Blair and Howard: Predominant Prime Ministers Compared

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Abstract

Political leaders matter again. The study of political leaders, particularly prime ministers has been an under-researched area, yet the leadership discourse is back on the agenda. This article puts prime ministerial predominance into this context using comparative analysis to examine prime ministerial leadership in Australia and the UK and evidence from the tenures of Tony Blair and John Howard. The article contends that similar centralising tendencies, personal projection, and autonomy from established structures were evident in the tenures of these two prime ministers. Ultimately this created dislocation (of varying degrees) between the leaders, followers and the wider electorate.

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The art of leadership is saying no not yes. It is very easy to say yes.
(Tony Blair, Mail on Sunday 2 October 2004)

"This country does not need 'new leadership', it does not need 'old leadership', it needs the right leadership'." (John Howard, 14 October 2007 Canberra, announcing 2007 Federal Election)

John Uhr, in his illuminating analysis of the role of ethics in Australian government *Terms of Trust* pointed out, 'Prime Ministers Blair and Howard come from opposite sides of the partisan fence, but they share this longing for pre-eminence'.[2] Tony Blair and John Howard shared the same period of time in office, and maintained dominant leadership stances: ascendant individuals, who centralised and accumulated power resources to symbolise the governments they led.

Ten years is a reasonable length of time to assess the impact and leadership style of the two men. Blair just made it to his ten year anniversary before choosing to step down after constant pressure from his Chancellor, while Howard fought and lost a fifth election in November 2007 (at the age of 68), after 11 years in power. Howard and Blair both grappled with the leadership succession issue. Howard entered the election in 2007 with a commitment not to fight another one and step down during the term of office in favour of his Treasurer. In the event it did not matter as he was defeated by a resurgent Australian Labor party (ALP), and also faced the ignominy of losing his parliamentary seat.

The idea that leaders matter is not new. Thatcher, Reagan, Hawke and Fraser were all dominant and perceptively strong leaders. Political leadership, in the case of these two prime ministers, is not just a function of government. Strong leadership as exemplified by Blair and Howard goes beyond structure. Both men developed autonomous relationships with the executive, the party and the electorate. There is evidence that voters vote less for parties and more for leaders as cleavage politics has broken down[3]. The Australian political psychologist Graham Little gave weight to the notion of the autonomous leader:

> 'The strong leader should look as if he comes from outside structure, that he is more alive, brave and purposeful than his social learning and role performance could have made him. His assertiveness should appear comfortable and important to him, a vital underpinning of his commitment to order[4].

Blair and Howard can both be seen in this light; though plainly different in style and personality, their premierships were autonomous and personalised. Strong leaders are inclined to dominate using tough moralistic rhetoric, hostility towards enemies, refusing to compromise and insisting on decisive action, anything else is a sign of weakness.[5] Blair took on oppositional forces throughout his

leadership - often those within his own party (for example, rewriting of Clause IV of the Labour party constitution) - with relish. His refrain was constantly that his action was the *right thing to do*[6]. Howard took to task the liberal intelligentsia in a culture war on political correctness in Australia, and employed an uncompromising stance towards asylum seekers. Using Blair and Howard as case studies, their leadership can be put into context, combining the impact of individual leadership style and structural change. Strangio and Walter conceptualise Howard's dominance as the 'unhappy convergence of the systemic and the singular'.[7] Blair, backed with the authority of a large electoral mandate, had replaced a discredited and tired government. His stock was high and his personal political capital strong. He had to establish the institutional capacity to support him, but was well placed to do so. Howard had to establish his political authority (he removed several departmental heads early and over time shaped the bureaucracy to his leadership). He did so with successive electoral victories, but had at his disposal a powerful executive (a Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and a well established private office available to him).

This article makes four comparative arguments on contemporary political leadership. First, there is a strong case for considering political leadership in systemic and individual terms. Second, character, style and personality are important variables in assessing leadership. Third, the prime minister as party leader is both empowered and constrained. Fourth, the contemporary prime minister in these two countries acts increasingly as an autonomous agent. In conclusion:

- Blair and Howard both demonstrated 'strong leadership', encompassing a tough, moralistic, uncompromising stance.
- Both leaders became autonomous agents, reaching beyond the executive, and party to engage directly with the electorate.
- Personality, control, and public projection combine to establish leaders as predominant forces in the extra-executive environment.
- Though agency (and the power to influence) is important, prime ministerial power is still contingent on location, relation, environment and events.

1. Political Leadership

Leaders as prime ministers not only have an impact on individuals and the institutions that govern them, but also on wider aspects of social life and even beyond domestic borders. Jim Walter draws attention to the tension between the liberal and democratic strands in liberal democracy, in that leadership does not fit into either the liberal perspective of individual rights and freedoms or the democratic perspective of collective decision-making.[8] The issue is dealt with by attempting to constrain leadership in liberal democracies; checks and balances attempt to limit powerful individuals. Yet powerful individuals can shape and stretch existing institutions and loosen the shackles.[9] Much that makes these individuals powerful comes from beyond the formal institutional or executive arena. It may be strength and type of personality, use of communication tools

and image projection. It may be dominance of (and beyond) the traditional political party.

In contrast to the burgeoning study of leadership in other disciplines, political science has been slow to make systemic analyses of political leadership[10]. The keenness of scholars to concentrate on institutions and structures has led to a downplaying of the role of leadership. Prime ministers in particular are viewed as constrained actors; dependent and contingent[11]. Comparative angles have often been lacking in a sub-field generally dominated by American work (understandably given the presidential system). Ludger Helms emphasised this point.

> Sophisticated studies on prime ministerial leadership styles, in particular those trying explicitly to develop an internationally comparative perspective, have remained rather thin on the ground.[12]

Scholarly work on prime ministers has tended to be dominated by institutionalists, understanding and explaining the role of the prime minister in the core executive. This approach, seeing the role of the British prime minister through a collective prism as one actor among many, has dominated the literature. The absence of a developed body of scholarly work on the prime minister and a systemic framework for studying the position may be a hangover from the British political preoccupation with the perceived demise of cabinet government.

The Australian prime minister has similarly suffered from a lack of systemic scholarly study. As one would expect in a country that inherited parliamentary democracy from Britain in the 1850s, the debate has been framed with reference to the British cabinet government argument. Pat Weller views this debate as 'unsatisfactory', presenting unrealistic and polarised concepts of political power. The gap has been filled somewhat in Britain in the Blair years, but in Australia detailed study of the 'forms, institutions and conventions through and by which political power is exercised at the centre of government is lacking'.[13]

The interactionist approach to studying leadership helps, 'characterised by the attempt to account for personal and systemic variables that have an impact on overall leadership':

> From this perspective, political leaders operate within an environment that constrains their freedom of action and shapes their ambitions and behaviour. However leaders are not considered to be hostages of the system. Rather they are seen as being able to influence their environment and leave their specific mark on the system.[14]

Similarly Robert Elgie points out that 'the extent to which political leaders are able to influence the decision-making process is considered to be contingent upon the interaction between the leader and the leadership environment in which

the leader operates.'[15] This is a theme echoed by Bell, Hargrove and Theakston's 'skill in context' model which enables scholars to 'assess the relative importance of personal political skill in policy achievement in relation to contextual factors'. The theoretical premise is that 'it is possible to compare political leaders within and across institutions to ask about the conditions under which individuality makes a difference'.[16]

This approach blends the institutional or systemic with the personal as a means to understand and explain political leadership. Since power is derived from both of these aspects it is the combination of the two that shapes the level of predominance.

