th May 2005, *The Sun.*
[387] George Pascoe-Watson, 'What's the story? Back door Tories', 6th May 2005, *The Sun.*
[388] Trevor Kavanagh, 'Slasher Howard has pulled it off', 6th May 2005, *The Sun.*

of analysis as Hague and Duncan Smith. The attacks on Howard were centred on policy and ideas, not his character or his perceived suitability to occupy Downing Street.

The greater cynicism and lack of enthusiasm for Howard and the election was reflected in the television reporting of politics. The trend of using experts to analyse the coverage was repeated. The typical format of bulletins would open with quotes from the leaders and then break into a longer analysis segment. Leaders' events provided most of the footage to which analysis and quotes were set. But as more people acquired access to more and more channels then the number of people watching these bulletins was steadily declining.[389] Again, in the absence of being able to give partisan views, television mostly occupied itself with the strategies of the campaign. This probably worked against Howard, due to the media obsession with his 'dog-whistling' strategy.

We can divide the coverage of the Conservative party into discrete areas, all of which have their unique features. Newspapers made their coverage of leaders very personal, especially the tabloids. In broadsheets, there was more policy, strategy and opinion, but most articles were filtered through the leader. Papers on the right were most susceptible to getting involved in detailed policy debates, and framing debates and stories about the Conservatives around ideology. However, even the broadsheets tended to bring many of these debates down to the leader, what they should do, and how much of an impediment they were to the ideology. If there was still a lot of the media coverage that did not revolve around the leader, it tended to lay most of the conclusions at the leader's door. In television, they were not able to cover the personal traits of leaders as much, questioning their trustworthiness and so on, but they were able to ferment leadership speculation.

5.4   Growing significance of leader effects in voting behaviour

Analysing for the effect of leaders on the vote is a question that has divided political scientists. As we have seen, authors like Mughan have come to the conclusion that leaders have had sizable effects over voting intention, while other authors like King have asserted that leadership effects are not as significant as most think. Given these contentions, we have let this section be guided by the findings of the BES when they looked for the existence and extent of leadership effects at the 2001 and 2005 general

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[389] Bartle, 'The Press, Television and Internet', p.708.

elections. This is not because of their position about leadership effects, but because they have conducted a very extensive analysis of exactly what we want to look at in this section, using extensive voter surveys, and controlling for many other important variables to discern the extent of leadership effects. As such a comprehensive study on exactly the question of this section, we shall let these findings dictate the content of this section, with extra relevant data added from our own analysis of ICM and MORI polls.

The BES study for the 2001 General Election shows that Hague was an unpopular leader who nevertheless had had a strong effect on Conservative voting that was more significant than other factors. The Conservative campaign had failed to win over the public. It had been relatively unsuccessful at changing the views of voters on what the most important subjects were, and what party was best placed to handle them. The Conservative projected share of the vote had resolutely failed to rise throughout the campaign.[390] As the authors state, Hague's image was a "significant impediment" to a Conservative victory, in a world where logically, voters were relying on heuristic clues, especially over image, and in an atmosphere of valence politics, competence, especially on the economy.[391] Hague had a lower rating than Kennedy or Blair, with the respective rating on a like score 3.9 to Blair's 5.7, a massive gap. Over the course of the campaign, Blair maintained a sizeable edge over Hague on both components of leader image - competence and responsiveness. On the competence dimension Blair had a 50% advantage over Hague. On only two areas of leadership rating ('caring' and 'sticks to principles') did he achieve bare majorities giving him approval. Going into the election, Hague was only viewed by 12% as a capable leader, and 28% viewed him as out of touch with ordinary people. But despite this, Hague's effect on the Conservative vote – 0.37 – despite not being near the 0.76 record of Blair on the Labour vote, was bigger than policy issues or party identification.[392]

Howard had some significant advantages over Hague. He entered a more favourable public environment, where Blair's personal rating had collapsed, and Labour had taken a hit in the polls. Apart from the crash in Blair's ratings, there were other unfavourable signs for Labour. The consensus in favour of higher spending had shattered. 52% thought

[390] Harold D. Clarke [et al.], *Political choice in Britain,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p.91.
[391] Clarke [et al.], *Political choice in Britain,* p.326.
[392] Clarke [et al.], *Political choice in Britain,* p.147.

the Government was spending too much.[393] Having said all this, health and education were still usually the most important issues or near the top for those polled. Blair had lost a lot of popularity and trust after Iraq, although BES data shows he recovered this during the campaign, and was still more popular than Howard. Just generally, Howard was not very popular. The BES study in 2005 used a model of influences on voting decisions that controlled for enduring values, election specific issues, assessments of the government's record, social background variables, various indicators of partisanship, and perceptions of the party leaders.[394] They concluded that appraisals of Howard were "significantly and strongly related to vote," and that in the Conservative case Howard's lukewarm popularity had cost them a chance to win the election as Blair's declining popularity had had an effect on the Labour vote. Leadership evaluations were far more important than either social structure, issues, or party identification in influencing the vote.[395] Howard's image had had too many "resonant connections" to the 1997 defeat.[396] His leadership image was a small improvement over Duncan Smith but almost always below Blair's. On a ten scale of party leader satisfaction, Howard's went from 4.4 to 4.3 during the campaign, while Blair's went from up from 4.7 to 4.9.[397] This interacted with a campaign in which the dominant predictors of vote were leader identification and valence issues.[398] Disturbingly for Howard, he was not highly rated by the public as an honest politician, the one factor he had based the campaign on above all other. Only 14% thought that the Conservatives kept their promises.[399] Despite Howard's attacks on Blair, 19% trusted Blair more than they trusted Howard.[400]

The BES studies of both General Elections share common themes. In separate ways, Hague and Howard's relative lack of popularity among voters were a significant impediment to their chances of success in the General Election. This was because, even when leaders were relatively unpopular, leadership was shown to have a significant effect on the vote in the control issue study, more than party identification, social standing or

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[393] http://www.icmresearch.co.uk/pdfs/2004_november_reform_public_services_and_taxes.pdf

[394] Geoffrey Evans and Robert Andersen, 'The Impact of Party Leaders: How Blair Lost Labour Votes', *Parliamentary Affairs,* Vol.58 (4), (2005), pp.822-823.

[395] Evans and Andersen, 'The Impact of Party Leaders', p.829.

[396] Evans and Andersen, 'The Impact of Party Leaders', p.818.

[397] Harold Clarke et al., 'Taking the Bloom of New Labour's Rose: Party Choice and Voter Turnout in Britain, 2005', *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties,* Vol.16(1), (2006), pp.8-9.

[398] Paul Whitely et al, 'The Issue Agenda and Voting in 2005', in *Parliamentary Affairs,* Vol.58 (4), (2005). pp.816-817.

[399] http://www.icmresearch.co.uk/pdfs/2004_july_newnight_political_survey.pdf

[400] http://www.icmresearch.co.uk/pdfs/2004_october_sunday_telegraph_post_conservative_party_conference_poll.pdf

policy issues. Conservative leaders, despite the fact they did not lead their parties to victory, were significant effects on voters, and more popular leaders would have been a way to drag the Conservatives nearer General Election victory.

5.5 Conclusions

There were three research questions that dictated the content of this chapter. The first, like the party chapter, focuses on the balance of power between leader and party. It questions how prominent a role the leader of the opposition took within election campaigns. The second two research questions, about how the leader of the opposition's role had become more prominent among the media, and if leaders of the opposition have a sizable effect on voting intentions, relate to the second broad question of the thesis, that of the place of opposition within the wider political system.

Looking at the first section, we see that both campaigns were not wholly personalised around the leaders and a lot of this was down to the party exercising its power. With Hague, despite the way he portrayed himself in his speeches as a crusader for 'Common Sense', there was little attempt to integrate this into the marketing of the party before and during the election. The concept was also hard to promote convincingly when it had been such a change from the first part of his leadership, and Portillo threatened what hegemony he had within the Conservative party. Margaret Thatcher also overshadowed Hague. The campaign never had much of a chance of being personalised around the leader thanks to the infighting at the top of the Conservative party, and the willingness of other lower political actors to contradict what Hague was saying. With the additional disadvantage of facing a charismatic leader in Blair, the utility of the Conservative campaign being centred around Hague was not very high, and indeed was nearly impossible to do, given the febrile state of the party. The party had real power to undermine the leader during an election campaign. But in 2005 the Conservative leader was much more successful in damping down the power of the party to disrupt the campaign. Howard was in a very different situation, where there were no equivalent figures from the party that threatened him. He also had an incentive to attack Blair's new weakness - honesty and trust - and indeed he themed the whole campaign around this. But if Howard dictated this message, and was the one who most often delivered it in his speeches, there was still a reluctance to prioritise the leader in the marketing of the

message. The promotional material of the 2005 campaign was not centred on his image, but the message he was trying to promote of accountability and honesty. It was a message that was closely associated with him, but did not use his image to market it. Even if there had been an incentive for parties to promote their leaders all ways they could across the campaign, the effect of these two unpopular leaders overrode it in much of the 2001 and 2005 campaigns.

The other two research questions relate to the place of opposition in British politics – how leaders of the opposition shaped media coverage of politics and opposition, and if leaders of the opposition had sizable effects on the vote. The media offered surprisingly detailed coverage of policy, but used leaders as short cuts to blame failing party strategy. In Hague's case, it was the media that fuelled the coverage of the outsiders, that only drew more publicity to the disagreements and division within the top echelons of the party. This was very different to the coverage afforded to Howard. He was mostly attacked on policy and not his personality. Again, he was shouldered with most of the blame for the 'wrong' policies, but precious little of the coverage focused on the personality he had been trying to put across. With both leaders there was often a criticism that although they were vigorous in their campaigning, they had failed to give direction to their campaigns, and had let them get derailed into 'single issue' pressure movements at times. This was a criticism uttered just as much by television as by the written press. The responsibility placed on the shoulders of the leader of the opposition to give this direction to the campaign is something that is generally comparable to a US Presidential candidate. Compared to previous periods in opposition, Conservative leaders faced an environment that was less concerned with oppositions' place as representing an ideological or social group. Instead the media tested the leader against his willingness to impose good strategy and unity. And of course, as we have shown, the effect of two even unpopular leaders on the vote was real, and was a significant impediment to the Conservatives chances of General Election victory. This was also a major tests for a leader, because they could not hide from the fact that the leader had substantial effects on voting, not matter how campaigns may be arranged.

If the Conservatives could 'actively' avoid putting the leader centre stage sometimes, there was a 'passive' sense in which they could not. Media coverage put a massive degree of responsibility on the shoulders of the leader of the opposition for the message and success of the campaign. And it was the leader who dictated this message in

speeches, comments and actions. The leader cannot delegate responsibility, or hide from these commitments. The balance of power between the party and the leader needed to be in favour of the leader for them to effectively build a campaign around themselves, and the volatility of relationships within the Conservative did not help. In terms of the place of opposition it was one that was much more prominent among public and media than it had been in previous times.

6 The Leader of the Opposition and the Wider Environment

This is the third of the chapters based on Presidentialisation theory as set out in our conceptual framework. It is all about the wider environment that is not directly controllable by the leader of the opposition, but does have an impact upon him. The chapter is split into two broad sections that deal with what leadership environment the leader of the opposition has to exist in, and what relationship the leader of the opposition has with the changing influence of the executive. The first section of this chapter is based around the supposed development of a space in British politics which Michael Foley called a 'leaderland' that affects the way leaders conduct themselves. The old way of public leadership had leaders, no matter how persuasive, as fronts for their party, not separated from their party's image in any meaningful way. But to adapt to the new requirements of political leadership in order to win elections, leaders have had to reveal more of their personalities and establish leadership as an independent political issue. This placed great importance in showing an ability to lead the public, but also to identify with them. Leaders now partially detach themselves from their party, and refract the party's identity through the personal vision and manifesto of themselves. Parties would allow this to happen not because it enhanced their political position (it had the opposite effect) but because of fears of competitive disadvantage in elections. This was the "pole star" for parties accepting and encouraging this evolutionary change. [401]

But these theories are by no means universally accepted in academia. Other authors argue British politics is still parliamentary, with a degree of conditioning of voters and political expectations that can only be explained with reference to the party system.[402] If parties are making the conscious decision to place more emphasis on a leader's ability to lead, these leaders still rely to an overwhelming extent on their parties for their political standing. With mass communications being threatened by more chaotic forms of communicating and organising politically, the possibility has been raised that it may actually become harder for leaders to synthesise messages through themselves, and politics may fragment back into discrete, single issue debates. Widespread levels of cynicism and distrust of politicians also make it harder for them to pretend that they are on a similar personal level with voters and maintain credibility. A presidentialised style

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[401] Foley, *The British Presidency,* pp.4-273.
[402] Foley, *The British Presidency* pp.20-22.

of conducting politics was not necessarily one that was effective on a long term basis, the politics of personality not necessarily being suited to the processes of government. [403]

Bearing all this in mind, how does the following chapter propose to give an insight into the development of a leaderland? It will concentrate on the core areas of the presidential dimension. They are that it is a space, stretched away from parties, within which leadership is an independent variable, where the battle to become Prime Minister is seen as a leadership role that has to be filled by individuals with proven credentials for leadership, and who play up to these roles.[404] Firstly we are looking for the techniques leaders used to prove their credentials for leadership. This splits into two parts, the techniques leaders used to 'identify' with the public, and the techniques they used to prove they had good leadership qualities. This will help inform some overall conclusions about the thesis and the political environment. In the second section we shall move on to look at if the media had started viewing leadership as this independent arena.

In the second half of this chapter we shall consider the relationship between the leader of the opposition and the executive. Accounts of Presidentialisation have mostly prioritised the executive in their analysis. The leader of the executive is top of the hierarchy in the British political system, most akin to the US President, inevitably making him the first port of call when analysing Presidentialisation and how it has affected British politics. His position is relevant to the debate about the changing nature of the system, because it has been construed in so many different ways. While some academics have claimed Prime Ministerial experience shows the British system is becoming presidentialised, others have asserted that the system is now all about networks and the core executive, while others have variously used it to support the case for Prime Ministerial Government, or Cabinet Government. Traditionally, the debate had been all about Prime Ministerial and Cabinet Government. Cabinet Government had been the dominant theory, with there being many post-war examples of the Prime Minister being constrained by his Cabinet.[405] Prime Ministerial theory insisted that the Prime Minister was becoming more powerful, and the Cabinet had become a 'rubber stamp', with discussion and dissent not tolerated. Core Executive theory, while also accepting that the Cabinet had declined in power, held that this was down to the number of international and domestic actors that

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[403] Ludger Helms, 'The Presidentialisation of Political Leadership: British Notions and German Observations', *The Political Quarterly,* Vol.76, (2005), pp. 430-438.
[404] Foley, *The British Presidency* pp.9-342.
[405] Foley, *The British Presidency,* pp.13-17.

were involved in government decisions. There were a series of power networks that each Prime Minister needed to work through, and with.[406] The most recent theory of all about the Prime Minister has been Presidentialisation, which has been viewed as an evolutionary change in the position of the leader of the executive within the political system, that parallels developments with the US President. But the leading works on Presidentialisation are preoccupied with the work of the governing party within the executive. As this study is preoccupied with the opposition certain differences have to apply to the working of the concept. Obviously the internationalisation of politics and the growth of the state do not impact the leader of the opposition as much as the Prime Minister. But is there still the possibility that the leader of the opposition has interaction with these factors and has some impact upon the nature of his job? Although the leader of the opposition does not have the direct control over these factors that the Prime Minister does, he still has to to interact with them. This second section splits into two main areas, how the leader of the opposition interacts with the international political environment, and how the leader of the opposition has interacted with the increasing amount of power that the Prime Minister has gained through executive Presidentialisation, and what they say about the powers of the leader of the opposition under this dispensation.

