Great expectations: the job at the top and the people who do it

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At the time of his death, Anthony King was working on a long-planned book-length study of the British prime ministership. Provisionally entitled *The Job at the Top*, the volume would have examined the styles and records of Britain's post-war premiers. It promised to be an incisive and authoritative treatment. Working in chronological order, King had already finished the book's introduction, as well as the chapters dealing with Clement Attlee, Winston Churchill and Sir Anthony Eden. He was nothing if not systematic. Illness prevented him from completing the chapters on Harold Macmillan and his successors through to David Cameron. While King's friends and colleagues can guess at what he might have written, they can only be certain that he would have pulled no punches in his appraisals.[1]

King thought and wrote a great deal about prime ministers and political leadership more generally. In this he was much influenced by his friendship with Richard Neustadt, the great scholar of the American presidency.[2] But in contrast to the way in which single papers embodied King's contribution to our understanding of 'government overload', 'executive-legislative relations' and 'career politicians', his contribution to our understanding of the prime ministership was defined by a body of work. He wrote essays on a range of topics, from the comparative powers of British prime ministers, through Margaret Thatcher's style as an 'outsider' leader, to the impact of leadership effects in British general elections, all of which expanded our

knowledge of prime ministerial and party leadership in Britain. There was, however, no single career-defining contribution. The whole of his thinking on the subject always exceeded the parts of his writings.

King's Canadian background and formative academic years as an historian imparted an acute awareness of the prime ministership's comparative and historical context to his work. His writings also drew on a remarkable insight and understanding of real-world practice. King had met most of Britain's post-war prime ministers and enjoyed access to the circles in which they moved. He liked to tell the story of the time when, in 1964, he and David Butler had visited Number 10 Downing Street to interview Sir Alec Douglas-Home for that year's Nuffield election study. Both men soon realised that Sir Alec had set aside more time for the interview than they had prepared for. The two researchers did their best to improvise before the prime minister offered them a personal tour of the building. They gratefully accepted. Lastly, of course, King wrote about prime ministers in the same way he wrote about everything else: accessibly, brilliantly and clearly. Reading his work was always fun.

This essay explores King's contribution to the study of the British prime ministership. It first surveys the range of his writings and some of the themes that characterised his work. It then relates his work and thinking to claims about the 'presidentialisation' of the office. Finally, the essay draws on his work to consider the importance of the expectations surrounding the office. As Britain grapples with the challenges associated with Brexit, we should all take note of his counsel against expecting too much in the way of 'strong' prime ministerial leadership.

King on the prime ministership

Almost everyone who studied politics in a British university in the 1970s and 1980s would have been familiar with King's *The British Prime Minister*. First published in 1969, this edited volume sought to make accessible 'the most important materials' published over the previous decade, including academic work and interviews with practising politicians. It also served to highlight the surprising scholarly neglect of the office. 'The Prime Minister is the most conspicuous figure in British political life; he is also, by all ordinary standards, the most powerful', wrote King. And yet, 'the academic literature on the Prime Ministership is thin.'[3] The literature was sustained by little original research and characterised by a tendency to rehash the same old arguments and examples. King's frustrations reflected his sympathy for post-war North American political science and its emphasis on developing theory and testing claims empirically. His frustrations were still evident in the mid-1980s when he produced the volume's second edition: 'All of the books on the prime ministership can easily be held in one hand', he now observed: 'the books on the prime ministership and the cabinet together can easily be held in two hands. The article literature is similarly meagre'.[4]

In the three decades since King revised *The British Prime Minister*, the quantity and quality of the academic literature has improved somewhat. It is still thin when compared to the volume of research on the US presidency, but it would now be impossible to hold in two hands all the available books. The relevant article literature has also grown. Nearly 60 papers focusing principally on the prime ministership were published in just seven British political-science journals in the quarter-century between 1991 and 2016.[5] The topics covered included the prime minister's powers of appointment, their accountability to parliament, their roles in foreign-policy making, their temperament and psychological disposition, their media relations and profile,

their rhetoric, their institutional resources, their skills and style and even their overall success in office. Many more articles have been published in other general and more specialist journals.

