

Conceptualising Ideological Transition: Centre-Right Neoliberalisation in the
UK and post-war West Germany

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Abstract

This thesis develops an account of how ideologies change by examining two case studies of an established phenomenon of ideological change, the neoliberalisation of centre-right parties. These two case studies, the ordoliberalisation of the Christian Democratic Union of post-war West Germany, 1945-1949 and the rise of Thatcherism in the Conservative Party in the United Kingdom, 1970-1979, present different national contexts, ideological families and periodisation, differences that facilitate analysis of the cases independently, comparatively and transnationally.

The case studies are approached through the historical/archival method read through an amended conceptual morphology. I trace a number of conceptual constellations in the ideological discourse of each case, examining how the contestations of the various concepts relate to a wider phenomenon of ideological change as well as the political developments of the cases. Such a study links ideological morphology to conceptual, intellectual, social and political histories as well as insights from the political sciences and discourse theory.

I argue that ideological communities are bound to political parties and that ideological change happens through the internal, intraparty contestation of concepts by competing forms of an ideological type. These contestations draw on existing ideological affinities, making contestation not just competition between forms but also part of the collaborative formation of new decontestations and ideological coalitions. Such an account presents new narratives for the individual case studies, including analysis of the transnational influence of German ordoliberalism on Thatcherism, the general phenomenon of neoliberalisation and notions of ideological composition and change in ideology theory.

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Introduction

Like so many examinations of historical phenomena, this thesis begins with the tension between change and continuity over time. Attention to political ideologies, and the attendant scholarship on ideology studies, offers much to the study of politics and political thought by presenting a lens through which to examine the thought of not just individuated people but groups. Groups are crucial in political studies as they compose social movements, win elections and drive social change. Indeed, the social contract tradition is founded on explaining the construction of group agreement and the legitimation of the state. Along these lines, I found Michael Freeden's approach to political ideologies, seeing them as group co-constructions of a shared and mobilising worldview, to be remarkably enlightening and generative for research.¹

However, as I mentioned at the outset, this insight came with a tension. Freeden's approach is very useful for understanding how an ideology works in a snapshot in time. An ideological community is formed of a number of actors who develop a shared vocabulary, a common political language for articulating their worldview. Established as a series of shared concepts, articulated in reference to one another and decontested into a common morphology, an ideology provides conceptual resources to mobilise and act together politically. This account brings together disparate actors and gives the anarchic diversity of views of individuals a manner of common stability. As an account of stability, it is very useful, but is less useful in accounting for change.

Ideologies are dynamic, that much is readily accepted. The socialisms, conservatisms, liberalisms and other political ideologies that circulate in our contemporary world are

¹ Freeden, 1996

meaningfully different from those that circulated a century ago and almost certainly will be different from the political ideologies in circulation in another century. We know ideologies change. What is less understood is *how* they change, how an ideology, a worldview, the *Weltanschauung* of a community transitions from one established position to another. This thesis seeks to fill that gap in ideology theory by approaching the theoretical question empirically.

What does this look like? In practice, I look at an established phenomenon of ideological change, the neoliberalisation of centre-right parties, and seek to understand what happened conceptually in the ideologies themselves and relate that to the political developments of the contexts. I use two case studies of neoliberalisation, the ordoliberalisation of the CDU in post-war West Germany 1945-1949, and the rise of Thatcherism in the United Kingdom 1970-1979. Looking at two different contexts comparatively, with different ideological families, national contexts and periodisation, draws attention to the similarities in the case studies, and consideration of neoliberalisation as a general phenomenon, a contribution to debates on the classification of ordoliberalism. Originally the thesis included a case study looking at the United States, but this was not possible to complete due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The case studies are approached through the historical/archival method read through an amended conceptual morphology. Such an approach incorporates the insights of Michael Freeden and ideology studies, but also *Begriffsgeschichte*, discourse theory, social and political histories. The case studies are examined in depth, incorporating new archival sources and contributing new narratives and conceptual clusters to the historical literature on each case study. The British case study is extended with examination of the transnational linkages between the cases, missing in existing scholarship.

This thesis argues that ideological change should be understood as constructed through the internal contestation of an ideological community, in practice meaning through intraparty contestation. This contestation between forms of an ideology, comparable to dialects of a political language, is moderated by the ideological affinities between forms, which help establish and legitimate new decontestations. Such an approach applied to neoliberalism draws attention to the ideological affinities that the moderate and left wings of centre-right parties had for neoliberalism and how neoliberalisation at the moment of initial political application in both cases represented a constructed coalition between ideological forms. This analysis draws attention to the crucial role of social thought in the legitimisation of neoliberalism and emphasises a thicker conception of neoliberalism than accounted for by accounts that centre only economic thought.

The thesis is composed of seven substantive chapters, which can be grouped into three broader parts. The first part comprises chapters one and two, a literature review and a consideration of method. The first chapter situates the thesis and its research question(s) in relation to the wider literature on ideology, ideological change, neoliberalisation and other academic domains, pointing to the inherent blending and interaction of literatures required to approach the topic of the thesis. In the second chapter, the case studies are justified and a research method, operationalising a variant of Michael Freeden's ideological morphology and conceptual history, is introduced and justified.

The second part of the thesis is composed of the examination of the two case studies as historical subjects over three chapters. The third chapter discusses West Germany's CDU in the years 1945-1949, and a contestation of christian democracy between christian socialists and ordoliberals. In the fourth chapter, the Conservative Party in the UK is examined between the years 1970-1979 looking at the contestations involved in the rise of 'Thatcherism'. This is followed up with a fifth chapter that explores a transnational story, linking the case studies

and examining the role of West German ideas and networks in the neoliberalisation of the Conservative Party in the 1970s.

The third part of the thesis analyses these case studies, examining the findings for political science and political theory. The sixth chapter examines the cases comparatively, looking at what the examination of the case studies suggests about a general political opportunity of centre-right neoliberalisation and neoliberalisation as a phenomenon. The seventh chapter returns to ideology theory and draws on the analysis in the thesis to advance new arguments about the relationship between parties and ideology, ideological families, intraparty contestation and the centre-right. In doing so, the thesis advances historical understanding of the case studies, of a general political phenomenon of neoliberalism and neoliberalisation and to the theoretical scholarship on ideologies.

In short, this thesis conceptualises ideological transition and it does this by examining centre-right neoliberalisation in the UK and post-war West Germany.

1. Literature Review

This research project aims to conceptualise ideological transitions by examining two cases of centre-right neoliberalisation individually, collectively, comparatively and transnationally. This description of a research topic situates it amid a range of different literatures within a range of different disciplines and subdisciplines. The originality of the project is both in utilising new empirical evidence and approaching a new research question but also in a generative synthesis of existing literatures and methodological approaches. This drawing together of approaches and disciplines limits the extent to which existing literatures can be drawn together into a cohesive whole separable by themes; there are instead separate and overlapping literatures. As a result, this literature review is structured around the questions inherent in the research question, concerning: the nature of ideology, ideology and political

institutions, ideology studies as an academic subject, ideological and conceptual change, the centre-right, and neoliberalisation. Using the research question as a thematic link, this chapter establishes how this thesis is situated amongst, and makes an original contribution to, existing scholarship.

What is an ideology?

At the centre of the research question is the notion of ideology or rather ideologies. The research question assumes that something which can be called an ideology exists, that it can change and that it can be studied. But what is an ideology? While this is a recurrent topic in ideology studies and their introductions, it remains heavily contested.²

A traditional reading of ideology presents it as illusion or ‘false consciousness’ that shapes the worldview of actors. This argument takes two related forms. The first develops from the Marxist critique of the German idealist tradition and is a materialist critique of idealism and idealist politics.³ Targeting political contests about abstract ideas such as religion, race, the nation, etc. this approach presents these ideas as ultimately reflective of the dominant class and that politics centred on these issues is a distraction from the pressing issue of material relations. Politics at the level of power, materialist politics, are subverted by divisions at the level of ideas and ideology serves as a tool or representation of class domination. This critique is aimed at illuminating ‘real’ material relations as a means to class consciousness rather than the distraction of abstracted contestation.

Other related approaches to ideology, such as that of Mannheim, develop this idea by noting the extent to which political ideas reflect one’s position in society – class, gender, profession, etc. This happens both for individuals, who have what he terms ‘particular ideology’ but also

² Ostrowski, 2022; see also Freeden, Sargent and Stears (eds.), 2013

³ Marx and Engels, 1974 [1932]

for the groups, who have what he identifies as 'total ideology'. These analyses suggest that one's engagement with the world shapes one's worldview and that those in power have different understandings of the external world, including politics, than those in other situations.⁴ To quote Mannheim: 'In brief, even in the formulation of concepts, the angle of vision is guided by the observer's interests. Thought, namely, is directed in accordance with what a particular social group expects'.⁵ This is a more structural approach but nonetheless connects those structures to material interests. This approach to analysis is driven less by a normative attempt to break a false consciousness and more a sociological analysis of why people have different worldviews. This breaks from orthodox Marxism as it understands the Marxist argument as reflective of another ideology reflecting class position rather than as a scientific step outside ideology, as such it relativises Marxism. Nevertheless, it connects to a reading of material interests as driving politics, albeit mediated through ideas.

A further development of the second form of this argument can be seen in the alternative reading of ideology as representative of a society and its overarching social relations. In this understanding of ideology, ideology is less connected to particular persons or classes and more so the entire social formation. In the structural Marxist tradition this can be seen with Althusser and the idea of ideological state apparatuses.⁶ Here, ideology remains that of the interests of a dominant class but is understood as reproduced not through each individual's relations but rather through the structure of the entire political system. The structures of ideas in law, education, politics, etc. are aspects of the superstructure which reinforce capitalism and class domination. Commitments to rule of law, property rights, and liberalism are not neutral ideas as they teach worldviews that reproduce capitalism, these ideas are themselves

⁴ Mannheim, 1960 [1936]; Mudge, 2018

⁵ Mannheim, 1960 [1936], p245

⁶ Althusser, 2014 [1995]

maintained by structures that rely on particular modes of production. This is connected to a view of ideological structures as a means of domination that complement the repressive apparatuses of the state. This analysis returns to the Marxist desire to re-frame analysis to materialism and expose and subvert the ways class domination is reproduced.

This continues into the post-structural analysis of ideology. These approaches tend to examine public discourses and how they reflect the systems within which people engage.

This approach then aims to identify how what are seen as ‘objective’ or ‘natural’ ideas are in fact contingent to the structures of a society and how that is reproduced through language.⁷

This emphasis on language also exists in discourse studies which break discourse into component parts and attempt to connect this to the ideas implicit in the discourse or rhetoric.⁸

One can also look at the work of Gramsci, who himself presents ideology as a view of the overall structure of a system, such as capitalism.⁹ The systems of political ideas within a system, such as liberalism, are understood as subaltern thought and are not understood as ideologies because they function within the constraints of the overarching hegemonic ideology. Analysis of subaltern thought, akin to what will be discussed later as ideology studies, is done to identify the limits the dominant ideology places on the political imagination.

As a post-Gramscian development, one can look at discourse theory and the ‘Essex School’ stemming from Laclau and Mouffe. This approach to discourse theory places an emphasis on the articulation of signifiers, chains of equivalence, floating signifiers and discursive logics.¹⁰ Note here that ‘ideology’ in these post-structural approaches is often used in the singular and

⁷ Glynos and Howarth, 2007; Maynard, 2013

⁸ van Dijk, 1998; Fairclough, 2000; Finlayson, 2007

⁹ Robinson, 2005; Swanson, 2009; Donaghue, 2018

¹⁰ Howarth, 1998

describes a macro-social phenomenon. Contrary to the previous approaches, such as Althusser, ideologies cannot be escaped through an alternative lens, such as historical materialism, they can only be changed. As such, one can consider this second approach to ideology as a critical approach, not always viewing all ideology as bad but seeing it as able to be de-naturalised and with analysis aiming to expose its contingency.¹¹

A third approach to studying ideology is what can be classified as a conceptual approach. This approach is even less critical and can be understood as a more neutral mode of enquiry seeking to describe distinct ideologies existing within a society, again, similar to subaltern thought within Gramsci's framework. Here 'political ideologies' and 'ideologies' are treated as effectively synonymous, and the term ideologies is used in the plural. Political ideologies are understood as ubiquitous and inescapable components of political thinking. However, as this approach is less interested in advocating for a particular political alternative, beyond the liberal acceptance of a plurality of political worldviews, it attempts to systematise and understand these ideologies. As such there is an overlap with the Weberian mode of political science, emphasising *Verstehen* and the *Weltanschauung*, as well as historical analyses of political thought, systematising a writer's ideas.¹²

Conceptual approaches view ideologies as semantic fields, nets of inter-related concepts whose conceptions and relationships to one another are co-constitutive.¹³ Ideologies are comprised of concepts with those concepts achieving meaning through the ideology. Consider that freedom means something different within the ideological framework of

¹¹ Žižek, 1994; Humphrey, 2005

¹² Freeden, 2013a

¹³ Ball et al., 1989; Freeden, 1996; Maynard, 2013

liberalism, where it may be related to non-domination and choice, than it does under socialism, where it may be related to equality and class.

The dominant conceptual approach to ideology is that of Michael Freeden who presents a framework of ‘ideological morphology’.¹⁴ This approach emphasises the spatial elements of a semantic field by distinguishing between core, adjacent and peripheral concepts within an ideological field. This develops a common idea of ideas ‘central to understanding’ an ideology and systematises them with core concepts necessary to understanding an ideology, adjacent concepts contributing to how these core concepts are understood and peripheral concepts relating these more central concepts to the political realities in which the ideology is contextualised. Alongside these spatial characteristics, another distinctive aspect of the ideological morphology approach is an emphasis on ‘decontestation’. This describes a process by which ideologies function, where an ideological community is able to temporarily fix a meaning and a morphological position to an essentially contested concept. These shared conceptions, which rely on yet more concepts, enable ideologies to provide shared communal resources for the expression of political ideas within an ideological community.¹⁵ Ideology building is then a process of decontesting concepts as ideologies develop more systematicity and can be mobilise or more political issues. These concepts are still able to move about within the spatial field of an ideology but present bounded building blocks for ideological thought.¹⁶

The ideological morphology approach has been successful in enabling further comparison between ideologies and sharper distinctions between ideological families as well as sub-

¹⁴ Freeden, 1996

¹⁵ Freeden, 1999

¹⁶ Freeden, 1986; Freeden, 1996

groups within ideologies.¹⁷ Having a framework for understanding what an ideology is has also contributed to analysis of boundary cases such as populism to determine what should, or should not, be properly conceived of as ideology.¹⁸

The conceptual approach is not limited to Freeden and similar approaches also use the idea of a semantic field. One such approach can be seen with Koselleck and *Begriffsgeschichte*, conceptual history, which emphasises the semantic field of a time period and how that shapes what is understood as well as what is understandable.¹⁹ This allows this approach to prioritise a consideration of concepts in time. Conceptual fields include not just the de-contested concepts of the moment but the legacies and latent meanings of the past. Changing time horizons with modernisation reframe the way concepts are understood, increasing abstraction.²⁰ This approach shares the emphasis on concepts and their comprehension in semantic fields but often lacks the focus on specifically political concepts and contexts.

Another conceptual approach can be found with the ‘Cambridge School’ of the history of political thought. This school emphasises the contingency of contextualised meanings of political ideas rather than presenting them as unit ideas.²¹ As such, political texts are understood as speech acts within a discourse or political arguments and concepts contextualised therein. This emphasis on speech acts in the Cambridge approach makes it more intentionalist than Freeden or Koselleck. While at times using the explanation of ‘ideology’, this approach typically conceives of these semantic fields as ‘political languages’ or discourses. Both of these sorts of analyses do not examine political ideologies as traditionally understood but contribute to a similar framework of concepts. One can note that

¹⁷ Freeden, 2013b; Freeden et al, 2013

¹⁸ Stanley, 2008; Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2013

¹⁹ Koselleck, 2011; Olsen, 2012

²⁰ Koselleck, 2004

²¹ Pocock, 1973; Skinner, 2002

Freedden draws on both approaches in explaining ideological morphology and conceptual history has been in some dialogue with ideology studies.²²

We then have three main approaches to ideology: a materialist approach, a critical approach and a conceptual approach. However, the approaches are not entirely discrete and have a number of overlaps.²³ As noted previously, the critical approach can be seen as developing from the materialist approach and the conceptual approach can be seen to describe a secondary phenomenon within the ideology of the materialist and critical approaches. Indeed, the conceptual approach is often poststructural and discursive. In many ways, the Freeddenite conceptual approach mirrors discourse theory except with different vocabulary. Concepts, decontestation, ideology and core concepts function in much the same way as signifiers, closure, discourse and nodal points.²⁴

This thesis understands ideologies as intersubjective semantic fields of concepts developed as ideological communities develop a shared vocabulary for their political organising and mobilisation. This semantic field is comprised of interrelated concepts in the form of the wider ideology, but also smaller conceptual constellations formed of a number of concepts. Concepts here refers to the pairing of a meaning-laden word and the conception attached to it, although the conception and meaning can only fully be grasped, insofar as meaning can be ‘fully grasped’, in the context of the conceptual constellations and total ideology. These semantic fields have spatial morphologies, in that one can speak of concepts being ‘closer’ or ‘farther’ from one another but I avoid the rigid categorisation of core, adjacent and periphery or any attempt to formally map the ideology. Ideologies are not written down but are shared discourses amongst peoples allowing both meanings held in common but also personal

²² Freedden, 1996; Ifversen 2021

²³ Beckstein and Weber, 2018; Käräylä, 2022

²⁴ Norval, 2000; De Cleen and Stavrakakis 2017 p306

instantiations, which differ due to the characteristics of language. Language both constraints shared understanding through to the inexpressibility of certain ideas while the creative flexibility of language and the possibilities for misunderstanding and imperfect understandings further facilitate personal particular understandings of an ideology.

Such an understanding stems from the Freeden-ite approach but incorporates elements of similar approaches to the topic. Indeed, the understanding and focus on constellations is similar to that identified in a recent article on reconciling analytical categories of ideational entities in human thought.²⁵ Most directly, this can be understood as Begriffsgeschichte's conception of semantic fields and conceptual history joined to the social considerations of Pocock-ian political languages and discourse theory. What the Freeden approach and emphasis on ideology adds is an emphasis on the political and a framework for discussing the connections between concepts and conceptual clusters that build a fuller worldview.

How do ideologies relate to parties?

As noted in the discussion of the conceptual approach, ideologies in this framework and in this thesis are broadly treated as synonymous with political ideologies. But what does this 'political' designation mean? Political ideologies do seem by their nature related to political movement building, with decontestation seeking to draw together people on a shared vocabulary for the purpose of political mobilisation. As an aside, the Essex approach emphasis on floating signifiers and chains of equivalence is also directly related to political mobilisation.

This points to a relationship to 'politics' but is less clear about what this political sphere entails. There is an implicit assumption that if a sizeable number of people can align their

²⁵ Kärriä, 2022

political values and platforms that they could marshal these numbers and organisation towards achieving their aims. This suggests some relationship to democracy and seems to imply some form for social movements or political parties, however one wishes to refer to organised blocs of voters. It is no surprise then that ideologies and the ‘age of ideology’ are seen to arise with the advent of mass politics and democratisation, either the French Revolution or the twentieth century.²⁶ The late nineteenth century saw an institutional transformation from political associations to political parties, as such it is no surprise to see the twentieth century with mass suffrage and mass parties displaying a relationship between ideologies and political parties.²⁷ The relationship between social associations and political organising long predates this, Trajan writes to Pliny the Younger in the first century AD that: ‘If people assemble for a common purpose, whatever name we give them and for whatever reason, they soon turn into a political club’; but we can see the age of political parties as giving institutional form to these activities.²⁸

This sense of relationship between ideologies and parties is buttressed by the fact that commonly used examples of ideologies, such as conservatism, socialism, liberalism and have clear overlap with names not just of political movements in general, but political parties specifically. However, while scholars often will accept that parties are associated with ideologies, they usually draw a sharp distinction between the two. This is commonly achieved through the use of a C/conservative distinction with the capitalised name referring

²⁶ Koselleck identifies the French Revolution, see Olsen, 2012; ‘age of ideologies’ is Otto Brunner; see also Pombeni, 2006

²⁷ Heyer, 2022

²⁸ Pliny the Younger, 2014, 10.34

to the proper noun of the party and its intellectual tradition and the lowercase name referring to the abstract ideology.²⁹

This distinction is cultivated by a noted divergence in understanding between the two. Scholars of political parties and their party cultures often arrive at a different understanding of the underlying ideology than those scholars, often intellectual historians or scholars of political ideas, who examine the non-party tradition. Consider liberalism, where an intellectual tradition associated with John Locke and John Rawls can be distinguished from the political work of Nick Clegg and David Lloyd George. Indeed, it is common in scholarship in intellectual history to argue that the coherence of using the same term to refer to both notions, or the coherence of a doctrine more broadly, is non-existent.³⁰ This suggests at least two different ideologies at play in the liberalism example; one of the intellectuals and one of the politicians.

However, while scholars of the parties may identify a distinction between the intellectual project and the political formation, the discourse and culture of the party often claims a link to the intellectuals. Marx and marxism are often invoked in the discourse of socialist, and especially marxist, parties just as Edmund Burke is often invoked in conservative parties. This may be an imagined tradition and history, scholarship has identified the deliberate construction of Burke as c/Conservative occurring long after his death, but it is clear that many partisans find this link to be important.³¹ The party and professional politics can be a key linkage between macro ideological acts such as abstract political thought and the micro ideology of mass vernacular culture with ideas flowing top-down and bottom-up.

²⁹ This formatting convention is less common with christian democracy due to grammatical conventions surrounding the capitalisation Christianity, however I will use the capitalisation convention in this thesis to draw attention to avoid conflation or confusion of the two

³⁰ Skinner, 1969; Bell, 2014; Bourke, 2018

³¹ Anderson, 1983; Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983; Jones, 2017

This overlaps with Gramsci's comments on parties as integrating natural and organic intellectuals, an approach that notes the involvement of lay members in such a discourse. Do note that while Gramsci speaks of these ideas and political parties relating to social groups, in this thesis ideologies and parties correspond to ideological communities:

1. The political party for some social groups is nothing other than their specific way of elaborating their own category of organic intellectuals directly in the political and philosophical field and not just in the field of productive technique. These intellectuals are formed in this way and cannot indeed be formed in any other way, given the general character and the conditions of formation, life and development of the social group within productive technique those strata formed which can be said to correspond...

2. The political party, for all groups, is precisely the mechanism which carries out in civil society the same function as the state carries out, more synthetically and over a larger scale, in political society. In other words it is responsible for welding together the organic intellectuals of a given group – the dominant one – and the traditional intellectuals. The party carries out this function in strict dependence on its basic function, which is that of elaborating its own component parts – those elements of a social group which has been born and developed as an 'economic' group – and of turning them into qualified political intellectuals, leaders and organizers of all the activities and functions inherent in the organic development of an integral society, both civil and political. Indeed it can be said that within its field the political party accomplishes its function more completely and organically than the state does within its admittedly far larger field. An intellectual who joins the political party of a particular social group is merged with the organic intellectuals of the group itself, and

is linked tightly with the group. This takes place through participation in the life of the state only to a limited degree and often not at all...

That all members of a political party should be regarded as intellectuals is an affirmation that can easily lend itself to mockery and caricature. But if one thinks about it nothing could be more exact.³²

Why do individuals collaborate to form parties? Political science literature has made a point about the value of parties for functional purposes: factional agglomeration, political mobilisation, etc.³³ However, this does not exhaust the value of parties. Scholars working on ‘partisanship’ have emphasised the role of parties for creating the conditions for normatively preferable modes of political contestation.³⁴ Here parties not only contain partisans they allow them spaces to develop and sustain their shared values, akin to ideology.

In this thesis, I will develop an argument that the boundaries between ideologies and party thought traditions is less discrete than existing scholarship argues and that instead the two are effectively synonymous. However, this argument will not be set out in this chapter. I will use the capitalisation convention to draw distinctions between abstracted ideologies and particulars of party discourse and make my case in the theory chapter for why this distinction is not as meaningful as others have suggested.

In general, the analysis will centre on the ideology of the thought tradition of the parties being studied but will make the case that this should be understood as just as worthy of treatment as intellectually important as any work by ‘traditional’ intellectuals. Again, more details of method will be discussed in the methods chapter, but the party ideology is

³² Gramsci, 1988, pp.309-310

³³ Heyer, 2022, p.2

³⁴ Rosenblum, 2008; Muirhead, 2014; White and Ypi, 2016

understood to be found represented in the discourse of the party broadly understood, capturing the ideological community of party representatives, members and fellow travellers, as well as the discourses in which they engage.

This section has largely justified an understanding of political parties and ideologies being closely intertwined with ideologies tied to parties and parties functioning through their relation to ideologies. However, this linkage is not uncontroversial, as certain authors and theorists have sought to separate the two or to claim that they need not necessarily be related. Here we see differing arguments for political parties without political ideologies and for political ideologies without political parties.

First, we can consider political parties without accompanying ideologies. It certainly seems possible perhaps very likely that some parties have formed without a clear ideological discourse. Consider single issue parties or those that are the vehicle of a particular personality. These mobilisations may have latent ideological subtext, explaining why their issue should be prioritised or why their candidate(s) is superior, but this is not core to the discourse of the community, insofar as there is one. I would not argue that these groups do not exist but rather that they are of limited value as ‘political’ parties in such a stunted form. The political is a domain that can be stretched very far but largely encompasses relations of power and an attempt to use that power towards ends. Groups without an ideology may be able to mobilise in the institution form of a political party but would be unable to wield power without a coherent worldview to make sense of what is to be done with it. One need only look at the extent to which populism and the ‘new social movements’ have lent themselves to the analysis of ‘new ideologies’.³⁵ I would argue that an understanding of politics, particularly one relating to systems of representation and/or political institutions, has

³⁵ See the *Journal of Political Ideologies* or Freedman et al., 2013 for examples

a tendency towards ideology. Non-representative systems would still have ideologies, an absolute monarch still governs in accordance with their worldview informed by the ideological community they have been educated in and overlapping with their favoured advisors, so representation, in the democratic sense, may not be required.

Related to the subject matter of the thesis, one can link this to the idea of conservatism as a disposition, a claim associated with Michael Oakeshott.³⁶ Oakeshott identifies conservatism as not a political worldview, as the political ideology view would claim, but rather with an inclination to the familiar and the known rather than untried innovation and change. While it may be the case that people hold this attitude, it is less clear that the disposition captures the full understanding of conservatism held by most self-described conservative ideologues, whether of the party political or politico-theoretical orientation.³⁷ The dispositional account may describe something but that something is very different from the phenomenon described by most scholars of conservatism, especially as an ideology. The disposition account can be considered an extreme variant of the that which was once used to describe populism, too ‘thin’ in content to be understood as an ideology.³⁸ While the critique of populism has often returned to Freeden, the fact that the critique of dispositional accounts coheres with the work of many conservative intellectuals, suggests that it has some external validity. In actually existing politics, parties require more comprehensive worldviews, a characteristic that forecloses certain thinner bases for political mobilisation.

The second critique of the linking of parties and ideologies argues for ideologies being able to exist without being tied to a political party. One form of this argument is that of the ‘intellectual’ centred accounts of ideologies that identifies specific to particular individuals or

³⁶ Oakeshott, 1991

³⁷ For a discussion see Fear, 2020, p.198

³⁸ Freeden, 1998; Stanley, 2008

groups which are not engaged in active politics. These accounts have two issues. Firstly, historicization of political thought has been successful to linking the thought of intellectuals to their political contexts and the networks and discourses individuals are situated within. The notion of an individual or group outside politics seems hard to maintain, particularly so since the rise of political parties. While this point has been noted before, consider Gramsci's discussion of 'organic' and 'traditional' intellectuals, where traditional intellectuals can only hope to have impact by working through organic intellectuals, interaction facilitated by political parties.

The other issue with this argument overlaps substantially with the argument developed in relation to parties without ideologies, in that it centres on the understanding of 'the political'. Ideologies of groups that do not actively engage in politics do not seem to meet a full definition of political ideology.³⁹ Ideological communities construct a shared worldview, but this has repercussions for political action, discourses that do not compel actors to shared political aims may not be 'political ideologies'. To some extent, this is a case of a definition influencing the subject of analysis, but I argue this is a meaningful distinction that can be drawn.

There are, however, some ideologies that are political in the sense identified, that nonetheless claim to avoid political parties. There is debate in contemporary Marxist theory about the 'party form' and its necessity for effective politics. This is led by autonomist Marxists, also known as autonomists, such as Antonio Negri, who argue for the political party being a historically specific organising device and that a revolutionary working class could achieve

³⁹ One can also note the literature on the ideological and other ideational content of cinema and other forms of media and culture (consider Geertz, 1973; Žižek, 2002; Trinder, 2019), I argue that these are either non-political or when political are related to party political ideologies.

its ends without need for institutional formation.⁴⁰ Georges Sorel and other revolutionary syndicalists have made the case for the syndicate and the tool of the general strikes as means for a political programme without the need for parties or parliamentary institutions.⁴¹ Other scholars from the left have argued for a return to political parties in light of the failings of extra-party social movements.⁴² While this is an interesting debate, it primarily centres the politics of revolutionary social change and is beyond the scope of this thesis which looks at not just centre-right politics in particular but more broadly ideologies functioning within the dominant social formation and not those seeking to transcend it.

Ideology studies as a subfield

The account of what ideologies are draws attention to an important element of the study of ideologies, the question of its existence as a field/sub-field of study. Scholarship on the topic, and cited in this thesis, stem from a range of theoretical and disciplinary approaches including political theory, comparative politics, intellectual history, sociology of ideas, discourse studies, linguistics and more. This leads to overlapping and clashing terminologies, methods, normative approaches and research questions. Whether these can be reconciled into a shared object of study, ideology studies, has been a recurrent question in the premier journal of the subfield, the *Journal of Political Ideologies*.⁴³ This characteristic led me to the structuring of this chapter around shared problematics relevant to the thesis rather than a thematic approach. After all, a field cannot properly be called interdisciplinary if the participating disciplines struggle to engage with one another.

⁴⁰ Spielman, 2019

⁴¹ Sorel, 1999; Brandom, 2012 pp363-376; Brandom, 2017

⁴² Smith, 2014; Dean, 2016

⁴³ Freeden, 2016; Freeden, 2019

This slippery nature of ideology studies as a topic plays into a question for the thesis as a whole. As a doctoral dissertation in a politics department, what type of politics scholarship is it doing? On first reflex, it is easy to see ideology studies as doing something similar to political theory and the study of historical political thought, albeit with actors that are more social and collective. However, the analysis is not just one of theory but is also a description and analysis of empirical politics, going beyond mere contextualisation. In this thesis, there is the rich case study work of historical approaches to political studies as well as elements of a comparative approach with comparative and transnational examination of the cases. A such, placing the approach within the big four sub-fields of political studies: comparative politics, international relations, political theory and British politics (or equivalent domestic political science tradition), is nigh on impossible. Political history can be used to describe the case studies but does not cover the theory and model building. As the thesis nonetheless directly studies politics, using a different categorisation is appropriate.

This categorisation problem also overlaps with chronology in relation to scholarship, particularly with the British case. Early works on Thatcher and Thatcherism come primarily from politics and sociology scholars however as time elapses, this topic shifts towards being the demesne of historians. These changes shift emphasis and elements of the background literature used by authors but also lead to elements of earlier scholarship being forgotten. The thesis brings together a number of different literatures from different disciplines, time periods, and linguistic communities which facilitates synthesis, bringing together what had previously been apart, but also re-emphasises some elements that had been left behind.

How do ideologies and concepts change?

Having explained how this thesis conceives of ideologies, what already exists to explain how they might change? While some work exists on this and related questions, I argue that this is in fact a gap in existing ideology studies literature. Ideology studies has been praised for

presenting a form of political thought that can be studied synchronically and diachronically;⁴⁴ however, this analysis is often cursory and not empirically grounded. By contrast existing scholarship of conservatism and christian democracy often overlooks the work on ideologies that would allow conceptual sophistication and engagement into the wider ideology studies literature. Indeed, one of the leading overviews of the field of ideology studies concludes that ideological change is a clear area of disagreement, with a lack of clarity in existing scholarship.⁴⁵

The dominant explanation for change in the history of political thought, comes from the work of Quentin Skinner. Skinner presents the idea of *paradiastole*, rhetorical redescription, wherein an actor actively contrives a new definition for a concept. This can be contrasted with the approach of Begriffsgeschichte which presents concepts as changing through relation to social dynamics, most notably modernity.⁴⁶ James Farr makes a similar claim when he argues that ‘to understand political change is in large part to understand conceptual change, and vice versa’, that conceptual change cannot be understood outside its political contexts.⁴⁷ In the Skinnerian mode, concepts change meaning in the speech act as a new meaning is presented and thereafter used. Begriffsgeschichte emphasises a *Sattelzeit*, a period where society and concepts undergo significant change, and that concepts acquire a number of meanings at times ‘sedimenting’, such that older meanings are carried through into new ones.⁴⁸ As Bo Stråth explains: ‘whilst the primary focus of conceptual history is on structures

⁴⁴ Kärskylä, 2022, p76

⁴⁵ Maynard, 2013, p318

⁴⁶ Skinner accepts this as an alternative form of conceptual change but one that he is less interested in that Koselleck in Skinner, 1999

⁴⁷ Farr, 1989, p31

⁴⁸ Koselleck, 2011, p18

and processes, the emphasis within the speech act school has been on human agency as the prime mover of intellectual history'.⁴⁹

For the purposes of this thesis, the Skinnerian explanation and its emphasis on rhetoric is unconvincing. If we are interested in the shared language of an ideology, it is of no consequence whether a new definition is uttered. Rather it is of interest whether the new meaning is believed and shared. Consider the classical thought experiment regarding a tree falling in the woods with nobody about to hear it: if a concept is redescribed with nobody to repeat it, to what end can it be said to have been changed? Rather than centring articulation, this calls for an emphasis on reception.

These approaches offer suggestions for emphasis when looking for ideological and conceptual change but only limited explanation for what this might look like. It suggests we should look at social and political developments rather than personal intentions but does not explain what these might be. For these sorts of answers, we can look at the need to respond to new developments, ideological contradictions, and the notion of an inter-ideological 'battle of ideas'.

The first of these suggests that changes in context: social, economic, political, etc. confront the ideological community with new issues that it lacks an answer for within the ideology. As such, they add to their conceptual repertoire or make changes to the existing concepts to accommodate the new vocabulary. Over time an ideology can accommodate more issues, perhaps by dropping conceptual constellations that are no longer of use. This is broadly how Freedman explains ideological change for 'progressive ideologies', that is those that are not

⁴⁹ Stråth, 2006, p35

conservatism. Freeden's spatial morphology of ideologies has 'perimeter concepts', which link the more abstract concepts of the ideology to the contexts of the contemporary present.

Whereas those abstractions enable ideologies to function on a long-term and wide-space basis, and hence permit the flexibility necessary to their survival, the relatively concrete perimeter concepts, ideas, and attitudes enable them to gain relevance for specific issues, to incorporate and identify significant facts and practices, to embrace external change, and to provide the greater degree of precision necessary to interpret the core and adjacent concepts.⁵⁰

A second approach likewise draws attention to developments but explains them as drawing attention to the existing contradictions within an ideology. This approach stems from Marxist approaches wherein ideologies all have inherent contradictions that imperil them. This analysis is typically applied to capitalism but is also applied to more traditional political ideologies.⁵¹ As historical conjunctures draw attention to these contradictions; the ideology must evolve to explain away the issue. This new, changed ideology has its own contradictions that will inevitably need to be resolved as well in the future.

In practice, these two explanations would seem quite similar, with ideologies changing in response to historical innovations. While there are differences in the underlying understanding of ideologies, there is a shared explanation of limitations of existing systems of ideas leading ideologues to, consciously or unconsciously, develop responses that are appropriate to developing contexts.

The third approach centres contestation between ideologies for political leverage. Here, ideologies change not in response to wider social changes but rather due to their ideological

⁵⁰ Freeden, 1996, pp.79-80

⁵¹ Finlayson, 1998

competition. This accords with Freeden's account of conceptual change for conservatism which he compares to a swivel mirror. Conservatism is presented as a reactionary ideology, developing 'antithesis' concepts to mirror and deflate the core concepts of emerging ideological rivals.

The quicker the pace of those movements—and the history of the past century in the West has evinced transformations of great magnitude—the greater the need for a fast conservative reaction. The result is thus a *structural* mirror-image reaction to whatever ideological configuration is perceived as the most immediate or menacing source of externally induced change, and the ideological response of conservatives is to come up with what they believe is the most effective and successful conceptual strategy for resisting it.⁵²

It is useful to note the intentionalism of this account, but one can also tease it apart from the previous types. After all, the reactionary ideology and its antitheses are not an account of the start of ideological change but rather a knock-on effect. First progressive ideologies change then conservative ideologies change in response. As such while there is flexibility and creativity in how ideologues develop their antitheses these are always secondary to the developments of the progressive ideology; although Freeden notes that conservatives often, deliberately or inadvertently, misrepresent progressive ideologies and as such have antitheses to non-core concepts.⁵³

All three of these explanations present ideological change as contextual and primarily driven by external events. Changes in the social, political, economic landscape create conditions wherein ideologies must change to remain relevant. Ideological competition means that these

⁵² Freeden, 1996, pp.341-342, emphasis in original

⁵³ Freeden, 1996, p.343

first wave changes have knock-on effects for other ideologies. The constant change of contexts means a constant circulation of ideas and ideational change. However, this is all quite theoretical and non-specific. While there have been a number of accounts of ideological change over the *longue durée*, analysis of changes here rarely has conceptual rigour or clarity.⁵⁴ Where studies are more specific and conceptual, they are often either synchronic, examining a moment of change, or their accounts are party specific, emphasising particular actors.⁵⁵ This provides particular accounts and not models or systems that can be generalised. The explanations discussed above from Freedden rely on individual examples to suit the theory rather than a purposive identification model. This thesis aims to fill that gap by providing rich understanding of two cases while using comparison between them to consider what a more general model would look like.

The thesis's emphasis on the conceptual changes themselves also draws attention to the internal context of ideologies, existing within ideological communities, to complement the externalist emphasis of existing scholarship. This avoids the representation of ideologies as black boxes purely responding to inputs and instead questions what happens socially, politically and conceptually to develop new ideological configurations.

Party Change in Political Science

Alongside this work about ideologies is work within political science on changes in political parties and ideas within them. While this often does not use the language of ideologies, let alone consider theories from the related literatures, it nonetheless has overlapping subject matter and even conclusions.

⁵⁴ Greenleaf, 1983

⁵⁵ Freedden, 1986

Materialist accounts of party change emphasise the material interests of the classes comprising the parties and wider society. Centre-right parties are typically associated with capitalists as well as the middle and upper classes. As such a weak materialist account may have parties following the ideas and changing composition of these groups. A harder materialist account would have the material interests of these groups at their core. Parties would pursue politics that improves the outcomes of their voters and, significantly, those who finance them.

A popular theory of party-political change surrounds office or vote seeking behaviour.⁵⁶ This represents political parties, or those directing them, as utility maximisers motivated by a desire to win elections or maximise votes and therefore to have popular political positions. As such, it would suggest that party positions would be responsive to changes in public attitudes. If a party advocated for law and order while the public had changed *en masse* to supporting a rehabilitative justice approach, the party would be expected to change its position. This would weaken the value of claimed ideological principles to parties as parties would be committed to political positions only insofar as they contribute to electability. An example of this logic can be seen in Downs' seminal work on the median voter theorem.⁵⁷ This suggests that political parties, as rational actors, should identify where the median voter political position is and appeal to it. In so doing they would be most likely to maximise votes and win an election.

From the standpoint of ideology studies, such approaches are flawed. By reducing political positions to a linear spectrum, they diminish the complexity of ideological constellations as well as making bold assertions about the distribution of voter preferences. More nuanced

⁵⁶See Harmel and Janda, 1994; Bækgaard and Jensen, 2012

⁵⁷ Downs, 1957

accounts of ‘the ideological spectrum’, such as that developed through the Comparative Manifestos Project exist but do not avoid this issue.⁵⁸ Furthermore, political campaigning often recognises that turnout is not distributed equally across social groups and thus parties can respond by appealing to particular constituencies and maximising turnout of political groups, whether they are understood as ideologues or partisans. Nonetheless, it is important to consider whether ideological changes are justified to members or others in the ideational community of the party in relation to political advantage and popularity rather than in relation to shared principles. Such an approach, emphasising electability, would provide an alternative explanation to ideological change than one premised on concepts. Of course, electability itself could be analysed as a concept operating within office-seeking ideologies.

Another approach to party change is that of exogenous shock models, notably that of Harmel and Janda.⁵⁹ These draw on empirical analysis of change in the stated political positions of parties as well as party institutional structures. This analysis points to parties changing positions in response to electoral defeat, change in leadership and change in dominant faction.⁶⁰ The explanation for this is similar to the office seeking explanation in that parties are expected to be competing for office and these shocks are understood to represent to actors a failure to convince the public or the party on the way forward.

However, while the Harmel and Janda model presents a chronology of change, it does not clearly account for *how* a party will change in response to shocks, moving to the ‘centre’ or toward a political extreme. While current leadership may be pressured to change, or leadership, in the form of a person or dominant faction, may introduce new perspectives, it is not clear what form these changes would take and why they would be accepted. Again, we

⁵⁸ Gemenis, 2013

⁵⁹ Harmel et al., 1995; Walgrave et al., 2006; Bale, 2012

⁶⁰ Bale adds the media as an additional driver

end up with a black box of exogenous shocks leading to change without understanding the form of change.

In general, these party change explanations are quite limited in providing a model of ideological change. However, they do provide reason for caution in assuming that party change must be ideological and entirely exogenous. Change is responsive to external events but mediated in some way through the structures and personnel of the party. Analysis of ideological change should look at internal party dynamics as well as public attitudes alongside just the ideas of party members. Further it calls attention to the questions of when and why a party or ideology may change alongside the theoretical question of how. It is hoped that answering this ideational question, of how a party can change its principles, can feed back into these models of timing and intention.

An approach that does engage more directly with ideas is that of the ‘new institutionalism’, in its varied forms and names including historical institutionalism, ideational intuitionism and discursive institutionalism.⁶¹ As an institutionalist literature, this approach emphasises institutions in accounting for change in politics, particularly policy programmes, but particularly notes how institutions are socially constructed, including norms and beliefs. Here systems of political ideas and discourses, are valid subjects of analysis.

One classic of this literature is Peter Hall’s work on policy paradigms.⁶² Hall makes a case for policy discourse to be understood as institutions and modelled similarly to Kuhnian scientific paradigms. Here policy paradigms are in a punctuated equilibrium; generally stable and operating as ‘normal science’, with minor tinkering in the techniques and details of policy, except during paradigm shifts when the end goals pursued for policy change. Hall

⁶¹ See Thelen, 1999; Schmidt, 2008; and Hay, 2016

⁶² Hall, 1993

uses the case of the shift from Keynesianism to monetarism in the UK in the 1970s and 1980s and explains this as occurring due to:

the accumulation of anomalies, experimentation with new forms of policy, and policy failures that precipitate a shift in the locus of authority over policy and initiate a wider contest between paradigms. This contest may well spill beyond the boundaries of the state itself into the broader political arena. It will end only when the supporters of a new paradigm secure positions of authority over policymaking and are able to rearrange the organization and standard operating procedures of the policy process so as to institutionalize the new paradigm.⁶³

The overlaps between this account and those previously discussed explaining ideological and party change are quite striking.

Colin Hay develops the Hall account by focusing on the discursive construction of ‘crisis’ that facilitates a paradigm shift.⁶⁴ Here paradigmatic crises do not just ‘happen’ but are the results of developments in discourse creating a need to move on from the old status quo. Hay presents not a baseline of equilibrium but of ‘punctuated evolution’, with policy and discourses constantly in flux but only occasionally undergoing paradigmatic change.

Eunice Goes and Alan Finlayson have introduced ideology to this consideration of the policy process.⁶⁵ Both note how ‘new’ policy ideas and paradigms are introduced in relation to existing party and ideological traditions. The shape of discourses for change are then constrained by the dynamics of existing ideological discourses. While these approaches are

⁶³ Hall, 1993, pp.280-281

⁶⁴ Hay, 2001

⁶⁵ Finlayson, 2013; Goes, 2021

very promising in drawing attention to this nexus of change, ideology and party, they are less clear on how this dynamic actually plays out.

Across the institutional approaches we can see a clear recognition of how understanding change in parties requires understanding the historical and ideational contexts of the change. One can note an emphasis on policy debates in these accounts, with Hall centring his analysis on how civil servants change policy, and with Goes and Finlayson using ideology when connecting policies to their public justification. This seems to understate the extent to which policy debates are always laden with ideology. This thesis will complement this institutional literature by further developing the discussion of ideology and party in relation to ideational change; approaching the topic with greater empirical richness and theoretical sophistication than can be achieved in articles alone.

What is the centre-right?

This project examines parties on the ‘centre-right’ and for deliberate reason. The cases of neoliberalism that are studied occur in parties of the centre-right, indeed initial neoliberalisation tends to occur under parties of the right, especially the centre-right, but also because the centre-right presents an intriguing analytical subject. The centre-right is relatively understudied in ideology studies, particularly in relation to ideologies of the left or the radical and extreme right.⁶⁶ But what is the centre-right?

In classing parties and politics as ‘centre-right’, I immediately invite problems surrounding the definition of such a term, particularly around the assumed left-right spectrum.⁶⁷ The idea of a consistent and trans-historical external conception of the left and right that can serve as

⁶⁶ The understudied nature of centre-right ideology has meant that the field is relatively full of works of ideological construction by Conservatives, with scholars often, but not universally, taking these self-descriptions for granted rather than developing their own critical analyses, as they would for other ideologies.

⁶⁷ Bobbio, 1996; Dinas and Gemenis, 2010

poles for political classification whether they be liberalism and collectivism, open and closed society, local and global, etc. has been demonstrated to be ahistorical, empirically suspect and misleading for classification. Why then persist in using the classification centre-right? I do so pragmatically, using the term as a label for a particular type of politics that is shared in my case studies and continues to evade alternative clear conceptualisation. I maintain a recognition of the concerns of classifying politics along left and right but note that the label is useful in communicating my phenomenon of study.⁶⁸

Centre-right politics and parties are inherently engaged in democratic politics. By virtue of being tied to the supposed centre-ground, they claim to represent the rump mass of the electorate and hold views that are publicly shared or at least acceptable to large sections of the public.⁶⁹ This is in contrast with established definitions of the extreme right and radical right.⁷⁰ Centrist parties then are required to be dynamic and reflective/responsive to changes in the views of the demos and public sphere. It is known that the public attitudes and political views of the public have changed in the period since mass democracy. One must then assume that the political positions held by centrist parties, as well as the centre-left and right, must have also changed. I use centre here in reference to a wider notion of the spectrum of parties, that are certainly tendencies in the parties which would not typically be associated with the centre, but the party as a whole fills this role. A similar term that could be used here, but would introduce its own issues, would be ‘the mainstream right’.

However, centre-right parties are of course described not just with reference to the centre but also the right. Understanding what is indicated by the right is of course problematic, as I have just noted regarding the issues of framing a left-right spectrum. However, in post-war mass

⁶⁸ White, 2011

⁶⁹ Gidron and Ziblatt, 2019

⁷⁰ Mudde, 2000

politics of the West, the centre-right works as the label for a less collectivist and more conservative view than that of the centre-left, which is associated with forms of democratic socialism and labour movements. As I will explore throughout the paper, this classification can be circular, with conservatism defined via an inversion of the argument as anti-socialism and hence anti-left, but I would maintain that the classification has analytical value from the perspective of political science.

Centre-right parties have generally positioned themselves as parties of business or of those of means as well as being a proverbial ‘natural party of government’. Alongside this classification these parties have also been electorally successful in the era of mass politics, dominating the governments of the two countries studied. To the extent that elections are understood as means of representing the populace, the parties examined have consistently been publicly popular as well as on the right of political debates.

