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# A SILENT REVOLUTION

The intellectual origins of cancel culture

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“If debate gets truncated and distorted even within academia, it is unlikely to remain honest in other sectors of society.”

Timur Kuran, *Private Truths, Public Lies*

“The goal of our culture now is not the emancipation of the individual from the group, but the permanent definition of the individual by the group. We used to call this bigotry. Now we call it being woke. You see: We are all on campus now.”

Andrew Sullivan, *New York magazine*<sup>1</sup>

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1 Sullivan, A. (2018) 'We all live on campus now'. *New York Intelligencer*, 9 February (<https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2018/02/we-all-live-on-campus-now.html>).

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## Introduction: The long march

In 2015, Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt published an essay in *The Atlantic*, later expanded into a book, titled 'The coddling of the American mind'.<sup>2</sup> This was a reference to Allan Bloom's 1987 bestseller *The Closing of the American Mind*. However, Lukianoff and Haidt were writing almost thirty years after Bloom, and in response to a rather different challenge. Bloom had feared a culture of relativism, in which students learned there were no moral absolutes or standards of excellence (Bloom 1987). Lukianoff and Haidt however, had become aware of the censoriousness of the modern campus, in which absolute certainty held sway: 'It is creating a culture in which everyone must think twice before speaking up, lest they face charges of insensitivity, aggression, or worse' (Lukianoff and Haidt 2015).

Seven years later, that censorious culture has become widespread, having moved beyond the campus into wider society, as noted in a recent leader column from *The Economist*:

[A] new style of politics has recently spread from elite university departments. As young graduates have taken jobs in the upmarket media and in politics, business and education, they have brought with them a horror of feeling 'unsafe' and an agenda obsessed with a narrow vision of obtaining justice for oppressed identity groups. They have also brought along tactics to enforce ideological purity, by no-platforming their enemies and cancelling allies who have transgressed...<sup>3</sup>

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2 Lukianoff, G. and Haidt, J. (2015) 'The coddling of the American mind'. *The Atlantic*, September (<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/09/the-coddling-of-the-american-mind/399356/>).

3 [Anonymous leader column] (2021) 'The threat from the illiberal left'. *Economist*, 4 September (<https://www.economist.com/leaders/2021/09/04/the-threat-from-the-illiberal-left>)

Research from Milos Brocic and Andrew Miles, reported in their recent paper *College and the “culture war”* supports the assumption that students acquire, or at least more fully embrace, this new censoriousness as part of their higher education. In a reversal of Bloom’s expectations, attending university now promotes not relativism, but moral absolutism. The effect is strongest for those studying humanities courses and those who pursue graduate degrees (Brocic and Miles 2021).

While it is tempting to look for short-run causes for this sudden flowering of illiberal ideas in our premier centres of intellectual inquiry, the phenomenon has deep roots. More than twenty years ago, Timur Kuran was noting its spread across the American campus in *Private Truths, Public Lies*. The ideas on which it depends are older still, coalescing decades before *The Closing of the American Mind*. As Friedrich Hayek wrote in *The Intellectuals and Socialism*, “What to the contemporary observer appears as the battle of conflicting interests has indeed often been decided long before in a clash of ideas confined to narrow circles” (Hayek 1949). The intellectual origins of today’s censoriousness lie in the narrow but influential circles of the New Left in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and in particular on American campuses. At the centre of this intellectual nexus is the concept of a ‘Long March’ through institutional power in order to secure revolutionary change.

The New Left itself was a movement that arose as the horrors of Soviet totalitarianism became impossible for many left-leaning activists in the West to ignore. Rejecting conventional Marxist analysis, and putting special emphasis on personal, including sexual, liberation, the New Left nonetheless remained hostile to the capitalist system and committed to its overthrow. It was also far more focused than earlier, worker-centred efforts on universities and other socially influential institutions. In 1962, the Port Huron statement from Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) announced that ‘A new left must be distributed in significant social roles throughout the country. The universities are distributed in such a manner...’ and added “The university permits the political life to be an adjunct to the academic one” (Hayden et al. 1962).

It was in December 1967, however, that the Long March strategy was publicly named. *Der Spiegel* featured the radical sociologist Rudi Dutschke on its cover. The accompanying story was titled ‘Der lange Marsch’, and it outlined his blueprint for New Left radicalism. Like the SDS, Dutschke wanted to subvert Western capitalism by taking over its institutions and using them to shift public attitudes towards revolution. It was a consciously



non-violent strategy, named after the series of military retreats that cemented Mao Zedong's power.

