

VWSM Weekly *

Gordon Burt **

No. 5

Tuesday 6 October 2020

VWSM Weekly provides links to a selection of items that appeared in the past week, Monday to Sunday. The topics covered (not all of them in this issue) are listed below. It also provides commentary – this week the selected topic is:

The centre ground and the extremes of the political spectrum, pages 5-10.

See pages 11-12 for General Background on the project.

<u>Values</u>	Environment	Social	USA election
Truth	Economy	Technology	Trump
Power	Politics, Law	Science	
<u>World</u>	Military	Mathematics	
<u>Society</u>	Crime	<u>Modelling</u>	

* This is linked to the monthly ANA Commentary
<https://sites.google.com/site/gordonburmathsocsci/home/a-new-agenda>;

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Understanding ... diversity ... war ... Trump-Biden ... the centre ground

Loneliness versus wisdom

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1064748120304681?via%3Dihub>

UN Summit for Diversity: Leaders' Pledge for Nature

<https://www.leaderspledgefornature.org/>

Languages in a Global World: Learning for Better Cultural Understanding

OECD: <http://www.oecd.org/berlin/50191762.pdf>

Where worlds engage. U.S.-China Trade relations ... Scott Macdonald

video: <https://www.concordia-ny.edu/about/where-worlds-engage/blog/1621458/economist-scott-macdonald-presents-2020-jacobson-global-lecture>

War: how conflict shaped us. Margaret Macmillan.

Reith Lectures 2018: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0b8d340>

Trump-Biden first presidential debate

video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wW11Y5jFNcQ> (27.39/2:04:20)

Biden better; partisan judgment; vote unchanged

opinion poll: <https://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/trump-biden-debate-poll/>.

Everything in Moderation, Daniel Finkelstein

podcast with Tim Bale

<https://podcasts.google.com/feed/aHR0cHM6Ly9hbmNob3IuZm0vcy8yMTcwNDQ4NC9wb2RjYXN0L3Jzcw==>

National Populism: The Revolt Against Liberal Democracy. Matthew Goodwin

LSE podcast 2018 <https://www.lse.ac.uk/lse-player?id=4532> (3.36...)

The centre ground and the extremes of the political spectrum

Values

Loneliness versus wisdom ... two concurrent pandemics of loneliness

“Today we are living in the midst of two ongoing pandemics. One of them began a couple of decades ago, with increasing social isolation and loneliness (SI/L) associated with growing social anomie resulting from progressive globalization and impossibly rapid changes in technology. This has led to a 33% increase in suicides and a 6-fold increase in the number of opioid-related deaths in the US since the late 1990s. SI/L is a major factor underlying this pandemic of deaths of despair.¹ In the UK, a new Minister of Loneliness was appointed in 2018 out of concerns about lost productivity caused by loneliness among workers. Added to this silent but dangerous pandemic of SI/L is the new pandemic of Covid-19. While most of the recent attention has understandably focused on the morbidity and mortality directly caused by the coronavirus, looming under the surface is a related iatrogenic pandemic of greater SI/L, especially among older adults, resulting from social distancing requirements to stem the spread of coronavirus. ...”

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1064748120304681?via%3Dihub>

Work

Work: a history of how we spend our time. James Suzman

book: <https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/work-9781526604996/>;

Observer: <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2020/oct/04/blue-sky-thinking-is-it-time-to-stop-work-taking-over-our-lives>.

Health

High prevalence of SARS-CoV-2 swab positivity in England during September 2020: interim report of round 5 of REACT-1 study

[https://www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/institute-of-global-health-innovation/REACT1_12345_Interim-\(1\).pdf](https://www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/institute-of-global-health-innovation/REACT1_12345_Interim-(1).pdf) ;

The R number

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-r-number-in-the-uk#latest-r-number-and-growth-rate>

Truth

Coronavirus misinformation: Quantifying sources and themes in the COVID-19 ‘infodemic’

<https://allianceforscience.cornell.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Evanega-et-al-Coronavirus-misinformationFINAL.pdf>

Environment

UN Summit for Diversity: Leaders’ Pledge for Nature

<https://www.leaderspledgefornature.org/>

State of the World’s Plants and Fungi 2020 ... Kew

report.[https://www.kew.org/sites/default/files/2020-](https://www.kew.org/sites/default/files/2020-09/Kew%20State%20of%20the%20Worlds%20Plants%20and%20Fungi.pdf)