King's own contribution to the literature generally fell into—and often straddled—one of three broad categories. In the first category were a number of essays that focused on the institution of the prime ministership. During the early 1990s, for instance, King wrote about the conflicting principles that structured Britain's political executive, how and when prime ministers impinged upon ministerial autonomy, and the power of British prime ministers compared with that of other 'chief executives' in Western Europe.[6] The last of these essays argued that, when measured in terms of a head of government's potential influence within her country's governmental structures, the British prime minister was one of the most powerful.

During the same period, King also wrote a survey article on the prime ministership for a special issue of *West European Politics*. It was probably the closest thing to a comprehensive statement of his interpretation of the office.[7] In this piece, he identified what he considered to be the seven basic 'requirements of the job': appointing and dismissing ministers; appointing the most senior civil servants; chairing cabinet and important cabinet-committee meetings; answering questions in the House of Commons, and occasionally making statements; attending European Union and international heads-of-government meetings; acting as minister for the security services; and deciding on the timing of elections. The requirements of the job did not include, quite explicitly, general policy leadership. The same article also set out the principal sources of prime ministerial power, with a particular emphasis on the powers of appointment, dismissal and portfolio allocation. The rise in the number of

career politicians, King argued, had only increased the importance of these powers and, consequently, a prime minister's potential influence over other politicians.

The second category of King's work included essays that focused on prime ministers as political operators. In a 2010 article, for example, he examined how different prime ministers had used their power of dismissal and found that Margaret Thatcher had been far more likely than others to sack ministers on ideological or policy grounds.[8] Indeed, Thatcher's style of leadership was a favourite subject of King's. Most prime ministers took office without wishing to transform Britain; and insofar as they did, their policy goals and agenda were usually the same as those of their party. Thatcher was different. Moreover, Thatcher was distinctive in the extent to which she actually employed the office to advance her agenda. She used her powers of appointment to create a government more sympathetic to her programme, she worked remarkably long hours, and she dominated her colleagues, setting forth her views at the start of meetings and using the full force of her personality and intellect to argue her case. Lastly, Thatcher was successful, in that she largely achieved the extensive changes in policy that she sought.[9] For all these reasons, she greatly affected how academics and other politicians viewed the possibilities of the premiership.

It was the exceptional combination of Thatcher's motivation, instrumental dominance and success that piqued King's interest as a political scientist. To invoke Neustadt's distinction, Thatcher was the embodiment of a 'leader'—a chief executive who used her powers to advance her agenda—rather than a 'clerk'—a performer of routine roles. No less exceptional was Thatcher's 'outsider' style of leadership. Because of her Lincolnshire background, gender and convictions, she was both a social outsider in her party and the wider 'establishment', and a psychological outsider in her self-identification and orientation towards them. Above all, she was a

tactical outsider in her behaviour: she showed 'comprehensive disdain for the norms, the conventions and the customary civilities of British political life.'[10] She rejected consensus and traditional ideas of cabinet government, she often sought to undermine established institutions, and she was often rude to those she did not esteem. If Thatcher happened to be an interesting case-study of prime ministerial leadership, she was also a case-study in outsider leadership.[11]

The third broad category of Kings's work included essays that focused not so much on the job or those who did it, but on the getting of the job. Since being the leader of one of the major parties was a necessary if not sufficient condition for becoming prime minister, this third area of inquiry led King to consider the question of how and why parties selected their leaders. In the mid-1960s, for instance, he noted the different criteria seemingly applied in the election and selection respectively of Harold Wilson and Sir Alec Douglas-Home. Many Conservatives, he reckoned, were less affected less by calculations of 'electoral expediency' than their Labour counterparts.[12] Crucially, however, intra-party considerations were to the fore. Most of the time, King later wrote, party members look 'for the person who will lead the party best rather than the person who will lead the country best. The issue of who would make "the best prime minister" … scarcely arises.'[13]

In the early 1990s King turned to another aspect of the getting of the job, this time the question of whether prime ministers' and party leaders' personalities, or, more precisely, their images, directly influenced election outcomes. Working with Ivor Crewe, King followed an essentially counter-factual line of inquiry: how would parties' vote shares have changed had the two major parties' leaders been switched at successive elections?[14] Their analysis, which drew on available individual-level survey data and came with plenty of health warnings, suggested that only in the close

races of 1964 and February 1974 had the personal appeal of the party leaders had a *decisive* impact on the result. In both cases, it was Wilson's relative popularity over Douglas-Home and Edward Heath respectively that gave Labour victory. This was not to say that leaders' images did not influence vote choice, only that they rarely determined the outcome.