6.1   The Leadership Arena

6.1.1   Empathy With The Public

This section looks at the techniques leaders used to show that they possessed an empathy with the public, and that they had the required qualities to be a good leader. Techniques that showed an empathy with the public were especially to the forefront, although this was not necessarily always to the leaders' benefit.

The Conservative party had a natural difficulty in demonstrating an empathy with the public. Although by 1997, the top ranks of Labour had become largely middle class, (and were led by an Oxbridge, public school, alumni), they (perhaps unfairly) had a reputation as more representative of the whole nation than the Conservatives, who were seen by many as the party of the rich, and after the 1997 election were the third party in Scotland, Wales, and large parts of the north of England. This was a perception any leader after

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[406] Martin Burch and Ian Holliday, 'The Blair Government and the Core Executive', *Government and Opposition*, Vol.39 (1), (2004), p.1.

1997 would have to defy. The strategy of William Hague early on in his leadership indicated that he wanted to show empathy, and not just to natural constituents of the Conservatives. One advantage Hague had was that he was a lot younger than previous Conservative leaders. This meant his leadership campaign could plausibly claim that he represented a break with the norms that had defined the Conservative party until 1997 - 'A Fresh Future' was the title of his campaign. Hague defined the mass of the Conservative party as unrepresentative and urged it to become more like the public it hoped to represent.[407] To back this up, Hague appeared at events like the Notting Hill festival, and went to a theme park dressed in a baseball cap.[408] These events showed the two competing imperatives for leaders. On one hand, there was an impulse to show a leader doing fun, relaxed things that he would usually do in his spare time (or at least that the leader would like people to think he did) to show he was not just a typical 'boring' politician. On the other there was the impulse to do 'popular' things, and be seen in a context where one would not normally expect to see a Conservative leader. So to be seen as 'relevant', there was a dual, contradictory need to be as 'normal' as possible, while being as 'different' or new as possible, and carrying off both with a degree of plausibility. And all politicians started off with the disadvantage that they worked in an 'industry' that had a preoccupation with intrigue and sometimes arcane matters, and often punishing schedules that did not allow much time for leisure pursuits, that could preclude attempts to live a 'normal' lifestyle, with a relatively rich range of family, leisure and outside interests and activities.[409] These contradictions dogged Hague throughout his leadership. He was competing with Blair, who had been relatively proficient at persuading people that he was 'one of them'. Appearances on light entertainment shows, and the frequent leaks to the press of him doing 'normal' activities, like watching football, taking his children to church in a people carrier, or appearing with a mug of tea after the birth of his youngest child, burnished the image.[410] Blair also had a skill for being able to make it seem as if he was directly reflecting the thoughts of the majority, with his frequent affixing of the term 'the peoples'...(courts, shares, taxes, health service etc).[411] A dramatic example was the events after Princess Diana's tragic accident in 1997. Although the car accident had no obvious political component, and there was no fundamental disagreement between the two parties, Blair managed to

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[407] Nicholas Wood, 'Hague goes public in search for new ideas to gain votes', 9th August 1997, *The Times.*
[408] Andrew Pierce, 'First 100 days fail to create party mood', 26th September 1997, *The Times.*
[409] Peter Oborne, *The Triumph of the Political Class,* (Michigan: Simon and Schuster, 2007), pp.27-30.
[410] BBC News, 'Cherie's joy at baby Leo', 21st May 2000, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/758167.stm.
[411] Philip Stephens, ''President' Blair'', 12th September 1997, *Financial Times.*

emerge seen as conveying the people's wishes far better than Hague did. This was because of the contrast between the immediate responses of the two men to the event. While Hague released a press statement through Conservative Central Office expressing his shock at the crash and his admiration for the Princess, Blair made an emotional speech outside his local church, using the phrase which became famous, coined by his chief media advisor Alistair Campbell, that Diana was the 'people's princess'.[412] Despite there being no real difference of substance between the two men's reactions, Blair's response was seen as evidence of a talent to reflect what many 'ordinary people' had been saying, while Hague's reaction was seen as somewhat cold and part of an 'uncaring' Conservative attitude and philosophy. Hague then compounded this by later accusing Blair of manipulating the event to gain publicity and improve his reputation, which was seen by many as an attempt to make the issue political, in a way Blair's speech was not. Even though subsequent accounts of what happened have called this into question (we know now that Blair's 'impromptu' remarks outside the Church were carefully planned), it was not seen this way at the time. It opened up a space between the public perceptions of the personalities of Blair and Hague, despite their similarities as two youthful, clever and driven leaders.[413]

What hope did Hague have of realistically bridging this gap? The first attempts to portray him as youthful and comfortable with minorities in Britain were not carried through. Although they had not been necessarily unusual activities for a man of Hague's age, it did look very unnatural for a Conservative politician of his age, helping them attract derision. The Conservatives needed to find something more believable. Hague's new director of media, Amanda Platell, put in motion a different plan, to portray him as an 'action man', in what was called 'Project Hague'.[414] This called for photoshoots in pubs, judo with the Army, and attending movie premieres. Hague took advice from an image consultant on changing his timing in speeches and his accent.[415] It stemmed from a realisation that people thought of Hague as upper class, privately educated, and a southerner, "aloof, out of touch, remote from ordinary people and weak." A Conservative insider opined that people did not "have a clear impression of William Hague, what sort of person he is, his background or what he stands for, so they continue to project all the

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[412] Alistair Campbell and Richard Stott (Eds.), *The Blair Years: Extracts From the Alistair Campbell Diaries,* (London: Hutchinson, 2007), p.232.
[413] Andrew Pierce, 'First 100 days fail to create party mood', 26th September 1997, *The Times.*
[414] Gillian Harris and Tom Baldwin. 'Tory 'action man' scales the heights', 24th April 2000, *The Times.*
[415] Andrew Pierce, 'Sound of the South gives new voice to Hague', 11th October 1999, *The Times.*

parties negatives onto him."[416] Although 'Project Hague' as a whole did not carry on after the embarrassment of having it leaked to the media, elements of what was done later strongly resembled the intention of the plan. During the election campaign, Hague often reminisced about his Yorkshire background, his comprehensive education and how he proud he was of his father who had run a successful small business.[417] But this could be easily turned against Hague. An attempt to make himself relevant to ordinary voters that backfired was when he revealed that he had drunk fourteen pints a day when he was deliveryman for his father's soft drinks business. Such a claim was seen as unbelievable, and if true then inappropriate. The claim was later rubbished by the owner of a pub Hague had drunk in.[418] This demonstrated the near panic of Conservative officials through Hague's time as leader, to ward off charges he was a political nerd, and as a result running the gauntlet of ridicule. Hague had admitted "I can win arguments in Parliament. Now I have to get messages through the TV screen," a pointer to the fact he needed to exhibit signs of personality beyond the Commons. But Hague, with no young family, and marrying his wife Ffion in 1999, didn't have the same opportunity that Blair did to show he was a family man. How did he and his central team attempt to achieve an empathy with the electorate? He talked of his domestic life with his fiancée and his relationship with his parents.[419] Hague climbed to the top of Nevis and had a picnic there with his wife. His wife appeared with him on many events, including being at his side for almost the whole campaign in 2001. Hague was open about sharing thoughts on starting as a new married couple.[420] A story was leaked to the media that Hague had bought his wife a pound shaped bracelet, although this was later made fun of by the media when it was revealed that Hague had not even bought or chosen the bracelet himself.[421] Despite such embarrassments, to a small extent, the different ways of 'marketing' Hague's personality worked. The most popular paper in the land, *The Sun,* praised him for having a hinterland, and being more of an outsider than Blair.[422] But such small amounts of praise had also been at the expense of a lot of embarrassment. Many elements of the media were often in uproar over Hague's 'gaffes', and speculated that it all eroded Hague's stature to such an extent that it hurt his chances of being seen as, let alone

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[416] Rachel Sylvester, 'Our position is more serious. We are running out of time', 23rd April 2001, *The Daily Telegraph.*
[417] William Hague, 'We Will Give You Back Your Country', 16th May 2001.
[418] Michael Lea, 'Hague is happy as Billy Fizz', 31st August 2000, *The Sun.*
[419] Mary Riddell, 'Marriage, the media and Meat Loaf on Saturday', 1st February 1999, *Daily Mail.*
[420] William Hague, 'Statement By The Rt. Hon William Hague MP At the Launch of 1999 National Marriage Week', 4th February 1999.
[421] David Hughes, 'How the Tories are trying to find another new image for their leader. Project Hague', 13th August 1999, *Daily Mail.*
[422] 'Don't underestimate Mr Hague; Sun Says; Leading Article', 2nd October 2000, *The Sun.*

becoming, Prime Minister. As president of the Oxford union, having made a speech at the Conservative party conference when he was just a teenager and photographed with a picture of Margaret Thatcher on his wall, and admitting to reading Hansard, Hague's background was of a man heavily interested in politics from an early age.[423] In theory, the story of a man who had been passionately driven by his Conservative beliefs from youth, and had risen from a comprehensive school to the top of his party should have been inspiring, but in reality it was somewhat of a disadvantage, when the majority had disregarded politics in their youth, and indeed many disregarded it in their older age. They played into Blair's accusations that Hague and the Conservatives were "weird, weird, weird,"[424] however unfair these accusations might have been. To compensate, Hague may have had to make 'admissions' that were barely plausible and further reinforced, not dispelled, the perception that there was something strange about his character.

Possibly as a result, Iain Duncan Smith was more reticent about revealing elements of his personality. Although he revealed an exotic family history, and certain details about the way he interacted with his family, especially his kids, and his life in the Army, there was no equivalent to 'Project Hague'. Instead, Duncan Smith styled himself as the 'Quiet Man', who could not offer the glitz and fluff of Blair, but who would be honest. It would have contradicted this somewhat to have a surfeit of stories appearing about his personal life. But this made it easier for people to argue that he was rather dull, and had too little personality to be comfortable in being leader of the opposition, or indeed Prime Minister. As we have already seen in the party section, the perception that Duncan Smith did not possess the charisma required to be Prime Minister framed much media coverage of his leadership, much of which was derogatory towards his lack of personality. It was unquestionably a major impediment to establishing his authority and winning an election with the Conservatives.

Michael Howard was also a leader who was careful in what he revealed. Although Howard revealed more than Duncan Smith, he did it in a controlled way, and it was not at the level of the constant revelations Hague made about his personal life. It was always incorporated into his speeches in the same way, that he was a child of immigrants, from a

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[423] Mary Riddell, 'Marriage, the media and Meat Loaf on Saturday', 1st February 1999, *Daily Mail.*
[424] BBC News, 'UK Politics: The key points of Tony Blair's speech', 28th September 1999, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/460029.stm.

relatively poor background in South Wales, that he had lived the 'British Dream' by going to grammar school, then Oxford and training to be a barrister.[425] Beyond this there were not many other initiatives Howard took part in that gave voters an insight into his personality. Barring quite a few references to his favourite football team, Liverpool[426], Howard did not try to expose the same degree of outside interests to the public eye as Hague did. Some isolated shots of him playing table tennis were not exactly 'Project Howard'.[427] But Howard's accession to the leadership of the Conservative party coincided with a change in the use of personality in British politics and the atmosphere of the leadership arena. The Iraq war had become deeply associated with Blair, with many calling it 'Blair's War'. Debates before the war were especially serious and fractious, with Blair appearing on a number of televised question and answer sessions. There was no relaxed conversation about family life on these programmes. As the situation in Iraq began to deteriorate, Blair's ratings in the polls, and especially his reputation for honesty, began to slide rapidly. After Alistair Campbell resigned, sources close to Blair even started declaring the 'end of spin'. This self enforced discipline made it harder for Blair to stage the sort of 'ordinary guy' moments that had been so regular before. Arguably they would have been much harder to carry off anyway, this was now a leader easily among the best-known in the world, who had been at the centre of a rift between the United States and Europe, and had taken a decision to send tens of thousands of soldiers to war. The 2005 election campaign was the only time Blair went back to the old ways, amongst other things being interviewed by little Ant and Dec about what he bought his wife for Valentine's Day, and giving a highly personalised interview in *The Sun*.[428] But even then, it was greeted with incredulity that a long-serving Prime Minister was the 'ordinary guy'. With Howard emphasising how he preferred getting things done to the spin and glitz of Blair, it was perhaps an appropriate way to conduct the campaign. However, it also fuelled the charge that Howard was rather aloof, and not very inspiring.[429]

The leader after Howard, David Cameron, took a radically different approach to what image he tried to create for himself. From declaring himself as a candidate in the

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[425] Michael Howard, 'The British Dream', 9th February 2004, http://www.michaelhowardmp.com/oldsite/sp090204.htm.
[426] 'Profile: Michael Howard', BBC News Online, 19th February 2004, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/3224341.stm.
[427] Michael Cockerell, 'Shadowing the Conservative Leader', BBC News, 11th February 2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4258095.stm.
[428] Butler and Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 2005,* p.97.
[429] Robert Crampton, 'The straightman; Michael Howard', 23rd April 2005, *The Times.*

leadership election, he was remarkably open (or gave the appearance of being remarkably open) about his past and his personal life. It was a return to the level of disclosure associated with 'Project Hague'. From his experiences with bringing up a handicapped child and his use of the NHS, to his romances at university, to more trivial matters like his favourite music and what trainers he wore[430], there was a great deal of information put in the public sphere about Cameron that was not relevant to the detail of politics, but made him seem more relevant to 'ordinary people'. Cameron started off at a natural disadvantage to other politicians, and even the previous Conservative leaders before him. His background - rich father, Eton, Oxford, meant he was vulnerable to the charge from Labour that he was a 'Tory Toff', who was biased against ordinary people. Most damning were the pictures of Cameron in the garb of the Bullingdon Club at Oxford and the stories of the members' unruly behaviour.[431] Cameron's background threatened to be detrimental to his standing among swathes of the electorate. This perhaps explained the vigour of the attempts to promote things which made him seem like an ordinary person, despite the chance opponents would (and did) deride it as being fake.

Against the potential drawback of his public school background, by 2007 Cameron had a potential advantage, as he faced Gordon Brown. Cameron's talent for oratory (especially *sans* a script) and relaxed attitude had awoken comparisons with Tony Blair.[432] In contrast, Brown was seen as dour and bad at public speaking. Many Conservative strategists thought he would be a liability as Prime Minister, and not be able to match Cameron's sunny personality.[433] But as it turned out, Brown attempted to make this a virtue in the early months of his leadership, accusing the leader of the opposition over the despatch box as not being concerned about policy, and even producing a poster about himself bearing the legend 'He's not flash, just Gordon'.[434] It was a difficult charge for Cameron, that he was obsessed with his personality to a degree that Brown was not. But it did not divert him from the course he was on, relying on open disclosure about aspects of his personal life. Although Brown did not try and alter his image as a very serious politician, there were still many attempts to make him 'open up' to the voters about his

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[430] Christopher Howse, 'Can anyone explain? David Cameron's trainers', 16th February 2006, *Daily Telegraph.*
[431] Sam Coates, 'David Cameron admits 'deep embarrassment' over Bullingdon Club days', 4th October 2009, *The Times.*
[432] Matthew Parris, 'There's no doubt about it -the next Tory leader has to be David', 16th July 2005, *The Times.*
[433] John Kampfner, 'Brown must summon courage and charm', 12th March 2007, *The Daily Telegraph.*
[434] Greg Hurst, 'Gordon Brown's double whammy: two old foes come into the fold', September 14th 2007, *The Times.*

personal life. Even though the economy had taken a major turn for the worse during the economic crash of 2008, and leaders were anxious to appear serious, this did not stop them revealing personal sides to their character. Brown frequently talked of his support of the popular television programme *The X Factor*, or football, while Cameron claimed that some of his favourite pastimes were drinking beer, cooking and even watching darts on television. [435] Personality and relevance was still a big part of politics, even if it was not quite as obvious or constant as in the immediate post 1997 era. In the case of Conservative politicians, there was a special imperative for them to reveal details about their personal life, based on the disadvantage they had compared to Labour politicians relating to their personal image.