The Long March, and allied approaches like that of the SDS, solved two distinct problems for the New Left's supporters. First, it allowed them to enjoy the benefits of participation in a system they professed to despise, because they could feel they were working to bring it down from within. Second, it repudiated the violence which haunted the movement's extreme wing, most notably the Red Army Faction or Baader–Meinhof Gang.

In America, Herbert Marcuse took up the idea of the Long March. A leading light of the New Left, Marcuse wrote in a personal letter to Dutschke in 1971 that 'I regard your notion of the "long march through the institutions" as the only effective way' (Kellner and Pierce 2014: 336).

In a profile published by *Playboy* magazine in September 1970,<sup>4</sup> Marcuse gave an example of this approach in action, explaining how a professor with inconvenient political views was replaced with a Marxist using organised protests, an early example of a pattern of behaviour that is now becoming familiar even in the workplace.

Examples from the period could be multiplied. In Britain, activists' attempts to take over the Polytechnic of North London through a process of subversion and intimidation in the spirit of the Long March were documented in *Rape of Reason* (Jacka et al. 1975). And just as today's efforts to restrict speech in the name of social justice find echoes in the 1970s, so too do many of the concepts used to justify those restrictions. The idea of cultural appropriation was mooted in 1976 by Kenneth Coutts-Smith, in 'Some general observations on the problems of cultural colonialism', while Chester Pierce identified microaggressions as an issue in 1974, in 'Psychiatric problems of the black minority'.<sup>5</sup>

And yet from the beginning there were suggestions that the young would not be as straightforward to indoctrinate as Marcuse hoped. The *Playboy* profile also records how student revolutionaries met Marcuse's earnest commitment to Marxist study with a defiant anti-intellectualism, and some

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4 Horowitz, Michael J. (1970) 'Portrait of the Marxist as an old trouper'. *Playboy*, September.

5 al-Gharbi, M. (2019) 'Seizing the means of knowledge production'. *Heterodox Academy Blog*, 4 October (<https://heterodoxacademy.org/blog/seizing-means-knowledge-production/>).

hecklers also asked why he wasn't supporting black studies courses. The Long March was already heading in directions that its creators never intended.

# Origins

The Long March strategy crystallised in the late 1960s, but it was the product of a much longer history of efforts to introduce socialist ideas into Western industrial economies. In 1884, the formation of the Fabian Society was an early sign of the power of Long March-style methods. Like Dutschke 80 years later, the Fabians broke with violent revolution, and their approach also shared two of the Long March's most powerful characteristics: a slow enculturation or 'permeation' of radical ideas into mainstream debate, alongside a focus on the elite intellectual classes rather than workers.

In 1928, George Bernard Shaw explained the Fabian strategy and why it proved effective:

The Fabian Society succeeded because it addressed itself to its own class [...], meanwhile accepting, instead of trying to supersede, the existing political organizations which it intended to permeate with the Socialist conception of human society. (Shaw 1928)

Despite the slow-burning success of the Fabians, the lack of revolution across Western Europe continued to frustrate communism's true believers. That frustration grew in the aftermath of World War I, when the Great War's devastation failed to bring a Marxist reckoning, reaching new extremes with the rise of fascism. For the radicals, fascism did not represent a new and rival totalitarianism. Instead, they saw all their worst prejudices confirmed about bourgeois society's capacity for evil. That horror gave fresh intellectual energy to those seeking capitalism's overthrow.

In particular, the interwar period produced the prison writings of the communist Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci was jailed by Mussolini's fascist regime in 1926. At his trial, the prosecutor declared: 'for twenty years we

must stop his brain from functioning'. But while Gramsci died in prison 11 years later, he used his captivity to offer a fresh vision for revolution.

Like the Fabians before him, Gramsci focused on the intellectuals rather than workers as the standard-bearers of that revolution. A 'war of position', conquering and reshaping a society's cultural hegemony of thought, had to precede the actual revolutionary 'war of manoeuvre' which would seize political power. In the service of a war of position, the key figures to co-opt or replace were a society's intellectuals. Indeed, 'One of the most important characteristics of any group that is developing towards dominance is its struggle to assimilate and to conquer "ideologically" the traditional intellectuals' (Gramsci 1971).

Due to his imprisonment and the fact that his work was in Italian, Gramsci's ideas would take decades to spread. By the 1970s, they had become a source of inspiration to leftist intellectuals in the English-speaking world, apparently offering a way forward without violence and with intellectuals leading the charge.

