Life After Political Death

The Fate of Leaders
After Leaving High Office*

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Representative Democracy

Understood as forms of government and ways of life in which no body rules because power is subject to periodic elections as well as publicly monitored and contested from a multiplicity of sites, contemporary democracies are remarkable in the way they dispense with the fetish of leaders. Democracies certainly need leaders, multiply their numbers, respect them, follow them, learn from them - but they do not worship them as Leaders blessed with metaphysical powers. Democracies specialise in bringing leaders down to earth. They manage to do this - as we shall see in this chapter - by using a variety of formal methods and informal customs that require leaders to leave office peacefully, without staging ruthless comebacks, so enabling other leaders to take their place without kidnappings or gunfire, bomb blasts or street upheavals.

The principle that leaders should periodically be replaced using peaceful means has its origins in the birth of representative democracy in the Atlantic region, at the end of the eighteenth century. It is well known that this new type of polity was formed by splicing the classical spirit and language of democracy with medieval European ideals and institutions of representative government; that the new language and institutions of representative democracy fundamentally transformed the meaning and significance of political leadership; and that the resulting hybrid turned out to be one of the primary inventions of modern politics [Keane 2009]. Representative democracy signified a new form of government in which people, understood as voters faced with a genuine choice between at least two alternatives, were free to elect leaders who then acted in defence of their interests. Much ink and blood was to be spilled in defining what exactly representation meant, what counted as interests, who was entitled to represent whom, and what had to be done when representatives snubbed or disappointed those they were supposed to represent. But what was common to the new age of representative democracy that matured during the early years of the 20th century was the belief that good government was government by elected representatives of the people.

Representative democracy was not simply a functional response to territorial imperatives, a practical solution to the problem of how to exercise power responsibly

over great distances, as is still commonly supposed today. The case for democratic leadership was much more interesting than this. Thomas Paine's intriguing remark 'Athens, by representation, would have outrivaled her own democracy', is a vital clue to the entirely novel case for the superiority of representative government made by 18th- and 19th-century publicists, constitution makers and citizens; so too is Thomas Jefferson's insistence that 'there is a fullness of time when men should go, and not occupy too long the ground to which others have a right to advance' [Paine 1791 [1925], 273; Jefferson 1811 [1905], 204; Urbinati 2006]. Usually in opposition to monarchy and despotism, representative democracy was praised by its supporters as a way of governing better by openly airing differences of opinion, not only among the represented themselves, but between representatives and their electors. Representative government was applauded for its emancipation of citizens from the fear of leaders to whom power is entrusted; the elected representative temporarily 'in office' was seen as a positive substitute for power personified in the body of unelected monarchs and tyrants. Representative government was hailed as an effective new method of apportioning blame for poor political performance - a new way of encouraging the rotation of leadership, guided by merit and humility. In open defiance of talk (by Thomas Carlyle and others) of hero-worship as rooted in the human condition, representative democracy was thought of as a new weapon against pandering to the powerful, a new form of humble government, a way of creating space for dissenting political minorities and levelling competition for power, which in turn enabled elected representatives to test their political competence and leadership skills, in the presence of others equipped with the power to sack them.

The leap of imagination that accompanied the invention of representative democracy was astonishing. Yet it had some puzzling features, including an odd silence within theories of representative democracy about the fate of political leaders after their term had expired, or after they had been booted from office. It is true that there were some observers who warned that ex-leaders would be troublemakers. They drew the conclusion that representative government should not apply term limits to the highest offices of state.[1] This strangely anti-democratic argument was to lose the upper hand

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[1] Writing as 'Publius' ('The Same Subject Continued, and Re-Eligibility of the Executive Considered', *New York Packet*, 21 March 1788, later known as Federalist Paper 72), Alexander Hamilton defended the principle that elected heads of state should enjoy unlimited time in office, so long as 'the people'

during the course of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century struggles for the extension of the franchise; in the case of the United States, the argument was finally rejected in 1951 by the ratification of the 22nd Amendment, which limits presidents to a maximum of two terms. That innovation left untouched the whole issue of what was to become of political leaders after they had left office. The sources of this strange silence about life after leadership are unclear. Perhaps it was due to the belief that monarchy was the prime enemy of the principle of rotation of office holders at the executive level. The experience of lunatic kings like George III or Austrian Emperor Ferdinand I (who suffered up to twenty seizures a day, which made ruling difficult) convinced many of the pertinence of the great slogan of the Dutch Patriots and the French revolutionaries: 'Death to Aristocrats, Long Live Democrats!' There was also the passionate conviction, in some nineteenth-century liberal circles, that the spirit of monarchy could be replaced by the public-spirited power of educated reason that would apply to leaders and former leaders alike. James Mill (according to his son John Stuart) 'felt as if all would be gained if the whole population were taught to read, if all sorts of opinions were allowed to be addressed to them by word and in writing, and if by means of the suffrage they could nominate a legislature to give effect to the opinions they adopted. He thought that when the legislature no longer represented a class interest, it would aim at the general interest, honestly and with adequate wisdom; since the people would be sufficiently under the guidance of educated intelligence, to make in general a good choice of persons to represent them, and having done so, to leave to those whom they had chosen a liberal discretion' [J.S. Mill 1873 (1969), 64-65]. The odd silence about life after high office perhaps probably rested as well on the presumption that leaders would always be getting on in years, and that given life expectancy patterns markedly different from those today the autumn of their lives after office would be short (a presumption that has been

