

## **The 'New Five Giants' – conceptualising the challenges facing societal progress in the 21st Century**

### **Abstract**

This paper takes an overview of the barriers to social progress eighty years on from the original Beveridge report (Beveridge 1942). It argues we can identify and conceptualise five alternative 'Giants', relating these to social theory and social debates in the 21st Century, and considering the prospects for progress against these new challenges.

After considering Beveridge's original Giants in their context, it considers large-scale theories of social change after 1942 and reviews what other 'Giants' writers have suggested in calls for a 'new Beveridge' and proposes inequality, preventable mortality, job quality, fragmenting democracy, and environmental degradation as the most significant challenges we face, linking each to one of Beveridge's original Giants.

### **Introduction**

Anniversaries of the Beveridge Report gives us an opportunity to look both back and forward, and as we approach the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of 1942 there have been calls for a 'new Beveridge Report' (Coats 2020; Savage 2021) to consider the renewal needed after a global pandemic. This paper presents the case for five 'New Giants' that we face in the 2020s, locating each in terms of the changed context 80 years on from Beveridge, but also in relation to each of the original Giants that he proposed in 1942. It proceeds first by placing the 1942 Beveridge Report in the context of its time, before moving on to look at what other researchers and organizations have proposed in terms of possible new 'Giants' we need to confront. It then proposes a framework for the consideration of New Giants, before presenting five new ones -

Inequality, Preventable Mortality, Job Quality, Fragmenting Democracy and Environmental Degradation. The paper then presents its conclusion.

### **The Beveridge Report**

The Beveridge Report of 1942 (Beveridge 1942) was both a detailed plan for social security, but also a wider vision in which social policy would play a more significant role than it had in the pre-war period. Beveridge assumed, indeed made it a precondition of successful social security, that the government introduce family allowances and put in place a national health service, as well as utilising macroeconomic management to keep unemployment below 8.5% (which he termed full employment). In the context of the wartime period and with unemployment rates as high as they had been in the 1930s, these assumptions were remarkable.

The contents of the report are spelled out in detail in the rest of the articles in this special edition, with its visionary language presenting the Five Giants of Want, Disease, Ignorance, Idleness and Squalor. The main focus of the Report, however, was on 'Want', or relief from poverty, which it considered in terms of the structural reasons Beveridge saw as contributing to the problem (especially old age, illness, lack of work and lack of training). The plans themselves had an underlying social insurance logic which meant they could be presented as having significant continuity with the past to avoid appearing to be so radical as to be unacceptable (Harris 2004), but even then they were not well received by the Treasury. Whereas war had shown the capacity of the state to take on new projects was somewhat greater than might have been assumed in the 1930s, issues around affordability were clearly crucial in planning for the post-war reconstruction.

Baldwin (1992) describes the Beveridge Report as the 'most sold, least perused book of

1942' (p. 54), and part 'legislative proposal, part visionary philosophy' (p. 55). Baldwin sees the Report as occurring in a specific time and place, with the war creating the possibility of greater solidarity as everyone had been forced to face the same risks in which 'charity became mutual self-help based on individual self-interest' (p. 56). Beveridge's concern was with equalization of risks within the group, and which allowed the inequalities of the market 'free reign in other realms' (p. 58). Beveridge's wider vision attempted to balance these concerns with a need to stress the importance of individual responsibility as well.

Lowe (1993) agrees with many of Baldwin's point, and regards the Beveridge Report as an evolutionary change in welfare but one which was important because of its wider vision. He writes that the Report's 'individual proposals may have been mere rationalisations or developments of past practice. Cumulatively, however, they had a totally different significance epitomised by the two ideals of universalism and comprehensiveness' (p. 13). At the same time, however, Beveridge aimed not to 'stifle incentive, opportunity, responsibility', therefore limiting the state's role 'to guaranteeing each citizen a subsistence income' (p. 17). Lowe credits Beveridge with helping form the blueprint for the welfare state, especially in terms of his role as a populariser of his proposals, which forced perceptions in Whitehall of what was politically possible to change. (p.131).

Glennerster (1995) takes a more critical tone, and regards the Beveridge Report as being a compromise between Beveridge's ideals and the financial realities of the day (p. 28) which resulted in a plan which appeared to be both simple and comprehensive. However, in combining a national minimum with contributory social insurance, guaranteed benefits were not a right of citizenship, and the flat rate benefits were not set at a high enough level to meet all needs - especially in relation to rent. Beveridge's split between social insurance and social assistance,

was meant to get away from the stigma of means testing (for social insurance) but Glennerster believes it ended up undermining both social assistance and social insurance, as the low level of benefit could not be sufficient to support middle class claimants. Beveridge's assumption of unemployment being an interruption was 'ill founded', and became increasingly less sustainable in the post-war period. Beveridge's report, in these terms, is more important as a mobilising vision for the future of the welfare state than as a blueprint for the role of social security within it.

Finally, Timmins (2017) makes clear a key part of the Report's influence was Beveridge's ability to generate publicity for his recommendations, and which could be read (not least because of its overall length) in very different ways. It was a report that offered something for both for both the political left (which stressed its concern with ending poverty) and the political right (which stressed Beveridge's concerns to leave space for private initiative, and for a minimum level of benefits only). It was the ability to read the Report in such different ways that made it, in the end, acceptable to both main political parties. Beveridge himself was a Liberal (including serving as an MP for a brief period at the end of the war), and this may have contributed to the uneasy balancing act the Report represented between greater state responsibility for welfare, while also trying to emphasis the importance of personal autonomy. However, the lack of clarity over what the Report (in all of its 300 pages) actually said remains the source of much confusion, even today.

From the perspective of 2022, the Beveridge Report remains a crucial document, locating its view of social security within a wider vision that attempted to balance individual responsibility with collective risk pooling, but contains flaws and problems as a result. The Report's lasting is perhaps less about its actual detailed content, much of which were not

implemented - there was never a contributory, fixed contribution and benefit system with social insurance separate from taxation – than about its attempt to create a vision of how to overcome the challenges of the day from even the most difficult of circumstances. When people call for a 'new Beveridge' today they are asking for the implementation of Beveridge's plan, but for us to take a new path to confront the challenges we face.

