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## **Trussonomics: An Ideational Explanation of the Policies of the Growth Plan**

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# Trussonomics: An Ideational Explanation of the Policies of the Growth Plan



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## **Abstract**

Liz Truss and Kwasi Kwarteng's 2022 Growth Plan sent the markets into meltdown, the ramifications of which are still felt almost a year on. Using process tracing, this paper seeks to explain the policy choices of the Growth Plan by adopting a discursive institutionalist approach. First, this paper investigates the influence of ideas held by the two key decision-makers, Truss and Kwarteng, and finds that ideas they held for over a decade significantly influenced many of the Growth Plan's policies. Secondly, this paper explores the influence of ideas furthered by right-leaning think tanks on the policies of the Growth Plan. The results indicate that, while there are limitations to think tank influence, it is likely that the ideas of right-leaning think tanks played a significant role in shaping the policies of the Growth Plan. Causal mechanisms lie at the heart of this paper, responding to calls for a greater emphasis on the causal mechanisms linking ideas to policy outcomes (Campbell, 2002; Jacobs, 2009). Therefore, the results contribute to the body of literature investigating the explanations for economic policymaking and seeks to provide new findings for the literature which is engaged in a fractious debate about the role of think tanks in policymaking.

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## Chapter 1 | Introduction

Because these things will change  
Can you feel it now?  
These walls that they put up to hold us back will fall down.  
It's a revolution,  
The time will come for us to finally win. (Swift, 2021)

As a sign of her plans for economic reform if elected prime minister, Liz Truss walked onto the stage of the Conservative Party hustings to Taylor Swift's "Change". Although Swift was likely not talking about a "revolution" of free market ideas, the lyrics capture how Truss felt about the need for economic change: it was time to overthrow the "Treasury orthodoxy", the established consensus that fiscal discipline was necessary for a healthy economy, and usher in a bold new set of supply-side reforms to rapidly grow the economy (Times Radio, 2022). During the leadership race, triggered after the resignation of Boris Johnson, Truss laid out her vision for the United Kingdom's (UK) economy: low tax, high growth. In Kwasi Kwarteng, her Chancellor, Truss found her ideological soulmate and together they embarked on the UK's biggest tax cuts in 50 years, announced in the Growth Plan in September 2022 (Inman & Mason, 2022).

The Growth Plan's policies included tax cuts across the income scale, including lowering the basic rate of income tax and the politically controversial move of abolishing the additional 45 pence income tax rate. The corporation tax rise and introduction of the Health and Social Care Levy, announced in 2021 to balance the books following the pandemic, were cancelled and the bankers' bonus cap was scrapped. In addition, the Growth Plan announced a variety of regulation reforms affecting, for example, environmental protections and planning procedures. As well as these supply-side reforms, the Growth Plan included the energy support package, a £60 billion intervention to cap energy prices for households and businesses facing record high prices due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. While the energy support package was a new policy to deal with the pressures of rising energy prices, many of the previous policies regarding taxation, regulation, and the role of the private sector had been in place for a decade.

Therefore, the Growth Plan represented a significant departure from the established economic consensus in two ways. Firstly, the individual policies of the Growth Plan were more radical than previous governments dared attempt. Secondly, and more significantly, the Growth Plan was a significant departure from the commitment of successive Conservative governments to fiscal discipline. Following the dramatic rise in the debt-to-GDP ratio and the deficit following



the 2007-2009 financial crisis, the UK saw over a decade of austerity with cuts to spending across departments (*Budget*, 2010-2019). The Government believed that it was expensive and risky to maintain a high debt-to-GDP ratio and argued that a strong economy was founded on fiscal discipline (*Budget*, 2010-2021). In comparison, the Growth Plan combined tax cuts with high government spending while failing to outline how policies would be funded. Truss and Kwarteng were willing to increase borrowing to fund tax cuts and support other supply-side reforms which they believed would boost economic growth and be a more sustainable way to fund public services (Kwarteng, 2022a; Truss, 2022a).

Following Kwarteng's announcement of the Growth Plan, chaos ensued. The markets reacted badly to the £45 billion of unfunded tax cuts; the pound went into free fall, reaching a record low of \$1.0327 against the dollar, while the cost of government borrowing increased by 0.5 percentage points shortly after (BBC News, 2022a; Wearden, 2022). Despite U-turns on some headline policies, Truss and Kwarteng refused to back down; Kwarteng even suggested that there were more cuts to come (Walker, 2022a). Ultimately, the pressure from all sides – the markets, the public, and the Conservative Party – became too much. In a last-ditch attempt to save herself, Truss sacked Kwarteng but promptly followed him out of Downing Street just 10 days later making her the shortest-serving prime minister in British history (BBC News, 2022b).

The impacts of the Growth Plan were truly catastrophic. In addition to the short-term market meltdown, households and businesses continue to feel the aftershocks almost a year on. For example, it took until February for the first mortgages with a fixed-interest rate of under 4% to come on the market (Jone & Markortoff, 2023) while the number of new mortgages issued was down by 25% in March 2023 compared to before the announcement of the Growth Plan (Hinchliff, 2023). Given these ramifications, an investigation of how we got here is necessary. Therefore, this paper investigates: **What explains the policies of the Growth Plan?**

According to Matthijs (2016), “ideas are at their most powerful as an explanatory variable when they lead agents to go against their material self-interest” and “become even more intriguing when they are instrumental in actually causing a crisis” (p. 375). Therefore, using process tracing, this paper conducts a single case study analysis to investigate the influence of ideas held by key actors on the policies of the Growth Plan drawing on an expansive range of qualitative evidence. First, this paper will investigate the effect of ideas held by Prime Minister Truss and Chancellor Kwarteng. By tracing the ideas held by Truss and Kwarteng since their election to Parliament, investigating the mechanisms through which their ideas could influence the Growth Plan, and comparing the final policies of the Growth Plan with Truss and Kwarteng's previously stated preferences, this paper shows that the ideas of Truss and Kwarteng had an important influence on

the policies of the Growth Plan. The results show that there is substantial alignment between Truss and Kwarteng's ideas and the policies of the Growth Plan in all areas apart from government spending. This paper provides alternative explanations for this deviation. In addition, the results indicate two plausible causal mechanisms – cognitive mechanisms (Jacobs, 2009) and “power through ideas” (Carstensen & Schmidt, 2015) – through which ideas held by Truss and Kwarteng influenced the policies of the Growth Plan.

Secondly, this paper investigates the effect of ideas held by right-leaning think tanks on the policies of the Growth Plan. Following the announcement of the Growth Plan, several journalists highlighted the influence of a particular group of think tanks located at 55 Tufton Street. Often associated with free-market ideas - such as low taxation, low government spending, minimal state intervention in the market, and championing the private sector - some argued that these think tanks gained an extraordinary amount of influence on policymaking during Truss' time in office (Bright, 2022; Casalicchio & Blanchard, 2022; Dyer, 2022). This paper takes a closer look at whether and how right-leaning think tanks affected the policies of the Growth Plan. By considering evidence through Christensen's (2013) framework for studying expert influence, this paper outlines the initial preferences of right-leaning think tanks, their opportunities to influence the decision-making process, and the alignment between their initial preferences and the outcome of the Growth Plan. The results show that, while there are limitations on think tank influence, there is substantial evidence that right-leaning think tanks did influence the policies of the Growth Plan. The institutional environment places few constraints on interactions between think tanks and decision-makers and provides institutionalised opportunities for think tank influence which right-leaning think tanks take advantage of. The results indicate that think tanks employ a range of direct and indirect methods to influence policymaking and that Truss and Kwarteng view think tanks positively. A comparison of the initial preferences of right-leaning think tanks with the policies of the Growth Plan reveals substantial alignment which, given the previous findings regarding opportunities and methods of influences, suggest that right-leaning think tanks influenced many policies of the Growth Pan. However, like the ideas of Truss and Kwarteng, the ideas of right-leaning think tanks are unable to account for the Growth Plan's spending policies.

This paper makes a significant contribution to the literature. Firstly, this paper makes a scientific contribution by explaining an extraordinary and consequential event in recent history that is yet to receive attention in the academic literature. In addition, investigating the effect of ideas is a lengthy process, demanding a rigorous exploration of a wide variety of empirical evidence. Therefore, this research contributes to the field by providing an additional case study to compare to previous research and therefore, further our understanding of the influence of ideas.

Furthermore, this paper makes a methodological contribution. Previous work on the influence of ideas and the role of think tanks relies on traditional evidence sources such as speeches, reports, and documents. In addition to drawing on these traditional sources, this paper embraces non-traditional sources of evidence such as Twitter posts, podcasts, and YouTube videos. They provide a rich pool of evidence which this paper actively draws on. Secondly, this paper makes important societal contributions. The findings of this paper are important because they outline how ideas become official policies that have an enormous impact on people's lives. In addition, while think tanks play an important role in the creation of new policy suggestions, a better understanding of their role and influence in the decision-making process can improve how decision-makers use think tank research most effectively.

The paper will proceed as follows. First, Chapter 2 briefly reviews the existing literature on ideational explanations of economic policy and the role of think tanks in policymaking to outline previous findings and situate this research among the literature which inspired it. Then, in Chapter 3, this paper will outline the theoretical framework for the analysis, including explaining the causal mechanisms which the literature suggests links ideas of key decision-makers and think tanks with policies. In addition, this section derives theoretical expectations regarding the influence of ideas on the Growth Plan. Next, Chapter 4 describes the paper's research design including the process tracing methodology, operationalisation of the dependent and independent variables, the evidence collected and analysed, and concerns about validity and reliability. After, this paper turns to the results. First, this paper will investigate the influence of ideas held by the key decision-makers, Truss and Kwarteng, followed by an investigation of the influence of the ideas of right-leaning think tanks. Each section is followed in turn by a discussion of their findings, reflecting on the theoretical expectations and previous findings in the literature. Finally, this paper will make concluding remarks and indicate routes for further research in Chapter 9.

## Chapter 2 | Literature Review

The Growth Plan, given its recent occurrence, is yet to receive much attention in the literature. Thus far, most of the available literature consists of short opinion pieces written by scholars for various academic journals with contributions ranging from general overviews of Truss' premiership (Kutlovci, 2022) to more detailed discussions about specific policies (Anandaciva, 2022; Choonara, 2022; Dorling, 2022; Maani & McKee, 2022). However, an extensive exploration of the Growth Plan focusing on explaining its policies is yet to be conducted. Still, scholars have discussed at length different explanations for economic policy both in the UK and abroad, including ideas. This section will review two strands of the literature: (1) the influence of ideas on economic policy and (2) the role of think tanks in policymaking. The review situates this paper and its findings among the existing literature grappling with questions of the influence of ideas on economic policy and outlines the unique contribution of this paper to the existing body of literature.

### 2.1 | Ideational Explanations of Economic Policy

Various explanatory variables are discussed in the literature to explain economic policy design and change including economic crises (Biglaiser & Brown, 2005; Copeland & James, 2014; Mahon, 2004; Sanchez 2006), international influences (Crawford and Lijphart, 1995; Daguette, 2004; Keen & Lockwood, 2010; Pop-Eleches, 2009; Remmer, 1998), and institutional explanations (Hall, 1992; Facchini, 2018; Pop-Eleches 2009; Tabellini, 2000). However, a particularly interesting section of the literature considers the effect of ideas on economic policy, with scholars maintaining that ideas explain when, why, and how change occurs (Béland, 2007; Carstensen, 2011; Culpepper, 2008; Cox, 2001; Jacobs, 2009; Larsen & Andersen, 2009; Steinmo, 2003; Orenstein, 2013). For instance, Larsen and Andersen (2009) argue that neoliberal ideas had “an independent causal effect” (p. 239) on changes to the Danish welfare state in the 1990s by causing policymakers to turn away from Keynesian policies and undertake supply-side reform. In fact, the immense success of ideational explanations in explaining a wide range of policies leads Dietrich Rueschemeyer (2006) to claim: "That ideas matter in politics is beyond question" (p. 227).

Sometimes scholars focus on ideas about specific policies. For instance, Steinmo (2003) argues that changes in ideas about taxation over the 20<sup>th</sup> century shaped taxation policy. These ideas, Steinmo (2003) argues, are shaped by decision makers' experience of policies in the past which consequently direct their policy choices in the present. Focusing specifically on pension

policy, Orenstein (2013) argues that widespread shifts away from pension privatisation around 2005 are explained by ideational factors; as pension privatisation failed in several countries, attitudes towards pension privatisation soured and policymakers looked for alternatives (Orenstein, 2013). In both cases, the success and failure of policies in the past shaped ideas and determined policy choices later. Béland (2007) investigates changes to social security policy in the United States (US) between the 1930s and 1990s, arguing that changes occurred during a shift in ideas about social security provision and periods of intensifying electoral competition. This leads Béland (2007) to conclude that “ideational processes can become a major source of institutional change” (p. 33) and calls for the influence of ideas to be investigated further. In addition to these examples, scholars investigate the effect of ideas on specific policy areas including wage bargaining policies (Culpepper, 2008), pension reforms (Jacobs, 2009), and welfare reforms (Carstensen, 2010; Cox, 2001).

Alternatively, scholars investigate the influence of ideas at a higher level of analysis, considering the effect of paradigms on economic policies. Paradigms are “a framework of ideas and standards that specifies not only the goals of policy and the kind of instruments that can be used to attain them, but also the very nature of the problems they are meant to be addressing” (Hall, 1993, p. 279). Many scholars agree that paradigms influence policymaking. Multiple authors discuss the shift from Keynesianism to monetarism in the UK, a paradigm shift which began in the 1970s and was solidified with the election of Thatcher in 1979 (Hall, 1992, 1993; Hay, 2018). Hall (1992) argues that ideas were so important in determining economic policy that the change was “as much for political, as economic, reasons” (p. 96). This, Hall argues, is demonstrated by the fact that the Conservative Party under Thatcher adopted and “imposed” monetarist ideas on the Treasury despite the continued commitment to Keynesianism amongst the majority of the economic establishment (Hall, 1992, p. 108). Therefore, the literature indicates that ideas at different levels – from specific economic issues to wider paradigms - can influence economic policymaking.

Yet, the literature also highlights limitations to the explanatory power of ideas. Some scholars argue that the effect of ideas is conditioned on other factors. For instance, scholars highlight the importance of policy entrepreneurs, powerful and influential actors promoting specific ideas, in elevating the status of a policy by promoting and legitimising it (Béland, 2005). Another condition is the institutional environment, creating both constraints and opportunities for actors to advance ideas (Béland, 2005; Rueschemeyer, 2006). Hall (1992), for instance, argues that once in power, governments in the UK face few veto players preventing it from implementing policy change since the British political system vests substantial power in the Prime Minister and

cabinet regarding policymaking (Hall, 1992). A further conditional factor is timing as the acceptability of different ideas may vary given political, economic, or social conditions of the moment (Béland, 2005; Kingdon, 1984 as cited in Pautz, 2020). Favourable political conditions, such as economic crises, may increase calls for reform or the public may be more likely to accept reforms (Drazen & Grilli, 1993; Pop-Eleches, 2009; Tommasi & Velasco, 1995). This may allow new policy ideas to emerge as policymakers and the public search for alternatives. Nevertheless, the existing literature indicates that ideational explanations provide highly insightful contributions to explaining economic policy and thus an exciting path of interrogation for explaining the policies of the Growth Plan.

Despite the substantial amount of literature investigating the influence of ideas on economic policymaking, there exist gaps which demand further investigation. For instance, while Cox (2001) does this well, too often studies do not differentiate between material interests and the ideas held by decision-makers (Jacobs, 2015). This muddles the interpretation of the influence of ideas on policymaking. In addition, Campbell (1998) and Jacobs (2009) highlight that too little attention is paid in the literature to causal mechanisms, with many papers simply assuming causality. Further investigation of causal mechanisms is necessary to further develop our understanding of the effect of ideas on economic policy. These limitations in the existing literature are addressed in this study which takes steps to separate material interests from ideas and investigate causal mechanisms.

## **2.2 | The Role of Think Tanks in Policymaking**

In addition to considering the influence of ideas held by key decision-makers, this paper also considers the influence of the ideas of right-leaning think tanks. The number and diversity of think tanks have grown exponentially around the world in recent decades, including in the UK (Pautz, 2017; see also McGann, 2015; Ladi, 2005). Yet, the proliferation and diversity of think tanks in terms of interests, ideologies, strategies, and output creates challenges regarding classification (Pautz, 2020). This paper uses 't Hart and Vromen's (2008) definition of policy advocacy think tanks which defines think tanks as "ideologically driven, financially and/or connected institutes, which tend to devote at least as much attention to the dissemination and marketing of ideas as to producing them" (p. 136). Despite the variation in definitions, scholars tend to agree that the main contributions of think tanks include producing policy expertise, legitimising policy ideas, and liaising with key stakeholders in and outside of government (Ohemeng, 2015; Pautz, 2020; Schlesinger, 2009; Wells, 2012).

The literature has long concerned itself with the question of whether think tanks are important generators of ideas in public policy. Several scholars argue that think tanks are important idea generators and have a substantial impact on policymaking across a range of fields, from foreign policy to economic policy (Abelson, 2000; Case and Rowell, 2015; Drezner, 2015; Fitch-Roy et al., 2020; Fraussen & Halpin, 2017; Haass, 2002; James, 1993, Kingdon, 1984 as cited in Pautz, 2020; Ladi, 2011; Lingard, 2016). Arguably, the huge increase in the number of think tanks in recent years suggests there is a demand for think tank contributions (Pautz, 2020). The literature suggests that there are several ways in which think tanks influence policymaking including constructing discourse around policy ideas, delivering research and publications, and providing an arena to facilitate knowledge exchange (Abelson, 1995; Ladi, 2011; Ohemeng, 2015; 't Hart & Vromen, 2008). The legitimacy of the knowledge produced by think tanks is often bolstered by their self-presentation as technical experts, with some bodies even claiming to be apolitical (Westermeir, 2018).

Scholars also explore how short- and long-term conditions create new opportunities for think tank influence. For instance, crises are proposed as important moments in which think tanks can provide policy suggestions as crises can delegitimise the current policy set, thus leading policymakers to search for alternatives (Ladi, 2011; Westermeier, 2018). Some long-term trends also favour think tanks. Research suggests that the falling number of embedded advisers and experts in government increases the reliance of administrations on outside expertise such as think tanks (Fraussen & Halpin, 2016; Lingard, 2016; Pautz, 2020). Furthermore, as the world becomes increasingly interconnected, policymaking is quicker. Think tanks that present "silver bullet" ideas will be particularly influential (Lingard, 2016; Pautz, 2020) and embracing this trend will increase the influence of think tanks in the future.

However, there exists an equally vocal section of the literature which argues that think tank influence is overstated (Gonzalez Hernando et al., 2018; Lalueza & Girona, 2016; Pautz, 2016; Stone, 2007). Rather than being key players in policymaking, Stone (2007) describes think tanks as "cogs in the wider machineries of governance" which "do not enjoy automatic political access" (p. 154). Even during times of crisis, some claim that think tanks still fail to have substantial policy influence (Pautz, 2016; Lalueza & Girona, 2016). At the very most, think tanks "engage in constructing ideological fellowship", thereby legitimising existing government policy preferences rather than acting as a source of policy ideas (Denham & Garnett, 1998, p. 34).

Yet, between these two extreme positions lie scholars who argue that the influence of think tanks is conditional on other factors (Abelson, 2000). One example is that scholars argue that think tanks have a greater influence during different parts of the policy process. For instance, Pautz

(2013) investigates the role think tanks played in modernising Cameron's Conservative party while in opposition between 2005 and 2010. The findings suggest that think tanks may have a greater influence in the early stages of the policy process, such as in framing and promoting specific policies, rather than in the implementation (see also Kingdon, 1984 as cited in Pautz, 2020). Alternatively, the political system may shape the role of think tanks as parliamentary and presidential democracies provide different opportunities for engagement between think tanks and policymakers (e.g., Braml, 2006; Campbell & Pedersen, 2015; Pautz, 2012). Another conditional factor is the policy issue under discussion. Pautz (2017) suggests that think tanks had a limited role in policy development following the 2007-2009 financial crisis because they were not considered authorities on economic issues (Pautz, 2017).

While the results across the literature are mixed regarding the influence of think tanks, those scholars that investigate the influence of think tanks specifically in the UK often argue that there is a particularly close relationship between British political parties and think tanks. Scholars previously investigated the influence of think tanks during Cameron (Pautz, 2013), Blair (Schlesinger, 2009) and Thatcher's (Collini, 2006; Denham & Garnett, 2008; Desai, 1994; James, 1993) premierships. The results show a close relationship between think tanks and the UK government with scholars arguing that the government often engages with think tanks such as by taking inspiration from policy suggestions. Therefore, the existing literature focusing on the UK suggest think tanks have an influential role.

Despite the encouraging results regarding the influence of think tanks in the UK, the existing literature suggests that the think tank landscape has changed dramatically since Thatcher's premiership and even Blair and Cameron. The relationship between think tanks and the Government may have changed. Therefore, this paper contributes to the literature by investigating the influence of think tanks in a dramatically changed landscape regarding the relationships between experts and governments as well as the role of social media.



## Chapter 3 | Theoretical Framework

This paper takes a discursive institutionalist approach to explaining the economic policies of the Growth Plan. This section outlines key theoretical concepts guiding this research and, based on previous empirical research, presents theoretical expectations for the case study.

### 3.1 | Discursive Institutionalism

Discursive institutionalism, the newest of the four institutionalist approaches, is more adept at explaining change than rational choice and historical institutionalism (Schmidt, 2008). According to Schmidt (2008), work in the discursive institutionalist tradition has four key characteristics: (1) ideas and discourse are central to the study, (2) institutions act as important background information, (3) ideas are situated within the cultural context, and (4) ideas are considered capable of causing institutional change. These four key characteristics are evident in this case study. Firstly, this paper proposes that ideas are central to explaining the economic policies of the Growth Plan. Secondly, this paper recognises the importance of institutions in creating the framework in which decision-makers and think tanks could further ideas. Thirdly, this paper investigates the causal mechanisms which underpin the effect of ideas on economic policies which requires an appreciation and analysis of how ideas are situated within the context they are understood. Finally, this case deals with a policy change and considers ideas to be crucial in its explanation. Therefore, discursive institutionalism aligns closely with the key features of this case study and provides a framework through which to investigate the policies of the Growth Plan.

### 3.2 | What are ideas?

Ideas are at the centre of discursive institutionalism. It is important to be clear about what we mean by “ideas” as, while often presented as a single concept, ideas exist at three levels (Mehta, 2010). Firstly, political scientists talk about ideas in terms of specific *policy solutions* (Schmidt, 2008; Mehta, 2010). Most frequently associated with the term “policy idea”, policy solutions assume a particular goal or problem and provide a means to solve it. At a more basic level, ideas exist as *policy programmes* (Schmidt, 2008; Mehta, 2010). Policy programmes connect policy solutions with policy problems in a manner which reflect underlying assumptions about the functioning of policy (Hall, 1993; Mehta, 2010; Schmidt, 2008). Policy programmes involve defining problems, identifying policy goals, stipulating appropriate solutions, and outlining underlying principles and

ideals (Schmidt, 2008; Mehta, 2010). The Growth Plan is an example of a policy programme since it identifies various problems and outlines appropriate solutions to address them. The third level is *policy philosophies* (Schmidt, 2008; Mehta, 2010). Policy philosophies are general world views, meaning ideas, principles, and values held widely in society which organise the policies and programmes under consideration (Campbell, 1998; Schmidt, 2008). Policy philosophies are usually, except for in very rare circumstances, not up for debate (Campbell, 2004; Schmidt, 2008). This paper focuses on policy solutions and policy programmes because this paper considers individual policy solutions favoured by Truss and Kwarteng over the years, but also looks at how these policy solutions are connected with ideas and broader principles in a policy programme. While this paper does not focus in detail on policy philosophies, policy philosophies still feature since all three are deeply interconnected.

### 3.3 | Ideas and the Growth Plan

Kingdon's (1984, as cited in Pautz, 2020) three streams model suggest that ideational factors may be particularly powerful in explaining the policies of the Growth Plan. Kingdon (1984, as cited in Pautz, 2020) says that when three streams – problems, politics, and policies - come together, ideas can be highly influential. Firstly, there must be a problem which requires a solution. In the case of the Growth Plan, the UK economy faced a smorgasbord of economic problems in July 2022. For instance, with energy bills soaring following the horrific Russian invasion of Ukraine, households faced choosing between "heating and eating" while bankruptcy threatened businesses around the UK (End Fuel Poverty Coalition, 2022; Partington, 2022a). The rising energy prices contributed significantly to the cost-of-living crisis with millions of people turning to food banks to make ends meet (Buchanan et al., 2022). In addition, the UK was suffering from endemic slow growth and low productivity. Inflation was expected to reach 13.3% within two months while the economy shrank by 0.1% in the most recent quarter (Elliott, 2022; Giles, 2022; Inman, 2022a). This combination of high inflation and low growth is known as stagflation, and the UK had not experienced such a serious period of stagflation since the 1970s (Giles, 2022). In addition, the UK faced various long-term issues as productivity remained far behind the likes of the US, Germany, and France (ONS, 2023) and the percentage of workers in low-paid jobs in the UK (16.7%) was higher than the OECD average (13.6%) (OECD, 2023). Furthermore, the UK economy was still recovering from the pandemic. Despite boosts from hosting the women's 2022 Euros and the Commonwealth Games, the recovery was pedestrian (Elliott, 2022). This was largely the result of rising inflation which wiped out the positive impacts of any growth (Elliott, 2022).

Furthermore, Brexit weighed on the economy; the pound never truly recovered after its crash following the referendum while trade and investments had fallen (Portes & Wosyka, 2022). Without action, recession appeared to be just around the corner (Inman, 2022a). Therefore, the UK economy faced several economic problems which potentially facilitated the influence of ideas on policymaking.