6.1.2 Demonstrating Leadership Qualities

As well as attempting to persuade the public that they had a natural empathy with them, we also anticipate leaders of the opposition would attempt to persuade the public of one other thing: that they were 'strong' leaders, and had the necessary qualities to lead the country. This differed somewhat from trying to persuade the public that they could empathise with them. For one thing, persuading the public that they were on their level usually involved locating the leader in situations and a context where they would be portrayed as 'nice' people, who were at heart just ordinary folk who enjoyed a life outside politics. But persuading the public that they were good leaders did not always extend to being 'nice'. The ability to get their way, be tough, and stick to principles was part of a leader's image as well. As Margaret Thatcher had shown in the 1980s, there could be a substantial difference between those who actually liked a leader, and those who *respected* them for their ability to get things done.[436] The desire to be liked by the people, and then claim to lead them is somewhat contradictory. The two in theory threatened each other - how could a leader seem a friend of the people without undermining the authority they needed to rule them? How could he rule the nation, or stand to rule the nation, in a firm and decisive manner without undermining his reputation as a down to earth man of the people? It was a dilemma not faced by others in high profile leadership roles within business or sport - where often leaders were able to self consciously elevate themselves onto another plane, and found this strengthened their position. It did not necessarily work the same way for politicians. Although Thatcher had

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[435] Tim Shipman, 'Now 'Dave' claims he likes nothing better than to sit on the sofa watching darts... who does he think he's kidding?', 18th February 2010, *Daily Mail.*
[436] Peter Riddell, *The Thatcher Era and its Legacy,* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1991), p.216.

won plaudits for her decisive leadership style, many had said she had gone too far, and had become too aloof and remote from the public by the end of her premiership.[437] By contrast John Major, who had been almost universally regarded as a nice and decent man, did not find this saved him from accusations that his leadership style was far too indecisive and dithering.[438] There was a balance to be struck, but on first inspection it appears an immensely tall order for any leader to get anywhere close to the right balance. But as we shall see, it did not stop Conservative leaders from 1997 onwards trying to mould images of themselves as strong leaders, in addition to the efforts they made to be empathetic with the public.

In his last two years leading the Conservative party Hague portrayed himself as a tough man, who was one of the few ready to stand up against the 'liberal elite' Labour had constructed. The man who started off his leadership prepared to listen to people disappeared. Instead he was proud of the forces of conservatism and wanted to march them forward. Giving him a shorter haircut, his attacks on the liberal elite and willingness to venture onto controversial territory, like the right to shoot burglars[439], were meant to show his confidence and lack of fear at being branded an extremist. The language was exceptionally tough and strident. He claimed Labour had a "sinister agenda" to break up the United Kingdom and give power to the EU. [440] Blair was full of "vacuous, smug meaningless waffle."[441] The Government as a whole was the "most arrogant, hypocritical, autocratic, opportunistic, two faced unprincipled government this country has ever seen."[442] The Liberal Democrats were labelled the "most hypocritical, self-righteous, power hungry, egotistical, opportunistic, principle-less, sanctimonious, dirty fighting bunch of politicians in Britain."[443] In contrast, Hague would give the people "plain, unrehearsed, unstaged, unspun common sense."[444] His self portrayal was as a leader who would not be swayed by media and intellectual fashions, and would act with common sense and firmness. However, this was hard for Hague to pull off in reality. As we have seen, he had changed tack substantially from the opening period of his leadership, and he often seemed too enthusiastic to offer inducements to whatever

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[437] Riddell, *The Thatcher Era and its Legacy,* p.220.
[438] Nick Cohen and Stephen Castle, 'Major Trumps His Rivals and Floors the Media Critics', 9th July 1995, *The Independent.*
[439] Nick Craven, John Deans, 'Defiant Hague Rides Burglary Storm', 27th April 2000, *Daily Mail.*
[440] William Hague, 'Speech To The Carlton Political Dinner', 21st October 1999.
[441] William Hague, 'Speech to the Winter Ball 2000', 7th February 2000.
[442] William Hague, 'The Conservative party will Put Patients Before Politicians', 4th April 2000.
[443] William Hague, 'Speech to the 1999 Local Government Conference', 20th February 1999.
[444] William Hague, 'Keep the Pound Rally Speech', 15th February 2000.

pressure group was flavour of the month with the media (such as over the fuel protest). And although Hague may have portrayed himself as tough and willing to do what he wanted, he was often curtailed by his own party. Often the party were able to get their way, or cause Hague extreme embarrassment over kitchen table conservatism, drugs, and the tax guarantee, forcing him to make U-turns, and appear weak.

The tactic Duncan Smith used at the start of his leadership was very different. He tried to portray himself as a contrast with Blair. Instead of supporting various pressure groups or 'hot' issues like Hague had, he vowed to be short of gimmicks, and achieve one big goal, re-aligning the Conservative party to make its top priority the battle against poverty. There was to be none of Blair's glitz and panache, just a determination and quiet reassurance that his course was right. This reached its ultimate culmination in the 'Quiet Man' speech to the Conservative party conference in 2002, where Duncan Smith reminded Blair "Never, ever underestimate the determination of a quiet man."[445] Although he did not have the panache of Blair, underneath the quiet exterior he possessed the determination to get things done. But in some sections of the media it was ridiculed. They said that the self portrayal just again showed that Duncan Smith was ill suited to be a leader in the era of modern communications and was a desperate gambit by someone who lacked the personality to be a leader.[446] This is an example of how the portrayal of a leader's personality would vary, and could constrain exactly what 'good' leadership attributes a leader could lay claim to. In Duncan Smith's case, claiming to be an insurgent populist against the liberal elite would not have suited his reserved speaking style, but the message of the 'Quiet Man' matched the delivery. The influence of the environment was strong – after a whole term of government, patience with the 'showbiz' approach of the Blair Government was wearing thin, and it was more appropriate for Duncan Smith to accentuate his 'serious' side rather than the more informal aspects of his personality. But if the intention had been to portray him as a measured and sincere leader, then it was not carried through consistently. Duncan Smith did not stick to the 'Quiet Man' pose - his own contributions became 'louder' through 2003, more aggressive and aiming for drama. The fierce attacks on a government of "liars and incompetents" became more frequent.[447] They culminated in his dramatic admonition at the 2003 conference that "The Quiet Man was turning up the volume."[448] Despite the use

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[445] Iain Duncan Smith, 'Leadership With A Purpose', 16th October 2002.
[446] Tim Hames, 'The Tories have a script, now can they stick to it?', 11th October 2002, *The Times.*
[447] Iain Duncan Smith, 'Speech to the Carlton Club Political Dinner', 23rd September 2003.
[448] Iain Duncan Smith, 'Fighting For A Fair Deal For Everyone', 9th October 2003.

of the same phrase, this managed to completely contradict Duncan Smith's message of the previous year. How could a 'Quiet Man' turn up the volume? This confused the issue of what Duncan Smith was trying to achieve in his leadership style, and was not enough to impress his party, let alone the electorate, enough for them to let him carry on after the conference.

There was no doubt what Michael Howard was trying to get over about what he would be like as a leader. He repeatedly insisted that he was not an ideologue, driven by great visions (like Blair had been over Iraq), but would concentrate on small practical issues. This was a thing he consistently repeated during the election campaign and the run up to it. Howard was only offering small, 'concrete' measures, but he was guaranteeing that they would be delivered, or he would start sacking Ministers. This implied an authority that he possessed over them that would have been hard to countenance under the other leaders (could anybody have imagined Hague or Duncan Smith making the same pledge?). The way Howard took front line control over the Conservative campaign also implied that he had more authority over the party than Hague or Duncan Smith did. At the start of this chapter, we raised the difficult (nay impossible) balance between appearing a likable and 'normal' person, and a strong, respected and feared leader. If we can say that Hague and Duncan Smith, notwithstanding problems in the first area, found the second area most damaging to their leadership (lack of authority over an assertive party, inability to focus on one large issue and so on), then we can assert that Howard found the opposite problem. He was able to highlight a weighty body of evidence that he was in control of his party - a structured and slimmer central organisation, facing down candidates and members of the Shadow Cabinet who spoke out of turn, and a campaign that played heavily to him and his ability to get things done. But on the other hand, Howard had a major problem at presenting an image of himself as a warm and relevant person. The polls showed that even at a low point of popularity for Blair, Howard was even more unpopular. The political weight and authority that his time as Home Secretary gave him was potentially weighing down his ability to appear a man of the people, just as Blair's active and prominent place on the world stage militated against his continuing ability to act as a likable man. The balancing act in the arena of leadership was difficult, and had hurt Howard as much as Blair.

David Cameron was faced with the problem of finding the space in between the two extremes, and finding a better balance between them than the three previous leaders.

From the beginning Cameron's leadership was centred on the way he would be a very different kind of Conservative. Riding his bike to work, or going to the Arctic to pose with huskies, indicated a concern for the environment and a willingness to go beyond the traditional issues that a Conservative leader would be concerned with. Speeches on subjects as diverse as the price of chocolate oranges to the style of children's clothes were made.[449] By defining the direction of travel as such a sharp departure from the existing nature of the Conservative party, and wanting the change to be 'further and faster', Cameron was challenging the party, and asserting the strength of the mandate from his victory in the leadership election. But this came to the detriment of being accused of taking the Conservative party into a complacent and weird position, where it would be a weak imitation of New Labour.[450] In asserting the power of his mandate in the short term (and raising the party's position in the polls) Cameron was opening up areas of discontent that would challenge his authority in the long term. These epicentres of discontent fought hard against his efforts to 'change' the party, in areas like candidate selection or grammar schools. Cameron also laid himself open to the charge that he was more concerned with presentation, stunts and focus groups than policy and the values of the Conservative party. The Labour party in election advertisements branded him a 'chameleon'[451], who would say whatever it took to be elected. Stunts like posing with huskies in the Artic were derided as not being evidence of anything but a thirst for publicity.[452] In this, the danger was not so much even the 'un-Conservative' policies he was espousing, but the perceived motive behind why he was expressing them. On the one hand Cameron could be seen as a strong leader by pushing his party in a direction it didn't really want to go in, but on the other, how could it be strong leadership if Cameron didn't really believe what he was saying? For that would have been 'followship', not leadership, and would smack of opportunism. The dilemma is shown by the 'priorities' Cameron has been quoted at various times as having. They have been global warming, cutting child poverty, tackling global poverty, the war in Afghanistan, maintaining spending on the NHS and cutting Britain's massive budget deficit. From even a cursory glance, we can see that some of these objectives are mutually exclusive, and cover a very broad area. Although they might have satisfied different groups, and ameliorated concerns that Cameron was just another 'uncaring' Conservative, when the

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[449] David Cameron, 'Improving our NHS', January 4th 2006, http://www.conservatives.com/News/Speeches/2006/01/Cameron_Improving_our_NHS.aspx

[450] Simon Heffer, 'Northern Rock Shows Why Conservatives Can't Bury This Government', 20th February 2008, *The Daily Telegraph.*

[451] Phillipe Naugton, 'Dave the Chameleon is Labour's new election star', 18th April 2006, *The Times.*

[452] James Chapman, 'Cameron's Green Campaign Starts on Thin Ice', 21st April 2006, *Daily Mail.*

contradictions are pointed out they are often put down to an eagerness to satisfy everyone, and 'weak' leadership.[453] The fact that the political situation changed so dramatically after Cameron became leader was unfortunate for him, as it meant that other leadership attributes came to the fore. By Cameron's early 'caring' stance, he had made it harder for himself to demonstrate the kind of leadership attributes that were seen to be required in the harsher environment. The attacks by Labour on Cameron, that he was not a 'serious man for serious times', and that the economic crisis meant it was 'no time for a novice'[454], were at some points slightly absurd, but played on a feeling among some that Cameron did not have the attributes required to succeed in the harsher political environment.

Another part of the political environment that caused Cameron problems was the new Prime Minister he was facing. Brown had been known for his micro-management and persistent tactical trickery at the Treasury, but his reputation had been serious and dour, a 'man of substance' (a reputation that was maybe unfair after episodes like the 10p tax).[455] And, for the first few months, Brown's lack of glitz was portrayed as a virtue. His measured handling of the terrorist attacks and floods just after the start of his premiership were seen by many in the media as textbook, responsible leadership.[456] Blair's skill at public speaking and his alleged ability to manipulate the public through oratory, acting and spin, meant that Brown's wooden delivery was probably actually an advantage in the first months of his leadership. It helped create the impression he was a more honest and direct style of politician, and Brown played up to this by leaking how he would restore proper Cabinet Government, and put proposals to Parliament first.[457] Brown also won admiration for his supposed mastery of the nuance of political strategy and tactics. At the Treasury he had gained a reputation for being able to plot complicated tactical manoeuvres in great detail, which were sometimes often explicitly designed to, and often did, completely outwit his opponents. The time around the 2007 conference was the zenith of the adulation of Brown, and a nadir for Cameron. Issues that were seemingly not relevant to the business of government, or did not have any direct link to Brown's

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[453] Simon Heffer, 'David Cameron's 'Moral' Capitalism Is No Better Than Socialism, 3rd February 2009, *The Daily Telegraph.*

[454] Phillip Webster, 'Gordon Brown Hits Back: This Is No Time For A Novice', 24th September 2008, *The Times.*

[455] BBC News, 'Brown is UK's new prime minister', 27th June 2007, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/6245682.stm.

[456] Janet Daley, 'Brown leaves Cameron looking hollow', 1st July 2007, *Daily Telegraph.*

[457] Phillip Norton, 'Tony Blair and the Office of Prime Minister' in *Ten Years of New Labour,* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p.101.

policies, such as his promise of 'British jobs for British workers', (while making the opportunist claim that the Tories would 'lurch to the right' in response), were heralded as evidence of Brown's tactical genius.[458] His invitation to Thatcher to visit Downing Street, and comparison of himself to her, was not reported by the media as latent inconsistency (Brown had been fiercely critical of Thatcher in the past) but in terms of Brown's intelligence at exposing a faultline in Cameron's conservatism. Brown's assessment of himself and Thatcher - that they were both "conviction politicians" - spoke volumes for the way leadership was an issue on two levels. First it represented Brown's attempt to project some favourable leadership attributes onto himself - that fitted into the narrative that he had attempted to develop since he became Prime Minister, that he had strong beliefs. The second was an attempt to damage Cameron's differing leadership attributes, and tap into a belief that was concentrated on the Conservative right that Cameron did not have any beliefs and would trash any part of the party's core policies to win a general election.

