

Left versus Right defined the 20th Century. What's next?

Circle The Blue Mugge pub

Notes and discussion based on *Prospect* magazine 100 contributors who responded to the above question. *Prospect* published in March 2007 and edited selection of these responses. The notes below are extracts.

A. S. Byatt, Novelist and Critic "We will be governed by a kind of consensus populism - beliefs, ideas and policies that arise on blogs, websites, focus groups and so on. ... This has its appeal. It is also frightening... because it leads to a tyranny of the majority."

Philip Bobbitt Political Writer: "Nation state versus market state. The constitutional order of the nation state saw its role as one of regulating and reversing the results of markets. Market states, by contrast, try to use the market to achieve their governmental goals...."

Eric Hobsbawm Historian: "As for left versus right, it will plainly remain central in an era which is increasing the gap between haves and have-nots. However, today the danger is that this struggle is being subsumed in the irrationalist mobilisations of ethnic or religious or other group identity."

Meghnad Desaj Economist: "Left/right, north/south, east/west are dead. Politics will be global and/or personal. What mainly the state will be asked to do - mainly local issues - it will fail to do. People will devise their own solutions, however imperfectly. They will move across borders and create the preconditions of a global polity, not as a behemoth but as a beehive."

Brian Emo Musician: "Interventionist vs. laissez-faireists; globalises vs. nationalists; communities of geography vs. community of choice; real vs. virtual life; life extension for all vs. life extension for some."

Jonathan Ree Philosopher: "When the C20th began, the main emotion behind most people's politics was hope of some kind... 100 years later, the principal political emotion is indignation... We are now facing a crisis of both hope and of serious collective argument."

Francis Wheen Writer "Some things really are (or ought to be) universal, from freedom of speech to the value of pi, but in the current climate even these can be presented as western impositions. What makes this battle so serious is the array of forces ganging up on the Enlightenment... post-modernists... and Old Testament -style fundamentalists. They have little in common but the one big thing - their visceral hatred of reason."

Anatole Kaletsky Journalist. "Socialism may be dead, but.... The new political tensions will arise between a largely conservative elite **and** proletariat on the one hand, and, on the other, a socially excluded under-class who ... cannot or will not accept co-option into bourgeois society."

Trevor Phillips Race Campaigner "The task of politics is to find a language in which to communicate across the lines of identity and difference."

David Willetts Politician "We used to think of Britain as being divided by class. Increasingly we worry about a society divided by conflicts of culture and identity. But there is another division, just as significant, which can shape the political agenda of the future. We are in a society increasingly divided by age."

Remember Reith Lecturer, Jeffrey Sachs, quote from last week: "We are entering a new politics... call it **open-source leadership ...**"

Select three of the above which you think will be most crucial for our discussion.

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