> Predominance grants the prime minister the 'potential' for leadership within the government, but only when personal power resources are married with institutional power resources, and when the prime minister is able to use both wisely and well.[17]

Within this context we can describe both Blair and Howard as 'predominant' prime ministers who lent themselves well to comparative analysis. Both personalised and dominated as leaders and predominance gives us a framework within which to analyse.

Predominance derives from this judicious use of personal and institutional power. Richard Heffernan identifies the following personal power resources : reputation, skill and ability; association with actual or anticipated political success; public popularity; and high standing in his or her party. Institutional power resources identified by Heffernan include the following: being the legal head of the government; agenda setting through leadership of the cabinet and cabinet committee system and Whitehall; strengthening Downing Street and the Cabinet Office (the centre); agenda setting through news media management.

The combination and use of power resources is therefore essential to understanding contemporary prime ministerial predominance. It locates the research within acknowledged core executive studies and draws on newer concepts of presidentialisation.[18] This provides a framework for understanding what predominance is, and how to recognise it.[19] Heffernan developed his framework based on the British premier, but his work also provides a comparative basis for understanding prime ministerial predominance in similar countries.

2. Character, Style and Personality

Political leaders use and stretch the power resources available and individual character, style and personality are factors. James Barber's study of US Presidents argued that personality shaped presidential performance, whereby

> … the degree and quality of a President's emotional involvement are powerful influences on how he defines the issue itself, how much attention he pays to it, which facts and persons he sees as relevant to its resolution, and finally, what principles and purposes he associates with the issue.[20]

Character relates to the moral or mental qualities and attributes that define an individual, but as Barber points out it comes from the Greek word to stamp, impress or engrave. So how much does the character of the leader come to the fore to affect, shape and influence political leadership?

Character is not an easy concept to pin down; it can be highly subjective. The following exchange from ABCs *Four Corners* programme (19 February 1996) on the eve of John Howard's election as prime minister is instructive.

> *Q. How would you describe yourself?*
> *A. As a person somebody very much with quintessential Australian values. I'm direct, I'm unpretentious and I'm pretty dogged and I hope I've got a capacity to laugh at myself and not take myself too seriously.*
> *Q. So if you chose three words, they'd be?*
> *A. I hope... I'd like to be seen as an average Australian bloke. I can't think of... I can't think of a nobler description of anybody than to be called an average Australian bloke.*
> *Q. Is an average Australian bloke the sort of bloke who's going to be prime minister of Australia?*
> *A. But people can have other qualities than just being described as an average Australian bloke. I think you've got to have a combination of identifying somebody, but also respecting in them certain values.*
> *Q. What do you see as your leadership qualities?*
> *A. I think I'm seen as trustworthy. I'm seen as having determination and persistence and I'm seen as having a capacity to reach achievable answers to difficult issues.*

This exchange, viewed in the context of an election campaign, shows the difficulty in separating true character from image and again from political values. Here Howard set out his stall as appealing to the broad Australian voter, as one of them. Does this view of himself truly reflect his character and have an impact on his leadership? In eleven years we can see how his identification as an ordinary, trustworthy Australian became an integral part of his premiership. He was regarded by some commentators as a pragmatist who was legitimised by his identification with the public will, as a leader who symbolised an 'Australian way of life'.[21]

Howard was widely recognised as a practitioner, uninterested in broad abstractions or questions of system and process. He sought to redefine Australian values to align the public with his own view of the Australian core. This needs to be understood in the context of the Keating premiership whereby Australia's history and place in the world was the subject of much angst and debate. Howard as the constitutional monarchist has been the embodiment of

conservative values to some, and indeed this (albeit narrow) view influenced the more traditional aspects of his premiership. In the run up to the 2001 federal election, he took a hard line on asylum-seekers attempting to gain entry to Australia stating Australia's 'undoubted right to decide who comes here and in what circumstances'. Howard's philosophy also had a major bearing on his leadership. 'Howard is steeped not just in Australian Liberal rhetoric, but in the experiences he speaks of: families and small businesses, centred on work and neighbourhood, bounded by a relatively taken-for-granted nationalism'.[22] Howard grew up in a Sydney suburb, went to a state school and then studied law at Sydney University. He practised as a solicitor for several years before entering federal parliament in 1974 at the age of thirty-five.[23] Class, background, and experience though may not be such obvious markers of leadership as once they were. Adams describes Howard as 'an enigma' and identifies eight different competing and complementary views of the man in office. Howard can be viewed as the ruthless politician, the tough hard-hearted conservative, the suburban solicitor, the 'believer', the leader governing for all of Australia as Menzies successor, the ally of America, the man in the polls, and as presidential.[24] *Australian* journalist Denis Shanahan narrows it down to two Howards. One is a caricature, routinely lambasted and derided by commentators as a divisive, poll-driven, out of touch, conservative. The other is a more complex and successful Howard in tune with and responding to the Australian people. Similarly Howard's biographers Wayne Errington and Peter Van Onselen talked of 'many Howards', Howard was, accordingly, widely underestimated and misunderstood. Such a multiplicity of analysis perhaps demonstrates that modern political leaders are much written about, but little systemic analysis is actually produced. In general there is too much focuson the individual and not enough 'thinking beyond and around' or putting the 'skill in context'.

Similarly, Blair proved difficult to pigeonhole. He has been described as both everything and nothing. Skidelsky likens him to Keynes' description of Lloyd George as '…rooted in nothing; he is void and without content; he is an instrument and a player at the same time'.[25] Often regarded as a chameleon politician, much of the New Labour project rested on Blair's broad personal appeal and importantly his lack of Labour party baggage. In contrast to Howard, biographical study of Blair is rich and historical journalists have shown a certain fascination with his leadership. Seldon identifies what he calls Blair's ten defining character traits which again demonstrate, as with Howard, the difficulty in nailing the character of the individual. These are in fact more defining characteristics of Blair's premiership than personal traits. Two of these relate to the context within which Blair led – the cumulative influence of events; and luck. Three refer to Blair's style of leadership: the influence of key individuals; a lack of considered policy-making; decision-making among a tight-knit, informal group. The remaining five refer more specifically to his personal character: his understanding of British political history; as barrister-actor; as conciliator; his energy and physical stamina; and his religious conviction.[26] Blair was also an enigma. Like Howard he had a legal background, as a barrister, but his education at a fee-paying Edinburgh school and Oxford, represented a more traditional (though not

necessarily Labour) route to the top. Attention is often drawn to the moral and religious conviction that has underpinned Blair's life. It came to the fore most notably in Blair's second term of office, one dominated by foreign policy issues. 'He conceptualises the world as a struggle between good and evil in which his particular vocation is to advance the former' says Seldon, who suggested this conviction has led to a greater decisiveness on the international stage than domestically[27].

