

# Blair: an exceptional leader, literally

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If you can only bring yourself to read a few pages of Tony Blair's memoir, then make it the introduction. In it he expresses perfectly how different he is to other political giants of the last few decades.

People always compare Blair to Thatcher, putting him a neo-liberal tradition. Or they accuse him of being an opportunistic, pragmatist seeking only power. But as he says in the book's introduction, "I began as one type of leader; I end as another". I suspect he was, literally, exceptional.

He does believe in something called New Labour and calls himself a Moderniser. These are real terms for him but they don't quite describe the degree to which he was an exception within his own party and in British modern politics. He says he is not a 'retrospective' person and indeed, there is no sense of historical context. He says he was not part of the traditional right or left, but neither is he a classic centrist.

Cameron may have taken on his own party, but he is still much more comfortable with it than Blair ever was. Even the Milibands are far more comfortable referring to more conventional political metaphors and positions.

So why was Blair different? In the end of this introduction he makes one of the most intriguing claims in the book, which might just provide an answer:

"my soul is and always will be that of a rebel"

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