



Editorial

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Welcome to the third issue of *British Politics*. In this, the concluding issue to our first volume, we resume a number of themes and debates highlighted in our first two issues while maintaining our core aim of linking together strong theoretical and empirically based research. To this end our first offering, from Matthew Flinders and Jim Buller, provides a thought-provoking elaboration on the theme of ‘depoliticisation’; a relatively under-explored but increasingly cited concept within contemporary British politics literature. In a deconstruction of the various principles, tactics and tools that go to form depoliticisation strategies, the authors outline the potential uses of this conceptual framework for advancing both theoretical and empirical, as well as contemporary and historical, understandings of British political developments. Our second paper provides a similarly ambitious attempt to explore the utility of yet another relatively under-developed but increasingly fashionable concept; that of ‘path-dependency’. Charting the development of the National Health Service in terms of its internal relations and institutional forms, Ian Greener demonstrates the usefulness of realist path-dependent analyses to a subject area that remains consistently strong in its contemporary relevance.

Revisiting a theme covered in issue 2, our third offering presents a further analysis of the role of the media during the 2005 general election campaign. In this, Ivor Gaber presents evidence to suggest that the traditional notion of a single, national level campaign may now be an anachronism in the increasingly diverse and multi-faceted world of modern political communications. Staying on the theme of democratic change, our fourth contributor, David Judge, assesses the current state of British democracy under New Labour. Contrasting government attempts at centralisation within Westminster with its broader drive towards decentralisation, the paper utilises the conceptual analogy of ‘macular degeneration’ and argues that the long-standing framework of the Westminster Model remains key to understanding the reform process.

Our final set of contributions mark a change to our standard format. Here, the Forward Thinking section for this issue is given over to an extended discussion of some of the main theoretical debates that featured in our opening edition. From across the interpretivist/critical realist divide, Mark Bevir, Rod Rhodes and Stuart McAnulla re-engage with questions of epistemology, ontology and method; while Ron Johnston provides a critique of our own review of the field of British political studies, to which we in turn offer a response. And finally, in concluding this editorial we would like to extend a



special thanks to all those who have been involved in putting together this opening volume of *British Politics*. In particular, we would like to thank our external reviewers both for their time and for their invaluable comments and advice. While it is a matter of editorial policy not to publish a full list of reviewers' names in order to preserve anonymity, some form of public recognition for their efforts nevertheless remains in order.

Steven Kettell and Peter Kerr