But this strategy rapidly unravelled, after Brown, in another move that was initially used as evidence of his great mind for tactics, floated the idea of having a general election in the autumn of 2007. Although at the time it looked as if Brown would hold it and emerge victorious, after a dynamic, noteless, conference speech by Cameron and the popular pledge to cut inheritance tax, Brown became more doubtful about his chances of winning and humiliatingly called it off, saying he needed more time to set out his plans to the country.[459] Suddenly the way the two men's leadership properties were regarded by the media totally changed. The 'gimmicky' Cameron had now demonstrated a flair for being leader, and for the second time in three conferences, 'saved' what looked like a hopeless situation, by a memorable speech (ignoring the fact that a lot of the recovery had been down to George Osborne's announcement of an inheritance tax cut).[460] Brown's tendency to consult and sit on decisions, seen as a strength after he took power, was now turned into a weakness, with him being labelled a 'ditherer'.[461] Brown looked weak, faintly ridiculous, and most damagingly of all, his reputation for tactical genius had been torpedoed. Suddenly when he effectively copied the Conservative inheritance tax cut

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[458] BBC News, 'Gordon Brown's speech in full', 24th September 2007
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/7010664.stm.
[459] Patrick Hennessy and Melissa Kite, 'Gordon Brown: Why I Put Off An Early Election', 7th October 2007, *The Daily Telegraph.*
[460] James Forsyth, 'Osborne is Becoming the True Tory Leader', 26th June 2010, *The Spectator.*
461 Matthew d'Ancona, 'Mishap, folly, crisis. . . so why is Gordon Brown starting to cheer up?', 14th November 2009, *The Sunday Telegraph.*

plans, or unforeseen events happened to the Government like a number of disks containing personal data being lost[462], Brown's strategic direction was seen in an entirely different light. Unlike previously, there were no grand claims that the Prime Minister was a master triangulator, or that he was calm in a crisis. Instead the accusations flew around about uncertainty of purpose, and incompetence. Suddenly, Cameron was able to make hay with claims that Brown made decisions in a "bunker" isolated from what was really going on, and that the Prime Minister had betrayed colleagues and conducted vicious infighting to get the job, but "for what?"[463] The leadership environment had changed and Cameron was offering more decisiveness and avoiding the chaos at Downing Street. As time moved on, the willingness of Cameron to appear in headline grabbing stunts faded. Instead there were speeches on controversial subjects like immigration and the health and safety culture.[464] The economic crash in particular placed an onus on Cameron to be more sober and serious. This shows the difficulty for leaders, in that 'good' leadership qualities may not always stay the same, and might vary depending on the situation. When Cameron had taken over the Conservative party, the economy had been growing at a steady rate, his more informal style had been appreciated, and his willingness to accept Labour spending plans, and comment on 'new' issues had been tolerated by the party. But a failing economy, and a ballooning budget deficit, required a leader who looked as if he knew how to sort the chaos out. The nature of the job was transformed by outside circumstances, even though Cameron was leader of the same party, and against the same Prime Minister. It greatly changed the way his central team tried to present Cameron. Many of his party political broadcasts featured a new initiative he had been taking round the country, 'Cameron Direct', where Cameron held 'town hall' style meetings, answering questions from an open audience. These adverts emphasised how he was giving straight answers to straight questions, and how he had a plan to sort out the mess that the Labour Government had created. They tried to show he was honest enough to engage with real people and give them straight answers, even when they were answers the public did not necessarily want to hear.[465] This was a shift from his analysis during the initial period of his leadership that the Conservative party needed to listen to the wider public and make it an urgent priority to represent the moderate centre. Telling

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[462] Patrick Wintour, 'Lost in the Post', 21st November 2007, *The Guardian*.

[463] Andrew Rawnsley, 'Rage, despair, indecision. Inside Gordon Brown's Number 10', 21st February 2010, *The Guardian.*

[464] David Cameron, 'Reducing the Impact of Health and Safety', 1st December 2009, http://www.conservatives.com/News/Speeches/2009/12/David_Cameron_Reducing_the_burden_and_impact_of_health_and_safety.aspx.

[465] http://www.conservatives.com/Get_involved/Cameron_Direct.aspx

people what they didn't want to hear was very much a new strand introduced to Cameron's rhetoric and leadership style. It was not quite the jump from Hague's 'Listening to Britain' to being 'proud of the forces of Conservatism', but it was along the same lines, showing flexibility in leadership attributes. But was it at the expense of being seen as a chameleon, willing to change to say what was wanted? This was an impediment to him being regarded as an authoritative leader, especially during a deep recession when so many were looking for a clear direction.

The analysis we have undertaken on how leaders attempt to show they have an empathy with the public on the one hand, and appear strong leaders on the other, shows that although the two are somewhat contradictory, they are objectives that political leaders seek to fulfil, albeit with great difficulty. On the first aspect, the efforts made by William Hague and David Cameron especially were prodigious. Hague's strategy wildly varied from the start to the end of his leadership, while Cameron's was more consistent, but the ultimate goal was the same, to make the leader a 'normal' person, to neutralise the aspects of their life which very much militated against them being classed as 'normal' people. The fact that they were employed at such length strongly indicates that they were necessary, at least as way of suppressing concerns about the abnormality of a leader's background. In some cases, as under Hague, these attempts would backfire and lead to ridicule in the media, and a setback to his political momentum. However, what we do know is that Hague's early interest in politics was used by Labour to attack his character, and if he had let these stories run without some effort to convey to the public an alternative side to his character, his image with the public may well have been even worse. With Cameron, the same applied, at various points after 2005 Labour were ruthless in exploiting the fact he was a 'Tory Toff', even basing a by-election campaign around it in 2008.[466] Without efforts to make his image more down to earth (that wouldn't descend into the realms of implausibility) he would have been at an electoral disadvantage. Such actions were not necessarily an optional extra for leaders, but a necessity. Iain Duncan Smith and Michael Howard also partook to a lesser extent in strategies designed to make them 'relevant' to the population, although these were heavily stymied by their own personalities. But on their own such efforts were not enough for a leader to undertake themselves, as being seen as a candidate with the necessary qualities to be a good leader was also vital, and all the leadership candidates

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[466] Frances Elliott, 'Divisions over Tory Toff Insult Undermine Labour in Crewe By Election', May 19th 2008, *The Times.*

also put great effort into doing this. This was potentially even harder, as the requirements to be a good leader never stayed static, but altered according to the political requirements of the time. This is seen by the way Duncan Smith and Howard naturally gravitated towards portraying themselves as sober and honest leaders, after Blair's reputation for honesty had been trashed. This was especially evident during David Cameron's leadership, where he had to adapt to the changing needs for reassurance and moderation, and a tough, clear response to the financial crisis.

6.2   Did Leadership Become An Issue?

The question of whether leadership had become an independent issue requires assessment of how the Prime Ministers were regarded in relation to the leader of the opposition, and what comparisons were made between them. Was leadership often elevated above other issues in establishing political preferences among the media or the voters? Was it classified in such a way that it could exist independently of day to day political issues?

The aftermath of the general election in 1997 gives us plenty of material to suggest that the media regarded leadership as vitally important. The role of Blair's personality and his ability to connect with 'Middle England' was hailed as absolutely vital to Labour's victory. After the disaster of departure from the ERM, and the widespread sleaze and disunity during the 1992-1997 Government, no one was suggesting that Labour would have lost the election under a different leader. But the landslide added lustre to Blair's leadership. Many contended that without Blair's charm, his atypical background for a Labour leader, and his willingness to challenge his party, there never would have been such a giant landslide. Labour's record poll ratings were "not an endorsement of the Labour party, but of Tony Blair." Blair was a "presidential figure, above the vicissitudes of party politics." He impinged on the choice of the next Conservative leader in quite an urgent way. Hague found himself being talked up for the leadership at a very early stage, not because of policy reasons, but because he was a youthful politician, and this was seen as the best challenge to Blair.[467] There were not many voices that thought Hague was too young for the job. In the 1997 leadership contest, leadership did become an independent

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[467] Andrew Pierce, 'Appeal of youth may help Hague to lead party out of wilderness', 2nd May 1997, *The Times.*

variable, as the youth and vigorous style of Blair interacted with the debate in the Conservative party. The leader was not being chosen as a frontman for the party, but on his ability to beat Blair.

As it turned out, this did not reflect what actually happened. Even though Hague was youthful, he was not able to make as much capital from Blair out of being a member of a 'young country', his baldness and image as a political nerd not helping him. Blair was increasingly charming the audiences of chat and light entertainment shows, not Newsnight, and Hague struggled to keep up.[468] His youth did not absolve him of criticism based on his political judgement, and perceived immaturity on certain matters. The Conservatives had made a double error, copying Blair's approach, when in Hague, they did not have the man to do it, losing out on both sides of the coin.[469] Indeed, there were slip ups that Hague made, like misjudgements over the Ashcroft scandal[470], House of Lords reform, Kitchen Table Conservatism and Lord Archer[471] that contributed towards a sense he was too inexperienced to be trusted with the leadership. Although he was an impressive performer in the Commons, and had not been expected to produce a comprehensive list of policies in the first few months, it was held by most commentators that his first few months had been bad thanks to "a string of unfortunate photo-ops."[472] In this environment, Hague's performances in the Commons were not the great weapon they would have been in the past.

The difference in tone between the two parties was taken as a great dividing line and also something that Hague misjudged. Opposition was seen as a matter of looking like a potential government, and sounding credible.[473] By adopting a populist agenda, the Conservatives were damaging the government, but reinforcing their bad image. There was a definite theme and central idea behind Hague's Internet era, and the way it would reward low tax, open economies.[474] But far more emphasis was placed on the weaknesses on his personality than his vision. Blair's deficiencies were outweighed by Hague's

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[468] Tom Baldwin and Andrew Pierce, 'Chat show politicians take their cue from America', 4th November 2000, *The Times.*

[469] Bruce Anderson, 'President Blair . . . and vague Hague', 29th January 1999, *Daily Mail.*

[470] Matthew Parris, 'The guilty party', 24th July 1999, *The Times.*

[471] Tim Hames, 'Wobbling William', 25th November 1999, *The Times.*

[472] Andrew Pierce, 'First 100 days fail to create party mood', 26th September 1997, *The Times.*

[473] Peter Riddell, 'All talk and no power', 15th February 2000, *The Times.*

[474] William Hague, 'Common Sense, Common Ground and Conservatism: Speech to the Centre for Policy Studies', 26th January 2000.

perceived weaknesses.[475] *The Sun* reminded Blair's critics that they should consider the prospect of Hague as Prime Minister, and reject it as ludicrous.[476] Little dwelled upon was the old nostrum of governments losing elections, while the media continually measured the leader of the opposition against the demands of the job of Prime Minister. Blair already passed the test of 'can you see him in Downing Street', and Hague did not.

Duncan Smith also faced the same problems in being compared to Blair, and looking a plausible Prime Minister. Initially his measured style won plaudits,[477] but was later to bring criticism. Even papers like the *Daily Telegraph* who had praised Duncan Smith for his "secure ground of his obvious personal decency" warned him that it was not enough for him to be honest and sensible, but he must master television.[478] The battle to establish leadership qualities required a committed effort to establish them through modern forms of communication. Even certain personal qualities were effectively redundant unless the leader could master the central properties of a new political environment that revolved around television. Duncan Smith had a massive handicap in establishing his qualities for leadership, that many simply had no idea who he was.[479] *The Sun* ridiculed his image - "He lacks charisma and is out of his depth. The Conservatives will be in the backwaters of politics as long as he remains at the helm."[480] By calling himself the Quiet Man, he was banking on a misguided notion that the country would turn against charisma.[481] Starkly, Duncan Smith was the "wrong leader doing the right things" and couldn't be envisaged by most voters in Downing Street.[482] This is an interesting separation, between doing the right things, and being the right leader to carry them out. Effectively, having the right qualities to be seen as a plausible Prime Minister in a heavily mediated environment trumped policy and strategy. The 'can you imagine him as Prime Minister' argument was even more damaging to Duncan Smith than to Hague. The fact that he was believed to be too nice or anonymous to really achieve things showed the importance of personality in politics. Again, despite the setbacks

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[475] Trevor Kavanagh, 'Hague's finally broken Blair stranglehold on British politics', 17th May 2000, *The Sun.*
[476] 'Do you want to ditch Blair?; The Sun says; Leading article', 4th July 2000, *The Sun.*
[477] Tim Hames, 'IDS has to be saved from his colleagues', 1st February 2002, *The Times.*
[478] 'Leading Article - The New Tory', 6th October 2001, *The Daily Telegraph.*
[479] Andrew Grimson, 'Iain who? Anonymity has its advantages in Essex: Your Shout', 19th January 2002, *The Daily Telegraph.*
[480] Sue Cook, 'Charisma-lacking IDS won't taste Tory glory', 14th November 2002, *The Sun.*
[481] Tim Hames, 'The Tories have a script, now can they stick to it?', 11th October 2002, *The Times.*
[482] Mary Ann Siegarht, 'The Conservatives Will Be Back, but it won't be Iain Duncan Smith Waving from the Steps of Number 10', 16th October 2002, *The Times.*

befalling the Labour administration at this time, the leadership comparison could still reap rewards for Blair and maintain his dominant political position.

Michael Howard started off with an image as a ruthless politician due to his time as Home Secretary.[483] Howard countered it by insisting he had changed since then and the party must too.[484] His skill in the Commons was credited with bringing politics to life.[485] But his attempts at charm were limited[486], and elements of the media thinking Howard being angry and point scoring would not appeal to floating voters.[487] A leader in *The Times* urged him to open up more - "modern democratic politics is about far more than the exterior that is presented by aspiring Prime Ministers to voters. There is now a demand to know far more about the interior. This is mostly the consequence of television, which both projects and consumes personality.....politics is therefore legitimately a question of personality."[488] The politics of personality was not just seen as legitimate, but tending to drown out other parts of politics which previously would have been more important. For example, Howard's sparkling performances and point scoring off Blair at PMQ's would once have been seen as greatly advantageous, now it was mostly a side-issue, or even worse empathised that Howard was only good at 'old politics'.[489]

The one thing that happened to Blair that changed the battle for leadership in British politics was the way his popularity took a giant hit after the Iraq War. This process defined the battle Howard would have to fight with Blair over leadership. Blair was less popular with the voters, and had suffered particular damage to his reputation for honesty. This clearly drove the very personal way in which Howard attacked Blair. By this stage, it was doubted Blair was strong enough to make it much past the next election especially after his decision to step down.[490] In a new aspect to the presidential dimension, the

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[483] Maurice Saatchi, 'Memo to Michael Howard - image is not everything Tories should be crusading against', 4th November 2003, *The Daily Telegraph.*
[484] George Jones, 'I've changed and the party must too, says Howard', 4th November 2003, *The Daily Telegraph.*
[485] 'An opponent of substance; Howard has brought politics back to life', 13th November 2003, *The Times.*
[486] Rosemary Bennett, 'I don't need to be liked', 10th December 2003, *The Times.*
[487] Peter Riddell, 'Nice guys do win; and Mr Angry just upsets voters', 12th February 2004, *The Times.*
[488] 'Opening up; A testing time for Howard as well as Blair', 2nd January 2004, *The Times.*
[489] Anatole Kaletsky, Peter Riddell, Robert Thomson and Philip Webster, 'Up close and personal: why I have come to despise Blair', 27th April 2005, *The Times.*
[490] William Rees-Mogg, 'Even Thatcher didn't last, so what chance has Blair?', 5th January 2004, *The Times.*

Blair/Brown struggle for power dominated the General Election.[491] As he admitted, it dictated the nature of the campaign he ran.[492] He called Blair a liar and 'despised' him.[493] But Howard had to prove his own popularity, and he did not do this. Damagingly, his reputation for honesty was even lower than Blair's, despite focusing his campaign on it, so he was in a weak position to win the leadership battle over Blair.

The media made leadership an integral part of the Conservative story after 2005. This first happened in the leadership election, where press and television savaging of David Davis rocked his claim to be the leading candidate. In this media environment Cameron was the main beneficiary - he was regarded as having an ability to appeal to voters who had drifted away from the Conservatives. His personality and tone was seen as ideal to survive the political environment Blair had created, and prosper in 'decontaminating' the Conservative brand.[494] In awful contrast Davis had been accused of making a lacklustre speech at the conference and was perceived by many as dull. [495] The Sun thought Cameron was "articulate, lucid and self-confident...He looks good on television and he has the rare gift of making voters feel good about life. These may seem superficial qualities. But they are essential in an age where the medium is the message."[496] Statements about all four of the leaders like this were commonplace. Writers often put to one side major ideological or policy concerns over leaders if they showed an aptitude for the requirements of modern leadership. Increasingly, these were not about policy, or the requirements of parliamentary politics.