Common threads

If the body of King's work on prime ministers can be divided into one of three categories, it can also be united by a number of themes. The first of these was his unvarnished analytical concern with what Richard Neustadt might have termed the prime minister's 'vantage points', those powers and resources that underpinned his or her power within government, and how prime ministers exploited them. King was largely unimpressed by the constitutional façade and niceties of the office; his preoccupation was always with what he considered to be the essential architecture of intra-governmental power. It was largely for this reason that whereas Peter Hennessy identified no fewer than 36 prime ministerial functions in 2000, including those such as managing relations with the monarch and authorising the use of nuclear weapons, King highlighted just seven basic 'requirements of the job' (see above).[15] For similar reasons, King's work frequently emphasised the party dimension of the job: 'To an extent that is sometimes overlooked by outsiders, the prime ministership is a party job before it is a governmental or national job … no one can become [or remain] prime minister in Britain without the support of his or her party.'[16] Explaining and understanding power in government required a sharp awareness of what was occurring outside of government.

A second theme that united King's work was his emphasis on the great variability associated with the office. This variability was, if you like, the great constant. Different prime ministers had always brought different experiences, skills, priorities and personalities to the job, operated in very different contexts and adopted very different styles. They had also varied greatly in their personal standing within government. Rephrasing H.H. Asquith's famous aphorism, King suggested that: 'The power of the prime minister is what a prime minister wants, and is able, to get away with'.[17] Needless to say, what a prime minister wanted and could get away with varied across and within premierships. Thus Margaret Thatcher was a more dominant prime minister than Clement Attlee, while her own dominance fell away sharply at the end. What a prime minister wanted and could get away with also varied from minister to minister. Just as some prime ministers were more dominant than others, so some ministers, especially the so-called 'big beasts of the jungle', were more resilient to prime ministerial dominance. Prime ministers, historically, had granted considerable autonomy to such individuals. They risked trouble when they disregarded or mismanaged them.[18]

A third and related theme in King's work was his consistent promotion of the need to study the variability that characterised the office. When he first began writing on the subject, the academic literature was dominated by a debate over two static models and whether Britain's executive resembled prime ministerial or cabinet government. It would have been more fruitful, argued King, to have focused on collecting data, identifying patterns of behaviour and testing claims. Since then, variability has become a central preoccupation of much conceptual and empirical work, although debates around static models still exert some sway, as we shall see in the next section.[19]

A final theme that characterised King's work was his interest in the big picture. Researchers, he thought, should generally be able to answer the 'so what?' question. Thus, in one sense, and reflecting Neustadt's influence, he was interested in the scope for prime ministerial leadership. In another sense, he was interested not so much in whether leaders' images influenced vote choice but in whether they had a decisive impact on election outcomes. In yet another sense, and reflecting a concern that characterised all his academic work, King was interested in how prime ministerial behaviour affected the quality of government. In the 1960s, for example, he had first drawn attention to the potentially harmful administrative and policy consequences of frequent cabinet reshuffles.[20] Much later, in *The Blunders of Our Governments*, King, again with Ivor Crewe, made the same point. They also considered the comparatively small size of the prime minister's office and the role it had played in policy failures. Some blunders had occurred in part because the prime minister of the day had lacked the clout to coordinate policy and ensure decisions were implemented.[21] They concluded that some additional capacity was probably needed to improve policy coordination from the centre.

The presidentialisation thesis

To repeat a point made in the introduction, King's contribution to our understanding and knowledge of the prime ministership was defined by a body of work rather than any single study. His writings advanced our knowledge, in general terms, about the office and its occupants. They also contributed to broader debates about the character of British government and especially the pitfalls of becoming fixated by static models of government. This last point has an obvious resonance with claims of 'presidentialisation' in British government, in particular the notion that prime

ministers increasingly resemble presidents—and usually presidents of the United States—in their style and power. This notion colours a great deal of contemporary political discourse and media commentary, usually in the context of criticising excessive power in Downing Street.