Roger Scruton sees Gramsci's theories as a decisive shift to a new battleground, encouraging left-wing activists to swap streets and factories for intellectual subversion on campus. Scruton also notes a sinister undercurrent to Gramsci's belief that an intellectual class must lead the way to revolution: 'it promises [the intellectual] both power over the masses and a mystic identity with them. But that is the promise of fascism' (Scruton 2016: 208). This unresolved tension would continue to haunt Gramsci's disciples, justifying 'anti-fascist' actions that at times employed tactics little different to those of their enemies.

The UK was not immune. The magazine *Marxism Today*, under the editorship of Martin Jacques and the influence of the noted Gramsci-inspired scholar Stuart Hall, took a deep interest in these ideas. Indeed, it allowed them to understand the countercultural power of Margaret Thatcher very early. Stuart Hall coined the term Thatcherism before the Iron Lady was even Prime Minister. In 1987, he wrote 'Gramsci and us' for *Marxism Today*, which identified Thatcher's danger to the New Left project. Her own vision, he saw, was nothing less than a reversal of 'ordinary common sense' support for the leftist settlement which had been established in Britain during the post-war years (Hall 1987).

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In the 1990s, Tony Blair in many ways looked to Mrs Thatcher to inform his economic reinvention of the Labour party with market-based thinking. But when it came to culture, New Labour was in the grip of the New Left. It is telling how many of New Labour's senior figures had a background on the revolutionary left. As Peter Osborne notes in *The Triumph of the Political Class*, most of those who ushered in the Blairite revolution had been radical members of the New Left in the 1960s and 1970s. Two of Mr Blair's most trusted lieutenants, Peter Mandelson and John Reid, had been active members of communist organisations (Osborne 2007). All these scions of the New Left understood Gramsci's logic, and sought to impose a new culture through subtle and long-lasting changes. This included expanding regulation of speech and behaviour, and placing likeminded allies to oversee the growing system of quangos that resulted. Unlike Hall's early awareness of Mrs Thatcher's strategic threat, market liberals had their eyes firmly on economic issues, and did not appreciate what their opponents, inspired by Gramsci, were up to.

Another product of the search for a revolutionary doctrine that could thrive in the West was the *Institut für Sozialforschung* (IFS) or Institute of Social Research, better known as the home of the Frankfurt School. The timeline for the ISR's establishment as an adjunct to the University of Frankfurt has become muddled by conflicting primary sources. However, a recent review of the evidence by Ian Gardner suggests that it was formally established in early 1923, after the germ of the idea was developed by the wealthy radical Felix Weil in late 1919 (Gardner 2020).

There is some circumstantial evidence that the Fabians were an influence on the IFS's intellectual methods. Karl Korsch, a key influence on Weil, had travelled in England before the war and knew the Fabian approach. However, the main model appears to have been the Marx–Engels Institute in Moscow. Gardner argues his timeline re-emphasises 'the fundamentally ideological nature of the Institute and the political affiliations of its founders'. It locates Weil's inspiration in a time when he was moving in the circles of prominent communists, and ties the notorious 'First Marxist Work Week' to the period after the IFS was officially founded.

Gardner writes that the work week was:

likely intended to be the event at which the theoretical direction of the Institute was set. That theoretical direction was explicitly a Marxist one, influenced by practicing Communists and intellectuals with Communist sympathies.

There is no question that, thanks to the wealth of the Weil family (Felix's father was a successful grain merchant), the IFS was well-funded, supported by a generous endowment and an additional annual grant. This paid for ten permanent academics plus support staff and up to ten additional research associates contracted for specific publications or projects (Hunter 2010: 303).

From the outset, the IFS was interested in moving beyond conventional Marxist analysis and developing ideas more palatable to Western intellectuals. In the 1930s, under the directorship of Max Horkheimer, the institute's focus shifted. Horkheimer had met Weil in 1919 and was one of the central figures in the institute's early conception. As director, he pursued the development of critical theory, with far-reaching consequences.

Critical theory is an intellectual frame of distrust and negation. It is most familiar in the public debate today in the form of critical race theory, a descendant (by way of another product of the 1970s, Critical Legal Studies) which still retains strong similarities to its intellectual ancestor. Critical theory interrogates the *status quo* with a presumption of guilt, and seeks to change it. Writing in 1937, Horkheimer explained how critical theory demanded its practitioners adopt a perspective outside of and above their own culture:

[Critical theory] is suspicious of the very categories of better, useful, appropriate, productive, and valuable, as these are understood in the present order [...] the critical attitude of which we are speaking is wholly distrustful of the rules of conduct with which society as presently constituted provides each of its members (Horkheimer 2002: 207).

