



HAL
open science

The representation of ideologies during parliamentary debates

Stéphane Revillet

► **To cite this version:**

Stéphane Revillet. The representation of ideologies during parliamentary debates. Ideologies and Identities virtual conference, Jun 2021, online, United Kingdom. hal-03255085

HAL Id: hal-03255085

<https://hal-univ-bourgogne.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-03255085>

Submitted on 23 Jul 2021

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

The representation of ideologies during parliamentary debates

INTRODUCTION

First of all I would like to thank you for selecting my paper for this conference on (this quite topical subject) Identities and Ideologies.

For my part, I will focus on the relationship between Conservatism and Liberalism as an identificational factor for the conservative party.

I will examine the representation that the Conservatives make of liberalism during parliamentary debates esp during PMQs, then I'll focus on the aim, the purpose of such a representation. And if time permits I will analyse the limits of integrating liberalism into conservatism

The conservatives explicitly associate conservatism with (neo)liberalism and put this association of ideologies in the most favourable way during PMQs which I consider as a public platform to promote one's ideology. As Michael Freedman explains: "Ideologies are not exact representation of an ideational reality, but a symbolic reconstruction of it". To do so Conservative parliamentarians use a wide range of rhetorical strategies to represent their ideology

First

They 'll Represent liberalism through Symbolization = by creating symbols how ?

-> they associate positive notions with the principles underpinning Liberalism

For ex : Liberalism is "a success" = even socialist countries have adopted eco liberalism + **Privatisation = great / remarkable success** and **good** for the taxpayers, **good** for country

16/02/11 : **deregulation** is an extremely **powerful weapon in economic reform**

Attribution of positive moral values = Free trade and deregulation encourage

innovation and **self-respect /+ liberalism = just and ethical** + 25/10/94, col 756 : a Conservative MP explains that **denationalisation** would stop cronyism preventing “ the Government from appointing their own placemen to run half of British industry“

After truning Liberalism into a symbol, they ‘ll

Exacerbating the emotional force of symbols (repetition, associating with concepts)---→ Free trade 20/02/96 : Mr peter Ainsworth extolling the virtues of liberalism as a catalyst for **freedom** as it is based on **free trade, free markets, free enterprise policies and freedom from social chapter=** a Classical approach to liberalism (supported by Adam smith...)

Mp+Pm will associate Liberalism and conservatism in a positive way playing with rhetoric :

24/02/16= Cameron “The conservative party is the party of enterprise and aspiration and believes in enabling hard-working people to keep more of the money they earn “ a typical syllogistic demonstration to equate conservatism with liberalism

-→ liberalism = favours free enterprise and aspiration// conservative party (conservatism) party of enterprise and aspiration SO liberalism = conservatism both leading to freedom (more money = having enough resources/the means to act upon their free will = positive freedom Isaiah Berlin)

all those positive elements associated with liberalism are condensed in one word/ or one name like a prog which becomes a **symbol (Murray Edelman)** --
→ **popular capitalism** = (a society driven by mass ownership, enterprise, opportunity and aspiration)

Big Society :16/02/11 : the big society is about more than just volunteering or support for charitable groups; it is about opening up public services, devolving power to the lowest level, and giving people the opportunity to play a greater part in the lives of their communities /

Help to Buy = allowing individuals to own their own home / property = liberal value

Citizen’s charter : more choice and opportunity for the less privileged

ll – The conservatives’ representation of socialism

Another way of representing one's ideology : is to present its antithesis =

Through a negative definition-→ like a mirror image

Defining one's doctrine by representing what it is not by opposing it to
SOCIALISM supported by Labour

Let's take a look at how socialism is represented by the conservatives

I've organised the main features of Labour socialism as follows :

Type of socialism associated with Labour	Characteristics of Labour's socialism	Liberalism in practice = through Economic policies
Includes : Marxism Stalinism Communism Unionism Trotskyism Luddites	It relies on : it is based on : A centralist state controlling private sector (Re)Nationalisation Corporatism common ownership Trade Unionism Welfare (state) the state is Interventionalist unilateralist	It implies : High spending (socialist councils) + borrowing = + higher taxes + State subsidies Keynesian tradition

Socialism championed by Labour = Negative representation =in derogatory terms = purpose is to create negative symbols. To do so They'll resort to rhetorical means like

Exaggerations + hyperboles	caricature and jibes + insults	soundbites + slogans + repetitions
Marxist universe appealing to tribal socialism LAB only trade deals with Venezuela, Cuba and North Korea Lab dislike choice of almost any sort + the hatred of diversity and excellence	Labour's bossy centralising interfering approach (27/10/10/) /19/07/17 : lab : a hard-left, old-fashioned Socialist gvt Reheated hard left Marxism The Red Princes/ peaceniks Loony left (27/04/11) / Calls for more taxes are being made by the ever-loony lab (04/11/93)	If you vote red you live in the red one size fits all, take it or leave it IF Lo is trying to move left, I'd give him full Marks Greeconomics / nannying intervention 19/11/96 Because of last socialist gvt = Britain was sick man of europe