Some political leaders may 'steer a course towards 'high' politics (defence, foreign policy, constitutional reform) and away from 'low' politics' (domestic affairs – education, health, law and order). Writing before Blair's period of office Elgie noted:

> 'These areas reinforce the statecraft aspect of the leader's role. They emphasise the difference between the status of Presidents and Prime ministers and that of other members of the government. They also usually provide good photo opportunities and a chance to escape the low-life intrigue of party politics'.[28]

Blair though has been most often characterised as the 'barrister-actor'. His legal training and, albeit limited, acting career (as a student), combined to make him a powerful persuader and an impressive public speaker. Presentation and single-minded belief have been hallmarks of his public persona, (though he will be the first to state that leadership is about demonstrating strength of resolve and character). Displays of humility were rare, as for Blair any demonstrations of weakness were signs of poor leadership.[29]

Blair needs to be understood within the context of his ascent to the top. Eighteen years out of office had convinced the architects of New Labour that Labour that once elected the party needed to embrace the centre ground, occupy it and then not withdraw from it, convinced that governments ruling from the left could never be re-elected. Blair, a product of a soundly middle class upbringing and not wedded to party factions had the appeal and public profile to succeed. So the seeds of an essentially ideology-free party were sown with this pursuit of lasting electoral success, with the unencumbered Blair at the helm. Blair's leadership was essential for the New Labour project, according to the architects Mandelson and Little, and his personality in creating an unapologetically strong centre was crucial.

> 'Like Mrs Thatcher, Tony Blair has a clear idea of what he wants, he is impatient when others do not have the courage or imagination to go along with him, and he does not let up once he has resolved on a way forward'.[30]

Circumstance and events combined to propel both Blair and Howard to the top position. Character traits are then clearly reflected in the style of governing, the legal approach, the moral strand, the oratory. Religious conviction linked the two

leaders, though image and politics separated them. Yet these are nothing without supporting structures and supporters willing to put faith in the leader.

Leadership styles vary across time and space. In Australia, Encel's early characterisation of prime ministers as either 'larrikins' or 'prima donnas' demonstrates a less complicated description of leadership patterns. Maddox provided a more sophisticated typology dividing Australian prime ministers into initiators, protectors and maintainers, with the last category he suggested as the most successful.[31] Howard, in the tradition of most Liberal leaders would be a maintainer, preserving stability. His style tended towards the managerial, uninspiring in speeches, but focused and efficient in running his cabinet. Avoiding the long-term vision and rhetoric of the initiator, his style was less dynamic and more conservative. He fashioned an image of extreme ordinariness, his rhetoric was always sober and measured. He looked and often acted like a bank manager. Yet his decade in power was marked by considerable political rupture. He took on the unions, displayed indifference to Australia's troubled indigenous people, escaped responsibility for the 'children overboard affair', followed the US into Iraq, and endured the Australian Wheat Board bribery scandal. Although he managed to connect with a large section of the electorate (the so called 'Howard battlers') he polarised opinion and created an angry group of critics from across the political spectrum.

Blair by contrast preferred the informal, was impatient with bureaucratic transparency and accountability and uninterested in collegial government. He traded on dynamic rhetoric, constantly initiating, and persuading through oratory. If Howard was old and more ordinary, Blair was young and visionary. Blair had his critics who became, post-Iraq, more personal and vitriolic, but he did not create the political divide more evident under Howard. Both followed the US into Iraq, but while Blair was morally convinced of the case, Howard (always more cautious) did not commit significant troop numbers. However both leaders developed strong political centres to provide institutional capacity and maximise the use of powerful executives in bending the legislature and cabinet colleagues to accept an individualised policy agenda.

3. Prime Minister as Party Leader

The issue of how parties select their leaders is important, but so too is understanding the priorities and perceptions of the electorate and the ties of patronage, ideology and friendship. Blair's emergence and election as party leader and then prime minister is well documented.[32] Only 20 days passed between the death of Labour leader John Smith and the announcement that Blair's long time political friend Gordon Brown would not stand in the leadership election. This left the way clear for Blair to assume the leadership. Many accounts of this pivotal moment in Labour party politics exist, covering what may or not may have been agreed in the frenetic meetings between the two men.[33] Blair had built up such a lead in the polls (particularly as the candidate most likely

to win the next election) and was so far ahead of the other candidates, Prescott and Beckett, as to make his election a formality. In the electoral college vote, Blair secured 57 percent of the total vote, 60.5 percent of MPs and MEPs, 58.2 percent of party members and 52.3 per cent of trade unionists. Blair had gained a significant majority in all sections, even the trade union college where he had the support of only two leaders of the Labour-affiliated trade unions.[34]

Blair was only 41 when he assumed the party leadership and had entered parliament only 11 years earlier. The way he emerged as leader was instructive. Together with Brown, he had been planning reform of the party for some time; he displayed a level of opportunism, and quickly reached out beyond the constituency that elected him, to establish his credentials.[35] As Tom Quinn notes, 'those intra-party actors entitled to participate generally choose leaders they believe will benefit them, whether that means improving the party's election prospects or adopting a given policy platform'.[36] The context was of course successive electoral defeats and a weak, divided opposition.

Leadership of the Labour party confers a great level of power, patronage, and control of the party and of policy in government. Until 1981 the leader was elected in a secret ballot by fellow MPs but the electoral college system, designed to build greater links between the leader and the party, established a wider franchise and accountability. However the 1993 reforms, which included the rise in nomination threshold to 20 per cent and the end of the union block vote, made the costs of entry for potential leadership challengers high. Mindful of the damaging effects of leadership contests (for leader and deputy) in Labour's recent past, the incumbent's position was made secure. The legitimacy of being elected by single members also gave Blair an authority and connection that transcended the traditional trade union support.

