



The End of the Party: The Rise and Fall of New Labour

Andrew Rawnsley

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Andrew Rawnsley's bestselling and award-winning "Servants of the People" was acclaimed across all media as the most authoritative and entertaining account of New Labour and its first term in office. As one reviewer put it, 'Rawnsley's ability to unearth revelation at the highest level of government may leave you suspecting that there are bugs in the vases at Number 10'. "The End of the Party" is packed with more astonishing revelations as Rawnsley takes up the New Labour story from the day of its second election victory in 2001. There are riveting inside accounts of all the key events from 9/11 and the Iraq War to the financial crisis and the parliamentary expenses scandal; and entertaining portraits of the main players as Rawnsley takes us through the triumphs and tribulations of New Labour as well as the astonishing feuds and reconciliations between Tony Blair, Gordon Brown and Peter Mandelson. Drawing on hundreds of interviews and confidential conversations with those at the heart of power, Andrew Rawnsley provides the definitive account of the rise and fall of New Labour.

The End of the Party: The Rise and Fall of New Labour Details

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From Reader Review The End of the Party: The Rise and Fall of New Labour for online ebook

dadooronron0 says

Brilliant insight to what was going on with the Labour Party. Took a while to get through but only because I wanted to make sure I didn't miss any of the detail. There was a lot of it.

John says

Well worth the effort in reading it, now for War and Peace! Only having seen the TV series, I understand the W&P book is long and introduces a lot of characters. This book does the same but there is more war than peace. It really makes you wonder about our parliamentary democracy when the "most powerful" person in the land spends so much time agonising over what the media say. It also lays bare the infighting that was at the core of New Labour and how this reduced the effectiveness of the party and eventually exhausted it. A pity because it promised so much, and nothing since has been as good. I would like to see the author produce a companion book on the Tory governments following, it could make new Labour look like a love in.

Adrian says

The End of The Party

To cut straight to the most important point, End of The Party is absolutely unputdownable.

Here we have, in one volume, a complete, detailed, penetrating, but most of all, highly readable, account of one of the most tumultuous, controversial, and interesting periods in modern British political history.

The two strengths are, firstly, it's a work of investigative journalism, and therefore, has more insider scoops than you are likely to find elsewhere. Secondly, it's highly readable.

While covering all the major events of New Labour from 2001 to 2010, the central, underlying narrative, is the power struggle between Blair and Brown.

Brown is portrayed as power hungry, obstructionist, paranoid, and the biggest thorn in the side of Tony Blair.

"A government within a government, an opposition within a government."

Rawnsley confirms something that this reader long held back in those days of the early and mid 2000s, if Brown had been dismissed by Blair, he would have simply gone to the back benches and "burned the house down."

Much of the second part of the book is mainly concerned with Iraq, and how this acts as a near implosion on Blair's premiership. Tories barely even get a mention, as they appear so disorganized at this point they don't even factor as a serious opposition.

Although Blair's tenure ends on a high, with the final sealing of Peace in Northern Ireland, and accomplishing the impossible of getting Ian Paisley to say yes, it is clear that he leaves Number 10 with many reforms unrealized. Unrealized because of the obstructionism of one man, Gordon Brown.

The Brown tenure is not presented as happy days. It begins with a clandestine plot forcing out Blair, undergoes a brief honeymoon period with Brown enjoying a temporary surge in the polls, and appearing tough on security, but goes into a permanent downward spiral after the election that wasn't.

Plot after plot of Brown's deposition arise, scandal after scandal taints Labour's image, and the main low

point of the tenure, the 2008 crash, is presented as something of a life line to Brown.

It becomes clear that Brown survived the factional infighting because of the disorganization of the plotters, and the lack of a clear candidate for succeeding him. Also, the plot to depose Brown never really musters strength as the party fears the onset of an immediate election should Brown be deposed.

The election of 2010 and the subsequent coalition negotiations receive more light in this volume than they were given in Lord Mandelson's account, although Rawnsley is a writer with true attention to detail.

It ends on a positive, yet slightly somber note with Brown's resignation, but one can happily close the book in knowing that they have just completed an account of the New Labour years that pulls no punches.

