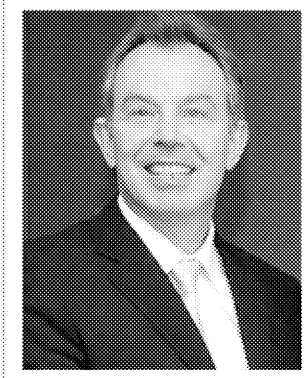
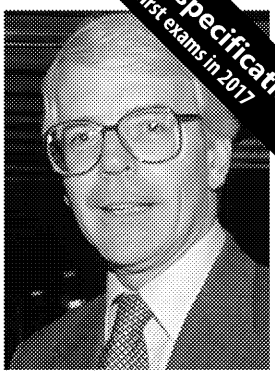
Zig Zag Education

History

A Level | AQA | 7041 / 7042

2015 specification
first exams in 2017





A Level AQA Course Companion: Paper 2S

The Making of Modern Britain: Part 2 1979–2007

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Contents

Teacher's Introduction

This comprehensive resource is designed to help teachers deliver and students study for a key module of the AQA A Level Modern History syllabuses, The Making of Modern Britain, 1951–2007: Part Two: Modern Britain, 1979–2007. This pack is for year two of the A Level Course. If you are looking for year one material then you will need our co-teachable pack, Part One: building and new Britain, 1951–1979. A timeline and introductory tasks have been provided to give a broad overview of the time period.

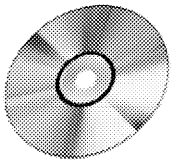
Remember!

Always check the exam board website for new information, including changes to the specification and sample assessment material.

The years after World War II saw Britain facing a new landscape in attempting to recover from the hardships of war. The country faced bankruptcy and economic disaster due to the costs of a prolonged military conflict that had lasted almost six years, and there was continued rationing and austerity even when the war was over, as politicians struggled to find answers that would speed up the nation's economic recovery. In the ensuing years, both Conservative and Labour governments sought to deal with the challenges the country faced, offering a range of policies that adhered broadly to the concept of a post-war *'consensus'*. Only with the advent of Margaret Thatcher in the mid-1970s did a more radical and alternative approach in dealing with the country's economic and social problems emerge.

This document covers how Britain developed politically, economically and socially during this post-war period, focusing on key twentieth-century leaders including Thatcher, Major and Blair. It also charts key events such as the Falklands War, the miners' strike, the Poll Tax riots, Black Wednesday and events surrounding the Iraq War of 2003.

This resource, therefore, thoroughly charts and analyses the attempts by various British governments to reconstruct the country in the post-war era, with specific focus on the politicians who sought to steady the nation's domestic and international position in what was a challenging period. There is also focus on the changing nature of the relationship between the citizen and the state, again with particular focus on the economic, social, political and foreign elements of historical study. The document ultimately focuses on the key events, issues and developments of the early 1980s through to the early twenty-first century.



The material is produced in an easy-to-read way, with key terms and phrases highlighted throughout and visual content (charts, photos, etc.) to enhance learning. There are regular tasks and talking points which can be used as formal assignments or can be more casually used as question and answer sessions in lessons which may generate further discussion. ***There are also some accompanying PowerPoint presentations that are aimed at complementing and enhancing student learning of some of the issues and concepts discussed throughout this period of history.***

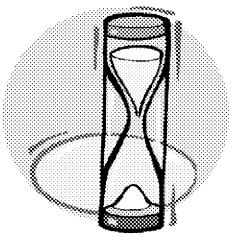
In addition to this, there are also specific assignments for students to engage in, including filling in flow charts, gapped exercises, revision quizzes, source-based exercises, graphs and diagrams. It is hoped such material can enhance existing materials and introduce some new teaching techniques into the delivery of the subject, while making learning more enjoyable for the students. The material can be used in its entirety in a sequential way, or, alternatively, can be dipped in and out of to supplement and bolster existing teaching materials (which you may be short of) or to vary your teaching of a particular topic.

This resource follows the time period in a chronological manner. This is to make it easier for students to understand as they follow a clear timeline of events, and to show them how one factor (such as economic policy) can affect and impact on another factor (e.g. politics). As the specification has taken a thematic approach, we've added the following symbols to each subheading so students know which theme is being addressed in the text.

