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Michael Moran, 1946–2018: An Intellectual Memoir

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Michael Moran's intellectual journey is a remarkable one. Starting from quite a narrow focus on industrial relations in the 1970s, he switched his main research interest to the politics of banking and to changes in financial regulation during the 1980s. In the 1990s he extended this interest in regulation to write about the emergence of the British regulatory state, which culminated in his major publication, *The British Regulatory State: High Modernism and Hyper-Innovation* (Moran 2003). After 2008 he turned his attention to the nature of contemporary capitalism and how it might be reformed. A subsidiary but important second theme was his broad interest in British politics, which led through various publications to a major single-authored textbook, *Politics and Governance in the UK* (Moran 2011), as well as the very successful co-authored text *Politics UK* (Jones et al. 1990) and what turned out to be his valedictory work, *The End of British Politics?* (Moran 2017).

Almost all his writings have Britain as their primary focus, but he studied Britain always through a comparative lens. Britain was his main case study but he was keen to use comparative methods, whether studying its health state or its regulatory state. He always treated developments in Britain as an instance of much broader trends. One of the people who influenced him was Sammy Finer (1997). In a review of Finer's *The History of Government*, Moran described it as 'a vast meditation on the character of human government'. Finer emphasized the role of invention in the institutions and practices of governing, and the ways in which some were dead ends while others were widely copied. Moran also shared with Finer his view that government in the modern sense, 'that intrusive, inescapable and unremitting direction and control' (Moran 1998: 800), is very recent. It had led to the adoption of techniques of penetration, surveillance and information gathering which had shaped the modern world. Moran, like Finer, had a very broad comparative view of the nature of politics and government. There is no insularity in his writing, but at the same time he always shows a remarkable grasp of the particularities and the details of British politics. All his major books have a solid grounding in evidence and a careful sifting of the best available research.

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Intellectual trajectory

Michael (Mick) Moran was born in Smethwick, Birmingham, to Irish working-class immigrants.[1] When he was five his parents returned to Ireland to Co. Clare. Mick grew up in extreme poverty and attended the local Christian Brothers school in Kilrush. His parents returned to Smethwick in 1959 when Mick was 13. He went to the Cardinal Newman School, a secondary modern. Those who attended secondary moderns in that period had little opportunity to develop academically and attend university. The disadvantages he faced make his subsequent success as a leading academic all the more striking. But, helped by a teacher who recognized his latent ability, he secured a place in the sixth form at St Philip's Grammar and achieved the A levels he needed to go to university, where he met his wife Winifred. He read politics and economics at Lancaster, with a subsidiary in mathematics, graduating in 1967 with a first-class degree.

After Lancaster Mick applied to the University of Essex for the MA in political behaviour. His maths subsidiary at Lancaster will have helped him secure a place on this high-flying and very demanding course. At that time among British universities Essex already stood out as a champion of quantitative, rigorous social science. Its Department of Government under the leadership of Jean Blondel modelled itself on leading political science departments in the US and was keen to change the way in which British politics was studied in British universities. The traditional centres of the discipline in the UK, particularly Oxford, the LSE and Manchester, were opposed to political science of the American kind. In 1952 Oxford academics had been key in rejecting the idea that the newly formed association of teachers of politics should be named the Political Science Association. They opted instead for the Political Studies Association.

The MA in political behaviour at Essex was a key part of an emerging *Methodenstreit* in British universities. One of the things Essex believed in, again following the US model, was a much more rigorous postgraduate training programme. The MA was seen as a preparation for doing a PhD. In other universities there was no requirement to complete an MA before embarking on a PhD, and many university lecturers did not have a PhD. The PhD was regarded with some suspicion partly because it was such a core part of US social science training. One of Mick's teachers on the MA was Anthony King, who became and remained an important intellectual influence, supervisor and friend. Moran paid tribute to him in a symposium on King's work (Moran 2018). It was King who suggested Mick should stay on after completing the MA in 1969 and convert his MA project into a PhD. Mick received his doctorate in 1973, but already in 1970 his MA qualification was sufficient to clinch appointment to a lectureship in the Department of Social Science at Manchester Polytechnic. He prospered at Manchester and in 1974, the same year as the publication of his PhD as a monograph, he was promoted to a senior lectureship. He remained at the Polytechnic for another five years but in 1979 an opportunity arose to move to a lectureship in the Department of Government at the University of Manchester. This was to be his home for the rest of his academic career. He was promoted to Senior Lecturer in 1985 and then became the W.J.M. Mackenzie Professor of Government in 1990, which he held until his retirement in 2011. This was one of the most prestigious

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professorships in the discipline. His academic achievements were recognized by his election as a Fellow of the British Academy in 2004 and of the Academy of Social Sciences in 2009.

Mick had an exceptional career at Manchester. He was a dominant figure for more than three decades. His obituaries pay tribute to how inspiring he was as a lecturer, particularly his command of large audiences, and also to his selfless contribution to his department and to the wider profession. He served as Head of Department, as Dean of Social Sciences, on two of the RAE panels, and on the PSA executive. He was an external examiner at many other universities, editor of *Political Studies* (1993–9) and editor of *Government and Opposition* (2000–6). During all these many and demanding commitments he still found time to research and write. He published 10 single-authored books, many co-authored books and edited books, as well as more than 40 academic journal papers and over 50 contributions to edited collections. He was extraordinarily productive throughout his life, and showed no signs of slacking off. After retiring from his professorship in 2011 he moved to the business school, where he established a very fruitful partnership with colleagues at the Centre for Research on Socio-Cultural Change, publishing several major books with them and at the time he died was actively discussing new projects.