But there were still traditional Conservatives, who abhorred this style of leadership, who thought that Cameron was actually a weak leader, who was just saying what people wanted to hear and had no idea of what he would do with power. Simon Heffer characterised him as 'Dave', with a "vision to turn the Tories into a left wing version of New Labour."[497] Some of the right thought Cameron was more motivated by Steve

[491] Gerard Baker, 'The real alternative: if Brown is the next Prime Minister, what does he actually stand for?', 30th April 2005, *The Times.*
[492] Michael Howard, Interview with Ben Harris, 14th July 2009.
[493] Anatole Kaletsky, Peter Riddell, Robert Thomson and Philip Webster, 'Up close and personal: why I have come to despise Blair', 27th April 2005, *The Times.*
[494] Matthew Parris, 'There's no doubt about it -the next Tory leader has to be David', 16th July 2005, *The Times.*
[495] Ann Treneman, 'Yes, he reached parts other contenders don't, No one else has dared be so dull', 6th October 2005, *The Times.*
[496] 'He's the right man for the job; Sun says; Leading Article', 25th November 2005, *The Sun.*
[497] Simon Heffer, 'Silence is golden for the Tory party', 5th August 2006, *The Daily Telegraph.*

Hilton and his focus groups than political beliefs.[498] People were divided over if Cameron meant all of what he was saying, due to this association with 'slickness' and PR.[499] His skill at playing the new leadership games in turn raised its own questions, and emphasised already stark differences to Brown. This encouraged the media to see the clash between the two men as something separate and personal.

This section shows that there is a distinct way for the media to look at politics that implicitly recognises the existence of a presidential dimension. Leaders have made extensive efforts to cultivate good leadership images, and this is with good reason, for the media have constructed an environment where leadership often trumps other issues, and is an independent part of analysis. It is a necessary precondition to be taken seriously in the leadership arena for a leader to successfully make his case in the media. There are few examples of the media explicitly referring to Presidentialisation, especially relating to the leader of the opposition. At the start of this section we asked what comparisons were made between the leader of the opposition and the Prime Minister, and asked if leadership was often elevated above other issues and classified independently of other political issues. We can see examples of both here. During all of the leadership elections leadership was elevated above other issues as a criterion for selecting a leader, specifically how they would be able to compete with Blair. During the different leaders' terms of office, they were often judged on their plausibility to fill the office of Prime Minister. In the increasing dearth of 'policy politics', leadership often took priority over other issues. Therefore we could have the examples of a leadership policy being praised while saying he would never get to Downing Street (Duncan Smith) or that they were not really sure what he stood for but he had the right talent to lead the Conservatives (Cameron). This took an independent path, with the leaders often being compared to each other, or even potential future leaders being factored into calculations of what would happen. The media has tracked this dimension closely, if not explicitly, as a frame of reference to guide their view of British politics. With frequency, they deploy the 'plausibility' test to leaders of the opposition, and reflect the differing norms of the political environment while doing so.

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[498] Simon Heffer, 'Savour the cheers, Mr Cameron. There may be fewer ahead', 4th October 2006, *The Daily Telegraph.*
[499] Tim Congdon, 'I'll be voting UKIP if Cameron stays', 11th January 2007, *The Daily Telegraph.*

6.3 Executive Presidentialisation and its Effects on the Leader of the Opposition

This section is about the changes in the power of the leader of the executive and what effects they have had on the leader of the opposition. It is based around the explanations of executive Presidentialisation stated in the conceptual framework, the internationalisation of politics and the growth of the state. How have they affected Labour Prime Ministers since 1997? And what has been the response of Conservative leaders of the opposition to them?

6.3.1 The Internationalisation of Politics

The internationalisation of politics was a phenomenon that many had been eager to highlight even before 1997. There were a number of imperatives that made it harder for an individual state to conduct its affairs without reference to, or constraint by, other states. Since the end of the Cold War, trade flows between countries had increased. In Britain this process was intimately bound up with Thatcherism during the 1980s. Abolition of exchange controls, policies that encouraged foreign investment and a greater will by the Government not to prop up failing businesses, meant that a proliferation of foreign consumer goods and large amounts of foreign direct investment became the norm. It became increasingly plausible to claim that the biggest single incentive for Britain to keep taxes low, especially on business, was to maintain a competitive position among other countries in a globalised economic environment.[500] The end of the Cold War did not mean Britain adopted an isolationist role, with its military often being involved in peacekeeping and other missions. And of course there was the EU, which had caused so much trouble to the Thatcher and Major Governments. The Single European Act which Thatcher signed, although it abolished many trade restrictions within the Union, left Britain open to the imposition of all sorts of regulations under the pretext of market harmonisation, grew the size of the EU central directorate, and led to Thatcher herself dramatically turning against it, most notably with the Bruges speech[501], and her attempts to stop the Maastricht treaty. This Treaty paved the way for more cooperation and a process that would end in the creation of a European Single Currency, the question of which threatened to rip apart the Conservative party. The European issue was so

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[500] Martin Holmes, 'Introduction' in Holmes (Ed.), *The Eurosceptical Reader,* (London: Macmillan, 1996), p.1.
[501] Margaret Thatcher, 'Speech to the College of Europe, 20th September 1988, http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=107332.

volatile because it cut across domestic and foreign policy issues, and opened up alternative visions of what Britain's future should be. Some thought that the EU was an unacceptable threat to Britain's 'special relationship' with the US, while others thought being an influential member of a powerful EU was the only way Britain could hope to project influence in the world.[502] Domestically, the traditional belief that the EU was a capitalist club and would work in the interests of business was now supplanted by a belief among the left that the corporatist and social welfare preferences of European politicians, and the growing body of EU social legislation being produced through the Social Chapter, was actually the most viable way of Britain introducing greater rights for workers, after the legislation of the Thatcher years. Many on the right agreed that this was happening, but were deeply against it. They thought that the imposition of social legislation by the EU, and possible future harmonisation of taxes and social responsibilities, was undermining the Thatcher vision of Britain as a competitive low tax economy. And this aside from the billions of pounds in budget contributions that membership was already costing Britain. Across all parts of the political spectrum there were those who thought that the EU and all the laws it produced were an insult to democracy and a threat to parliamentary sovereignty and the unity of the British state. On the other side there were 'pragmatists' who thought that the British Government's power to influence domestic affairs in a globalised world was on the wane anyway, and that pooling sovereignty was a rational response, one that was guaranteeing British jobs, with problems of corruption and democracy in the EU surely being better tackled as institutions developed. There was a great deal of division between different visions of the future for Britain. Perhaps this was not surprising, as a former imperial nation, who had a seat on the UN Security Council, was an important member of the EU, NATO and the Commonwealth, possessed a 'special relationship' with the US, in an increasingly complex and globalised world environment, meant that there were many different competing influences at work, some of them contradictory. Britain was not in a position to ignore the international arena, and it would become a key part of what any executive did. Disarmingly, as we shall see, the difficulty for the Conservatives was that their party contained vociferous elements of both.

The attitude of New Labour when they entered office in 1997 was coloured by these myriad contradictions. The Government came to office with a pledge to repair the

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[502] David Butler and Martin Westlake, *British Politics and European Elections 2004,* (London: Macmillan, 2005), pp.14-15.

damage that the Conservatives had done to Britain's reputation in Europe and make Britain a key player in the EU, yet recoiled from the opportunity to join the Euro.[503] The Government also pledged to maintain the special relationship with the US, even though increasingly often the interests of the US and the EU conflicted. But how did this link to opposition and international politics? Were there examples of the Prime Minister being able to increase his power over the executive and the political system via the internationalisation of politics? With Blair and Brown we will see examples of where they attempted to use foreign policy directives as a subset of campaign techniques. Blair frequently used Europe to paint the Conservatives as extremist and as evidence of his success in fighting for Britain. Blair and Brown made much of their key roles in debt relief through the G8, and promoting agreements on climate change. But with Blair we can look at this from a different perspective. It is a common assertion of Presidentialisation theorists that the increased time spent with other leaders at summits and bilateral meetings strengthens the Prime Minister, giving him a higher stature among the public, and a practical involvement in deciding issues that are not available to opposition politicians.[504] But being at the top table internationally did not always benefit Blair domestically. His close relationship with US President George W Bush was an example of this. In the US Blair was feted by those on both sides of the political divide. But at home, the association turned toxic in the eyes of some. Although Blairites defended the war, Bush was unpopular with large sections of Labour. Many media commentators began to refer to Blair as Bush's 'poodle', and a weak leader. This fed into a charge that became popular with the public and media, that Blair was too intimately involved in international politics, ignoring domestic problems while doing so.[505] Commonwealth, G8 and bilateral summits all added up to a lot of time away from Britain. During Blair's years in office the EU was engaged in the negotiation of many different treaties and accords, as well as the regular series of bilateral meetings. Amsterdam, Nice and most controversially Lisbon were all signed by Blair during his time in office, each leading to accusations that he had 'sold out' Britain. The whole process of the EU constitution was damaging to Blair, who at first denied the need for a referendum on the treaty, then was forced to concede that there would be one, reportedly under pressure from Rupert Murdoch, again leading to accusations that he was weak.[506]

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[503] Patrick Wintour and Andy McSmith, 'Spinning Out of Control?', 26th October 1997, *The Observer.*
[504] Foley, *The British Presidency,* pp.280-282.
[505] 'Magnificent, President Blair, but what about those growing problems on the home front', 3rd October 2001, *Daily Mail.*
[506] Butler and Westlake, *British Politics and European Elections 2004,* p.48.

The question of whether or not to join the Euro also constantly overhung the Blair premiership. The 'five economic tests' conducted in 2003 by the treasury produced a seemingly clear cut series of reasons why Britain should not join. However, speculation that Blair had wanted to join but had been blocked by Brown was another exposition of the way he struggled to control Brown.[507] By the end of Blair's time in Downing Street, he had become a major figure in world politics, respected (and feared) by many around the world, and his global stature was respected by many Blairites, and even some Conservative commentators. But this had not filtered through to his image in Britain, and if anything international politics had been responsible for the sharp decline in his image among the electorate from 2003 onwards. Although many may have realised that a lot of what was agreed internationally directly affected Britain, it did not mean that they liked some of the things Blair had agreed to, or his relationship with other world leaders. The growing internationalisation of politics was not necessarily therefore a boon to the Prime Minister, but could be a drag on him, an arena where he did not have built-in power to control developments (such as he effectively did over parliamentary legislation with large majorities) and was often forced to follow an agenda dictated by others. Blair was continually criticised for how going to war with the United States had made the country more likely to suffer a terrorist attack, despite other countries that had not participated in the war being targeted. Much of the legislation that spawned the term 'health and safety culture' originated from the EU, but it was Labour who was more often than not pilloried as the party that had fed this culture. The internationalisation of politics often led to less control with just as much opportunity for blame of the Government.

But what was the response of Conservative leaders? Were there any ways they were able to take advantage? And what power did they themselves have over international developments? What is noticeable is that although foreign policy did not dictate the trajectory of the Conservative opposition, there were certain events which caused them trouble. Undoubtedly, the war in Iraq had a huge amount of influence on the direction of British politics under Blair. From an early stage Duncan Smith decided that he would give Blair his full support for joining military action with the Americans in Iraq. The fact that Duncan Smith took the same position as Blair limited his ability to speak for the majority that opposed the war at that stage. That was left to the Liberal Democrats, and the Labour and (small number of) Conservative rebels that voted against the motion. This was reflected by the fact that the Liberals went up in the polls, while the Conservative

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[507] Rachel Sylvester and Toby Helm, 'The Euro Tests', 10th June 2003, *Daily Telegraph.*

position stayed largely static.[508] Although Duncan Smith was thanked personally by the US Vice President for his role in supporting the Government, and had attended meetings with Blair about planning for the conflict, there had been no prominent role for him in the lead up, or during the war itself.[509] Unlike Blair, he had not been constantly meeting other international leaders, or making rousing speeches about the need to take the nation to war, and had received little boost to a low profile among the public. And any statements he did make on domestic issues during this time were greatly overshadowed by the coverage of the build up to war. As the involvement in Iraq increasingly became problematic for the Prime Minister, the leader of opposition said little, which was probably not surprising given the fact that Duncan Smith had supported the war. Michael Howard had also supported the parliamentary motion and the war. In 2004 he claimed that if he had known that Blair had been exaggerating intelligence about weapons Iraq was supposed to possess, then he would not have supported it.[510] While to a certain degree this was a logical position, it immediately engendered confusion and cynicism. Many thought that it was an opportunist manoeuvre to use the bad intelligence as a get-out. Howard had set himself out as opposed to the way Blair conducted politics, and the war in Iraq had come to be seen as the prime example of bad things about the way Blair tackled politics. Yet he could not attack Blair with full force on the matter because it was a matter of record he had supported the war, and he could not change this. This attempt to do so came at the expense of alienating allies and making Howard look like he was a 'bandwagon jumper', without increasing the potency of his attacks on Blair. Blair was the one with more options over Iraq, reflecting the greater amount of control he had over foreign policy as Prime Minister - he could apologise for mistakes made in planning and justifying the conflict, link it to his responsibility for the nation's security (which Howard could not, directly) and be seen to be influencing the Americans about the next moves forward in the Middle East, something Howard could not do. In fact the criticism of Blair over Iraq actually worsened this problem, as Bush and Cheney cut off public ties with the Conservatives for months in protest at Howard's critical comments about the war. This caused problems for the leadership amongst some of the Conservative party and the right wing commentariat that surrounded them, who thought that the party was neglecting a duty to work closely with the Republicans, traditional allies of the Conservatives. It led Howard into a spat with the Republicans that prompted him to give a lukewarm welcome

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[508] http://www.icmresearch.co.uk/archive/2003_feburary_guradian_poll
[509] Alice Thomson, 'A Tory Affair With Blair Will Surely End In Tears', 28th February 2003, Daily *Telegraph.*
[510] 'Howard snubbed by White House for Blair attacks', 29th August 2004, *The Sunday Times.*

to Bush's re-election as President, and fostered the unusual situation where the Conservatives had a distant public relationship with the Republicans compared to Labour. [511] Due to the nature of the median Conservative and Labour supporter, it is unlikely that this lost the Conservatives many supporters at the General Election. But it impacted on the Conservatives and especially their leader in other ways. It led much of the right wing commentariat to criticise the leader, not just for the individual episode, but for weaknesses in his leadership ability and strategic direction, which chimed with other criticisms that Howard was running an ideology free zone with little vision. The episode fed into a wider narrative, more of which we shall see later, that the Conservatives had wild plans for foreign policy that would not be well received by key British allies. It deprived the Conservatives of the chance to use their traditionally close contacts within the Republican party to engineer meetings between the leader of the opposition and important administration officials that would make the leader of the opposition look important and statesmanlike, and gain extra publicity at home. Although he had criticised Blair's approach to intelligence in the build up to the war, there was not any discernible difference between Blair's and Howard's positions on the deployment of military forces in the country. For an issue that had consumed much of the discussion of British politics in the last years of Blair's premiership, Howard, and his successor David Cameron, had precious little to say. They were both constrained by their support for the original decision to go to war, and a willingness to show support to British soldiers. There was not much gain for a leader of the opposition in saying a lot about the topic. There are difficulties pertaining to being in opposition, but as we shall see, these appeared especially acute pertaining to the internationalisation of politics. More so than over the domestic business of government, the leader of the opposition was so obviously divorced from international politics, that they often faced near irrelevance over comments they made about international politics, or worse fanned controversies they could not control, while not having the benefit of the 'statesmen effect' that the Prime Minister had, with the few times the leader of the opposition met foreign politicians being very poorly publicised. One of the few times Cameron gained a large amount of publicity for was a meeting with a foreign politician who did not even hold executive office, Barack Obama in summer 2008, a very brief meeting that was part of Obama's much hyped visit in London.[512] The attention engendered by this relatively small scale meeting was a stark

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[511] Nicolas Watt, 'Howard Refuses to Congratulate Bush', 8th November 2004, *The Guardian*.
[512] Cole Moreton, 'Obama On Tour: Three Special Relationships in One Day', 27th July 2008, *The Independent*.

contrast to the lack of interest in a visit Cameron made to India, that was supposed to signal a step change in relations with one of the world's fastest growing economies.[513]

The leaders' slim power was even true over topics that the Conservatives themselves had said were top priorities, like Europe. Over the EU Treaties, the Conservatives were in a very weak position to influence what was going on. They had no direct role in the talks that led up to the agreements of the treaties, and they were relegated to taking up critical positions of the treaties after they were signed. Were there any instances in which these criticisms made a difference? In a formal sense they did not, as the legislation passing the treaties easily went through parliament. The indirect influence of criticising the treaties also did not appear to work. Although most agreed with the Conservative position that there should be no more treaties extending integration, the Conservatives did not increase the salience of the issue. The Conservatives were still able to secure some hits against the Government, although it is stretching it to say that this was all down to the Conservatives' skill. Two of the main irritants for Labour were the aborted referendum on the EU Constitution, and the controversial passage and signing of the Lisbon Treaty. But the promise of the referendum actually detracted from what would have been a main plank of the Conservative European election campaign, that they would definitely hold a referendum on the constitutional treaty. So although the Conservatives had been able to cause Labour some short term embarrassment, they did not secure a significant long-term gain.