Critical theory did not just offer a hermeneutic of suspicion and repudiation: it blurred the boundaries between activism and academic study. In the same essay, Horkheimer speaks of the critical theorist forming 'a dynamic unity with the oppressed class, so that his presentation of societal

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contradictions is not merely an expression of the concrete historical situation but also a force within it to stimulate change’.

Other left-leaning theorists would supplement this approach in important respects, notably Michel Foucault with his account of hidden structures of social power. However, the arrival of critical theory was a watershed. It broke new ground, uncontaminated by Marxism’s associations with Soviet repression, and gave practical form to Gramsci’s theoretical ideas about how intellectuals should fight the war of position. Academic radicals now had a new task: to reveal everything that was wrong with society. By doing so, they could help pull down the old order.

The ideas of the Frankfurt School might have remained marginal. However, in 1935 the ISR moved to America to escape the Nazis, becoming part of Columbia University. In America, the ISR’s sophisticated, European ideas fell on fertile soil.

Since the 1920s, educated American liberals such as Sinclair Lewis, the author of the business satire *Babbitt*, had expressed hostility to the commercial culture of the American middle class and sought to rise above it (Siegel 2015). The Frankfurt School gave new intellectual justification for this sense of alienation and superiority. The School’s leading figures, including Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, took aim at America’s popular culture, seeing mass entertainment as a tool for indoctrination or stupefaction.

In the shadow of World War II, the Frankfurt school also criticised the middle class with fresh urgency. Committed to the idea that bourgeois capitalism was the source of fascism, rather than a bulwark against it, its disciples taught that mainstream American life was always on the brink of totalitarian nightmare – a theory too seductive to require evidence.

The citizens whose lives are split between business and private life, their private life between ostentation and intimacy, their intimacy between the sullen community of marriage and the bitter solace of being entirely alone, at odds with themselves and with everyone, are virtually already Nazis (Horkheimer and Adorno 1987: 125).

These rarefied ideas slowly gained intellectual currency in academia. In the 1960s they went mainstream, thanks to the work of Herbert Marcuse. Marcuse had gained attention with his 1955 book *Eros and Civilisation*, which spoke to another feature of the Frankfurt synthesis: its interest in

the ideas of Freud and the connection between sexual and political liberation. In 1964, Marcuse published *One Dimensional Man* to huge acclaim. Marcuse dismissed both Soviet communism and Western capitalism as deadening and conformist systems of repression. He identified the path of individualism with rejection of social expectations. He also stressed the importance of radical intellectuals in cultivating resistance.

The work of Marcuse, like all of the New Left's thought, pulled in two directions at once. While he became a hero of the counter-culture for championing liberation from repression, he also displayed a chilling acceptance of repression as a tool of liberation. His 1965 essay 'Repressive tolerance' claimed that the only way to serve the true goal of tolerance was to call for intolerance towards certain opinions: 'Liberating tolerance, then, would mean intolerance against movements from the Right and toleration of movements from the Left' (Marcuse et al. 1969).

Two years later, with Rudi Dutschke's formulation of the Long March, all the elements were in place. The New Left rejected Soviet totalitarianism but still dreamed of a peaceful and liberating revolution. It feared capitalism as a breeding ground for fascism, a fear that justified radical action, including the repression of opposing viewpoints. It turned its back on the workers as the vanguard of revolution, in favour of intellectuals, especially academics. It spoke the therapeutic language of psychoanalysis. And it hoped to spread its worldview into positions of power and social influence in order to get its way.



# Evolution

A radical hope had characterised the late sixties counterculture, when the Long March emerged. But the seventies brought economic malaise combined with political disillusion. America's bitterly unpopular war in Vietnam ended in defeat, symbolised by the fall of Saigon in 1975. The New Left itself failed to shake off its violent fringe, with two extremists taking part in the Entebbe hijacking of 1976.

Crushing the hopes of Dutschke and Marcuse, the Long March also appeared to run out of energy. The baby boom generation (born between 1946 and 1964), despite their campus flings with radicalism, turned out to distrust institutional power and disdain political involvement on an unprecedented scale (Putnam 2000).