Secondly, according to Kingdon (1984, as cited in Pautz, 2020), favourable political conditions create opportunities for new ideas to emerge and gain prominence. A key example of such a political opportunity is electoral competition. The resignation of Johnson following several scandals triggered a leadership contest in the Conservative Party, the winner of which would become party leader and consequently prime minister. After Conservative Members of Parliament (MPs) had whittled down the candidates to two, Truss and Sunak, the party leader was decided by a vote of the 160,000 Conservative Party members. Therefore, the change in leadership provided an opportunity for the emergence of new ideas. Finally, Kingdon (1984, as cited in Pautz, 2020) argues that politics and problems must align with the policy solutions on the table. Policy solutions must appear to address the problems at hand and be considered capable of achieving desired goals. The ability of a policy entrepreneur to adequately link a policy solution to the problem and adapt the solution to the politics of the time is critical (Béland, 2005; Kingdon, 1984, as cited in Pautz, 2020). The leadership election offered plentiful opportunities for Truss and Kwarteng to present policy solutions and align them with the problems and politics of the moment. Since the case of the Growth Plan fulfils Kingdon's (1984, as cited in Pautz, 2020) three streams, ideas likely had a significant part to play in explaining the policies of the Growth Plan.

### **3.4 | Influence of Key Decision-Makers' Ideas: Causal Mechanisms and First Theoretical Expectations**

Scholars often argue that ideas affect policymaking across economic issues from welfare reforms (Carstensen, 2010; Cox, 2001) to wage bargaining (Culpepper, 2008). Having briefly reviewed the headline findings in the existing literature in Chapter 2, it is important to interrogate further the potential causal mechanisms explaining the influence of ideas on economic policy. This is particularly important given that the existing literature devotes little attention to outlining the causal mechanisms in ideational explanations (Campbell, 2002; Jacobs, 2009).

The literature suggests that ideas influence policy through cognitive mechanisms. According to Jacobs (2009), "to say that ideas matter is to say that political elites approach new decisions with pre-existing beliefs, ideologies, and worldviews and lean heavily on those

generalised frameworks in judging specific situations and making specific choices" (p. 253). The cognitive effect of ideas can be both top-down and ground-up. Firstly, from the top-down perspective, ideas create frameworks which shape decision-makers' beliefs and preferences about different policies (Jacobs, 2009). For instance, ideas held by decision-makers determine whether they considered a policy "right" or accepted to "work" to address the problem at hand (Widmaier, 2016, p. 342). This determines how decision-makers rank alternatives and therefore, the policies which are adopted (Jacobs, 2009). However, Jacobs (2009) argues that this overlooks the fact that politicians are incentivised to produce good policy which requires gathering evidence and considering alternatives. Jacobs (2009) claims that decision-makers can be overwhelmed by "too many causal possibilities, sources of information, and potential interpretations of data" (p. 253) and therefore, ideas direct attention to process information through a ground-up mechanism. Jacobs' (2009) argument that ideas direct decision-makers' attention towards a certain logic and data is grounded in psychology research on concepts such as confirmation bias (Jacobs, 2009; see also Kahneman, 2012).

Another way in which ideas can influence economic policy is by assisting decision-makers in cultivating wider public support behind policy ideas or a political project (Campbell, 1998; Schmidt, 2002). Ideas are powerful communication devices with policymakers using cognitive and normative arguments to persuade others to adopt ideas, thereby increasing support for particular policies (Carstensen & Schmidt, 2015; Campbell, 1998). Cognitive arguments rely on the ability of actors to establish a clear cause-effect story connecting problems and solutions while normative arguments garner public support behind policies by drawing on the principles, values, traditions, history, and cultural symbols of a given community to justify and promote specific policies (Béland, 2005; Carstensen & Schmidt, 2015; Cox, 2001). Carstensen and Schmidt (2015) call this mechanism "power through ideas". Several scholars investigate how power through ideas can influence policymaking. For instance, Matthijs (2016) argues that Angela Merkel successfully drew on normative arguments during the Greek sovereign debt crisis to convince other actors that austerity policies were required. Likewise, Carstensen and Matthijs (2017) outline how both New Labour and Cameron's Conservative Party attempted to employ power through ideas to convince the public to adopt similar ideas and increase support behind their respective projects. Therefore, ideas can influence economic policy by generating public support behind policies as they are widely accepted as "right" or capable of achieving specific outcomes.

Therefore, the existing literature yields various theoretical expectations about the potential influence of the ideas of key decision-makers on the policies of the Growth Plan. Firstly, the

headline findings of the literature indicate that ideas provide powerful explanations for economic policy, thereby yielding the following theoretical expectation.

*Theoretical Expectation 1:* Ideas held by key decision-makers influenced the policies of the Growth Plan.

Secondly, the literature suggests two potential mechanisms through which key decision-makers' ideas could have influenced the policies of the Growth Plan. This yields the following accompanying theoretical expectations.

*Theoretical Expectation 1a:* Ideas held by key decision-makers influenced the policies of the Growth Plan through the cognitive mechanism.

*Theoretical Expectation 1b:* Ideas held by key decision-makers influenced the policies of the Growth Plan through the mechanism "power over ideas".

### **3.5 | Influence of Think Tank Ideas: Causal Mechanisms and Second Theoretical Expectations**

Chapter 2 outlined that, while the results across the literature regarding the influence of think tanks are mixed, the research focusing on the UK suggests a close relationship between political parties and think tanks. Scholars propose different mechanisms through which think tanks influence the policy making process.

On the one hand, think tanks may attempt to influence policy directly. Firstly, think tanks may influence policymaking through their research and publications which suggest various solutions for economic problems (Rich, 2005). Think tanks provide a selection of ideas, from which policymakers can select policies (Desai, 1994), somewhat likening Kingdon's (1984) "primaevial soup". Think tanks often lean into their independent, non-partisan position to increase the reputability of their policy proposals (Case & Rowell, 2015; Hawkins & Cambridge, 2014; Lingard, 2016). For instance, Lingard (2016) argues that research production was the main mechanism through which think tanks in Australia influenced education policy in the 2010s, with this effect bolstered by the framing of think tank knowledge as independent. In addition, with governments aware that think tanks produce research with the explicit aim of providing new and exciting policy ideas, governments are more likely to turn to think tanks (at least in the short term)

than academic research which focuses on adding to the broader body of knowledge (Lingard, 2016).

Secondly, the literature suggests that think tanks influence policy by "capturing" policy actors (t Hart & Vromen, 2008). This involves cultivating relationships with decision-makers through "vivid, compelling encounters and experiences that speak to their current preoccupations" (t Hart & Vromen, 2008, p. 138). Through meetings and events, think tanks build up relationships with policymakers and can directly share the findings of their research with them (Case & Rowell, 2015; Desai, 1994). In addition, think tanks may provide opportunities for aspiring politicians while political parties may draw on the pool of think tank employees for recruits, thus contributing to ever-closer relationships between governments and think tanks (Schlesinger, 2009). For instance, key leaders of the New Labour project such as David Miliband previously worked at the Institute for Public Policy Research while many more former think tank employees worked as staff (Schlesinger, 2009). Similarly, the success of the IEA in "bringing a number of prominent MPs, journalists and academics within its ambit" including Thatcher is credited for its influence on the macroeconomic policy shift to monetarism in the 1970s and 1980s (Desai, 1994).

Thirdly, the literature highlights how think tanks use the institutionalised opportunities available to them. For instance, the No.10 policy unit acted as a "grand suggestion box", soliciting ideas from the broader knowledge community, and provided an institutionalised path of communication between think tanks and decision makers which facilitated the exchange of ideas (Desai, 1994, p. 32). Therefore, the literature suggests several methods of direct influence on policymaking.

On the other hand, think tanks may take a long-term approach to influencing policy by contributing to a wider policy discourse change. Through cultivating close relationships with the media as well as other key actors in public discourse, think tanks aim to shift and shape public opinion in a particular direction so that their proposals are more positively received (Case & Rowell, 2015; Stone, 1996). In addition, publicity campaigns are sometimes employed by think tanks during which they attempt to raise awareness of an issue to build popular support, sometimes supported with petitions (Ohemeng, 2015). Furthermore, think tanks may "mediatise" their original research to make it more compatible with the media landscape and thus, increase its visibility (Lingard & Rawolle, 2004). For instance, critiques by think tanks of the Keynesian consensus laid the groundwork for monetarist ideas and Thatcherism to flourish (Collini, 2006; Desai, 1994). Thus, think tanks contributed to a shift in beliefs and assumptions which supported Thatcher's economic reforms (Desai, 1994). Therefore, while there are mixed results in the

literature regarding the influence of think tanks, scholars provide several clear mechanisms through which think tanks could influence policymaking.

Therefore, the existing literature on think tank influence yields several theoretical expectations on whether and how right-leaning think tanks influenced the policies of the Growth Plan. The existing literature demonstrates a close relationship between previous British political leaders and think-tanks which yields *Theoretical Expectation 2*.

*Theoretical Expectation 2:* Ideas of right-leaning think tanks influenced the policies of the Growth Plan.

In addition, the literature suggests two ways in which right-leaning think tanks could influence the policies of the Growth Plan which provides two supplementary theoretical expectations.

*Theoretical Expectation 2a:* Ideas of right-leaning think tanks influenced the policies of the Growth Plan through direct methods of policy influence.

*Theoretical Expectation 2b:* Ideas of right-leaning think tanks influenced the policies of the Growth Plan through shaping the discourse around economic policy.

## Chapter 4 | Research Design and Data

Since this paper seeks to explain the economic policy approach of the Growth Plan, it is a single case study which draws on a wide variety of evidence to investigate the research question (Toshkov, 2016). This Chapter outlines the research design and data used to investigate the influence of the ideas of key decision-makers and right-leaning think tanks on the policies of the Growth Plan. This includes describing the process tracing methodology, detailing the operationalisation of the dependent and independent variables, the system for data collection and analysis, and considerations about reliability and validity.

### 4.1 | Single Case Studies, Process Tracing, and Ideational Explanations

According to Campbell (1998), "one way to explain how ideas affect policy making is to show through careful process tracing how specific actors carried certain ideas into the policymaking fray and used them effectively" (p. 29). Therefore, this paper uses process tracing, perhaps the most popular method used in single-case study research (Toshkov, 2016). Several different definitions of process tracing are offered in the literature (Bennett & Checkel, 2015; Collier, 2011; Gerring, 2007; Hall, 2003; Waldner, 2012) with many sharing the assertion that process tracing involves analysing and explaining how a sequence of events is connected by causal mechanisms. According to Waldner (2012), claims of causation in process tracing are based on concatenation, meaning events are linked together in a causal chain by causal mechanisms such as individual decisions, institutional constraints, and social choice functions. These mechanisms are vital as it is the explicit investigation of mechanisms that differentiates process tracing from narrative history (Waldner, 2012).

There exists helpful academic literature and textbooks about process tracing (Bennett & Checkel, 2015; Toshkov, 2016). In particular, Jacobs (2015) provides helpful guidance for process tracing the effect of ideas which shapes this research design. Firstly, Jacobs (2015) says that good process tracing of ideational effects has an expansive empirical scope, both in terms of temporal range and level of analysis. Therefore, this paper considers evidence from between 2010 and 2022; this large time frame allows stability and change in ideas as well as the effect of ideas to emerge. Furthermore, Jacobs (2015) says that analysts must consider the conditions under which their data was produced and account for potential biases in evidence which this paper does in section 4.4. In addition, according to Jacobs (2015), it is necessary to specify the mechanisms at play to illustrate



causality. Together, guided by Jacobs (2015), this paper uses process tracing to investigate how, not only whether ideas influenced the policies of the Growth Plan.

#### 4.2 | Dependent Variable, Independent Variables, and Operationalisation of Concepts

This paper's dependent variable is the policies of the Growth Plan (*The Growth Plan*, 2022). The Growth Plan was the central document formalising the economic approach of the Truss premiership; it outlined the economic approach of the Government, detailed the policies it intended to implement, and identified its key economic priorities (Appendix A). The economic policies considered in this paper are the domestic economic policies which fall under the following four categories:

1. Government spending
2. Taxation
3. Deregulation
4. Privatisation and the role of the private sector

These four policy areas provide a broad overview of the key policies of any fiscal event.

This paper considers two independent variables. The first independent variable is the ideas held by key decision-makers. The key decision-makers under consideration in this paper are Truss and Kwarteng who, as prime minister and chancellor, were the most senior figures in government responsible for economic policy. Ideas are tricky to operationalise since they cannot be seen as they are held inside the thoughts of individuals (Jacobs, 2015). Therefore, this paper operationalises the ideas of Truss and Kwarteng through their public statements about domestic economic policy such as in articles, interviews, Twitter posts, and other publications and public appearances. While indirect and subject to certain limitations, their stated preferences is the closest possible estimation of Truss and Kwarteng's true ideas available for this research.

The second independent variable is the ideas of right-leaning think tanks. The ideas of think tanks are easier to operationalise as they do not exist inside an individual in the same way that they do for decision-makers. Instead, the ideas of right-leaning think tanks are held by the institution and maintained through different activities. Therefore, this paper operationalises the ideas of think tanks through their publications. While individual contributors to think tank research may hold varying views, when considered in the round, research and publications together provide a clear indication of the ideas of think tanks. It is also important to define what is meant by right-

leaning think tanks. Right-leaning think tanks are defined as those institutions which promote neoliberal, free-market economic policy ideology such as low taxation, low government spending, deregulation, and privatisation (Flew, 2014; Lamer, 2003; Manning, 2022; Sonnenshein & Eichler, 2022; Venugopal, 2015). There are many right-leaning think tanks operating in the knowledge sphere and this paper considers the ideas of the following four: the Adam Smith Institute (AIS), the Centre for Policy Studies (CPS), the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA), and The TaxPayers' Alliance (TPA). These think tanks were selected because a significant part of their research is on economic policy, although they also produce research on other issues including justice, immigration, health, and housing. Furthermore, these four think tanks are widely considered classic examples of right-leaning think tanks, with the CPS being established by Thatcher in 1974 (Schlesinger, 2009).

While these are the three main variables, several other concepts demand operationalisation. These pertain to the mechanisms which connect the dependent and independent variables in addition to how this paper operationalises "influence" (Table 1).

**Table 1***Operationalisation of Concepts*

Theoretical Expectation	Concept	Operationalisation
Ideas held by key decision-makers influenced the policies of the Growth Plan.	Ideas held by key decision-makers	Ideas expressed in Truss and Kwarteng's publications, tweets, speeches, articles etc. since 2010
	Effect of ideas on the policy-making process	Presence or absence of top-down reasoning from ideas to policy preferences in publications during the leadership election and Truss' premiership
		Presence or absence of ground-up effect in publications during the leadership election and Truss' premiership
		Presence or absence of cognitive and normative arguments in the communications during the leadership campaign and Truss' premiership
	Economic Policy	Policies of the Growth Plan
Influence on policies of the Growth Plan	Comparison between the ideas of Truss and Kwarteng and the policies of the Growth Plan	
Ideas of right-leaning think tanks influenced the policies of the Growth Plan.	Ideas held by right-leaning think tanks	Ideas expressed in research and publications available on right-leaning think tanks' websites
	Access of think tanks to decision-makers	Legislation affecting access of think tanks to decision-makers
		Institutional opportunities for think tanks to access decision-makers
	Attempts by right-leaning think tanks to influence the policymaking process	Presence or absence of focus in think tank publications on providing policy suggestions
		The number of appearances by MPs at right-leaning think tank events
Collaborations between MPs and think tanks, such as co-authored papers, based on the resources available on their websites		

		Presence or absence of previous employment at right-leaning think tanks of Special Parliamentary Advisors (SpAds) working for Truss. SpAds, unlike civil servants, are temporary political appointments chosen by Secretaries of State to provide policy advice
		Use of institutional opportunities to engage in the policymaking process
		Evidence of adopting research for the mass media landscape
		Evidence of engagement with traditional media
		Evidence of publicity campaigns
	Perception of decision-makers of the proposals of right-leaning think tanks	Public statements by Truss and Kwarteng about right-leaning think tanks
	Influence of right-leaning think tanks with the policies of the Growth Plan	Similarities between the initial preferences of think tanks and the policies of the Growth Plan
		Public reactions of right-leaning think tanks to the Growth Plan

### 4.3 | Methodology and Analysis

The analysis is divided into two. First, this paper considers the influence of ideas held by key decision-makers on the policies of the Growth Plan. Secondly, this paper considers the influence of ideas furthered by right-leaning think tanks on the policies of the Growth Plan. Different methodologies are demanded because the mechanisms through which the respective ideas influence policies are different, as outlined in Chapter 3. While the ideas held by decision-makers can have a direct effect on policy, ideas furthered by think tanks will always have to work through other actors because they are not decision-makers.

#### 4.3.1 | What was the influence of ideas held by key decision-makers on the policies of the Growth Plan?

When process tracing ideas, it is necessary to demonstrate that ideas influence outcomes independent of material explanations (Jacobs, 2015). In other words, an individual's possession of an idea is not wholly dependent on the payoffs they expect an idea to yield at that moment in time (Jacobs, 2015). With this in mind, to investigate the influence of ideas held by key decision-makers on the policies of the Growth Plan, this paper traces stability and change in the ideas expressed by Truss and Kwarteng since they were first elected to Parliament in 2010. Jacobs (2015) explains that if decision-makers' ideas remain stable across time, despite changes in the material context, one can be more certain that ideas influenced policies.

To establish Truss and Kwarteng's ideas, this paper surveys a broad range of their publications and public appearances since 2010. Using such a long study period exploits changes in material interests which shifted as Truss and Kwarteng moved between different government roles. The data collection started with an investigation of Truss and Kwarteng's Twitter feeds. For Truss, posts between 1<sup>st</sup> January 2010 and the start of the leadership race on the 13<sup>th</sup> of July 2022 were considered. Unfortunately, Kwarteng only joined Twitter in December 2016. Therefore, his respective search period was from 1<sup>st</sup> December 2016 until the 13<sup>th</sup> of July 2022. This cut-off date was chosen because any ideas expressed during the leadership campaign would be difficult to distinguish from the policies of the Growth Plan which started to take form during the campaign. Truss and Kwarteng often retweet public appearances or link articles, interviews, and speeches they have written or given. Therefore, this paper used a snowballing method whereby any links posted or retweeted were also investigated. Then, all tweets, interviews, articles, and speeches were

logged if they pertained to one of four key categories of domestic economic policy: (1) government spending, (2) taxation, (3) deregulation, and (4) privatisation and the role of the private sector.

Ultimately, this process yielded 300 unique evidence sources for Truss which included 237 tweets, 33 articles, and 27 speeches. For Kwarteng, 312 unique sources of evidence were logged by snowballing through Twitter, including 252 tweets, 16 articles, and two speeches. Since Kwarteng's Twitter feed was only available until 2016, the appearances of Truss and Kwarteng in the House of Commons since 2010 were also analysed. The Hansard provides a report of all Parliamentary debates which can be filtered by appearances for specific MPs. Appearances were logged if they concerned the four categories. This yielded 113 contributions from Truss and 116 contributions from Kwarteng. All sources of evidence were coded using the four categories, with key quotes categorised in an Excel spreadsheet. An example of how evidence was logged and coded is provided in Appendix B.

After, this paper compares the ideas of Truss and Kwarteng to the policies of the Growth Plan to establish whether there is substantial alignment. Following, this paper uses the same snowballing method to gather evidence between the 13<sup>th</sup> of July 2022 and the announcement of the Growth Plan to investigate the causal mechanisms linking ideas with policies. This period was selected because it was then that the policies of the Growth Plan formalised. The evidence collection yielded 34 unique evidence sources for Truss, including 18 tweets, 7 articles, and 5 television appearances. For Kwarteng, the results yielded 12 unique evidence sources of 8 tweets, 3 articles, and one television appearance.

Together, these three steps indicate whether ideas held by key decision-makers influenced the policies of the Growth Plan. Firstly, if the results show that Truss and Kwarteng maintained stable ideas across their careers, this will indicate that these expressed ideas were not determined by material interests which fluctuate depending on their government role. Secondly, if there is alignment between ideas expressed by Truss and Kwarteng and the policies of the Growth Plan this suggests that ideas held by key decision makers influenced the policies of the Growth Plan (*Theoretical Expectation 1*). Finally, evidence that cognitive mechanisms and power through ideas were at play indicates viable routes through which ideas could influence the policies of the Growth Plan (*Theoretical Expectations 1a and 1b*).

### 4.3.2 | What was the influence of ideas furthered by right-leaning think tanks on the policies of the Growth Plan?

This paper uses Christensen's (2013) method for studying expert influence in decision-making processes to investigate the influence of ideas furthered by right-leaning think tanks on the policies of the Growth Plan. The five-step process proceeds as follows: (1) defining the initial preferences of actors, (2) mapping the access of actors to decision-making actors/bodies/arenas, (3) considering how certain ideas were furthered, (4) investigating how decision-makers respond to ideas, and (5) concluding to what extent initial preferences appear in policies (Christensen, 2013). Different sources of evidence are used for each section.

First, to define the initial preferences of actors, this paper surveys the research published by selected right-leaning think tanks from 2020 until the publication of the Growth Plan. This period was selected because it is both long enough to provide a rounded overview of the key policy priorities of think tanks, but short enough to only capture proposals which could account for the economic impact of the pandemic which would likely affect the policy proposals. Helpfully, most websites provide a filter feature for publications. For each think tank, the following filters were used to identify relevant publications:

- Adam Smith Institute: “Economy & Tax”, “Regulation & Industry”, “Privatisation”, and “Welfare”
- Centre for Policy Studies: “Economy”, “Tax”, and “Public Services”
- Institute of Economic Affairs: “Economic Theory”, “Labour Market”, “Markets and Morality”, “Regulation”, “Tax and Fiscal Policy”, and “Welfare”
- The TaxPayers' Alliance: No filter for publications was provided. Therefore, articles were selected by looking for keywords in the titles of the research papers based on the filters applied on the other three websites: economy, market, regulation, tax, and welfare.

This process yielded 5 articles for the ASI, 22 for the CPS, 24 for the IEA, and 37 from the TPA. After collecting relevant articles, they were reviewed in relation to the four key domestic economic categories to establish right-leaning think tanks' ideas.

To complete stage two, this paper reviews the legislation regarding interactions between think tanks and decision-makers. In addition, this section draws on evidence regarding the opportunities for think tank influence in Parliament. Both types of evidence are drawn from the

UK Parliament website which provides extensive information about the institutions of Parliament and its functioning (*UK Parliament*, n.d.).

Stage three of Christensen's (2013) framework involves exploring the methods used by the selected think tanks to further their ideas. The evidence collected is guided by the methods suggested in the literature. Firstly, evidence is collected to investigate the use of methods for direct policymaking influence, namely through their research (Desai, 1994; Lingard, 2016; Rich, 2005), capturing policy actors (Case & Rowell, 2015; Schlesinger, 2009; 't Hart & Vromen, 2008), and engaging in institutionalised opportunities (Desai, 1994). Secondly, evidence is collected to investigate whether think tanks attempt to influence wider policy discourse through "mediatising" research (Lingard & Rawolle, 2004), active media engagement (Case & Rowell, 2015; Stone, 1996), and running campaigns (Ohemeng, 2015). Table 2 outlines in detail the evidence sought for each of these methods.



**Table 2***Table Detailing the Evidence Used to Investigate the Methods Used by Think Tanks to Influence Policy Making*

	Literature Suggestions	Operationalisation/Evidence
Direct influence on the policymaking process	Research and Publications	Analysing the focus of research and publications to investigate their focus (i.e. analysing policies, data collection, and policy suggestions)
	“Capturing” policy actors	Calculating the number of appearances by MPs at think tank events based on their respective websites and YouTube channels  Investigating collaborations between MPs and think tanks, such as co-authored papers, based on the resources available on their websites  Calculating the number of SpAds with an employment history at right-leaning think tanks who also worked for Truss over her political career based on their LinkedIn profiles.
	Engaging in institutionalised opportunities	Evidence of giving written or oral evidence to Select or Public Bills Committees
Influencing wider policy discourse	“Mediatising” research	Investigating the presentation of research and publications online on websites and Twitter feeds for evidence of adopting research to the broader media landscape
	Media Engagement	Evidence of engagement with traditional media (i.e. newspapers, TV, radio) based on appearances logged on the respective websites of the four think tanks
	Campaigns	Evidence of right-leaning think tanks running issue-specific campaigns based on a review of their websites

Stage four investigates how decision-makers respond to the ideas of right-leaning think tanks by drawing on the publications collected to establish the ideas of Truss and Kwarteng. This section will explore whether Truss and Kwarteng mention think tanks and analyse how they engage with think tank content. Finally, stage five compares the similarities and differences between the policies of the Growth Plan and the initial preferences of right-leaning think tanks, focusing on the four key economic categories. Furthermore, this paper will consider the online reactions of the selected think tanks to the Growth Plan. The evidence of reactions is collected from the websites and Twitter feeds of the respective think tanks.

The literature is divided regarding the threshold for identifying "think tank influence" ('t Hart & Vromen, 2008). On the one hand, some scholars take the "knowledge diffusion" view which argues that rather than affecting policymaking directly, think tanks contribute to the general discussion about policy with the hope that ideas filter over time into policymaking (Goodman, 2005; Stone, 1996; 't Hart & Vromen, 2008). On the other hand, some scholars argue that think tank influence is only identifiable when there is evidence of policy adoption ('t Hart & Vromen, 2008). Although a demanding definition of think tank influence, this paper adopts the second definition since it is easier to study empirically. However, this paper also recognises that think tanks influence also occurs indirectly, over a longer period and therefore, this paper may underestimate the influence of think tanks on policy making. In short, if the evidence demonstrates plausible access of think tanks to decision-makers, a positive reception of think tank proposals by decision-makers, and alignment between the policies of the Growth Plan and the initial preferences of right-leaning think tanks, this suggests an influence of right-leaning think tanks on the policies of the Growth Plan (*Theoretical Expectation 2, 2a, and 2b*).

Together, the two parts provide a broad and deep overview of how ideas held by key actors influenced the ideas of the Growth Plan. Across the two parts of the methodology, a broad and substantial amount of evidence is employed. However, the causal implication of evidence is not equal. The certitude, the likelihood of finding evidence in the case that the hypothesis is true, and the uniqueness, the likelihood of finding evidence when the hypothesis is not true, affect the implications of finding evidence for the theoretical expectations (Toshkov, 2016; Van Evera, 1997). Most of the evidence used in this paper is either a hoop, with high certitude and low uniqueness, while there are some smoking guns, with low certitude and high uniqueness (Appendix C).

#### 4.4 | Validity and Reliability

This paper has an expansive empirical scope drawing on a variety of evidence to investigate the influence of ideas on the Growth Plan. However, there are some limitations regarding the validity and reliability of both the evidence and the method. A discussion of these issues indicates additional steps required to increase validity and reliability and highlights the limitations of this study.

