

'lack of a popular basis of support for redistribution and reregulation' (p. 100). The middle classes' 'ties to and interests in the market are such that it seems inconceivable that one could simply turn back the clock' (ibid). The middle classes may now be more sceptical about the promises of neo-liberalism but 'they are not done with the market' (p. 101). The collapse of collective identities and stable group ties has gone too far. Deep changes in the welfare state cannot be easily undone. Attitudes to the state have fundamentally altered.

This is a well-argued thesis supported by much sociological evidence. One can take issue with some elements. A central tenet is the concept of the middle classes. Mau's equivocation about who or what these are is indicated in the book's title – referring initially to 'the majority class' and then in the sub-title to 'European middle classes'. Mainly he uses the term as a statistical construct, referring to middle-income groups but with associated social characteristics relating to skills, occupation, education, culture and values. At other times, his interpretation seems strongly influenced by his own German location. Mau accepts the differences between social democratic corporatist societies and liberal or southern European societies. But this is not really good enough: the variations are critical. This links also to his attempt to generalize across European societies. While accepting the point that in a short book it is not possible to deal thoroughly with varieties of welfare states, the construct seems to be stretched too far and certainly breaks down now post-2008, when social and economic conditions in say Greece, Spain, Germany, Poland, Sweden or UK are very different.

Central to Mau's argument is the nature of contemporary politics. This he sees as having been strongly influenced by attempts to woo the 'median voter'. Competition between two broad parties/coalitions, one liberal-conservative and the other social democratic, may have characterized previous decades but it is ceasing to function well, with decreasing party attachment and rise of minority parties a common phenomenon across Europe.

With polarization and rising authoritarian populism, the challenge today is how to revive ideas and programmes of social democracy, in Britain and Europe, and make these appealing to the majority of voters, perhaps the bottom 70%. But support for neo-liberalism may well continue, reluctantly and unhappily, driven largely by *fear*, especially fear of the consequences of radical change (as argued by Costas Lapavistas (2015) in his account of why the Greeks finally voted to stay in the euro). Mau's cold analysis is a useful corrective to overly optimistic and naïve polemics but it leaves open the question of whether neo-liberalism is itself sustainable, how it might collapse and what might replace it.

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Robert M. Page (2015), *Clear Blue Water: The Conservative Party and the welfare state since 1940*. £70.00, pp. 212, Bristol: Policy Press, hbk.

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Robert Page's aim in this book is to chart the changing views of, and policies on, the welfare state in the Conservative Party since 1940. In the opening chapter, he provides a typology of various

strands of Conservative thought that have held sway in different periods. Post-war Conservatism is divided into four periods, each of which is characterised by a dominant mode of thought: One-Nation Conservatism from 1950–64; modern technocratic Conservatism between 1965–74; neo-liberal Conservatism during the years 1974–97; and finally what Page terms ‘progressive neo-liberal Conservatism’ from the election of David Cameron as leader in 2005 to the present. Page is careful to say that the transitions between these periods do not represent ‘seismic shifts’ in the party’s attitude towards the welfare state, but ‘it remains the case that the Conservative approach to the welfare state is best understood as a battle between different strands of thought’ (pp. 12–13). I will return to this categorisation of Conservative ideology at the end of the review. But at the outset, it is clear that it is right to reject the notion that there is *a* Conservative approach to the welfare state, there rather being divergent and contested views that vie for predominance over policy at different times. To use Page’s apt metaphor, the Conservative river contains different ‘hues of blue’ (ix).

The bulk of the book is concerned to explicate the four periods outlined above, with a chapter devoted to each. For the purposes of this review, I will focus on the last two periods, those of ‘neo-liberal conservatism’ and ‘progressive neo-liberal conservatism’. The earlier chapters on One-Nation Conservatism and modern technocratic Conservatism provide clear and useful overviews of these periods and Conservative policies on welfare both in government and opposition. There is also an insightful account into the Conservative’s position on the welfare state in the early 20th century and in the crucial period covering the Second World War and the Labour government of 1945–51. But I focus on Page’s handling of the later periods as I think they demonstrate some difficulties of analysis and a general problem with the way he periodises the Conservative Party’s history with the welfare state and identifies it with distinct and coherent ‘strands of thought’.

