

Learning to Judge Politics

In the first of a series of interviews conducted by members of *Theoria*'s editorial board with provocative political theorists and thinkers, Professor Lawrence Hamilton talks to Professor John Dunn in an exclusive interview at King's College, Cambridge, held on the 28 March 2019.

LH: My first question is a very simple one: what in your opinion is the point of political theory?

JD: I've always thought the point of political theory is to help you to orientate yourself in a political world, to judge what it is a good idea or a bad idea to do, what to favour or resist, and assess all of those yourself. So, I think of it as a practical business in the end.

LH: You've been doing this for fifty years plus. There are people that take a much more analytical approach to political theory. They are concerned with conceptual clarification. You wouldn't obviously go down that route. Your concern is about something more practical – about understanding and about intervention into practical politics.

JD: Yes, well I think we are all in practical politics, whatever level of placidity or activity we happen to display in face of it. That's life. I don't think practical politics can be segregated from life. I think life just is practical politics. You can ignore its being so. Obviously, most people do more or less ignore it, but I'm not in favour of doing so. I think the more you

understand about how important politics is, about how consequential it is and how deeply it reaches into everyone's lives, the less good reason there is for just being passive and ignoring it.

LH: So, as political theorists, you think we should not ignore practical politics in a number of ways?

JD: I think we should reconcile ourselves to informing ourselves about what's going on. We should try to draw on whatever cognitive resources we can find to help us to judge the significance of what's going on from a practical point of view.

I think of it as a synoptic process really. I see political judgement as a skill that you do or don't learn and as quite a general sort of skill that you can take around the world through time wherever you go.

I don't think of it as a skill that you can learn to do superlatively, however personally gifted you may be, because too many different sorts of things help to make it inconclusive, and there is no guarantee of accumulating it. You can get warmer and you can also get colder.

I am interested in trying to understand better what's really going on in the world, and trying to judge what it will mean and to see what can be done about the more deeply discouraging things that threaten us.

LH: I want to pick up on three things here. First, your reference to judgement. Second, the issues of global intellectual history or political theory and the importance both of having a

synoptic view and the necessary context so that you gather the right sorts of information and as much of it as possible for particular judgements. The third issue relates to one's audience as a political theorist. If you're concerned with how best to gather together the ways in which we think about, theorise, value, the facts of the matter in a particular place and at a particular time, then you're going to be talking to a particular audience. What is that audience?

JD: Well, it depends on where and when you are. And it depends quite a lot on what is actually going on there and then.

Supposing I'd been in this country in 1938 and I happened to be in the same social role as I am at the moment (that I was a Fellow at King's; at the time, there wasn't anybody teaching about politics at King's because the university didn't think it was a serious subject to study). I would have wanted to address as wide an audience as I could possibly reach to warn people about what then threatened them and urge them to act in a particular way. It depends on what is going on, and who you think has a reason to listen to you.

I don't myself have a British political audience at all, and I've never really had one. The one place in the world where I do have an audience by accident is South Korea. I won that audience over time, but I was given the opportunity to do so by a politician, a political leader. The only reason I went to Korea was because of him, and I've gone on going back there because he really was a very important figure.

I've thought a great deal, as a result, about the politics of Korea, and I know quite a lot about it. I don't know that much about the politics of many countries because you can't. I've never been obsessed by British politics because for most of my lifetime I didn't think the

immediate stakes in it were very high. I don't mean that I thought that things were fine, but I thought that there was no chance of anything I said directly affecting the ways in which they definitely weren't fine, and I didn't think there was much going on, that there was much in the way of dynamism. I did feel differently during the Prime Ministership of Margaret Thatcher, and obviously I feel differently now. But now is a particularly hopeless time to look for an audience really, unless you already have one, and even if you did happen to have one it's not so clear what is worth saying to it because there is such complete chaos.

LH: I asked the question partly because I was struck, as a graduate student in one of your classes, by your insistence on your audience being the other citizens around you, not so much the elite representatives.

JD: Well, I suppose it would depend very much where I happen to be at the time. Supposing I was closeted with a significant chunk of a political elite, I would certainly talk to them with some urgency, especially if I had something to tell them which I thought was at all important. But I don't characteristically find myself in that position. The closest I've found myself to being in that position, besides Korea in the last twenty-five years or so, was actually just by complete chance in Ghana half a century ago, because the gap between a foreign university teacher and the elite in Ghana was quite narrow in some respects, so it was easy for me to get access to people and quite easy to get them, at least initially, to listen to me. But at that point, I was far more interested in listening to them. I didn't have a lot to say to them about the politics of Ghana, but I did acquire some on the basis of that experience.