##### 4.4.1 | What was the influence of ideas held by key decision-makers on the policies of the Growth Plan?

The investigation of the influence of Truss and Kwarteng's ideas draws on over 800 different publications and appearances. However, the character restriction of tweets may mean that expressed ideas are not as elaborate as the true ideas held by Truss and Kwarteng. Nevertheless, this concern is partly addressed by the method of snowballing which brings long-form publications into the analysis. An alternative concern is that when serving in the Government, Truss and Kwarteng experienced increased pressure to "tow the party line". Consequently, the ideas expressed by Truss and Kwarteng may not be a fair reflection of their true ideas. This is a particular concern regarding their speeches in the House of Commons where, in their capacities of Secretary of State, they act as the spokesperson for the Government. While this pressure also extends to their personal publications, they may have slightly more freedom in these forums to express their own opinion or add nuance. This validity concern is partly addressed by the extended time frame which provides variation in the pressure Truss and Kwarteng experienced to support the Government. If ideas remain stable, we can be more certain that Truss and Kwarteng expressed their true ideas. Another concern is that these sources paint a picture of an overly coherent set of ideas, in both words and practice. Truss and Kwarteng would likely try to obscure as much as possible any instances in which they supported or implemented policies which contradicted their ideas. This concern is addressed by incorporating Truss and Kwarteng's contributions in the House of Commons which provides a more complete overview of their parliamentary activity such as the legislation they introduced. In addition, this paper consults interviews given by Truss and Kwarteng to journalists which provides the opportunity to identify any contradictions in the political activity of Truss and Kwarteng. For instance, an insightful piece of evidence is Truss and Kwarteng's interviews with former BBC Political Editor Nick Robinson on his podcast *Political Thinking*. The discussions on the podcast aim to reflect on a politician's career in full and Robinson

tends to push politicians on areas of inconsistencies in their political ideas and beliefs. Therefore, while there are some limitations, the combination of multiple different types of publication across an extended period increases the likelihood that the evidence provides a valid reflection of Truss and Kwarteng's ideas.

Regarding reliability, it is likely that the method of snowballing through Twitter led to publications being overlooked. For instance, publications may not have been linked or interview appearances may not be available online. Nevertheless, the large sample increases confidence that the sample yielded an accurate reflection of their ideas. A further concern is that, while this paper strives to provide an objective account of the influence of ideas, it is impossible to overlook the influence of subjectivity. Confirmation bias may result in an overemphasis on evidence supporting the theoretical expectations and (inadvertently) overlooking contradictory evidence (Kahneman, 2012). Therefore, this paper uses purposefully neutral categories to log and code quotes. For example, the category regarding taxation is named "Taxation" rather than "support for low taxation". Instead of looking for evidence of low taxation, the coding process demands that both increases and decreases in taxation are considered. In addition, an inter-coder reliability test was conducted. Two pieces of evidence were selected and coded by an economics student who had not been involved in any other part of the research process. Afterwards, similarities and differences were compared, and no significant differences were identified (Appendix D). Using neutral categories and an inter-coder reliability measure increases the reliability of the findings, increasing assurances that future researchers will reach similar conclusions if repeating this research.

#### 4.4.2 | What was the influence of ideas furthered by right-leaning think tanks on the policies of the Growth Plan?

Analysing the recent publications of right-leaning think tanks is a valid method to identify their initial policy preferences. While think tanks also disseminate ideas through other forums such as events and interviews, publications are a crucial part of their operation (Desai, 1994, Ohemeng, 2015; Pautz, 2020; Rich, 2005). In addition, although the publications of only a selection of right-leaning think tanks are analysed, they represent some of the biggest actors in this field and can be considered relatively representative of right-leaning think tanks generally. However, there are some validity concerns. This section relies heavily on indirect evidence, particularly regarding how decision-makers responded to the proposals of think tanks. For instance, an MP will likely speak highly of a think tank if they are speaking at an event hosted by that think tank. Their verbalised support may be politeness rather than evidence of responding positively to right-leaning think

tanks. Interviews with policymakers and think tank employees may have a higher validity by directly posing the question to actors about their opinion of think tank ideas. Furthermore, interviews could have been insightful for the other stages of analysis too including investigating the policy preferences of think tanks and how they further their ideas. However, interviews are not without challenges. A key concern is how truthfully interviewees retell events, particularly given the highly politicised nature of the topic under investigation. In the absence of interviews, this paper employs an analysis of documents, appearances, and public statements in various forms which provides a strong alternative.

The process of selecting the articles to determine the preferences of right-leaning think tanks was guided by concerns of ensuring reliability. While it is likely that articles were overlooked through filtering, several topic options were selected covering the most fundamental parts of policy. In addition, while the filters reduce the selection of articles reviewed, the use of filters increases reliability by ensuring that future researchers identify and analyse the same selection of articles. However, there are some concerns. For instance, this paper focuses largely on public methods of influence while private methods may be equally, if not more, important. Therefore, the analysis may overlook influence or misunderstand how influence is cultivated. Thus, this research may underestimate the influence of right-leaning think tanks. This part of the results and analysis is also vulnerable to confirmation bias and so neutral categories and inter-coder reliability tests were also employed. There were no significant differences in the categorisation of quotes identified by the inter-coder reliability test (Appendix E).

#### 4.4.3 | Methodological Validity and Reliability

Single case studies are often critiqued for their lack of generalisability since (Toshkov, 2016). It may be argued that the results of this research are limited to the UK because, for instance, rules about lobbying differ across countries and therefore, the influence that think tanks have in the UK is not comparable to other contexts. Furthermore, it could also be claimed that contextual factors such as the specific political and economic conditions of the time mean that the effect of ideas is unique to this case. However, by drawing on previous findings, this paper is situated within a broader body of literature. Thus, the conclusions of the research will be valuable in understanding how ideas influence policy in both the UK and further afield through its relationship with previous research. In addition, while process tracing is highly regarded as a method for single case study research, there are several pitfalls which can limit the validity and reliability of results. For instance, there is the risk constructing a narrative rather than a causal story. However, outlining causal

mechanisms remains at the heart of this paper. Both parts of the methodology explicitly focus on the opportunities and ways in which ideas held by key decision-makers and right-leaning think tanks could influence the policy process which reduces the risk that the result of the research is simply a narrative of causally unrelated events.

Scholars provide helpful guidelines and best practices when conducting single case study research and process tracing. For instance, Bennett and Checkel (2015) provide ten best practices for process tracing which were closely considered in the design of this study (Figure 1). For instance, in response to points 1 and 2, alternative explanations will be considered and scrutinised in Chapter 9. Point 3 is addressed by the consideration of the reliability and validity of evidence as well as the implications of the evidence for theoretical expectations (Appendix C). Therefore, while there are limitations, the research design mitigates the impact on the validity and reliability of conclusions by following best practices outlined in the literature.

### Figure 1

*Ten Best Practices for Process Tracing (Bennett & Checkel, 2015)*

1. Cast the net widely for alternative explanations
2. Be equally tough on the alternative explanations
3. Consider the potential biases of evidentiary sources
4. Consider whether the case is most or least likely for alternative explanations
5. Make a justifiable decision on when to start
6. Be relentless in gathering diverse and relevant evidence, but make a justifiable decision on when to stop
7. Combine process tracing with case comparisons when useful for the research goal and feasible
8. Be open to inductive insights
9. Use deduction to ask, “if my explanation is true, what will be the specific process leading to the outcome?”
10. Remember that conclusive process tracing is good, but not all good process tracing is conclusive

## Chapter 5 | Results: Influence of Key Decision-Makers' Ideas

This chapter presents the results regarding the influence of key decision-makers' ideas on the policies of the Growth Plan. First, this chapter outlines stability and change in the ideas expressed by Truss and Kwarteng to establish their beliefs about the following four areas of domestic economic policy: Government, Taxation, Deregulation, and Privatisation and the Role of the Private Sector. Second, this paper compares the ideas of Truss and Kwarteng and the policies of the Growth Plan which indicates whether ideas influenced the policies of the Growth Plan. Finally, this paper will consider two mechanisms suggested in the literature through which the ideas of Truss and Kwarteng could have influenced the policies of the Growth Plan.

### 5.1 | Ideas of Key Decision Makers

#### 5.1.1 | Liz Truss' Economic Ideas

By the time Truss became prime minister, she was known as “a champion of free enterprise, low taxes, reduced regulations, and the gig economy” (Stewart et al., 2019) which, along with her “relentless optimism”, made her “the darling of the Tory members” (Stewart, 2021). Despite being considered one of the “most ideologically rigid politicians” (Crerar, 2022a), Truss had a reputation for U-turns. For example, when studying at Oxford, Truss was a member of the Liberal Democrats but later switched to the Conservative Party in 1996. Furthermore, originally a Remainer, Truss became highly enthusiastic about the opportunities provided by the UK's new status outside of the EU following the referendum. Truss was elected MP for South West Norfolk in 2010 and since then held several ministerial positions in government. Thus, her career path provides a good test for the stability of her ideas.

#### May 2010 – July 2014: Early Days in Parliament and Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Childcare and Education

Truss started on the backbenches but as soon as 2012 earned her first ministerial position as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Childcare and Education. Her junior position meant that she had time to work on other projects, several of which were related to advancing free-market ideas. For instance, Truss formed the Free Enterprise Group in 2011, a group of 36 Conservative MPs “dedicated to recasting the argument about free enterprise for a new age” (IEA, 2012). They

aimed to “encourage a competitive and free economic environment; raise the global economic standing of the United Kingdom; challenge monopolies and oligopolies; and free individuals to create, innovate and take risks” (IEA, 2012). In addition, during her time on the backbenches, Truss collaborated with four other Conservative MPs – Kwasi Kwarteng, Dominic Raab, Priti Patel, and Chris Skidmore – to write *Britannia Unchained: Global Lessons for Growth and Prosperity*. *Britannia Unchained* outlines a free-market vision for the UK with low taxation, less government spending, and widespread deregulation. The highly controversial book implored the Government to look abroad for evidence of how such policies contributed to higher rates of economic growth (Kwarteng et al., 2012).

During this period, a dominant concern was fiscal discipline and Truss frequently criticised the record of the previous Labour government in her early appearances in the House of Commons and online publications. For instance, Truss condemned the “grim consequences of Labour's spending spree”, saying that the UK was “staring down the barrel of an economic gun” (Truss, 2011a). Truss argued that high government spending “crowded out” private sector funding (Truss, 2012a) and created economic instability (Kwarteng et al., 2012). In *Britannia Unchained*, the authors claim that Canada’s relative resilience during the financial crisis was because, in years prior, Canada reduced government spending significantly across departments while the Labour Government let the deficit rise to an unsustainable level (Kwarteng et al., 2012). This, the authors argue, made the UK economy more vulnerable to economic crises (Kwarteng et al., 2012) and therefore, Truss believed government spending must be kept under control.

Truss did, however, support investing in infrastructure such as the construction of the A11 road through her constituency (Truss, 2012b). Furthermore, Truss supported spending on childcare and proposed the introduction of tax-free childcare for most parents with children aged under five years old during her time at the Department for Education (Osborne & Truss, 2013). Despite this, the overwhelming majority of Truss’ publications argue that the UK should not be subsidising childcare and that the focus should be on supply-side reform such as reducing childcare regulations (Truss, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c, 2012c, 2013a, 2013b). Truss was convinced that the stringent regulations on nurseries and childcare providers were driving up the price of childcare and explained why parents in the UK were saddled with childcare costs far in excess of European neighbours (Truss, 2011e, 2011f, 2011g; 2014a). Truss’ critiques extended beyond childcare: she also complained about food safety rules (Truss, 2011h), Sunday trading laws (Truss, 2012g), and employment protection legislation (Truss, 2012h, 2012i; Kwarteng et al., 2012). In addition, Truss was particularly critical of farming regulations such as the number of inspection visits (Truss,



2010a; 2010b; 2011i). Therefore, according to Truss regulation was a heavy drag on the economy, one which was necessary to address during the recovery from the financial crisis (Truss, 2011j).

Truss also frequently declared the need for lower taxation. Truss' support for low taxation is evident from her early years as an MP. For example, in response to Budget 2011 which lowered income tax and National Insurance Contributions, Truss tweeted her celebrations (Figure 2).

## Figure 2

*Tweet from Liz Truss Celebrating the Tax Cuts in Budget 2011 (Truss, 2011d)*



In fact, the measures did not go far enough for Truss who supported the further simplification of the tax scheme by combining NI and income tax (Truss, 2012d), removing the 50p additional tax rate (2012e; 2012f), and opposed the introduction of higher education taxes (Truss, 2012g).

Privatisation and a strong private sector were crucial for economic growth, according to Truss. In an article for The Telegraph, Truss argued that it is the free market and business which create wealth and opportunities and provided the "services that people want at a price that they can afford" (Truss, 2012e). Truss' support for privatisation was closely linked to her belief in individual responsibility, a key tenant of Thatcherism. In 2011, Truss wrote in another article for The Telegraph that "the Conservative project should be about enhancing individual responsibility, meritocracy and endeavour" and that it is individuals, rather than the state, who are responsible for their success (Truss, 2011k).

Therefore, the results demonstrate Truss' commitment to the key tenants of free-market economics. She was an ardent believer in low government spending, tax cuts, and deregulation. Truss claimed that these policies stimulated the private sector and therefore encouraged economic growth.

July 2014 – July 2016: Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

In July 2014, Truss was promoted to the cabinet and appointed Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). DEFRA is responsible for supporting the food, farming and fishing industries as well as protecting the environment. One of Truss' key ambitions was reforming the regulations affecting the farming industry. Truss said in a speech at the National Farmers' Union that cutting red tape was "vital for our future food security" (Truss, 2015a) and promised to remove "£470m worth of unnecessary costs for businesses" by 2020 (Truss, 2016a). Truss took issue with planning regulations which prevented rural businesses from expanding (Osborne & Truss, 2015) and continued to complain about the number of inspection visits (Ross, 2015; Truss, 2015a). Furthermore, a report by DEFRA published under Truss supported the further rollout of Enterprise Zones to rural areas, believing that farmers would benefit from the special set of incentives to attract private business and investment (DEFRA, 2015). Encapsulating Truss' approach was the desire to "see farmers farming, not form filling" (Truss, 2015b). Interestingly, while Truss often criticised the EU for introducing additional and unnecessary bureaucracy (Conservative Party, 2014; Truss, 2015a, 2016b), Truss supported the Remain campaign as leaving the EU "would mean more red tape for business" (Truss, 2016c, 2016d). The results indicate, however, that Truss' ideas were not entirely coherent as the same regulations which Truss vilified for holding back businesses from growth and innovation are celebrated for underpinning the positive international reputation of British produce and driving trade (Truss, 2015c; 2016e). Nevertheless, Truss appeared to continue her support for regulation reform established in her early parliamentary career.

There were some small deviations from Truss' previously declared ideas. For instance, Truss oversaw the introduction of new schemes providing grants to businesses including the £141million Countryside Productivity Scheme as well as the £900million Countryside Stewardship Scheme to fund environmental programmes (Truss, 2015a). In addition, Truss seemed to turn away slightly from her commitment to low taxation by implementing the 5pence plastic bag levy which she celebrated in Parliament (Truss, 2016f). However, these deviations were small. Truss remained overwhelmingly committed to low taxation, commending the raise in the employer National Insurance Contribution threshold in 2015 which she argued would increase job creation in the farming industry (Truss, 2015d; 2015e). Similarly, Truss continued to encourage private sector over public sector growth, celebrating that "since 2010, five private sector jobs have been created for every job lost in the public sector" (Truss, 2016a).

July 2016 – June 2017: Secretary of State for Justice

In July 2016, after the UK voted to leave the EU, Cameron's resignation, and May's selection as prime minister, Truss was appointed Secretary of State for Justice and responsible for the independence and efficient functioning of the judicial system as well as the prison system. During this period Truss made almost no statements about economic affairs.

June 2017 – July 2019: Chief Secretary to the Treasury

In the 2017 cabinet reshuffle, Truss was appointed Chief Secretary to the Treasury and responsible for managing government spending, public sector pay, procurement, infrastructure spending, housing, and planning. This is reflected in the issues which Truss most frequently discussed. In her early parliamentary career, Truss frequently expressed disdain for high government spending, but this dominated her statements as Chief Secretary. Truss frequently celebrated progress in reducing the deficit such as by using "#fiscaldiscipline" in Twitter posts (Truss, 2018a; 2018b). According to one tweet, "getting debt down means more jobs, more security and better services #LetsGetFiscal" (Truss, 2018c). Truss argued that increasing the size of the state would not spur economic growth; rather it would "squeeze out freedom and enterprise of the private sector" in addition to "raising the tax burden on individuals and businesses which drive our economy" (Truss, 2017a).

Yet, despite being responsible for maintaining sound public finances, Truss continually rallied against higher taxation. For instance, Truss claimed in one tweet that "we cannot tax our way to prosperity" (Truss, 2018d). Truss lobbied against the introduction of the sugar tax (Truss, 2018e), taxes on internet companies (Truss, 2018f) and corporation taxes (Truss, 2018g). Truss justified her position by arguing that thriving free enterprise and economic growth was the only way to "sustainably fund public services" (Truss, 2017b). In addition, Truss continually accused Labour of wanting to raise taxes which would "make it harder for businesses to succeed" (Truss, 2018h). However, Truss also emphasised the importance of fiscal discipline, highlighting in a speech in the House of Commons that the Government would only implement the vast array of tax cuts favoured once the debt was falling and interest payments were under control (Truss, 2018i).

Many of the same issues from her early years as an MP remained high on Truss' agenda. For instance, Truss continued to bang the drum of deregulation. To get "#BacktoBlack", Truss maintained that the answer was "supply-side reform and fiscal discipline" (Truss, 2018j). Rather than increasing welfare provision, Truss argued that employment was "the best route out of poverty" and supply-side reform was necessary to create more jobs (Truss, 2019a, 2019b). Truss

continued to promote Enterprise Zones, believing that these low-tax and low-regulation areas would attract investment and create business opportunities (Begum, 2018), and claimed that supply-side reforms since 2010 had made the UK "one of the best places in the world to start a business" (Truss, 2018k). Related to deregulation, Truss continued to sing the praises of the private sector, insisting that the private sector is much more efficient than the public sector at producing goods and services (Truss, 2018h) and criticised state bailouts of struggling companies (Truss, 2018l).

Therefore, Truss' tenure in the Treasury saw a continuation of her established ideas including the need for regulation reform, the benefits of cutting taxation, and the importance of supporting the private sector. The dominant focus, however, was on the need to manage the public finances with the majority of publications focusing on lowering government spending.

July 2019 – September 2021: Secretary of State for International Trade; President of the Board of Trade; Minister for Women and Equalities

When Johnson became prime minister, he moved Truss to the Department for International Trade where, as Secretary of State, she was responsible for securing trade deals, attracting investment, and upholding the rules-based international trade system. This was a particularly important position given that the UK was scheduled to formally leave the world's largest trading block, the EU, in 2020.

As expected, Truss' publications focused on free trade due to her new role. Therefore, this paper's four key domestic economic categories took a back seat during this period. Nevertheless, there are strong indications that Truss maintained many similar ideas. For instance, Truss highlighted the importance of deregulation, albeit intermittently. Truss emphasised the need to cut customs and tariffs and forge "business-friendly rules" (Truss, 2020a; 2020b). Truss also emphasised the necessity for the UK to have control over setting its standards, a contentious point in free trade negotiations (Truss, 2020a). Furthermore, Truss blocked legislation proposed by DEFRA to ban products with low animal welfare standards fearing that it would prevent the UK from progressing in trade negotiations (Caslicchio, 2021) indicating her continued commitment to deregulation. In addition, Truss spoke of the need to promote free enterprise and marry this with free trade to boost economic growth (Truss, 2020b, 2020c, 2020d). For instance, Truss maintained that supporting free enterprise was "our best way forward" in the aftermath of the pandemic and credited the private sector for driving economic growth, high wages, and productivity (Truss, 2021a). Regarding government spending, Truss retweeted links to the available support for households and businesses during the pandemic, calling the support "important" (Truss, 2020e,

2020f). However, her focus remained on supporting businesses by creating new trade opportunities (Truss, 2020g, 2020h, 2020i, 2020j) and refuted claims that the pandemic “justifie[d] a permanently bigger state” (Truss, 2021a). This is because, according to Truss, high government spending “ultimately leads to worse outcomes for everyone” as it leads to “poor productivity” and “stagnant growth” (Truss, 2021a). Therefore, despite domestic economic issues becoming less salient, Truss appeared committed to key tenants of her ideas expressed since her election as an MP. Their absence was likely the result of her government role.

#### September 2021 – September 2022: Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs

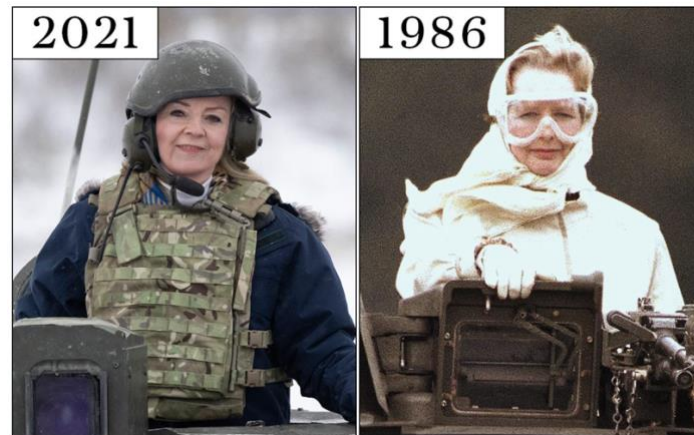
After two years as International Trade Secretary, Truss was promoted to the Foreign Office in the September 2021 cabinet reshuffle. A highly pressurised department at the best of times, Truss served as Secretary of State when the Russian invasion of Ukraine began on the 24<sup>th</sup> of February 2022. This dominated the vast majority of Truss' agenda. Truss was engaged in monitoring and responding to the rapidly escalating tensions (Truss, 2022b, 2022c, 2022d) and was responsible for announcing the UK's response to the invasion including various sanctions and military support (Truss, 2022e; 2022f; 2022g).

As a consequence, Truss spoke far less frequently about economic issues. However, there are indications in the results that Truss maintained many of her long-held free market ideas. For instance, Truss said she wanted to "help countries avoid having their balance sheets loaded with debt" (Truss, 2022b), indicating a continued belief in the importance of fiscal discipline and low government spending. In addition, Truss continued to support free enterprise and businesses, believing that the work of the Foreign Office contributed to economic growth at home; for instance, Truss claimed that "by positioning the UK at the heart of a network of economic, diplomatic and security partnerships, and helping other countries grow through enterprise and trade, we are making our country safer and more competitive, standing up for our values, and confirming our status as the best place to live, work and do business” (Truss, 2021g). Furthermore, some noted that Truss seemed to be stilling herself on Margaret Thatcher in various photo opportunities. For instance, in a trip to Estonia, there was considerable likeness between a photo taken of Truss and an infamous picture of Thatcher taken on a visit to West Germany in 1986 (Figure 3). Truss claimed in an interview that these similarities were simply coincidences (Robinson, 2022). However, when placed in context with Truss' historic reverence for Thatcher (Truss, 2013a; 2019c; 2019d), it could also be seen as an attempt to align herself with the key values

of the former prime minister such as the free-market economic ideology which underpinned Thatcherism (Green, 2002).

### Figure 3

*Comparison of Photos of Truss and Thatcher Showing Similarities (Silverman, 2022)*



Therefore, while Truss spoke less frequently about economic issues and there are indications that Truss continued to support low government spending, deregulation, low taxation, and privatisation.

In short, while the results indicate some variation in Truss' ideas across her career, they are often small deviations. The ideas expressed by Truss are overwhelmingly stable as Truss continually calls for fiscal discipline, low taxation, deregulation, and supports a strong private sector.

#### 5.1.2 | Kwasi Kwarteng's Economic Ideas

Like Truss, Kwarteng was elected to Parliament in May 2010. Elected MP for Spelthorne, Kwarteng spent much longer on the backbenches than Truss. In 2018, Kwarteng gained his first ministerial role and rose quickly under Johnson to become Secretary of State for the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) in 2021. Described as Truss' "ideological soulmate" (Partington, 2022b), Kwarteng was an early endorser of Truss and widely assumed during the leadership campaign to be appointed chancellor if Truss became prime minister

(Walker, 2022b). Despite the long period spent on the backbenches, Kwarteng's ideas faced tests and sometimes changed during his parliamentary career.

#### May 2010 – November 2018: Early Years as an MP and Time on the Backbenches

Like Truss, criticising the spending record of the previous Labour government was a key feature of Kwarteng's speeches in the House of Commons in his early years as an MP (Kwarteng, 2011a; 2012a). Kwarteng blamed overspending under Labour for the size of the deficit, arguing that "blaming the global crisis for what was essentially decisions taken by the Labour party in government is entirely wrong" (Kwarteng, 2011a, also Kwarteng, 2010a, 2014a). While austerity was "painful", Kwarteng believed it was the "responsible course of action" as maintaining a large deficit would have damaging effects on the markets and the government's ability to borrow (Kwarteng, 2010b; see also 2011b; 2011c, 2014a, 2015a, 2016a). Regarding spending, Kwarteng took great issue with subsidies, arguing that "the idea that we can somehow subsidise things endlessly on an unproductive basis is simply wrong" (Kwarteng, 2016b). Instead, Kwarteng believed that free-market economics and the private sector, rather than large state spending, are the key drivers of wealth for all sectors of society (Kwarteng, 2010c).

Kwarteng, a self-proclaimed free-market Conservative (Kwarteng, 2013a), passionately called for tax cuts to "send a signal" that the UK was "very keen on promoting business and enterprise" (Kwarteng, 2012b; see also 2015b). For this reason, Kwarteng favoured a corporate tax rate of 15% (Kwarteng, 2013b) as well as removing National Insurance Contributions which he deemed a "tax on jobs" (Kwarteng, 2015c). In addition, Kwarteng supported income tax cuts, arguing that they would help families deal with the rising cost of living (Kwarteng, 2012c; 2013c). However, Kwarteng's concerns about the deficit were so serious and dominant in his thinking that it even curtailed his commitment to low taxation. For instance, in a debate about air passenger duty, Kwarteng said that because of the size of the deficit, "£3billion coming into the Exchequer is too high an amount simply to discard" by abolishing the air passenger duty (Kwarteng, 2013a). He continues: "I fully understand all the supply side arguments. I understand that, if we were to abolish the tax, we could perhaps reap economic rewards at some future date. However, those who promote reducing or abolishing it must tell us how they would replace that revenue from day one" (Kwarteng, 2013a). Therefore, despite his support of low taxation, the results indicate that fiscal discipline was a greater concern. However, the overwhelming majority of public statements about taxation called for further tax cuts. It seemed that Kwarteng did not believe that reducing the deficit and cutting taxes were incompatible.