There is, of course, nothing new in likening the prime minister to a president. As the journalist Sidney Low observed as long ago as 1904,

> The office of Premier has become more than ever like that of an elective President, since it has been held by a succession of able statesmen, who were unquestionably the real, as well as the nominal, chiefs of their parties, and generally stood far above all rivalry or competition on their own side.[22]

The comparison was given further impetus by Richard Crossman in the 1960s when he drew attention to the apparent marginalisation of cabinet and parliament and the centralisation of policy making in and around Downing Street. Such claims were dismissed by Crossman's boss, Harold Wilson, and countered in the academic literature by George Jones.[23] Yet claims of presidentialisation never went away. They were reinvigorated by Margaret Thatcher's distinctive style of leadership, and turbocharged by Tony Blair's.

Among academics, the notion of presidentialisation has been given its fullest conceptual airing by Michael Foley and by Thomas Poguntke and Paul Webb.[24] For Foley, the value of the term lies in drawing attention to how recent British prime ministers, notably Thatcher and Blair, have tried to lead by distancing themselves from other institutions, in a way that US presidents are constitutionally and often politically obliged to. Poguntke and Webb, meanwhile, highlight how the term

encapsulates three seemingly related trends in many established democracies: the accretion of leadership power resources and autonomy within the political executive; the same accretion within political parties; and increasingly personalised media coverage and electoral processes. Related to and potentially reinforcing these trends are deep-rooted changes in the character of electorates: class and partisan dealignment and declining levels of political engagement have arguably increased the importance of short-term leader evaluations in driving individual vote choice.[25]

King accepted that the institutional resources at a prime minister's disposal had grown in recent years but was sceptical that they amounted to a serious empire. He also recognised that elections and media coverage had become more personalised, and that leaders sometimes distanced themselves from their parties. Yet, in the first instance, there was no evidence that leaders' images were increasingly determining election outcomes over other factors; and, in the second, Thatcher's and Blair's outsider leadership had earlier precedents.

King robustly challenged the presidentialisation thesis in his 2007 book *The British Constitution*, dismissing the idea that the prime ministership had become a 'super presidency … endowed with plenipotentiary and almost preternatural powers'.[26] Rather, the office was simply what it had been for a long time: the headship of government in a parliamentary system that, given the right circumstances, was capable of sustaining dominant leaders. For King, claims to the contrary rested on 'bad geometry' and a poor sense of history. It was not the case that prime ministers had become consistently more dominant within their own governments. There was no such straight line. There had always been dominant prime ministers, and there had always been weaker prime ministers. John Major followed Margaret Thatcher, just as Lord Rosebery had followed William Gladstone a century earlier.

King also rejected the related the claim that the personalisation of politics had somehow given prime ministers greater celebrity. Celebrity had always been associated with Downing Street. No one, for instance, could doubt the contemporary strength of Gladstone's image. Nor was celebrity a necessary or sufficient condition for prime ministerial dominance. Edward Heath, perhaps consistently the most dominant head of a British government since 1945, was hardly the archetypal celebrity. Blair, who was the archetypal prime ministerial celebrity of recent times, was only partially dominant thanks to the brooding presence of Gordon Brown. Moreover, being the focus of media attention was a double-edged sword. If it empowered prime ministers when things were going well, it made them more vulnerable when things went badly.

King's rejection of presidentialisation had much to do with an enduring commitment to conceptual and analytical clarity. As Keith Dowding has convincingly argued, the notion of presidentialisation does little to promote either.[27] It is a media-friendly term, to be sure, but masks conceptually and analytically distinct processes of personalisation and policy centralisation, both of which play out in different ways in parliamentary and presidential systems. Moreover, as King alluded to in his own work, many commentators and politicians tend to invoke presidentialisation both to describe and explain prime ministerial dominance. In doing so, they conflate the dependent variable—an alleged increase in the prime minister's potential influence—with the independent variables—the factors that allegedly explain it—specifically the prime minister's celebrity and their slightly expanded resources.

That said, while King rejected the notion of presidentisalisaion as an accurate or useful analytical framework, he recognised that its prominence in contemporary discourse could potentially shape the mindset and behaviour of politicians. With New

Labour very much in mind, King considered the circumstances in which party politicians might expect a prime minister to be dominant:

> It is just conceivable that the members of an administration, especially the members of an incoming administration, with few ministers who had previously served in government, might actually *want* the prime minister to be dominant. Alternatively they might have come to believe that dominant premiers were, as a matter of fact, the norm, and on that basis they might well have come to regard prime ministerial dominance as normal and, therefore, as acceptable.[28]

King thought that such circumstances were likely to be rare and transient, however, since ministers would soon find their feet and develop their own power base within government. Nevertheless, expectations mattered; and expectations could potentially be shaped by others' belief in presidentialisation.

