



Britain's cosmopolitan future

How the country is changing and
why its politicians must respond

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policy network paper



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Summary

In the wake of Britain's general election, its political parties are taking stock and looking to their futures. As they do so, they need to consider the megatrends convulsing and transforming the country at large. Its ethnic minority population is booming; its cities are sucking in ever-more people, jobs and investment; its university-educated population is growing fast; its links with the outside world are becoming closer and more numerous. This paper describes these and other trends that together point to a "cosmopolitan" future for the country. It discusses their impact on lifestyles, attitudes and party politics; drawing a series of conclusions about how politicians should adapt to them. It argues that, for all the challenges that they present, and the turbulence that the upcoming period of transition will entail, Britain's cosmopolitan future is a bright one.

About the Author

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Introduction: More entangled and less attached

“The chief characteristic of the modern world is the scope and speech of change. It imposes on countries, corporations and people the need to adjust fast. The same is true of political parties. [...] So not just in vision and attitude but in policy and programme, ask one question: does this really fit the way the world is changing?” – Tony Blair.¹

Darkness falls. Upstairs in a suburban house a mixed-race young woman prepares for a night out, and downstairs her mother peers out of the window. Outside a hoard of clubbers writhes and bounces, neon-clad limbs thrusting electronic devices into the night air. Her daughter rushes outside to join them. They spin, whirl and photograph themselves to anthems of youth, rebellion and the city; from the Rolling Stones to David Bowie, from Soul II Soul to Blur. Text and social-media messages whizz through the ether. Dizzie Rascal, the hip-house voice of 2000s London, bestrides the heaving mass outside singing his best-known song. “Some people think I’m bonkers / But I just think I’m free / Man, I’m just livin’ my life / There’s nothin’ crazy about me.”

The picture is one of a young, urban, multi-coloured, technological, consumerist, permissive Britain at ease with itself and in the modern world. The year is 2012. The event: the opening ceremony of the London Olympics. Designed by the cineaste Danny Boyle, the spectacle may be best-known for its account of Britain’s story to date, encompassing Shakespeare, the Industrial Revolution and the first world war. But its most incisive and resonant part is perhaps this latter segment: a vision of the country in all its contemporary modernity. Jonathan Freedland of the Guardian called this “a shorthand for a new kind of patriotism that does not lament a vanished Britain but loves the country that has changed”.

The ceremony embodied not just the country that has changed but the one that is still changing; the one in which people are becoming more relaxed in a churning world of difference and diversity, less rooted (perhaps even less sentimental), simultaneously more at home in the mass and more truly themselves; or, as the philosopher Michael Sandel puts it: “more entangled, but less attached”.² The Britons it describes are indeed slipping their institutional, ethnic, geographical and social moorings. This change expresses itself in a number of trends: the growing comfortableness in an ethnically diverse society, the live-and-let-live attitudes of young Britons, the new self-confidence and swagger about Britain’s cities. Some disparage these with the term “metropolitan”. Others go with “liberal” or even “libertarian”. But no word quite captures the sum of the changes convulsing and deracinating the country as neatly as “cosmopolitan”.

These developments are more relevant today than ever before. As they emerge from the election the two main political parties are looking to the horizon. Labour now faces a fight on three fronts: against the Scottish National party (SNP) in Scotland, against the United Kingdom Independence party (Ukip) in parts of the north and against the Conservative party in swathes of England and Wales that it tried and failed to win (and in some cases even lost). The Conservatives, though delighted at their unexpected win, risk years of acrimony over Europe, and have a majority narrow enough to put David Cameron at the mercy of his most right-wing, isolationist and socially conservative MPs. Despite its win, the party remains relatively weak in the fastest-growing bits of Britain: London and the northern cities. As they size up their tasks, both parties would benefit from a sense of how the country is evolving; of its cosmopolitan future.

1. Cited in Philip Gould, *The Unfinished Revolution: How New Labour Changed British Politics Forever*, Abacus, 2011, p. xiii

2. Michael Sandel, ‘The procedural republic and the unencumbered self’, *Political Theory*, February 1984, pp. 81–96, https://www.theihs.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg_images/Seminars_and_Workshops/Summer_Seminars/Travel_PDFs/Sandel,%20Michael%20The%20Procedural%20Republic%20and%20the%20Unencumbered%20Self.pdf

I have written this paper to set out in one place (and in the context of the election result) the arguments that I have gathered about this development over the past year, some of which I have expressed, in part at least, in the Economist, the Evening Standard and the Guardian, and in a Radio 4 programme. It draws on interviews that I conducted for these pieces, and additional ones specifically for this paper. In part one I enumerate the various economic and social developments that are together contributing to this change. In part two I describe the effect that these are having on British politics: why, in short, the only future as a big, majority-winning party of government is a cosmopolitan one: relatively open to the world, socially liberal and comfortable with the country's plural, multi-ethnic society.

Although cosmopolitanism is Britain's future, the country is not moving towards that future at an even pace. This explains Ukip's rise. So part three looks at the challenge of embracing changes that are, by and large, good for the country without alienating or abandoning those who feel shut out by or hostile to them. Finally, in the conclusion, I set out some recommendations for each of the main parties in the light of these imperatives.

The point of this paper is not to insist that all politicians suddenly embrace what some might consider a hyper-liberal vision of Britain (however much that vision resembles the future). Each will respond to the country's changes in his or her own way, and gradually. But this account does set out to warn those in parties who think they can still play from the 20th century song sheet that they risk condemning their parties to irrelevance. The graveyard of political careers is, after all, littered with the tombstones of individuals and parties who attached themselves to declining segments of the electorate at the exclusion of other, growing segments. Most of all, in this paper I seek to embolden the many individuals in both main parties (and others) who understand that this change is happening, and perhaps even to help them dissect it.

Two final notes. First, this paper does not set out to say much about recent political shifts in Scotland. While the demographic and attitudinal changes described in the following pages apply north of the border as well as south of it, the stratospheric rise of the SNP there is a distinctive phenomenon that requires its own dedicated analysis. Moreover, though this surge has big implications for Britain as a whole, whether the Conservatives or Labour lead the next British government will be decided in England. Second, although the arguments of this paper concentrate firmly on British circumstances and examples, many apply to other western countries as well. Other northern European readers, in particular, may find points of resonance in the paragraphs discussing population trends, and what they mean for politics, in an increasingly diverse country. The points about cities and the post-industrial service economy may be of more relevance to readers from other Anglo-Saxon economies. The following is an account of a nation in rapid demographic and attitudinal flux – and the political risks and chances that such changes create. If it does not contain some internationally applicable insights, that is down to the author, not his choice of subject matter.

1. The Londonisation of Britain

"The rise of the new middle class – with its university degrees, relative financial security and more liberal outlook – is one of the great social changes of the past generation. Britain is becoming more ethnically and culturally diverse, more white-collar and more cosmopolitan, and this will only accelerate in the years to come." – Rob Ford and Matthew Goodwin, authors of *Revolt on the Right*.³

3. Rob Ford and Matthew Goodwin, 'The voters of Clacton don't deserve Matthew Parris's sneering contempt', Daily Telegraph, 08/09/2014

The growing cosmopolitanism of Britain is curious, as it collides with a favourite trope of political and economic commentary: the growing separateness of London. Last year Philip Stephens of the Financial Times, only somewhat tongue-in-cheek, called for the capital to be its own city state, free from the conservatism of Little England. Aditya Chakraborty, of the Guardian, entertained a gloomier version of that fantasy in a Radio 4 programme called *The Country Formerly Known as London*. Nigel Farage has even suggested that the city already has one foot out of the door, telling an interviewer in December that many Londoners “do not feel a strong affinity to this country”.

London is, of course, unique in Britain and always will be. The distinction between it and the rest of Britain is gradually blurring nonetheless. Its distinctive mixture of youth, diversity and both cultural and economic liberalism is already present in other parts of the country: in metropolitan outposts like Manchester, Leeds and Cambridge, for example. Having toured every county in England, the Financial Times writer, Matthew Engel, concluded (“when I was on county 34 of the 39”) that the defining divide in the country today is that between “London” (that is, places with a London-ish outlook) and “UnLondon” (places without it).⁴

But various of these London-like characteristics are taking hold more widely. Stick a pin in a map of the country and it is ever-more likely that you will hit somewhere that could be described as urban, even metropolitan, where non-white faces are common, where same-sex couples can walk down the street hand-in-hand without raising eyebrows, where many residents have been to university and are internationally minded – in short, places with at least a dash of London about them.

Recently much has been written (rightly) about places like Clacton and South Thanet where voters are inclined to vote Ukip and where (to quote one of the party’s Thanet activists on the BBC programme *Meet the Ukipers*) people reject “the existing parties and their London-centric attitude”. But as Ford and Goodwin, the authors on the definitive study on the rise of Ukip, suggest in the above quote, such places are in fact increasingly unusual.

The Londonisation of Britain involves a number of overlapping social trends and it is worth examining each briefly in turn:

More diversity

On average, non-white Britons are younger and have more children than Britons as a whole. BME groups accounted for 80 per cent of all population growth over past decade⁵ (overall growing from nine per cent of the population in 2001 to 14 per cent in 2011, according to the census).⁶ Such is the pace of this growth that Britain is the only country in Europe heading towards American levels of diversity: its minority population, as a proportion of the total, is actually converging with that of the United States. By around 2025 Britain will be about as diverse as America is now. By 2040, according to Trevor Phillips and Richard Webber, it will be as diverse as America outright; both countries will have a roughly 40 per cent-minority population.⁷ And by 2070, according to David Coleman of the Migration Observatory at Oxford University, Britain will be majority non-white.⁸

Diversity in more places

Another development of the coming years, one that is perhaps less well-known but (for reasons discussed in part two) has particularly important political implications, is that ethnic minority Britons and white Britons will become much more mixed. This trend has two engines.