One of the main themes of his early research was how interests were formed, how they were expressed and how they were represented. This was a guiding thread in his studies of industrial relations and then of finance. He became very interested in the contrast between the way in which the interests of labour and the interests of finance were represented in the British political system and the attempts by governments to change the way in which that was done through legislation (Moran 1999a).

The Politics of Industrial Relations was a study of the Heath government's industrial relations legislation in the early 1970s (Moran 1977), and how it sought to move away from voluntary collectivism to a system which relied more on compulsory collectivism. Unions were still to have a central role, but one which was much more highly regulated by the state. The legislation led to a sharp rise in industrial conflict and was discredited, but as Moran shows, it paved the way first for the Labour government's Trade Union Act in 1974, and then for the succession of industrial relations bills introduced by the Thatcher government. Over the course of two decades the position of industrial relations was transformed, voluntary collectivism was phased out and the role and power of unions significantly reduced.

Moran observed a similar process taking place in financial services. *The Politics of the Financial Services Revolution* studies the move away from the highly informal and self-regulating financial services sector of the 1960s and 1970s through the reforms that became known as the Big Bang in 1986 (Moran 1991). These reforms swept away many restrictive practices and reorganized the industry, opening up the UK financial sector to foreign banks. Unlike manufacturing industry and public utilities, the banks had never felt the need for a representative body to influence government policy when it impinged on their interests. They had relied on the Bank of England to represent them to the Treasury and through the Treasury to the rest of government. The legislation developed in the 1980s followed the liberalization of the US financial markets in the 1970s. It swept away the self-

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government and the gentlemanly codes of the old City. In exchange for much greater freedom of operation, and much greater competition, the new financial services sector was also embedded in a much more formal system of regulation. As Moran pointed out, the common view at the time that the reforms associated with the Big Bang were all about the deregulation of financial activity was only partly true. They were also part of a much wider movement of re-regulation, incorporating all sectors of the economy into a much more comprehensive (and potentially intrusive) regulatory state.

This was to become the grand theme of Moran's research programme, which culminated in *The British Regulatory State* (2003). He charted the way in which the old style of British government, resting on informality, precedent, conventions and self-government of associations and professions throughout the economy and civil society, was gradually replaced by new formal systems of regulation, monitoring and accountability. Like other academics in Britain, Moran experienced this in his own professional life with the introduction of the doctrines of new public management into universities. Unlike many academics in other disciplines, Moran understood that the changes fitted into a broader pattern of regulatory change which was sweeping through not just the UK but to varying degrees through all advanced industrial economies. It became a key component of the neoliberal reforms which the US in particular championed as the template for a reshaped international order. Moran's major contribution was to describe in such detail and with such analytical insight how these changes were effected in Britain. He took the term 'club government' from David Marquand to characterize the informal and closed elite networks through which so much of Britain was governed in the earlier decades of the 20th century, a world strikingly captured in journalistic terms by Anthony Sampson in his *Anatomy of Britain,* first published in 1962 (Marquand 1988; Sampson 1962).

Mick's experiences shaped him and his academic writing in important ways. The rigorous political science foundation he acquired at Essex as a postgraduate never left him and is evident in all his work, which is meticulous, thorough and always searching for evidence to support the arguments he develops. At the same time his Irish roots, his experience of poverty when he was growing up, the opportunities that gave him the career he had, were all important determinants of the kind of political scientist he became. His research interests changed as he grew older, because of his growing interest in political economy. It can be glimpsed at earlier stages of his career, but a real turning point was the financial crisis of 2008 and the austerity which followed, leading to major cutbacks in the welfare state. He became much more radical in the conclusions he drew from his analysis and outspoken in his criticism of the elites who had run and ruined Britain. His upbringing in Ireland and Smethwick gave him a detachment and a perspective which he used to great effect, not least in his final book, *The End of British Politics?*, to condemn the breaking of the post-war social contract and the resulting rise in inequality (Moran 2017).

Industrial relations

Moran's first book, *The Union of Post Office Workers: A Study in Political Sociology*, was based on his doctoral research (Moran 1974). It was a case study of one trade

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union and was aimed at testing a particular hypothesis in industrial sociology: whether the effectiveness of an organization like a trade union depended on strong congruence between the ideas and interests of those running the union and the members. In the case of the Union of Post Office Workers Moran found that there was very little congruence between the two but that rather surprisingly this did not affect the effectiveness of the organization. At the start of the research he had expected to find that congruence and effectiveness were strongly related.