John Howard's passage to the top could not have been more different or indeed more tortuous, but in a similar way it shaped his experience as prime minister. Judith Brett calls the power of the leader of the parliamentary party the third organising principle in the Liberal party (the first two being control of the parliamentary party over the formation of party policy and a strong federal structure). The parliamentary party has sole control over the election of the leader. In the aftermath of the Menzies era the Liberal party discarded four leaders between 1966 and 1975. Stability came with Malcolm Fraser's tenure, but following his resignation in 1983 the party then had five different leaders before John Howard's second stint in 1995. The Liberal party has always been a leadership party which depends on a leader. The story of the Liberal party demonstrates the importance of 'strong leadership' to the party's fortunes

> The Liberal Party has been politically successful when it has had an electorally successful leader, who has been able to give cohesion and direction to the party. [.] The party's periods of difficulty have been marked by destructive conflicts over leadership.[37]

Howard led the party for a brief period during the turbulent 1980s, but lost the 1987 election. His standing in the polls was so low he was dubbed 'Mr 18 per cent' and after losing two leadership election contests he himself memorably declared that a return to lead the Liberal party would be akin to 'Lazarus with triple bypass.' The Liberal party was deeply divided. Howard, representing the 'wets' had blundered as leader (on Asian immigration in 1988) and engaged in an ongoing battle with rival Andrew Peacock. So the party appeared desperate when it turned to him yet again in January 1995 following Peacock and his successor John Hewson's failure and Alexander Downer's disastrous stint. In contrast to the formalised manner in which the British Labour party now selects its leaders, with a wide and clearly defined constituency, the Liberal party of Australia concentrates the franchise in the federal parliamentary party, termed the caucus. Liberal party rules are not specific on the election of leaders; the only reference in its constitution to the how the leader is selected is as follows:

> *52. The Parliamentary Party shall:-*
> *(a) appoint its Leader, who shall thereupon become the Parliamentary Leader of the Organisation;*

Voting and nomination procedures are not apparent or publicly available. The process is fluid and candidates emerge from the group, testing support before putting themselves forward to challenge incumbents or fill a vacancy. The Australian Labor party also selects its leaders from the parliamentary caucus, but its leader is bound by party policy and has much less autonomy. It is noticeable that while the election of party leaders has been widened to incorporate the party membership of all three main parties in Britain, Australia still concentrates its leadership selection within the parliamentary parties.

After the period of Liberal party strife it seemed the party had nowhere else to turn but to Howard as 'the last man standing'. Howard was elected unopposed in 1995, with Peter Costello elected unopposed as his deputy. He had the opportunity to learn from his previous tenure as party leader, and from the mistakes made not only by himself but also by the other leaders. His ascent could not have been more markedly different from Blair's: experience against youth (Howard was 57 in 1996, Blair 44). Most leaders come to office having had a taste of government: Blair of course had no ministerial experience; Howard on the other hand had been a junior minister and then Treasurer from 1977 until 1983, in Malcolm Fraser's government. Errington and Van Onselen cite Howard's wilderness years in opposition as shaping the pragmatism, tenacity and political ruthlessness he demonstrated as prime minister.[38]

The route to leadership of the party may demonstrate Howard's persistence and Blair's opportunism, but they would have proved to be mere historical footnotes without the ensuing parliamentary electoral victories. These cemented intra and extra executive authority in the individual leader as a party asset. Indeed with the value of hindsight we can now see how crucial the electoral victories in 1996 in 1997 established Howard and Blair's leadership credentials and defined their

premierships. Howard achieved a big swing in 1996 against the unpopular Keating government to establish a solid parliamentary majority in the House of Representatives. His first term was a troubled one, but despite running a campaign based on the introduction of a goods and services tax (the GST - a broad-based value-added tax), and losing the two party-preferred vote to Labor, the Liberal-National Coalition held on in 1998[39]. The 2001 election was dominated by security (Howard was in the US on 11 September) and asylum (the government refused permission for the *MV Tampa* ship carrying asylum seekers to enter Australian waters). The Coalition subsequently increased its majority and registered the biggest swing to an incumbent government since 1966. The 2004 election pitted Howard against the erratic Mark Latham, with Howard's leadership and economic management proving decisive in his fourth election victory. Securing control of the Senate was an added bonus that year.

With a longer electoral cycle, Blair's huge victory in 1997 gave him the platform to win again in 2001. Only in 2005 did his unpopularity begin to bite, with his majority cut by 100 seats to 66. In common with Howard, Blair faced a weak opposition with a succession of leaders throughout his premiership. Yet in both countries the opposition re-established itself. Renewal through a change of leader initially helped Blair's successor Gordon Brown, but Howard was undone seeking a fifth term. He had misread the mood of the country and his leadership, previously his strongest card, became his weakness when confronted by a new opponent. Kevin Rudd shifted the ALP towards Howard's territory, describing himself as an economic conservative and campaigning on the need for new leadership.

Blair and Howard both headed parties that are be considered 'catch all' parties, whereby ideology is dampened to broaden appeal. Furthermore, both the British Labour party and Australian Liberal party are pragmatic parties, interested in adopting policies that will bring them to power and maintain them in power. The evolution of the parties has seen the Liberal party conform to Panebianco's classification as an electoral-professional party, eclipsing the rival ALP's slow movement in this direction.[40] The appeal, based on a continuous and coordinated market research strategy and projection of image of the party leader in the media, saw the British Labour party evolve under Blair's leadership, while the British Conservative party played catch up.

Paul Kelly, writing specifically on Australian parties, goes as far as to state that without executive power the major parties not only look weak, but 'unviable'.[41] Parties need electoral success, and the problems suffered by the Liberals between 1983 and 1996 and the ALP since 1996, illustrate this vividly. The Australian Liberal party is particularly dependent on being in office and consequently gives the leader much autonomy. The parliamentary party has the power to choose and remove leaders, but beyond that authority is vested in the leader, until he fails or looks likely to. It helps that the legislature is small with only 150 House of Representative members and 76 in the Senate. The parliamentary party in Howard's final term was therefore made up of 74 members

from the lower house and 33 senators, constituting a 'party room' (the term used to describe the parliamentary party) of 107. Contrast this with the current number of Labour MPs in the British House of Commons (353 out of total legislature of 646). Even for a party renowned for its discipline and party management, it is no surprise that Howard was able to run a much tighter ship than Blair.

The Liberal party 'places great importance on leadership; on the need for Parliament to lead the nation, on the need for Cabinet to lead the Parliament, on the need for its own leader to lead the party'.[42] Dissent under Howard was rare (generally confined to the party room) and unity maintained. Treasurer and rival Costello had experienced and capable supporters who were not rewarded with ministerial positions (such as Petro Georgiou). Indeed when three members including Georgiou voted against the government in protest at measures to process asylum seekers offshore in August 2006 it was a unique event. It led Howard to withdraw the proposal in the Senate. Howard was a careful manager of his rivals; he gave room in cabinet for discussion, but denied potential challengers any power base. He engaged with the party room to keep the numbers in his favour at all times. He only pushed ahead with politically difficult issues when he could be certain of winning the political battle (as with the introduction of the GST). Indeed for Howard each day as prime minister was a mini political battle to be won. Having worked so hard to gain the position he was not prepared to give it up easily.

