

*Evolution of Political Manifestos with a study of proposals to Reform the House of Lords in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.*

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## Abstract

This is a study of how electoral Manifestos have evolved in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with a special case study of how Manifesto undertakings in one policy area, that of Reform of the House of Lords, have been delivered by a party when in government. An examination of the Manifestos issued by the Labour, Conservative and Liberal parties for the 27 elections between 1900 and 2001 shows a substantial increase in size on various dimensions and a certain convergence between the parties in their approach to presentational characteristics. A statistical analysis of the overall set of data collected could not confirm that the variations observed were not due to chance. Examination of the relationship between pledges in Manifestos and action taken to reform the House of Lords shows that these pledges were neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for reform to take place. Several reforms have been introduced which had not been pledged in electoral Manifestos whilst several pledges put forward have not been followed up. The study is making several modest contributions to the literature and is highlighting a few areas where further research could be undertaken.

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## 1. Introduction

The aim of this project is to examine a number of dimensions of political Manifestos as they have evolved over a period of time, to compare submissions of different political parties and then to test the extent to which undertakings in Manifestos link with government action in one specific policy area: the Reform of the House of Lords.

Shortly before the general election of 1997 hard copies of the latest Manifesto by the Labour Party were in general circulation, where Tony Blair put forward pledges as to what he would be delivering if Labour were to win that election. The expression “New Labour” started appearing more frequently in the press but at the same time a few critics described that Manifesto’s content as “*all things to all men*” (*inspired by: 1 Corinthians, 9:22*). Of particular interest was the statement (196 words) as to how Labour would reform the House of Lords. The outcome of that election was a landslide victory for Labour, attracting 43.2% of the national vote and claiming 63.4% of the seats in the House of Commons, thus presenting a clear Parliamentary majority of 179 seats. This was an opportunity for Tony Blair, the Prime Minister, to be adventurous in what his government would undertake and more confident that proposals put forward would be seen through the law-making procedures in Parliament. The Conservative and Liberal Parties also distributed leaflets with excerpts from their Manifestos, but these were only short extracts and bullet-point summaries, subjectively deemed by the present writer as fairly unimpressive in the form presented, particularly when compared with the Labour Manifesto, which could not be overlooked easily. Informal enquiries about post-electoral intentions regarding the House of Lords (policy area chosen as a specific case study), at the local constituency level, and also though the national headquarters of the three larger parties, did not go very far; there was little enthusiasm at that time for academic enquiries. The competing discourse of the day was the “*Millennium Bug*” and the ensuing threat of a possible “*destruction of civilisation*” (believed to originate in *The Telegraph*, but it has not been possible to pinpoint the reference).

An initial search of the literature did not yield substantial studies on the dimensions of Manifestos, both in comparative terms between the parties and about their evolution over time. Also, studies of how specific policy areas have been addressed in Manifestos are particularly scarce in the literature. The present enquiry aims to address this broad gap by revisiting the purposes and evolution of Manifestos. Will be examined, inter alia, how sundry variables in Manifestos differ between political parties, how these dimensions have evolved over time, how the parties, through their Manifestos, have pledged action on reform of the House of Lords and the extent to which these undertakings were delivered. Given the breadth of areas that need to be addressed and after considering the resources required for this investigation, it was decided to adopt an exploratory forensic approach, not underpinned by any one specific theory.

## 1.1 Where does this Enquiry fit?

Study of the Manifestos will be confined to what was published by the three mainstream political parties in the UK before each general election during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In this respect, this enquiry will be forensic and not constrained by any one specific theoretical approach.

Relating the specific case of reform of the Lords with what is pledged in political party Manifestos could be guided by several disciplines, only some of which are considered here. Given that the Lords have a fundamental contribution to the making of law in the UK, any reform which affects the powers, decision-making or composition of the Lords and anything else which touches upon their law-making role, procedures, conventions, rights and duties, would fit in to the broad area of *Constitutional Law* or in the general domain of *Public Law*, as exemplified in Hand (2014). Politics being a process by which society decides what it values and how resources should be distributed (White, 1994, p.5), reshaping of the institutions of government relates to political theory and context. *Political Science* would thus have a legitimate contribution to the study of reform, as illustrated by Kelso (2013). There is also room for an eclectic approach, which avoids making a choice between many of the polarities current in theory and methodology (Silverman, 1994, vii). Instinctively, a positivist approach to research would come to mind. A paradigm encompassing hypothetico-deductive methodologies would have satisfied the norms of historically “received” sound research and possibly made a contribution to knowledge. But which is the knowledge-base which will be added upon? Quoting Kant (Landesman, 1997, p.2) “*we can know things as they appear to us, and the picture of the world that we form on the basis of the appearances is constructed according to categories of thought that pay no respect to things in themselves*”.

In general terms, no single discipline is likely to address fully the areas of concern about a link between Manifestos and action on reform of the Lords. Several overlapping areas of scholarship need to be accessed with a view to enhancing understanding. The present investigation is seeking the assistance of a variety of academic disciplines, using them as guides along the research process, in their creative contributions, and not as shackles. In epistemological terms, acceptance of a pragmatic theory would lead to: “if it works, it is true” (Cole, 2002, pp.50-55), independently of the narrowness or breadth of a context and of the discipline which has guided it. The approach is largely *forensic*, selectively guided by a combination of political science, constitutional law, decision making and political economy. Apart from these guides, this enquiry will remain non-parametric and will not aim for prediction (Toulmin, 1966 p.25 *et seq.*) but will be based on historical data (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p.41). It is recognised that in the social sciences there is some difficulty to constructing a research problem in simple terms (Thiétard, 2001, p.41 *et seq.*). The answer to the question “what am I looking for?” leads to an interpretative research approach (Thiétard, 2001, p.31), with explanations limited by both the paucity and the scatter of information and the incompleteness of the context within which facts have shaped decisions and actions.

The research orientation of this project is empirico-inductive (Majchrzak, 1984, p.18 & p.103), where *“concepts and causal theories are induced from the empirical dynamic study of the social phenomenon”*. The enquiry begins with observations and aims to suggest possible areas of generalisation (White, 1994, p.47), rather than be based on *à priori* assumptions (Patton, 2002, p.125) (but it is accepted that some assumptions are inevitable). Theory will be a guide, called upon to help when needed, and not a rigid algorithm. A fairly comprehensive review and analysis of theories related to or competing with a grounded theory approach will be found in Goulding (2005), Corbin & Strauss (1990), Locke (2005) and Glaser & Holston (2007). In *Argument and Evidence*, Phelan & Reynolds (1966, p.154 *et seq.*); highlight that in the social sciences, induction and deduction inform each other in sequence, without a rigid template as to which one is the starting point. Barnes (1974, p. 46 *et seq.*) calls this situation the *“non experimental nature of some sciences”* and the *“unobservable unique past events”* for which *“no single convention has guided scientific methodology, or even ex post facto successful scientific methodology”*. Notwithstanding the limitations of the approach adopted, analysis of past events relating to how a policy area has been treated in political Manifestos and how it was implemented should make a contribution not only to methodology but also to theory formation in this broad and un-pinned down subject area.

For the present project it was decided to focus observations to about 100 years of change. It was thought that a longitudinal study of this length would provide a sufficient pool of information for patterns, if any, to be identified and brought to the surface. It was also thought that a much longer period of analysis would have probably required different approaches, both at the epistemological level and in the areas where this study may contribute. The period of 1900-2001 was chosen as it satisfies several practical considerations. It includes 27 general elections, thus 27 opportunities for the parties formally to make public their proposals through their Manifestos. A sample size of 27 allows several basic statistical tests to be applied and thus contributes to reducing the likelihood of doubtful conclusions being drawn. Informed statistical testing helps *“separate knowledge from opinion”* (Greco & Sosa, 1999, p.6). Statistics will be used both for descriptive purposes and, where appropriate, inferentially. The period of 1900-2001 is also useful in that a greater volume of accessible recorded information is available than for earlier times in history and encompasses a period when major changes were proposed for the Lords. On the other hand, the exponential growth of material and interest in specific policy areas, such as the reform of the Lords, place undue weight on what is happening today and the dynamics of recent times. Sheer volume and noise tone down attention to earlier concerns, contexts and circumstances. For this reason, it was decided to conclude the investigation with the general election of 2001. The rapid expansion and penetration of the new media and of its use by political parties, the quasi-logarithmic increase in the broad literature, and the minute-by-minute coverage in the media, advocate against the mingling together of information spread broadly in recent times with what was cast to the public in yesteryear. Messages and pamphlets in Sir Robert Peel’s times would have taken several days to reach parts of the

electorate, compared with the milliseconds (quasi real-time) that messages would take to reach any part of the world at the close of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## 2. About Manifestos

### 2.1 What is a Manifesto?

The noun Manifesto is etymologically linked to the Latin *manifestum*, meaning evident or conspicuous. In the English language the expression first appeared in the translation by Nathaniel Brent (ca. 1620) of Fra. Paolo Sarpi's *History of the Council of Trent*. The earliest modern application of the expression in England is in what is commonly known as the *Tamworth Manifesto*, which was in the form of a letter by Sir Robert Peel addressed to his constituents on 18 December 1834, just before the 1835 general election. Peel had just accepted the King's (William IV) invitation to form a minority government to replace the administration of Lord Melbourne (a Whig). The letter consisted of 2391 words (Bloy, 2018) and is shown in [Appendix 10](#). Other styles of Manifesto would include the *Declaration of Independence of the United States* (1776), the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen* (1789) during the French Revolution, and the *Communist Manifesto* (1848) by Marx and Engels. General commentary on Manifestos can be found in Quinn (2017).

According to the Glossary page at [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk) (last accessed 9 Apr 2019), "*A manifesto is a publication issued by a political party before a General Election. It contains the set of policies that the party stands for and would wish, or intends, to implement if elected to govern*". An earlier definition in *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language*, Unabridged Edition, 1967, defines a Manifesto as "*a public declaration of intentions, opinions, objectives, or motives, as when issued by a government, sovereign, or organization*". Given overlaps in the literature, it should be noted that in the USA a political Manifesto is often called a party platform or electoral platform.

There is sufficient consensus in the literature that a political Manifesto is a statement of intent, by a political party, issued just prior to elections, forming a part of its overall communications strategy. It sets out the practical and philosophical direction the party intends to follow as well as the legislation that it will enact, if it is called upon to form the next government. It seems reasonable to expect the party winning an election to be guided by its own Manifesto, yet "*Politicians don't make promises as part of some bargain with their voters, as a quid pro quo. They make promises to signal their political philosophy, their ideology*" (Martinned blog, 2012).



## 2.2 The Salisbury Convention

It is generally accepted in British politics that legislative proposals originating in an electoral Manifesto carry greater legitimacy in Parliament than measures that do not. In the UK, under the Salisbury (or Salisbury-Addison) Doctrine (or Convention), it is generally expected that the *“House of Lords should not get in the way of the implementation of government Manifesto commitments for which (by definition) the government had a “mandate” from the electorate”* (Elliott, 2017b) or “promised” in its election Manifesto (Parliament UK, 2014) . This convention was generally considered to be a *“convention that conditioned the relationship between two chambers [House of Lords and House of Commons], rather than (as it had originally been) a compact between two political parties”* (Elliott, 2017b) [Further comment in Dymond & Deadman (2006) and McLean (2011)]. Given that this convention, which, self-evidently, is a convention and not a law, the determination of how binding it is, is a *“highly inexact science”* (Elliott, 2017b).

Periodically, and prompted by circumstances, the discourse extends on to whether or not there is compulsion in the delivery of a Manifesto in the case of a minority government or in a coalition formed after a general election has taken place. The literature on Manifestos leads to the conclusion that such cases may be considered as falling outside the spirit of the Salisbury Convention (see, for example, Vince Cable’s comments in Cowling, 2015). Manifesto undertakings remain of some interest, and for the occasional misuse by politicians, but they are not pedantically relevant in such situations. Where a one-party government is formed, the Salisbury Convention is expected to apply.

## 2.2 Commitment to content of political electoral Manifestos

The direct election by voters of individuals, from which group a government will be formed, ensures strong bonds of accountability (but there are exceptions, such as the case of an unelected member of the House of Lords being appointed to a position in Government). Manifestos link the pre-election statements with a democratically mandated post-election obligation and legitimacy (Quinn, 2014), but there are many unanswered questions. By way of illustration: is a statement made in an electoral Manifesto committing the party that made it? In other words: is winning an election both a *right* and an *obligation* to implement the content of a Manifesto? Conversely, is an action undertaken by a party in government frowned upon if it has not been pre-signalled in a Manifesto? What challenge, if any, is open against a government which is not adhering to the letter or spirit of its own party’s Manifesto? If a Manifesto is a binding promise, who is the promise made by and who would have a standing to take legal action? Could the complainant be any interested party, such as a citizen or voter in general, or is it that complaints have to be limited to those who can demonstrate that they were led by the contents of the Manifesto to vote for a particular party? Is the

complaining party expected to show some loss, financial or otherwise? Martinned (2012) suggests that under normal private law in the UK, only people who relied on the contents of a Manifesto and voted for a particular party would qualify. The position of the Court in the recent case of Boris Johnson being sued for promoting Brexit by using incorrect information, would probably discourage attempts at litigation. This particular private prosecution case was brought forward not as a breach of contract but rather as “misconduct in public office” and was dismissed by the High Court. Similarly, if legal action were possible, who would it be against? Who would be the culpable party (in the legal sense) if Manifesto pledges were ignored by a political party once in government? Would it be against a particular Member of Parliament, a Minister, the Cabinet in collective responsibility, the political party which published the Manifesto, the party in government or the government in general? What if a Bill were introduced in keeping with the Manifesto but was voted against by the House of Commons? What if passed by the Commons and blocked by the Lords? [Commentary in *the Guardian-on-line* (2017)].

Judging by the content of a multitude of blogs on the Internet [see sample reference: Debate (2013)], the weight of opinion leads to the expectation that electoral Manifestos are to be delivered, but it is unlikely that they can be treated as legally binding. It is a “*moral responsibility [which] must be made legally enforceable*” (Kumar, 2004). There remains a general anticipation that, when in government, a party will act within the spirit of its electoral Manifesto (Barra, 2005). It is “*one of the most important assumptions underlying this view of British politics since 1945*” and “*(T)he winning party was assumed to have a mandate to implement its Manifesto in office*” (Quinn, 2014). And, “*The party that won a majority of seats in parliament would have a mandate to implement the Manifesto. That is, it would have both the right and the obligation to do so.*” But this matter has not been raised and settled in the courts. Taking, for example, Tony Blair’s statement in the Labour Manifesto for 1997 (p.1, line 13) “*This is my contract with the people*”, is there really a commitment? by whom, to whom and for what?

Elliott (2017a) in a post on *Public Law for Everyone* concludes that “*Manifestos are merely prospectuses. Many of the promises made in them are never implemented, or are implemented only in a loosely recognisable form. After all, with one notable exception, Manifesto commitments are not engraved in stone, and are inevitably susceptible to the vagaries of political and other developments that cannot be foreseen*”.

The stone referred to by Elliot (2017a) is the so-called **EdStone**. This was a large stone tablet commissioned by the Labour Party for the general election of 2015. Six election pledges were written on it, together with the signature of Ed Miliband, the then Leader of the Labour Party.

- A strong economic foundation
- Higher living standards for working families
- A National Health Service with the time to care
- Controls on immigration

- A country where the next generation can do better than the last
- Homes to buy and action on rents

Labour did not do well at that election, the stone was much mocked. John Rentoul, for example, Tony Blair's biographer, described it as the "most absurd, ugly, embarrassing, childish, silly, patronising, ridiculous gimmick I have ever seen" (Rentoul, in Wikipedia). It happens that the Labour Party did not declare the cost of the stone as part of what it had expended towards that election and, as a result, was fined by the Electoral Commission.

### 2.3 Are the undertakings in Manifestos being delivered?

Quinn (2014) asserts that "*Manifestos were an important hinge, linking pre-election promises with democratically mandated post-election governance*". This expectation or wish for Manifestos to be considered as binding has to be partly offset by concern about the rigidity of any undertaking made before a party gets in government. Even though civil servants are meant to be even-handed between parties in the information that they make available, it is appreciated that a party in opposition might not have a sufficiently reliable and comprehensive picture of the country's political economy so as to commit itself to priorities and formulate policy on a particular issue until after it has been in power for some time. There is also the need for flexibility in the light of a constantly changing economic and political climate both within the United Kingdom and in the rest of the world. In any case, "*once in office politicians are frequently struck by amnesia*" (Haig, 2002, p.212), or, in the present writer's opinion, they could even be overwhelmed by the reality of a situation.

BBC (2017) made reference to a *Manifesto Tracker* which "*tracks the progress the government is making- or not- in achieving the promises made by the Conservatives in their 2015 general election Manifesto and general policy announcements*". The BBC report claimed that, out of 161 policy areas listed in the Manifesto, so far (to 2017), no progress had been made towards the delivery of 16 of these areas (9.9%). On another 90 areas (55.9%), policy had not yet been delivered but some progress was being made towards its delivery. On 55 areas (34.2%), policy had been delivered. Given that only 20 months separated the election (May 2015) from the publication of that report (January 2017), it could be argued that progress had not been bad, particularly since a part of the political time had focused on the debate and Referendum about membership of the European Union. It has to be stressed, however, that there is no formal classification for the division of policy areas and neither a norm nor an accepted yardstick as to what would constitute good progress or delivery, and in whose opinion. Further work in this area would be welcome.

A *Performance Tracker*, published by the Institute for Government (2017), examined the general performance of the government in a number of policy areas. Through comparison with the *Manifesto Tracker* a view can be formed as to the extent to which government has been achieving what it was supposed to be committed to in the

preceding Manifesto. The overlap of topics and methodological approaches between the two trackers is limited but, if publication of these two reports were to be continued, they should provide an interesting basis for political analysis and comparison.