### **Conceptualising changes since the 1940s**

It is crucial to understand the production of the Beveridge Report in its original context, but also to recognise that the world in 2022 is rather different. 80 years on, a range of changes have taken place which have been the subject of a huge amount of debate. These changes have been narrated in a number of different ways, but with those narratives having several core elements in common.

The first change is that of the particular kind of globalization we have seen since the 1970s especially (Stiglitz 2003). The breakdown of the post-war international financial infrastructure, based around fixed exchange rates, left countries to manage their own currencies to a far greater extent. Financial globalisation makes money transfers almost instantaneous and have also led to speculative financial flows become massively higher than those from trade (Jessop 2015). This means that national economies are no longer able to pursue their own macroeconomic agendas, and face substantial risks from financial outflows if they find themselves poorly regarded by currency traders. This growth in financial globalisation has made governments pursuing unilateral Keynesian macroeconomic policy far more difficult.

This limitation on macroeconomic policy has implications for welfare policy. Beveridge's belief that unemployment could be managed by government is now far more under

question - the complexity of the economy, and its international dependence makes achieving full employment far more difficult (Hutton 2010). At the same time, what we might mean by 'full employment' has changed significantly. The economy of national scale and mass production and consumption of the 1940s and 1950s is now an international one, based far more on services, and with far lower levels of unionisation. Since the 1990s, the growth of 'precarious' employment has grown (Hutton 1996), with governments pursuing policies based around making their economies more 'competitive' (Cerny 1997) with the pay of those poorest remaining largely static, while those fortunate enough to be high-skill enjoying a different form of flexibility if their services are in high demand (Viebrock and Clasen 2009). The growth of the 'platform economy' in which workers have to be on call and respond quickly to individual jobs in order to receive pay, takes this a stage further still.

Beveridge made assumptions about the structure of family life that had repercussions for generations later (Colwill 1994). There has also been significant changes to the way we live (Lister 2010). Household are much less likely to have single earners (assumed to be men) leading households dependent upon them. Family structures have grown more diverse, and it is far more likely all adults in a household are in, or trying to be in, some kind of work (Daly and Rake 2003). Part-time and temporary work is far more common, bringing benefits for those seeking that type of employment, but costs if people need to hold several jobs at once to make ends meet.

These societal changes are crucial in the work of authors trying to theorise about change. Jessop (1999) explores the governance of welfare as seeing governments moving away from Keynesian Macroeconomic management to trying to achieve Schumpeterian competitiveness, a move from welfare to workfare in which the changing structure of households is a key factor as welfare policy becomes increasingly subordinated to economic policy. Jessop also sees a move

from national levels of governance to postnational ones, in which local and international institutions and organizations become far more predominant, and from states being the predominant locus of government to a growth in private, not-for-profit and other non-public actors playing roles in welfare policy.

Beck (1992) categorises the changes in terms of representing a 'risk society', where human activities have created new social risks that run beyond the capability of us to easily manage, and which are of a complexity far greater than those of previous eras. Issues such as climate change affect us all, and we all contribute to them, but they appear to go beyond the capabilities of any of us to confront. Global financial markets have created crises of mind-boggling scale, and it appears beyond the ability of individual governments to either deal with those crises individually, or prevent them from potentially occurring again. Giddens (1994), in analysis similar in many ways to Beck, considers new social risks including global finance and the environment as resulting from financial and cultural globalization, but is perhaps more optimistic about the future than Beck, suggesting the globalized world offers greater opportunities for us to learn from one another and form coordinated responses to the challenges we face (Giddens 1998).

As Beveridge had to work with both the ideational and political context of his time, any attempt to understand the situation today must also deal with the context of today. From the 1980s onwards there has been a general move to greater individualism and a rise in distrust of politics and political processes (Barber 2007). A brief period of 'progressive politics' appeared in the 2000s, but in retrospect this appears to have halted this move rather than reversed it (Jenkins 2006) so that the economic and social planning of the scale seen in the 1960s and 1970s now seems unthinkable. Changes in employment type (towards more service sector jobs) has seen

declines in unionisation and so 'countervailing' forces in the workplace (Galbraith 1996). A reduction in unionisation has also contributed to new kinds of workplace relationships in which people may hold two or three part-time jobs (the extreme of which is the 'platform economy') and pay for the poorest off has to be supplemented by the state in order for people to earn enough to live (Spicker 2014).

The move to the political right has been accompanied by the problem of 'affluence' (Offer 2006) in which political change has become more difficult as more societal groups move out of absolute poverty, reducing urgency of the need for change for many people. People have grown more resistant to paying taxation, leading to a double crisis of the welfare state (Taylor-Gooby 2013) in which welfare services have become increasingly starved of resources, provide a worse level of service as a result, creating a further justification for further cuts. Alongside these changes, there is an increasing awareness of environmental issues and of a new kind of politics in which large-scale change has been seen in relation to the recognition of rights for gay couples and for disabled people, but with still a long way to go.

As such, the world has undergone considerable change since the 1940s. How have those who have presented calls for 'New Giants' or a 'New Beveridge' incorporated these changes into their plans, and what have they proposed?

### **Calls for a 'New Beveridge'**

The importance of the Beveridge Report has meant it has formed the inspiration for a number of writers in considering the direction of society in later periods. One of the remarkable things about much of this work is that there is very little of it appears to reference other work attempting to revisit Beveridge. It is therefore worth exploring it in some depth to look for those

links, and to explore what this work has in similarity and in difference.