Some may be deterred by the length of the book, but it really does not seem like 800 or more pages, it seems more like 300 pages as it is that damn readable.

Rawnsley does not leave any details overlooked, but it still does not become information heavy. Despite the level of detail, one finds themselves crying out for more, not less.

In short, the very best account of the New Labour period, and one of the best politics books in print today.

Paul says

Rawnsley has studied in detail the second and third terms of the New Labour project and has interviewed hundreds of politicians and civil servants both on and off the record.

This a monumental book in physical size and scope. The main focus of his gaze is the towering icons of Blair and Brown. This pair, along with Mandelson created the New Labour project and made the party electable. Even as they were still celebrating the win of the second election the cracks in the veneer were starting to show. Shortly after they were elected the tragedy of 9/11 happened, Rawnsley goes into lots of detail on the subsequent wars and the way that a labour politician could be associated with a very right wing American politician, and how the members of his party were horrified with this relationship, and the British general public were disbelieving as well. The accusation is made that Blair agreed to commit British troops to the war regardless. The fallout from WMD, dodgy dossiers and the inevitable Whitehall whitewashes has tainted politics since. Blair has an amazing ability to capture the moment with a correctly judged phrase. Whist he was very politically astute, what he did not have was any political ideology.

A lot of the book is concerned with the promises made by Blair to Brown on the succession. Various deals were made between them, and the public had the impression that Blair never kept these, but Rawnsley reveals that these were deals, and Brown rarely kept to his side of it. The rows that these two had were spectacular, but as Rawnsley said every time they looked into the abyss then they would find common ground and keep on. The Iraq war was his downfall, and the lies that he perpetrated to bring us to the war are shameful. However he was a key player in the Northern Ireland peace process, and it would not be where is today without him.

Brown was a schemer and a plotter, who surrounded himself with acolytes to do his dirty work. He would arrange for them to brief and spin again supporters of Blair and when he was Prime Minister even against members of his own party. One of them, Damien McBride, was particularly unpleasant, and we are still getting the fallout from his recent book. Even though he claimed to be uninterested in the media, he comes across in the book as even more sensitive to any bad headlines, throwing massive fits when the press savaged him. Brown was subject to frequent rages, and staff in Number 10 would often be the recipients of these. The cabinet secretary had to warn him several times to keep his temper in check. He didn't come across as someone nice to work with, and if he felt that you had betrayed him then you would be ostracised. My

favourite quote at the time was he waited 10 years for a job that he couldn't do...

It is a fascinating book, and Rawnsley has managed to convey the way that this government did and didn't work. In the end the New Labour 'project' imploded spectacularly, and has forever changed the face of British politics

Paul Bryant says

Just a note to say that hey, the Labour party has just elected a new leader. He's a Jewish atheist who lives with his female partner but isn't married. Rock & roll?

THE RISE AND FALL OF NEW LABOUR AS TOLD BY JACOB AND WILHELM GRIMM

Two brothers, sons of the king, grow up in the Palace. The younger brother, Antonio, is blessed with charm, is fair of face and has a golden tongue. The people love him. The older, Gordano, studies hard, knows by heart all the laws of the land, but yet is ill-favoured, has a stumbling mien, a halting tongue, and foul breath. But still, as the older brother, Gordano knows that soon, very soon he will be King, as their father is declining.

The day comes when the old King takes to his bed and rises no more. After the solemnities the two princes go forth onto the palace balcony and show themselves to the assembled multitude. To the utmost consternation of Gordano, the great throng calls out one name only - Antonio! You shall be our King! In vain does Gordano quote from his hoary laws, but the people will have none of it. They must have Antonio, and so it is he, beaming and tossing flowers, that is crowned.

Gordano skulks to his Treasury, and counts the money of the realm, and the love of his brother turns to hate. His brother has usurped the throne which was his by right of birth. He plots a revenge, but he knows he cannot act except with stealth, for the people love Antonio immoderately, he of the smiling visage and golden tongue. Murder grows in the bowels of the older brother.