## 2.4 What happens when a Manifesto undertaking is not delivered?

Does a pre-electoral pledge by a senior politician count as an integral part of a Manifesto? Prior to the 2010 general election, Nicholas Clegg MP, the then leader of the Liberal Democrats, signed the *Vote for Students pledge* (“*I pledge to vote against any increase in fees in the next parliament and to pressure the government to introduce a fairer alternative*”). When the Liberal Democrats joined the Conservative Party to form a coalition government, they had to abandon their pledge to oppose any increase in tuition fees, but gained permission to abstain on any vote relating to an increase. Mr Clegg wrote to his MPs to say that he had “struggled endlessly” with the issue and said that departing from the pledge he had made prior to the election would be “*one of the most difficult decisions of my political career*”. Both Mr Clegg and the Liberal Democrats were widely criticised for not honouring that pledge. During an interview on 24 October 2010 with the BBC (Andrew Marr programme) Mr Clegg said that he “regretted” not being able to keep his pre-election policy to scrap tuition fees but claimed that this was the result of the financial situation the country had found itself in. On 19 September 2012, Mr Clegg apologised, not for breaking his pledge, but for having “*made a promise we weren’t absolutely sure we could deliver*”. Thus, if this pledge were to be treated in the same way as a statement in a Manifesto, Mr Clegg (2010) demonstrated that this commitment could be ignored if circumstances so dictated.

A further case, one that actually did go to Court, was when the Labour Government of Tony Blair declined to hold a Referendum on the Lisbon Treaty. Labour had previously undertaken in the Manifesto for the 2005 election to hold a Referendum on the proposed Constitution Treaty of the European Union, but work on this treaty did not proceed due to its rejection by France and the Netherlands. With several modifications the Constitution Treaty evolved into the Lisbon Treaty. The case *R (on the application of Stuart Wheeler) v Office of the Prime Minister et al.*, was heard on 25 June 2008 (report by Caroline Sweeney, Monckton Chambers, 25 June 2008). In this case, Mr Wheeler claimed that the promise made in the Labour Manifesto: “*We will put it to the British people in a referendum and campaign whole-heartedly for a ‘Yes’ vote to keep Britain a leading nation in Europe*”, was not delivered. The Court considered the case and gave judgment in favour of the defendants, explaining that the legal complaint failed for several reasons. The most important of these was that the Lisbon Treaty and the Constitution Treaty were quite different in several respects, so that an undertaking in relation to one of them could not be held as an undertaking in relation to the other. It is surprising that the Court went as far as to comment on a comparison of the two treaties and to declare that they were different. The Court also declined to be drawn in to matters pertaining to politics and that “*the question whether the government should be held to such a promise is a political*

*rather than a legal matter*". The Court also held that getting involved in such matters would be interfering in the proceedings of Parliament, one of the Judges declaring that *"this case is politics dressed up as law"*. Effectively *"this conclusion removed that case from the hands of the Court and [as a result] it shed little light in relation to enforceability of Manifesto pledges through the legal system in the United Kingdom"*. Statements like the following are abundant: *"you can't sue politicians for breaking their election promises"*; *"can politicians ever be forced to keep their promises?"*; *"none of them have any legal obligation to fulfil these pledges"* and *"why judges will never force them to do so."* Thus wrote Dodds (2015) in *the Politics Blog*.

So, it seems unlikely that legal action will succeed even if raised by entities who consider themselves aggrieved because a government did not deliver the Manifesto on which the party was voted in. Notwithstanding this view, and in the absence of any other evidence, performance close to the pledges of a Manifesto is expected and will therefore remain an assumption in this project. As said earlier (Barra, 2005), Manifesto *"... statements are so general that it would be difficult not to find any evidence of fulfilment"* [and the reciprocal, of non-fulfilment] and make it difficult to determine the extent to which an objective had been achieved or is still wanting. In the absence of evidence though a comprehensive analysis, it would not be unreasonable to assume that there is so much contained in a Manifesto and that what is there is couched in words that would often make it likely that at least a part, however small, of whatever has been pledged would be delivered, and, of course, the reciprocal, that some of the pledges would not be delivered. Disaffected expectations would need to wait until the next general election, when the matter can be settled via the ballot box: *"in the mandate doctrine, voters must trust governing parties to implement their Manifesto pledges, but if they don't, voters must wait till the next election to punish them"* (Quinn, 2014). Concern about discrepancies between Manifesto pledges and delivery is likely to assume greater importance when the party in government has a safe majority in the House of Commons. Should this be the case, it is assumed that the party would be better able to act in keeping with the spirit or the letter of what has been pledged and which might have contributed to placing it in government. An interesting comparison between British and American attitudes towards Manifestos as mandates will be found in Royed (1996). There is, of course, an important assumption being made, that Manifestos represent the wants and wishes of the electorate, but this will remain an assumption until evidence supports or refutes it empirically and the electorate has expressed its choice (Pennings & Keman, 2002; Adams et al., 2004).

It is not unusual for parties to backtrack in the presence of public outcry when an attempt is made to introduce legislation going against the spirit or the letter of a Manifesto. Philip Hammond, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, attempted to increase National Insurance Contributions for a certain class of business (METRO, 2017, and Sands M *et al*, in City A.M., 2017) but soon found it necessary to make a U-turn by redefining the application of his proposals in a way which circumvented the offending intention. Also note Vince Cable's comments in Cowling (2017). As Norman Lamont (2017), a previous Chancellor

of the Exchequer, said: *“Election pledges should not be lightly given...and tax pledges cannot be lightly cast aside”*. David Cameron, reported in Hope & Swinford (2017), *“Breaking a Manifesto promise- how stupid can you get”* ...It is thus suspected that interpretation and importance given to a Manifesto pledge as a commitment, is very much in the hands of the party that has made it.

Making a Manifesto a legally binding commitment between a party and the electorate has been a frequent proposal. Hattenstone (2015) in *The Guardian* has suggested that failure to deliver a pledge in a Manifesto should trigger a general election. Petitions have claimed that *“Manifesto promises are regularly not being kept to and are being used simply as a gateway to get into power”* (Wormald in *38 Degrees*, undated) and have been submitted by the public at large on numerous occasions, without success. A public petition asks for a change to the law or to government policy. After collection of 10,000 signatures, petitions get a direct response from the government. After 100,000 signatures, petitions are considered for debate in Parliament (Petitions, 2016). But it is thought that a change in the meaning and status of Manifestos is so important that it is most unlikely that petitions would be a route for change.

## 2.5 Qualitative evaluation of Party Manifestos

Over the decades a variety of partly subjective evaluations have been reported in the press. The relevance of these to the role of Manifestos in the polity remains to be developed and the methodology adopted itself evaluated (BBC, 2017). By way of examples:

How future thinking are Manifestos? Nesta (2015a) compared the Manifestos for 2010 with those of 2015 for seven political parties and concluded that the more recent Manifestos were less future thinking than those for 2010. Their future-thinking measurement consisted of analysing *“words that are time sensitive, and codes the extent to which a theme is being written about in a past, present or future context.”* The Nesta analysis received a generally favourable commentary in the press and was extended with an analysis of the 2017 election Manifestos over several policy areas. A “political futures tracker” by Nesta (2015b), offered an analysis of data streams from Twitter, near real time. It aimed to *“identify phrases that may have a temporal orientation and semantic analysis to guess what that orientation is”* (p.12 of the tracker). The increasing penetration of social media may help identify several new areas of analysis and opinion mining tools.

Eagleton (2015), a literary theorist, commenting on the writing style of the 2015 Manifestos, reported that they are generally lacklustre and as follows: the one by the Conservatives was the slickest and the most typographically sophisticated; that from Labour was a styleless, drably written self-advertisement; the one from the Liberal Democrats seriously overweight, stuffed with detailed policies, full of provocative,

outrageously radical stuff; that of SNP cast in colourless, low-key, aridly factual prose, with little sense of how to buttonhole an audience; the prize for stylishness was given to the Green Party.

The Labour Party Manifesto for the 1983 election has been described as *“the longest suicide note in history”*. This expression was originally used by Gerald Kaufman, Labour MP and Shadow Cabinet Minister, to describe his party's Manifesto, *“which emphasised socialist policies in a more profound manner than previous such documents - and which Kaufman felt would ensure that the Labour Party (then in opposition) would fail to win the election”*. The same reference is found in the New Historian (2017) and in Quinn (2017).

Does the statement by David Cameron, reported in Hope & Swinford (2017), ... *“if you get to a position of having to make a pledge you have to stick with it”*, imply that Manifestos do not need to contain pledges? This statement is an important component in deciding what expectations to have of commitment to the content of a Manifesto.

But, given the effort that political parties invest to produce Manifestos, do citizens read them? Däubler (2014) contends that few people read them and that readership is either with strong partisan supporters, or with highly interested individuals who may access the writings of several parties for comparison purposes. The question of *“why are these the policies [that] we need now”* is seldom addressed (Innes, 2017), neither is the question of whether or not Manifestos are still making an important contribution to the overall marketing mix and communications strategy of a political party.

In a way, the views of Edmund Burke are pertinent about the difference between those elected being spokespersons or representatives of the electorate: *“your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgment; and he betrays, instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion”*. In certain circumstances the need for flexibility in a representative democracy could outweigh the likelihood of a binding contractual arrangement between the party publishing a Manifesto and other interested parties... *“Voters don't decide issues; they decide who will decide issues”* (George Will, quotations).

## 2.6 Political Parties and elections in the United Kingdom

In the UK, the Electoral Commission is charged with the registration and conduct of political parties. At the close of 2018, and depending on definitions, it was estimated that there were over 400 registered political parties in the UK. Not all parties entering an election publish a full Manifesto and, under the “first past the post” system, few gain sufficient votes to claim a seat in the House of Commons. For illustrative purposes, as shown in Exhibit 1, after the general election of 2001 (the last general election in the sample for this project) only about 2% of the registered parties (plus the Speaker) managed to get represented in Parliament.

*Exhibit 1* shows that for the 2001 election turnout was 26.4 million valid votes, or 59.4% of the electorate. The Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democratic parties, together, earned 90.7% of the vote and claimed 95.6 % of the seats. There has been consistent pressure, particularly by the Liberal Democrats and, occasionally, by other smaller and regional parties, for the “first-past-the-post” system to be replaced with an alternative which would come closer to recognising a proportional representation of the overall votes cast. For illustrative purposes, had seat allocation been on a strictly proportional basis, the Liberal Democrats could have claimed more than twice the number of seats after the 2001 election, thus giving them a more noticeable voice in the House of Commons. Would awareness of different voting systems influence the electorate to vote differently? It is to be noted that in the aggregate of the 27 general elections during the period 1900-2001, the three largest parties (by votes received) earned a mean of 93.6%

***Exhibit 1: Results of the general election of 2001.***

<b>Party</b>	<b>2001 % Votes</b>	<b>2001 % Seats</b>
Conservative and Unionist	31.7	25.2
Labour	40.7	62.5
Liberal Democrats	18.3	7.9
Democratic Unionist	0.6	0.8
Scottish National	1.8	0.8
Sinn Fein	0.7	0.6
Plaid Cymru	0.7	0.6
Social Democratic and Labour	0.6	0.5
Green Party of England and Wales	0.6	0.0
UK Independence	1.5	0.0
<b>Turnout, millions</b>	<b>26.4</b>	

**Source:** multiple sources accessed from 2001 to 2019.

of the national vote and claimed 93.9% of the seats in Parliament (*Appendix 1*). In the aggregate, there was a strong correlation ( $r=.83$ ;  $p<.001$ ) between votes received and seats declared (source: the field studies). So, in the aggregate and over the whole of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the “first-past-the-post” system resulted in a close statistical association between votes obtained and seats declared by the three larger parties. The outcomes for individual elections and for smaller parties might not be considered as even-handed. Given that seats and votes are in whole numbers, a perfect and pedantic proportionality is unlikely to be achievable, whatever the system (see Craig, 1975). Depending on culture and the discourse of the day, there are likely to be other, more creative, ways of achieving closer adherence to proportionality, for example through allocating a weight to the electoral votes cast, or incorporating a weighting factor in Parliamentary votes, without affecting the number of Members of Parliament. Changing existing practice is likely to require a substantial shift by the parties before it gets properly debated and considered for adoption. An assessment of the performance of the first-past-the-post



system in the 2017 general election (Renwick, 2017) was tested against a number of other voting systems and did not conclude with an outright condemnation of this system.

## 2.7 Evolution of Manifestos: Quo Vadis? and the wider picture

Nearly two centuries separate the *Tamworth Manifesto* of 1834 and the time of writing the present notes (2018-2019). This period has witnessed major changes in the ways of communication between those uttering a message and the intended audience. Whereas in Sir Robert Peel's days the electoral franchise was determined mostly on the basis of wealth and dynasty, the 20<sup>th</sup> century has seen the development of a quasi-universal suffrage. This meant that a much larger and more diverse electorate could be reached, thus testing new strategies and taking advantage of new media (such as the social media) to carry the political message. This evolution has both required the consideration of new ways and the exploration of fresh possibilities in the length, content, media used, target audience, style, platform and other measurable aspects or dimensions of Manifestos. From Sir Robert Peel's leaflets and loudhailers, evolving technologies have presented opportunities for diversification in message presentation and transmission. Imagination, recipient interest and cost, however, are likely to remain constraining variables in comparisons between parties. From about 1980 Manifestos have been treated more obviously as a part of the overall marketing mix of a party and one of the means used for selling its aspirations to the electorate. Manifestos contribute to projecting the "brand" of a party and are likely, in time, to benefit from theoretical and evidence-based inputs from political marketing or marketing in politics (e.g. Lilleker & Pack, Eds, 2016). More and more "advertising discourse" (Haig, 2002, p.213) is being borrowed from consumer marketing and greater use is made of lessons learnt at the consumer level for how to use the senses to influence decision making. Although party Manifestos are reported to have low readership, Alastair Campbell (2013), spokesman and campaign director for Tony Blair and later director of communications and spokesman for the Labour party, claimed that they still matter. From the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Internet versions of the Manifesto have incorporated sound, animation, drop-down menus and hyperlinks to other websites. The appearance of supplementary Manifestos, devolving regionally (Clark & Bennie, 2016), focusing on specific issues, or marketing directed to a narrower audience (Haig, 2002, p.216) (niche marketing) are typical examples of additional dimensions and of a product/market mix approach which is infusing the literature: Lilleker D & Negrine R (2006); Lees-Marchment J (2008); Cwalina W, Falkowski A & Newman B I, (2011); Clark A & Bennie L (2016); Lilleker D & Pack M (2016).

There is little doubt that the role of Manifestos is evolving and needs to be re-examined in terms of its position in the marketing mix and the contribution it makes to the overall strategy and messaging approach of political parties. The influence of devolution, of market segmentation, of the resource allocation process in terms of cost/benefit, the availability of funding, friendly as well as disruptive (or sinister) foreign interference,

legislation, conventions and the choice of media to convey the message are probably as important contributors to the outcome of an election as would be the content of the message and the style and clarity of the presentation. A study of how Manifestos have changed is thus an important building block to where they stand now and where they are likely to go.

### 3. Manifesto Data Collection and Analysis

#### 3.1 Period of analysis and data collection protocol

Data collection in this part of the project has the aim of helping with a general understanding and to define what makes up political Manifestos, how they have evolved over time and how they differ between the parties. Emphasis will be placed on quantitative dimensions, particularly on what is not readily available in the literature, and will thus not be confined to variables identified from theory. The period 1900-2001 was adopted because it is sufficiently long to allow a trend analysis to be applied. It is also sufficiently compact to cope with external changes in the definition and measurement of the variables selected and is helpful with cross-sectional analysis. The sample for data collection consists of the three front line UK parties, viz. the Conservative and Unionist Party, the Labour Party and the Liberal Democratic Party. For the sake of simplicity hereinafter these will be shown as: Conservative, Labour and Liberal, even though splinter groups and mergers between parties can be observed over the above period. It will be assumed that some continuity has existed within these parties during the above period but this assumption will be held under observation. These parties have formed most of the governments in the period 1900-2001 and have consistently attracted a higher proportion of the electorate than the remaining parties. As evidenced in Appendix 1, aggregated results of general elections for the period 1900-2001, show that these parties earned 93.6% of the popular vote and claimed 93.9% of the seats in the House of Commons.

The first operational objective was to gain access to the Manifestos published by the parties in the sample from 1900 to 2001, during which period 27 general elections took place. It has proven more frustrating than anticipated to procure hard or digital copies of the full set of Manifestos through the headquarters of these parties. On the telephone, respondents repeatedly claimed not to be holding the full series or to be short of copies. One offered to sell part of a set and directed the enquiry towards commercial solutions. Respondents from all three headquarters became noticeably less cooperative when the enquirer evaded confirming membership of or voting for their respective party. Some of the party Manifestos appeared in published form (e.g. Dale, 2013, for the Conservative Party), but conversion of hard copy printed text to digital form for analysis would have proven onerous. Some university institutions also held partial or complete sets of Manifestos in either digital or hard copy form, restricted to their own members and to doctoral researchers.

Conveniently, all the Manifestos had been posted on the Internet on several sites. Some of these sites contained minor errors of classification, requiring repeated cross-verifications. One Manifesto was picked *at random* from each party and checked against what was shown on other websites (Conservative for 1966, [www.conservative-party.net](http://www.conservative-party.net)); (Labour for 1983, [www.labour-party.org.uk](http://www.labour-party.org.uk)); (Liberal for 1950, [www.libdemManifesto.com](http://www.libdemManifesto.com)). These proved to be consistent. The 81 Manifestos (3 parties x 27 elections) were downloaded, saved on a hard drive and copies printed.