Overloaded expectations?

King's point about the importance of expectations brings us to the final part of this essay: the nature of contemporary expectations surrounding the prime ministership. There can be little doubt that many voters, journalists and politicians expect a great deal from British prime ministers—and, since they are potential prime ministers, from party leaders. Many people seemingly expect prime ministers to provide a clear sense of policy direction. They expect prime ministers to manage and dominate their colleagues. They expect prime ministers to respond to all emergencies and resolve all problems. They expect prime ministers to take the decisions. In short, many people

expect them to be strong leaders. For Archie Brown, the 'myth of the strong leader' and the widely-held view that such leaders are to be preferred to those who operate differently, has become all pervasive in contemporary democratic politics.[29]

At this point, two notes of caution should be sounded. The first is that claims about expectations of strong prime ministerial leadership should not be exaggerated in either its extent or novelty. The buck has long stopped with prime ministers, and people have always looked to them to provide a lead. Second, there is very little direct evidence of what different groups of people expect or want from the prime minister, and thus how it has changed. There is little survey evidence that might reveal how voters' expectations have changed or compare to those in other countries. There is similarly little evidence that might be used to establish whether MPs, party activists and voters have systematically different expectations. Nevertheless, there seems little doubt that the expectations surrounding today's prime ministers are somewhat greater than those of a century ago, just as the expectations surrounding other heads of government are generally greater.

One feature of the British political system that seems to encourage great expectations, or at least does nothing to dampen them, is the absence of any single authoritative document that sets out the prime minister's role, responsibilities and powers in government. The office is referenced in statute—in no fewer than 100 items of primary UK legislation from the Chequers Estate Act 1917 to the European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Act 2017—but there is no comprehensive legal definition.[30] The closest thing to an official statement of the prime minister's role and powers, *The Cabinet Manual*, merely describes the existing vague state of affairs i.e. that the prime minister determines and regulates the membership and procedures of

cabinet, which is the ultimate decision-making body of government.[31] The scope for more or less dominant leadership is correspondingly huge.

If the foundations of the office do little to discourage expectations of strong leadership, then other features of the system may positively encourage it. Most of these have been around for a long time. The institution of 'prime ministers questions', for example, assumed its modern form in 1961 and has since evolved to oblige prime ministers—and leaders of the opposition—regularly to show mastery over potentially any area of public policy under the full scrutiny of MPs, journalists and any member of the public who might be watching. The practice brought into sharp focus the prime minister's ultimate political responsibility for everything that goes wrong in government, and, as King noted, reinforced his or her 'open licence to enquire, to intervene, to goad, to check, to prod, to remonstrate, even to dominate'.[32]

Another institutional requirement of the job that almost certainly reinforces the expectation of strong leadership is the need to meet regularly with other heads of government. Even during the early post-war period, such meetings were rare. From the early 1970s, however, the demands of regular European Union heads-of-government meetings, coupled with the advent of faster, safer travel, has resulted in prime ministers spending a far greater proportion of their time meeting with other leaders. They now act as their government's representative; and they share in the aura of being surrounded by other heads of government. Prime ministers may or may not have been empowered by the subsequent coupling of domestic and international concerns, but this development has almost certainly reinforced an expectation on the home front that the prime minister could and should lead on potentially issue.[33]

Meanwhile, changes in the ways that prime ministers get the job have also probably exacerbated an expectation of strong leadership. Both the Labour and

Conservative parties have, since the early 1980s, opened up their leadership-election rules so as to enable the participation of rank-and-file members. Party leaders consequently have the added personal authority that comes with the direct backing of tens of thousands if not hundreds of thousands of party members. Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn invoked this fact when three-quarters of his own MPs expressed no confidence in his leadership in the wake of the 2016 Brexit referendum. He simply faced them down. If presidentialisation—in the narrow sense of enhanced personal authority—has any relevance to the modern prime ministership, it is surely as a consequence of the personal mandate they may now enjoy within their own party. It would be remarkable if they and their ministerial colleagues were not mindful of this mandate in their interactions.

A final feature worth highlighting is the personalisation of general election campaigns. Party leaders are encouraged to demonstrate their brains and ability at every turn. The arrival of televised leaders' debates has also probably led voters and others to link parties' pledges personally to their leaders. At any rate, such innovations are unlikely to have dampened the broader climate of expectations in any way. They have probably helped to ratchet them up.