If there is a single academic who can claim to have the most influence on both UK welfare since the 1990s, but also on global welfare debates, it is probably Anthony Giddens. Giddens' role in relation to New Labour in the UK was complex, but he clearly had strong access to UK and US government policy-making circles at different times (Giddens 2002). Giddens presented one of the key texts of the 'progressive' movement in that period, and in his book 'The Third Way' (Giddens 1998) he explicitly links (and contrasts) his approach to Beveridge. At the end of chapter four, 'The Social Investment State', which outlines his view of renewed social democratic governance, he explains his approach in terms of Beveridge's original Giants, replacing each with a 'positive welfare' idea rather than Beveridge's 'negatives'. Instead of Want he proposes autonomy; instead of Disease, active health; instead of Ignorance, education as a continuing part of life; instead of Squalor, wellbeing; and in place of Idleness, initiative (p. 128). These are less Giants than alternative conceptions of welfare - with Giddens wishing to harness the increased 'reflexivity' (Mouzelis 2001) necessary to navigate the modern world to the goals of improving welfare. Giddens sees Want being replaced by opportunities for people to become independent and autonomous; Disease being replaced by us taking better care of ourselves through the availability of health information and better food in an environment where we have greater resources; Ignorance replaced by lifelong education and the raising of skills; Squalor replaced by a focus on both mental and physical health and greater opportunities to achieve greater wellbeing (through greater autonomy and more highly skilled work); and with changes in technology and lifestyle offering us the change to develop and avoid Idleness, but engage throughout our lives in education and development.

It is also noticeable that whereas Beveridge's Giants were collective, large-scale

challenges requiring societal action, The Third Way is Giddens' explanation of how progressive governments can transform welfare in the way he describes, but has, in the background, the same social risks that were a central part of his earlier work, including the environment and financial globalisation, and which he acknowledges need coordinated governmental action.

If Giddens' work was a direct influence on governments in the 1990s, then one of the most influential (and critical) voices after then belongs to Dorling. Dorling is prolific, but has social injustice as a central theme running through it. It is perhaps not surprising then, when Dorling considered the Five Giants and how they might be reflected in the 2010s (Dorling 2015), he framed them in terms of the 'beliefs that uphold injustice' and of the 'duplicity' of our times, often expressed by institutions and governments that claim they are about alleviating social problems, but often preserve them or even make them worse.

Dorling suggests the individualism propagated since the end of the 1970s is at the core of the belief system held by the most powerful based around elitism, exclusion, prejudice, greed and despair. This belief system leads to five faces of social inequality. The first is that 'Elitism is efficient' and has a long history based on IQ tests and other attempts to divide up societies based on human ability that have become unacceptable to speak openly about, but which are still concealed in technical terms used by organisations such as the OECD. Dorling's second face is that 'Exclusion is necessary' and is based on elitism seeking to exclude most people from normal social activity, most often now through the extension of debt so that 'want' has been reduced, but replaced by a reliance on debt finance to fund the necessities of life with it being the riches of others that makes households poor. The third face is that 'prejudice is natural' and is based on the richest excluding themselves from society and looking down on others, leading to a lack of respect and trust. This is fuelled by increasing inequalities of wealth and health and is transmitted

especially by inherited wealth being passed from generation to generation. The fourth face is that 'greed is good' and is based on how households are disregarded in lacking access to basic infrastructure (access to car, access to internet) while others have easy access, but often at a cost to others (in terms of the car) in terms of congestion and pollution in the name of personal freedom. The final face is that 'despair is inevitable' and is based on increased incidence of mental illness.

Dorling's approach to the inequality makes it seem difficult to escape from, but he does retain optimism as he believes there are limits to it – 'Compared with the end of the last gilded age, it is now much harder to see who or what there is left to exploit, and how much harder it will be to fool so many better informed people this time around.' (p. 11). However, since Dorling's book was published (2015) we have seen the election of both Trump and Johnson, and so perhaps now our hopes rest on the COVID-19 pandemic offering a chance to set a different direction forward (more on which later).

Dorling's approach is important in that it shows how the discourses which maintain and enhance the current social order are embedded in a range of ideas and social practices, but is different from Beveridge's original conception of Giants in that it identifies its Giants indirectly, explaining in each case their processes of reproduction. Elitism, exclusion and prejudice are linked together to create a static order, underpinned by inherited wealth and unequal access to opportunity, and sustained through property, ill health and unfair educational systems, all of which are justified on the grounds that they allow greater freedom. This allows the rich to be greedy while not providing support for those who are most disadvantaged, and even allows the latter group to be labelled as lazy or feckless.

In 2018 the Royal Society of Arts asked the question 'If William Beveridge was around

today, how would he frame Britain's new 'giants'? The most popular answer from its Fellows and general public (at a series of regional events) as inequality, with the second being 'lack of connection' (linked to isolation and loneliness as well as poor mental health) <sup>1</sup>. Third was 'intolerance' encapsulated in the Brexit referendum, the emergence of populism and 'Fake News'. Fourth was 'apathy' linked to hopelessness and lack of aspiration, along with a sense of disempowerment. Finally, there was concern for the environment, based on over-consumption, energy use, air pollution, but also positives including conservation and the countryside.

There is then, at least some overlap between Dorling and the RSA's approach. Both are rooted in inequality, and link social problems such as mental illness, intolerance and a lack of purpose in life to rising levels of inequality. Both include a strong element of deception which enables those who do well from the current system to justify it persisting in the face of injustices. The RSA's inclusion of environmental problems is important, and links to Dorling's concern with exploitation and greed.

If Dorling and the RSA's work has some agreement, work done by IPSOS MORI a little earlier (2012, at the seventieth anniversary of the publication of the Beveridge Report) ends up presenting a rather different view (Hall 2012). In terms of the major challenges facing Britain in November 2012, a national poll found the economy scored highest amongst the public as being the most important issue facing Britain with 55%, followed by unemployment at 33%, the NHS 20%, Race Relations and/or Immigration 19%, Crime 17%, Inflation 16%, Education 14%, Poverty 13%, Housing 10%, and Pensions/Security/Benefits 9%. As such, economic concerns appear greater than social justice ones, but with some support for the NHS, Education, Poverty,

<sup>1</sup> A series of links to articles and events is at <https://www.thersa.org/blog/2018/05/britains-new-giants-public-services-people-and-place>

Housing and Social Security, but at much lower levels. It seemed, in 2012, that immigration was seen as a bigger challenge than all social welfare services other than the NHS.

