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After Cameron: the New New Right and the unchaining of Britannia

Matthew Lakin\textsuperscript{ab}

\textsuperscript{a} Oriel College, University of Oxford, Oriel Square, Oxford OX1 4EW, UK

\textsuperscript{b} Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Oxford, Manor Road, Oxford, OX1 3UQ, UK

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After Cameron: the New New Right and the unchaining of Britannia
Matthew Lakin*

Oriel College, University of Oxford, Oriel Square, Oxford OX1 4EW, UK; Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Oxford, Manor Road, Oxford, OX1 3UQ, UK

This article looks at an emerging and ideologically influential grouping within the Conservative Party that presents a challenge to the dominant contemporary Cameronite interpretation of Conservatism. This grouping is fashioned as the ‘New New Right’ composed of an identifiable number of the ‘2010 generation’ of Conservative politicians. The most prominent among these are the five authors of After the Coalition and Britannia Unchained: Kwasi Kwarteng, Priti Patel, Dominic Raab, Chris Skidmore and Elizabeth Truss. Employing Michael Freeden’s ‘morphological approach’ to ideology, in addition to utilising interviews with key members of this group, this article situates and interrogates the explicitly post-Cameronite thinking of the New New Right drawing on three central features of its thinking: the rejection of the rhetorical ‘de-neoliberalisation’ of British society after the financial crisis of 2007–08, a resistance to ‘anti-market socialisation’ and the promotion of a ‘thin’ conception of social rights. The difference between ‘Cameronite’ Conservatism and the New New Right is more quantitative than qualitative, as, while they occupy the same semantic field, the latter poses a threat to the former’s commitment to civic conservatism. This ideological innovation is not a revival of Thatcherism; it is more conservative fiscally and largely anti-statist on a gamut of social issues. The New New Right potentially provides the ideological template for the next generation of Conservatism after Cameronism.

Keywords: conservatism; ideology; New New Right; responsibility; Big Society; neoliberalism; Cameronism

*Email: matthew.lakin@oriel.ox.ac.uk

Not since the 1970s has there been a group of Tories thinking so hard, with such freedom, about the future of the country. (Forsyth 2012)

Introduction: a conservative coalition
In forming the Coalition Government with the Liberal Democrats in May 2010, the Conservative Party, under the leadership of David Cameron, failed to win a majority in such an ostensibly auspicious political climate: an unpopular Labour Government with a beleaguered leadership; the financial crisis of 2007–08; the ‘Great Recession’ of 2008–09 and a Conservative Party – organisationally, strategically and politically – revived after 13 years in Opposition. Despite Cameron’s failure to form a Conservative majority, the Coalition Government has had its – debatable – political accomplishments: education, health and welfare reform, deficit reduction and the superintendence of a nascent economic recovery (HM Government 2013). The greatest triumph of the ‘Conservative-led’ Coalition Government, however, has been the alignment of Tory discourses and diagnoses of the financial crisis with the ‘climate of opinion’: the ‘crisis discourse that has
consolidated in Britain in recent years is one of a crisis of (public) debt – to which … austerity and deficit reduction is the solution’ (Hay 2013, 41; my emphasis). The Cameronite Tories and the Orange Book Liberals (Marshall and Laws 2004), the two factions responsible for the guiding ideas and policies of the Coalition Government, are united in an attempt to ‘modernise’ post-Blair, post-‘Great Crash’ Britain with an agenda wedding social and moral liberalism to fiscal conservatism.

The Coalition may have borne political fruit for these two factions of the two coalition parties, but they have disrupted the ideological equilibria and coalitions of the individual parties. This article analyses – and places into context – the emergence, ideology and thought-practices of a new and potentially important political grouping within the Conservative coalition: the New New Right (hereafter referred to as NNR). It is a centrifugal response to the socio-politico-economic events since the financial crisis, which is recognisably conservative. Employing Michael Freedeen’s ‘morphological approach’ (1996, 2003, 2006, 2013a) to ideology, in addition to utilising interviews with key members of this group, this article interrogates the explicitly post-Cameronite thinking of the NNR drawing on three central features of its thinking: (1) the rejection of the rhetorical ‘de-neoliberalisation’ of British society after the financial crisis; (2) a resistance to ‘anti-market socialisation’ (3) and the promotion of a ‘thin’ conception of social rights. It concludes with a review of the interaction and conflict between Cameronite Conservatism and the NNR. The examination of this nascent conservative grouping is important, not necessarily for its causal effect on the Rightward move of the Conservative Party since 2010, but in its resonant contribution to the chorus of wider Conservative opinion that constitutes (1) a move away from the pro-social, Big Society conservative centrisism that David Cameron adverted between 2006 and 2010; (2) a growing hostility to what it sees as the de-neoliberalisation of the British political economy combined with (3) an ostensibly forward-looking ideological outlook distinct from the ‘first generation’ of Thatcherites. The ultimate significance of the NNR is impossible to gauge at this early stage. However, when politicians put their names to publications, which indicate a distinctive ideological position at variance with the stance of the current leadership, their views are worthy of academic analysis, whether or not they come to hold influential positions within the Conservative Party.

There is a corpus of scholarship that maps contemporary conservatisms within the Conservative Party (Norton 1994; Baker, Gamble, and Ludlam 1994; Heppell and Hill 2005; Webb and Childs 2011; Buckler and Dolowitz 2012). Indeed, post-Thatcher, there has been an explosion of different maps: Thatcherite Dries vs. One Nation Tory Wets; Eurosceptics vs. Pro-Europeans and ‘Mods’ vs. ‘Rockers’ (Bale 2010, 119–120). These extant ideological groupings, albeit important, need updating for the Coalition era. Since the formation of the Coalition, there have been a variety of identifiable ideological groupings. Webb and Childs (2011, 384) see the potential for the ‘revival of the old conflicts between the “wets” and the “dries” of the 1980s’. The revival of ‘wets’ and ‘dries’ in the context of Cameron’s Conservatives does not fit easily with the fusion of fiscal conservatism and social liberalism in Cameronite Conservatism, and nor does it easily accommodate the ideological nuances of the NNR. Kelly (2013, 210–211), notwithstanding his designation of ‘pre-Thatcherite’ ‘one nation Tories’ and ‘Thatcherites’, manages to accommodate Cameronism designating it as a form ‘post-Thatcherism’, which is a ‘new form of conservatism’ that ‘reflected the peculiar circumstances of the post-Blair era’. The NNR does not fit neatly into Kelly’s pre- or post-Thatcherite ideological encampments. They share with Thatcherites/dries and post-Thatcherites a scepticism of the central state but their anti-statism is conceptually more consistent and their arguments
go beyond Thatcherism. They share with pre-Thatcherites/wets and some Thatcherites a respect for traditional values but, again, their argumentation is different. Finally, their hostility to anti-market socialisation is discordant with pre-Thatcherites and post-Thatcherites. The NNR share much ideological affinity with the Thatcherite New Right. They are ‘third-generation’ Thatcherites. Their ideological distinctiveness, however, resides in the NNR’s use of different arguments, its different political context and, importantly, its novel defence of political concepts used to shore up the project initiated by Thatcher.