LH: It's very interesting to me that you spent that time in Ghana, and I suspect it would be interesting to a *Theoria* audience, which is becoming more and more of a Global South audience, to understand what was it that attracted you to spending time in Ghana and what you got out of it.

JD: I'd been trained as a historian in political thought, and I was teaching history in the College. That was what I was employed to do. But I didn't want to go on working on the past as such. I wanted to become a renegade to history and work on the present instead with my eye on the future. I went to Ghana because I was interested in politics and puzzled by it and thought that somebody who had learnt something from political ideas, if they were going to think about politics, should pick a category which was clearly not well understood at the time and was also quite widely distributed. The category I had in mind in going there was the category of post-colonial states because there were, suddenly, lots of these. They plainly had some features in common. They were obviously very different from one another, and it was perfectly clear that no one at the time knew how to think about them effectively.

LH: And maybe still not today? But you moved quite quickly away from that. Was that because you felt like you'd done what you could do?

JD: Ghana was a very, very winning country. Ghanaians are an unusually delightful sort of people to be with. I got very, very heavily involved with Ghana for completely accidental personal reasons.

There are two reasons I moved away from it. One was because of the returns to intellectual effort and the other was purely existential.

I went there married to someone I was very madly in love with, and she left me for someone else while we were there: a completely irrelevant but urgent backstory. I was working at the university but also doing research about 250 km away in the forest, and I lived in that for some of the time and got very thoroughly involved with Ghanaian life. I knew people in Ghana really right across the class structure and knew them quite intimately in ways I've never really done anywhere else.

It was a very intense time for me. I went back to Britain after a year, as that was as long as I could get away for without losing my job. Two years after I returned to Britain, there was a second military coup and a government came in that was exceptionally ruthless and brutal by Ghanaian standards and fantastically destructive, in the sense that they wrecked everyday life for over 90 per cent of the population within a couple of years. The lives of many people I knew well were really ruined, and I just couldn't take it. It was Ghana which changed the way in which I looked at politics and which taught me how dangerous politics can be

One of my best friends – very emphatically against my advice – became head of the Special Branch of the police because he had been involved in the campaign of the party that genuinely won the election and the head of that party rationally distrusted its incumbent professionals and wanted to put in someone whom he really did trust. My friend had been working before in the United Nations as a lawyer. He had a Nigerian wife and two young children, and I told him he was crazy to take the post. Two years later, when the second coup came, it was several of his immediate subordinates who came round to beat him up and cart him off to prison.

The last time I went to Ghana three years later, I did so after publishing a book I had written with an anthropologist, Sandy Robertson, about the research we had done together, and so that I could talk again to the people I had written about and they could talk to me should they wish to. At that point, my friend was in the maximum security prison under a death sentence and I just couldn't take it in one way or another. It was just too shaking. So in effect, I just ran away from it.

On the intellectual returns point, I suppose I just recognised after my Ghanaian experience that there wasn't going to be a lot that it was really helpful to say with any rapidity about the category of the post-colonial state because to achieve that you would have had to have done the work that I began to try to do in Ghana on quite a large number of instances.

I didn't want to go on working on Africa because I did not want to go back to Ghana, so I simply stopped doing so. I'd already got myself quite heavily involved with two other different lines of academic work, and two lines were quite enough. I went on thinking about African politics, but I did so from a safe distance and I tried to do so more comparatively.

LH: This links to a very important component of your earlier work around comparison. But I'd like us to talk about political judgement and democracy. In your latest book, *Breaking Democracy's Spell*, you say that democracy has been your main concern for at least a quarter of a century and wound up in that is a concern for political judgement and how best we can judge as collectives, whether that collective be national or even beyond that.

JD: Well, I am certainly in favour of balancing national judgement with a degree of international judgement. I don't think a fully nationalist perspective on politics is enough to orientate you, at least not given my own values. Obviously, it might be enough for Nigel Farage.

My interest in democracy began by a series of accidents, and I went on pursuing it because of those previous accidents. I thought about it very briefly in the first place and recognised some things about it that other people did not appear to have registered but which I thought were important. But at the time, that was a relatively casual didactic purpose.