Usage of the term centre-right also enables consideration of the similarities and differences in the party families examined, christian democracy and conservatism. Case selection will be discussed further in the next chapter but here we can note how the two families are often grouped together under the umbrella of centre-right but are also distinguished as distinct families in themselves, as christian democracy and conservatism.⁷¹ One distinction that gets drawn, alongside the influence of secularism or confessional thought is that conservatives are more from the right while christian democrats identify as from the centre. However, this can vary with the scholar as some have presented christian democracy as a variant of conservatism.⁷² Studying a similar phenomenon in both cases will provide insight into this debate about the similarities and differences between the ideologies and whether they can be

⁷¹ Van Kersbergen, 1995; Pombeni, 2013; Invernizzi-Accetti, 2019

⁷² Bale and Krouwel, 2013; See discussion in Gidron and Ziblatt, 2019

grouped under the category of centre-right. Such examination furthers understanding of the understudied ideological group.

This is not just a semantic distinction. One of the most similar works in the literature to this thesis in terms of framework and topic is Rachel Turner's, Neoliberal Ideology which examines neoliberalism as an ideology in the Freedman tradition.⁷³ There are a number of differences between our studies, including Turner's focus on intellectuals compared to this thesis's emphasis on party discourse and ideological community, but the most substantial is that Turner examines neoliberalism as a liberal ideology. I will argue through this thesis that centring that the elements of conservatism and christian democracy, the centre-right, in the story of neoliberalisation introduces important theoretical and empirical insights.

While more a specific comment on case selection than on the framework of the thesis, questions can be raised about the classification of the parties in this thesis as centre-right. The CDU often situates itself and is sometimes located as a party of the centre, while Margaret Thatcher is identified as a politician of the right. Nonetheless, I maintain my classification. Centre-right is not understood relation to contemporary politics but rather relative to a wider spectrum of parties. Both parties include actors more associated with the right or extreme right, the CDU would collaborate significantly with the Deutsche Partei and included a number of Nazi administrators, members and soldiers and the Conservative Party included the Monday Club and elements of the National Front.⁷⁴ Both parties had members who had been involved in explicitly centrist parties, the Germans of the Centrum Partei, or expressed interest in their formation.⁷⁵ Both parties were interested in appealing to floating, centrist

⁷³ Turner, 2008

⁷⁴ One Tory MP in the British case study had been involved with the Hitler Youth as a young child but, due to his youth at the time, this should not be understood as an indication of broader political inclinations; see Rost, 2010

⁷⁵ Russel, 1978 pp148-154

voters, however conceived and overlapped politically with competitor parties. A distinction can be drawn here with the radical and extreme right. As a study of ‘neoliberalisation of centre-right parties’ the key classification is of the parties at the start of periodisation, 1945 for the CDU and 1970-1974 for the Conservatives, where the term seems appropriate. That neoliberalisation is understood to accompany a shift towards the right does not change the initial categorisation but does raise an element of the parties, ideologies and phenomena that is worth considering through the thesis.

What is neoliberalisation?

The case studies of ideological change in this thesis centre on the phenomenon on ‘neoliberalisation’, suggesting a transition towards ‘neoliberalism’. These are both contested concepts and have their own related literatures. The very different understandings of the underlying concept often causes confusion when scholars see the analyses as incoherent. As such it makes sense to contextualise the thesis amongst this existing scholarship, to make clear which meanings are being used. As with the other elements of the research question this involves bringing together a range of disciplines. The thesis contributes to some of these literatures while also seeking to find bridges between often distinct scholarship. I identify three forms of scholarship on neoliberalism which roughly relate to different disciplinary positions and periodisation.

Neoliberalism

First among these is an approach in intellectual history and history of economic thought that centres on the 1940s and 1950s but with a long tail. Here neoliberalism is an intellectual idea developed in the aftermath of the Walter Lippmann Colloquium in 1938. This idea was a development of so-called ‘classical liberalism’ in the light of the failure of *laissez faire* in the Great Depression. In opposition to calls for a greater role for state planning, this approach

provides justification for a new approach to liberalism that explicitly recognises the role of the state and institutions in creating the conditions for liberal systems and ends, particularly markets. What this approach to neo-liberalism emphasises is what has been termed the ‘Neo-liberal Thought Collective’,⁷⁶ the networks and overlapping personnel in later groups such as the Geneva School, Mont Pelerin Society, Freiburg School, Ordo journal, Chicago School, Institute of Economic Affairs, Virginia School, and others that maintain and develop this intellectual approach.⁷⁷ Key figures, such as Friedrich von Hayek, Milton Friedman, Ludwig von Mises, James Buchanan and others comprise an intellectual movement. As the names of the sub-groups suggests, this collective is heavily comprised of academics, usually economists, as well as think tanks.

The second form of scholarship is that conducted from within the social sciences, particularly sociology, and emphasises a new form of politics and subjectivity, with an emphasis on the 1970s and 1980s and the Governments of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. Here we see analyses of ‘Reaganism’ and ‘Thatcherism’.⁷⁸ Accounts of the ideas at play here can emphasise confrontation with unions, monetarism and lower taxes but connect these to the value of market competition. While presented as ‘rolling back the state’, analysis of the policy programmes points to changes in who is the subject of tax and the continued role of the state for the much-vaunted markets. Foucauldian analyses emphasise the construction of new subjectivities in the form of governmentality.⁷⁹ This often centres the notion of *homo oeconomicus*, with government viewing people as atomised rational economic maximisers and citizens internalising this new subjectivity. The two notions of neoliberalism here, the

⁷⁶ Mirowski and Plehwe, 2009

⁷⁷ Cockett, 1994; Denham, 1996; Jackson, 2012a; Stedman Jones, 2012; Olsen and Schulz-Forberg, 2014; Slobodian, 2018

⁷⁸ Gamble, 1979a; Hall, 1980; Gamble 1994

⁷⁹ Foucault, 2008; Brown, 2015

politics and the sociology, can be distinguished but they share an emphasis on the political practice understood as neoliberalism and share an identified key period.

The differences between the two broader approaches, the historians and the social scientists, can be overstated and scholars have explicitly situated themselves as between the two.⁸⁰ The political actors studied by the second approach often self-identify as implementing the economics studied by the first approach, although the economists are liable to criticise the fidelity of this application. Think tanks and public intellectual economists, like Hayek and Friedman, can appear as actors in both approaches. This suggests a relationship between theory and practice, or the experience of practice. However, the process of transfer of ideas from economists to practitioners, what I discuss in the thesis as neoliberalisation and discuss in the next subsection, is often less clear, especially as the new ideas are often discussed as forming a new hegemony or new common sense. I situate this thesis between approaches, taking the ideas seriously but focusing on how they are initially introduced to political practice.

The third approach to neoliberalism provides an account of neoliberalism as a form of late capitalism centring on the 1990s and 2000s and often appears in critical political economy. Key here are financialisation, managerialism and globalisation.⁸¹ Here we can observe a shift away from the ‘political sphere’ and towards financial institutions, the World Trade Organisation and global capital. If we continue the notion of links between the approaches this can be understood, following Colin Hay, as ‘normalised neoliberalism’ where neoliberalism is fully hegemonic in capitalism.⁸² This approach often has the least link to ideational analysis as it draws its origin from the political practice of the 1970s with little

⁸⁰ Such as Slobodian, 2018, p.4; Jackson, 2021

⁸¹ See Harvey, 2005; Mudge, 2018

⁸² Hay, 2004

reference to the economic thought of the first approach. This form of neoliberalism is beyond the scope of this thesis as the thesis analyses earlier historical developments.

It will be noted in the case selection that one of my case studies, West Germany in the late 1940s, is not a typically used example of neoliberalism in politics. Where the phenomenon is studied, the United Kingdom under Thatcher and United States under Reagan are often treated as ideal types. While Foucault identified the case studied in this thesis as neoliberal,⁸³ its chronology, nearly thirty years before Thatcher's leadership, leaves it as atypical.

Neoliberalism as a mode of economic thought has many schools within it, usually corresponding to different universities and personal networks. These include the Chicago School, Virginia School, Geneva School as well as those most related to the West German case study, the Freiburg School and Cologne School.⁸⁴ These schools share personnel with more famous neoliberal schools and participation in the 'Neoliberal Thought Collective' and Mont Pelerin Society. Nonetheless the comparative and transnational elements of this thesis contribute to literature considering the boundaries of classifying neoliberal systems, and the Adenauer/Erhard regime's place within this categorisation.

Neoliberalisation

Alongside these accounts of neoliberalism are accounts of neoliberalisation, how neoliberalism came to be applied in politics. The difference in focus often reflects a shift between the historical and social scientific accounts mentioned above. These different accounts draw on different methods and frameworks for thinking about ideational and policy change but also draw out further nuances in the understanding of neoliberalism. As the rises of Reagan and Thatcher are the most studied cases of neoliberalism in politics, they are also

⁸³ Foucault, 2008

⁸⁴ Petersmann, 1986, pp.237-238; On 'German neoliberalism' see also Zweynert, 2013

the dominant examples used to explain neoliberalisation. As this is often understood as a case of ideological change there are overlaps with the accounts discussed earlier in this chapter but often informed by historical context more than ideology theory.

The dominant accounts of neoliberalisation are narratives about flows of ideas. Drawing on intellectual historians, broadly understood, and the wider ideational and linguistic turns in scholarship, the accounts focus on which ideas are transmitted and the networks and mechanisms of ideational reproduction.

A most traditional account of political history stresses the ideas of key political actors and the extent to which they adopt ideas related to the economic neoliberals. Here we can find analysis of the ‘Magnification of British Politics’ and other discussion of the personal political thought of ministers.⁸⁵ Likewise, this analysis can point to personal relationships and interest with economists, particularly the neoliberal economists. In general, this relates to the study of ‘high politics of the politicians who mattered’, although this approach is often caricatured.⁸⁶ Such an approach can be instructive in the individual stories and experiences of actors but does not seem well suited to understanding how ideologies change. The ‘high politics’ tradition is noted for its individualism and hostility to consideration of structures.⁸⁷ While this thesis is not structuralist, understanding shared and social ideas is obviously difficult to reconcile with individualist methods. While a ‘high politics’ approach may explain the trajectory of Margaret Thatcher’s thought, it alone cannot explain how this came to be adopted more widely, how her articulations became legitimations.

⁸⁵ See elements of Clarke, 1999, p306; Denham and Garnett, 2001; Saunders, 2017

⁸⁶ Cowling, 1971, p3

⁸⁷ Craig, 2010, pp471-472

The binary opposite of ‘high politics’ is ‘low politics’, more commonly in the form of ‘popular history’. Here one can consider the transmission of neoliberalism amongst the wider public. Here scholarship has pointed to the role of the media including economic journalists in the UK, as well as the popular publication of Friedrich Hayek’s *Road to Serfdom* and broadcast of Milton Friedman’s *Free to Choose*, in disseminating and normalising neoliberal economics.⁸⁸ Alongside direct engagement with economists these ideas also spread through financial news, investment clubs and popular media.⁸⁹ Neoliberal ideas, values and perhaps ideology are advanced as underlying or supportive concepts such as consumer sovereignty, creative destruction and economic rights become normalised and naturalised.⁹⁰ These approaches help identify processes of ideational change, particularly in relation to the hegemony of neoliberalisation, but often establish timelines that follow behind the shifts of high politics. Here the high politics claim to study ‘people who matter’ seems relevant, while we may wish to expand this field of people it is clear that not all people are equally relevant to understanding political change. Some middle level or linkage between the high and the popular would explain political and ideological change.

An approach that seeks to link the two has drawn attention to the strategic role of certain actors and institutions to spread neoliberal ideas. While there are key actors here, they successfully use power and forms of media to disseminate their ideas and gain support. Three types of agents are often studied here: strategic politicians, think tanks and the business community but the emphasis is on institutions or networks rather than individuals. Across these types of agents, it is recognised that neoliberal thought was spread not just through personal connections and established ideological platforms but through the construction of

⁸⁸ Cockett, 1994; Cottier, 2022

⁸⁹ Prestidge, 2019; Becker, 2022; Edwards, 2022

⁹⁰ Olsen, 2018

new institutions as well. Policy groups and think tanks play a key role here across a number of contexts, often spreading neoliberal economics.⁹¹ Business groups are often identified in relation to discourses of entrepreneurship and marketisation, but also in funding economic education.⁹² Analysis of the rhetorical strategies of neoliberalism associates it with appeals to ‘common sense’ and the economic fatalism that ‘there is no alternative’ as well as the invocation of crisis, which will be discussed later.⁹³ This literature can focus on influence on the wider public, key political actors or civil servants but shares an emphasis on the deliberateness of neoliberalisation.

The approach in this thesis is most similar to this form but takes the party as a form of institution to be analysed. Thinking about ideological discourse provides a space to think about the discursive spaces within which strategic actors interact and are received amongst the innumerable other discourses and actors at play. Recall that neoliberalism was far from the only dynamic at play in any case of neoliberalisation. As we will see in the case studies of the thesis, religious contests, specific social policies, personal politics and more all diffuse the impact of strategic actors.

In addition to the three forms of ideational change discussed that focus on political ideas: high politics, popular politics and institutional politics, an alternative form of explanation of neoliberalisation focuses on policy and governance. While this approach does not deny the change in ideas and discourse, they claim that it is not the underlying driver of neoliberalism, when understood as a policy programme. Understanding the thinking of policy makers, who are often not politicians, is key. As Jack Copley has argued, ‘While certain Conservative politicians were driven by laissez-faire convictions, the Thatcher government also publicly

⁹¹ Cockett, 1994; Desai, 1994; Denham, 1996; Carroll and Shaw, 2001; Djelic and Mousavi, 2020

⁹² Moreton, 2008; Philips-Fein, 2009; Rollings, 2013; Hemmer, 2016; Mondom, 2018; Plehwe, 2020

⁹³ Dorey, 2015

exaggerated their commitment to neoliberal principles as a rhetorical strategy to grant them the policy space to pursue currency depreciation without spooking financial markets, which points to the importance of ideas as rhetoric in the politics of economic credibility.⁹⁴

Scholars have also been critical of the extent to which the economic thought of neoliberalism explains the phenomena described as neoliberalism in policy fields. Instead, the influence of new forms of planning and budgeting, emerging from the United States military think tanks are presented as the progenitor of neoliberal managerialism.⁹⁵ More broadly the influences of path dependency and political valence in policy fields can be important constraints or mediators of the forms neoliberalism can take.⁹⁶

A third form of explanation for neoliberalisation centres crisis as part of the explanatory narrative. This takes two forms: the crisis of the previous political and economic system or the construction of a discourse of crisis. The first presents neoliberalism as emerging and becoming established both in response to and in relation to the collapse of previous systems. Neoliberalism as economic thought arises due to the failures of *laissez faire* in the 1920s and 1930s, but as political system arises due to the crises of the welfare state, Keynesianism and the neoclassical system. The vacuum left by these systems leaves spaces for an alternative system that purports to resolve this crisis, neoliberalism.⁹⁷ While this explanation centres the 1970s in its analysis, we will see that it can be extended back to the West German case in this thesis as 1945 was also after a crisis, the Nazi regime and defeat in the Second World War.

⁹⁴ Copley, 2019, p7

⁹⁵ Knafo, 2019; Knafo et al., 2019; Berman, 2022: Interestingly enough, David Howell, who is a key actor in the UK and transnational chapters, visited the think tank emphasised by this argument RAND, and directly drew on this current of ideas in the development of his 'New Style of Government' and PSRU in the late 1960s and early 1970s

⁹⁶ Tomlinson, 2019

⁹⁷ Hall, 1993; Copley, 2019; Stahl, 2019

The alternative variant of the crisis explanation centres the construction of a discourse of crisis and can be associated with the work of Colin Hay.⁹⁸ Hay notes that while neoliberalism may have been justified as resolving a crisis, this crisis had to be understood and neoliberalism to be understood as the resolution. Economic and political systems regularly have challenges and ‘crises’ but not all lead to meaningful changes. Neoliberalisation here is a successful narrative and the result of ideological entrepreneurs rather than a structural conjuncture.

A final wrinkle in the literature on neoliberalism is the question of innovation and originality. To what extent does neoliberalism and neoliberalisation mark a departure from its predecessors? This is not just an ontological question but has implications for the understanding of the phenomena. Much of the literature on neoliberalism emphasises novelty, how a new political economy takes over a party or country, replacing what had come before in a substantial moment of change. Here we can see the claims that Thatcherism marks a departure from conservatism or that neoliberalism is or is not authentic liberalism.⁹⁹ Against this literature an alternative literature has been keen to stress the continuities with what came before. Thatcherism here is contextualised in relation to the New Right and other tendencies in the Conservative Party that predate it.¹⁰⁰ Similar analysis exists for the United States as well as to question the originality of neoliberal economics. In a sense, both present as straw men with the real answer somewhere in the middle, with meaningful change as well as continuities and pre-histories. This thesis engages with two elements of this debate, given the continuities and change, why was neoliberalisation successful in the cases examined but not

⁹⁸ Hay, 2001; Hay, 2010

⁹⁹ Garnett and Gilmour, 1996; Jackson and Saunders, 2012, p18

¹⁰⁰ Norton and Aughey, 1981; Green, 2002; Green, 2006, pp22-23

before, and to what extent are neoliberalised ideologies in continuity with the ideologies pre-neoliberalisation?

What we have then is an array of different, albeit overlapping, analyses of neoliberalism and neoliberalisation. For the purpose of the thesis these present existing narratives to engage with and dynamics to be attentive to. Thinking about ideology as a bridge between high and popular politics offers a way to bridge different analyses of agency but leaves open consideration of strategic actors, policy fields and the role of crisis.

Conclusion

In total the research question for the thesis draws it into engagement with a variegated set of literatures spanning discipline, methodological commitment and subject of analysis. The focus on ideology and ideological change presents a way to bring together and synthesise a number of these literatures and linking considerations of actors and individual ideas into wider discursive and semantic fields. Alongside linking these literatures, an endeavour that will be developed further through the comparative and transnational methods of analysis, the paper identifies a gap in the understanding of ideologies. Ideologies are understood as social systems of ideas linked to ideological communities, but this social element and how it relates to political practice is underexamined. The research question thus pushes the analysis to new empirical findings on the cases, their relationships and on neoliberalism as well as to theoretical insights in parties, ideologies and neoliberalisation.

2. Considerations of Method

As has been established, this thesis develops a conceptual account of ideological change by looking at cases of neoliberalisation. While this is guided by insights from ideology studies and the histories of ideas, reference to these sub-disciplines alone is not a clear method of analysis. This chapter explains the operationalisation of the research question by explaining

the justification for case selection, source selection and method of analysis, as well as providing an account of impact of coronavirus on the research project.

Case Selection

The thesis draws attention to initial neoliberalisation, when neoliberalism first becomes adopted in a country. In selecting cases, I aimed to identify cases that had a clear literature on this development such that the classification would be, if not uncontroversial, reasonably justifiable. The cases selected are the Christian Democrat Union (CDU) in the occupied zones and West Germany 1945-1949 and the Conservative Party in the United Kingdom 1970-1979. These account for the rise of ordoliberalism and the social market economy with Ludwig Erhard as well as the rise of Margaret Thatcher and Thatcherism. They represent what Foucault identifies as the first neoliberalisation, in West Germany, and what much of the wider neoliberalism literature has identified as the first of the wave of neoliberalisation in the 1970s and 1980s,¹⁰¹ the origin of neoliberal hegemony. As noted in the literature review, Thatcherism is well studied within the study of neoliberalism, the CDU by comparison is relatively understudied. Literature on both periods has an established narrative of ideological change, although this can and has been contested.

As cases of initial neoliberalisation we have two key cases, which have important similarities but also differences. The temporal contexts are very different, separated by thirty years, but so too are the parties. The CDU is expressly christian democratic and the Conservative Party conservative, which in my classification are both centre-right but present differences for comparison. Different national contexts present different national histories and traditions with

¹⁰¹ Steger and Roy, 2010

Nazism, Manchester liberalism and Toryism examples of national intellectual traditions that, while not absent in the other country, are most associated with one case.

In spite of this, there are also a number of important similarities. Both are understood to feature centre-right parties undergoing ideological change and a move right-ward. Both grapple with high levels of inflation. Both cases emerge from socio-economic crisis in the form of the reconstruction after the Second World War and Britain's status as the 'sick man of Europe'. There are overlapping networks of actors, with Friedrich Hayek and other neoliberal economists referenced by leading actors in both cases. Even from a superficial analysis, there are a number of similarities in the case beyond the shared narrative of neoliberalisation. As we will see in the transnational chapter, these similarities were not lost on actors in the 1970s.

In the initial research design for this thesis, it was planned to have third national case study, that of the United States and the Republican Party in the 1970s with the presidency of Gerald Ford as a precursor to Reagan. This case study did not happen, as will be discussed further later in this chapter, due to the coronavirus pandemic. The planned USA case study would have provided a more similar context to the UK case and allowed more formal consideration of similar cases and different cases, with West Germany the case of difference. As the three national cases were reduced to two, there was more space in the thesis for consideration of the transnational elements of the cases, the bridging of the two discourses. This had not been initially intended as it only emerged as an original finding from the analysis. The transnational networks and ideas in the British case make it difficult to claim the two cases as wholly independent, but this would already have been implied due to shared relations to the neoliberal thought collective. This is necessarily a limit to the rigour of a claimed generalisability of the research but is a typical feature of historical cases. The transnational

networks between the parties and their relationship to neoliberalisation has not yet been explored in depth in the literature.¹⁰²

The blend of similarities and differences in the two cases, given the claim that they are both examples of a shared phenomenon of neoliberalisation, allows consideration of neoliberalisation and the conditions facilitating it. Comparison of cases can reveal the extent to which the dynamics and phenomena seen in both cases are examples of the same genus of phenomenon, neoliberalism and neoliberalisation. For the shared phenomenon, whether it be neoliberalism or a more generalised ideological transformation, this can ask which shared contextual factors facilitate the transformation, and which factors prove to be unnecessary. The differences in the cases can be examined to see how they relate to differences in process or outcome. Using somewhat dissimilar cases, and not just the most similar cases of the United States and United Kingdom, as is more typical in the literature, allows more direct consideration of the importance of the shared context of the 1970s and 1980s in the narrative of neoliberalisation regarding Thatcher and Reagan. Incorporating the 1940s and West Germany extends timelines and questions established periodisation for the neoliberalisation of politics.

Of course, these questions do draw on some assumptions regarding the existence of a shared phenomenon between the cases and that it is neoliberalism. As noted in the literature review, I am aware of the fact that some of these claims have been contested. Methodologically, there can be issues when ‘selecting on the dependent variable’, with an influence from selection bias on analysis. Through the process of research and analysis, I have been aware of this

¹⁰² Ordoliberalism has been briefly discussed in relation to Thatcherism and the party networks have been studied but the link between the two has not been explored in depth. This will be discussed further in the transnational chapter but see Gamble, 1979a; Steber, 2017; Davies, 2019, pp102-103

critique and therefore deliberate in critically assessing whether a shared phenomenon does indeed exist.

A final consideration in the process of case selection was practical consideration of language and access to sources. Research is necessarily constrained not just by the sources which are selected but also availability of sources and whether the researcher can use them, which are not always the same thing. This is particularly a challenge when engaging in research spanning different historical contexts and language communities. As explained by Quinn Slobodian and Dieter Plehwe:

To write persuasively about the reception of the transnational spread of neoliberal ideas, or the domestic production of ideas independently, requires deep knowledge of local histories, including competency in the language, fluency with the inevitably vast relevant literatures, and enough of an awareness of each place's tangled political and economic pasts to locate neoliberal ideology within them.¹⁰³

In addition to theoretically informed case selection, the choice to examine West Germany and Britain was also informed by my ability to read both languages as well as familiarity with the case studies from earlier research, although both developed further as I carried out this project. The scale of the thesis ultimately would have ruled out further case studies and, in hindsight, it probably would not have been practical for the thesis to include the transnational discussion and an additional American case study. A clear area for future research would be to extend the analysis to include other national, subnational and supranational contexts of neoliberalisation, but there were not practically possible.

¹⁰³ Slobodian and Plehwe, 2022a, pp11-12

Source Selection

As noted in the literature review, the ideologies being studied here are discourses related to the political parties being examined. The discourse of an ideological community here is understood in a quite broad and amorphous way. Here we are looking at the entire population of persons involved in holding, maintaining and reproducing an ideology. If we think about the discourse around social democracy in the contemporary Labour Party, there are many forms of actors involved in the discourse around this topic including politicians, party bureaucrats, party members, members of the party, journalists and members of the public who are involved in debates and discussions. In form, these contributions to discourse may be casual conversations, planned speeches, published texts, social media posts, letters, marginalia and more. This is not to mention the contributions made by art, public memory, symbolic action as well as inaction, and silences. There is an overwhelming array of speakers and range of texts, such that it would be impossible to capture it all let alone analyse it in its totality. The same is true for the cases studied, while technologies of communication vary as appropriate to each context, the cacophony of voices is immense. For the purposes of research, I needed to determine a framework for identifying which sources to select and analyse.

The first note here is that while ideology is near ubiquitous with implications on nearly all political speech, not all speech is treated as of equal value in ideological discourse. Some voices and forms of media are received more widely and have wider impact on audiences. Attention to the reception of speech, which is central to understanding social discourses, orients source selection to consideration of the speaker and context of speech. Here we can be reminded of the ‘high politics’ emphasis on ‘politicians who matter’. While consideration of ideological communities requires and facilitates a broader consideration than that from high politics over who, and what, is understood to matter, it does not rule out all consideration of

the relative position of sources. While there is no *a priori* way to know who matters, this principle guides us towards consideration of influence, audience, and reception. As a researcher this means being sure to look at sources from actors that one has reason to believe are likely to matter, consideration of intended and realised audience of texts, and look at wider trends in the discourse, incorporating less influential actors, to observe both reception as well as to maintain a sensitivity to unanticipated influential actors and texts.

The second, and related, note here is that not all sources are equally relevant to ideological change. The speaker and form of material matter in an ideological discourse, but in consideration of ideological change we are looking for sources engaged in the contestation of ideas and construction of new decontested states. Consider if we were looking at ideological contestation regarding Brexit and came across a source from a hypothetical Conservative party leader giving a speech proclaiming their support for grammar schools, justifying them on the basis of meritocracy and parental choice. This speech is from an actor who would likely be of influence in ideological discourse and is involved in articulating ideological commitments, however it does not seem related to Brexit. Perhaps the leader may relate their thinking on education to Brexit or we may have reason to believe that concepts of meritocracy and/or parental choice are important to understand Brexit, but absent these factors, this text is not relevant to the phenomenon under investigation.

These issues are complicated by the extent to which ideology, its expression and contestation, is understood to often be unconscious and non-deliberate. As such, the search is not for key speech acts and forms of active rhetoric where an author may expressly state: 'This is your current ideology A, instead it should be B'. These sorts of claims are rare and there is no reason to believe that they would be particularly influential in the discourse, as we saw in the previous two notes. Attention is instead drawn to unexpressed assumptions and how these may change. These can often be found in the justifications provided for policy and action.

Justification typically requires reasoning. The claim: ‘We should adopt policy A rather than B because we believe in principle C’ is a statement from the author about policy selection and two choices thereof but is useful for analysis because it claims a principle and explains it in relation to the speaker’s context. Changes in claimed principles or how they are deployed are suggestive of changes in ideology. This is a process that requires interpretation on the part of the researcher, a process which will be detailed further in the next subsection, but what we can note here is that the method of source selection requires processing and interpreting many sources to find and identify relevant sources.

Constructing a large corpus of texts reflecting various factions and tendencies within the parties under examination is key to avoid missing important intra-party dynamics. While complicated by the breadth of actors, this collection of texts can be guided by consideration of importance. Priority was given to texts disseminated throughout the parties, indicating wider reception but also more commitment to content on behalf of the speakers/publishers, and to those received and produced by the identified key actors.

Types of Material

Having established the basic criteria for selection of sources we can discuss different types of sources that were both available and used in the research and thesis to explain their assumed research value and how they were approached. This will proceed as follows: academic literature, archival sources, memoirs and non-academic sources and interviews.

As noted through the literature review, there is an established academic literature on the cases studied, particularly so for the UK in the 1970s. Where the thesis varies from these studies is in its research question and framework for analysis. As such there was a large provision of existing analyses and sources for re-interpretation under the thesis’ schema. These varied from works that were contemporary to the case studies to those contemporary to the writing

of the thesis. These works were also key for guiding the approach to primary sources by providing established narratives, actors and concepts to focus on. While these would not prove to be exhaustive, with new elements developing through the analysis, this was key to the method, providing initial material for interpretation. Secondary literature also provided primary sources unavailable to the researcher as well as analysis of datasets and sources to pre-empt unnecessary redundant analysis.

Central to the method of research and claim to originality is the use of archival sources. Research included the use of eight archives including many subsidiary collections. Research was undertaken at the official party archives for both political parties corresponding to the case studies. This was conducted to uncover heretofore unused sources for analysis, reinterpret previously explored sources, as well as to better understand the context of existing analyses. Often, arguments from the literature were found to be more compelling after closer examination of the underlying archival material.

In practice, this form of material often took the form of formal minutes and papers from many committees in party, extra-party and para-party institutions (e.g., the Shadow Cabinet, Anglo-German Foundation and Bow Group Executive). These were useful for examining how principles were crystallised into a more concrete policy form as well as how they were legitimated. Minutes would often also reveal internal debates and changing papers reflect changing language; both reflect intra-group contestation. Also included in this category are a number of party materials that were more widely published and hence found outside formal archives. These include party pamphlets, newspapers and other publications intended for the political education and networking with the wider membership of parties and think tanks.

Another set of primary sources that are used are memoirs and other non-academic sources. These sources vary from archival sources through two different features, being written or

edited after the events have occurred, or being written as external, ‘objective’ analysis, or both. As such they have a very different intended audience and authorship than the archival material. These can be analysed as academic sources or as archival material depending on their content, quality and style. The time elapsed however introduces well known issues for retrospective accounts, in the form of both mistaken memories and the attempt to correspond with or respond to established narratives.¹⁰⁴ These issues are certainly not avoided with other sources, but they have different dynamics in these types of sources. Newspaper reports from the time fit somewhere between archival sources and non-academic sources depending on their genre and how they are being used.

The final set of sources used were interviews with actors, a source that was pursued after the pandemic indefinitely limited access to archives. Here, actors from the 1970s were interviewed virtually. Actors from range of different backgrounds and seniority were interviewed including MPs, party workers, think tank employees, members of student movements, and scholars of the Conservative Party. Some have been repeatedly interviewed by scholars and journalists while others have never before been interviewed on these topics. Due to the time elapsed since the case studies, the interviews related to the period of the Conservative Party case study and transnational analysis but was not possible for the West German case study. Due to the time since the 1970s and the advanced age of many of the interviewees, I was cognisant that these sources are particularly prone to mistaken memories.¹⁰⁵ As such, these sources were used to add additional colour to the archival and academic material, follow up details raised in those sources and understand personal dynamics of key actors but were not used as the sole basis of analysis.

¹⁰⁴ Gamble, 2002; Richards and Mathers, 2010

¹⁰⁵ The contemporary context of Brexit and Boris Johnson’s premiership were raised in a number of interviews and could certainly also factor into the narratives provided regarding attitudes to Europe and conservatism

The types of material available for analysis led to imbalance in sources between the case studies. The case of Thatcherism in the UK has a much wider existing literature, some actors are available to be interviewed, and archives and sources were much more available in the UK, especially during a pandemic. I was able to make trips to a number of archives in the UK but only to one in Germany. This is compounded by language issues making my reading and analysis of German language sources significantly slower. As such, the British case has both more secondary material and more original sources to draw on and allowed more extended analysis, including a second substantive chapter. The originality of the German case stems less from original sources than providing a new narrative to existing analyses as well as bringing more of them into the English language literature.

Method of Analysis

In terms of a method of analysis, the process of research in this thesis adopts a retroductive approach, seeking to develop a convincing explanation for an existing phenomenon. This is distinguished from deductive or inductive approaches through theory building via a recursive circle of explanation construction and assessment rather than distinct modes of hypothesis building and testing.

This process is understood in terms of the logic of retroductive explanation and theory construction, which involves a to-and-fro movement between the phenomena investigated and the various explanations that are proffered. In this way, an initially chaotic set of concepts, logics, empirical data, self-interpretations, and so on, at varying levels of abstraction, are welded together, so as to produce an account which,

if it removes our initial confusion, can constitute a legitimate candidate for truth or falsity.¹⁰⁶

Drawing together existing explanations and analysis of new empirical data, this approach aims to explain them in the language of ideology theory, testing new narratives for the case study and accounts of ideology theory.

As noted in the literature review, the data collection and analysis started with the inclination that thinking about ideologies socially, embedding them in relation to parties would provide insight in ideological change. There was also dissatisfaction with the swivel mirror account of conservative ideological change in the Freeden account with preference for a greater emphasis on intra-ideological contestation. However, these insights were neither clearly formed nor strongly supported with empirical evidence and would be modified and further developed as the analysis continued.

At the core of the method is a focus on ideological change as composed of conceptual changes. Following conceptual history and ideological morphology, language is seen to both reflect wider structural changes but also to create change. Here the driver is not the rhetorical innovation of individual actors but how changes in concepts ripple throughout an ideological community shaping structures and processes.¹⁰⁷ Concepts are connected to one another to establish meaning so changes in individual concepts entail repercussions for the wider ideology. The first challenge of method then is in identifying the concepts and conceptual changes that occur such that they can be analysed to explain their changes.

From the insights of existing literature, as well as the reading and interpretation of a number of selected texts, a selection informed by the considerations detailed in the subsection of this

¹⁰⁶ Glynos and Howarth, 2007, p34

¹⁰⁷ Stråth, 2006, p35

chapter on source selection, an initial set of concepts of interest can be identified. These concepts may be introduced or removed from the ideology in the case study, associated with a key policy or political change, and/or seen to have changed meaning in the period. Reading secondary texts also pointed to areas of change in policy or ideas that seemed imperfectly accounted for in existing ideational histories where ideological change may be found.

Analysis of these concepts took the form of reading texts from the ideological discourse in the relevant areas or related to relevant concepts to identify the meanings ascribed to the concepts by different actors at different times. This is done by noting which concepts are related to the concept and the wider conceptual constellation that gives it meaning. As noted earlier, discussion about policy is often useful here in directing actors to both give a more concrete form to their claimed principles, having to make trade-offs and commit to certain meanings. Policy debates also prompt actors to provide justifications for their positions, relatively rare situations where otherwise unconscious assumptions may be explicated. I note here that, although policy debates and trajectories are crucial for analysis, the thesis is not intended as a study of the details of policies or the legislative and policymaking processes themselves.¹⁰⁸ Policy debates are studied as insights into ideological contestation and construction.

Here different narratives from the literature can be applied to examine the extent to which they explain the findings in the source base. The findings when assessing some sources are used to assess further sources as well as to revisit the selection of concepts, creating a recursive process of concept and explanation selection and analysis. Movement between

¹⁰⁸ The literature on economic policy debates in these case studies is expansive and far more detailed than this thesis. As examples, see Williamson, 2015; Caines, 2017; Whisker, 2020

different types of sources involves different speakers, audiences and genre of text as well as moving between primary and secondary literature.

The narratives of individual conceptual clusters end up overlapping in the same policy spaces and responding to the same historical events. Conceptual clusters themselves overlap over shared concepts. Linking these narratives of change and changing conceptual morphologies facilitates consideration of the dynamics impacting the wider ideology. The process continues until a satisfactory explanatory narrative emerges. This explanation of method is quite abstracted, but this is almost necessarily the case for an analysis that is founded on interpretation.

As the British case was being analysed, a transnational character of the case study emerged. Undoubtedly informed from the sensitivity to the ideas, personnel and language of the German case, it became apparent that there was a clear case of not just similarity but also transfer between the cases. As a result, further research into this narrative and related conceptual forms became not just a sub-section of a chapter but a standalone chapter itself. Breaking this into a separate chapter of analysis was prompted primarily by the size of analysis but also because it presented a largely original narrative. In terms of method, it also made sense to pair analysis of the comparative dimensions of the cases with their transnational relationship. Research into the British case also prompted re-evaluation of elements of the continuing analysis of the German case.

After analysis of both cases was largely complete, with narratives of ideological change established for each case, comparative analysis was carried out to consider the extent to which the expected phenomenon of ideological change and neoliberalisation had been observed in each case. If such a phenomenon was identified, analysis proceeded to consider the extent to which a shared process of change was at play in both cases, as well as what

factors may have contributed to the shared outcome. These considerations did not entirely start after the other chapters were complete as familiarity with the literature had led to comparison between the cases in the initial research design and the process of research led to regular comparison between the cases on my part as a researcher throughout the research process.

The final part of analysis was to return to ideology theory and link the findings across the cases and modes of analysis to contribute to thinking about ideological change. Where the comparative chapter considers the empirical similarities in the cases this analysis focuses on the ideologies themselves and ways to think about political thinking and practice. As noted, from the outset of research a number of elements of existing ideology theory had been flagged as questionable, under-theorised or lacking in empirical support. Through the thesis, evidence had emerged to support certain explanations of ideological form and practice and established novel new theories as well. As with the comparative analysis, this form of analysis was latent throughout source selection and analysis but was most directly carried out after the other chapters had been completed.

Impact of Coronavirus

As noted earlier, the initial plan for the thesis was three case studies of the UK, USA and West Germany using archival research in all three countries. The coronavirus pandemic arrived and arrested research after the first wave of archival research in Germany had been completed but as archival trips to the USA and UK were imminent. Lockdowns and access restrictions meant that the American case study was dropped, and many archival trips were long postponed.¹⁰⁹ Library and interlibrary loaning was impacted, leading to a reliance on the

¹⁰⁹ Research at the LSE Library Archives and Special Collections, holder of key archival material, was not possible until August 2021, more than a year and a half into the pandemic.

ownership of physical books and digitised sources. This caused substantial delays and restructuring to the thesis as well as the incorporation of interviews as an additional source base. The indefinite length of these closures and interruptions further compounded challenges in responding to the circumstances. If the pandemic could have been avoided or foreseen, a follow-up trip to Germany could have been carried out, including returning to the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung as well as visiting additional archives.

3. West German Ordoliberalisation¹¹⁰

The neoliberalisation of the post-war Christian Democratic Union in what would be West Germany is a story of ordoliberalisation with the party seen to move from a christian socialist footing in 1945 to an ordoliberal approach, particularly economically, by the start of the first West German government in 1949. This chapter proceeds by providing a sketch of the historical developments in the period, contextualising discussion of discourse, ideology and party. Existing narratives of explanation from the literature are provided and assessed before we turn to an analysis centring on ideology and ideological change. Here three conceptual constellations are identified: the social market economy, the christian democratic union and the new economic order. Tracing these constellations and how they interact draws attention to the way ideological affinities between christian socialism and ordoliberalism facilitated neoliberalisation in the CDU.

Historical Framework

Understanding the immediate post-war period requires starting in Weimar in 1919. In the Weimar Republic, political parties were formed across a variety of lines including communist (KPD), social democratic (SPD), catholic centrist (Zentrum), protestant liberal (DDP),

¹¹⁰ Unless otherwise noted, translations are by the author

conservative (DVP) and fascist (NSDAP) parties. Many of these parties experienced fracturing, with splinter parties, leaders and factions. The Weimar Republic was politically tumultuous, culminating with the non-socialist parties cooperating with the Nazi party to pass the Enabling Act, bringing about the Third Reich. In the Nazi period, alternative parties, and their representatives, were repressed.

After the Second World War, in 1945, political parties began to form again, in the occupied zones. The socialist parties, the KPD and SPD, immediately reformed and began seeking recognition by the zonal governments. By contrast, the parties of the centre and the right did not immediately reform. In part this was due to de-nazification, as many of the conservative and nationalist politicians had been integrated into the NSDAP and therefore were banned from political activity. Another issue was that the complicity of the centre and the right in the rise of the Nazis made them unpopular as options for a post-Nazi political system.

Within this context, elites and other political actors in the centre and centre-right found a new configuration in the Christian Democratic Union (CDU). This new party would be a union of catholic and protestant forces, of liberal, conservative and labour politics variants. This union was presented as an alternative to the fracturing of the non-socialist parties and to present a united Christian and liberal democratic party. Due to the lack of a pre-existing national political apparatus, as well as zonal law, this party formed through the founding of local groups which then sought to unite at the local, state, zone and ultimately national level.

Because these local groups formed semi-autonomously, the manifestos at founding differ in stated ideology, reflecting the differing ideologies of the constituent members. Ideologically, this reflects the ideologies of the precursor parties from Weimar but also other groups such as the Christian labour movement and the Confessing Church. Because of this local specificity, there are a variety of policies and principles stated by the groups, representing different forms

of christian democracy. Nonetheless, there is a particular ideological form that appears in many of these founding manifestos, namely christian socialism.

This position can be seen in two foundational documents of the party from 1945, the *Kölner Leitsätze* from June and the *Frankfurter Leitsätze* from September. These reflect two different groups within the party. The former, based in Cologne around Dominican Catholic Eberhard Welty was associated with the Catholic Workers Movement (KAB) while the latter was associated with the writers Walter Dirks and Eugen Kogon, who would set up the journal *Frankfurter Hefte*.¹¹¹ These groups would have differences in ideology, which will be discussed later, but here we can note common language about the need for a new approach, in claiming ‘a new Germany will be created’ and ‘we want a new Germany’ and in linking this to a socialist approach to political economy, stating: ‘we support a true christian socialism’ and ‘we are committed to economic socialism on democratic foundations’.¹¹²

In these documents as well as the wider party discourse of the time, there is a tendency to criticise liberalism and totalitarianism alongside calls for a more socialised economy. Demands are made to nationalise heavy industry and for private capital to be constrained. The programmes often distinguish themselves from an atheistic and divisive Marxism, but members express a kinship with socialism.

Jumping ahead to 1949, West Germany has its first federal election, an election in which the CDU-CSU win a plurality. As such, they are able to form a coalition with the liberal FDP and a minor nationalist conservative party (DP). This is also an important year for the party as it finally becomes an integrated national party, with the exception of the Bavarian branch, the CSU, which remains a semi-independent sister party. Just four years since forming, one

¹¹¹ Pridham, 1977; Uertz, 1981; Patch, 2018

¹¹² ‘Kölner Leitsätze’, 1945, p2; ‘Frankfurter Leitsätze’, 1945, p1, 5

might expect the 1949 CDU to retain the christian socialist zeal of the party from formation.

After all, most of the major party leaders remained constant. However, this is not the case.

In 1949, the party is economically committed to the Social Market Economy, a policy programme associated with an approach to economics known as ordoliberalism. As part of this approach, the CDU resists nationalisation and places an emphasis on markets and the competition for regulating consumer goods. The economists guiding the party's policies such as Ludwig Erhard, Franz Böhm and Alfred Müller-Armack were associated with ordoliberalism and liberalism more broadly and were decidedly non-socialist. In a new political programme known as the *Düsseldorfer Leitsätze*, the new approach and the social market economy are elaborated upon. Prices and wages are explicitly tied to markets and competition and there is an expressed opposition to state or public guidance of the economy. Socialisation is tackled head on with the programme claiming that with the social market economy:

the problem of socialization receives a lesser importance. It was the positions of economic power of individuals that led to the demand for socialization. Through competition policy [*Leistungswettbewerb*] and control of monopolies, positions of economic power are destroyed or placed under the control of the monopoly office.¹¹³

This document explicitly ties the notion of a social market economy to the *Währungsreform*, the price and currency reform of 1948, carried out under the aegis of Erhard. In the programme, this event is credited with facilitating an economic resurgence in West Germany and as exemplifying the approach of the social market economy.¹¹⁴ This new political programme becomes the basis for the first government of the independent FRG.

¹¹³ 'Düsseldorfer Leitsätze', 1949, p35

¹¹⁴ 'Düsseldorfer Leitsätze', 1949, p28

Ordoliberalism

As mentioned, the economists associated with the CDU and its economic approach by 1949 are associated with the school of economic thought known as ordoliberalism, commonly identified as a form of neoliberal economics, but one with strong links to sociological thought. Ordoliberalism was developed in the 1930s by the likes of Walter Eucken, Wilhelm Röpke, Alexander Rüstow and Alfred Müller-Armack as a response to the fall of Weimar and rise of the Nazi regime which was understood, in part, as demonstrating the threats of democracy to economic competition.¹¹⁵ In the typically neoliberal fashion, it calls for state action to create the conditions for market competition. Amid the range of neoliberalisms, this approach is noted for an emphasis on an economic constitution constraining democracy to facilitate a free economic order, the ‘ordo’ of ordoliberalism, which facilitates a free and good society. Alongside this constitutional and moral character, ordoliberalism is also noted for its emphasis on anti-trust and anti-monopoly intervention, which could be seen in the quote from the Dusseldorf Programme. Ordoliberalism is associated with the Freiburg School of economics and the journal *ORDO*.

The limits of established explanations

This change in policy and ideology had been significant enough to see the defection of some high-profile christian socialists such as Maria Meyer-Sevenich and Walter Dirks, but most of the leading politicians of the tendency, such as Jakob Kaiser and Karl Arnold, remained active in the party. A quite significant change had occurred, at least in policy terms, and had been recognised by some members, but the change was largely accepted and accommodated.

¹¹⁵ On ordoliberalism see Ptak, 2004; Glossner, 2010 pp39-47; Bonefeld, 2017 pp1-14; Rahtz, 2017

This seems hard to square with the strong claims of principle made only years earlier. How does the literature account for this?

The first thing to draw from the existing literature is additional historical context. Instead of a sharp policy change between the manifestos of 1945 and the programme of 1949, we can note the intervening programmes of 1946 and 1947. More specifically we can examine two programmes that came out of the British zone, the *Neheim-Hüsten Programm* and the *Ahlener Programm*. Neheim-Hüsten in 1946 set out the social and economic policy in the British zone, emphasising individual rights and freedoms in an echo of christian social thought on personalism.¹¹⁶ These individual rights are held against concentration of power in the hands of business but also the public. However, despite the use of Christian social thought, christian socialism is never mentioned and socialisation is ruled out, at least in the short term: ‘The question of socialisation is not currently practical as the German economy is not free. In future regulation, economic and political considerations, foremost the common good, will be decisive.’¹¹⁷ An exception to this principle is carved out for coal mining. Interestingly, the word used for socialisation in this discussion passage is *Vergesellschaftung* rather than *Sozialisierung*. While the words are basically interchangeable, this may reflect a desire to avoid the language of the social.

In Ahlen in 1947, the British zonal CDU sets out a more detailed programme for economic and social thought. This programme has been identified as a high point for the influence of christian socialism as it calls for socialisation of mining and heavy industry, co-determination, profit sharing and co-operatives. It also opens with a bold criticism of capitalism: ‘The content and goal of this new social and economic order can no longer be the

¹¹⁶ Patch, 2018 p78

¹¹⁷ ‘Parteiprogramm von Neheim-Hüsten’, 1946 p5

capitalistic pursuit of power and profit, but rather in the wellbeing of our people'.¹¹⁸ However this overstates the case; christian socialism is never mentioned, 'private capitalism' and 'state capitalism' are jointly criticised and, most tellingly, socialism is only mentioned in relation to the 'state socialism' of the Nazi system.¹¹⁹ Socialisation is only supported provided there is a mix of private and state ownership.

This policy arose in large part due to policy debate in the North Rhine Westphalian state government about socialisation of the mines, with the British government encouraging nationalisation as well as the SPD and KPD. The CDU, who were a minority, then had to establish a policy on nationalisation. While the leader of the CDU in the state, christian socialist Karl Arnold, had sought to form a coalition with the SPD on this issue, the zonal party used the language of Ahlen to scupper proposals for nationalisation in favour of mixed socialisation. This policy deadlock lasted years until the American government was driving economic policy and opposed nationalisation.¹²⁰ This difference in administration will be touched on later in this section. Suffice it to say, however, the Ahlen programme was less radical than it may have appeared.