David Cameron (2006), at the beginning of his leadership, contended that the Conservatives’ failure in the New Labour years was that it ‘did not know how to deal with [its] … victory in the battle of ideas’. The NNR think no such victory has taken place (Interview with Elizabeth Truss 2013). The NNR, even though ‘fully supportive of the coalition government’, (Kwarteng et al. 2011, 14), is disappointed with the Cameron generation of Conservatism. The Conservatives, despite the electorally propitious context in which the last General Election was fought, failed to win an overall majority. The disappointment is compounded by Cameron’s failure fully to promote ‘Tory values’. The NNR imply that Cameron, hostage to ‘left-wing thinking’ of the Liberal Democrats in Government, is not fundamentally changing the climate of opinion in British society. Thus, efforts to eliminate the structural deficit, reduce immigration, deregulate the economy and cap welfare expenditure are being undermined: ‘the last thirty years of public debate in Britain has been dominated by left-wing thinking … [a]lthough there is a Conservative-led government, there still remains a left-wing consensus’ (Kwarteng et al. 2011, 3). It is for this reason that the NNR see the Coalition as a temporary aberration meeting ‘a temporary, but nevertheless important need, to pay off the fiscal deficit’ (Kwarteng et al. 2011, 14). For the NNR, Cameron, whilst in coalition, conspires in a national consensus: accommodating Blairite, micro-social democratic revisions to the Thatcherite consensus. In order to reverse what Keith Joseph (Kwarteng et al. 2011, 19) – the co-intellectual architect of Thatcherism – called the ‘ratchet’ (Joseph 1976, 5) towards more interventionist social democratic outcomes, the NNR argue that the Conservatives should argue from ‘first principles’: the case for the market and the smaller state (Forsyth 2012). Kwasi Kwarteng, the Josephite figure and ‘main driver’ (Interview with Kwarteng 2013) of the NNR, and leader of the Free Enterprise Group (hereafter referred to as FEG), invoked ‘Stockholm syndrome’ to characterise the Conservative’s ideological dilemma, arguing that the Conservatives are limited in their ‘ability to win big majorities’ because the Party has been ‘captured by the Left’, leaving the Conservatives ‘apologetic about some of the positions we hold, on … the economy … welfare, or immigration’ (Chakelian 2013). The NNR, much like the Thatcherite counter-revolutionaries in the 1970s, expressly want to change the political ethos in Britain by turning Right. They have the potential to be as ideologically successful as the One Nation Group in the 1950s, or the Thatcherites in the 1970s in attaching their prescriptions for the country with a prevailing ‘common sense’ (Interview with Kwarteng 2013).

The NNR are composed entirely of the 2010 generation of Conservative MPs. Although not to the exclusion of other contributors, this article focuses on the thought and practice of five MPs – Kwasi Kwarteng, Priti Patel, Dominic Raab, Chris Skidmore and Elizabeth Truss – all of whom are members of the academic seminar group – and prolific publisher of policy recommendations – of the NNR: the FEG. All five were contributors to two books: After the Coalition: A Conservative Agenda for Britain (2011) and Britannia Unchained: Global Lessons for Growth and Prosperity (2012). These two books constitute the manifesto, and inform my analysis, of the NNR.
This relatively nascent Conservative grouping has attracted significant attention in non-academic circles. The most critical assessment of their thought-practices is Jon Cruddas (2012), who argued that the NNR propounds a programme of ‘intensified commodification’ and ‘destructive economic liberalism that threatens the foundations of modern conservatism’. James Forsyth (2012) characterises them as ‘New Radicals’ – ‘a group of ideologically driven Tory radicals’ that intend to ‘change the Tory party and Britain too’. Andy Beckett (2012) asserted that they ‘are trying to seize the political agenda with some of the most right-wing ideas the party has seen for decades’. In the same register, Roger Scruton (2013), the doyen of high Toryism, argued that they call on the ‘Conservatives to save the country’. Although evocative, all accounts hitherto lack depth. Cruddas asserts that the NNR ‘threatens’ existing conservatisms. The contrary is true, as opposed to promoting a ‘destructive economic liberalism’ that vitiates conservatism, its neoliberalism reinforces Tory ideals: ‘order, discipline, anti-collectivism, the containment of change, and responsibility’ (Lakin and Ostrowski 2014, 20). Forsyth (2012) persuasively calls the NNR, ‘New Radicals’. Nevertheless, their radicalism is ‘illusory’. For Freeden (1996, 411), it is tantamount to a form of ‘reactionary counter-reformism’: using the power of the state – not to create a new set of institutions or new forms of social behaviour – but to retrench the state, reversing the socio-politico-economic consensus of the ‘state interventionist, socialising, socialist, neo-socialist, social democratic’ Left (Interview with Kwarteng 2013). Echoing Thatcherite discourses, the NNR want to move British society forward to the past.

The New New Right

Timothy Heppell (2013) has argued that the 2010 generation of Conservative MPs are ideologically economic – and social – liberals and overwhelmingly Eurosceptic. This article does not strongly depart from these categorisations but proposes to bring into focus and magnify one potentially influential subsection of the Conservative Party. The NNR thus have three distinctive ideological features: (1) the rhetorical de-neoliberalisation of British society, (2) the promotion of free-market anti-socialisation and (3) the promotion of a ‘thin’ conception of social rights that rejects ‘thick’ conceptions of social rights and identity politics. The NNR is thus economically neoliberal and hostile to the social state and the identity politics. This article addresses the three constitutive features of the NNR’s Conservatism. Unlike the Thatcherites, their ideological world views are optimistic and cast in the present political debates. Unlike the Cameronites, they ‘have a traditional view of politics’ shunning the focus group politics of Blair and Cameron in favour of politicians campaigning ‘on clear platforms’ in an ‘attempt to persuade the electorate to adopt their policies’ (Kwarteng et al. 2011, 230).