Resulting from casual observation, the investigation starts with analysing the size of Manifestos over the period of 1900-2001 and compares the submissions of the three parties. The exploratory null hypotheses, which were not derived from theory, were that, on a number of defined dimensions, there would be no difference between the Manifestos of the parties in the sample, nor in the change over time.

### 3.2 Proxies for dimensions

Inspection of the hard copies of the gathered Manifestos showed that there was substantial visual divergence in presentational dimensions (font size & style, paragraph, indents etc), which varied over time both within and between parties. If, for example, size were to be expressed as the “number of pages”, Manifestos for the elections of 2015 and 2017 measured as shown on the table below (*data from GQ Magazine, 2015 and 2017*).

Number of pages	2015	2017
Labour	86	124
Conservative	84	88
Liberal Democrats	158	95

The number of pages as a proxy for size is not helpful because there are substantial variations in display factors such as page layout, spacing and size of font. Further, because presentational dimensions can have some influence on the understanding of the content, it was decided that these should be standardized between Manifestos and between parties. This was achieved through the capabilities of ordinary word-processing software (Microsoft Windows, Word), thus allowing consistency in visual appearance and measurement and also greater reliability in replication. A visual inspection of the hard copies of Manifestos also showed diversity in the amount of text per page and in the inclusion of illustrations and other visual aids and hyperlinks. It was decided not to embark on an analysis of the effects of such variables because this task would have required greater theoretical underpinning.

From a handful of measurements effected manually and after enquiries with Microsoft-qualified software engineers in the retail trade (Currys *PC World*, visits on 2 ; 9 & 30 Oct 2018) , it was concluded that, in layman’s terms, in Microsoft Word, a “word” is defined as any non-empty continuous area appearing between two deliberately entered blank spaces (space button or return button). This was verified manually on a sample of three documents of 107 words, 161 words and 283 words. The abovementioned engineers were convincing that the reliability of software-based estimation would hold when scaling up to much larger documents. This contention will be held as an assumption because it would not be practical to verify manually the size in words of documents of the magnitude encountered in the field studies.

The number of words per Manifesto (as estimated by the software used) appeared to be an acceptable and consistent proxy for size, with the important practical advantage that it did not involve manual or operator-dependent measurement.

### 3.3 Data transformation and analysis

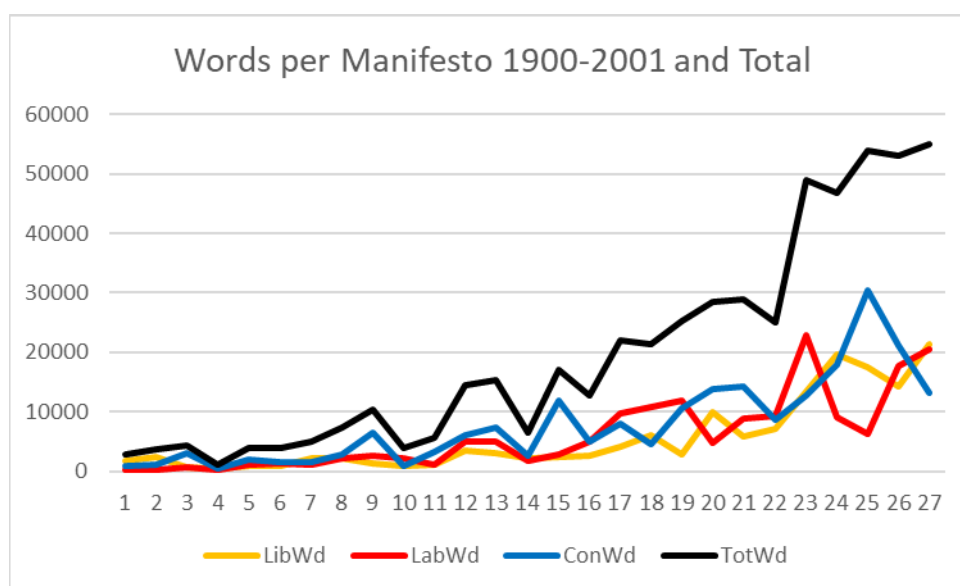
It was estimated that the 81 Manifestos (3 parties x 27 elections) were made up of over 1400 pages of A4, possibly containing in excess of 500,000 words. It would have been too slow and prone to error to count manually numbers of this magnitude. Conveniently, the word-counting facility on Microsoft Word, allowed a consistent approach to measurement, which was easy to replicate (count and re-count reliability) on different machines and versions of the software used in this project (e.g. Word 2003, 2007 & 2016). Prior to counting, each Manifesto was inspected visually and several words and graphics *preceding* and *following* the text were removed because they did not relate to the Manifesto word content; it was obvious that these were labelling additions by the Web Editors/Masters for ease of classification and retrieval. The number of words in six Manifestos of modest size (counting in larger documents would have been more prone to errors, thus defeating the benefit of count-recount reliability), relating to the elections of 1900 and 1906, were also checked manually and compared with the measurements shown by the word-counting facility on Word 2007; these yielded identical results. Interestingly, a paper by Haig (2002) showed a word-count for the same sample, covering the period 1945 to 2001. A comparison of Haig’s data with those for the present project showed only minor variations and there was a very high correlation between them ( $r=0.98$ ;  $p<.01$ ; *two tail*). No changes were applied to the content of Manifestos. The measurements collected under this protocol are displayed in Appendix 2. Statistical work was carried out on Microsoft Excel 2003, 2007 and 2016. Appendix 3 displays the descriptive statistics and Appendix 4 displays the cross-correlations between variables. Given that no established theory was used to hypothesise on a direction for differences in the values between the variables, it was decided, whenever possible, to apply a *two-tail* statistical confidence test. The level of statistical significance was estimated through an algorithm drawn from the Internet (e.g. <http://vassarstats.net/rsig.html>) and counter-checked with an algorithm from a different source (e.g.

<http://www.danielsoper.com/statcalc3/calc.aspx?id=44>) (both last accessed 15 Jan 2019). After an initial assessment of the statistical interpretations, the variance between and within the Manifestos of the sample parties was tested with a view to establishing if observed differences could be due to chance (*Exhibit 15*).

### 3.4 Changes in the size of Manifestos over the period 1900-2001

The graph in *Exhibit 2* displays the number of words in the Manifestos of the sample and their total. It is noted that over the period 1900-2001, word content per Manifesto has increased close to twenty-fold. The x-axis shows the sequence in which elections took place: the first being in 1900 and the last one in 2001.

***Exhibit 2***



Source: the field studies (*Appendix 2*). Microsoft Excel 2016

It will be noted from *Exhibit 3* that Manifestos of the Liberal party showed the highest word-count on 5 occasions out of 27, those of the Labour party on 7 occasions and the Conservative on 15 occasions. Reciprocally, the Liberal party tabled the lowest word-count in their Manifestos on 13 occasions (close to 50% of the observations), the Labour party on 10 occasions and the Conservatives on only four occasions. Thus, the Conservative party was the most verbose and the Liberal party the least!

***Exhibit 3: Frequency of Highest and Lowest word-counts in the Manifestos***

	Liberal	Labour	Conservative
Highest word-count	5	7	15
Lowest word-count	13	10	4

Source: the field studies (*Appendix 2*); frequencies out of 81 (3x27) Manifestos.

Exhibit 4 shows that there is a strong statistical relationship between the size (word count) of the Manifestos of the three parties, particularly between those of the Conservative and the Liberal parties.

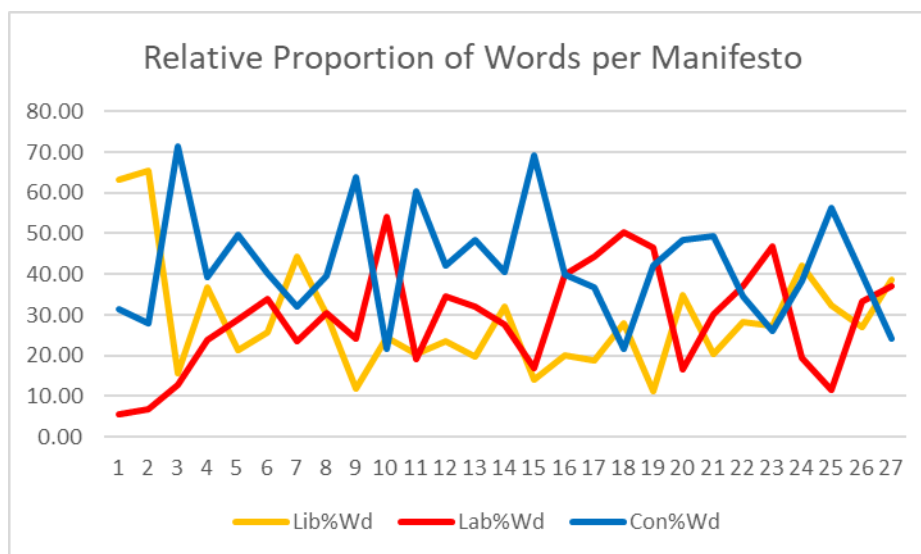
**Exhibit 4: Correlation coefficients between word-counts in the Manifestos**

	Liberal	Labour	Conservative
Liberal	1		
Labour	.74**	1	
Conservative	.81**	.58*	1

Source: the field studies (Appendix 2): (n=27; \*p<.01; \*\*p<.001; two-tail). Microsoft Excel 2007 & 2016.

Because of the substantial increase in the size of Manifestos over the period of analysis, it was decided to also express the size of each Manifesto as a proportion (percentage) of the sum of the words in the Manifestos of the three parties for each election (Exhibit 5). This simple relative ranking approach directs observations and emphasis on volumetric dimensions and circumvents or tones down possible misinterpretations due to the effects of auto-correlation (Durbin-Watson statistic, e.g. in Newbold et al, p. 512).

**Exhibit 5:**

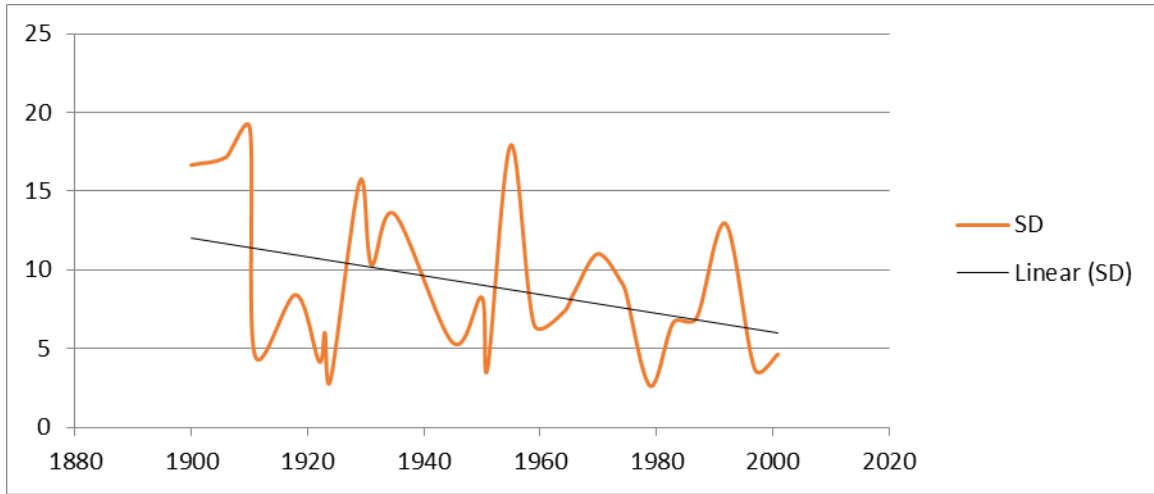


Source: data from the field studies (Appendix 2)

Exhibit 5 confirms visually that a relatively high proportion of wording in Manifestos is contributed to by the Conservative party and a relatively low proportion of the wording was contributed to by the Liberal and Labour parties. Interestingly, Labour won the elections of 1964 and 1966 when it submitted the largest Manifestos.

The relative proportions of words between the parties have been converging (reducing trend in standard deviations) as shown in Exhibit 6 for the sampling period, thus showing a gradual toning down of the substantial fluctuations observed in the earlier years of analysis. No theoretical explanation could be proposed for this trend.

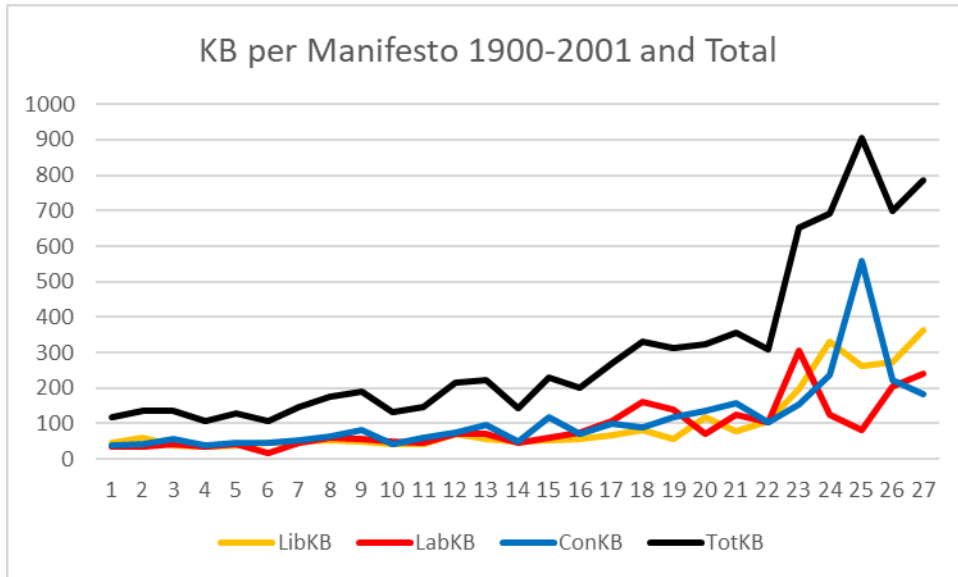
**Exhibit 6: trend in the variation of the proportion of words used by the 3 parties**



Source: data from the field studies ([Appendix 2](#))

**3.5 An alternative proxy for size**

**Exhibit 7:**



Source: the field studies ([Appendix 2](#))

Given the option of expressing size as the volume of information in digital units, it was suggested during a visit to the trade (Currys *PC World*, visits on 2; 9 & 30 Oct 2018) to also estimate Manifesto size in kilobytes (KB). This style of unit is increasingly becoming of current use in the data management industry. This was also easy to measure with the Microsoft word processing software in that it can be made to show on the right-hand side of each saved file title and offers the advantage of easy measure-remeasure verification

across equipment and versions of the software. The KB for each Manifesto was measured and the data shown on Appendix 2 are plotted on Exhibit 7 (above).

As was the case with word count (Exhibit 4), the correlation coefficients for size expressed in KB (Exhibit 8) show a high statistical relationship between the submissions of the Conservative and the Liberal parties, and a low relationship between the Conservative and Labour parties.

**Exhibit 8: correlation coefficients of KB content in the Manifestos**

	Liberal	Labour	Conservative
Liberal	1		
Labour	.69**	1	
Conservative	.71**	.37*	1

Source: the field studies (Appendix 2); (\*ns; \*\*p<.01; two-tail). Microsoft Excel 2007 & 2016.

How are word count and KB measurements related? The very high and statistically significant correlations shown in Exhibit 9 lead to the conclusion that KB and word-count measurements, as estimated by the Microsoft software, could be a good proxy for each other and thus interchangeable. When Exhibit 2 and Exhibit 7 are superimposed, the lines of KB and word-count would show an almost complete overlap.

**Exhibit 9: correlation coefficients between KB and word-count in the Manifestos of the sample and their total**

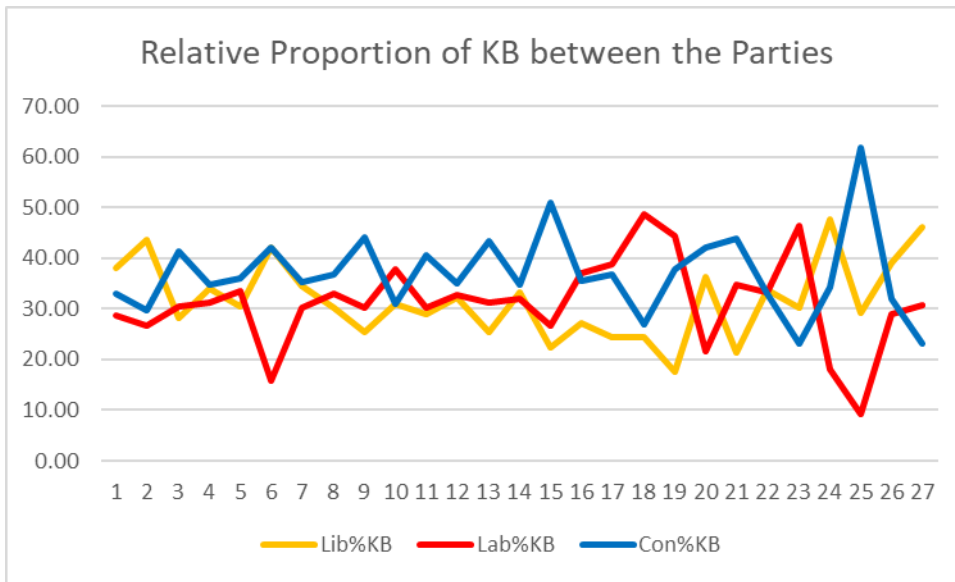
	Liberal word-count	Labour word-count	Conservative word-count	Total word-count
Liberal KB	.98			
Labour KB		.98		
Conservative KB			.93	
Total KB				.98

Source: the field studies (Appendix 2); (n=27; all significant at p<.01; two-tail), Microsoft Excel 2007 & 2016.