4. Jeremy Cliffe and Lucy Proctor, *Two-Nation Britain*, BBC Radio 4, 29/03/15, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b05mr9mc>

5. Rishi Sunak and Saratha Rajeswaran, *A Portrait of Modern Britain*, Policy Exchange, 2014, <http://www.policyexchange.org.uk/images/publications/a%20portrait%20of%20modern%20britain.pdf>

6. ‘Into the melting pot’, *The Economist*, 08/02/2014, <http://www.economist.com/news/britain/21595908-rapid-rise-mixed-race-britain-changing-neighbourhoods-and-perplexing>

7. Trevor Phillips and Richard Webber, ‘Labour’s new majority’, *Demos Quarterly*, July 2014, <http://quarterly.demos.co.uk/article/issue-3/537/>

8. Press Association, ‘White Britons “will be minority” before 2070, says professor’, *The Independent*, 02/05/2013, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/white-britons-will-be-minority-before-2070-says-professor-8600262.html>

The first is the move of ethnic minorities out of the inner cities. At the moment just over 50 per cent are in three conurbations (those of London, Manchester and Birmingham), but immigrants and their descendants are spreading out of these areas and into smaller cities, towns and suburbs. In a study documenting the rise in the proportion of ethnic minority school pupils, from 11.5 per cent in 1999 to 17 per cent in 2009, Chris Hamnett of Kings College London was struck by the extent to which this was not confined to city centres: “We’re not looking at minorities being trapped or ghettoised in small areas. There’s a process of suburbanisation.” The biggest increases in the ethnic minority pupil population were not in traditionally diverse Tower Hamlets, Newham or Birmingham, but leafy Croydon and Merton. This “suburbanisation” was particularly pronounced among Asian Britons, noted Hamnett, who also observes:

“Across the whole country the clear trend is towards outward dispersal and diffusion, often into more affluent suburban areas that display greater levels of home ownership, educational attainment and aspiration, and employment opportunities. Such a trend is, I believe, beneficial for the country as a whole, both socially and economically.”⁹

This trend is occurring across the country, Hamnett writes:

“there are still large and typically more rural areas of the country where the percentage of ethnic minority pupils is very low. Yet even in these areas, the concentrations of ethnic minorities typically still doubled or trebled from 1-3 per cent to 4-5 per cent in a decade.”¹⁰

And Britain has only experienced the start of this great spreading-out, according to Philip Rees, one of the country’s leading demographers, who has produced a “diversity index” projecting trends for ethnic minority Britons to 2051:

“If you use the diversity index and you colour a map and all the high value areas are in London and the bigger conurbations and some other big cities like Leicester and Bradford, when you roll it forward to 2051 about half of the local authorities in the country move into that class [...]. The places that will experience the most change are those that have small populations now, so ethnic minorities are to a certain extent moving away from their areas of concentration into other districts.”¹¹

Rees adds that these trends would occur “even if you closed our national borders” to new immigrants, thanks to the age structure of existing ethnic minority Britons.¹² His view is echoed by Sunder Katwala of British Future, who points out that “although the gradual spreading-out looks quite slow, [for demographic reasons] it is about to get much faster.”¹³

The second engine of an increasingly mixed population is the remarkable rise in the number of mixed-race Britons. Again following in America’s footsteps, Britain is truly becoming a melting pot (the mixed-race population is actually growing faster here than it is across the Atlantic). The 2011 census showed that this group grew more than any other over the preceding decade, doubling to around 1.2 million.¹⁴ As British Future notes, there are many prominent examples of this “Jessica Ennis generation” in public life, including the celebrated athlete herself, the singer Zayn Malik, the racing driver Lewis Hamilton, and the radio presenter Jameela Jamil. And just as it is spearheading the growth in the ethnic minority population, it is also leading its spread out of the cities. As the Economist noted last year:

“Their [mixed couples’] children are quietly transforming Britain’s suburbs and commuter towns. [...] In Chiltern, an affluent commuter district in Buckinghamshire, five per cent of children under five years old were mixed Asian and white in 2011 – more than in most of London. Their parents may have met at university or while working in the capital. Within Birmingham, too, mixed Asian and white children are especially common in the largely middle-class white suburbs of Edgbaston, Moseley and Harborne.”¹⁵

9. Chris Hamnett, ‘David Starkey is wrong to call Britain a white monoculture’, *The Guardian*, 23/11/2011, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/nov/23/david-starkey-britain-white-monoculture>

10. Hamnett, 2011

11. Cliffe and Proctor, 2015

12. Cliffe and Proctor, 2015

13. Author interview with Sunder Katwala

14. Rob Ford, Rachael Jolley, Sunder Katwala and Binita Mehta, *The Melting Pot Generation: How Britain Became More Relaxed On Race*, British Future, December 2012, <http://www.britishfuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/The-melting-pot-generation.pdf>

15. ‘Into the melting pot’, *The Economist*, 8/2/2014, <http://www.economist.com/news/britain/21595908-rapid-rise-mixed-race-britain-changing-neighbourhoodsand-perplexing>

The same article concluded that:

“Most of all, the rise of mixed-race Britain shows that Britain is capable of absorbing even large numbers of newcomers. For the young, who are used to having people of all backgrounds in their midst, race already matters far less than it did for their parents. In a generation or two more of the melting pot, it may not matter at all.”

Growth of cities

It is telling that Ukip has broadly performed poorly in Britain’s conurbations (especially London), relative to the country’s more peripheral areas. That is because large urban areas are disproportionately cosmopolitan. Using YouGov data, John McDermott of the Financial Times has shown that such places are more economically liberal than the country as a whole: though Labour-inclined, both Londoners and Mancunians are more sceptical about nationalised utilities and railways than the average Briton. But both are also more socially liberal: keener on gay marriage, cannabis legislation, the EU and immigration. As McDermott notes:

“That urban and rural areas have different politics isn’t of course a new observation. Tory-Whig parliamentary battles were often proxies for conflicting views between landed gentry and city dwellers. [...] What is new is how big cities – especially their cores – are once again expanding and, in doing so, taking on a clearer liberal identity. Cities are where England’s open and cosmopolitan outlook is most apparent. But politics has so far failed to catch up.”¹⁶

This sharpening of the big cities’ live-and-let-live identities appears to be the British manifestation of a trend first observed by John Judis and Ruy Teixeira, authors of *The Emerging Democrat Majority* (a 2004 book that predicted many of the trends that would sweep Barack Obama to the White House in 2008). They pointed out that the new post-industrial urban areas exhibit the political characteristics of the university graduates who dominate their economies: “These new post-industrial metropolises [...] are peopled by the new professionals who live according to the ethics of post-industrial society. Their socially liberal values and concerns with the quality of life permeate the population, including the white working class.”¹⁷ There are obvious and big differences between British and American politics, but British cities, with their cosmopolitan outlook and plentiful office jobs, certainly seem to conform to the Judis-Teixeira theory about the nexus of post-manufacturing urban service industries and liberal, university-influenced social values.

The same trends propelling the emergence of this new cluster-based service economy are also driving the growth of these cities themselves, which are expanding faster than the population as a whole (a development bound to be reflected when parliamentary constituency boundaries are next revised). Around the start of this year, London’s population crossed its 1939 peak of 8.6 million. It is expected to hit 10 million by the 2030s. Likewise, the ONS records that Manchester grew by 18.9 per cent between 2001 and 2011 (compared with just 4.2 per cent for the north-west region as a whole). Likewise, Leeds will grow 11.8 per cent between 2011 and 2021, with the overall Yorkshire/Humber region growing seven per cent. Population growth in cities is outpacing that in other areas because, in a country that specialises in things like business services, creative industries and niche manufacturing, big cities are where the work and opportunities are.¹⁸ Bigger cities mean more competitive clusters, which mean more jobs, which mean yet bigger cities.¹⁹

A larger share of the population living in the big cities broadly means a larger share likely to hold cosmopolitan views (and likely to be exposed to the diversity and global links in which cities specialise). Freddie Sawyers of YouGov, quoted by McDermott, points out that: “The general pattern will be that the bigger a city is, the more liberal it will be when taken as a whole.”²⁰

16. John McDermott, ‘England’s liberal cities’, *Financial Times*, 27/01/2015, <http://blogs.ft.com/off-message/2015/01/27/englands-liberal-cities/>

17. John Judis and Ruy Teixeira, *The Emerging Democrat Majority*, Scribner, 2004, p8

18. Tony Champion, *People In Cities: The Numbers*, Government Office for Science, 2014, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/321814/14-802-people-in-cities-numbers.pdf

19. Regional Profiles: Population and Migration - North West, Office for National Statistics, 2013 <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/regional-trends/region-and-country-profiles/population-and-migration---2013/population-and-migration---north-west.html>

20. Cited in McDermott, 2015

Metropolitanisation

The growth of the cities has a secondary effect. As they increasingly become the focus of the economic life of their regions, they exert a greater gravitational pull on surrounding areas. As jobs are sucked in, once economically self-sufficient towns and suburbs become dormitories (Reading and Croydon outside London are good examples of this, but the same pattern is true of the outskirts of regional cities as well).

According to Mike Emmerich, a former senior Downing Street policy adviser and an expert on urban growth, these centripetal economic forces act as centrifugal political ones, spreading big cities' values out into their peripheries. On the whole, he says, "as that notion of a city spreads out, so does some notion of a different kind of place with different kinds of values, the liberal values [of the big city]." Cosmopolitan values travel along the corridors of prosperity emanating from the metropolises, he adds: "what oils the wheels of a community or a different group of communities living side-by-side is an economic engine that provides enough for all [...] It encourages and fosters the kind of diverse and cosmopolitan living that is so much a part of London."²¹

Fragmentation of the class system

As the Judis-Teixeira argument about "post-industrial areas" suggests, the rise of cosmopolitan values (and people who hold them) is tied to the decline in the traditional white collar-blue collar divide. In the postwar decades, politics was a materialistic bargaining process between these two monolithic blocs. But the decline of heavy industry and the rise of new forms of economic activity (particularly those propelled by digitisation and automation) have fragmented the old class system. According to the Great British Class Survey commissioned, and partly run, by the BBC in 2013, Britain's old upper-middle-working class divide has become a seven-way split, with the traditional categories ("established middle class" and "traditional working class") describing just 39 per cent of the population.²² New groups like the "technical middle class", "new affluent workers" and "emergent service workers" are now also part of the mix, each combining certain middle-class with certain working-class characteristics.