This first piece of research had a very precise and quite narrow research question, but it gave him a firm foundation on which to develop a wider study of trade unionism during the 1970s. This was a decade of heightened industrial conflict and political turmoil against a background of accelerating inflation, oil price shocks and a sharply slowing international economy. The failure of the Heath government's industrial relations reforms and its electoral defeat in 1974 on a slogan of 'Who Governs Britain?' were traumatic for Conservatives and led to an extended debate in the party about how it was to govern in future in the face of trade union power. Moran became one of the leading analysts of this debate during the 1970s. Apart from his book *The Politics of Industrial Relations* (1977), he also published a number of important articles and chapters, including 'The Conservative Party and the Trade Unions since 1974' (Moran 1979a), 'Citizens and Workers' (Moran 1979b) and 'Industrial Relations' (Moran 1986a). In his *Political Studies* article he analysed in considerable detail the course of the internal argument in the Conservative Party about what their policy on industrial relations and towards the trade unions should be, following the economic and constitutional crisis provoked by the miners' strike and the financial collapse which led to the expulsion of the Conservatives from office in February 1974 (Moran 1979a: 43).

Moran distinguished three strands in Conservative thinking at this time. There were the individualists, who included Keith Joseph, Nigel Lawson, John Biffen and Jock Bruce-Gardyne as well as Margaret Thatcher. They favoured a renewed onslaught on the legal protections of trade unions, particularly over such issues as the closed shop. But these ideas were contested by those who still believed in the principles of voluntary collectivism, which involved reaching understanding with trade union leaders about the proper spheres of government and unions. This group included James Prior, who as shadow employment secretary favoured accepting Labour's repeal of the Industrial Relations Act and abandoning attempts to end the closed shop. He wanted employers, trade unionists and managers to 'shoulder their responsibilities, rather than relying on government to regulate their activities' (Moran 1979a: 46). A third group embracing Maurice Macmillan, David Knox and Peter Walker still favoured some kind of statutory intervention in industrial relations, particularly in relation to incomes policy. They argued for a policy of incorporation and partnership with the trade unions.

Moran shows in a skilful analysis that Margaret Thatcher allowed all three positions to contest the policy space, but that ultimately she came down on the side of James Prior. Her 'pragmatic monetarism' made her alive to the electoral risks the party would run if it embraced the course of deflation to solve the problem of trade union power through mass unemployment. This was accepted by ideological monetarists like Nigel Lawson, who argued that 'the reduction of trade union power … [is] a long-term objective. In the meantime we have to go through the valley of

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the shadow of deflation' (Moran 1979a: 48). The counter-argument was that of Peter Walker, who warned repeatedly that monetarism if pursued to its full deflationary logic would 'divide the nation and create a bitterness in society not experienced since the Jarrow marches' (Moran 1979a: 50).

Moran concluded that in the debate about industrial relations in the Conservative Party there were a number of competing doctrines, and the conflicts between them had not been fully settled. The dominant influence on the party's policy in opposition had come from the tradition of voluntary collectivism, represented by James Prior. Margaret Thatcher used the language of individualism and sympathized with the ideological monetarists, but in practice she had acquiesced in the party's retreat towards voluntary collectivism. Moran explained this as the demands of party management. Thatcher had adopted a strategy more often associated with Labour Party leaders – 'using the rhetoric of one tradition while supporting the substance of another' (Moran 1979a: 53).

This was a very reasonable judgement when the article was written in 1978, but it came before the Winter of Discontent which led the Conservatives to adopt a much tougher approach to trade unions in their 1979 manifesto. The tumultuous first two years of the Thatcher government saw a major economic shock, partly due to government policies but mainly to external events such as the second oil price shock. The deflationary policy pursued by the government in response led to a huge shakeout of British industry of the kind Peter Walker had warned against. But it greatly weakened trade union power and enabled an emboldened Thatcher to rid herself of James Prior and to appoint Norman Tebbit to carry through in stages the individualist agenda of the hardline monetarists for industrial relations. But this did not make Moran's analysis incorrect. It reflected very accurately where the balance of political possibilities lay in 1977–8, but he had also drawn attention to the radical doctrine of monetarism which wanted to move policy in a very different direction to anything the Conservatives had been committed to since 1945.

In another article written at this time, 'Citizens and Workers', Moran tackled the same issue from a different analytical perspective, focusing not on the internal conflicts over policy within the Conservative Party but looking at the tension between two different understandings of industrial relations in the British political tradition: the idea of class against the idea of citizenship. The idea of class stressed the balance of power between capital and labour and the never-ending struggle between them. The collective organization of labour was the only way workers could defend themselves against employers. They could not rely on any help from the state. This was the tradition of voluntary collectivism, and what it demanded was that the state stay out of industrial relations. The idea of citizenship emphasized instead the rights of individual citizens which were guaranteed by the state and had been progressively extended as a result of political campaigns and the widening of the franchise. T.H. Marshall had described the evolution of citizenship rights from civil to political to social rights. A part of social rights was that individual workers potentially acquired specific legal rights at work.

Moran argued that much of the post-war history of industrial relations had been the working out of the contradictory logics of class and citizenship. In 'Citizens and Workers', he analysed in particular the attempt to balance these different doctrines in the 1971 Industrial Relations Act, in Labour's 1974 Trade Union Act and finally

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in the report of the Bullock Committee on Industrial Democracy (Moran 1979b: 66–68). He argued that there was an irreconcilable tension in the Bullock Report in wanting to give legal representation to workers on company boards, but giving the choice of those representatives to trade unions rather than individual workers.