Against de-neoliberalisation

The NNR challenges Cameronism’s attempt to formulate a measured – and at least rhetorical – de-neoliberalisation of Conservatism. Rhetorical de-neoliberalisation refers to Cameron’s and the Coalition’s efforts to alter the language, if not the practice, of neoliberal political economy, which was intellectually challenged most forcefully since its inception in the Anglo-Saxon polities in the late 1970s by the financial crisis of 2007–08. Echoing the NNR’s critique, Deepak Lal (2012, 223), an economist with thought-practices not dissimilar from the NNR, argues that the ‘crisis has brought all kinds of dirigiste
panaceas to the fore, and there seems to have been a revival of crude Keynesianism amongst the commentariat and policy makers'.

The very approaches that anti-capitalist, social democratic and regulatory liberal discourses identify as the central cause of the crisis are, for Cameronites and the NNR, by virtue of their *market fundamentalism* (Gamble 2009, 141–167), not the problem, but the solution to the crisis because the crisis is not one of ‘market failure’ but one of ‘state failure’: a crisis of the state not a crisis for the state (Hay 2013, 18). Although Cameronism and the NNR occupy a similar semantic field in attributing the central cause of the financial crisis of 2007–08 to ‘state failure’, the NNR more vigorously defend the merits of the market against the Keynesian, ‘regulatory liberal’, Labour discourses of ‘market failure’ and the explicit critique of neoliberalism. Cameronism’s reticence to defend the market, whilst simultaneously aggressively asserting state failure and Labour’s public spending profligacy, is attributable to both Cameronite’s pre-financial crisis commitment to ‘progressive conservatism’ (Clark and Hunt 2008; Cameron 2009a), in which he implemented the so-called ‘politics of and …’, (Bale 2010, 283–362) whereby issues of economic efficiency were wedded to issues of social justice, and the ideological concessions necessary to facilitate political alliance with the Liberal Democrats. Prior to the formation of the Coalition, the Liberal Democrats (2010, 14–15) adopted a more Labourite, market failure discourse of the crisis than the Tories state failure discourse. The NNR have no such ideological affinity with progressivism nor are they shackled by the necessity of ideological trading with the more progressive elements of Liberal Democrat ideology, who believe in shielding New Labour’s ‘social investment state’ (Giddens 1998, 99–128) against neoliberal retrenchments. Cameronism, as one of its distinctive features, contends and realises that there is an *insufficiency of neoliberalism* (McAnulla 2012, 166–180). In managing the fallout of the financial crisis, Cameron’s Coalition has rejected some of the thought-practices of neoliberalism, including regulation of the banking sector, maintaining a 45% higher rate of tax, Cameron’s (2012a) attack on ‘crony capitalism’; protecting NHS and overseas aid spending, and a corporatist-style industrial strategy (Cable 2012; Heseltine 2012; Osborne 2013). Andrew Crines (2013, 213–216) posits that neoliberalism has not been so much rejected by Cameron but metamorphosed into ‘progressive neoliberalism’ manifested in Cameron’s and the Coalition’s ready endorsement of self-regulation and shareholder control along the lines of the ‘John Lewis’ model. The NNR recognises no such insufficiencies in neoliberalism.

The FEG is the NNR’s forum for the development and dissemination of neoliberal ideas and policy proposals. The FEG is one of many groups that has sprung up inside the Conservative Party since 2010, alongside *The Forty*, the *301* and the *2020*, but the FEG is by far the most forceful of the groups in terms of the development of ideas and policy proposals. The stated aims of the FEG (2013), given ‘administrative support by the Institute for Economic Affairs’, are quintessentially neoliberal: ‘[e]ncourage a competitive and free economic environment; Raise the global standing of the United Kingdom; Challenge monopolies and oligopolies; Free individuals to create, innovate and take risks’). The NNR supports the ‘austerity programme’ of the Osborne Treasury not only in order to maintain market confidence, cut public expenditure, bring down the deficit and ensure Britain ‘lives within its means’, but to restore the conditions where neoliberal ideas can thrive. Austerity is decontested as a ‘virtuous necessity’ (Clarke and Newman 2012). Historically, the politics of austerity, in the Baldwinite 1930s or Thatcherite 1980s for example, has borne fruit for Conservative electoral success and the wider proliferation of conservative values (Jackson and McClymont 2011). The politics of austerity since the
financial crisis has, with the exception of Francois Hollande and Parti Socialiste success in France, electorally and ideologically benefited the Centre-Right in Europe: Angela Merkel’s Christlich Demokratische Union in Germany; Mariano Rajoy’s Partido Popular in Spain; Fredrik Reinfeld’s Moderata Samlingspartiet in Sweden and Erna Solberg’s Høyre in Norway (Diamond2011).

For Colin Hay (2013, 41), the Tory discourse that ‘state indebtedness was the cause of the crisis and spending retrenchments is the solution’ has become neoliberal ‘paradigm-reinforcing rather than paradigm-threatening’ in Britain. The Conservatives subscribed to what Hay called a ‘Labour debt crisis’ discourse, with the solution lying in restoration of balance to the public finances through a combination of light tax raising and heavy public spending reductions. For Hay (2013, 16–21), however, the crisis is for the state, rather than of the state. The difference is that if one situates the crisis for the state, ‘it is to suggest that the fiscal deficit which now threatens public expenditure cannot be attributed to any dynamic internal to the state itself since its origins lie elsewhere’, whereas the crisis of the state ‘would implicate the state directly in the generation of the fiscal shortfall that now threatens the public programmes with which we associate it’ (Hay 2013, 18). Whilst the Cameronites have had to temper their rhetorical crisis of the state, the NNR have argued emphatically for a restoration of a language that is consonant with a practice of retrenchment that the austerity programme promises to deliver (i.e. tightest squeeze on overall public expenditure since 1945, tightest settlement for spending on overall public services since 1975–80 and the tightest squeeze on NHS spending since 1951–56) (Lee 2011, 15). For Cameronites, however, whilst they are committed to a form of ‘progressive neoliberalism’, their neoliberalism eschews the liberal individualism of both the Thatcherite New Right and this post-Cameronite NNR. Both are united in a joint scepticism of the state but the language and thought-practices of the NNR see Cameronite ‘progressive neoliberalism’ as being tantamount to an abnegation of neoliberalism.