This represents a detachment of economic status from cultural status. As the ideological divide between left and right has narrowed, a new, second axis has emerged that cuts across the old left-right one, says James Tilley of Oxford University.²³ On one end of this new spectrum are libertarian views and at the other are authoritarian ones. Where an individual stands on this depends on cultural factors such as level of education, place of residence (urban or rural), as well as type of employment.

Thus the Great British Class Survey devised the new class categories by distinguishing between cultural capital (a sort of worldliness measure) and economic capital. It found, for example, that the "emergent service workers" (bar staff, carers, call centre workers) have overtaken the "traditional working class" (lorry drivers, electricians, factory workers) as the largest low-paid sector. They have much less housing wealth and smaller savings pots, but have more cultural capital and are about twice as likely to be university educated (they are also twice as likely to be from an ethnic minority).²⁴

What does all this tell us? That in a hollowed-out, post-industrial service economy like that of Britain, groups that (measured on a purely economic scale) would traditionally have been considered "working class" bear cultural characteristics that we might consider "middle class". These groups are concentrated in growing sectors of the economy and the population. And all of this is happening at a time when cultural outlook is becoming a more defining part of people's political identity. As Tilley puts it: "People's income and their social class and things like that are still quite good predictors of their vote choices, but they've become less important. [...] And as those issues have become less important to people, these other [libertarian/authoritarian] issues have in a sense become more important to people."²⁵

21. Cliffe and Proctor, 2015

22. It should be noted that the study's methods were controversial, see Mike Savage and Fiona Devine, 'The Great British Class Survey revives classical sociological theorising on class in an era of digital data', LSE Politics Blog, 22/04/2013, <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/gbcs-response/>

23. Cliffe and Proctor, 2015

24. Mike Savage et al, 'A new model of social class? Findings from the BBC's Great British Class Survey experiment', Sociology, April 2013, <http://soc.sagepub.com/content/early/2013/03/12/0038038513481128.full.pdf>

25. Cliffe and Proctor, 2015

The decline of monolithic institutions

The break-up of the big, monolithic class blocs has not been an isolated phenomenon. In Britain, as in the wider west, collectivism of all kinds are in decline. Trade union membership has halved since 1980.²⁶ Membership of political parties has fallen from 3.8 per cent of the population to around one per cent over the same period (there are now more registered Jedis than members of the once 3-million-strong Conservative party).²⁷ Between 2001 and 2011, according to the census, the number of people declaring themselves adherents to “no religion” rose from 14.8 per cent to 25.2 per cent.²⁸ Britons are also strikingly relaxed, in the grand scheme of things, about nation and nationhood: a survey in 2010 found that only a third of English people knew the date of St George’s day and only one in 10 said they would fly the national flag in their garden.²⁹ None of the periodic attempts by gimmick-seeking politicians to whip up the “Britishness agenda” ever gets terribly far.

These trends are more pronounced in Britain than elsewhere and show little sign of abating. Britons have replaced the old, totalising institutions with take-it-or-leave-it diversions: shopping, the pub, television, volunteering, membership organisations like the National Trust (whose membership, at the current rate, is on track to overtake that of the entire trade union movement in the next few years), sport, YouTube and Facebook. As Janan Ganesh of the Financial Times puts it: “Even by western standards, Britain is extraordinarily evolved. It is decades into post-modernity. It is cynical, ironic, unimpressed. [...] The soul of the nation does not reside in Speakers’ Corner, but in Ikea car parks and middling gastropubs on weekend afternoons.” Philip Gould makes a similar point in the Labour modernisers’ bible, his book *The Unfinished Revolution*, describing working-class voters as having “outgrown crude collectivism and left it behind in the supermarket car park”.³⁰

All this makes for a peculiarly individualistic, consumerist people and helps to explain why the “less attached” side of Sandel’s “more entangled, but less attached” formulation is such an apt description of life in Britain today. It also makes a mockery of claims that ordinary Britons are clamouring for a paternalistic dose of “family, faith and flag”.

The post-nuclear family

It is worth pausing on the “family” part of that socially conservative refrain. Here, too, the country as a whole is converging on London’s metropolitan mores. The capital has long housed more “singleton households” than other parts of the country, a product at least partly of professionals (and particularly female professionals) choosing to settle down and have children later in life, or not at all. But whereas the proportion of such families in London remained flat between 2001 and 2011 (possibly a product of skyrocketing house prices there), that in the rest of the country rose; increasing by about 1 million to 7.1 million in 2011, according to census data.³¹

This is part of a bigger story: the decline of the traditional, nuclear household; driven by changing labour-market patterns, the waning power of marital and lifestyle norms and legal changes like civil partnerships and gay marriage. Though politicians still brandish a provincial, static vision of the family – Iain Duncan Smith warning that the last Labour government “cloaked neglect of the family under the veil of neutrality”, for example – society is (as the Economist puts it) “changing beneath their feet”.³² All this contributes to a future Britain that looks more like London today: multifarious and relatively easy-going about heterodox lifestyles.

26. John Moylan, ‘Union membership has halved since 1980’, BBC News, 07/09/2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-19521535>

27. Richard Keen, ‘Membership of UK political parties’, House of Commons Library Standard Note, 30/01/2015, <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/research/briefing-papers/SN05125/membership-of-uk-political-parties>

28. ‘The percentage of the population with no religion has increased in England and Wales’, Office for National Statistics, 04/04/2013, <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census/key-statistics-for-local-authorities-in-england-and-wales/sty-religion.html>

29. Nick Collins, ‘England “least patriotic” country’, Daily Telegraph, 19/04/2010, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/7608125/England-least-patriotic-country.html>

30. Gould, 2011, p4

31. Households and Household Composition in England and Wales 2001-11, Office for National Statistics, May 2014, <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census-analysis/households-and-household-composition-in-england-and-wales-2001-2011/households-and-household-composition-in-england-and-wales-2001-11.html>

32. ‘The post-nuclear age’, The Economist, 16/03/2013, <http://www.economist.com/news/britain/21573548-forget-traditional-family-there-are-now-three-distinct-models-associated>

More global links

Increasing numbers of Britons are experiencing contact with the world outside their country's borders. According to the Office for National Statistics, the number of trips abroad by UK residents (including for business and for pleasure) roughly doubled from 37m in 1993 to 70m in 2006 (falling to 55m in 2010 and rising again to 58m in 2013, the last year for which data is available).³³ As the country's links to the wider world grow, its transport hubs are becoming busier. The number of passengers passing through Britain's airports was up from 112 million in 1993 to 240 million in 2007. Though it fell during the recession, it is once more rising fast: to 238 million in 2014.³⁴ The country's two main international airports, Heathrow and Gatwick, both posted record passenger numbers in 2014.³⁵

Partly, all this reflects London's emergence as the world's leading global city. But much evidence suggests that the new depth and breadth of international links are spreading throughout the population at large. Regional cities are establishing new direct connections with other countries. The number of airports outside London, Birmingham and Manchester serving more than five international destinations rose from four in 1990 to 15 in 2006.³⁶ There is also evidence that increasing numbers of young Britons are considering³⁷ and opting to study at foreign universities: 10,000 took Erasmus programme places at European universities in 2007, but 15,000 did in 2012.³⁸ And it seems young people more generally are going abroad more. Though a marketing slogan, the term "generation easyJet" put about by the eponymous low-cost airline has more than a ring of truth: 63 per cent of the children of baby boomers had gone abroad by the age of 10, twice the rate of their parents' generation.³⁹

And the world is increasingly impinging on Britain outside London too. The dramatic increase in the number of foreign-born residents (from one in 11 in 2004 to one in eight in 2012), largely driven by new arrivals from other parts of the EU, has mostly taken place beyond the capital.⁴⁰ According to the Migration Observatory, inner London saw the lowest percentage increase in foreign-born residents between 1995 and 2013 (up by 50 per cent, compared with 90 per cent nationally).⁴¹ Thirty-one per cent of babies born in Britain in 2011 had at least one foreign-born parent.⁴²

That outwards-in pattern is also true of the economy. Britain attracts much more foreign investment than any other European country (with the inflow growing faster than the rich-world rate for most of the past three decades). In 2013-14 it hosted the largest number of foreign direct investment projects since records began. Though London remained the main destination, projects in England outside London rose 11 per cent year-on-year⁴³ and Greater Birmingham saw a greater increase (57 per cent) than even the capital (with big investments from the likes of Deutsche Bank and Jaguar Land Rover).⁴⁴

The march of the graduates

But perhaps the biggest single factor behind Britain's growing cosmopolitanism – greater, arguably, even than the country's growing diversity – is the rise of university education. Each cohort of Britons is more likely to have undertaken higher education than the last. In the half-decade from 2007, for example, the number of students enrolling for a first degree at a higher education institution grew every year by about 50,000, almost equivalent to the voting population of the typical parliamentary constituency.⁴⁵ Ford cites this as a crucial driver of attitudinal change: "If you look at the cohorts [that] are now drawing their pensions, people who were born in the decade immediately after the second war, you were looking at 5-10 per cent being university educated. The current cohort, coming through this university, it's more like 40-45 per cent that will end up at the end of it with a university education. It's a huge increase and that means that these younger cohorts, the values are much more university associated. [...] So ... socially liberal, internationalist, pro-EU, economically moderate, pro-immigration often as well – all these kind of things."⁴⁶

33. Travel Trends 2013, Office for National Statistics, May 2014, <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/ott/travel-trends/2013/rpt-travel-trends-2013.html#tab-Commentary-UK-residents-visits-abroad>

34. Phil Davies, 'UK airports optimistic about passenger growth in 2015', *Travel Weekly*, 10/04/2015, <http://www.travelweekly.co.uk/Articles/2015/04/10/53785/uk-airports-optimistic-about-passenger-growth-in-2015.html>

35. 'Heathrow and Gatwick report record passenger numbers in 2014', *BBC News*, 12/01/2015, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-30775021>

36. Air Services at UK Regional Airports, Civil Aviation Authority, November 2007, <http://www.caa.co.uk/docs/589/CAP775ExecutiveSummary.pdf>