Subsequently, all the elements of the constitution were signed in an Intergovernmental Treaty at Lisbon. Blair, and Brown, argued that an Intergovernmental Treaty didn't require a referendum.[514] Cameron gave a guarantee that there would be a referendum under a Conservative Government.[515] But Labour were able to pass the Treaty through Parliament, although Brown signed the Treaty after the other European leaders had left, accused of an embarrassing attempt to avoid publicity.[516] But later on Cameron faced his own problems, as the Treaty was ratified by all member states, and he was forced to admit that there would not be a referendum on the Treaty under a future Conservative Government, but they would accept the Treaty under duress and negotiate for opt-outs to

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[513] David Cameron, 'We Must Forge A New Special Relationship – With India', 5th September 2006, *The Guardian.*
[514] George Pascoe Watson, 'Napoleon or Wellington, Blair', 21st June 2007, *The Sun.*
[515] David Cameron, 'Cameron: I'll Give EU A Vote', 26th September 2007, *The Sun.*
[516] David Byers, 'Gordon Brown Signs Up To EU Treaty, Finally', December 13th 2007, *The Times.*

social legislation. This drew some criticism from the press and members of his party, for breaking a 'cast iron guarantee' he had given to hold a referendum.[517] So although Conservative leaders had won the chance to cause the Government short term embarrassment, it was at the cost of opening up discord within their own party, and vulnerability from attack by UKIP. The Government was vulnerable on Europe, but it was an issue that had the potential to backfire on the Conservatives, apart from the adverse impact it had on the Conservative image, with the accusations of being a single issue party, and this was reflected in the way leaders after Hague utilized it a lot less as part of their public appeals.

This potential meant that the Government had no real incentive to change their position on the treaties once they were passed, and were actually able to turn the Conservative criticisms against them - under all four leaders of the opposition after 1997, they were accused of having 'pie in the sky' arguments over Europe.[518] A major theme of the Labour criticisms was that the Conservative position would lead to Britain being reviled in Europe, would cause near meltdown in the workings of the EU, and was in some way extremist. Hague was regularly derided for his unfeasible plan to renegotiate the Treaty of Rome if he won power.[519] Howard was accused similarly about his plans to hold a referendum and the EU Constitution.[520] Brown often disdainfully referred to David Cameron's setting up of a new group within the European parliament, claiming it was proof of the extremist 'same old Tory' attitude to Europe.[521] What also did not help the Conservatives was, as alluded to, Labour were able to rely on appearing to be at the 'centre of Europe', and the Conservatives were not able to publically demonstrate that Labour were wrong in accusing them of being isolated. Indeed European leaders often criticised the Conservatives, like under Hague, for fostering 'alarmism' about creeping EU powers, and especially after Cameron started a process of withdrawing Conservatives MEPs from the European Parliament European People's Party (EPP) grouping, they were very reluctant to agree to have any kind of meeting with him. The exit from the EPP caused a great deal of controversy, and when it was first in negotiation there were eleven leaders of right wing Governments and parties in Europe who said that they would refuse

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[517] David Cameron, 'Cameron: I'll Give EU A Vote', 26th September 2007, *The Sun.*
[518] Denis McShane, 'Tories Must Answer for Extremist Links', 18th March 2010, *The Guardian.*
[519] Martin Fletcher, 'Cook faces long game of Euro poker', 7th December 2000, *The Times.*
[520] Toby Helm, 'Blair `is bouncing Britain into EU treaty', 30th March 2004, *The Daily Telegraph.*
[521] Francis Elliott, 'Cameron tries to steady nerves on Right before Labour assault',
19th June 2007, *The Times.*

to work with Cameron if he withdrew Conservative MEP's from the EPP. [522] This gave credence to Labour claims that a putative Cameron Government would be isolated in Europe. The criticisms of European Governments were not just imagined, but real. [523] Without the Conservatives being in government, they could not counter what were hypothetical visions of the future in detail. With criticisms of their tax policies for example, they may have been able to point to what levels of tax had contributed to making other countries more prosperous, or what the Conservatives had done in the past. But the question of hypothetical negotiations in the future with a group of foreign countries was so open to question that the allegations could not be countered in a comprehensive way, and no doubt the Labour allegations were effective among some voters in painting their attitude towards Europe as reckless. Labour had a great advantage in that they could choose to discuss their record of agreements in the complicated networks of the EU, and spin them as being successful, while hinting that other European leaders would disregard Britain under a Conservative Government, something that could not be disproved conclusively by the Conservatives themselves. As we shall see with their attitude to the expanding state, part of being in opposition was that it made it very hard to demonstrate it had passed arbitrary 'tests' set by the Government.

6.3.2   The Growth of the State:

Another major cause of executive Presidentialisation is the growth of the state. How did this influence work, and how did it affect the Labour Government and their Prime Ministers? Unlike many other western countries, the British state did grow by a large amount, since the Labour party took power in 1997. There was a contradiction between the need to be internationally competitive, and being able to finance public services that were satisfactory to the electorate.[524] Even though New Labour had been conceived round the premise that a Labour Government must not endanger economic competiveness, once Labour was in power they were not afraid to implement policies which would expand the state, needing more taxes to pay for it. After an initial couple of years where Brown stuck to the previous Conservative Government's spending plans[525] and actually decreased state spending as a percentage of GDP, paying down some national debt, state spending started rising by huge amounts. The initial 'prudence' of

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[522] David Charter, 'Leaders From EU Right Turn Against the Tories', February 28th 2006, *The Times.*
[523] Bruno Waterfield, 'David Cameron Warned By Angela Merkel Over Lisbon Treaty', 11th May 2009, *The Daily Telegraph.*
[524] Stephen Dorrell, Interview with Ben Harris, 4th June 2008.
[525] Stephen King, 'The Truth About Spending Cuts', 29th March 2010, *The Independent*.

Brown, and the stability of the economy, enjoying high growth, low inflation and low interest rates, meant that he had the credibility to sanction the big increase in spending. He also had public support as well, with most supporting the rise in national insurance to finance improvements in the NHS. Most of the rises were targeted on causes that were close to Labour - especially health, with increases coming in at over 10% some years. Even the consistent, and record period of economic growth was not enough to pay for these spending increases on their own, and the slack was taken up by a combination of the Government beginning to borrow money again, and some tax rises, like a series of complex adjustments to tax thresholds, and most notably a rise in national insurance.[526] As most other European states were attempting to reduce spending and tax rates to cure their poor competiveness, Britain was experiencing the opposite phenomenon, having been in a very competitive position at the end of the Conservative years in government, and being able to raise tax and spending greatly without (apparently) endangering the state of the economy, while tackling the perception that British public services had been underfunded by the Conservative Governments since 1997. A great many more were employed in the more generously funded public sector. By electoral logic, aside from the economic arguments for and against, this was a good thing for Labour and a bad thing for the Conservatives. Labour had traditionally gained the votes of most public sector workers, especially in health and education, the two public services that were being expanded most rapidly. These two services were also the most popular of the public services, and affected huge numbers of voters some way directly, and in theory the extra money going in would make a Labour Government even more popular, and make a Conservative comeback to government less likely, unless they could find a way to increase the amount of public service workers voting for them quite substantially. Studying the strategy of Labour Governments since 1997, it is clear that they thought that this was a weakness of the Conservatives that could be exploited. The Labour campaigns in 2001 and 2005 revolved around the extra money, and the promises of extra money, that government had pledged to the 'schools n' hospitals' combination that Blair and Brown kept referring to. Not many chances were missed to raise fears of what 'Tory cuts' would do to these services, and the possibility was continually raised that the Conservatives had plans for deeper cuts, and would possibly even privatise parts of these services. Even when the figure of £35 billion of cuts that Labour quoted was queried by

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[526] Maurice Mullard and Raymond Swaray, 'New Labour and Public Expenditure', in Matt Beech and Simon Lee (Eds.) *Ten Years of New Labour,* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p.46.

many as misleading, Labour used the claim throughout the 2005 election campaign.[527] Even after the economic crisis, and the sharp falls in tax revenue, Brown pressed on for a long time with his 'cuts versus investment' strategy.[528] Even when he relented to pressure from the Cabinet to admit there would have to be substantial cuts if Labour won another term of office, he insisted that unlike the Conservatives, they would not be carried out immediately, thereby not endangering a fragile British economic recovery.[529]

If the increasing number of public sector workers was a potential problem for the Conservatives, then what was their response? A common criticism of William Hague was that he had not done enough to reassure workers in the public sector that they should not be frightened of the possibility of a Conservative Government. But on the surface, there was one very large concession he had made to them. Despite a commitment to be a tax cutting Conservative, Hague had pledged to match the massive increases that Labour had planned for education and health spending. Later he extended these promises to other public services such as the police and the military.[530] Despite the fast economic growth that the country was experiencing, committing to these large spending increases limited Hague's room for manoeuvre, meaning that to square the circle between tax cuts and spending increases he had to rely on slightly vague promises to reduce waste in government, and deliver services more efficiently. This was what awakened criticism especially among Conservatives, who said that this stance was not credible when taking into account the fact that Hague did not have a detailed blueprint to structurally reform these public services, making promises that they could run them more efficiently and get more value for money sound rather hollow. There were accusations that Hague had, by promising to match Labour's spending plans, 'parked' the issue.[531] Matching the spending would guard the Conservatives to some extent against accusations of 'Tory Cuts', not having detailed plans to reform the services would not arouse too much controversy amongst the professionals in these services, while the Conservative leadership could conceivably use the campaign to publicise other issues where they had leads over Labour, like Europe or immigration, and move them up the agenda, having 'neutralised' the public services. With Hague able to match, but not better, Labour promises to the public sector, it appears he was caught in a trap of not being able to make

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[527] George Jones, 'Labour in Retreat Over £35 Billion Claim', 18th March 2005, *The Daily Telegraph.*
[528] 'Investment V Cuts', 12th June 2009, *The Times.*
[529] Patrick Wintour and Andrew Sparrow, 'Conservatives Declare Labour Defeated Over Spending Cuts Row', *The Guardian,* 15th September 2009.
[530] George Jones, 'Hague extends Tory pledges on spending' 23rd January 2001, *The Daily Telegraph.*
[531] 'What the Tories must do', 4th April 2001, *The Daily Telegraph.*

their future appear to be more secure than under Labour, but not promising a radical plan of reform that would make it possible for the Conservatives to one day deliver these services more efficiently and at a lower eventual cost than Labour were doing.

Duncan Smith, although he never had the opportunity to contest a general election, represented a step change in the way the Conservative leadership dealt with the question of the public services. In an interview for this thesis, he contended that the Conservative election campaign of 2001 had been far too focused on a narrow range of issues that mainly appealed to voters that had already voted Conservative. To improve the party's fortunes, Duncan Smith wanted a comprehensive set of plans for the public services, where no one could accuse them of not talking about the subject in the hope that it would be ignored. Duncan Smith encouraged Shadow Cabinet ministers to visit other countries, some of them seen as more socialist than Britain, to learn from the way they ran the equivalent services, and come up with plans for reform.[532] This was his public position at the time, that the Conservative party should be seen to be coming up with comprehensive polices to improve the public services. However, Duncan Smith's attempts at 'engaging' with health and education did not bring the Conservatives a breakthrough in the polls, nor persuade significant additional numbers of people that the Conservatives had a better strategy than Labour for health and education. Again, he was not helped by the way Labour held the levers of power. While Conservative plans for reforming the public services may have been interesting for some voters and political insiders, they could not hope to match the dramatic immediacy of a Labour National Insurance rise 'for the NHS', with all the affinity with the service that this implied. And that National Insurance rise had been popular with the public. This put Duncan Smith in a difficult position, between criticising Labour for imposing this additional burden on business and hiring staff, while not being able to make any concrete commitment to repeal the tax rise. The rapid growth in numbers of people employed by the NHS, and its popularity, made it a hard subject for Conservative leaders to tackle. As by far the largest item of government spending, logically it should have been the first place the Conservatives would look for spending reductions that would reduce the size of government and pave the way for reducing taxes, two objectives which every Conservative leader since 1997 has said that they want to achieve. But the size of the institution and the respect it engendered among the public meant that no Conservative leader since 1997 has pledged to cut spending on the health service, because to do so would have fed the Labour criticism that the leaders

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[532] Iain Duncan Smith, Interview With Ben Harris, 5th June 2008.

did not care about the NHS, and would far rather it was privatised. The choice was between sticking to Labour spending plans and chance destroying any hopes they had to present a coherent plan for reducing the tax burden and the size of the state, or pledge to radically reform it and chance becoming very unpopular with the public.

The platform Howard entered the 2005 election on showed the Conservative difficulty with the growing state and how to reform it. Again, Howard had decided to take the position that he would maintain Labour spending plans on health and education. But these ran alongside pledges that he would reduce the tax burden on the British public. Although he was offering less tax, it was only a relatively minor cut. Howard's prospective spending plans were founded on the James proposals for reducing waste in the public sector, which had detailed £35 billion worth of savings that could be made.[533] This avoided the accusation that had been made against Hague, that he did not have any real idea how to achieve these efficiency savings, although it did not stop Labour criticising aspects of the James proposals as being totally unbelievable. Howard planned to allocate the £35 billion of savings between more spending on health and education to match the Labour spending plans, a reduction in the national debt which had been building up for most of the decade, and £4 billion of targeted tax cuts. In a £600 billion plus Government budget, cutting the burden of tax by £4 billion was seen as pretty uninspiring by some figures on the right, a "rounding error." [534] And the pledge by Howard that these minor tax cuts would be made while expanding the role of the state[535] pointed to the confused nature of the campaign - were the Conservatives bound by Labour now? Would they stop the expanding state? This was not resolved by the plans for public services reform - the plans for patients and pupil passports would actually have cost more in the short term. Of course this would be paid for by the generous spending increases pre-allocated to these departments, but this meant that the rest of the public sector, including traditionally Conservative institutions like the police and the military, would face having their spending squeezed, meaning the Conservatives could become more unpopular within these sectors. Howard was trying to do many things within tightly limited parameters of what was possible, set by the Labour Government.

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[533] Brendan Carlin, 'Howard's tax cut plan aims to lift Tory spirits hit by ex-minister's defection', 17th January 2005, *The Daily Telegraph.*
[534] 'Tories must grasp the nettle or they'll be stung' 5th January 2005, *The Daily Telegraph.*
[535] Butler and Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 2005,* p.60.