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consented to their 'perpetuation in office'. Hamilton said that 'inevitable annihilation', the strict application of term limits, would have perverse effects. Short-term stays in office would produce unwelcome changes of policy and unstable administration; and weaken the state in times of crisis, when the wisdom of experienced leaders is vital. Term limits would also stir up trouble among 'the people', who might feel deprived of their favourite leaders; and tempt incumbents 'to make the harvest as abundant as it was transitory' by engaging in 'peculation, and, in some instances, to usurpation' (an odd argument that critics of Hamilton tried to turn on its head, by pointing out that the temptations of power could only be cured by placing strict limits upon its use). Hamilton went on to warn that 'inevitable annihilation' would inevitably result in disgruntled former leaders 'wandering among the people like discontented ghosts'. The warning rested upon several questionable assumptions, but it correctly pointed to a difficulty that defenders of representative democracy were initially reluctant to address: the problem of finding meaningful public and private roles for former holders of high office.

invalidated by the fact that for the past four decades in OECD countries two and a half years have been added to people's lives each decade, on average). Or perhaps the strange silence was based on the belief that the holding of office is supervised and protected by God, that (as Edmund Burke famously put it in a much-neglected passage in his 'Speech to the Electors of Bristol' [1774]) the 'unbiased opinion', 'mature judgement' and 'enlightened conscience' that ideally come with the holding of office were 'a trust from Providence', with the corollary that the abuse of these qualities by incumbent and former leaders would be punished by divine wrath.

Whatever the reasons for the silence, it is my opening conjecture that in the field of political thinking there is something like a classical Greek bias that clouds our inherited understanding of representative democracy: a mentality of ostracism, it could be called, a presumption that leaders who give up or are ousted from office are simply stripped naked and banished to the Land of Oblivion, just as happened in ancient Greek democracies. The method of ostracism *(ostrakismos)* was a distant cousin of modern efforts to apply limited terms of office to political incumbents. Ostracism represented a definite break with the old Greek custom of elites hounding their elite opponents into exile. It was a new form of democratic compromise, a clever method, under the control of citizens, of transforming the ugly blood sport of hunting down enemies into the milder practice of treating opponents as mere competitors for power. Ostracism was also seen by Greek citizens as a potent remedy for a pathology that was peculiar to democracy: that self-government of 'the people' could seduce 'the people' into choosing leaders who had no interest in 'the people', except for abusing 'the people'. Resting on the principle of one man, one vote, one victim, ostracism involved annually banishing unduly popular leaders from a city for ten years, if a minimum number of voters favoured their expulsion. Those banished in the unpopularity contest were given ten days to quit the city – leaving the *ekklēsia* to get on with the business of self-government.

It is unimportant here why the weapon of ostracism failed and was subsequently abandoned (it had the effect of stirring up political vendettas and was misused by rival political figures bent on shoving their opponents off the political stage). The crucial thing is to see that contemporary realities are quite at odds with the mentality that framed the Greek theory and practice of ostracism. Out of office, out of sight, out of

mind is a rule that no longer applies in actually existing democracies. 'All political lives', Enoch Powell used to say publicly and in private conversation, 'unless they are cut off in midstream at a happy juncture, end in failure, because that is the nature of politics and of human affairs' [Powell 1977, 151]. That is no longer true. Life after office is becoming commonplace, for several reasons. Under democratic conditions, former leaders are not typically forced into exile, although that practice has not entirely ceased [Roniger and Sznajder, forthcoming]. With a bit of luck and regular exercise in the gym or pool, former top political leaders are living healthier and longer lives, so that when they leave office they find they still have many extra years on their hands. Democracies that impose term limits reinforce the trend towards life after high office, either because ex-leaders tend in consequence to be younger or because term limits often produce leaders who in the final period of office are turned into lame ducks (an expression invented by eighteenth-century bankers and later applied to elected representatives). For these and other reasons, former leaders do not usually go quietly. No longer are they relegated to the ranks of nobodies, or simply forgotten. They instead enjoy rising public prominence; and they are the source of a growing problem - and perhaps a resource opportunity - for actually existing democracies.

For reasons of space and clarity, I will concentrate exclusively upon political figures that once occupied the highest offices of state. I am aware there are other and probably different patterns of life after holding office at lower levels of both government and civil society, inside and beyond territorial state boundaries. The concentration on executive office holders is however not just an analytic convenience; it is justified by the very considerable powers that they usually enjoy when in office, and (so I claim) by the growing opportunities of exercising powers of leadership after they leave or are removed from office. Put differently: there are empirical, strategic and normative reasons for thinking in fresh ways - hard and deeply - about the dialectics of life after political office holding at the highest levels. The subject of ex-office holders is under-theorised, under-researched, under-appreciated and - in many cases - under-regulated. What follows is a rough sketch of a field of research that is new, undeveloped and arguably of growing importance in shaping the future of contemporary democracies.

Office dependency

The starting point of this research is that the experience of political office holding at the highest levels induces habits that are difficult to kick after leaving office. The experience of being removed from office is often synonymous with the collapse of a personal world. 'You know how hard it is. I've given my whole life to politics', says the key character in Václav Havel's *Leaving* (2008), a play scattered with references both to Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* and to Shakespeare's *King Lear*, two plays that also deal with the theme of the painful personal costs produced by the loss of power. Office dependency, as it might be called, is particularly virulent among former presidents, prime ministers and other top jobholders, but the malady may afflict office holding at all levels.