[09/Kew%20State%20of%20the%20Worlds%20Plants%20and%20Fungi.pdf](https://www.kew.org/sites/default/files/2020-09/Kew%20State%20of%20the%20Worlds%20Plants%20and%20Fungi.pdf);

conference. <https://www.kew.org/science/engage/get-involved/conferences/state-of-the-worlds-plants-and-fungi-symposium>;

World Society

Languages in a Global World: Learning for Better Cultural Understanding

Executive summary <http://www.oecd.org/berlin/50191762.pdf>

Book

<http://www.oecd.org/education/cei/languagesinaglobalworldlearningforbetterculturalunderstanding.htm>

This book addresses language diversity around the world and its relation to education and culture. In this time of globalisation, language learning is central to politics, economics, history, and most obviously education.

This book questions why some individuals are more successful than others at learning non-native languages, and why some education systems, or countries, are more successful than others at teaching languages. Language learning is not only a means of improved communication, but more importantly it plays a key role in promoting global understanding and respecting cultural differences.

This publication explores language learning all across the globe, in countries ranging from France to Kazakhstan to Taiwan. It provides a fundamental sense of the centrality of language and culture to humanity both at present and into the future. It invites a humanitarian dialogue about language and culture around the world.

The book's structure is designed with chapters written by different authors on the subject of language learning. These individual authors bring a wide range of perspectives and research experience to this subject. For example, there are chapters on the role of motivation in non-native language learning; the way that languages, cultures and identities are connected; and the insights that neuroscience provides into how the brain understands and produces language.

This enlightening book clearly recognises that language learning intertwines with future concerns that society will need to address.

US, China

Where worlds engage. U.S.-China Trade relations in the Age of Disruption and Coronavirus.

2020 Jacobson Global Lecture. Scott Macdonald. (March 11).

video: <https://www.concordia-ny.edu/about/where-worlds-engage/blog/1621458/economist-scott-macdonald-presents-2020-jacobson-global-lecture>

Scott Macdonald The new Cold War in the Caribbean

<https://theglobalamericans.org/2020/09/china-holds-a-lot-of-americas-debt-could-beijing-weaponize-it/>

<https://www.csis.org/analysis/return-cold-war-caribbean>

<https://theglobalamericans.org/2019/04/the-return-of-the-cold-war-in-the-caribbean/>

War

War: how conflict shaped us. Margaret Macmillan.

Reith Lectures 2018: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0b8d340>

Book 2020: <http://www.margaretmacmillan.com/>

Book *Paris 1919*: <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/105821/paris-1919-by-margaret-macmillan/>

Society

Half of Tories say Islam clashes with British life;
<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/half-of-tories-say-islam-clashes-with-british-life-pzhgn9rhq> ;
<https://yougov.co.uk/topics/philosophy/explore/topic/Islam>

California slavery reparations
<https://eu.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2020/10/01/california-consider-slavery-reparations-after-historic-law/5877926002/>

Megan and Harry: Black History Month UK, Evening Standard
video: <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/bhm-next-gen-trailblazers-harry-meghan-racism-a4560921.html> ;
<https://www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk/> ;
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_History_Month .

USA election

Trump-Biden first presidential debate
video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wW11Y5jFNcQ> (27.39/2:04:20)
Biden better; partisan judgment; vote unchanged
opinion poll: <https://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/trump-biden-debate-poll/>.

The debate
video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wW11Y5jFNcQ> (27.39/2:04:20)
Chair's verdict: "I'm just sad with the way Tuesday night turned out."
<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/oct/01/it-is-what-it-is-debate-moderator-chris-wallace-reflects-on-trump-biden-clash>

Opinion poll, 538-ipsos: Biden better; partisan judgment; vote unchanged
538 <https://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/trump-biden-debate-poll/> ;
Ipsos <https://www.ipsos.com/en-us/news-polls/538-first-presidential-debate-2020> ;
Data tables <https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2020-09/topline-538-sept-29-debate-combined.pdf> ;

"While the media focuses on the un-presidential president, the Democrat's extremist agenda remains under the radar."
Gerard Baker
<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/trumps-boorishness-let-biden-off-the-hook-kt6qgnxfd>

The centre ground and the extremes of the political spectrum

A number of pieces appeared last week discussing the middle and the extremes of the political spectrum, and also extreme political discourse.¹

Daniel Finkelstein was at the Cheltenham Festival talking about his book, *Everything in Moderation*.