I didn't think of democracy as a dimension in which the life of my own society was in any significant degree in jeopardy when I began to work on it. But as I continued to work on it, more and more happened in the world; and it has turned out pretty obviously that democracy as a mode of organising the political life of a society is indeed in jeopardy today, and not just in my own society.

So, I've gone on thinking quite hard about quite a wide breadth of experience; and because I've done that comparatively and purposefully, I've gone around the world thinking and talking to people about what democracy means in different settings and how it is operating, and learnt a lot from listening to them while doing so, over what is now a quarter of a century and more.

I think partly as a result of that, I do tend to have something specific to say wherever I go. It's more specific, naturally, in places where I've accumulated quite a lot of relevant knowledge than if I only know about them from how they feature in the pages of the *Financial Times*. I've squandered what should have, from the modern academic point of view, been the research component of my life on reading the *Financial Times* from one end to the other for thirty-six years. So, it's been a long journey. I've gone on doing so because I couldn't find anything else

more efficient and comparably broad in streaming information from across the world. It is in a way the only global newspaper.

LH: So, this links to the two points I was talking about. In your latest book, *Breaking Democracy's Spell*, you argue that, and this a quote, 'democracy's ascendancy has impaired our political judgement'. How so?

JD: Well, I think that people, especially in the United States where I gave the lectures that became that book, assumed that democracy was the reliably known and long-discovered solution to the question of how to live together in security and prosperity and such levels of amity as a population could muster, that democracy in effect was a training in amity. That assumption is less widespread now because so much has since happened to show its absurdity.

I had thought for some time that it is indeed an absurd presumption. If you know what democracy has been over time and space and you explore why it has spread as it has, you can see quite clearly that what has made it the apparent winner of a particular sort of global power competition certainly cannot have been its having all those profoundly satisfactory properties.

What I was principally trying to say in those lectures was just that democracy in any defensible understanding is not the solution to the riddle of history and is going to go on reproducing a great deal of the lethal harm which is now occurring, unless we learn how to stop it doing so. That is something we could only learn together. So, democracy needs to be re-built from the ground up by the citizens it supposedly empowers if it's going to turn out not just not to be the solution to the riddle of history, but also not to be a serious menace.

LH: So, some might say, and you've made reference to it obliquely, that Brexit and Trump are, in a sense, consequences of the fact that representative democracy has left out a lot of that citizenry.

JD: Well, I think that the point isn't just that democracy in its current Western form has left a lot of people out the whole way along, because you could say that that is simply in the price. It's not so much democracy that has left them out as the history of global capitalism, and it hasn't done so by inadvertence. That's simply the way it operates; it's a power process. But democracy certainly hasn't succeeded in constraining it from doing so to anything like the degree that those who first saw it as a potential political solution for modern history hoped that it would.

I've recently re-issued *Setting the People Free*, the book I wrote before *Breaking Democracy's Spell*. It tries to tell the story of democracy. But, as I've pointed out in this re-issue, that book isn't just a story; it's also an argument which makes what has since happened less than surprising. I've learnt quite a lot about democracy from the thirty years or so that I have tried to think about it hard and consecutively.

For democracy to be a good political order, it needs to be true that its citizens are successfully educated to understand the politics of their society. It cannot be a very good political order in so far as they aren't. It's not that there's some other particular political order that is superior to it. The main lesson of the work I've been doing is that we have put far too much weight on the idea that democracy solves problems. It's we who solve or fail to solve problems. Actually, the idea of democracy makes that quite explicit, if only you look at it steadily. But in the hands of political scientists, especially American political scientists, and in those of routine politicians in representative democracies, that point has been effectively ignored.

No modern citizenry is in fact reasonably well educated politically. You may say, ‘well, whose fault is that?’ I don’t think it’s the fault of some definite social role – of career politicians or economists, personnel in the security services, university or primary school teachers – though I do think that it is more the fault of university teachers than of anyone else. That’s a disappointing view for anyone who opts for my profession, but it’s also a challenge to them. It struck me a long time ago that everyone is in fact an amateur political theorist and that most people are very bad political theorists. Lots of professional political theorists unfortunately are also very bad political theorists because they don’t take politics seriously enough and don’t bother to learn enough about it to become any better.