Looking back on the debates over industrial relations and how to reform them from the vantage point of the 1980s, Moran could now see that he had been observing the system of voluntary collectivism in its death-throes. It had been pushed to destruction, and the new system of industrial relations that had emerged depended on individualism rather than collectivism. But it was not an individualism which sought to return industrial relations to where they had been in the 19th century, when trade unions had often been viewed as conspiracies against the public and outlawed. The idea of democratic citizenship meant that individual workers acquired much more extensive legal rights involving such things as employment protection, health and safety, and protection against gender and racial discrimination. The voluntary collectivism of industrial relations largely disappeared, and this involved a deregulation; for example, the setting aside of rules which had protected closed shops.

Industrial relations fitted into what was to become one of the central themes in Moran's work, the replacement of self-government in so many parts of British life by a new regulatory state. In industrial relations this re-regulation took the form of establishing individual legal rights at work. He described the anti-union laws passed by the Thatcher government as having been in many respects remarkably successful (Moran 1986a: 291). The Thatcher government had certainly learned from the failure of attempts by previous governments at reform. But he also noted that even more important than the new laws was the altered context in which trade unions were operating. So many sectors, industries and firms with very high union membership had disappeared altogether, because of the choices the Thatcher government made on the economy. By the end of the 1980s a very different kind of economy was emerging.

Banking and finance

After the 1970s Moran moved his focus from industrial relations to banking and finance. This might seem strange since industrial relations remained so central to British politics at least until the defeat of the miners' strike in 1985. It was a shrewd move because finance was about to become the centre of attention, and it gave Moran an even richer example of the replacement of self-government by regulation. He advanced this new research agenda through two important books: *The Politics of Banking* (Moran 1984a) and *The Politics of the Financial Services Revolution* (Moran 1991). But the change was first announced in a number of articles, in particular 'Finance Capital and Pressure-Group Politics in Britain' (Moran 1981), as well as two later articles in *Political Studies*: 'Politics, Banks and Markets: An Anglo-American Comparison' (Moran 1984b) and 'Theories of Regulation and Changes in Regulation: The Case of Financial Markets' (Moran 1986b).

Two aspects of the financial markets in the early 1980s seem to have caught Moran's attention. At the start of *The Politics of the Financial Services Revolution* he recalls how in the early 1980s he became interested in developments in financial

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markets which were to lead to the Big Bang. The question he asked was why Britain was in the vanguard of this development when for so long it had been noted for backwardness and decline. In line with his work on industrial relations, he came to see the role of the state as crucial, yet this was the same state which for so long had been characterized as weak and ineffective. Part of the answer to these conundrums, he came to realize, was that the changes in London were part of an international revolution which involved key financial centres such as New York and Tokyo. New York was in fact the pioneer of the financial services revolution starting around 1976, while Moran came to see London as the most important arena through which the American financial services revolution was exported both to the UK and to other major capitalist economies (Moran 1991: 4). The financial services revolution was often treated as one of the main examples of deregulation in the 1980s. But, as with industrial relations, for Moran this deregulation only captured part of the story. State agencies were crucial actors in the revolutionary process which changed finance, and which led to a new regulatory regime, not just the dismantling of an old one.

This focus on the wider regulatory regime made Moran's study of finance comparative in a way his study of industrial relations had not been. He noted that the traditional focus in studying the British financial system from the 1930 Macmillan Committee onwards had been on the capacity of financial markets to deliver credit for investment to the rest of the economy. Moran's focus was different. He was interested in the organization of financial services in competitive world markets, the ceaseless struggle for comparative advantage. What made the US, the UK and Japan suitable for a comparative study was that they had three features in common. They had all experienced structural change in their financial markets during the 1980s, there had been tension between their democratic institutions and their corporatist arrangements for finance, and all three were members of the same international political and economic order which shaped domestic policy.

When it appeared, *The Politics of the Financial Services Revolution* was quickly seen as a landmark study of one of the crucial developments in the 1980s. The comparative focus gave it special interest. It was based on meticulous earlier work by Moran on the nuts and bolts of the UK financial system. In 'Finance Capital and Pressure-Group Politics in Britain', for example, Moran had looked in detail at the influence of the financial community, how its interests were represented and how there was not just one financial interest called the 'City', but many different financial interests within it. He showed how there had been a long debate on how to represent the 'City' and what role the Bank of England played, and pointed out the disjunction between the City's view of itself as ill-organized, divided and lacking influence over government, with the critics' view, which endowed the City with a mystique of extraordinary power (Moran 1981: 399).

The City in the early 1980s was undergoing rapid change in the nature and scale of its economic operations. The traditional City elite was in decline and London was being invaded by foreign banks. The dual system of regulation and interest representation which had characterized the City for so long was in serious trouble (Moran 1981: 401), largely because of the growth and importance of secondary banking which was not subject to it. New arrangements which had been put in place after the competition and credit control reforms to the financial sector

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introduced by the Heath government in 1971 were held to be responsible for the financial exuberance of the next two years, which got out of hand and led to the 1973 crisis. One outcome was a new regulatory role for the Bank of England, the first sign of this complex pattern of deregulation followed by re-regulation, which was true too of other countries, particularly the US (Moran 1984b: 181).