The sun shines on the land and seven full harvests are gathered in, for Gordano husbands well the wealth of the land, which his brother bestrews about him. Things go so well for Antonio that he thinks only one thing is lacking, and this thing shall make him a man - glory on the battlefield.

Anyway... blah blah blah ---- the war becomes a grisly dance of death, yadda yadda. Antonio comes back a changed man, Gordano seizes the moment, banishes him, becomes King, expects - nay, demands the love of his people and is mortified, driven mad indeed, when they all quail before the foulness of his breath, and shun him, and he turns in despair to his Treasury, the source of his power, and finds that robbers have got in while he was plotting Antonio's downfall, and there is nothing left except the bones of a few small animals. The harvests have begun to fail, and Gordano hurls his crown to the ground, and bellows in pain.

That's about the size of it.

The theme of this big fat book is

THE COLOSSAL UTTER FAILURE OF TONY BLAIR

which when you look at it fairly closely is *utter* and should you have a leftish bone in your body (say your left hip or your left anklebone) might leave you racked with sobs when it hits you occasionally. Back in the 90s Tony and his pals had a dream which as dreams go was appalling in its modesty - his dream was

TO MAKE THE LABOUR PARTY ELECTABLE AGAIN.

That's all. So he did this by sawing off all the bits of the party which were slightly leftish and added in tablespoonfuls of rightwingish cake mix, and he made love violently to Rupert Murdoch a few times, he could be such a charmer, and the most wretched of all newspapers The Sun switched its bile-machine around 180 degrees and started on the Tories, and Tony sashayed into Number Ten with a giant majority.

Consider Obama and his health reform bill. Oh. My. God. Extracting support for it from *members of his own party* has been like watching an outtake from Saw VI - two Democrats are chained together in a squalid basement with dripping pipes - syphilitic rats the size of lawnmowers emerge from the shadows - all they have to do to get the rats to disappear is *sign the health bill* - the rats get closer, the Democrat senators are wriggling and writhing but they're not going to sign the bill from hell until *five giant black rats are hanging by their teeth from their soft parts*. Then finally, cursing God, they sign. Let us contrast this with Tony Blair's situation in 1997 - his giant majority in the House of Commons consisting of Labour MPs who were *frankly delirious with joy at being elected at all* meant that he could have done anything - a Bill to rename all the months in the calendar after members of his own family? no problem - a Bill to make it legal to hunt Conservatives? give us 48 hours, Tony, it shall be done.

What did he then do? He spent 5 years wondering how he could manage to win another landslide and he figured that the best way to do that was to avoid rocking the boat too much and *mention Princess Diana as many times as humanly possible*.

So then he got

A SECOND LANDSLIDE VICTORY

after which our troubles really began.

As for the 2010 election, by the way, since you ask, loathesome Dave Cameron has been practising his JFK knockoff speeches and is bobbing & weaving like a bantamweight after four Red Bulls trying trying so hard to deflect the public gaze from the serried ranks of the hideous slavering Tory goon squad behind him. And Gordon Brown lumbers about bellowing mightily and eating live people (if I open my window I can just hear him in the distance ... "rrrrrrraahhhhrrrr" - that was him!) and Nick Clegg has a dream that in only 30 sleeps he will be able to say "Dave, you're my bezzie mate". The polls are crazed at the moment and a big volcanic cloud is hovering over us.

SOME WEEKS LATER

Well, the political debate is rather attenuated in Britain at the moment :

David "Dave" Cameron : Mr Speaker, I'm cutting everything I can't axe. There's no bloody money. The

shitbags on the opposite benches spent it all and on what? Prawn crackers for everyone over the age of 88? What kind of nonsense was that?

Harriet Harman (for it is she, acting Leader of the Labour Party, who speaks for Her Majesties' Loyal opposition at present, while the Labour Party itself has a six month long election to find a replacement for Gordon. They have to choose between four clones (Brundleblair) and one black woman. The clones will win. Send in the clones.) : Mr Speaker, the Member for Fornication and Groinstrain is irresponsibility personified. We earnestly urge him to reconsider his mad rush into double digit recession. We hoarsely endorse an alternative policy. As opposed to cutting 80 billion from government expenditure over a period of one year, which is fiscal madness, we propose cutting 79 billion over the period of one year and three months. This is completely different, as you will notice. [She swells up to three times her usual size:] You are clearly insane, while we are clearly not.