Blair never felt the need to massage and consult with the party through the parliamentary mechanism. Former Cabinet Minister Robin Cook commented in his diaries in 2002 'The danger for Tony [Blair] is that the sole reason he has retained the affection and support of the party is because he has delivered phenomenal popularity for the party. The risk is that if he ever loses that popularity, there will be no other reason left for the party to give him their support'[43]. Blair came to power as the unchallenged Labour party leader. Party constraints on the leadership had been loosened prior to 1997. The drive to increase membership did not compromise the autonomy of the leadership, indeed it may have enhanced it. As Peter Mair has pointed out the activist level in the party, which is traditionally the more troublesome, becomes marginalised by the influx of 'ordinary new members more likely to adopt the leadership's position'[44]. The impact of Blair's dominance of the party on a structural and personal level has been a largely compliant party. Yet over time as the parliamentary majorities fell from 179 in 1997 to 166 in 2001 and then 67 in 2005, so did Blair's authority over the party. Intra-party power and authority enabled both Howard and Blair to build a platform to project a public profile that sustained them in the public eye and distanced them from political rivals and the political party in general.

4. Prime Minister as Autonomous Agent

Leadership is relational, a process of interaction with followers. Without supporters, followers, and indeed voters, a leader's tenure will not survive. Dependency and interaction may be important but, as Poguntke and Webb suggest, so too is autonomy for the leader. If this is the case the leader's power (in majoritarian systems) is contingent on tolerance of the party. Parties will tend to tolerant as long as the leader appears an electoral asset.

Being an electoral asset means reaching out as an individual with a defined public profile. During election campaigns this relates to an increased focus on the leader at the expense of the general profile of the party agenda. Ian McAllister, after analysing Australian public opinion poll data from 1973 to 2003, concluded that

> The results emphasise the extent to which the leader has absorbed the functions once exercised by the party, a pattern now familiar across other advanced democracies'.[45]

Public opinion here acts as a useful barometer over time. Although a rather blunt instrument, the graph below plots the two leaders' popularity fluctuations over the past ten years. The graph demonstrates the unprecedented high Blair maintained in office in his early years, while Howard struggled to convince the public early on. The dip for Blair in September 2000 relates to the fuel protests, which paralysed the country and represented Blair's first real test in government. Howard's dip in 2001 was the result of a series of electoral losses, the effects of introduction of the GST, and then later in that year the 'children overboard affair'. Both leaders saw a surge in popularity following the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in the US. Blair's ratings fell away again dramatically after this date, only bouncing back once troops were committed to Iraq in 2003. Howard also gets a 'support the troops' bounce, but settled into a more consistently positive level of approval. The poll data shows the impact (both positive and negative) of the same external shocks and demonstrates the relatively stable positive ratings of Howard compared to the downward trend of Blair over the same period of time. However almost inevitably Howard's ratings in common with Blair fell after June 2006 right up to the election in November 2007, seemingly out of step with Australian public opinion on climate change, industrial relations, indigenous affairs, and Iraq.

Blair and Howard 97-05: Approval Ratings
Source: MORI and Newspoll
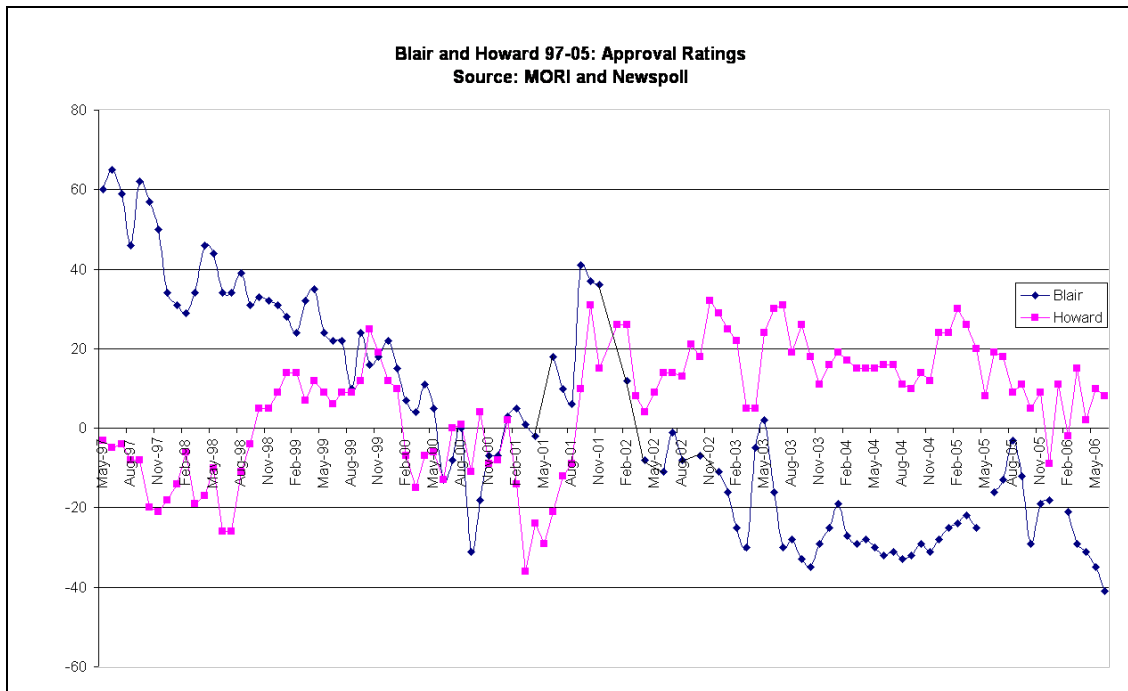
Leaders matter, not only in election campaigns, but at other times. The leader is held responsible for policy decisions, presents them and justifies them. Leaders are the public face of the government and as such gain from government successes, but suffer when government fails. Michael Foley describes this propulsion of leaders into the public arena and away from government as 'spatial leadership' and asserts that the possession of a public identity is a political resource in its own right.[46] Whilst the development of a strong public profile for prime ministers is not new (Thatcher for instance was assiduous in cultivating a relationship with voters that went beyond that of the party leader, and Hawke was a ground-breaking example of a prime minister with the 'personal touch'), it has been taken to a new level in recent years. The greater the public identity: the more powerful the political resource. The contemporary context is well described by Heffernan: 'An interest in political celebrity, backed by an ever more prevalent interest in process journalism, magnifies the modern prime minister, placing him or her centre stage in key political processes'.[47]

Electoral analysis has generally downplayed the influence of party leaders in British elections. Contrary to the perceived wisdom in the media, and amongst politicians themselves, Tony King contested that 'the personality of leaders and candidates mattered a lot less and a lot less often, in elections than is usually supposed'.[48] Yet political scientists have not been deterred in looking for leadership effects. After considering the experiences of thirteen country case studies Poguntke and Webb concluded that 'leader-centred election campaigning and media coverage have generally been both increasing, or starting from comparatively high levels in most cases'[49]. Furthermore they suggest that leader effects on voters do appear to be significant and increasing, as in an age of competitive elections voters are now less constrained by stable party loyalties

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and are freer to base their voting on the personal and political qualities of leaders. Earlier quantitative work, using British Election Survey data argued that leadership evaluations remained highly significant even after other variables (including party identification), have been taken into account.[50] In Australia, studies based on survey data collected in the 1970s and 1980s concluded that leaders do indeed have independent effects on the vote above and beyond what voters feel about the parties.[51] Though leadership effects can be both positive and negative, they are strongest when leaders are conceptualised as autonomous electoral forces. In an era of 'valence politics' where there is a broad agreement on the end to be pursued (lower crime and corruption, more peace and prosperity), leaders are the unique point on which voters will choose.