A link to the Dusseldorf Programme of 1949 can be made though, as the latter document makes a point to repeatedly claim continuity with the social and economic principles of Ahlen, despite rowing back a fair amount of the claimed commitments.¹²¹ This additional context, of Neheim-Hüsten and Ahlen, adds to the story of CDU programmatic change, but the underlying questions regarding ideological change remain unresolved.

¹¹⁸ 'Das Programm von Ahlen', 1947 p4

¹¹⁹ 'Das Programm von Ahlen', 1947; Lienkamp, 2001 p207

¹²⁰ Van Hook, 2004

¹²¹ 'Düsseldorfer Leitsätze', 1949

One dominant explanation points to the success of the Social Market Economy, known as the German Economic Miracle or *Wirtschaftswunder*. An early form of this argument appears in the Dusseldorf programme, but it is further elaborated in academic literature. As I noted earlier, Ludwig Erhard's economic policies as Economic Director of the bizonal Economic Council were closely associated with social market economics. This line of argument claims that the extraordinary success of these policies, or the myth of their success, was crucial in building support for the agenda.¹²² While this may seem counter-intuitive chronologically, there is some sense to this narrative.

Erhard was not elected to the Economic Council but rather was appointed. The council was heavily influenced both by the occupying governments, Britain and the United States, but also the politics of the parties making nominees. The story of Erhard's appointment is fairly complex, but a crucial detail is that he was not on the original set of nominees presented by the CDU but rather was a result of efforts to maintain a coalition with the liberal FDP.¹²³ The currency reform was not a policy developed by Erhard, but rather came from the occupying forces; however, the price reform, scrapping nearly all price controls, was.¹²⁴

The economic policies of Erhard and the Frankfurt Economic Council were considered successful by large groups in the population. Industrial production increased and polling showed high levels of satisfaction with the reform and a significant drop in relative concern about food and basic goods.¹²⁵ However this was not without its limits, the fall in concern in prices accompanied a rise in concern about money troubles more generally and

¹²² As an example of this argument see Wallich, 1955; Heidenheimer, 1960 pp.145-147; for a more critical perspective on myth construction see Kramer, 1983; Spicka, 2007

¹²³ Erhard was never a member of the CDU in this period, only joining the party formally when he became Chancellor in 1963; For details on Erhard's appointment see Heidenheimer, 1960, pp.136-139

¹²⁴ Spicka, 2007

¹²⁵ Heidenheimer, 1960, p146; Merritt and Merritt, 1970; Spicka, 2007, p40

unemployment rose. While Erhard had sought to revoke all price controls, public discontent in the form of a general strike forced concessions on the supply of basic goods.¹²⁶

The wider economic recovery and ‘economic miracle’ in Germany occurred in the 1950s, after the developments discussed in this case study and stem from a wider range of sources than just the reforms of 1948. While the perceived success of these policies may go some way towards explaining why Erhard’s social market economy was retained in the longer term it does not provide a complete account for why Erhard was supported before the reforms were a success and why his approach was adopted so quickly throughout the party. There must be more to the story.

The attention drawn to Erhard in the previous explanation connects well with the second established explanation in the literature, that which emphasises the personal politics of leaders and their agency in actions. Here we see analyses of the actions of several politicians, but particularly Erhard, Konrad Adenauer, and Jakob Kaiser. Erhard was Economic Director of the Bizone in Frankfurt, Adenauer was the leader of the CDU and based in Cologne, and Jakob Kaiser led the branch of the party in Berlin.

For christian socialists, like Kaiser and Arnold, this account points to their declining position in the party as driving the decline of their faction. Jakob Kaiser was initially a rival leader to Adenauer with strong support in the party. His decline in influence is attributed to two factors, his location and his relations with Adenauer. In terms of location, Kaiser was based in Berlin after the war and initially started to organise within the Soviet occupied zone, forming the CDU in the eastern zone with Andreas Hermes. However, Kaiser, like most of the CDU, was critical of the Soviet government and the KPD. In 1947 he was forced to resign

¹²⁶ Winkel, 1974, p62; Fuhrmann, 2017

his leadership of the zonal CDU and by 1948 had been exiled to West Germany, in the form of West Berlin. The East German CDU, the CDUD, would operate until re-unification but was not formally linked to the CDU and operated loyally to the government. The decline in Kaiser's influence in the CDU coincided with his issues with the Soviet Union and a geographical concentration of power in the Bizone. The Western occupiers also resisted the forming of a national CDU party, isolating those from different zones. While Kaiser had loyal supporters, he would be reliant on being invited to other major party conferences, outside of his base of support, into the territory of Adenauer.

Adenauer is presented in this account as a canny operator, managing the christian socialist faction out of influence in the party.¹²⁷ Adenauer is understood as being hostile to the language of socialisation and christian socialism and, while still a critic of unrestrained capitalism, firmly committed to private property and individualism. On several occasions, he deliberately excludes christian socialists, like Kaiser, from the conferences and programme writing in the Western zones to contain their influence. Adenauer's influence over the writing of the Neheim-Hüstem programme has been credited for its avoidance of the term christian socialism.¹²⁸

The story of Kaiser ties to the third mode of explanation in the literature, which point to structural shifts in power in the party. As can be seen in the cases of Adenauer and Kaiser, power and influence in the party became concentrated with the British and Bizonal CDU impacting the influence of actors based on geography. These changes had to do with the actions and interests of occupying governments, both in terms of geopolitics but also with political commitments. The British occupying government had initially encouraged

¹²⁷ Bösch, 2001, p59; Van Hook, 2004, pp.143-149

¹²⁸ Heidenheimer, 1960, p69; Bösch, 2001, p60

socialisation of the Ruhr, in accordance with a Labour government in Britain, but as Britain suffered economic hardship at home, America became more influential over economic policy in West Germany.¹²⁹ The American government was more sceptical towards socialisation. The impact of occupying governors has also been cited as influential in the marginalisation of christian socialists from political power in Frankfurt, keeping their preferred candidate out of office.¹³⁰ Another power influencing voters would have been the Catholic church. While the christian socialists initially situate their work in relation to catholic social thought, like *Rerum novarum* and *Quadragesimo anno*, these entailed a reliance on support from the central church.¹³¹ Anti-communists in the church rebuffed Christian socialism and declared it unchristian.¹³² This claim would likely have impacted the views of some, and likely many, Catholics.

The other structural factor here is the demographic composition of the party. From 1945 onwards the party expands from its original small groups to a party with members and one that appeals to voters. At once this increases the number of agents and voices in the party but it also changes the composition. As the party expands, the voices of the original, primarily Catholic, trade unionist voices are diluted, especially with the increase in Protestant and middle-class voters. Whether due to material interests or more personal histories, these voters and members presented a demand for a move towards conservatism and liberalism. Adenauer argued against the use of the language of christian socialism in 1946 based on it being *politically* harmful, that it would repel potential voters.¹³³

¹²⁹ Carden, 1979

¹³⁰ Uertz, 1981, p63

¹³¹ One of the drafters of *Quadragesimo anno*, Oswald von Nell-Breuning was active in debates regarding economic and social policy in the CDU from formation through to his death in 1991 – including these very debates. Later in his career, Nell-Breuning was also a drafter of *Gaudium et Spes* as part of Vatican II.

¹³² Patch, 2018, pp80-81

¹³³ Patch, 2018, p79

While these different narratives from the existing literature provide insight into the move in the CDU between 1945 and 1949, they overwhelmingly centre the perspective of Adenauer and other champions of Erhard's social market economy. We get a sense of who the advocates of this approach were and why they were powerful in the party. What is less clear is why the rest of the party, especially those who were initially hostile, were receptive to these arguments. The interaction between these groups is often murky. It is useful here to consider a perspective on this literature from 1975.

Since Christians for whom socialism was not just a temporary fashionable movement “were politically defeated, memory of them was suppressed or destroyed. That history books ordinarily recount historical events from the victor's point of view is a well known fact”¹³⁴

Understanding the motivations and justifications that appealed to the ‘defeated’ is important here to avoid ignoring their agency or treating the success of neoliberal as predetermined. As we will see, considering this period through the lens of ideology, examining the ideas being contested, offers additional insights to the existing literature.

Focussing on ideology

A series of authors have already approached the topic of christian democracy in this period and identified a unique concept, or a set thereof, as the defining concept(s) to explain the period. A sample of these concepts would include anti-materialism,¹³⁵ the family,¹³⁶ the social market economy,¹³⁷ and philosophy of history.¹³⁸ These different strands intertwine

¹³⁴ Lienkamp, 2001, fn5 p197 quoting Dirks, Schmidt and Stankowski *Christen für den Sozialismus*; translation Lienkamp

¹³⁵ Mitchell, 1995; Invernizzi Accetti, 2019

¹³⁶ Chappel, 2018

¹³⁷ Fuhrmann, 2017

¹³⁸ Walter, 1987; Invernizzi Accetti, 2019

and inter-relate, but their treatment in the literature, as separate explanations, obscures their relations. One of the merits of looking at this development through an ideology studies approach, is to recognise the relationships of the overlaps, how the shared changes are themselves an important phenomenon. An exception to this prioritisation of single concepts is Invernizzi Accetti, who does seek to examine christian democracy as an ideology, however his book has a much wider scope than just the CDU in the late 1940s and hence lacks the historical specificity of other accounts.

To develop an alternative understanding of this historical development, I will proceed by examining a series of conceptual constellations, sections of the ideological morphologies of the CDU in the period. Examining the dynamics of various sections of the broader morphology offers insight into the contours and dynamics of the ideology as a complete system, which is too complex to relate in the bounds of this section. In examining these constellations, I will examine three: the social market economy, the Christian Democratic Union, and economic order.

Social Market Economy

As has been explained in the historical overview for this chapter, the social market economy plays a central role in the narrative of the CDU and ordoliberalisation. Of the three constellations, this one has been the subject of the most scholarly work.¹³⁹ There is some contestation in the literature,¹⁴⁰ but it is generally accepted that Alfred Müller-Armack, one of Ludwig Erhard's juniors and more socially minded than others in the ordoliberal circle, initially developed the term in 1946 but that it gained prominence in 1949 with the Düsseldorf Leitsätze.

¹³⁹ See, among others, Schlecht, 1990; Wünsche, 2016; Fuhrmann, 2017; Biebricher and Ptak, 2020

¹⁴⁰ See Goldschmidt and Wohlgemuth, 2008, pp.262-263

In his dispositive analysis of the term, Uwe Fuhrmann traces the rise of the term within the party to 1948 and its use by Hermann Pünder as a *critique* of Erhard's 'free' market economics.¹⁴¹ In the drafting of the Düsseldorf Leitsätze, the term did not come from the ordoliberals but from a christian socialist ally of Pünder, Johannes Albers. Albers criticised Erhard's language of a 'liberal economy' to which Adenauer responded by framing the political debate as a choice between a 'planned economy or a market economy', at which point Albers interjected with the modifier 'social'. The binary was thereupon changed to one between 'bureaucratic planned economy or social market economy'.¹⁴² While the social market economy is associated with ordoliberal economics, we can here see that its language, particularly that of the 'social' market, was important for christian socialists as well. Looking at the conceptual cluster of the social market economy, linking it to the wider understanding of the social, helps explain this usage.

To start, one can look at the contested notion of the social in contemporary Catholic social thought. James Chappel has drawn attention to two different strains of thought that presented a modernist conception of Catholicism for the mid twentieth century.¹⁴³ Both centred the family in their worldview, but the two strains used different metaphors to model the family. The first presents a fraternal conception of the family, emphasising solidarity and fraternal bonds. Chappel links this approach to anti-fascist politics and Christian socialism. The second conception of modernist society utilises a paternal conception of the family and derives an

¹⁴¹ Fuhrmann, 2017, pp. 287-291

¹⁴² Fuhrmann, 2017, p. 302

¹⁴³ Chappel, 2018; See also Walter, 1987, pp75-80

anti-communist orientation.¹⁴⁴ If the fraternal model can be linked to Christian socialism the patriarchal model can be linked to Esping-Andersen's 'conservative' welfare state type.¹⁴⁵

The two approaches to the family have repercussions for social policy when the understanding of the family is extended to the social sphere. The fraternal approach extends the cooperation and solidarity between brothers and partnership in marriage to fellow workers and citizens. Using elements of the personalism discussed earlier, this approach emphasises equality and the role of civil society institutions such as trade unions.¹⁴⁶ The social bonds between people necessitates a political commitment to social justice. Solidarity, personalism and other aspects of this approach induced advocates to participate in christian democratic politics but also support collaboration with social democratic and socialist parties. The paternal emphasis on the relationship between parent and child, reproduction and the private sphere by contrast encouraged an emphasis on property rights and authority.¹⁴⁷ Chappel's historical narrative is that of a shift from the fraternal notion to a paternal notion and a resulting political shift of responsibility and defence of private property link drove these modernists towards political alliances with liberalism and conservative parties.

Both understandings of the family understood themselves to be 'social' by drawing attention to the relationships in the family and linking them to an approach to wider society. The family was constructed as a social entity and likewise society, particularly civil society should be as well. What the family was conceived to look like, as a model of equality or hierarchy, was contested and therefore so too the conceived organic natural sociability.

¹⁴⁴ While the fraternal and paternal approaches were held by men and women, there are certainly implied gender and heteronormativity in the conceptions of the family and society

¹⁴⁵ Esping-Andersen, 1990

¹⁴⁶ Chappel, 2018, pp110-111

¹⁴⁷ Chappel, 2018, p115

We can see these debates within the christian socialist wing as well. Different groups had different understandings of what christian socialism meant and entailed overlapping with personal commitments as well as religious order.¹⁴⁸ Following Bernd Uhl, scholars tend to identify three strains of christian socialism in the CDU: that associated with the Dominicans and Welty in Cologne, that of Dirks, Kogon and the *Frankfurter Hefte* in Frankfurt, and that of Kaiser in Berlin.¹⁴⁹

The Cologne circle were initially the first to make use of the language of ‘christian socialism’ but saw its association with political socialism, especially Marxism, as a misnomer. Instead, they saw their politics as an extension of traditional Catholic social thought seeking to achieve social justice. As such it is understood as a robust Christian social ethics. Per Welty:

The word ‘socialism’ has, in a direct sense, neither a historical nor a systematic meaning. It derives from ‘social’ and means nothing other than that social concerns are appreciated sufficiently firmly and broadly to form a doctrine or to name an outlook that is socially valid and appropriate. Words like ‘social’, and ‘socialism’ have an ideal meaning and therefore a meaning beyond history. They certainly allow for a closer delimitation, as long as the overall meaning is preserved and fully appreciated. There are also words or word derivations that, as they sound, were shaped by their historical origin and therefore have a historically fixed meaning. This group includes the word ‘Marxism’, which always refers to Karl Marx and his particular view of society.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ Jesuits and Dominicans are pointed to as having different positions on these debates. Christian socialists were not exclusively Catholic, examples like Otto Heinrich von der Gablentz buck the trend, although he was involved with the Lutheran Berneuchen Movement

¹⁴⁹ Uhl, 1975; Focke, 1981; Lienkamp, 2001

¹⁵⁰ Welty, 1946a, p57

As such, this group was also quick to drop the language of 'christian socialism' when it became controversial, although their underlying ethos was maintained. From its understanding of the social and socialism, it is not surprising that this group was critical of Marxism and nationalisation and instead called for co-determination, equitable division of private property and intervention to pursue social justice, the politics associated with the British zone where they were based.¹⁵¹

The other two approaches are much more comfortable with actually existing socialism, although they often referred to their politics as 'socialism out of Christian responsibility' rather than directly as 'christian socialism'. Here the point was to claim that actually existing socialism, or a variant thereof, as political approach and political economy followed from Christian social thought. As such, Christians were obligated to engage with socialism. We can see this in the words of Walter Dirks from the same year, criticising the likes of Welty:

Socialism is in fact the social raised to a concrete order in the sense of the cooperative. There is a clear boundary here between social policy, which does not necessarily affect the essence and thus the whole, but attacks parts and can therefore be unsystematic, and socialist policy, which 'goes for the whole' and the whole of social life. That this overall reform is necessary, an actual rebuilding of economic and social life, is of course the insight on which our policy is based. Anyone who disputes this, loses the right to use the word socialism - because they reject its content.¹⁵²

For christian socialism associated with Frankfurt, the goal was the development of a form of socialism that would appeal to the bourgeois and christian political blocs. Here there was a policy emphasis on state planning, economic democracy and collective ownership of banks

¹⁵¹ Lienkamp, 2001

¹⁵² Dirks, 1946a, p631

and heavy industry, a more expansive socialisation. This would be a politics for the middle class but would also appeal to Socialists.

In Berlin, the goal was similar in that it entailed cooperation with socialists and engagement with socialism. A core part of this christian socialism, which sometimes also used the language of ‘socialism out of christian responsibility’ was ‘bridging’ East and West both as foreign policy but also in economic and domestic realms. In the words of Berliner Otto Heinrich von der Gablentz:

Man only finds his correct place as a member of society if he is secured a space that remains free from social interference, for family life and for the choice and design of his profession. We have three principles of socialism - common property, economic planning and cooperative management – that should be implemented in such a way that they fulfil three requirements:

- to respect the family's own life
- to secure the most appropriate supply in the long run
- to give all employees space to develop their initiative at work¹⁵³

These reflect an amendment and constraint on socialisation but go much farther than the plans of the Cologne group.

What we have then are a number of divides among christian socialists. While all use the language of ‘the social’ as foundational in their ideology and especially economic thought, the conceptions of the concept vary. For an ideological type that by its name calls for

¹⁵³ Gablentz, 1946a, p35; The use of the word man, *Mensch*, here is normal German language usage but does seem to reflect a gendered politics of the family

socialisation, the attitudes to such a practice vary tremendously from limiting such a policy to only mixed socialisation of the most concentrated industries to more widespread demands.

I have established the view of the christian socialists, but what of the ordoliberal and others on their wing of the CDU? As those who were most associated with the policy of the social market economy, one would expect them to have a clear conception of ‘the social’. However, just as with the christian socialists, there were a variety of viewpoints articulated.

Alfred Müller-Armack, the ordoliberal who is understood to have originated the term, presents the concept as a ‘co-ordination of form’ between ‘the spheres of life represented by the market, the State and the social groups’.¹⁵⁴ This reflects the influence of his research into sociology, particularly religious sociology, alongside his work on economics. By constraining a free-market economy and joining it to social ends, this approach is intended to create a more unified and harmonious society, which he refers to as ‘social irenics’.¹⁵⁵ In his words:

Our economic policy will generally only be able to win if it sheds the overly ideological attitude and seeks to win mutual conviction through which the goals of social justice can be achieved, as well as the necessities of real economic activity.¹⁵⁶

This is generally a defence of market economics but calls for use of the ordoliberal framework, to facilitate markets, as well as interventions that are oriented to social ends. It is not altogether surprising that before using the term ‘social market economy’, Müller-Armack used the term ‘controlled market economy’.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ Müller-Armack, 1998, p259

¹⁵⁵ Goldschmidt and Wohlgemuth, 2008

¹⁵⁶ Müller-Armack, 1948a, p1

¹⁵⁷ Müller-Armack, 1947, p23; Goldschmidt and Wohlgemuth, 2008

This understanding of the social market was not universal, with Müller-Armack himself noting in 1956 that, “‘social market economy’” was initially felt to be a contradiction in terms’.¹⁵⁸ Ludwig Erhard, seen by the public as the face of the social market economy, rejected the claim that the approach modified market competition, with Friedrich Hayek later quoting him as asserting that ‘market economy as such is social, not that it needs to be made social’.¹⁵⁹ Hayek agreed, claiming that coupling the notion of ‘social justice’ to a market economy was nonsensical and opened the door to totalitarianism.¹⁶⁰ There may be recognition that social ends may be achieved through market economics, but this only requires the appropriate application of market economics rather than their alteration.

In spite of these concerns, Erhard did not shy away from using the terms social or social market economy as they became popular. At the Second Party Conference in the British Zone in 1948, Erhard delivered a speech, entitled ‘Market Economy of a Modern Character’, explaining the currency and price reform. This speech was one of his first public uses of social market language, predating the Dusseldorf Programme. Near the start he explains that ‘we have placed our socio-economic and social life on a new basis and created a new beginning’.¹⁶¹ Even without using the specific terminology of social markets, he clearly links market economics, and a particular form of market economics, to social life.

From this perspective, Erhard can be seen as pursuing the market economics he had sought all along, ordoliberalism, but with a more popularly palatable label. The distinction between Erhard and Müller-Armack is at times presented as that between an orthodox ordoliberal

¹⁵⁸ Müller-Armack, 1989, p82; translated in edited volume

¹⁵⁹ Hayek, 1983, p55

¹⁶⁰ Hayek, 1983, p56; for analysis of this argument, see Feser, 1997

¹⁶¹ Erhard, 1948, p3

‘Freiburg School’ approach and a ‘Cologne School’ approach, named after Müller-Armack’s home institution. Nonetheless these are typically understood as forms of ordoliberalism.

Across the ordoliberal wing, the social was understood as a site for the engagement of individuals, a notably more liberal conception. Rather than utilising the metaphor of the family, ordoliberals compared persons to individuated entrepreneurs or sovereign consumers.¹⁶² In both analogies, individuals turn to markets and competition as systems that facilitate greater choice and prosperity. The market rather than the family is the institution through which persons achieve freedom and their social ends.

This is not altogether surprising within the framework of orthodox ordoliberal economic thinking, outside the political application in West Germany. Ordoliberalism is based on the concept that individual freedom is a good thing but only facilitated by embedding individuals in a market, that ‘the constitutional framework induces self-interested individuals while pursuing their own interest to do what is in the public good. It was in the common interest of all citizens that legislature and government act in accordance with their constitutionally determined mandate to create, preserve and manage the regulatory framework that guarantees the functioning of the market’.¹⁶³ As the originator of ordoliberalism, Walter Eucken claimed in 1948: ‘Interdependence exists also between the economic and social systems. Not only do the methods of economic control mould the social structure; the social structure also influences economic control’.¹⁶⁴

One element that must be noted here is the overlapping concepts used between rival factions within the groups, christian socialists and ordoliberals, and between the groups themselves.

¹⁶² Bonefeld, 2012, p642; Olsen, 2018

¹⁶³ Glossner, 2010, p41

¹⁶⁴ Eucken, 1989, p33, translation in edited volume

The 'social market' is understood in a variety of different ways by different factions but does invoke key concepts for each group whether that is social justice, socialisation, social irenics or the natural society of markets, or a mix of multiple understandings. While the emphasis varies, with the christian socialists prioritising the social and the ordoliberal focusing on markets, they are both able to unite around a common language.

Before leaving the discussion of the conceptual constellation around the social market economy, it is worthwhile to discuss what the notion of a social market was constructed against, which alternatives were being rejected. A notion of a social market economy draws implicitly on a counter-concept of an asocial economy.¹⁶⁵ There are two primary foils for christian democrats in this economic discourse, Marxism and Nazism. The two are targeted by both christian socialists and ordoliberals and there are interesting dynamics in the discourse explaining why the social market economy is preferable, dynamics that exemplify thinking within the party about society.

Marxism and Marxists, the KPD in both Weimar and in the contemporary Germanies, are targeted within this discourse due to relationship between their ideology and concepts of class conflict and class war. From a materialist reading, as a party of the middle classes and business, it is understandable that many Christian Democrats would be apprehensive about the idea of class war, but this is insufficient to explain the concepts being used here. Christian socialists in the trade union movement also rejected class conflict, when their personal position is not being threatened. Even where there is self-interest in resisting class conflict the language and justifications offered can be illuminating.

¹⁶⁵ This language is somewhat anachronistic as the language of 'asociality' was not used in the party discourse, very likely due to the association between the concept 'Asoziale' and Nazi persecution. There is a literature on the CDU, ordoliberals and the churches in relation to Nazism but this is not the subject of discussion here.

Berlin christian socialist Otto Heinrich von der Gablentz developed a thesis in his 1946 pamphlet 'Über Marx Hinaus', but which he maintained in other publications through the 1940s, that presented the emphasis on class struggle as typical of a nineteenth century socialism and out of date in the twentieth century.¹⁶⁶ Gablentz instead argues that while Marx's historical materialist method is useful for understanding dynamics of capitalism, the natural inescapability of class stratification makes the analysis incomplete.¹⁶⁷

The christian socialists joined Marxists in recognising tensions between classes but differed by suggesting that co-determination and a reformed capitalist political economy could resolve these tensions without revolution or open class conflict. In a sketch of what christian socialism would look like in practice, an advocate pointed to an absence of class conflict and exploitation while retaining private property.¹⁶⁸ This allowed the new system to be distinct from liberalism and Marxism. Others, like Walter Dirks, would identify the State as a permanent aspect of society and hence not purely the vehicle for class rule and conflict claimed by Marxist socialists.¹⁶⁹ A desire to treat the present as a stable moment rather than a step to revolution was fundamental to reformulating class contestation through the state and economy rather than class conflict through revolution. Consider the words of Berliner, Walther Schreiber: 'We in the Christian Democratic Union, we do not want classes in the state. We want neither a proletarian class nor any other class. We want to have a united people. And we want all parts of the people to finally understand that they belong together'.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁶ Gablentz, 1946b; 'Die Anti-Marxisten', 1947

¹⁶⁷ Gablentz, 1946a, p32

¹⁶⁸ Geflitter, 1947

¹⁶⁹ Dirks, 1945, p2

¹⁷⁰ Schreiber, 1949

The ordoliberals shared the christian socialist concern about class struggle but approached the concept differently. Where the christian socialists had challenged the possibility of the classless society, ordoliberals actually actively sought to dissolve class boundaries. In particular, ordoliberals advocated for de-proletarianisation, transforming the working class into a capitalist middle class. The intellectual Wilhelm Röpke is emblematic of this approach.¹⁷¹ De-proletarianisation and the expansion of the middle class were valued both as a means to increase quality of life but also to embed people to achieve liberation.¹⁷² For Ordoliberals class struggle was to be avoided but also an aspect of politics directly targeted for elimination. This element of the ordoliberal project, undermining the basis for class struggle, was specifically noted by socialists and trade unionists as an outcome of the social market economy.¹⁷³

This framing can be seen continuing into the contested area of policy. In 1946 as Adenauer sought to unify the party through the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft CDU/CSU*, Adenauer distributed a set of nine guiding principles for the parties economic and social policy.¹⁷⁴ Created between the Neheim-Hüsten and Ahlen Programmes it is not surprising to see commitments to giving workers powers over their businesses and the direction of the economy. As with the christian socialist bent of the party in the period, nationalisation is supported in certain classes of industry, with mining directly identified, tempered by a desire for entrepreneurship. However, in amongst these claims is the statement that ‘class struggle is rejected as well as any abuse of economic power’.¹⁷⁵ Opposition to the possibility of class conflict and struggle

¹⁷¹ Ptak, 2004, pp.41, 294

¹⁷² Eucken, 1989, pp34-37, translation in edited volume; Olsen, 2018

¹⁷³ Ptak, 2004, p198

¹⁷⁴ ‘9 Leitsätze der CDU’, 1946

¹⁷⁵ ‘9 Leitsätze der CDU’, 1946

is specifically identified as a constraint on socialisation. The concern about abuse of economic power also echoes ordoliberal concerns about monopoly power.

The criticism of Nazism changes through the period under study, in a manner that reflects the power struggles within the party. We can start here by examining the ‘bridge concept’ of the Berlin CDU, which sought to create a Germany that would be between East and West and facilitate the existence of a united Germany. In a speech from 1945, immediately post-war, Gablentz makes this argument calling for a political approach bringing together the strength of East and West, freedom and order, while avoiding the dangers, identified as capitalism and the despotism of a command economy [*Zwangswirtschaft*].¹⁷⁶ In a similar vein, Erich Köhler, who would go on to be the first president of the West German Bundestag, gave a speech in 1946 describing the CDU’s approach as a ‘synthesis of planned economic steering and the old, Western idea of free and accountable personhood’.¹⁷⁷ The language of economic steering was used more broadly in the party in the early years of the CDU as a desirable alternative to the command economy, being used as well by Müller-Armack.¹⁷⁸ This carries through to the top of the party, with the CDU/CSU Economic Policy Working Group under the auspices of Adenauer circulating a document on guiding principles in 1946 claiming that: ‘The preparation and implementation of economic planning and economic steering are joint tasks of state bodies and self-governing organs of the economy’.¹⁷⁹

However, alongside the rise of Erhard and social markets discourse, we also see a changing attitude towards economic steering. Planning and steering move from being understood as part of appropriate governance to being elements of the feared command economy. By 1948,

¹⁷⁶ Gablentz, 1945

¹⁷⁷ Köhler, 1946, p21

¹⁷⁸ Müller-Armack, 1946, p5

¹⁷⁹ ‘9 Leitsätze der CDU, 1946

Gablentz writes of the necessity ‘to choose between two fundamentally different economic systems, namely the system of anti-market economic steering and the system of the market economy based on free price formation, real competition and social justice’.¹⁸⁰ In the same year, the CDU develops a draft economic programme that ‘call[s] for a resolute departure from the dictatorship of the centrally controlled administrative economy with its central planning, steering, recording, management, allocation and the obligation to provide any service desired by the state’.¹⁸¹

Here dictatorship, the established language for Nazism, is linked to state planning and steering. This criticism of capitalism can also be seen in the Ahlen Programme of 1947 where the binary of problems is presented as between state socialism, typified by Nazism, and state capitalism. While this language was read by observers as endorsing christian socialism, it clearly positions state power as a problem. In positioning the state and state power as a problem, the scope for socialisation is much reduced, and a political economy opposed to concentrations of power, liberalism and specifically ordoliberalism, is supported. Recall again that the origination of the term ‘social market economy’ in party discourse was a modification of a planned political choice between the planned economy and market economy. This shift in framing, from a desire to support sociality to a concern about state power also echoes the shift discussed in Catholicism from fraternal to paternal modernism.

The Christian Democratic Union

The name of the party under examination, the Christian Democratic Union, was not a decided fact in the period of immediate founding post-war. As the party was founded near simultaneously by a variety of local groups, there was variation in the names chosen for the

¹⁸⁰ Gablentz, 1948, p11

¹⁸¹ ‘Entwurf eines Wirtschaftsprogramms’, 1948, p1

new group. This can be best seen in the form of the Bavarian branch of the party, the Christian Social Union, but a variety of different names were also used such as Christian Social People's Party and Christian Democratic Progress Party.¹⁸² The unification of the party under a single name was an administrative action in the sense of creating a single party, excepting the CSU, at the zonal and ultimately national level but also had an ideological purpose. The name of a newly founded party is a positive joint expression of its intended identity so examining the constituent concepts indicates valued concepts for the party. Indeed, one of the earliest pamphlets from the party is dedicated to explaining the party and its name and naming is discussed in many early manifestos.¹⁸³ That the name chosen was different from the Weimar forebearers was indicative of a new coalition of people and ideologies. The conceptual constellation of a Christian Democratic Union, comprised of the concepts 'Christian' 'Democratic' and 'Union', is a valid subject of study in itself to understand the party it serves to name.¹⁸⁴

What alternative names were in circulation but rejected? Most significant was the mentioned move away from the previous party names, with only the liberal party, FDP, retaining significant membership to the right of the SPD. Other parties, such as the DP, BP and *Zentrum* reformed albeit, in much reduced forms.¹⁸⁵ Some on the left trade-union wing in the party sought to form a labour party but were unable to muster appropriate size.¹⁸⁶ Even with the set of labels discussed in this section a range of permutations also exist.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸² Kaff, 1983

¹⁸³ 'Was ist – was will die CDU?', 1948

¹⁸⁴ Heidenheimer, 1960, pp.34-35; Kaff, 1983, p.51

¹⁸⁵ These parties represent German nationalism, Bavarian nationalism, and Catholic centrism respectively

¹⁸⁶ This name is most associated with Wilhelm Elfes in Mönchengladbach but also was used elsewhere; Kaff, 1983, p58; Patch, 2018, p56

¹⁸⁷ The CSU is not discussed in depth in this chapter, as their variation is of limited relevance to the national party and discourse in the period. For more on the CSU label see Kaff, 1983.

This nominal vacuum and search for names created a political opportunity for both christian socialists and ordoliberals. Walter Dirks, a christian socialist, identified this initial condition as quite hospitable for his political project:

The CDU of the first phase was a 'left' movement - if only because the positions of the 'right' were neither represented nor representable at the time: fascist and the reactionary right had been eliminated, capitalist interests had no political effects before the currency reform, the conservatives were mute because there was nothing to preserve in the debris and rubble; one awaited all salvation from the future, from changes, plans and actions, that is, from a 'left' activation.¹⁸⁸

We can note here that these same conditions would have also helped ordoliberals who similarly had a new political project, unsullied by political practice. As Dirks notes, capitalist interests could organise around ordoliberalism after the currency reform around a similar argument.

So, how should we interpret the name selected? In the existing literature, the concept 'Christian' in the name has been primarily identified with the anti-materialist claim of the party.¹⁸⁹ What these sources reveal is a shared critique of previous political regimes, liberalism and Nazism, as overly secular and materialistic. This criticism is then also wielded against Marxist socialism and its atheism. The claim is that all three; liberalism, Marxism and Nazism; lack the spiritual guidance provided by Christianity. Christianity here has a moral and ethical value that is important for resisting the alienating and dehumanising failures of the previous regimes. This claim was buttressed by the fact that many early members of the

¹⁸⁸ Quoted in Bushell, 1998, p110

¹⁸⁹ Mitchell, 2003; Mitchell, 2012; Pridham, 1977, pp24-25

CDU had been active in the resistance to Nazi Christianity through religious institutions, Protestant and Catholic.

Catholicism in this period was associated with christian socialists. In setting out his political vision in the first issue of the *Frankfurter Hefte*, Walter Dirks centres the role of workers in the politics of a new Germany. However, he claims that they must be allied to Christians, to give guidance and depth to socialism.¹⁹⁰ Here Christianity is central to the demands of the moment. Dirks identifies that the party offered an opportunity through ‘real’ Christianity to guide evangelicals away from their tendencies to authoritarianism, nationalism and militarism and to transcend the bourgeois nature of the German churches. However, they could not be spared this political conversion, and the right Christianity would be essential: ‘The Union should of course "collect", but not all Christians and not without looking at them, only all those Christians who have understood the law of the epoch and the political mission of Christians.’¹⁹¹ Christianity and a form of ecumenical Christianity are crucial to Dirks’ understanding of christian socialism and the CDU, but this was doctrinally specific. Eberhard Welty likewise placed ‘christian ethics’ at the centre of his political programme, decrying ‘erroneous’ interpretations that uncritically echoed the interests of capital.¹⁹²

Ordoliberals were associated with Protestantism. While their arguments are often associated primarily with economic policy, as we see throughout this chapter there is a strong current of social and indeed religious thought. A series of publications in recent years have pointed to the Protestant, particularly Lutheran Evangelical, thought underpinning the ordoliberal worldview.¹⁹³ Early ordoliberals, like Walter Eucken, had been in close contact with

¹⁹⁰ Dirks, 1946b, p12

¹⁹¹ Dirks, 1946b, p23

¹⁹² Welty, 1946a, p61

¹⁹³ Manow, 2001; Hien, 2017; Hien and Joerges, 2018; Krarup, 2019a; Krarup, 2019b

influential theologians, like Dietrich Bonhoeffer, applying his ideas to their economic thought. Eucken argued that secularisation had driven the rise of communism and Nazism and that religion would be required for the new system.¹⁹⁴ This echoes the wider party discourse on materialism. In the ordoliberal ‘social irenic’, their ideology provided a way to make protestant ideas appeal to Catholics as well, echoing the non-denominational appended modifier of Christian.

An important element of the concept Christian was its ecumenical nature, distinctive from the denominational parties, neither particular to Catholics nor Protestants. This was explained as a means to avoid fracture as well as to build a new spirit of unity. This was also implied in the word ‘Union’ rather than party, which will be discussed later. This non-denominational stance was nonetheless approached from denominational frameworks. While the party shared a notion of the importance of Christianity for their politics, the use of the term in the party title was not unanimous. Some christian socialists in Berlin sought to found the party as a Democratic Union to be more inclusive towards non-Christians.¹⁹⁵

The christian socialist variant was initially more closely linked with the institutional church, providing a blessing and curse. Christian socialists were able to claim the support of influential clergy, notably Oswald von Nell-Breuning, but this claim was dependent on retaining support. This would prove particularly challenging in the context of a Vatican which had concerns about the links between socialism and the atheism of Marxism. Eberhard Welty took great pains to reconcile his understanding of christian socialism with the position set out by the church, largely arguing that the understandings of socialism were different, but it is notable that he identifies this as the most significant objection to address.¹⁹⁶ This

¹⁹⁴ Hien, 2017, p188; see Krarup, 2019b, p314

¹⁹⁵ Heidenheimer, 1960, p35

¹⁹⁶ Welty, 1946b, p132

particularly came to a head in 1947 when the Jesuit Paul Berkenkopf publicly stated that Socialism and Catholicism were incompatible.¹⁹⁷ The statement by Berkenkopf, against christian socialism, was reported in the wider CDU press and coincided with the shift in support against Christian Socialism.¹⁹⁸ As Ordoliberalism retained the language of Christianity but was not institutionally tied to a church, it was able to benefit from the Catholic turn against collectivism and was less susceptible to an analogous turn among its own supporters.

The Democratic element of the CDU moniker was less controversial. Traditionally, this has been linked with the Conservative Revolution of the Weimar Era, when Conservative parties, such as the DNVP had been actively anti-democratic. In this context it is suggested that the democratic element in the CDU name suggests a willingness to engage with democracy rather than stay outside politics or oppose democracy. However, this can be expanded to include the commitment to liberal rights and orientation against totalitarianism. The conception of democracy also connected to a desire to be popular and centrist, winning elections.

Among some in the party, the commitment to democracy went further. As we have mentioned before, notions of economic democracy were in circulation amongst both ordoliberals and christian socialists. Ordoliberals sought to expand ownership of assets as means to liberate the proletariat while christian socialists used similar language to discuss their organic conception of society. The following comment from Karl Arnold has echoes of the ordoliberal language on economic democracy but with the policy commitment of christian socialists:

¹⁹⁷ Heidenheimer, 1960. Pp. 120-121

¹⁹⁸ 'Jesuiten gegen 'Christlichen Sozialismus', 1947

Democracy must take shape in all areas of life: in cultural, in social and also in economic spheres. For the democratization of our economy, our constitution imposes a clear obligation on the state government to advocate for equal co-determination of employees in shaping the economic and social order when participating in federal legislation.¹⁹⁹

Nonetheless, there was some contestation of the importance of democracy in the name of the new party. In the south and west of Germany, the label ‘Democratic’ was associated with liberalism. As a result, the Bavarian branch of the party adopted the name Christian Social Union. This name was not used elsewhere due to the naming considerations discussed throughout this section but also because the term ‘Christian-Social’ had been used by an actively anti-Semitic party during the German Empire and was considered tainted.²⁰⁰ In the formation of the national party, the initial planned name was solely Christian Union, but this was changed after objections from Jakob Kaiser. Kaiser claimed that establishing a commitment to democracy was required to rebuff critiques of the party as reactionary.²⁰¹

The third and final component of the party’s title is ‘Union’ and can be linked to that desire to win elections. After the hyper-fracture of Weimar, the CDU was constructed as a *Volkspartei*, uniting a range of ideologies and segments of the population. This emphasis on a broad worldview and membership related to political strategy but in terms of ideological political culture also suggests an openness of some ideological dissensus. The political strategy was openly admitted by the party which claimed that: ‘The big political parties, if they ever want to gain a majority, must appeal to all groups of the people as a whole.’²⁰² The language of

¹⁹⁹ Arnold, 1950, p5; the mention of co-determination will be discussed in more depth later in the chapter, note too the mention of economic and social order

²⁰⁰ Heidenheimer, 1960, p35

²⁰¹ Heidenheimer, 1960, p76

²⁰² ‘Was ist – was will die CDU?’, 1948, p3

unity also echoed the call for solidarity advanced by many christian socialists.²⁰³ It has also been claimed that the language of ‘Union’ was intended as a democratic antithesis of the authoritarian language of ‘Movement’, tying the unity language to both christian and democratic claims of christian democracy.²⁰⁴ This emphasis on unity applied across a number of fields, encompassing its ecumenical approach, range of political ideologies and breadth of classes. This diversity created the conditions where a party could be the site of contest between ordoliberal and christian socialist ideas.

The attempt to broaden the base of the party beyond Catholic partisans did play a role in the ideological shift. It has been noted that as the party expanded to include more liberal and conservative members, changing the class composition more middle class than the previous trade unionist composition, support for socialism waned.²⁰⁵ This new bourgeois membership would later be identified as a core support for Erhard and ordoliberalism.

The Economic Order

As a third, and final, conceptual constellation we will look at the concept *Neuordnung der Wirtschaft*, reorganisation of the economy. In contrast to the previous two conceptual constellations, this concept has not yet been examined as a key concept in the period or in regard to ordoliberalism. As such, while this section draws on existing scholarship, its narrative is largely original.

Neuordnung can be translated most directly as reorganisation but as a compound word can be decomposed into two constituent parts, new and order, both of which are relevant to our understanding of the concept’s meaning for CDU members. The term *Neuordnung* had been

²⁰³ Bushell, 1998

²⁰⁴ Pridham, 1977, p23

²⁰⁵ Mitchell, 2012, p. 123

used by the Nazis but, to my reading, the invocations by those in CDU discourse do not draw on this usage. The term had also been used by the dissident Kreisau Circle, based around Helmuth James von Moltke, which did include future CDU members, notably Otto Heinrich von der Gablentz and Eugen Gerstenmaier, although the direct influence of this group on the CDU is beyond the scope of this thesis.²⁰⁶

The component relating to newness, echoes aspects of the previous conceptual constellations, emphasising discontinuity with the Nazi period, Weimar and the German Empire with the blank slate of *Stunde Null*, time zero. While this claimed discontinuity was not achieved, with a significant continuation of personnel and ideas from the previous eras, we will see that there was a demand to consider marking a juncture from earlier economic systems and to explore the idea of something new. This demand came from the more radical christian socialists as well as those more moderate, like Eberhard Welty:

It is now dawning, even for those most fearful and most reluctant to see a major reform of the existing ownership structure, that things cannot remain as they are and must be changed properly. The whole order of ownership is shaking. Whether the individual wants it or not, we must see that the benchmarks and recommendations offered, to loosen up and improve things, are not enough to get the situation under control.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁶ On Kreisau and *Neuordnung*, see Mommsen, 1994; *Ordnung* as a concept has been heavily examined regarding German thought of the twentieth century, including the ordoliberal concept of *Ordnungspolitik*. Paul Nolte has written on *Ordnung* in German social thought including consideration of ordoliberals and Catholic social thought but does not examine their use of the concept *Neuordnung* in depth, Nolte, 2000 pp.290-303; See also Nolte, 2003; Vanberg, 2015

²⁰⁷ Welty, 1946a, p61; Welty is discussing property ownership policies and criticising both state monopolies and unfettered capitalism. Welty defends private property but calls for a more social policy, expanding ownership for social ends.

The second term, *Ordnung*, relates to order but had a particular cachet within the Christian social thought that the christian socialists drew on. As noted previously, most christian socialists were Catholic, and the Thomist and Augustinian traditions were particularly influential. Jacques Maritain, one of the leading neo-Thomist theologians of the era, is often credited as the founder of the christian democratic political movement. In his ideological morphology of christian democracy, Carlo Invernizzi Accetti identifies organic structure as a core concept: ‘Organic structure means here that the natural order is assumed to be constituted by a plurality of reciprocally sustaining sub-orders, radiating outwards from the human person and progressively encompassing the family, the neighbourhood, professional organisations, the political community and humanity as a whole’.²⁰⁸

This is also connected to the concept of solidarism, again drawn from christian social thought.²⁰⁹ Solidarism refers to a system where business and professional interests engage to mediate and develop mutually agreeable ends. Unlike a more traditional account of corporatism this structure is not through state mandated and dominated systems and rather is spontaneous. As such, social and economic institutions can be understood as elements of an organic order that ties people to the good. The neo-Thomist approach points to the fallen status of man and the challenge of negotiating the pursuit of the City of God in the City of Man and uses the emergent common good to guide one to the other.²¹⁰

This relates to the concept of personalism, once again from Catholic social thought. Under personalism, or christian individualism, Catholics embraced ‘an understanding of the Christian individual responsible to God and the community’.²¹¹ In the absence of the organic

²⁰⁸ Invernizzi Accetti, 2019, p346

²⁰⁹ Misner, 2003; Invernizzi Accetti, 2019, p 151

²¹⁰ Invernizzi Accetti, 2019, pp36-37

²¹¹ Mitchell, 2012, p91

natural order, man is understood to be atomised and alienated. Here we see the criticism of ‘materialist ideologies’, that they overlook the spiritual and communal oriented needs of the person. A commitment to persons and ‘human dignity’ was at the basis of the critique of collectivism and capitalist individualism and worked by situating individuals in relation to the natural order and its institutions. A clear explanation of this position, linking the concepts exists in P. Geflitter’s ‘sketch’ of christian socialism in 1947:

By christian socialism we mean a completely new societal order, without precedent, that is just as far removed from collectivism of the Marxist type as it is from the individualism of liberalism. It is the synthesis between the God-given rights of the individual and those of the community, according to the nature of man, who is a self-contained personality and a member of the community at one and the same time.²¹²

As its very name and central journal, *Ordo*, suggest, notions of order are also crucial to the conceptual framework of ordoliberalism. By contrast with christian socialism, ordoliberalism has been associated with a Lutheran approach and with it a particular understanding of order drawing on both this theological tradition and the work of Husserl.²¹³ Here, the approach to order is less focussed on a natural order but rather presents a ‘rule-based order’. The Lutheran aspect of this argument is drawn not just from the fact that many of the economists who were early ordoliberals were Lutheran or other Protestants, as has been discussed previously, but also links in theology.

Troels Krarup has pointed to a conception within evangelical Lutheranism that finds justice as being with God alone, inaccessible to man, and as such rejects humanism.²¹⁴ Such a notion

²¹² Geflitter, 1947, p1

²¹³ Manow, 2001; Goldschmidt and Rauchenschwandtner, 2007; Krarup, 2019a; Krarup, 2019b

²¹⁴ Krarup, 2019a

emphasises man's fallen character. Because human rulers cannot achieve properly just rule it is important to use rules and laws to restrain governing authorities and prevent them from overstepping and doing things that are wrong. Order is not natural; it must be created. This explains the ordoliberal commitment to setting constitutional constraints. Per Franz Böhm, an economic order 'is not only a technical but also a moral order'.²¹⁵

Drawing a middle ground between liberalism and communism, this approach argues that the liberal market system failed in the Great Depression due to distortions from centralisation of power in monopolies. As such it argues that rules and laws are needed to set boundaries for markets in order to facilitate a properly functioning market system. Similarly, ordoliberalism emphasises formal constitutional protections for the market mechanism to protect the system from overzealous democracy, which it sees in both state-captured liberalism and class interest Marxism. As with Lutheranism, the weaknesses of man require disciplining through rules and, for ordoliberals, the market.