- £ Economy
- Foreign affairs
- Social issues
- Politics

July 2017

Timeline of British History (19



1978–9 Sustained industrial unrest results in the *'winter of discontent'* an Margaret Thatcher win power for the Conservatives.

1979 Margaret Thatcher *(right)* is elected as Britain's first female prin as the Conservatives return to power after five years in opposit Michael Foot takes over from Callaghan as Labour's new leade

1980 Thatcher removes the link between pensions and average earni control public expenditure. She also introduces laws to limit p trade unions, privatises nationalised industries and encourages home ownership.

1981 The *'Gang of Four'* break away from the *'moderate'* right-wing of Party to form the SDP *(Social Democrat Party)*.

1982 The Falklands War *(right)*, commences in April after Argentina islands. Britain declares war and reclaims the territory after 74 boosting Thatcher's status ('Falklands factor').

1983 After the Falklands victory, Thatcher wins the general election landslide triumph. Opposition is divided and Labour's worst p result sees Neil Kinnock succeed Foot as leader.

1984 The miners' strike begins. After a year of violence and unrest, t unions are defeated and Thatcher is victorious.

1984 **Brighton bomb – the IRA attack the Conservative Party Conference, killing Thatcher and her cabinet.*

1986 The Single European Act is signed by Margaret Thatcher, leadi closer European integration.

1986 **The 'Westland affair' leads to Michael Heseltine's resignation from t creating a potential rival for Conservative leadership.*

1987 A historic third election win for Thatcher amidst economic boo downside sees unemployment creeping up.

1989 The Poll Tax is introduced in Scotland, a year ahead of the rest o
Chancellor Nigel Lawson resigns in protest at Thatcher's style o
leadership and use of political advisers.

**Britain joins the ERM (Exchange Rate Mechanism) – a cross-Europ
link.*

1990 Riots in London and other cities against the flagship Poll Tax, d
Thatcher's position. Prior to her departure from office, Deputy
Minister Sir Geoffrey Howe resigns, criticising the Prime Minis
leadership style.

**After over eleven years as prime minister, Thatcher reluctantly resig
leadership challenge by Michael Heseltine. John Major* (right) *succe
prime minister.*

1992 **Against all the odds, John Major wins the 1992 general electio
narrow parliamentary majority of 21, the Conservatives' fourt
in a row.**

****Black Wednesday – September 1992 – the pound leaves the ER
destroying Conservatives' economic credibility.***

1993 John Major's disastrous 'back to basics' campaign leads to furth
support for the Conservatives.

1994 Tony Blair *(right)* becomes the new leader of the Labour Party, l
'New Labour' and 'modernising' the party in the process.

1995 John Major wins leadership election to remain Conservative lea
outflanks his critics.

Tony Blair removes 'Clause 4' (of nationalisation of industry) fr
Labour Party's Constitution.

1996 Following defections and deaths of MPs, at the end of 1996 Joh
loses his parliamentary majority and the Conservatives form a
government.

1997 Labour takes office for the first time in 18 years under Tony Bla
with a landslide 179 seat majority. The Conservatives suffer th
election defeat of the twentieth century.

1997–8 Devolution introduced in Scotland and Wales, while Northern
agrees to peaceful government with the signing of the Good Fri
Agreement (1998).

2001 Blair is re-elected with a second landslide election victory. The
terrorist attacks *(right)* have major impact on both foreign and d
policies of Blair's Government.

2003 — Blair controversially supports US invasion of Iraq, causing majo within the governing party and across the country.

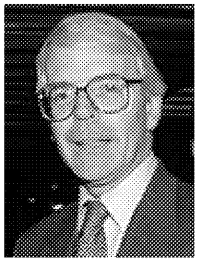
2005 — Despite growing unpopularity and the failures of Iraq War, Bla elected with a reduced majority, becoming the first Labour prim to win three successive general elections.

2007 — After ten years as prime minister, Tony Blair stands down to be by his long-term Chancellor and political rival, Gordon Brown

Introductory History Exer

Key figures of Britain 1979–2007

Using textbooks and the Internet, can you find out at least six things abou
individuals below? Present your findings to the rest of your group.