With Australia's shorter electoral cycle (three years), the ability to maintain the 'permanent campaign' whilst in office and exploit the benefits of incumbency is crucial. Howard's discipline and attention to detail made him well placed to exploit such a political environment. It was the perception of Howard's determination and strength that allowed him to score relatively high popular approval ratings despite seeming to pursue unpopular policies. This approval rating was facilitated by weak voter attachment, enhancing the role of the leader who can now 'stand in' for parties, representing issues, integrating interests and mobilising opinion. Bean and McAllister, in their assessment of the 2004 federal election, concluded that popular perceptions of party leaders were much more important than socio-economic issues in the campaign. The high personal popularity of John Howard therefore counted for a great deal. Bean and McAllister suggest that the effects of the Iraq war were mediated by voters' evaluations of Howard. So his autonomous position, personally associating himself with the policy blunted its negative effects.[52]

Blair too, swiftly developed this deliberate relationship with the electorate, albeit over a longer electoral cycle. In both the 1997 and 2001 election campaigns the leader was central to the message that party strategists were seeking to convey to the electorate. Blair proved particularly adept at utilising this shift towards television-based, personality-centred campaigning, and exemplified the move from the partified to the presidential in terms of style. This autonomy can prove to have negative effects too. By making the Iraq war such a personal matter for Blair, he suffered as the above graph demonstrates. He had approached the war with a personal zeal, convinced that he was right, personalising the decision and limiting his advice structures to small groups of confidents. He went on the front foot personally to persuade the public and Labour party in the face of considerable opposition – whilst he won parliamentary support only with the opposition votes his authority was dented.

Howard developed a personal dialogue with the public, not by preaching or hectoring, but by identifying himself with 'ordinary' Australians. He regularly appeared on radio talk shows, his morning power walk became a national symbol of his leadership, and he would muse on anything Australian from swimmer Ian Thorpe's retirement to the price of bananas. Yet, Howard had by the end of his

premiership become isolated, cabinet rivals openly plotted against him conscious that he had become a liability as leader. The distance he had placed between himself and his political rivals came back to haunt him. Cabinet, his source of strength, was even sidelined (most notably on an A$10bn water plan for the Murray-Darling basin).

These leadership effects rely on communication to project and promote the prime minister. The modern prime minister can use 'his resources of public communication – his media management offices, his media access and his public reputation - to turn authority into power, over events, people and policies'.[53] Both Howard and Blair developed a shrewd understanding of how the media can work in their favour. Institutionalised media management capacity was not as extensive and pervasive under Howard although the media unit in the Prime Minister's Office was 'the largest ever assembled by an Australian prime minister'.[54] Blair and Howard operated in different media climates. For Blair the relationship with the key print media titles (and their proprietors) was crucial, for Howard his relationship with talkback radio grew to define his media strategy in reaching beyond the Canberra press gallery.[55] It allowed him to 'address an older, more conservative audience which he regards as his natural constituency' and circumvent the specialist political journalists to speak directly to voters.[56]

Blair showed a similar desire to reach out directly to voters without the message being channelled by the main, Westminster-based, print or broadcast media. This autonomous relationship had a two-fold aim; to strengthen the prime minister's authority over his or her colleagues by an enhanced public profile and to set the government's agenda. As Heffernan notes, 'political communications offer an already strong prime minister an additional means of expanding intra-governmental power this has been a particular feature of the Blair premiership, the circumvention of collegial constraints in parliamentary government'. The media is used in a coordinated fashion to trail policy, 'interpret' speeches and announcements, and as an informal conduit.

Howard by contrast ran a tight ship and although considerable use of media advisers was made, the level of briefing, leaking and media management was small in comparison. The shorter electoral cycle in Australia, puts a greater imperative on constant news management. Senior Australian journalist Michelle Grattan has acknowledged Howard as 'an extraordinarily activist and canny media operator, always out there, visible, with something to say, in forums of his choosing, on everything', but she lamented the way 'a modern government operates like a powerful hose, designed to get the message out in a forceful, directed and managed way' and described the Howard method as 'intimidation and favouritism'.[57]

Public projection for the leader therefore points two ways, establishing the machinery and channelling 'the message' through the formalised media on the one hand and reaching out above and beyond the traditional outlets on the other hand. Both of these approaches emanate from the centre and can be identified in

the Blair and Howard premierships. These are essentially institutionalised features of prime ministerial power, however it is the personal ability to utilise these resources that may (but may not) give prime ministers critical predominance. Even so not matter how well a prime minister marshals news media resources, if they are unpopular and weak they will remain so. And as the experience of Blair and Howard has shown, once personal political becomes diminished it is hard to recover.

Conclusion: Excessive Leadership?

The prevailing view of the core executive in Westminster systems emphasises interdependent networks at the core of the executive[58]. Such analysis sees leaders not as unfettered, but constrained by new informal mechanisms and accountable in a system of governance, whereby power is relational and diffused. Indeed in a 'hollowed out state' prime ministers may have less power as decision making is located elsewhere. Blair was often portrayed as frustrated by his inability to progress the New Labour agenda domestically, while he could assert his will in foreign affairs. However constrained he may have been domestically; his autonomous actions in foreign affairs (on Iraq in particular) eroded both his public standing and support within the Labour party.

The power of a prime minister may indeed be locational and relational depending on others and the structural resources; but power and authority is now increasingly found in the agency rather than the institution of the prime minister. The trend identified by Webb, McAllister and others is for a greater centralisation of institutional power, particularly as much decision making is located elsewhere (sub-national level, international level, non-governmental). McAllister believes that the change or trend is gradual and in some cases outweighed by the personalities involved.[59] Blair bolstered policy capacity at the centre (units across Downing Street and the Cabinet Office and an emphasis on delivery), while Howard strengthened cabinet structures (the Cabinet Policy Unit and Cabinet Implementation Unit). Both leaders increased external, contestable (and often politicised) advice - largely through greater numbers of ministerial advisers. So the personality of the leader is a strong determinant.