What triggers office dependency? It is arguably not just the perks of office - guaranteed salary and discretionary budgets, administrative backup, the chauffeured time management, good dinners, access to women and men, potential bribes - but also the deep personal satisfaction of winning public recognition (or fond memories of 'honeymoons') that together function as a type of snuff whose consumption is not easily relinquished when one's time is up. Political leaders come to be hooked on the stuff of office; they are prey to what is usually called hubris; they hanker after honours (such as the peerages, knighthoods, the Order of the Garter and other prizes much coveted by former British prime ministers). Psychoanalytic reasons usually figure in the manic or narcissistic clinging to office (as Angus McIntyre [1988] has insightfully pointed out). It was Tito who remarked that 'political death is the most horrible death of all', a comment that clarified why he not only dyed his hair, sported gleaming white false teeth and regularly used a sun lamp to top up his tan, as if to build a grandiose self that recognised no death; Tito so equated departure from office with bodily death that he secured lifelong tenure of office and ordered a constitutional change to collective leadership, so that after he had moved on (so he thought) nobody could hijack or mothball his fame, or ruin his reputation.

My point about office dependency can be expressed differently: the capacity to concede power gracefully to others - the 'politics of retreat' is the term I invented for analysing the different cases of the post-1985 Gorbachev reforms in the Soviet Union,

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and Václav Havel's difficult presidencies in the former Czechoslovakia - is neither a divine nor a 'natural' gift [Keane 1990; Keane 1999]. Of course, there are exceptions, in the form of political office holders who are mentally and viscerally committed to observing time limits on their power; know that the rotation of office holders is an unqualified democratic good; grasp the pitfalls within the illusion of indispensability; and who are blessed with the wisdom that political genius consists in knowing when to stop ('In der Beschränkung zeigt sich erst der Meister', was Goethe's way of saying that the master triumphs by holding back). But stepping down is a capacity learned reluctantly, and with the greatest difficulty, usually in trying circumstances; it is a talent that has few supporting role models and virtually no philosophical mentors or political guidebooks.

The perceived perils of losing power are well known. The grimness of defeat is not just linked to the enforced abandonment of policies that may have been fought for with great energy and purpose. The fear of political death has much more to do with the loss of constantly challenging work; mourning the lengthening of days where once minutes were sliced thinly; empty diaries and silent phones; the inability to make up lost time with families and loved ones; and the emotional difficulty and fears of outright depression (suffered by Lyndon Johnson, for instance) caused by exiting a macho world where thick skin is a job requirement and confessions of vulnerability are reckoned a liability. The resulting 'relevance deprivation syndrome' (a phrase coined by a former Australian foreign minister, Gareth Evans) undoubtedly fuels the unwillingness to leave office, and that is why the history of representative democracy brims with concrete attempts to force soldiers of high politics to shoulder their arms, to prevent hubris by erecting political and constitutional limits upon leaders. The mid-nineteenth-century invention (in the Canadian province of Nova Scotia) of the formal role of 'leader of the opposition' [Kaiser, 2008; Michaud, 2000] can be seen as an early attempt to constrain hubris by simultaneously offering an incentive to competitors for office and providing a formal role for leaders who find themselves thrown from office. More recent methods of regulating office dependency include informal restrictions, such as public exposure through investigative or muckraking journalism and the observance of rules of propriety concerning private dalliances. There are also formal rules, such as laws against the acceptance of bribes and payments, recall and initiative mechanisms, impeachment, time limits on office

holding and (practices designed supposedly to ease the transition to the role of an incorruptible ex-leader) the payment of pensions, the provision of free travel and medical benefits, office accommodation, security protection and (as in Belgium and Canada) restrictions on membership of supervisory boards or management of companies in receipt of state contracts.

Self-recycling political elites

The extent to which these checks on leaders are put in place, or are practically effective, is of course highly variable and context-dependent in today's democracies. Yet there is ample evidence that the more any democratic political system gives a free hand to their top political leaders, the more that system typically turns a blind eye to the doings and misdoings of their former office holders. That in turn has the effect of minimising, or eliminating outright, the difference between holding top elected office and life after political leadership, an elision that is not usually good for democracy.

The political art of keeping tabs on leaders and enforcing the distinction between holding and leaving office is a key indicator of whether or not a form of government can be considered democratic. The contrast with anti-democratic governments, eighteenth-century European monarchies and twentieth-century totalitarian regimes for instance, is revealing. Think for a moment how hard-core monarchies symbolically represented the power they wielded over their subjects. The physical body of kings like Charles I and Peter the Great was conceived both in the figure of God the Father and Christ the Son. The monarch's body was divine, and therefore immortal and unbreakable. It could not be admitted that kings died; they lived on forever. Their bodies symbolised perfection. Like God and his Son, kings could do no wrong, which is why the violation of their bodies - through un-Godly acts ranging from unsolicited touching by their subjects through to attempted regicide - were harshly punishable. The body of kings also symbolised the unbreakable quality of the 'body politic' over which they ruled. Like God, kings were omnipresent and their bodies coterminous with the polity itself. Monarchs were God-given givers of laws. But they also resembled God the Son. Sent by God to redeem humankind, kings had a 'body natural' - the sign of God in the world - as well as a body politic. Just like the

persons of the Trinity, the two bodies plus the authority they radiated were immortal and one, inseparable and indivisible.