As was the case with the growth of the number of words per Manifesto (Exhibit 2 and Exhibit 7), the size ratio in KB between the parties is displaying some notable variation over the period of analysis. Exhibit 10 displays an increasing variation between the parties, (%KBSD), which is confirmed in the fit of the trend-line of standard deviations (Exhibit 11).

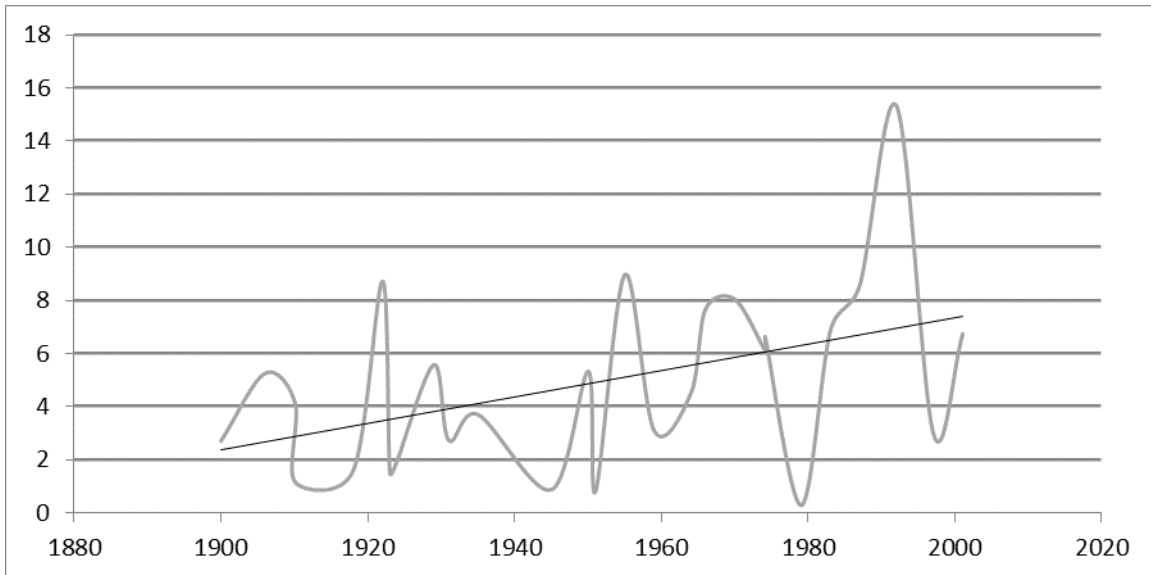


**Exhibit 10:**



Source: data from the field studies (Appendix 2).

**Exhibit 11: trend line in the variation of the proportion of KBs used by the 3 parties**



Source: data from the field studies (Appendix 2)

The meaning of the difference in trends between the plots on Exhibit 6 and Exhibit 11 (%WdSD & %KBSD) could be due to the penetration of information technology, which has allowed a more creative or adventurous exploration of what is possible and has brought to a level playing field access to technological solutions. It is noticeable that during the observation years when divergence in word numbers decreased, the complementary measurement of divergence in KB increased; no theoretical explanation could be advanced for this observation.

During the period of observation (1900-2001), the ratio of words-to-kilobyte has also increased manifold. The meaning and trend of this last observation is not being analysed but it suggests that, as technology is developing, parties might be “packing in” more words per kilobyte. Is this a measure of efficiency? If so, the Conservative party shows a consistently steeper growth (in words per KB) than the other parties. It must be remembered that general use of software and of the digital options in Manifestos was not widespread before the 1980s.

### 3.6 Does Size matter?

Is the party publishing a larger Manifesto likely to achieve a greater level of success in a general election? Obviously, what is being tested is a statistical association and not causality. Even if the size of a Manifesto were a contributor to the electoral result, the content and other influencing variables are expected to have some effect. Over the 27 elections examined, there were 19 occasions when one of the parties was a clear winner and 8 occasions when the results yielded a hung parliament, a coalition or a national government. [*victory= forming the next government; loss/defeat= not forming the next government*]. Because of the imprecise definition of this dichotomy, it was decided to restrict the initial analysis to the 19 occasions when there was a clear winner.

The data on Exhibit 12 show that the party with the largest word-count in its Manifesto won on only 9 out of these 19 occasions. The null hypothesis cannot be rejected and this means that a large word-count in a party's Manifesto is not statistically associated with winning an election.

The evidence did support the converse hypothesis: the party with the lowest word-count in its Manifestos lost on 16 out of the 19 elections. The null hypothesis (that fielding a short Manifesto is not statistically linked with losing an election) was rejected ( $p < .01$ , one-way *binomial test*, Siegel, 1956, p. 250). Fielding a shorter Manifesto than the other parties is therefore linked statistically with not winning an election. Interestingly, on one occasion (out of 19), the party with the lowest word-count won that election (Conservative, 1983).

The statistical relationship remains the same when the proxy for size is the number of KB per Manifesto. Fielding the largest Manifesto in KB is not associated with winning an election. Conversely, fielding the shortest Manifesto in KB is statistically associated with not winning an election, the null hypothesis being rejected ( $p < .01$ , one-way, *binomial test*, Siegel, 1956, p. 250).

**Exhibit 12: Election outcomes against size of Manifesto**

<b>Outcome of Election ▼</b>	<b>Word count as the Number of Words</b>	<b>Word count as KB</b>
	<b>Out of 19 clear outcomes</b>	<b>Out of 19 clear outcomes</b>
<b>Victory to the party with the Highest word count</b>	<b>9</b> <b>47%</b>	<b>8</b> <b>42%</b>
<b>Victory to the party with the Lowest word count</b>	<b>1</b> <b>5%</b>	<b>2</b> <b>9%</b>
<b>Defeat of the party with the Highest word count</b>	<b>10</b> <b>53%</b>	<b>11</b> <b>58%</b>
<b>Defeat of the party with the Lowest word count</b>	<b>16</b> <b>84%</b>	<b>16</b> <b>84%</b>

*Source: extracted manually from the Field Studies (Appendix 2 & Exhibit 16)*

Fielding a shorter Manifesto than the other parties is therefore linked statistically with a defeat at that election. But why would a party field a shorter Manifesto than the others? It is assumed that parties work on their campaigns independently and do not share their communication strategies. Knowing or guessing the size (and content) of one's competitors' Manifestos is often a case of game theory and the prisoner's dilemma (Poundstone, 1993 and <http://www.econlib.org/library/Enc/PrisonersDilemma.html>). A party might decide to save resources because it has concluded that it would, in any case, lose that election. Although the difference in cost between fielding a large or a short Manifesto is not known, it is thought most unlikely that the size-related difference in cost will be an important contributing factor to investment decisions in party marketing. If the proxy for size were to be the number of KB per Manifesto, the picture would remain about the same. If these relationships were to hold in the future as they were observed for the past, party strategists would note that investment towards a large Manifesto will not necessarily result in success, but it might contribute to reducing the statistical likelihood of failure.

### **3.7 Changes over time in the dimensions of Manifestos**

From the mid 1990s, probably as a result of the development and availability of publishing software, printed Manifestos have also embodied an increasing proportion of visual aids like tables, charts, sketches and pictures and greater use was made of colour in all the media. Furthermore, the rapid development and penetration of portable access through the expanding use, range and capabilities of smart mobile communications

devices, is changing the meaning, role and importance of the traditional hard copy Manifesto as well as that of its distribution through the media. It is likely that not only the visual and tangible appearance of a Manifesto will change to take advantage of the evolving technology but also the selection of the target audience and the composition of the message contained. Different expressions of a message are likely to be directed to different target audiences for the same election. Bespoke Manifestos are likely to be the new reality. Bespoke to any segment, be it geographic, socioeconomic or categorised in any other form of identifiable and definable behavioural response.

**Exhibit 13: correlations between parties on the ratio of words per KB**

	Liberal words/KB	Labour words/KB	Conservative words/KB
Liberal words/KB	1		
Labour words/KB	.68	1	
Conservative words/KB	.64	.71	1

Source: the field studies (Appendix 2); (n=27; all significant at  $p < .01$ ; two tail)

**Exhibit 14: correlations between a party’s share of the total number of words in Manifestos and its share of total KBs**

	Liberal % words	Labour % words	Conservative % words
Liberal % KB	.72		
Labour % KB		.70	
Conservative % KB			.78

Source: the field studies (Appendix 2); (n=27; all significant at  $p < .01$ ; two-tail)

The high correlations shown in Exhibit 14 imply a similar approach in the management of Manifestos by the three parties. It could be that the higher the correlation coefficient, the more advanced the party’s expertise in media management. Under this hypothesis the evidence suggests that the Conservative party has shown marginally greater expertise in Manifesto management than the other two parties.

Having examined a number of variables over the 81 Manifestos it would be prudent to verify the extent to which variance of measurements *within* the data from each party relates to variance *between* parties. Under a null hypothesis the means of the measurements for each variable would be equal for all three parties. There are several statistical tests that can help with a decision in this respect. Under the null hypothesis (that there are no differences between the values of the overall data of the three parties) the *F ratio* from an analysis of variance would be expected to be close to 1. The higher the value of the *F ratio* the more likely it is that there are real differences between the parties which are not due to chance or to expected fluctuations in the data. The calculated *F ratio* needs further to be checked by applying a post-hoc test to the data. Again, there are several options available but the more common and easier to calculate is the Tukey’s Honestly Significant Difference test (Tukey’s HSD), for which there are several free packages online. The Tukey level of significance on Exhibit 15 was calculated on an algorithm available through [www.mssqltips.com](http://www.mssqltips.com) (last accessed 15 Jan

2019) and a Q (Studentized) values table from the same site; the levels of statistical significance were set at  $p < .05$  and  $p < .01$ , as is the convention in the social sciences.

On the basis of the analysis shown on *Exhibit 15*, it was concluded that, in the case of the size of a Manifesto expressed as word-count or as KB, or as the number of words per KB, the null hypothesis stands, i.e. that the differences between the parties, even though observed individually on a number of variables and submitted to a number of tests, were not statistically significant on the *F ratio*.

In terms of the proportion of words (%) occupied by each party for each Manifesto, the null hypothesis was rejected in the comparison between Conservative and Liberal parties and between Conservative and Labour parties. The null hypothesis held in the case of differences between the Labour and Liberal parties. A similar conclusion was drawn about the proportion (%) of KBs per Manifesto.

Thus, on the basis of the variables measured and the tests applied, the Conservative party Manifestos stood different from both those of the Liberal and Labour parties. The tests also indicated that there was no statistically significant dissimilarity between the Labour and the Liberal parties for these variables.

***Exhibit 15: analysis of variance***

Variable	F- value (ratio)	P-value of F	Tukey's HSD Lib-Lab	Tukey's HSD Lib-Con	Tukey's HSD Lab-Con
Manifesto Size in words	0.92754	.39983	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>
Proportion (%) of words by party	<b>8.628052</b>	<b>.000412</b>	<i>ns</i>	<b>sig. **</b>	<b>sig. **</b>
Manifesto size in KB	0.394139	.675396	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>
Proportion (%) of KB by party	<b>4.302061</b>	<b>.016892</b>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<b>sig. *</b>
Words per KB	2.500156	.08363	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>

Source: field studies (ns= not significant; \* significant at  $p < .05$ ; \*\* significant at  $p < .01$ ). F & P values calculated on Microsoft Excel 2007 & 2016; critical value of  $F = 3.116792$ .

## 4. Proposals in Manifestos: the case of the House of Lords Reform

The aim of this section is to examine one specific policy area and assess the extent to which proposals in Manifestos have been addressed by different parties in government and what has been the follow-up. In the absence of a practical or theoretical imperative, any policy area could have been chosen for exploratory purposes, e.g. immigration, adult education, policing and so on. The House of Lords was chosen out of personal interest. The operational purpose of this section is to examine the content of electoral Manifestos and to identify text which refers to the Lords or proposes any form of constitutional change involving the Lords. In the process, an attempt is made to quantify the dimensions and differences between the three parties in the sample and to identify what it is that they are proposing to change. *Appendix 9*, extracted from "A Briefing Paper: House of Lords Reform" prepared by the Political Studies Association under the pen of A. Renwick (2011, p.18), shows one view of the positions of the three main parties, claiming that these positions have evolved. This claim is understandable, given the period of time over which comparisons are made.

### 4.1 Problems with the Lords: Method and Journey

For over a century, most political parties have made reference to an ever-increasing list of reforms that are considered essential for the House of Lords. But were these reforms really needed or were they just intended to detract from other areas of political pressure which were more difficult to address?

When someone criticized Winston Churchill about a wall that he built, he said: *"Any fool can see what's wrong, but can you see what's right?"* (multiple sources, including RBC Letter, Jan 1970, Vol. 51, No. 1).

Notwithstanding the many ills with the Lords advanced over the decades, little evidence has been put forward about a functional shortfall considered serious enough to require immediate correction. Neither has a proposed correction been assessed as to the likelihood of its acceptability (by whom?) nor has serious debate taken place on the extent to which the remedy will not be worse than what it was meant to cure.

*"But the House of Lords is a truly unique institution, shaped by a broad range of conventions, habits, and expectations. We cannot be certain how these historical legacies would interact with the proposed innovations to produce the outcomes that interest us"* (Renwick, 2011, p.5)

The leaflets distributed by the three larger parties just before the General Election of 1983 have heightened interest in this area. Victory went to the Conservatives under Margaret (later baroness) Thatcher, followed by a disaster vote for Labour under Michael

Foot and for the Liberals under David (later lord) Steel. It was noted that all three parties mentioned the Lords in their Manifestos for that election (see *Exhibit 16*). Labour's entry for 1983 presented some inconsistency in that on the one hand it proposed abolition of the Lords, yet later on, in the same Manifesto, it referred to just removing its legislative powers. The Liberals undertook to reform both the powers and composition of the Lords, whereas the Conservatives undertook to ensure continuity, possibly embarking on some symbolic cosmetic tinkering.

## 4.2 What is Reform?

References to the Lords in the Manifestos for the period 1900-2001 suggest that substantial resources were being committed to talking about change by the three larger political parties (Conservatives, Liberal Democrats, Labour). But what do these parties mean by reform of the Lords? The literature lists several possible alternatives, which depend on the conceptual context.

Reform, in the context of the present project, means the action of re-shaping an institution with a view to improvement, betterment, amelioration, refinement, as well as rectification, correction, amendment, revision. So, reform leads to both the improvement of output (productivity of volume or quality on political cost/benefit criteria), as well as the ideological adjustment or redirection of what the House of Lords is supposed to do. Several sources on the Internet (e.g. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reform>, accessed 19 Nov 2018) claim that the word reform, used in this way, originates from Christopher Wyvill's Association (1700s) which identified "Parliamentary Reform" as its primary aim.

Apart from one recently defined issue (number of peers), there is no enduring cross-party consensus as to what is wanting with the Lords, let alone about the change that would redress it. The discourse at the time of writing does not include a framework for identifying, defining and implementing a change which would be both based in theory and also likely to be accepted by the British electorate. It is quite likely that any cost/benefit analysis (based on sundry resource allocation theories) will identify areas of particular interest to a particular discourse and thus unlikely to generate broad acceptability.

Is change being initiated to satisfy some ideology, independently of definable and measurable performance against agreed (by whom?) criteria? The decision to reform the Lords, come-what-may, could be quite similar to the judgment of King Louis XVI during the French Revolution. In Danton's words: "*Nous ne voulons pas juger le roi, nous voulons le tuer*" (<http://lintegral.over-blog.com/article-30699658.html>, accessed 19 Nov 2018). What was important, according to Danton, was to kill the King, as a symbol, and not to judge him according to some principle embodied in law. By analogy, should the Lords be abolished or transformed, whatever their record, and not be judged or evaluated against some defined principle of performance? Is reform of the Lords a convenient subject for diversion from other political matters, more difficult to resolve at a

particular point in time? Once again, why is reform proposed? by whom? with a view to what end? can re-engineering of the Lords, a process, help reach consensus between parties, and thus be introduced without challenging ideology?

It is difficult to resist the transatlantic saying "*If it ain't broke, don't fix it*" (Lance, 1977), which has been used frequently in relation to reform of the Lords. For example, Nick Clegg's proposals in 2011 (at that time Deputy Prime Minister and Leader of the Liberal Democratic party), for a reform of the Lords, were labelled as *a solution which is looking for a problem* (Bale, 2011). The debate about reform appears to be based on undefined or contrived foundations and it is this particular area which calls for more extensive investigation beyond the present work. In the words of Ahl & Allen (1996) "*the uncertainty of many scientific findings may be the result of asking inadequate questions*"; by analogy, the uncertainty about reform of the Lords might be rooted in the fuzziness and continuously changing definition of what is wrong, why is it wrong, and what polity would like to see in its place. Are the parties really after reforming the Lords or are they just keen to talk about reform? Why is it that initiatives in this area go far along the procedural route but most fail to reach the implementation stage? If the purpose of putting forward reform proposals for the Lords is just a means of deflecting attention from some other issue, what would happen if, fortuitously (based on catastrophe theory; Brown (1995)), a reform were agreed?