In terms of specific services, there was some support for raising welfare benefits for the poor (even it led to higher taxes), with 47% agreeing and 27% disagreeing, but with the gap between those two numbers much smaller than in the late 1980s (55-22%) but higher than in 2008 when the two responses were more or less equal. As such, alleviating poverty still held support for around half the population. However, this support had some clear caveats. 84% of people supported stronger tests for people claiming incapacity benefit, and 62% agreed that people on benefits should be subject to a 'cap' on those benefits if they chose to have 'too many children'. In terms 'idleness' the most marked change appeared. Although 33% of people regarded unemployment as being the biggest issue facing Britain, 78% of people agreed that jobseekers should lose some benefits if they turned down work. As such, there was clearly a strong sentiment of support for means-testing and for active monitoring of those receiving welfare payments.

If we explore the links between the IPSOS/MORI poll and Beveridge's original Giants, just about 10% of people regarded education as the most important issue facing Britain, down from over 50% in 1997/8. However, education did not seem anywhere near as pressing as economic growth at the 70th Anniversary. In terms of squalor, housing was the most important issue for 10% of British people in 2012, but 37% of people believed they would never be able to afford their own home. The major reasons for this belief were lack of job security (51%) and the inability to raise the substantial deposit necessary (58%). At the same time, 87% supported people being forced to move away from more expensive housing areas to bring down the benefit bill.

In terms of disease, as we saw above the NHS was for 20% of people the biggest issue facing Britain (the third highest score), while the same time the NHS was the second highest reason (37% of people) for people to be proud to be British (45% being our History). The biggest health challenges reported by people were cancer 36%, obesity 33%, alcohol abuse 27%, heart disease 22%, age related illness 22%. Satisfaction with the NHS was high (70% overall, with the highest satisfaction being for GPs at 87%). However, satisfaction levels were tiered by generation, with those born before 1945 having the highest levels - but groups born later tending to cluster at similar levels about 10% lower than the oldest people. As such, viewing what might be seen as comprising the New Giants from the perspective of the public, seems to represent a confusing picture, but with a strong emphasis on the importance of the economy and healthcare.

Atkinson (1999) in his review of Beveridge in the 21st Century, suggested that Beveridge's views would have 'evolved' in line with changing contexts and challenges, and suggests four major challenges that the welfare state needs to confront. First, Atkinson makes the case for social policy having to be integrated with economic policy. This points to significant changes in the structure of the economy, with at Beveridge's time large areas of the 'commanding heights' nationalised, but which is no longer the case. Equally, the labour market has changed significantly since Beveridge's time. Atkinson suggests this means is that government has become a regulator rather than having direct control of the economy, and so needs to take this role far more seriously - with areas such as rail regulation and pensions being examples he uses.

Atkinson's second challenge is around social exclusion and investment in children. He makes the point that poverty is not static, and there is both 'high turnover among low-income families' (p. 31), as well as a situation where, for many there is little chance of escape. However

even short periods in poverty can affect children significantly - diet can be affected, it can limit access to educational opportunities, and lead to delays in accessing health services. Atkinson stresses the importance of child benefit is crucial, but makes clear the need for a stronger child focus in other policy areas. He wants to see goods and services for children considered more in price indexes and in the recording of statistics for unemployment (where children affected might be measured).

Third, Atkinson calls for a new form of national minimum - and advocates for a variation of a citizen's income he calls a 'participation income' in which the social minimum would be linked to engagement with socially recognised activities and could be a 'natural development' (p. 33) of welfare to work. Finally, he asks for us to see the welfare state more in an international context. He points to the increasingly linked world, but also makes clear that national economies are not passive observers of globalisation, and are far from powerless. Atkinson especially saw potential for the UK to influence Europe in terms of developing regulation as arguing for European minimum level of Child Benefit. However, the UK leaving the EU has probably put paid to that.

Having reviewed some of the versions of what the New Giants might be, what can we conclude? First, New Giants have to deal with the changed context of the world today, and be linked to that. As such, they need to take account of the changes identified above - the move from closed, planned economies to far more open, globalized ones, with new risks that are the products of human action, and which are greater in scale than individual governmental action. The new risks go beyond national boundaries - they need action and coordination on a greater scale than those presented by Beveridge in 1942. Second, that the 'Giants' must reflect significant challenges which are beyond the scope of individuals alone to confront. They must

represent collective action problems - problems which people themselves may contribute to if they make their own decisions. Third, in keeping with Beveridge's vision, the New Giants should be both bold and an extension of the current understanding of welfare.

These three criteria could lead to a number of New Giants, and fit better with some of the candidates provided by authors above than others. However, considering these criteria and Beveridge's original Giants leads to the suggestions for New Giants in the next section.

## **The New Giants**

### **Inequality**

The first of the New Giants is the most widely-included in work updating Beveridge's Giants. Inequality is included as the New Giant replacing 'Want'.

Inequality, of course, is not new. There were extraordinary levels of inequality the late nineteenth century (Picketty 2014). It is also the case that absolute poverty (which is close to Beveridge's definition of 'Want') has not gone away. What is different between 1942 and 2022 is that, on average, we are much, much richer, but with growing differences in income and wealth between social groups (Atkinson 2015; Dorling 2019).

It is also the case that we are now far clearer about the consequences of inequality. Inequality matters not only because it leaves some people in absolute poverty, which is bad enough, but also because of increasingly strong evidence that higher levels of inequality are associated with a 'health gap' - not only do some people get left behind within countries, but even the better-off in countries with higher levels of inequality do worse than the better-off in countries with lower levels (Bambra 2017; Marmot 2015). We can now explore inequality not only within countries, but also between them, and it appears to be a problem at that level as well.

