

guardian.co.uk

Washington thinktank says US right could learn from Cameron and Clegg

Cato Institute says Britain's coalition government has brought together the best traditions of British liberalism

Patrick Wintour Political editor
The Guardian, Wednesday 11 August 2010

A [larger](#) | [smaller](#)



David Cameron and

Nick Clegg have come in for praise from a leading rightwing thinktank in Washington
Photograph: Christopher Furlong/Getty Images

The leading conservative thinktank in Washington has praised the way in which [David Cameron](#) and [Nick Clegg](#) are cutting the deficit in Britain, saying the rightwing "[Tea Party](#)" movement has a lot to learn from the manner in which the British coalition has governed in its first 100 days.

The praise from the [Cato Institute](#) may not be totally welcome to left-of-centre Liberal Democrats as they seek to explain their policies, and will also jar with some Conservative rightwingers trying to come to terms with the coalition.

In a [newspaper article](#), Cato Institute vice-president Gene Healy singles out Clegg for praise, saying he turns out to be "my kind of liberal – the classical variety, given to quoting John Stuart Mill: 'a state which dwarfs its men ... will find that with small men no great things can be accomplished'."

He insists the Cameron-Clegg union was not a shotgun wedding but a true alliance of small state de-centralisers.

Writing in the [Washington Examiner](#) he concludes: "Hope has been hard to come by for small-government types in the age of Obama. But the Tea Party movement could learn a lot from the urbane duo of Cameron and Clegg, who've brought together the best traditions of British liberalism, marrying economic and social laissez-faire.

"Americans tend to prefer an earthier conservatism, one that clips the 'g's off of its present participles and rails against cultural elites. How odd – and refreshing – then, if a pair of Oxford and Cambridge-educated toffs managed to point the way forward for the American Right."

The praise for the coalition represents something of a change for the institute that previously predicted Cameron was going to increase the size of the state by increasing value added tax and capital gains tax.

Commenting on the July budget, one of its senior fellows [Daniel Mitchell](#) warned "The United Kingdom, I fear, has gone past the point of no return in the journey toward becoming indistinguishable from the decrepit welfare states so common in the rest of Europe."

Cameron has made efforts to court American political opinion in [his visit to America](#) last month, but as the scale of the cuts emerge in the UK, it is likely the American right will take increasing interest in whether the experiment works and what it means for the need to cut the deficit in the US.

The other leading rightwing Washington thinktank, [the Heritage Foundation](#) has also praised Cameron for taking a bold line on deficit reduction.

guardian.co.uk © Guardian News and Media Limited 2010