The NNR’s effort to resist the de-neoliberalisation of British society constitutes what Gamble (2009, 141–167) calls ‘market fundamentalism’. The NNR, in line with market fundamentalism, has thus developed ‘the argument that the problem was caused not by too little but too much regulation. If deregulation had been allowed to go further then the market itself would have sorted out the problems’ (Gamble 2009, 146). The NNR’s attempt to (rhetorically) re-neoliberalise Britain is not just a diagnosis of ‘state failure’, however, but a prognosis for the future transacted into public policy positions: direct tax cuts, reduction of every government departments’ expenditures, anti-inflationary bias, creation of economic zones, privatisation of public sector services and New Public Management reforms of public services in receipt of taxpayer funds. The NNR complain about the ‘large, bloated public sector’ with its ‘increasingly large liabilities’ subsuming ‘too much spending’ and generating ‘too little growth’ and overall ‘poor productivity’ (Kwarteng et al. 2012, 3). They want, much like the Coalition’s shift from targets to outcomes, an abolition of New Labour era controls, such as child poverty targets, waiting lists, school results and climate change targets. They postulate that ‘privatisation has been an almost unqualified success’ (Kwarteng et al. 2011, 53). The Coalition’s record on privatisation, deregulation and liberalisation has been considerable, building on Thatcher’s privatisation programmes in the 1980s:

Gove’s reforms of Britain’s [sic] state schools; the outsourcing of police functions; the opening-up of planning on behalf of developers; the abolition of Regional Spatial Strategies; the restriction of state welfare benefits; the abandonment by the state of families
renting from private landlords; the Health and Social Care Bill permitting private companies to have a greater involvement in services, managerial processes and infrastructure; the removal of environmental controls on behalf of industry; the part-privatisation of new roads; the … privatisation of Royal Mail; and so forth. (Lakin 2013, 486–487)5

The NNR go further in their project of narrowing the scope of the political and spreading market-based practices: a market-based immigration visa system (Freeman and Kwarteng 2013, 21); freezing the minimum wage, abolishing Agency Workers Regulations and the Working Time Regulations (Raab 2011a); abolishing the Low Pay Commission (Forsyth 2012); halving the number of Whitehall departments (Raab 2013a); liberalising transport markets (Kwarteng and DuPont 2011; Kwarteng 2012); relaxing childcare ratios (Truss 2012a); introducing market solutions to climate change (Kwarteng et al. 2011, 75–80); restoring the ‘Beveridgean contributory principle’ in the benefits system (Skidmore 2012); and, consistent with long-standing Tory hostility to organised labour, a call for a ‘strike law reform’, which would require a ‘voting threshold of support from 50 per cent of balloted members for strike action to proceed’, thus placing a further restraint on trade union power (Raab 2011b, 73–83, 2013b). These reforms are purported to be necessary because of the need to contain costs and eliminate debt and deficits. In addition to these market-based reforms, the NNR propose a ‘Golden Rule’, in which ‘budgets should be balanced across a cycle’ (Kwarteng et al. 2011, 4). This includes three distinct ideas. First, a ‘debt cap’, which is ‘the idea that Parliament should legislate a hard limit to the amount of debt the country could take on’ (Kwarteng et al. 2011, 35), prohibiting large spending programmes without commensurate tax revenues. This is compounded by the second idea, a ‘balanced budget enforcement’, imported from Reaganite and post-Reaganite US Republicans, which requires that the state cannot spend more than its income. Third, the NNR have proposed a ‘debt brake’, balancing the structural deficit in such a way that shortfalls in any one year are compensated for with greater austerity in the next (Forsyth et al. 2012). Together, these measures seek to entrench an anti-public spending/pro-low taxes bias in the constitutional and parliamentary arrangements of British politics.

The NNR go beyond the typical bugbears of neoliberalism in condemning ‘Bankers, lawyers and managers in major corporations’ who ‘have hidden behind “innovative financial products” and opaque practices to cover up their subsidy from the rest of the economy. Risks that should have been borne by those who took them have been socialised by the government’ (Kwarteng et al. 2011, 18). For the NNR (Kwarteng et al. 2011, 47), their insulation from the neoliberal requirements to ‘create wealth through innovation and hard work’, whilst claiming ‘the rewards that were reserved for entrepreneurs’ is as much of an obstacle to their ‘support for business, the profit motive and the individual drive of the wealth creator’ (Kwarteng et al. 2012; Eustice, 2012) as the public sector worker or Whitehall mandarin. NNR neoliberalism is therefore discrepant from the Thatcherite variant of neoliberalism in its poujadist disdain for all elites.

As mentioned, the NNR contend that British politics over ‘the last thirty years … has been dominated by left-wing thinking’ (Kwarteng et al. 2011, 3). Beckett (2012) rightly points out that this comment is stated as if ‘the transformative 18 years of the Thatcher and Major governments had never happened’ – an admission that Thatcher’s ‘rightwing project’ had ‘failed’. Kwarteng (Interview with Kwarteng 2013), acknowledging this implied criticism of Thatcher, revised this by dating the inception of the left wing consensus at the downfall of Thatcher in 1990. This revised comment chimes with the NNR’s claim that ‘The 1980s … were a successful decade for Britain’ (Kwarteng et al.
2012, 2). Truss (2013) hailed Thatcher as a source of ‘inspiration … for the politics of the Right’. Indeed, d’Ancona (2013, 349) contended that the NNR are ‘Thatcher’s grandchildren’. Indeed, superficially, the NNR could be considered as ‘third-generation Thatcherites’, keepers of the sacred flame who regard the route to political preferment as an attempt to translate the Thatcherite approach to politics into the contemporary context. Nevertheless, there is a perceptible simultaneous subduing of Thatcherism. There are three proposed reasons for this. First, Thatcher’s Thatcherism endorsed neoliberalism with considerable qualification. Thatcherism alloyed neoliberal economics with a high Tory conception of country and Party: ‘although Thatcherites engaged with neoliberalism they did not fully embrace, and on occasion explicitly rejected, neoliberal economics in their purest form’ (Green 2006, 49). For this reason, and the more complete and explicit endorsement the NNR provide to neoliberalism, the NNR believe Thatcher’s ‘work remains incomplete’ (Kwarteng et al. 2011, 12). Second, Kwarteng (Interview with Kwarteng 2013) contends that Thatcher’s radicalism must be contextualised and historicised. Thatcherism, it is contended, was radical in its time. The NNR agree with other Tory historians that all Thatcher did was use a ‘radical rhetoric to give intellectual respectability to what the Conservative Party has always wanted’ (Cowling 1990, xxviii), and the critics of Thatcherism and the politics of the 1980s exceptionalise Thatcherism – from the (Conservative) British Political Tradition – in order to demonise it. Downplaying the novelty of Thatcherism is a way in which the NNR can make useful political/strategic comparisons with Thatcherism and also macro-decontest the ideological counter-transformations of the 1980s as natural and essential. Third, despite the achievements of the Tory administrations of the 1980s and 1990s, the impact of New Labour’s ideology on the sociocultural fabric on Britain only served inter alia to eclipse Thatcherism (Gamble 2005). Therefore, by arguing that New Labour eclipsed Thatcherism, they are not criticising Thatcherism but arguing for a revised continuation: a more holistic neoliberalism in order to overcome New Labour’s ‘high taxes and … poorly designed welfare system’ (Kwarteng et al. 2012, 68).