Margaret Thatcher 	
John Major 	
Tony Blair 	

The Impact of Thatcherism (19

After two demoralising yet very close general election defeats in 1974, Edw
Heath was ousted by Margaret Thatcher as Conservative leader in Februa
Many historians mark this date as the end of the so-called 'years of conse
British politics. Four years later in 1979, in the midst of trade union unres
eventually came to national power with a convincing parliamentary majo
On being elected and as she was about to enter 10 Downing Street for the
as prime minister, Margaret Thatcher quoted St Francis of Assisi, stating:

> *Where there is discord, may we bring harmony. Where there is error, may w*
> *doubt, may we bring faith, and where there is despair, may we bring hope.*

There would be much debate over future years as to whether she successfu
inspired promise. The swing of 5.2%, which was the biggest since 1945, in
within the British electorate, and Thatcher appeared to offer a clear vision
was less clear about what she proposed to do or what she was for. She wa
existing environment of industrial decline and rampant trade union powe

> *Thatcher's style was deliberately confrontational. She made no secret of the f*
> *blow apart misbegotten notions of* ***'consensus'***.[1]

Party	MPs
	1979
Conservative	339
Labour	269
Liberal	11
Others	16

Thatcher and her ***'New Right'*** allies
the *'years of consensus'* that had existe
1970s, and they represented *'a major*
consensus on welfare… (and) also a fun
the Conservatives'.[2]

Task

Look at the Conservative Party's 1979 manifesto on the Internet and try t
party's policies represented a new direction after the 'years of consensus'
policy examples to support this viewpoint.

The following web links may be of use for this purpose:

- *http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/110858*
- *http://www.conservativemanifesto.com/1979/1979-conservative-manifesto.*

New Right

The 'New Right' is a conservative political movement that emerged in the USA
1980s. Its views consisted of a combination of very liberal (neo-liberal) attitudes
capitalist economy, combined with conservative social attitudes relating to pers
and the importance of maintaining law and order.

1 Eric J Evans, *Thatcher and Thatcherism* (2nd ed., 2004), Ch. 4, p. 43.
2 C Collette & K Laybourn, *Modern Britain Since 1979* (2003), Ch. 1, p. 8.

The ***'Thatcherites'*** as they became known, identified successive Labour an as pursuing failed *'Keynesian'* policies that were damaging Britain's econo argued that the state had to do less and the individual be given more freed general living standards, offering a significant review of the relationship b the previous thirty years. They had also not forgotten the political humili Conservatives in 1974 at the hands of what they believed to be an over-po that needed to be restricted and controlled.

Margaret Thatcher as leader

As well as being the first female prime minister, Thatcher was unusual in part of the semi-aristocratic Conservative hierarchy of landowners and ge lower middle class background, the daughter of a grocer with distinctly tr Thatcher rejected the paternalistic approach of the *'One Nation'* Conservat 'individualistic' free market outlook.

A key influence was the American economist **Milton Friedman** who devis monetarism as an alternative to socialism. She and her allies on the **'New** Keith Joseph were also particularly influenced by **F A Hayek's** *(right) 'The* (1944), an academic attack on collectivist government. Below is an extract Hayek's *'individualistic'* viewpoint on economic management:

> *As soon as the state takes upon itself the task of planning the whole economic different individuals and groups must indeed become the central political pro the state will alone decide who is to have what, the only power worth having this directing power.*
>
> *This single power, the ruling group, should have control over all human end have complete control over the position of each individual in society.*[3]

Although Margaret Thatcher herself had no clearly formulated ideology o instead had a *'gut instinct….. to break away from the consensus that the two m Second World War.'*[4] This rejection of much of the post-war **consensus** (pol increasing adherence to such *'radical'* policies and ideas would subsequen ***controversial prime minister in post-war British history'***.[5]

3 F A Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (1944), pp. 80–81.

4 Andy McSmith, *No Such Thing as Society: A History of Britain in the 1980s* (2011), Ch. 1,

5 Alan Sked & Chris Cook, *Post War Britain: A Political History* (4th ed., 1993), Ch. 12, p.

Amidst early economic difficulties, there was division within the cabinet a
moderates within the Conservative Party urged Margaret Thatcher to ease
monetarist economic policies which involved severe cutbacks in public sp
to come from the *'Heathite wets'* such as *Ian Gilmour, Francis Pym and James*
guard who Thatcher often dismissed as *'Those Tory grandees'*, and who we
from her cabinet over the years. At the 1980 Conservative Party Conferen
growing social discontent due to her economic policies, Thatcher respond
manner to calls to review her economic approach with a policy U-turn:

> *You turn (U-turn) if you want to, the lady's not for turning.*

These sentiments, expressed in what became a landmark speech, cemente
as a strong leader and went some way to establishing her as the ***'Iron Lad***
in British politics. The explicit dismissal of a U-turn was also a pointed cri
economic policy in the early 1970s.