Inequality is a New Giant because individually we can do little about it - it requires a collective solution. Rising inequality appears to be a symptom of an increasingly dysfunctional form of capitalism it is harder and harder not to treat the flat income rises for the poorest in society since the late 1970s as being a driver of unfairness, as well as being extremely important in understanding the resentment that group increasingly feel towards others in society (Taylor-Gooby 2013). Rising inequality, in a time of lower economic growth than that which was achieved in the 1950s and 1960s, means all boats do not rise together, and flat living standards for some while others become wealthy at levels not seen since the 1930s (Picketty 2014). Exclusion from such rises in wealth drives despair and leads to those not a part of it regarding themselves as failures (Case and Deaton 2020), regardless of whether they had any real chance of achieving it in the first place. Instead, it can seem like those gaining the most are seeking to extract rents as increasing productive wealth becomes harder and harder (Standing 2014). Tackling inequality is a national government problem, but will require international cooperation in order to solve it. It is both a social risk and a collective action problem.

### **Preventable Mortality**

Preventable mortality is the second of the New Giants, and perhaps a less obvious inclusion than inequality. However, it is both a significant social risk (during the COVID-19 pandemic especially we have become more aware than ever that inequalities have profound links to health), and a collective action problem (there is an imperative for us all to look after ourselves, but our life choices have effects on others – hence the extraordinary levels of government action during the pandemic). Even before the pandemic there were massive, systematic differences in measures such as the OECD's 'preventable years of life lost', with the USA recording 6,593 per 100,000 of the population, but Switzerland at 2,990, and the UK

broadly in the middle at 4,186<sup>2</sup>. It is also worth stressing that, although inequality is linked to preventable mortality, the two are also separate, as I will attempt to explain.

As noted above, in his discussion about what a New Beveridge would have to address, Dorling (2015) makes important points about inequalities in health as well as inequalities in income and wealth. A substantial part of this argument is about differing life expectancies, which can be considered even at postcode level (Bambra 2017) and which demonstrates the high degree of social stratification that links infrastructure with income, health, as well as world-view in a more polarised environment. As well as resulting from inequality, however, preventable mortality is also about the effective use of health systems. Health systems are crucial as they are there (we hope) should we fall ill, but health outcome measures are still extraordinarily different between countries even though (Schneider et al. 2017), at least in the developed world, those health systems ought to be able to access the same knowledge and expertise. Healthcare is vastly expensive, and it is a political decision to decide how they ought to be organised and funded (Greener 2020), but some health systems clearly do this better than others – and so create mortality that was preventable. If we then expand our focus beyond developed countries to the world, then the scale of preventable mortality becomes even clearer – especially when there is an opportunity for us to vaccinate against a pandemic. Indeed, at the time of writing, there are significant differences in availability of vaccines for COVID-19 between the developed world and other nations, when if ever there was a case for sharing to reduce the risk of transmission for everyone – it is now. Whereas as in the 1940s Beveridge saw disease as blocking the path to civilised society, we might regard preventable mortality as occupying that position now. Medical knowledge and technology cannot cure all conditions, but, more evenly distributed, it can help us

<sup>2</sup> An interactive chart is available at <https://data.oecd.org/healthstat/potential-years-of-life-lost.htm>

prevent a great deal of unnecessary death and suffering. It is not beyond the means of the world to fund fair and equitable healthcare for all – if there is the will.

### **Job quality**

Beveridge's Giant of idleness was formulated in the decade after the mass unemployment of the 1930s, and given Beveridge's own expertise in the area (he contributed significantly to the founding of what used to be called 'labour exchanges') was clearly important to his thinking about welfare (Harris 1998). Although the 1942 Report was extensively about the Giant of 'Want', Idleness was a related part of this as, if people were out of work, then they were much more likely to fall into poverty. The surveys that formed the foundation of the Beveridge Report presented a view of unemployment as one which was primarily an 'interruption' to work.

The labour market in the 2020s is very different to that of the 1940s. Employment is no longer based on mass production factories, but rather more likely to be located in service sectors which are generally both less unionised and less well-paid (Jessop 2002). Households are much more likely to have all adults working, and in many cases people holding several jobs. Work has become more precarious since the 1980s leading to analysts of change writing of the 'precarariat', who have been left out the economic gains made since that time, and face insecure work (or none at all) (Standing 2014).

Poor job quality is a social ill, where little reward is often combined with high levels of monitoring (Sennett 2006), but also in terms of the levels of insecurity it is often combined with (Shildrick et al. 2012). Many families face situations where, in order to achieve an adequate level of income, they have to work across several jobs, under considerable strain (Mullainathan and Shafir 2013). A change that Beveridge could not possibly have foreseen has come through the

growth of zero-hour and 'platform' economy jobs with little or no security, far fewer employment rights, and less access to sick pay. As Thelen (2014) shows it is possible to balance the needs of different societal groups and provide both flexibility and security, but where an ideological approach that allows employers to dominate, driving down contract standards, the links to health and wellbeing here are clear (Bambra 2011). Poor job quality is also a collective action problem, as our individual preferences in what we buy, for lower levels of taxation on our own incomes, or for low levels of labour market regulation, have wider unintended consequences for us all.

If the situation in respect of job quality in 2022 is difficult, the future looks daunting. As artificial intelligence algorithms are used to replace an increasing range of human judgements, then even secure professions face jobs being transformed or replaced. Advocates of a 'basic income' make the case for the state being able to mediate, and give greater power to people in insecure work to make choices about their lives (Painter and Thoung 2015). However, these simple solutions appear to underestimate the complexity of social security (Spicker 2014) and mean more radical thinking is necessary (Cottam 2019). In any case, job quality and the functioning of the labour market is a New Giant that needs to be confronted.