For the NNR, Britons, and not just institutions, are guilty of departing from neoliberal values. Foucault talked of ‘neoliberal governmentality’ as ‘the responsibility of political government to actively create the conditions in which entrepreneurial and competitive conduct was possible’ (Barry, Osborne, and Rose 1996, 1–18). The NNR negatively define the kind of citizens required to bring re-neoliberalised governmentality to fruition. The NNR argue that, ‘As the world becomes more competitive, Britain will have to work harder to keep up’ (Kwarteng et al. 2012, 1). Cruddas (2012) presents a stark characterisation of their ‘ideal worker’ as one ‘prepared to work long hours, commute long distances and expect no employment protection and low pay’. This, for the NNR, should be the ‘new normal’ because ‘the British are among the worst idlers in the world … Once they enter the workplace, the British have long been less productive than workers in other Western countries’ (Kwarteng et al. 2012, 61, 66). ‘The state’, the NNR claim, ‘has made Britons idle. Our culture of instant gratification ignores the years of persistence that lie behind real success’ (Kwarteng et al. 2012, 5). Simply, ‘fewer Britons work … the financial rewards from hard work declined because of higher taxes or perverse disincentives in the welfare system’ (Kwarteng et al. 2012, 77). In seeking to reverse this, they state that national decline is reversible if Britain recognises ‘support for business, the profit motive and the individual drive of the wealth creator’ and the British worker ‘abandon[s] the quick fix and instead put[s] in the fundamental graft, risk and effort that bring long-term rewards’ (Kwarteng et al. 2012, 4, 116). The NNR see the expansion of the state, with income tax featuring as the ‘principle means of financing this
expansion’, as the biggest impediment to restoring and spreading the value and benefits of work (Kwarteng et al. 2012, 6). The NNR believe strongly that the sociopolitical climate needs to change. For example, profit ‘remains a dirty word … Making an honest profit should be seen as a good thing, while rent seeking from the State should be regarded as a bad thing’ (Kwarteng et al. 2011, 12, 48). This is a neoliberal conception of citizenship accentuating market choice and contractual relations at the expense of liberal or social democratic conceptions of citizenship (Miller 1995).

Neoliberalism is a term that students of the Conservative Party or conservatism – both big and small ‘c’ – should sensibly be cautious of using for three reasons: first, the expanded usage of the word entails that it has no singular definition (Boas and Morse 2009); second, it is often used as a term of abuse and third, those who scholars and students alike label as ‘neoliberals’ do not self-identify with the term. Whilst the second use of neoliberalism should be eschewed because the object is not to normatively upgrade or downgrade, the last explanation for endorsed cautiousness when using neoliberalism should not be an impediment to its usage in itself, particularly in light of postmodernist ‘double-coding’ – ‘words which say one thing, while meaning another and camouflaging, or concealing, a third’ (Eccleshall 2000, 278) – and the ‘surplus of meaning’ – a semantic surplus that necessitates interpretation in order to make sense of a new meaning (Ricoeur 1976), which offers scope for interpretation of political ideologies. However, the primary case for the usage of neoliberalism here is that the NNR expressly employs the term when talking about ‘“neoliberal” reforms’, which they endorse, such as cuts in taxation, the taming of inflation and privatisation of government monopolies (Kwarteng et al. 2011, 44–45). Whilst precision and interpretive caution is always important in the study of ideologies, the use of the term ‘neoliberal’ is not only useful in terms of decoding their thought-practices, but essential insofar as the NNR themselves express affinity with neoliberal reforms, despite Kwarteng’s preference for the term ‘neo-classical liberal’ (Interview with Kwarteng 2013). The NNR are unprecedentedly, in British politics, avowed neoliberals. They are unabashed and consistently lay blame for the financial crisis primarily on bureaucrats, regulators, governments and the unsustainable entitlement economy. They further resist arguments that the financial crisis has intellectually discredited and made political impracticable neoliberalism. The crises of capitalism, not dissimilar to Marxist and Schumpeterian analyses, are simply decontexted as natural moments of ‘creative destruction’, and beyond the volition or control of human agents. The NNR thus advocate the trinity of neoliberalism, deregulation, liberalisation and privatisation in order to restore ‘the fundamental graft, risk and effort that bring long-term rewards’ (Kwarteng et al. 2012, 116) in the overarching effort to reconstruct the ‘basis for renewed capitalist prosperity’ (Gamble 2009, 148).

Free market antisocialisation

The retreat of Tory values is not solely confined to the realm of political economy for the NNR. ‘Left-wing’ values have, the NNR argue, dominated the ideas in civil society and the social and cultural interactions it has with markets and the state over the ‘last thirty years’ (Kwarteng et al. 2011, 3). Rhetorical re-neoliberalisation, generally, offers a guide to the NNR’s politico-economic preference for maintaining financial responsibility and safeguarding the market order at the cost of other political priorities such as social justice. Part of the NNR’s ideological matrix is not just a support of neoliberalism, it is a charge against the ‘social justice, equality and compassion’ vogues of contemporary post-Great Crash British politics that threaten neoliberalism (Scruton 2013). Truss called this ‘anti-
market socialization’, asserting that ‘Conservatives need to recast the argument about free enterprise for a new age, or risk losing the debate to a tide of anti-market socialization’ (FEG 2013). Anti-market socialisation refers to the various political projects that seek to roll back the free market economy. The NNR, therefore, supports its opposite: free market anti-socialisation.

The promoters of anti-market socialisation – or non-market alternatives – are to be found in all three major Westminster political parties. Indeed, Kelly (2013, 214) has correctly argued that the ‘emergence of a fresh consensus’ after the financial crisis – albeit one ‘not easy to categorise’ – is one centred around non-state and non-market alternatives for social cohesion and economic inclusion. Kelly points to the pan-political interest in society, with its various decontestations of Cameron’s (2009b, 2010, 2011a) ‘Big Society’, Nick Clegg’s (2011) ‘Open Society’ and Ed Miliband’s (2010a) ‘Good Society’.