Deregulation was also a crucial concern. According to Kwarteng, rules and regulations “impede and impair our ability to grow the economy and create genuine prosperity” (Kwarteng, 2013d). In his first speech to Parliament, Kwarteng told the story of a local business owner in his constituency who felt so “strangled by red tape and bureaucracy” that he did not have enough time to spend on his business (Kwarteng, 2010c). In addition to stifling innovation and growth, Kwarteng claims that regulation leads to higher prices for consumers as it creates regulatory costs (Kwarteng, 2012d, 2013b). Kwarteng’s attitude to minimum and living wage legislation was slightly more mixed. On the one hand, Kwarteng delivered a scathing review of the living wage proposal in 2013, claiming that such laws did not drive rising real wages and that they put a “straitjacket on business” (Kwarteng, 2013d). On the other hand, in 2015 Kwarteng said that he was “particularly gratified that various measures have been introduced to increase the living wage” (Kwarteng, 2015a). Yet, while Kwarteng’s comments about the living wage are inconsistent, the results suggest that he was generally highly supportive of deregulation reforms.

As demonstrated by his statements on government spending, taxation, and deregulation, Kwarteng strongly supported private enterprise. Kwarteng calls the private sector the “backbone of our economy” (Kwarteng, 2010c), often referring to the importance of the private sector in his local constituency (Kwarteng, 2010c, 2015a, 2016b). To boost the private sector, Kwarteng supports “less regulation, less red tape and bureaucracy, and a clear tax system” (Kwarteng, 2010d). The results demonstrate that aspiration is a crucial part of Kwarteng’s support for the private sector, believing that the Government should create the conditions “to allow people to realise their own ambitions and to unlock their spirit of enterprise” (Kwarteng, 2015b). Therefore, over Kwarteng’s first eight years in Parliament, his ideas appeared to broadly align with classical free-market principles. The concern about low government spending was particularly dominant. Yet, Kwarteng wrote and spoke prolifically about the benefits of low taxation and deregulation as well.

#### November 2018 – July 2019: Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union

In November 2018, Kwarteng gained his first ministerial office in the Department for Exiting the EU which was responsible for the Brexit negotiations and the UK’s withdrawal from the EU in 2020. Kwarteng held this role for less than a year, yet public statements during this period are still revealing of his ideas. A key concern was passing Theresa May’s Brexit deal which Kwarteng called “absolutely essential” (Kwarteng, 2019a). The uncertainty caused by the threat of a no-deal Brexit scenario undermined private sector investment and therefore, Kwarteng implored



his colleagues to support the deal to provide certainty for businesses (Kwarteng, 2019b, 2019c). In addition to encouraging colleagues to support May's Brexit deal, Kwarteng focused on the potential for deregulation reform, assuring farmers that the Government would "seize the opportunities of a green Brexit and break from the EU's common agricultural policy" (Kwarteng, 2019d). Furthermore, Kwarteng emphasised the opportunities for trade after Brexit, claiming that businesses have "a brighter future outside the EU than within it" (Kwarteng, 2019e; see also Kwarteng, 2018a, 2019f).

Fiscal discipline and government spending continue to feature as a theme in Kwarteng's public appearances. For instance, explained that he supported Brexit because he wanted to end "the club membership" (Kwarteng, 2019b). In addition, in a 2018 debate about industrial strategy, Kwarteng made scathing and quite offensive comments about those encouraging government support for industries or nationalisation:

Anyone who thinks we will drive innovation, R&D and talent by nationalising vast swathes of the British economy [...] deserves some sort of break or respite, because they are clearly not thinking particularly straight. (Kwarteng, 2018b)

However, Kwarteng was committed to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund which would replace previous EU funding to support different regions in the UK (Kwarteng, 2019c, 2019g). Furthermore, writing for *The Telegraph*, Kwarteng admitted that "it would be foolish to pretend all is well with the capitalist system", referencing the housing crisis and low-interest rates (Kwarteng, 2017a). Yet, despite these concessions that some government spending and involvement in the market may be necessary, Kwarteng remained defiant that "as a means of generating wealth and prosperity, no system has approached the efficiency of the free market" (Kwarteng, 2017a).

Closely connected to Kwarteng's ongoing commitment to creating a pro-business environment, attracting investment, and boosting the public sector, was his call for low taxation. Kwarteng argued that lower taxation creates "a culture of entrepreneurship and [...] growth" and that lower taxes increases tax receipts (Kwarteng, 2018b). Kwarteng criticised the Government's approach to taxing the insurance industry saying in 2018 that the insurance sector "is a very successful British industry and something that we should be supporting" rather than raising taxes by 6 percentage points as had been the case in the past decade (Kwarteng, 2018c). This suggested a continued belief in the benefits of low taxation.

July 2019 – September 2022: Minister in and later Secretary of State for the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy (BEIS)

In July 2019, Kwarteng was promoted to Minister of State for Business, Energy and Clean Growth and then later Secretary of State for BEIS. Since his election to the House of Commons, Kwarteng's expressed ideas fell in the free-market tradition. He enjoyed relative freedom to develop his ideas, saying on the *Political Thinking* podcast that his time on the backbenches had been a “very creative period” in which he worked with others on developing ideas on how to improve the economy (Robinson, 2021). However, the evidence suggests that Kwarteng's promotion to minister and then Secretary of State in BEIS proved to be a major test of his ideas. For instance, Kwarteng reflected in a speech at the 2019 Conservative Party Conference: “There's nothing [better] to convert someone from being a radical free marketeer to seeing the virtues of government action than making them an energy minister” (Neate, 2021).

While on the backbenches, Kwarteng was highly critical of Labour's spending record and was supportive of the Government's austerity project. However, his roles in BEIS made it clear that significant government intervention was necessary to reach the target of achieving net zero emissions by 2050 (Kwarteng, 2019h). The demand for government investment only increased in the wake of the pandemic with the Government aiming to "Build Back Greener" (Kwarteng, 2020a). As a result, Kwarteng oversaw huge government investments in a wide variety of different projects including hydropower (Kwarteng, 2019i, 2020b), electric vehicles and charging points (Kwarteng, 2020c, 2020d), carbon capture and storage (Kwarteng, 2020e, 2021a), and grants for upgrading home energy efficiency (Kwarteng, 2020f). According to Kwarteng, this was highly successful as he credited the Government for the two-thirds fall in the cost of producing offshore wind (Kwarteng, 2019j). Between 2020 and 2021, BEIS published a series of industrial strategy policy papers on hydrogen (BEIS, 2021a), industrial decarbonisation strategy (BEIS, 2021b), and transport decarbonisation (BEIS, 2021c). Government intervention was central to these plans: for instance, the industrial decarbonisation strategy outlined how the Government would provide substantial funding, develop the necessary frameworks, and structure carbon pricing to boost the move to net zero (BEIS, 2021b). Nevertheless, Kwarteng maintained that a competitive market system was still generally preferable and that private companies played a crucial role in the transition to net zero. For instance, across the industrial strategy plans, BEIS reiterates its "commitment to market-led approaches that build and maintain competitive tension" (BEIS, 2021a, p. 7). Yet, having been deeply opposed to large government spending and state involvement

in the market, Kwarteng realised “climate change commitments have changed the commitment of the Government to the market” (Robinson, 2021).

In addition to the pressure of delivering the Government’s net zero commitment, the 2021 energy price crisis and the pandemic also placed a strain on Kwarteng’s ideas. On the one hand, Kwarteng said that his department would do “whatever it takes to support jobs and businesses through the pandemic” (Kwarteng, 2021b, 2021c) and approved of providing financial support to manufacturers struggling to pay their energy bills. Furthermore, Kwarteng authorised the nationalisation of the energy provider Bulb Energy when it faced collapse (Kwarteng, 2021d) and oversaw the bailout of the US company CF Fertilisers in 2021 which was responsible for producing approximately 60% of the UK's CO<sub>2</sub> (Allegretti, 2021; Kwarteng, 2021e). In addition, Kwarteng resisted calls from energy companies to lift the energy price cap and let the market dictate energy prices (Kwarteng, 2021f). Kwarteng admitted that this was “a big intervention in the way the energy market works”, claiming that it was evidence of the Government's “non-ideological approach to the issue” and “determination to support hard-pressed energy consumers” (Kwarteng, 2020g). In addition, Kwarteng approved financial support for low-income households with their energy bills (Kwarteng, 2020g), saying that “protecting consumers is [the Government's] primary priority” (Kwarteng, 2021g, 2021h, 2022a). Therefore, the results suggest that Kwarteng was prepared to support higher government spending to address market failures and go against his previous opposition to subsidies and bailouts (Kwarteng, 2016b) to deal with extraordinary crises such as the pandemic and the energy crisis.

However, on the other hand, Kwarteng was prepared to let some companies collapse rather than provide bailouts (Kwarteng, 2021b; 2021c). Apart from Bulb Energy, Kwarteng let most energy companies collapse as he argued that the “supplier of last resort” system protected consumers (Kwarteng, 2021b). In addition, when major steel producer Liberty Steel asked the government for a £170million bailout, Kwarteng rejected despite 3,000 jobs being at risk (BBC, 2021a). While the Subsidy Control Bill provided mechanisms to support struggling businesses, Kwarteng emphasised that the new subsidy regime would “not return to the failed 1970s approach of the government trying to run the economy, picking winners or bailing out unsustainable companies” (Courea & Wright, 2021). Instead, the new regime was “designed to remedy market failures” while protecting “the dynamic and competitive free market economy that has been central to our national prosperity for decades” (Kwarteng, 2021i). Therefore, the results show an inconsistency in Kwarteng’s ideas and actions with the crises prompting Kwarteng to support some government spending and involvement in the market.

Regarding other economic ideas, Kwarteng's commitment to deregulation also appeared strained. In many regards, Kwarteng remained committed to deregulation. For instance, he called for radical reform to employment legislation to encourage growth as he argued the current system prevented businesses from "taking risks" (Robinson, 2021). In the wake of the UK's exit from the EU, the government announced a swathe of reforms to previously imposed EU legislation. This included a review of thousands of EU regulations kept after Brexit, reform of the GDPR, and the digitalisation of driving licenses and shareholder certificates (Cabinet Office, 2021a). Kwarteng welcomed these reforms saying that "we now have the opportunity to create a competitive, high standards regulatory environment to support innovation and growth" (Kwarteng, 2021j; see also 2021k). However, Kwarteng also oversaw the introduction of new business regulations. The National Security and Investment Act, Kwarteng's first bill as Business Secretary, gave the Government increased powers to "scrutinise, impose conditions on or, as a last resort, block a deal wherever there is an unacceptable risk to Britain's national security" (Kwarteng, 2021l). In addition, after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Kwarteng introduced new measures requiring owners and operators of businesses in the UK to verify their identity with Companies House, the register of companies in the UK (Kwarteng, 2022b). Various other regulations were announced including eco-design regulations requiring producers of electronic products to provide information about the energy performance of a good (Kwarteng, 2020h), regulations on the longevity and recyclability of products (Kwarteng, 2021m), and new rules to investigate and punish company directors who mismanaged their enterprises (Kwarteng, 2021n). Despite Kwarteng's call for employment regulation reform, in debates about the UK's exit from the EU Kwarteng made it clear that the Government remained committed to upholding workers' rights including the working time directive, the annual leave entitlement, and breaks at work (Kwarteng, 2021o). Therefore, again, Kwarteng's ideas about regulation were mixed.

While the results show that Kwarteng said relatively less about taxation during this period, it remained clear that Kwarteng remained deeply opposed to higher taxation believing it necessary to "provide the right tax environment for businesses to invest and grow" (Kwarteng, 2020i). For instance, Kwarteng celebrated the announcement of the super-deduction tax in Budget 2021 with a Twitter post (Figure 4).

## Figure 4

Twitter Post from Kwarteng Celebrating the Cut to Businesses Taxes (Kwarteng, 2021p)



Kwarteng opposed imposing a windfall tax on energy companies experiencing bumper profits due to energy price rises, claiming that a windfall tax “would be a tax on jobs, destroy investment and add to the uncertainty” (Kwarteng, 2022c; see also 2022d). Yet, despite these proclamations against high taxation, Kwarteng defended the Health and Social Care Levy in the House of Commons, introduced by Sunak as Chancellor under Johnson to balance the nation's finances after the pandemic. Representing the Government at the dispatch box, Kwarteng said that “people will understand that the increase in the national insurance contribution was precisely to pay for the NHS backlog and for ongoing health and social care costs. In that context, it made sense” (Kwarteng, 2022e). While the Business Secretary appears to support the Levy, it is not necessarily a ringing endorsement of the policy and, unlike his ideas about government spending and deregulation, his support for low taxation remains generally consistent.

While Kwarteng recognised that state intervention in the market and government spending was necessary to fulfil net zero emission commitments, he also insisted that the march to net zero would be “powered on by private enterprise, competition and the free market” (Kwarteng, 2021q). Kwarteng credits the free market and competition for developing new technologies and lowering costs for consumers (Kwarteng, 2021r). Kwarteng was highly optimistic about public-private partnerships for projects; for instance, while the 10 Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution

pledged £12 billion of Government investment, the Government anticipated three times this from the private sector (Kwarteng, 2021a). According to Kwarteng, the responsibility of the Government was to create the right framework to encourage private-sector investment (BEIS, 2020; Robinson, 2021). The key mechanism used to attract private investment was and continues to be the Contracts for Difference (CfD) scheme. The CfD scheme sees private companies submit sealed bids for projects with high upfront costs. In return, the Government provides “direct protection from volatile wholesale prices” which creates greater certainty for investors and therefore, increases investment (BEIS, 2022). Kwarteng argued that these auctions meant that the private sector, rather than the state, decided which technology will be most profitable and brought competition into the system (Robinson, 2021). Kwarteng emphasised that “no government in the world can simply spend their way to creating the industry”, reiterating that any government actions aimed to “open the door” to private investment (Kwarteng, 2020j). Regarding the post-pandemic “#BuildBackBetter” campaign, Kwarteng affirmed that “private enterprise has always been the key to our national prosperity, generating wealth and jobs across the country” and therefore, would form an important part of the recovery (Kwarteng, 2021r). Thus, despite the significant involvement of the Government in the market for green technologies, Kwarteng was intent on infusing the system with free-market and competitive foundations. According to Kwarteng, while the Government set the framework, it was up to the market to deliver the new technologies necessary to fulfil environmental commitments.

In short, Kwarteng's tenure at BEIS placed significant pressure on his small-state ideas. He offered enthusiastic support for government spending on different infrastructure and energy projects to deliver on the Government's net zero commitment despite his previous denouncement of the Labour Government's spending record. In addition, Kwarteng took various measures to cap energy prices for consumers and even authorised the (temporary) nationalisation of key industries under pressure due to rising energy prices. Kwarteng also offers vocal support to the Government's COVID-19 support package, much more so than Truss. Furthermore, Kwarteng introduced various new regulations regulating foreign investment and the durability of goods. Nevertheless, while Kwarteng may have learnt that state action has benefits, the results show that he still believed that the free market is the best system on offer. Higher government spending was necessary due to extraordinary pressures. Therefore, the results do not suggest that there was a wholesale replacement of Kwarteng's ideas about government spending.

## 5.2 | Comparison of Ideas with the Policies of the Growth Plan

Having reviewed the stability and change in Truss and Kwarteng's ideas, it is possible to compare the results from the previous section with the policies of the Growth Plan to investigate whether there is alignment. This would indicate a potential influence of ideas on the policies of the Growth Plan.

### 5.2.1 | Government Spending

The Growth Plan announced the Energy Price Guarantee, capping household energy bills at £2,500 until October 2024, as well as providing £400 cash support for all households through the Energy Bills Support Scheme. The Treasury calculated that this would save the average household £1,400 a year. In addition, the Treasury announced the Energy Bill Relief Scheme which would provide business and other non-domestic energy users with a discount on their energy bills for six months. The Treasury estimated that the measures would cost approximately £60million in the first year. Nevertheless, Kwarteng said that the Government was committed to a "responsible fiscal approach", promising a medium-term fiscal plan within the coming months to outline in more detail how the government planned to manage the national finances (Kwarteng, 2022a).

This was a significant deviation from Truss and Kwarteng's previously expressed views. As outlined in 5.1.1, Truss consistently rallied against high government spending from her early years on the backbenches where she defended the austerity project to her role as Foreign Secretary where she set out to spread the message of the importance of fiscal discipline at home and abroad. With Kwarteng, Truss argued in *Britannia Unchained* that fiscal discipline was the foundation of a healthy and growing economy. Kwarteng's ideas were slightly less stable; having been a strong critic of high government spending, Kwarteng oversaw huge government investments and some bailouts during his time as Business Secretary. However, although Kwarteng supported government spending in some regards, such as correcting market failures, he continued to believe that the private sector produced goods more effectively and efficiently than the state (Robinson, 2021). In addition, while both Truss and Kwarteng supported pandemic assistance, both emphasised the need for assistance to be temporary (Kwarteng, 2021e; Truss, 2020e). In contrast, the Growth Plan pledged support for households for two years. Therefore, the results indicate substantial differences between the Growth Plan's spending measures and Truss and Kwarteng's ideas.

### 5.2.2 | Taxation

The Growth Plan included a wide range of tax cuts, several of which had been promised during the leadership contest. For instance, the Growth Plan cancelled the planned increase to corporation tax and the introduction of the 1.25% Health and Social Care Levy. However, this was not all. The Growth Plan cut tax across the income spectrum with the basic rate of income tax falling from 20% to 19% and the abolition of the 45 pence additional rate of income tax paid by those earning over £150,000. Furthermore, the Stamp Duty Land Tax threshold was doubled for all home buyers and increased even higher for first-time buyers. The Growth Plan estimated that the cost of these tax cuts was approximately £45 billion, funded by increased borrowing.

As outlined in 5.1, there was no other area of economic policy in which Truss and Kwarteng maintained such clear preferences than taxation where they consistently lobbied for tax cuts for individuals and businesses. There are some contrasts between Truss and Kwarteng's ideas and the taxation policies. Truss, for instance, made it clear when Chief Secretary to the Treasury that tax cuts must be accompanied by spending cuts and fiscal discipline. In contrast, the Growth Plan married high government spending on the energy package with unfunded tax cuts which appeared to be quite a substantial deviation. Yet, despite this contrast, the Growth Plan's policies align overwhelmingly with Truss and Kwarteng's ideas concerning taxation policy.

### 5.2.3 | Deregulation

Regulation reform was a key feature of the Growth Plan, intended to deliver economic growth and increase energy security. The Growth Plan announced reforms to infrastructure, housing, and farming regulation to increase house construction, accelerate infrastructure projects, and support growing businesses. This included reducing the stringency of environmental regulation and reforming the consultation process for construction projects. Similarly, the Growth Plan announced deregulatory reforms to the financial services sector such as scrapping regulations which restricted insurance (Solvency II) and pension funds (Pensions Regulatory Charge Cap) from investing in businesses and infrastructure. The Growth Plan claimed this would release billions for investment. Furthermore, the bankers' bonus cap, EU-wide legislation which limited bonus pay of senior bank executives to 100% of their fixed salary, was abolished following Brexit. A flagship policy was the implementation of Investment Zones which would benefit from time-limited tax incentives including 100% relief from business rates for new businesses and enhanced capital allowances. In addition, Investment Zones would be regulated by radically liberalised planning restrictions to streamline applications such as by "disapplying legacy EU red tape where



appropriate” and reforming environmental regulations (Pope & Coggins, 2022; *The Growth Plan*, 2022, p. 17). Truss argued that the supply-side reforms benefitting Investment Zones would “open the floodgates to investment” and create “hubs of innovation and enterprise” (Truss, 2022n). The Growth Plan announced that 38 authorities had already registered interest and there was no limit on the number of areas which could gain Investment Zone status.

The deregulation policies aligned closely with Truss and Kwarteng's ideas. The Growth Plan implemented reforms in areas they previously complained suffered under the weight of regulation, such as farming and business growth. In addition, the Growth Plan announced reforms to regulations neither Truss nor Kwarteng mentioned previously, such as financial services, but the reforms aligned with their general view that regulations created unnecessary transaction costs. Both Truss and Kwarteng celebrated that the reforms would “unleash” the economy, a verb Truss used several times across her career to describe supply-side reform (Truss, 2012e, 2015c, 2017c). In addition, the Growth Plan's Investment Zones aligned not only with Truss and Kwarteng's general ideas about the benefits of deregulation but Truss' ideas about specific policy solutions for growth as well. Truss welcomed Enterprise Zones introduced in 2015 which similarly offered streamlined planning procedures and lucrative business rates (Osborne & Truss, 2015). Investment Zones went even further than its predecessor by not only streamlining planning procedures but removing several planning regulations as well (Pope & Coggins, 2022). Therefore, the evidence suggests that there is a significant alignment between Truss and Kwarteng's ideas about deregulation and the policies of the Growth Plan.

#### 5.2.4 | Privatisation and the Role of the Private Sector

Truss and Kwarteng's plans prioritised the private sector. To start, the Growth Plan removed barriers to investment, both regarding taxation and regulation. Furthermore, in addition to cancelling the corporation tax rise, the Growth Plan permanently increased the Annual Investment Allowance (AIA) to £1million to encourage investment. The Growth Plan also increased the generosity and availability of various funding mechanisms including the Seed Enterprise Investment Scheme (SEIS) and the Company Share Option Plan (CSOP) which assisted businesses in raising investment. Billions of pounds were also earmarked for boosting the UK's science and technology industry. Justifying these reforms, the Growth Plan cites the examples of the privatisation and liberalisation of the markets in the 1970s and 1980s which it argued “facilitated dynamic markets” and faster economic growth (*The Growth Plan*, 2022, p. 15). Therefore, the Growth Plan announced a range of different policies to support a strong and growing private sector which it considered crucial to achieving its 2.5% growth rate trend target.

For Truss and Kwarteng, the private sector was always considered crucial. Since as early as the publication of *Britannia Unchained*, Truss and Kwarteng argued consistently that the private sector was more efficient, innovative, and effective than the public sector. While Kwarteng accepted a role for the state to address market failures, he always maintained that a strong private sector was preferable. Both also argued that strengthening the private sector was necessary following various economic shocks; for instance, Truss and Kwarteng highlighted in 2020 and 2021 how important the private sector would be for the post-pandemic recovery (Kwarteng, 2021r; Truss, 2020g). Therefore, it is unsurprising that the policies of the Growth Plan were geared to support a strong private sector.

In short, for three of the four economic categories, there is a clear alignment between the ideas of Truss and Kwarteng and the policies of the Growth Plan. Their ideas about government spending seem to deviate from the policies which calls into question the ability of ideas to explain the policies of the Growth Plan. Nevertheless, it appears that promotion to top political office gave Truss, with the support of Kwarteng, the opportunity to implement ideas she had harboured for over a decade as an MP. With Kwarteng as Chancellor and the backing of the majority of Conservative Party members, Truss was able to translate many key aspects of her free-market ideas into policy.

### **5.3 | Potential Causal Mechanisms**

To move from a narrative story to a causal story explaining the alignment of Truss and Kwarteng's ideas with the policies of the Growth Plan, it is vital to consider potential causal mechanism. Section 5.3 focuses on two mechanisms suggested in the literature: cognitive mechanisms and power through ideas. This section draws on the evidence from during the leadership campaign and the days of Truss' premiership before the announcement of the Growth Plan since this is when the policies came into formation.

#### **5.3.1 | Cognitive Mechanisms**

First, this section presents the evidence regarding the way in which Truss and Kwarteng weighted different policy alternatives to investigate whether ideas have a top-down effect. Regarding taxation, Truss argued that low corporation tax rates increase a country's competitiveness for attracting investment which led Truss to argue that Sunak's policy to maintain the increase in corporation tax was "wrong" as it "choked off investment" (The Telegraph, 2022).

In addition, Truss claimed that Sunak's critique of her tax-cutting plans and his support for maintaining the higher rates of corporation and income tax was an example of "scaremongering and project fear" (The Telegraph, 2022). Instead, Truss maintained that "we cannot get growth going by raising taxes" (The Telegraph, 2022). Therefore, Truss favoured cutting energy levies as well as abolishing the Health and Social Care Levy and planned corporation tax rise (Jayawardena, 2022). When weighing up the alternatives for dealing with Britain's ever-rising debt-to-GDP ratio, Truss argued that reversing the rise in corporation tax and the introduction of the Health and Social Care Levy would more successfully raise the necessary revenue to pay back the Government's debt than tax increases (Truss, 2022a). Likewise, Kwarteng clearly favoured supply-side reform over imposing windfall taxes on energy companies to manage the rising cost of energy (Kwarteng, 2022f). In addition, he argued that Truss' "tax-cutting instincts" were "absolutely right" (Kwarteng, 2022g) and insisted that Sunak's plans to maintain and increase taxes would not "re-energise and incentivise the economy" (GB News, 2022; Kwarteng, 2022f). Like Truss, Kwarteng argued that cutting taxes would "turbocharge" the private sector and the economy, and therefore favoured cancelling the rises to corporation and income tax (Kwarteng, 2022g, 2022h, 2022i). This aligned with Truss and Kwarteng's previously stated ideas about the benefits of cutting taxes for the economy.

Regarding deregulation, the results show that Truss preferred supply-side reforms to deal with the energy crisis and was unenthusiastic about calls from some quarters, such as the Green Party, to nationalise major parts of the energy sector (Walker, 2022). While recognising the short-term effects of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Truss diagnosed a significant part of the problem as a longer-term supply-side issue which required reforms to regulations regarding fracking and North Sea oil and gas extraction (Times Radio, 2022, The Telegraph, 2022). Likewise, Kwarteng agreed that deregulation reforms were the preferred alternative to deal with the energy crisis. In an article endorsing Truss for the party leadership, Kwarteng wrote that "rather than slapping a punitive windfall tax, as Rishi Sunak has done, we need to incentivise investment in domestic oil and gas for our energy security" (Kwarteng, 2022f). Therefore, there appears to be strong similarities between Truss and Kwarteng's previously expressed ideas and the policies they favoured.