‘Neo-liberal Conservatism’, Page claims, dominates Conservative Party politics between the defeat of the party under Edward Heath in October 1974, and the defeat of John Major’s government in the election of 1997. Of course, this period is dominated by one figure who transformed the direction and electoral fortunes of the party: Margaret Thatcher. Page rightly points out that those who have argued that Thatcher did not prompt a revolution in the welfare state – total spending on welfare remained constant through the Thatcher years and most Tories, even of the neo-liberal stripe, were keen to prove that the NHS would remain a primarily publicly-funded institution, free at the point of delivery – ignore the extent and profundity of the changes introduced under her premiership (p. 105). As much as this was about the structural and financial reforms introduced, it was about changing attitudes and behaviour amongst the electorate. The ideological emphasis on individual responsibility was designed to promote an acceptance of a much reduced role for the welfare state, and approval for the logic of incrementalism, that is, the gradual withdrawal of the state as self-sufficiency became established. The ‘neo-liberal’ period saw a very clear drawing of an ideological divide between Conservatism and ‘socialism’: not only the socialism of Labour in government, but of ‘One-Nation’ Conservatives, who had been complicit in promoting a culture of welfare dependence.

After John Major’s resounding defeat by ‘New’ Labour in 1997, the strident individualist tone of neo-liberalism and its ostensible anti-welfare state commitments, saddled the Conservatives with the reputation of being, in Theresa May’s celebrated phrase, ‘the nasty party’. Three leaders failed to revive the Tories’ fortunes, before David Cameron was elected as leader on a pledge to ‘detoxify the brand’. In reality, as Page argues, this meant ‘the recalibration, rather than the rejection, of neo-liberal Conservatism’ (p. 128). Page labels Cameron’s Conservatism as ‘progressive neo-liberal conservatism’ and claims that its progressive character has been most evident in the area of social policy. The emphasis on social inclusion, social justice, and the ‘Big

Society', contributed to an approach to welfare that highlighted the positive role the state has to play in mending the 'broken society'. While this agenda was perhaps promoted more actively in coalition with the Liberal Democrats between 2010–15 than it would have been by a majority Conservative government, a number of these ideas have continued to inform Conservative policy after their outright victory in 2015.

Overall, Page has written a very clear and informative book. My main quibble is with his characterisation of the Conservatives since 1974 as 'neo-liberals' and 'progressive neo-liberals'. In a way, this has more to do with the ambiguities of the term 'neo-liberalism' than the objective of Page's analysis in distinguishing the two. There is no doubt that there was an important change in Conservative ideology and policy under Thatcher and, while some of this was retained by Cameron, there was unquestionably another shift in 2005. In part my concerns are about anachronism: few, if any Conservatives, would have called themselves 'neo-liberals' in 1974, and certainly not Enoch Powell. But there is also a problem of identifying periods with distinct ideological labels. The interplay of ideas and political circumstances makes this a fraught exercise. I think this is particularly the case with the last period. The 'progressive' Conservatism of Cameron has been built in an era when considerations of presentation and electoral politics are ever-present in a way they were not when 'One-Nation' Conservatism was constituted. Big ideas can be rapidly dispensed with if they do not do the work of winning elections: the 'Big Society' was always going to have a relatively short shelf-life. This does not mean that the modern Conservative Party is 'non-ideological'. But the reason its view of the welfare state is different now than in 1940 is much less due to a shift in ideas than a fundamental transformation of politics and social relations over this period.

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Why are some countries perennial leaders in science and technology (S&T) while others are perennial laggards? That is the question that Mark Zachary Taylor tackles in his well-written and exciting book that I read cover-to-cover as if it were a detective novel. If this research question does not sound mysterious, Taylor's book is likely to convince you otherwise. Taylor succeeds in showing that we really do not know quite why countries as disparate as the US, Israel, Sweden, Taiwan, Japan, Singapore, South Korea and Canada excel in S&T whereas countries like Spain, Greece and Brazil do not.

We think we know why. Scholarly wisdom tells us the answer must lie in policies and institutions. Countries that excel in S&T have policies that channel resources into the right programs. They have institutions to create the right incentives and to compensate for market failure problems.

Only a scholar with chutzpah and a passion for mystery would claim otherwise. Taylor is just such a sleuth and in a series of well-written opening chapters he argues that policies and institutions do not explain nearly as much as you would think. Many countries excelling in S&T had unimaginative policies and mediocre political institutions, while many prosperous democracies with all the right policies and institutions on paper are not nearly so successful.