37. Richard Adams, 'Tuition fees encourage British students to study abroad', *The Guardian*, 24/04/2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/apr/24/tuition-fees-british-students-abroad>

38. Joan-Anton Carbonell, 'Further Up the Road: Six Years of Growth for Outward Student Mobility in the UK', *Go International*, November 2014, <http://go.international.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Further%20up%20the%20road%20carbonell%202014.pdf>

39. 'Easyjet highlights increase in air travel by younger Brits', *Advance*, 24/10/2013, <http://www.adsadvance.co.uk/easyjet-highlights-increase-in-air-travel-by-younger-brits.html>

40. '1 in 8 of the usually resident UK population were born abroad', Office for National Statistics, 29/08/2013, <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/migration1/population-by-country-of-birth-and-nationality/2012/sty-population-by-country-of-birth.html>

41. Cinzia Rienzo and Carlos Vargas-Silva, 'Migrants in the UK: An Overview', *The Migration Observatory*, December 2014, http://www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/migobs/Migrants%20in%20the%20UK-Overview_0.pdf

42. Melanie Hall, 'Third of children born in England has foreign-born parent', *Daily Telegraph*, 01/05/2013, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/10029547/Third-of-children-born-in-England-has-foreign-born-parent.html>

43. UKTI Inward Investment Report 2013-14, UK Trade & Investment, July 2014, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ukti-inward-investment-report-2013-2014/ukti-inward-investment-report-2013-2014-2>

44. 'Greater Birmingham leads UK foreign investment surge', *Insider Media*, 25/07/2014, <http://www.insidermedia.com/insider/midlands/119926-greater-birmingham-leads-uk-foreign-investment-surge/>

45. Patterns and Trends in UK Higher Education 2013, Universities UK, 2013, <http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/highereducation/Documents/2013/PatternsAndTrendsInUKHigherEducation2013.pdf>

46. Cliffe and Proctor, 2015

2. The emerging cosmopolitan majority

“It was 46 golden Olympic minutes when three young Britons showed the watching world just who we are. A ginger bloke from Milton Keynes, a mixed-race beauty from Sheffield, an ethnic Somali given shelter on these shores from his war-ravaged homeland. This is what Britain looks like today... The long-term social ramifications of these Games remain to be seen. Yet the sight of these three Olympians wrapped in the Union Flag will surely do more to inspire than any political words.” – The Sun⁴⁷

These social and economic trends have various attitudinal and political manifestations, which are explored in this section. Although it would be wrong to claim that Britain as a whole is about to become just as liberal and internationalist as London, it does seem that the country is at what Doug Sosnik, Bill Clinton’s former political director (quoting Freeman Dyson of Princeton University) calls a “hinge point” – one at which two historical periods join, at which trends of urbanisation, growing ethnic diversity and dramatic generational differences suddenly accelerate.⁴⁸

America is a foretaste of what is happening in Britain. There, like here, certain areas (for California and New York, read London and Manchester) have long been cradles of cosmopolitan values; witness the decline of the conservative vote in all four places. Yet America also shows how the trends described in part one of this paper – the rise of university education, the growth of the ethnic minority population, the emergence of a post-industrial economic eco-system – can spread out of the latte-sipping parts of a country and into the sorts of places that decide elections. In America, as Judis and Teixeira predicted, they have turned former solidly Republican ‘red’ states like Ohio, Florida, Colorado and Virginia into ‘purple’ swing states, which have trended towards the Democrats in recent presidential elections.

That very process appears to be happening in Britain. The chart below⁴⁹ shows five typical Conservative-Labour marginal constituencies (the first four are Labour targets that the party failed to take, the fifth is one of the seats it lost to the Tories). In each, the big socioeconomic trends have progressed rapidly over the past decade – and in most, faster than in the country as a whole. The cosmopolitan tide is advancing on middle England (see box). Mondeo Man, as it were, is more likely than was his counterpart in 1997 to be non-white; to work in an office; to have been to university; to work with, or otherwise know, people born outside Britain (his children are also more likely to go to school with their children).

Change between 2001 and 2011 in:	Non-“white British” share of population, %	Manufacturing jobs as proportion of total, %	Share of population born outside UK, %
Nuneaton	+58%	-39%	+65%
South Swindon	+88%	-40%	+80%
Croydon Central	+59%	-60%	+46%
Warrington South	+79%	-44%	+65%
Bolton West	+153%	-42%	+49%
England and Wales	+56%	-40%	+44%

47. Quoted in Rob Ford, Rachael Jolley, Sunder Katwala and Binita Mehta, *The Melting Pot Generation: How Britain Became More Relaxed On Race*, British Future, December 2012, <http://www.britishfuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/The-melting-pot-generation.pdf>

48. Doug Sosnik, ‘America’s hinge moment’, Politico, 29/03/2015, http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2015/03/2016-predictions-americas-sosnik-clinton-116480.html#_VR639lpH1sP

49. Office for National Statistics, *Neighbourhood Statistics by Westminster Parliamentary Constituency; 2011 Census and 2011 Census*, <http://neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/>

Voices of cosmopolitan middle England

While making a programme on some of these developments for BBC Radio 4, I visited Warrington to examine them on the ground. Midway between Liverpool and Manchester, it is experiencing a number of the trends discussed in the first section of this paper: closer links to the big cities, an increasingly diverse population, a growing university-educated population and an ever-more “post-industrial” economy. The Warrington South constituency has long been an electoral bellwether. Comments from ordinary voters there give a flavour of attitudes on the rise across middle England.

“I’d say Warrington is fairly liberal. I mean we have a gay pride event in the town every year [...] I don’t hear people not being comfortable with it. Live and let live.”

“Definitely become more modern. When we first moved to Warrington, everywhere closed half-day on a Wednesday. Now shopping’s open until later, we’ve got big department stores, Ikea, the big Marks and Spencer and things off the motorway.”

“There’s the whole world. We’re free to move and live where we like. As long as people are coming and bringing a separate skill set to the country, I really can’t see that there’s a problem with it at all.”

“I’m all for being part of Europe, really. I don’t think there’s any need to kind of segregate yourself away.”⁵⁰

What do these changes mean for politicians? What evidence is there that Britain, overall, is becoming more cosmopolitan in outlook? The main answers fall under several headings.

More ethnic minority voters

The most obvious is that, with the rise of Britain’s ethnic minority population, ever-more voters are put off by the nativist rhetoric most associated with, albeit by no means exclusive to, Ukip. “Ukip have made all the running with the immigration debate in the past few years and we have seen all of the parties looking to offer a harder line on migrants,” notes Ford. “But there is another side to this debate: millions of hard-working British citizens who came to this country from abroad who find this kind of rhetoric profoundly alienating. If the parties do not respond to that then they face lasting damage as this electorate is only going to become more significant.”⁵¹ He has a point: around 4 million people eligible to vote in the 2015 election were born outside UK, up from 3.5 million in 2010. For the first time, there were two seats where over 50 per cent of the electorate was born abroad: East Ham and Brent North.⁵² That trend is only going in one direction.

As immigrants and their descendants spread out of traditionally diverse seats like East Ham and Brent North, their influence on election results will grow. As Simon Woolley of Operation Black Vote (OBV) notes, the BME vote was larger than the winning candidate’s majority in 186 seats at the 2010 election (up from 99 in the 2005 election). Among the “constituencies where the BME vote can win it” in the 2015 election, OBV listed classic middle England marginals like Keighley, Milton Keynes South, Worcester, South Swindon, Rugby, Stroud and Warrington South.⁵³ The organisation’s research has also shown the number of seats where the BME impact is “significant” or “very significant” to be dramatically on the rise – and those where it is “minimal” to be declining fast. As Phillips and Webber put it last year: “Changes in minority voting behaviour could turn out to be at least as significant as the effect of the 3 million electors who tell pollsters that they might support Ukip in the forthcoming election.”⁵⁴

50. Cliffe and Proctor, 2015

51. Cited in Matthew Taylor, ‘Surge in migrant voters could swing vote in key UK constituencies’, *The Guardian*, 29/01/2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/jan/29/surge-in-voters-born-overseas>

52. Taylor, 2015

53. Lester Holloway, *Power of the Black Vote in 2015: The Changing Face of England and Wales*, OBV, August 2013, <http://www.scribd.com/doc/159511648/Power-of-the-Black-Vote-OBV>

54. Richard Webber and Trevor Phillips, ‘The Tories’ missing half million voters’, *Demos Quarterly*, April 2014, <http://quarterly.demos.co.uk/article/issue-2/the-tories-missing-half-million/>

Diversity and immigrants: familiarity breeds content

Britons do not much like immigration. Most say it should be “reduced a lot”, and the subject has often appeared among the top answers when Ipsos Mori asks voters what are the two biggest issues facing the country.⁵⁵ It seems this is, at least partly, the product of negative media coverage; according to a Migration Observatory study of the print media between 2010 and 2012, the word most commonly associated with the phenomenon was “illegal”.⁵⁶ Moreover, Britons think the proportion of immigrants in Britain is about twice as high as it actually is.⁵⁷ Ipsos Mori has also shown that the less voters know about immigration, the more hostile to it they are.⁵⁸

But Britons do, broadly, like individual immigrants – or, at least, do not mind them. Few tell Ipsos Mori that immigration is one of the biggest issues facing them and their families (as opposed to the country as a whole). Indeed, though more likely than other Europeans to describe it as a national issue, Britons are less likely to call it a personal one.⁵⁹ When voters have personal experience of immigrants, their hostility ebbs; the reality clashing, as it does, with the lurid stories they read in the newspapers.⁶⁰ As Peter Kellner of YouGov puts it: “When asked about the men and women from particular parts of the world that we have come to know, our hostility starts to fade.” A study by the German Marshal Fund shows that lack of familiarity with immigration correlates with a greater propensity to say that there are “too many” immigrants.⁶¹ That trend (“familiarity breeds content,” as Kellner puts it) helps to explain why areas with high levels of immigration like London and Manchester are, according to the polls, most comfortable about it:

“Not many of us are offended by people who settle in Britain to build companies, study science, treat patients, run corner shops, cook takeaways or play Premiership soccer [...] In the streets and schools, pubs and offices in much of urban Britain, people from all round the world mix perfectly happily. The stories of division and hostility are striking for their rarity.”⁶²

Thus as immigrants and their descendants move out of areas of concentration and into the suburbs and small towns we can expect many more Britons to think in terms of “immigrants” (rather than the more negative and less personal “immigration”). That attitudinal trend is already evident in polling on immigration among different age groups. According to Ipsos Mori, those born after 1980 – who are much more likely to have grown up in a diverse area, with the children of immigrants among their schoolmates – are roughly half as likely to describe immigration as an important issue facing the country as are those born in the homogeneous Britain of the pre-war years.⁶³ As Ford argues: “The cohorts growing up more recently have grown up in a much more diverse society than the older cohorts and their views about issues to do with ethnicity and identity and nationalism reflect that. They tend to be much more comfortable with diversity. They tend to regard it as an unremarkable part of everyday life.”⁶⁴

The emergence of civic Britishness

According to a government-commissioned report on social cohesion: “The trend over time, such as one can be discerned, is of a move from an ancestral understanding of Britishness to one based more on civic values.”⁶⁵ This is in line with the findings of the British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey, which similarly documents the decline of an “ethnic” sense of nationhood and the rise of a “civic” one. What these point to is perhaps the most important attitudinal shift caused by immigration and the growth and spread of a diverse population in Britain: the growing assumption that respect for the country’s institutions and values, and participation in its public life, are what make someone British, rather than whether they are Christian, were born in Britain or have British ancestry.