It is a strange historical fact that twentieth-century totalitarianism thrived on a version of the same fiction of a unified body politic, 'pure as a diamond', as the butcher Great Leader Pol Pot explained in a little-known 1949 pamphlet, *Monarchy or Democracy*. In the name of 'the people', but like the monarchies of old, totalitarianism put the body of the Great Leader on a grand pedestal for the grand purpose of establishing Him as the ultimate source of wisdom, strength, knowledge and power. The embalming and public display of Lenin's corpse in the Soviet Union in January 1924 was a foretaste of such practices, which reached something of a climax in the huge Memorial Hall edifice in T'ienanmen Square constructed in memory of the Great Helmsman of the Chinese people, Mao Zedong. Those who have seen it will agree that it is no simple grave for a common corpse. It more than resembles the royal mausolea reserved for the Sons of Heaven who were at once elevated persons and divine persons, in whose bodies time figuratively stood still, forever. The T'ienanmen edifice preserves this custom for a revolutionary saint. It contains a marble statue and a crystal-covered sarcophagus containing Mao's embalmed remains, together with an inscription in the green marble of its southern wall: a telling phrase dedicated to the memory of 'our great leader and teacher Chairman Mao Zedong: forever eternal without corrupting'.

This kind of worship of rulers is anathema to democracy. That is why democracies that permit their leaders to stay on indefinitely - sometimes to get away with blue murder - potentially compromise democracy itself. A positive example that springs to mind of how drawing a line between holding and not holding office is vitally important for democracy is the way the British parliamentary system has become gradually less tolerant of prime ministers hanging on to high office. Although Tony Blair, John Major, Margaret Thatcher, James Callaghan, Edward Heath and Harold Wilson by no means disappeared from public sight after their removal from power, they did not seek to return side stage to the highest office. In the history of the office of prime minister, a history that stretches back to Robert Walpole in the eighteenth century, this is a new and significant trend. It stands in striking contrast to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when nine prime ministers served at the helm of

subsequent governments under other prime ministers, and (prior to the election of Harold Wilson) the twentieth century saw just five (Douglas-Home, Chamberlain, MacDonald, Baldwin and Balfour) who managed to do the same thing. Although their moves were typically justified as giving governments under pressure greater strength based on experience – Hamilton's argument - the continuity stood at right angles to the rotation principle of representative democracy. In democratic terms, it comes as a welcome surprise that during the past half century what might be called the Balfour syndrome has been shattered: it is now virtually unthinkable that a prime minister would be allowed to behave like Arthur James Balfour, the political chameleon who after serving as prime minister for three years (1902-1905) excelled at playing the role of imperial elder statesman by serving eleven years in such high ministerial posts as Foreign Secretary (1916-19) and Lord President of the Council (1919-22; 1925-29) under both Liberal and Conservative governments.

A negative example of the political dangers posed for democracy by the fudging of the line between holding and giving up office is the case of contemporary Italy. Described by the noir author Carlo Lucarelli as a country 'where you can pull one string and it leads you to a garbled skein of interlocked groups of power', its political system is of course a 'freak' case within the world of contemporary democracy [Povoledo, 2007; Rizzo and Stella, 2007]. But its exceptional qualities, its pathologies in matters of top office holding, should be carefully studied, if only because Italy provides some good examples of what is arguably bad practice, including an unusually high degree of recycling of top political leaders. It is perhaps not surprising that there exists no detailed study of life after political office holding in that country; it is as if the topic is taboo among political scientists. All presidents of the Italian republic become *senatore a vita* after leaving office (article 59.1 of the Constitution); presidents themselves enjoy the power to appoint *senatore a vita*; and all 11 presidents since 1948 have either been prime ministers, or presidents of the Chamber of Deputies or the Senate, or active as leaders or founders of political parties. The same pattern of recycling is evident among prime ministers; most of them leave and return quickly to top political jobs. Virtually all of the 22 prime ministers since 1948 have remained in politics after the end of their mandates, either as presidents, vice-prime ministers, ministers or senators. The recycling process is anchored in the patterns of political party patronage; and it is strongly reinforced by the fact that

representatives in both houses, the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, are elected for five-year terms of office, with no limitation on the number of terms, either for deputies or ministers or prime ministers.

The upshot is that through time, past and present political leaders in Italy have formed something like a self-enclosed governing elite that easily survives changes of government, which come and go, with regular monotony. The elite is male-dominated, unusually old and wealthy. Some 60 percent of Italy's politicians are over the age of seventy (in France, the figure is 20 percent; in the Scandinavian democracies about 38 percent); among major member states of the European Union, Italy has the lowest number of female politicians; earning more than twice as much as representatives in the United States Congress, Italian politicians are driven around in chauffeured cars, enjoy free train and air travel and mobile phones, and are entitled to a handsome pension after only two terms in office, despite the fact that many hold outside jobs and often never show up in the legislature. When established Italian politicians fail to get re-elected, they are normally recycled into government or business positions, protected by top leaders through revolving-door systems of patronage. Naturally, the Italian political elite resists any effort to impose public controls on the recycling of office holders. That is why it is only in moments of profound crisis that their degree of public unaccountability is exposed. The *Tangentopoli* scandal of the early 1990s was certainly the biggest, and (so far) the most revealing. The upper layer of the political elite was either forced into retirement, committed suicide, exiled or skulked off into the political shadows. Under pressure from the courts and investigative journalism, the two dominant political parties, the Christian Democrats and the Socialist Party, in effect collapsed. Their respective leaders were badly shaken. After four decades of leadership, Giulio Andreotti, prime minister 7 times, found himself facing a ten-year trial linked to his alleged mafia involvements. His dream of becoming President of the Republic failed to come true (hence his popular sarcastic nickname, *Il Presidente Andreotti*); but he remained defiant. Reminded by a journalist that power has exhausting effects on people, he replied by quoting Talleyrand: power exhausts those who don't have it (*il potere logora chi non ce l'ha*). His counterpart on the Socialist Party side, Bettino Craxi, fared less well. On the day that parliament denied judges based in Milan the authority to proceed with investigations of his alleged criminal activities, a large crowd

gathered outside his place of residence, the Hotel Raphael in Rome. That evening, as he left the hotel, the crowd mockingly chanted, 'Bettino, do you want these as well?', and 'Thief! Thief!' They then hurled thousands of coins and waved 1000-lire banknotes in the air. He seemed never to recover from that moment of humiliation; to save his skin he ostracised himself and remained until his death in political exile.