Ordoliberalism also relies on a concept of the person in its form of liberalism. Here there is exists an understanding of the 'human being' as a liberated human, something to be valued. This liberation, core to any form of liberalism, is intimately tied to the ordoliberal order, and with it market competition. See a quote from Walter Eucken, originally published in 1948 with the title 'The Problem of an Economic and Social Order':

For the leading intellectuals of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, freedom was far more than just a matter of economics and politics. It was not just a doctrine or a general principle but the only possible form of human existence. Without freedom, without the possibility of spontaneous action, man was not a 'human being'. Freedom

²¹⁵ Quoted in Manow, 2001, p188

was the basis of all moral thought for the great philosophers of this period; for only the person who is free to have wants and act upon them is confronted with decisions and is able to make his choice in one way or another. 'The metaphysical barrier to all moral thinking is the denial of freedom.' Only the ability to make decisions in freedom enables recognition and realisation of the binding moral order and only the free person, while observing and thinking of his own accord, can approach the truth. He is tied to the laws of logic, but not to opinions which some external authority or other forces upon him. Only the free man is capable of development. The law has the task of guaranteeing the sphere of freedom and economic policy ought to be about the free, natural order that God intended.²¹⁶

In isolation, these conceptions of the concept order and the concepts related to it are notably different. The christian socialist tradition emphasises a pre-existing metaphysical social order while ordoliberalism recognised order as a deliberate human or state construction.²¹⁷ However, one can note that they share crucial similarities. Most significant is that both ideological forms place great importance on order or orders in the economic and social sphere. This notion of order is also linked to a conception of the embedded person or individual who is enabled to become good through their freedom. The creation or maintenance of the proper order is thus socially, morally and economically desirable in both schemata, even if the notion of order is different. It has even been suggested that the

²¹⁶ Eucken, 1989, p34; quote is from Kant

²¹⁷ Parallels could be drawn with debates in the Conservative Party in the 1970s about the 'natural' character of market competition where 'traditional Conservatives' took umbrage with the claims of 'monetarist neoliberals'. Celebrating the natural and organic is associated with conservatism in ideology studies so this concept of natural order links christian democracy and conservatism conceptually. See Joseph, 1975a

ordoliberal term ‘ordo’, the Latin word for order was intended as a way to appeal to Catholics and those engaged with christian social thought.²¹⁸

Having established concepts related to new and order, what does the conceptual cluster of ‘New Order’ refer to here? Invocations of *Neuordnung* and *Ordnungspolitik* arose initially in the 1930s alongside the rise of ordoliberalism. Werner Abelshauser has identified a significant decision in economic theory by these early ordoliberals, although one that echoes comments that have been made more broadly about neoliberalism, that the ‘answer to the challenge of the global economic crisis was therefore not sought in the field of economic *theory* in Germany, but in the redesign of the economic *system* and its *order*’.²¹⁹

In the christian socialist framework the understanding of a natural order meant more than a mere rebuilding of industry and an improved economy would be incomplete. As persons are connected by the natural order to their employment and their wider society, social thought justified state intervention for social ends. For Gablentz a christian socialist economic order demanded economic planning, communal ownership and cooperative management.²²⁰

Socialisation was then part of the economic reorganisation.

Beyond Berlin, we also see demands for a meaningful *Neuordnung*. Eberhard Welty, from Cologne, named his influential journal *Die Neue Ordnung*. While he expressed more constraint on socialisation, this too was directly tied to a conception of the new order, particularly personalism:

If the personal dignity of the human being is emphasized today and from today, if almost everywhere it is emphasized so emphatically that there are inviolable basic

²¹⁸ Manow, 2000, p11; Krarup, 2019b

²¹⁹ Abelshauser, 1991, p19, emphasis in original

²²⁰ Gablentz 1946b

rights for humans, if one of the foremost concerns for our new order is that people are true to themselves, with unconditional self-respect, with "all-round personal responsibility" (Pope Pius XII), then this return to reflection is primarily due to Christian ethics.²²¹

In Frankfurt, Walter Dirks and Eugen Kogon were also animated about the need for a meaningful reorganisation and tied it to their demands for christian socialism.

We call it socialist, in order to name and acknowledge the "leap", that qualitative difference that exists between the old and the new order: between a socially reformed capitalism, that is constrained from every nook and cranny but fundamentally free, and one that is fundamentally aimed at the common good, bound and planned by him, even if in detail an as free as possible community economy. We name this new order socialist because, for reasons of historical honesty, we neither want nor can deny the connection with those who have been demanding this new order in many varieties and with many reasons, including inadequate and heretical ones, for a hundred years.²²²

Dirks and Kogon were keen to advocate for this 'leap' in the party against the forces of reaction and conservatism.²²³ These factions, identified as also within the CDU, resisted revolutionary change out of comfort and from a bourgeois position. Here, Dirks identifies a discourse claiming to speak for 'order' that seeks to undermine the progressive elements of the political moment, restoring older relations.²²⁴

Neuordnung was also invoked in much of the early christian socialist political advocacy for socialisation. In November 1946, Jakob Kaiser spoke in favour of socialisation of heavy

²²¹ Welty, 1946a, p49

²²² Dirks, 1946a, p642

²²³ Dirks, 1950; Rolfes, 2020, pp347-348

²²⁴ Dirks, 1950, p945

industry in the Ruhr, the socialisation policy Adenauer opposed, describing it as part of the *Neuordnung* that would be achieved in a united Germany.²²⁵ In 1947, a CDU parliamentary group, including Adenauer and Karl Arnold was formed specifically on the theme of the *Neuordnung* of heavy industry of the Rhine and Ruhr.²²⁶ This group would develop the language of the Ahlen Programme.

For christian socialists then, we can see the new order concept as a demand for a meaningful reform of economic policies including socialisation but also elements of the corporative agenda that had been set out by solidarism. The details of these demands varied with the speaker and the political context but they shared a language to express their demands.

The ordoliberals also made use of the language of a *Neuordnung* but used it as a shorthand to refer to very different policy, the currency and price reform. As early as October 1945, five months after the Nazi capitulation, Alfred Müller-Armack wrote a paper, translated for the British military government as “Reflections on Urgent Economic Matters”, that claimed that there was an agreed policy goal of a market economy *Ordnung*, but disagreement about how to achieve it.²²⁷

In the subsequent years, it became clear that there was significant demand for a currency reform. The occupying governments began developing policy plans for a currency reform very soon after Müller-Armack’s paper, preparing over a number of years for the 1948 *Währungsreform*.²²⁸ In 1947, in a text calling for ‘fundamental reconstruction of the

²²⁵ Heidenheimer, 1960, p96

²²⁶ Adenauer et al., 1947, p15

²²⁷ Müller-Armack, 1945

²²⁸ Tribe, 2001

economy', Jakob Kaiser also acknowledges that 'a currency reform will have to be done in the coming year'.²²⁹

The plans drawn up in 1948 by Erhard and others in the Bizone, known as the 'Homburger Plan' are explicitly named as a plan for *Neuordnung* of the monetary system.²³⁰ While the currency reform primarily ended up following the process of the Colm-Dodge-Goldsmith plan, a plan supported by the Allied governments, Erhard withdrew a number of worker protections from the proposal and added a full relaxation of price controls. As such the currency reform was more dramatic and a more significant break from the previous system than many had anticipated. In some ways then, it did form a *Neuordnung*, albeit one very different from that which christian socialists had called for.

After the currency reform, it is repeatedly referred to as establishing a *Neuordnung*, and this language is used by the party. Ludwig Erhard at second party conference in the British zone in 1948, spoke of the goals of economic system as a *Neuordnung*, calling for 'not the meaningless and soulless "termite state" with its depersonalisation of man, but the organic state, founded on the freedom of individuals, striving together towards a higher whole, that is the spiritual basis on which we will build a new economy, a new societal order'.²³¹ Here we also see many of the elements of the economic order noted earlier.

Alfred Müller-Armack also speaks of a new order linking it with a conceptual constellation we have discussed earlier, the social market economy.

²²⁹ Kaiser, 1947

²³⁰ 'Entwurf eines Gesetzes zur Neuordnung des Geldwesens' 1948

²³¹ Erhard, 1948, p17

The step into the market economy can, from the view to science, only be the first phase of a reorganization (*Neuordnung*), which must be followed by a meaningful reorganization (*Umgestaltung*) in the sense of a social market economy.²³²

In a draft economic policy in 1949, the party discusses the importance of reorganisation of the society and economy, something we saw with a number of the early manifestos, however here this is directly linked to competition policies, reflecting the ordoliberal shift.²³³

It is useful to reflect here on how the success of the ordoliberals in redescription of *Neuordnung* interacts with their policy expertise. While christian socialists had a well-theorised conception of how they understood the conceptual constellation, this was nonetheless abstract and led to policy disagreements. We have discussed before how christian socialists may have supported the notion of socialisation but that they disagreed on the role of private capital and the extent of nationalisation.

This ambiguity for christian socialists was not unremarked upon. A press account of a speech by Jakob Kaiser exemplifies this issue. While the newspaper was associated with the SPD, and hence we might expect it to be critical, the specifics of its critique relate to the political challenges involved with demanding ‘order’:

He speaks of an "ordering word" - that was the title he gave his remarks - and he fails to create order. No doubt he wants “order”. But which? ... He argues formally rather than politically. He invokes dignity and sincerity, as if his opponents lived in this sphere. He gives the impression of arranging something that is in disorder. It's not like that. Rather, his opponents have their system in a very clear order.²³⁴

²³² Müller-Armack, 1948b, p226

²³³ ‘Entwurf eines Wirtschaftsprogramms’, 1949

²³⁴ ‘Der Weg zur Ordnung’, 1948

By contrast, as professional economists, both in the civil service and in academia, ordoliberals were much more prepared for policy application. The political programme of ordoliberalism, *Ordnungspolitik*, had already been established such that when ordoliberals found themselves with political power they could wield it in their favour. This was of course helped by the fact that a number, like Erhard, were installed in less than democratic positions governing economic policy, while christian socialists were more regularly deliberating in journals or the weakened state governments.²³⁵

An indicative example here can be seen in 1947 when a number of CDU party leaders were contacted and asked to recommend economic advisors across a number of competencies. When the christian socialist Otto Heinrich von der Gablentz was consulted he provided a list. Under the competence of economic order, Gablentz recommended the name of Franz Böhm, one of the leading ordoliberals.²³⁶ Despite representing a different position in the intraparty debate over economic order, Böhm's expertise led him to be recommended by a christian socialist.

The language of *Neuordnung* was not an unavoidable element of German language. Existing scholarship has discussed how the political rivals in the SPD confronted similar issues, the need to rebuild the economy physically and structurally and move on from Weimar and the Nazis but had far less frequent invocation of the language of order, preferring terms like *Neubau*, new building.²³⁷ The CDU did use language related to rebuilding, *Aufbau*, but this is largely contained to 1946.

²³⁵ This did not just occur as some happenstance to the ordoliberals, they actively sought to develop contacts and influence over Allied economic policy; Ptak, 2004, p155

²³⁶ Gablentz, 1947

²³⁷ Walter, 1987, p195; Gilgen, 2003

Analysis

The three conceptual clusters discussed in this chapter are different but have significant overlaps displaying a semantic field of shared and related concepts. Together these indicate not just political thought but also economic, social, religious and strategic commitments.

While these three conceptual clusters form only part of the wider ideology constructed in the discourse, they are indicative of a wider worldview and ideological morphology. From what has been examined across the clusters, we can observe a few emergent phenomena.

Firstly, we can note the shared language used by ordoliberal and christian socialists. Across a set of conceptual clusters important to the party discourse, we can observe members of these groups invoking similar concepts, words and arguments even if arguing for different positions. Both may argue for a social market economy for different reasons, and may understand the social market economy differently, but they have conceptual resources to explain a commitment to the social and the role of a social market in achieving that end.

This is indicative of an underlying ideological affinity between the forms of christian democracy that both represent. Having a shared vocabulary means that existing ideational conflicts can be obscured but also provides a basis to settle them. Having a shared conceptual vocabulary means that the discourses from each ideological form exhibit similarities, flattening some of the disagreements. Some of this may be strategic use of rhetoric but, as we saw throughout the chapter, much of it was the result of longer-term ideational currents.

This does not seem to be fully captured by existing accounts of decontestation within ideologies. The decontestation explanation suggests that competing forms in an ideological community could be brought together through establishing shared conceptual language, establishing a shared concept and conception so it can be a basis for shared mobilisation.

Here we seem to see conceptions that are not decontested, ordoliberals and christian socialists

do not have agreement on their concepts and conceptions and are often aware of this. The point about ideological affinities is that ordoliberal and christian socialists do have a field of shared concepts, they are in the same ideological community after all, but they also have overlaps and similarities of language in the areas where they disagree. Even if these concepts and conceptions are not yet decontested, the shared language likely provides a foundation hospitable to future decontestation. Unlike an empty signifier, these concepts are already quite conceptually laden; it is not the case that any ideology or ideological form could display the same ideologies or similar ideological affinities.

We might also imagine that these affinities might draw groups together within an ideological community or facilitate integration of new groups into a community. This may go some way into explaining why the various splinters, factions and ideological currents from Weimar and the Nazi era unified under the banner of the CDU; existing explanations emphasise shared material interests and social networks but the construction of a *Volkspartei* was not inevitable. Having a sense that their ideologies were not as different as they may have thought, whether true or not, may have facilitated political cooperation. Likewise, these similarities may have made exit for disaffected christian socialists more difficult as the discourse can draw attention to affinities within the ideological community, affinities not shared by rival ideological camps. As we noted in the literature review, there is a question as to why neoliberal ideas achieve political power through centre-right parties. In this West German case, the weak power of the FDP plays a role, but these affinities may also explain the appeal of a relatively christian socialist party to ordoliberals, like Erhard.

From this notion of ideological affinities, we can think about ordoliberalisation in this case less as a story of christian socialists and ordoliberals as hostile rivals but rather incorporate a narrative of unconventional but persuadable bedfellows. Shared languages and apparent similarities in ideology and programme bring the two together in the CDU and this shared

language helps christian socialists reconcile themselves to the changing ideology as ordoliberalism becomes dominant in the party. At the same time, ideological affinities give ordoliberals a pathway to introduce and legitimate their political programme to those who would otherwise be critics.

A second observation arising from the chapter is the role of policies in mediating the relationship between ideas and factions in the party. This was most notable with the new economic order, where the currency reform was referred to by the same word as the call for a fundamental shift in economic approach. This transference in meaning meant that the application of an ordoliberal policy could be understood as delivering the demands of a christian socialist agenda, despite clearly not doing so. The social market economy displays a similar trajectory.

Alongside considering the ideological affinities built around particular concepts and constellations, this suggests that we must also look at how these ideas move from ideological concepts to political mobilisations and who is able to control the narrative of what policies are instantiating the conceptual language of a community. Moving between the policy demands of manifestos, campaigning literature and government policy indicated an important dynamic between these policies and the ideational discourse of the party.

A third observation concerns the foils that the CDU and christian democracy is presented against. As we have seen throughout the chapter, there is often explicit criticism of Nazism, Marxism, Weimar and monopoly capitalism. What is interesting about this selection is that none of them were significant political rivals of the CDU. In the 1949 West German federal election, the CDU, SPD and FDP combined to take more than 70% of the vote, with the next largest party, the communist KPD, receiving less than 6%. This was not a surprise result with polling in the western zones showing wide support for the CDU and SPD and only minor

support for communism, neo-Nazi parties were banned.²³⁸ The CDU would have been very familiar with the results of the local elections, as they were actively engaged in them, and they boasted of their strength in polling figures.²³⁹

As the other *Volkspartei*, the SPD was discussed but much of the criticism centres on critiques of Marxism rather than the specific policies and positions of the SPD.²⁴⁰ The SPD is often presented, erroneously, as indistinguishable from the KPD. A different point can be made of the critique of *laissez faire* and capitalism. Again, there is no serious rival party espousing the position that is claimed to be opposed. On occasion the FDP is attacked on this point but they were still a relatively small party and, perhaps more importantly, were not meaningfully distinct on these fronts from the CDU. Despite its remonstrations against them, the CDU was the primary party for capitalists, nationalists and liberals.²⁴¹

With these points established, we can now return to the changing language in the early political programmes of the CDU with a fresh perspective. Recall from the beginning of this chapter that the major programmatic change from socialism to the social market economy was one of the underlying problems of that needed explanation. The 1949 Dusseldorf Programme, which celebrates the social market economy makes a peculiar claim, stating four times that the approach in it, particularly the social market economy, is based on the principles of the Ahlen Programme.²⁴² Recall the Ahlen Programme had been heavily influenced by christian socialism but had avoided the specific term due to the influence of Adenauer. What the Ahlen Programme had included was language about a *Neuordnung*.

²³⁸ Merritt and Merritt, 1970

²³⁹ Adenauer, 1947

²⁴⁰ Adenauer, 1947; Schreiber, 1949

²⁴¹ Merritt and Merritt, 1970, p75

²⁴² 'Düsseldorfer Leitsätze', 1949

The content and goal of this new social and economic order can no longer be the capitalistic pursuit of power and profit, but rather in the wellbeing of our people.

Through a socio-economic order, the German people should receive an economic and social constitution that corresponds to the rights and dignity of people, serves the spiritual and material development of our people and secures internal and external peace.²⁴³

This extract was quoted in the discussion of the limits of existing explanations of ordoliberalisation. However, the analysis in this chapter adds additional context and insight into the language used, how it engages a number of conceptual constellations in the christian democratic ideology. What I have explained in this chapter is the conceptual ambiguity of the language of Ahlen. It was initially understood by christian socialists as a victory, using language they recognised and identified with. However, it also used language that was amenable to ordoliberals, laden with concepts they too valued, even if understood differently. Thus, as the discourse expands, including new voices, we see conflation of shared words and concepts, ‘stretching’ meaning, even for committed ideologues.²⁴⁴

As the party discourse adopted the conceptions of concepts used by ordoliberals it ended up applying those concepts in a manner closer to the policy preferences of ordoliberals than christian socialists. However, because it still used language and concepts laden with meaning for christian socialists, as well as ordoliberals, these christian socialists were able to see the new language, policies, and indeed ideology, as in continuity with, or at least an evolution of,

²⁴³ ‘Das Programm von Ahlen’, 1947, p4

²⁴⁴ Stretching here references Sartori, 1970; these reflections on ideology theory are expanded further in the seventh substantive chapter of the thesis.

previous christian socialist commitments. The ideological affinities between the ideological forms allowed them to arrive at forms of decontestation that were mutually amenable.

The period of this chapter covers 1945 to 1949 but the history of the chapter continues into that of the Federal Republic. The social market economy remains a common reference point in German political economy although over the years it has been invoked more broadly than in just the CDU. Both ordoliberalism and the social market economy have been discussed as foundational to the economic institutions of the European Union.²⁴⁵ But the historical case that best bookends the period of this chapter occurs in 1951 and concerns codetermination.²⁴⁶ Codetermination, *Mitbestimmung*, refers to companies being governed by a management board with parity of representation between workers and management.²⁴⁷

As we have seen in the chapter, the direction of travel in the CDU had been a move away from christian socialism with initial demands gradually watered down, particularly demands for socialisation. What had been maintained however was a call for co-determination which survived the moderation in the party as a concrete political demand in the Ahlen Programme and from the moderate christian socialists. However, the idea of parity of co-determination had been opposed by Ludwig Erhard and the business community who saw it as a threat to free markets.

However, in 1950 the Congress of German Catholics passed a motion demanding co-determination and the position got widely adopted in the trade union movement, by Catholics

²⁴⁵ Hien and Joerges, 2018

²⁴⁶ This account draws from Kurth, 1953; Patch, 2018

²⁴⁷ *Mitbestimmung* is notoriously challenging to translate. See a translator's note for the CRD in the 1970s. 'I have, throughout, translated the word "Mitbestimmung" as "worker participation"; the German word could be additionally paraphrased: "joint decision-making with regard to the destiny of the company, particularly workers' participation in instituting the supervisory board".'; Schneider, n.d.

and by Protestants. By 1951, Adenauer joined the left of the party in introducing and passing a bill making co-determination a requirement in the new economy.

At first glance, this may seem a counterexample to the story of ordoliberalisation, as a success for the christian socialists against the direction of travel. Indeed, the case is sometimes presented as such, or as a quirk of the latent Catholic commitments of Adenauer.²⁴⁸ However, we might also think about how the presumed domination of the party and ideology by ordoliberalism was incomplete. As we discussed, a narrative of ordoliberals dominating the christian socialists misses the way that christian socialists reconciled themselves to ordoliberalism, finding a language to accept ordoliberal policies. The christian socialists and their concepts had not disappeared in 1949. The radical demands of the christian socialist order had been dampened but elements had been sedimented into the Christian Democratic ideology. The case of 1951 may also indicate how ordoliberals also had to accommodate christian socialism into their programme. Since 1951, the social market economy has included co-determination as an element of its policy programme, despite this not being an intended element from the ordoliberals.

4. British Neoliberalisation

While the case of German ordoliberalisation is understudied, particularly in the anglophone literature and in relation to neoliberalism, the case of the UK Conservative Party and ‘Thatcherism’ are the subjects of a much more established literature. However, the case has much more to offer. While ‘Thatcherism’ as a concept has been widely studied with numerous mooted definitions, its essence is still contested.²⁴⁹ Ideological transformation, the focus of this thesis, has not been core to the research questions of existing studies. This

²⁴⁸ Chappel, 2015, p36

²⁴⁹ See, among others the competing explanations of Hall, 1979; Letwin, 1992; Gamble, 1994; Gallas, 2015

chapter begins with a short overview of the history of the Conservative Party in the 1970s, setting the context for the conceptual analysis of later parts. Then the party culture of the Conservative Party is examined, identifying how it poses challenges for conceptual analysis but also how relates to the historical questions to be resolved in the study of concepts and ideology. In the third section a series of conceptual constellations are discussed, sketching the contours of the Conservative ideological community and contestations. In a fourth section one conceptual constellation, wider ownership, is singled out and studied as a key concept in the construction of an ideological consensus. To finish the chapter a cumulative analysis is made of the conceptual contestation and changes examined in relation to the questions of the chapter.

Historical Context

The 1970s are widely understood to be a period of significant change in the Conservative Party. The period covers two party leaders, Edward Heath and Margaret Thatcher, two governments, four general elections and includes a number of significant policy developments in the United Kingdom. Among these are accession to the European Economic Community (EEC), the Ugandan Asians' Crisis, and the Sunningdale Agreement. However, the rise of Margaret Thatcher to the party leadership and the position of Prime Minister, and the related story of neoliberalisation, is dominant in established narratives of the decade.

This narrative will be complicated later in this chapter, but the basics are well established, and were in existence in the party discourses at the time. The story begins with a claimed 'post-war consensus', where the main parties, Conservative, Liberal and Labour, shared a common policy approach built around the Beveridgean welfare state, mixed economy and

Keynesianism.²⁵⁰ The 1970 election manifesto and ‘Selsdon Man’ are read here as Heath experimenting with neoliberalism, a turn away from the consensus and towards more free markets and confrontation with trade unions, a ‘quiet revolution’.²⁵¹ However, this change was short-lived and rolled back by a series of ‘U-Turns’, aborting the revolution and returning to consensus.²⁵² After losing the October 1974 general election, Heath was replaced as leader by Margaret Thatcher who brought about a change to the leadership and party. Thatcher was committed to free markets, privatisation and monetarism. After the 1979 general election and the ‘Winter of Discontent’, Thatcher would become Prime Minister and find herself in a position to implement her views. Under Thatcher’s premiership Britain experienced privatisation of public industries, abandonment of prices and incomes policies leading to widespread unemployment, and an economic resurgence. At least, such is the popular narrative.

There are a number of avenues to complicate this narrative, not least that ‘Thatcherism’ had a number of precedents in the Conservative Party before Thatcher. The ‘New Right’, associated with the likes of Enoch Powell and the Black Papers, arose in the 1960s and had been influential on Heath’s Selsdon Man.²⁵³ Margaret Thatcher may have been the eponym of Thatcherism but key actors, such as Keith Joseph, the Institute of Economic Affairs and Centre for Policy Studies, were active before her leadership and premiership. Monetarism and trends towards a neoliberal monetary policy have been identified in Labour and Conservative governments back to the 1960s.²⁵⁴

²⁵⁰ Toye, 2013; Blackburn, 2018; the ‘post-war consensus thesis’ begins in 1970s with Addison, 1975, but the contours of the rhetorical argument predate the scholarly argument and this chapter displays elements of the argument in popular discourse

²⁵¹ Bruce-Gardyne, 1974

²⁵² Bale, 2012; this is the subject referenced in Thatcher’s famous ‘u-turn’ quip

²⁵³ Seyd, 1972; Cowling, 1989; Hickson, 2009; Porion, 2019

²⁵⁴ Clift and Tomlinson, 2012

Nonetheless, the argument remains that a significant ideological development arose in the mid to late 1970s. While these currents had precursors, Thatcher's rise is seen to herald a move of neoliberalism into hegemony. In particular a synthesis of the authoritarian and economic liberal currents of the New Right, coupled to a popular narrative, is understood to present an effective political ideology, termed by Stuart Hall 'authoritarian populism'.²⁵⁵ This argument for hegemony adopts the framing of Thatcherites, with a clash between 'dries' and 'wets', those with a solid commitment to their Thatcherism and those who would concede to the interests of labour/Labour. In drawing together a coalition under Thatcher and providing a popular gloss, the new faction had the numbers and argument to take over the party. We can note the common argument for hegemony based on a claimed adoption of neoliberalism by the Labour Party under New Labour.

However, this claim of hegemony has been contested. Bob Jessop and the 'Gang of Four' presented an alternative account of Thatcherism, focussing on political economy, but which claims that Thatcherism never became truly hegemonic.²⁵⁶ This argument draws on opinion polling showing a continued resistance to the Thatcher governments among Conservatives and incomplete adoption of an alternative political economy. A series of articles have claimed that Thatcher was far from achieving hegemony in her parliamentary party, let alone the country.²⁵⁷

In government from 1979, Thatcher's first term has been identified as marking a change in rhetoric more than policy as she sought to placate the senior 'wets' still in her cabinet. In her second term she was able to pursue her policy programme with fewer party fetters. Existing

²⁵⁵ Hall, 1979, pp178-184; Gamble, 1994

²⁵⁶ Gallas, 2015, pp15-21

²⁵⁷ Norton, 1990

research has clarified the positions of the leadership and the CRD through the 1970s,²⁵⁸ but this leaves the question of ideological justification unanswered; if Thatcher did not have ideological hegemony until at least part way through her first term, how was ‘Thatcherism’ legitimated within the party? As with ordoliberalism, how was this neoliberalism justified to its critics?

Party Culture

Before discussing the concepts within the conservative discourse in the 1970s, it is worthwhile to contextualise this discourse not just in the political developments of the 1970s but also within the party culture of the Conservatives in the period. As we will see, the conservative discourse is closely linked with the Conservative Party and a number of characteristics of the Party in the period shaped its discourse or possible discourse.

Party culture has been a subject of interest for a while but can be associated with the historiography of the New Political History. A renewed attention to the political in social and cultural history took the form of the linguistic turn but also a contextualisation with party culture. As Lawrence Black explains: ‘Parties are not reactive, but active agents. Language is important in this, but so are political communication, internal and informal party culture, and how these define and construct a party’s audience – in short, political culture’.²⁵⁹ This examination of party culture has often taken the form of an examination of print culture, but it can be extended more broadly into discourse.²⁶⁰ Understanding party culture has an additional importance for parties of the right/centre-right, as they are less often studied. As Richard Kelly notes in his study of Conservative Party conferences, the conferences can often

²⁵⁸ Noteworthy here are Williamson, 2015; Caines, 2017; Begley, 2020

²⁵⁹ Black, 2003 p24

²⁶⁰ On print party culture see Bingham, 2011; Love, 2014

be misunderstood by external observers who are more familiar with the cultural mores of Labour Conferences and thus miss the nuances of behaviour in the Conservative Party.²⁶¹

One of the primary quirks that Kelly notes is the performance of consensus in conference motions, where nearly all motions presented to the conference are passed near unanimously.²⁶² Kelly notes that this voting record obscures the contestation within the party where the motions are written to be supported and hence arise after internal contestation. Delegates at Conferences will also speak against motions to demonstrate discontent but nonetheless vote for it, a position not indicated in the raw voting figures.²⁶³ This performed agreement or suppression of disagreement has been noted in the academic literature as a typical characteristic of the Conservative Party.²⁶⁴ We can see this exemplified in correspondence between Margaret Thatcher and Chris Patten about the future of the Conservative Research Department:

For someone in my position, I imagine there should be at least three rules. First, when you have left a job, don't offer advice to your successors from the touchline; second, don't bother the Prime Minister with your views on party organisation when there are so many other pressing issues; and third, don't risk the wrath of the gods by disagreeing with a Party Chairman who has just helped to win an election.²⁶⁵

This tendency is particularly strong when a leader is understood to be successful, but nonetheless is a general rule.

This conflict avoidance also takes the form of an avoidance of discussing political ideology, again in contrast with Labour, which more regularly sees open discussion of the ideological

²⁶¹ Kelly, 1989

²⁶² Kelly, 1989, pp12-13

²⁶³ See future MP Tim Yeo's speech on the 'Industry and Free Enterprise' motion at the 1977 Conference; '1977 Conservative Party Conference Report', p16

²⁶⁴ Seyd, 1980

²⁶⁵ Patten to Thatcher, 1979, p1

programme for the party. Patrick Cosgrave notes that from 1965, the leadership insisted that frontbenchers stick to their briefs and not ‘ramble generally over the field of political philosophy’.²⁶⁶ This is in part a reflection of the norms of the party but was also justified as political strategy. Adam Butler writes to Margaret Thatcher, for whom he was PPS, in 1977 that:

I agree [with Chris Patten, head of the CRD] that the number of ‘heavyweight; philosophical’ speeches should be severely limited. They are valuable and I believe helpful to you; but they contribute little to winning the next Election, apart from setting the general tone, for those who read or hear them, for your Administrations.²⁶⁷

Philip Norton notes that the majority of Conservative MPs were liable to follow the party line in both not openly dissenting in their voting but also in not identifying with particular wings or factions of the party.²⁶⁸ This does not mean that there is no discussion of political ideas in the party, we will see in this chapter that a number of concepts and the wider ideology were certainly contested. In the realm of political theory, a memo from within the CRD in 1975 discusses the prospect of introducing the work of John Rawls and Karl Popper, ‘the most distinguished recent contributions to political philosophy from the right’, to the Shadow Cabinet, perhaps inviting Popper himself, as well as a possible reading list for the Shadow Cabinet, with mooted texts ranging across Stuart Holland’s *Socialist Challenge*, John Plamenatz’s *Democracy and Illusion*, R. H. Tawney’s *The Acquisitive Society* and Friedrich Hayek’s *Constitution of Liberty*. For the purposes of this thesis what is worth noting is that this discussion was private, within the CRD and possibly the leadership, not public facing.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁶ Cosgrave, 1978, p152

²⁶⁷ Butler to Thatcher, 1977a

²⁶⁸ Norton, 1975; Norton, 2021

²⁶⁹ Douglas to Forman, 1975

The classification of Rawls as ‘from the right’ is interesting, as recent scholarship historicising his work has stressed the influence of social democratic liberalism on his thought, however scholarship from Ben Jackson and Zofia Stemplowska has also noted links between Rawls’s thought and that of Conservatives and neoliberals.²⁷⁰

These dynamics are intended to obscure internal party ideological conflict from external eyes. As a knock-on effect, however, it can hide ideological discussion and contestation away from academic analysis. It is harder to identify and analyse this contestation if it is hidden away from public expression. This does not mean that ideological contestation does not occur, it just reinforces the fact that it is more likely to be found in party-internal, private correspondence or reflected in memoirs and interviews than in publications intended for the public. That contestation is likely to be coded, disguised and/or unconscious reinforces the value of conceptual analysis in comparison to looking for explicit expressions of ideology and intention.

Despite this general historical tendency towards uniformity and consensus, however, the 1970s were also a period of increased fracture and factionalism within the Conservative Party. This was noted as atypical. In 1964, Richard Rose had influentially claimed that the Conservative Party did not have factions, consciously organised political groups, but rather tendencies, unorganised groups with shared ideology.²⁷¹ This was not universally the case, with groups like the Progress Trust, Tory Reform Committee and the One Nation Group forming, but the party tendencies were generally composed of dining groups and social associations rather than active factions.²⁷²

²⁷⁰ On work historicising Rawls see Forrester, 2019; Smith, et al., 2021; on Rawls, Conservatives and neoliberals see Jackson, 2012b; Jackson and Stemplowska, 2021

²⁷¹ Rose, 1964

²⁷² Seawright, 2010; Ritchie, 2018; Love, 2020

Through the 1960s, this began to change as groups began to organise into more organised and active pressure groups and form factions. Notable here are as follows: the Monday Club, which was founded and named in response to the ‘Black Monday’ of Macmillan’s ‘Winds of Change’ speech, indicating their support for empire and opposition to immigration, but was also an early home for Powellite economics; the Greater London Young Conservatives, led by Eric Chalker, which originally organised for greater democracy in the Party but quickly became advocates for a more progressive party; and the Bow Group, which had organised as a group of young Conservatives in the 1950s but developed a clearer position and orientation in the 1960s.²⁷³ A key member of the GLYC recalls that their first direct actions at a Conservative Party Conference in the 1960s, when the only other visible group was the League of Empire Loyalists, were clearly breaking protocol but that later years brought more groups.²⁷⁴

Into the 1970s, these groups multiplied alongside a growth of think tanks and as groups formed in opposition to Heath, both for and against the Selsdon Man approach. Here we can note the likes of Pressure for Economic and Social Toryism, National Association for Freedom, Selsdon Group, among others. Andrew Gamble recalls that his scholarship, written from a position on the political left, led to invites to speak from Heath’s critics on the right, who were desperate for ideational weapons against him.²⁷⁵ This burgeoning of groups changed some dynamics in the party, with the party’s political education college, Swinton College, declining as the new groups outcompeted its influence.²⁷⁶

²⁷³ Rose, 1964; Seyd, 1972; Seyd, 1975; Barr, 2001; Mason, 2004; Seyd, 2021

²⁷⁴ Wade, 2021

²⁷⁵ Gamble, 2021; Gamble would also speak at the Bow Group’s Annual Conference and get reviewed in party publications; ‘Bow Group Annual Conference’, 1975; Wright, 1975; Toy, 1980

²⁷⁶ Black, 2014, p205

These pressure groups were not wholly outside the influence of the existing party culture and norms. Minutes of the Tory Reform Group Officers show serious apprehensions about forming an ‘active and explicit parliamentary TRG group’, with the fear of ‘appear[ing] an anti-leadership group’.²⁷⁷ This created tensions with more radical members of the group who sought to implement ‘war tactics’.²⁷⁸ With the multiplying actors in the party, the space for open ideological conflict expanded but remained constrained. These tensions would remain in the party but stay simmering under the surface.

What this leads to then is a problem for the historical case. The established narrative of Thatcherism presents an alliance between authoritarians and economic liberals, a convincing argument for the ‘dries’ but it does little to explain the appeal for moderates and traditionalists, the ‘wets’. This group had become more organised and developed a clearer capacity to organise but is missing from the story of Thatcherism other than as a foil that was defeated. Given that the Conservative Party did not see significant departures under Thatcher, with non-Thatcherites staying involved in the party, the explanation for why remains unanswered.

Contextual Concepts

It would be impossible to cover the entirety of ideological discourse of the Conservative Party across a decade in a single chapter. There is a need to limit the content for the possibility of analysis. Within this section, I will examine a series of conceptual clusters that illuminate the dynamics of the period. The claim is not that these concepts are representative of the entirety of the party discourse but rather that they allow understanding of the important dynamics in the wider discourse. These set the discursive context for the discussion later in the chapter of

²⁷⁷ ‘Minutes of the Tory Reform Group Officers Meeting’, 1976; ‘Minutes of the Tory Reform Group Officers Meeting’, 1975, p3

²⁷⁸ Russel, 2021

the concept of wider ownership. While these conceptual clusters can be distinguished, they are not discrete, interrelating as expected from an ideology.

Conservatism, Dogma and Ideology

In the first Party Political Broadcast of her leadership, constructed to introduce her to potential voters, Margaret Thatcher explicitly introduces herself to viewers as a conservative, stating that: 'I see Britain as having, what you would call a middle-class approach, I call it a fundamentally conservative approach, with a small "c", because it's founded on belief in the dignity of the human personality and the right to let that develop. And the right to bring up your own children and look after them as you would. And a fundamental respect for the similar rights of others'.²⁷⁹ This argument expressly endorses an understanding of conservatism as a body of ideas, what we might term an ideology. Links are made to class as well as liberal understandings of rights and the role of state. Thatcher makes a clear link between this conservatism and the family, especially as the PPB continues to include the claim that her views are a result of her childhood experience and the influence of her parents. These lessons are founded in moral language of 'law and order' and 'self-discipline'.²⁸⁰

This orientation towards conservatism as a strong and cohesive body of ideas guiding political practice is a strong claim of Thatcher's and one repeated by many of her supporters but it is one that can be contextualised within a wider debate in the party. This understanding that conservatism as such an ideology, with clear principles to draw on, was contested within the party and the decision to shift the political agenda of the Conservative Party towards actively practicing conservatism was certainly controversial. Understanding this context is a valuable introduction to the party's internal discourses.

²⁷⁹ 'Party Political Broadcast', 1975

²⁸⁰ 'Party Political Broadcast', 1975

A claim from those in the party who supported Heath, the dominant approach before the Thatcher leadership, is that conservatism is in fact non-ideological. This can be seen exemplified in Ian Gilmour's 1992 book *Dancing with Dogma*, but the argument can be clearly seen in work of the 1970s and 1980s. The basic premise of this argument is that good/true conservatism is non-ideological. This position is set out in works advocating towards a 'non-ideological Toryism', for leadership that 'precludes dogma, [and] ideology' or in defence of a "true Toryism" ... seldom motivated by ideology, dogma or doctrine'.²⁸¹ Gilmour is now noted as a 'wet' critic of Thatcher, however, having served in previous cabinets, he is also an example of a member of the Heath governments. We can find a similar argument from within Bow Group circles. Discussion of a 1977 Nicholas Ridley pamphlet on social services dismisses the pamphlet as 'a perfect example of the insensitivity which is bred by an over-zealous application of ideology' claiming that, as an alternative, 'politics is about compromise, not ideology'.²⁸²

Just because these Conservatives claim to be non-ideological does not mean that they are. It is well established in ideology studies and the study of de-politicisation that presenting claims as non-ideological or objective is often just as ideological a claim itself.²⁸³ In this vein, we can look more closely at what those who claimed that conservatism is more open meant when they referred to conservatism.

Two concepts that recur here are those of moderation and centrism. In a sense this can be seen indicated in the titles of the memoirs of Jim Prior and Francis Pym, which call for *A Balance of Power* and *The Politics of Consent* respectively, but a clearer baseline can be found in 1970. In *Daily Notes*, a party publication produced during the election campaign, the philosophy of

²⁸¹ Gilmour, 1978 p8; Pym, 1984 p.xi; Russel, 1978 p7

²⁸² Braun, 1977

²⁸³ Ostrowski, 2022

the Conservative party is described as ‘the party of the centre, the party of “one nation”, the party opposed to extremes’.²⁸⁴

This is conceptually linked with claims to a conservative approach to change associated with Edmund Burke, evolutionary change. Here a core element of conservatism is simply slowing the pace of change to temper immediate harms. This claim is well associated with studies of Conservative thought and ideology but is interesting how rarely it is expressly uttered in the publications of the actors being studied. Evolutionary change is discussed occasionally but an elaboration of these ideas is rare.²⁸⁵ Instead, these concepts of ‘balance’, ‘pragmatism’ and being ‘non-doctrinaire’ are used to describe similar ideas of cautious politics but one that is flexible in content.

The emphasis on consensus and consent also fit with the emphasis on centrism. Criticism is levelled at ‘extremists’ from both left and right. As such the position is not an argument for left wing Conservatism, or at least not so conceived, but rather that there should be agreement between the party and centre-left and centrist MPs from other parties and traditions. Here Lord Hailsham claims that, had he won the leadership contest in 1963, Labour would have imploded with the right of the party welcomed to join the Conservatives in a Christian Democrat style party of the centre.²⁸⁶ Jim Prior reflects seriously upon a joking comment by Denis Healey about possibly setting up a joint party.²⁸⁷ While Prior rejects this possibility, Trevor Russel mentions that the idea of a party of the centre was taken seriously by a number of Conservative MPs and floats the idea of a party including ‘Heath, Whitelaw, Gilmour, Walker, Prior, Shirley Williams, David Owen, Bill Rodgers and Roy Hattersley’ on a ‘moderate, sensible, progressive

²⁸⁴ ‘Daily Notes 7’, 1970 p121

²⁸⁵ As an example, see Hogg, 1978

²⁸⁶ Hogg, 1978 p40

²⁸⁷ Prior, 1986 p263

and reformist' programme.²⁸⁸ The prospect that such a party, including a much wider swathe of the Conservative Party than the SDP, could have actually been formed seems quite unlikely. However, it is indicative of the fact that in certain wings of the party, disillusionment with the right and a recommitment to the centre was clearly seen as a desirable prospect.

This call for the party to focus on the political centre was far from universal in the party. In fact, a major element of the transformation of the Conservative Party is a shift away from the centre and towards the right. Keith Joseph, considered one of the leading political intellectuals of the monetarist revolution, infamously explained changes in his political views in the early 1970s as part of a 'conversion' to conservatism.²⁸⁹ This argument relies on the implicit claim that the positions he previously argued for, that of the Heath-led cabinet, were not truly conservative. Instead, Joseph and others argued for a move away from the centre and towards a 'conservative' set of ideas.

This strong positioning can be seen in Joseph's claimed conversion but also in the major strategy documents issued by the party. Two of the key policy documents of the early Thatcher leadership were 'The Right Approach' (1976) and 'The Right Approach to the Economy' (1977), with the naming convention extending to other pamphlets on the likes of transport and European policy. This naming was not an arbitrary choice as the leader of the Conservative Research Department at the time, Chris Patten, would describe them as not just statements of policy but also statements of strategy for the party.²⁹⁰ While the titles of these do not include the word conservatism, they do demonstrate an embrace of being on the 'right'.

²⁸⁸ Russel, 1978 p153

²⁸⁹ Joseph, 1975b, foreward

²⁹⁰ Patten, 1980, p20

In a speech to the Oxford Union entitled 'The Quest for Common Ground' Joseph criticises the elements of the party committed to the 'middle ground'.²⁹¹ This he describes as self-defeating, unstable and with a dangerous tendency towards the left. In contrast, he argues that the party should pursue the 'common ground', which he accepts will be described "as 'immoderate', 'right-wing', 'breaking the consensus'".²⁹²

By contrast with those who sought balance, this shift was presented as towards 'a distinctive, if too rarely articulated, Conservative approach'.²⁹³ In a speech to the extreme right Monday Club, Friedrich Hayek celebrates Thatcher and Joseph being described by Eric Heffer in *The Times* as 'fanatically believing in what they are doing' and attacks both Macmillan's 'Middle Way' and Gilmour's claims to a non-ideological centre as being part of a 'Muddle of the Middle'.²⁹⁴ He argues that the decline of England is due to the fact 'the Conservative Party has failed, failed because it refused to be bound by principles but has abandoned principles in the service of expediency'.²⁹⁵ The emphasis on consensus and moderation leads to unacceptable compromises to socialism.

This argument for a shift right was, of course, unpopular with the moderate Conservatives who were vocally critical of what they saw as dogmatism. Gilmour does not limit this criticism to his contemporary party. In his discussion of Conservative ideas in *Inside Right* he presents dogmatism as a flaw that appears even in the thought of the otherwise commendable Edmund Burke.²⁹⁶ However, the criticism is most directly aimed at his contemporaries. Notable is a

²⁹¹ In Joseph, 1976a

²⁹² Joseph, 1976a p23

²⁹³ 'The Right Approach', 1976 p19

²⁹⁴ Hayek, 1980 p4

²⁹⁵ Hayek, 1980 p3

²⁹⁶ Gilmour, 1978 p66

passage that accompanies discussion of the lack of economic orthodoxy in Conservative thought, due to a prioritisation of political and social ends over the economic.

Many conservatives became hooked on Keynesianism; they should now beware of addiction to the harder drug of monetarism... No doubt there is a tendency for Conservatives, like Keynes's practical men, to be addicted to the last economic orthodoxy but one, and to be the slaves of some defunct economist. But even that may be better than to be the slaves of the current of economic orthodoxy. At least the old-fashioned orthodoxies have been mellowed by time, and their adherents are less likely to cling to them with the proselytising zeal of converts.²⁹⁷

This argument is premised in a historical tradition, the subject of the next subsection of this chapter, but one should not see it as unrelated to the political context. As mentioned earlier, open criticism of fellow party members and especially the party leadership is not common in the Conservative Party. A discussion of the limits of a certain interpretation of conservatism that overlaps with the views of the leadership may well be a thinly disguised criticism. Where the similarities are very close, as in the passage above, it would be very likely.

An indication of the debates within the Conservative Party can be found in the Bow Group's annual weekend conference, 1975. Bringing together academics, journalists and politicians, this conference was entitled 'Principles and Pragmatism: Can the Conservative Party Have a Philosophy – and If So, What Should It Be'.²⁹⁸ Bringing a diverse set including Andrew Gamble, Nicholas Scott, Patrick Cosgrave, David Howell and Anthony King, the conference featured talks including 'Principles versus Pragmatism', 'Moral Aspects of Conservatism' and 'Compassion and Conservatism'. The Bow Group journal, *Crossbow*, featured similar

²⁹⁷ Gilmour, 1978 p231

²⁹⁸ 'Bow Group Annual Conference', 1975

arguments. 1974 finds articles entitled ‘What Conservatism means now’ and ‘Wanted – A Philosophy’ and articles from the decade include passages claiming that ‘what is important is for the Conservative party to think out where it stands and to re-define its philosophy’ and that the ‘main purpose of embracing extreme views within a party, is to give the party the impetus and the morale necessary to capture with more moderate policies the decisive central ground’.²⁹⁹

One may note the religious vocabulary and connotations of dogma which coincide with William Keegan’s discussion of monetarists as ‘evangelising’.³⁰⁰ Keith Joseph himself was nicknamed the ‘Mad Monk’ by monetarism sceptic Chris Patten, of the CRD. The Conservatives who opposed the shift right were not advancing a secular claim but did adopt a common language of religious fanaticism to use to describe their intra-party rivals. This language was adopted within the party by some on the right as well, as a letter from the public published in a Party newsletter expressing his support for Margaret Thatcher and her group of ‘Crusading Conservatives’.³⁰¹ This was likely a reference to Thatcher’s speech at the 1976 Conservative Party Conference which emphasised a need for confrontation with socialism and Marxism. The version of this speech published by Central Office was headlined with the quote ‘I call the Conservative Party now to a Crusade’, a theme Thatcher developed in the speech with the claim: ‘This is not just a fight about national solvency. It is a fight about the very foundations of the social order. It is a crusade not merely to put a temporary brake on Socialism, but to stop its onward march once and for all. To do that we must reach out not only to the minds but to the hearts and feelings and to the deepest instincts of our people’.³⁰²

²⁹⁹ Howell, 1974a; Hodgson, 1974; Alexander, 1974 p37; Maudling, 1970 p9

³⁰⁰ Keegan, 1984

³⁰¹ Wilson, 1980

³⁰² ‘Margaret Thatcher at the Conservative Conference 1976’

History

The preceding pages are the philosophical basis for the politics of consent. The experience of the centuries is their practical justification.³⁰³

Understanding why the new ‘Thatcherites’ were so keen to assert a distinctive ideology is related to a second conceptual formation related to the understanding of conservatism in history. In a way, the ‘wet’ approach, that conservatism is non-ideological but related to the tradition of a party, already includes this element. There, Conservatism as a concept is directly related to the history of a particularly political party. However, they were not alone; Thatcherites and other ‘dries’ also argued for their form of conservatism from their understanding of history and the Conservative Party.

As mentioned above, Keith Joseph framed his conservatism in a ‘conversion’ narrative where he had spent years supporting the Conservative Party but that the party had not been truly conservative. This was part of a wider criticism of the Middle Way and the policies of the previous decades. The policy elements of these complaints will be discussed in more depth later in this chapter, but in brief we can note the expanding size of the government, the economic policies it took and its cooperation with the Labour Party as key subjects for complaint. As we explore throughout this chapter, they clashed with the understanding Thatcherites held for conservatism. But this is not just a conceptual clash, it is importantly historical as well. Thatcher’s conservatives were using the contested history of the party to justify their claims.

