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978-1-107-02568-4 - Democratic Decline and Democratic Renewal: Political Change in Britain, Australia and New Zealand

Ian Marsh and Raymond Miller

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## Democratic Decline and Democratic Renewal

The story of liberal democracy over the last half-century has been a triumphant one in many ways, with the number of democracies increasing from a minority of states to a significant majority. Yet substantial problems afflict democratic states and, while the number of democratic countries has expanded, democratic practice has contracted. This book introduces a novel framework for evaluating the rise and decline of democratic governance. Examining three mature democratic countries – Britain, Australia and New Zealand – the authors discuss patterns of governance from the emergence of mass democracy at the outset of the twentieth century through to its present condition. The shared political cultures and institutional arrangements of the three countries allow the authors to investigate comparatively the dynamics of political evolution and the possibilities for systemic developments and institutional change.

IAN MARSH is Adjunct Professor in the Australian Innovation Research Centre at the University of Tasmania.

RAYMOND MILLER is Associate Professor in the Department of Politics at the University of Auckland.

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## Preface

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This study had its genesis in my last years as a graduate student. It was my good fortune to work as a research assistant to the late Sam Beer whose office became a kind of Prospero's cell. One of my tasks was to prepare the index for his book, *Britain Against Itself*, which drew me to the heart of its logic. This and my associated thesis research<sup>1</sup> convinced me not only that, from a democratic perspective, the two-party system was rapidly passing its use-by date but also that a new role for parliament would be a key element of any reconfigured structure of politics. Since all this occurred some 25 years ago, and since the two-party system has survived, more or less intact, in two of the three states covered in this study, you might be forgiven for thinking that this author has lost touch with reality. My justification for continuing to search for a framework to elaborate and justify a fragile but certain intuition is contained in the following chapters.

Along the way, I have of course incurred many institutional and personal debts. At Harvard, apart from Sam Beer, I was also privileged to have an association with the late Ed Banfield. Although the spirit of this work moves in another direction, his Burkean vision of political life is always with me. Iris Murdoch's philosophical work has also been an important inspiration as have (especially) Charles Taylor's moral/historical studies.

Through a period at the European University Institute, it was my good fortune to meet Jean Blondel. We have since collaborated in a number of projects. Jean is a unique political cosmopolitan and I have learnt much from his incisive Cartesianism. Jean and Tess's friendship has been a rich bonus. Takashi Inoguchi at Tokyo University has also been a valued collaborator. He made possible an encounter with Japanese culture and society that continues to excite. Similarly, Ove Pedersen at the Centre for Business and Politics at the Copenhagen Business School and Henrik Bang at the University of Copenhagen

<sup>1</sup> Published as Marsh (1986).

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created a link to Denmark and another stimulating ‘discovery’. This experience was enormously enriched by Len Seabrooke with whom I collaborated earlier on some of the material in this study – but of course he is no longer responsible for the use to which it is now put.

In Australia, I owe a particular debt to Jonathan West, Director of the Australian Innovation Research Centre at the University of Tasmania. Jonathan created the opportunity for this study to be completed. His research centre has been a very congenial home for these past three years. The Research School of Social Sciences at the Australian National University and the Graduate School of Government, University of Sydney, earlier provided encouraging settings.

This study has itself been the occasion for a rewarding collaboration and friendship with my co-author, Raymond Miller.

In recent years, secondary and no less happy collaborations that were ancillary to this study (and funded through it) were with Ben Spies Butcher and Lindy Edwards.

At various moments in the project we received research help from some very talented students: many thanks to Sean Behringer, Oliver Derum, Nino Adimoto, Chloe Bennett, Yi Chieh Wang, Emma Blomkamp, Edwin de Ronde and Paul Parnell. Carol Harding, Maria Trochatos, Leanne Howie and Richard Prekodravac created environments of order and support.

Individual chapters were read by Mark Blyth, Jean Blondel, Chris Cunneen, Martin Krygier and Peter Aimer. Their advice, cautions and encouragement were much appreciated. In addition our two anonymous reviewers made many helpful and incisive suggestions. Hopefully, our response has strengthened both the clarity and substance of the argument. Lorine Ligtvoet edited the manuscript with a care which contributed importantly to both expression and logic. She also compiled the bibliography.

I thank Jeffrey Smart for permission to again use one of his enigmatic pictures – and also for a welcome that has extended over all the years of my romance with Italy.

In many surprising ways, John Boots has also been a catalyst for my maturing views.

Funding for this study was provided by the Australian Research Council (DP0665849) and this support was very much appreciated.

This book continues in another key preoccupations concerning power, justice and meaning that were inaugurated many years ago by my late father, Malcolm Howard Marsh. My most heartfelt debt is again to Lorine whose support was essential and has been unflinching.