How Thatcher tackled inflation

Thatcher and her first Chancellor of the Exchequer, *Geoffrey Howe,* targete
British economy, given that it peaked at 26% in the mid-1970s, and was sti
Conservatives took office.

> *Inflation was a monetary phenomenon which it would require monetary disc*

Thatcher and Howe believed that excessive inflation was at the root of Bri
poor performance throughout the 1970s. Harsh public spending cuts and
Thatcherite medicine for dealing with the key problems of inflation, balan
dealing with militant trade unions.

Monetarism

This economic theory focuses on inflation as the key economic indicator that ne
economy. This viewpoint believes that inflation is caused by an excess quantity
system, and is closely aligned with a free-market outlook. The emphasis is, there
money supply along with the provision of credit (financial loans), in order to ge
while controlling inflation.

Key Thatcherite economic tools were as follows:

- Raising interest rates
- Reducing government expenditure and borrowing and running a balanced budget
- Direct and indirect taxes raised in the short term, notably VAT
- Deregulation of state controls and reduced subsidies to industry

[6] Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (1993), Ch. 1, p. 33.

Key Question

Did monetarism mean that high levels of unemployment, social unrest a
were inevitable?

Key Thatcher Cabinet Members

- **Geoffrey Howe** – Chancellor of Exchequer, Foreign Secretary and Deputy
  Viewed as one of her most loyal supporters until he resigned and publicly
  in 1990.
- **Nigel Lawson** – Chancellor of Exchequer (1983–1989). Along with Howe, s
  architects of Thatcherite economic policy. Like Howe, he tired of her autoc
  before arguing for her removal in 1990.
- **Michael Heseltine** – Environment Secretary, Defence Secretary (1979–1986
  downfall after resigning from her cabinet in 1986 and challenging her for t
- **Norman Tebbit** – Employment Secretary, Trade Secretary, Conservative C
  loyalist of Thatcher, but one who remained loyal. Was heavily involved in
  employment laws and steering the government through the 1984–1985 mi
  for his wife after they were both injured in the 1984 Brighton Bombing.

Thatcher's early Budgets have been summarised as follows:

> *Faced with an annual inflation rate well in excess of 20 per cent, Thatcher m
> favour of the rich in Geoffrey Howe's tax-cutting Budget of 1979…She then
> money, supporting Howe's 1981 Budget, which raised taxes during a recessi
> to reduce inflation – which ran contrary to accepted 'Keynesian' policy.*[7]

Howe's first Budget raised indirect taxation (e.g. VAT) as a means of contr
however, cut direct taxation, notably in relation to the top level of income
punitive 85% down to 60% in 1979. Limits on government spending and b
introduced as part of the first phase of monetarism. Howe's most signific
the one which took place in 1981, which saw significant spending cutback
in various inner-cities. There are contrasting views of this particular Budg
it as:

> *…the epitome of soundness, an exercise in rigour that laid the foundations fo*

By contrast, the 'wet' liberal Conservatives and some left-leaning commen
implications of such fiscal conservatism, while 364 economists famously w
newspaper in 1981 warning that such hardline monetarist policies would
damaging recession and create further unemployment.

7 C Collette & K Laybourn, *Modern Britain Since 1979* (2003), Ch. 1, p. 8.

8 Larry Elliott, 'Budget 2010: George Osborne's austerity package haunted by spectre o
http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2010/jun/22/budget-budget-deficit

Unemployment and economic re-alignment

The successful evidence of the Conservative government's purge against i figures which indicated that inflation had **fallen by 21.8% in April 1980 to** the figure would fluctuate. This was a great economic achievement but at unemployment, peaking at over three million on two separate occasions, a **rates**, which ranged between 10 and 17% for most of the 1980s.