### 4.3 What are the aims of Reform of the Lords?

Why does the House of Lords matter? The United Kingdom's unwritten constitution assumes a bicameral legislative parliament. Working with two Houses is not essential for a democratic system, indeed there are several countries, both old and new, deemed to be democratic, with single legislative chambers (e.g Denmark, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, and scores of others). In any case, on occasion, Labour party Manifestos have proposed to abolish the House of Lords ("*The Lords must go*": Labour Dec. 1910, p.1, line 4 and Labour Jan. 1910, p.1, line 23), but they have not gone as far as to propose that it be replaced by a Senate, or merge the two Houses (as was done in Sweden from the election of 1970), or just remove the Lords altogether, without anything else taking its place.

Parliament is thought to originate from the council of the Anglo-Saxon kings of England as a witenagemot, or 'assembly of wise men', to advise the king on all matters on which he decided to ask its opinion, although historians are gradually moving away from this hypothesis (Longford, 1988). '*Nobody set out to create Parliament. It developed naturally out of the daily political needs of the English King and his government. Nor did it develop continuously over time, but went through short periods of rapid growth.*'

([www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk), accessed 11 Apr 2019). As an Anglo-Saxon Council, it became involved in matters of new laws, grants of land and disputes between important persons (Encyclopaedia Britannica), but it was not a fixed council; the king summoned whom he wanted when and where he wanted them. Parliament came into existence out of the



witan 'somewhere in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries' (Longford, 1988, p.29). It was at about that time that the concept of representativeness was introduced with the king summoning representatives of the nobles, who were bound to the sovereign by feudal ties, of the clergy and bishops and of laymen. There is some uncertainty (Pike, 1894) as to when a separation took place into two units (the Commons and the Lords) but, in recent centuries, both the House of Commons and the House of Lords had to be involved in the passing of legislation. "*But the House of Lords is a truly unique institution, shaped by a broad range of conventions, habits, and expectations.*" (Renwick, 2011, p.5). The House of Lords has an important contribution to make in the formulation and processing of law from its earliest stages to completion, such as proposals (Bills) before they become law (Act of Parliament). In this function it has the opportunity to scrutinise proposals and to call the government to account and, *inter alia*, to participate in the law-making function. It is thus not surprising that political parties, whether in government or in opposition, wish to gain or retain control of the management of its law-making capabilities and contribution.

There is no consistent statement in the literature as to what is expected from a Reform of the Lords, and by whom. At the superficial level and intuitively, at least some of the proposals in the Manifestos are put forward as a way of being critical of another party. An interesting consideration of the subject is shown in Renwick (2011, p.33), where some criteria for the evaluation of (Government's) proposals relating to a reform of the Lords are put forward. Although these proposals are, in chronological terms, outside the period under investigation in this study, they form an interesting decanting of the literature and of the discourse in the early part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. There is no recognisable theoretical underpinning in these proposals other than a wide range of views, opinions, political positions and posturing. According to this source, an ideal reform of the Lords would take care of the following matters (abbreviated from the original):

- The second chamber should have sufficient legitimacy to perform its role but it must not be a rival to the Commons
- Its representativeness should be enhanced, including not only the regions but also women and ethnic minorities
- The composition of the two chambers should be different
- No party should hold an overall majority in the second chamber
- Reforms should encourage independence
- It should be possible to include individuals with expertise and experience
- Members should be working towards scrutinising government policies and debating major national issues; they should not be developing constituency work and a political career.

- Reform should not impose an undue extra cost.
- Voting system should be clear to the electorate
- There should be integrity in elections or appointments
- There should be stronger ties between electors and their representatives
- It should not be presumed that accountability of members is sought. (present writer's note: this statement appeared inconsistent with the rest and had to be verified several times).

The Electoral Commission holds records (contact 7 Mar 2019) from more than 400 political parties in the United Kingdom. Some of these are very limited in geographical coverage and most of these do not publish text generally accepted as a party Manifesto, or, if they do, their formal Manifestos were not readily accessible at the time of this project. Reform of the Lords, under various guises, has been on the agenda of several of these parties for over a century.

The next operational aim for this project was to extract from the Manifestos those parts of the text that refer to the Lords. The literature was consulted about several methods of text, discourse and narrative analysis (e.g. Riessman (1993), Czarniawska (2004), Nunan (1993) and Salkie (1995)) and helpful approaches were inspired from each. Consideration was given to using expert panels, a questionnaire-based survey, focus groups and several other approaches. The two short-listed options were either to undertake the task "manually" or to use one of the software packages for textual analysis.

Several data-mining, text analysis or text analytics-style software are discussed on the Internet. A few of these are open-source but, at the time of writing, most are proprietary and appear to be geared at large scale projects or teams of researchers. The aim of these packages is to convert what appears to be an unstructured set of text data, which is presented in a natural (everyday) language, into something assumed or designed to be more meaningful, something which aims to identify structures and themes. *"From political theory, to law, to survey research, scholars stand to learn much from the application of automated text analysis methods to their domain of interest"*, where the implicit *"promise is that the methods will make possible inferences that were previously impossible"* (Grimmer & Stewart, 2013). These packages are also likely to deliver a more reliable outcome (Dandoy et al, 2015), offer *"the potential for a huge increase in the scope and power of text analysis within political science"* (Laver et al 2003, p.330), and the opportunity for fuller use of published resources towards exploring the political positions of parties (see, for example, the Comparative Manifesto Project).

This software-based approach of qualitative analysis appeared attractive and there was little doubt that it is a useful tool to help researchers not only explore new avenues of analysis but also help make findings more reliable and consistent, independently of

operators. At the time of the decision on the present project, there was concern by this researcher about the lack of familiarity with these packages, and, more importantly, with the enormity of the choice available. Wikipedia, for example (last accessed 5 Feb 2019), listed in excess of 50 different alternatives. Further, the (technical) assumptions behind each piece of software and the unknown (to this researcher) theoretical and epistemological foundations and direction that this enquiry would be led into through using these packages, have called for prudence. Progress in data transformation has still some way to go before political text can be interpreted using software (Martin & Vanberg, 2008). A better working knowledge of the assumptions, models and algorithms built into the software would be prudent before their findings become accepted for further examination. The practical/operational aspects of using these packages were not considered a serious impediment in that they could be mastered with practice (Popping, 2000; Provost & Fawcett, 2013). Further, to ensure that there is conceptual consistency in the findings, prudence in the analysis would have advised investment in alternatives for comparison and validation purposes. This approach would have required substantial additional resources and was outside the scope of this project. “Automating” the analysis and taking advantage of digital technology has to stay on the agenda. It remains essential to compare the outputs of sundry packages in terms of similarities and differences in their output, the consistency in their measurements and the theoretical bases of their analyses. The literature has been supportive of progress in this area (see Martin & Vanberg, 2008).

The protocol adopted for this project was to read through the hard copies of all 81 Manifestos (3 parties x 27 elections) and note that part of the text that mentioned the House of Lords either directly or by implication. In addition to the words “House of Lords” several other expressions were listed: Upper Chamber, Upper House, Lords, revising Chamber, Second Chamber, Peers and anything else which, by context, was understood by the researcher to mean the House of Lords. The process was repeated and some corrections effected. One Manifesto from each party (1923 Liberal; 1970 Labour and 1992 Conservative) was read for a third time. The findings of this verification were consistent with those of the previous readings (test-retest reliability by same operator) but it is appreciated that inconsistencies and other human errors remain possible (this operation was the most tedious part of this project).

Each Manifesto entry relating to the Lords was transcribed on a spreadsheet under the appropriate party and election date. A comparison of the frequency with which the House of Lords is mentioned in individual party Manifestos appears on Exhibit 16. Of course, not all words have the same impact, and their meaning also depends on context, but this aspect of analysis is outside the scope of the present study. There was also some concern about the evolving meaning of words over time and the “basket” or “portfolio” of words used at different periods of time (see, for example, Society Now, 2014). The choice of wording is a function of not only the discourse of the day but also of fashion and capability by both the writer of the message as well as the reader. Communications theories have much to contribute to the interpretation of Manifestos.

**Exhibit 16:** Extracts from the Manifestos of the three parties in the sample from 1900-2001, as these refer to the Lords

**Abbreviations:** CON= Conservative; LAB= Labour; LIB= Liberal & Liberal Democrats; HL= House of Lords; COM= House of Commons.

Manifesto to	LAB	LIB	CON	Gov. Elected	Event & Reform
1900	None	So long as the Peers may arbitrarily overrule the Commons.	None	CON	
1906	None	Throughout this period the House of Lords, by its docility, has done its part to facilitate their task.	None	LIB	1906 HL rejects bills by LIB govt passed by COM 1909 budget rejected by HL creating crisis
1910 Jan	The great question you are to decide is whether the Peers or the people are to rule this country. ...important Bills ... have been mutilated or destroyed by the HL, an irresponsible body which represents nothing but its own class interests... they claim the right to decide what taxes shall be paid... They also claim to dictate the date at which Parliament shall be dissolved. The time has come to put an end to their power to override the will of the Commons. The feudal age is past and ...the people are no longer willing to live on the sufferance of the Lords. The Lords must go. Down with privilege.	..the House of Lords... rejected the whole provision which the Commons had made for the finance of the year... an assumption on the part of the non-representative House... The House of Lords has violated the Constitution...The claim of the House of Lords to control finance is novel and a mere usurpation. Given a Tory majority in the House of Commons, the House of Lords interposes no check upon legislative innovations of the most violent and unexpected kind... it is absurd to speak of this system as though it secured to us any of the advantages of a Second Chamber...The limitation of the veto is the first and most urgent step to be taken...	Resolution of the Lords that country should be consulted upon Budget proposals... long tirade defending the Lords ...possibility of some change in composition of House of Lords. Presently containing men of first-class eminence.	Hung LIB with Irish Nationalist support.	
1910 Dec	Remove Lords as a block in the working of our Constitution. Strong and independent Party of Labour sitting in the Lords	Belated and delusive composition which the House of Lords is, at the last moment, being advised to offer to its critics...would result in the creation of a Second Chamber predominantly Conservative in character... practically inoperable... capable of interposing an even more formidable veto than the present House of Lords	Thin disguise of attack on the Upper House. Single Chamber conspiracy.	Hung LIB with Irish Nationalist support.	1911 Parliament Act reduces power of HL to reject money bills from COM.
1918	None	None	It has been recognised by all parties that reform is urgently required in the constitution of the House of Lords...create a Second Chamber which will be based upon direct contact with the people..	CON-LIB coalition	1920 Removal of Welsh Lords Spiritual
1922	Parliament act must stand, and there must be no restoration of the Lords' veto	None	None	CON	1922 removal of representative

1923	None	None	None	Hung (LAB)	peers of Ireland.
1924	None	None	None	CON	
1929	None	None	None	Hung (LAB)	
1931	Class-conscious hostility of the House of Lords...it will tolerate no opposition from the House of Lords to the considered mandate of the People...	None	None	National Govt.	
1935	... seeks power to abolish the House of Lords and improve the procedure of the House of Commons.	None	None	National Govt.	
1945	and in stating it we give clear notice that we will not tolerate obstruction of the people's will by the House of Lords.	None	None	LAB	1945 Salisbury Convention: unwritten constitutional convention that HL may not oppose what COM has passed if included in Manifesto.  Parliament Act 1949, limits HL delaying power to 1 year for money bills and 2 sessions for other bills.
1950	None	We are anxious to reform the composition of the House of Lords, so as to eliminate heredity as a qualification for membership, which should be available to men and women of distinction.	Without mandate and without good reason they have reduced the powers of the House of Lords and taken the country a long way towards a single chamber.. It would be our aim to reach a reform and final settlement of the constitution and powers of the House of Lords by means of an all-Party conference called at an appropriate date. It would have before it proposals that; a) the present right to attend and vote based solely on heredity should not by itself constitute a qualification for admission to a reformed house. b) a reformed House of Lords should have powers appropriate to its constitution, but not exceeding those conferred by the Act of 1911.	LAB	
1951	None	None	None	CON	
1955	None	None	It has long been the Conservative wish to reach a settlement regarding the	CON	Life Peerages Act 1958 allows either

			reform of the House of Lords, so that it may continue to play its proper role as a Second Chamber under the Constitution.... We believe that any changes made now should be concerned solely with the composition of the House.		sex to be created life peers.
1959	None	None	None	CON	Peerage Act 1963, women inheriting titles allowed to sit in HL.  Hereditary peerages may be disclaimed for life.  All Scottish peers allowed to sit in HL.
1964	we shall not permit effective action to be frustrated by the hereditary and non-elective Conservative majority in the House of Lords.	None	We have made reforms in the composition of the House of Lords...	LAB	
1966	Finally, legislation will be introduced to safeguard measures approved by the House of Commons from frustration by delay or defeat in the House of Lords.	None	None	LAB	
1970	The priorities are clear. We have to make existing democratic institutions more effective and we have to extend the democratic principle, in various forms, into those institutions where democracy itself is still a stranger. We cannot accept the situation in which the House of Lords can nullify important decisions of the House of Commons and, with its delaying powers, veto measures in the last year before election. Proposals to secure reform will therefore be brought forward.	None	None	CON	
1974 Feb	None	The Westminster Parliament would then become a Federal Parliament with a reformed second chamber in which the majority of members would be elected on a regional basis.	None	Hung (LAB)	
1974 Oct	None	None	None	LAB	
1979	No one can defend on any democratic grounds the House of Lords and the power and influence it	The House of Lords should be replaced by a new, democratically chosen, second chamber which includes	Now Labour want not merely to abolish the House of Lords but to put nothing in its place. This would be a	CON	

1983	<p>exercises in our constitution. We propose, therefore, in the next Parliament, to abolish the delaying power and legislative veto of the House of Lords.</p> <p>Take action to abolish the undemocratic House of Lords as quickly as possible and, as an interim measure, introduce a Bill in the first session of parliament to remove its legislative powers- with the exception of those which relate to the life of a parliament.</p>	<p>representatives of the nations and regions of the United Kingdom, and UK members of the European Parliament.</p> <p>To reform the powers and composition of the House of Lords, which must include a significant elected element representative of the nations and regions of Britain.</p>	<p>most dangerous step. A strong Second Chamber is necessary not only to revise legislation but also to guarantee our constitution and liberties.</p> <p>Labour want to abolish the House of Lords. We will ensure that it has a secure and effective future. A strong Second Chamber is a vital safeguard for democracy and contributes to good government.</p>	CON	
1987	None	<p>Only Labour and Conservative working peers have been appointed to the Lords, in vain hope of silencing the Alliance voice.</p>	None	CON	
1992	None	<p>Reform the House of Lords. We will maintain a second chamber as a Senate, primarily elected by the citizens of the nations and regions of the United Kingdom. It will have power to delay all legislation other than money bills for up to two years.</p>	None	CON	Constitutional Reform Act 1995
1997	<p>End the hereditary principle in the House of Lords. A modern House of Lords. The House of Lords must be reformed. As an initial, self-contained reform, not dependent on further reform in the future, the right of hereditary peers to sit and vote in the House of Lords will be ended by statute. This will be the first stage in a process of reform to make the House of Lords more democratic and representative. The legislative powers of the House of Lords will remain unaltered. The system of appointment of life peers to the House of Lords will be reviewed. Our objective will be to ensure that over time party appointees as life peers more accurately reflect the proportion of votes cast at the previous general election. We are committed to maintaining an independent cross-bench presence of life peers. No political party should seek a majority in the House of Lords. A committee of both Houses of Parliament will be appointed to undertake a wide-ranging review of</p>	<p>Create an effective and democratic upper house. We will, over two Parliaments, transform the House of Lords into a predominantly elected second chamber capable of representing the nations and regions of the UK and of playing a key role in scrutinising European Legislation</p>	<p>We have demonstrated we are not against change where it is practical and beneficial. But fundamental changes which have not been fully thought through – such as opposition proposals on the House of Lords – would be extremely damaging. We will oppose change for change's sake.</p>	LAB	<p>House of Lords Act 1999, removed right of most hereditary peers to sit in HL and vote.</p> <p>Creation of Supreme Court takes away judicial role of HL.</p>

	possible further change and then to bring forward proposals for reform.				
2001	We are committed to completing House of Lords reform including removal of the remaining hereditary peers to make it more representative and democratic, while maintaining the House of Commons primacy. (Wakeham Commission) we will seek to implement them in the most effective way possible. Labour supports modernisation of the House of Lords procedures to improve its effectiveness. We will put the Independent Appointments Commission on a Statutory footing.	Replace the House of Lords with a smaller directly elected Senate with representatives from the nations and regions of the UK. The Senate will be given powers to improve legislation. We will transfer the judicial functions currently undertaken by the House of Lords to a new Supreme Court.	The House of Lords, historically a source of balance and independence, has suffered a botched reform.	LAB	

Source: Extracted manually from the Manifestos.

It will be noted from Exhibit 17 that for the period 1900-2001, there were no statistically significant differences between the three parties in the number of times they made reference to the Lords in their Manifestos. The Labour party made the longest mentions (on average 44.9 words) and also fielded the largest single entry (177 words in 1997). Labour also showed the largest variability in the number of words over the period (s.d. 50.3), confirming wider fluctuations in the size of its mentions when compared with those of the other two parties. The Liberal & Labour parties made the largest number of mentions (12), the Liberal party used fewer words per mention (av. 38.3) and was the most consistent in showing lower fluctuations in the size of its mentions (s.d. 24.5). Notwithstanding observable differences between the parties, these were not statistically significant (Siegel, 1956).

**Exhibit 17: References to the House of Lords in each party's Manifestos (1900-2001)**

<b><i>Mentions of Lords in Manifestos</i></b>	<b><i>Labour</i></b>	<b><i>Liberal</i></b>	<b><i>Conservative</i></b>
Total number of mentions	12	12	10
Elections when the only party mentioning the Lords	5	4	2
Elections when two parties mentioned the Lords *	1	1	1
Elections when all three parties mentioned the Lords*	6	6	6
Elections when no party made reference to the Lords*	7	7	7

Source: the field studies (\* in the same election Manifesto) extracted from entries in Exhibit 16.