The Cameronites are the Tory tribe that has done most to promote a moderate version of Conservatism that limits the scope, emphasis and importance of the market and celebrates the ‘socio-centric paradigm’ (Letwin 2007). Cameron presented such a conservative formulation in the idioms of social responsibility, the enabling state, the post-bureaucratic age, localism and the Big Society, with deficit reduction his ‘duty’ and Big Society his ‘passion’. Cameronism therefore, in theory, is constituted by a pairing of ‘social recovery’ with ‘economic recovery’ (Cameron 2011b). Cameronism’s early civic idealism, however, has been conceptually superseded by the ‘Global Race’ (Beckett 2013; Cameron 2012b, 2013) – a theme almost handpicked from the ideological manual of the NNR (Chekelian 2013; Interview with Kwarteng 2013). Whilst the NNR decry the Big Society as an irrelevance of no interest and bereft of a ‘definitive blueprint’ (Interview with Kwarteng 2013; Truss, 2011, ix), the NNR ally themselves with Cameronism in their support for localism – decontested as departing from centralist features of standardisation, regularity and evenness of state provision in favour of for-profit business and neoliberal institutions.

Cameron’s flight from a centrist Conservatism has presented Labour with the opportunity to promote a different discourse of anti-market socialisation. In Miliband’s (2010b) attempt to seize ‘“Big Society” back off David Cameron’, Labour Party elites have proposed several different counter-responses (Beech and Hickson 2014), including Purple Labour (Philpot 2011), Blue Labour (Glasman et al. 2011) and One Nation Labour discourses (Smith and Reeves 2013). In combination, the panoply of Labour discourses presents an ideological map that threatens the NNR’s anti-social marketisation and attempts to re-neoliberalise British politics. Central to Milibandism is a critique of the market society, believing that, from the age of Thatcher, ‘we drifted from having a market economy to being a market society’, in which, ‘social relations are made over in the image of the market’ (Sandel 2013, 10–11; my emphasis). For Andrew Vincent (2013, 136, 141), Miliband’s One Nation variant of social democracy would reverse the purported ‘institutional vernaculars’ of neoliberalism:

The prospect of social democracy in government would signal a return to political realism and sanity. Private market-based police, armies, roads, transport, networks, education, welfare, prisons, water, or even judicial systems, may look attractive for a minority, but in practice any ordinary citizen would know that this latter strategy is verging on ideological psychosis.

Neoliberalism is therefore not an extinct macro-economic ideology (Crouch 2011). In order to reverse the market society and private market-based practices – and the
concomitant absence of the ‘role of politics’ in NNR thought in particular (Cruddas 2012) – Miliband (2014) has proposed the rejuvenation of Labour’s commitment to the activist, although not a ‘centralised’, state in contradistinction to the ‘Serco/G4S state’. In this vein, the self-styled ‘One Nation’ Labour Party will impose price controls on the ‘Big Six’ energy companies, use the state to requisition private land (Miliband 2013), move from Croslandite redistribution to Milibandite ‘predistribution’ (Hacker 2013) in order to help the ‘squeezed middle’ in an age of ‘responsible capitalism’ (Hunt 2013, 146) and commit to check and change the pace and composition of the Conservative’s austerity programme.

Cameronite civic communitarian Toryism, albeit in retreat and substituted by Osbornomic economic reductionism, along with Miliband’s spectrum of Labour critiques that revolve around the reversal of the neoliberal market society, plus the Liberal Democrats’ peripheral contribution to anti-market socialisation in the forms of social localism, pro-Europeanism, economic centrism and constitutional radicalism, feature as the various reflex, mirror images of the NNR’s anti-social marketisation – namely anti-market socialisation. The NNR use the threat of anti-market socialisation to shore up the project of re-neoliberalisation by resisting what it sees as internal and external threats to its essential ideological commitment to the entrenchment and expansion of the neoliberal and market fundamentalist vision of the market society. For Labour, ‘community, society … or country’ is ‘always trumped by textbook economic liberalism’ in NNR thought (Cruddas 2012). Scruton (2013), sympathetic to the economism and enmity to equality and social justice, interprets the thought-practices of the NNR as conservative insofar as they ‘are seeking to conserve a country and its institutions’. In trying to conserve Britain and some of its institutions, the NNR defends the neoliberal market order from these sources of anti-market socialisation.

Sources of anti-market socialisation are seen to promote relativism and the ‘culture of equivalence’ in education, with the NNR berating both ‘prizes for all’ and the notion of equal validity among all academic subjects (Kwarteng et al. 2011, 135–153, 2012, 38–60). New Labour era additions to the National Curriculum, such as Citizenship, are derided by Truss as ‘peripheral’ (Truss 2012b, 295). In deviating to the mean, values like ‘beauty’ and ‘merit’ have been denuded and replaced by bureaucratic and technocratic values of ‘systems’ and ‘processes’ (Kwarteng et al. 2011, 16). Instead of ‘academic rigour’ in state schools, which the NNR claim the ‘egalitarian consensus has demonised’, the progressive consensus has focused on non-market alternatives in search of solutions: ‘counterproductive’ policies such as ‘abolishing grammar schools or redistributing wealth’ (Kwarteng et al. 2011, 3, 2012; Forsyth et al. 2012). Contrary to the social democratic notion that the emergence of market dominance in the 1980s onwards fuelled socio-economic inequalities, inequalities are attributed to the ‘debt-delusion Keynesianism’ of the ‘flawed egalitarian consensus of the 1960s’, in which ‘the Statist way of thinking’ focused ‘wholly on the social causes of an individual’s poverty’, at the expense of individual ‘choice’, ‘autonomy’ and ‘responsibility’ (Kwarteng et al. 2011, 2012, 23; my emphasis). Statists, who are analogous to the ‘Left’ in NNR discourse, have not just ‘annexed’ education, but also family policy whereby ‘progress is state involvement and institutionalised subsidy support’ (Kwarteng et al. 2011, 3). In an economic libertarian register, individuals and families, in mirror image to the state and its impersonal institutions, are the foundational units of society for the NNR, such that, ‘By strengthening the role and responsibility of the individual, we are helping them provide for others, their family, and the community’ (Kwarteng et al. 2011, 19). For the NNR, the diminution of individual responsibility and the attendant need to blame individual failures on society or
social causes was a contributory factor in New Labour’s ‘era of indulgence and hedonism’ (Kwarteng et al. 2012, 115).