The problem the authorities grappled with was how to free the financial markets but at the same time retain some control over the sector. Exposure to the much stronger regulatory culture in the US gradually persuaded British political opinion that more formal regulation needed to be adopted in the UK too if London was to follow New York as an international financial centre open to the whole world. The traditional oligarchic club culture of the City which depended on close personal networks was to be finally swept away by the series of changes which acquired the name the Big Bang. The instigator of these changes was the Thatcher government in alliance with certain elements in the City. The opening of London meant the arrival of even more international banks, changing the City irreversibly.

This transformation of the City made the Big Bang one of the key success stories of the Thatcher decade. The recovery from the shakeout of manufacturing in 1980–1 was led by a big expansion of service jobs. By 1989 the financial services sector was employing 2.6 million people across the UK and the success of London as an international financial centre brought restored prestige to the battered British state. The Thatcher government sacrificed coal, shipbuilding, steel and many parts of manufacturing but it acted decisively to defend London's pre-eminent position in finance. As Moran notes, as far as finance was concerned, the government did not let market forces take their course. It understood that goods traded in financial markets were the creation of regulation and that systems of regulation were powerful sources of comparative advantage (Moran 1991: 6).

Moran's treatment of financial services had much in common with his treatment of industrial relations. He was always sceptical of fashionable theories which were not backed by evidence, even if they reached conclusions he agreed with. In noting that the City was both viewed as all-powerful and extremely weak he sought ways to develop measures of power to test some of the general assertions which were made. In both cases this led him towards an understanding of regulation as key to the relationship between states and markets. In 'Theories of Regulation and Changes in Regulation' he defined regulation as 'an activity in which the discretion of individuals or institutions is restricted by the imposition of rules' (Moran 1986b: 185). The structural transformation of markets through intensified competition and global trading had increasingly circumvented national systems of control and led to regulatory failures (Moran 1986b: 187), and a growing debate in different sectors about how to improve regulation.

Moran set out four theories of regulation which he argued defined the boom in regulation studies in the public policy literature. There were teleological theories which saw regulation as shaped by long-term social goals and political projects, and were cast at a very general level. Secondly there were the instrumental theories, such as the theory of regulatory capture, particularly associated with public choice theories and certain kinds of Marxism which were agency centred and treated regulation as always in the interests of the regulated. Thirdly there were cultural theories which stressed the importance of national cultures in forming very different

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regulatory styles, and finally there were administrative theories which focused on the tools of regulation and the problem of information which made the outcomes of public policy always uncertain.

It is hardly surprising that Moran thought the cultural and administrative theories were the best. His detailed studies of regulatory change in two major areas had increasingly convinced him that regulatory reform was characterized by muddle, incompleteness and delay, and always had important side effects which were often not understood when the changes were made. At the same time this complexity helped him develop a deeper understanding of the relationship between states and markets.

In a book he edited with Maurice Wright, *The Market and the State*, Moran argued that markets and states do not stand in opposition in any simple sense. The creation of an economy in which free exchange and private property were supreme demanded an extensive apparatus of state power. The freer the economy the more extensive and powerful the state had to be (Moran and Wright 1991: 243). Markets would not function if the state confined itself to providing a framework for the exchange of contracts. The implications were clear. State agencies were central not only to processes of regulation but also to those of deregulation and re-regulation (Moran and Wright 1991: 245).

The British regulatory state

During the 1990s Moran continued to work on regulation, applying his insights to a new field, the health care state. He published several articles on this theme, including a review article 'Crises of the Welfare State' (Moran 1988) and 'Reshaping the Health Care State' (Moran 1994) before his full-length study supported by a grant from the Nuffield Foundation, *Governing the Health Care State*, which appeared in 1999 (Moran 1999b). This research, like his earlier inquiries into industrial relations and financial services, was driven by his general interest in problems of regulation in public policy, and by a very specific research question. What explained the marked differences between health care systems in Britain and the US? The US system in the 1990s was state of the art for health reform and for new treatments, but it was poor at containing costs and providing access to health care. The UK system was a command-and-control system. The one thing it was good at was cost containment, but the price of effective cost containment was a quality and speed of service which was increasingly unacceptable to middle-class consumers, leading to the growth of a parallel service, particularly for elective treatments (Moran 1999b: 179).

What intrigued Moran when he examined the two health care systems in detail was that in the UK the attempts to reform the health service by introducing new forms of regulation and the toolkit of the new public management were not leading to a retreat of the state but rather were strengthening the core institutions of the state. He explained this by pointing to the way all health care systems were ultimately about rationing choices, but the way this rationing was managed was continually being opened up by innovation in medicines and treatments. The impossibility of containing the costs of health care he saw as a universal dilemma for welfare states. A related problem was that the global market in health care established in the 1980s had put growing pressures on national health care systems. In the UK

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the medical profession had long played a key role in the rationing process, acting as gatekeepers to what treatments patients were allowed to access. The ascendancy of medical technology and the global health care industry brought an accommodation between three sets of institutions: the medical profession, corporations and governments. Medical professionals validated and purchased the technology, corporations produced it, and governments either paid for it or regulated the systems which paid for it (Moran and Alexander 1997: 593).