In *The Times*, Max Hastings talked about “those millions of us who go through life believing that truth about most things in life is to be sought in the middle ... we want a political party we can support without shame and a revival of reasoned argument ... where and how can the militant centre fight back? ... [the Lib Dems] are bereft trapped in a vicious circle ... I doubt that a new centre party can emerge in the foreseeable future. We must pin our hopes on voices of moderation in the two main groupings ...”. In addition to this argument about the political spectrum, Max Hastings also discusses the need for respect and the quality of debate.

In reply, Matthew Goodwin is in broad agreement with Max Hastings’ desire to “curb rising polarisation in British society”. Yet he is “not convinced that the restoration of the old liberal centre ground, which he craves, is the answer”. He argues that, with the rise of populism, Brexit and Boris Johnson, opinion has moved away from social and economic liberalism to family, security, community, stability and tradition.

Also replying to Max Hastings, Anthony Seldon, “an instinctive middle-grounder myself” takes the long view, going back to Ancient Greece and Rome, the wars of the Roses, the Civil War and the 19th and 20th centuries, noting that “gladiatorial contests heighten not dampen interest in debate”. Vituperative debate is not a new phenomenon.

Gerard Connolly shares Max Hastings’ regret at the loss of moderate thinking in politics. “Boris Johnson has succeeded where Jeremy Corbyn failed and turned his party into a narrow-minded cult. ... [He has excluded and weakened alternative voices] ... *The Washington Post* talks of ‘the right-wing nationalist government of Boris Johnson.’”

¹ *Everything in Moderation*, Daniel Finkelstein

Podcast with Tim Bale

<https://podcasts.google.com/feed/aHR0cHM6Ly9hbmNob3FuZm0vcy8yMTcwNDQ4NC9wb2RjYXN0L3Jzcw==>

Cheltenham Festival

<https://www.cheltenhamfestivals.com/literature/whats-on/2020-/danny-finkelstein-everything-in-moderation/> ;

Book: <https://www.harpercollins.co.uk/9780008356606/everything-in-moderation/>

“How to help our politicians raise their game. To rescue both big parties from extremism, we must revive respect for MPs and curb social media.”

Max Hastings, *The Times*, October 1, 2020: 26.

“Moderating and improving public discourse”

Matthew Goodwin, Anthony Seldon, Gerard Connolly, David Bogod,

Letters to *The Times*, October 2, 2020: 26.

National Populism: The Revolt Against Liberal Democracy. Matthew Goodwin

LSE podcast 2018 <https://www.lse.ac.uk/lse-player?id=4532> (3.36...)

David Bogod shares Max Hastings' desire "to moderate the incontinent abuse displayed by many on social media". However he stresses that "measures need to be proportionate and should minimally impact on freedom of speech".

Hastings talks about different wings of a party. Connolly talks about leaders turning "a party into a narrow-minded cult". Parties, wings, cults are different types of groupings of individuals, in other words, factions. A key feature of these groupings is whether they are narrow or broad.

Goodwin refers to "the Overton window (the ideas that define the spectrum of acceptable policies)" ...

Connolly refers to the lack of tolerance shown by the Johnson government: exiling those who disagree, marginalising, politicising, briefing against, evisceration and refusal to be scrutinised ... "all strikes at the heart of democracy".

But how much tolerance is shown towards the Johnson government? Hastings says "I used to regard the Conservative right as awful, but unthreatening because ridiculous. Yet today they are in charge." Looking in the other direction, he calls for Jeremy Corbyn's expulsion and for ensuring that "the left-wing snake is scotched".

Hastings asks "where and how can the militant centre fight back?" ...

... There is an idea here which I am struggling to formulate. Hastings wants his ideas to win. People are dissatisfied with democracy if they don't win. They almost think that democracy fails if they don't get what they (or their group) want. Democracy is

...

[I need to think about this some more!]