Three factors drive the collection of personal prime ministerial resources in the two cases; strength of character, control of (and autonomy from) the party, and public projection. Within these three drivers there are overlapping contextual themes: interaction, events and techniques. Strong leaders are not dictators and interaction with colleagues, followers and the public is the key to gaining authority and trust. Events have shaped these two leaders in the way they have committed themselves to the security agenda post September 11, and their involvement in military action in various arenas. Techniques of leadership are now well established and essential for modern successful election campaigns and media strategies to derive the full benefits of incumbency. In sum,

- Blair and Howard demonstrated 'strong leadership', encompassing a tough, moralistic, uncompromising stance.
- Both leaders became autonomous agents, reaching beyond the executive, party and engaging directly with the electorate.
- Personality, control, and public projection combine to establish leaders as predominant forces in the extra-executive environment.
- Though agency (and the power to influence) is important, prime ministerial power is still contingent on location, relation, environment and events.

In Britain the Blair style of government led to criticism from a range of sources and greater institutional constraints enveloped the prime minister in his third term. Some core elements of the command and control nature of the premiership were questioned. Communications strategy after the Alistair Campbell era came under scrutiny (Phillis Report 2003), while prime ministerial patronage and party funding also came into the spotlight (Phillips Report 2007). In Australia Howard too finally exhausted his political capital, being removed not only from power in November 2007, but also losing his parliamentary seat. He left a Coalition heavily defeated and out of office at both federal and state level. His governing style had enhanced the already considerable power of the executive (particularly as control of the senate after 2004 enabled him to force through unpopular legislation in areas such as industrial relations) and the emphasis on his personal leadership had hollowed out the Liberal party, leaving it in a state of disarray. In both cases many of the institutional changes at the centre that enhanced prime ministerial predominance will survive. Gordon Brown adopted the policy and strategy capacity developed under Blair and Kevin Rudd has shown only limited signs of dismantling the politicised nature of the advisory structures entrenched under Howard. Recognition, though, of the limits of prime ministerial domination which surfaced swiftly after Blair's premiership (particularly with regard to the prime minister's war powers) have not been reflected in Australia to the same extent.[60]

Yet beyond the institutional, leaders clearly still matter, and as Paul Kelly said in relation to Howard 'modest leaders can become giant killers'. In monarchical constitutions such as Britain and Australia, where the monarch plays a role as figurehead only, the leadership of the country is embodied by the prime minister, and the currency placed on these leaders in a mediatised world has increased as institutions such as parties have declined. Walter and Strangio note that as greater expectations are invested in leaders, more extensive responsibilities are delegated to them by parties and the public and they consequently act as 'superheroes'.

The 'Strong Leader' thesis needs revisiting, particularly the strong leader's 'intention to overcome and marginalise contrary views'. Howard and Blair certainly conformed to this predominant view of prime ministers, though ultimately they fell dramatically from office the trend of leader-centric politics shows little sign of diminishing.

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[2] J. Uhr *Terms of Trust: Arguments over Ethics in Australian Government*, UNSW Press 2005, p92.

[3] See in particular, I. McAllister, 'Prime Ministers, Opposition Leaders and Government Popularity in Australia', *Australian Journal of Political Science* Vol 38, No 2 2003.

[4] G Little, *Strong Leadership: Thatcher, Reagan and an Eminent Person*, Oxford University Press 1988.

[5] J. Walter, 'Political Leadership' in Parkin, Summer and Woodward (eds) *Government, Politics, Power and Policy in Australia*, Pearson Education, 2006.

[6] This point is emphasised in David Aaronovitch's interviews with Blair, *The Blair Years* BBC Television, 2 December 2007.

[7] J. Walter and P. Strangio *'No Prime Minister, Reclaiming Politics from Leaders'* UNSW Press 2007.

[8] Walter 2006 op cit.

[9] M. Bennister., 'Tony Blair and John Howard: Comparative Predominance and Institutional Stretch in Britain and Australia', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* forthcoming 2007.

[10] See G. Peele 'Leadership and Politics: A Case for a Closer Relationship?' *Leadership*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 2005, pp187-204 and G. W Jones *West European Prime Ministers*, Frank Cass, 1991.

[11] R. Heffernan, 'Prime ministerial predominance? Core executive politics in the UK.' *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 5(3): 2003.

[12] L Helms, *Presidents, Prime Ministers and Chancellors; executive Leadership in Western Democracies*,: Palgrave Macmillan 2005, p18

[13] P. Weller 'Investigating Power at the Centre of Government: Surveying research on the Australian Executive' *Australian Journal of Public Administration* 64 (1): 35-42 (March 2005) and P. Weller , *Cabinet Government in Australia 1901-2006*, Sydney NSW Press, 2007.

[14] L Helms 2005, op cit p20.

[15] R Elgie, *Political Leadership in Liberal Democracies*, Macmillan 1995, p7.

[16] D Bell, E, Hargrove, and K. Theakston 'Skill in Context: A Comparison of Politicians', *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 29 (3) 1999 pp528-548.

[17] R. Heffernan, 2003 op cit p350.

[18] See in particular T. Poguntke and P. Webb *The Presidentialization of Politics: A Comparative Study of Modern Democracies*. OUP, 2005; A Mughan, *Media and the Presidentialization of Parliamentary Elections* Palgrave, 2000; and M Foley *The Blair Presidency*, Manchester University Press, 2000.

[19] See R. Heffernan 'Exploring (and Explaining) the Prime Minister', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, Volume 7 Number 4 2005, for a full discussion of how the predominance model relates to the existing literature on the British prime minister.

[20] J D., Barber, *The Presidential Character: Predicting Performance in the White House* 4th Edition, Prentice Hall. 1992 p4.

[21] P Kelly, 'How Howard Governs' in N Cater (ed) *The Howard Factor*: A *decade that changed the Nation*, Melbourne University Press 2006, p3; see also J Brett, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class*, Cambridge University Press 2003, p204 on Howard and Australian values.

[22] Brett 2003 op cit p184.

[23] D. Barnett and P Goward, *John Howard: Prime Minister*, Viking Penguin Books, 1997.

[24] D. Adams, 'John Howard as Prime Minister: The Enigma Variations' in Aulich, C and Wettenhall, R., *Howard's Second and Third Governments,* UNSW Press, 2005.

[25] Skidelsky in A. Seldon and D. Kavanagh *The Blair Effect 2001-2005,* Cambridge University Press, 2005 p439.

[26] A.. Seldon, *Blair*, Simon and Schuster, 2005.

[27] Ibid p700 and A Seldon *Blair Unbound* Simon and Schuster 2007

[28] R. Elgie 1995 op cit p9.