One element that jumps out when reading pamphlets, speeches and books from the period is the extent to which arguments are justified in the history of the party. Edmund Burke is well

³⁰³ Pym, 1984 p194

known as a lodestar for Conservatives, but many other names pop up to justify political positions. A third of Ian Gilmour's *Inside Right* is dedicated to examining conservative thinkers from George Savile, Marquess of Halifax, through Lord Hailsham and another section is entirely a political history of 'Post-War Conservatism' emphasising its history and origins.³⁰⁴ The quote that introduces this subsection, from fellow minister Francis Pym, is situated within an argument that closely ties historical experiences to the concepts justified.

On the right, the same can be said to occur. Margaret Thatcher's first speech to the Conservative Party Conference after becoming Leader begins with her linking herself to the post-war Conservative Prime Ministers, listing them by name and situating herself among them.³⁰⁵ In the same year, she gives an interview with Norman Lamont and talks about philosophers and statesmen who inspire her:

During the recess I was looking particularly at the lives and work of Disraeli, also of Lord Salisbury – who was a very highly successful Leader of the Conservative Party and Prime Minister. He extended the power, authority and popularity of the Conservative Party enormously during his period of office. More recently the only memorable phrase illustrating our philosophy was 'property owning democracy' which was Anthony Eden's. And one has to applaud Harold Macmillan for the practical way in which he made Conservative philosophy a reality for the average person in Britain. He brought within the reach of the average person thing which hitherto had been the prerogative of a comparative few.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁴ Gilmour, 1978

³⁰⁵ Thatcher, 1975

³⁰⁶ Lamont and Thatcher, 1975 pp22-23

As discussed earlier, Hayek's speech to the Monday Club contextualises his thought within a series of Conservative thinkers including Burke, Macmillan and Thatcher.³⁰⁷ As they sought to call for a shift towards the right, or away from the centre, situating their position as still in continuity with a conservative tradition functioned as a justificatory mechanism for the right of the party.

An example of where these claims to historical justification clashed was the use of the term 'One Nation'. The term is associated with Disraeli and his idea of the two nations in one country, the rich and the poor. However, this concept has a long history of being claimed within the Conservative Party, generating an understanding of a political tradition and institutional form in the One Nation Group.³⁰⁸ However, in the 1970s what this tradition entailed was contested even within the One Nation group which included both supporters and opponents of the shift to free markets including Ken Clarke, Ian Gilmour, Keith Joseph, John Biffen and Geoffrey Howe.³⁰⁹

Language claiming the Disraelian tradition was broadly associated with the 'left' of the party, those who objected to the direction of the party under Margaret Thatcher. Norton and Aughey present 'One Nation' as part of the same 'progressive Tory' milieu as the Bow Group and Pressure for Economic and Social Toryism (PEST).³¹⁰ Indeed, the first issue of the Tory Reform Group's journal, *Reformer*, opens with a manifesto claiming that, 'whilst there are still some Tories living in the dark ages we shall have to be vigilant in the defence of "One Nation"'.³¹¹ Walsh notes that in the 1970s and 1980s, One Nation was seen as on an opposite end of the

³⁰⁷ Hayek, 1980

³⁰⁸ Walsh, 2003

³⁰⁹ 'One Nation at Work', 1976

³¹⁰ Norton and Aughey, 1981

³¹¹ 'If we didn't exist they'd have to invent us', 1977 p1

party from Thatcherism.³¹² This drew on a paternalist tradition that claimed that the two nations could be reconciled by ameliorative action by the rich to the poor and opposed policies seen to harm the poor.

However, Margaret Thatcher was also able to claim she was ‘proud to lead a party which stands for one nation’.³¹³ Enoch Powell, the first high-profile advocate for free market economics in the Conservative Party, a significant precursor to Thatcher, had helped set up and run the One Nation Group. Evans notes that while Thatcher used similar language on One Nation to those on her left, she did so with a certain conceptual move.³¹⁴ Rather than using paternalism as a means to unite the rich and poor into one nation, Thatcher stressed the role of patriotism as a uniting force. Both sides could claim a desire to bring two nations together, but this was inflected by their understandings of what barriers separated the two nations.

Here we can see language used within the party emphasising the Conservative Party as a ‘national party’. A pamphlet from 1972 entitled ‘For ALL the people’ claims that in contrast to Labour, which represents sectional interests, the Conservative Party is a national party and directly links this to Disraeli.³¹⁵ In preparation for a general election in 1978 a working group of Angus Maude, Rhodes Boyson, David Howell, Nigel Lawson and Norman Tebbit suggested a number of themes to centre messaging about and emphasised the Jubilee as a way to emphasise national pride and national unity.³¹⁶ While Tebbit now claims that the language of a national party in this document was intended to suggest a party appealing to the working classes and upper classes and across levels of education, akin to the ‘left’ view on Disraeli, the

³¹² Walsha, 2003 p72

³¹³ Thatcher, 1979

³¹⁴ Evans, 2009

³¹⁵ ‘For ALL the people’, 1972

³¹⁶ Maude et al, 1978

emphasis on national pride and the monarchy suggests that the patriotism interpretation was also in the mind of at least one of the authors.³¹⁷

Another example of contestation in this conceptual cluster is the area of recent political success. Both used political elections and their results as justification for their political position, disagreeing on how to interpret recent election outcomes. Note that it was not objective results that were contested, number of votes and seats were accepted, the contestation was over how these results could be interpreted and what they meant for contemporary politics.

One of the dominant arguments for moderation claims that moderation by previous conservative leaders was both a good governing style and also politically successful, winning elections. This is linked to moderation as the ‘natural governing party’ should not be purely interested in ideal policies but rather in those that would win power. This is made fairly explicit by Gilmour who frames the introduction to his discussion of Tory history with the following selections, very clearly developing a presentist history:

Before coming to a conclusion on the Conservatism of the post-war Tory Governments... it may be wise to look back beyond recent policies and events. We need more guidance and as to what is and what is not Conservatism than the continuity of the last thirty years. Guidance can be sought in the origins of the Tory Party, in its history, and in the views of Conservative writers.³¹⁸

Critics of the post-war Tory leadership have fallen into the same error. Nothing is static, and a brief look at Tory history has shown that Conservatism, not surprisingly, is no

³¹⁷ Tebbitt, 2021

³¹⁸ Gilmour, 1978 p23

exception. That glance also refutes the view that the Conservative Party has somehow deserted its past and its principles since the war.³¹⁹

After years without a stable majority government, moderation was presented as a return to normalcy and stable way to govern. Moderation and political success were seen as synonymous for the Conservative Party.

By contrast, Thatcherites saw recent electoral failures in 1974 as indicative of a failure of the post-war consensus. The ‘betrayal’ of the ‘quiet revolution’ and of ‘Selsdon man’ were blamed for both political and electoral failures. A reliance on ‘dated’ policies meant the old ways of doing things were no longer fit for purposes. This was also seen in shifts by the Labour party away from the centre, the Conservative Party likewise needed to shift to meet new political realities.³²⁰ To quote *The Right Approach*: ‘There is no future in trying to find a middle road between folly and common sense’.³²¹

Inflation / Monetarism

The most significant area where Thatcherites wanted the party to change its direction was on economic and monetary policy, unsurprising for a group often referred to as monetarists. On a policy level this was slightly convoluted with different indicators emphasised such as the M0, M3, the PSBR, and raw inflation.³²² A variety of policies were followed in pursuit of this aim, all with their own histories, including attempts to lower government spending, cuts to the public sector workforce, privatisation of nationalised industries and more. Examining the trajectories of these policies has long been a lively area of public policy literature but this section will focus

³¹⁹ Gilmour, 1978 p38

³²⁰ Howell, 1971; Howell, 1976

³²¹ ‘The Right Approach’, 1976 p16

³²² Minford, 1990

on how underlying concepts were discussed within the party.³²³ Most party members and MPs were far from public policy practitioners or economists and therefore the ideas were discussed in a different form and sphere from the minutiae of policy.

One area where we can see the changes in party discourses is the language used to discuss inflation as a problem for the party to tackle. Throughout the 1970s, inflation was seen as a political problem and used as a way to criticise trade unions and the Labour Party for its rise. However, while this criticism recurs in campaign materials the language associated with this critique changed over the seventies. In the 1970 election material, inflation is discussed, but primarily in relation to consumer prices. In a list of the failures that mark Labour's record, a list repeated across materials, this issue is referenced as 'a record rate of price increases' or 'the record rise in prices'.³²⁴ Both 1974 election manifestos begin with forewords discussing the importance of tackling inflation. The February 1974 manifesto discusses the challenges to prices globally but follows this up by directly blaming the unions and their price settlements for continuing inflation.³²⁵ The October 1974 manifesto is even more aggressive against inflation 'For inflation at its present pace threatens not only the standard of living of everybody in the country, but also the survival of our free and democratic institutions ... Inflation is therefore a moral and political evil as well as a social and economic evil. Everything else is secondary to the battle against inflation and to helping those who have been wounded in it'.³²⁶ In the 1979, Thatcher's first election as first leader, the discussion of inflation retains a dominant role. The manifesto lists five major goals for the proposed government with number one being 'to restore the health of our economic and social life, by controlling inflation'.³²⁷

³²³ E.g. Hall, 1993; Copley, 2019

³²⁴ 'Daily Notes 5', 1970; 'Daily Notes 7', 1970

³²⁵ 'Firm Action for a Fair Britain', 1974

³²⁶ 'Putting Britain First', 1974

³²⁷ 'Conservative General Election Manifesto 1979', 1979

This is explained as important because ‘SOUND MONEY and a fair balance between the rights and obligations of unions, management and the community in which they work are essential to economic recovery... Inflation on this scale has come near to destroying our political and social stability’.³²⁸ We can see a gradual shift in emphasis from confronting inflation because of its impact on common people to its impact on business to inflation as a problem in of itself.

This was key to the criticisms levied against monetarists as dogmatists, as their emphasis on committing to a policy prescription, control of the money supply, was at odds with a pragmatic emphasis on outcomes. This argument relies on a strawman of the monetarists, who would argue that control of the money supply was not just an end in itself. Some linked monetarism to ideas of freedom and it was often intended to improve the economy to public benefit. Keith Joseph exemplifies this more nuanced argument with his Preston Speech:

What I believe is that if we get the money supply wrong – too high or too low – nothing will come right. Monetary control is a pre-essential for everything else we need and want to do; an opportunity to tackle the real problems – labour shortage in one place, unemployed in another; exaggerated expectations; inefficiencies; frictions and distortions; hard-core unemployment; the hundreds of thousands who need training or retraining or persuading to move if they are to have steady, satisfactory jobs; unstable world prices.³²⁹

Nonetheless, it is true that inflation was often presented in the rhetoric of many monetarists as a problem in itself, rather than a cause or symptom of problems.

The rise of monetarism to appear to be a policy panacea may seem quite strange initially. For a party with a variety of wings and without a strong grounding in economic thought, it is

³²⁸ Capitalisation in original, ‘Conservative General Election Manifesto 1979’, 1979

³²⁹ Joseph, 1975b p31

peculiar how dominant the approach became. A traditional explanation for this growth is the role of think tanks like the IEA and the CPS which actively advocated for the approach, public economists such as Milton Friedman and Friedrich Hayek, and the influence of thought leaders in the economic press, notably Samuel Brittan and Peter Jay, who normalised monetarist arguments.³³⁰ These elements certainly play a role; they are mentioned in memoirs from the time and appear in other contemporary materials. Notably, the *Changing Gear* pamphlet from 1981 claims that ‘we [the party] swallowed down a great dose of liberal political nonsense which argued through the pamphlets of the IEA and the CPS’.³³¹

However, while this emphasis on institutions points to where monetarism was advocated for in networks that engage Conservatives, it does not necessarily explain why monetarism was successful and widely accepted. Conservatives would have been able to – and in fact, a few did – read and engage with continuity Keynesian arguments or left-wing economist arguments from the likes of J. K. Galbraith or Stuart Holland.³³² Different approaches to economics were available but were not taken up widely in the party. A useful way into answering this question is presented when Keegan distinguishes two types of monetarists; two reasons people advocated for monetarism.³³³ Regarding opposition to incomes policies, a key policy difference between Thatcher and Heath, Keegan identifies a type of monetarists who felt incomes policies should be opposed on pragmatic grounds, due to them ineffectual and counterproductive, and another type whose opposition to incomes policy was premised on a principle against state interventions. Michael Heseltine claims that for most Tory MPs, in spite of the new

³³⁰ Keegan, 1984; Smith, 1987; Cockett, 1994

³³¹ ‘Changing Gear’, 1981 p2

³³² Brittan, 1973; Howell, 1976

³³³ Keegan, 1984 pp75-76

terminology ‘all it [monetarism] came down to in the end was controlling public expenditure. Classic Conservative view’.³³⁴

This union of those opposed to state power and those sceptical about the efficacy of price controls offers an interesting contrast to the narrative of the ‘moderates’. While the language was primarily used by those who opposed monetarism, similar language was also used to support Thatcher’s approach. *The Right Approach* claims that ‘the ethos of modern Conservatism’ is ‘the philosophy of balance and moderation’.³³⁵ When the policies advocated for by monetarists can be seen as sensible or pragmatic, the ideas can be normalised and adopted by those who would identify as moderates. This was a deliberate goal of *The Right Approach to the Economy* which was written by Geoffrey Howe, David Howell, Keith Joseph and Jim Prior and edited by Angus Maude; all senior members of Thatcher’s team but across the spectrum of attitudes to economics and trade unions. Howell’s memoir presents this document as:

a truce-seeking document in the age-old war between traditionalists and free-market radicals in the Conservative Party ... an attempted bridge between those who believed a deal would have to be done with the all-powerful trades union leaders, through some kind of wages and prices trade-off, and those who believed that, with tough monetary policy and lots of supply-side reforms, the wage-price spiral could be broken. The pamphlet hummed and hawed between the two approaches and Margaret Thatcher disliked it.³³⁶

³³⁴ Hesetine, 2021

³³⁵ ‘The Right Approach’, 1976 p16

³³⁶ Howell, 2019 p131

Broadly, we can see the limits of a binary, wet vs dry or Thatcherite vs opponent categorisation of ideology; as with the German case, we can see instances where these factions are fragmented but also where they overlap. Groups did collaborate, albeit awkwardly, but did try to find common language for the party to use.

One should not forget the social and political pressures within the party against criticising the party leader. Here we must note that criticisms of Hayek, Friedman and monetarism by the ‘wets’ are also coded attacks on the party leader as monetarism was seen as her most distinctive policy position. These coded attacks were recognised by contemporaries.³³⁷

Consumers/Markets/Competition

It is a world in which the law can (and should) help the consumer to make a properly informed choice and to maintain the openness and effectiveness of a competitive market³³⁸

As discussed in the opening chapters to this thesis, neoliberalism is at times essentialised as little more than market fundamentalism and the dogged pursuit of efficiency. While such a description may apply to radical economic liberals in the 1970s it does not capture the wider semantic fields within which markets were understood by the advocates of neoliberalism.

A useful angle into this history is through Geoffrey Howe. Geoffrey Howe had been involved with the Institute of Economic Affairs and a member of the Mont Pelerin Society since the late 1960s and was both familiar with and supportive of elements of neoliberal economics.³³⁹ However, in his account of the ‘economic experiment’, William Keegan presents Howe as having initially been associated by the public with the left of the Conservative Party

³³⁷ Hayek, 1980

³³⁸ Howe, 1977 p5

³³⁹ Howe, 1994 p75

economically, rather than the monetarists, reflecting a greater willingness than the fundamentalists to support government interventions into the economy.³⁴⁰ However, as discussed in the last chapter, Howe became disillusioned with the effectiveness of state intervention and more open to monetarism.

From 1972 to 1974, Howe was appointed to the renamed position of Minister for Trade and Consumer Affairs. This naming of a cabinet level ministry for ‘Consumer Affairs’ is unique in British history, but it was not coincidental. The ministry in the 1970s coincided with greater activity within the Conservative Parliamentary Party Consumer Protection Committee which culminated in a pamphlet, *Square Deal for Consumers*.³⁴¹ Howe himself authored a pamphlet during his time as minister, entitled *Action for the Consumer*.³⁴²

Within these sources we can find discussions of consumer protection regulations but also an emphasis on consumer choice and the political priority of empowering consumers. This should come as no surprise as the concept of ‘consumer sovereignty’ has been linked to, neoliberal discourse including Milton Friedman’s *Free to Choose*.³⁴³ This concept emphasises consumer choice as a means to efficient markets and competition, seen as good. In opposition to state planning, which is seen as inefficient, it is argued that market mechanisms are more inefficient at allocating resources and prices. Empowering consumers allows them to compel producers to compete for patronage while consumers likewise compete for low prices and high utility. As discussed in previous chapters, this emphasis on markets and competition as desirable for their inefficiency is a known characteristic of neoliberal thought. The other element being a restraint on state intervention beyond facilitating the conditions for these markets and competition.

³⁴⁰ Keegan is referring here to Howe’s support for Concerted Action, which will be discussed later; Keegan, 1984 p72

³⁴¹ Taylor, et al., 1972

³⁴² Howe, 1973

³⁴³ Olsen, 2018

An emphasis on consumers is not necessarily a smoking gun for neoliberalism. However, within the pamphlet written by Howe during his time as minister, both Friedman and the concept of ‘consumer sovereignty’ are specifically invoked.³⁴⁴ This influence can be seen in later works where Howe restrains his support for government intervention in the economy, delimiting that it should only occur ‘to ensure that producers or developers face a sufficient *market* incentive’ and, in the quote which introduces this section, ‘to maintain ... a competitive market’.³⁴⁵ We can also see these ideas and analogous concepts adopted by others in the parliamentary party. Keith Joseph adopted both the language regarding consumers, claiming that ‘in a market economy, the consumer is king’ as well as broader neoliberal language around markets.³⁴⁶ Angus Maude similarly echoed the language of consumer sovereignty: ‘Despite the pretensions of planners, the fact is that it is only from the freedom of choice of the consumer as an individual that real progress comes. This is not only true of industry and commerce. It is true of society as a whole’.³⁴⁷

The linking of markets, consumers and choice offers a different semantic field to the cold calculus of economic rationality. The consumer is a neoliberal subject, a holder of capital emboldened by markets, bringing a different conceptual morphology. Similar to some perspectives discussed in the Germany chapter, markets are understood as a means of liberating this subject. The conception of consumers also links with the previously discussed link between inflation and prices, particularly consumer prices, and we can note the co-incidence of the decline of this language in the late 1970s as reflecting a changing neoliberal conservatism.

³⁴⁴ Howe, 1973

³⁴⁵ Howe, 1977 p7, emphasis in original

³⁴⁶ Joseph, 1975a p15

³⁴⁷ Maude, 1975 p28

This, however, was not the only additional conception linked to the concept of the market. While he also used the link between markets and consumers, Keith Joseph embraced the wider neoliberal logic more thoroughly. In a passage from his essay ‘The Economics of Freedom’, Joseph echoes Hayekian language of markets as spontaneous order and an information processing system as well as the wider neoliberal project of state action to create the conditions for markets:

The quintessential difference between socialism and market economics as a body of doctrine and precept is that market economics are wholly normative and empirical. No one invented the laws of the market or imposed them on society. The market economy developed spontaneously as a result of the actions of millions of people following their self-interest as they understood it. Comprehension of the market economy by thinkers like Adam Smith followed its realisation. This helped encourage the struggle against remaining obstacles to the working of the market, in order that the market realise its own inherent potentialities. This is the opposite of the Marxist and other socialist strategy which consists of hindering the working of capitalism in order to impose in its place an artificially created system packed with ambiguities.

In a sense, the market is a state of nature with empirically observable laws, like the laws of nature. Indeed inasmuch as economics is a social science, it studies laws of human nature. Now just as we gain greater control of over our material environment through understanding the laws of physical nature, and working with and through them to achieve desired objectives, so we can enhance our control over our economic

environment, by better understanding of the laws of the market, thereby working with and through them to attain desired ends.³⁴⁸

This perspective goes further than the weak claim that markets *can be* a more efficient and effective means of distribution or even a stronger claim that markets *are* more efficient and valuable means of distribution than the state and makes a metaphysical and oddly *normative* claim about markets. Market competition is necessarily a better system than state distribution.

An interesting characteristic of Joseph's writing here is the naturalisation of market systems, Hayek's spontaneous order. A classic conservative criticism of liberalisms, discussed earlier, is that they represent the imposition of a rationalist economics mindset onto politics, forcing a dogmatic view onto an otherwise natural and organic system. Joseph rejects this claim, that economics is a man-made rationality, and instead presents it as a part of the natural organic system: 'We can no more "override the laws of the market" ... than we can repeal the law of gravity, mechanics, physics'.³⁴⁹ Here he utilises the same language as his critics even when advancing a position particular to his side of the argument.

Across these cases we can see a valuation of markets but occurring through connection with a range of other concepts. Whether tied to the subject of the consumer or to a metaphysical evaluative framework, these examples show how Conservatives articulated the virtues of market competition by moving beyond abstract economics.

Morality and the Individual

Margaret Thatcher's infamous quote 'there is no such thing as society' is both well-known and known to be slightly out of context, a longer quote from the same passage reads: 'who is

³⁴⁸ Joseph, 1975a p19

³⁴⁹ Joseph, 1975a p20

society? There is no such thing! There are individual men and women and there are families and no government can do anything except through people and people look to themselves first'.³⁵⁰ Thatcher is not denying the relationships between peoples in a society, rather she is arguing that an abstracted 'society' should not be responsible for taking care of people, that instead individuals, families and personal relationships should be the primary providers of welfare. As Joseph had argued years before, 'individuals are real, whereas society is an abstraction'.³⁵¹ The ideas in Thatcher's quote, regarding individuals, responsibility, particularly moral responsibility, and the family all form key elements in the discourses about social thought in the 1970s. Recall the invocation of families from her first PPB.

An early mention of responsibility can be found in a short piece by Alec Douglas-Home published by the Conservative Party in the run-up the 1970 General Election. Douglas-Home claims that the Conservative Party believes in a responsible society, that:

we believe in a society in which the sense of social responsibility prevails. A society in which care is taken for the poorest and weakest members of the national family. A society which shows compassion, which abhors abuse, which does justice to all the people. A society in which the individual behaves responsibly towards the community, in which the citizen does his duty towards his neighbour...

the Responsible Society in which we believe is one in which the individual can exercise responsibility for himself and his family. A society in which the individual can find scope for his talents and initiative. A society in which the individual has the freedom

³⁵⁰ Keay, 1987, pp29-30

³⁵¹ Joseph, 1975c p6

under the law to choose to do those creative, caring things which must make life worth living for himself and for us all³⁵²

This argument clearly emphasises the individual and the family as responsible actors but also leaves considerable scope for responsibility shouldered by society. This can be taken as a reflection of the post-war consensus.

By contrast, Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite has noted that in the late 1970s, Thatcherites instead made a different moral argument utilising both the theory of economists like Friedrich Hayek and Protestant thought from Methodists and sociologists like Ferdynand Zweig.³⁵³ Hayek's thought was deployed to argue against state intervention, as mentioned previously in this chapter, and to shift emphasis to individuals. From the Protestant and sociological angle, concern was raised about welfare creating dependency and poor values, an expressly moral problem but leading to social problems. In such a context, state intervention would be counter-productive not just due to ineffectiveness but for actively creating social ills. This moral concern can be found in a memo written from Centre for Policy Studies policy guru John Hoskyns to Chairman Hugh Thomas which notes that the position of the trade unions 'is not simply amoral but juvenile... Shame is a very important part of our message about the union'.³⁵⁴

The emphasis on individuals received a mixed response in the party. Some supported it as a counter to state domination. Rhodes Boyson, an MP from the Monday Club and active in the New Right was a supporter, claiming that 'freedom of man within society is an essential precondition of the good political and moral life and the only alternative to some form of

³⁵² Douglas-Home, 1970

³⁵³ Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, 2012

³⁵⁴ Emphasis in original, Hoskyns to Thomas, 1979 p1

modern collectivist feudalism. Yet neither man nor child can stand alone, so that the strength of the family unit is central to the freedom of the individual'.³⁵⁵ Others felt that Thatcherism was moving the Conservative Party towards liberalism; this liberalism was then inauthentically conservative. Here we can see Lord Hailsham warning against 'confusing freedom with permissiveness'.³⁵⁶ The language of 'permissiveness' here echoes the rhetoric of the long 1960s which bemoaned the 'permissive society' associated with the decline of rigid moral and sexual mores.³⁵⁷ These anxieties continued into the 1970s, particularly around race and crime, but the language of permissiveness declines in frequency.

The link between individualism and morality can be tenuous because it relies on the acceptance of a wider framework where morals and moral society are pursued to liberate individuals, a view Joseph held but that was less widespread in the party. Eminent sociologist Mary Douglas, wife of a staff member and former Director of the CRD, wrote a report for Keith Joseph discussing how her work on cross cultural structural analysis in anthropology suggested that concerns about morals and permissiveness were better addressed with less individualism rather than more.³⁵⁸ As summarised by her husband James, the 'ironical thing is that these are the sort of ills that the Right get very worked up about but if her analysis is correct the economic philosophy of the extreme Right would actually exacerbate them'.³⁵⁹ It is fair to question the extent to which this synthesis of moralism and liberalism was held in the party; while Thatcher herself seems to have sincerely held similar views, the view was also convenient in appealing to different arguments within the party.

³⁵⁵ Boyson, 1975 p3; Boyson was involved with the Black Papers, IEA and CPS

³⁵⁶ Hogg, 1973 p14

³⁵⁷ Mort, 2011

³⁵⁸ Douglas, 1974

³⁵⁹ Douglas to Rowe, 1975

A faith – and collectivism whether Marxist or not is a faith – can only be conquered by a greater faith; a false doctrine can only be conquered by a truer doctrine. Are we prepared to be branded by our opponents as reactionaries and doctrinaires?³⁶⁰

A recurrent element of the discourse of the New Right is invocation of the pressing threat of Marxism from the Labour Party. The explanation for the failure of the post-war consensus, discussed earlier in this chapter regarding history, develops two horns of argument about threats from the left. The first is the Hayekian concern about the road to serfdom, where a tendency towards consensus and state intervention steadily acquires more responsibility and resources. In the language of academic Max Beloff, giving a lecture to the CPC Summer School: ‘The collectivist era has lasted for more than a century. It is more deeply entrenched, and has engendered more interests dependent upon its survival than the older era of interventionism’.³⁶¹ This trend of concessions to socialism and increasing size of the state ultimately leads to the erosion of individual rights. Indicative of this argument, we can note here the publication of a pamphlet entitled *Britain’s Road to Serfdom*.³⁶² Common concerns raised concern the rise of quangos, public spending and bureaucracy. This of course link to monetarist concerns about the money supply but we can note a concern that moderate conservatism enable political trends that endanger the freedoms of citizens.

The second concern regards the shift left within the Labour Party. The argument claims that Marxists had infiltrated the Labour Party and led the party away from an acceptable consensus position. As such, the proposals of the New Right were both compensating for past moves left but also standing up against contemporary threats from a radical Marxist Labour Party. This

³⁶⁰ Beloff, 1978 p23

³⁶¹ Beloff, 1978 p23

³⁶² Johnson, 1978

narrative dismisses the influence of Labour moderates as insignificant against the ‘determination of Labour’s Left Wing to implement Clause IV of the Party’s constitution and so turn Britain into a Marxist state’.³⁶³ Increasing the stakes of inter-party contest both reduces the ability for conciliation with the centre-left and expressly condemns maintaining the status quo.

Moderate Conservative responses to these attacks run along two seemingly contradictory lines. The first argues against the claimed socialism of the post-war consensus. This denies that there was any socialism involved in the post-war conservative governments or their policies. The second defence against claims of socialism instead marks a compatibility between conservatism and some forms of socialism. This argument agrees that Marxism is a problem but accepts certain socialist ideas or compromises to the Labour Party. Here we can read that ‘there is no anti-thesis between Conservatism and Socialism or between Conservatism and Liberalism. Blind anti-Liberalism or blind anti-Socialism is not Conservatism’.³⁶⁴

Across the spectrum, Conservatives argue that their intraparty opponents are equivalent to a dangerous Marxism. An example can be found in correspondence between Friedrich Hayek and Brian Rathbone of the radical right Monday Club to arrange a speaking engagement. Hayek admits not being familiar with the group and asks for information about the ‘predominant outlook of the members’ in order to prepare.³⁶⁵ In response Rathbone notes that the Monday Club was ‘delighted when Mrs. Thatcher became leader of the party’ but that their only concern with her is a tendency ‘to give high office to some people who are by no means her true political supporters ... sometimes compromised with socialist views’.³⁶⁶ In this response we can see that

³⁶³ Bellairs, 1979 p15

³⁶⁴ Gilmour, 1978 p110

³⁶⁵ Hayek to Rathbone, 1980

³⁶⁶ Rathbone to Hayek, 1980

socialism is used to distinguish between good conservatives, who support Thatcher, and those who are dangerous. It should be clear that none of the members of Thatcher's cabinet would have identified as socialists, the claim that some were closet socialists only makes sense in the context established.

On the other side of the accusation, we can also see moderates emphasise the extremism of monetarists by drawing links to Marxism. As discussed earlier, extremism is presented as bad due to its distance from a consensual and slower mode of conservatism. However, this is reinforced with comparison to Marxism. Gilmour draws on the thought of Michael Oakeshott to explain conservatism as in part an opposition to 'Rationalism'.³⁶⁷ Rationalism, the use of abstract ideas as the founding principles for politics, is clearly demarcated from a grounded conservatism. Here, the ideas of the right of the party are mentioned as problematic for relying too much on their own abstractions, whether that be economic thought or a conception of freedom. This re-treads what we have discussed on criticisms of extremism, dogma and monetarism. However, Gilmour concludes the section by noting a joint conservative opposition to rationalism and collectivism.³⁶⁸ The two are linked when presented as similar in consideration as a threat. Likewise, in a party pamphlet based on a speech at the Conservative Party Conference 1973, Lord Hailsham argues: 'Democracy is most in danger when the central ground is simultaneously attacked to destruction by violent and extreme elements from opposite sides ... We must always defend the middle ground against attacks whether from outside or inside our Party'.³⁶⁹ Hailsham identifies here Michael Foot and Enoch Powell and equates the free market right wing of the conservatives with the harder left.

³⁶⁷ Gilmour, 1978 pp92-100

³⁶⁸ Gilmour, 1978 p100

³⁶⁹ Hogg, 1973 p7

Wider Ownership

A crucial conceptual cluster for considering Conservative discourse in the 1970s is that of ‘wider ownership’. This cluster is composed of a core concept of ‘wider ownership’ but as I will demonstrate linked with a number of different concepts to provide a cluster in the semantic fields related to economic and social policy, particularly related to ownership and industrial relations. Wider ownership as a term arose in the late 1950s and gained traction through the Wider Share Ownership Council.³⁷⁰ The WSOC at its foundation in 1958 was dominated by Conservatives but in its early years interacted with both Conservatives and Liberals.³⁷¹ The Conservative party established an internal policy committee on wider ownership, the Wider Ownership Committee, under Edward Heath in 1968, but by 1975 the Committee was chaired by David Howell and included Keith Joseph, while Geoffrey Howe as Shadow Chancellor stayed abreast of developments. In 1974, the Centre for Policy Studies formed a Personal Capital Formation Group, later renamed the Wider Ownership Study Group in the 1980s. There was interchange of personnel and papers between these similarly named entities. Papers indicate that not only was Council research circulated in Committee, in 1977 George Copeman, Deputy Chair of the Council and its leading light, was asked by the Conservative Party to reply to critics of its position on employee ownership.³⁷² Feedback from the Industrial Participation Association, chaired by Nigel Vinson, who founded the CPS’s Wider Ownership Group, was a valued source of feedback to the Conservative Party’s Wider Ownership Committee regarding the Wider Ownership Green Paper.³⁷³

³⁷⁰ On the history of wider ownership see Francis, 2012; Edwards, 2016; Davies, 2019

³⁷¹ Edwards, 2016 p105-106

³⁷² Howell to Thatcher; 1975; Cropper to Howe, 1977

³⁷³ ‘Report on Submissions’, 1977

In Conservative discourse wider ownership was linked to the concept of ‘property-owning democracy’ which had an even longer history in the Conservative Party, dating back to Noel Skelton in 1923.³⁷⁴ However the existing scholarship has noted a resurgence of influence of the concept, particularly in relation to Conservative policy in the 1970s, a resurgence that has been linked to liberalism in Conservative ideology. Nigel Vinson links wider ownership with the concept of ‘popular capitalism’ which called for transforming working class people into capitalists, with the ownership of capital transforming society.³⁷⁵

Two crucial documents for looking at this discourse in the Conservative Party are *The Right Approach* (1976) and *The Right Approach to the Economy* (1977), which have been introduced earlier in this chapter. To reiterate, these publications were at once statements of intent, setting out a vision for Conservative Party policy and policies for achieving it, as well as consensual documents aiming to unite the party around a shared vision, the *Right Approach to the Economy* bearing the name of by authors of different persuasions such as Jim Prior and Keith Joseph. They were often referenced as official positions of the party, including by the CRD, but Margaret Thatcher was not altogether pleased with them and refused to present them as the official position of the Shadow Cabinet.³⁷⁶ Geoffrey Howe, another named co-author, would later stress the indefinite nature of the subtitle provided to the second document: *Outline of an Economic Strategy for the next Conservative Government*.³⁷⁷

The Right Approach introduces a commitment to individualism and rights but presents these as intrinsically related to distribution of private property.

³⁷⁴ Francis, 2012

³⁷⁵ Frost, 2015, p. 184

³⁷⁶ Caines, 2017

³⁷⁷ Howe, 1994 p101

that private ownership of property is essential if we are to encourage personal responsibility and the freedom that goes with it. Property diffuses power, increases choice and is an important source of independence. Since some people have more ability and a greater opportunity to acquire property than others, there are bound to be social and economic inequalities. Conservatives are not egalitarians. We believe in levelling up, in enhancing opportunities, not in levelling down, which dries up the springs of enterprise and endeavour and ultimately means that there are fewer resources for helping the disadvantaged.³⁷⁸

As policies to achieve this new approach we find discussions of employee participation, profit sharing, institutionalised national wage bargaining and the sale of council homes. This is most directly stated in the section on profit sharing which features claims that: ‘we think it is right to go further than this and to use the tax system to help make Britain a nation of genuine worker owners on a scale not encouraged by our existing financial institutions... We think that the best way of spreading ownership is probably by encouraging voluntary employee profit-sharing schemes through tax relief’.³⁷⁹

These actors and ideas of the *Right Approach* documents arose from the Economic Reconstruction Group, one of the most important policy groups in the Conservative Party, which sat above other groups and thus integrated public sector, taxation, inflation and industrial relations policies.³⁸⁰ *The Right Approach to the Economy* presents as a continuation and extension of these arguments and has a section set aside for ‘Wider Ownership and Personal Capital Building’ which claims that:

³⁷⁸ ‘The Right Approach’, 1976, pp17-18

³⁷⁹ ‘The Right Approach’, 1976, p29

³⁸⁰ Caines, 2017, p183; A comparison could be drawn between the language of ‘economic reconstruction’ and the ‘economic reorganisation’ suggested by *Neuordnung* in the German case. However, reconstruction is not a significant topic of the group and thus not subject to analysis in this thesis

The Conservative Party's commitment to a property-owning democracy is long-standing. We believe the time has come to extend it to the ownership, not only of homes, but of wealth in other forms as well. For us a free society is a society in which property in all its forms is held by as many people as possible. This is the antithesis of the narrow State ownership in which Socialists believe. We would like to see the habit of personal capital cumulation, making vast numbers of people owners as well as earners, much more deeply ingrained in our society.³⁸¹

This is only part of a broader approach the Conservative Party will be developing to personal savings and ownership. In the sixties we spoke not only of a property-owning democracy but of a capital-owning democracy. We now intend to strengthen this theme through tax reforms.³⁸²

This section of the document features a similar selection of policies: sale of council homes, cuts on personal taxation, employee share schemes and profit sharing. We can see across these passages, invocation of a number of the contested concepts presented in this chapter. It is reasonable then to use these policies as topics around to build analysis of the broader discourse of wider ownership.

It is clear that there were two dominant and linked policy proposals for achieving wider ownership: share ownership, used in the name of the pressure group WSOC, and profit sharing. Profit sharing, as indicated by the passages from the *Right Approach*, was not a proposal to directly share profits between owners and workers but rather encompassed proposals to do this indirectly by making it easier for workers to purchase shares in the companies they worked in, thus becoming beneficiaries of dividends and increases in share

³⁸¹ 'The Right Approach to the Economy', 1977

³⁸² 'The Right Approach to the Economy', 1977

values. As both of these involved projects for increasing share and capital ownership by workers or the wider public more broadly they were often linked. The Wider Ownership Committee confirmed the centrality of these proposals to their vision, claiming that spreading ownership was their ‘primary aim’, greater than merely mobilising savings and that ‘their central objective is to encourage many more people to become shareholders in their own right. We consider personal capital-ownership to be the missing leg from a stool whose other legs are pension rights (new effectively secured on a bipartisan basis) and home ownership’.³⁸³

The desire for these policies arose from a number of different directions. Alongside the existing currents in the party was also the external influence of the ideas of Louis Kelso, an American political economist who championed the ESOP share ownership plan but was more broadly an evangelist for share ownership. The papers of Geoffrey Howe feature multiple letters encouraging him to read Kelso, including one from the staff of then Presidential candidate Ronald Reagan.³⁸⁴ Howe’s secretary replied that they were familiar with the arguments and taking it into account in the policy formation process.³⁸⁵ David Howell praises Kelso at length in his memoir, claiming that his work ‘in time will prove as influential in shaping the world as Marx’s *Das Kapital* – perhaps even more so’.³⁸⁶ Howell draws upon Kelso as an advocate for not just wider share ownership but wider capital ownership more broadly. Kelso is also mentioned in a pamphlet written by George Copeman, head of the Wider Share Ownership Council, for Aims of Industry.³⁸⁷

³⁸³ ‘Minutes of Wider Ownership Group’, 1978, p1; Wider Ownership Group, 1978 p1

³⁸⁴ Hannaford to Howe, 1976

³⁸⁵ Howe to Hannaford, 1976

³⁸⁶ Howell, 2019 p. 193

³⁸⁷ Copeman, 1974

Simultaneously the Wider Share Ownership Council has been situated as part of a wider ‘investment culture’ that would become more fully developed in the 1980s.³⁸⁸ The development of money pages in the major newspapers as well as investment clubs and unit trusts had made share ownership more accessible as well as more socially desirable.³⁸⁹ It is worth noting here that the support for investment clubs and wider investment culture coincided with the sociological change in the party under Heath, the declining role of aristocracy and greater influence of businessmen and ‘new money’.

One contentious element of the policies was the language used to refer to profit sharing. After the *Right Approach to the Economy* was published, the Wider Ownership Committee received strong pushback on its word choice. A Bow Group pamphlet suggested using the term ‘capital sharing’ instead, a term also picked up by Tim Boswell of the CRD who suggested ‘New Capital Sharing Schemes’ as more politically neutral.³⁹⁰ Such a term would follow language used in the ‘Property Owning Democracy 1977’ Green Paper which, although using reference to profit-sharing, framed the policy as ‘concerned with the creation and ownership of new capital, not with sterile squabbles about the existing distribution of existing wealth’.³⁹¹ This language suggested capital building as an alternative to the existing emphasis on distribution and redistribution. In July 1978, a move was made to once again change the name of the policy from ‘capital ownership’ to ‘personal ownership’ with the tagline ‘Investing in British Industry’, perhaps reflecting discomfort with the valence of the term ‘capital’.³⁹²

³⁸⁸ Edwards, 2016; Edwards, 2022

³⁸⁹ An example of these currents at play in the 1960s and 1970s can be found in the memoir of Peter Rost; Rost, 2010, pp54-64

³⁹⁰ Cole, 1978; Boswell to Howe, 1978

³⁹¹ ‘Property Owning Democracy 1977’, 1977 p3, underline in original

³⁹² Wider Ownership Group, 1978

This invocation of 'British Industry' relates to the second main area of wider ownership policy which relates to industrial relations, particularly worker councils. Here wider ownership was related to attempts to give workers greater influence over the places they worked. This took the form both of the pension schemes previously mentioned, which would make workers shareholders, with companies beholden to their shareholders, or in workplace democracy schemes like worker councils, schemes where workers would be represented on boards or in management.

At one level this is a reflection of pressures from Europeanisation. Both Conservative Party sources and the Industrial Partnership Association point to European guidelines, and expectations of future European legislation as prompting shifts in this area.³⁹³ However, as I will show, beyond these external pressures, there were also ideological justifications for these changes to industrial policy. A clear explanation of an underlying justification can be found in a draft consultative document prepared during the production of the wider ownership green paper:

Greater participation is needed not only for economic reasons but also because a better quality of working life is important in its own right. If the experience of work is to be more rewarding than it now is for the great majority of employees, they must be treated as intelligent partners in an enterprise and not cogs in a machine.

Of course there are divergent interests between employers and employees and it is right that there should be effective organisation on both sides and vigorous but responsible collective bargaining to resolve them. Employees, as well as management, stand to gain from the prosperity of the enterprise in which they work; and the nation as a whole benefits from rising standards of living. If we lose sight of this community

³⁹³ 'Draft consultative document on employee participation', 1974; Bell, 1979

of interest we shall all be the poorer and can expect increasingly to be left behind by other countries. Greater employee participation is essential for furthering common interest.³⁹⁴

Here we can see an appeal to the value of expanding access to wealth and prosperity, a means to reduce class conflict and a humanist appeal to the value of workers.

There is a relationship here to concerns about the changing nature of the firm. Appeals to employee participation were often made by small business owners, like Nigel Vinson, who had run a plastics company in the 1950s and 1960s where his close relationship with his workers had spurred an interest in industrial participation and wider ownership.³⁹⁵ In the 1970s, precursors of financialisation were changing the nature of ownership of firms with the growth of institutional ownership. One CRD document notes that the growth of institutional owners was weakening paternal *oblige*, in a negative manner, as managers had confusion about ownership and their responsibilities.³⁹⁶ Geoffey Howe would make a similar point in response to criticism from some entrepreneurs in the party:

There is, I believe, some danger in overlooking the changes that have been brought about by the rapid growth of institutional shareholding in the last ten years. The classical company model, consisting of individual shareholders, directors and employees is no longer an accurate picture of most companies. The individual shareholders have given way to institutions – pension funds and insurance companies predominantly. I find much to worry about in the facelessness of these bodies and I

³⁹⁴ ‘Draft consultative document on employee participation’, 1974

³⁹⁵ Vinson, 1971; Frost, 2015; Vinson, 2021; Vinson would get criticised for hypocrisy in *Crossbow* when he sold his firm to Imperial Tobacco in 1971

³⁹⁶ ‘Draft consultative document on employee participation’, 1974

cannot dispel the fear that sooner or later a Socialist Government will seek to take over the voting power lying (often dormant) in the hands of these giants.³⁹⁷

Beyond the direct benefit to workers of a better workplace or better management, workplace democracy was also justified as a means of managing industrial relation. A CRD seminar on ‘Worker Participation in Industry’ from 1973 pointed to the importance of participatory systems to reduce the agonism of industrial relations and noted that comparative countries with participation tended to have better economic outcomes and less strikes.³⁹⁸ This influence on improving industrial relations was also stressed to Thatcher when explaining the Wider Ownership Committee and its pursuit of property ownership in 1975.³⁹⁹

This was the crucial distinction between the Conservative Party plans and those of the Labour Party. The Conservatives had set out plans for workplace democracy in a Green Paper in 1977 that predated the Bullock Committee report put out later that same year.⁴⁰⁰ In responding to the same European pressures and coming up with recommendations for worker participation, these two proposals were quite similar. Indeed, a memo for Howe in 1978 notes the similarities in proposals on the area from the Liberals, Labour and that set out by the Conservatives, noting that ‘in one area after another, the [Labour] Government is adopting proposals which the Conservative Party has worked out for them in advance’.⁴⁰¹ However a crucial difference was that Bullock closely tied this worker governance to unions, putting union representatives on works councils while the Conservatives sought to exclude unions

³⁹⁷ Howe to Cole, 1979

³⁹⁸ ‘On Worker Participation in Industry’, 1973

³⁹⁹ Kaye and Sandilands, 1975

⁴⁰⁰ Comments on a draft of the Green Paper show that concern about the developing Labour position on the topic was spurring some to push for stronger policy commitments from Conservatives, to avoid looking ‘wet’; Jackson, 1974 p3; The Diamond Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth overlaps with these documents having been formed in 1974 and publishing reports between 1975-1979. However, it is not regularly referenced in the Conservative discourse

⁴⁰¹ Cropper, 1978

from the process. This apparent similarity but key difference was stressed in a Contact Programme paper issued in response to Bullock.⁴⁰²

This attempt to circumvent the unions and weaken their power, in a principled or unprincipled pursuit of worker participation, was not unnoticed by the trade unions. The TUC was identified early as a key political obstacle for the party's works council plans.⁴⁰³ Robbie Gilbert, who worked on industrial relations for the CRD and later as a Special Advisor for Prior, notes that for the trade unions, works councils were 'a complete non-starter' because they undermined union power.⁴⁰⁴ Likewise, the unions and workers raised concerns that payment in shares was a cynical attempt to reduce wages, with the Industrial Participation Association noting that most workers preferred compensation in cash to shares.⁴⁰⁵ The same publication by the Industrial Participation Association notes that employees noted that this attempt to change worker attitudes towards the firm by offering shares, while framed as a mutual benefit, was regularly understood by workers as a cynical interest of management.⁴⁰⁶

This emphasis was picked up by many members of the party as a positive. R. G. Puttick, Chairman of the Woodrow Group, praising 'the aims of the Conservative Party to promote personal capital building and wider share ownership among employees ... as a counter to collectivism' as 'first-class'.⁴⁰⁷ A policy statement from the Young Conservatives praised industrial democracy as 'fundamental to the creation of wealth for the community' but also stressed the need for entirety of workforce, and not just the unions, to be involved in consultative councils and workers on boards.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰² Conservative Contact Programme, 1977

⁴⁰³ Nicholson, 1973

⁴⁰⁴ Gilbert, 2022

⁴⁰⁵ 'Report on submissions', 1977; Bell, 1979

⁴⁰⁶ Bell, 1979, p173

⁴⁰⁷ Puttick to Howe, 1977, p1

⁴⁰⁸ Hayes, n.d., p1

The other source of opposition was from economic liberals and defenders of business interests. Brian Cole wrote a report for the Bow Group, as well as an article in the *Financial Times* along similar lines, criticising the profit-sharing proposals as misunderstanding markets, reducing profits and being socially divisive.⁴⁰⁹ Cole would claim to have the backing of entrepreneurs.⁴¹⁰ Alongside the backlash from trade unions, a CRD report passed along CBI concerns that worker participation proposals would reduce company flexibility and impact corporate confidentiality.⁴¹¹ Peter Lloyd would criticise worker councils in the pages of *Crossbow* as hurting the efficiency of firms and instead pointing to market and social forces to resolve industrial relations.⁴¹²

The third key area of policy proposals regarded home ownership, particularly the sale of council houses. This would become the policy of Right to Buy in 1980. Michael Heseltine, who would introduce the legislation for Right to Buy, had advocated the policy in a report for the Shadow Cabinet earlier in the decade claiming that ‘expansion of home ownership is one of the most important things we can do to spread wealth and ownership, and therefore independence from the State, among our citizens’.⁴¹³ In his infamous speech to the Conservative Party Conference 1977 at the age of sixteen, a young William Hague had made a similar claim, calling for a need to ‘roll back the frontiers of the state’ in order to ‘create a capital owning, home owning democracy for the young people’.⁴¹⁴

As these quotes suggest, an additional ‘benefit’ of the policy to sell off council houses was that it would reduce the size of government, particularly local government. This had been a

⁴⁰⁹ Cole, 1977; Cole, 1978

⁴¹⁰ Cole to Howe, 1979

⁴¹¹ ‘On Worker Participation in Industry’, 1973

⁴¹² Lloyd, 1975

⁴¹³ Heseltine, 1978, p1

⁴¹⁴ ‘1977 Conservative Party Conference Report’, p53

consideration in share ownership schemes where giving shares to workers was presented as a bulwark against nationalisation and a means for denationalisation, the term then used for privatisation.⁴¹⁵

The discourse on wider ownership as a whole can be linked to the idea of *embourgeoisement* which has been associated with Keith Joseph and examined in the work of Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, among others.⁴¹⁶ One influential sociologist working on this topic, Ferdinand Zweig, was published by the CPS.⁴¹⁷ Embourgeoisement, or deproletarianisation, at once described a demographic change, changes in class composition moving people from poor working classes to more bourgeois middle class lives, but also an ideational change, the adoption of bourgeois values.⁴¹⁸ These values, alternately referred to as ‘middle class’, ‘bourgeois’, ‘vigorous’ and ‘Victorian’, would increase the economic output of workers and their material conditions but achieve moral ends, breaking reliance on the state and the ‘culture of poverty’.⁴¹⁹

This focus on ‘Victorian values’ is particularly associated with Margaret Thatcher but was more widespread amongst her supporters. Such a perspective is set out in Keith Joseph’s 1975 address to the Economic Research Council, entitled ‘The Politics of Political Economy’:

‘Our job, however, is not to dictate general values, least of all when we speak as economists. As politicians and economists, our task is to create conditions under which the values we cherish can form the cement of our society. Our job is to re-create the conditions which will again permit the forward march of *embourgeoisement*

⁴¹⁵ Gardner to Howe, 1975; ‘Minutes of Wider Ownership Group’, 1978

⁴¹⁶ Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, 2012

⁴¹⁷ Zweig, 1976

⁴¹⁸ Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, 2012, pp514-515

⁴¹⁹ See Sutcliffe-Braithwaite as well Letwin, 1992

which went so far in Victorian times and even in the much maligned ‘thirties’, when home-ownership made such strides.’⁴²⁰

Beyond the core Thatcherites, we can also see this view, or at least one similar, set out by Geoffrey Howe when defending his profit-sharing policy.