I too have been influenced by recent issues such as Brexit² and the 2019 UK general election³ to think about the centre ground. Taking as a starting point the abstract notion of the distribution of opinions in abstract political space⁴, the following general points seem to me to be important.

.(0) The centre can be defined either in relation to a space of objective attributes or to the distribution of public opinion in that space.

.(1) The foundational concept is the statistical distribution representing the variation of individuals in the space.

² The Brexit Year, 2019.

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbXnb3Jkb25idXJ0bWF0aHNvY3NjaXxneDo0YTQzMDUzNDkzMDI0ZTg1>

³ UK election 2019

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbXnb3Jkb25idXJ0bWF0aHNvY3NjaXxneDo2ODlmNDRhY2UzZjgwMjI4>

UK 2019 election results

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbXnb3Jkb25idXJ0bWF0aHNvY3NjaXxneDo2NjBmMDhkN2NkNW15Y2E3>

Labour leadership election, 2020; voter distribution in political space

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbXnb3Jkb25idXJ0bWF0aHNvY3NjaXxneDozNDc2ODE1NjA4YzQ1ODgw>

⁴ The USA racism protests ... the abstract structure of public opinion. See pages 34-65.

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbXnb3Jkb25idXJ0bWF0aHNvY3NjaXxneDozMjI1MWMxYTRlZmlyYmJm>

.(2) In certain circumstances the middle estimate gives the best estimate of the true value.

.(3) In certain circumstances the middle gives the optimal social choice.⁵

.(4) The distribution of individuals in space is sometimes single-peaked (as in the normal distribution).

.(5) The party vote distribution is sometimes M-shaped with the central party having a low percentage of votes.⁶

.(6) The social value of different parties/governments can also be M-shaped.⁷

The latter three points are relevant to Hastings' concern that a middle party gets trapped in a vicious circle.

.(7) The assumption of a one-dimensional space makes sense in that a principal component can always be identified.

.(8) However complications arise when two or more dimensions are in play and are significant.

.(9) In particular parties may be central on one dimensions but not on the other.⁸

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbnxnb3Jkb25idXJ0bWF0aHNvY3NjaXxneDozNDc2ODE1NjA4YzQ1ODgw>

.(10) The distribution of individuals and the location of parties can change over time. These points relate to Goodwin's comments on Hastings.

The above points are discussed in greater detail in a number of recent papers. What follows are summaries of the key arguments in these papers.

Voter distribution in political space: Tunisia, Austria, Israel, Portugal, Poland, UK⁹

The distribution of political values is a foundational concept. Here we are interested in the distribution of political preferences as expressed by the percentage support for political parties. Firstly we shall make some general remarks about distributions. Then we shall briefly consider the distribution of percentages when the party percentages are ordered by decreasing size. Our main concern though is how individuals and

⁵ Optimal social design

"Optimal social design: estimating a social welfare function from questionnaire data"

Gordon Burt, *Quality and Quantity*, 2006, 40, 6, 897-910.

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11135-005-3266-8>

"Social design, ethics and the amount of value"

Chapter 6 in Gordon Burt's *Conflict, Complexity and Mathematical Social Science*, Bingley, Emerald Press, 2010, pp. 87-105, particularly pp. 95-105.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/291366513_Chapter_6_Social_design_ethics_and_the_amount_of_value

The majority problem and central optimality.

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbnxnb3Jkb25idXJ0bWF0aHNvY3NjaXxneDo0ZWZmZmViNTBlYmJiNGI4>

⁶ Voter distribution in political space: Tunisia, Austria, Israel, Portugal, Poland, UK

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbnxnb3Jkb25idXJ0bWF0aHNvY3NjaXxneDo1ZWZmM2M5MGFjN2Q0NWZi>

⁷ Page 225 in Burt, Gordon. *Values, World Society and Modelling Yearbook*, 2015. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2017.

⁸ Page 6 onwards in Labour leadership election, 2020; voter distribution in political space

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbnxnb3Jkb25idXJ0bWF0aHNvY3NjaXxneDozNDc2ODE1NjA4YzQ1ODgw>

Pages 20-23 in *The Brexit Year 2019*:

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbnxnb3Jkb25idXJ0bWF0aHNvY3NjaXxneDo0YTQzMDUzNDkzMDI0ZTg1>

⁹ Voter distribution in political space: Tunisia, Austria, Israel, Portugal, Poland, UK

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbnxnb3Jkb25idXJ0bWF0aHNvY3NjaXxneDo1ZWZmM2M5MGFjN2Q0NWZi>

parties are distributed in political space. A major result of political theory is the median voter theorem: if people's preferences are single-peaked then the ideal preference of the median voter is the Condorcet winner.