LH: What has the last week and the last few months of Brexit leading up to last night meant? Has it reinforced that judgement, and, if so, has it also added some other concern about this particular parliamentary democracy?

JD: Well, I don’t think that there are institutional fixes for collective comprehension. The deep point about democracy today is that it is an attempt to maximise political comprehension on a basis which is as fair as is compatible with living in a capitalist world. We don’t, in my view, have any idea how to create another world, and so we are stuck with that one. That’s where we are living and have to go on living. We have not really yet addressed at all effectively the question of what is cognitively required across a population for it to live well in that world.

This is a very old perception inside the history of political ideas in the West, and obviously it must vary greatly how far it is shared in comparable political thinking in other parts of the world; but I do think it’s right that there just is no substitute for comprehension. The

robust political case in favour of representative democracy is that it's a more plausible and potentially sustainable structure of self-protection across the population than anything anyone else has so far thought of. But it's also a very, very weak structure in some ways and can't be made a strong structure for providing protection unless people understand very much better what is going on their lives and why it's going on. So I don't think that democracy is going to recover plausibility and stability unless in fact we manage to do rather better in collective self-education.

LH: But then the question is, if you undertake a world comparative project, what is the place where it is the best despite its inequalities? If understood in a kind of median sense, would the United Kingdom not rank quite highly on general education levels and political comprehension?

JD: Well, I don't know about general education levels. I dare say that's right. But I don't think it is right about political comprehension. I don't think that it's fair to blame the majority of the citizenry for that state of affairs, but I do think it's at least fair to blame university teachers of politics to a much larger degree for it because that's what they are there for. I mean, what else are they there for?

LH: But you don't think that the political authority, the state in this question, has an obligation to enable and enforce that?

JD: No. Every state is at the mercy of the political comprehension of the people into whose hands it happens to fall. Recently in this country, quite a lot of them happen to have studied PPE

at Oxford, but that doesn't seem to have helped them, and I doubt if that's an accident. I think PPE is a rotten training in political comprehension. I'm afraid that we simply haven't developed the study of politics in any of the ways in which we've done so with that as its central purpose. A long time ago, that was more or less the aegis under which the subject began to be taught, but scholasticisation has taken over and a variety of structural processes in particular institutions have taken over that affect universities in ways I see as taking us further away from it rather than moving towards it.

LH: What then would be the components of a political theory education or a PPE education that would generate good political judgement?

JD: Well, I don't think that political judgement is a sort of magic. It's just a practical skill that needs to be extended across the population. You shouldn't learn it in order to set up as a consultant or as a political advisor. Although that's not a bad role to take up if you have the right person to advise with the right political force at the right time.

Democracy has a lot of potential merits, which aren't very successfully realised. One of its potential merits is imaginative, in making it much easier for people to see the sense in which it might be really good for them to listen to each other. Of course, if they do listen to each other, one of the things that will occur to them is that some are considerably more instructive to listen to than others. But I don't think there is enough attention or enough reasons in fact for attending to what the people who should have something worth listening to in fact have to say. So I think it is a serious failure in the professional activity of teaching about politics not to be overwhelmingly worth listening to for the most part for most people most of the time. That is not

a good outcome of so much investment. What it is worth saying depends obviously on whom – coming back to your question about audience – you are trying to talk to. There are plenty of conversations that are constituted by a very high division of intellectual labour – for example, questions about what exactly it was that John Locke was thinking about and why he thought about it in a particular way, and then, more ambitiously, questions about the way he thought about it and how that way has turned out for people in other times and places.

It's a matter of chance how much pertinent political instruction there is in those conversations. They may easily be completely un-instructive. It's a property of the academic division of labour and its game-theoretical structure that people go on and on in particular places for diminishingly good reasons. Of course, some of those places are potentially more rewarding to go on and on in than others. But the way scholasticisation works isn't to home in on those places, because it isn't addressed to the collective needs of the population but more to the mutual amusement and competition of the speakers themselves.

LH: You've highlighted an inherent contradiction or at least a difficulty that, in my opinion, is not enabled by capitalist democracy: the distinction between effective democratisation of knowledge and the capacity to create and comprehend knowledge, and the fact that in that process of democratisation it becomes obvious that some are better at the craft than others. So, the impetus behind democracy is thwarted. So, it's a fascinating problem, and I wonder how you see through that.

JD: Well, I don't think there's a fix for it: a clear remedy which is bound to work. But I do think it is a continuing political challenge to a society how much mutual attention there is within it.