The study of the health care system was the prelude to Moran's major work, the culmination of all his work on the politics of regulation, *The British Regulatory State* (Moran 2003). This book sums up the conclusions of three decades of work on the politics of regulation but it also started some new lines of argument. As he had often done in his writings, he began the book with a paradox. For the first two-thirds of the 20th century, he wrote, governing arrangements in Britain were among the most stable and least innovative in the advanced capitalist world. In the decades since then Britain had become a leader in institutional and policy change (Moran 2003: 1). The most striking episode of change had occurred during the Thatcher years with financial liberalization and privatization. This was the period when the foundations of the new British regulatory state were laid and the boundaries between the public and private spheres were redefined. The new dispensation was characterized by privatization, marketization and decentralization and by the application of the tools of the new public management to govern the public sector. This new British regulatory state replaced systems of self-regulation which had long roots in the 19th century and before. In the 1970s these systems were central to the government of markets for labour, services and goods. Britain was notorious for being run by private institutions beyond the reach of government or law. These institutions had developed idiosyncratic cultures and institutional patterns derived from the 19th century.

In his earlier analyses of the British state and the change from self-government to regulation, Moran had been content with describing and analysing the process. In *The British Regulatory State* he is much more critical. He argues that the rise of regulation was less of a fundamental shift than was often suggested. It was characterized by hyper-innovation while the traditional British state had been characterized by stagnation. But hyper-innovation and stagnation were connected (Moran 2003: 3). They reflected a state that remained over-centralized and incapable of decentralizing. The 1970s crisis was a crisis of the old order, a crisis of the kind of club government – oligarchic, informal, secretive, and pervasive – which was familiar in almost every British institution.

Moran sets out three ways to describe what happened to British governing arrangements between 1970 and 1990. The first sees the change as a scaling down of the ambitions for the state, the abandonment of schemes of transformative social change through state action, and a new image of the state as a regulator, concerned with balancing and steering the system. The second puts the emphasis on institutional innovation and the import of US-style regulation. The third sees the changes as inaugurating a regulatory state, which was both the product of the crisis of the old interventionist order and the harbinger of a new kind of state whose purpose was primarily to address market failures and recognize the limits to state resources (Moran 2003: 5).

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Moran is closest to the third of these interpretations, associated in particular with Giandomenico Majone, but he still regards all of them as inaccurate in important respects. The state, he argues, did scale down its ambitions but acquired some major new ones. Under the new regulatory state, the range of social and economic life that was subject to public power widened rather than contracted. This is because the regulatory state is a colonizing state with its own utopian projects and an insatiable urge to establish new regulatory spheres. Self-regulation is swept away by the imposition of an apparatus of surveillance and control. In the new regulatory state there is more hierarchy, formality and state control than ever before (Moran 2003: 6).

Moran's grand thesis in *The British Regulatory State* was that most observers had been misled. They had assumed the British regulatory state was like the US regulatory state or the European regulatory state. Elements were certainly borrowed from them, and the book goes into considerable detail in describing them. But the differences remained stark. In the US the regulatory state was synonymous with a century-long growth of state power, while in other parts of Europe it represented a turning away from the command state. The UK experience, however, was different, because the UK regulatory state was not marked by diminished ambition and had not retreated from hierarchy towards the management of dispersed networks. Self-regulation had disappeared, but in its place had come explicit command where none existed before and increased bureaucratic control. The result was that the British regulatory state was characterized by hyper-innovation and hyper-politicization (Moran 2003: 21).

Moran's view of the British regulatory state is informed by a comparative analysis of regulation as it operated in other states, but he uses it to demonstrate the exceptionalism of the British regulatory state. The traditional model of club government was formed through the long unbroken constitutional and imperial history and its related narratives of national purpose. The crisis of the British state in the 1970s was resolved through the adoption of elements of the different state and regulatory traditions of the US and Europe. Britain's entry into the European Economic Community in 1973 was a decisive catalyst. The EU policy world Moran notes was very different from club government. Brussels and Washington shared many characteristics, not least lobbying by business groups over the provisions of regulation. The change represented a shift from the tacit to the explicit (Moran 2003: 167).

One of the consequences of the new British regulatory state was the characteristic which Moran termed 'hyper-innovation'. Innovation was justified and constantly sought after as a means of increasing policy effectiveness (Moran 2003: 171). One of the unintended consequences was a string of policy fiascos. They had existed under club government as well, but they now became a distinguishing and accentuated feature of the British regulatory state (Moran 2001). They included the Millennium Dome, rail privatization, the poll tax, the collapse of Barings Bank, the BSE outbreak and numerous large IT projects. The main reason for these fiascos, Moran argued, was an inappropriate use of the command model. Rail privatization and major IT projects were particularly linked to the new regulatory state because of the drive to achieve comprehensive and instantaneous observation. These tendencies show no sign of abating. The further centralization of powers

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under the Johnson government after 2019 and the hyper-innovation and hyper-politicization pursued by Johnson's chief aide Dominic Cummings, complete with algorithms and moonshots, would have been seen by Moran as a perfect illustration of his main argument. Policy fiascos and British governments appear to have become inseparable. The COVID-19 emergency would have been a fertile case study for him, bringing together his research on health care, regulation, risk, policy fiascos, the failure of elites and widening inequality.