Postmodern libertarianism? Reversing the social state and promoting thin rights

Scruton (2013), himself a Tory, has surprisingly described the NNR as ‘postmodern Tories’. Prima facie, the notion that ‘Tories’ are ‘postmodern’ is oxymoronic. Bruce Pilbeam (2001) argues that there are ‘suggestive parallels’ between conservatism and postmodernism insofar as they both strenuously reject ‘rationalist’ ideological prescriptions. However, Scruton (1994, 33), himself a Tory, has described postmodernism as ‘vulgar relativism’ which ‘has no hope of surviving outside the minds of ignorant rascals’ (my emphasis). There are no serious ideological ‘consanguineous relations’ between conservatism and postmodernism but they express, albeit in ‘different voices’, identity politics: postmodernism promotes it and the NNR denigrate it. In a similar way to neoliberalism providing the economic antidote to social democratic étatisme, the NNR’s rejection of identity politics and thin conceptions of social rights amounts to a rejection of social visions or collectivism. Social visions, for Kwarteng, are neither expected nor wanted from Conservative governments (Interview with Kwarteng, 2013). The NNR’s opposition to identity politics, its thinly defined conception of rights and animus to social visions of politics thus constitutes an opposition to any extension of the social state.

Our programme for government, the Coalition’s manifesto states, is a ‘partnership government driven by … values’. Among its values is a desire to build ‘a smaller state’ with more ‘power and responsibility in the hands of every citizen’ (HM Government 2010, 8). For the NNR, the Coalition’s commitment to the smaller state has not delivered the scaling-back of the state to which they are committed. The NNR’s smaller, quasinightwatchman state applies, in part, to non-economic issues such as social policy or constitutional reform. Unlike the hortatory expostulations of the Thatcherites, the NNR ostensibly exhibit, on occasion, liberal social positions defending their moral and social positions in Tory decontestations of the concept of ‘civilised’, negatively defined as freedom, liberty and the pre-eminence of economic choice. There are multiple examples. Patel wants to restore the death penalty because it is ‘civilised’ (Kozlowski 2012), and Raab (2011c) is critical of Labour’s Equality Act 2010 because, in its attempt to legislate away inequalities, it has become a ‘vehicle for social engineering’ thus violating liberty. Raab (2011d) is also critical of ‘feminist bigotry’, with the pay gap in the workplace, for example, the outcome of ‘genuine choice’ and not the ‘result of discrimination’ against women. Raab’s opposition to social engineering is repeated in the NNR’s opposition to ‘identity politics’, which focuses on ‘an individual’s ethnicity or gender … without any regard to the person’ (Kwarteng et al. 2011, 3). Again, the culprits are the ‘Left’: ‘The new Left emerged in the 1960s and 1970s with a form of identity politics that grouped people together to form a rainbow coalition: women’s groups, gay rights and black and minority ethnicity citizens’ (Kwarteng et al. 2012, 3). The NNR celebrate individualisation, thus weakening their ties to (social) collectivism. Other, older forms of identity politics such as ‘character’ and ‘class’ are attacked on account of their constrictive effect on British economic progress (Kwarteng 2011; Kwarteng et al. 2012, 3). Whereas the Camerones concern is to keep the Party apace with the frenetic changes in the social and cultural world, the NNR ‘turn to economics whenever they need a conclusive reason for their policies’ (Scruton 2013). However, as Scruton (2013) continues, non-economic affairs are important for the NNR because they ‘are acutely aware that our civil inheritance can no longer be taken for granted’. Britain’s civil inheritance is thus threatened.
both by anti-market socialisation and by the proliferation of ‘identity politics’ into the cultural fabric of the country.

A key piece of ‘identity politics’ that divides the NNR is gay rights. One of the hallmarks of Cameronism’s social inclusiveness was shifting the Conservative’s attitudes towards same-sex couples, as illustrated by his distancing the Party’s association with ‘Section 28’. The NNR were divided on the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill 2013. Skidmore and Truss supported the Bill on the basis that extending marriage to same-sex couples was consistent with both the NNR’s anti-statism (i.e. the state is not an arbiter of moral beliefs) and Cameronism’s inclusiveness and broadening of conservative institutions (decontesting gay marriage as one not of ‘equality’ but of ‘commitment’ (Cameron 2011b)). Kwarteng, Patel and Raab who voted against the Bill, did so on the same anti-statist justifications as Skidmore and Truss. Raab (2012) invoked negative liberty in claiming that, ‘in the … spirit of tolerance, I want to protect churches … from being forced to conduct ceremonies that run counter to their faith’. It is also – as befitting conservative ideologies – a decontestation of rights as an unequal and hierarchical arrangement: the protection of prior and organic rights over later and artificial rights (i.e. the religious right prior to minority relationship-recognition right; the market right prior to the welfare right).

Responsibility: ‘master-super-concept’

The central feature of contemporary conservative ideologies is a defence of a limited conception of politics. This finds expression in the three core features of the ideology of the NNR. One of the more fascinating aspects of the NNR’s conceptual field is that conservatism’s limited politics is encapsulated in its elevated status of the concept of responsibility. Responsibility is decontested as to coalesce with a core concept of neoliberal ideology: the self-regulating market, which for conservative decontestations rewards thrift, self-reliance, entrepreneurship and (fiscal/financial) responsibility (Kwarteng et al. 2011, 5). A nominally adjacent concept in conservative ideologies, responsibility features as the NNR’s version of Cameronism’s Big Society: a micro-core realisation of O’Sullivan’s (2013) observation that a defence of limited politics constitutes the core feature of contemporary conservative ideologies. Responsibility is both what Freeden (2013b, 293, 70) calls a ‘master-concept’ and ‘super-concept’, the latter not dissimilar to William Connolly’s (1993) notion of ‘cluster concept’, in NNR ideology. By ‘master-concept’, Freeden refers to a core concept that has elevated import, in weight and salience, within a corpus of work around which the theory is organised. It is furthermore a ‘super-concept’ ‘that embraces a number of otherwise separately identifiable constitutive concepts, each of which has an important historical and contemporary existence on its own, but each of which can be decontested in multiple ways’ (Freeden 2013b, 70). For the NNR, responsibility, decontested specifically as ‘financial responsibility’ (Kwarteng et al. 2011, 3), embraces the three features discussed: the concept of the market decontested as a realistic illimitable self-regulating panacea, the concept of the social decontested negatively as an impediment to economic efficiency and the concept of rights decontested as thin, limited and hierarchical. Hence, responsibility is a recurring and consistent feature of (NNR) conservative discourse and praxis. For the NNR, the decontestation of responsibility celebrates individual, fiscal, welfare and economic responsibility as the foundational unit for responsibility within families, communities and country. Obstacles to responsibility include social explanations of causal failure, multiculturalism (Kwarteng et al. 2011, 20), attempts to promote views of social justice,
economic redistribution and the comprehensivisation of secondary education. The NNR’s ideology is easily decodable, with responsibility its master- and super-concept articulated in their emphasis on the importance of a return to neoliberal certainties in the realm of the political economy, their resistance to social incursions that amount to a socialised curtailment of the market society and their promotion of thin rights. This ideology benefits from being buttressed by a proselytising and converting mentality, expressed in Truss’ claim that, ‘when a case is made, public opinion can and will shift’ (Truss 2013; Interview with Truss 2013), that consistently translates its complex ideology into simple precepts: tax cuts, accelerated spending cuts and the removal of bureaucratic barriers to growth.