However, the results indicate differences between Truss and Kwarteng's ideas and the policies they favoured regarding government spending. During the leadership election, Kwarteng said little on the issue of government spending, focusing his support for Truss largely on her proposed supply-side reforms. Truss first expressed a clear preference for tax cuts over "handouts" as a measure to support families in the cost-of-living crisis (Walker, 2022d). However, the Growth

Plan did ultimately include the energy support package which entailed a huge amount of government spending, largely financed by borrowing. While Truss and Kwarteng previously denounced the destabilising effects of high government spending on an economy (Kwarteng et al., 2012), Kwarteng claimed in his speech to announce the Growth Plan that the measures were, in fact, anti-inflationary as it would "reduce peak inflation by around 5 percentage points" (Kwarteng, 2022a). Therefore, the results indicate tensions between Truss and Kwarteng's ideas and their preferred policies expressed during the campaign and the early days of Truss' premiership.

Second, this section presents the results regarding the evidence Truss and Kwarteng drew on when formulating the Growth Plan to investigate the presence of a ground-up effect. At one leadership contest debate, Truss rejected data which contradicted her policy proposals; when a member the public, backed with evidence that Germany did not face such a dire economic outlook despite higher levels of corporation tax, asked Truss why she continued to insist that cutting corporation tax was necessary Truss barely engaged with the facts presented to her and instead focused on how tax cuts would help ease the pressure of the cost-of-living crisis (The Telegraph, 2022). The results from Twitter also indicate that Truss and Kwarteng rarely engaged with alternative ideas as they never cite research which contradicts their ideas. Furthermore, evidence regarding the closest advisors of the Truss premiership suggests that Truss focused her attention on advisors who shared her free-market ideas. Truss drew greatly on the advice of the so-called "Trussketeers", a small group of economic advisors which included the likes of Gerard Lyons, "a tax cuts and deregulation enthusiast" (Robinson, 2022). However, beyond this, the data collection revealed little additional evidence to indicate the kind of information that Truss and Kwarteng drew on when devising the Growth Plan. The Plan itself, for instance, does not include any references to work other than data produced by government departments. Therefore, the evidence available to investigate the presence of a ground-up effect is limited.

### 5.3.2 | Power Through Ideas

Next, this paper presents the evidence to investigate the potential presence of the power through ideas mechanisms. The results indicate that Truss and Kwarteng drew on both cognitive and normative arguments during the campaign and in the early days of the premiership to try to persuade the public, and in particular Conservative Party members, to adopt their ideas and thereby increase popular support for the Growth Plan's policies.

The results indicate several examples of cognitive arguments employed by Truss and Kwarteng to persuade the public of their ideas such as regarding the policies required to trigger economic growth. Truss and Kwarteng repeatedly emphasised that the current policies were not working which they supported by citing evidence of years of low growth and current high inflation (Kwarteng, 2022f, 2022i; Truss, 2022a, 2022e, 2022l). As a result, they argued that the UK required "bold" reforms (Truss, 2022a). In particular, Truss and Kwarteng made several arguments regarding how taxation affects economic growth. For instance, in a leadership debate, Truss said to Sunak:

Under your plans, we're expected to have a recession because you've raised taxes, it is cutting back on growth, it is preventing companies from investing, and it is taking money out of people's pockets. That is no way to get the economy going during a recession. (Guardian News, 2022a)

Likewise, in the announcement of the Growth Plan, Kwarteng said that "high taxes reduce incentives to work, they deter investment, and they hinder enterprise" (Kwarteng, 2022a, 2022f). Cognitive arguments were used to build support for other policies too. For instance, Truss argued that regulations and "Stalinist" housing targets got in the way of housing developments, providing evidence for her argument with her personal experience of sitting on the planning board in her local council (Guardian News, 2022b). Similarly, Kwarteng blamed a "13-year Labour moratorium and Lib Dem blockers" for the lack of nuclear development (Kwarteng, 2022j) and argued that deregulation of the energy sector would increase energy security (Kwarteng, 2022f). Therefore, there are several examples of cognitive arguments in Truss and Kwarteng's publications and appearances during the leadership campaign.

The results also reveal several examples of normative arguments. For instance, Truss repeatedly drew on Conservative values to justify her policies saying that they were "built on a clear and long-standing Conservative philosophy" and she announced that she would "lead a government committed to core conservative principles" (Times Radio, 2022; Truss, 2022h). Furthermore, Truss' online campaign was peppered throughout with posts connecting proposed economic policy ideas with Conservative values (Figure 5).

**Figure 5**

*Truss Campaign Posts on Twitter Drawing on Conservative Values and Principles (Truss, 2022i, 2022j)*



In addition, Truss' campaign focused on the principles and values of aspiration, opportunity, enterprise, hard work, and independence. With the leadership election playing out against the Women's Euros, Truss said that the UK needed the same "courage, determination and a will to win" as the Lionesses who went on to win the tournament (Guardian News, 2022a). Furthermore, Truss' campaign was strongly patriotic, referring frequently to Britain as a "great nation" and several campaign posts including the Union Jack flag in the background (Figure 6).

**Figure 6**

*Truss Campaign Posts on Twitter Using Union Jack as a Symbol of Patriotism (Truss, 2022k, 2022l, 2022m)*



Therefore, the results suggest that Truss and Kwarteng both drew on both cognitive and normative arguments to convince the public of their ideas, thereby increasing support for their policy programme.

## Chapter 6 | Discussion: Influence of Key Decision-Makers' Ideas

### 6.1 | Discussion of Findings

The results suggest that ideas provide a powerful explanation for the policies of the Growth Plan. Firstly, the results show considerable stability regarding Truss and Kwarteng's ideas about key areas of economic policy which suggests that they espoused free market ideas due to a genuine belief in their merit, rather than calculating that such views would provide them with material benefits. Often, Truss and Kwarteng's government roles favoured their ideas. For instance, Truss' beliefs about the importance of fiscal discipline and low government spending aligned naturally with her responsibility for managing public finances as Chief Secretary to the Treasury. Likewise, her roles in DEFRA and the Department for Education provided airtime for her supply-side ideas. In addition, the political context was often favourable. The ability of Truss and Kwarteng to express their low tax ideas in the early years of their careers was aided by the fact that between 2010 and 2021 all chancellors were committed to cutting taxes for individuals and businesses. Furthermore, Truss and Kwarteng's support of privatisation and a strong private sector was highly compatible with the general attitude of the Conservative Party towards free enterprise. For instance, Thatcher said at the 1967 Conservative Party Conference that "the philosophical reason for which we [the Conservatives] are against nationalisation and for private enterprise is because we believe that economic progress comes from the inventiveness, ability, determination and the pioneering spirit of extraordinary men and women" (Thatcher, 1967). Therefore, for Truss and Kwarteng the stability in ideas was likely significantly aided by their position in the Conservative Party, as well as their government roles and the political context.

Nevertheless, their roles did not always align naturally with their preferences. While roles could provide opportunities for Truss and Kwarteng to express their ideas, sometimes it relegated economic issues to the background. For instance, Truss spoke little about economic issues while in the Ministry of Justice while Kwarteng was unable to express many ideas about the economy during his time as a minister in the Department for Leaving the EU. In addition to relegating economic issues, different roles put pressure on Truss and Kwarteng's ideas although they often remained stable. For instance, despite being responsible for fiscal discipline, as Chief Secretary, Truss continued to support tax cuts. Similarly, despite his position as a minister, Kwarteng publicly criticised the Government's approach to taxing insurance companies. Oftentimes, occasional deviations can be easily explained as a result of needing to tow the party line, such as Kwarteng's support of the Health and Social Care Levy. Alternatively, some reforms might be explained



contextually. For instance, the reform to Companies House registration requirements was part of the UK's response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Other deviations may not be considered deviations at all such as the new rules on corporate governance and auditing which were watered down after businesses complained about the additional costs they would incur (Clarence-Smith, 2022). Similarly, Truss' support for childcare spending does not appear such a significant deviation when placed in context. For instance, the tax-free childcare scheme Truss introduced included various eligibility criteria (Osborne & Truss, 2013) and was proposed at a time when the Government cut child benefits for many middle-income families. Therefore, ideas usually remained stable even in the face of challenges and most deviations were usually small and temporary.

However, the results appear to show a substantial change in Kwarteng's attitude and approach towards government spending. Having been equally critical as Truss of high government spending in his early years as an MP, Kwarteng oversaw billions of pounds of funding to boost the production of low-carbon energy and drive progress towards the net zero emissions target by 2050. There are several potential explanations for Kwarteng's apparent shift in ideas. For instance, material interests could be at play; Kwarteng may have felt pushed by the popularity of such investments given concerns about the climate or the jobs they would create. Alternatively, Kwarteng may have felt pushed in this direction by Johnson who had a liking for big projects (Wainright, 2016), had a more relaxed approach to government spending (Webber, 2022), and seemed to have quite a strong influence on the activities of individual departments (BBC, 2020). However, Kwarteng's statement that "there's nothing [better] to convert someone from being a radical free marketer to seeing the virtues of government action than making them an energy minister" (Neate, 2021) suggests that his role ushered a change in his ideas. Nevertheless, it must be stressed that this was a slight shift rather than a complete reorientation in Kwarteng's ideas. Kwarteng continued to highlight that the private sector needed to be at the forefront of the project to achieve net zero and there is no suggestion in the results that Kwarteng moved away from his belief in the importance of fiscal discipline. Therefore, the results show an overwhelming amount of stability in the ideas of Truss and Kwarteng, fulfilling Jacobs' (2015) requirement to separate ideas from material interests.

Next, the results compared Truss and Kwarteng's ideas with the policies of the Growth Plan. The results show that the ideas expressed by Truss and Kwarteng across their political careers are closely aligned with many of the policies of the Growth Plan, suggesting that ideas provide a powerful explanation. Regarding taxation, deregulation, and the private sector, the Growth Plan actioned many of the policies both Truss and Kwarteng called for since they entered Parliament.

This provides evidence supporting *Theoretical Expectation 1: Ideas held by key decision-makers influenced the policies of the Growth Plan.*

However, while the results indicate that ideas do provide a powerful explanation for many aspects of the Growth Plan, there is a glaring anomaly: the energy support package. Despite Truss and Kwarteng's support for pandemic financial assistance and Kwarteng's actions as Business Secretary, the combination of high government spending through the energy support package and the wide-ranging tax cuts was a far cry from their ideas about low government spending and fiscal discipline. Nevertheless, while these results do suggest there are limitations on the explanatory power of ideas, some deviations do not nullify the previous evidence which shows clear alignment between ideas and the policies of the Growth Plan. Ideas continue to provide convincing evidence of the influence of ideas on many aspects of the Growth Plan.

Finally, this paper presented the results regarding the investigation into the functioning of two potential causal mechanisms. The results indicate that cognitive mechanisms could be at play as argued by Jacobs (2009). The results show that Truss and Kwarteng consistently promoted policies during the campaign which aligned with their ideas such as reversing the planned increase in corporation tax or preferring supply-side reforms as a solution to the energy crisis over nationalising the energy or windfall taxes. Given Truss and Kwarteng's historic belief in the benefits of tax cuts and deregulation in incentivising businesses and growing the economy, it comes as no surprise that they would reason that supply-side reforms were required to address the UK's stagnant economic growth. At the same time, Truss and Kwarteng criticised policies from other candidates which contrasted their ideas. Given that Sunak announced the increase in corporation tax and the introduction of the Health and Social Care Levy, he came under particularly intense scrutiny including being blamed by Truss for the UK's current poor economic performance. While this was likely also because Truss was engaged in a battle for election and likely to criticise the policies of her opponents, her long-term support for supply-side reforms suggests that she reasoned from these ideas to the policies she would have the chance to implement if successful in the leadership contest. Therefore, regarding taxation and deregulation, there is evidence of a top-down effect.

However, the results suggest that this was not the case regarding government spending. While at the start of the leadership campaign, Truss promoted policies which appeared to derive from her ideas about government spending she changed course during the campaign to endorse government support for households. Kwarteng, having remained quiet during the campaign regarding spending measures, adopted a completely different causal argument regarding the effect of government spending when he announced the Growth Plan in Parliament. While he previous

argued that high government spending destabilised the economy (Kwarteng et al., 2012), he claimed that the energy support package was anti-inflationary. Since both Truss and Kwarteng adopted wildly different reasoning to that of their established ideas, it is likely that ideas did not influence the policies of the Growth Plan regarding government spending.

Unfortunately, the evidence available to investigate the potential of a ground-up effect is limited and therefore, it is not possible to appropriately conclude whether ideas affected the policies of the Growth Plan through this mechanism. For this, it would be helpful to understand in more detail the reports which informed the Growth Plan and the experts present in drafting the policies. Cognitive mechanisms, since they occur in the minds of individuals, are inherently difficult to trace and therefore, more direct evidence than available for this paper is necessary. Therefore, the results provide partial support for *Theoretical Expectation 1a* as there appears to be a top-down effect however, the lack of available evidence regarding a ground-up effect means that it cannot be conclusively argued that cognitive mechanisms explain the influence of ideas on the policies of the Growth Plan.

Evidence regarding the power through ideas mechanism was more readily available. The results show that both cognitive and normative arguments were used by Truss and Kwarteng to persuade the public to adopt their ideas to build support around the policies which would later become the Growth Plan. Normative arguments were especially powerful. This is likely the result of the reduced electorate for choosing the Conservative Party leader. Since only Conservative Party members were eligible to vote, it created incentives to draw on symbols and values which resonated particularly with this group. As Béland (2005) argued, successfully framing policies in a political and culturally relevant manner increases public support. Since Truss won the election, we might assume that she persuaded enough people to adopt her ideas about the economy and therefore, generate enough public support for the policies which would later become the Growth Plan to win the election. However, the fact that the Growth Plan ultimately failed suggests that Truss and Kwarteng did not achieve sufficient power through ideas; big sections of the public, the Conservative Party, the media and the markets remained unconvinced about Truss and Kwarteng's ideas and therefore, there was not sufficient support to make the Growth Plan stick. Nevertheless, in explaining the initial selection of policies, the results suggest that ideas influenced the policies of the Growth Plan through the mechanism of power through ideas, aligning this paper's results with previous findings (Carstensen & Mattheijs, 2018; Mattheijs, 2016; Seabrooke & Wigan; 2016) and providing substantial support for *Theoretical Expectation 1b: Ideas held by key decision-makers influenced the policies of the Growth Plan through the mechanism "power over ideas"*.

Together, the stability of key decision-makers' ideas in many economic domains, the alignment between their ideas and many policies of the Growth Plan and encouraging evidence regarding potential causal mechanisms provides strong evidence for the argument that ideas held by key decision-makers' influenced the policies of the Growth Plan. This is the case regarding taxation, deregulation, and private sector policies. However, ideas and the causal mechanisms struggle to account for the high government spending entailed in the energy support package. Therefore, other explanatory variables may provide a better explanation of the policies of the Growth Plan, at least regarding the energy support package.

## 6.2 | Alternative Explanations

Considering alternative explanations is important for two reasons. Firstly, even though there appears to be a strong influence of ideas, it is important to consider whether other explanations provide better or additional explanatory value. Secondly, alternative explanations are necessary because differences between key decision-makers' ideas and policies regarding government spending suggest that other factors are at play. Several other variables are proposed in the literature to explain economic policymaking including economic crises, international influences, and the institutional environment.

### 6.2.1 | Economic Crises

According to proponents of this argument, economic crises contribute to economic reform such as by delegitimising status quo policies (Drazen & Grilli, 1993; Pop-Eleches, 2009; Tommasi & Velasco, 1995) and increasing public demands for new policies (Armijo and Faucher, 2002; Tommasi & Velasco, 1995). The economic crisis – both more recent shocks such as the pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine as well as long-term economic problems – may have delegitimised current policies and convinced Truss and Kwarteng among others that change was necessary. This is reflected by the fact that Truss repeatedly argued that the UK could not have a "business as usual approach" (Guardian News, 2022b; The Telegraph, 2022; Truss, 2022a). However, the economic crises argument has shortcomings when explaining the taxation, deregulation, and private sector policies. For instance, there did not appear to be a particularly strong public demand for supply-side reform. A poll during the leadership campaign suggested that the majority of the public did not want tax cuts, with 26% even supporting an increase in taxation to fund public services (Savage, 2022). Furthermore, as the final vote loomed in the

leadership contest, the polls gifted Labour “its biggest lead in 10 years” over the Conservatives in opinion polls as the public became increasingly concerned about the implications of a Truss premiership (Helm, 2022). Moreover, over 40 organisations – related to health, the environment, unions, and professional bodies – signed a letter urging Sunak and Truss to reconsider their deregulation plans (Harvey, 2022). This suggests that the supply-side reforms were not motivated by a particularly strong public preference resulting from the economic crisis. In addition, while the economic crisis may have delegitimised existing policies, it does not explain the particular policies chosen regarding taxation, deregulation, and privatisation. If economic crises are taken as the only explanatory variable, it is feasible that Truss and Kwarteng could have taken an alternative policy route. For this, ideas were likely necessary.

In contrast, economic crises provide a more convincing explanation of the policies regarding government spending. The cost-of-living and energy price crises placed immense pressure on Truss and Kwarteng to act. The effect of the crisis on forcing Truss and Kwarteng’s hand regarding the energy support package is described by the journalist Pippa Crerar:

What [Truss’s] announcement shows us is that even the most ideologically rigid politicians have to be willing to defer to pragmatism when faced with the harsh, cold realities of government – in this case the cost-of-living crisis and the prospect of millions of families struggling to pay their bills this winter. (Crear, 2022a)

Despite Truss and Kwarteng’s criticism of high government spending and support for fiscal discipline, the economic conditions of the time necessitated higher government spending. Therefore, economic crises provide a potential alternative explanation which accounts for the difference between the ideas expressed by Truss and Kwarteng and the policies of the Growth Plan regarding government spending.

## 6.2.2 | International Influences

Alternatively, scholars propose international influences and pressures as an explanation for economic policy change (e.g. Daguerre, 2004). As many other European governments announced support packages for their citizens and the concern of MPs grew ever greater, it would be unlikely that Truss could maintain her no-handouts approach (Helm & Henly, 2022). However, international influences appear to have little explanatory power regarding most of the other policies

of the Growth Plan. This was particularly the case regarding the taxation policies. For instance, the IMF, once considered a key proponent of neoliberalism, warned Truss and Kwarteng:

Given elevated inflation pressures in many countries, including the UK, we do not recommend large and untargeted fiscal packages at this juncture. (Sherman & Espiner, 2022)

Similarly, Joe Biden called the policies of the Growth Plan “a mistake” and that he “wasn’t the only one (sic)” who held this view, suggesting that others in the international community were also sceptical of Truss and Kwarteng's radical tax cuts (Crerar, 2022b). In her first article since leaving No.10, Truss said that the Growth Plan policies were “swimming against the international tide” as the policies went against the prevailing opinion which supported “limit[ing] competition between G7 economies” (Truss, 2023). Therefore, while the move of some governments to provide financial support to households and businesses in response to rising energy costs may have increased pressure on Truss and Kwarteng to enact similar policies, the Growth Plan did not seem to be part of an international move towards free market ideas. The opposite appeared to be true; the international response was very critical.

### 6.2.3 | Institutional Arguments

Discursive institutionalism recognises the importance of the institutional environment in providing the background to interactions. Several institutions contributed to shaping the policies of the Growth Plan, particularly in how bold and radical they were. For instance, the cabinet and prime minister have substantial freedom and face few obstacles in policymaking (Hall, 1992). Therefore, Truss and Kwarteng faced fewer institutionalised pressures to alter or water their policies down. In addition, able to appoint ministers and select advisors, Truss was free to saturate the decision-making environment with people committed to her pro-growth agenda. As one civil servant said who had worked for Truss in the Foreign Office and No.10, Truss had built her career on being “the most radical person in the room” and “the problem after she got to number 10 was that there was no one to hold her back” (Robinson, 2022). Furthermore, according to the Dissolution and Calling of Parliament Act (2022), a general election must be held at least every five years. Although Truss was not elected prime minister through a general election, she was allowed to govern based on the mandate from Johnson's general election victory in December 2019. Therefore, Truss had approximately two years during which to win over the electorate whose

support for the Conservative Party following several scandals, economic and social problems, and twelve successive years in government, was faltering (Helm, 2022). Those who worked in No.10 and the Treasury at the time have since reported that the need to act fast because of the impending election was an important part of Truss' thinking and contributed to the fast and radical adoption of policies (Robinson, 2022). Therefore, while institutional arguments may not explain why the Growth Plan enacted supply-side reforms coupled with high government spending on energy bills, it does point to why the Growth Plan was so extreme and attempted to do everything all at once. The institutional explanation is a helpful accompaniment to the ideational explanation to explain the policies of the Growth Plan.

Therefore, reflecting on alternative explanations indicates that ideational explanations for the policies of the Growth Plan remain convincing. Particularly regarding taxation, deregulation, and privatisation, the alternative explanations do not provide a significantly better account of events. Regarding government spending, it appears that the economic crisis – by delegitimising the "do nothing" status quo approach and by generating public demand for higher government spending – forced the hand of Truss and Kwarteng. Thus, while ideas struggled to account for the energy support package, the economic crisis explanation is more successful. This section also indicates the important role of institutions in creating opportunities and challenges. The institutional framework – allowing Truss and Kwarteng to surround themselves with like-minded officials, providing few veto players, and placing the administration under time pressure to enact reforms – contributes to explaining why the Growth Plan's policies were so radical. Nevertheless, although no single explanation can definitively account for the nature of the policies (Hall, 1992), the results demonstrate that ideas make a significant contribution to explaining the policies of the Growth Plan.

## Chapter 7 | Results: Influence of Think Tank Ideas

While Truss and Kwarteng were the most influential decision-makers, in the wake of the Growth Plan many journalists reported on the alleged privileged access of right-leaning think tanks to Truss and Kwarteng (Bright, 2022; Casalicchio & Blanchard, 2022; Monbiot, 2022). Therefore, this paper investigates the influence of ideas of right-leaning think tanks on the policies of the Growth Plan. This section presents a variety of evidence guided by Christensen's (2013) process for investigating expert influence on decision-making with the results structured by the five stages of the framework. This paper focuses on four think tanks: the ASI, the CPS, the IEA, and the TPA.

### 7.1 | Defining Actors Initial Preferences

Despite differences in the specific focus of right-leaning think tanks, the results indicate that there are significant similarities in their ideas about government spending, taxation, deregulation, and privatisation.

#### 7.1.1 | Government Spending

The publications of the four right-leaning think tanks are highly critical of large state spending. The CPS (2021), for instance, laments the “age of the trillion-pound British state” and the ASI blames high government spending for “crowding out” private sector investment (Butler & Lesh, 2020). Despite these critiques, right-leaning think tanks sometimes accept that support for families during the pandemic and cost-of-living crisis was necessary (Heywood, 2021; Lesh & Kilcoyne, 2020). Nevertheless, those think tanks which support some intervention emphasise that it should be temporary. For example, the CPS stresses that interventions for the cost-of-living crisis "should be ones that don't risk adding permanently to government spending (sic)" (Williams, 2022a, p. 6). Similarly, Lesh and Kilcoyne (2020) writing for the IEA encourage the Government to withdraw the furlough scheme which paid the wages of millions of workers after only three months to restore the incentive to work. Regarding deficit reduction, opinions are mixed; for instance, despite both writing for the CPS, Elsdon (2021) says that the Government must reduce the deficit due to its negative effects on businesses investment while Clougherty (2021) says that "the best long-term recipe for prosperity is to prioritise growth over immediate deficit reduction"



(p. 1). Yet, despite these contradictions, right-leaning think tanks are overwhelmingly against high government spending and encourage spending cuts.

### 7.1.2 | Taxation

The four right-leaning think tanks are universally against almost all types of tax; research publications are highly critical of income tax (Clougherty & Bunn, 2021; TPA, 2022a), the Health and Social Care Levy (Clougherty, 2021; TPA, 2022b), Digital Sales Tax (Clougherty & Dunkley, 2022; TPA, 2020a), corporation tax (Clougherty & Bunn, 2021), National Insurance Contributions (Lesh & Kilcoyne, 2020; TPA, 2021a) Stamp Duty Land tax (Lesh & Kilcoyne, 2020; TPA, 2020b), Aviation Passenger Duty (CPS, 2021; TPA, 2021b) and excise taxes (Lesh & Niemietz, 2022; TPA, 2021c). Right-leaning think tanks argue consistently that cutting taxes leads to more economic growth and increases business investment (Butler & Lesh, 2020; Clougherty, 2021; Heath 2020; Heywood & Ives, 2022; Record, 2020). The post-pandemic recovery is a dominant concern, with right-leaning think tanks maintaining that the Government should not raise taxes to balance the budget (Lesh & Kilcoyne, 2020; Williams & Colvile, 2022). Furthermore, many argue that the cost-of-living crisis makes it unfair to raise taxes (Clougherty & Lyons, 2021; Williams, 2022b), with Jessop and Shackleton (2020) arguing that raising taxes is unnecessary given low-interest rates. As a result, right-leaning think tanks expressed strong criticisms of Budget 2021 which raised corporation tax and introduced the Health and Social Care Levy. For instance, the CPS complained that the measures moved the UK "from having a very attractive corporate tax system to a deeply uncompetitive one" which "would dampen recovery, harm Britain's tax competitiveness, and encourage international investment to go elsewhere" (Clougherty, 2021, p. 1). Therefore, the results reveal deep opposition to any form of taxation amongst the four think tanks.

### 7.1.3 | Deregulation

The IEA write prolifically in support of deregulation. For example, Lesh and Niemietz (2022) claim that "the British state intervenes heavily in various product markets through tax and regulatory measures, in ways which drive up costs" (p. 6). Some, they concede, are legitimate interventions to correct negative externalities, but most are based on questionable evidence and the costs for consumers outweigh any benefits (Boleat et al., 2021; Lesh & Hewson, 2022). For instance, Hewson and Veljanovski (2022) argue that the proposed Digital Markets Unit, which would regulate firms in the digital market, will "reduce innovation, investment and UK start-ups,

create security risks and harm consumers, who will receive reduced services" (p. 6). The results indicate that the other four right-leaning think tanks are broadly supportive of deregulation as well. For instance, there is complete agreement across the four think tanks that regulations are a major contributor to high childcare costs (Dunkley, 2022; Lesh & Niemietz, 2022). Many also take issue with Sunday trading laws (Butler & Lesh, 2020; Lesh 2020), planning regulations (Butler & Lesh, 2020), and the National Living Wage (Elsden, 2021; Shackleton, 2020; Williams & Colvile, 2022). Thus, deregulation is considered vital to unlocking the economy and is proposed as a crucial part of the economic recovery after the pandemic universally across the four think tanks.