The leadership of David Cameron has attempted to square this circle, but in a way that has upset many in his own party, while presiding over an upsurge of those who thought that the Conservatives had the best polices about the public sector.[536] From the very beginning of his leadership Cameron was clear that he would not be making huge tax and spending cuts, but 'sharing the proceeds of growth'. He claimed that the fundamental principle that had underpinned the NHS since its inception - that the services it offered should be made free for all - would be maintained under a future Cameron Government, and there would not be a fundamental restructuring of the service with part privatisation, an insurance model, or a patients' passport.[537] Going beyond previous leaders, Cameron actually said that the NHS was his first priority, and made it a key part of promotional activity. Surprisingly, given that he was nominally committed to reducing the role of the state, and given the massive spending increases devoted to the sector, Cameron used the 2006 conference to launch a high profile campaign to stop 'Brown's NHS cuts'.[538] When the economic crisis came, this put Cameron in a difficult position, which he opted to get round by insisting his priorities were cutting the deficit and not the NHS.[539] By doing this Cameron guarded his position on the NHS from attack, but this meant that if the Conservative target of eliminating the bulk of the structural deficit by the end of the parliament was to be achieved then the spending cuts for other departments would have to be even more stringent. The claim Cameron had made to be a 'compassionate caring Conservative', was vulnerable to attack that he was planning massive cuts. Against this Cameron was able to offer a 'Third Way' which gave him some chance of claiming he was still a compassionate Conservative, but would get the deficit in order. Cameron had been an advocate of changing society, he had initially claimed that he wanted to change society as profoundly as Thatcher had changed the economy. This desire merged with great amounts of policy work produced by Duncan Smith's special justice commission on 'Broken Britain'. Cameron pledged to tackle the myriad causes of the 'Broken Society'. Indeed, at the beginning of the economic crisis he even insisted that to fix the broken economy, first a government would have to tackle the broken society. Although he dropped this claim, he still made significant references to the concept in the run up to the General Election. The increased involvement of charity groups, reform of the tax and

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[536] http://www.icmresearch.co.uk/2007_may_sunday-telegraph_trust_poll.pdf.

[537] David Cameron, 'Improving our NHS', January 4th 2006, http://www.conservatives.com/News/Speeches/2006/01/Cameron_Improving_our_NHS.aspx.

[538] David Cameron, 'The best is yet to come', Speech to the Conservative party conference, October 4th 2006, http://www.conservatives.com/News/Speeches/2006/10/Cameron_The_best_is_yet_to_come.aspx.

[539] Patrick Wintour, 'Cameron Error Gives Labour First Blood In Election Campaign', 4th January 2010, *The Guardian*.

benefits system, were all part of Cameron's reasoning about the broken society. [540] It gave him more credibility than his three predecessors to claim he was a genuine 'caring Conservative', but it was not a position that was invulnerable to attack, that he was a closet Thatcherite.

Like the internationalisation of politics, the growth of the state was difficult to handle for the leaders of the opposition. They did not control it, and coming out strongly against it chanced antagonising swathes of potential voters. The disconnect and complete lack of direct authority the leader of the opposition had over state employees made it difficult for them to claim that they could 'lead' the state organisations. Even Hague, the leader most associated with the virtues of a small state, had to issue guarantees to state organisations that he would not cut spending on them. All the other Conservative leaders had to issue these guarantees as well. Only Cameron made a fierce effort to turn his relationship with a state organisation round to his advantage - the NHS.

6.4   Conclusions

In this section we have looked at the relationship of leaders of the opposition to the political environment. This environment has changed significantly from previous times the Conservatives had been in opposition, and changed fundamentally the place of opposition from a passive one that relied on government malfunctioning, to an active one that had to prove the leader of the opposition was suitable to be Prime Minister, and had to react to government actions relating to the state and the internationalisation of politics. The media have created a set of high expectations on the leader of the opposition to fulfil the test of being plausibly seen as Prime Minister. This placed a large emphasis on the leader of the opposition's personality over his policies. The increased expectations led leaders of the opposition to feel the need to fulfil a complicated balance between being a strong leader and a 'man of the people'. In terms of the two of the main drivers of executive Presidentialisation - internationalisation of politics and the growth of the state, we have seen that it is very hard for leaders of the opposition to respond to both of these factors. Commonly, they are relegated to the position of playing a reactive role to the activities of the Prime Minister. While this may absolve the leader of the opposition of

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[540]   David   Cameron,   'Mending   our   Broken   Society',   22nd   January   2010, http://www.conservatives.com/News/Speeches/2010/01/David_Cameron_Mending_our_Broken_Society.a spx

involvement in controversial decisions such as Iraq, it also impedes his attempts to look like a potential Prime Minister. Politically, it creates many constraints for the leader of the opposition over the policies he makes and the rhetoric he uses. The interaction with the increased power of the Prime Minister is essentially one way, because the leader of the opposition has such little power over international politics and the growth of the state. Because most matters relating to international politics and the growth of the state are administrative, or policy driven, the politics of opposition is mostly ineffective. He gains little obvious benefit of publicity for successful meetings or contacts with international leaders, yet can still attract adverse publicity when things go wrong, or when these international leaders are unhappy or refuse to meet the leader of the opposition. Particularly with regard to the growth of the state, the leader of the opposition has to be mindful of upsetting a significant portion of the electorate, and this undoubtedly influences his tone, and the language he uses. One result of the growth of departments is the growth of the Shadow Cabinet, but this has not proved a boon for the leader of the opposition, as we have seen in the party chapter, as it is close enough to leak and embarrass the leader. A process of executive Presidentialisation may have given a boost to the Prime Minister's prominence at the heart of government, but it has not given the leader of the opposition a similar type of fillip.

7 Conclusions: Conservative Leaders of the Opposition 1997-2010

In this concluding analysis, we must look to what extent the material in the thesis has illuminated the questions raised by the conceptual framework, and which insights it has brought, additional to the existing literature.

7.1 Research Question Conclusions

This thesis grew out of a belief that there have been changes in the political environment that have affected the role of the leader of the opposition, that can be illuminated with a study that is not centred around agents, but the structures that surround them. These changes have not been wholly reflected by a modern literature that is more concerned with individual agents and events than the wider place of opposition or the structure of power within the Conservatives. To attempt to make a contribution to the literature about the Conservatives in opposition since 1997, a framework was created around the principles of Presidentialisation theory, which itself has to take account of the modern political environment. This framework was detailed in the second chapter, and outlined a structure of party, electoral and political environment chapters, that all apply to Conservative leaders of the opposition since 1997. The final analysis begins by looking at some of the answers the three substantive chapters came to, and how the thesis worked.

The first substantive chapter was about the leader of the opposition and his party. The research questions this chapter asked were:

- Did the balance of power between the leader of the opposition and the Conservative party favour the leader? Did the formal or informal balance of power within the Conservatives change in favour of the leader of the opposition, and how permanent were these changes between different leaders? Did the leader of the opposition claim the political mandate, or were other figures within the Conservatives, or the Conservative party as a whole, able to plausibly claim the mandate or water down the leader's claim? How much power was concentrated in

the leader of the opposition's office - were other figures within the Conservatives able to challenge or defy the leader's office?

This chapter is largely concerned with the balance of power within the Conservatives. We found that the balance has become more volatile, with leader and party gaining more powers to use against each other. Before 1997, the Conservative party had been organised in a very loose fashion, with autonomous local party organisations, and the powerful 1992 Committee taking informal soundings from MPs. This usually worked relatively harmoniously due to the tradition of deference to the Conservative leader, despite the lack of formal control the leader had over the party. But through the Conservatives' last decade in government, this conception of power in the party had almost totally broken down. Thatcher, despite winning three elections for the Conservatives, was ignominiously dumped by MPs in 1990, a move that would cause great infighting and disquiet for years to come. John Major's leadership was dogged by rebellions, especially over Europe. The leader, far from inspiring deference, was often a figure of ridicule and seemed powerless to stop the chaos around him.

The febrile atmosphere and infighting that had grown to define the Conservative Party during these years, would affect formal, and informal relationships between the leader and the party in the years after 1997. In terms of the formal relationship, the infighting was undoubtedly a major spur towards changing the relationship. As we detailed in this chapter, there were a series of formal changes to the party pushed through by William Hague. These changes established a greater degree of central control over recruiting and communicating with members, centralising initiatives through a party board, and taking powers away from local party associations and middle level management in the party. The three wings of the party - parliamentary, voluntary and professional - were united as one single body, with a single constitution, rules and national membership. In return, the Conservative grass roots gained more power. The grass roots had traditionally been the ignored part of the party, a bystander to the activities of the leadership and to a lesser extent the middle level management. Suddenly it found itself with the power to vote in the final run off in a leadership election, and on key party policies. In a formal sense, these alterations would change the balance of power dramatically within the Conservative party, and the Hague changes were long lasting. Since they have been introduced, there has been only one major attempt to alter one of the key planks of the reforms, the method of selecting the leader, by Michael Howard in 2005, which was

unsuccessful. So we can see from the detail in this chapter that the formal side of the relationship between the leader and the party has changed a great deal, and in a way that tallies with many of the assumptions of the conceptual framework. However, this does not take account of the balance of power between the leader and the party, independent of the formal rules that govern the party. This has immensely affected the conduct of the leader of the opposition, and it is where the rest of the party has, in practice, been able to exert more power. Although the changes in formal powers granted the leader of the opposition more power in theory, and depressed the power of party grandees and middle level management, in practice these powers depended on the state of leaders' informal relationship with the rest of the party. This was seen in the little used referendum power that the reforms had established. It was only used on three occasions, twice by Hague and once by Cameron. Although at face value it was a powerful tool for the leader to communicate directly with and gain the endorsement of members, against opposition from professional party members, in reality it was not used like this. Hague and Cameron found plebiscites of the party that were racing certainties to result in a strong victory for the leadership attracted low levels of turnout, and interest from the media, heavily diluting their impact. Of course a lot more interest could have been created by putting more controversial and divisive issues to the party, but then the leader would have had to face the unedifying prospect of losing votes, or winning them by such a narrow margin as to make the party look divided. When it really could have helped the leaders, such as over the kitchen table conservatism debacle under Hague, the 'back me or sack me' fracas over a gay adoption bill under Duncan Smith, or over Cameron's clumsy row with the party over grammar schools, the option of a plebiscite was effectively non existent, as there would have been a serious possibility that the leader would have been defeated by the vote. The power was firmly dependent on the pre-existing political success and position of the leader in the party. And despite the new arrangement of formal power within the party, this position was relatively easy for well known figures within the party to challenge. Under all four leaders, major figures were able to speak out against the leader, often with impunity, and derail the direction that the leader was seeking to take the party in. There was a high degree of volatility among the Conservative party that had been unprecedented in previous times the Conservatives had been in opposition, that made it so much harder for the opposition leader to run a leadership that was free of significant challenges. Even seemingly lowly MPs, heads of party branches, or ex-Ministers could rush into print, onto radio, television, or more recently even blog about what they thought were the leader's failures. Of course it is not true to say that critical

opinions of the Conservative leader did not exist before 1997, but what is different is the ease of reception to criticism of the leader and its wider impact on opposition and its place in British politics. There was a greater cynicism about leaders, that they were out to deceive or to 'spin', and so-called 'straight talking' MPs found their deconstructions of leaders gained more currency than usual. Media coverage of the leader placed emphasis on him being a symbol of the party, and more voters saw him as one, so when he did not unite the party around him he was seen as 'failing a key test'. And the expectations of a leader had changed so much even from the last period of Conservative opposition which ended in 1979, and certainly from the beginning of the century. This was partially the result of a gradual 'professionalisation' of opposition, which had given it a full range of Shadow Ministers and research money to provide criticism of the Government across all areas. But what had truly accelerated this process was a fast moving change in the media, which had lost much of its attention span, lurching from coverage of crisis to scandal, and looked to the opposition, and specifically the leader, to provide a response to most government activities, or at least have a policy or soundbite for most areas. This placed a high degree of responsibility on the opposition to achieve party unity on a great variety of issues, just like for a government, achieving a degree of cohesiveness unthinkable of previous periods in opposition. The increased responsibility meant there were many more chances for the party to disrupt it, and gave them much more power.   Post 1997, the leader often appealed for the party to change its look and feel, and represent the makeup of the country, or appealed to the party to broaden its range of concerns. When these leaders were forced to divert from these positions by party pressure, they then struggled to prove to the media and wider world that they were properly exerting authority over their party, and left either wing of the troublesome 'mod/rocker' intra-party debate disillusioned. This then meant that each leader had to exert firm discipline over recalcitrant members. Some were more successful than others in doing this. David Cameron had to deal with fewer of these rebellions, because appeals to modernise the party were more consistent with the platform he was elected on, but they still occurred. Much of the deference was down to his perceived ability to deliver electoral success - when this ability was in doubt then he endured the rockiest time of his leadership, before Gordon Brown's abortive election, when it looked likely that he was about to lead the party to another election defeat.

The question of whether the leader and not the party competed for the mandate is about whether the leader was able to construct an independent set of reasons for voting for

'him', by moving his image beyond his parties, and whether the party gave them freedom to do it. Part of the problem for Hague was that he kept flipping what personality he wanted to convey to the electorate, and what exact mandate he was competing for. Whichever persona he had tried he had not been given autonomy from criticism by his party. Duncan Smith suffered the same problem, for after initial attempts to claim that he was on a personal mission to help the poor, he reverted back to what sounded much more like a traditional Conservative in tune with the majority of his party. At all times there was at least one, and at times both, of the modernising and traditional wings of the party who were very sceptical about Duncan Smith and refused to give him full autonomy. This was not as much of a problem for Michael Howard, who the party gave more autonomy to display himself to the public as his self portrayal as an honest and accountable politician. However, there were still murmurings that this style of leadership was not effective enough, and Howard was helped by the imminence of a General Election, making it almost unfeasible that the Conservatives would change the leader again. David Cameron also had a clear idea of what his political personality was, and was given autonomy to make this the main electoral message to an unprecedented extent in branding and publicity, especially while the party was doing well in the polls. If Howard had shown that it was possible that the party would give autonomy to a leader wanting to make himself the main competitor for the electoral mandate, then Cameron was leader for long enough to show this could actually happen and take effect. But such a mandate was conditional on the prospect of success that could be demonstrated to a vocal and volatile party.

The different leaders had very mixed fortunes at ensuring the majority of power resources resided in the leader's office. This completes the general picture we saw in the party chapter, that the greater prominence of the leader gave him an opportunity to exercise more power, but only if he was politically strong, otherwise power had shifted to the party, due to their ability to put greater pressure on a leader who had extra responsibilities and expectations to fulfil. William Hague and Iain Duncan Smith found it extremely difficult to keep a stable team in the leader's office, have it keep the Shadow Cabinet and MPs under control, and prevent frequent leaks of information to the media. Under Duncan Smith the situation was much the same, to the worse extent that the party actually forced him to reverse key appointments, giving the impression that the party actually had more power over the leader's office than vice versa. In contrast David Cameron and Michael Howard ran more stable central teams that have been less prone to

leaking to the media, and disciplining recalcitrant party members. However in both cases this led to criticism below the surface that the central teams were aloof and were not pursuing the right strategies.

The record of leaders gaining more powers in relation to their party has certainly been very mixed. In a formal sense the Conservative leader has acquired more power at the expense of middle level management since 1997, but many of these powers have been unusable, if the leader has not been in a politically strong position. Parties have tolerated their leaders establishing strong central offices, and competing primarily for the mandate themselves, but only when they are seen to have some realistic chance of electoral victory. If not, then the party has been exceptionally volatile and has allowed the leader very little room for manoeuvre. We saw that, when comparing leaders, and even within the term of leaders, they were granted much more autonomy when they were seen as having the potential to win an election. But this was a very high standard for the leader of the opposition to be judged against by the party, and in practice this shifted a lot of power to the party in a form that had not existed before.

In the second substantive chapter, about elections and parties, we asked the questions about the General Elections that the Conservatives led by William Hague and Michael Howard took part in:

- How prominent a role did the leader of the opposition take within general election campaigns, and how did it compare to other figures within the Conservatives? Has the leader of the opposition's role become more prominent among media? Have leaders of the opposition had sizable effects on the voting intentions of the electorate?