It would be of interest to explore further the reasons why out of the 81 opportunities (3 parties x 27 elections) only 34 (42%) times the Lords were mentioned in the Manifestos. It is noted that in 7 out of the 27 elections (ca. 26%) all three parties in the sample made no reference to the Lords; it would be interesting to follow this up, presumably more pressing matters were of concern to these parties at a higher level at that particular period of time.



#### 4.4 Nature of proposed reform of the Lords.

What did the parties say in their Manifestos on how they would reform the Lords if they formed the next government? The literature was revisited, including: Czarniawska, 2004; DeVellis, 1991; Kirk & Miller, 1986; Mikhaylov *et al.*, 2012; Nunan, 1993; Riessman, 1993; Salkie 1995, with a view to identifying possible variables (dimensions & scales) and an ad hoc Codification was compiled by the present writer and shown on Exhibit 18.

**Exhibit 18: A form of Codification of changes to the Lords as proposed in Manifestos**

<b><i>Reform tabled in Manifestos</i></b>	<b><i>Proposed Code</i></b>
Removal of Lords or creation of unicameral parliament Change size of membership	<i>existential size</i>
Change in who has the right to take a seat	<i>composition</i>
Change subject-areas where Lords may impose their will	<i>powers</i>
Change qualifications for admission to the House, age, gender, Change method of joining Lords: inheritance, election, nomination, appointment	<i>qualification appointment</i>
Change and improve procedures	<i>efficiency</i>
General moaning, criticism or sniping, directed at other parties	<i>moaning</i>

**Source: present writer's proposal for analysis of the extracts on Exhibit 16.**

The above codification was influenced by the literature (including Dorey & Kelso, 2011), but it is accepted that what might appear to be a minor variation in the definition of each heading may lead to a meaningful difference in the outcome of the analysis. Had this particular topic been the sole variable in this project, more resources would have been invested to sourcing a software option or to reaching a consensus through the use of some "expert" panel accompanied by test-retest procedures. Apart from the existential label on the "abolition" of the Lords, most of the other changes could fit under a general label, such as "reform"; some of the changes could be considered as tidying-up operations but others could have more profound constitutional implications. It is thought that changes, however minor on first sight, would have some effect over time. It is also suspected that, based on several theories in decision-making, the mere fact of proposing a change or discussing it is likely to influence behaviour in several areas, much depending on the general political climate, circumstances, party positions, other discourse(s) and individuals involved. The literature on decision-making within the general behavioural sciences is quite extensive, with several seemingly competing and often inconsistent approaches; that relating to aspects of political science, as it refers to the Lords, will probably need revisiting.

It will be noted on Exhibit 19 that Labour was the only party to threaten openly abolition of the Lords. Both Labour and the Liberals highlighted repeatedly the need to re-visit the powers of the Upper House. The Liberals put particular emphasis on the composition of

the Lords, both relating to who had the right to sit and how they were to be appointed. Consistently with their views about the voting system for the House of Commons, the Liberals also emphasised the need for a more representative House of Lords and a more direct connection with the electorate. The Conservatives favoured limited or no change in most of the dimensions listed. It should be noted that devising reform schemes for the Lords might be motivated more by partisan interests than what Dorey & Kelso (2011, p.51) call discourses of democratisation, fairness, legitimacy or representativeness.

***Exhibit 19: Frequency of what the parties have proposed in their Manifestos (1900-2001) for a House of Lords reform.***

<b>Code/proposal</b>	<b>Labour</b>	<b>Liberal</b>	<b>Conservative</b>	<b>Total</b>
Existential	2			2
Size		1		1
Composition	1	5	4	10
Powers	6	7	2	15
Qualification				0
Appointment	1	8	1	10
Efficiency				
Moaning	1		1	2
Status quo			5	5
Unclear	1			1
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>46</b>

**Source: Manual application of codification proposed on [Exhibit 18](#) to data shown in [Exhibit 16](#).**

Although differences between the stated intentions of the three parties are noticeable, the frequency of these differences is not statistically significant. It is also of interest that, during the period included in the analysis, there was limited focus on the size of the House of Lords (except for the Bryce Conference in 1918 and of the 2001 Manifesto of the Liberals which proposed “a smaller directly elected” chamber). Emphasis on the size of the Lords in terms of numbers and, possibly cost, has increased in the years after 2001 (see, for example, Russell, 2016), although it is quite likely that some of the earlier proposals have included, directly or by implication, reviews of these areas in their logic or detail. A sample of failed reform proposals is shown in [Appendix 6](#); these were compiled from Renwick (2011, pp.16-17).

An attempt has been made above to measure the frequency and content of statements in the Manifestos of how the parties in the sample were proposing to reform the Lords. The text of the 81 Manifestos was examined and all references to the Lords were transcribed. Although the frequencies of the differences observed were not statistically significant, the evidence suggests that the Conservatives were not inclined to introduce major reforms. Some tinkering proposed with the composition of the Lords could have been more a reaction to what the other parties proposed than a deep-rooted desire to change the constitution. The Liberals were consistent in proposing a reform, with emphasis on qualitative dimensions such as representativeness and the way in which

membership was to be determined. Consistently with their views about elections for the House of Commons, the Liberals were also aiming to bring much closer together the electorate and membership of the Lords, possibly through direct election. The Labour party was more specific in its proposals, aiming for more radical changes to the constitution, occasionally going all the way to proposing the abolition of the Lords and possibly the introduction of a unicameral Parliament.

To carry out the above, the researcher used mainly “manual” sorting and analysis methods. Given the rapid development and testing of data mining and digital technology, it is concluded that careful experimentation with the use of software should be considered, particularly with a view to addressing qualitative approaches.

#### 4.5 Have the parties in the sample delivered the reforms of the Lords proposed in their Manifestos?

As displayed on Exhibit 19, proposals for reform of the Lords address a multitude of decision areas. The general literature presents a long list of changes which have been introduced over the centuries under formal or informal procedures. At the time of writing, change can be introduced formally by law and Standing Orders or less formally by unwritten custom and practice and by Precedent. Although law-making and Standing Orders are defined, e.g. *Standing Orders are written rules formulated by each House to regulate its own proceedings. They cover, for example, how business is arranged and conducted, the behaviour of MPs and members of the House of Lords during debates, and rules relating to committees.* ([www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk), accessed 26 Feb 2019), the rest is often a matter of interpretation, negotiation, adaptation, convention and influence. A comprehensive listing was originally compiled by *Erskine May and regularly updated as a 'Treatise on the Law, Privileges, Proceedings and Usage of Parliament' which is considered the authoritative source on parliamentary procedure by providing details of observed 'rules' within the House, whether they relate to Standing Orders (and are therefore regulated by the House), traditional practice or whether they derive from 'Speaker's Rulings'.* ([www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk) accessed 26 Feb 2019). Reform may also be included in ad hoc, uncodified arrangements or “softer” methods of change which are seldom documented. It is suspected that they not only allow for innovation and reform to be introduced but, more importantly, perform an informal safety valve in unforeseen circumstances. Given the long history of the Lords and the multitude of avenues for change, what is meant by fulfillment of a Manifesto undertaking relating to reform?

It was claimed earlier that Manifesto “... *statements are so general that it would be difficult not to find any evidence of fulfillment*” (Barra, 2005). Assessing the reciprocal, i.e. non-fulfilment, would be of similar difficulty by aiming to establish which part of a Manifesto undertaking is still wanting. A strict adherence to the words used in a Manifesto might prove to be too pedantic and either quasi-impossible to deliver or deemed to have been delivered with a token change. If, as discussed earlier, a

Manifesto forms a part of a marketing communication strategy, then some flexibility in wording might be expected as of practical necessity. It could be argued that what is declared in a Manifesto should be read and examined together with the content of other communications and media used by a party. A party's undertaking is only partly contained in a published Manifesto; the remaining media used form both an essential supplement and complement for consumption. It is not proposed to develop further this theory at present. For this project, evidence of an undertaking by a party to reforming the Lords will be limited to the wording used in its Manifesto.

After re-visiting the Manifesto entries on the Lords, it was decided to explore the usefulness of separating these into two groupings. The first grouping would include "passive" statements and criticism of a situation or of the other political parties and declare a conceptual positioning. The generality of undertakings under this heading is likely to make it difficult to determine the extent to which they have been delivered, but it is worth exploring. The second grouping would point to a direction of "action" to be taken and thus hopefully towards a more practical verification of fulfillment. Together they form what a party *proposes* or *undertakes to* reform in the Lords (the stimulus). The delivery or implementation (the response) would include legislation or reforms introduced during the parliament session for which a Manifesto was published. It is not known to what extent there is a carry-over effect of either influence or action from one Manifesto to a later parliament, for which it is anticipated that a fresh mandate will be published. Nor is there clear evidence of how decisions and proposed actions by any party have influenced decisions or actions of subsequent governments or of other parties. The possibility of this *residual* or *carry-over* effect needs to be investigated. In this project the simple trail of action will go from undertaking (stimulus) to delivery (response).

**Undertaking (stimulus)**

**Delivery (response)**

# *Passive statements*



# *Law, Standing Orders etc*

# *Action statements*

For fuller (forensic) verification the direction of action will also be reversed.

**Observed reform**



**Antecedent undertaking in Manifestos**

Listing of the completed reforms (the response) has been limited to what has been published and is shown in Purvis (2011) from the Library of the House of Commons, Parry (2012) from the Library of the House of Lords and Renwick (2011) from the Political Studies Association.

A more holistic approach to decision-making in Parliament, taking note of all steps and influences in the law-making process, would need to be considered. Such an approach would require substantially greater resources than available and yet still retain methodological limitations. The simplified approach adopted here aims to verify the link between a recorded end-product (= a reform introduced by law) and an undertaking by a

party through its Manifesto published immediately preceding an election. The list of reforms is shown on Exhibit 16 and Exhibit 20 and further analysed on Appendix 5.

**Exhibit 20: (subjective) Classification of Lords-related references in the Manifestos of the parties in the sample 1900-2001.**

**Abbreviations:** CON= Conservative; LAB= Labour; LIB= Liberal.

Manifesto	LAB	LIB	CON	Gov. Elected	Event or Reform
1900		powers		CON	
1906		powers		LIB	
1910 Jan	abolition	powers	powers, composition	Hung LIB with Irish Nationalist support.	
1910 Dec	powers: unclear	composition, powers	status quo, moaning	Hung LIB with Irish Nationalist support.	1911 Parliament Act. Reduces power of Lords to reject money bills.
1918		composition	appointment	CON- LIB coalition	1920 Removal of Welsh Lords Spiritual
1922	status quo			CON	1922 removal of representative peers of Ireland.
1923				Hung (LAB)	
1924				CON	
1929				Hung (LAB)	
1931				National Govt.	
1935				National Govt.	
1945	powers			LAB	1945 Salisbury Convention Parliament Act 1949,
1950		appointment, composition.	composition, powers	LAB	
1951				CON	
1955			composition, status quo	CON	Life Peerages Act 1958
1959				CON	Peerage Act 1963. Women inheriting titles may sit in the Lords. Hereditary peerages may be disclaimed for life. Scottish peers allowed to sit in the Lords.
1964			composition	LAB	
1966	powers			LAB	
1970	powers			CON	
1974 Feb		appointment		Hung (LAB)	
1974 Oct				LAB	
1979	powers	composition, appointment	status quo	CON	
1983	Abolition, powers	powers, composition, appointment	status quo	CON	
1987		appointment		CON	
1992		appointment, powers		CON	Constitutional Reform Act, 1995
1997	composition, appointment	Appointment, powers	status quo	LAB	House of Lords Act 1999, removed right of most hereditary peers to sit in the Lords. Creation of Supreme Court taking away judicial role of the Lords.
2001	moaning	powers, composition, appointment	moaning	LAB	

Source: (subjective) Application of code from Exhibit 18 to data from Exhibit 16.

Starting with the end-product (Constitutional Event or Reform introduced) affecting the Lords, is there wording in the preceding Manifesto of the party in government at the time of the introduction, which commits itself to such action?

- The first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was politically uneasy, to say the least. There was an elected Liberal majority in the House of Commons which was finding it difficult to implement its governmental programme because it was obstructed by the unelected Tory majority in the Lords. The 1911 Parliament Act, had “*a profound effect on constitutional and political legislation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century*” (Ballinger, in Norton (Ed.) 2011, p. 19). Through this Act the primacy of the House of Commons in matters of financial legislation was placed on the statute book. *Inter alia*, the Lords’ absolute veto was replaced by a period of suspension of about two years. The maximum duration of parliament was reduced from seven to five years. Although party Manifestos in 1900 to 1911 reflect the general malaise between parties, as well as between the House of Commons and the House of Lords, they do not specify the kind of legislative action to be undertaken; it could be argued that all three parties pointed a finger at the House of Lords, from innocuous tinkering by the Conservatives, to a functional adjustment by the Liberals, to the occasional outburst by Labour (“*The Lords must go*”: Labour Dec. 1910, p.1, line 4 and Labour Jan. 1910, p.1, line 23).
- The Welsh Church Act, 1914 was an Act “*to terminate the establishment of the Church of England in Wales and Monmouthshire*”. This Act was not implemented until after the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> World War. From then on Welsh Bishops could no longer sit at the House of Lords as Lords Spiritual, which resulted in a potential reduction of the membership of the House of Lords.
- Removal of the representative peers of Ireland, 1922. A number of Irish peers were elected to sit in the House of Lords for life. This practice ceased in 1922 with the formation of the Irish Free State as an Independent Dominion, thus reducing membership of the House of Lords. The last Irish representative peer for life passed away in 1961.
- The relationship between the House of Lords and the House of Commons remained contentious, with numerous non-specific references in Manifestos (e.g. “*it will tolerate no opposition from the House of Lords to the considered mandate of the People*” (Labour 1931 p.2 line 5 from bottom); “*we will not tolerate obstruction of the people’s will by the House of Lords*” (Labour 1945 p. 3, line 9 from bottom). The outcome of the 1945 election was a large majority (146) for Labour, which had to work with an overwhelmingly Conservative House of Lords (McLean, 2011). An agreement was reached between Lord Cranborne (later Salisbury) and Lord Addison, the Leader of the House, which was communicated to the House of Lords in August 1945. It is known as the Salisbury or Salisbury-Addison Convention or Doctrine. It entails that the House of Lords should not

oppose a Government Bill from the House of Commons if the idea motivating such a Bill was included in the Manifesto of the party elected to form the government. There is general debate as to the situations when such arrangement applies and occasional concern about implementation (Kelso in Norton [Ed.] 2011, p.105 and Dorey & Kelso 2011, p. 64 *et seq*).

- The 1949 Parliament Act is reported to have been motivated by three factors (Dorey & Kelso, 2011, *inter alia* pp. 84-86), first as a precautionary measure against possible hindrance by the House of Lords to legislation to be introduced by a predominantly Labour House of Commons b) as a means of calming down the Left of the Labour Party in matters of nationalisation and c) as a means of avoiding taking more radical steps in reforming the House of Lords. The achievement was a reduction of the delaying power of the House of Lords from two years down to one; helpful to the Labour Party and to the House of Commons but not specifically pledged in a Manifesto.
- The Manifesto of the Liberal Party for 1950 (p.6 lines 2-4) declared “*We are anxious to reform the composition of the House of Lords, so as to eliminate heredity as a qualification for membership, which should be available to men and women of distinction*”. But the Liberal Party was not in power at that time and had little influence on major issues. The Labour Party on the other hand, saw the creation of Life Peers as a means of increasing its representation in the House of Lords and thus of its voice in debates. Henceforth Life peerages could also be conferred on women. The 1958 Life Peerages Act, introduced by the Conservatives, was not based on a pledge in their Manifesto.
- The 1963 Peerage Act authorised “*the disclaimer for life of certain hereditary peerages*” and provided for the inclusion “*among the peers qualified to sit in the House of Lords all peers in the peerage of Scotland and peeresses in their own right in the peerages of England, Scotland, Great Britain and the United Kingdom; to remove certain disqualifications of peers in the peerage of Ireland in relation to the House of Commons*” ( [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk) accessed 30 Mar 2019). This piece of legislation was introduced by the Conservative Government and had not been pledged in their Manifesto; it also removed the limitation to 16 peers to represent Scotland and thus increased the potential membership of the House of Lords.
- In its 1997 Manifesto (p. 40-41) the Labour Party pledged to create a modern House of Lords, “*The House of Lords must be reformed. As an initial, self-contained reform, not dependent on further reform in the future, the right of hereditary peers to sit and vote in the House of Lords will be ended by statute.*” Taking advantage of a large majority (178) in the House of Commons after the 1997 elections, the Labour Government started implementing this pledge through the 1999 House of Lords Act by removing all but 92 hereditary Peers. The

remaining undertakings in the Manifesto in relation to the House of Lords appear to have stalled.

- In the same 1997 Manifesto (p. 41 lines 8-9), Labour declared that “*The system of appointment of life peers to the House of Lords will be reviewed.*” The result was the creation in 2000, without primary legislation, of the *House of Lords Appointments Commission*.

The evidence tabled above shows that there were some occasions when the parties in government delivered their Manifesto undertakings relating to reform of the House of Lords: e.g. *1911 Parliament Act*; *1945 Salisbury Convention*; *1949 Parliament Act*; *1958 Life Peerages Act*; and partly the *1999 House of Lords Act*, followed by the *2005 Constitutional Reform Act* (just beyond the period of analysis). The few remaining reform undertakings were either not delivered or their fulfillment has not been recorded in the sources shown above.