Although we have used the phrase 'political preferences' the findings can also be thought of as relating to political identities and to the distribution of political identities.

The problem of factions¹⁰

Mrs May warned against the idea that "mobilising your own faction is more important than bringing others with you ..."¹¹

At rallies and at hustings ... on social media and in traditional media ... simple symbols are used to create hatred and to mobilise opinion so that a faction can win ... can win against other factions and against society as a whole.

Trump seeks a second term in office and his strategy is to exacerbate the polarisation of the two major parties. Johnson and Hunt have likewise outbid one another in the exacerbation of the polarisation between Remainers and Leavers. Likewise Brexit Party exacerbation of the polarisation between the UK and the EU.

In her last major speech as PM, delivered at Chatham House, May argued for compromise etc. – see above quotation. Factions and parties seek to win for their own faction. This was a topic discussed in a course I was involved with thirty years ago ... Back in the 1980s, the UK Open University produced a course on *Models of Democracy*. The set book had the same title and was written by the late David Held.¹² Factions and parties form to promote their own interests, against other factions and against society as a whole. Factions and parties seek to win. They gain power for their faction or party in part by obtaining majorities. The notions of faction, party and majority are thus interlinked but interestingly are differently referenced in the index in Held's book.¹³ Held's discussion of *the problem of factions* examines James Maddison's Federalist Paper No. 10 in a way which is highly relevant to current debates in the US and the UK ...

[to be continued]

¹⁰ Pages 34-35 in *The Brexit Year 2019*:

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbnxnb3Jkb25idXJ0bWF0aHNvY3NjaXxneDo0YTQzMDUzNDkzMDI0ZTg1>

¹¹ "Stay out of the gutter, Mrs May tells frontrunner."

Francis Elliott. *The Times*, July 18, 2009: 7.

<https://www.chathamhouse.org/file/theresa-may-state-politics>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-speech-on-the-state-of-politics>

However the speech has been criticised along the following lines:

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/1155101/theresa-may-brexiteer-news-no-deal-eu-michel-barnier-bbc-tory-leadership-video>

... but I think the arguments in the speech have merit in their own right.

¹² *Models of Democracy*. David Held. 1987 Cambridge: Polity Press

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Held; <https://www.sup.org/books/title/?id=10597> 3rd edition, 2006

¹³ Factions 63, 187-8, 189-190, 61-66, 190-1

Majorities 190, 193-4

Parties 154, 155-8 175 216-9 258

The problem of factions relates to what I have referred to as the majority problem: Brexit and the majority problem: competing democratic criteria (121 pages).¹⁴

The Majority Problem and Central Optimality¹⁵

The majority criterion is commonly used in social situations to decide which option to choose. However in certain circumstances the majority option is not the best option and it is this that we refer to as majority suboptimality. Note that here the notion of ‘best’ depends on a specific definition of value.

In certain circumstances, a central option is the unique optimum and so every non-central option is suboptimal – in particular this applies to any non-central option favoured by a majority. In other words, majorities which do not embrace the central option – what might be referred to as one-sided majorities - are suboptimal.

Possible conceptions of the centre are: mode, median, mean and midpoint. A possible criterion for optimality is maximum value and minimum value deviation/polarisation.

First though we note Peter Emerson’s work on the majority problem and also the ways in which the majority problem has manifested itself in the Brexit process.

The distribution of political values is a foundational concept. The notion here of a centre implies the distribution of values in a political space. The Borda Count and Condorcet criterion make no reference to a political space and are thus more general criteria with more general direct applicability. My hypothesis is that often a political space can be identified and thus make a notion of centre relevant.

Middle Voter Democracy¹⁶

There are many different conceptions of democracy. Middle Voter Democracy is a set of ideas which provides a different way of looking at political choice:

People and parties, options and policies are located in a political space.

Their distribution in political space tells us what we need to know.

The (MVD) best option is defined as the option preferred by the middle voter.

Elections or opinion polls provide evidence about voters’ distribution in political space.