Political economy

During the 2000s Moran's intellectual interests took him towards political economy, but the financial crisis of 2008 was a turning point. He began to draw much more radical conclusions from his research. The financial crisis was the greatest policy fiasco of all, with huge consequences, and its origins for Moran lay firmly in the kinds of regulatory reforms pursued in the 1980s. It was a verdict on the choices which established the regulatory state. Moran began to collaborate with colleagues at Manchester in the Centre for Research on Socio-Cultural Change (CRESC). They were drawn from a number of different disciplines and with them he co-authored several important works which sought to explain the financial crisis and its aftermath and to chart a political response. These books include *After the Great Complacence* (Engelen et al. 2011), which provided a distinctive and radical analysis of the financial crisis, and *Foundational Economy* (Froud et al. 2018), which was drafted with Karel Williams in the autumn of 2017 and set out a radical vision for how the economy and the British state could be reorganized.

Moran worked particularly closely with Karel Williams and this became a very fruitful period of his life, because formerly he had mainly worked as an individual scholar rather than on large collaborative projects. He brought to the collaboration his experience of researching and teaching British politics for four decades and his expertise on regulation and public policy and on the nature of corporate power and its tension with democratic citizenship.[2]

After the Great Complacence analysed the financial crisis as a policy fiasco, brought about because of the hubris of political, administrative and financial elites and because the democratic system of political competition was no longer working to articulate alternatives and solutions (Engelen et al. 2011: 2). The book sets out in detail how the financial crisis happened, and the responsibility of the different elites for it. The origins are traced back to the changes in regulation of financial services introduced in the 1980s. The authors argued for an updating of Tawney's project, to bring economic power under popular control. In contemporary circumstances, that meant as a priority putting banks and markets under democratic control and making them serve social purposes. Reforming the financial system had no hope of being realized, however, if it was promoted through the established institutional world of political, regulatory and financial market elites (Engelen et al. 2018: 243). There had to be an overhaul of the way in which the British state worked.

Foundational Economy offers a new way of thinking about political economy. It starts from the premise that the distinctive primary role of public policy should be to secure the supply of basic services for all citizens. These basic services, such as clean water and the electricity network, and the workers who supply them make

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up the foundational zone of the economy. The book argues that the debate since the 1980s has been over whether these foundational services should be supplied by the state or outsourced to private companies, but that the real debate should be how to find ways to recognize and protect the unique value of foundational services and the access of all citizens to them (Froud et al. 2018: 27–28). The reason that this has become so urgent is that the foundational economy which was created in two great waves in the late 19th century and in the immediate post-war period has come under sustained attack since the 1980s.

In pursuing the ideal of a market economy, public policy has ended up recreating a 'predatory capitalism with income and wealth inequalities at nineteenth century levels' (Froud et al. 2018: 28). What was required was a new idea of universal citizenship. The basic needs of citizens would be calculated using the criteria developed by Amartya Sen to determine human capabilities and the conditions of flourishing, and these would then be met through a decentralized and locally controlled foundation economy, which the book argues is a much surer basis for universal citizenship and the provision of basic services to all than an economy dominated by international finance and global corporations. To achieve this the duties of corporate citizens would be made explicit, and their operations brought into the public domain under a reformed constitution. To operate in the foundational economy all companies would have to agree a social licence specifying what they put back into communities as social benefit (Froud et al 2018: ch. 4).

Some of these ideas had been developed earlier by Moran as he became more critical of the lack of checks on the private power of corporations. In 'The Company of Strangers' he had explored the legal basis of the corporation, and the very permissive terms of the licence to operate which had been established in British law (Moran 2006). He also wrote about the nature of financial and corporate power from new angles. His *Political Quarterly* article co-authored with CRESC colleagues, 'Breaking the Constitutional Silence', examined the outsourcing of public provision to private companies which had been such a feature of the British regulatory state in the previous 30 years (Johal et al. 2014, 2016; Moran and Payne 2014). It argued that companies which took on outsourcing contracts should be considered part of the public domain and regulated accordingly.

British politics

Moran had always been known for his specialized writings on interests, power and regulation, but this was accompanied by more general writing on British politics, based on the course he taught at Manchester for so many years. He was the author and co-author of a number of very successful textbooks on British politics – *British Politics: A Reader*, *Politics UK* and *Politics and Governance in the UK*. These books demonstrate the great breadth as well as the depth of his understanding of British politics.

Moran's qualities are again on display in his last single-authored book, *The End of British Politics?* (Moran 2017). This book is not a textbook; it is passionate and radical, at times polemical. It ranges over all the subjects which Moran taught and researched over his career and is the most revealing book about himself and his own commitments that he ever wrote. The tone of the book is set by the dedication. It

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reads: 'To my grandfather, Jack Brennan 1882–1958, who made his own contribution to the history of the British state in the Irish War of Independence 1916–21.' He also pays tribute to Karel Williams and all his CRESC colleagues. Many of the ideas in the book, he wrote, owed their origin to the collaborative research in CRESC he had been engaged in for a decade. He also recognized the students in the Glossop Guild classes whom he had been teaching for several years, carrying on the tradition of liberal adult education pioneered by the Workers' Educational Association.