### **Fragmenting Democracy**

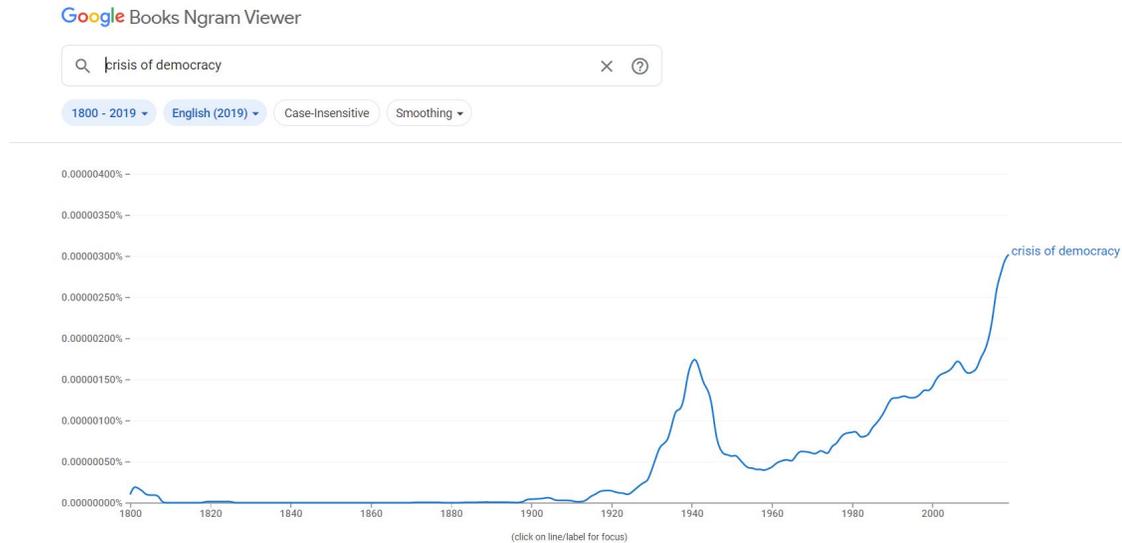
There are a number of candidates to replace 'Ignorance' as a New Giant. In recent decades, education has put an emphasis on acquiring higher level skills, especially through expanding University participation, has been present across most developed countries (Sandel 2020), but in the UK there are still deficits in terms vocational and technical training (Thelen 2004).

At the same time as governments have focused so heavily on education levels, however, a sense of democracy being in crisis has risen. After 1989 and the proclamation of the triumph of liberal democracy (Fukuyama 2012), there have been periods of electoral success for far-right political parties and populist leaders (Lakoff 2016). The rise of the internet had the potential to make high-quality information available to all, but may instead have at least as often created platforms for the spread of what has become known as 'post-truth' messages (Fuller 2018). The links between populist campaigns and messaging, allied to social media platforms, has raised difficult questions about how the spread of inaccurate and hate-filled messages should be regulated and controlled.

It seems that, counter to Giddens' (1991) hopes, the a world where time and space has become compressed through technology which allowed faster and faster communication and messaging has not led to greater reflexivity, but highlighted a need for greater regulation. Online privacy is being compromised and used to tailor political messaging, as well as to spread untruth with democratic institutions to be challenged and even undermined by social media.

Beyond post-truth politics, there is now an accumulation of work raising concerns about the state of democracy in the world, demonstrating significant lack of knowledge of basic political information from many voters (Achen and Bartels 2016). Research such as this, combined with the election of populist leaders such as Trump, has led to a range of claims of a crisis of democracy (Brennan 2016; Runciman 2018; Van Reybrouck 2016).An examination of the phrase 'crisis of democracy' in google n-grams produces is shown in figure one:

**Figure one – crisis of democracy n-gram**



From a mood of triumphalism about liberal democracy in the 1990s, the world in the 2020s seems far less sure of its future. and to the proposal of a range of possible solutions, including far greater news regulation, improved public information literacy, and even fundamentally changing the institutions of democracy themselves. How we deal with these challenges to democracy is the fourth of the New Giants.

### **Environmental degradation**

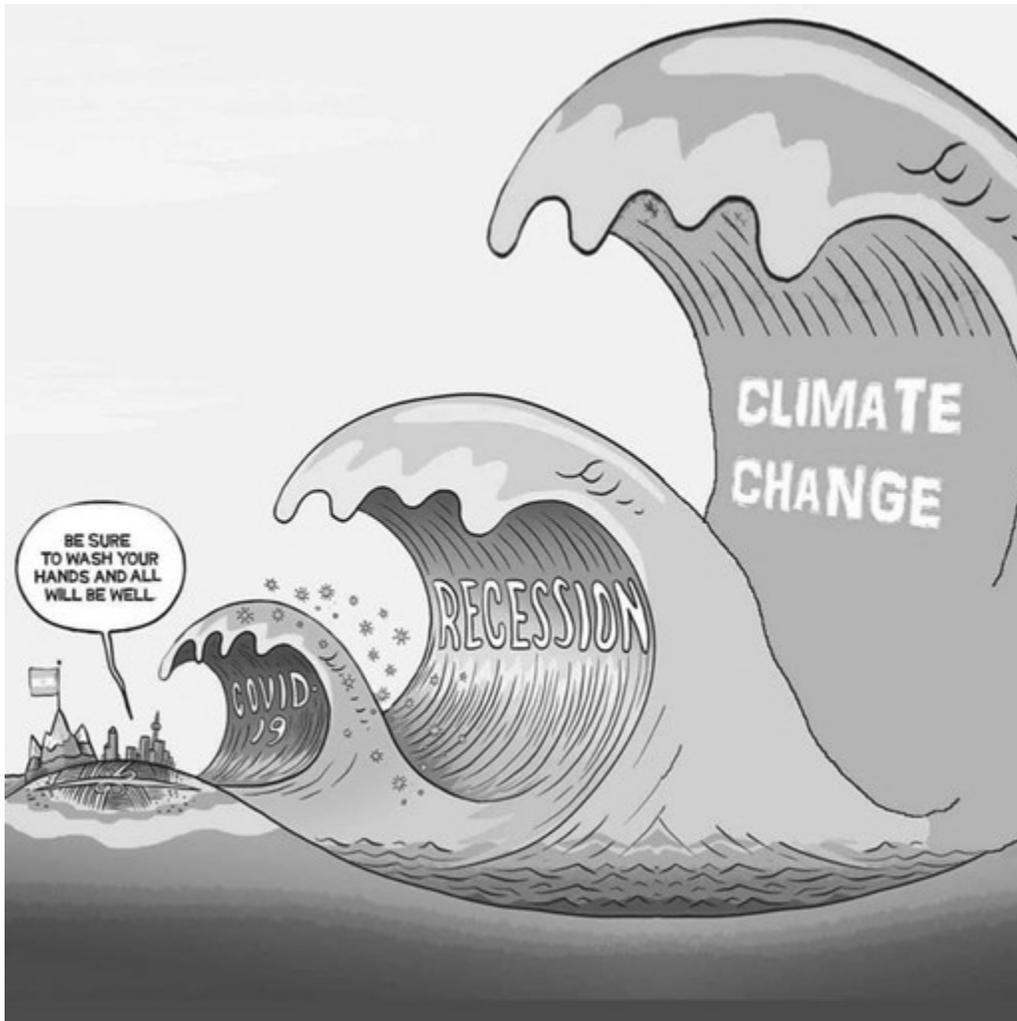
The last of Beveridge's original Giants was 'Squalor', and which in Beveridge's Report was mostly concerned with house. Beveridge was rightly concerned with the conditions in which people were living, and his 1942 Report acknowledged the problem of dealing with the challenge of helping people meet rental payments as they varied too much between different places. His hope was that housing shortages would be dealt with by more rational planning in the post-war period, and resolve the issue.