High interest levels were seen as a key element in controlling the money s There was also a sharp decline in manufacturing output due to these polic of Howe's early Budgets *'spectacularly gruesome'*.[9] Chancellors Howe and t abandoned monetarism by 1986 with unemployment rapidly rising, inflat supply rising rapidly: a situation ostensibly impossible according to mone economic policy argued that it was actually the lack of spending power du reduced inflation, not the government's attempts to control the money sup

Recession

A period of temporary depression in economic activity or overall prosp specifically refers to a decline in any nation's Gross Domestic Product (G negative real economic growth, for two or more successive quarters of a

Thatcher's economic policies had led to a sharp **recession** from 1979–1982, unemployment rocketed from one million in 1979 to a staggering three mi matched in the twentieth century during the depression-plagued 1930s. T government spending reductions and the economy actually **shrank by 2%** factors resulted in significant social problems and unrest, and notable riots *Liverpool (Toxteth),* with elements of racial tension evident in such unrest. meant that *'throughout 1981, Britain was a country nowhere near to being at pe* minister Michael Heseltine recalled the turbulence of *'that long hot summer* memoirs:

> *The trouble had begun with the riots in Brixton over Easter. In July the riot South London, in Southall, in Moss Side in Manchester, in Birmingham, Pr to a lesser extent in other cities around the country. But among the very wo a period of a week or more in Toxteth, Liverpool.*[12]

Questions and Talking Points

1. Outline key differences between monetarism and Keynesianism eco the 1970s. Focus on the following points: money supply, inflation, ta levels, interest rates.
2. Why was there so much civil and social unrest in the early 1980s?

9 Eric J Evans, *Thatcher and Thatcherism* (2nd ed., 2004) Ch. 2, p. 21.
10 Hugo Young, *One of Us* (1989), Ch. 12, p. 239.
11 Michael Heseltine, *Life in the Jungle* (2000), Ch. 12, p. 215.
12 Michael Heseltine, *Life in the Jungle* (2000), Ch. 12, p. 215.

The Falklands War (1982)

Lead-up to conflict

There had been simmering tensions for some time about ongoing British sovereignty over the distant **Falkland Islands,** a one-time part of the Empire situated over 8,000 miles from mainland Britain. Given its location just off the Argentinian coast in the South Pacific, it was a group of islands which Argentina referred to as 'The Malvinas' and sought to reclaim for itself. Following some significant defence cuts and the withdrawal of British forces from the area from the late 1970s onwards, the unpopular military 'junta' that controlled Argentina saw an opportunity to boost its position, and on 2nd April 1982 it ordered the invasion of this distant British colony.

Political context and key events

The Argentinians had wrongly calculated that Britain was too weak to res
despite advice from some ministers and Foreign Office civil servants to ne
Thatcher was determined to avenge this aggression. She consequently ser
within days of the invasion. The military conflict formally commenced wh
the islands on 30th April 1982.

By mid-June the islands had been recaptured with the loss of 254 British tr
Argentinians, at a financial cost of approximately £700 million for the Briti
controversial incident of the conflict was Thatcher's order to sink the Arge
Belgrano on 2nd May 1982. It was sunk because the British Navy claimed it
zone' around the islands, but Argentina claimed the ship was outside it. I
Argentinian sailors and some have subsequently accused Thatcher of bein
in carrying out this order. However, others have hailed it as decisive lead
turning point in the war.

Consequences of the conflict

The British military victory was confirmed when the Argentinians surrend after a period of tension and uncertainty as to how the conflict would dev re-assert itself on the international stage. There were then some major do that followed, and it ultimately appeared worth it for Thatcher and her go government's popularity soaring as a result.

Prior to the Falklands conflict the Conservatives were staring down the ba Unemployment was rising and the opinion polls were indicating a loss of November 1981 the formerly safe Conservative seat of Crosby on Merseys Williams in a stunning by-election result. Had the war gone wrong, the co certainly have seen the departure of Margaret Thatcher as prime minister, fully aware of throughout the conflict. This perceived national 'regenerati created a surge in patriotism back in Britain and a boost in her own self-co boost for the Conservatives' election prospects, which had previously bee rising unemployment and the emergence of the SDP (following this new p Labour Party in early 1981).