The evidence allows us to estimate the middle voter and hence the (MVD) best option.

¹⁴

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbmxb3Jkb25idXJ0bWF0aHNvY3NjaXxneDoyOWFiNmU0MzNiMjhkZTE4>

¹⁵ The majority problem and central optimality.

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbmxb3Jkb25idXJ0bWF0aHNvY3NjaXxneDo0ZWZmZmViNTBlYmJiNGI4>

¹⁶ ¹⁶ Pages 35 in The Brexit Year 2019:

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbmxb3Jkb25idXJ0bWF0aHNvY3NjaXxneDo0YTQzMduzNDkzMDI0ZTg1>

Parties and pacts, aggregate options and majority criteria introduce partiality and can sometimes lead to indecisiveness or to the choice of options which are not the (MVD) best option.

What would have happened if MVD had been used?

The 2016 referendum would have pointed to a very soft Brexit as the (MVD) best option.

Mrs May's Deal would have been approved by parliament at the first vote.

A softer Brexit would have been approved by parliament's indicative votes.

Boris Johnson would not have been selected as the new Tory party leader.

Conservatives would have won the Brecon and Radnorshire by-election in 2019 ...

... Labour/ Lib Dem having won the seat in 2017 by 20 votes!

Options and support¹⁷

The number of options, the number of groups, the size of support and the amount of tolerance ...

[This links to Goodwin's reference to "the Overton window (the ideas that define the spectrum of acceptable policies)" ... but I need to work on more on the nature of the link.]

The impasse over Brexit was that there was no majority in the House of Commons for any of the options. The following were all factors in the situation: the number of options, the number of groups, the size of support and the amount of tolerance. In this section we consider some of the relationships between these variables.

... The fact that there are so many possible majorities will be used later to suggest that the concept of 'majority' should not play such a central role in our political theory and practice. If there are many majorities on what basis does one particular majority become the winner?

... The above ideas are quite general. We now suppose that individuals, groups and options are located in a one-dimensional space. The spatial aspect allows us to replace the concept of breadth tolerance with distance tolerance. It is found that many majorities are possible with a sufficient level of 'distance tolerance'. See the preceding paragraph about the implications for the role of the concept of 'majority' in politics.

¹⁷ Pages 34-36 in Brexit and the majority problem: Competing Democratic Criteria
<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbXnb3Jkb25idXJ0bWF0aHNvY3NjaXxneDoyOWFiNmU0MzNiMjhhkZTEEx>

General Background on the Project

Ten years ago I wrote a book on mathematical social science entitled *Conflict, Complexity and Mathematical Social Science*,¹⁸ and in recent years I have produced a number of yearbooks on *Values, World Society and Modelling*¹⁹ which have received favourable comment²⁰, including a review of the 2017 Yearbook in the *Journal of Peace Research Book Notes*.²¹

I have now turned my attention to specific topics. In 2018 I wrote *Football and Mathematics*.²² In 2019 I looked at the Brexit debate in the UK²³, and now in 2020 I have been looking at politics in the USA (see below).

This Autumn has seen new developments, with the start of *VWSM Weekly* and also the drawing together of previous work into two volumes, *Humanities and Mathematics*²⁴ and *Religion and Mathematics*²⁵, both only in early draft form.

Trump, America and Mathematics (forthcoming)

In June I produced a report on the racism protests in the USA following the killing of George Floyd. Over the summer I have produced two reports, one on the 2016 Presidential election;²⁶ and a second also about USA Presidential elections, but this

¹⁸ Burt, Gordon. *Conflict, Complexity and Mathematical Social Science*. Bingley: Emerald. 2010.

¹⁹ Burt, Gordon. *Values, World Society and Modelling Yearbook, 2014*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2016.

Burt, Gordon. *Values, World Society and Modelling Yearbook, 2015*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2017.

Burt, Gordon. *Values, World Society and Modelling Yearbook, 2017*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2018.

²⁰ 2014 Yearbook, reviews by Professors Oliver Ramsbotham, Kristian Gleditsch and Christopher Mitchell: <http://www.cambridgescholars.com/productreviews/61006>.

2015 Yearbook, reviews by Professors Ken Avruch and Glenn Palmer:

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2017 Yearbook, reviews by Professors Peter Abell and Lars-Erik Cederman:

<https://www.cambridgescholars.com/productreviews/62623>.

