
Editorial

British Politics (2014) 9, 1. doi:10.1057/bp.2013.33

Welcome to the ninth volume of *British Politics*. Our first contribution in this issue comes from Colin Rallings, Michael Thrasher and David Cowling, and examines the issue of mayoral referendums and elections. The article shows that these have been characterised by a relatively low level of adoption, generally low turnouts and voter ignorance about the voting systems that are being used. Our second main article is from Matthew Flinders and Katharine Dommett, who explore the politics and management of public expectations. Building on recent literature on the creation of ‘expectations gaps’, the authors develop their own distinctive focus on ‘expectations vacuums’ and ‘expectation clouding’. These concepts, the article argues, can be used to shed light on the rejection of elected mayors in most cities in May 2012, while raising broader questions about the tools of contemporary statecraft and the future of local governance.

Following this, our third contribution is from Richard Heffernan and examines the power of the party leader through a case study of David Cameron’s leadership of the Conservative party in opposition. Examining the various powers and capacities at their disposal, it argues that a party leader has the potential to be ‘pre-eminent’, but not necessarily ‘predominant’, with the latter being dependent on their acquisition of certain personal and reputational qualities. Our fourth article is from David Bailey, who explores the question of whether there has been a rise in extra-Parliamentary political activity in the wake of the global economic crisis. This article examines the results of event data analysis from December 1978 to December 2012 and finds that there has been an overall increase in extra-Parliamentary activity, including the emergence of two new key actors on the extra-Parliamentary scene – anti-cuts campaigners and radical activists.

The fifth and final article in this issue is by Mark Low. Utilising Susan Scarrow’s task-oriented approach to party membership, this examines the engagement of local activists within the Conservative party, and finds that the nature of engagement has changed through a shrinking of their responsibilities and a simplification of their role. Overall, this is seen to indicate a shift towards the American model of party organisation.

Steven Kettell
University of Warwick, Coventry, UK.
E-mail: s.kettell@warwick.ac.uk

Peter Kerr
University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK.
E-mail: p.kerr@bham.ac.uk