On American campuses however, a new power base was emerging. The arrival of the boomers in universities had brought an extraordinary expansion in student numbers. America's public universities make up the vast majority of student enrolments for higher education, and in 1965, these enrolments stood at 3.97 million. By 1975, that had more than doubled, to 8.83 million (Ellis 2021). Academic appointments grew in response. The speed at which this happened – and the political tenor of the times – brought more activist faculty members onto America's new campuses. While university faculty members had always skewed left, this began a process that would shift the campus balance of power significantly in the left's favour. In 1969, a Carnegie Commission on Higher Education found that Democrats outnumbered Republicans among faculty by 3 to 2. In 2018, the ratio was 13 to one, and climbing.<sup>6</sup> In Humanities departments, the elimination of contrary political viewpoints among faculty is near-total.

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6 Ellis, J. M. (2020) 'Campus culture seizes the streets'. *Wall Street Journal*, 5 July (<https://www.wsj.com/articles/campus-culture-seizes-the-streets-11593973851>).

Equally consequential was the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The same universities were now under pressure to increase African-American student enrolments and academic outcomes, and the ideal of equal treatment soon gave way to special treatment. The landmark 1954 ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* argued that blacks would feel inferior unless they received the same education as whites. At the start of the 1970s, an older generation, including Marcuse himself, were still opposed to creating separate departments for black studies. However, they were swimming against the tide. The logic of *Brown* was soon reversed: now special treatment, and special disciplines, were necessary for true equality (Bloom 1987: 94–6). The arrival of black studies established a template for further departments on the same lines, all of which would act as power centres within the academy for a more activist and identitarian approach.

The implementation of the Civil Rights Act also had immediate consequences for freedom of speech on US campuses. Open debate over racial issues, especially over the merits of affirmative action, became impossible. Entry standards for African-American students were in many cases lowered substantially to improve access. This was a likely factor in high dropout rates and poor performance among black students, but the topic was not up for public discussion. The general campus atmosphere was blamed instead, for being systemically inhospitable to minorities. To rectify this, further constraints on speech and behaviour followed, and were rapidly expanded to cover the needs of other identity groups as well (Kuran 1995: Chapter 14).

This attack on free speech was spearheaded by a new class of campus administrators, that had also been created by the unanticipated consequences of regulation. In 1972, Title IX of the Education Amendments made it illegal for federally-funded colleges to discriminate on the basis of sex. In 1978, the Supreme Court's *Bakke* decision ruled against universities using explicit racial quotas, but also established that seeking diversity in the student body was legitimate and lawful. These changes stimulated the growth of a campus bureaucracy of unanticipated size and scope, which has continued to expand at a startling rate. Between 1987 and 2012, the US university and college sector more than doubled its administrative staff, collectively adding the equivalent of 87 new administrators every working day.<sup>7</sup> Dedicated to promoting diversity and

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7 [New England Center for Investigative Reporting (NECIR)] (2014) 'New analysis shows problematic boom in Higher Ed administrators'. *Huffington Post*, 6 February ([https://www.huffpost.com/entry/higher-ed-administrators-growth\\_n\\_4738584](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/higher-ed-administrators-growth_n_4738584)).

equity of outcomes, but with no interest in academic priorities, this new administrative caste attracted activists, and became by far the most radical group on campus.<sup>8</sup>

All these developments institutionalised a more political and less freely expressive atmosphere on American campuses. After decades of steady enculturation, that shift is finally coming to wider attention as it becomes second nature to a new generation of students. What Marcuse, Dutschke and the SDS had hoped to achieve through conspiracy was instead largely a confluence of historical and regulatory contingencies. In the process, identitarian concerns took centre-stage and intellectual rigour was often sacrificed, neither of which would have met with the approval of Marcuse. But the reinvented academy remains very much a child of the New Left: hostile to the *status quo*, revolutionary in its goals, therapeutic in tone and above all, willing to restrict debate in the name of social justice.

Over the last 60 years, the West's educated elites have become steadily more left-wing (Piketty 2018). The rise of this Brahmin Left has brought the ideas of the New Left to widespread influence, as America's cultural heft, especially in the English-speaking world, helped to spread these trends to universities across the world, including the UK. They are now permeating out into wider society.