It is, in my view, overwhelmingly important that people should be encouraged to accumulate personal wealth; that they should be encouraged to participate as shareholders in the companies for which they work (not necessarily up to the hilt); and that they should begin to share the same sense of involvement and responsibility as motivated the entrepreneurs of past eras.⁴²¹

Here we see a broader based moral and economic case for wider ownership. Fitting alongside the liberal claim that economic wealth could be a source of economic liberation, we can see a wider distribution of assets as a means of improving the economic and social health of the nation. This liberal claim can be exemplified by Nigel Vinson’s claim that economic power should be diffused and material wealth more widespread on the basis that freedom was only possible with a certain level of material wealth.⁴²² Such an argument is a classic trope from the left, and identified as such in Vinson’s biography, so it is interesting to see it invoked from a Conservative.

Having discussed a number of concepts and debates important to the conceptual constellation of wider ownership we can return to the passages that opened its discussion, the *Right Approach* papers. Recall that *Right Approach to the Economy* was simultaneously a party statement of policy intentions and a consensus building settlement. As David Howell, a key

⁴²⁰ Joseph, 1975b, p57

⁴²¹ Howe to Cole, 1979

⁴²² Frost, 2015 pp185-186; Vinson also connects his ideas to Christian theology; *ibid.* pp90-93

actor in the Economic Reconstruction Group and a co-author of *Right Approach to the Economy* recalls in his memoir:

To shift these Tories from Heath managerial harmony (sort of) to the rhetoric of free-market Thatcherism, without party splits, there had to be a new, reconciliatory theme. This theme, we argued, was that wealth – assets and capital (savings) – could, and would, be widely spread. Personal ownership could deliver welfare, security and dignity on a scale that the old welfare state could no longer match.⁴²³

This kind of economic democracy – the socialisation of future wealth – could be seen as a valuable and unifying bridge between the Conservatism of One Nation, described earlier, and the zeal of the free-market aficionados who reigned on the government bench. Here was a common-ground theme, the decisive antidote to the trap of wage-poverty, which combined real ownership by the people, the real spread of the security and dignity of ownership, and the defeat of socialist centralism and fake “public ownership”. Furthermore, it was a policy which united the Thatcher Cabinet – among, by then, precious few policies with that potential.⁴²⁴

Wider Ownership provided a language that could bring together a range of policies but also a breadth of ideological forms in the party. Those seeking economic liberation, weakened trade unions, a new settlement in industrial relations, empowered workers, bourgeois values, and more had sometimes contradictory interests but had a shared conceptual vocabulary and policy package in the form of wider ownership.

While the moral language of embourgeoisement and orientation against trade unions would appeal to those on the authoritarian right of the party, the primary groups involved in the

⁴²³ Howell, 2019, pp131-132

⁴²⁴ Howell, 2019, p196

wider ownership discourse are those on the moderate wing of the party and those involved with the central party and its economic policy groups. The Tory Reform Group was a big advocate of wider ownership and industrial democracy plays a central role in Trevor Russel's *The Tory Party*, which set out a vision of the TRG's views, and is the subject of extended discussion and support in Peter Walker's *The Ascent of Britain*.⁴²⁵ David Howell would credit Walker for Right to Buy.⁴²⁶ In the central party it is clear that key actors like David Howell, Geoffrey Howe and, to an extent, Keith Joseph developed a framework for a new economic approach that included elements of their neoliberal thinking while still being amenable to moderates. What we can see with wider ownership in the 1970s are discourses that are recognisable in justifications for later developments in Right to Buy, privatisation, 'Tell Sid', and private pension reforms.

Of course, this constructed consensus is noticeably different from what is now understood as Thatcherism. The calls for industrial participation, works councils and rhetoric of profit sharing seem far from the outcomes delivered by Thatcherite governments in the 1980s and 1990s. The plans for wider ownership seem to have changed when Thatcher became prime minister and more attentive to the plans being drawn up from Opposition. Indeed, Russel's explanation of the TRG support of industrial democracy notes Margaret Thatcher as a crucial opponent of a robust industrial democracy.⁴²⁷ Here the commitment to economic liberalism, going beyond the free market liberalism of Howe, Joseph, et al., places Thatcher and Thatcherites of the 80s and 90s against the consensus constructed in the 1970s.

From the advocates of wider ownership there is often a discussion of the betrayal of their vision when reflecting on the legacies of Thatcherism. This betrayal narrative begins early. In the

⁴²⁵ Walker, 1977; Russel, 1978

⁴²⁶ Howell, 2019, p195

⁴²⁷ Russel, 1978, p86

comments on an economic policy motion at 1977 Conference some representatives show a dissatisfaction with an approach overly focused on taxation and inflation. A Jenni Turco from Bridgwater spoke in opposition to the motion claiming it was too narrowly focused in comparison to *Right Approach to the Economy*. But the real narrative of betrayal comes later.

Nigel Vinson's biography records his 'frustration at the pace and scope of change' on wider ownership and records a complaint, echoing Jenni Turco, he made to Thatcher in 1982 that she was 'giving the impression that the defeat of inflation through monetary measures was an end in itself, and for not doing enough to spread the benefits of economic growth more widely'.⁴²⁸

David Howell's memoir records his assessment on the implementation of wider ownership was that it was on implemented 'sort of, partially, hesitantly, without follow through', that 'popular capitalism in Britain moved forward a fraction during the Thatcher era – not nearly as far as some of us want'.⁴²⁹ The vision of wider ownership is not seen to have been achieved and privatisation is often identified as having been improperly implemented and a missed opportunity.⁴³⁰

Keith Joseph, who Vinson identifies more resistant to state intervention than himself, makes similar points in his maiden speech in the House of Lords in 1988.

I entered politics in order to try, however modestly, to reduce the widespread poverty of many British people. At the time, and for many years after, I was an unreflecting statist seeking short cuts to Utopia. Over time I have come to realise that perhaps the state can do better by setting the right framework and by intervening little...

⁴²⁸ Frost, 2015, p190-191

⁴²⁹ Howell, 2019 p197-198

⁴³⁰ See the memoir of Tory MP and former WSOC member Peter Rost; Rost, 2010 p247-249

I hope that historians will say that during the 1980s British progress accelerated towards *embourgeoisement*—that is, towards a state in society where most people own and earn enough to have choice and scope and where everyone has the attitudes and time-horizons to make use of them. I readily admit that we have far to go... I still believe that *embourgeoisement* is within reach...

The choice and priorities would be for every individual and every family. The range of choice is now immense. Yet, there are several million of our fellow citizens whose progress to *embourgeoisement* has been stunted by the framework created for housing, health and schooling and whose dignity and choice has therefore been diminished.⁴³¹

Joseph explains an ongoing commitment to *embourgeoisement* clearly linking into the conceptual constellation of wider ownership. His explanation of the imperfect achievement of these aims under Thatcher is remarkable given his typical identification as an architect of Thatcherism and roles as Secretary of State for Industry and Secretary of State for Education and Science.

To conclude this section, there is a reasonable question that can be asked as to whether the politics and policies advocated by those using the conceptual constellation of wider ownership can be properly classified as ‘neoliberal’. If neoliberalism is identified in the use of the state to create the conditions for market competition, the cluster of policies and concepts seems orthogonal or at least not directly related. However, the policies and discourse of wider ownership can be clearly seen in the discourses and policies that are associated with ‘Thatcherism’. How can these be reconciled? We can seek a more expansive understanding of neoliberalism encompassing the semantic fields within which the state, state

⁴³¹ Joseph, 1988.

action and the conditions of market competition are understood. We can note that the subject of wider ownership, the citizen owner created through *embourgeoisement*, is recognisable in the subjectivity accounts of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism as a movement in economics and economic thought stresses the subject of the holder of capital, liberated through state protected market competition. Wider ownership then constructs subjects for neoliberalism.

Analysis

This chapter has identified a complex and multifaceted discourse in the Conservative Party. Existing scholarship largely frames the rise of Thatcherism as purely a dichotomy between ‘wets’ and ‘dries’ or who identify neoliberalisation as purely a doctrine of the economic liberal and authoritarian tendencies. The examination of ‘contextual concepts’ in this chapter largely fits that narrative. The 1970s here is a decade with widespread contestation in the party and ideological community with many contests over concepts.

However, the narrative of binary debate is too simplified. These groups or factions in the party are themselves divided with sub-factional contestation at play as well. While there are a number of rhetorical claims to be non-ideological, these claims are exactly that, rhetorical, as the content and implications of conservative ideology are regularly discussed, even if not directly.

However, framing the period as entirely about division within the party also misses some of the underlying dynamics. Against narratives that present Thatcherisation as the takeover of the Conservative Party by external non-conservative agents it is notable how internal the ideological contestation is. While there is great contestation on conservatism in the period, it is both located with Conservative Party discourse and centred on a shared conceptual vocabulary. While participants in the discourse may disagree on *who* in the party is betraying conservatism by being ‘ideological’ they share a notion that not being ideological is

important to conservatism. Similar trends can be seen throughout the ideological discourse. Neoliberals and their opponents share vocabulary, spaces, a party and ultimately an ideology. It is clear that neoliberalism or Thatcherism is another form of conservatism, with its advocates drawing on existing currents and the party and exhibiting a shared discourse. The links a connections between the concepts points to how they fit into a wider shared conservative ideology.

As with the German case, we can speak here of ideological affinities. While neoliberals are advocating for change in the party and its policies this is done by appealing to shared concepts with intraparty rivals. This means that ‘wets’ can more easily engage with a neoliberal conservatism as it uses similar ideological morphology. An examination of conceptual contestation points to conceptual similarity as much as disagreement on conceptions and application.

On the point of the discourse being internal to the conservative party, we can note that while a number of groups not formally of the party, such as the think tanks, are involved, the actors are primarily participating in discourses connected to the party. The Labour Party and Liberal Party are referenced in this discourse, but their MPs and activists are not active in the conservative discourse. Socialism and liberalism are mentioned but are not substantively engaged with as valuable alternatives to conservatism. In contrast to the arguments of Thatcherism as authoritarian populism, where Thatcherism is said to reflect the attitudes of the public, Thatcherism emerges not from popular discourse but rather from internal party discourses.

Where the analysis of contextual concepts points to the contestation in the party, examination of wider ownership introduces a new narrative to thinking about the rise of Thatcherism. The conceptual constellations often point to the coalition construction of the New Right, an

intraparty coalition of authoritarians and liberals against the moderate Heath-ites. This is an important part of the rise of neoliberalism in the party but as we noted in the introduction is incomplete in explaining the appeal of this approach to the rump mass of Heath-ites who remained in the party, particularly the parliamentary party.

The narrative of wider ownership offers something of an explanation to this story. Here we see the construction of a coalition between moderates and liberals with some appeal to the moralising wing of the authoritarians. Again, this is built on shared vocabulary and historical discourses in the party, but we can also find the exposition of shared concepts and decontestation of some meaning. Here we have a different or altered narrative of Thatcherisation. While the New Right may point to the rise of Thatcher as leader or the emergence and normalisation of neoliberalism as a common view in party discourse in the early 1970s, there seems to have been the discursive construction of a second ideological coalition built in the later 1970s to make this approach appeal across the party.

David Howell writes of the ‘Hope of ‘79’, of a shared vision of what Thatcherism would be and the ends that privatisation, marketisation and confrontation with the unions could be oriented towards. This vision of Thatcherism has little to do with the view of Margaret Thatcher herself and indeed it seems that she undermined this vision with the actual policies and practices of her Governments from 1979. Indeed, this reflects Freedman’s understanding of decontestation which stresses at once its political value, drawing together an ideological community but also its impermanence, essential contestability means that decontested concepts and conceptual morphologies are always subject to future re-contestation. The processes and dynamics of these developments are beyond the scope of this thesis, but this chapter progresses our understanding of how her government was in a position and provided a political language with which to pursue these policies in the first place.

5. Anglo-German Networks and Ideas

As I conducted research on the UK in the 1970s, a number of links between the UK case and German case of the previous chapter emerged that demonstrated transnational connections between the cases rather than just comparative similarities. This chapter extends the analysis of the UK case study chapter by examining this transnational story in greater depth. To do so, I examine two further conceptual clusters, the ‘German Model’ and the social market economy as well as the networks that facilitated this transnational flow of ideas.

Existing Literature

The connection between ordoliberalism in Germany and Thatcherism in the UK has not been studied in much depth in the existing literature. Comparison has been made between Thatcherism and ordoliberalism but this is primarily a comparison of theory rather than a historical observation.⁴³² The most advanced discussion of this relationship is Ben Whisker’s article on Concerted Action, which does discuss the ‘German Model’ examined in this chapter, but this account misses many of the more influential policy areas and the relationship to neoliberalism.⁴³³ Aled Davies’s individual and collaborative study of pension funds and individualism does point to elements of the relationship but only uncovers the tip of a wider mass of history.⁴³⁴ This is not to suggest that the relationship between the cases was unknown at the time; Andrew Gamble’s acclaimed book ‘The Free Economy and the Strong State’ originates from a 1979 article in *The Socialist Register* which linked Thatcherism to ordoliberalism and the social market economy, which we can recognise from the chapter on Germany.⁴³⁵

⁴³² Bonefeld, 2012; Ledger, 2018; Da Costa Viera and Foster. 2021

⁴³³ Whisker, 2021

⁴³⁴ Davies, et al, 2017; Davies, 2019

⁴³⁵ Gamble, 1979a

Beyond discussion of the global web of the neoliberal thought collective, an existing scholarship does also exist on the transnational movement of neoliberal practices. The export of neoliberalism to the Global South has been a key frame of analysis as well as the subject of its own revisionary accounts.⁴³⁶ International institutions such as the IMF and GATT have been studied but these are more international than transnational.⁴³⁷ Regarding the influence of the German ordoliberal experience, Isabella Weber has demonstrated how German economists in China both exported ordoliberal ideas but also contributed to the construction of the political myth of the German economic miracle, a development similar to that which will be described in this thesis.⁴³⁸ The export of ordoliberalism to Anglo-American contexts is also a developing field, particularly ordo influence on and compatibility with Virginia and Chicago school economics.⁴³⁹ However, this literature has only lightly touched on Britain, as discussed above.

The 'German Model'

Glen O'Hara has written of the role that 'foreign archetypes' have played in British economic policy discourses, particularly those of the twentieth century.⁴⁴⁰ He links the rising emphasis of these national models to the rise of transnational bodies, and we can particularly think here of the dual processes of Europeanisation and globalisation. As O'Hara notes, use of these models reflects both the imaginaries of British actors, as they seek out alternatives, but also their self-perceptions, British understandings of their economic systems.⁴⁴¹ O'Hara notes the

⁴³⁶ The notion of the Chicago boys is key in Klein, 2007; Slobodian and Plehwe, 2022b

⁴³⁷ Slobodian, 2018

⁴³⁸ Weber, 2020; Weber, 2021

⁴³⁹ Dyson, 2021; Kolev and Köhler, 2022

⁴⁴⁰ O'Hara, 2012, pp11-17

⁴⁴¹ The language of a German Model, *Modell Deutschland*, is also a term from SPD politician Helmut Schmidt's campaign in 1976 and has been subject to its own analysis in Germany regarding its accuracy and application as a national model. In this thesis I refer to a similar notion but do not claim to identify a relationship between Schmidt's invocation and Conservative discourse. The German Model here is a concept identified in discourse but not a specific word or term. See Hertfelder, 2007

model of Germany, alongside that of France, as of particular importance in the mid twentieth century, noting the appeal of German policies on inflation and industry when Britain was the ‘sick man of Europe’ but notes that this is an underexplored research area. Ben Whisker extends this analysis of the German Model and focuses on industrial relations, particularly the policy of Concerted Action. In this section I will extend the analysis even further, pointing to how the German Model was able to integrate a number of policy strands related to the wider ownership cluster discussed in the last chapter.

David Howell recalls that in the late 1950s and into the early 1960s, his cohort of younger Conservatives, language he typically uses to refer to the Bow Group, had a preoccupation with West Germany.

Our eyes were focused on the German recovery miracle (*Wirtschaftswunder*) and the *Ordoliberalismus* of Ludwig Erhard, who was pushing the German economy well ahead. I had seen the growing achievement of rebuilt German cities and main streets at the end of my time as a national serviceman in Germany. The picture of plumper German ladies digging into *erdbeertorte mit sahn*e – a luxury unknown in austere post-war Britain – was wedged in my mind. It was plain as a pikestaff that Britain was on the wrong track and that radical change, of philosophy, of policy, of organisation and of mindset – in short, a whole new style of government – was needed to catch up with the rest of western Europe.⁴⁴²

Reading party papers, publications and memoirs of the 1970s, it is remarkable the frequency at which West Germany appears. The German case appears as a model for the UK in a range of different policy areas. Chris Patten points to West Germany as having a better welfare system

⁴⁴² Howell, 2019, p94; In 1971 Howell published the pamphlet *A New Style Emerges* which set out his vision for government, particularly the CPRS

as well as praising the ‘Concerted Action’ approach to tripartite reconciliation.⁴⁴³ The 1977 Campaign Guide has two references to Graham Bannock’s comparative study of small businesses to argue that Germany provides a model for lower taxation and the merits of small manufacturing businesses.⁴⁴⁴ This reference may well have been the work of David Howell who had written a positive article about the report in *The Times* that same year.⁴⁴⁵

Industrial Relations

However, if there is a particular area where West Germany pops up with the most frequency it is in the area of industrial relations. The Thatcher premiership is known for confrontation with the unions, and the established narrative of the 1970s prior to Thatcher’s ascent is one of appeasement of the unions. The post-war settlement with industry was seen to be in crisis amid rising inflation, the failure of the social contract and concerns about the power of trade unions. In 1974, the Conservative Party’s Counter Inflation Policy Group discusses a paper by Terence Higgins on future policy. Higgins claims that, while a prices and income policy remains essential, structural changes in the economy require longer term thinking and suggests both some demand management and greater control of nationalised industry prices and incomes by government departments.⁴⁴⁶ In response, David Howell circulates a paper that claims that even more fundamental changes in policy approach were needed and that both dominant approaches to economic thinking, the ‘Cambridge School’ and neo-classicism, needed to be challenged and rethought.⁴⁴⁷ As the old system, of price and incomes policies, was undermined alternative models were sought.

⁴⁴³ Patten, 1983

⁴⁴⁴ Bannock, 1976, *The Smaller Business in Britain and Germany* discussed in Conservative Party, 1977; This report was produced for the Anglo-German Foundation which will be discussed later in this chapter, Bannock is also affiliated with the IEA

⁴⁴⁵ Howell, 1977

⁴⁴⁶ Higgins, 1974

⁴⁴⁷ Howell, 1974b

In this search for alternative models and approaches to economics one area that draws attention is industrial relations and the relationship between business and trade unions. A clear alternative model that emerges is that of West Germany. Here we can find Peter Walker described as ‘attracted to the German system’, with an emphasis on co-determination, cooperatives and employee consultation, and backing from the Tory Reform Group and Heath.⁴⁴⁸ Walker was the leading vocal progressive Conservative after the death of Iain Macleod, with Ian Gilmour declining in influence and Walker on the frontbenches and seen to lead the TRG. In his own work, Walker repeatedly praises the West German industrial relations system, particularly works councils and co-determination, describing it as ‘way ahead of any other country’.⁴⁴⁹ Jim Prior talks admiringly of the ‘rational structure of industrial unionism in Germany’ and that it should be a model of British unions.⁴⁵⁰ The German system of employee participation, with workers on boards draws attention as a possible way to have better trade union relations. West Germany presents the model for achieving wider ownership.

The drivers of this interest are discussed in a draft consultative document on employee participation from 1974 which establishes the policy both from principles, ‘Greater participation is needed not only for economic reasons but also because a better quality of working life is important in its own right... Greater employee participation is essential for furthering common interest’, as well as the more pragmatic reason of pressure after joining the EEC, with weight bearing down from a Communique from Heads of State and Government, Paris 1972 and draft European Company Statute.⁴⁵¹ In this consultative document, West Germany is discussed in the most detail, exemplifying employee participation and co-determination. The document concludes that in order to protect flexibility and not upset

⁴⁴⁸ Russel, 1978, pp. 84-85

⁴⁴⁹ Walker, 1977, p76

⁴⁵⁰ Prior, 1980, p. 19

⁴⁵¹ Draft consultative document on employee participation, 1974, p. 1

industrial relations, a full German-style approach would not be possible but it is clear that Germany factors in the imagining of mooted wider ownership.⁴⁵² Employee participation could thus appeal to those like Howe and Walker who saw participation and involvement as means to empower individuals, those seeking a means to weaken unions, and those trying to better align with the EEC.

Germany is used as a model of employee participation in CPC publications from 1973, when it is mentioned in an Old Queen Street Paper and in a pamphlet, through 1980, where Kenneth Carlisle MP mentions it as a model case of profit sharing.⁴⁵³ In 1977, when the Conservative Contact Programme (the 3-way Contact Programme) issued a contact brief on the party's position on Employee Participation and in opposition to the Bullock Committee Report, Germany is used again to point to the different underlying industrial relations between the countries, drawing on an assumed knowledge of German industrial relations on behalf of lay Conservative Party members.⁴⁵⁴

As we will see, by 1977 elements in the party particularly close to Thatcher had begun to position themselves against worker representation on boards. This transition can be seen in the orientation towards importing a German policy known as 'Concerted Action'. This policy had been championed by Geoffrey Howe in the opposition years and is mentioned by name in 'The Right Approach'.⁴⁵⁵ Concerted Action mirrored a West German policy that organised tripartite coordination between employers, the government and trade unions, by building on the National Economic Development Council (NEDC). While this package would increase participation and the influence of workers councils it was controversial for its corporatist elements and Thatcher

⁴⁵² Draft consultative document on employee participation, 1974

⁴⁵³ Abbott, 1973; Cassidy, 1973; Carlisle, 1980; Carlisle would later be a member of the CPS Personal Capital Building/Wider Ownership Study Group; 'Reports of Study Groups', 1984

⁴⁵⁴ Conservative Contact Programme, 19774

⁴⁵⁵ 'The Right Approach', 1976 p38; Caines, 2017, pp. 189-191

ultimately ended up opposing it on those grounds memorably writing across the top of the report: ‘Please tell Geoffrey and Adam Ridley that I disagree most strongly with this paper. We are [trying to] cut down advisory bodies and requests for statistics - not multiply them’.⁴⁵⁶ Concerted Action did not go ahead.

The appeal to a ‘German model’ often does mention the influence of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) on the policy, especially as the SPD held the chancellorship in West Germany for all but nine days in the 1970s.⁴⁵⁷ Concerted Action is typically associated with SPD Economics Minister Karl Schiller. Indeed, by the 1970s many Christian Democrats, particularly ordoliberals, were critical of the involvement of the state to the extent represented by the ‘German Model’. While the policy would be linked with the social market economy it was treated with more than some ambivalence by ordoliberal economists. However, the understanding of wider ownership underlying these policies overlaps significantly with the thought of other ordoliberals, like Wilhelm Röpke, who had made similar arguments about the need to create ‘small capitalists’ who could enjoy economic freedom and the discipline of markets.⁴⁵⁸ The report on Concerted Action prepared for the Economic Reconstruction Group is a fundamentally ordoliberal analysis; it is derived primarily from the analysis of ordoliberal economists with ordoliberalism used to present the justification for the policy alongside a ‘neo-liberal critique’ explaining ordoliberal critiques of the policy.⁴⁵⁹ Whether Concerted Action is necessarily ordoliberal or not, it was understood by Conservative ministers through the lens of ordoliberalism.

⁴⁵⁶ Ridley, 1977; transcription aided by Begley, 2020, *The making of Thatcherism*, pp. 46-47, p.98; Williamson, 2015

⁴⁵⁷ An FDP politician, Walter Scheel, held the role of acting chancellor after Willy Brandt’s resignation

⁴⁵⁸ Bonefeld, 2015; Da Costa Viera and Foster, 2021

⁴⁵⁹ Zweig, 1977

Inflation

Alongside Germany's industrial relations, the other horn of the German Model concerns inflation policies. Here there is a focus on both the contemporary West Germany's monetary policy as well as consideration of the period examined in this thesis, the post-war ordoliberalisation.

Germany is regularly invoked as having better inflation policies than Britain, again being presented as a model. Keith Joseph's 'Monetarism is not Enough' speech includes the claim that 'we have much to learn from the latest stage of Germany's success story' pointing to control of the money supply by the West German Government and the Bundesbank.⁴⁶⁰ The creation of the European Monetary System and the question of British participation in the late 1970s was often understood in the Conservative Party as related to Europeanisation.

However, it was also related to thinking about West Germany with the Bundesbank and Deutschmark at the core of the EMS. Some monetarists in the party were enthusiastic about this proposal due to the Bundesbank's reputation for monetary discipline.⁴⁶¹ Konrad Zweig, who wrote the main report on Concerted Action for the party published two pamphlets on West German economic policy, one for the CPS entitled 'Germany through inflation and Recession: An Object Lesson in Economic Management 1973-1976' and another for the Adam Smith Institute.⁴⁶² Both publications discuss ordoliberalism and the Bundesbank.⁴⁶³

Alongside the Bundesbank, there was interest in learning from the German Economic Miracle, the *Wirtschaftswunder* of the post-war years. For the CPS, this involved having a session with Sir Paul Chambers, who had headed the Finance Division of the Control

⁴⁶⁰ Joseph, 1976b, p6

⁴⁶¹ Williamson, 2015 pp213-218

⁴⁶² Zweig, 1976; Zweig, 1980; Zweig's reports on Concerted Action and the *Sachverständigenrat* for the CRD were not published. A second report on Concerted Action was done in-house in the CRD by Adam Ridley

⁴⁶³ Zweig was also involved in discussions about mirroring the German Council of Economic Advisors.

Commission in British occupied West Germany, a role in which he played an important role to plan and implement the famous currency reform.⁴⁶⁴ This reform and how it had been achieved was the subject of the session. Keith Joseph also specifically asked for Chambers to be invited to the Advisory Council of the CPS.⁴⁶⁵

This interest in the post-war period can also be seen in the attention given to Ludwig Erhard. Margaret Thatcher writes a birthday message to Erhard in 1977 ‘on behalf of [his] countless admirers in the Conservative Party’ wherein she expresses ‘every good wish today and gratitude for the wonderful example [he has] given those of us dedicated to the extension of free enterprise’.⁴⁶⁶ On the occasion of Erhard’s death, mere months later, Thatcher writes a letter of sympathy to Helmut Kohl on behalf of ‘those of us who share his vision of a free-enterprise economy’ and notes that:

He was a man for whom I had the greatest admiration and I am sure that when history is written he will be judged as one of the most outstanding political economists of the century. I shall always remember meeting Dr. Erhard for the first time as one of the highlights of my visit to Bonn in 1975.

If only Britain had produced a man with similar foresight in the economic field, I cannot help feeling that our present economic situation would be rather better than it is today.⁴⁶⁷

This was not just a customary message between leaders on the death of a former premier. Correspondence within Thatcher’s office shows that multiple junior colleagues questioned whether it was necessary that a message be written and whether it ought to come from Thatcher,

⁴⁶⁴ Webley to Coats, 1975; Turner, 1987

⁴⁶⁵ ‘Minutes of CPS Meeting’, 1974, p3

⁴⁶⁶ Thatcher to Erhard, 1977

⁴⁶⁷ Thatcher to Kohl, 1977

before Thatcher's own intervention.⁴⁶⁸ David Howell was also a fan, having met and interviewed Erhard in the 1960s, and was already inspired by his views. Reflecting on his time in university, Howell claims:

Erhard had already become a hero to some of us and his book *Prosperity Through Competition*⁴⁶⁹ had served as a kind of economic (and political) Bible to us at Cambridge as we searched for an alternative to the consensus which seemed to paralyze the post-war British economy. I see I wrote in my new copy "the only hope".⁴⁷⁰

Tying a few of these elements together is a report on the 1973 Conservative Party Conference in the *Daily Telegraph* that notes dissatisfaction with Heath's leadership and claims that 'probably the most restive are the market-economy men, not least because, since they heard senior Ministers enthusiastically propounding something very like Ludwig Erhard's "Social Market" policy only three years ago, they feel they must have secret sympathisers in high places. Where they hoped for something like the "German miracle," they have seen policies adopted which seem to prefer temporary convenience to long-term advantageous economic development'.⁴⁷¹

Social Markets

One of the best-known academic works on the ideas of the New Right and Thatcherism is Andrew Gamble's 'The Free Economy and the Strong State', which discusses Thatcherism as a New Right blend of hard conservative moralism and liberal economics.⁴⁷² However, while

⁴⁶⁸ Ryder to Thatcher, 1977; S. to Ryder, 1977

⁴⁶⁹ 'Prosperity for All' is the original German title

⁴⁷⁰ Howell, 2019, pp. 94-95

⁴⁷¹ Green, 1973, p18

⁴⁷² Gamble, 1994.

the book was first published in 1988, if one goes back to the initial article that originated the thesis, from 1979, and other articles and book chapters from the end of the 1970s that build the argument, Gamble was using different language.⁴⁷³ Here he referred to the New Right and Thatcherism, which are at times treated as synonymous, as a blend of a populist authoritarianism and ‘social market doctrine’. Of course, having examined the ‘social market economy’ in the West Germany chapter of this thesis, the language of ‘social market doctrine’ jumps off the page. Gamble’s understanding of this approach muddles ordoliberalism with the more well-known Anglo-American neoliberalism, discussing Röpke alongside Hayek and Friedman; he draws together various trends in the party including monetarists, Powellites, the IEA, and competition; nonetheless, he is clear to distinguish it as different from liberal market economics. While Gamble recognises that some libertarian Conservatives adopt monetarism and other aspects of the new economic approach merely as instruments to pursue Britain’s economic success, a new tool for an old goal, he also identifies a second group in the New Right. This second group that Gamble identifies has a thicker understanding of the social market doctrine and seeks a more fundamental reshaping of the economy and government.

The language of ‘social markets’ was invoked and claimed by a number of different actors in the Conservative Party. A 1974 article in the *Sunday Times* identifies Michael Heseltine and Eldon Griffiths as evangelists for the social market economy, while in the 1975 leadership contest it was Hugh Fraser who used the term when setting out his stall in the *Times*.⁴⁷⁴ The Selsdon Group, a neoliberal group set up in opposition to Heath’s infamous U-turn, stated in a press release in January 1974 that they ‘put the case for the social market economy’.⁴⁷⁵

Nonetheless, the term can be best associated with the Centre for Policy Studies, and its

⁴⁷³ Gamble, 1979a; Gamble, 1979b; Gamble, 1980.

⁴⁷⁴ Biffen, 1974; Fraser, 1975

⁴⁷⁵ Selsdon Group, 1974

related actors Keith Joseph and Nigel Vinson, as well as with David Howell. These actors will be recognisable as central in the discourse on wider ownership discussed in the last chapter and I will argue the two conceptual clusters are linked.

Gamble's use of the language of 'social market doctrine' was a response to its use by members and institutions of the Conservative Party, but especially that from the Centre for Policy Studies, since its foundation in 1974.⁴⁷⁶ As the CPS dropped the use of the term from their discourse at the end of the seventies, it largely fell out of use in the party. It would later be revisited in the early nineties, adopted by David Owen, Robert Skidelsky, and the SDP, giving rise to the Social Market Foundation, and invoked by Maurice Glasman and Blue Labour, but the usage in the Conservative Party has fallen away.⁴⁷⁷ By the time of the first publication of Gamble's book, in 1988, he used the language of 'neoliberalism' to talk about groups previously discussed as social market doctrine.

The Centre for Policy Studies had been set up in the early 1974 with key Thatcherite Keith Joseph, and Margaret Thatcher herself, on the executive. This think tank is now understood as a key font of Thatcherism; a monetarist and free-marketeer rival to the Conservative Research Department as a source of policies, ideas and organisation. However, it is worth noting that it was originally justified to the party during Heath's leadership as studying and learning from market economics in other countries. The initial prospectus for the centre described it as paying 'particular attention to social market policies' and this language also appeared in its early publications as well as some of the initial letters sent out soliciting research for the Centre.⁴⁷⁸ Mooted titles for the think tank included the 'Erhard Foundation' and 'Institute for a Social

⁴⁷⁶ Gamble, 2021

⁴⁷⁷ Skidelsky, 1989; Brack, 1990; Joseph, 1992; Baston, 1996; Glasman, 1996; Marquand, 1999; The continuity SDP still uses the language of social markets

⁴⁷⁸ Webley to Coats, 1975

Market Economy’ and in its first years the CPS published both a pamphlet on ‘Why Britain needs a social market economy’, authored by Vinson and Martin Wassell with a forward from Joseph, and another on German monetary policy, which included a section on the evolution of the social market economy.⁴⁷⁹ It is no surprise that most of the media reports on the social market economy from the period are discussions of the CPS.⁴⁸⁰

The language of ‘social markets’ in the CPS was driven by Nigel Vinson and would be subject to heated contestation within the think tank. Another co-founder of the CPS, Alfred Sherman, was less enamoured with the term and sought to move away from it. This precipitated with something of a mutiny against Vinson in mid/late 1975 where Sherman became Director of the think tank and a number of social market related activities were dialled back. This was primarily related to budget cuts stemming from Thatcher and Joseph’s new roles in the party but also involved a move away from ‘draft[ing] social market policy blueprints for Party’; the CPS would continue to ‘act as clearing house for all social marketeers to meet together and discuss activities’.⁴⁸¹ A commitment to social markets would remain in the think tank’s self-description throughout the decade.⁴⁸² Only in 1978, as the CPS has a special meeting to plan for the 1979 election and its future, is a plan suggested to drop the phrase ‘social market economy’ from the Centre’s philosophy, this was pushed by Alfred Sherman.⁴⁸³ This shift has also been linked to opposition to the term from Thatcher and from Shirley Letwin, although as we will see, Thatcher did occasionally use the term.⁴⁸⁴

⁴⁷⁹ Denham and Garnett, 2001; Joseph, 1974; ‘Why Britain needs a Social Market Economy’, 1975; Zweig, 1976

⁴⁸⁰ See Brittan, 1975; Rogaly, 1975a

⁴⁸¹ Wassell, 1975a; In Sherman’s account, his influence arose ‘since none of the others showed any capacity for doing anything’ such that ‘by the later years in Opposition, [he] was the Centre’; Sherman, 1992

⁴⁸² In 1977, plans were developed to publish a new and improved version of ‘Why Britain needs a social market economy’ but Eamonn Fingleton, the intended author, never completed the brief and the before John O’Sullivan could be commissioned Sherman had moved the CPS away from social markets, see next footnote; ‘Minutes of meeting of CPS Management Board’, 1977; ‘Minutes of CPS Management Board’, 1978

⁴⁸³ ‘Minutes of special meeting’, 1978

⁴⁸⁴ As an example, see Thatcher, 1978; Denham and Garnett, 2001

What did social markets mean for the Vinson, Joseph and the CPS? ‘Why Britain Needs a Social Market Economy’ directly draws on Ludwig Erhard and Alfred Müller-Armack, originators of the term in late-1940s Germany, and explains it as ‘a socially responsible market economy, for a market economy is perfectly compatible with the promotion of a more compassionate society’.⁴⁸⁵ The pamphlet continues by noting the shortcomings of market distributions and notes that ‘there is therefore a clear need to complement the market system with various “social policies”’ with emphasis on social markets informing the ‘*form* government intervention should take’ rather than ruling out interventions.⁴⁸⁶

In the pamphlet on German inflation policy, an extended and informed understanding of ordoliberal social markets is presented by Konrad Zweig, who emphasises ‘a strong continuity of thought’ between ‘true English economic liberalism’ and social market economics. Zweig notes the evolution of the concept in German political economy and points to the idea that ‘economic and social policies of the State are complementary to the free market when operating through the market, not against it’ and emphasises order, private property rights and stable currency.⁴⁸⁷ He is also at pains to note ordoliberal critique of some more contemporary uses of the language of social markets, particularly regarding Concerted Action. In 1976, at a Bow Group event at the Conservative Party Conference, Joseph praises West Germany’s ‘humane and wealth-creating social market system’ and singles out the notion of market conforming subsidies.⁴⁸⁸

Joseph’s use of the language of social markets was not limited to this period either. In 1969, before Heath’s premiership and before Selsdon Man was born, Joseph, then Shadow

⁴⁸⁵ ‘Why Britain Needs a Social Market Economy’, 1975, p7

⁴⁸⁶ ‘Why Britain Needs a Social Market Economy’, 1975, p9; emphasis in original

⁴⁸⁷ Zweig, 1976, p11

⁴⁸⁸ Joseph, 1977, p7

President of the Board of Trade, calls for ‘a social market policy based on competition, tax reform, and effective help to those who need it’.⁴⁸⁹ Similarly, 1970 finds Joseph commenting on the virtues of ‘a social market philosophy, of free enterprise in a civilised context’.⁴⁹⁰

There are some tensions between the different understandings of social markets. Indeed, these tensions mirror some of the debates within the ordoliberal camp that were discussed in the chapter on West Germany. Vinson here reflects Alfred Müller-Armack who was more open to the need for state interventions to keep markets oriented to social needs. Joseph by contrast is somewhat closer to Erhard wherein social needs are achieved through markets but ideally without state intervention beyond creating the conditions for market competition.

Zweig is interesting here as a more contemporary ordoliberal, hence reflecting developments in ordoliberal thinking since the 1940s. Zweig was a former student of Mises and in his early career had associated with Hayek and the Freiburg School. Hayek wrote him a reference when Zweig was seeking academic employment after he fled Nazi rule.⁴⁹¹ As mentioned previously, Zweig’s report for the party on Concerted Action included many ordoliberal critiques of the way German economic policy had been seen to deviate from orthodox ordoliberalism over the decades.

This links well with a fascinating episode where Joe Rogaly, a writer for the *Financial Times*, pens a piece responding to the CPS and their invocation of the Social Market Economy. In a quite detailed account, Rogaly notes that while the concept may be appealing it is not very reflective of contemporary German policy which is much less free market and amenable to the likes of Joseph. In a key passage he states:

⁴⁸⁹ Fergusson, 1969

⁴⁹⁰ Faith 1970

⁴⁹¹ Beckmann, 1999

This is not to deny that it worked magnificently during the first quarter of a century of the Federal Republic's existence, or that its basic principles will influence policy decisions for many years to come. But the fundamental question now is whether a turning point has been reached, since to the visitor the West German policy seems set to change so radically during its second quarter of a century that, on present form, by the end of it "Soziale Marktwirtschaft" will be no more than an interesting chapter in the economic history books.⁴⁹²

This article evidently drew the attention of the CPS because two days later, Martin Wassell, General Director of the CPS and Vinson's co-author for 'Why Britain needs a Social Market Economy' appears in the Letters to the Editor, defending the think tank's position. Wassell accepts the praise of Erhard and the fact the government policy in West Germany had and was continuing to move away from the ordoliberalism of the 1940s but does not concede Rogaly's argument. Instead, he doubles down on the social market economy, noting: '[Rogaly] appears to conclude that Britain should hesitate to espouse policies that have been so successful in Germany at a time when the Germans are threatening to retreat from them – and are suffering the consequences. In other words, Britain must be wary of straying from "the road to serfdom" since others may soon be accompanying us on the journey!'.⁴⁹³ In other words, the CPS wishes for Britain to be more committed to ordoliberalism than even the Germans, a position presented with an invocation of Hayek.

Rogaly responds in another article the next week pointing to the different contexts between Germany and Britain and the challenges facing implementation of the social market economy

⁴⁹² Rogaly, 1975a

⁴⁹³ Wassell, 1975b

in Britain but does not receive another reply. Rogaly finishes with a fairly prescient observation, one that we will return to in the analysis section of this chapter:

It can be seen that little short of a wholesale counter-revolution would be anything like enough to make much impact in Britain. Mrs. Thatcher, Sir Keith Joseph and their band may win the next election – but in terms of changing Britain in the direction of the Social Market Economy they have a long, hard and perhaps impossible task ahead of them.⁴⁹⁴

The other key actor in this period is David Howell, a man of many hats in the Conservative Party. From the early 1960s on, Howell was active in the Bow Group, Director of the Conservative Political Centre, a writer for the *Daily Telegraph*, among other publications, Director of the PSRU, advisor to Heath and later Thatcher, MP and minister. He was also interested in social market economics. Howell's understanding of Erhard's philosophy, derived from his readings, as well as meeting the man in the early 1960s, centres liberalisation and competition, but also 'the famous *Sozialmarkt* concept – a wonderfully practical German expression of an idea that eluded the polarised British debate'.⁴⁹⁵

Howell claims that in the 1960s, when he was director of the CPC, the 'social market economy' was a key component of the discussions arising from the Contact Programme, which engaged groups of Conservative members as policy groups providing feedback to the leadership.⁴⁹⁶ In 1965, the *Daily Telegraph* runs an editorial reviewing a motion at a Greater London Young Conservatives conference calling for free markets and move away from socialism. The *Telegraph* identifies the motion with the nascent New Right but also states:

⁴⁹⁴ Rogaly, 1975b

⁴⁹⁵ Howell, 2019, p95

⁴⁹⁶ Howell, 2017; There does not appear to be discussion of 'social markets' in the contact programme directly, although wider ownership and industrial relations are regularly discussed, indicating the extent to which Howell linked these concepts/issue areas.

‘In all this one begins to see the outline of a new and popular Conservative doctrine. It is similar to Dr. Erhard’s “social market economy”’.⁴⁹⁷ This may well have been influenced by Howell as he had been employed by the *Telegraph* until the year before and would continue to contribute to the paper in the forthcoming years, including advocating for the social market economy in the 1970s.⁴⁹⁸

These three actors are not independent and interacted with one another often. Joseph and Vinson worked together at the CPS, Howell also claims that he was approached by Joseph to be the second Director of the CPS.⁴⁹⁹ Joseph and Howell were both being MPs and ministers and appearing in many of the same crucial economic policy groups in the Party, and were very involved in discussions about wider ownership and industrial policy, often bringing up the ‘German model’. Vinson was friendly with Howell and both had been active in the same Constituency Association, Guilford.⁵⁰⁰

Networks of Exchange

The interest in social markets and the German Model in the party was in part accidental, stemming from personal experience with National Service or social relationships with Germany.⁵⁰¹ However, it was also the result of active work by both the Conservative Party and Christian Democratic Union to build transnational networks and relationships. In practice this meant that both institutional parties sought to engage with one another and that para-party groups were able to engage transnationally.

⁴⁹⁷ ‘New Tory Radicalism’, 1965

⁴⁹⁸ Howell, 1977

⁴⁹⁹ Howell, 2017

⁵⁰⁰ Vinson, 2021

⁵⁰¹ Jim Prior’s headteacher at Eton was an education advisor in occupied Germany and would push Prior to visit Germany and discuss German policies. Peter Rost, who was one of the originators of the British-German Parliamentary Group, was born in Germany before leaving after the rise of fascism.

The Bow Group hosted talks by a number of CDU officials in the 1970s, sent a delegation to a conference put on by the Adenauer Foundation, and even planned to set up a Bow Group branch in Bonn. Interestingly, the contact person on the German side helping plan this new branch was economics professor Wolfram Engels, who would go on to found the Kronberger Kreis and Stiftung Marktwirtschaft, key institutions for ordoliberalism in Germany.⁵⁰²

Meinhard Miegel, a key colleague of Kurt Biedenkopf, General Secretary of the CDU, recalls the meetings and conferences between the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Bow Group and Conservative Party fondly and that there were the ‘lively contacts’ between the organisations.⁵⁰³

Formal networks also included the Königswinter Conference, a longstanding exchange between British and German politicians, academics and other actors. Königswinter did discuss economic policy actively in the 1970s.⁵⁰⁴ However this was not all. In the late 1970s, the British-German Parliamentary Group was founded and began having conferences. These discussions often touched on the comparative industrial strategies of the countries.⁵⁰⁵ In 1977, the departing German ambassador wrote to Thatcher and identified the role of the Parliamentary Group, as well as the actions of the party, in the development of ‘total trust’ in Anglo-German relations.⁵⁰⁶

The 1970s also heralded the formation of the Anglo-German Foundation for the Study of Industrial Society. This Foundation was also formally non-partisan but published often on industrial relations policies in Germany, advocating them to Britons. The seminars launching

⁵⁰² ‘Minutes of European Liaison Committee’, 1974; Lamont, 1972

⁵⁰³ Miegel, 2020

⁵⁰⁴ Indicative is 1977 when Concerted Action and co-determination were discussed; ‘XXVII. Deutsch-Englisches Gespräch’, 1977

⁵⁰⁵ ‘British-German Parliamentary Group Conference 1978’, 1978; For an account of this group and its activities see Rost, 2010

⁵⁰⁶ Von Hase to Thatcher, 1977

these reports were regularly attended by members of the Conservative Research Department as well as the CPS; events were attended by MPs.⁵⁰⁷ AGF reports were mentioned in Conservative Party speeches and campaign guides and the head of the AGF met with the CPS where it was described as giving ‘sympathetic consideration to applications for funding’.⁵⁰⁸ In its internal reports, the AGF noted that ‘social market policies’ were a ‘fruitful field for discussion either directly, or within the general area of discussion of the future of the western economies’.⁵⁰⁹

One figure who appears in the AGF visitor book is Alan Peacock, who also wrote publications funded by the Foundation. Peacock was familiar with the German language, had a longstanding interest in German economic thought including ordoliberalism, which he had discussed with Hayek when they were colleagues at LSE, and he was a rare British economist of his generation to engage with ordoliberals personally and in scholarship.⁵¹⁰ Peacock was most associated with the Liberal Party and Jo Grimond but also active in the IEA and a leading neoliberal economist. In 1989, Peacock would co-edit a two-volume collection of essays on ordoliberalism and the social market economy alongside Hans Willgerodt, editor of *Ordo*, nephew of Wilhelm Röpke and Alfred Müller-Armack’s successor at the University of Cologne.⁵¹¹ These volumes are key to the anglophone literature on ordoliberalism.