55. Bobby Duffy and Tom Frere-Smith, *Perception and Reality: Public Attitudes to Immigration*, Ipsos Mori Social Research Institute, January 2014, p16, https://www.ipsos-mori.com/DownloadPublication/1634_sri-perceptions-and-reality-immigration-report-2013.pdf p 16

56. Bobby Duffy and Tom Frere-Smith, 2014, p87

57. ‘Perceptions are not reality: Things the world gets wrong’, Ipsos Mori, 29/10/14, <https://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/3466/Perceptions-are-not-reality-Things-the-world-gets-wrong.aspx>

58. Private presentation of polling taken between February and May 2015 by Ipsos Mori on 11/5/15

59. Bobby Duffy and Tom Frere-Smith, 2014, p88

60. Peter Kellner, ‘Immigration: familiarity breeds content’, YouGov, 02/02/2015, <https://yougov.co.uk/news/2015/02/02/immigration-familiarity-breeds-content/>

61. Mark Easton, ‘Why are we so concerned about immigration?’, BBC News, 03/02/2011, http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/legacy/thereporters/markeaston/2011/02/why_are_we_so_concerned_about_im.html

62. Kellner, 2015

63. Bobby Duffy and Tom Frere-Smith, 2014, p17

64. Cliffe and Proctor, 2015

65. Shमित Saggarr, Will Somerville, Rob Ford and Maria Sobolewska, *The Impact of Migration on Social Cohesion and Integration*, Migration Advisory Committee, January 2012,

This shift, too, is sharply generational. Most Britons think Britishness is defined by a mix of ethnic and civic factors, but whereas only 13 per cent of those born before 1945 think only civic factors apply, 40 per cent of those born after 1964 do. As the BSA concludes: “These findings suggest that, over time, the importance attached to ascribed ethnic factors in thinking about national identity may well decline, as older generations die out and are replaced by generations who are less likely to think of Britishness as dependent on factors such as birth, ancestry and sharing customs and traditions.”⁶⁶

This shift is profoundly cosmopolitan in its implications, suggesting that Britain is moving towards an ‘American Dream’-like sense of nationhood. What does it look like in practice? One example is the enthusiasm for British athletes like Ennis and Mo Farah at the 2012 Olympics. Another might be the latest season of the popular business-based reality show, *The Apprentice*, in which viewers cheered on an Australian, a Spaniard and a black British woman. In a detail similarly revealing of the country’s demographic trends, the last of these almost won thanks to her compelling business idea: to make tights in a much wider range of skin-tones than are commonly available and sell them to Britain’s growing population of well-off, professional, non-white women. Another might be the growing acceptance of mixed-race families. As Rachael Jolley, formerly of *British Future*, writes: “A few decades ago, a couple from different ethnic backgrounds would have caused reaction on the streets of Britain.” Yet again, the generational gap on this question is stark. 70 per cent of those aged 18-24 are comfortable with mixed-race relationships and five per cent are uncomfortable; among those aged 65 and over the numbers are much closer: 51 per cent and 24 per cent.⁶⁷

A pro-European turn

Britain has always had a bifurcated relationship with the outside world, as the Economist’s Bagehot columnist observed in 2012: “With your back to the open sea, an island can feel encircled, even claustrophobic. Turn to face the waves and an island feels like a starting point, a place surrounded by a variety of bracing possibilities, both good and bad. Britain has the politics of an island.”⁶⁸ But there is evidence that, as Britain’s population is forging new links across the sea, the latter of these poises is becoming more common, and the former less so.

Most obviously (and perhaps relevantly, given the impending referendum), this is manifest in the growth in support for the EU. Though this appears to have dipped, understandably, during the eurozone crisis, it is now clearly on the rise; in February, YouGov posted the largest support for staying in the union since its records began (45 per cent to 35 per cent). This rise was spearheaded by the country’s young, with a net +43 per cent support for membership among those aged 18-24, +24 per cent among 25-39s, -1 per cent among the 40-59s and -6 per cent among those aged 65 and older.⁶⁹ Polling of first-time voters by Opinium last December found that 62 per cent thought EU membership generally “very good” or “good”, compared with just 15 per cent who said “very bad” or “bad”. Sixty-seven per cent said they would definitely or probably vote for Britain to remain in the EU in any in-out referendum.⁷⁰ This generational shift, as more than one interviewee observed to me, means that (all else being equal) it will become steadily easier to win such a referendum as time goes on.

Live and let live

Ukip’s rise is sometimes characterised as the resurgence of social conservatism in Britain. The polling and academic research suggests that it is more like its swansong. “It is clearly the case that the electorate has become increasingly libertarian over the last 25 years,” says Tilley.⁷¹ “There is a steady cohort drift towards a more cosmopolitan outlook,” agrees Ford.⁷²

66. ‘Defining British identity’, British Social Attitudes 31, British Social Attitudes, <http://www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk/latest-report/british-social-attitudes-31/national-identity/defining-british-identity.aspx>

67. Ford et al, December 2012

68. Bagehot, ‘Great Britain SOS’, *The Economist*, 28/01/2012, <http://www.economist.com/node/21543529>

69. William Jordan, ‘Record support for staying in the EU’, YouGov, 24/02/2015, <https://yougov.co.uk/news/2015/02/24/eu-referendum-record-lead/>

70. Toby Helm, ‘Britain’s first-time voters: pro-EU, socially liberal – and no fans of Farage’, *The Observer*, 27/12/2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/dec/27/first-time-voters-eu-2015-election-farage-labour#img-1>

71. Author interview with James Tilley

72. Cliffe and Proctor, 2015

One aspect of this is the dramatic rise of social liberalism since the 1980s. According to the BSA survey, the proportion of people supporting the death penalty has fallen from 74 per cent to 48 per cent; those saying people who want children should marry has fallen from 70 per cent to 42 per cent; those opposing pre-marital sex has dropped from 28 per cent to 11 per cent; support for the 'right to choose' has risen from 37 per cent to 62 per cent. Among the most dramatic such changes have been those concerning homosexuality. In 1987 74 per cent said homosexuality was always or mostly wrong and 11 per cent said it was not wrong at all. In 2012 the equivalent figures were 28 per cent and 47 per cent.⁷³ Penny Young, the chief executive of NatCen, the research organisation that runs the survey, says that "over time [...] they will become more liberal again" on such matters.⁷⁴

As the figures suggest, this is more than just young people's typical liberalism. It is society as a whole shifting, generation by generation, in a more relaxed direction. Tilley continues: "Both panel and cross-sectional data cast doubt on the idea that life-cycle effects are responsible for the large age disparities that one sees in libertarian attitudes; much more plausibly it appears that generational changes in values are driving age differences and any associated aggregate change over time."⁷⁵

The other main aspect of this individualist trend is the rise of economic liberalism. Young people are less sentimental than their elders about the NHS, more supportive of the privatisation of utilities, more sceptical about government regulation of cigarette packets and more likely to think that Tesco, for example, is so big because it gives people what they want (as opposed to driving small firms out of business).⁷⁶ Britain, in short, is becoming a more live-and-let-live place.

3. Keep building those bridges

"The people of Clacton may not have the right clothes or haircuts, but they have a right to a respectful hearing from our political class and a proper response to problems that have been festering for decades."
– Rob Ford and Matthew Goodwin.⁷⁷

A cosmopolitan politics is not just electorally advisable. It is progressive, liberating and good for Britain. Among the country's greatest strengths are its web of partnerships and links with different parts of the world (not least its own European neighbourhood), its remarkable ability to successfully integrate new arrivals and harness their talents and international diaspora connections, its internationally oriented service industries, its universities and its increasingly successful, assertive cities. Confidently cosmopolitan governments – ones that keep Britain's door open to the world and welcome the country's diversity, its increasingly live-and-let-live spirit and urban outlook – will enable it to make the most of these strengths.

And make no mistake: if either of the Conservative and Labour parties wants to obtain the nation-spanning support required to secure big parliamentary majorities in the future, it will have to adapt to these changes. Neither can take its ability to meet this imperative for granted. In the United States the "emerging Democrat majority", as the name suggests, has for deep structural reasons overwhelmingly benefited the party of Obama and Clinton (though even there, it is possible to imagine a rejuvenated Republican party changing this). In Britain it is less clear which of the main parties of government can keep pace with the cosmopolitan tide most successfully, even if Labour has an edge in the form of its greater support among ethnic minority, young and urban voters.

Before I discuss the implications of Britain's changing make-up for the main political parties and the need for them to embrace the country's more cosmopolitan future, some caveats deserve an airing.