You could say that that deficit in this country now has come about because its political class has simply lost interest in the lives of most of the population, especially the half that voted to leave in the Brexit referendum. There was an element in that failure that was involuntary. They failed to think of anything they could say to much of the population, and they weren't forced to try to address them. In a sense, we are all now being made to try to say something to them. But of course, it proves to be the case that we don't have that much to say. Political classes can fail.

A political class in what I would see as a less undemocratic society would have to be a class which recognised its deep accountability to the rest of the population and recognised that its task was to advise and persuade its fellow citizens for the better and to listen carefully to why it was failing to persuade them whenever it was.

LH: Do you think there is an institutional tweak or an institutional solution? Would it involve some mechanism that would enable or guide or enforce the political class to be more conscious, cognizant of the citizens' needs?

JD: Well, there used to be such a mechanism in this country. There used to be mass political parties. Mass political parties precisely operated in that way. If you turn political parties – as is the current practice – into quite small structures without any deep roots anywhere, you lose that; and you lose both a lot of the cognitive value and almost all the accountability. No electoral democracy can work well except by accident if you lose both of those.

LH: So you don't think it's got to do with an electoral arrangement or an institutional arrangement relating to the representatives. It's got to do with the fact that by chance or in

response to a particular democratic history that you've had the development of mass parties and then their diminution.

JD: Well, I think the mass parties did actually address that question in quite a deep way. Of course, I have my own political taste in when I think they best did or when I approved the fundamental way in which they addressed them. Party political conflict is necessarily to quite a large degree about precisely those questions. But I think the mass aspect of it was of absolutely fundamental importance. Until somebody thinks of another structure which combines that degree of cognitive flow with that degree of personal accountability, I don't think that the problem can be fixed.

On my model of a more successfully politically educated citizenry, that citizenry would be far more interested in political parties. Political parties are the selection mechanism through which citizens can determine state policy. They are far from being the sole generative cause of state policy at this point, but they are the mechanism for selecting it for the population at large, so we can't be governed in any sense at all democratically in my view in the end unless we can restore a structure which has those properties. I'm not saying there couldn't be some other structure. I'm just saying there isn't any other structure at the moment in operation. No one I know of has so far thought of an alternative candidate with minimal plausibility.

There are alleviation devices of different kinds, which if you inserted them into this pretty pathological space, would damp down some of its pathologies. But they don't have the same fundamental merits that I think mass parties did have.

LH: So do you think that on balance Jeremy Corbyn's return to the mass party, in some sense in the way that he has and that he's garnered support even though it hasn't looked successful at the higher levels, is a successful move or not?

JD: Well, I think it is a move in that sense in the right direction. It's important for a lot more people to care about politics in a non-passive way than before that movement began. I regret the particular distribution of people who did pitch into it, not all of them, but quite a few of them, because I think they are particularly unpleasant and not going to improve anything by pitching in except by chance. Supposing the Conservative Party became a mass party, it wouldn't be representing only communities with cultural values all of which I share, but it would be playing an appropriate role in the politics of a less undemocratic country.

LH: So, we need to look beyond the illusory version of democracy that we have been given and that has been sold to us, to some of the more important dynamics that you have been talking about.

JD: Also, I would say to some of the conceptual presuppositions of the idea of democracy, which is not very effectively articulated in practice in the institutional arrangements we have.

LH: You mean, not just equality before the law but also mechanisms to control levels of inequality?

JD: Well, the idea of democracy initially meant that the citizens decided. We know the citizens decide very little. On the basis that I have been trying to sketch out, a less undemocratic society would be one in which they were in fact practically deciding, in however mediated a form, a great deal more. And it wouldn't be possible, or it would certainly be far less likely, for there to be the same degree of cumulative, selective inattention by the political class to the real-life predicaments of the majority of the population.

LH: But you obviously don't have in mind full participatory democracy or deliberative democracy or any of these other models, especially in a place that is the size of, say, India.

JD: I think the idea that you could have deliberative democracy or participative democracy in a way which determines the agency of the Indian state is self-evidently utterly incoherent. It doesn't make any sense at all. I think it would be good for there to be quite a lot more consequential deliberation in Indian politics. I think that's true everywhere, and obviously I think it would be good for there to be quite a lot more of some kinds of participation in Indian democracy, but it wouldn't be in taking the state decisions. I don't think India would be much better governed if it had one hundred referenda a year. I think it would be worse governed under those circumstances. It would be completely ungovernable, unless the referenda were about a trillion issues, in which case what would be the point?