The contrasting cases of Britain and Italy contain many morals, but this one is of particular interest: in the absence of strong legal restrictions and informal rules governing both office holding and the departure from office, top political leaders who leave office never really do so. They in effect stay on or, like Silvio Berlusconi, expect to stay on, if need be by calling into question the results of elections, all the while complaining about the excessive controls on those who want to wield power from the top. The upshot is the formation of a self-perpetuating political class whose unelected power contradicts some basic principles of representative democracy - and through time injects a measure of sclerosis into the whole system of government. The case of Italy in particular suggests a new maxim: *the level of formal public regulation of former top political office holders, the overall degree of awareness of the need in practice to monitor and to circumscribe their duties and powers, and periodically to rein them in, serve as a vital index of the strength or weakness of democratic controls placed more generally upon representatives within any given polity*. Indirect confirmation of this political maxim - that democracies are advised to put former top office holders under a pedestal - can be found in regimes where no such controls exist. The absence of formal limits on former office holders is matched by the absence of formal controls on incumbent leaders, which is why the public demand for either typically causes a big stir in authoritarian regimes (as happened in China during the 1970s, when for the first time unofficial magazines like *Beijing Spring* took advantage of the normalisation of diplomatic relations with the United States to call for American-style limited-term presidents).

Revolving Doors

Even when formal and informal controls upon top political leaders are strong, ex-office holders potentially remain powerful figures. This is not just a function of good health and increasing life expectancy, though in some contexts (Japan's 'silver

democracy' is an example) the declining average age of exit from office, sometimes called the 'younging' of politics, are important trends. The power thirst of former office holders is slaked above all by their battle-hardened egos, their dreams of running or governing again, their seduction by the fantasy of returning to governmental office 'through the back door', by redeploying an arsenal of skills and contacts gleaned from their time in office. Herbert Hoover's meddling in White House politics during Franklin Roosevelt's unprecedented third term of office counts as an example; so too does Bill Clinton's fraught 2008 campaign in support of a Hillary Rodham Clinton presidency - a campaign that triggered alarm in the minds of some voters that dynasty was not good for democracy, especially when the former president tried to offer explanations of his future role. 'I wouldn't be in her cabinet – that would be unlawful', he said clumsily on one occasion. 'And I wouldn't be in a fulltime staff position – that wouldn't be wise. But if there's something specific I can do for Hillary then I would do it in a heartbeat' (Luce 2008).

There are times when this will to resume office as an *unelected* broker of governmental power potentially clogs the open pores of rotated representation that are vital for the health of representative democracy. The growing involvement of former top political leaders in government by moonlight, for instance in the flourishing multi-media lobby industries upon which all democratic governments have become invisibly dependent, is a troubling case in point. Ken Silverstein's rare study of former political leaders' involvement in the Washington lobbying scene shows just how important these ex-office holders are in providing what is sometimes called 'the secret handshake that gets you into the lodge' (Silverstein 2007). Little seems to have been written about the subject, but as the drafters of the Canadian Federal Accountability Act (2006) and those pressing for its tougher implementation have correctly spotted, legal regulation of former office holders' involvement in the shadows of governmental power - closing the revolving doors through which public officials sell their expertise and inside knowledge when they leave public office - is vital for nurturing the ethos and procedures of open government that is routinely subject to public monitoring. That is why in Canada, and in several other democracies, there are calls for the implementation of a new package of reforms, including: a public register of details of the activities of all lobbyists; stringent bans on their gifts and political donations; a several-year ban on former top political office-

holders taking jobs as lobbyists; and the creation of an independent agency that is responsible for monitoring the overall system, enforcing a code of conduct and imposing sanctions on those lobbyists who cover up, or fail to register, their activities.

Civil Society Pathways

Other former political office holders are learning to cope with life after being at the top by cultivating new leadership roles within the nooks and crannies of civil society; for a growing number of still-youthful political leaders, politics is becoming a job followed by a career. A careful examination of former US presidents, for instance, shows that right from the beginning of the republic this was an option that could earn private respect, public fame, but rarely dollars for ex-presidents (examples include Thomas Jefferson's commitments to the establishment of the University of Virginia; Theodore Roosevelt's prolific writing, including his autobiography; and Lyndon Johnson's founding of a library and museum). The full realisation of the potential of civil society as a grazing ground for ex-office holders is however only being felt in our times. The media saturation of contemporary societies is among the powerful forces enabling former top leaders to enjoy life after political death by becoming celebrities. The age when former leaders lapsed into mediocrity (spent their time 'taking pills and dedicating libraries', as Herbert Hoover put it) or enjoyed untrammelled privacy, sometimes bathed in self-pity ('after the White House what is there to do but drink?', Franklin Pierce reportedly quipped), is over. Former leaders of government and heads of state find it virtually impossible to stay offstage, or to remain invisibly silent.