73. British Social Attitudes Survey, <http://www.bsa-data.natcen.ac.uk>

74. Cliffe and Proctor, 2015

75. Author interview with James Tilley

76. 'We are the 89%', The Economist, 28/10/2014, <http://www.economist.com/news/britain/21625880-moderate-voters-not-ukipers-will-decide-next-years-general-election-we-are-89>

77. Ford and Goodwin, 2014

First, although Britain's cosmopolitan shift is, on balance, clearly positive, it generates side-effects that cannot simply be ignored or brushed aside and that create new policy challenges. A rapidly growing population and the concentration of economic activity in the cities are fuelling an appalling shortage of decent housing in (or at least, efficiently connected to) places where people want to be. Along with the subsequent rise in commuting, these developments are putting the country's infrastructure under vast strain. The growing consumerism of Britons and their (related) poor work-life balance is bad for child welfare, a measure on which the country does poorly by global comparison.⁷⁸ The rise in the number of people living alone contributes to the problem of loneliness. And the country's good overall record on integration does not belie failures in certain areas: some immigrants bring to Britain a social conservatism that is out of keeping with the country's other cosmopolitan trends.

Second, Britain's cosmopolitan shift creates political tensions. Not everyone is comfortable with the rapidly changing country around them. Viewed from the remote towns and some of the "left behind" fringes of the cities, the booming metropolises can seem alien and unsettling. This phenomenon will gradually decline with time, says Ford, but in the meantime the country will experience a period of transition: "As this cosmopolitan group grows and the socially conservative group gradually declines [...] you cannot appeal with any concrete policy proposal to one of these groups without alienating the other. [...] Fifteen years from now, if we're having this discussion again, it will be a much easier strategic question to answer because everything will have moved in that [cosmopolitan] direction, but right now it is very hard."⁷⁹ It would be pernicious and undemocratic to ignore or disparage that group simply because it is ill-at-ease in the country Britain is becoming (even if that transition is a good thing overall).

The question therefore is: how should politicians and policy makers navigate this period of transition? Two very broad pieces of advice suggest themselves.

A new focus on young voters

Over the first two sections of this paper I have noted the stark age gradient on many of the changes Britain is experiencing. A diverse population, a civic national identity, a live-and-let-live spirit, a majority-graduate population and a preference for internationalism – these may be Britain's future, but for many younger Britons they are also the present. It thus makes sense for parties trying to adapt to national change and to appeal to the growing cosmopolitan electorate to "lean in" to this transition, as Katwala puts it, by appealing to younger voters.⁸⁰

That change is, in any case, badly needed. At the 2010 election only 44 per cent of those aged 18-24 voted, compared with 76 per cent among those aged 65 and above. Turnout among those aged between 25 and 34 was a little-better 55 per cent. (As this paper was published definitive figures for the 2015 election had not yet been published.) This generation gap has increased over the years, a trend not unrelated to the disproportionate efforts of the 2010-15 government to protect the interests of older voters.⁸¹ It is even larger than the educational one: young Britons with the most qualifications are less likely to turn out than older ones with the fewest qualifications.⁸²

A smart political party would seek to do something serious about this. Disproportionately low turnout among young Britons is not just undesirable in principle; it also creates the risk that Westminster lags behind the social and attitudinal changes, and attendant policy challenges, sweeping the country at large. Raising that turnout level would help both main parties forge an electorally viable politics that, while seeking to accommodate older, more conservative voters, also adapts to the liberalising, cosmopolitan tide.

78. Author interview with Sunder Katwala

79. Stephen D Fisher and Nick Hillman, Do Students Swing Elections? Registration, Turnout and Voting Behaviour Among Full-Time Students, Higher Education Policy Institute, December 2014, p15, <http://www.hepi.ac.uk/2014/12/01/hepi-students-tip-balance-power-2015-election-long-register-vote/>

80. Fisher and Hillman, 2014

81. Stephen D Fisher and Nick Hillman, Do Students Swing Elections? Registration, Turnout and Voting Behaviour Among Full-Time Students, Higher Education Policy Institute, December 2014, p15, <http://www.hepi.ac.uk/2014/12/01/hepi-students-tip-balance-power-2015-election-long-register-vote/>

82. Fisher and Hillman, 2014

Doing so would require concerted effort over a number of years. Indeed, efforts to lift youth turnout in the 2020 election should start now. A number of promising suggestions already in the ether together provide a starting point. Labour and Liberal Democrat proposals to lower the voting age to 16, combined with polling booths in schools and further education colleges (as Andrew Adonis has suggested)⁸³ may all help. John Bercow has said that Britain should offer online voting by 2020⁸⁴; this, surely, would also make a big difference, as the Economist has argued.⁸⁵ Some 92 per cent of potential first-time voters in the 2015 election were active on Facebook, 68 per cent on Twitter, 55 per cent on Instagram and 33 per cent on The Student Room.⁸⁶ Enabling this obviously web-centric generation to cast their ballots through a secure website, with an integrated social media campaign encouraging them to do so, could be dramatically effective.

It should also be easier for young voters to register. Proposals that students be registered by their higher-education institution, and that registration be possible on election day at polling stations themselves, deserve attention.⁸⁷ Here, too, online voting would help. Young people are an especially footloose, rapidly churning group (the same, incidentally, is also true of ethnic minority voters, 20 per cent of whom were not registered this spring):⁸⁸ many rent accommodation on a short-term, informal basis, or split their time between a family home and an educational institution. Elections held outside of term time, for example, can mean much lower turn-out rates for student voters who live far from their place of study, and thus their designated polling stations.⁸⁹

Beyond making voting easier, politicians can also do more to make politics as a whole more appealing to young people, who are both less likely to join a party (three per cent compared with 10 per cent among older voters) and, according to the Observer, “much less likely than older voters to use traditional methods of political engagement, such as writing to an MP or other elected politician”.⁹⁰ “Young people are used to more fine-grained choice” in their lives, observes James Morris, a public opinion expert at Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research.⁹¹ So parties need to move away from the constituency-centric member/voter distinction, instead cultivating looser, broader networks of supporters and citizens, as well as associated single-issue campaigns. That is the lesson of two recent political movements that have succeeded in engaging young people: the Obama 2008 campaign and the Scottish yes to independence campaign.

It may not be easy, but lifting the turnout of Britons aged under 35, would dramatically change British politics, propelling it through the coming age of transition and providing a stronger mandate for decisions in the country’s long-term, cosmopolitan future. It is particularly relevant in the light of any upcoming European referendum.

Bridging the divide

This forward-looking approach does not rule out efforts to bridge the divide between parts of the country experiencing cosmopolitan change and those that are not. Indeed, it should not. To some extent, doing so is straightforward. Policies like house-building, improved infrastructure and investment in skills both respond to this change and help allay the concerns of those uncomfortable about it.

But they are not enough. Some subjects, like immigration and its effects, clearly create more complicated tensions. Two principles should guide politicians’ and policymakers attempts to navigate these.

First, they should distinguish ‘hard’ non-cosmopolitanism and ‘soft’ non-cosmopolitanism. In its excellent guide, *How to Talk About Immigration*, British Future distinguishes between a “rejectionist minority”, that “would close the borders, or even send all immigrants back”, and an “anxious middle” that “would seek to manage the pressures brought by immigration while securing its benefits too”.⁹²

83. Andrew Adonis and Adam Tyndall, ‘Vote early and vote often’ in Ralph Scott and David Goodhart (eds) *Twenty Years of Ideas, Demos*, 2013, www.demos.co.uk/files/477zzm_DemosAnniv_08notimeline-Web_3_...pdf?1374245389

84. Oliver Wright, ‘Britons should be able to vote online by 2020, says Speaker John Bercow’, *The Independent*, 26/01/2015, www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/britons-should-be-able-to-vote-online-by-2020-says-speaker-john-bercow-10001782.html

85. ‘Apathetic fallacy’, *The Economist*, 18/04/2015, <http://www.economist.com/news/britain/21648712-online-voting-could-transform-britains-electorate-apatetic-fallacy>

86. Helm, 2014

87. Fisher and Hillman, 2014

88. Doreen Lawrence, ‘With a million missing voters, how can life get better for Britain’s BAME communities?’, *The Guardian*, 06/02/2015, www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/feb/06/million-missing-voters-life-get-better-bame-community?CMP=share_btn_tw

89. Fisher and Hillman, 2014

90. Helm, 2014

91. Author interview with James Morris

92. Sunder Katwala, Steve Ballinger and Matthew Rhodes, *How to Talk About Immigration*, British Future, 2014, <http://www.britishfuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/How-To-Talk-About-Immigration-FINAL.pdf>

The racist views of the former are very difficult to reconcile with cosmopolitan Britain. The non-racist views of the latter are much less so, especially if politicians translate anxieties about immigration into the bread-and-butter issues (about housing and public service pressures, for example) for which they are often a proxy.

Another strategy for winning over the “anxious middle” is to distinguish more clearly between immigration (good) and lack of integration (bad); being whole-heartedly welcoming of new arrivals while at the same time being more insistent that they embrace liberal values. This can be backed up by expanding the provision of English teaching, a more rigorous inspection regime for schools and, in the long-term, moving the welfare state onto a more contributory, insurance-based footing, like some of its northern European counterparts.

Second, although the cosmopolitan trends are positive overall, good public policies can ensure that the greatest possible number of people experience these benefits and, more broadly, feel that there is a place for them in the country that Britain is becoming. As the cities and their booming post-industrial economies become increasingly dominant, so the importance of linking them to outlying parts of the country increases. Expanding broadband and programmes to improve the digital skills of the elderly, the isolated and the unemployed are part of the solution. So are better transport links in general, ranging from the vast Crossrail project to workaday road improvements, which, as Emmerich argues, can enable moribund, former industrial areas to reinvent themselves as commuter towns serving the cities. Unifying travel-to-work areas through combined authorities and metro mayors, an area in which Manchester is clearly the pioneer, would certainly help this process.

The education system, too, has a role to play. An old-fashioned, knowledge-acquisition focus should give way to the acquisition of capabilities, particularly resilience and adaptability, preparing pupils for a churning economic and social future increasingly susceptible to global and technological change. A fuller life-long learning infrastructure, perhaps inspired by the successful Danish ‘flexicurity’ model, should become the norm, helping people in depressed areas develop new, marketable skills.