Forensically, the evidence also shows that a number of reforms were introduced without their prior specific reference or undertaking in Manifestos: e.g. the *1920 removal of Welsh Lords Spiritual*, the *1922 removal of Representative Peers of Ireland* and the *1963 Peerage Act*. But this does not mean that these reforms were not a party policy declared in an earlier Manifesto or on a platform other than a Manifesto, such as a consequence of a major constitutional crisis. The possibility of a carry-over effect needs to be investigated.

In looking for contextual conditions during the debates on the legislation listed above, one characteristic appears obvious. Most of these legislative measures were introduced when the Government held a safe majority in the House of Commons. The Conservative Government had the benefit of a majority of 283 when it implemented the *Welsh Church Act, 1914* in 1920. The majority was of 74 when the *Removal of the representative peers of Ireland, 1922* was implemented. Labour had a majority of 147 when the *Salisbury or Salisbury-Addison Convention or Doctrine* was adopted in 1945 and also when the *1949 Parliament Act* reached the Statute Book. Similarly, the Conservative Government held a majority of 59 at the time of the *1958 Life Peerages Act*, and of 95 at the time of the *1963 Peerage Act*. Unsurprisingly, Labour held a majority of 178 when the *1999 House of Lords Act* was passed and a majority of 166 when *House of Lords Appointments Commission* was created in 2000. It is worth noting that no change to the House of Lords was introduced when a party in government held a majority of fewer than 59. (Data from: House of Commons, UK Election Statistics, 2018). The only exception to this observation is the *1911 Parliament Act*.

A few failed proposals to reform the House of Lords are listed in *Appendix 6* (from Renwick, 2011); these cannot be linked to times when the government of the day commanded only a small minority in the House of Commons. Therefore, although a high majority in the Commons is statistically associated with successful introduction of reform measures for the House of Lords, failed proposals are not necessarily related to low majorities (for example, the *Parliament (No.2) Bill*, which proposed the splitting of the



House of Lords into voting and non-voting members, was abandoned in 1968, even though the government held a majority of 97). The hypothesis, based on received wisdom, linking the likelihood of successful introduction of reforms to the House of Lords with government majorities in the House of Commons would need to be better defined operationally prior to further testing.

## 5. Contribution, Limitations and Summaries

This study has addressed a number of areas where the literature on Manifestos was incomplete or unclear and has made a modest contribution towards filling some gaps. A special case relating to Reform of the House of Lords is aiming to examine the extent to which pledges in Manifestos have been delivered when a party won an election and formed a government.

Manifestos are statements of intention of what a political party claims it will deliver if it were to form the government after elections. There is an expectation that pledges will be delivered and frequent exhortations for these to be legally binding. The commitment is, at best, political, and there is neither evidence of a contractual relationship, in the sense that it has not been tested in a court of law in the UK, nor a prediction that it is likely to become so. The Salisbury convention ensures that greater weight is given by Parliament to proposals that have been based on a party's Manifesto and that they will not be opposed when they reach the Lords. This convention has not been tested on minority governments, national governments or coalitions but analysis of the literature leads to the conclusion that it is unlikely to apply in these situations.

A longitudinal study of a sample of three British political parties over the 20<sup>th</sup> century was undertaken through the examination of their Manifestos for 27 elections from 1900 to 2001. Although the sample consisted of only three out of the 400-or-so of the parties registered by the Electoral Commission, it represented in excess of 90% of the votes cast during the sampling period.

Some initial difficulties were encountered in the collection of the full set of Manifestos for that period, but adequate copies could be sourced through the Internet. Variables in Manifestos, particularly size, were selected on the basis of convenience and expediency. The number of words and the number of Megabytes have been defined and tested as acceptable proxies for the size of a Manifesto. The high level of correlation between these two variables proposes their suitability as proxies for each other. Functions already installed as part of the Microsoft word-processing software proved a reliable instrument (test-retest) for the measurement of size (Microsoft Word 2003, 2007, 2016).

It was noted that limiting the analyses to quantitatively expressed variables may have missed other expressions (e.g. qualitative), which might have a meaningful contribution on the overall view of the evolution of Manifestos. The application of data-analytic

software needs to be considered with a view to exploring qualitative dimensions in Manifestos.

It was observed that political parties have been publishing increasingly larger Manifestos during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, from fewer than 200 words in 1900 to over 30,000 words in the late 1990s. Although the Tamworth Manifesto, which is assumed to be the first published political party Manifesto in the UK, was the equivalent of only a handful of pages long, Manifestos have evolved during the 20<sup>th</sup> century to become substantial publications with illustrations, extensive extensions and digital versions with hyperlinks based on the application of modern technology. The rapid penetration of new platforms, such as the social media and smart mobiles, mean that hard copy Manifestos may no longer be viewed as the main medium for the declaration of a party's position on a particular issue. Manifestos are now a part of a wider approach to a party's marketing mix and communications approach and their role in the overall party strategy needs to be reassessed.

On examining the extent to which there were similarities or differences between the Manifestos of the parties in the sample, it was observed that those of the Conservative party stood out as generally the wordiest and those of the Liberals the shortest and better written. A substantial increase in size of Manifesto is noticeable for all parties, particularly since the election of 1979; presumably this is contributed to by the penetration of new technology in the preparation of Manifestos.

The evidence shows that fielding a large Manifesto is not linked statistically with achieving success in a particular election, but there is a statistical association between fielding the shortest Manifesto and losing in that election. Although statistically significant differences were observed between the Manifestos of the three parties on some of the variables measured, an analysis of variance on the aggregate data could not reject the hypothesis that the observed differences were probably due to chance.

The policy area proposing a Reform of the House of Lords was chosen as a specific case to examine the link between declarations in Manifestos and delivery by the party in government. There was no evidence of consistency within or between the parties, nor over time, as to what is wrong with the Lords and against what criterion, and what needs to be done to correct it. Concerns about the very existence of the Lords and of the protocols for both accession and behaviour of its members have been a periodic malaise on the political scene. The Conservatives have generally aimed to maintain the status quo, with minor concessions in the form of tinkering in areas leading to appeasing the current problem. The Liberals have aimed for a broader representation of the electorate and the use of alternative approaches to selection of individuals and to the composition of the House of Lords. The Labour Party has aimed for a more radical reform, at times pledging existential solutions, such as the abolition of the Lords. This lack of consistency of aims, both between the parties and within a party over time, and the absence of consensus among parties as to what is wrong with the Lords, have probably contributed

to most of the reforms actually undertaken being piecemeal and not in keeping with the vocabulary and magnitude of what had been proposed.

The next step was the examination of the extent to which there is a direct relationship between reforms of the Lords proposed by a party in its Manifesto and measures actually introduced when that party formed the next government. The evidence showed that some reforms were introduced without pre-announcement of intention in a party's Manifesto. The reciprocal was also observed in the sense that there were several Manifesto declarations which did not get followed-up with action when the author-party was in government. The conclusion reached is that declaration of intent in a Manifesto is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for action to be undertaken by a party when in government, at least in relation to this policy area.

The assumption of a simple direct link between a pledge in a Manifesto and action being delivered when in government is probably too simplistic and presents an important limitation to the conclusions of this part of the investigation. The decision process needs to be unfolded to take into account other influences on government, for example impact of previous policy positions, including older Manifestos, be they of that party or those of other parties, of other influencing bodies which might not necessarily be tied to a political party, the general political economy and, possibly to an increasing extent, of international perspectives and issues.

Further, a government may take action which might prove rather long to process into law due to complexity or other contingencies. Although the simplistic binary statement may not capture government action as an achievement, progress to date might have gone a long way towards preparing the ground for action on a separate occasion.

The grounded theory approach adopted in this project has helped follow up several trails in a general investigation about the evolution of Manifestos. The evidence examined has highlighted some of the changes that have taken place in Manifestos over time, particularly to the need for a redefinition of their role in the overall communications mix of parties. Evolving technology and penetration of applications through the social media contribute to giving access to a wider range of theories and practice from marketing strategy and consumer behaviour. Study of Manifestos and of any special case (such as Reform of the Lords) in future should benefit from being informed by the conduct, findings and limitations of the present study.

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**Appendix 1:** Votes gained against Seats declared in 27 elections, 1900-2001.

<i>votes%</i>		<i>seats%</i>	
Mean	93.59259	Mean	93.91852
Standard E	1.271694	Standard E	1.531623
Median	94.6	Median	96.4
Mode	96.8	Mode	89.1
Standard D	6.607916	Standard D	7.958548
Sample Var	43.66456	Sample Var	63.33849
Kurtosis	11.1249	Kurtosis	12.41976
Skewness	-2.95651	Skewness	-3.13067
Range	32.8	Range	39.8
Minimum	66.3	Minimum	60.2
Maximum	99.1	Maximum	100
Sum	2527	Sum	2535.8
Count	27	Count	27

*Source: the field studies. Calculation on Microsoft Works Excel 2007.*



## Appendix 3: Descriptive Statistics of Basic Data

	LibWd	ConWd	TotWd	Lib%Wd	Lab%Wd	Con%Wd	LibKB	LabKB
Mean	5559	6064.222	7882.963	19506.19	28.8022	29.17247	42.02533	100.0741
Standard E	1191.509	1207.809	1397.703	3409.213	2.574468	2.517308	2.601956	18.36554
Median	2562	4768	6108	14525	26.85316	30.27143	39.86146	55
Mode	#N/A	#N/A	#N/A	#N/A	#N/A	#N/A	#N/A	45
Standard D	6191.264	6275.959	7262.676	17714.79	13.37733	13.08032	13.52016	95.43017
Sample Var	38331750	39387657	52746460	3.14E+08	178.953	171.0947	182.7947	9106.917
Kurtosis	1.070214	1.312273	2.167376	-0.32582	2.048061	2.066389	-0.11608	2.142172
Skewness	1.498402	1.373878	1.394565	0.971099	1.351117	0.014036	0.561017	1.835577
Range	20886	22694	29930	53834	54.06698	48.48769	49.7292	327
Minimum	408	156	435	1111	11.39765	5.481377	21.57216	36
Maximum	21294	22850	30365	54945	65.46463	53.96907	71.30137	363
Sum	150093	163734	212840	526667	777.6594	787.6568	1134.684	2702
Count	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27

	TotKB	Lib%KB	Lab%KB	Con%KB	LibWdKB	LabWdKB	ConWdKB	TotWdKB
Mean	112.1111	302.3333	31.74417	31.21102	37.04481	47.30362	54.64846	62.54268
Standard E	20.21067	44.58322	1.455896	1.651301	1.551634	3.760788	5.416639	5.11783
Median	83	214	30.46875	31.13208	35.64356	47.15686	67.70667	70.33333
Mode	#N/A	135	#N/A	30.34483	#N/A	#N/A	#N/A	#N/A
Standard D	105.0177	231.6612	7.565056	8.580412	8.062525	19.54163	28.14568	26.59303
Sample Var	11028.72	53666.92	57.23007	73.62348	65.0043	381.8753	792.1794	707.1891
Kurtosis	12.62253	0.986781	-0.20773	1.207704	-2.429217	-0.76078	-1.147	-1.05076
Skewness	3.202217	1.46523	0.422332	-0.36323	0.946554	-0.05119	-0.46003	-0.33501
Range	521	798	30.07846	39.4508	38.48407	73.47009	88.22129	89.73589
Minimum	37	106	17.68489	9.181416	23.24159	11.33333	4.588235	11.75676
Maximum	558	904	47.76335	48.63222	61.72566	84.80342	92.80952	101.4926
Sum	3027	8163	857.0926	842.6975	1000.21	1277.198	1475.508	1688.652
Count	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27

**Abbreviations for descriptive statistics**

LibWd	Liberal: words per manifesto	TotKB	KBs for the total of the 3 parties
WdLab	Labour: words per manifesto	Lib%KB	Liberal: % share of the total KB of the 3 parties
ConWd	Conservative: words per manifesto	Lab%KB	Labour: % share of the total KB of the 3 parties
TotWd	Words for the total of the 3 parties	Con%KB	Conservative: % share of the total KB of the 3 parties
Con%Wd	Conservatives: % share of the total words of the 3 parties	LibWdKB	Liberal: words per KB
Lib%Wd	Liberal: % share of the total words of the 3 parties	LabWdKB	Labour: words per KB
Lab%Wd	Labour: % share of the total words of the 3 parties	ConWdKB	Conservative: words per KB
LibKB	Liberal: KB per manifesto	TotWdKB	words per KB for the total of the 3 parties
LabKB	Labour: KB per manifesto	KB	kilobyte, as defined by Microsoft Office Word 2007
ConKB	Conservative: KB per manifesto		

Source: *The Field Studies, Calculated on Microsoft Works Excel 2007, data from Appendix 2*



## **Appendix 5:** What parties in Government had stated in their Manifestos and Reforms introduced during term of parliament

**Abbreviations:** CON= Conservative; LAB= Labour; LIB= Liberal & Liberal Democrats; HL= House of Lords; COM= House of Commons.

Manifesto for Election of	Party forming Government	Extracts of Positioning and Criticisms in Manifesto of party forming Government	Action statement in Manifesto of party forming Government	Constitutional Event or Reform introduced during term of parliament.	
1906	LIB	Throughout this period the House of Lords, by its docility, has done its part to facilitate their task.		1906 HL rejects bills by LIB govt passed by COM 1909 budget rejected by HL, creating crisis	
1910 Jan	Hung LIB with Irish Nationalist support				
1910 Dec	Hung LIB with Irish Nationalist support	Belated and delusive composition which the House of Lords is, at the last moment...would result in the creation of a Second Chamber predominantly Conservative in character... practically inoperable... capable of interposing an even more formidable veto than the present House of Lords.		1911 Parliament Act, reduces power of HL to reject money bills from COM	
1918	CON & LIB coalition	NONE  It has been recognised by all parties that reform is urgently required in the constitution of the House of Lords.	... create a Second Chamber which will be based upon direct contact with the people...	1918 Bryce Conference; proposals fizzled out.  1920 Removal of Welsh Lords Spiritual.	
1922	CON			1922 Anglo-Irish Treaty; Removal of	

				Representative Peers of Ireland.	
1945	<b>LAB</b>	<b>And in stating it we give clear notice that we will not tolerate obstruction of the people's will by the House of Lords.</b>		<i>1945 Salisbury Convention</i> : unwritten constitutional convention that HL may not oppose what COM has passed if included in Manifesto. Cross-Party talks, 1948. Proposals fizzled out.  <i>Parliament Act 1949</i> limits HL delaying power to 1 year for money bills and 2 sessions for other bills.	
1955	<b>CON</b>	<b>It has long been the Conservative wish to reach a settlement regarding the reform of the House of Lords, so that it may continue to play its proper role as a Second Chamber under the Constitution...</b>	<b>We believe that any changes made now should be concerned solely with the composition of the House.</b>	<i>Life Peerages Act 1958</i> , allows either sex to be created life peers.	
1959	<b>CON</b>			<i>Peerage Act 1963</i> , women inheriting titles allowed to sit in HL.  Hereditary peerages may be disclaimed for life.  All Scottish peers allowed to sit in HL.	
1966	<b>LAB</b>		<b>Finally legislation will be introduced to safeguard measures approved by the House of Commons from frustration by delay or defeat in the House of Lords.</b>	<i>Parliament (No.2) Bill 1968</i> dropped in 1969.	
1997	<b>LAB</b>	<b>They support hereditary peers...</b>	<b>End the hereditary principle in the House of Lords. A modern House of Lords. The House of Lords must be reformed. As an initial, self-contained reform, not dependent on further reform in the future, the right of</b>	<i>House of Lords Act 1999</i> , removed right of most hereditary peers to sit and vote in HL.  <i>Constitutional Reform Act, 2005</i> . Ensure independence of judiciary. Creation of Supreme Court takes	

			<p>hereditary peers to sit and vote in the House of Lords will be ended by statute. This will be the first stage in a process of reform to make the House of Lords more democratic and representative. The legislative powers of the House of Lords will remain unaltered. The system of appointment of life peers to the House of Lords will be reviewed. Our objective will be to ensure that over time party appointees as life peers more accurately reflect the proportion of votes cast at the previous general election. We are committed to maintaining an independent cross-bench presence of life peers. No political party should seek a majority in the House of Lords. A committee of both Houses of Parliament will be appointed to undertake a wide-ranging review of possible further change and then to bring forward proposals for reform.</p>	away judicial role of HL.	
1999-2000	LAB			<p><i>Royal Commission on the House of Lords 1999-2000.</i></p> <p>Broad acceptance by Labour party, no follow-up legislation.</p>	
2001	LAB		<p>We are committed to completeing House of Lords reform including removal of the remaining hereditary peers to make it more representative and democratic, while maintaining the House of Commons traditional primacy.</p> <p>(Wakeham Commission) we will seek to implement them</p>		



			<p><b>in the most effective way possible.</b></p> <p><b>Labour supports modernisation of the House of Lords procedures to improve its effectiveness.</b></p> <p><b>We will put the Independent Appointments Commission on a statutory footing.</b></p>		
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Sources: extracted manually from: Purvis (2011), Parry (2012), Renwick (2011) and from the sample hard copies of party Manifestos (1900-2001).