<p>unilateral disarmament with lab we would be living in an underprotected overtaxed socialist backwater</p> <p>Lab party obsessed with bigger and bigger benefits (16/02/11) / 11/01/12 : lab= out-of-control benefit system = (+01/02/12 + he is the party for unlimited welfare</p> <p>Labour hates privatisation and it hates profit. It cannot stand share ownership</p>	<p>27/02/13 : they are not only socialists but incompetent socialists to boot</p> <p>Lab= want to borrow / spend less by borrowing/spending more = LO Bert in the Muppet show living on Sesame Street</p> <p>Common ownership = a dinosaur (07/03/95)</p> <p>the nature of the Labour beast Labour needs more democracy (17/07/93)</p> <p>The unions are the dog and the Labour is the lamppost (15/07/93)</p>	<p>Lab party = anti-enterprise, anti-business, anti-growth (05/02/14 /+ 02/04/2014) anti-market, anti-competition 04/02/15</p> <p>« tax, tax, tax, injustice, injustice ,injustice 10/07/19</p> <p>unions own the Labour Party practically lock, stock and barrel</p> <p>vote for it, pay for it</p> <p>sthg-for-nothing culture = lab welfare</p>
--	---	---

Another strategy= attacking the **moral values** of the ideology / socialism= scholars like Kinder, Peters, Mc Allister (2000) have ranked honesty and integrity as the first quality people expect from their gvt= leaders that can be trusted. Undermining the integrity of socialism can be very damageable for Labour

<p style="text-align: center;">Below moral and ethical standards</p> <p>Socialism tied with/ linked with :</p> <p><u>CORRUPTION</u> : the depth of corruption and despair=result of lab local authorities -→the worst local authorities are socialist local authorities</p> <p>Tax avoidance (ref to ken livingstone) = modern socialism (18/04/12)</p> <p><u>Cronyism</u> 21/11/96 : crony politics = lab get \$ from union and silence on strike</p> <p>Labour and Liberal councillors are more interested in jobs for the boys than in value for money for the ratepayers</p> <p><u>Lack of transparency and democracy</u></p> <p>Lab = donations (from unions) buy + trade unions buy their lab candidates and buy their policies and pick LO = that is wrong with British politics (25/02/15)/ rigged appointments = a sad day for democracy (03/07/13)</p> <p>+ Lab's relationship with unions is a disgrace to British democracy</p> <p>Lab = Quangocracy</p> <p>09/06/2010 : lab becoming more and more authoritarian</p>
--

living up to the words of Marx : « those are my principles, and if you don't like them, well, I have other = Groucho Marx

Deviant / inappropriate behaviour

Unison threatens councils if they accept contracts from private firms = **labour using bully-boy** tactics

(20/02/19) chosen to leave Jeremy Corbyn's Labour party and join the Conservatives, due to the **bullying and antisemitism** that she has received **from Momentum** and the **hard left**

Lab **Marxist** and **antisemite** (03/04/19)

Schools hijacked in 60s/70s by the **trendy lefties** and now **no moral base** (02 /03/93)

In short : the sort of socialism embodied by the Labour party poses a **critical threat** to the country, with trade unionists who want to disrupt our schools, our borders and our country.

A threat to democracy, Britain would become another North Korea, where centralized control of economic activities leads to political repression.

A threat to moral values, low ethical standards go hand in hand with socialism, besides socialism creates a society of "shirkers" enslaved by state benefits and not of strivers according to Cameron.

A threat to the economy = Lab wants to overthrow capitalism (23/05/18)

Ideological Labour (socialism) gvt causing chaos and disruption (04/03/97)

The Conservatives = equate Labour with the worst form of socialism and both (labour and socialism) have become symbols of a threat even a symbol of some kind of evil reinforcing the dichotomy between US and THEM = the CONS : proponents of liberalism Vs Labour epitome of socialism = Good versus bad.

Symbols are very powerful because as Muray Edelman explains :

"people think in terms of stereotypes and oversimplifications due to some incapacity to "recognize or tolerate ambiguous and complex situations and respond chiefly to symbols that oversimplify and distort". Hence the need for politicians to be good at handling and creating symbols.

Symbols function as very effective semantic short-cuts.

Ideologies use symbolisation so much so that they become themselves symbols, which makes them easy to identify, to understand and to oppose. Freedon explains that “simplification and occasionally more dangerously oversimplification is what ideologies do best”. The Arguments and theories must be put in a simple way in order to reach out to a large audience. Besides condensing a wide range of meanings, symbols arouse a wide range of strong emotions too (Kertzer). Symbols possess a emotional force that is far greater than the rational force of a piece of information for ex.

--→ this symbolization of ideologies results in the reification/ objectification of ideological lines. David Kertzer : “Political symbols make it easier for people to treat concepts as things” = considered as tools of persuasion (if not manipulation) of voters. In a confrontational context such as that of the PMQs Ideologies become “competitions over providing plans for public policy“, according to Freedon.

HOWEVER things get blurred when those lines change. Liberalism as an ideology is a symbol and this symbol is ambiguous, vague not anchored in a definite meaning. In order to appeal to the greatest number of voters it is quite easy/ convenient to move along the semantic and conceptual continuum of liberalism and sometimes the core identity of the group is affected in a negative way prompting some rebellions.