Finally, tone and language should be part of the solution, not the problem. Older voters may be uncomfortable about how Britain is changing, but they may be reconciled to this, to some extent at least, if they are persuaded that the changes are in the interests of their children, grandchildren and friends’ children. It might be noted, for example, that the grandchildren of today’s immigrants will, within decades (if not months), be paying for the healthcare and pensions of the children of today’s Ukip voters. It is broadly fair to call places like Clacton economically “left behind”, but it is as unhelpful to patronise them as it is to pander to anti-immigration sentiment that some of their residents harbour. Neither is constructive. British identity should be discussed in civic terms (as opposed to ethnic ones, as discussed above): defined by values and participation rather than personal background.

Again, although American political speech and register cannot be imported wholesale, British politicians should take inspiration from the great melting pot across the Atlantic, the country whose broadly successful multicoloured mix, more than any other in the west, Britain is coming to exhibit. Some American politicians have developed a peculiarly cosmopolitan way of talking about nation and belonging. Katwala points to Barack Obama’s speech in Philadelphia in March 2008 (during the Democratic primaries) as the example to follow.⁹³ It is hard to disagree:

“For we have a choice in this country. We can accept a politics that breeds division and conflict and cynicism. [...] We can pounce on some gaffe by a Hillary supporter as evidence that she’s playing the race card, or we can speculate on whether white men will all flock to John McCain in the general election regardless of his policies. We can do that. But if we do, I can tell you that in the next election, we’ll be talking about some other distraction. And then another one. And then another one. And nothing will change.

93. Author interview with Sunder Katwala

That is one option. Or, at this moment, in this election, we can come together and say, 'Not this time.' This time, we want to talk about the crumbling schools that are stealing the future of black children and white children and Asian children and Hispanic children and Native American children. This time, we want to reject the cynicism that tells us that these kids can't learn; that those kids who don't look like us are somebody else's problem. The children of America are not those kids, they are our kids, and we will not let them fall behind in a 21st century economy. Not this time."⁹⁴

Conclusion: lean in

"While the 2016 presidential election is likely to reflect the last remnants of this bygone era, the candidate running for president in 2016 who best understands how the country is changing and runs a campaign based on the America of the future rather than the America of the past is most likely to be our 45th president." – Doug Sosnik⁹⁵

Britain may be at a different place on the road to a cosmopolitan future than is America. Yet Sosnik's above quote captures something important about the situation here. Politics is often understood backwards. Elections are certainly fought that way, as governments and opponents seek to define their own and each other's records. They are, as Sosnik terms it, "lagging indicators" that reflect divisions, debates and events that are already receding into the distance. That makes times like this, with the election over and a new parliament soon to convene, the ideal time to plan ahead.

As they prepare for the new parliamentary term, the political parties should think hard about Britain's changes. The following is a sketch of some of the things that they may want to consider:

The Labour party

At first glance, the changes described in this paper give Labour grounds to rejoice. As Philips and Webber put it: "In 2010 the balance in the popular vote in England and Wales was Conservative 10.5 million, Labour 9 million; in 2050 [following demographic change] we estimate that it could be Conservative 11.8 million, Labour 12.3 million."⁹⁶ Yet there is nothing inevitable about the party's lead among ethnic minority and young voters, just as there was nothing inevitable about its dominance of Scottish politics. It is at real risk of complacency about its lead among ethnic minority, young and urban voters. In the wake of the party's dismal election result there has been much talk about it "reconnecting" with small-town, white, working-class communities. It is easy to see the appeal of this argument: Labour, after all, has deep roots in such places. Ukip is undoubtedly on the rise in some of them. Yet boxing itself into that corner would be a grave error, cutting Labour off from an advantage that could potentially make it the natural party of government in 21st century Britain. As the party seeks to recover over the coming months and years, it should keep in mind the following:

- **Tackle Ukip through unity, inclusion and strong leadership.** Ukip undoubtedly did well in some northern, Labour areas in the election. Of course Labour should seek to head off that threat by rebuilding organisationally in parts of the country where it has become moribund (just as it must do in Scotland). But it is not remotely enough for the party to consolidate its support among white working-class voters. Faced with a Conservative party now 100 seats ahead (and 20-30 more once boundary change has taken place), Labour has to be bolder: binding together voters in working-class areas, hyper-cosmopolitan urban voters and the increasingly cosmopolitan Tory-Labour swing voters in middle England. As discussed in part three, doing so will require policies that give "left behind" parts of the country a share in the trends fuelling the rise of the cities.

94. Transcript: Barack Obama's Speech on Race, National Public Radio, 18/03/2008, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=88478467>

95. Sosnik, 2015

96. Phillips and Webber, July 2014

It will mean melding the best of New Labour (a modern, aspirational, open vision of Britain in the world) with the best of Blue Labour (a communitarian approach to things like democracy, political reform and civil society). But most of it demands a Labour leadership charismatic and persuasive enough to unite drastically different segments of the electorate behind such an approach.

- **Do not treat “the working class” as a monolithic, static bloc.** A second factor complicating the calls for Labour to reconnect with its working class base is that the very meaning of “working class” is not what it was. As discussed in part one, there are now about half as many “traditional working-class” voters as there are “emerging service worker” ones. Another way of looking at this fragmentation is as the rise of the middle class, or at least groups with certain middle-class traits. As Kellner observes: “Half a century ago, two-thirds of voters were working class. In 1997, they still outnumbered middle-class electors by 2 million. Today, Britain has 6 million more middle-class than working-class electors.”⁹⁷ Had Labour kept up with this trend, and kept winning the numbers of middle England seats that it took in 1997, then the rise of the SNP in Scotland need not have posed such a threat to the party’s ability to command a majority. But it has not. If cosmopolitan trends make winning such places again a possibility, the drift apart of Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom make it a necessity.⁹⁸
- **Do not take ethnic minority voters for granted.** Moreover, some in Labour talk as if the only flank on which the party is vulnerable is its white, working class one. This betrays a dangerous and, debatably, patronising complacency about its lead among ethnic minority voters (as well as other cosmopolitan groups). Already the party’s grip on such Britons is slipping. Conservative support among them rose from 10 per cent in 2005 to 16 per cent in 2010⁹⁹ (at the time of writing definitive figures for 2015 were not yet available). As Katwala writes, the Tories are “breaking Labour’s monopoly on ethnic diversity in parliament”¹⁰⁰ and “the 2015 intake captures an increasingly competitive ‘race for representation’ between the two major parties”.¹⁰¹ A report by his thinktank, British Future, before the election reported that: “The Conservatives have been most likely to select new non-white candidates for safe seats.”¹⁰² It is quite easy to imagine these early steps forward by the Tories heralding a bigger shift: the combination of a reformist Tory leadership (especially, once David Cameron steps down, under the Boris Johnson or even an ethnic minority figure, such as Sajid Javid) and the rapid move out of the cities and up the economic ladder of ethnic minority voters producing a sudden tilt in their political affiliation. That is precisely what has happened in Canada, where the Conservative party enjoys more support from such voters than does its left-leaning rival, the Liberal party.
- **Pay the cities heed.** For the same reasons, it would be wrong to assume that Labour can take the cities for granted. Even in London, where the party is organisationally formidable and the demographics are favourable, it failed to win crucial target seats like Battersea, Croydon Central, Enfield Southgate, Harrow East, Hendon and Finchley & Golders Green. Twice in a row the party has lost elections to the London mayoralty (a post that, when created, was assumed to be a Labour sinecure). It is entirely possible to imagine Manchester or Leeds electing a charismatic, independent-minded Tory mayor, providing the party with a foothold in such places. Proportional representation in local elections, a measure increasingly popular in parts of all the main parties, would have a similar effect. A Labour party that loses touch with cosmopolitan, upwardly mobile voters will, over time and perhaps quite rapidly, lose its hard-won grip on the big cities at precisely the time when they are on the march (their population growth will be reflected in greater numbers of parliamentary seats at the next boundary review).

97. Peter Kellner, ‘Labour’s lost voters’, Prospect, November 2012, <http://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/features/labour-voters-election-europe-immigration>

98. Patrick Diamond, ‘Labour neglects English marginal seats at its peril – it can’t just appeal to its “heartlands”’, The Stagers, 25/11/2014, <http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2014/11/labour-neglects-english-marginal-seats-its-peril-it-cant-just-appeal-its-heartlands>

99. Crossley, 2014

100. Sunder Katwala, ‘The Conservatives are breaking Labour’s monopoly on ethnic diversity in parliament’, ConservativeHome, 24/03/2015, <http://www.conservativehome.com/platform/2015/03/sunder-katwala-the-conservatives-are-breaking-labours-monopoly-on-ethnic-diversity-in-parliament.html>

101. Sunder Katwala, ‘The class of 2015 enter Britain’s most diverse ever parliament’, British Future, 8/5/15 <http://www.britishfuture.org/articles/class-of-2015-most-diverse-parliament/>

102. Sunder Katwala and Steve Ballinger, ‘The Race for Representation: How Ethnic Diversity Became the ‘New Normal’ in British Politics’, British Future, March 2015, http://www.britishfuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Ethnic-minority-MPs.Final_23.3.15-1.pdf