Thom says

A good read, enjoyable, and discussant good about the years 2001-maybe 2006. It's let down by the fact that Rawnsley is very clearly a Blairite (though not one afraid of strongly criticising Blair where he went wrong): in every dispute between Blair and Brown, he takes Blair's side; he uncritically presents the comments and analyses of Blair supporters, and is instantly dismissive of anything said by Brown or Brown supporters; and - with the exception of Iraq - he presents Blair's problem as being not standing up to Brown and cultivating rival leaders to him. As far as the author is concerned, Brown single-handedly lost the 2010 election, and Blair's unpopularity before he stood down was all Brown's fault, because of spinning against Blair from the Brown camp and because of political positions Brown forced on Blair. He does not even really absolve Blair from the fundamental flaws of New Labour that led to a sense of alienation and distrust in politics; instead, he does not even consider the accusation as relevant to Blair.

Jamie B says

I really enjoyed this book, Rawnsley presents a well informed, analytical account of both Blair and Brown's time in government.

Interestingly, Rawnsley shows that while New Labour may have mastered the art of 'spin' in order to win elections, the lack of a defining ideology was the single biggest contributing factor to the party fizzling out after a decade or so in government.

The book also argues that throwing money at problems in the public sector is not necessarily an adequate solution, while they need to be financed properly, Blair actually got to the point where public departments experienced a productivity decrease despite the extra money - in these cases restructuring is more appropriate to modernise the department.

F.R. says

This superbly written and highly detailed tome has the capacity, like many books about the New Labour project, to leave you wringing your hands in rage and frustration. It's fundamentally depressing to see how

little core belief there was at the centre. Whereas Clement Atlee (the first Labour Prime Minister to win a majority) came in and changed the entire social fabric of the country, Blair and Brown ran a government of headlines. It didn't matter what the consequences actually were, or whether the initiative could really be delivered successfully, as long as it looked good in the next day's *Daily Mail* that's all that counted.

The day in 1997 when Tony Blair walked down Downing Street in the sunshine, was one of great optimism for the country – albeit followed by four years that even the Labour Party thought was wasted. This book opens in 2001, at the start of the second term, when the government thought they would finally make good on the promises they'd given to the public. But then “events dear boy, events” in the form of 9/11, and a whole different direction was taken.

One of the things most depressing about this book is how mad both Blair and Brown seem. This period catches Blair at his messianic worst, touring the world as a ‘great statesman’, fully convinced he was the man who could influence George W. Bush – when it was clear to all around him that he was barely influencing the President an inch. That period included an amazing conference speech where Blair announced he was going to solve all the hunger, disease and war in the world, whilst conceding that he couldn't get the trains to run on time in his own country. He was the ultimate big picture man, and it's clear from reading this that he gave no more thought to what would happen in the aftermath to the invasion of Iraq than Cheney or Rumsfeld did.

Throughout it all he had Gordon Brown agitating next-door, waging running wars and media campaigns against the Prime Minister, as well as anyone else he considered a rival in the cabinet. If there's a man who really comes badly out of this book it's Brown (though I doubt Ed Balls, or even current Labour leader Ed Miliband would appreciate it as a Christmas present). He is portrayed as a bullying control-freak with a volcanic temper, as well as the inability to admit any fault and a lack of real empathy with people. Brown's inherent flaws are so pronounced throughout the whole of this work, that it's truly amazing no one stepped in the way to stop him becoming Prime Minister. As when he got there, it was always going to unravel in the most calamitous fashion.

When the first edition of this book was published back in spring, the election was just getting under way and it was in the Labour Party's interests to deny it (it has since been updated to capture Brown's very last days). Since then there have been a number of memoirs (not least Blair's and Mandelson's) which show how accurate Rawnsley's version actually is. If you have any interest in British politics, if you want to read a factual book about the last government which has big characters and chapters which wouldn't disgrace a thriller, then this is definitely recommended.