To what extent is liberalism a threat to political identity

III – Liberalism = a threat to political identity ?

While New Labour moved to the centre with a unavowed neoliberal approach exemplified in Blair’s Stakeholding Society (which prompted a fierce battle in The House of Commons) the Conservatives moved to the centre too (from Cameron) using a more social liberal rhetoric

The rhetoric changed : Cameron became the champion of a progressive , a compassionate conservative gvt, T May promoted a shared, fairer society (to detoxify the nasty party)

HOW ? Strategies

---→ **With programmes like the Big Society** as a way of laying emphasis on the **power of the community**

19/06/19 : it will she also do what she has done throughout her time as Prime Minister and pay tribute to a **vast army of other people**—the volunteers in our society who do so much for us? I am thinking particularly of the Royal British Legion, the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, the Red Cross, and, especially on this important day in its life, the Order of St John and St John Ambulance. Those are truly the big society. = **by reigniting The ONE Nation gvt tenets**

--→ **Acknowledging the benefits of social policies** of Bevan and Beveridge and Attlee = progressive liberalism = // Roosevelt

trying to appropriate / take ownership of Labour's social policies :

[On the NHS for example : **NHS 21/01/97** : it is perfectly true that the **Labour party established the national health service but it is the Conservative party that has built up the health service**. We have been in power for two thirds of the period that has elapsed since then, and **we have built up the health service from its beginnings** into a service that is now recognised as the best in the world.
+ 18/03/97 : The Labour party may have set up the health service, but we have built it up.]

The Conservative claimed ownership for the National Minimum Wage.

[~~Major railed against the minimum wage, depicted as the worst evil of all evils = it would create chaos, unemployment....~~]

NATIONAL LIVING WAGE 19/07/17 But what is important for Government as well is to ensure that we provide support to people. That is why **we** created **the national living wage**. That was the biggest pay increase ever for people on the lowest incomes. When did the **Labour party ever introduce the national living wage? Never!** That was a Conservative Government and a Conservative record. **BUT** the National Living Wage which is the basic avatar of the National Minimum Wage. **Blair's New Labour voted the National Minimum Wage 1998**

-----→ **T May goes as far as slotting in Labour's lineage at least from a rhetorical point of view :**

01/05/19 : We have been ensuring that we provide for people **at every stage of their lives**. For young people in particular, we are ensuring that they have the opportunities to lead full and healthy lives into the future. and ensuring that we provide for them not just through the welfare system but with our long-term plan for the national health service. **At every stage of life**, we are ensuring that we as Conservatives are improving people's lives-----→ This **echoes with from the cradle to the grave** in the Beveridge Report

Assuming what BEVAN would want / making Bevan speaking 24/02/16 : I think that if Nye Bevan were here today, **he would want a seven-day NHS**, because he knew that the NHS was for patients up and down our country.

29/06/11 Will the Prime Minister agree that **Aneurin Bevan would be turning in his grave** as he sees a Conservative Secretary of State increase spending on the health service in England while a Labour Government in Cardiff cut spending on the NHS?

----→ **Theresa May advertised the increase of money spent on her shared society** with "1 billion to local communities across the country and to "ensure there is a sustainable, long term future for social care"" with 4 billion more for adult care (9% increase) , biggest cash boost in health service's history , school funding is at a record level... (May and June 2019)

BUT This rhetorical move to the centre wasn't so appealing to some Conservatives who thought that the **identity of the party was diluted** in some unwanted progressive liberal ethos

Philip Davies qui cite Eric Forth : 23/05/2018 : May I paraphrase our former colleague, the late, great Eric Forth? **Prime Minister, I believe in the free market, I believe in individual freedom and individual responsibility, and I am suspicious of the nanny state. Am I still a Conservative?**

Another example of the rejection of new liberalism that is to say individual rights not violated by the rule of the majority (tyranny of the majority : Mill's , On Liberty)= rights of minorities)) ex : **same sex marriage**

Ex 2 : 09/01/13, fin col 313 = Tebbit strongly opposed to same sex marriage vs Nick Clegg (Liberal) supported it so Philip Davies asked : Just in case anybody is in any doubt, will the Prime Minister confirm who he is closest to, politically? Is it Lord Tebbit or the Deputy Prime Minister?

Even if the rhetoric has a touch of the social liberalism, **Conservative PM never crossed the line**, the welfare state should be available only **for the deserving ones**, for the strivers and not the Shirkers supported by socialist Labour

Ex : Cameron : I'd rather be a child of Thatcher than a son of Brown. Cameron : in the shadow of Robert Peel **The differences in ideological identities must be clear-cut**

11/07/12) it's all about pursuing "progressive ends delivered through conservative means"

Conclusion : Liberalism is a core element of Conservatism. The multifaceted nature of liberalism enables the Conservatives to move across the liberal spectrum with the risk of sometimes betraying the core values of conservatism at least on the face of it .

Auteur :

STEPHANE REVILLET