If some features of the system help to reinforce a demand for strong leadership, it is clear is that those expecting prime ministers to be consistently dominant are likely to be hugely disappointed. In the British system, executive authority remains fundamentally vested in cabinet, collectively, and secretaries of state, individually. Even if prime ministers were endowed with superhuman intelligence and ability, they would still lack the powers and resources to dominate. As King noted in his 2015 book, *Who Governs Britain?*, it is 'easy to overestimate the importance of the prime minister in the British system of government'.[34] All prime

ministers are hugely constrained, and always have been, by their limited personal staff and limited time, the legal pre-eminence of cabinet, the presence of colleagues with responsibilities and authorities of their own, and the myriad demands on their time emanating from elsewhere. If it is easy to overestimate the prime minister's importance, it likely that many people do.

The general consequences of expecting too much are all too clear. First, like all unrealistic expectations, they are likely to be a source of disappointment. Second, trying to meet expectations may to lead to behaviour that is dysfunctional. The logic and rules of British government are not designed around a single strong chief executive. There is no large personal staff to advise prime ministers, coordinate policy and ensure decisions are implemented. Moreover, if prime ministers try to concentrate decision making in their hands, they may increase the incidence of delayed decisions and potentially flawed decisions. Third, trying to meet expectations may make prime ministers politically vulnerable. If they seek to dominate colleagues by, for instance, rebuking or mocking them in public, or by being rude in private, they will create enemies who may be more minded to strike if things go awry.

In his last published article, King looked at the relationship between 'strong' and 'successful' executive leadership, and concluded that the relationship in Britain was 'tenuous and may even, possibly, be negative'.[35] He wrote these words before Theresa May succeeded David Cameron as Conservative leader and prime minister in 2016. Needless to say, May's example constitutes another case in support of the negative association. Coming to office in the wake of the Brexit referendum and facing the monumentally difficult task of leading Britain's withdrawal from the European Union, the new prime minister imported from the Home Office her closed, controlling and—in the words of Kenneth Clarke—'bloody difficult' style of

leadership. In the process, she alienated many in her party and showed little inclination to build a broad consensus around what form Britain's post-Brexit relationship with the EU should take. Moreover, her promise of 'strong and stable' leadership backfired enormously during the 2017 general election. She was demonstrably neither. When her authority evaporated with her party's overall majority, any idea of prime ministerial dominance flew out the window.

On rare occasions, as King acknowledged, strong leadership may well be needed. May and her advisers seemingly reckoned that the highly unusual circumstances of Brexit were such an occasion. Had the 2017 general election given the Tories a large majority, her approach and style might have paid off. Yet, even then, the assertion of strong leadership in the context of negotiating Britain's withdrawal from the EU would still have been risky. Given the complexity and divisiveness of the task, and the likelihood that something would go wrong at some point, her own power stakes would arguably have been better protected with a more collegial approach from the outset. For the country as a whole, a more inclusive style might have produced a better negotiating strategy and increased the likelihood of a better final deal.

Notes

[1] The present author was a PhD student of Tony's at the University of Essex between 2003 and 2007. For a personal tribute, see Nicholas Allen, 'Enlightening British politics: a tribute to Anthony King', *British Politics* 12:3 (2017), 295–307. The author would also like to thank Sophie Poll for assistance in tracking down a number of journal articles.

[2] Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power: The Politics of Leadership* (New York: Wiley, 1960).

[3] Anthony King (ed.), *The British Prime Minister* (London: Macmillan, 1969), p. vii.

[4] Anthony King (ed.), *The British Prime Minister*, 2nd edn. (London: Macmillan, 1985), p. 1.

[5] The journals in question are *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* (12 articles), *British Journal of Political Science* (7), *British Politics* (7), *Government and Opposition* (3), *Parliamentary Affairs* (17), *Political Studies* (3) and *The Political Quarterly* (8). These numbers exclude book reviews and are based on a conservative judgement of what constitutes an article 'focusing principally on the prime ministership'.