[29] The acceptance of Ken Livingstone back into the Labour party for him to run as the London mayoral candidate in 2004, appeared to be a spectacular u-turn after Blair's declaration that Livingstone as mayor would be a disaster prompting him to run and win as an independent. The 2004 decision is more about practical politics (Labour needed a local election win in 2004) than real hubris on Blair's part (former Number 10 aide Lance Price in Michael Cockerell's BBC documentary *Blair: The Inside Story* broadcast 20 February 2007). Also his apology for faulty intelligence on Iraq was left ambiguous and in 2003 he echoed Margaret Thatcher in announcing to Labour party Conference that he had 'no reverse gear'.

[30] P. Mandelson and R. Little *The Blair Revolution: Can New Labour Deliver?* Faber and Faber, 1996.

[31] S. Encel in J. Walter op cit; G Maddox, *Australian Democracy in Theory and* Practice, Longman, 2000, p409.

[32] See Seldon op cit.; J Naughtie, *The Rivals: The Intimate Story of a Political Marriage*, Fourth Estate 2001; A Rawnsley, *Servants of the People: The Inside Story of New Labour*, Penguin 2001.

[33] It is a well rehearsed argument that Brown secured agreement to gain control of large parts of domestic policy and that Blair would stand down to make way for him (see Rawnsley 2001, Naughtie 2001). Much of the subsequent tension in their relationship can be traced back to this informal pre-election pact.

[34] T Quinn, *Modernising the Labour Party: Organisational Change Since 1983*, Palgrave Macmillan 2004a.; T Quinn, 'Electing the Leader: The British Labour Party's Electoral College, *BJPIR* Vol 6 2004b, pp 333-352.

[35] Blair's response to the death of Princess Diana in 1997 so early in his premiership, gave him the opportunity to establish such autonomous credentials which his infamous 'peoples princess' speech did instantly.

[36] Quinn 2004a op cit p122.

[37] J Brett 'The Liberal Party' in Parkin, Summers and Woodward (eds) G*overnment, Politics, Power and Policy in Australia* Frenchs Forest NSW: Pearson 2006 p213.

[38] W. Errington and P Van Onselen *John Winston Howard: The Biography*, Melbourne University Press 2007.

[39] The two-party-preferred vote is the total number of votes received by the two main parties the ALP and the Coalition. These totals are a combination of the primary votes (also known as 'first preference' votes) and the preferences distributed from other candidates. In 2001 the ALP 'won' the two party preferred vote by 50.98% to the Coalition's 49.02%, but lost the federal election.

[40] See O. Kirchheimer 'The Transformation of Western European Party Systems' in J. LaPalombara and M. Weimer (eds), *Political Parties and Political Development,* Princeton University Press 1966; and A. Panebianco *Political Parties: Organisation and Power* Cambridge University Press 1988. See also the case for considering Labour to be an example of the 'Electoral Professional Party' in P Webb 'Election campaigning, professionalisation and the organisational transformation of the British Labour Party' *European Journal of Political Research 21*, (April 1992) pp.267-288.

[41] Kelly op cit p6.

[42] D Jaensch, *Politics of Australia* 2nd Edition, Macmillan, 1997 p274.

[43] R Cook, *Point of Departure,* Simon and Schuster*, 2003,* p79

[44] R Heffernan, and P Webb, 'The British Prime Minister: More Than First Among Equals' in Poguntke, T and Webb, P (eds), *The Presidentialization of Politics: A Comparative Study of Modern Democracies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p47

[45] I. McAllister, 'Prime Ministers, Opposition Leaders and Government Popularity in Australia', *Australian Journal of Political Science* Vol 38, No 2 2003 p259.

[46] Foley op cit p31 and p205. Foley also points out that this public projection of the leader puts distance and autonomy not only from government but from other government ministers 'leadership stretch'. The danger of this is when the leader is perceived to be unpopular and hence a vote-loser. The 2005 Labour party campaign demonstrated this well when Brown's prominence in the campaign rose, while Blair's fell possibly as a result of party strategists viewing the unpopular Blair as a hindrance.

[47] R. Heffernan, *The Prime Minister and the News Media: Political Communication as a Leadership Resource*, Parliamentary Affairs 59(4) Sept 2006.

[48] A. King, *Leaders, Personalities and the Outcome of Democratic Elections*, Oxford University Press, 2002.

[49] Poguntke and Webb op cit p345.

[50] Clarke, Sanders, Stewart and Whiteley in Denver D (2005) 'Valence Politics: How Britain Votes Now' British Journal of Politics and International Relations Volume 7 (2) pp292-299; see also Mughan 2000 op cit.

[51] I. McAllister, *Political Behaviour, Citizens, Parties and Elites in Australia*, Melbourne: Longman Cheshire. 1992; C Bean, and A Mughan,.'Leadership effects in Parliamentary elections in Australia and Britain', *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 83 (4) 1989 pp1165-1179.

[52] C Bean, and I McAllister,. 'Leaders, the Economy or Iraq? Explaining Voting in the 2004 Australian Election', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol 52 No 4 2006 pp604-620.

[53] C. Seymour-Ure, Prime Ministers and the Media: Issues of Power and Control Blackwell Publishing, 2003 p61.

[54] The Media Unit has a staff of eight, comprising a press secretary, a senior media advisor, a media advisor, an assistant media adviser, and four media assistants in A Tiernan, 'Advising Howard: interpreting changes in advisory and support structures for the Prime Minister of Australia' *Australian Journal of Political Science.*Vol.41 No.3 September 2006 pp309-324.

[55] See M Grattan, 'Gatekeepers and Gatecrashers: The Relationship Between Politics and the Media', 38th Alfred Deakin Lecture, 2 May 2005 for a full discussion of Howard's relationship with the Australian media.

[56] I. Ward 'The Media Power and Politics' in Parkin,et al op cit., p373.

[57] Grattan 2005 op cit

[58] See in particular R. A. W. Rhodes, *Transforming British Government*, Macmillan, 2000; M. J Smith,, *The Core Executive in Britain*, Macmillan, 1999; M J Smith, The Core Executive and the Modernisation of Central Government' in Dunleavy, P, Gamble, A. Heffernan, R., and Peele, G., (eds) *Developements in British Politics 7* Palgrave Macmillan, 2003 on the prime minister in the core executive and Heffernan 2003 op cit on its limitations.

[59] I. McAllister, *Political Leaders in Westminster Systems* Discussion Paper RSSS, ANU 2004.

[60] Apart from a joint letter criticising the lack of ministerial accountability and the growth of executive power in Australia by former prime ministers and long time foes Gough Whitlam and Malcolm Fraser, governance issues did not feature in the 2007 federal election campaign. Rudd's appointment of reformer Senator Faulkner as Cabinet Secretary however gave a signal that change may be forthcoming.