The most crucial networks were those between the parties and intra-national groups. These links had history. Johannes Großmann has detailed the history of the conservative international, CEDI, and this group remained active in the 1970s, meeting alongside Le

⁵⁰⁷ ‘AGF Visitors Book’, n.d

⁵⁰⁸ Conservative Party, 1977.; ‘Minutes of the CPS Management Board’, 1979

⁵⁰⁹ ‘1976 Report on the Work of the Foundation’, 1977

⁵¹⁰ Tribe, 1997

⁵¹¹ Peacock and Willgerodt, 1989a; Peacock and Willgerodt, 1989b

Cercle as a coordinated anti-communist front.⁵¹² However, they had limited influence beyond their natural allies in the Monday Club, with Julian Amery, who attended a joint conference in 1976 dismissing them as “unreconstructed” conservatives’.⁵¹³ The CEDI and the Habsburg networks were associated by the Conservative Party with Franz Josef Strauss, who the Conservative Party initially sought to sideline in intra-party relations, at the behest of the CDU, before becoming more friendly as Thatcher’s leadership unfolded.

In the mainstream of the parties, the need for cooperation was driven by two factors, concern about the influence and organisation of the left in Europe and a related desire to cooperate with British accession to the EEC and the development of the European Parliament. This is perfectly summed up by a 1976 report by Douglas Hurd for the Shadow Cabinet setting out the urgent need for ‘an alliance of Centre and Right Parties in Western Europe’ and that ‘The German CDU is the key, for they are the only major party which enjoys a close relationship with all those eligible for the alliance’.⁵¹⁴

A crucial element of the relationship between the parties is the exchanges between their research institutions the Conservative Research Department and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung. These groups organise a number of exchanges throughout the 1970s. The meetings were well received by participants and considered productive. In 1978, Chris Patten, head of the CRD described a session as ‘quite the best meeting of the sort that I have ever attended. We actually did some work: I hope that it’s possible to build on these foundations’.⁵¹⁵ The report of the meeting itself displays a particular interest in discussing economic policy and the

⁵¹² Großmann, 2014

⁵¹³ Amery to Wiggin, 1976; The Monday Club was heavily represented among CEDI representatives. The participation of intelligence/security figures like Robert Moss and Brian Crozier at Le Cercle meetings does suggest some link to this wing of the foreign policy brigade

⁵¹⁴ Hurd, 1976

⁵¹⁵ Patten to Thatcher, 1978

related discussions on the philosophical and practical role of the state as well as ‘steal[ing] a march on the Socialists’ suggests that the social market economy was also a subject of discussion.⁵¹⁶ In an interview, one of the participants remembers the meeting as notably friendly and echoes comments Patten makes in his report regarding a keen interest in learning from the institutional set up of the KAS.⁵¹⁷ The CPS would request to be involved in CRD/KAS exchanges but there is no indication that they were successful.⁵¹⁸

The other core institution was the European Democrat Union (EDU) and its student wing, the European Democrat Students (EDS). The EDS was initially more active and helped prompt the foundation of the EDU in its actions to link parties as well as resulting in personal relationships. Indeed, a 1974 memo in the International Office notes the pressure ‘particularly from the younger generation’ for further cooperation between the CDU and Conservatives and the wider European centre-right.⁵¹⁹ Scott Hamilton, who went from the FCS to a leadership role in the EDS would go on to be influential in the International Office and foundation of the EDU.

In the 1970s, the EDS was active on a number of fronts regarding Britain, particularly accession to the EEC; many of the Conservatives involved would stay involved with the Conservatives for Europe campaign for decades. At meetings the dynamics were often defined by the existence of three camps, the libertarians from Scandinavia and the low countries, the christian democrats led by the CDU and the Conservatives. Meetings were often friendly and philosophical discussing human rights, anti-communism and, as I’ll emphasise, social markets. Interviewing a number of representatives from the FCS and

⁵¹⁶ Patten to Elles, 1978

⁵¹⁷ Shepherd, 2022

⁵¹⁸ Adam Ridley did go, and his German language skills were remarked on, but Ridley was primarily affiliated with the CRD rather than the CPS

⁵¹⁹ Stephens, 1974

RCDS, its CDU-CSU equivalent, both sides remember long discussions about the social market economy and the Germans seeking to convince the Britons of the value of the concept.⁵²⁰

This exchange would be successful for some time, with the CDU able to use the Conservatives as allies in the EDS against the libertarians. However, as the liberal and neoliberal wings of the in the Conservative student movement cemented themselves, they began to be understood as too extreme for the West German students and collaboration declined.⁵²¹ Personal relationships remained but the transnational networks declined. The break with the libertarian student wing was not absolute, as some libertarians, such as Nigel Ashford, were also active in the transnational conversations. Further, 'A Bibliography of Freedom', a 1980 pamphlet published by the CPS but written by Chris Tame, a leading young libertarian and director of the Libertarian Bookshop, features Wilhelm Röpke, arch ordoliberal economist.⁵²²

At the senior level, the EDU was also a site for discussion of social markets. The second annual conference discussed a number of resolutions including how to respond to Eurocommunism but also the Socially Oriented Market Economy. This echoed the language of the charter. The impact of ordoliberalism on the EDU can be found here with draft charters including calls for a 'socially-orientated market economy' achieved in part through 'the prevention of excessive concentrations of market power'; this language was not deemed problematic by the Conservatives.⁵²³

⁵²⁰ Ashford, 2021; Eisel, 2021; Pflüger, 2021

⁵²¹ On the libertarian student network see Evans, 1996

⁵²² Tame, 1980

⁵²³ 'Draft Charter of the European Democrat Union', 1976

Analysis

The Anglo-German exchange of ideas provides two wrinkles to existing narratives of British neoliberalisation. These dovetail well with the narratives and analysis of discourse developed in the UK case study chapter. The first of these shifts the geographical framework with which to examine Thatcherism from a parochial national context or in relation to the Anglo-American special relationship towards to a European frame. The second connects with the discussion of wider ownership to consider the ideological coalition of the 1970s and the possibility of another Thatcherism.

The first of these findings draws on the fact that Thatcherism is not wholly of a British origin nor entirely a result of the established narrative regarding Reagan, Milton Friedman, Chicago and the Virginia School. While these play a role in the overall story of Thatcherite policy, in the period studied in this thesis West Germany is a more significant influence.⁵²⁴ This chapter points to how Germany was not just the origin of some actors but actively considered in visions of neoliberalism both as a reference for effective policy and in imagining a possible future. Ordoliberalism is not just similar to British neoliberalism, the two are directly linked.

As such, it is not possible to think of the two cases in this thesis as independent events. While intent is of secondary interest in examining discourse, key actors influencing the second case actively sought to make it develop similarly to the first. This complicates comparative analysis, but that will be the focus of the next chapter. Reframing of the context of Thatcherism to encompass post-war West Germany brings the influences discussed in the West German chapter into discussion of 1970s Britain even when most if not all actors in the latter would be under- or uninformed about that context.

⁵²⁴ This is particularly the case with the comparison to Reagan who does not become President until 1981.

The second finding emerging from this chapter is related to that of wider ownership discussed in the last chapter. The conceptual cluster of the social market economy overlaps heavily with wider ownership and displays similar dynamics. Further, consideration of the German Model points to the extent to which wider ownership was often understood in relation to Germany, with West Germany a crucial model for works councils, industrial participation and alternative relations with trade unions. The networks linking Germany were the same contributing to the transformation of a discourse in the party from the property-owning democracy to one concerned with wider ownership.

The social market economy conceptual cluster discussed should be distinguished from the notion of the market economy associated with mature Anglo-American neoliberalism. Both of the major biographies of Joseph, by Halcrow and by Denham and Garnett claim that the ‘social’ element of the social market economy mattered in understanding Joseph’s thought and that of some of his allies.⁵²⁵ This is corroborated by Nigel Vinson, who claims that the ‘social’ modifier on market economics was important and that he views its removal was a mistake.⁵²⁶ In his biography, Vinson is clear to establish his preference for a social market economy over a market economy.⁵²⁷

This was directly connected to the ideological coalition between moderates and liberals discussed in the last chapter. Andrew Gamble’s article in 1979 recognised that ‘even many of the intellectuals who currently advocate a “social market economy” do not by any means share the populist positions of Thatcherism and are extremely unhappy that monetarism and the social market economy should appear as “right-wing” doctrines’.⁵²⁸ Halcrow notes that

⁵²⁵ Denham and Garnett, 2001; Halcrow, 1989

⁵²⁶ Vinson, 2021

⁵²⁷ Frost, 2015, p. 185

⁵²⁸ Gamble, 1979a, p4

the use of the modifier, ‘social’ was successful in part because it made the market economics advocated by the CPS more palatable to the central party.⁵²⁹

It is often remarked upon that the views of Margaret Thatcher and Keith Joseph are ‘idiosyncratic’ as neoliberals. Those who reduce neoliberalism to market fundamentalism or mere economic liberalism often remark on the emphasis on morality in the thought of Thatcher and Joseph. Scholars of Keith Joseph remark on the claimed dissonance between his embrace of liberalism, freedom and competition economically while having socially conservative views, platforming Mary Whitehouse.⁵³⁰ These tensions were also remarked upon at the time.⁵³¹ If we take seriously Joseph’s invocation of social markets, using his related invocation of *embourgeoisement* we can likewise take seriously his interest in the utilisation of markets as a means to social ends. Markets and market competition in this framework and not merely pathways to national economic prosperity or efficient distribution of resources but are a social policy in themselves.

Howell writes a number of newspaper articles endorsing a social market economy, but noteworthy is one in *The Times* that notes ‘the stress on the “social” part of the social market economy was always a critical part of its progenitors’ thinking... the social market economy is after all not just a theory but a pattern of life’.⁵³² Howell stresses the small business thinking of social market theory, including approvingly citing a report from the Anglo-German Foundation, but he also stresses the links between the social market economy, wider ownership and industrial democracy. Again, social markets are positioned as indicative of a wider political project than just economics.

⁵²⁹ Halcrow, 1989, p. 67

⁵³⁰ Denham and Garnett, 2001

⁵³¹ Douglas, 1974

⁵³² Howell, 1975

A draft speech for Margaret Thatcher, believed to be from 1978, is entitled ‘The Politics of Freedom’ and as its title suggests primarily discusses freedom. This is done in the context of an exposition on the importance of Christianity in Thatcher’s political convictions. The final paragraph opens: ‘It is this conviction which led me, and others before me to opt for what I call the social market economy, not primarily on economic grounds, but on moral grounds, because it entailed the widest spread of responsibility. It has also proved economically most beneficial, but that is an added bonus’.⁵³³ While Thatcher was not a regular advocate of social markets it is interesting to see one of her few invocations is directly in connection to her Christian values. Another discussion of social markets in Thatcher’s speechwriting notes makes a similar point. In the same year, 1978, Alfred Sherman prepares a speech for Thatcher to give to the Spanish Union de Centro Democratico, a centre-right party emerging in the post-Franco era.⁵³⁴ In his notes to Thatcher for the speech, Sherman notes:

the need to find a workable Christian neo-Conservative tradition with positive appreciation of the role of the social market economy, demonstrating that far from leading to exploitation and misery, it provides the basis for a truly caring responsible society in which all can serve their fellow-men as their conscience dictates. We must show awareness that we need far more than economic philosophy. We must deal with morale, service, national purpose, religion.⁵³⁵

As with wider ownership an account of the German influences on Thatcherism seems to indicate a build-up to 1979 but then a quick drop off in the discourse. The language of social markets falls away in the CPS and thereafter the wider party. In the early 1990s the remaining advocates for a social market economy are Keith Joseph, retired to the Lords, and Chris

⁵³³ ‘The Politics of Freedom’, n.d.

⁵³⁴ On the transnational networks linking Spain and neoliberalism see Großmann, 2014; Moreton, 2021

⁵³⁵ Sherman, 1978 ‘Madrid Speech’

Patten, the moderate Tory known as a rival of the CPS but also one of the people most involved in the CRD/KAS relationship.⁵³⁶ As with wider ownership elements of the ordoliberal discourses continue into the 1980s and beyond but become diluted. An interview with a former holder of the industrial relations desk at the CRD, later a special advisor to Prior, pointed to the Youth Training Scheme as the clearest policy outcome of the German influence, far from the vision set out in the 1970s.⁵³⁷

The details of the decline of German influence seem related to strategy advisors arguing against the use of ‘social’ as a concept, personal relationships, and the changing power dynamics of a shift from Opposition to Government. However, into the 1980s there seems to have been a noteworthy change of footing from prioritising social markets to just prioritising markets. This market fundamentalism, shorn of the social ends that played a part in the justification of neoliberalism that facilitated its rise, then leads to different policies and priorities. It is perhaps not surprising that an approach that no longer uses the language of social markets was less concerned about the social implications of its schemes for privatisation and de-industrialisation. Without a sense of the German Model, wider share ownership could be achieved by tinkering with pensions and selling shares of nationalised industries without a connected focus on getting workers a say on boards.

6. Comparative Analysis

In the introductory chapters to this thesis, I introduced and justified the two case studies selected for study. In doing so, I noted the apparent similarities of the cases: early cases of neoliberalisation, taking part in centre-right parties with some links between the economists

⁵³⁶ Marquand and Patten, 1991; Joseph, 1992; In the same interview, Patten also accepts a similarity between his ideological worldview and christian democracy

⁵³⁷ Shepherd, 2022

cited; as well as the differences: conservatism vs Christian democracy, late 1940s vs 1970s, UK and West Germany. However, as we have examined the cases in more depth throughout the thesis, we have found evidence to challenge elements of both these apparent similarities and differences as well as uncovered new areas for comparison. The transnational chapter in itself is a reflection of new findings on the relationships between the cases. In the same introduction I discussed established accounts of party and ideological change that informed the later analysis.

In this chapter I return to the cases from a comparative perspective, zooming out from the single case studies of the chapters in isolation to consider them together. Here I discuss what the case studies tell us about a claimed shared phenomenon of neoliberalisation. Structurally this chapter is composed of two parts, the first revisits a number of elements of the cases to tease out the structural similarities and differences in the contexts of neoliberalisation. In the second part, I draw on this analysis to advance my account for how neoliberalisation happened. This chapter focuses on the empirical cases in the thesis, in the next chapter the implications of the thesis for ideology studies will be discussed.

The discussion of structural similarities and differences in the first part of this chapter is structured on a ‘political opportunity structures’ approach. Such an approach seeks to understand the structural conditions presenting an ‘opportunity’ for agents to build a successful social movement.⁵³⁸ Here I focus on crisis, leadership and institutions, to represent the roles of political structures, agents and institutions in creating the contexts of neoliberalisation. This is not an endorsement of the ‘political opportunity structures’ approach but rather the framework is used to structure the analysis.

⁵³⁸ See Tarrow, 2011

Political Opportunity Structures

Crisis

An immediate comparison of the cases reveals the centrality of crisis in both narratives, justifying a new socio-economic politics. In a simple account, this centres on economic crisis, with inflation seen to be a problem in both cases and necessitating new policies: in the German case the *Währungsreform* and in the British case monetarism. However, having looked more closely at the cases we can recognise how this economic crisis was understood as part of a wider social and political crisis.⁵³⁹ It is useful here to draw on Hay's analysis of the importance of 'crisis construction' in relation to ideological contestation, which itself draws from Koselleck.

Crises are representations and hence 'constructions' of failure. A given constellation of contradictions and failures within the institutions of the state can sustain a multiplicity of conflicting narratives of crisis. Such narratives compete in terms of their ability to find resonance with individuals' and groups' direct, lived experiences, and not in terms of their 'scientific' adequacy as explanations for the condition they diagnose. In so doing, crisis discourses operate by identifying minor alterations in the routine texture of social life, recruiting such iterative changes as 'symptomatic' of a generic condition of (state) failure. Through this process of ideological contestation a predominant construction of crisis may emerge. The crisis becomes lived in these terms.⁵⁴⁰

Policy

The specifics of the economic crises point both to similarities and differences between the cases. We recognise from the outset that both cases feature issues with inflation, but the

⁵³⁹ Hall, et al., 1978

⁵⁴⁰ Hay, 1996 p255

details vary. In the West German case, the Government and the governing institutions – as the form of governance and occupation changes dramatically over the period 1945-1949 – had to manage reconstruction after the Second World War and the development of a new state. In this period, black markets abounded as a result of price controls alongside shortages and concerns were high about monopolies and cartels formed over the previous decades. With devastated production the concerns over inflation were high.

In the British case, inflation was again seen as a primary concern as well as a component in the broader malaise of stagflation, wherein it was coupled with low productivity. The Social Contract, a policy of Harold Wilson's Labour Government that had tied the repeal of the Industrial Relations Act to voluntary wage restraint from the Trade Union Congress collapsed leading to a spiral of inflation. The Prices and Incomes policies were seen to be no longer fit for purpose and some Conservatives expressed concern about the size of the state.

Scholarship, particularly that of Colin Hay, has drawn attention to the construction of the crisis in the United Kingdom case.⁵⁴¹ Here attention is drawn to how the crisis was politically constructed, that the diagnosis of economic catastrophe was a contingent outcome of active politics. There is certainly truth to this, in how the narrative of crisis has relied on certain post hoc tropes. It is manifestly true that the economic problems of the 1970s are less concretely tangible than the bombed infrastructure of late 1940s West Germany, although of course the economic diagnoses there were subject to their own discursive construction.⁵⁴²

A notable element of overlap comes from the diagnosis. In both cases, banking and particularly monetary policy was identified as a source of the crisis. Whether this diagnosis is accurate or not is beyond the scope of the dissertation. There is an interaction here between

⁵⁴¹ Hay, 1996; Hay, 2010

⁵⁴² Fuhrmann, 2017

the schools of thought drawn upon in both cases, ordoliberal and broader neoliberal, with important overlaps; attention to economists who focus on monetary policy is liable to identify a policy solution in that area. Likewise, an issue seen to emanate in monetary policy will draw attention to scholars with heterodox proposals in the area. Beyond monetary policy we can note how the neoliberal school arises from the socialist calculation debates, where it was argued that socialist planning would not work whereas markets would.⁵⁴³ Beyond the emphasis on monetary policy, both cases studied arise from attempts to find solutions to a perceived problem with planning.

The similarities between the cases also arises not just descriptively but actively, as actors in the 1970s aimed to pattern their actions on that of the 1940s, developing a similar understanding of the policy issues and aiming to use a similar response. Of course, this means the cases are not independent and complicates comparison. As described in the chapter on transnational flows of ideas in the 1970s, alongside a broader attempt to model Germany, which was seen as a successful contemporary, there were also particular attempts to model Germany's actions in the post-war period, especially as they were seen as ushering in an 'economic miracle'. This took the form of reports on the history of the German case as well as discussion with some actors from the earlier period.⁵⁴⁴ Certain actors in political and policy spaces saw their crisis as similar to the German and sought to reproduce the exit. This should be considered in any post hoc comparison of the cases.

[Social](#)

In the UK case, discussion of economic crisis in the immediate moment overlapped with 'declinism', a discourse which had been popular in the 1960s but continued to appear in the

⁵⁴³ Innset, 2020

⁵⁴⁴ Zweig, 1977; Zweig, 1980; Webley to Coats, 1975

1970s. Declinism here refers to a concern that Britain had lost its global great power status and was underperforming its peers as well as concern about a social decline related to 'dependence'. While this idea of decline was related to economic underperformance it was also inextricably related to the experience of decolonisation and the collapse of empire. The social element drew on concerns about immigration but also about the effects of welfare states creating cycles of poverty.

Welfare dependency here interacts with declinism in two ways varying on the author.

Sometimes dependency is presented as a manifestation of decline, that moral and social failing forming part of wider malaise of the British system. Alternately, dependency is a cause and symptom of decline, that an approach to economics and politics that is failing has led to a resultant culture of decline. Here we see Conservative critiques of declinist narratives.⁵⁴⁵ The argument goes that decline is a political choice and that it could be avoided with a more robust approach. Avoiding a defeatist approach of 'managed decline' would improve the attitudes and performance of workers.

These combine into what I described as the 'social markets' rationale for neoliberalisation. The introduction of greater market forces in the economy and the discipline of competition would not just improve the economy, through increased efficiency and productivity, but was also a means of correcting social and moral failings. Per Margaret Thatcher:

What's irritated me about the whole direction of politics in the last 30 years is that it's always been towards the collectivist society. People have forgotten about the personal society. And they say: do I count, do I matter? To which the short answer is, yes. And therefore, it isn't that I set out on economic policies; it's that I set out really to change

⁵⁴⁵ See Middleton, 2013

the approach, and changing the economics is the means of changing that approach. If you change the approach you really are after the heart and soul of the nation.

Economics are the method; the object is to change the heart and soul.⁵⁴⁶

Beyond the monetarists and neoliberals, Tory ‘wets’ also expressed a desire for a new economic approach expressed in similar language. Wider ownership and employee participation included currents of more left-wing thought but overlaps with themes of embourgeoisement and the property-owning democracy in the likes of ‘The Right Approach to the Economy’, described by one author as a ‘truce-seeking document’ and ‘attempted bridge’⁵⁴⁷.

Here we can think of the combination of social and economic crisis narratives as contributing to the distinctive conjunctures wherein meaningful ideological contestation and transformation is possible but also in the shape and form to which this change took, neoliberalism. We may think about the timing of the successful rise of neoliberalism as opposed to the comparative failures of precursors with Powell and Callaghan.

In the German case, economic and infrastructure crises are clear with devastation from the Second World War a pressing issue as well as prices and inflation. While the economic situation in the 1970s UK was not ideal, post-war Germany is meaningfully more severe. It is notable that Erhard becomes head of the Administration for Economics after his predecessor Johannes Semler was sacked by the occupying forces for complaining about the inadequacy of American food aid and calling it ‘chicken feed’⁵⁴⁸.

⁵⁴⁶ Butt, 1981, p.3

⁵⁴⁷ Howell, 2019, p131

⁵⁴⁸ Fuhrmann, 2017, p123

However, we can also see here that these crises are understood through a social and a moral lens. As discussed in the Germany chapter, economic crisis was understood as a consequence of a materialist society, encompassing both Weimar and Nazism as well as Marxism and *laissez faire* liberalism. Here Christian Democracy was a vehicle for a new Christian economics as part of a new Christian society. Both Christian socialists and liberals in the CDU expressed their socio-economic thought in these terms.

In a sense these similarities between the cases draw on the underlying economic thought at play, neoliberalism particularly a neoliberalism with ordoliberal currents. The result is a moralising of ‘order’, influential in the German context and we have seen its presence, although much less visibly, in the British case. Understanding the way economic thought tied into social concerns also helps explain how neoliberalism and debates about economics more broadly were able to make headway with the many party representatives and members who would not have had much interest in economics, particularly the minutiae of economic policy. Norman Tebbit is a useful example here of type of Tory MP who describes anti-collectivism as ‘a basis of [his] political views’ but economics as a subject is ‘an overrated area’⁵⁴⁹. One would imagine that many other MPs likewise had basic economic instincts but left the details of the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement to others. Invocations of economics then were references to their other concerns.

[Political](#)

Alongside these crises, ostensibly in the realm of policy, were narratives of crisis in the political domain. Here we see pressure on parties not just to change their platforms but also themselves or at least to reframe their perception.

⁵⁴⁹ Tebbit, interview with author

In the German case this can be seen in the perceived need for the CDU to exist. The justification for the formation of a new party, out of continuity with predecessor parties, was due to their political failings both in Weimar and in leading to the Nazi regime. Where predecessors were tainted it was also believed that some party was needed to challenge socialism and particularly Marxism which were conceived as threats to Germany. The creation of the CDU then was understood itself a reflection of political crisis on the centre and right.

In the UK case, for the most part there was no plan for creating a new party or choosing a new name. An exception here is the case of Adam Butler MP writing to Margaret Thatcher to suggest the party rename itself 'The National Democratic Conservative Party' with a long-term plan to drop the term Conservative and become the National Democrats.⁵⁵⁰ However, this appears to be a rare exception and an overreaction to rumours regarding the formation of the SDP.

A more pressing political concern regarded a series of electoral defeats and weak performances. This contributed, alongside the socio-economic policy levels previously mentioned, to the narrative that the Conservative Party needed to rejuvenate its image to win elections again. While it is understandable that change may be demanded after electoral defeat(s), these demands were for party change more substantial and meaningful than had occurred after previous defeats.⁵⁵¹ On the 'right' of the party this formed a call for a more distinctly conservative approach to differentiate from Labour and return to a principled position, often including a full-throated rejection of socialism and a call for confrontation with the trade unions. While those on the 'left' of the party were less dissatisfied with the

⁵⁵⁰ Butler to Thatcher, 1977b

⁵⁵¹ Harmel and Janda, 1994

status quo, the language used in defences against those of the right indicates that they saw themselves as involved in a defence of the conservative tradition.

While the argument for a strategic political shift was contested and, as discussed in the UK chapter it was more common with those arguing for a shift away from the centre, the fact that this narrative was prominent the intra-party debate creates an opportunity for alternative policies and conceptual clusters that cohere with the narrative. Policies that deviate from post-war norms can be accepted by those themselves looking to deviate, and the policies can further shape the ideas and platform of the deviants.

[Leadership](#)

Both the German and British cases are dominated by the figures of the party leaders.

Margaret Thatcher dominates discussion of neoliberalisation in the Conservative Party and the first decades of the CDU are closely twinned to the figure of Konrad Adenauer. In a sense this might be expected for periods of ideological change, a strong leader has the prerogative to shape their party in their image in a way that a weaker leader may be less able to.

However, as we probe more deeply into the leaderships and the leadership teams, more nuance to this dynamic can be explored. In this section I explore the role of agency in the opportunity structure of the case studies, looking at the leaders themselves, their leadership networks and their rivals, the leaders of intra-party opposition.

[Adenauer and Thatcher](#)

As noted, both Adenauer and Thatcher loom large in the periods studied. The first decades of the CDU have been widely characterised as the ‘Adenauer Era’ while Thatcher looms over the period of ‘Thatcherism’ with the 1970s and the New Right often read post-hoc as a

stepping-stone in the making of ‘Thatcher’s Britain’.⁵⁵² These strong leaders and personalities present as commonalities in the cases themselves, but looking closer entails consideration of their personal positions, which presents new comparison as well as contrasts.

Adenauer is caricatured primarily as an elder statesman, but also as a canny pragmatist who delivers the party to victory in 1949. Adenauer is presented as having vague ideological principles other than a commitment to the West and an orientation against the Soviet Union and communism. Such a caricature is not without substance, but I would argue that this undersells the significance of his views in the party discourse. At the formation of the party, Adenauer is certainly oriented towards the centrist wing of the party, rather than the christian socialists, compounded with his willingness to collaborate with the emerging conservative and liberal wings. He is of a Catholic milieu, particularly one that is Rhenish Catholic, and not the Protestantism generally associated with the most the full-throated ordoliberals such as Ludwig Erhard.⁵⁵³ While Adenauer’s thought from this centrist perspective, which seeks compromise and coalition building can be fruitfully associated with. ‘pragmatism’,⁵⁵⁴ note here Adenauer’s rhetoric on the use of the term ‘Christian Socialism’:

The word constellation is not apt. We should not in the long run get the adherents of the party used to the idea of seeing Socialism as something acceptable ... The word Socialism is scientifically and semantically used up ... If we use it we may win five people but twenty will run away.⁵⁵⁵

His opposition to socialism is not couched in the language of principles or values but rather justified as part of a political calculus to maximise the size of the party coalition. Indeed,

⁵⁵² Heidenheimer, 1960 p.vii; Bösch, 2001; Geppert, 2002; Jackson and Saunders, 2012 p18

⁵⁵³ Hockerts, 2016

⁵⁵⁴ Anthon, 1963; Forlenza, 2017

⁵⁵⁵ Adenauer, June 26 1946, quoted in Heidenheimer, 1960 p120, extract in Heidenheimer

Adenauer's actions in the party in the period can largely be characterised as attempts to maintain the interconfessional character of the party, incorporating both Protestants and Catholics of various ideological persuasions, although in practice this meant tempering the distinctive ideas from the left-wing Catholic factions that were off-putting to Conservative and liberal Protestants. A pragmatic maintenance of the 'confessional arithmetic' both ideationally and in substantive representation, incorporating increased numbers of non-Christian socialists numerically and in key roles, reflects and compounds a change in the party away from the Christian socialism of its founding.⁵⁵⁶

Adenauer certainly gains political capital by propagating an inclusive political ideology, which would be key to winning the 1949 election. Combining the fractured parties of the Weimar era was fundamental to maximising political influence and presenting a combined front against Marxist socialism. However, the notion of interconfessional compromise was also a central plank in the burgeoning Christian Democratic ideology that Adenauer espoused. As discussed in the case study, the dual critique of materialism in Marxist socialism and Nazism provided a central reference point for Catholics in the construction of the party and a common language with which to integrate Protestants and their views. Combining these currents with notions of the new Christian order to be created drew the diverse currents and provided ideological affinities for the emerging political language and ideology. The construction of a cross-sectional *Volkspartei* went part and parcel with the construction of unified anti-materialist, and later anti-socialist, front. Adenauer's pragmatism then is directly connected to his pro-West and anti-Soviet position and also reflective of a political strategy for the leader and the party.

⁵⁵⁶ Pridham, 1977, p43

Margaret Thatcher too is not without her own caricatures. Popular attitudes vary wildly from the hard-hearted ‘Milk Snatcher’ to the inestimable ‘Iron Lady’. As Robert Saunders notes in a review of the academic literature, ‘there is little agreement... on the content of her politics, the character of her mind or even the party to which she belonged’.⁵⁵⁷ This is in part due to her adopting a number of different presentations appealing to the constituency before her:

As Tim Bale puts it, Thatcher was simultaneously ‘a politician’, ‘a living, breathing person’ and ‘a cultural phenomenon’. She was also a media construction (the ‘Maggie’ of the tabloid press) and ‘the prime minister’: a composite, official personality of which civil servants, speechwriters and advisors also formed part.

These were not merely different facets of a single individual; the ‘Thatcher’ who won millions of votes at elections, who gave her name to an ideology, who was burned in effigy and who governed for eleven years each had its own historical reality, which shaped political behaviour and voter responses.⁵⁵⁸

As Saunders suggests, the Thatcher of ‘Thatcherism’ was not the outcome solely of an individual’s actions, but rather a reflection of the reception of the political movements associated with her, a reception mediated through others, notably the media. Thatcher is a figurehead, not the one pressing forward the intellectual debate. For the most part, Thatcher as an individual is noted as not having contributed much to the intellectualising of Thatcherism or neoliberalism; she is a consumer or user rather than a producer of ideas.⁵⁵⁹ Nonetheless, Thatcher did play a part in propagating neoliberal discourse, whether in the

⁵⁵⁷ Saunders, 2017 p639

⁵⁵⁸ Saunders, 2017 p640, quotes are from Bale, T. 2015 *Margaret Thatcher*

⁵⁵⁹ Green, 2006 p22; Saunders, 2017 p651

apocryphal story of her banging Hayek on the table, or the examples discussed in this thesis, criticising the unions and socialism and calling for fiscal and social discipline.

As with Adenauer, religion, particularly Christianity, was part of Thatcher's presentation, with her claiming: 'As a Christian politician, Christian first politician second, I seek to apply Christian values – the Old and New Testaments, the wisdom of Greece and Rome – to those areas of life which fall into the proper province of politics'.⁵⁶⁰ Again, like Adenauer this impacts the ideological discourse; while Christianity itself was not regularly a topic of the ideological discourse, as it had been in Germany, repeatedly in the thesis I have discussed the influence of her Methodist Christianity on moralistic politics.⁵⁶¹

A significant similarity between the leaders seems to lie in both being understood as 'strong leaders'. Both are strong figures in their party organisation, Adenauer growing in strength as the organisation becomes established, having an ability to direct their juniors and to actively shape the direction of the party. The notion of a 'strong leader' could be distinguished from a 'weak leader', someone like Heath for much of the 1970s with large blocs of party members and elements of his own leadership undermining him. The CDU has a less clear example of a weak leader, Adenauer is the only leader they had until 1966, but he figures prominently in wider politics of the party.

It seems quite obvious that having a strong party leader on-side would play a role in shaping the ideology of the party in that direction. Insofar as party ideologies represent a shared discourse, the leader has a privileged and amplified position as a speaker. In both cases, we can see examples of the leaders making use of their bully pulpit to advance their politics or manoeuvring behind the scenes to shape the language of party positions.

⁵⁶⁰ 'The Politics of Freedom', n.d. p3

⁵⁶¹ Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, 2012

The leader's openness to ideological combat is an important distinction between the cases of neoliberalisation. While both support certain tendencies or factions in the party at the expense of others, Adenauer's interventions take the form of *criticism* of christian socialism and gestures towards centrism, actions that create the conditions for the rise of ordoliberalism while not directly supporting the ideological form. By contrast, while Thatcher also criticises the previous ideological status quo Middle Way Conservatism, she is actively associated with the networks advocating for neoliberalism and the New Right approach. While she is not leading the ideological campaign for neoliberalism, she is engaged in it. This distinction can be overstated, both leaders exhibit elements of both behaviours, but the balance of advocacy and opprobrium is different.

In relation to ideological change this changes the relationship of key intellectual actors to the party leader. In Thatcher's case she is directly connected to the networks constructing a new ideological consensus, and seen by many as their figurehead, while Adenauer maintains more of an arm's length distance. It also makes it more difficult to ascertain Adenauer's own orientation in the intra-party contests. Is he an advocate of ordoliberalism or a useful fellow-traveller? He presents a helpful case in seeing the blurriness of such a possible distinction, either way he is a participant in intra-party discourses and power struggles that lead to the rise of an ordoliberal Christian Democracy.

What does this suggest about the political opportunity structures involved? While both cases show strong leaders influencing the political opportunity, they also demonstrate an interesting inversion of perceived action to covert action. Thatcher is understood by many of her contemporaries, particularly those in the wider party, to be at the forefront of a neoliberal takeover, the historical case shows that this action was the impact of much wider networks in the party, networks that will be discussed in the next subsection, and there were other actors who appear just as if not more influential in the 1970s, like Joseph, Howe, Howell and

Walker. Adenauer, by contrast is understood by contemporaries as a strong leader but with ordoliberalism coming from the ordoliberals like Erhard; however, the case study has pointed to the key role his machinations at conferences and in appointments had on ideological programmes. Those wider networks actually advancing neoliberalism require further examination.

Neoliberal Network Leaders

Building on this point, we can note that party leadership is not limited to the party leaders themselves; indeed, both Adenauer and Thatcher make use of wider teams of supporters and fellow travellers. In relation to neoliberalisation element, it is notable that neither seems to have a particular interest or aptitude for economics, the signature policy area associated with the ideology. As such, while both could comment in generalities about many of the key policy areas that make concrete the ideologies, they both defer to colleagues who have more interest or specialisation. In the case of the CDU this is particularly associated with Ludwig Erhard, while in the UK we see a cluster of figures.

Ludwig Erhard's origins were as an economist, training academically under the likes of Walter Eucken, the founder of ordoliberalism.⁵⁶² During the Nazi regime, he acted as an economic analyst which, compounded by his lack of membership in the NSDAP, kept him at an arm's length distance from the regime. After the war, Erhard was placed in a number of governing ministries by the occupying forces, later with a vote of the regional and zonal political groups becoming Director of Economics of the Bizonal Economic Council, the role wherein he contributed to the economic and currency reform of 1948. As such, he implemented the policies he had developed in the previous decades while also contributing to

⁵⁶² Mierzejewski, 2004

the ideological discourse, notably here of the CDU where he became the primary economic policy expert and Minister of Economics from the first Government 1949. Alongside policy work, Erhard would tour the country campaigning for the CDU, so he was not wholly separate from party politics.

Erhard would benefit from the support of Adenauer and other centrist, liberal and conservative members of the CDU but his closest allies would be fellow ordoliberal economists such Alfred Müller-Armack and Franz Böhm. Here we can see that as the ordoliberals like Erhard found themselves in positions of power through appointment rather than popular politics, the emphasis was on programs rather than politics in a more traditional sense. This is well encapsulated by a glowing biography from Alfred Mierzejewski:

Many historians have propagated the myth that Erhard was incapable of promoting himself. They contend that he was the fortunate beneficiary of forces that came to his assistance and propelled him into a prominent position in German public life. In fact, Erhard's meteoric rise to power and prominence can be explained in much more prosaic terms. Armed with knowledge gained from experience, a program, and ambition, he acted energetically to push himself to the fore.⁵⁶³

In the UK case we saw a range of different key actors contributing to the ideological discourse around neoliberalism, such as Keith Joseph, Geoffrey Howe and David Howell. For the most part, the primary exception being Keith Joseph, these actors were from a younger cadre of politicians, and linked to the Bow Group. They reflect the turn to businessmen and generational change that had been introduced by Heath but with different political priorities.

⁵⁶³ Mierzejewski, 2004 p50

These actors were not of the New Right, a tendency in the party associated with Powellism, but certainly found an audience there as well.

While these actors were quite familiar with neoliberal arguments and contributed to their expression in the party discourse, they were never active in the economics literature as Erhard had been. Regardless, we can see these as networks of politicians and politicians more directly than in the West German case. While economists would be used as references, and interlocutors through the think tanks, they appear here as correspondents with the networks bringing neoliberalism to power in the party rather than as central participants, in the German manner.⁵⁶⁴ The political debates in the British case had repercussions and relation to discourse in wider society including the newspapers and popular economic consumption but this was again not dominated by academic discussion but in relation to policy.⁵⁶⁵ Samuel Brittan exemplifies this sort of public intellectual.⁵⁶⁶

As noted in the earlier subsection, a noteworthy distinction here between the German and British cases is the form of relationship between leader and their team. Adenauer appoints Erhard as a technocrat to develop and implement economic policy. By contrast, Joseph and Thatcher had a long-standing working relationship as ministers in previous cabinets, had launched the Centre for Policy Studies together, and had been seen as ideological allies. Most of the others are shadow ministers in her shadow cabinet, developing policy and strategy in party groups designed for that purpose. The transformation of the New Right into neoliberal Thatcherism is co-constituted as development of the neoliberal network and Thatcher's leadership a marked contrast from Erhard, whose network was more-so imported into the Adenauer apparatus. Of course, ordoliberals had pre-existing relationships with the other

⁵⁶⁴ Jackson, 2012a p49-52

⁵⁶⁵ Edwards, 2016

⁵⁶⁶ Middleton, 2013

CDU groups, particularly those of Protestant liberals, but Erhard had initially been associated with the FDP. Erhard is believed to have never formally joined the CDU before becoming its leader and the Chancellor for a CDU government in the 1960s.

There is a contrast then between ordoliberalism emerging as technocracy, advocated by economists and economic planners, and neoliberalism emerging as a politics, with the economists providing ‘ideological fellowship’ to a programme driven by political actors. Indeed, while the German economists are committed to a certain type of economic approach, although there were important internal debates among ordoliberals, while the British politicians could be described as having a more pragmatic ‘what works’ adoption of neoliberalism. Useful examples to consider here are William Keegan’s account of Geoffrey Howe’s conversion,⁵⁶⁷ as well as Heseltine’s claim that the much of the Conservative interest in the PSBR was often pre-existing opposition to taxation, old wine in new bottles.⁵⁶⁸ However, such a binary does understate the commitment to forms of liberalisation, particularly Joseph’s advocacy for monetarism; Howell had been calling for elements of his policy package since the 1960s. While these leaders were at the forefront of the neoliberal networks in their respective parties, the movements in their entirety cannot be reduced to them.

However, as with an emphasis on just party leaders, considering only the agency of advocates for neoliberalism is an incomplete account of the agents and agency involved in the political opportunity structure in each case. One of the interesting findings of the thesis has been the extent to which intra-party rivals to neoliberalism were crucial to the development and success of neoliberalism in the case studies.

⁵⁶⁷ Keegan, 1984 p72

⁵⁶⁸ Heseltine, 2021

Intra-party contra-neoliberal leaders

The rivals of neoliberalism within each case study also play important roles in shaping the discourse of neoliberalism and its success in the party discourse but also in shaping the terrain on which ideological contestation is fought. In the West German case this was the christian socialists, especially the figures of Jakob Kaiser and Karl Arnold, while in the UK case this was Heath-ites and especially Peter Walker.

In the German case, the christian socialists were an ideological tendency well represented among the founders of the party. Jakob Kaiser was based in Berlin and initially involved with the East German CDU. Karl Arnold was in the British Zone with Adenauer and would end up leading the CDU in the regional government of North Rhine Westphalia. Both were connected to a wider network of christian socialists including priests/theologians, politicians associated with labour movements, and intellectuals. The christian socialists presented an alternative vision for the CDU to the ordoliberals and unsuccessfully sought to achieve their goals through the party.

In the UK case, the rivals to neoliberalism are less clear to define but generally are associated with the Middle Way Conservatives, who sought some continuation of the mixed economy, prices and incomes policies or otherwise a form of cooperation with industry rather than confrontation. The most senior amongst these is Edward Heath, although such an account flattens Heath's own engagements with free market economics. Heath and the Heath-ites, were identified as the problem of previous Conservatism and to be replaced with the new Conservatism. Heath indeed did present some challenges within Parliament, making a number of speeches that criticised the new leadership and earning censure from the 1922

Committee.⁵⁶⁹ A more active figure by the late 1970s is Peter Walker, who led the Tory Reform Group and alongside Ian Gilmour was willing to articulate critiques of the direction of travel for the Conservative Party. Of course, these actors had their own networks of supporters and fellow travellers, including notably the Tory Reform Group, in its various iterations and associated groups, and elements in the Conservative Research Department.

One thing that comes out from analysis of these rivals to neoliberalism is the limits of their imagined alternatives. The christian socialists have a more comprehensive alternative built on catholic social thought and an idea of socialism and socialisation as a form of Christian responsibility. However, moving this from theory to a form of praxis is more challenging. Commitments to private property rights, concerns about class conflict, worries about Marxist nihilism and the exigencies of party politics keep christian socialists from committing to particular policy prescriptions for much of the period. They become a nominally socialist grouping, although many end up avoiding the term, who dither when presented opportunities to socialise.

The Middle Way Conservatives in Britain similarly do not present a clear alternative. They have something of a policy mix, largely calling for continuity with the status quo as the neoliberals call for a move towards confrontation, monetarism, etc. However, this is less convincing as a prescription given the perceived crisis of the moment, discussed earlier in this chapter. In a political moment where the status quo did not seem to be working, the moderate conservatives could not advocate for failed policies and instead often found themselves discussing the pace or tone of policy change rather than its substance.

⁵⁶⁹ 'Minutes of a Meeting held in Room 14', 1978

A quote from a retrospective interview with David Howell is quite telling on this point. While Howell was among the liberals in the party, and identified in the thesis as contributing significantly to the Thatcherite ideological coalition, he identifies himself as belonging to the:

Moderate, not the left wing, because I was very much in favour of the policies which became called 'Thatcherite' later, but the policies of unscrambling the socialist state and going for markets and liberating, but I didn't want to go too far. And there were lots of zealots around who began, as often is the case, to push it too far. And I found them very uncomfortable to work with.⁵⁷⁰

The bone of contention here is less with the content of policy, although there was some lively policy disagreement within the party, but about style and ideology.

This attitude of ambivalence rather than complete opposition also plays into the other main finding about the agents and networks opposed to neoliberalism in the centre-right parties examined, their ideological affinities. In both cases, there are elements of the thought of 'rivals' to neoliberalism that makes these rivals sympathetic to neoliberalism. In the West German case this included similar critiques of the status quo and an emphasis on the person and order for constructing a positive alternative. In the British case we find that intra-party contestation showed deep similarities in vocabulary and ideological logic and that wider ownership, the German Model and social markets present ways for people like Walker to reconcile themselves to neoliberalism and support elements of Thatcherism.

These ideological affinities make the apparent rival agents actually involved in coproduction of a new ideological coalition and the new ideological decontestation with neoliberal actors. The fact that the rivals to neoliberalism are simultaneously in a relatively weak position to

⁵⁷⁰ Howell, 2017

present an alternative to the neoliberal network and that their ideological forms predispose towards collaboration is crucial to understanding the political opportunity presented in the case studies.

Institutions

As the previous sections have identified, the sense of crisis in interaction with agents are important for understanding the political opportunities in the case studies. Understanding the role of agents and agency in these contexts, and how the sense of crisis was constructed, often turns to institutions and the political party. Agents find power and interact with one another in relation to institutional structures and particularly in relation to the party. In this section I will discuss a number of elements of this institutional context and its relation to the opportunity structure for ideological contestation.

Party Development

A major difference between the cases is the level of development of the parties. The Conservative Party had been existence for many decades while the post-war moment was the very genesis of the CDU.⁵⁷¹ As such, while the Conservative Party had a national structure, history, elected officials, bureaucrats, an electoral machine and positions in the national legislature, these all had to be set up by the CDU post 1945. As Heidenheimer argues, the development of the party as an institution was fundamental to the CDU's activities and the actions of agents in the post-war period:

Normally in an established, cohesive party organization provides a vehicle for the party leadership. This period however was characterized by the struggle to win the

⁵⁷¹ Establishing the age of the Conservative Party is a complicated judgement due both to change in institutional forms of the party and the surrounding political system over history. To sidestep this debate, I simply note the fact that the party was much older relative to the CDU in the cases considered.

non-existent national leadership, while the party organization, which was being created simultaneously, was both the instrument and goal of the contenders.⁵⁷²

The CDU at formation was a loosely related set of local political groups with different locales representing different ideological forms, political lineages and platforms. As noted above, the christian socialists in the CDU wrote many of the earliest platforms, but the party was far from unified around this tendency. Different religious traditions offered different interpretations of what christian democracy and socialism should mean, which in turn often varied from those who drew on the Christian trade union tradition as well as the power battles between different political and social leaders.⁵⁷³ Similarly, centrists, liberals and other tendencies were fractured and had to build coalitions and work to incorporate one another into the party.

This process proved fertile for intellectual development, with competing manifestos and declarations allowing exposition for what Christian Democracy should entail but the fractured party limited coordination around any of these ideological forms. As such, we can understand the divisions within the party as well as the power vacuum that could be filled by the first person to centralise the party, elder statesman Konrad Adenauer.

By contrast, the Conservative Party was a mature party by the time Thatcher took leadership, presenting different dynamics for the case. As a centralised party with a powerful executive, the direct influence Thatcher as leader could exert on the party was greater than that available to Adenauer. Thatcher's ability to communicate with the party grassroots was far greater than that available to Adenauer and the established party communications machine may well have

⁵⁷² Heidenheimer, 1960 p24

⁵⁷³ Uhl, 1975; Uertz, 1981

played an important role in building Thatcher's support among the grassroots, which would comprise a political strength.

As discussed in the chapter on Britain, a reflexive history of the Conservative Party played an important role in the party's ideological discourse, a historical role unavailable to the CDU which instead situated itself within national history. Conservatives debated with one another about Disraeli and Macmillan or the electoral prowess of Heath and Churchill in reference to a shared political tradition while the CDU discussed Weimar and the Nazi regime. Both narratives proved to be useful for the construction of neoliberal narratives, with neoliberal Conservatives justifying a need to recover conservatism from the recent 'crisis' and ordoliberals situating themselves against the failures of previous regimes, but it is useful to note how these narratives were related to the specifics of party history. Thatcher could not have presented the Conservative Party as a new actor and Adenauer could not draw on stories of shared past political victories. The narratives and conceptual repertoire available to actors in the cases were shaped by the party histories and their stages of development.

[Think Tanks](#)

Part of the different development of the Conservative Party relative to the CDU was the existence of a range of think tanks which fed into the party discourses. These institutions and relation to the party and Thatcher has long been a subject of academic analysis.⁵⁷⁴ The production of material, academic and popular, and advocacy by these think tanks contributed to public and party discourses around economic and social policy. The range of neoliberal think tanks are believed to have played a role in the mainstreaming of certain ideas among key actors as well as building networks between them.