For further details on the 1982 Falklands War, the following website has information:

- *http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/uk/2007/falklands_anniversary/default.stm*

There is also a good timeline below:

- *http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/06/14/the-falklands-war-timeline/*

The 'Falklands Factor' was the single most important factor in the large Cons

Some have argued that the Falklands victory was part of a more **assertive** Margaret Thatcher, which included a more active and vigorous role again the Cold War.

Thatcher and the Cold War

The election to office of Thatcher in 1979 and **Ronald Reagan** *(below)* in th be very significant for the development and ultimate outcome of the **Cold** conflict had existed between the capitalist West and the communist Easte and Thatcher shared a *'right-wing'* ideology and were ardent *'free market'* c challenge and undermine the Soviet Union, a nation they perceived to be communist state.

[13] Eric J Evans, *Thatcher and Thatcherism* (2nd ed., 2004), Ch. 8, p. 99.

President Reagan's initial retreat from *'détente'* to a more aggressive style o
Soviet Union in the 1980s was ardently supported by his key ally Margare
progressed, it became clear that Thatcher and Reagan used their shared ca
their unity in often tense diplomatic dealings with the Soviet Union and its
viewpoint. This close ideological affinity between Thatcher and Reagan fo
extremely close **'special relationship'** during the 1980s.

Détente

Détente is a French term used in recent times to refer to a relaxing or easing of te
international politics particularly since the early 1970s, primarily relating to the
between the Soviet Union and the USA and a general thawing of the Cold War f
1960s until the early 1980s.

Many believe that such a united approach was a key factor in bringing Mo
Gorbachev to the negotiating table and ultimately contributed to the colla
European communist regimes in the late 1980s, the end of the Cold War in
eventual break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991. Thatcher was said to have
role between the two superpowers:

> *She used her good relationship with Gorbachev to demonstrate…that she was able to move easily between the superpowers.*[14]

Thatcher's support for the USA in this ideological conflict with the Soviets
missiles on Greenham Common, sparking significant protests from **CND** (
Disarmament), and also allowing US aircraft to fly over British airspace wh
Thatcher's high-profile visit to the Soviet Union in early 1987 projected he
generated powerful images that enhanced her reputation in the run-up to
US–Soviet relations thawed and the Cold War appeared to be reaching its
final years of the 1980s, episodes such as the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989) a
Germany (1990) were seen to be major events in this process. Given her cl
superpower leaders over previous years, Margaret Thatcher could claim t
role in the build-up to this dramatic shift in global relations.

This burgeoning international role appeared to have played a part in trans
the international scene, having been viewed as 'the sick man of Europe' in
could never claim to have the military or economic capacity of either of th
mid to late 1980s it appeared to have a valuable contribution to make as a
The implications of this were a marked improvement in Britain's reputatio

1983 general election and beyond

Party	*MPs*
	1983
Con	397
Lab	209
Lib	23
Others	21

After the patriotic frenzy created by the 1982 F
massive electoral victory in 1983 with a parlia
overwhelming re-election for a second term w
considering there were three million people u
year marked the high point of Conservative p
assisted by a divided opposition, with the Lab
a quarter of the popular vote as Labour slump

[14] Eric J Evans, *Thatcher and Thatcherism* (2nd ed., 2004), Ch. 9, p. 111.

During the 1983 general election campaign, Labour's left-wing shift under
had resulted in policies that were seen by the wider public as extreme and
manifesto later famously described by one Labour MP as *'the longest suicid*
damaged by its SDP defectors, the Labour Party appeared to be in a very p
government. Many wavering voters, therefore, rejected Labour, as oppose
endorsing the Conservatives.