Conclusion: conservative languages

The second decade of the twenty-first century in Britain is a decade potentially ripe for the flourishing of conservative – both big and small ‘c’ – values. Ivor Crewe (1988, 25–49), in a seminal essay written at the end of the Thatcher decade, concluded that, although the Thatcher governments were electorally successful and politically dominant, there was no indicative evidence of a corresponding inculcation of Thatcherite values among the electorate. Things have changed, however. British Attitude Surveys (BSA), during and after the financial crisis, have revealed attitudes – especially towards the economy, the role of the state and immigration – attuned to NNR ideology forcing one Guardian columnist to write that ‘Britain’, in 2010, was ‘more Thatcherite … than in the 80s’ (Curtis 2010; Kwarteng et al. 2012, 109). The 2013 BSA announced that ‘Britain’s moral outlook’ as well as its attitudes to ‘the welfare state’ are ‘affected by individualisation’ (Park et al. 2013, ix, x). This is especially true of ‘generation Y’ – ‘Thatcher’s Children’. This is explicable, in part, because ‘postwar collectivism is increasingly … a distant memory, and the free-market worldview … is seemingly as ordinary and immovable as the weather’ (Harris 2013; Ball and Clark, 2013). Furthermore, echoing the NNR, ‘Britain is more inclined than it was in the 1980s to feel that people should stand on their own two feet economically, and is less likely to favour increased spending on welfare benefits’ (Park et al. 2013, xviii). The NNR are potentially – supported by the findings of the BSA survey – the by-product and expression of a decade-long ‘shift to the Right’. As Bartle, Avellaneda, and Stimson (2010, 216) put it, ‘the electorate were nearly as “right-wing” in 2009 as 1979, the year that Mrs Thatcher came to office … It suggests that the public are now less supportive of “big government” than at any time since the late 1970s’. The NNR therefore think the climate of opinion chimes with their anti-statist and anti-collectivist tune. The NNR reflects a mainstream hardening of attitudes towards social welfare and economic redistributionism supporting a clear ‘hierarchy of desert’ (Pearce and Taylor 2013; Park et al. 2012, ii, ix), a hardening of attitudes towards immigration with 48% of public opinion believing immigration ‘undermined’ Britain’s cultural life (Ford, Morrell, and Heath 2012, 26–44), and an ascendant Euroscepticism (Park et al. 2012, xv). A more unambiguous long-term social development for the NNR is the ‘continued increase in liberal attitudes towards a range of issues such as abortion, homosexuality, same-sex marriage and euthanasia’ (Lee 2012, 182), partly because individually they arrive at different judgements on these issues from the same starting point of an anti-statism increasingly popular in Britain.

As attitudes have shifted, conservative languages have shifted too. As argued earlier, Cameronism and the NNR occupy the same semantic field, emerging from within the family of conservative ideologies. As the Coalition Government has evolved, the original
emphasis, despite the preponderance of deficit reduction, on Big Society, localism and communities, has been replaced with a language not discordant with the leitmotifs of the NNR, concerning freedom, enterprise, deregulation, liberation and an increasingly deconstructed narrow, fiscal account of responsibility. Cameron has stressed, in 2012–13, the ‘global race’. Osborne celebrates the ‘march of the makers’, ‘the workers’ and ‘the strivers’ against ‘the shirkers’ and ‘the skivers’ forcing Britain to become more economically competitive, resulting in support for zero-hour contracts, punitive welfare attitudes to claimants and a creeping mainstream hostility towards government. Cameron, at the beginning of his leadership of the Conservative Party, postured as the ‘heir to Disraeli’. In Coalition, Cameron turns Right towards an intellectually febrile, aggressively neoliberal Conservatism that seeks to ensconce the market society by re-neoliberalising the economy, delimiting the socialisation of markets and restraining the ‘new Left’ legacy of ‘identity politics’ that smoothers both individualism and extends the frontier of the political. The NNR potentially provides the ideological template for the next generation of Conservatism. It is the latest expression of a limited conception of the political that is at the very core of conservative ideologies.

Notes
1. See Hayton (2012) for importance of divisions on social liberalism.
3. The following Conservative MPs are members of the Free Enterprise Group: Harriet Baldwin, Nick de Bois, Karen Bradley, Robert Buckland, Aidan Burley, Alun Cairns, Therese Coffey, Charlie Elphicke, George Eustice, George Freeman, Mark Garnier, John Glen, Ben Gummer, Sam Gyimah, Matthew Hancock, Richard Harrington, Chris Heaton-Harris, Margot James, Sajid Javid, Chris Kelly, Kwasi Kwarteng, Andrea Leadsom, Phillip Lee, Brandon Lewis, Anne-Marie Morris, Brooks Newmark, Jesse Norman, Guy Opperman, Priti Patel, Christopher Pincher, Mark Pritchard, Dominic Raab, Jacob-Rees Mogg, David Ruffley, David Rutley, Laura Sandys, Chris Skidmore, Julian Smith, Rory Stewart, Elizabeth Truss (chairman of the group), Andrew Tyrie, Mike Weatherly and Nadhim Zahawi. Only 4 of the 43 MPs of this group were elected prior to the May 2010 General Election: Brooks Newmark (2005), Mark Pritchard (2005), David Ruffley (1997) and Andrew Tyrie (1997). With 43 members, it constitutes just under a sixth of the membership of the Conservative Parliamentary Party.
4. In evidence, see Cameron and Osborne’s sudden decision to abandon in 2008 their commitment to match Labour’s public expenditure limits and adopt fiscal conservatism, opposing the bank bailouts and calling for tougher cuts in public spending.
5. Other Coalition-era privatisations could be listed: Search and Rescue (SAR), the probation services, the re-privatisation of Lloyds Bank, the uranium-enrichment group Urenco and the proposed privatisations of the Student Loans Company and the Law Courts.

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