That is why growing numbers of top political leaders, attracted by the magnets of stardom, discover that there is much life to be lived after holding high office. They sense that the heterogeneity of their media-saturated civil societies provides them with choices, with possibilities of leading others in new ways, outside the sphere of government. They befriend fame, for instance by exploring star roles on the global lecture circuit, setting up foundations, hiring their services to businesses and signing lucrative book contracts (Margaret Thatcher's memoirs brought her £3.5 million advance royalties; Tony Blair reportedly signed for £5 million; Bill Clinton received a record $12 million royalty advance for *My Life*). There is nothing in principle

objectionable about any of this (quite a few who leave high office have huge debts to pay off), and actually existing democracies ought on balance cautiously to welcome the trend. Ex-office holders' involvement in civil society leadership serves as an important reminder that during the course of the past century the word leadership was excessively politicised, to the point where we have forgotten that the words *leader* and *leaderess*, from the time of their first usage in English, were routinely applied to those who coordinated such bodies as singing choirs, bands of dancers and musicians and religious congregations.

The opening up of pathways that lead toward civil society serves as an important corrective to the undue dominance of state-centred definitions of leadership. We should not be instantly dismissive of the involvement of former political office holders in civil society, for instance by sourly lamenting the disappearance of true charisma (as Philip Rieff [2007] has done), or by condemning the quest for fame, as if it was merely a cunning means of earning money or simulating the retention of office long after leaving behind the real thing. The evidence rather suggests that by exploring various civil society leadership roles, whose substance and style are often in tension and sometimes contradictory, former top office holders are (a) challenging and pluralising prevailing definitions of (good) leadership, partly by freeing it from guilt by association with government; (b) stretching the boundaries and meaning of political representation, especially by putting on-message parties, parliaments and government executives on their toes; (c) contributing to the contemporary growth of 'monitory' forms of democracy, for instance by drawing the attention of publics to the violation of public standards by governments, their policy failures, or their general lack of political imagination in handling so-called 'wicked' problems that have no readily agreed upon definition, let alone straightforward solutions [Keane 2009]; and (d) generally helping both civil societies and governments to make sense of the growing complexity of democratic decision making under conditions of dispersed power, so bringing a greater measure of nuance and coherence to policy making and administration (Mishra 2007).

Leadership in the non-governmental domain is of course tricky business; former top office holders find this when attempting to juggle different roles, which are sometimes in tension with the egalitarian ethos and public openness of democratic

ways of doing things. It is also the case that leadership of civil society organisations raises tough, but intellectually interesting and politically important questions about the legitimate scope of parliamentary prerogatives and the powers of political parties and government executives in representative democracies. One trend is however unmistakable: we live in times (as Frank Ankersmit [2008], Michael Saward [2009] and others have shown) marked by the multiplication and dispersal of different and conflicting criteria of representation that confront us with problems (such as whether unelected leaders can be held publicly accountable for their actions using means other than elections) that were unknown to the earliest champions and architects of representative democracy.

Ethical responsibility

What range of choices do ex-office holders have in the field of civil society? Some former leaders cultivate the style and message of *ethical responsibility*. Contemporary examples include Al Gore, Nelson Mandela, Adam Michnik, Mary Robinson, but the trend has been developing for some time. The case of Pierre Trudeau is instructive: shortly after his departure from office, he joined the Montréal law firm Heenan Blaikie as a counsel. Though he rarely gave public speeches or spoke to the press, Trudeau's measured interventions into public debate had a significant impact, as when he wrote and spoke out against both the Meech Lake Accord and the Charlottetown Accord proposals to amend the Canadian constitution, on the ground that their implementation would weaken both federalism and the Charter of Rights. His opposition proved to be crucial in producing the defeat of the two proposals.

Trudeau's behaviour set an example of ethically responsible leadership after holding office: those who have followed in his footsteps like to be seen as seasoned sages, as public witnesses of suffering and injustice, as endorsers of prospective new leaders, advocates of policies and ways of thinking that do not yet command majority support. These ethical former office holders sublimate their political leadership skills into the arts of communicating with publics about the strengths and limits of government policies and structures. We can leave aside here questions about the merits of their causes, for what is striking is the way that ethical ex-leaders are not simply using the bully pulpit (a peculiarly American term coined by Theodore Roosevelt to describe

the use by leaders of a 'superb' or 'wonderful' platform to advocate causes and agendas). The experiments of ex-leaders in non-governmental or civil society leadership roles have profoundly transformative effects on the meaning of leadership itself. Leadership no longer only means (as it meant ultimately in Max Weber's classic state-centred analysis) bossing and strength backed ultimately by cunning and the fist and other means of state power – a *Realpolitik* understanding of leadership that slides towards political authoritarianism (and until today has given the words *Führer* and *Führerschaft* a bad name in countries such as Germany).[1] Leadership instead comes to be understood as the capacity to mobilise 'persuasive power' (as Archbishop Desmond Tutu likes to say). It is the ability to motivate citizens to do things for themselves, the learned capacity to win public respect by cultivating 'narrative intelligence' [Denning 2007], an intelligence that includes (when leaders are at their best) a mix of formal qualities, such as level-headed focus; inner calm; courteousness; the refusal to be biddable; the ability to listen to others; poking fun at oneself; and a certain radiance of style (one of the confidants of Nelson Mandela explained to me his remarkable ability to create 'many Nelson Mandelas around him'; the same thing is still commonly said of Jawarhalal Nehru). Such qualities also include the power to combine contradictory qualities (strength and vulnerability; singularity and typicality, etc.) simultaneously, and apparently without effort, as if leadership is the embodiment of gestalt switching; and, above all, an awareness that