The Prime Minister now appeared to be much more focused and *'driven by*
policies developed further and took shape as an ideology. From the outse
more confident and focused:

> *Far more successful than the first…it had direction, it became increasingly c*
> *public services and the reduction of public expenditure… on the welfare state*

Labour divisions – The Gang of Four and the SDP

The eventually decisive Conservative general election victory of 1983 was
helped by ongoing Labour Party divisions. Such divisions came to a head
party's general election defeat in May 1979, with each party faction blamin
for the loss of power. The following year, 1980, saw the election of Michae
new Labour leader, a figure from the party's left-wing faction which was n
ascendancy. The left-wing radical Tony Benn (*right*) also only lost out on
deputy leadership to the more moderate Denis Healey by the tiniest of ma

Foot's leadership position was too much for the party's moderate wing to
former Labour ministers **Roy Jenkins, David Owen, Shirley Williams an**
'Limehouse Declaration', *'calling for a new start in British politics… duly for*
Party or SDP two months later'.[17]

The SDP's main policy grievances with Labour were focused on its left-wi
defence policies involving nuclear disarmament and its *'anti-Europeanism'*
the EEC. The four prominent MPs at the SDP's head became known as ***'T***
party threatened to *'break the mould'* of British politics and was initially bol
Labour MPs and one Conservative MP to its ranks.

Despite winning a series of high-profile by-elections in 1981–1982, namely
Crosby and in Glasgow, the SDP fizzled out as a political force against the
SDP won only six MPs in 1983 as part of an alliance with the Liberals and
ceased to be an effective player on the British political scene. Most of its m
formed Liberal Democrats in 1988, but a few die-hards fought to the bitter
dissolved as an organisation in 1990.

15 Eric J Evans, *Thatcher and Thatcherism* (2nd ed., 2004), Ch. 12, p. 146.
16 C Collette & K Laybourn, *Modern Britain Since 1979* (2003), Ch. 1, p. 9.
17 Andrew Marr, *A History of Modern Britain* (2007), p. 396.

Post-election aftermath

In the aftermath of her second and most decisive general election victory i
have transformed her political fortunes and a dominant period of her lead
ideology known as *'Thatcherism'* had been coined by the media, and as o

Key Principles of Thatcherism

- The 'free market' ideas/philosophy of Thatcher's ideological mentors Sir Keith Joseph and Enoch Powell
- Return to nineteenth-century classical laissez-faire economics
- Reduced role for the state (government)
- Victorian values
- Priority of market forces
- Creating a culture of enterprise
- Monetarism
- Focus on individualism and self-help
- British patriotism and nationalism

Thatcher was the only
minister to become ep
'Thatcherism'.[18]

Not everyone agrees w
philosophy, as many c
was based on oppositi
certain issues, e.g. trad
influence, etc. and tha
together in a somewha
what soon became clea
'Thatcherite' policies w
and social division wit

Questions and Talking Points

1. Was Thatcherism a credible political philosophy?
2. In what ways did Thatcherism mark a break from the political conse
3. Summarise the key factors in the 1983 general election result.

[18] Eric J Evans, *Thatcher and Thatcherism* (2nd ed., 2004), Ch. 1, p. 2

Thatcher and Europe

Margaret Thatcher generally became more hostile to all things European t
longer she remained in office. In 1984 she negotiated a **financial rebate** fr
the European Union due to Britain getting a poor deal relating to how mu
countries paid into Europe and how much they got out. This was mainly
to the UK's relatively small farming sector, which resulted in Britain recei
only a small share of European farming subsidies. She signed the **Single European Act in 1986,** when, scepticism towards Europe, '**sovereignty** to the European done before or since'.[19]

> ***Sovereignty***
> Supreme authority within a territory.

However, her evolving mood was particularly evident in her hostile and E
September 1988:

> *To try to suppress nationhood and concentrate power at the centre of a Europ
> highly damaging and would jeopardise the objectives we seek to achieve. Eur
> because it has France as France, Spain as Spain, Britain as Britain, each with
> identity. It would be folly to try to fit them into some sort of identikit Europ*
> ***Margaret Thatcher, Bruges Speech, 20th September 1988***

This speech has been viewed as a key moment in the modern Conservativ
Europe, as it:

> *…did reconfigure Conservative political discourse on Europe and legitimate*

The **Bruges Group** of Eurosceptic Conservative MPs was formed in comm
such anti-European hostility was heightened by the **1988 Immigration Act**
of immigration to citizens of the EEC (later known as the EU). However, r
growing hostility to Europe. Tensions also emerged within the Conservat
build a Channel Tunnel which would improve transport and trade links w
Conservatives were less enthusiastic than others, fearing a further underm
detachment and political **sovereignty.** However, commercial and busines
work commencing in 1988 and the landmark project being eventually com

Tensions over Europe appeared to come to a head with the damaging resi
Deputy Prime Minister **Sir Geoffrey Howe** in November 1990. Howe cite
to Europe and reluctance to join the **ERM (Exchange Rate Mechanism)** as
national interest. Britain's trade with Europe had increased from 30% to 5
cited by pro-Europeans as a key factor in maintaining constructive relatio
Community.