Gramsci's vision of an elite class of intellectuals directing society toward revolutionary ends has proven seductive to this modern breed of meritocrats. Speech controls too, appear to come naturally to them. Conscious of their superior intellects, members of the Brahmin Left are more than ready to nudge and, if necessary, force the less-enlightened into line. Tragically, the neglect of cultural issues over the last half-century by economic liberals has enabled this decidedly illiberal trend. The heirs of Blair were successfully inoculated against the pursuit of equal economic outcomes. The pursuit of equal social and cultural outcomes did not receive the same attention. Only now is it becoming clear that such cultural ambitions also have revolutionary consequences, including the creation of a paralysing bureaucracy of control, run by a vast network of petty commissars in HR departments, universities and public sector bodies.

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8 Abrams, S. J. (2018) 'Think professors are liberal? Try school administrators'. *New York Times*, 16 October (<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/16/opinion/liberal-college-administrators.html>).

## Conclusion: We all live on campus now

Networks of intellectual elites are a powerful, slow-motion route for introducing new ideas into a society, and this has been true since the rise of Christianity (Hunter 2010). Such a strategy is hard to deliberately sustain, because its payoff is slow to arrive. However, in recent British history both the Fabians and the publishers of this paper, the Institute of Economic Affairs - inspired by Friedrich Hayek's analysis - have demonstrated this technique's enduring effectiveness. The Long March strategy of the Sixties and Seventies, institutionalised and perpetuated less by conspiracy than by regulatory overreach, has benefited from the same slow, silent accretion of influence.

Today's cancellations are the continued working out of the New Left's irreconcilable desire to be both anti-totalitarian and revolutionary. From the start, that tension drove its adherents to acts of violence at worst, and at best to embrace intimidation and censorship in the name of liberation. Timur Kuran's work on preference falsification details how the resulting culture of silence on campus produced a spiral of misunderstanding, and gave rise to ever-tightening controls on speech and behaviour (Kuran 1995).

Public attitudes to free speech have changed rapidly in the last few years. But like any overnight success, this shift was decades in the making. Kuran points to the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe as an example of how slow-motion changes in private sentiment can be revealed in public all at once, in a process he calls a preference cascade. Similarly, Stephen Vaisey and Omar Lizardo find that when a generational cohort develops new social attitudes, this gradual change can gain public currency much later, in a sudden, punctuated shift (Vaisey and Lizardo 2016).

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The result can be hard to recognise as the product of a coherent movement. Even a term like ‘cancel culture’ suggests nebulous, organic change without a clear origin or cause. But the shift against free speech, at first slow and now rapid, was deliberately set in motion and pursued by one, highly influential intellectual movement. The architects of New Labour were trained by the New Left. Terms like ‘critical race theory’, which seem to come from nowhere to dominate the headlines, are the direct descendants of critical theory as developed and promoted by the Frankfurt School. The characterisation of speech as an obstacle to liberation is not new. It is an inheritance of Marcuse.

Since contemporary attacks on free speech share an intellectual framework, they demand more than a case-by-case response. Today’s cancel culture is not invulnerable. That does not, however, guarantee a short-term solution. The New Left and its heirs re-engineered the political landscape by working on a multi-decade timescale. The Institute of Economic Affairs itself was founded to exploit the same trick. While today’s 24-hour news cycle has increased the demand for quick fixes, the New Left’s current triumph should, above all, encourage a renewal of long-term thinking by those who would overturn the present hegemony (Greer 2021).

In the meantime, there are interventions that can help. The work of Kuran and others reveals how cancel culture is, despite its name, in large part a product of flawed regulation (Kuran 1995).<sup>9</sup> One recent contributor to the suppression of speech on US campuses, for example, was a 2013 federal rule change which redefined harassment as any ‘unwelcome’ behaviour, removing older, more objective standards and opening the door to vexatious claims (Lukianoff and Haidt 2015). In the UK, the regulatory structures imposed by New Labour, in particular the Equality Act, continue to require institutions to prioritise diversity and equity concerns in ways that make speech repression a rational response.<sup>10</sup> Uncovering the regulatory structures which incentivise cancel culture, alongside campaigning for regulatory reform, and against new rules with censorious consequences, offers one promising path to defend the principles of free and open debate. But the future will belong to those who can, like the New Left and Friedrich Hayek, lift their eyes to the far horizon and reimagine its possibilities.

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9 Hanania, R. (2021) ‘Woke institutions is just civil rights law’. *Hanania Newsletter*, 1 June (<https://richardhanania.substack.com/p/woke-institutions-is-just-civil-rights>).

10 Timothy, N. (2022) ‘Like it or not, we are all still living in the shadow of Sir Tony Blair’. *Daily Telegraph*, 2 January. (<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2022/01/02/like-not-still-living-shadow-sir-tony-blair/>).

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