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[1] Max Weber's famous account of the qualities of competent political leadership (*Führerschaft*) in parliamentary democracies is sketched in 'Politik als Beruf' (originally delivered as a speech at Munich University in the revolutionary winter of 1918/1919), in *Gesammelte Politische Schriften* (Tübingen 1958), pp. 493-548. During the speech, Weber said that democracies require leaders to display at least three decisive qualities. Genuine leadership first of all necessitates a passionate devotion to a cause, the will to make history, to set new values for others, nourished from feeling. Such passion must not succumb to what he called (Weber here drew upon Georg Simmel) 'sterile excitation'. Authentic leaders - this is the second imperative - must avoid 'self-intoxication' all the while cultivating a sense of personal responsibility for their achievements, and their failures. While (finally) this implies that leaders are not merely the mandated mouthpieces of their masters, the electors, leaders' actions must embody a 'cool sense of proportion': the ability to grant due weight to realities, to take them soberly and calmly into account. Passionate, responsible and experienced leaders, Weber urged, must be relentless in 'viewing the realities of life' and must have 'the ability to face such realities and … measure up to them inwardly'. Effective leadership is synonymous with neither demagoguery nor the worship of power for its own sake. Passionate and responsible leaders shun the blind pursuit of ultimate goals; such blindness, Weber noted sarcastically, 'does rightly and leaves the results with the Lord'. Mature leaders must be guided instead by the 'ethic of responsibility'. Recognising the average deficiencies of people, they must continually strive, using state power, to take account of the foreseeable effects of particular actions that aim to realize particular goals through the reliance upon particular means. Responsible leaders must therefore incorporate into their actions the prickly fact, in many contexts, that the attainment of good ends is dependent upon (and therefore jeopardized by) the use of ethically doubtful or (in the case of violence) even dangerous means.

leaders are always deeply dependent upon the people known as the led - that true leaders lead because they manage to get people to look up to them, rather than leading them by the nose.

Unelected Wealth

The age when former leaders passed away in penury has come to an end. It is astonishing to think that this was the fate of James Madison, who left the presidency poorer than when he entered, due to the steady financial collapse of his plantation; or that Harry Truman was quoted in 1957 as saying to then-House Majority Leader, John McCormack: 'Had it not been for the fact that I was able to sell some property that my brother, sister and I inherited from our mother, I would practically be on relief, but with the sale of that property I am not financially embarrassed'. Growing numbers of former top office holders now prefer to make money, usually in the guise of good causes, but sometimes in gung-ho ways that are frowned upon in the world of business itself, certainly when measured (for instance) against the much-discussed Toyota business model, whose executives, by all accounts, are encouraged to live by the values of parsimony, customer focus and humility; or when measured against the present-day talk in the United States of CEO Version 3.0, according to which good managers are neither empire builders with boardroom-sized egos nor narrow-minded clean-up specialists, but innovative team builders equipped with a strong sense of personal responsibility.

There are moments when gold-digging former office holders are turned into scandalous parodies of the most vulgar money-grubbers. Gerald Ford was among the first former leaders of the United States to make huge sums of money (at least \$1 million a year) from what he called the 'mashed potato circuit' of speaking engagements, and from corporate directorships. More recent examples include Gerhard Schröder's earning of undisclosed large sums behind the scenes after accepting Gazprom's nomination for head of the shareholders' committee of Nord Stream AG, a gas pipeline business venture that he had approved just weeks before leaving office; Tony Blair's widely reported three-hour visit to China's southern province of Guangdong, sponsored by the Guangda Group of property developers, who allegedly paid the former British prime minister a net cash payment of US

$330,000 and offered him a luxury villa worth US $5.39 million (whether he accepted the latter offer is unknown, but the gist of his unusual decision to resign his parliamentary seat, in part to avoid disclosing his outside earnings, and his new role as a price-tagged travelling publicist who reportedly earns up to half a million pounds sterling per month, is profiled at http://washingtonspeakers.com); and (to illustrate that the trend is bipartisan) Margaret Thatcher's reported consultancy fee of £1 million paid annually by the American tobacco giant, Philip Morris. Gold digging on this scale, variously dubbed 'after-dinner mints', the rubber-chicken circuit or, in Blair's case, the Blair Rich Project, arguably tends to breed discomfort and to arouse public suspicions of politicians in existing democracies. In certain contexts, it feeds political disaffection, the sense that political crooks happen, the belief that the lavish lifestyle of ex-leaders proves that all political office holders misuse office by kicking away the ladders of election, in order to climb to new heights of unelected wealth, and the power it brings.

Cross-border leadership

There is one other interesting and important development in the contemporary politics of life after office holding, a development whose effects are literally the most far-reaching: the systematic involvement of former top office holders within governmental and non-governmental structures that operate at the regional and global levels, in ways that have never happened before in the history of democracy. Elsewhere I have attempted to analyse the rapid contemporary growth of cross-border civil society networks and new tangled architectures of law and government ('cosmocracy') that defy all previous empire- and state-centred accounts of institutionalised power [Keane, 2004]. What is interesting is that growing numbers of ex-office holders are taking advantage of regionalising and globalising trends by getting involved in cross-border government, business, think tanks, charities, media and public affairs. It is hard to interpret the long-term viability and significance of this trend, which is now a well-established feature of political life within and among the European Union and its member states. With its growing density of cross-border institutions, the European region may be thought of as a laboratory in which experiments are conducted in the arts of carving out political futures for former high

office holders. The appointments of Paddy Ashdown as High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Peter Mandelson as European Trade Commissioner are exemplary of the trend; so too is the active commitment of Jacques Delors (the only politician to have served two terms as President of the European Commission) to the think tank Notre Europe, which he helped to found; Carl Bildt's role as special European Union envoy to the former Yugoslavia; and the career of Karel Van Miert, who went from holding office as president of the Flemish Socialist Party to appointments as European Commissioner responsible for transport, credit and investment, consumer and environmental policy and (from 1993 until 1999) as vice-chairman of the European Commission responsible for competition policy.