⁵⁷⁴ See Desai, 1994; Denham, 1996; Jackson, 2012a

There were think tanks that argued against the neoliberals and for the Middle Way, particularly the Tory Reform Group and its predecessors as well as certain currents in the Bow Group and other institutions. Others, like the Monday Club, articulated alternatives that avoid the Middle Way/Thatcherite binary. In spite of these, it is the neoliberal think tanks such as the CPS, IEA and ASI that formed a more significant part of the institutional configuration within which Thatcherism arose. In part this may be related to the greater resources available to these think tanks, funded by the business community, but perhaps more significant is their relationship to the ideological discourse. As Denham and Garnett have claimed, the key purpose of think tanks is in providing ‘ideological fellowship’ to a political tendency, intellectual credibility to underarticulated demands.⁵⁷⁵ While think tanks disseminate ideas, their function is less to convert actors than to provide justification to the converted.

By contrast, the CDU dynamic was characterised by the existence of a multiplicity of *Kreise*, circles. In contrast with the British think tanks these were often insular and local, based around particular intellectuals or political leaders. The ordoliberals were built from *Kreise* related to Walter Eucken and Freiburg economists while the christian socialists were built on tight networks in Cologne, Berlin and Frankfurt. While these did contribute to policy discussions and organising, they also reproduce an emphasis on personal relationships within the party. The importance of networks and patronage, increase the importance of actors empowered to make decisions; the party leader but also the technocrats.

Ordoliberals were active in the formation of the Mont Pelerin Society in the late 1940s and would shape debates within the society.⁵⁷⁶ The Mont Pelerin Society would go on to be the

⁵⁷⁵ Denham and Garnett, 1998 p154

⁵⁷⁶ Innset, 2020

primary network of the Neoliberal Thought Collective and influence Thatcherites. This institution provides an institutional commonality between the cases. However, the role of the institution is different with Mont Pelerin largely reflecting the different knowledge networks in the cases; appearing as a manifestation of the ordoliberal *Kreise* in the 1940s and a think tank -esque fount of neoliberal actors and ideas in the 1970s.

Electoral System

A third element to be observed between the two cases on an institutional level is the distinction created by electoral systems. Where Britain has first past the post and a unitary system, the FRG has a proportional and federal system. As mentioned in a previous subsection, the federal system created parallel mandates in the German context with Karl Arnold forming a Grand Coalition in North Rhine Westphalia and cooperating with the SPD and excluding the FDP, creating different dynamics to those in the Bundestag where the FDP formed part of the first governing coalition and the SPD led the opposition.

The proportional system led to a greater number of effective parties in the legislature, contributing to the coalition of the first Adenauer Government. This placed the CDU-CSU in coalition with the liberal FDP as well as the conservative and nationalist German Party (DP). However, the CDU was the dominant partner in the coalition and would incorporate the DP within a few years.

In a FPTP system, the British elections in the 1970s were dominated by the Conservatives and Labour. This system marginalised the Liberals who, despite having some ideological affinities with the neoliberal and social market currents in the Conservative Party, were not a major factor in Parliament or the elections. Perhaps the most significant minor party action for the Conservatives was the defection of Enoch Powell to the UUP. With a unitary system,

the Conservatives were able to more directly control lower levels of governance than would have been possible in Germany.

The FPTP system also likely contributed to the political unviability of political parties to the right of the Conservative Party. While the National Front did have a resurgence in the 1970s, it proved unable to win parliamentary elections, possibly feeding into the Conservative vote. The CDU was less successful, as the case of the DP demonstrates, however they were also helped in this regard by the role of occupying forces controlling party formation in the early years.

The federal system in West Germany factors in the tensions of governance between Adenauer and the North Rhine Westphalia Minister President Karl Arnold. Having competing levels of political power introduced opportunities of party competition, policy formation and intraparty contestation that simply were not a factor in the unitary British case. Ultimately Arnold was overpowered by the strength of Adenauer as a leader, lessening the significance of the division, but it does represent an influence of institutional design on the case studies.

Occupation

A final important context for the early years of the CDU was occupation. The French, American, British and Soviet occupying governments shaped the dynamics within the CDU, a structural character wholly missing from 1970s Britain. Occupying governments had to grant licenses to parties to operate, and the cooperation of certain centre-right parties with the Nazis played a part in the need to form a new party to get approval to operate. After formation, the relationships between zones shaped the unification into a national party, or lack thereof. While Adenauer was leader in the British zone, his power was initially limited, with parties constrained to operating only within their zones creating different zonal iterations of the CDU. With the unification of British and American zones into the Bi-zone and the later

incorporation of the French zone to form the Tri-zone, this power expanded, especially with rival Jakob Kaiser in Berlin. As the Tri-zone became the FRG, Adenauer had control of the new 'national' party.

It is worth remarking briefly on the CDU in the Soviet zone, the CDUD. In the earliest months, Kaiser was active within this part of the CDU and in correspondence with those in other zones. However, the Soviet government soon began regulating parties and forcing alignment with Soviet diktats. This undermined the CDUD's ability to align with the CDU and forced Kaiser to leave for the Western zones. Kaiser's association with Berlin, which was obviously a weaker constituency as a result of this repression, played a part in his side-lining, and the party's shift towards a Western orientation. This presents another counter-factual with greater support for Kaiser or a wholly different national composition of the party. The CDUD would continue under the GDR government as a collaborating bloc party until reunification.

Ordoliberal policies, particularly the currency reform, represented such a Western orientation as it both instantiated commitment to capitalism but also was implemented zonally, i.e. only in the former French, British and American zones. The *Währungsreform* in the West precipitated the Berlin blockade by the Soviets. Ordoliberalism both benefited from the Soviet repression in the East as part of an anti-Marxist narrative, and exacerbated these tensions, furthering path dependency to ordoliberalism and the West.

As mentioned in the sub-section on leadership networks, occupation also played a role in shaping the CDU by creating an extended period without an elected national government or legislature. This introduced two dynamics. Firstly, it empowered Ludwig Erhard and his interpretation of the social market economy as Erhard had been appointed Director of the Bizonal Economic Council, shaping the agenda of the economy. This would be influential in

the success of ordoliberal forms within the CDU. Secondly, it created an extended period where the party could not govern nationally. While regional governments created some opportunities for policy disputes with rival parties like the SPD and FDP, the gap placed greater emphasis on personalities and rhetoric with limited political records to campaign on. This is quite a contrast from the British case where Conservative policy agendas would respond to the announcements of the Labour Government and much of Thatcher's campaign against trade unions drew on the perceived failure of said Government. This allowed the Conservative Party to campaign on more substantive policy lines than the CDU.

Neoliberalisation

What can we actually then say about neoliberalism and neoliberalisation after having examined the case studies? After having examined the political opportunity structures of the cases I want to suggest five findings. Two are positive arguments: first, that the political party is at the core of the political opportunity and neoliberalisation, and second, that neoliberalisation drew heavily on social thought and concepts. The next three findings are interventions into debates on neoliberalisation and reject the arguments that neoliberalism represents a takeover of the parties involved, that neoliberalism is right-wing and that neoliberalisation was a planned, strategic unfolding.

The political parties jump out as crucial elements tying together the political opportunity. So much of the case studies centre on the political parties which encompass the crucial agents, supporters and opponents, and forms the forum wherein they look for support. The party culture, party development, party institutions, etc. all condition the political opportunity, such that the political opportunity structure is almost impossible to disentangle from the party. The extra-party, exogenous, conditions are themselves mediated through a discourse of partisans speaking amongst themselves. The significance for ideology theory will be explored in more depth in the next chapter, but we can note here that political neoliberalisation, the

introduction of neoliberalism as a dominant political project within an ideological community, happens to and by political parties in both case studies.

A second interesting similarity between the cases is found in the contestation of social thought. Much of the scholarship on neoliberalism and neoliberalisation focuses on economic thought or economic policy: the ideas of economists, inflation policies, public finances.

Social policy is then treated as a secondary effect of economic ideas, sometimes with the intimation that social outcomes are not a concern of neoliberals. However, in the case studies the social is central to the contestation of neoliberalism and its legitimisation. Similar concepts appear in both case studies, including de-proletarianisation/*embourgeoisement*, economic orders, economic democracy, industrial relations, social markets and more broadly a moral and social case for markets. These are not just secondary concerns but at the core of debates over the direction of the party ideologies and policies. They relate to economic concepts but situate the economic realm as directly related to the social. This leads to a much thicker conception of neoliberalism and one that addresses many of the questions about the justification of neoliberalism that rely on the notion of a vulgar market fundamentalism.

Understanding the history of neoliberalisation as including this thicker neoliberalism also blurs claimed distinctions between ordoliberalism and neoliberalism, distinctions where social thinking is associated with ordoliberalism but not neoliberalism. This insight advances our understanding of neoliberalisation and neoliberal ideology.

A common account of neoliberalisation has presented it as a takeover. Here an external force, neoliberals, take over the Conservative Party, wresting control away from conservatives; alternatively, the neoliberals are faction within the party, but again they seize power and shift the party to a position wholly new. Such an account is not supported by the case studies.

While meaningful change does occur in the cases, they are not just examples of continuity, these changes involve and incorporate actors and ideas from throughout the ideological

community. Neoliberalism in Britain draws on existing Conservative intellectual resources, allowing it to be justifiable to those who are not neoliberal Conservatives. Likewise, in Germany ordoliberalism is shaped by its engagement with christian socialism and the ways the different forms of christian democracy interact.

Neoliberalisation is not a hostile takeover of a political party or ideological community. Members of the ideological community who support neoliberalism appeal to other members of the community using shared language and shared concepts to adapt both neoliberalism and the decontested, shared ideological morphology to work together such that this shared ideology can facilitate and incorporate neoliberalism. This process may not always be supported by rivals but for the ideological community it is ultimately consensual, or at least legitimated to the community.

The rejection of the hostile takeover narrative also returns to consideration of the ‘right-wing’ nature of neoliberalism. In the literature review I discussed the classification of the both case studies as ‘centre-right’ and noted that such a classification could be controversial. While christian socialist christian democracy and middle way conservatism, the initial ideological forms for the case studies can be associated with the ‘political centre’ or centre-right, the historical narratives of neoliberalisation suggest a shift toward to right. In the literature review, I justified the classification of centre-right with reference to parties of the extreme or radical right, noting that the parties studied in the case studies seek much wider public appeal.

However, the case studies give further reason to consider the phenomenon of neoliberalisation as centre-right. The centrist ideological forms, and their advocates, play a crucial role in the formation and legitimation of the ultimate neoliberal ideological forms that become successful in the party, achieving neoliberalisation. This is an important observation. Neoliberalism is legitimated within the parties due to its widespread appeal, to the right but

also the parties' centre-right wings. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis, such an observation seems relevant in considering the later appeal of neoliberalism to centre-left parties and its continuing appeal into the present. Having an appeal to the political centre and a flexibility to appeal to existing ideological affinities beyond the ideological niche of economic liberalism was key in the process of neoliberalisation.

This account of neoliberalisation as a contingent development of parties muddling through and a polyphonous discourse also puts paid to accounts of neoliberalisation as a pre-planned process run by shadowy economists and imposed step for step on host countries. While this narrative is rarely set out directly, accounts emphasising the role of the Mont Pelerin Society, or the neoliberal thought collective on neoliberalisation can overstate the ability of the economists to directly impose their visions into politics. Politically, the process of neoliberalisation was far from straightforward, developing over years through the interactions of supporters, neutrals and opponents. There is a refrain from some I interviewed that there was no blueprint for Thatcherism in place in 1979 Britain, when I identify initial neoliberalisation as having already happened.⁵⁷⁷ This is largely an accurate account. My narrative of neoliberalisation in Britain is one of the construction of an unstable ideological coalition between a number of camps in the party, one incorporating some concepts that would be dropped very soon thereafter and with other elements that would characterise Thatcherism yet to emerge. While the West German experience was understood by some Conservatives to be a blueprint, they were far from being able to impose it on the party.

Those in the think tanks, the IEA, ASI, etc. may have had a planned strategy for Thatcher to adopt but she was not one for grand strategy. Norman Strauss and John Hoskyns worked for Thatcher at the CPS and later in her Policy Unit where they sought to build a strategy for

⁵⁷⁷ Baker, 2021

achieving her political programme. This produced the controversial ‘Stepping Stones’ report in 1977 but this was only part of their output.⁵⁷⁸ Hoskyns would later claim that the thesis presented to the Cabinet was of a ‘15-25 year job’ incorporating ‘five years to put the fire out and five years to then catch up with the rest of the world’, but that this long-term strategy was not implemented as, after the proverbial fire was put out, the long-term plans were dismissed as ‘too obscure and abstract’.⁵⁷⁹ This story corresponds with a strategy document that can be found in the papers of the Conservative Party’s Strategy & Tactics Committee from the turn of 1979 to 1980. This document, entitled ‘the “Long Campaign” paper’, sets out a ten-year plan for Thatcher’s government from the initial goal of stabilising economy through to changing public perceptions of the party and creating new cleavages for voting with big picture ideas from changing the voting system to a widespread change in public attitudes by manipulating journalists.⁵⁸⁰

Again, this strategy was not implemented. In an interview, Norman Strauss pointed to the exigencies of the political cycle as constantly distracting politicians and the Government from any deep strategy and expresses the claim that most politicians and functionaries in the party were simply uninterested in or incapable of grasping ‘real strategy’. Margaret Thatcher’s grand strategy was little more than policy objectives:

So we wanted to talk to her about strategy and she kept trying to put us off, put us off.

Until finally, towards the end of one day, we all troop into the office and she says - imagine her, standing up I think - and she said, ‘We’ve got a strategy’ and one arm goes up, ‘It’s to raise productivity’ and the other arm goes down ‘and to lower

⁵⁷⁸ Hoskyns and Strauss, 1977

⁵⁷⁹ Cockett, n.d.

⁵⁸⁰ There are two copies of this document, the restricted copy in the Conservative Party Archive (Hoskyns, n.d.) and an unrestricted copy in Hoskyn’s personal papers (Hoskyns, 1979). From my observation, under the constraints of the CPA’s restrictions, the two copies are near identical in content.

inflation’. So she's kind of like the Angel of the North, arms outstretched but a bit at 45 degrees. That's as far as we can get with her. We can't get her to speak Japanese. To a man as we left her office, we all adopted the aeroplane posture, the arms as wings and we flew down the Downing St corridor *sotto voce* screaming ‘We've got a strategy. We've got a strategy’. And that was as far as it went.⁵⁸¹

The West German case is the same, developing far from in a linear trajectory towards ordoliberalism. Ludwig Erhard did not have a grand strategy to get influence, his rise was as much a result of contingency as of his own agency. As we see in the example of co-determination, compromise and transformation was always a dynamic.

7. Towards a theory of ideological change

While this thesis has examined a pair of cases of neoliberalisation and their comparative and transnational dimensions, the underlying rationale for the thesis has been towards developing an understanding of ideological change. Beyond providing descriptive accounts of the conceptual change, these accounts also feed into considerations of how to theorise ideologies and ideological change more abstractly and generically. While gestures at an analytical framework were introduced earlier in the thesis, here I will update and develop the theory in light of my findings. In this chapter I draw on the cases, and what has been learned from them, to present new arguments for ideology studies, particularly the role of parties as ideological communities, distinctions within ideological families and a model for ideological change centring on intraparty contestation. I use these to discuss the centre-right as a mooted ‘ideological family’ and argue against claims of conservative exceptionalism.

⁵⁸¹ Strauss, 2021. The reference to ‘Japanese’ is Strauss’s way of referring to his belief that actors from different intellectual cultures and paradigms cannot understand one another, that they are effectively speaking foreign languages.

This theory building is necessarily limited by the specificity of the case selection, having identified potential cases of centre-right neoliberalisation, the findings are thus most applicable to similar cases. Nonetheless, I find that it is reasonable to extend many of the findings to ideology studies more broadly and will signpost where the findings may be extended to other contexts and, indeed, where this should be done with caution.

Parties and Ideology

A key emphasis of this thesis has been the overlap between political parties and political ideologies with parties acting as the ideological communities for political parties. In a sense this is non-contentious, talk of -isms has long been associated with the parties and party families with the same monikers. However, common accounts have sought to separate the two and emphasise a role for ideologies as separate from parties, noting the role of non-party intellectuals and ideational continuities outside of party institutional histories.⁵⁸² This thesis challenges this distinction by emphasising the bindings between ideologies to parties.

Here I return to the basics of what the form and function of a political ideology is. In his critique of Skinnerian emphasis on the production of political thought, Michael Freeden draws attention to the reception of ideologies but more particularly their social character, their action- and group-orientation.

to concentrate on the production of ideologies is to overlook features which ought to attract equal interest. For unlike other sets of political ideas, two central characteristics of ideologies are their overt action-orientation and group-orientation. The action-orientation of ideologies distinguishes them by their propensity either to recommend political conduct directly or, indirectly, to make others adopt conduct-

⁵⁸² Freeden, 1996 p24

evoking thinking through the shaping of legitimate language; hence the ways in which ideologies are perceived and understood—that is, consumed—are vital to an appreciation of how they operate. The group-orientation of ideologies suggests that they are, as are all forms of language, collective constructs in their production and, specifically and typically, consumed by groups *qua* groups, thus contributing to the formulation of communal ends. Ideology, more than other kinds of political thought, is a phenomenon squarely located within group activity; a form of political discourse not only produced by groups, as might be asserted about all political thought, but consumed by significant political publics.⁵⁸³

Ideologies then develop as actors coordinate about shared projects and a shared language for their politics, social groups of people who share aims but also contribute to the discourse and use the language. For analysing an ideology, understanding its social group is key. Again, Freeden:

Inasmuch as ideologies are levers of social action, the key to any scholarly analysis of their influence and an important component of their meaning lies in the manner the groups, to whom they are directed, comprehend the political concepts which fashion them. Moreover, inasmuch as many ideologies are, at least in part, disseminated and consumed unconsciously, the role of 'active' intentionality diminishes in relation to that of 'passive' comprehension.⁵⁸⁴

Beyond Freeden, a similar point is raised by discourse analyst Teun van Dijk, who notes that the same entity exists as an 'ideological collectivity', 'community of practice' and

⁵⁸³ Freeden, 1996 p105

⁵⁸⁴ Freeden, 1996 p109

‘community of discourse’.⁵⁸⁵ Understandably, for stability, process and recognition, these communities take an institutional form. Groups become named and regulated, mobilisation requires organisation and leadership; to pursue political change, groups must take forms that allow them to engage in their political contexts.

In the contemporary world, since the advent of mass politics, it seems reasonable to imagine that political parties would be the dominant form of such an ideological group. As the case studies in this thesis demonstrate, the political mobilisation and discourse of christian democracy and conservatism studied are inextricably linked to the political parties that could advance the ideologies. Party leaders have a powerful voice in shaping the direction of the discourse, political education and agendas are set by party communications bureaus, the fixing of party policies represent moments of decontestation.

This is not to say that the ideological community is directly synonymous with the political party. Ludwig Erhard was not formally a member of the CDU and yet had a strong influence on the trajectory of christian democracy. Think tanks that were technically external to the Conservative Party, like the CPS and IEA, nonetheless influenced the discourses on conservatism. These may seem like indications of an intellectual level to ideologies above the fray of party politics.

However, this is not the case. The extra-party agents or groups contributed to the ideologies through their engagement with the parties and their discourses. Thinking about the parties as ideological groups, as a structured institution of ideological thinking and action, a discourse and means to pursue its implications, enables thinking about a more loose and amorphous party. Think about the *Daily Telegraph*, a newspaper with no formal connection to the

⁵⁸⁵ Van Dijk, 2006 p120

Conservative Party but which clearly participates as an insider in party discourse, hence its nickname the *Torygraph*. The CPS and IEA may have engaged with some members of other parties or even the parties themselves, but their influence on politics and on ideological discourse required direct engagement and participation within the party discourses. Only through engagement in Christian Democrat circles could Ludwig Erhard influence christian democracy.

The same relates to academic intellectuals. While scholars of christian democracy and conservatism have often built ideological systems on the works of extra-party intellectuals whose ideologies, the likes of Edmund Burke, Roger Scruton and Jacques Maritain, these figures do not seem to have inspired a political ideology outside the party discourse. Burke and other historical figures were appropriated for political arguments, as discussed in the British chapter, however this deployment was not directly based on his ideas or independent of the new actors restating them. Scruton and Maritain were involved in developing theories of conservatism and christian democracy, but it would be misleading to describe their ideas as political ideologies in their own right; the ideas of an individual cannot be the same as that of a collective ideological community unless we render their compatriots unthinking automatons. Scruton's thought on aesthetics was not the basis of political mobilisation and action without being linked to a political vehicle, the Conservative Party. We can see Scruton and the Conservative Philosophy Group directly engaging with the Conservative leadership and Maritain writing in the *Frankfurter Hefte*, so it is hard to read their political thought as independent of the party discourses.⁵⁸⁶ The wider and more diffuse party, incorporating

⁵⁸⁶ On Scruton and the CPG see 'Guest List', 1981; Seldon and Flew, 1996; On Maritain's engagement with christian socialists see Maritain 1946a, Maritain 1946b.

intellectuals, political actors and laypeople, the layers of ideological action into a single discourse, is thus coterminous with the political ideology under examination.⁵⁸⁷

This locating of the ideology in a political party seems to be generalisable beyond the cases studied. As party politics have dominated state politics for many decades now, it seems reasonable to imagine that the other parties would have their own ideologies and that alternative ideologies would have been pushed into mobilising through their own parties. In the UK context then it seems reasonable that the same dynamics would be at play for the Labour, Liberal, Scottish National and many other parties, in their varied iterations.

A few possible distinctions can nonetheless be drawn out. Firstly, different political parties have different political cultures which may lead them to slightly different dynamics internally. The Conservative Party has been noted as less factional than the Labour Party, leading to a more cohesive party discourse.⁵⁸⁸ Factions themselves overlap with ideological forms in this thesis, but it is possible that factions could have a meaningfully separable discourse from that of the party as a whole.⁵⁸⁹ This would especially be the case with entryist political groups which seek to be a party within a party. Further, some parties may be more reliant on intellectuals than others, consider an explicitly Marxist party or others more deferential to ‘party intellectuals’ rather than ‘pragmatism’. Nonetheless I presume that these intellectuals are still mediated through their reception by partisans and are reliant on parties to achieve influence.⁵⁹⁰

The second distinction concerns extra-party movements. In particular, ‘new social movements’ and ‘new ideologies’ took new forms of political organising to established

⁵⁸⁷ Humphrey, Laycock and Umbach (Eds.) 2019

⁵⁸⁸ Kelly 1989

⁵⁸⁹ Ideological forms are discussed further in the next subsection

⁵⁹⁰ Note the classic quote attributed to Marx, ‘what is certain is that I myself am not a Marxist’

structures and avoided, to an extent, the use of political parties. It is plausible that social movements could function as ideological communities without being primarily oriented to a political party. However, extra-party movements face challenges in achieving political aims and the dynamics of accessing and wielding power may well push them towards a party model. Instructive here are the cases of green political movements as well as the ‘new lefts’.⁵⁹¹ Social movements and ideological politics carried out without a political party nonetheless has a tendency towards the party form.

Ideological Families and Ideological Forms

The study of ideologies has developed from a study of individual ideal types of ideologies, comparing say socialism and liberalism, and towards an account of ‘ideological families’, studying liberalisms often to understand the common core of liberalism across a number of contexts. This account of ideological families draws on the Wittgensteinian notion of family resemblances, the overlapping commonalities across a range of variations.⁵⁹² This thesis has expanded these typologies further, by drawing distinctions between what I call ideological types and forms.

The term ideological ‘types’ here refers to a particular instance of an ideological discourse within a family, such as the Conservative Party tradition in the United Kingdom as an instance of conservatism. By ideological ‘forms’ I refer here to cohesive currents within a type, competing directions for the discourse. In the same UK case we can identify neoliberal, authoritarian and middle way conservatisms amongst others. These forms overlap with tendencies and factions within a party, representing ideological variants expressed by tendencies.

⁵⁹¹ Renaud, 2021

⁵⁹² Freeden 2003

What the thesis emphasises then is that while ideologies function as groups aiming to decontest the concepts and conceptions of members, they are constantly multivocal with internal groups seeking to express what is shared in different ways. As another metaphor used in the thesis intimates, political languages can have different dialects. The varying influence of these forms impacts the morphology of the ideological type presented by the ideological community.

What is important to note here is that a christian socialist christian democracy and an ordoliberal christian democracy can both be forms of christian democracy and co-exist within the same christian democratic type. If the ideology of an ideological community is the decontested conceptual morphology of its members, we can note that these forms emerge from the remaining conceptual agreement and disagreement. Different forms in a type may share enough of their conceptual morphology to identify their broader ideological community as their vehicle to implement their ideology. These forms may have different structures and orientations, bringing different traditions and ideas into their discourses, but it is not the case that either is a ‘truer’ form of the type. They are simply alternatives and competitors.

This notion is not wholly original and, using different terminology, Michael Freeden traced the competition between competing forms of liberalism in his book *Liberalism Divided*.⁵⁹³ However, in that book Freeden examines two ‘streams’ of liberalism as recurrent factions constantly battling within an ideology. This thesis notes the contingency of the ideological form, that forms emerge and ebb away; being introduced, integrated and even excised from an ideological type. Indeed, a story of neoliberalisation is not just of the success of a form within a type but also its introduction and the evolution necessary to find success. In the thesis we find that forms are not purely antagonistic but can be cooperative, developing

⁵⁹³ Freeden, 1986, similar in turn to the analysis in Greenleaf, 1983

shared conceptual clusters that achieve decontestation at the level of the ideological type through their different conceptual paths. The ideological affinities between forms facilitate the movement of ideas and personnel between them.

Such an account also gives us an understanding for why marginalised ideological forms, those which are not dominant in an ideological community or the drivers of the constant transformations of the ideological presentation of the party stay in the community. An example here is the christian socialists in the CDU after 1950. Part of this story is the decontested ideological morphology of the party type; as identified by Freeden, while there are differences between the forms, they share what are understood as fundamental conceptual constellations. What this thesis adds to this story is that forms that are marginalised can still influence the wider ideological discourse as even the more dominant ideological form(s) must legitimate future decontestation across the ideological community, such as through the use of ideological affinities. The story of ideological change is not the replacement of one ideological form by another but of their interaction, engagement and relative power.

Intraparty Contestation

Developing an understanding of political ideology that centres parties and party discourse draws attention to the role of intraparty contestation. The competition over conceptual structure and meaning in the cases examined is carried out by participants in the party discourse and amongst forms emerging within it.

Intraparty contestation can be distinguished from interparty contestation which predominates in accounts of ideologies. Here we can think of accounts that emphasise ideological change stemming from a public ‘battle of ideas’. This account is particularly strong for scholars of

conservatism, who present an account of a reactionary ideology.⁵⁹⁴ Here conservatism is presented as focused on the preservation of the status quo, or slow-moving organic changes from a natural order. As an ideology based from the status quo, changes originate not from conservatism itself but rather from the other ideologies that call for change from the status quo against which conservatism needs to develop responses. In another phrasing, for this account change is exogenous rather than endogenous.

One would expect from this account for centre-right party ideologies to be in constant dialogue with other ideologies, constantly evolving in relation to the challenges of rivals. In this thesis, however, this empirical claim is not the case, and the language and conceptual morphology of other ideologies rarely appears in the party discourses studied. Debates are played out within the party between rival forms working to advance their interpretations, the theoretical and conceptual output of rival ideological families or types is notably lacking.

In both cases we see forms of an ideology that draw on the vocabulary of the ideology or adjacent discourses – economics, theology, etc. The overarching constraint on change is the ability to legitimate it with existing conceptual structures. As such the role of ideological affinities or conceptual linkages to existing morphology is crucial. These constraints keep party discourses internal and resist the introduction of extra-party discourse and ideas.

This is not to say that there is no discussion of other political parties or ideologies. Indeed, the spectres of communism and socialism haunt the parties being examined. However, to continue the metaphor of apparitions, these are not the rival ideologies themselves but projections of them presented by fellow partisans. Conservatives rarely engage with socialism or the work of socialists themselves directly, but rather construct straw men to dismiss them

⁵⁹⁴ Fear, 2020

or contrive threats to confront.⁵⁹⁵ Other ideologies do then exist, but they only interact with the ideological discourse of Conservatism when they are made a part of it.

Exogenous context still matters here but is nonetheless mediated through the party discourse. In the German case, the Nazi past and the material reconstruction were, largely, extra-party phenomena that impacted the CDU and needed to be understood. Any functioning worldview would need to accommodate these conditions. However, the existing worldview and conceptual vocabulary of actors frame their initial encounter of ideologues, with the material world and new frames needing to be comprehensible within the ideology. Members of an ideological community do not experience the world beyond the community with a *tabula rasa*, their experience is mediated through their worldview. Exogenous context is understood internally, within the ideological discourse.

As I will discuss later in the chapter, this challenges the claim of conservative reaction. Centre-right discourses may utilise a reactionary rhetorical strategy or tropes to legitimate conceptual changes as reaction, but the rhetoric does not match the conceptual and social developments.

Much of this restates the case that ideologies do not exist as metaphysical entities, autonomous agents in their own right. Ideologies are discourses, constructed and reproduced by people. As such, we cannot speak of an ideology having an interest for itself or achieving sentience, to do so would be reification. We can only speak of the interests of partisans or ideologues whose individual actions are constrained by the need to bring along groups to influence the wider ideology. Recognising the discursive and social element of political ideologies requires that analysis situate change through discursive and social mechanisms.

⁵⁹⁵ Compare the discussion of Stuart Holland in Howell 1976 pp11-15 to Johnson 1975, a review in *Crossbow* which bears the title 'Cloud Cuckoo Board'

Refraction Model

In relation to ideology theory, this emphasis on intraparty contestation situates the analysis against existing accounts of ideological change in conservative cases. Freedman himself draws on claims of reaction and conservatism to identify a ‘swivel mirror’ nature to the ideological structure of conservatism. Here he claims that conservatism has a particularly stable core built around a conceptual cluster opposing change and that adjacent and peripheral concepts are relatively unstable changing to create ‘anti-theses’ of the central concepts of rival ‘progressive ideologies’.

there is no logical necessity for the conservative swivel mirror to reflect any particular core of a rival progressive ideology, or any particular unit within each core. The mirror can be angled to pick up different reflections. This flexibility in its choice of ideological opponent is the fundamental explanation for any particular form of conservative morphology and for what, on the surface only, may appear to be incompatible conservatisms. The pliant mirror-image system is then the third factor in according rigid protection to the core notion of change, for it aims to seal immediately any chink in the ideational armour that could be penetrated by any particular opposing idea in any particular place, as and when it emerges, and thus to maintain the balance and order among the political concepts it has already endorsed. Most ideological change is induced by perimeter events and practices. Progressive ideologies, in deciding how to react or adapt to such change, channel them first to adjacent concepts and then, if necessary, to their stable substantive cores. This latter process is a slow one. Conversely, the swivel-mirror conservative morphology accords priority attention to any perimeter disturbance perceived to endanger its core concept of change. That core is directly and immediately involved in configuring adjacent

concepts and alternative perimeter practices so as to close the access route of that disturbance.⁵⁹⁶

This account is not compatible with the emphasis on intraparty contestation discussed in the thesis. To reiterate, ideologies are not animate objects and cannot unilaterally respond to other ideologies. Ideologies only change when the content of their ideological discourse changes. The language of ideologies ‘deciding how to react or adapt’ is thus suspect. As seen in the thesis, ideologies are not an undifferentiated bloc. Rather, they contain various different forms. The idea of a deliberated strategic conceptual move, akin perhaps to Skinnerean rhetorical redescription, does not fit a social entity as well as it can an individual. Conceptual change in a party may be contested or unconscious, perhaps both, but there is no single brain making strategic judgements.

In contrast to the swivel mirror account this thesis presents two alterations of the account of conservative change. First, the claimed flexibility at the peripheral level does not appear in the Conservative case, despite being a clear case of meaningful ideological change. Instead, as in the case of the CDU, the positions of the party and its partisan discourse remain quite consistent. Change from one set of decontested positions and policy to another is gradual and squared with the existing sets of conceptual configurations. The idea of a quickly changing ideology moving between contradictory positions simply is not the case. Such a claim seems to stem from not understanding the system of ideas that comprise the ideology and the logic of justification at play.

Consider here Mary Douglas’s letter to Keith Joseph complaining that the positions of the party on social permissiveness and economic freedom were contradictory in the terms of her

⁵⁹⁶ Freeden, 1996 pp343-344

anthropological training.⁵⁹⁷ While liberalisation and conservatism may be contrary tendencies in her ‘cross cultural structural analysis’, they are reconcilable within Joseph’s thought, if simply characterised with Gamble’s strong state and free economy maxim or the social market economics discussed in this thesis. While, in a sense, this could be related back to stability at the core, the broader point is that the phenomenon of flexibility may well refer more to a misinterpretation of conservative discourse than a structural feature.

As a second point, the conceptual changes that do happen at the periphery cannot be separated from those at the core. Freeden’s account of conservative ideological change is one that is quite immaterial, with the façade of the ideology changing but its core structure, a conceptual cluster and logic opposing inorganic change, staying mostly stable and unchanged. This is at tension with the notion within ideology theory of ideologies as semantic nets composed through the interlinking of contested and decontested concepts creating shared meanings. While core concepts and peripheral concepts may be distantly related in varying spatial positions, they are nonetheless related and the notion that they can be separated seems problematic.

Consider a spider web, where a vast web of nodes is linked through a network of links. When a fly is caught in the web and pulls on a few nodes and links, the movements are felt throughout the web, alerting the spider to its prey. Changes at the periphery could not *sometimes* have a change on adjacent and core conceptual clusters, they *necessarily* would. Changes at any area of an ideology, core or periphery, have impacts on the rest of the web.

Consider Keith Joseph’s arguments for considering economic laws as guidance for economic theory, an example that Freeden himself draws on.⁵⁹⁸ In this case, Joseph advocates for an

⁵⁹⁷ Douglas, 1974

⁵⁹⁸ Joseph, 1975a; Freeden, 1996 p395

alternative to a long running conservative hostility to basing economic policy on economic theory and rationalism, which contradict an opposition to inorganic change. Joseph argues that, while conservatism opposes the imposition of rational logics to policy making, that this principle is not broken when drawing on economic rationality as the ‘market is a state of nature with empirically observable laws, like the laws of nature’.⁵⁹⁹ While this ideological change, switching economic rationality from unacceptable to acceptable, is significant, it is justified as in keeping with existing frameworks of acceptable change, by changing the understanding of economic rationality from inorganic to organic. Contrary to the swivel mirror, this change is neither unprecedented nor easy, arising only after a long history of justifications in party discourse and requiring further justification in the essay itself. Nonetheless, in this conceptual change the nature of how core concepts, of rationality and organic change, are understood changes, as well as the more peripheral conceptions of rational market theory. In an ideology properly understood, a purely peripheral change is not possible.

What this leads to is what I present as a ‘refraction model’ of change, drawing on a metaphor of light bending as it passes through a prism, rather than bouncing directly back as in the case of a mirror. Ideological change happens not through the bouncing of new ideas off the periphery of an ideology but rather as concepts and developments introduced to an ideological discourse are bent and manipulated to accommodate to their contexts. The new ideas are changed by the medium they find themselves in, the ideology, while the ideology changes with the new addition/alteration. Rather than looking at conservatism as a fixed object subjected to new ideas, this account provides a more robust account of conservatism as a social and dynamic discourse.

⁵⁹⁹ Joseph, 1975a p19

This account of ideological change, while distinct from the swivel mirror, is not entirely dissimilar to Freeden's accounts of ideological change in progressive ideologies. The question of whether this undermines a claim to 'exceptionalism' for conservatism will be addressed in the next subsection, but here I aim to further distinguish my account from Freeden. Indeed, it is true that refraction has similarities with the gestures that Freeden makes towards ideological change, however these are often sketched rather than fully explicated. One of the clearest accounts comes from a discussion of John Stuart Mill and liberalism where Freeden explains that 'it was through the perimeter interface of the political and administrative life in which Mill participated fully that the morphology of his ideology adopted shape after shape, testing different formulae for optimizing its core concepts'.⁶⁰⁰

Such an emphasis on the overall shape of an ideology and the changing morphology of core concepts is indeed similar. The primary innovation of this thesis to that account, beyond applying it to centre-right cases, then is to more fully explain how this mechanism functions. The other innovation is a greater emphasis on the social character and a stronger position against intentionality. While Freeden does stress unintentionality, he emphasises agency to distinguish his account from structuralist accounts.⁶⁰¹ We can see in both examples discussed the influence of a single actor, whether that be Mill or Joseph. The scope for deliberate and strategic manipulation of ideology by individual actors in Freeden's account is absent from my account and its account of ideology emerging from multi-vocal social discourse. A single actor may have their own worldview change in a unique way, but this can only be said to change the ideology when it is legitimated and adopted across the ideological community.

⁶⁰⁰ Freeden, 1996 p159

⁶⁰¹ Freeden, 1996 pp124-125

The Centre-Right as an Ideological Family

So far, we have primarily discussed conservatism and theories of its ideological change.

Christian democracy gets occluded in these accounts either being folded into the conservative category or bundled along with progressive ideologies. This is a general tension in the study of christian democracy with scholars contesting whether to treat the ideology as a subset of the conservative family or a family in itself.⁶⁰²

Here it is useful to reconsider what is meant when ideological types are classified within a family. So far in this theory chapter I have discussed the relationship between ideological types and forms but said less about ideological families, the groupings of ideological types. I argue that this classification, into families, has a descriptive and analytical purpose. By identifying family resemblances amongst types of a family, scholars identify shared logics and facilitate comparative study across time and location to better understand the ideological morphology of a given moment. Understanding what is shared across different socialisms provides a pre-set structure for new socialisms and a shortcut to finding distinctive features in a given context.

However, this description tells us nothing about any essential character of the ideology. The overlaps between types of a family seem to stem from genealogy and interaction. Freeden notes that history plays a ‘crucial role’ in the classification of groups and that ‘family resemblance may well be one selected by the observer, not one “inherently” salient’.⁶⁰³ As an ideology is a discourse with a corresponding community, overlaps arise as the community splits or interacts with others. Here we can link family resemblances with the relationships among parties. As seen in the transnational chapter, parties and their members do interact,

⁶⁰² Pombeni, 2013; Invernizzi Accetti, 2019

⁶⁰³ Freeden, 1996 p91.

strategically or socially, facilitating ideational transference. Intellectual texts also flow, exemplified by the case of German conservatives seeking consciously to develop counterparts to Burke and Cecil as part of the post-war conservative reconstruction.⁶⁰⁴

Conservatism and christian democracy as ideological families certainly have overlaps in genealogy and personnel. As the chapters demonstrate, they also have meaningful differences. Determining the significance of this divergence is not an objective truth to be uncovered, but a judgement call for the researcher and one based on the questions they are posing and seeking to answer. Likewise, the size of an ideological family can vary with the specificity or generality of the ideological morphology deemed ‘ineliminable’. Such an answer is in keeping with Freeden’s account of morphology and familial resemblances, but ultimately leads to an element of arbitrariness of classification.

The exceptionalism of conservatism

What does this mean for theories of ideological change? First and foremost, the account of ideological change I presented as ‘refraction’, as a counter to narratives of conservative ‘swivel mirrors’, also describes the christian democratic case well. As with the conservative case we see competing forms drawing on their own traditions, alongside some conceptual innovation, to pull the broader discourse in their favour. The roles of traditions and existing conceptual clusters serve as a constraint for the ideology, containing the relative radicalism in some conservative, liberal and socialist forms, while ideological affinities between forms are key to legitimating new decontestations. Change does not take place at the core, at least not directly, but rather as peripheral and adjacent conceptual constellations are edited and the wider shape of the ideology changes with them, changing the core indirectly.

⁶⁰⁴ Steber, 2017b p39

Christian democracy changes in much the same way as conservatism but seemingly also in the same way as other ideologies. This too contributes to the arbitrariness of grouping conservatism and christian democracy together, as there is nothing structurally distinct about the centre-right. Setting aside claims that the centre-right is ‘non-ideological’, which have been quite comprehensively rejected in ideology studies, claims of conservative exceptionalism tend to point to a metaphysical distinctiveness or exceptionalism. Freeden’s swivel mirror is not just a claim about the importance of the core concepts in conservatism but also an assertion of a ‘fundamental asymmetry’ between conservatism and other ideologies.

whereas concepts concerning human nature, social structure, and the distribution of goods are core components of progressive ideologies, conservatism displays another type of substantive core: social and political activity, and its articulated defence, should be geared to preventing non-organic, disruptive change by invoking an extra-human order. To these two core concepts conservatism adds a particular method of configuring whatever further concepts conservatives entertain. Underlying the common morphology conservatism shares with all ideologies, incorporating cores and peripheries, is a specific manner of interlocking and controlling the behaviour of its political concepts. This structural intricacy, rather than the substantive units comprising it, bears the hallmark of conservatism.⁶⁰⁵

As we have seen in the discussion of refraction, however, the account of the swivel mirror does not stand. Ideologies are not autonomous agents responding to one another and the core of conservative ideology is not shielded from change. Instead, we can see that the

⁶⁰⁵ Freeden, 1996 pp340-341

morphology would then be similar to that presented for progressive ideologies. Conservatism then is unexceptional.

This, however, only incompletely answers the exceptionalism argument presented by Freeden. Freeden aims to situate his argument for the swivel mirror as also a *longue durée* diachronic observation, drawing on the marked variation in presentations of conservatisms across time – but a greater consistency in the core account of change. In relation to the cases in the thesis, it may be that his account does not hold in the periodisation selected but bears out in longer timescales or alternative contexts.

This counterclaim is not without precedent, Martina Steber's account of Conservative history has pointed to the 1970s as a key transition towards de-exceptionalising the ideology, as Conservatism becomes like other ideologies through engagement in the 'war of words'.⁶⁰⁶ For Steber, the 1970s are important as internal crisis prompts greater introspection in the party about the meaning of conservatism and a more pluralist ideational discourse emerging with the involvement of think tanks and other actors. As this thesis does not cover Conservative history prior to 1970 in any serious depth, it could be possible that the dynamics of ideational change before this period were more like Freeden suggests. Along these lines, perhaps we cannot say that conservatism *is* exceptional but rather that it perhaps *was* or *could be*.

This seems unconvincing for two reasons. Firstly, Freeden presents this exceptional structure as essential to conservatism, such that a conservatism without it would not be conservatism. If the 1970s Conservative Party ideology was not exceptional, then it could not properly be described as conservative. As seen in the UK chapter, such an argument would not be

⁶⁰⁶ Steber, 2017a

unprecedented, with the likes of Ian Gilmour presenting Thatcherism as a fundamental break with conservatism. While Freeden wishes to reject the claimed break and argue that Thatcher retains his understanding of conservatism, perhaps the break did nonetheless happen, saving the exceptionalism thesis.

This does not hold up. As both Freeden and I identify, there is a great amount of continuity within the ideology across the period. The identity of the participants in the Conservative discourse is mostly constant, many conceptual clusters are held constant and, as the thesis has shown, changes from the status quo are nonetheless tied to existing ideological affinities in the party. There is no discrete moment of ideational rupture and, while forms may change, the ideological type is constant. Proto-neoliberal forms had long been in circulation in certain Conservative milieus.⁶⁰⁷

Secondly, the important dynamics have not changed. While the thesis does not study earlier decades, the mechanisms that underpin change in the party pre-exist the 1970s. The reason that refraction is more compelling than the swivel mirror lies both conceptually and in the emphasis on intraparty rather than interparty ideological competition. The intraparty dynamics have long histories, while the 1970s may be a decade of think tanks rising in prominence, similar groups in the form of Reading Clubs and internal pressure groups like the Tory Reform Committee date back to at least the 1940s.⁶⁰⁸ The CPC's Movement of Ideas – initially Two Way and later Three Way – which sought to connect the grassroots and central party in political education and ideas likewise dates back to the 1940s before being developed further in the 1960s.⁶⁰⁹ Factions and tendencies are as old as parties.⁶¹⁰ The 1970s

⁶⁰⁷ Green, 2002

⁶⁰⁸ Green, 2002, pp11-12; Love, 2020

⁶⁰⁹ Green, 2002, 11; Norton, 2002

⁶¹⁰ See Skjønberg 2021; Heyer, 2022

may represent a deeper commitment to changing public attitudes but this would not reflect a change in the functions of the ideology.

Conclusion

This thesis opens with the question of ideological change, the recognition that while it is apparent that ideologies change over time existing accounts of ideology are lacking or only offer unconvincing accounts for how this change happens. Through this thesis, I have sought to redress this gap, examining a pair of historical case studies where ideological change is established to have happened and developing an account for how these ideologies changed in the case studies specifically but also as a more general practice.

The findings here are multiple and occur at a variety of different levels and schema of analysis. In the West German case, the story of *Neuordnung* is a new contribution to the intellectual history of the CDU, the post-war moment and of the FRG. The conceptual constellations examined complicate existing stories of the relationship between different factions in the founding of the CDU and of christian democracy, pointing to ideological affinities between the rival ideological forms of christian democracy: christian socialism and ordoliberalism. In the British case, the narrative extends our understanding of the meanings and importance of wider ownership in the 1970s. The case study also brings together existing scholarship to draw out the ideological connections between different conceptual constellations in the party discourse. The transnational chapter introduces a story of transnational flows of ideas and a role for ordoliberalism in Thatcherism that is almost entirely absent in the existing literature. The story of the ideological coalition of the 1970s constructed between moderates and the New Right, founded on wider ownership, industrial democracy and a German Model is an alternative account of the period.

These cases, comparing West Germany in the late 1940s and the UK in the 1970s are an uncommon pairing and provide new insights into neoliberalism and neoliberalisation as phenomena and centre intraparty contestation and existing ideological affinities in a story that has so often stressed external takeover and the liberal ideological tradition. Finally, for ideology theory, this thesis pushes forward the importance of the ideological community, tied to the political party, in the understanding of ideologies, stressing discursive conceptual change rather than the strategic intentions of rarefied intellectuals. Breaking ideologies into families, types and forms displays the crucial role of intraparty contestation in ideological change, including a new ‘refraction model’ to challenge ideas of ‘swivel mirrors’ or the ‘battle of ideas’. These arguments de-exceptionalise conservatism and improve our understanding and classification of conservatism and christian democracy within a centre-right ideological family.

I hope to have indicated the value of greater engagement and rapprochement between studies of ideology from the standpoint of political theory, the empirical observations and theory building of political phenomenon that characterise the political sciences, and the rich detail and narratives of histories: conceptual, intellectual, political, etc. These areas of study naturally and necessarily overlap and so are impoverished in the absence of one another. All three camps have different elements they can extract from this thesis for their own uses, but I hope to have demonstrated how sustained engagement is crucial for future research.

There is certainly more to be done, for this intellectual furrow to be ploughed further. The case studies were both of initial centre-right neoliberalisation to ensure a baseline similarity and established cases of ideological change. It would be useful for future research to expand beyond this narrow remit, looking perhaps at the neoliberalisation of left-wing parties, but also looking beyond neoliberalism, at ideological changes of all forms, including ideological contestation in periods of relative stability. As both cases are in Western Europe in the mid-

twentieth century, there are plenty of other contexts to be explored, including non-Western political traditions and political systems, historical cases before the advent of the mass party and in systems with more diversity of personnel; while Margaret Thatcher was a woman, the actors in the case studies are overwhelmingly masculine. I suggest in the theory section that we have reasons to believe that some of these factors would not undermine the overall account of intraparty contestation, but verification of such a claim would be valuable.

The historical cases, as is so often the case, introduce additional questions to be explored. The pre-histories of the cases are inviting for future research, examining contestation among christian democrats in the period before ‘christian democracy’ was a thing or tracing back actors and ideas involved with Thatcherism into the 1960s and 1950s. For a study of neoliberalisation, the focus has been on initial neoliberalisation, the introduction of neoliberalism to the fore in a political system. There is plenty more to be done to explore how the conceptual constellations identified were invoked and transformed by the process of governance as neoliberalised parties not only came to power, but wielded power and ultimately lost it.

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