

CSD News

In July, Chris Sparks was awarded a Phd for his dissertation *Montesquieu's Vision: the Spectre of Uncertainty and the Haunting of Modernity*

New appointments

CSD welcomes the following new members: Chantal Mouffe, Quintin Hogg Research Fellow; Barry Buzan, Professor of International Studies; Hebba Raouf Ezzat (Cairo University), British Council Chevening Scholar; and Shoshanna Garfield (New York University), Visiting Research Scholar.

Publications

The 1996 Intergovernmental Conference: Perspectives on European Integration

by Richard Whitman

CSD Perspectives, number 7
(Winter 1995)
University of Westminster Press
ISBN: 1 85919 002 2
£3.50

The forthcoming Intergovernmental Conference, or IGC, of the European Union (EU) will debate future institutional and policy-making arrangements for the EU.

The media will probably focus on institutional and member-state perspectives on the IGC and cast the debate in terms of winners and losers. However, alternative readings of the IGC are possible.

One such reading is labelled integrationist, or neo-functional. Like the 'neo-constitutional' and 'informal integrative' approaches, it can be classed as 'anational' and 'ainstitutional'. That is, it does not reflect positions held by an EU member state or institution.

Formal - as opposed to informal - integration is defined as integration undertaken through the framework of institutions created under the auspices of the Treaty of Paris (1951), and reinforced and extended by the Treaties of Rome

(1957) and the successive revision of these three treaties.

The period of high formal integration in the European Community (EC) - the 1950s and early 1960s - provided the inspiration for what remains the definitive approach to the study of European integration, E. B. Haas's *The Uniting of Europe: Political, Social and Economical Forces, 1950-1957*.

Haas - who focused on the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) - emphasised three elements of European integration that are relevant today: integration as an ideology, as a set of institutions and institutional practices, and as a process with both national and supranational dimensions.

One of Haas's key assertions was that for the ECSC to be a scheme of political unification it did not need absolute majority support, nor did its members need to have identical aims. He was clear that the process he was examining was one of 'political integration' leading to the formation of a political community understood as 'a condition in which specific groups and individuals show more loyalty to their central political institutions than to any other political authority, in a specific period of time and in a definable geographic space'.

Haas was looking for the creation of a 'new national consciousness' as an essential attribute of this political community. He was, thus, implying that the creation of a political community analogous to the nation-state was a prerequisite for actor capability. His notion of political community did not, however, envisage the creation of a federal state.

Haas's concern was with the actions of political elites in support of, and their re-actions to, integration. He considered a doctrine or ideology of 'Europeanism' of little use in studying the integration process, quoting Raymond Aron sympathetically: 'The European idea is empty; it has neither the transcendence of Messianic ideologies nor the immanence of concrete patriotism. It was created by intellectuals, and that fact accounts at once for its genuine appeal to the mind and its feeble echo in the heart.'

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by Richard Whitman
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Politics and Media Cultures

by Richard Huggins

To suggest that television plays a major role in the conduct of politics today is a truism. Every election since the 1950s has been a 'TV election', and the relationship between the electronic media and the politician, and the reliance of the latter (and of his/her campaign managers, image-managers and 'spin doctors') upon the former has continued to grow and develop since then. Nevertheless, the nature and complexity of these relationships have changed.

Those leaders who encountered the medium in its infancy thought little of it. Clement Attlee lamented its development and maintained that it was a poor educative medium compared to the Workers' Education Association. Initially, political reporting on television attempted to reproduce the style of radio in a visual form. Thus broadcasters were content simply to report and attempted not to interfere.

However, such an apparent age of innocence could not last. The immediacy of television soon brought its own demands for the immediate response, apposite quote and focused interview. For many politicians this must have represented a significant invasion of privacy that today seems almost beyond comprehension. When Louis St Laurent gave his first short television interview, to answer questions submitted in advance, he observed that they 'even wanted to know what I had been thinking about. I answered, perhaps a bit sharply, that I was responsible to the public for what I did as a result of my thinking, but only to my conscience for the thinking itself until it became translated into acts.'

Such coyness and stiffness proved ephemeral and politicians increasingly became astute and skilled media operators. Harold Macmillan quickly mastered the art of television, as did Harold Wilson, and even Edward Heath demonstrated reasonable skill at the set-piece interview. In time we arrived at the media-dominated

campaigns of Thatcher and Kinnock, and now of Major and Blair, who employ an array of communications officers, media specialists and advertising agencies in the pursuit and management of office. Indeed, Blair has taken this approach into the House of Commons and 'employs' Peter Mandelson and Alastair Campbell as party organisers and communications chiefs. For his troubles, Blair has been daubed the first postmodern politician, although it is unclear whether this is criticism or praise.

The impact of these developments is, at best uncertain. In some analyses, for example those of the American commentator, Kathleen Hall Jamieson, the prospect of a highly mediated politics that is riveted by the image of politicians is wholly undesirable. This approach argues that the voter is denied a place in a dialogue between the political actors, is reduced to the role of voyeur, and is politically, as well as otherwise, impoverished by such developments. In many ways this type of analysis is deeply indebted to modern notions of what politics ought to be about: namely, that it should be conducted in a dialogical mode through the media of, primarily, newspapers, and then radio.

But there exist other possible interpretations. First, the advent of mass media systems, and of television in particular, has involved many more of us in the 'publicness' of politics. The 'sacred' element of our constitutions may have been damaged and 'de-auratised' in the process but this is not wholly 'bad'. Secondly, as John Thompson has argued, the ever present media have created a whole range of dangers for the politician, who can be caught out

or out-thought, or who can slip up.

Thirdly, Hall Jamieson's analysis, which implies that there is a dichotomy between the real and the fictional, neglects the degree to which this dichotomy is and always has been imaginary. It is arguable that individuals have always lived in a world in which image, 'reality', symbol and metaphor collide and co-exist. If this is so, the advent of



televisional politics is primarily an accelerated, more complete, but not wholly new, version of this.

Finally, such approaches neglect both the centrality of the image-based media in our societies and the possibility that our cultures, and their attendant forms of politics, are undergoing significant transformation in an era of what might be termed 'media cultures'. The implications of this for political leadership are uncertain. The possibility for the 'de-auratisation' of offices of state seem immense and are possibly highly democratising. But, equally, such developments are attended by necessary concerns over the nature and content of a politics so reconstituted. My research aims to explore these questions and to reconsider the role of political leadership in the era of media cultures.

Richard Huggins is a PhD candidate at CSD and a Lecturer in Politics at Oxford Brookes University