[6] Anthony King, 'Cabinet Coordination or Prime Ministerial Dominance? A Conflict of Three Principles of Cabinet Government', in Ian Budge and David McKay (eds.), *The Developing British Political System: The 1990s* (London: Longman, 1993), pp. 52–65; Anthony King, 'Ministerial autonomy in Britain', in Michael Laver and Kenneth.A. Shepsle (eds.), *Cabinet Ministers in Parliamentary Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 203–225; Anthony King, '"Chief executives" in Western Europe', in Ian Budge and David McKay (eds.),

Developing Democracy: Comparative Research in Honour of J.F.P. Blondel (London: Sage Publications, 1994), pp. 150–163.

[7] Anthony King, 'The British prime minister in the age of the career politician', *West European Politics* 14:2 (1991), 25–47.

[8] Anthony King and Nicholas Allen, '"Off with their heads": British prime ministers and the power to dismiss", *British Journal of Political Science* 40:1 (2010), 249–278.

[9] Anthony King, 'Margaret Thatcher: The style of a prime minister', in King (ed.) *The British Prime Minister*, 2nd edn., pp. 96–140.

[10] Anthony King, 'The outsider as political leader: The case of Margaret Thatcher', *British Journal of Political Science* 32:3 (2002), 435–454: p. 446

[11] See also Dennis Kavanagh, *Politics and Personalities* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990), pp. 134–162.

[12] Anthony King, 'Britain: The Search for Leadership', in William Andrews (ed.), *European Politics I: The Restless Search* (Princeton, NJ: Van Nostrand, 1966), pp. 16–76.

[13] King , 'The British prime minister in the age of the career politician', p. 28

[14] Ivor Crewe and Anthony King, 'Did Major win? Did Kinnock lose? Leadership effects in the 1992 election', in Anthony Heath, Roger Jowell and John Curtice (eds.), *Labour's Last Chance? The 1992 Election and Beyond* (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1994), pp.125–148.

[15] Peter Hennessy, *The Prime Minister: The Office and its Holders Since 1945* (London: Penguin, 2000), pp. 59–90.

[16] King, 'The British prime minister in the age of the career politician', p. 25.

[17] Ibid., p. 35.

[18] King and Allen, '"Off with their heads"'.

[19] For examples of an emphasis on variability, see Richard Heffernan, 'Prime ministerial predominance? Core executive politics in the UK', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 5:3 (2003), 347–372; Mark Bennister, Paul 't Hart and Ben Worthy, 'Assessing the authority of political office-holders: The leadership capital index', *West European Politics* 38:3 (2015), 417–440.

[20] Anthony King, 'Britain's ministerial turnover', *New Society*, 14 August 1966.

[21] Anthony King and Ivor Crewe, *The Blunders of Our Governments* (London: Oneworld, 2013).

[22] Sidney Low, *The Governance of England* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1904), p. 158

[23] R.H.S. Crossman, 'Prime ministerial government', in King (ed.), *The British Prime Minister*, pp. 151-167; Harold Wilson, *The Governance of Britain* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1976), pp. 64–65; G.W. Jones, 'The prime minister's power', in King (ed.), *The British Prime Minister*, pp. 168–190.

[24] Michael Foley, *The British Presidency: Tony Blair and the Politics of Public Leadership* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000); and Thomas Poguntke and Paul Webb (eds), *The Presidentialization of Politics: A Comparative Study of Modern Democracies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). See also Sue Pryce, *Presidentializing the Premiership* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997).

[25] See David Denver, Christopher Carman, Robert Johns, *Elections and Voters in Britain*, 3rd edn. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 136–140.

[26] Anthony King, *The British Constitution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 318.

[27] Keith Dowding, 'The prime ministerialisation of the British prime minister', *Parliamentary Affairs* 66:3 (2013), 617–635.

[28] King, *The British Constitution*, p. 322.

[29] Archie Brown, *The Myth of the Strong Leader: Political Leadership in the Modern Age* (London: The Bodley Head, 2014), pp. 1–2.

[30] Based on a search of the www.legislation.gov.uk website, 13 September 2017.

[31] Cabinet Office, *The Cabinet Manual: A Guide to Laws, Conventions and Rules on the Operation of Government* (London: Cabinet Office, 2011), pp. 31–32.

[32] See King, 'The British prime minister in the age of the career politician', p. 36.

[33] See Richard Rose, *The Prime Minister in a Shrinking World* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001).

[34] Anthony King, *Who Governs Britain?* (London: Pelican, 2015), p. 209.

[35] Anthony King, 'In favor of "leader proofing"', *Daedalus* 145:3 (2016), 124–137.