The deep political question going forward is how politically plastic the structure of global capitalism can be on a local basis in a democratic way. I think the answer will turn out to be that it isn't very plastic in any sense at all, and a democratic sense is an extremely demanding sense through which to try to mould it. But I am in favour of its being organised to be so in so far

as it can and that we need to try to think out better ways in which we can at least make that attempt.

That's why I think mass political parties are so important. It's because they formed a causal structure in the past with some fundamental properties which we have since lost. We need to think very hard about whether we can recover them or make other structures to replace them.

LH: And the causal structure is effectively a structure of representation and then representatives being held accountable?

JD: Yes, it is a combination of ensuring that the representatives are at least aware of what they should be representing (what they're *for* to represent) and a structure through which, in so far as they clearly fail to represent it, that they can be called to account.

LH: And finally, some of your latest work has been on the desirability and the necessity for a global intellectual history or a history of political thought, and you can extend that to a global political theory. I wonder if you can say something about why that is desirable and how that links to the representative question and the accountability question. In other words, it's clearly important to get over the Eurocentric or North-Atlantic-centric problem of political theory, but there may also be a strong link between that and the main substantive concern you have as to the parlous state of democracy today.

JD: I don't really agree with that. The way I see it is this: democracy is an idea of an imperfectly coherent, but not completely whimsical, kind about the structuring of politics inside a determinate territory and for a determinate citizenry.

It's a coherent idea about how the politics of the state and the nation could be approached in an appropriate way. I don't think it's a clear idea of about how the politics of the world could be approached in an appropriate way because the politics of the world does not have a governmental structure. I am in favour of lots of global dialogue for its own dear sake, but I don't think that addresses the problem of government at all. The issue is how that dialogue bites on the government, and there isn't a government there for it to bite on. In this country, as in rather a large percentage of countries in the world, it would be a good thing for the population to be aware of the past political sensibility and preoccupations of groups of human beings who were not resident amongst them one hundred years ago or two hundred years ago or in some places even ten years ago.

That awareness is an element in democracy at a coherent nation-state level, and today it has become quite an important element. But where I think it's really politically important for a global history of political thought to bite on isn't domestic politics; it's international relations in a very broad sense, all relations with populations across the borders of your own state. Obviously, these are interactive personally and also for states, as well as commercially very intense. It still very much matters for everyone what is going on in the world outside their own countries.

I think it is perfectly clear, if you look at the policies of the major Western states over the last twenty-five to thirty years, even before Trump became president, that they have been in many ways not just objectionable in particular instances but systemically ill-considered because

of their extreme inattention to the way other peoples experience the world. I think from a technical economic point of view that that has had drastic consequences and that there may be quite a lot of economic de-globalisation in the near future and who knows for how long?

What is clear is that we don't have an even minimally satisfactory structuring of international political relations for the international economic relations we have at the moment, and we don't have any mechanism at all, except for the evidently catastrophic character of some policies that political leaders have pursued, of actually learning how to improve it. I think it would be very good if in any national civic curriculum there was some serious attention paid to the way that politics has been for other peoples and not just the way it has been in their own countries. Then it would be more natural for political leaders to attend to that too and of course they could also be relatively privileged recipients of what we do manage to learn about this.

We have not learnt much in this way so far because we haven't tried to. It's very hard work doing so. It would have been much better for the statesmen and women of the West if they had known something about the history of political thinking in China and something about the history of political thinking in Iran and maybe also about the history of political thinking in India and Saudi Arabia and many other places.

LH: That's fairly fascinating. I was going to mention China, and that is an obvious example that really clarifies the point of that intervention about global history of political thought.

There obviously is also a post-colonial imperative, right?

JD: I'm a post-colonial child. I come from two or three generations of imperial cadres, and I grew up trying to persuade my parents that empire had all been a terrible mistake and more

urgently that it was very important for it to come to a rapid end. I didn't mean it wouldn't matter for it to end disgracefully – just that it needed to do so promptly. That was very divisive in my family because the centre of my parents' pride and the happiest years of their lives lay in the later stages of the Indian Empire. It was that experience, above all in Iran and India itself, which has determined how I have seen the world for the rest of my life.