Peter Kobryn says

A comprehensive view behind the scenes of 10 Downing Street and its occupants between 2001 and 2010 this is a superb read for anyone with interests in British politics.

Starting from Labour's second successive landslide in 2001 this work by the excellent Andrew Rawnsley goes into fine detail about the way in which both Tony Blair and Gordon Brown managed their premierships.

Extensive and detailed sources help Rawnsley to provide astonishing insight into the happenings of the time, the determination of Tony Blair to stand shoulder to shoulder with George Bush after 9/11 but his failure to deliver any benefit from such close support for the peace process in the Middle East and the post invasion

reconstruction of Iraq.

The Iraq war and the build up to it inevitably dominate the early parts of this book and the confirmation that Blair committed British support and troops as early as he did and then worked towards finding a justification for the venture is both not surprising but also dismaying.

All through this book the quality and depth of the author's sources make this as detailed and compelling a record of government in action that could be hoped to be found.

Gordon Brown does not come out of this book well. Speculation about his bullying and conniving behaviour appears to be confirmed and much more than that in some respects. One is left with a sadness about what might have been possible had Chancellor Brown had worked in partnership with Prime Minister Blair rather than trying to undermine him for the best part of his ten years as premier.

This is a superb historical account. The Labour government of 1997-2010 achieved a great deal and made improvements to the fabric of the nation as well as to the individual well being of millions. However Tony Blair also led the nation into a war which seemed illegal and ill conceived and the chancellor years trying to undermine the Prime Minister without having the self awareness to realised that he had no strategic plan for what he wanted to do with the highest office in the land and also that he was incredibly ill suited for the role.

Superb, pacy and engaging writing for a key period in the life of the nation.

Matthew Ball says

This book certainly isn't short at 800-odd pages, so it is just as well that all blurb on the cover to the effect that it is a real page-turner is justified. Rawnsley creates a real sense of drama, and even tragedy, out of the story of Britain's Labour Government from its re-election in 2001 to its final defeat in 2010.

This book doesn't pretend in the slightest to be a general, or even a political, history of Britain in those years. Its focus is rather on the personal relations and political infighting at the very top of government - in a nutshell, the notorious "TB-GBs". Rawnsley's choice of emphasis is perhaps inevitable given the fame of his weekly political column in the London *Observer* based on similar material. But do the rest of us need to bother with these old squabbles, or can we safely leave their memory to political nerds?

One reason for making the effort is provided by the contrast between what was supposed to be going on in government according to the Party line swallowed by most UK media at the time, and what actually went on as revealed here (my assumption that the account is essentially accuracy can be justified by the thoroughness of the referencing, the impressive size of Rawnsley's contact book, and the "ring of truth" his story has throughout). Labour's leaders spent extraordinary amounts of their time, energy and political and emotional capital not on efforts to improve the public services they professed to love, but in an a secret, bitter struggle with each other for control of the government. In particular, whilst public Health and Education services were boosted by being given more money, efforts to reform the way they were delivered foundered on the factional infighting.

So what matters here is not just that the public's right to know about all this was partly frustrated, but also that the effectiveness of public service delivery was affected (this last point depends on another assumption -

viz., that constructive high-level political input into things generally makes them better - but without this assumption I do not see how politics can matter at all).

Some important conclusions are suggested by these concerns. One line of argument might be that the toxic culture of infighting detailed here is stronger in the Labour Party than in its rivals, and so a reason why they should be preferred over Labour. Another line might be that the squalidness of the political process is a reason to minimize the extent to which politics impacts our lives, and hence a reason to reduce the role government plays in our society. Personally I am not persuaded by either of these lines, although I think a serious case could be mounted for either.

