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Today representative democracy is the dominant political system in the world. Britain played a prominent part in the democratization of the world through both its constitutional reforms at home and its power and influence abroad. In that process, Prime Ministers played a prominent role through their power and influence in government, Parliament and the country more generally. Quinault examines the stance of ten leading Prime Ministers - from the mid-nineteenth century until the twenty-first century - on the theory and practice of democracy. The attitude of each Prime Minister is assessed by considering their general views on democracy and their use of that term and concept in their discourse and thereby their role in advancing or resisting democratic political change. Particular attention is paid to their role in electoral reform, together with their stance on the composition and powers of the House of Lords and the role of the monarchy in the governing process. Their attitudes to the democratic aspects of some major international issues are also considered.



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Review

The erudition on display and Quinault's playful ability to allow his subjects to condemn themselves with their own words, are reminiscent of the work of Ben Pimlott, especially his excellent political character sketches. -- The Times Literary Supplement Quinault is by no means insensitive to context, and he is particularly attuned to the international influences on democratic debate... fun to read and brings together an array of interesting material. -- Reviews in History The [themes] provided in Quinault's book are always thoughtful and suggestive. His studies of individuals are often fascinating. -- Twentieth Century British History, vol 23, no 1, March 2012

About the Author

Roland Quinault is a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Historical Research, University of London. He received his MA and D.Phil. from the University of Oxford, where he was a scholar at Magdalen College and a Junior Research Fellow at Merton College. He has been Honorary Secretary of the Royal Historical Society and Reader in History at London Metropolitan University. In 2010-11 he is the Fulbright-Robertson Visiting Professor in British History at Westminster College, Fulton, Missouri. He has written numerous studies of British political leaders from the Victorian era to the present day.

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