- **Fear the ‘cosmopolitan party’.** It is often said that voters in Scotland and ageing, blue-collar parts of England are turning to the SNP and Ukip respectively because Labour took them for granted. There is much truth in that. Yet the party’s other strongholds, young, urban and ethnic minority places, are just as vulnerable to appropriation by a savvy, insurgent party. The Liberal Democrats could yet reinvent themselves as such an outfit. The Greens, who have done Labour many favours by erring towards their own radical wing, could yet see sense and become a moderate, European-style green party of the urban middle-class. Unless Labour protects and nurtures its cosmopolitan flank, someone else will attack it.
- **Drag party structures into the 21st century.** The Labour party cannot hope to hang on to its strength among young, urban voters, unless it does more to adapt to the mores of its time. For some new joiners, the first experience of the party is old-timers debating process in a lifeless committee meeting, or, at best, a cup of tea and an instruction to stuff or deliver envelopes. When people were happy to devote themselves to big, monolithic causes (and, frankly, had fewer alternative diversions), this was one thing. But at a time when parties can count ever less on voters’ adherence to such causes, this top-down approach is dangerous. Labour could do two things about this. First, it could build its supporter network. Many who are unwilling to become members are happy to work with the party on local campaigns, national and international causes, and in specific electoral races. So the party should hold more primaries and build links with associated but not formally affiliated individuals and organisations, as its most proactive candidates were already doing before the election. Second, it should accept that some may wish to become members (or supporters) to pursue a specific cause, rather than as a blanket commitment to electing party candidates in the area where they live. In today’s churning Britain, some owe little allegiance to their neighbourhood. That may be regrettable, and even in some cases reversible, but to some extent it is also inevitable. So the party should enable new members to join issue-based groups, rather than constituency parties, if they prefer. These could work at a national or regional level to coordinate and engage Labour supporters interested in specific themes, channeling their energy into issue-specific campaigning. And who knows; perhaps, come election time, those people will even help their local candidates with some door knocking.
- **Youth turnout, youth turnout, youth turnout.** The above measures should all serve the one mission that would best help Labour to adapt to Britain’s cosmopolitan change. If the party retains its structural advantage among younger voters, raising their propensity to cast their ballots would drastically improve its prospects of winning a majority (lifting that of voters aged 18-24 to the national average could add as many as 2 million of these disproportionately Labour-supporting voters to the total electorate). Some means of doing this were discussed above, but alone they are insufficient. To appeal to these voters, Labour must ensure that (in form and substance) its politics is open, youth-focused and cosmopolitan. Most of all, it must show that it can help them get on: acquire skills, find a well-paying job and own a home.

The Conservative party

The developments described in this paper most obviously require some soul-searching from the Conservative party. Its supporters are disproportionately white, rural and old. At a time when the country is becoming more non-white, more urban and when the values of Generation Y are steadily becoming mainstream, this is a problem. Yet Tories have reasons to be hopeful. David Cameron’s modernisation project may be incomplete, but it moved the party much closer to where it needs to be in the 21st century than where it would have been under David Davis. There is much that he and his eventual successor, be it Theresa May, Boris Johnson, George Osborne or someone else, can do to adapt the Conservatives to cosmopolitan Britain. The party’s to-do list includes the following:

- Make it your top priority to improve your party's performance among ethnic minority voters.** "Bluntly, the Conservative party's problem with ethnic minority voters is costing it seats." Thus Michael Ashcroft introduced a study of the matter, *Degrees of Separation*, in 2012.¹⁰³ In fact, the single trait that most reliably predicts that someone will not vote for the party is that they are not white. In a country in which the minority vote is growing so much, so quickly, that should terrify it. To be fair, Tories have made strides forward: the boom in the number of ethnic minority Conservative MPs and candidates should count among the party's proudest achievements (of the 16 newly elected ethnic-minority MPs, seven are Tories). But it needs to go further: moderate its language on immigration and make some bold gestures and substantive changes to show that it likes the country that Britain is becoming. As one senior Tory adviser told the *Guardian*: "Securing 16 per cent of this growing vote in 2020, 2025 or beyond will not just squeeze majorities but crush the party." The party faces an "existential threat" if it fails to increase its appeal dramatically, added the adviser. "It has taken years to get us into this mess. It will take a long time to unpick."¹⁰⁴
- Do not ditch modernisation.** Many Tories cringe at the early years of Cameron's leadership of the party: from his trip to the Arctic to prove his environmentalist credentials to his talk of "hugging hoodies" to combat the sense that his was an authoritarian party. This 'Notting Hill modernisation', it is said, was too metropolitan, too wonkish, too heavily influenced by Steve Hilton, the then-opposition leader's hippyish, cerebral, but hardly blue-collar strategy director. According to this view the project fell apart when the party went into an election that if should have won in the midst of an economic crisis with a clever-clever big society manifesto styled as "an invitation to join the government of Britain." Yet this is only partly accurate. Cameron's attempts to detoxify his party were entirely sensible, and not unsuccessful (his popularity soared in the years when he was conducting the counter-intuitive stunts that so embarrass his party today). They simply lacked a living-standards element, a gap that Ed Miliband exploited in the last parliament. As the new Conservative government gets to work, then, it should avoid the flaws of the early Cameron project, but not without retaining the best of it: the sense that Conservatives can be just as moderate, optimistic and, most of all, comfortable in modern Britain as can Labour. For guidance on this, the party should look to both Bright Blue, a ginger group pushing liberal conservatism, and Renewal, one launched by David Skelton, a former deputy director of Policy Exchange, to develop and promote a more compassionate, one-nation Tory agenda.
- Learn from Boris.** The mayor's two election victories in the capital show that there is nothing inevitable about his party's poor performance in liberal, young parts of the country (indeed, according to Lynton Crosby, Johnson out-performs his party by 40 per cent among ethnic minority voters).¹⁰⁵
- Become the party of the cities.** For a party supposedly of aspiration and economic dynamism, the Conservatives do remarkably poorly in the places where those things most obviously play out: Britain's cities. An excellent report by Policy Exchange, *Northern Lights*, in 2012 described these as "no-go areas" for the party (pointing out that only two Conservative MPs have Premiership League teams, of which there are 20, in their constituency).¹⁰⁶ That does not have to be the case, as Johnson's electoral success in London shows. Osborne's recent focus on devolution to (and the integration of) the northern metropolises, championed by his aide Neil O'Brien, the former director of Policy Exchange, points precisely to the route the Tories should take. By giving the cities more power, the Conservatives can both show that they trust them to set their own courses and can create a constituency for a pro-business, fiscally prudent approach there. Mayoralties, initially rejected in referenda, may yet provide the Tories with metropolitan footholds. In light of Britain's demographic and social trends, Osborne's enthusiasm for the northern cities may come to be seen as one of his party's wisest long-term investments.

103. Michael Ashcroft, *Degrees of Separation: Ethnic Minority Voters and the Conservative Party*, Lord Ashcroft Polls, April 2012

104. Cited in Anushka Asthana, 'The Tories' future is threatened by their lack of minority appeal', *The Observer*, 17/08/2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/aug/17/david-cameron-tories-ethnic-minority-appeal>

105. Lucy Crossley, 'Ethnic minority voters abandon Labour: Poll finds collapse in numbers of Indian, Caribbean and Africans who support the party since 2010', *Daily Mail*, 24/12/2014, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2886649/Ethnic-minority-voters-abandon-Labour-Poll-finds-collapse-numbers-Indian-Caribbean-Africans-support-party-2010.html>

106. Neil O'Brien and Anthony Wells, *Northern Lights: Public Policy and the Geography of Political Attitudes*, Policy Exchange, 27/04/2012, <http://www.policyexchange.org.uk/publications/category/item/northern-lights-public-policy-and-the-geography-of-political-attitudes-in-britain-today>

- **Remember California.** If there is a foretaste of a Conservative party that fails to adapt to Britain's cosmopolitan change, it is the Republican party of California. As Ford points out: "If you looked at California in the 1960s it was Republican across the board, but when the big changes to California from migration and ethnic diversity in the 1980s and 1990s started the Republicans were firmly on the "anti" side of all of that. And as a result they have never been able to capture a significant chunk of the Latino vote and now they're in a situation where they have less than one-third in the California House of Representatives and they cannot win statewide elections there any more. They're completely locked out of the power structure. Now, it took 20 years to get there, but everyone was saying at the time: this is what's going to happen unless we do something about that. They didn't and then they were, all of a sudden, finding themselves completely on the margins."¹⁰⁷

These broad suggestions variously apply to the other parties, too. To the extent that they possess it, the Liberal Democrats could do more to "weaponise" their natural cosmopolitanism. Having failed abysmally as the party to rein in the excesses of the two main parties, a 'split-the-difference' outfit, they should now try honing their liberal identity instead. The Greens, though the closest Britain has to the kernel of a future 'cosmopolitan party', need to modernise and extend their appeal well into the economically centrist but socially liberal centre ground. Even Ukip, currently the most obviously anti-cosmopolitan party, can adapt to a changing Britain. The party has a significant libertarian seam, best expressed in some of its younger members and Douglas Carswell, the free-thinking former Conservative who has looked distinctly uncomfortable about some of his new comrades' views on things like immigration. It is entirely possible to imagine a truly libertarian Ukip, shorn of some of its nationalist, socially conservative elements, emerging and remaining a significant political force throughout and beyond a period of demographic change that one might expect eventually to put the party out of business.

In short, each party has it within itself to develop an agenda in keeping with Britain's cosmopolitan change. Some will do so, others will position themselves against it. It is hard to predict at this stage which will act in which way. Each, if it chooses to adapt, will need to do so in ways that draw on its own traditions and values. That is right. Inauthenticity does politicians no favours. British politics would be weaker without parties that are themselves and distinct, representing different perspectives on the country's past, present and future and ensuring that Britons of all sorts have a voice.

Here is one final observation that might help parties and politicians willing to think seriously about the long-term implications of this paper. The Olympic opening ceremony in 2012 did not just point the direction in which Britain is going. It also demonstrated, in the process, that this change demands more than hard policies and technocratic adjustments. Yes, the politics of immigration, social policy, foreign policy, economic policy and much else will change as the country does. But above all, politicians need to respond to the great cosmopolitan shift with mood and tone and vision and colour, with that which is tactile, human and ineffable about politics, indeed is politics at its most essential. They need to do things too often taken for granted, or mocked as shallow artifice, but are more crucial now than ever: to articulate, empathise and connect.

That willing, constructive subjectivity is what it will take for them to bridge Britain's past and its present, all while being proudly – and, as time goes on, increasingly – at home in a country where citizens are more entangled and less attached, more unto themselves and more interdependent, more narcissistic and less judgmental, where their lives are more electronic, personalised, consumerist and atomised, where cities are gobbling up investment, fields, towns and suburbs, where a churning, mongrel, messy island-people is turning outwards to face the waves. And where, despite the contradictions and difficulties and paradoxes, it is all – on balance – a thoroughly good thing.

107. Cliffe and Proctor, 2015