The first research question concerns the balance of power between opposition and party, while the last two refer to the place of opposition within the wider political system. This area highlighted what we saw in the previous chapter that the balance of power between the leader and party had become more volatile, and more difficult for all but successful leaders to impose themselves upon. The role of Hague and Howard in the election campaigns in which they led the Conservative party were strikingly different. Under Hague, there was no concerted attempt to personalise the message and the marketing of

the campaign around him. The prominence of Portillo and his alternative vision of what the direction of the party should be, little use of Hague in publicity material, and the way 'Save the Pound' dominated the visual content of rallies all served to minimise Hague's role. The prominence given to European policy meant it was exceedingly easy for Baroness Thatcher to upstage Hague in the latter part of the campaign. It was also not an issue that played to the image of Hague that his team were trying to present, that of the straight talking, no nonsense politician. With Howard, there were large differences. The central message of the campaign, about the timetable for action and accountability, was closely identified with the leader himself, and there were no other figures in the Conservative party who competed for status with Howard in the way Portillo had with Hague. Still, despite this, the marketing of the campaign did not utilise Howard himself overly. But as Howard admitted himself, the public perception of Blair was a large spur to honesty and accountability being the central messages of the campaign, and if Blair had not been Prime Minister then it would have been likely that the campaign would have looked rather different. This relates to our overall conception of a 'leaderland'. If the image of the Prime Minister was such a decisive influence on the strategy of the leader of the opposition, then it shows the importance of a political environment defined by leaders. But it was one in which the party was still very powerful.

The media coverage the two men received was also very different. In Hague's case, the tabloid press was often very critical, although less often fulsome of praise. All papers associated him closely with the perceived fallings of the campaign. This extreme treatment was not meted out to Howard, instead he was treated more dispassionately, with cool disdain in some quarters for the lack of imagination in his campaign. But much of the coverage repeatedly pinned the ultimate blame for bad electoral performance solely on the leader and his shortcomings. Compared to the scope the print media had for personal opinion, the broadcast media were much more constrained by impartiality restrictions. However, they were able to report at length on splits within the party, (and repeatedly did so under Hague, less under Howard) comment on party strategy, and produce packages mostly featuring the leader and their activities. Although such packages included little of what the leaders had actually said, they often contained long sections of narration by the correspondent backed by footage of the leader, underlining the importance of what surroundings the leader was put in when being filmed during the campaign. The media were less concerned with the leader's place as representing an

ideological or social group, but tested the leader against his ability to impose strategy and unity.

As for the question of whether the leaders had a substantial effect on the vote, we saw in this section that the leaders were adjudged to have a significant affect on the voters, and that Conservative voters appraisals of the leader had a significant ability on their willingness to vote Conservative. Although in both cases the relative unpopularity of the leaders hurt the Conservatives' chances of election success – Hague was well behind Blair in aggregate approval, and Howard was still behind a much weakened Blair - both leaders did not have as big an effect as Blair did on the Labour vote. The leaders did not have impressive ratings compared to Blair, and this put them at a massive disadvantage politically.

The place of leaders relative to their party during elections has been shown to be very complex. Even though the Conservative party often took the opportunity to actively avoid putting the leader centre stage and give more prominence to the party, there was a passive sense in which they could not avoid the leader taking centre stage, as media coverage put a massive degree of responsibility on the leader for the message and success of the campaign, while giving party members freedom to voice their discontent. We see also from the BES research that leaders had strong effects and more popular leaders would have made their prospects of victory more realistic. It does not come down to what other sections of the literature think, that Blair was near impossible to beat in an election, as the research shows that Blair became less popular after the Iraq war. We can see, taking an overall look at these elections, that there was receptivity to the presidential environment by other leaders, and there was an expectation that leaders should be presidential, disquiet when they weren't, and an inability to 'hide' from presidential expectations in the media and elsewhere. The expectations on leaders of the opposition have markedly increased.

The third substantive chapter about the political environment asked:

- What techniques did the leader of the opposition use to persuade people they empathised with them, and were strong leaders? Did the media create an independent leadership dimension? How did the leader of the opposition relate to

the way internationalisation of politics and the growth of the state was affecting the Prime Minister's office and the Cabinet, and what place did they take within state and international networks? What form of organisation did the leader of the opposition use for his own Shadow Cabinet?

As for the techniques leaders of the opposition used to persuade the electorate that they were relevant to ordinary people and strong leaders, we found that it was a complicated task that often was rendered impossible by competing imperatives. Especially in the travails of William Hague, we saw the extreme difficulties that a Conservative leader had in persuading people he was down to earth, neither a political nerd nor an elitist. On the other side, there was David Cameron, who was relatively proficient with a string of different initiatives that claimed he was empathetic with ordinary people (even with his background) but found that they were used by his opponents to deride him as lacking substance and not being a strong leader. In terms of an overall leadership environment the media constructed a great deal of their political coverage around the leaders, viewing many events in the context of competition between them. What was noticeable was the emphasis they placed on the 'Can you see him as Prime Minister' test, which worked to the especial detriment of Hague and Duncan Smith, and was unable to be overcome by policies alone. This changed the nature of opposition, from a passive one that relied on government errors, to an active one where the leader of the opposition had to prove he was suitable to be Prime Minister.

In most areas of foreign policy the Conservative leader was able to do little to influence the situation while having to react to events, some of which caused them intense problems, such as the ratification of the EU constitution or the Iraq war, which had such ramifications on the Conservatives' relationships with other parties of the right. Often the leader was able to do little to counter Labour accusations that he would be a disaster negotiating with Britain's foreign partners. The substance of these allegations was so personally directed, and so low on empirical weight that they were impossible to counter in a comprehensive way, and responding to them would often cause problems within the party. With the growth of the state, Conservative leaders have faced a very obvious problem, having to tread carefully around the greater number of state workers created by Labour, for fear that they would turn against them in a general election. Again it was not something they directly controlled. Even the most pro small state leader, Hague, was forced to offer comprehensive guarantees to huge government departments that their

budgets would not be cut. Other Conservative leaders were forced to do the same. Even Cameron, with the budget deficit ballooning after the financial crisis, was forced to guarantee above inflation increases for the health service. This has in practice provided a substantial structural constraint on leaders of the Conservative leaders of the opposition, with their traditionally more sceptical attitude to public spending.

In terms of the political environment that the leader of the opposition had to work within, it was one that was very difficult for him to control. With the increasing amount of powers the Prime Minister had, through the growth of the state and the internationalisation of politics, the leader of the opposition was often forced to have to react to government initiatives without any of the power and prominence that derived from the office of Prime Minister. This fed into a leadership environment where the leader of the opposition had to pass the 'could you see him as Prime Minister' test, and show he was man of the people and a strong leader. The place of opposition leader was more prominent and pressurised in previous times, and he continually had to prove his suitability to be Prime Minister. This took the focus of opposition politics away from policy and towards personality, with a large number of different incentives applying to the leader of the opposition, not all of which were straightforward for him to take advantage of.

7.2   Overall Conclusions

As we have said, the two main objectives of this thesis were to come to conclusions about the balance of power between the leader of the opposition and the Conservative party, and the place of opposition in the British political environment. We must review the conclusions the thesis has come to in these areas while placing them into an overall context based on the existing literature.

This thesis rested much of its analysis on structure not agency, and identifies some ways in which structural constraints are important. It rests on an assumption that structural considerations are important, as a counterpoint to the weight of existing literature that is centred around the interplay between agents. This differs to many of the works about the Conservatives in opposition since 1997 which concentrates on the results of the interplay of individual agents. The work that shares most similarities in its frame of analysis was

Timothy Heppell's *Choosing the Tory Leader*, which asserts that comparative studies are essential to understanding the dynamics of leadership politics. Denham and O'Hara also conclude that the leader is central to the politics of the Conservatives and he has a core need of securing election by which he is judged. Tim Bale also asserts that the Conservative leader is all powerful, the only person who can "pronounce authoritively on what constitutes Conservatism in any particular period" with the Shadow Cabinet having little appreciative power over strategy. These are not contentions that this thesis would disagree with, but the longer time period in which this thesis brings it out, and its relation to the place of opposition is what makes for some differences. Such assertions are all about the balance of power within the party, but this thesis is also concerned with the place of opposition in British politics, and the set of expectations and constraints that have been generated upon the office of leader of the opposition. This concern with the wider place of opposition in British politics, and the set of expectations and constraints that have been generated upon the office of leader of the opposition, as well as the balance of power within the party, means that this thesis does not pivot around some of the issues which have defined many of the other works.

The most notable of these pivots is the 'Centre Ground' concept. This has dictated much of what has been written about the Conservatives in opposition since 1997. It is a feature of this thesis but not one that dictates the original reason for writing it, in comparison to studies like Bale's that take up a critical position of the Conservatives for not sticking to the Centre Ground. The thesis does not criticise the Conservatives for not sticking to the centre ground, but judges whether it was appropriate or possible for an opposition to engage in preference shaping over certain points. Over certain points it does not approve or disapprove of the different strategies leaders employed, or set them tests. It takes a more holistic approach in looking beyond rating individual agents, and placing them in the context of the structures they had to work within and the expectations placed upon them by the political environment. Consideration of the Prime Minister and his electoral effectiveness also does not guide the thesis to conclusions, like the often stated opinion that no leader could have won a general election against Blair. Even when wider questions about the place of opposition are covered, they are ultimately subservient to the question of the centre ground, as Bale puts it, the 'why'; of how the Conservatives failed to take position upon it for so long. The electoral theory does not drive the conclusions of the thesis. Also, because the thesis is about opposition and not government, it achieves some other distinguishing features. It is obviously different from the vast amount of

literature written about the government during this period. By studying opposition and not the government it provides us with an office where expectations were often little, are relatively new, and often seen as unimportant, to see if the status of being leader of the opposition has changed. In theory the office of leader of the opposition and its status should be affected even more dramatically by these changes than the office of the Prime Minister, and this is also a feature that is less considered by the existing literature on opposition.

In terms of power within the party, we see that the leader of the opposition has gained power in the way the formal structure of the party has been arranged, but it has been using these powers to his advantage that have been so difficult. The party has been a constraint on the leader of the opposition, and the changing political environment has given the party new ways to constrain the leader, even if it has reduced the party's prominence relative to the leader. Although the leader enjoys much more prominence and responsiblity, as we have asserted, with this comes increased expectations that are hard to fulfil in opposition. The modern political environment has also brought less deference to the leader, and more opportunities for discontent to be expressed. A leader with a coherent strategy and who looks like being electorally successful can overcome this, however the 'bar' is higher than it ever was, in practice giving the party more power. The place of opposition within British politics has also changed. It was traditionally a central part of the Westminster Model, being adversarial and parliamentary based. The parliamentary aspect of opposition has been overshadowed by an increased focus on leadership, and the rise to prominence of the leader of the opposition, under pressure at all times from the 'can you see him as Prime Minister' test. This means opposition is much more centred on the leader's attributes, and attacking the Prime Minister's defiencies, while to a greater extent than ever before proving the Prime Minister is a 'normal' person. The place of opposition was increasingly as a one-man band, not opposing the Government across all areas, but concentrating fire against the Prime Minister. Opposition is more leader centred, in a positive and negative sense, having to balance complicated imperatives in the portrayal of the leader, and is less parliamentary based. This is where the conceptions of leaderland are able to help us form some overall conclusions. We saw in the review of the political environment that there was one, and it was a firm part of the political environment that was a part of leaders' calculations, but also an expectation among the media. If leaders did not act in a presidential way, the media would quickly make an issue of it, and pressurise the leader to be more of a public

face of the party. The media frequently saw things in terms of the battle between leaders, and their differing personalities, and crucially introduced the 'can you see him as Prime Minister' test to the leader of the opposition. This test being applied moved opposition politics beyond the post war political environment. The test of the opposition leader renders the old dictum that was confidently asserted by the old post war literature that it was governments that lost elections, and parties in opposition could do little to affect this, almost obsolete. Instead there is a test that is almost wholly centred on the leader of the opposition, and as seen most graphically in the case of Duncan Smith, could totally derail a leader who even would be thought by some to have the correct policies, and be a decent man. As we have seen, the skill for a leader at proving they were suitable for Downing Street rested on two almost incompatible aims - to prove they were reasonable people who understood modern life and that they were strong leaders who could get things done in a ruthless modern political environment. Again, there is no hiding place, one day a leader may have to prove that they are 'in touch' with popular culture, on another they have to show they can get things done even when ranged against powerful vested interests. No matter that the two imperatives might seem somewhat absurd, they undoubtedly have existed since 1997, and affected the fortunes of Conservative leaders of the opposition. This environment, despite taking its cue from institutions and structures outside Parliament, is a significant structural constraint on the leader of the opposition, as it effectively precludes those who cannot master these imperatives from being successful. The Conservatives have had to compete in this arena of leadership, often with very bad results. Some of this may have been down to the presence of Tony Blair as Prime Minister, charismatic, a world leader, self-professedly bold, always ready to separate himself from his party and always anxious to be, or act to be a common man. In many ways he was the archetype of a presidential leader, and his plausibility as a leader, and ability to shrug off attacks on his honesty in 2005 hurt the Conservatives in the politics of leadership. But what reinforces the point is that the politics of leadership continued after Blair. Succeeding Blair, we had Gordon Brown, who professed not to care about image, was a passionate member of the Labour party, and lacked charisma in his public appearances. But Brown, who was seemingly ill-suited to the presidential environment, had to participate in the politics of leadership. Even though they were faltering, Brown made attempts to colonize both wings of the leadership tests. From his free outpourings of opinions on popular shows like the *X- Factor,* to his admonitions that he made the right economic calls, Brown played leadership politics and was (as Michael Foley asserts) judged by it as well. And in a reverse of the post-war political

environment, the dictum of the government losing elections was totally turned on its head. Like John Major after Britain's exit from the ERM, Brown was frequently written off as having no hope of winning the 2010 general election, mainly due to his poor leadership skills. In a reverse of previous procedure, Conservative party members frequently complained in the run up to the 2010 general election that they were being scrutinised excessively for splits and about their policies, like they were the government, while Labour was able to sail on with huge gaps in their future budget plans, while continually and loudly sniping at everything the Conservatives did, more like the opposition. This was widely put down to the polls which showed consistent big Conservative leads, which had a lot to do with Cameron's popularity, which dragged his party up in the polls, and Brown's perceived weakness at the politics of leadership, and his ability to conduct a general election campaign. Even through the turbulent times of the global economic crisis, where Brown scored excellent poll ratings for their handling of the banking meltdown, the Conservatives maintained huge poll leads, despite an unsure initial reaction to the crisis. As well as impacting upon the place of opposition, this also has impacted upon the position of the party in relation to the leader, and the way they are able to treat him. Paradoxically, because of the increased prominence of the leader of the opposition, and the different way that the media treats politics, even backbench MPs, have a lot more freedom to undermine the leader's claim to unity, and they can cause a lot of damage to a leader's prospects. This is real power, and the ability to show election winning potential seems to be one of the few things that can overwhelm it. The politics of leadership trumped the politics of policy detail and increased the salience of the 'could you see him as Prime Minister' test. A more open environment among the electorate less tied to different parties through partisan loyalties accentuated this trend.

As we have seen in all the substantive areas of the new political environment, our conceptual framework has at times struggled to explain the leaders who did not achieve electoral success, or the prospect of it. But what it has shown is that, through successful and unsuccessful leaders, the common threat is a constant imperative towards competition in the arena of political leadership, this can override all other aspects of politics, and places a huge amount of emphasis on the leader of the opposition. While the leader of the opposition does not control a large state apparatus like the US President, the institution of Prime Minister and the expectations of those who could assume it apply totally and directly toward leaders of the opposition. This has changed the nature of

opposition, and paradoxically given his party more power over the leader of the opposition, as they can easily upset these increased expectations. While the leader of the opposition is a more powerful and prominent individual, it places a huge number of different obstacles and expectations on them, which create a more demanding structural environment.

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