## Appendix 6: Failed reform proposals

### Failed Reform Proposals since 1918

The Parliament Act of 1911 was never intended to be a final settlement. Its preamble famously said, “it is intended to substitute for the House of Lords as it at present exists a Second Chamber constituted on a popular instead of hereditary basis”.<sup>26</sup> Many attempts to enact a comprehensive reform have been made since then, but none has yet succeeded:

- ***Bryce Conference, 1918.*** This was a cross-party committee of Lords and MPs. It proposed a chamber of 327 members, most of whom would be elected by MPs in thirteen regions using the Single Transferable Vote (STV) electoral system.<sup>27</sup> A third of the members would be elected to twelve-year terms every four years. The right of the Lords to veto non-financial bills would be restored and a new mechanism would be introduced to resolve disagreements between the two chambers.<sup>28</sup>

The government eventually put a series of resolutions before the House of Lords in 1922. But these found little favour among their Lordships, as they proposed that the Parliament Act restrictions should be retained. The government therefore dropped the issue. Several further initiatives followed over the ensuing years, but nothing came of them.<sup>29</sup>

- ***Cross-Party Talks, 1948.*** The Attlee government initially hoped to enact the reforms it wanted through cross-party consensus. The parties agreed that the hereditary principle should be ended in favour of a wholly appointed chamber, but not over the length of delay that the second chamber should be able to impose.<sup>30</sup> The government therefore abandoned the idea of comprehensive reform and passed only the Parliament Act 1949, noted above.
- ***Labour’s Failed Reform Attempt, 1966–70.*** The Wilson government published a White Paper on Lords reform in November 1968.<sup>31</sup> This proposed an entirely appointed house. The government of the day would be ensured a small majority among active members taking a party whip and members would be able to retire into “non-voting” status. It also proposed a reduction in the second chamber’s delaying power to six months.

The Conservative opposition refused to cooperate with the government on these proposals and was therefore able to draw out the process of parliamentary scrutiny. Fearing that the time required to secure Lords reform would endanger the rest of its programme, the government eventually abandoned the proposal.<sup>32</sup>

- ***Royal Commission on the House of Lords, 1999–2000.*** Reform discussions since 1999 have been long and tortuous. For those who want to know the details, the House of Lords Library has published a chronology spanning almost a hundred pages.<sup>33</sup> The first step was a Royal Commission established by the Blair government and chaired by Lord Wakeham. Reporting in January 2000, this recommended a house the majority of whose members would be appointed by an Appointments Commission, while the remainder would be elected directly using an open-list system of proportional representation (see p. 52) in regions. The chamber’s formal powers would remain unaltered.<sup>34</sup>

The government indicated broad acceptance of these proposals.<sup>35</sup> Labour’s 2001 election manifesto committed to “completing House of Lords reform”,<sup>36</sup> and the Queen’s Speech following the election announced legislation “to implement the second phase of House of

Lords reform".<sup>37</sup> A White Paper followed in November 2001, laying out reform proposals based largely on the Royal Commission's recommendations.<sup>38</sup>

**Rejection of All Options: The Votes of February 2003.** The 2001 White paper was widely criticized. The government therefore allowed Parliament free votes on seven options, ranging from a wholly appointed to a wholly elected chamber; the Commons also voted on an eighth option of outright abolition of the second chamber. Infamously, the Commons voted against every one of these options, while the Lords voted by large margins for a wholly appointed chamber and against any element of election.<sup>39</sup> Little further progress was made thereafter.

**Reforming the House of Lords: Breaking the Deadlock (2005).** Hoping to break this impasse, a report was published in February 2005 by a cross-party group of senior MPs, led by Kenneth Clarke, Robin Cook, Paul Tyler, Tony Wright, and Sir George Young, which set forth a reform package that has had considerable influence on later proposals.<sup>40</sup> It suggested that the Lords' powers should be unchanged, but that the membership should fall to 385. Around 70 per cent of these members (270) would be elected using the Single Transferable Vote (STV) system in regions. A third of these would be elected at the same time as each Commons election, producing staggered terms of twelve to fifteen years. Most of the remaining members would be chosen by an independent Appointments Commission, again to staggered terms. The Prime Minister would be able to appoint up to four members each parliament in order to serve as ministers, and sixteen Church of England bishops would remain.

**2007 White Paper and Votes.** The government eventually published another White Paper in February 2007, which was followed by a second series of votes in Parliament. This time, the Commons voted for either an 80 per cent or 100 per cent elected chamber, while the Lords voted by huge margins against all but the fully appointed option.<sup>41</sup>

**2008 White Paper.** Another White Paper – the third since 2001 – followed in July 2008.<sup>42</sup> This was in part the product of cross-party talks and showed substantial areas of agreement among the three main parties. Its proposals, like those of the 2005 all-party group, were similar in most respects to those of the current government. The House of Lords would be largely or wholly elected, though the choice of electoral system was left open. The elected members would serve staggered terms lasting for three Parliaments. If an appointed element were retained for the purpose of retaining crossbenchers, an independent Appointments Commission would be responsible for choosing them.

The White Paper also signalled, however, that the government did not intend to legislate before the next election. It said, "The Government has long held that final proposals for reform would have to be included in a general election manifesto, to ensure that the electorate ultimately decide the form and role of the second chamber."<sup>43</sup> Accordingly, no further significant progress was made.

## **Appendix 7: Evolving positions of the parties on Reform of the Lords**

### **The Parties' Evolving Positions on House of Lords Reform**

#### ***Conservatives***

Though it was responsible for the important reforms of 1958 and 1963, the Conservative Party opposed Lords reform from the late 1960s until 1997.<sup>44</sup> But it has proposed a substantially elected upper house at each of the last three general elections. In 2001, it proposed "a stronger House of Lords in the future, including a substantial elected element". In 2005, it pledged to "seek cross-party agreement for a substantially elected House of Lords". Its 2010 manifesto said:

We will work to build a consensus for a mainly-elected second chamber to replace the current House of Lords, recognising that an efficient and effective second chamber should play an important role in our democracy and requires both legitimacy and public confidence.<sup>45</sup>

#### ***Labour***

Labour advocated the abolition of the House of Lords without replacement in 1979 and 1983. In 1992 it supported an elected second chamber. Its 1997 manifesto promised to end "the right of hereditary peers to sit and vote in the House of Lords" as "the first stage in a process of reform to make the House of Lords more democratic and representative". Beyond this, however, it pledged only a review of how life peers were appointed. The party's 2001 manifesto backed the Wakeham Commission's proposals for a largely appointed house, while that of 2005 said, "we will remove the remaining hereditary peers and allow for a free vote on the composition of the House". In 2010, the party proposed a referendum on the creation of a fully elected second chamber:

We will ensure that the hereditary principle is removed from the House of Lords. Further democratic reform to create a fully elected Second Chamber will then be achieved in stages. At the end of the next Parliament one third of the House of Lords will be elected; a further one third of members will be elected at the general election after that. Until the final stage, the representation of all groups should be maintained in equal proportions to now. We will consult widely on these proposals, and on an open-list proportional representation electoral system for the Second Chamber, before putting them to the people in a referendum.<sup>46</sup>

#### ***Liberal Democrats***

The Liberal Democrats and their predecessors have long advocated a largely or wholly elected second chamber. In 2001, the proposal was to "replace the House of Lords with a smaller directly elected Senate with representation from the nations and regions of the UK", while the 2005 manifesto promised "a predominantly elected second chamber". The party's 2010 manifesto pledged to "replace the House of Lords with a fully-elected second chamber with considerably fewer members than the current House".<sup>47</sup>

Thus, by 2010, agreement had emerged across the major parties on a largely or wholly elected chamber retaining the same powers as the current House of Lords. As is clear from the current debate, however, significant opposition exists within each of the parties to this official line.

Source: copied from: Renwick A.: House of Lords Reform, a Briefing Paper, Political Studies Association, June 2011. [www.psa.ac.uk](http://www.psa.ac.uk) ; See also: Evans G & Norris P (Eds) (1999): Critical Elections, British Parties and Voters in Long Term Perspective, Sage, London 0761960201

## **Appendix 8: Text of the “Tamworth Manifesto”**

This version: 2394 words

To the Electors of the Borough of Tamworth.

Gentlemen,

On the 26th of November last, being [then at Rome](#), I received from His Majesty a summons, wholly unforeseen and unexpected by me, to return to England without delay, for the purpose of assisting His Majesty in the formation of a new government. I instantly obeyed the command for my return; and on my arrival, I did not hesitate, after an anxious review of the position of public affairs, to place at the disposal of my Sovereign any services which I might be thought capable of rendering.

My acceptance of the first office in the Government terminates, for the present, my political connection with you. In seeking the renewal of it, whenever you shall be called upon to perform the duty of electing a representative in Parliament, I feel it incumbent on me to enter into a declaration of my views of public policy, as full and unreserved as I can make it, consistently with my duty as a Minister of the Crown.

You are entitled to this, from the nature of the trust which I again solicit, from the long habits of friendly intercourse in which we have lived, and from your tried adherence to me in times of difficulty, when the demonstration of unabated confidence was of peculiar value. I gladly avail myself also of this, a legitimate opportunity, of making a more public appeal - of addressing myself, through you, to that great and intelligent class of society of which you are a portion, and a fair and unexceptionable representative - to that class which is much less interested in the contentions of party, than in the maintenance of order and the cause of good government, that frank exposition of general principles and views which appears to be anxiously expected, and which it ought not to be the inclination, and cannot be the interest of a Minister of this country to withhold.

Gentlemen, the arduous duties in which I am engaged have been imposed on me through no act of mine. Whether they were an object of ambition coveted by me - whether I regard the power and distinction they confer as of any sufficient compensation for the heavy sacrifices they involve - are matters of mere personal concern, on which I will not waste a word. The King, in a crisis of great difficulty, required my services. The question I had to decide was this - Shall I obey the call? Or shall I shrink from the responsibility, alleging as the reason, that I consider myself, in consequence of the [Reform Bill](#), as labouring under a sort of moral disqualification, which must preclude me, and all who think with me, both now and for ever, from entering into the official service of the Crown? Would it, I ask, be becoming in any public man to act upon such a principle? Was it fit that I should assume that either the object or the effect of the Reform Bill has been to preclude all hope of a successful appeal to the good sense and calm judgement of the people, and so fetter the prerogative of the Crown, that the King has no free choice among his subjects, but must select his Ministers from one section, and from one section only, of public men?

I have taken another course, but I have not taken it without deep and anxious consideration as to the probability that my opinions are so far in unison with those of the constituent body of the United Kingdom as to enable me, and those with whom I am about to act, and whose sentiments are in entire concurrence with my own, to establish such a claim upon public confidence as shall enable us to conduct with vigour and success the government of this country.

I have the firmest convictions that that confidence cannot be secured by any other course than that of a frank and explicit declaration of principle; that vague and unmeaning professions of popular opinion may quiet distrust for a time, may influence this or that election but that such professions must ultimately and signally fail, if, being made, they are not adhered to, or if they are inconsistent with the honour and character of those who made them.

Now I say at once that I will not accept power on the condition of declaring myself an apostate from the principles on which I have heretofore acted. At the same time, I never will admit that I have been, either before or after the Reform Bill, the defender of abuses, or the enemy of judicious reforms. I appeal with confidence in denial of the charge, to the active part I took in the great question of [the currency](#) - in the consolidation and amendment of the [Criminal Law](#) - in the revival of the whole system of Trial by Jury - to the opinions I have professed, and uniformly acted on, with regard to other branches of the jurisprudence of this country - I appeal to this as a proof that I have not been disposed to acquiesce in acknowledged evils, either from the mere superstitious reverence for ancient usages, or from the dread of labour or responsibility in the application of a remedy.

But the [Reform Bill](#), it is said, constitutes a new era, and it is the duty of a Minister to declare explicitly - first, whether he will maintain the Bill itself, secondly whether he will act on the spirit in which it was conceived.

With respect to the Reform Bill itself, I will repeat now the declaration I made when I entered the House of Commons as a member of the Reformed Parliament - that I consider the Reform Bill a final and irrevocable settlement of a great constitutional question - a settlement which no friend to the peace and welfare of this country would attempt to disturb, either by direct or by insidious means.

Then, as to the spirit of the Reform Bill, and the willingness to adopt and enforce it as a rule of government: if, by adopting the spirit of the Reform Bill, it be meant that we are to live in a perpetual vortex of agitation; that public men can only support themselves in public estimation by adopting every popular impression of the day, - by promising the instant redress of anything which anybody may call an abuse - by abandoning altogether that great aid of government - more powerful than either law or reason - the respect for ancient rights, and the deference to prescriptive authority; if this be the spirit of the Reform Bill, I will not undertake to adopt it. But if the spirit of the Reform Bill implies merely a careful review of institutions, civil and ecclesiastical, undertaken in a friendly temper combining, with the firm maintenance of established rights, the correction of proved abuses and the redress of real grievances, - in that case, I can for myself and colleagues undertake to act in such a spirit and with such intentions.

Such declarations of general principle are, I am aware, necessarily vague: but in order to be more explicit, I will endeavour to apply them practically to some of those questions which have of late attracted the greater share of public interest and attention.

I take first the inquiry into [Municipal Corporations](#):

It is not my intention to advise the Crown to interrupt the process of that inquiry, nor to transfer the conduct of it from those to whom it was committed by the late Government. For myself, I gave the best proof that I was not unfriendly to the principle of inquiry, by consenting to be a member of that Committee of the House of Commons on which it was originally devolved. No report has yet been made by the Commissioners to whom the inquiry was afterwards referred: and until that report be made, I cannot be expected to give, on the part of the Government, any other pledge than that they will bestow on the suggestions it may contain, and the evidence on which they may be founded, a full and unprejudiced consideration.

I will, in the next place, address myself to the questions in which those of our fellow-countrymen who dissent from the doctrines of the [Established Church](#) take an especial interest.

Instead of making new professions, I will refer to the course which I took upon those subjects when out of power.

In the first place I supported the measure brought forward by [Lord Althorp](#), the object of which was to exempt all classes from the payment of Church-rates, applying in lieu thereof, out of a branch of revenue, a certain sum for the building and repair of churches. I never expressed, nor did I entertain, the slightest objection to the principle of a bill of which [Lord John Russell](#) was the author, intended to relieve the conscientious scruples of dissenters in respect to the ceremony of marriage. I give no opinion now on the particular measures themselves: they were proposed by Ministers in whom the Dissenters had confidence; they were intended to give relief; and it is sufficient for my present purposes to state that I supported them.

I opposed - and I am bound to state that my opinions in that respect have undergone no change - the admission of Dissenters as a claim of right, into the universities; but I expressly declared that if regulations, enforced by public authorities superintending the professions of law and medicine, and the studies connected with them, had the effect of conferring advantages of the nature of civil privileges on one class of the King's subjects from which another was excluded - those regulations ought to undergo modification, with the view of placing all the King's subjects, whatever their religious creeds, upon a footing of perfect equality with respect to any civil privilege.

I appeal to the course which I pursued on those several questions, when office must have been out of contemplation; and I ask, with confidence, does that course imply that I was actuated by any illiberal or intolerant spirit towards the Dissenting body, or by an unwillingness to consider fairly [the redress](#) of any real grievances?

In the examination of other questions which excited the public interest, I will not omit the Pension List. I resisted - and, with the opinions I entertain I should again resist - a retrospective inquiry into pensions granted by the Crown at a time when the discretion of the Crown was neither fettered by law nor by the expression of any opinion on the part of the House of Commons; but I voted for the Resolution, moved by Lord Althorp, that pensions on the Civil List ought, for the future, to be confined to such persons only as have just claims to the royal beneficence, or are entitled to consideration on account either of their personal services to the Crown, or of performance of duties to the public, or their scientific or literary eminence. On the Resolution which I thus supported as a private Member of Parliament, I shall scrupulously act as a Minister of the Crown, and shall advise the grant of no pension which is not in conformity with the spirit and intention of the vote to which I was a party.

Then, as to the great question of Church Reform. On that head I have no new professions to make. I cannot give my consent to the alienating of Church property, in any part of the United Kingdom, from strictly ecclesiastical purposes. But I

repeat now the opinions that I have already expressed in parliament in regard to the church Establishment in [Ireland](#) - that if, by an improved distribution of the revenues of the Church, its just influence can be extended, and the true interests of the Established religion promoted, all other considerations should be made subordinate to the advancement of objects of such paramount importance.

As to Church property in this country, no person has expressed a more earnest wish than I have done that the question of tithe, complicated and difficult as I acknowledge it to be, should, if possible, be satisfactorily settled by means of a commutation, founded upon just principles, and proposed after mature consideration.

With regard to alterations in the laws which govern our Ecclesiastical Establishment, I have had no recent opportunity of giving that grave consideration to a subject of the deepest interest; which could alone justify me in making any public declaration of opinion. It is a subject which must undergo the fullest deliberation, and into that deliberation the Government will enter, with the sincerest desire to remove every abuse that can impair the efficiency of the Establishment, to extend the sphere of its usefulness, and to strengthen and confirm its just claims upon the respect and affection of the people.

It is unnecessary for my purpose to enter into any further details. I have said enough, with respect to general principles and their practical application to public measures, to indicate the spirit in which the King's Government is prepared to act. Our object will be - the maintenance of peace - the scrupulous and honourable fulfilment, without reference to their original policy, of all existing engagements with Foreign Powers - the support of public credit - the enforcement of strict economy - the just and impartial consideration of what is due to all interests - agricultural, manufacturing, and commercial.

Whatever may be the issue of the undertaking in which I am engaged, I feel assured that you will mark, by a renewal of your confidence, your approbation of the course I have pursued in accepting office. I enter upon the arduous duties assigned to me with the deepest sense of the responsibilities they involve, with great distrust of my own qualifications for their adequate discharge, but at the same time with a resolution to persevere, which nothing could inspire but the strong impulse of public duty, the consciousness of upright motives, and the firm belief that the people of this country will so far maintain the prerogative of the King, as to give to the Ministers of his choice, not an implicit confidence, but a fair trial.

I am, Gentlemen,

With affectionate regard,

Most faithfully yours,

Robert Peel.

**Source:** Bloy Marjorie, The Peel Web, A Web of English History, [www.historyhome.co.uk/peel/politics/tam2.htm](http://www.historyhome.co.uk/peel/politics/tam2.htm), last accessed 17 Dec 2018.