²¹ *Journal of Peace Research*, Book Notes. [Review of Gordon Burt \(2018\) Values, World Society and Modelling Yearbook 2017, by Peter Abell. Published online 2 August 2018. https://www.prio.org/JPR/BookNotes/?x=1208.](https://www.prio.org/JPR/BookNotes/?x=1208)

²² Burt, Gordon. *Football and Mathematics. Premier League and World Cup*. Newport Pagnell: Mathematical Social Science Publishing. 2018.

²³ Burt, Gordon. *Brexit website*, January 2020. <https://sites.google.com/site/gordonburtmathsocsci/central>.

²⁴ Burt, Gordon. *Humanities and Mathematics*.

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbmxb3Jkb25idXJ0bWF0aHNvY3NjaXxneDozM2RkZTQ3NDVmMTQyYzMy>.

²⁵ Burt, Gordon. *Religion and Mathematics*.

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²⁶ USA presidential elections, 1789-2020

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbmxb3Jkb25idXJ0bWF0aHNvY3NjaXxneDo0NzI5ODA4MTI0YWZkYzYz>

USA presidential elections, 2016 and 2020

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbmxb3Jkb25idXJ0bWF0aHNvY3NjaXxneDozMjI1MDEzZWwMzEy>

The USA racism protests ... the abstract structure of public opinion

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbmxb3Jkb25idXJ0bWF0aHNvY3NjaXxneDozMjI1MDEzZWwMzEy>.

Police homicides ... gun culture, population density and ethnic density? Some thoughts on a study by Edwards, Esposito and Lee.

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbmxb3Jkb25idXJ0bWF0aHNvY3NjaXxneDozOTMzY2Y1MDEzZWwMzEy>

Trump and the USA: the distribution of people and countries on the hate-love continuum worldwide.

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbmxb3Jkb25idXJ0bWF0aHNvY3NjaXxneDozOTMzY2Y1MDEzZWwMzEy>.

time their history since 1789.²⁷ Further reports are planned and I am hoping to put them together to produce a book with the following chapters:

Discourse in the USA: nice and true?
USA, 1789 to 2020, and world history
USA presidential elections, 1789-2020
USA presidential elections, 2016 ...
... and 2020
The USA: violent culture and ethnic structure ...
... the abstract structure of public opinion
Trump and the USA: the distribution of people and countries on the hate-love continuum worldwide
COVID-19

Values

‘Values’ is the first word in the title of my ‘Values, World Society and Modelling Yearbooks’. It is the first word for a very good reason: values are central. Many of the chapters in my books are explicitly about values.

Table 1 The chapters on values in my books

in *Conflict, Complexity and Mathematical Social Science*

...
4 Possibility and probability: value, conflict and choice
5 Theory, evidence and reality: the mean and median of competing groups
6 Social design, ethics and the amount of value
...

in *Values, World Society & Modelling Yearbook, 2014*

...
2 Individuals and Societies, Needs and Cultures
3 Individuals: Activities, Happiness and Other Values, Emotion, Personality
4 Relationships: Family and Friends, Care and Therapy, Nurturing Flourishing
5 The Life of an Individual ... Feeling at Home in the World
6 ‘Our Values’: Unanimous? Universal? Exceptional? Good? Safe?
...

in *Values, World Society & Modelling Yearbook, 2015*

...
2 Transcending adversarialism: The John Burton Memorial Lecture 2015
3 Life as a journey
4 ‘Our values’: the Enlightenment ... the Prophet
...

in *Values, World Society & Modelling Yearbook, 2017*

...
6 Cultural Trajectories: Languages, Religions and Political Cultures
7 Value Trajectories: Wellbeing, Wealth, Health, Peace and the Environment

Sources

The initial sources of information for the VWSM Weekly are The Times, New York Times and the Observer (Sunday). I am grateful for the work of their journalists.

VWSM Weekly Website

This issue and past and future issues can be accessed via:

<https://sites.google.com/site/gordonburmathsocsci/home/a-new-agenda>;

²⁷<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbmxb3Jkb25idXJ0bWF0aHNvY3NjaXxneDo0NzI5ODA4MTI0YWZkYzYz>