Is the trend a new form of sinecure system for former leading office holders (as might be thought of Edward Heath's propagandizing for two decades on behalf of the Chinese regime, for undisclosed sums)? Might it be a new and improved version of the old Greek method of sending dangerous or disgraced ex-leaders into exile? Is the trend perhaps a solution to the Peter Principle, that is, a way of getting rid of incompetents who have managed to rise to the top of domestic politics? Are former leaders who embed themselves in cross-border settings simply flash-in-the-pan celebrities, mere mutants who will probably not survive the entangled contradictions and hostilities of the current round of globalisation? Or might their involvements be the seed of new forms of cross-border political representation and public opinion formation? The evidence is inconclusive, but think for a moment of the role played by former German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, who helped found (in 1983) the InterAction Council, a group of over 30 former high office holders; Mikhail Gorbachev's and Nelson Mandela's running commentaries on world affairs; Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* campaign; the Africa Progress Panel and peace negotiation efforts of Kofi Annan (most recently in Kenya); or of Jimmy Carter, whose self-reinvention as an advocate of human rights makes him the first ex-president of the United States to realise that the world is shrinking, and therefore in need of new ways of doing politics in more negotiated and principled ways, nurtured by bodies like The Elders, which he helped to found in 2007. Is it just possible that by their actions these former leading political office holders are trying to show the world that it resembles a chrysalis capable of hatching the butterfly of cross-border

democracy - despite the fact that we currently have no good account of what 'regional' or 'global' or 'cross border' democratic representation might mean in practice?

Some Implications

This essay has pointed to an unexplored aspect of the question of dispersed leadership: the growing social and political importance of former political leaders engaged in a variety of activities after leaving high office. The trend is fairly ubiquitous but by no means straightforward. Public recognition is growing - this is undoubtedly something new in the history of democracy - that there is life after political death, and that former political leaders can make comebacks in ways that raise questions about their capacity for re-entering government and meddling with its structures and policies, their propensity to give politicians a bad name by engaging in dubious matters, or by foolish wrongdoing. On the more positive side, it is clear that life after political death provides opportunities for democracies. Former political leaders can do good works for democracy. They can serve as an inspiration to their colleagues and to citizens alike. Especially in times in which politicians as representatives are suffering (to put it mildly) a mounting credibility gap, ex-leaders can set new and higher standards for public office holding. Out of office, they can demonstrate to millions of people what ideally office holding is about.

There is something wholly unprecedented about this trend, for it challenges static conceptions of leadership through office holding. The notion of office and office holding was among the great inventions of medieval Europe [Keane 2009]. It was within the Church in particular that a basic principle of representative democracy took root: the rule that specified that holding office implied faithful performance of a specific set of tasks. The point was that office holding carried with it certain expectations and obligations. That in turn meant that an office resembled a de-personalised or 'disembodied' role; it was not identical with its holder. Jobs and persons who did jobs were not the same. To hold an office was not to 'own' that office - not even when the office was held for life. On the contrary, office holding was a contingent matter because it implied the ongoing possibility, subject to certain procedures, of removal from office. The removal rule, let us call it, was a basic

ingredient of what later came to be called bureaucracy. Yet (contrary to Max Weber and those influenced by him) the removal rule had equally strong affinities with the theory and practice of modern representative democracy. Think for a moment of elected city mayors, or members of parliament who are elected for a fixed term of office, or presidents or prime ministers who are forced to resign. Each one of these political roles rests upon the old Christian presumption that office holders are not synonymous with their office, that they do not privately 'own' their position, that every holder of political office, from the most humble to the most powerful, are in post only for a specified time - such that in a representative democracy (to paraphrase lyrics from the famous song by Bob Dylan, *It's Alright, Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)*) even presidents of the most powerful democracy on the face of the earth are periodically forced to stand naked before their citizens, and the whole world.

The real normative significance of the growing power of former political leaders is that they force existing democracies to think twice, and more deeply, about what counts as good political leadership. The old maxim, a favourite of Harry Truman when he was out of office, that money, craving for power and sex are three things that can ruin political leaders, now applies with real force as well to leaders after they have left office. If that is so, then politically alert former leaders can teach by positive example the need for renewing and crafting new standards of public integrity. The days are over when former leaders could summarise their new occupation using the same staid words as Calvin Coolidge when asked (in 1930) to fill out a membership form for the Washington Press Club: 'Retired. And glad of it.' Life after leadership has become more complicated, more challenging and more able to set standards for others left behind in office. A sign of our times is the wise remark of a distinguished Portuguese former politician who later directed a remarkable non-governmental foundation that is by world standards a pacesetter in its active support for public accountability and pluralism in matters ranging from political power to aesthetic taste. When asked to define the ideal qualities of life after leadership in a democracy he replied that they were the same as the qualities to be expected of incumbent political leaders: 'A determination to be courageous; an ability to anticipate situations; the inclination to dramatise political effects, so as to warn citizens of actual or potential

problems; above all, the willingness to admit that mistakes have been made, to urge that they must be corrected, without ever being afraid of making yet more mistakes'.[1]

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[1] Interview with Emílio Rui Vilar, former senior minister of the first democratic governments after the defeat of the Salazar dictatorship, former Deputy Governor of the Bank of Portugal and former Director-General of the Commission of the European Union (Lisbon 27 October 2006).

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