My own view is that the sad history of New Labour best supports the conclusion that Britain needs a radical rethink of its political system. Democracy is available in different flavours, and in Britain we have the more adversarial. The first-past-the-post voting system encourages the politically engaged to congregate into two opposing tribes who play up their inter-tribal rivalry whilst each suppressing any internal differences, because open discussion of the latter would undermine the contrast with the enemy that is supposed to motivate one's own side on to the effort needed to win power. The results are brilliantly documented in this book: Labour's heavyweights spent years slugging it out with each other in private about what should be the "dividing lines" between them and the Conservatives without ever coming to a clear conclusion. The policies that actually resulted showed a middle-way caution that, whilst not reprehensible in itself, belies the supposed advantages of the adversarial system (decisive government based on a clear contrast between binary alternatives). The more damning point is that the ability of the politicians to supply constructive input into policy was, if this history is to be believed, seriously limited by the intensity of their struggle with each other - an intensity that might (plausibly) be lessened if political differences were generally out in the open, as they tend to be in countries with more consensual political systems.

Jim says

This is by far the best book about New Labour and the politics of the first decade of the new century that I have read. And I've read a few. Forget the self-serving and deliberately obfuscating memoirs of Campbell, Darling and Blair himself. It takes a proper journalist to cut through the layers of flannel to get to a version of the truth that is almost believable. This is the first account I've read, for example, that leaves you with no doubt of the division between Blair and Brown, demonstrating the duplicity of one (Blair) with the outrage and fury of the other. It's almost fair to say that Blair drove Brown mad as he clung onto power, and the book is filled with memorable scenes, quotes and recollections that give colour to the whole affair.

One of the strengths of the book is that the author seems to have spoken to everyone who mattered. When he hasn't, he has often picked the best quotes to illuminate a situation. The chapter on the Northern Irish peace process is a classic, almost gripping in its recall of personalities and events and finally leaving me with the impression that Blair did deserve most credit for bringing it about. What a pity he did the reverse with the Middle East and it's difficult not to form the impression that Blair was not only a poodle to Bush, he wanted to be a poodle.

Overall, the impression given on Blair's presidency (sic) leaves one agreeing that all political careers end in

tatters. It took Blair ten years to sour the milk. It then takes Brown ten weeks. If the author spanks Tony with his assessment, he flails Brown with a cat o nine tails. Tony didn't do God. Gordon didn't do human. His first months of being Prime Minister are portrayed as the biggest shambles since Richard Nixon stated there would be no whitewash at the White House. Brown ached to be able even to formulate a whitewash.

Ian Brydon says

Like most regular buyers and readers of books, I have come to take with a pinch of salt the reviewers' plaudits that the publishers liberally strew over the covers of their wares. One such comment on the cover of Andrew Rawnsley's accounts of the last two terms of the Blair/Brown New Labour administration suggested it was almost a Shakespearean account. I immediately dismissed that as representing the flightier end of PR hyperbole, but I was mistaken.

This is a completely gripping account that had my alternately smirking at some of the bizarre presumptions to which Blair and Brown, along with their respective coteries of henchmen, succumbed, and then almost shouting in rage at some of the more ghastly errors. Of course, that dichotomy could be found in accounts blessed with the pellucid view of hindsight about almost every administration, regardless of political complexion. In the case of the new Labour governments that held sway from 1997 until 2010, there was, however, the distressing lacquer of smugness and odious self-satisfaction among the lead players that lends its own squalid sheen.

Rawnsley has that happy gift of being able to convey different political ideologies and convictions with great clarity. He is, after all, one of Britain's best established political journalists. It is also clear that he was more sympathetic, both personally and politically, to Tony Blair than to Gordon Brown. The latter emerges from these pages as an emotionally barren bully, haunted by the paranoia obsession that everyone around him was intent upon doing him down. He did, indeed, have a lot of enemies among his Cabinet colleagues, though it is unclear to what extent those enmities were of his own making.

Rawnsley is not slow to criticise Blair, either – there is no hint of hagiography here – and from this account there is little room to manoeuvre away from culpability over the decision to go to war with Iraq without suitably robust evidence.

Rawnsley's account benefits from the vast range of people involved with the events that he describes to whom he was able to speak directly. Over the years he interviewed most of the principal participants in British politics during the three electoral terms for which New Labour was in power. The book certainly reads more like journalism than academic history, but that is, after all, Rawnsley's metier. It is a large book, but the story is compelling, and the narrative fairly fizzes along.