This did not happen. There remain significant issues with housing today. Housing is important as it raises issues about where people can afford to live (and so affordability, and the

proportion of pay taken up with housing costs), but also because houses have become, in countries where ownership has increased significantly (such as the UK), into significant investments. These investments, especially through generational transfer, have become a significant source of inequality which ask difficult questions about the role of inheritance in propagating it.

At the same time, there is a much bigger threat attached to the circumstances in which we live - that of environment degradation and the problems it will bring to us all. Environmental concerns have come to form the centre of Giddens' work since the 1990s, and link to his long-standing concerns about the unintended effects of human action in late modernity (Giddens 2011). Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, there are popular images suggesting that it is only a small wave concerned with the potential effects of global warming (for one example, see figure two below).

Figure two – global warming and the pandemic



<https://pbs.twimg.com/media/EYSa0m5XQAEoyX2.png>

If inequality is largely uncontested as a new Giant, then so (at least in academic work) is the challenge of dealing with the consequences of human action upon our environment. Damage to our planet and its ecosystem has the potential to disrupt our world in a way which go beyond even those of the other Giants, and clearly fits with the criteria for inclusion put together above. Environment damage is both a social ill and collective action problem - we all have to work to resolve it, and that involves us having to change our behaviour at a large scale while acknowledging it is hard for most people to make much impact in terms of change themselves. Because of the sheer scale of the problem, and the massive potential effects, environmental

damage is then, the most pressing of all the New Giants.

## **Conclusion**

The Beveridge Report is often cited as a source of inspiration. Call for a 'new Beveridge' do not ask for the content of Beveridge's plan for social security to be implemented, but instead for a new vision of the challenges that lie ahead of us, and of a concerted plan to overcome them.

The world has changed a great deal since 1942. This paper has reviewed how others have viewed the challenges we face in 2022, and argued that there are a range of New Giants that now confront us. What these Giants have in common is the massive size of the challenge they present us with, and the sense of individual powerlessness we may feel in confronting them. The New Giants require action on a scale beyond national governments. While it is possible for national governments to try and confront inequality, preventable mortality, job quality, fragmented democracy and environment degradation, only through far greater international cooperation can they be overcome.

Beveridge was key in providing the vision for the post-war welfare state, but the international settlement that underpinned that settlement, and made it possible for greater cooperation, occurred at Bretton Woods, putting in place a system of international institutions that survived until the 1970s and underpinned the post-war 'boom' or 'golden age' (Skidelsky 2009). There is an urgent need for these institutions to be renewed. Although many of the institutions established at Bretton Woods still exist, many appear to have been increasingly mobilised not as a means of achieving greater international cooperation, and have suffered from ideological capture by groups who may not even acknowledge that environmental change is

occurring, never mind accepting the problems that growing inequalities might bring. But without a renewal of global institutions, we will not prevent global finance from continuing much as it has done since the 1980s, or find ways of putting in place binding agreements to prevent climate change. At the global level, the New Giants I have outlined are interlinked. To confront inequality we must avoid 'beggar my neighbour' approaches to labour market regulation that push ever downward on employment rights, pushing more people into poorer quality work, which do not limit environmental degradation, and which do not all fair access to healthcare. Only through stronger international institutions can we overcome these problems.

The COVID-19 pandemic showed how international cooperation can achieve significant goals, with vaccines being generated and approved in record times, but also the national barriers that can stand in the way. But unless we are able to mobilise cooperation toward the big goals specified here - engaging in greater regulation of social media and news media to prevent the further deterioration of democracy, and achieving greater cooperation to prevent unnecessary loss of life across the world (not least in the roll out of vaccines for COVID-19), then we risk falling short of what is needed of us. Reaching these bigger goals represents an ever bigger challenge than Beveridge asked us to mobilise towards in 1942, but if we do not rise to that challenge, the dangers to our future are far greater too.

## **Bibliography**

- Achen, Christopher, and Larry Bartels. 2016. *Democracy for Realists: Why Elections Do Not Produce Responsive Government*. London: Princeton University Press.
- Atkinson, Anthony. 2015. *Inequality*. Cambridge: MA: Harvard University Press.
- Atkinson, Tony. 1999. 'Beveridge and the 21st Century'. Pp. 29–34 in *Ending Child Poverty: Popular Welfare for the 21st Century?*, edited by R. Walker. Bristol: Bristol University Press.