The book starts with a firm rejection of teleology in all its different ideological variants. Moran insists that our future is anything but predestined. The fate of any state depends on agency, the agency of the elites who direct it, and the activists who challenge them. There is no fixed past which determines the future. Rather, the fate of the state depends on the story which the living tell of its past and its future. This potentially makes the future very open-ended and gives hope for radical change. The need for such change has become urgent, Moran argues, because every version of national purpose which supported the nation a century ago, whether religious providence, imperial mission, naval superiority or industrial might have either been discredited or no longer reflect Britain's circumstances. In Britain after 1945 there was a determined attempt to reimagine Britain through policy commitments to social citizenship through universal welfare programmes, economic management to maintain full employment and prosperity, and new international alliances. But this post-war settlement collapsed in the 1970s.

There then followed a second reimagining of the British state, first under the Thatcher government in the 1980s, and then extended by the Blair government. Moran argues that by 2000 the full scale of the Conservative achievement was clear. They had established a new model of economic management, a new model of public administration and a new model of state–civil society relations by 'successfully reshaping working class interests' (Moran 1999a: 198). Labour had added devolution, citizenship rights and Europeanization. Moran had become increasingly critical of the democratic deficit at both the national and the European levels. In a concluding essay co-authored with Geraint Parry in a book of reflections on democracy in the 1990s, he noted that we appeared to be living in a democratic interlude but expressed fears that it might not last (Moran and Parry 1994: 264).

Both the Thatcherite and the Blairite exercises in statecraft had become exhausted by 2010, undone by the fatal combination of messianism and providentialism. In the last decade Britain has been beset by a set of overlapping crises in the economy, the party system and the union which – together with the discrediting of military providentialism in Iraq and Libya – have contributed to a more general crisis of national purpose and identity. Brexit and the threats to the Union in Scotland and Northern Ireland are symptoms of that crisis. Moran hoped that the British could reimagine their state again, and that a radically decentralized state might lead to a renewed social contract. But he admitted that this hope was no more than a glimmer.

The themes in *The End of British Politics?* were developed further in his final essay, 'Populism and Social Citizenship: An Anglo-American Comparison', prepared for a conference at Essex, one of the places which had most shaped his

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intellectual journey 50 years before (Moran 2019). He did not live to deliver the paper in person. It was read for him by David Sanders. The essay analyses the wave of populism within Western democracies, arguing that its causes lie in the choices made by elites since the 1970s. In a striking passage Moran argues that the social contract of the post-war years had been broken, and the new world of neoliberalism had been created through deliberate political choices, rather than by impersonal structural forces:

> The deregulation of financial markets was a choice, made because economic and governing elites sensed advantage. That choice set free the forces of financialisation, led to the world of maximised shareholder value, enriched beyond the dreams of avarice those corporate managers who could deliver that maximised value and thus brought to birth income inequality and the new plutocracy. Choice created deregulated labour markets and often – as in the case of the miners in the UK – led the state to destroy whole working-class occupations. Choice fashioned taxation systems to enrich plutocrats. Choice positioned the UK as a post-industrial service economy in the international division of labour where the most important enterprises were branch subsidiaries of foreign enterprises. Choice sold over one and a half million social housing units, creating the conditions for 'generation rent'. Choice opted for the light touch deregulation of financial markets that led to the catastrophe of the Great Financial Crisis and the decade of austerity. (Moran 2019: 221–222)

It was not 'ordinary people' who needed to change, he concluded, but the elites.

Mick Moran was one of the leading political scientists of his generation and will be remembered in many different ways. What comes through all his writings is a deep commitment to understanding how politics works, not just out of academic interest but to inform citizens and to help make the world a little less dark. Mick summed this up in his characteristic style in *Politics and Governance in the UK*. It was read out at his funeral:

> Why study politics? Indeed, why be concerned with political life at all? For most citizens … the answers to these questions are pretty obvious: there are no good reasons either to study politics or to take an active part in political life. … But if politics is a minority interest, even in a democracy, it is nevertheless a matter of the utmost importance – in a quite literal sense, a matter of life and death. … Politics is about trying to choose between competing views and interests … the failure to make these choices by peaceful means, and to carry them out effectively and peacefully has catastrophic results. Consider, for instance, the life of people unfortunate enough to live in poverty-stricken countries of Africa, like the Democratic Republic of Congo. What single thing would transform their life: a great medical advance, a great advance in biotechnology which would make farming more productive? Neither of these things; their lives would be transformed for the better by peace and the creation of a stable system of government, because since the then Belgian Congo achieved independence nearly sixty years ago it has been racked by civil wars.

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> Understanding politics, if we want to make the world a better place for our fellow human beings, is more urgent even than understanding medicine, biology or physics. Politics shapes every detail of our lives, from the most dramatic to the most mundane. (Moran 2011: 6)

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Notes

1 Biographical material is drawn from three published obituaries: Moran (2018), Sanders (2019) and Williams (2018). See also the moving tributes on https://joemoran.net/memories-of-mick-moran-1946-2018/.

2 Information supplied by Karel Williams.

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