#### 7.1.4 | Privatisation and the Role of the Private Sector

The private sector is considered by the four think tanks as crucial for economic growth and the creation of opportunities. For instance, the IEA argues that the focus of the recovery from the pandemic should be on "expanding the pie by embracing private sector entrepreneurship and innovation" (Lesh & Kilcoyne, 2022, p. 1). Similarly, the CPS calls for the private sector to be "at the heart of the recovery and the country's future prosperity" (Clougherty et al., 2022, p. 74). Right-leaning think tanks encourage private sector investment in infrastructure such as the railways (Lodge, 2022) and the TPA supports the privatisation of Channel 4 and the BBC arguing that the private sector is more innovative and efficient (Friend, 2021). Based on interviews with over 100 business leaders, Clougherty et al. (2022) propose ten reforms which the government should implement to support the private sector (Figure 7). They argue that implementing these reforms is crucial for economic growth. Therefore, the results indicate strong support for privatisation and a strong private sector across the four think tanks.

In short, the four right-leaning think tanks have clear, consistent initial preferences. Despite having slightly different focuses, all four think tanks are overwhelmingly committed to minimal government spending, low taxation, deregulatory reform, and a strong private sector.

**Figure 7**

*Clougherty et al.'s (2022) Ten Reforms to Support the Private Sector*

1. Publish a plan to make Britain the most investment-friendly country in the world,
2. Cancel the corporation tax rise,
3. Extend the special tax regimes that bring wealth and talent to Britain,
4. Enhance tax breaks that boost investment,
5. Reform the regulations that hold back our investment ecosystem,
6. Introduce cutting-edge regulator frameworks to capture new markets,
7. Put a new competitiveness unit at the heart of government,
8. Renew No.10s focus on business and put in place a much better support structure,
9. Empower city regions to promote themselves as investment destinations,
10. Promote business-finance-university clusters across the UK

**7.2 | Access to Decision-Making Actors, Bodies, and Arenas**

The second stage of Christensen's (2015) process is outlining the access of actors to decision-makers and arenas. A review of the official regulation guiding interactions between think tanks and Parliament suggests there are few restrictions. Interactions between MPs and think tanks are mostly affected by guidance on lobbying Parliament which is minimal. According to the regulations, "anyone can lobby their MP or a member of the House of Lords" such as through emails and letters, petitions, research, and meetings (*Lobbying Parliament*, n.d.). The only restrictions pertain to the material lobbying parties are permitted to bring onto parliamentary property for meetings (*Lobbying Parliament*, n.d.). Otherwise, think tanks can freely approach MPs, while MPs are also able to consult the advice of think tanks if they wish.

Additional regulations affect think tanks with a charitable status which provides them with certain benefits and freedoms such as tax reliefs on donations (The Charity Commission, 2018). An example of the additional restrictions affecting charitable think tanks is that their research must be "balanced and neutral and allow the individual to form their own view" (The Charity Commission, 2018). Furthermore, researchers must not be "linked to a particular view or opinion" and "conclusions must be based on an objective analysis of evidence and data" (The Charity Commission, 2018). Charitable think tanks are not allowed to be affiliated with a particular political

party, and the guidance specifically highlights that think tanks should take "particular care when inviting politicians to events" as "consistently working with one political party will call into question whether it is particularly neutral" (The Charity Commission, 2018). Interestingly, the main purpose of research by charitable think tanks must be to educate and any attempts to change the law or a policy are not permitted (The Charity Commission, 2018). Of the four think tanks selected in this study, two – the ASI and the IEA – are registered as charities and therefore, affected by these regulations. Nevertheless, they still are relatively free to interact with MPs and the system has been accused of weak enforcement (Grant, 2023). Therefore, the results indicate few regulations affecting interactions between think tanks and decision-makers.

The review of the institutional environment highlights several opportunities for think tanks to access MPs. One important route is through the circulation of think tank research through Parliament. The UK Parliament website lists think tanks as an important source of research used by MPs, House of Lords Peers, and civil servants (*How Is Research Used in Parliament?*, n.d.). Both the House of Commons and the House of Lords have their respective libraries with research services which produce briefings, write background summaries for debates, and provide a confidential research service for Parliamentarians inquiring about certain issues (*How Parliament uses research*, n.d.). The UK Parliament website explains that think tank research forms a part of the evidence used in the work of the research services (*How Parliament uses research*, n.d.). In addition, a summary of research by different think tanks often features in the Current Affairs Digest - a monthly report on policies, proposals, and research published by the House of Lords – alongside articles from journals and the international press (*How Is Research Used in Parliament?*, n.d.). Think tanks are also consulted by POST, the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, which is a bicameral body responsible for delivering “impartial, balanced and timely briefing” which includes summarising existing research and identifying important issues for future consideration (*POST About Us*, n.d.). According to the POST website, think tank research forms an important part of the knowledge used to provide briefings (*How Is Research Used in Parliament?*, n.d.). POST is also responsible for “facilitating knowledge exchange between the UK Parliament and research communities” which includes think tanks (*POST About Us*, n.d.). The Knowledge Exchange Unit acts as a first point of contact for researchers, providing them with advice about how to engage in knowledge exchange with Parliament (*Knowledge Exchange Unit*, n.d.) while POST also organises events to connect Parliamentarians with research experts (*Training and Events*, n.d.). Therefore, it appears that research produced by think tanks is often consulted when producing briefings and analysis across Parliament.

In addition, the UK Parliament website highlights the contribution of think tanks to Select Committees and Public Bills Committees. Select Committees are cross-party groups that "carry out inquiries on different topics, write reports and make recommendations to the Government" by drawing on research (*How Parliament uses research*, n.d.). Public Bills Committees focus on specific bills to change legislation, also drawing on research to inform their scrutiny (*How Parliament uses research*, n.d.). As well as providing research to assist and inform the activities of Select Committees and Public Bills Committees, think tanks are frequently invited to submit evidence and proposals to assist the work of the committees on issues across Government. Individuals and organisations may be invited to give written or oral evidence as witnesses to a Select Committee, the latter involving witnesses being questioned by members of the Select Committee on a specific issue (*Guidance on giving evidence*, n.d.). Potential individuals and groups invited to give oral evidence include government ministers, people with personal experiences of the topic, academics and researchers, and representatives from organisations which may include think tanks (*Guidance on giving evidence*, n.d.). Furthermore, researchers, including those affiliated with think tanks, may be appointed specialist advisers to provide advice to committees on specific issues or across their general work (*Specialist advisers, media, research, and outreach*, n.d.). Therefore, the results indicate that Select Committees and Public Bills Committees offer opportunities for think tanks to be directly involved in the policymaking process as well as gain access to key decision-makers.

A final access point for think tanks is through a strong public presence, particularly online. For example, POST's website explains that "Parliamentarians and their staff discover research through the media, the Internet, and third sector organisations" (*Ways to engage with Parliament*, n.d.). As a consequence, POST recommends that researchers "increase their visibility" online such as through social media to reach Parliamentarians and their staff (*Ways to engage with Parliament*, n.d.). Therefore, the internet provides another, albeit indirect route, for think tanks to access decision-makers and arenas.

In short, the results suggest that there are few restrictions on the access of think tanks to decision-makers and decision-making arenas. In fact, there appear to be several opportunities, some of which are institutionalised, to aid knowledge exchange between think tanks and decision-making arenas.

### 7.3 | Methods Used to Further Ideas

With so few restrictions and several opportunities for influence, the stage is set for think tanks of all political leanings to attempt to further their ideas. According to the website of the ASI,

they use a "two-pronged strategy for changing the world" (*About the ASI*, n.d.). Firstly, they aim to directly affect policy in the short term by publishing policy proposals in the hope that they will be adopted by decision-makers (*About the ASI*, n.d.). Opportunities such as POST and the Current Affairs Digest increase the likelihood of such research being influential. Secondly, the ASI says that they aim to change the "landscape of opinion" by educating people about and changing the conversation around the free market (*About the ASI*, n.d.). The results demonstrate that the CPS, IEA, and TPA also use a similar combination of providing specific policy proposals with activities to shape attitudes and assumptions about free market ideas.

### 7.3.1 | Direct Influence on Policy

As reviewed in 7.1, think tanks publish extensively on a wide range of issues including the four economic categories considered in this paper. A closer investigation of the purpose of the research publications reveals that many publications focus on collecting and presenting data on a variety of different economic problems (Butler, 2022; Capie & Wood, 2021; Shackleton, 2020; Williams & Colvile, 2022) and analysing existing policies (CPS, 2021; Clougherty & Bunn, 2021; Record, 2020; TPA, 2021d). In addition, a dominant feature across articles is their focus on providing specific policy suggestions. Writing for the ASI, Lesh and Kilcoyne (2020), provide a list of recommendations aimed at the Government to successfully "unfreeze" the economy following the pandemic across various economic policy areas such as fiscal measures, employment, hospitality and retail, taxation, investment, housing, and childcare. One recommendation is to raise the employer's National Insurance threshold to encourage hiring (Lesh & Kilcoyne, 2020). Likewise, Shackleton (2020) writing for the IEA suggests a range of different policy options on the issue of "creating new jobs" including reviewing minimum wage legislation and relaxing employment regulation. Furthermore, an overview of the titles of research by the four right-leaning think tanks indicates their focus on providing specific policy proposals with sample titles including: "Abolishing the Factory Tax: How to Boost Investment and Level Up Britain" (Dumitriu & Serodio, 2020), "Cleaner, Fairer, Better: The Case for UK Subsidy Transparency" (Powell-Smith, 2022), "National Insurance: A Plan to Blunt the Pain" (Colvile & Clougherty, 2022), and "Rebooting Britain: How the UK Economy Can Recover From Coronavirus" (Jessop & Shackleton, 2020).

In addition to publications, the available evidence suggests that cultivating personal relationships with MPs, including Truss and Kwarteng, is an important part of right-leaning think tanks' strategy to directly affect policymaking. The IEA, for instance, held 75 meetings with MPs

across the political spectrum to "discuss free market ideas" in 2021-22 alone (*IEA Trustees' Report*, 2022, p. 3). Truss tweeted about having lunch at the IEA in 2011, at which they discussed the "promotion of the free market in Britain so we become a more competitive country" (Truss, 2011). Furthermore, the founder of the ASI wrote in his 2012 autobiography that think tanks, Conservative Party researchers, and newspapers used to hold weekly meetings to "coordinate activities to make us more effective collectively" (Monbiot, 2022; Pirie, 2012). In addition to private meetings, many Conservative MPs have given speeches or appeared on panels at events hosted by right-leaning think tank. Between the beginning of 2020 and Truss' election as prime minister, four Conservative MPs spoke at the ASI, twenty-four at the CPS, twenty at the IEA, and seven at the TPA (Appendix F). Some Conservative MPs spoke multiple times, and their appearances far outweigh those of other political parties. These appearances include many prominent Conservative MPs such as Boris Johnson, Liz Truss, and Kwasi Kwarteng. In fact, Truss has spoken at more IEA events than any other politician in the last twelve years (Honeycombe-Foster, 2022). Furthermore, right-leaning think tanks frequently co-author papers with Conservative MPs. The CPS, for instance, collaborated with Rishi Sunak MP on freeports (Sunak, 2016), Sajid Javid MP on economic growth (Javid & CPS, 2020), Anthony Mangnall MP on free trade (Mangnall, 2022), John Penrose MP on subsidies (Powell-Smith & Penrose, 2022), and Julie Marson MP on public spending (Marson, 2021). There are further examples of exchange between MPs and right-leaning think tanks. For instance, the Free Enterprise Group was closely affiliated with the IEA, even hosting events and drinks receptions together (IEA, 2013, 2014). According to Mark Littlewood, director of the IEA, the Institute supported the Free Enterprise Group by "printing documents for them, hosting dinners for them and all the rest of it" (Grylls, 2022). In addition, twelve members of Truss' cabinet were part of the Free Enterprise Group (Led by Donkeys, 2023). Furthermore, personal friendships facilitate connections between think tanks and MPs, including with Truss. Both Littlewood and Andy Mayer, CEO of the IEA, have reportedly been friends with Truss since they studied together at the University of Oxford (Grylls, 2022). Therefore, there are several examples of the four think tanks engaging directly with MPs.

Reviewing the Special Parliamentary Advisors (SpAds) employed by Truss across her ministerial positions before her election to No.10 reveals that 4 of Truss' 15 SpAds previously worked for a right-leaning think tank (Table 3). Unfortunately, the Cabinet Office has not released official files on the SpAds employed during Truss' premiership yet however, broadsheet newspapers reported extensively on the SpAds and other advisors associated with Truss as prime minister (Bright, 2022; Casalicchio & Blanchard, 2022; Dyer, 2022). The reported list of SpAds generated by the journalistic research indicates that Truss was surrounded by at least seven advisors

during her time in No.10 who previously worked at a right-leaning think tank including the ASI, the CPS, the IEA, and the TPA (Appendix G). Furthermore, they held several highly senior roles. For instance, Ruth Porter was appointed deputy chief of staff, having previously worked at several right-leaning think tanks including the IEA (Casalicchio & Blanchard, 2022). Additionally, Matthew Sinclair, Truss' chief economic advisor, served as chief executive and director of the TPA for over three years (Casalicchio & Blanchard, 2022).



**Table 3**

*The Employment History of SpAds Who Worked under Truss in the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, the Department for International Trade, the Ministry of Justice, as Chief Secretary to the Treasury, and in the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Cabinet Office, 2014-2022)*

Advisor	DEFRA	MoJ	Treasury	DIT	FCDO	Right-Leaning Think Tank
Emma Boon						The TaxPayers' Alliance
Guy Robinson						n/a
Ruth Porter						Institute of Economic Affairs, Policy Exchange, Maxim Institute
Kirsty Buchanan						n/a
Tim Pitt						n/a
Kane Daniell						No
Adam Jones						No
James Caldecourt						No
Jamie Hope						No
Nerissa Chesterfield						Institute of Economic Affairs
Sophie Jarvis						Adam Smith Institute
Hugh Bennett						No
Chris Jenkins						n/a
Sarah Ludlow						No
Reuben Soloman						No

As well as furthering relationships with individual MPs, the evidence suggests that the four right-leaning think tanks make use of the institutional opportunities available to them to influence policy. For instance, right-leaning think tanks frequently respond to requests for written evidence on a wide range of topics from committees (Booth, 2020; Bourne, 2016; Jessop & Hewson, 2020; Snowdon, 2021; *Written Evidence Submitted by the Adam Smith Institute*, 2020; *Written Evidence Submitted by Taxpayers' Alliance*, 2020). These usually consist of short documents of around 3 to 10 pages with arguments and research responding to specific policy suggestions. In addition, Select Committees often call right-leaning think tanks as witnesses to provide oral evidence (e.g. *Oral Evidence: An Equal Recovery*, HC 152, 2021; *Oral Evidence: Aligning UK Economic Goals with Environmental Sustainability*, HC 849, 2022; *Oral Evidence: Budget 2021*, HC 1196, 2021; *Oral Evidence: The Cost of Living*, HC 1058, 2022). All four right-leaning think tanks have provided oral evidence to the Treasury Select Committee (*Oral Evidence: Household Finances: Income, Saving and Debt*, HC 565, 2017; *Oral Evidence: Tax after Coronavirus*, HC 664, 2020; *Oral Evidence: The UK's Tax Burden*, HC 1165, 2022). During these appearances, representatives often further the free-market ideas of right-leaning think tanks they represent. For instance, when giving evidence on an equal recovery from the pandemic, Christopher Snowdon argued against the Health and Social Care Levy which the IEA, his employer, previously criticised (Littlewood, 2021a; *Oral Evidence: An Equal Recovery*, HC 152, 2021). Similarly, in his appearance at the Environmental Audit Committee, Matthew Lesh from the IEA spoke fervently about the need for economic growth and its positive implications for social justice and the environment (*Oral Evidence: Aligning UK Economic Goals with Environmental Sustainability*, HC 849, 2022). Therefore, the evidence of engagement in institutionalised opportunities for policymaking influence provides a further indication of the four right-leaning think tanks attempting to directly affect policymaking.

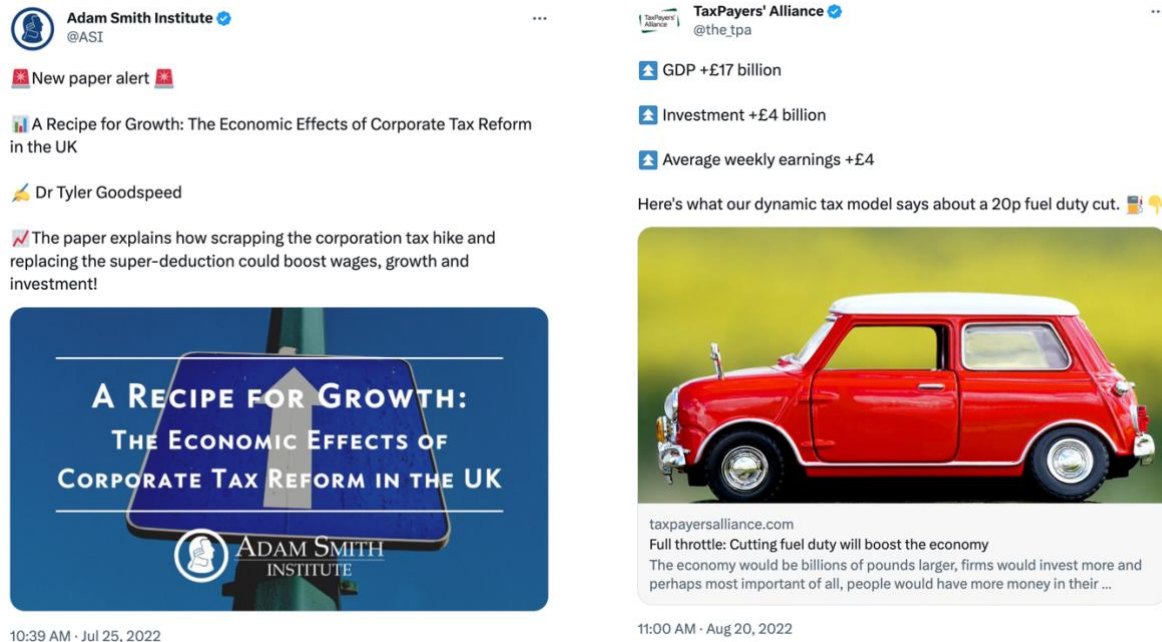
### 7.3.2 | Long-Term Influence on Economic Policy Discourse

The results suggest that the four right-leaning think tanks also engage in shaping the broader discourse around the economy, attempting to shift opinion towards free market ideas. There is substantial evidence of the four right-leaning think tanks employing a wide variety of public strategies to further their ideas. Firstly, a review of the four websites shows that their research is widely accessible to the public. In addition, the four think tanks take particular care to increase the accessibility of their findings by consolidating results in executive summaries so that readers do not have to read an extensive article. Think tanks use a host of other methods to

increase the visibility of their research as well. For instance, all four right-leaning think tanks are active on Twitter, usually posing to alert followers to new research on their websites (Figure 8).

### Figure 8

*Examples of Twitter Posts by Right-Leaning Think Tanks to Announced Newly Published Research (ASI, 2022a; TPA, 2022c)*



Furthermore, both the ASI and the IEA have podcasts (*Digital: Podcast*, n.d.; *IEA Podcast*, n.d.) while the CPS runs the news website CapX which claims to “bring you the best on politics, economics, technology and ideas” all in one place (*CapX Home*, n.d.).

Secondly, the results demonstrate that the four right-leaning think tanks are actively involved in the mass media environment, such as by translating their findings into articles published in broadsheet newspapers. For instance, John O’Connell, chief executive of the TPA, writes frequently in *The Telegraph* about the need for tax cuts (O’Connell, 2020a, O’Connell, 2020b) and lower government spending (O’Connell, 2020c, 2021a, 2022a). Similarly, according to the website of the IEA, the Institute made over 1,500 “appearances in the media” since 2010 including citations of their economic research in articles (Bodkin, 2022; Heath, 2021; Jolly, 2021; Kirkman, 2021; Martin, 2021; Paxton, 2022) and comments given to newspapers (Altman, 2022; Benstead & Wallace, 2021; Kamm, 2021; Lynch, 2021; Stevens & Washtell, 2021; Wallace, 2021; Wallace & Lynch, 2020, 2021). Moreover, senior researchers at the IEA have written countless

newspaper articles calling for small government (Littlewood, 2021b, 2021c, 2022a; Shackleton, 2021), deregulation (Denham, 2022a, 2022b, 2022c; Lesh, 2022; Littlewood, 2021d, Revell & Tapper, 2021), and lower taxes (Denham, 2021; Littlewood, 2022b). Media releases and appearances are equally important to the CPS (e.g. Beard, 2022; Goss, 2022; Lehane, 2022; Meleady, 2022; Wallace, 2022a, 2022b). In addition to newspapers, the four think tanks make frequent appearances on news programmes and political panel discussions; for instance, representatives from the ASI have appeared on various television and radio channels such as BBC Newsnight, ITV News, LBC, Times Radio, TalkTV, and GB News in recent years (*Media*, n.d.). All four think tanks provide contact details for media enquiries on their websites. Therefore, the results provide a multitude of examples of right-leaning think tanks engaging with the broader media landscape.

Thirdly, the results indicate attempts by the TPA to shape the landscape of opinion through campaigns. The TPA campaigns actively to implement a Single Income Tax as well as campaigning against the BBC licence fee, Stamp Duty Land tax, beer and alcohol duties, inheritance tax, air duty passenger tax, and clean air zones (*Campaigns*, n.d.). The TPA engage the public in campaigns by collecting signatures for petitions and through polls on their Twitter feed (e.g. TPA, 2021d, 2021e). The other three right-leaning think tanks engage less in such overt campaigning.

In sum, the results indicate that think tanks employ both direct and indirect methods to affect policymaking. There is substantial evidence of several ways in which think tanks deal directly with MPs and decision-making arenas to influence specific economic policies directly. In addition, the results indicate that think tanks are actively involved in engagement with public discussions about economic policy as well.

#### **7.4 | Response of Decision-Makers**

The fourth phase of Christensen's (2013) framework considers the response of decision-makers to the proposals of right-leaning think tanks. While the evidence collected was limited, the results suggest that the four right-leaning think tanks are positively received by Conservative MPs. For example, several MPs expressed how right-leaning think tanks, especially the IEA, shaped their politics. For instance, in celebration of the IEA's 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, Sajid Javid said that the IEA helped him "develop the economic and political philosophy that guides [him] to this day" (Javid, 2015) while Dominic Raab said that he "feels a huge debt" to the IEA for "nurturing" his book *The Assault on Liberty – What Went Wrong with Rights* (IEA, 2015).

Focusing specifically on the Growth Plan's key decision-makers, Truss and Kwarteng appear to view the four right-leaning think tanks positively as well. For example, Kwarteng's positive attitude towards right-leaning think tanks is suggested in his appearance at an event organised by the IEA and TPA at the 2022 Conservative Party Conference which he attended shortly after the announcement of the Growth Plan. At the event, Kwarteng was interviewed by John O'Connell and indicated an affinity towards the work of the TPA (Figure 9).

### Figure 9

*Extract from Kwarteng's Interview at the IEA and TPA Event at the Conservative Party Conference (IEA, 2022b)*

*O'Connell:* The TPA has done a lot of work on money going to organisations that then lobby against government policy, in areas of social policy, and organisations which might undermine British values you could even say. Is that something we can expect the Government to take immediate action on?

*Kwarteng:* Well, we've said we're going to look at government efficiencies, we've said we're going to look at Whitehall, we've said we want to streamline government. I don't know quite which organisations you might be talking about but we're looking at everything in the round.

*O'Connell:* Well, it's something that the TPA would be able to perhaps furnish you with more information on in that process.

*Kwarteng:* I look forward to it. I've got a whole host of your papers, I'm sure I could rummage through them and find where the culprits are.

Kwarteng's response suggests that he monitors the work of the TPA, potentially considering it a valuable source of knowledge. In addition, Kwarteng was challenged by the interviewer on some of the policies of the Growth Plan; for instance, the interviewer asked why Kwarteng was not more ambitious with the growth target, for instance aiming for a 3 or 4 per cent growth rate. In response, Kwarteng said such policies may be possible in the "wonderful world of think tanks", but that government policymaking is more complex (IEA, 2022b). This indicates that, while

proposals from think tanks may have an influence, they are filtered through the reality of political life.

The results imply that Truss is similarly positive about right-leaning think tanks. While Kwarteng tweets rarely about think tanks, Truss' tweets indicate a positive relationship with right-leaning think tanks. Sometimes, Truss uses the hashtag "#ff", meaning Follow Friday, to highlight accounts that she wants to encourage her followers to explore. Beneficiaries of Truss' use of the hashtag include Mark Littlewood, Neil O'Brien (director of Policy Exchange), Ruth Porter (communications director at the IEA), and JP Floru (director of programmes at the ASI) (Truss, 2011m). In addition, Truss retweets posts by different right-leaning think tanks, such as the CPS's critique of Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell's nationalisation plans (Truss, 2018m). However, the Twitter posts also reveal that Truss and Kwarteng engage with the ideas of a wide range of different think tanks across the ideological spectrum as well (Kwarteng, 2021, Truss, 2014b, 2018b).

In short, the available evidence suggests that proposals from right-leaning think tanks appear to be relatively positively received. In particular, the relationship between Truss, Kwarteng and other Conservative MPs with the IEA seems to be especially strong. However, the evidence available is limited. In addition, the results highlight that Truss and Kwarteng also draw on research from think tanks of other political orientations, but their public support of right-leaning think tanks – through tweets and appearances – is substantial.

