

RED BOX | DANIEL KORSKI

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Start-ups solve problems while politicians are immobilised

DANIEL KORSKI



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These are the times that must try a politician's soul. Whichever party line you toe it's almost impossible not to feel frustrated at the policy paralysis that has gripped most political systems.

From Stormont in Belfast to the Senate in Washington, political gridlock has become the rule, not the exception. Presidential systems seem as prone to paralysis as parliamentary democracies. Government departments across the world over are feeling the effects. Decisions are postponed, solutions fudged, and problems papered over.

Examples of the problems abound. Take the Domestic Abuse Bill, a prime example of critical legislation being slowed down because of political flux. First seen in 2017, the Bill is still yet to make it through the House of Commons. Or HS2 — now kicked into the long grass of a review. Everyone who works in the

political room to progress.



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The man or woman on the street would be hard pushed to name any significant pieces of non-Brexit legislation that have passed into law in the past few years. Promises of new bills in a forthcoming Queen's Speech are believed by very few.

Yet it is not that politicians have stopped caring about healthcare, education, or crime. Very few politicians go into parliament with anything but good intentions. But translating passion and pledges into law requires time, energy, focus and, quite often, compromise: things that are in short supply these days.

Glasses can, however, be half-full or half-empty. Even paralysis can have its uses and benefits. It can for example create space for new thinkers and fresh perspectives to emerge.

Nowhere is this more apparent than the effort to drive innovation across the public sector. Here, a vanguard of start-ups are stepping into the void and using cutting-edge technology to create new solutions to old problems. In what was previously the preserve of mandarins, entrepreneurs are now beginning to make a real difference. They are helping to solve long-standing public sector challenges; solutions to which have until now been too hard to find, fund or agree on politically.

of map, and which is now saving lives. Or Adzuna, a job skills matching company providing the tech needed by the DWP to help job seekers find roles. There is Forward Health, a clinical messaging platform with the ability to save the NHS £44 million a year, used across 140 UK hospitals to speed up patient care. Working across every area of public policy, these young, ambitious “GovTech” startups have set out to improve public life — regardless of the political context.



RED BOX POLITICS PODCAST

Electoral shock therapy

Matt Chorley is joined by British Election Study authors Jane Green, Geoff Evans and Chris Prosser to explain why half of us are now floating voters and what that means in a snap election.

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Turbulent times are also encouraging more citizens to engage in our democratic process, aided by emerging civic communication tools such as Novoville, Polyteia or Cap Collectif, which are springing up across Europe and beyond. Inviting new ideas and new voices into our political processes has been the goal of countless carefully planned programmes; yet it has taken a paralysis in politics for new tools to emerge and this objective to be truly realised.

The rise of innovative new businesses is not of course solely down to policy petrification. The building backlash against traditional outsourcers such as Carillion has also stimulated the government’s appetite for a new breed of companies to step forward and offer up solutions. Historically seen as risky, start-ups are now a nimble, tech-led, and much welcome alternative to the incumbent providers.

helped create the perfect conditions for the UK's nascent GovTech scene to emerge. It is a sector projected to be worth £20 billion to the UK economy by 2025 and holds out the promise to create new and cheaper solutions to public problems.

Paralysis can be economically damaging and costly to society. This is not meant to glibly underplay the costs of inaction. But we should not ignore the technology-powered silver linings accompanying the political clouds. Looking back at the past few years it is clear that while the old order has been challenged, space has opened up for new solutions, especially in the delivery of public services.

When countless ministers, mayors, officials, start-ups and investors from across Europe gather in Paris next month at the GovTech summit hosted by President Macron, it will not be to decry the things that have not happened; it will be to push for the things that can happen. We would all do well to take up their invitation to innovate rather than be overcome by the politics of paralysis.

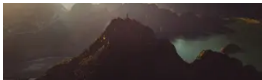
Daniel Korski is the co-founder of the GovTech venture firm PUBLIC



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John Pearson 11 HOURS AGO

I suggest an early Govtech application should be to provide a platform to make it easier for national or local government buyers to learn about which products or services other regions or countries are using and how they rate them. This will reduce Not Invented Here syndrome and help spread best practice.

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Geoffrey Towler 16 HOURS AGO

diminishing opportunities for corruption...!!
Two words.....proportional representation....!!

Report

No sodding around with electoral boundaries to gain political advantage. Coalitions would be a fact of life, but the negotiations would take place before the coalition is formed, not on every single issue that is raised in the house.

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howard epstein 13 HOURS AGO | Geoffrey Towler

In countries with proportional representation, elections are often followed by months of wrangling, often ending without the formation of a government leading to another election - and so on, ad nauseam.

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Geoffrey Towler 10 HOURS AGO | howard epstein

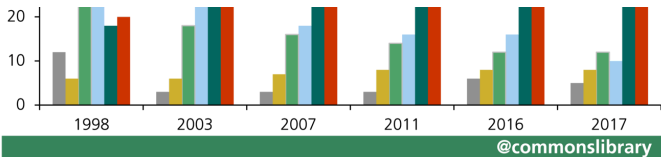
And the difference between that and the situation we have now is...??

How long is it since the UK had a proper government that put the country and the people before scoring points off the opposition?

And then we need to consider exactly how democratic the system is:

Liberal Democrats

The Liberal Party contested the 1983 and 1987 elections in alliance with the Social Democratic Party (SDP), before the two parties merged in 1988 to form the Liberal Democrat Party. The SDP had been established in January 1981 and by March 1982 it had 29 MPs, most of whom had defected from Labour.... [See more](#)



UK Election Statistics: 1918-2019 - A century of elections

House of Commons Library This Commons Library briefing paper presents an overview of election results...

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howard epstein 7 HOURS AGO | Geoffrey Towler

It's case of be careful what you wish for....

The UK has the leading economy in Europe, less social friction than France, less terrorism and right-wing emergence than Germany, is not wholly dysfunctional like Italy, head and shoulders above the rest of Europe for lifestyle and cultural activity, not nearly as challenged as Spain and so on.



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