- Baldwin, Peter. 1992. 'Beveridge in the Longue Duree'. *International Social Security Review* 45(1):53–72.
- Bambra, C. 2017. *Health Divides: Where You Live Can Kill You*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Bambra, Clare. 2011. *Work, Worklessness, and the Political Economy of Health*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Barber, B. 2007. *Consumed: How Markets Corrupt Children, Infantilize Adults and Swallow Citizens Whole*. London: W. W. Norton and Co.
- Beck, U. 1992. *Risk Society: Towards A New Modernity*. London: Sage.
- Beveridge, W. 1942. *Social Insurance and Allied Services*. Vol. Cmnd 6404. London: HMSO.
- Brennan, Jason. 2016. *Against Democracy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Case, Anne, and Angus Deaton. 2020. *Deaths of Despair and the Future of Capitalism*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Cerny, P. 1997. 'Paradoxes of the Competition State: The Dynamics of Political Globalization'. *Government and Opposition* 32(2):251–74.
- Coats, David. 2020. 'A New Beveridge'.
- Colwill, Jeremy. 1994. 'Beveridge, Women and the Welfare State'. *Critical Social Policy* 14(41):53–78.
- Cottam, Hilary. 2019. *Radical Help: How We Can Remake the Relationships Between Us and Revolutionise the Welfare State*. London: Virago.
- Daly, M., and K. Rake. 2003. *Gender and the Welfare State*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Dorling, Danny. 2015. *Injustice: Why Social Inequality Still Persists*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Dorling, Danny. 2019. *Inequality and the 1%*. London: Verso.
- Fukuyama, F. 2012. *The End of History and the Last Man*. London: Penguin.
- Fuller, S. 2018. *Post-Truth: Knowledge As A Power Game*. London: Anthem Press.
- Galbraith, J. K. 1996. *The Good Society: The Humane Agenda*. London: Sinclair-Stevenson.
- Giddens, A. 1991. *The Consequences of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Giddens, A. 1994. 'Living in A Post-Traditional Society'. Pp. 56–109 in *Reflexive Modernisation*, edited by U. Beck, A. Giddens, and S. Lash. Cambridge: Polity.
- Giddens, A. 1998. *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Giddens, Anthony. 2002. *Where Now for New Labour?* Cambridge: Polity Press.

- Giddens, Anthony. 2011. *The Politics of Climate Change*. Second edition, revised and updated. Cambridge Malden, MA: Polity.
- Glennerster, H. 1995. *British Social Policy Since 1945*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Greener, Ian. 2020. 'Healthcare Funding and Its Relationship to Equity and Outcomes: A QCA Analysis of Commonwealth Fund and OECD Data'. *Journal of European Social Policy* 30(4):480–94. doi: 10.1177/0958928720905290.
- Hall, Suzanne. 2012. *21st Century Welfare: Seventy Years Since the Beveridge Report*. London: IPSO Mori.
- Harris, B. 2004. *The Origins of the British Welfare State*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Harris, Jose. 1998. *William Beveridge: A Biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hutton, W. 1996. *The State We're In*. London: Vintage.
- Hutton, Will. 2010. *Them and Us: Changing Britain - Why We Need A Fair Society*. London: Little, Brown and Company.
- Jenkins, S. 2006. *Thatcher and Sons: A Revolution in Three Acts*. London: Allen Lane.
- Jessop, B. 1999. 'The Changing Governance of Welfare: Recent Trends in Its Primary Functions, Scale and Modes of Coordination'. *Social Policy and Administration* 33(4):348–59.
- Jessop, B. 2002. *The Future of the Capitalist State*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Jessop, B. 2015. 'Crises, Crisis-Management and State Restructuring: What Future for the State?' *Policy & Politics* 43(4):475–92.
- Lakoff, G. 2016. 'Understanding Trump'. *George Lakoff*.
- Lister, R. 2010. *Understanding Theories and Concepts in Social Policy*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Lowe, R. 1993. *The Welfare State in Britain Since 1945*. London: Macmillan.
- Marmot, Michael. 2015. *The Health Gap: The Challenge of an Unequal World*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Mouzelis, N. 2001. 'Reflexive Modernization and the Third Way: The Impasses of Giddens' Social-Democratic Politics'. *Sociological Review* 436–56.
- Mullainathan, S., and E. Shafir. 2013. *Scarcity: Why Having so Little Means so Much*. London: Penguin.
- Offer, A. 2006. *The Challenge of Affluence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Painter, A., and C. Thoun. 2015. *Creative Citizen, Creative State: The Principled and Pragmatic Case for a Universal Basic Income*. London: RSA.
- Picketty, Thomas. 2014. *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Runciman, David. 2018. *How Democracy Ends*. London: Profile Books.

- Sandel, Michael. 2020. *The Tyranny of Merit: What's Become of the Common Good?* London: Penguin.
- Savage, M. 2021. 'Calls for a New Beveridge Report as Numbers of Destitute UK Housholds Doubles during COVID'. *The Observer*, February 20.
- Schneider, E., D. Sarnak, D. Squires, A. Shah, and M. Doty. 2017. *Mirror Mirror 2017*. New York: Commonwealth Fund.
- Sennett, R. 2006. 'The Culture of the New Capitalism'.
- Shildrick, T., R. MacDonald, C. Webster, and K. Garthwaite. 2012. *Poverty and Insecurity: Life in Low-Pay, No-Pay Britain*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Skidelsky, Robert. 2009. *Keynes: The Return of the Master*. London: Allen Lane.
- Spicker, P. 2014. *How Social Security Works*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Standing, G. 2014. *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Stiglitz, Joseph. 2003. *Globalization and Its Discontents*. London: Penguin.
- Taylor-Gooby, P. 2013. *The Double Crisis of the Welfare State and What We Can Do About It*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Thelen, K. 2014. *Varieties of Liberalization and the New Politics of Social Solidarity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Thelen, Kathleen Ann. 2004. *How Institutions Evolve: The Political Economy of Skills in Germany, Britain, the United States, and Japan*. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Timmins, N. 2017. *The Five Giants: A Biography of the Welfare State*. London: William Collins.
- Van Reybrouck, David. 2016. *Against Elections: The Case for Democracy*. London: Vintage Digital.
- Viebrock, Elke, and Jochen Clasen. 2009. 'Flexicurity and Welfare Reform: A Review'. *Socio-Economic Review* 7(2):305–31.