## 7.5 | Comparison of Initial Policy Preferences and the Policies of the Growth Plan

The initial responses from the right-leaning think tanks to the Growth Plan were highly positive. For example, Daniel Pryor, head of research at the ASI, said "Today's measures are a welcome first step to getting the British economy back on track" (Pryor, 2022) while Mark Littlewood called it a "boost up budget" (Littlewood, 2022c). Similarly, the chief economist at the TPA, Duncan Simpson, said: "The package today represents a bold first step towards the liberalising policies which will be required to meet the Government's growth aspirations" (Simpson, 2022). Expressions of optimism were accompanied by promising analysis, with the TPA estimating that the Growth Plan's policies could increase GDP by £99billion in a decade (TPA, 2022e). Positive reactions were also widespread on Twitter (Led by Donkeys, 2023) (Figure 12).

**Figure 10**

*Twitter Reactions to the Growth Plan from the ASI (ASI, 2022b) and CPS (CPS, 2022)*



However, an investigation of the reactions to specific policies and the alignment between the initial preferences of the four think tanks and the policies of the Growth Plan reveals more variation.

### 7.5.1 | Government Spending

Despite the positive reactions, a comparison of the initial preferences of the four think tanks and the policies of the Growth Plan reveals significant tension between the two regarding government spending. The announcement of the Energy Price Cap for households and the Energy Price Guarantee for businesses starkly contrasted the preference of right-leaning think tanks for fiscal discipline and restrained government spending. Not only are right-leaning think tanks generally opposed to high levels of government spending, but several had spoken out specifically against such a measure; for instance, the ASI explicitly said that the Government should "not freeze energy bills" (Macdonald et al., 2022) while the IEA called energy caps "in every sense a useless policy" in 2021 (Mayer, 2021).

The IEA responded critically to the policy, calling the energy price guarantee "middle-class welfare on steroids" (Mayer, 2022). Littlewood was concerned about what it would mean for fiscal

discipline and, therefore, the stability of the markets over the medium term. In response to the Growth Plan, Littlewood implored the government to "outline plans to get down public spending and borrowing in the medium-term" (Littlewood, 2022c). However, other think tanks remained measured in their critique. For instance, John O'Connell said that "the Treasury now needs to get serious on spending and ensure borrowing doesn't weigh down on generations to come (sic)" (TPA, 2022f). However, the Growth Plan did not completely contradict right-leaning think tanks' preferences. For instance, the Growth Plan did not nationalise the energy sector nor did the Growth Plan introduce a windfall tax on energy companies as the CPS urged them not to (Williams, 2022b), although they would U-turn on this second point less than a month later (Kollewe & Lawson, 2022). While some think tanks expressed their dislike of the spending policies, others remained quiet on the issue and instead focused on other policies included in the Growth Plan which aligned more closely with their preferences. Despite their silence, on paper, the huge financial commitments of the Growth Plan contrasted significantly with the initial preferences of the four right-leaning think tanks.

### 7.5.2 | Taxation and Reliefs

In contrast to the spending measures, the preferences of the four think tanks were more closely aligned with the taxation policies of the Growth Plan. The Growth Plan abolished the Health and Social Care Levy and cancelled the rise in corporation tax, just as right-leaning think tanks had called for. The ASI said that cancelling the rise in corporation tax was "a sensible move" because it "would have hammered business, choked off investment, and reduced workers' wages" (Pryor, 2022). In addition, the Growth Plan cut income taxes across the income distribution which right-leaning think tanks welcomed. For instance, in response to the abolition of the top rate of income tax, the IEA said: "The additional rate of income tax was always performative politics rather than sound economics" (Littlewood, 2022c). Similarly, the ASI said the Health and Social Care Levy and the top rate of income tax "should never have existed in the first place" (Macdonald et al., 2022). The Growth Plan also delivered on demands to freeze alcohol duties (Lesh & Niemietz, 2022; TPA, 2021c), increase the Stamp Duty Land Tax threshold (O'Connell, 2022), and permanently raise the AIA (Pryor, 2022). However, the reforms did not go far enough for some of the four think tanks. The IEA, for instance, said that "the Government should also consider raising income tax thresholds to help boost pay packets further" (Littlewood, 2022c) while the TPA called on the Kwarteng to "double the cut [to the basic rate of income tax] at the next budget" (TPA, 2022f). Nevertheless, the taxation measures were the most celebrated of all policies in the



Growth Plan; right-leaning think tanks considered the taxation reform a “very encouraging start” with an eye to further cuts in the future (Littlewood, 2022; Macdonald et al., 2022; TPA, 2022f).

### 7.5.3 | Deregulation

Right-leaning think tanks had long bemoaned the restrictions caused by regulations and therefore, the results demonstrate that they welcomed the Government’s commitment to regulatory reform. For instance, Morgan Schondelmeier, the ASI’s director of operations was highly complementary:

The measures outlined for proposed Investment Zones show that this Government knows what will really drive growth and prosperity. Liberalising restrictive planning rules, generous tax allowances for investment, scrapping destructive taxes like stamp duty and drastically raising National Insurance thresholds will all turbocharge growth. (Schondelmeier, 2022)

In addition, the ASI supported a return to fracking, arguing that it is more environmentally friendly than alternatives and could help lower the cost of energy (Lehodey, 2022). This aligned with the Growth Plan’s commitment to end the pause on fracking which had been in place since 2019 and the announcement of new North Sea oil and gas licenses. Despite positive responses, some of the four think tanks issued words of warning. For instance, Littlewood (2022c) called on the Government to “spell out details cutting burdensome red tape, including sunset regulations”. Furthermore, Schondelmeier (2022) expressed concern about Investment Zones highlighting that there are “risks associated with the government picking winners – situating the Investment Zones in politically convenient places”. Rather than being places of minimal state involvement in the market, Schondelmeier (2022) suggested that the Investment Zone policy could involve substantial government involvement. The Growth Plan made no mention of reforms to employment legislation or minimum wage regulations which right-leaning think tanks supported. Nevertheless, the response was overwhelmingly positive as the Growth Plan delivered on the initial preferences of right-leaning think tanks for reforms to environmental and planning regulations.

## 7.5.4 | Privatisation and the Role of the Private Sector

A pro-business attitude was at the centre of the Growth Plan, therefore aligning closely with the preferences of right-leaning think tanks, as it aimed to create the conditions to "allow the private sector to generate long-term prosperity" (*The Growth Plan*, 2022). The Growth Plan focuses more on policies to support investment and business growth in the private sector rather than privatising assets such as Channel 4 as right-leaning think tanks suggest (Lodge, 2022). However, think tank research overwhelmingly supported investment and supply-side reforms with the explicit aim to grow businesses which the Growth Plan delivers on. For instance, the Growth Plan delivers on several of the suggestions included in the CPS's proposed ten-step plan to boost private sector growth and investment (Clougherty et al., 2022) (Table 4).

**Table 4**

*Comparison of Clougherty et al.'s (2022) Ten-Step Plan to Boost the Private Sector with the Policies of the Growth Plan*

CPS Proposal	Growth Plan Policy
Publish a plan to make Britain the most investment-friendly country in the world	Overall, the Growth Plan may be considered the Government's plan to make Britain more investment-friendly by cutting taxes and reducing regulation.
Cancel the corporation tax rise	The planned corporation tax rise to 25% was cancelled. Corporation tax to remain at 19%.
Extend the special tax regimes that bring wealth and talent to Britain	While the plans were yet to be fully outlined, the Government said it would "set out a plan in the coming weeks to ensure the immigration system supports growth whilst maintaining control" (Kwarteng, 2022a). Shortly before the start of the Truss premiership, several visa routes were introduced – Global Talent, High Potential Individual, Scale-up Worker and Global Business Mobility – which the Government remained committed to. The

	expansion of the SEIS and CSOP schemes was intended to help companies attract talent. The Government also removed the bankers' bonus cap and abolished the additional rate of income tax to "make the UK a more attractive place to live and work" ( <i>The Growth Plan</i> , 2022, p. 5).
Enhance tax breaks that boost investment	The AIA, which was due to return to £200,000 in 2023, was permanently set at £1million. The 1.25 percentage point increase in the dividend tax rate was cancelled to support entrepreneurs and investors. In addition, the SEIS and the CSOP would support companies in attracting investment while R&D tax reliefs were introduced to support investments in innovation.
Reform the regulations that hold back our investment ecosystem	The Growth Plan commits to tackling regulation that burdens businesses and holds back growth. This includes addressing regulations affecting financial services, infrastructure, housing, and farming. The Government says that its plans will "remove barriers to the flow of private capital" ( <i>The Growth Plan</i> , p. 9).
Introduce cutting-edge regulator frameworks to capture new markets	No new frameworks to capture new markets were introduced.
Put a new competitiveness unit at the heart of the Government	No competitiveness unit was announced in the Growth Plan.
Renew No.10s focus on business and put in place a much better support structure	The SEIS and CSOP are key mechanisms to support business growth in addition to the existing Enterprise Investment Scheme (EIS) and the Venture Capital Trusts (VCT).
Empower city regions to promote themselves as investment destinations	Investment Zones provide opportunities for cities and areas to attract investment by

	benefitting from tax reliefs and streamlined regulations. The process to become an Investment Zone is "open to everyone", with areas having to register an expression of interest after local consultation ( <i>The Growth Plan</i> , 2022, p. 19).
Promote business-finance-university clusters across the UK	Investment Zones would be based around universities to draw on innovative research and progress (Pope & Coggins, 2022).

The comparison demonstrates that the Growth Plan addressed many points of the ten-step plan such as reforms to regulations, introducing new capital investment mechanisms, and changing tax policy. The reaction of right-leaning think tanks to the Growth Plan's focus on business and enterprise was positive. For instance, Littlewood (2022c) celebrated the "important announcements on liberalising planning, scrapping the ludicrous cap on bankers' bonuses and encouraging those who can work to do so". Therefore, there is significant evidence that there is substantial alignment between the preferences of right-leaning think tanks and the Growth Plan regarding the commitment to supporting a strong private sector.

To summarise, the results suggest that in three of the four economic policy areas – taxation, deregulation, and the role of the private sector – the policies of the Growth Plan aligned with the initial preferences of the four right-leaning think tanks. However, the energy support package represents a substantial deviation from the initial preferences of right-leaning think tanks.

## Chapter 8 | Discussion: Influence of Think Tank Ideas on the Growth Plan

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2022, right-leaning think tanks had a lot to be happy about since several policies that they historically supported featured prominently in the Growth Plan. In fact, such were the similarities between the policies supported by right-leaning think tanks and the Growth Plan that Littlewood asked Kwarteng to confirm that the Growth Plan had been written by the Government and not the IEA (IEA, 2022b). While Kwarteng confirmed that the Government, and not the IEA, was the author of the Growth Plan, the application of Christensen's (2013) framework demonstrates a plausible line of causality from the initial preferences of right-leaning think tanks to the policies of the Growth Plan. This suggests that the ideas of right-leaning think tanks did have some influence on the Growth Plan's policies.

### 8.1 | Discussion of Findings

Firstly, the results indicate that there are few regulations restricting the access of think tanks to MPs with think tanks free to set up meetings or contact MPs with policy proposals. Even those think tanks subject to additional restrictions due to their charitable status do not face onerous regulations prohibiting access to decision-makers. The lack of restrictions on think tank access to decision-makers is an important feature of democracy. For a democracy to function well, it is crucial that people can raise issues with those in power. While the distributional differences in resources mean that some voices are louder and listened to more frequently, the rules are formulated in this way so that in theory everyone has the opportunity to actively participate in government. In addition, the lack of restriction may be because the Government actively seeks outside opinions, including think tanks, to make policies better. This is further reinforced by the fact that there are several institutionalised opportunities for think tank involvement. The results show that those working in Parliament frequently draw on outside resources, including think tank publications, to inform briefings and draft policy proposals. In addition, think tanks can be invited to provide expert evidence to support the policymaking process such as through Select Committees and Public Bill Committees. While much of the research of the four right-leaning think tanks is ideologically loaded, strongly promoting free-market ideas, the review of the research also shows the immense depth and breadth of think tank research available. Therefore, it is understandable that the institutional environment creates formalised opportunities for think tanks

of all ideological orientations to engage in the policymaking process. Thus, the results suggest that, while think tanks are not embedded in the political system as they are in other countries (Campbell & Stewart, 2023), there were many potential opportunities for right-leaning think tanks to influence the policymaking process of the Growth Plan.

Secondly, the results show that think tanks capitalise on the lack of strict regulation and the several institutional opportunities available. The review of the research published by the four right-leaning think tanks indicates that a significant section of their publications explicitly focuses on providing policy suggestions. With opportunities such as POST and the Current Affairs Digest available, right-leaning think tanks are likely aware that policy suggestions could be circulated through Parliament and specifically framing research as policy proposals potentially increases the chances of their research having an impact. This finding aligns with previous research which argues that research is a critically important method through which think tanks can influence the policymaking process (Desai, 1994, Ohemeng, 2015; Pautz, 2020; Rich, 2005).

In addition to research, the results indicate several examples of right-leaning think tanks capturing policy actors (t Hart & Vromen, 2008). There are many examples of collaborations between Conservative MPs and right-leaning think tanks, including Truss and Kwarteng, as well as significant networking through events hosted by right-leaning think tanks. Through these “vivid, compelling encounters” (t Hart & Vromen, 2008, p. 138), right-leaning think tanks may flatter MPs to build positive relationships between think tanks and the Government while events also create the chance for think tanks to discuss specific policy ideas with key decision-makers. Another form of capturing policymakers discussed in the literature is personnel exchange. In line with previous research from the UK (Desai, 1994; Schlesinger, 2009), the results indicate some exchange in personnel between right-leaning think tanks and Truss’ advisory team throughout her senior roles in various departments. In addition, the results suggest that the Truss campaign and her prime ministerial office were also staffed by previous employees of right-leaning think tanks. While this second point is founded on unofficial data, we can be relatively confident in the evidence since many of the individuals listed across different news reports were pictured outside No.10 to welcome Truss after she was confirmed as prime minister. Nevertheless, there are some reasons to question how conclusive this evidence is for the argument that right-leaning think tanks influenced the Growth Plan through capturing policy actors. It may be entirely coincidental that Truss drew several staff members from the world of right-leaning think tanks or there may be a high think tank presence among her staff because Truss valued their previous experience in conducting research and producing policy proposals regardless of their ideological orientation. Ultimately, even if none of Truss’ SpAds were previously employed at a right-leaning think tank,

it is still entirely possible that right-leaning think tanks influenced the policies of the Growth Plan. Therefore, the employment history of 'Truss' SpAds provides limited evidence of right-leaning think tanks exerting influence on the Growth Plan by capturing policy actors. Nevertheless, the evidence of frequent collaboration and attendance of events provides more convincing evidence that right-leaning think tanks attempted to influence policies, including economic policy, by capturing policy actors.

The final direct method of policy influence investigate in this paper was engagement in institutionalised opportunities for influence. While the results indicate that right-leaning think tanks capitalise on the institutionalised opportunities for influence such as in Select Committees and Public Bill Committee, it is unlikely that right-leaning think tanks could use this method to influence the policies of the Growth Plan. This is because these mechanisms would only come into effect after the Growth Plan had been announced to scrutinise the proposed policies. Therefore, despite their active engagement in the past, contributions to Select Committees and Public Bills Committees did not offer a potential method for direct influence. However, these findings do not undermine the other results providing evidence that right-leaning think tanks attempt to influence policy making directly. It simply indicates that not all methods provide a relevant explanation.

The results also suggest that right-leaning think tanks attempt to influence the policymaking process through shaping the landscape of opinions (*About US – ASI*, n.d.). There is evidence of several ways in which right-leaning think tanks increase the accessibility of their research and “mediatise” their findings such as through Twitter posts, podcasts, and websites (Lingard & Rawolle, 2004). This is likely because right-leaning think tanks believe that shifting the discourse around economic policy towards free market ideas will likely have a knock-on effect on the policies considered by policymakers. This may be likened to attempting to create a paradigm shift, which previous research outlined can change and shape specific economic policies (Hall, 1992, 1993; Hay, 2018). As this paper focuses on the alignment between the initial preferences of right-leaning think tanks and the policies of the Growth Plan, this research may underestimate the effect of right-leaning think tanks since the comparison between preferences and policies does not adequately account for the influence of think tanks on the economic policy discourse. Therefore, it is important to bear in mind the contribution of right-leaning think tanks to the discourse around economic policy.

To briefly summarise, the results of the third step of Christensen’s (2013) framework indicates that, while not all methods of influence expected in the literature were relevant, there are

several methods used by right-leaning think tanks which served as mechanisms through which their ideas could influence the policies of the Growth Plan.

Thirdly, this paper investigated the attitudes of Truss and Kwarteng towards the four right-leaning think tanks. While the evidence is limited, it does indicate that Truss and Kwarteng respect and are interested in the work of right-leaning think tanks. For instance, while Kwarteng's comment about engaging in the work of the TPA may be evidence of politeness rather than an endorsement of their research, the fact that his appearance at the IEA and TPA event at the Conservative Party Conference was twice as long as his speech to announce the Growth Plan suggests Kwarteng's positive attitude towards the two think tanks (Dyer, 2022). Similarly, the results indicate Truss' positive perception of right-leaning think tanks as she engages with their research through Twitter and has frequently appeared at events hosted by the four think tanks. The suggestion from the findings that Truss and Kwarteng are interested and engaged in the activities of right-leaning think tanks is not surprising given that they both have deep roots in the think tank world; Kwarteng, for instance, was chair of the Bow Group, which claims to be the "world's oldest conservative think tank" (Bow Group, 2023; Pickard & Thomas, 2021) while Truss was director of Reform think tank where she co-authored papers on reducing the budget deficit (Bassett et al., 2009) and improving education standards (Kounine et al., 2008). Nevertheless, given the lack of evidence it is important not to overstate confidence in the conclusion that right-leaning think tanks are positively received by key decision-makers.

Finally, the results demonstrate close alignment between the initial preferences of right-leaning think tanks and many of the policies of the Growth Plan. Regarding taxation, deregulation, and the private sector, the Growth Plan implemented various policies which right-leaning think tanks furthered for years such as lowering Stamp Duty Land Tax, reducing the top rate of income tax, and ending the pause on fracking. The Growth Plan also addressed recent complaints about the negative effects of the rise in corporation tax and the introduction of the Health and Social Care Levy. In addition, the online reactions of right-leaning think tanks were overwhelmingly positive and expressed optimism about Kwarteng's suggestion that more was to come. Given the plausible line of causality outlined in the preceding steps, the close alignment between the initial preferences of right-leaning think tanks and several policies of the Growth Plan provides support for *Theoretical Expectation 2: Ideas of right-leaning think tanks influenced the policies of the Growth Plan*. In addition, the previous findings regarding the methods employed by right-leaning think tanks to influence economic policy support the expectation that right-leaning think tanks influenced the policies of the Growth Plan directly (*Theoretical Expectation 2a*) and through shaping the economic policy discourse (*Theoretical Expectation 2b*). These findings suggest that think tanks continue to



have an influence on policymaking in the UK as they did under previous prime ministers (Collini, 2006; Denham & Garnett, 2008; Desai, 1994; James, 1993; Pautz, 2013; Schlesinger, 2009).

However, there is one glaring anomaly: the spending on the energy support package. Not only did the energy support package contrast significantly to right-leaning think tanks' preference for a small state and low government spending but representatives of right-leaning think tanks such as the IEA and TPA publicly criticised the policy. Therefore, despite the apparent opportunities for think tank influence, the results suggest there are limitations to the influence of think tanks. One might expect some differences between initial preferences and policies since perfect alignment across most policy areas may be an excessively demanding threshold to indicate "influence". After all, unlike Truss and Kwarteng who had a direct influence on the policies of the Growth Plan, think tanks influence decision-making indirectly through decision-makers. Therefore, it may be possible to accept some significant differences between the preferences of right-leaning think tanks and the policies of the Growth Plan and still argue that there was a significant influence. Nevertheless, the differences between initial preferences and policies suggests a limitation of the influence of the ideas of right-leaning think tanks and highlights the importance of considering alternative explanations.

## **8.2 | Alternative Explanations and Limitations of Results**

### **8.2.1 | Coincidental Alignment in Preferences and Policies**

While the alignment between the preferences of right-leaning think tanks with many aspects of the Growth Plan indicates a causal effect, it is still possible that the significant alignment is simply coincidental. Evidence regarding the sources used to develop the policies of the Growth Plan or more evidence on the responses of Truss and Kwarteng to the ideas of right-leaning think tanks would provide more insight into the causal effect of think tank ideas. However, the application of Christensen's (2013) framework, which demands an exploration of the opportunities for furthering ideas, maintains a focus on the causal mechanisms linking ideas with policy outcomes. The results outline a feasible and likely path of influence and the responses of Truss and Kwarteng, albeit few, do indicate a positive response to right-leaning think tanks. Therefore, while it may be that the preferences of right-leaning think tanks and the policies of the Growth Plan are coincidentally very similar, the results also outline a likely causal effect.

## 8.2.2 | Muddled Causal Chain

An alternative concern is that the causal chain between these two variables is muddled. The results indicating a close relationship between right-leaning think tanks and Truss and Kwarteng might be evidence of Truss and Kwarteng using think tanks to validate their ideas rather than think tanks influencing the Growth Plan (Denham & Garnett, 1998). It is likely, for instance, that Truss did appoint SpAds with a history of employment at right-leaning think tanks because of their ideological alignment. Similarly, Truss likely retweeted right-leaning think tank research to legitimise ideas she already held. However, this does not mean that right-leaning think tanks did not influence the policies of the Growth Plan at all. It may be that both can be true: at the same time that right-leaning think tanks influenced the policies of the Growth Plan, Truss and Kwarteng could have engaged actively with right-leaning think tanks to justify and legitimise their own ideas. Therefore, even if the causal chain is somewhat muddled, the argument that the ideas of right-leaning think tanks influenced many policies of the Growth Plan remains convincing.

## Chapter 9 | Conclusion

The ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed, the world is ruled by little else. (Keynes quoted in Desai, 1994, p.27)

Written almost a century before Truss was elected prime minister, John Maynard Keynes argued that ideas offer a powerful explanatory account of institutional change. The results of this paper provide evidence of the continued value of ideational explanations for economic policy.

Firstly, this paper finds that the ideas of key decision-makers, Truss and Kwarteng, influenced large part of the Growth Plan. Through reviewing stability and change in the ideas expressed by Truss and Kwarteng since they entered Parliament, this paper separated the ideas of Truss and Kwarteng from material interests. This revealed that Truss and Kwarteng consistently supported low taxation, deregulation, and a strong private sector with any small deviations possible to explain through contextual factors. However, while Truss' attitudes towards government spending remained stable throughout, Kwarteng supported higher government spending and intervention in the market during his time as Business Secretary. Nevertheless, the results indicate that, while Kwarteng gained an appreciation of the potential for successful government intervention to correct market failures, there was not a wholesale displacement of Kwarteng's preference for restrained government spending and fiscal discipline. After establishing the stability of Truss and Kwarteng's ideas, this paper compared these ideas with the policies of the Growth Plan. The results indicate that in many policy areas there was substantial alignment as the Growth Plan delivered the tax cutting, supply-side reform agenda Truss and Kwarteng had furthered for over a decade. The paper then investigated potential causal mechanisms linking Truss and Kwarteng's ideas with the policies of the Growth Plan. While there was limited evidence available to investigate a ground-up cognitive effect, the results provided significant evidence of a top-down cognitive effect and power through ideas. Therefore, the alignment between ideas and policies in combination with evidence supporting causal mechanisms provides convincing evidence that ideas of key decision-makers influenced the policies of the Growth Plan.

However, the comparison of Truss and Kwarteng's ideas with the policies of the Growth Plan revealed a strong tension regarding government spending and fiscal discipline. The combination of high government spending on the energy support package and tax cuts across the income distribution completely contrasted the ideas expressed by Truss and Kwarteng since they entered Parliament. In addition, the causal mechanisms investigated also struggle to account for

the energy support package policies. Nevertheless, while ideas cannot account for all policies, they still provide a powerful explanation for many aspects of the Growth Plan. Reflecting on potential alternative explanations shows that other explanations do not provide a significantly better account of the Growth Plan's policies.

Secondly, this paper finds that ideas further by right-leaning think tanks also influenced the policies of the Growth Plan. Applying Christensen's (2013) framework for investigating expert influence on policymaking revealed a likely link between the initial preferences of right-leaning think tanks and the policies of the Growth Plan. The results outline various opportunities for think tank influence which right-leaning think tanks duly capitalised on to influence policymaking both directly and through shaping the discourse around economic policy. A comparison of the initial preferences of right-leaning think tanks and the policies of the Growth Plan demonstrated that there was substantial alignment regarding taxation, deregulation, and privatisation policies. However, the energy support package contrasted significantly with clear preferences among right-leaning think tanks for minimal government spending and intervention in the market. Therefore, this indicates that, while there are several opportunities for think tank influence, there are limitations to the influence think tanks have on the policymaking process.

Therefore, the energy support package represented a limitation to the influence of ideas of both key decision-makers and right-leaning think tanks. This demonstrates that other contextual factors, in this case the economic crisis, must also be account for. Decisions are not taken in a vacuum, indicated also by the important role played by institutions in providing the opportunity for Truss and Kwarteng to implement their ideas. Taking these contextual and institutional factors into account does not undermine the argument that ideas influenced the policies of the Growth Plan, but rather enhances our understanding of economic policy making.

## 9.1 | Limitations

This research draws on an expansive range of empirical evidence to explain the policies of the Growth Plan, investigating both whether and how ideas account for this infamous event. Chapter 4 reflected on the validity and reliability of the evidence and methods used, however there are other limitations to consider. Firstly, while this research explicitly focuses on the causal mechanisms linking ideas to outcomes, the evidence available is sometimes limited. In particular, there is limited evidence regarding ground-up cognitive mechanisms and the responses of Truss and Kwarteng to right-leaning think tank proposals. This limits the possibilities to draw conclusions from the results since there is insufficient evidence to establish a clear pattern. While

evidence regarding other potential causal mechanisms is more readily available and convincing, the lack of evidence still limits our understanding of exactly how ideas influence economic policymaking. Secondly, this paper may be criticised for limited generalisability. Clearly, one of the facilitating factors increasing the influence of think tanks was the existing affinity between Truss, Kwarteng, and right-leaning think tanks. Truss and Kwarteng previously worked in the world of think tanks, potentially making them predisposed to listen to right-leaning think tanks regardless of the opportunities and methods think tanks could use. Therefore, the influence of think tanks in the future may be less, not because of changes in opportunities but, simply because of the characters in power. In addition, previous research highlights other factors which condition the influence of ideas, such as institutional factors. However, situating this research within the existing literature provides a comparison with other case studies which reveals important differences in the effect of ideas in different contexts and moves the literature closer to a deeper understanding of the influence of ideas on economic policy making. In addition, previous research specifically on the UK suggests that even with changes in prime ministers, think tanks continue to have an important influence of policy making (Collini, 2006; Denham & Garnett, 2008; Desai, 1994; James, 1993; Pautz, 2013; Schlesinger, 2009).