I have found myself reading far more non-fiction books than usual this year, and this has been one of the most entertaining and informative of them.

Andrew Hague says

The most important thing of any book is to keep the reader engaged. As stimulating as the history of New

Labour undoubtedly is I worried that a near 800 page book about their second and third terms in Government would be a hard slog to get through. By the time I was on the the last page I wished 'The End Of The Party' had been 800 pages longer.

Whilst events like The Iraq War, the expenses scandal and the turbulent relationship of Blair and Brown have been retold many times before the attention to detail and the pace of Andrew Rawnsley's writing makes you feel you are in the room as the main protagonists lurch from one crisis to another. Not many of the main players come out of the book in a particularly good light. The lead roles are naturally taken by Blair and Brown and their broken relationship is the crux of the book. Two extremely different men with very different talents, Blair is a people pleaser who is desperate to be liked to the point of fault whilst Brown can be summed up by Blair himself with his quote of 'Analytical intelligence, absolutely. Emotional intelligence, zero'. The pettiness of Brown in particular is ludicrous at times. So often his sole focus is getting one over the prime minister whilst Blair's deep rooted guilt about the infamous 'Granita Pact' of 1994 means he continually refuses calls from his own cabinet (and even his wife) to sack his chancellor. That the figureheads of a party who sold themselves as "servants of the people" should conduct government in such a self absorbed manner is a disheartening realisation that no matter how high the office or important the job, the flaws of human nature will often triumph above all else.

It's hard to imagine a better account of the New Labour years than what Rawnsley has achieved with 'The End Of The Party'. It's a fascinating insight into the inner workings of an ideology that dominated the political landscape in Britain for over a decade and one that influenced it's opponents to the point where it became near impossible to differentiate between the two main parties. As Jeremy Corbyn continues to distance his Labour Party from the days of Blair and Brown, 'The End Of The Party' stands as the definitive account of a political philosophy that now seems consigned to history.

Matt says

Great for someone not super-steeped in British politics, though occasionally a bit tedious. A fascinating counterpoint to all of the information written about the political age of pre and post 9/11 from the other side of the pond.

Nigel says

This is an excellent book which was very well referenced. It gives a very detailed analysis of the workings of the last Labour government from 2001 until its final death throes. It shows the strengths and weaknesses of the major characters in the government during the period. Although it is structured to follow the main chronology of events it is not written like a diary. Its chapters focus on the main events of each period and there are many overlaps because of that. But this really helps the readability of the book and at times the narrative carries you along in the same way that a good novel does. Although long - it is very readable and very enjoyable. It will also make people who care about our country very angry and the way power was often abused to satisfy personal ambition.

The 2 main players in this account are obviously Tony Blair and Gordon Brown. Whilst Blair's abilities as a leader and debater are recognised the book also exposes his major weaknesses which are strangely contradictory. For example on Iraq he is just convinced he was right and you get the sense that other people's failure to come round to his viewpoint as their problem not his so he would back down or change his view.

Yet in other areas he was extremely weak and allowed others, most notably Gordon Brown to get their way. Brown would regularly overrule him and thwart him from delivering on his main policies. Brown had been doing this to Blair since very early on in Labour's time in office yet Blair seemed to do nothing about it. Gordon Brown comes out of this extremely badly. He gets some credit for understanding the financial crisis and for showing international leadership when it was required (history has yet to deliver a verdict on whether what he did was sufficient). However the book also describes in great detail how he was totally unsuited to being Prime Minister, how he was convinced that the job was his by right. It describes repeated efforts by him and his trusted attack dogs like Ed Balls, Charlie Whelan and Damien MacBride, to undermine Blair and others. It exposes his complete lack of a policy strategy for when he actually got the job he had lusted after for over 10 years. It shows his inability to engage with people. The great tragedy for our country though is that all of this was known before he got the job and the book provides many, many examples of this, yet no-one in the Labour party had the courage to stop him.

Also if you want a good synopsis of either the financial crisis or the Northern Ireland peace process then I would thoroughly recommend the chapters dedicated to them. They give a succinct chronology of the main events and how they progressed.