## 9.2 | Future Research

There are several exciting avenues for further research regarding this case study and ideational explanations of economic policymaking generally. Firstly, regarding this case study, further evidence regarding the information and data used by Truss, Kwarteng, and their team to develop the policies of the Growth Plan would provide a greater insight into the causal mechanisms linking ideas with policy outcomes. In addition, more information regarding how Truss and Kwarteng responded to proposals by right-leaning think tanks would provide greater insight regarding their influence as well. Furthermore, while this paper focused on the ability of ideas to explain the selection of policies in the Growth Plan, future research should consider investigating why the Growth Plan ultimately collapsed, with Carstensen & Schmidt's (2015) ideological power framework providing a potentially fruitful path for further investigation. Alternatively, future research could draw on the policy fiascos literature to gain a deeper understanding of the fallout of the Growth Plan. Secondly, future research on explaining economic policymaking generally should maintain a focus on outlining causal mechanisms. While this paper attempted to respond to Jacobs' (2009) and Campbell's (1998) call for further investigation of

causal mechanism, there is much progress still to be made in our understanding of the influence of ideas on economic policymaking.

### **9.3 | Concluding Remarks**

When Truss walked on stage to Taylor Swift’s “Change”, she promised a “revolution” in the ideas determining economic policymaking in No.10 and the Treasury. That change was short lived. This paper’s finding that ideas play a significant role in explaining the policies of the Growth Plan serves as an important reminder of the need for evidence-based policymaking and upholding institutions which provide checks on policymakers. This is because, as Trussonomics is written into the history books, the implications of Truss and Kwarteng’s decisions will be felt for a long time yet.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Summary of the Key Policies of the Growth Plan**

- Increasing private sector investment: introduce Seed Enterprise Investment Scheme, reforms to Company Share Option Plan, remove bankers' bonus cap, implement Investment Zones, permanently increase Annual Investment Allowance.
- Enabling companies to focus on business: abolish the Office of Tax Simplification, cancel planned increase in Corporation Tax rate, cancelling increase in rate of Diverted Profits Tax
- High quality infrastructure: introduce new legislation to accelerate major infrastructure project, raise Stamp Duty Land Tax nil-rate thresholds, deregulation reforms
- Getting the housing market moving: increase incentives for public sector to sell surplus land, increase Stamp Duty Land Tax Threshold
- Getting more people into work with the right skills: reduce basic rate of income tax, reverse the increase in National Insurance Contributions (NICs), reverse dividend tax increase, increase Administrative Earnings Threshold and Universal Credit sanctions regime.
- Tackling energy prices: Energy Price Guarantee and Energy Bill Relief Scheme for businesses, moratorium on green levies, supply side reforms for energy production

## Appendix B

### Example of Coding of Evidence on the Ideas of Truss and Kwarteng

Below is an example of the coding of evidence – including articles, interviews, speeches, and tweets – made by Truss and Kwarteng. This is not a complete collection of the evidence which was coded but aims to provide an example of the classification of different quotes using five different categories: government spending, taxation, deregulation, privatisation and the role of the private sector, and think tanks.

Politician: Liz Truss (@trussliz)

Title	Source	Date	Government spending	Taxation	Deregulation	Privatisation and the role of the private sector	Think Tanks	Link
Tweet	Twitter	21/02/12					“At IOE putting case for ABACC of 3 rig. A-levels inc. at least A/S maths + AS art/humanity. Practical proposal for Fair Access to University”	<a href="https://twitter.com/trussliz/status/171930095265652737?s=20">https://twitter.com/trussliz/status/171930095265652737?s=20</a>
With our plan, the countryside can become Britain’s engine of growth	The Telegraph	20/08/15			“And we’ll look at planning and regulatory constraints facing rural businesses. In a recent survey of rural businesses the main barrier to growth that most identified was planning restrictions. So for a start, we’ll review rules around			<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/conservative/11813164/With-our-plan-the-countryside-can-">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/conservative/11813164/With-our-plan-the-countryside-can-</a>

					agricultural buildings such as barns to allow rural businesses to expand more easily.”			<a href="http://become-Britains-engine-of-growth.html">become-Britains-engine-of-growth.html</a>
Tweet	Twitter	18/01/18		“The UK isn’t one of the best places in the world to start a business by accident. We’ve worked hard to create the right environment – reforming regulations and reducing taxes so enterprises can reach higher and do more.”				<a href="https://twitter.com/trussliz/status/953923787829006336?s=20">https://twitter.com/trussliz/status/953923787829006336?s=20</a>
Tweet	Twitter	21/01/18	“Not only would this raise debt to eye watering levels-it would cost billpayers and taxpayers- and put off those who want to invest in Britain.”					<a href="https://twitter.com/trussliz/status/955040732477259776?s=20">https://twitter.com/trussliz/status/955040732477259776?s=20</a>
“Firms to be given greater planning freedom under government scheme to create new business hub”	Manchester Evening news Article	26/11/2018			“The idea is that the zones will attract the right businesses there - and because of the freedom to do things differently - there is more possibility to generate business opportunity”  “There have been all kinds of different			<a href="https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/business/business-news/manchester-ripe-government-nt-">https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/business/business-news/manchester-ripe-government-nt-</a>



					models such as the Local Enterprise Zones, which have tax reliefs, well this is about planning freedoms.”			<a href="#">scheme-create-15464377</a>
“Struggling with energy bills and the cost of living? You'll get instant help, vows LIZ TRUSS”	The Daily Mail	13/08/2022		<p>“If elected leader, I will ensure we Conservatives stay true to our core principles of low taxes, enterprise, and hard work. I will lead us back on to the road of true Conservatism and put us into the fast lane of economic growth.”</p> <p>"Lowering taxes helps people by putting more money back in their pockets. But just as importantly, it is an incredible catalytic force for free enterprise and growth over the long-term, showing that Britain is open for business and open to opportunity."</p>	“I will continue what Boris Johnson started on Brexit and tear through EU red tape by the end of 2023. This includes reforms to help pension funds invest billions of pounds more in British infrastructure.”	“Building a strong economy, and getting the private sector motoring right across the country, is critical to ensuring our Union doesn’t just survive, but thrives”		<a href="https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-11109295/Struggling-energy-bills-cost-living-Youll-instant-help-vows-LIZ-TRUSS.html">https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-11109295/Struggling-energy-bills-cost-living-Youll-instant-help-vows-LIZ-TRUSS.html</a>

Politician: Kwasi Kwarteng (@kwasikwarteng)

Title	Source	Date	Government spending	Taxation	Deregulation	Privatisation and the role of the private sector	Think Tanks	Link
The Economy	Hansard	11/12/12	“It was only after 2001 that the disaster occurred, that the wheels spun off the car and we suffered under a profligate traditional Labour tax and spend regime. I use the phrase “tax and spend” very gingerly, because the taxation never covered the spending.”					<a href="https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2012-12-11/debates/12121156000003/TheEconomy#main-content">https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2012-12-11/debates/12121156000003/TheEconomy#main-content</a>
Trade, Exports, Innovation and Productivity	Hansard	13/01/2016			“The idea that we can somehow subsidise things endlessly on an unproductive basis is simply wrong.”			<a href="https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2016-01-13/debates/16011324000001/TradeExportsInnovationAndProductivity">https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2016-01-13/debates/16011324000001/TradeExportsInnovationAndProductivity</a>
“The Left is deluded to think that the	The Telegraph	14/08/17				“Yet the perceived failings of capitalism should not detract		<a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/</a>



							's event this morning, "A decisive decade for British business" to discuss the evolution of our economy over the coming years, and how Covid-19, Brexit and Net Zero have altered the role of the British state	<a href="#">Kwasi Kwarteng/status/1407335782700945409?s=20</a>
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## Appendix C

### Application of Van Evera's (1997) Two-Way Typology

Theoretical Expectation	Concept	Operationalisation	Certitude	Uniqueness	Implication
Ideas held by key decision makers influenced the policies of the Growth Plan.	Ideas held by key decision makers	Ideas expressed in Truss and Kwarteng's publications, tweets, speeches, articles etc. since 2010	If ideational explanations influenced the policies of the Growth Plan, consistency in the expressed ideas are likely to be present regardless of material interests. Politicians are public figures and therefore, it is necessary for them to engage frequently in public debate such as on Twitter, in newspaper articles, and through television interviews. The sources of evidence employed include the most popular forums for politicians to express their opinions. It is likely that, if Truss and Kwarteng express consistent ideas across the period, the Growth Plan was influenced by ideas rather than just material interests.	Even if we find consistent support of the ideas which would later characterise the Growth Plan by Liz Truss/Kwasi Kwarteng, alternative explanations may still account for policies of the Growth Plan.	Hoop
	Effect of ideas on the policy-	Presence or absence of top-down reasoning from ideas to policy preferences in publications during the during	Even if ideas explain the policies of the Growth Plan, it is highly possible that this research does not find evidence of a top down	If there is evidence of a top-down approach, it is unlikely this occurred if ideas did not explain the policies of the Growth Plan.	Smoking gun

	making process	the leadership election and Truss' premiership	mechanism since this process occurs in the minds of individuals.		
		Presence or absence of bottom-up mechanism in publications during the during the leadership election and Truss' premiership	Even if ideas explain the policies of the Growth Plan, it is highly possible that this research does not find evidence of an attention mechanism since this process occurs in the minds of individuals.	If there is evidence of a bottom-up effect, it is unlikely this occurred if ideas did not explain the policies of the Growth Plan.	Smoking gun
		Presence or absence cognitive and normative arguments in the communications during the leadership campaign and Truss' premiership			
	Economic Policy	Policies of the Growth Plan	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Influence on policies of the Growth Plan	Comparison between the ideas of Truss and Kwarteng and the policies of the Growth Plan	If ideas held by key decision-makers do influence the policies of the Growth Plan, it is likely that there will be alignment between ideas and policies.	Alignment between ideas and the policies of the Growth Plan may be coincidental and there may be no causal effect.	Hoop
Ideas of right-leaning think tanks influenced the policies of the Growth Plan.	Ideas held by right-leaning think tanks	Ideas expressed in research and publications available on right-leaning think tanks' websites	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Access of think tanks to decision makers	Legislation affecting access of think tanks to decision makers	If think tanks did influence the policies of the Growth Plan, it is likely that the legislative framework provided opportunities to do so or, at the very least, did not provide a serious obstacle. Given that legislation is publicly available,	Even if there are few restrictions on interactions between think tanks and key decision makers, this does not indicate that think tanks made use of opportunities nor that MPs reacted positively to think tank proposals. Influence on the Growth Plan	Hoop

			evidence of either restrictive or relaxed legislation is accessible.	may still be limited. In addition, there may be informal institutions which affect the interactions between decision makers and think tanks; these are not codified but are no less important.	
		Institutional opportunities for think tanks to access decision makers	If think tanks did influence the policies of the Growth Plan, it is likely that there will be examples of institutional opportunities for access to key decision-makers.	Even if there is evidence of institutional opportunities for think tanks to access decision-makers, think tanks may not take advantage of these opportunities and therefore, not influence the Growth Plan.	Hoop
	Attempts by right-leaning think tanks to influence the policy making process	Presence or absence of focus in think tank publications on providing policy suggestions	If ideas of right-leaning think tanks do influence the policymaking process, it is likely that they will focus their research on present clear policy recommendations.	Even if there is evidence that think tanks focus their research on providing policy recommendations, think tank influence could still be limited.	Hoop
		The number of appearances by MPs at right-leaning think tank events	A high number of appearances of key decision makers are right leaning think tank events would suggest that right leaning think tanks were actively trying to affect policy by working with MPs. However, there are several ways that think tanks could attempt to influence policy. Therefore, if there are few or no appearances of key decision makers at right-leaning think	It is unlikely that right-leaning think tanks would invite key decision makers to attend and speak at events if they did not aim to influence policy making. Such events are about sharing and spreading ideas and therefore, are constructed to influence ideas.	Smoking Gun

			tank events, the theoretical expectation may still be accurate.		
		Collaborations between MPs and think tanks, such as co-authored papers, based on the resources available on their websites	Evidence of collaborations between think tanks and MPs would indicate attempts by right-leaning think tanks to influence policy making by establishing close working relationships with key decision makers. However, alternative methods of influence are also possible and therefore, a lack of evidence would not completely undermine the theoretical expectation.	It is unlikely that right-leaning think tanks would attempt to forge close working relationships with key decision makers without attempting to promote ideas. Therefore, examples of collaboration are evidence of attempts by right leaning think tanks to influence the policy making process.	Smoking Gun
		Presence or absence of previous employment at right-leaning think tanks of SpAds working for Truss	The presence of a high number of SpAds working for Truss would indicate a close relationship between right-leaning think tanks and Truss. However, if there are few or no SpAds who have been previously employed in a right leaning think tank, the theoretical expectation may still be accurate.	Even if there is an increase in the number of SPADs with a background in free market think tanks, it does not necessarily mean that think tanks have a significant influence on policy making.	Straw in the wind
		Use of institutional opportunities to engage in the policy making process	If the ideas of right-leaning think tanks do influence the policymaking process, they are likely to engage in institutionalised opportunities for involvement in the policymaking process.	Even if there is evidence of think tanks using institutional opportunities, they still may not influence the policies of the Growth Plan.	Hoop
		Evidence of adopting research for the mass media landscape	If ideas of right-leaning think tanks do influence the	Even if there is evidence of think tanks adopting their research for	Hoop



			<p>polycymaking process, it is likely that think tanks take particular care to “mediatise” their research.</p>	<p>the mass media landscape, they still may not influence the policies of the Growth Plan.</p>	
		Evidence of engagement with traditional media	<p>Think tanks are likely to engage with traditional media if their ideas influence the policy process.</p>	<p>Even if think tanks engage with the traditional media, they still may not influence the policies of the Growth Plan.</p>	Hoop
		Evidence of publicity campaigns	<p>Think tanks may have an influence on the policy making process even if they do not run campaigns.</p>	<p>Even if think tanks run issue specific campaigns, they still may not influence the policies of the Growth Plan.</p>	Straw in the wind
	Perception of decision makers of the proposals of right-leaning think tanks	Public statements by Truss and Kwarteng about right-leaning think tanks	<p>If right-leaning think tanks did influence the policies of the Growth Plan, it is likely that Truss and Kwarteng felt positively towards them.</p>	<p>Even if Truss and Kwarteng make positive statements about right-leaning think tanks, it is possible that these do not mean that think tank ideas had a causal effect on the Growth Plan. It may simply be evidence of shared economic ideology.</p>	Hoop
	Influence of right-leaning think tanks with the policies of the Growth Plan	Similarities between initial preferences of think tanks and the policies of the Growth Plan	<p>If right-leaning think tanks influenced the policies of the Growth Plan, it is likely that there is close alignment between their initial preferences and the policies of the Growth Plan. If there are few or no similarities, it is unlikely that right-leaning think tanks influenced the policies of the Growth Plan.</p>	<p>There may be alignment between initial preferences and the policies of the Growth Plan by coincidence. Right-leaning think tanks may have had not influence yet there may still be alignment between initial preferences and the policies</p>	Hoop
		Public reactions of right-leaning think tanks to the Growth Plan	<p>If the ideas of right-leaning think tanks influenced the policies of the Growth Plan, right-leaning</p>	<p>Positive reactions may occur even in the case that there is no influence of right-leaning think</p>	Hoop

			think tanks are likely to express publicly positive reactions to both celebrate the policies and claim some credit.	tanks on the policies of the Growth Plan.	
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## Appendix D

### Inter-coder Reliability Test: Comparison of Coding of Articles by Truss and Kwarteng

**Article:** Truss, E. (2022a, July 10). Liz Truss: I would cut taxes from day one as prime minister. *The Telegraph*.

Coder	Government spending	Taxation	Deregulation	Privatisation and the role of the private sector	Think Tanks
Heitplatz, H.	<p>“Put Covid debt on a longer-term footing”</p> <p>“Long term plan to bring down the size of the state”</p> <p>“People do not want to Government trying to run their lives or spend more of their money than is necessary.”</p> <p>“In the Treasury, I had a firm grip on the national finances. I would take the same approach as prime minister.”</p>	<p>“Start cutting taxes from day one”</p> <p>“It isn’t right to be putting up taxes now”</p> <p>“I would reverse the National Insurance increase that came in during April, make sure we keep corporation tax competitive so we can attract business and investment into Britain”</p>	<p>“Bold supply side reform”</p> <p>“Making the most of our new-found freedoms outside the European Union”</p> <p>“Charting our own course on regulation”</p>	<p>“I will get the private sector growing faster than the public sector”</p>	n/a
West, H.	<p>“Bring down the size of the state”</p> <p>“Spend more money than is necessary”</p> <p>“In the Treasury, I had a firm grip on the national finances. I would take the same approach as prime minister.”</p>	<p>“I would start cutting taxes from day one to take immediate action to help people deal with the cost of living.”</p> <p>“Reverse the National Insurance increase that came in during April, make sure we keep corporation tax competitive so we can attract business and investment into Britain”</p>	<p>“It is built on a clear and long-standing Conservative philosophy, including bold supply-side reform.”</p> <p>“Charting our own course on regulation”</p>	<p>“I will get the private sector growing faster than the public sector”</p>	n/a

**Article:** Kwarteng, K. (2022f, August 20). Liz Truss will deliver affordability, self-sufficiency and security, says Kwasi Kwarteng, the minister tipped as the new chancellor. *The Daily Mail*.

Coder	Government spending	Taxation	Deregulation	Privatisation and the role of the private sector	Think Tanks
Heitplatz, H.	n/a	<p>“She has already announced she will reverse the National Insurance contribution rise and introduce a temporary moratorium on energy levies.”</p> <p>“Rather than slapping a punitive windfall tax, as Rishi Sunak has done”</p> <p>“Bold and ambitious vision for the country that is based on her core principles of higher growth and lower taxes”</p> <p>“Liz is right to focus on reversing the 70-year-high tax burden and going for growth. Because without economic growth, wages won't rise and jobs will be lost. Each tax we levy acts as a disincentive on economic activity.”</p>	<p>“Without radical supply-side reform, we cannot protect ourselves from this gas crisis, or other price shocks into the future.</p> <p>“Incentivise investment in domestic oil and gas for our energy security.”</p>	n/a	n/a
West, H.	n/a	<p>“She has already announced she will reverse the National Insurance contribution rise and introduce a temporary moratorium on energy levies.”</p>	<p>“Liz has also been extremely clear that without radical supply-side reform, we cannot protect ourselves from this gas crisis, or other</p>	n/a	n/a

		<p>“Punitive windfall tax”</p> <p>“Core principles of higher growth and lower taxes”</p> <p>“Liz is right to focus on reversing the 70-year-high tax burden and going for growth.”</p> <p>“Each tax we levy acts as a disincentive on economic activity.”</p>	<p>price shocks into the future.”</p> <p>“Incentivise investment in domestic oil and gas for our energy security.”</p>		
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## Appendix E

### Inter-coder Reliability Test: Comparison of Coding of Think Tank Research

**Article:** Macdonald, J., Fielder, E., & Hughes, A. (2022). *In the bleak midwinter: How (and how not) to tackle the energy crisis*. Adam Smith Institute.

Coder	Government spending	Taxation	Deregulation	Privatisation and the role of the private sector
Heitplatz, H.	<p>“Any support the Government provides should be properly targeted towards those who need it most, whilst avoiding the risks of energy rationing and excessive debt”</p> <p>“Continuing to use direct cash transfers to households to help them manage the cost of living in a manner best suited to individual circumstances.”</p> <p>“Offering businesses Government-backed loans to help them spread the cost of energy bills. “</p> <p>“Uprating benefits in line with inflation immediately, providing relief to lower income households”</p> <p>“There are reports that the PM is considering freezing energy bills for businesses as well, at a cost of an additional £40bn.<sup>11</sup> This would be a further subsidy for energy consumption.”</p>	<p>“The UK’s new Prime Minister, Liz Truss, has committed to reverse the Health and Social Care Levy addition to National Insurance Contributions.”</p> <p>“One possible lever that has been touted is a ‘nuclear’ cut to VAT by 5 percentage points. However, this is likely to be of considerable cost to the Treasury, whilst failing to suitably target those in most need of Government help.”</p> <p>“Extending the 5p cut in fuel duty, which is due to expire in March 2022<sup>19</sup> is poorly targeted.”</p> <p>“The costs from ‘sin taxes,’ excise taxes on goods such as fast food and sugar, are passed to consumers in such a way that disproportionately places the burden on lower-income households”</p> <p>“The Government should remove these distortionary taxes,</p>	<p>“While the scale of intervention is justifiable, the policy itself will destroy price signals, subsidising energy consumption without incentivising reduced demand.”</p> <p>“Longer term pledges to look at increasing domestic energy supply through fracking and investment in nuclear are also welcome.”</p> <p>“It is welcome news that the Government is seeking to end the moratorium on fracking. The global energy market is unlikely to fully stabilise in the short term and it is in the national interest to boost supply as quickly as possible”</p> <p>“An optimal policy response would allow prices to rise while providing households with support proportionate to their needs.”</p>	n/a

	<p>“As we argued in Pulling Out All the Stops, targeted cash transfers, which offer households flexibility in deciding how to use the funds to best suit their own needs, are preferable to more complicated rebate methods.”</p>	<p>which 11 are unnecessarily punitive for lower-income households and have questionable effects on reducing consumption.”</p>		
West, H.	<p>Avoid “excessive debt”</p> <p>“While the scale of intervention is justifiable, the policy itself will destroy price signals, subsidising energy consumption without incentivising reduced demand”</p> <p>“Continuing to use direct cash transfers to households to help them manage the cost of living in a manner best suited to individual circumstances. This could be done through targeted £350 payments every quarter from now through 2023, alongside a lump-sum energy relief payment on 2021 energy usage”</p> <p>“Offering businesses Government-backed loans to help them spread the cost of energy bills. “</p> <p>“Uprating benefits in line with inflation immediately, providing relief to lower income households”</p> <p>“There are reports that the PM is considering freezing energy bills for businesses as well, at a cost</p>	<p>“The UK’s new Prime Minister, Liz Truss, has committed to reverse the Health and Social Care Levy addition to National Insurance Contributions.”</p> <p>“One possible lever that has been touted is a ‘nuclear’ cut to VAT by 5 percentage points. However, this is likely to be of considerable cost to the Treasury, whilst failing to suitably target those in most need of Government help.”</p> <p>“Extending the 5p cut in fuel duty, which is due to expire in March 2022<sup>19</sup> is poorly targeted.”</p> <p>“The Government should remove these distortionary taxes, which 11 are unnecessarily punitive for lower-income households and have questionable effects on reducing consumption.”</p>	<p>“Longer term pledges to look at increasing domestic energy supply through fracking and investment in nuclear are also welcome.”</p> <p>“It is welcome news that the Government is seeking to end the moratorium on fracking. The global energy market is unlikely to fully stabilise in the short term and it is in the national interest to boost supply as quickly as possible”</p>	n/a

	<p>of an additional £40bn.<sup>11</sup> This would be a further subsidy for energy consumption.”</p> <p>“The Government should provide 100%-backed loans to businesses struggling to meet monthly energy payments, in partnership with banks, such that only businesses assessed to be creditworthy are eligible, to reduce the amount of fraud and support for non-viable businesses seen with Covid loan schemes”</p>			
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## Appendix F

### List of Appearances at Right-Leaning Think Tank Events by Conservative MPs between January 2020 and September 2022

*Multiple appearances are indicated in brackets*

**Adam Smith Institute:** Ben Everitt, Liam Fox, John Penrose, Chris Skidmore. Data only available from March 2021.

**Centre for Policy Studies:** Bim Afolami, Jake Berry, Thérèse Coffey, Claire Coutinho, Virginia Crosbie, Deheena Davidson (2), Gareth Davies, Lord Frost (2), Jo Gideon, Greg Hands, Richard Holden, Eddie Hughes, Sajid Javid, Boris Johnson, Andrea Leadsom (2), Anthony Mangnall, Jacob Rees-Mogg (2), Jesse Norman (2), Neil Parish, John Redwood, Alex Stafford, Anne-Marie Trevelyan, Liz Truss (2) and Matt Warman.

**Institute of Economic Affairs:** Bim Afolami, Steve Baker (2), Scott Benton, Paul Bristow, Simon Clarke, Damian Collins, David Davies (2), Iain Duncan Smith, George Freeman, Robert Halton, Mark Harper, Chris Loder, Time Loughton, Huw Merriman, Jacob Rees-Mogg (2), John Penrose, Chris Philp, John Redwood, and Greg Smith (3).

**The TaxPayers' Alliance:** Lee Andersen, Andrea Jenkyns, Julian Knight, Andrea Leadsom, Marco Longhi, John Penrose, and Sammy Wilson.

## Appendix G

### List of SpAds and Advisors under Truss when Prime Minister

The following list is based off reporting by Dickson et al. (2022), Badshah (2022), Mason (2022) and Payne (2022).

Advisor	Previous Employment	Advisor	Previous Employment
Adam Jones	No	Jason Stein	No
Alex Boyd	No	John Bew	Policy Exchange
Alex Wild	The 'TaxPayers' Alliance, Public First	Julian Jessop	Institute of Economic Affairs
Alice Robinson	No	Mac Chapwell	No
Chris Jenkins	n/a	Matthew Sinclair	The 'TaxPayers' Alliance
Caroline Elson	Centre for Policy Studies	Mark Fullbrook	No
David Canzini	No	Nick Catsaras	No
Hugh Bennett	No	Ruth Porter	Institute of Economic Affairs, Policy Exchange, Maxim Institute
Iain Carter	No	Sarah Ludlow	No
James Bowler	No	Shabbir Merali	No
Jamie Harries	No	Sheridan Westlake	No
Jamie Hope	No	Simon McGee	No
		Sophie Jarvis	Adam Smith Institute