19 Michael Heseltine, *Life in the Jungle* (2000), Ch. 16, p. 348.
20 Source: *http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=107332*
21 Andrew Geddes, 'Europe' in Kevin Hickson (ed.), *The Political Thought of the Conservative Par*

From 1989 onwards Britain entered another recession, the second significa
the Thatcher administration when unemployment again peaked at over th
Eurosceptics have blamed the onset of this economic slump on the decisio
Mechanism (ERM) in October 1990, a policy Thatcher is said to have adop
from pro-European ministers. This policy, which continued under John M
onwards, was part an anti-inflation strategy, whereby the pound's interes
German mark at all costs. This often resulted in interest rates that were hi
should be. The reasons for joining were emphasised by Sir Geoffrey How
November 1990:

*The conduct of our policy against inflation could no longer res
and control the domestic money supply. We had no doubt that
battle, and, indeed, in other respects, by joining the Exchange
monetary system.*[22]

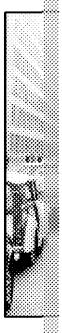
Thatcher's increasing level of hostility to Europe was a key factor in many
against her in 1990, as they felt her attitude to the continent was harming
sphere:

> *Her uncompromising stance on the European Community did not unify the
> image of a government that was both arrogant and divided.*[23]

It was perhaps no coincidence that her chief opponent for the leadership in
an ardent pro-European. In the post-Thatcher years, Europe has appeared t
running through the party, creating damaging divisions in its wake. One c
describing the European issue as having *'formed the fault line of Conservative*

Impact of Thatcherism on soc

The miners' strike 1984–1985



In March 1984, simmering trade union unrest exploded into a full-scale miners' strike, which erupted as a successor to the two large strikes of the early 1970s and which went on to become *'the longest major strike in British history'*.[25] The National Coal Board had announced proposals to close 20 mines with the loss of 20,000 jobs, and such plans to streamline and close hundreds of coal pits provoked an inevitable angry response from the mining unions. An earlier threat to strike had been curtailed in 1981 when a deal was struck with the unions.

However, many within the Conservative Party's leadership now saw the i
greater economic efficiency into the mining industry, along with the oppo
following Heath's humiliation at the hands of the *National Union of Minew*
latter factor was particularly relevant to Thatcher who had been a cabinet
government, and her administration felt that it was in a strong position in
less reliant on British coal for electricity as had been the case in the past.

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22 Sir Geoffrey Howe, speech in the House of Commons, Hansard, 13th November 1990,
23 Dennis Kavanagh & Anthony Seldon, *The Powers Behind the Prime Minister: The hidden infl*
24 Philip Norton, 'The Constitution' in Kevin Hickson (ed.), *The Political Thought of the Conserva*
25 Sammy Palfrey, *Writing and the Miners' Strike 1984–85,* Working Class Movement Lib

It was also an opportunity for the Thatcherite ideology to address the *'trad*
all, as it had pledged to on taking office in 1979. The Thatcher administrat
had sourced cheap overseas coal supplies to prevent the over-reliance on c
Following her recent electoral success and defeat of the Argentinian invad
felt increasingly confident in dealing with what she viewed as *'the enemy w*

> *Governments had walked in fear of a coal strike for decades… Margaret That*
> *not just a strike but a spell. Parliament had regained its sovereignty.*[26]

With the weight of the government's resources and the police behind her a
stockpiled in preparation for this dispute, it was always likely that Thatch
strike victorious, unlike the less focused Heath in the 1970s. However, son
enjoyed a degree of luck during this prolonged and bruising crisis, where
miners and police were common occurrences at picket lines throughout 19
significant social instability in the process. The strike created great divisio
people, primarily those on the left of politics and within mining communi
with the miners' plight, particularly the impact that the strike had on thei

> *Bitterly divided in many areas, subjected to intimidation and violence by mil*
> *country, and in others facing a desperate struggle to make ends meet while th*

The impact of the strike on the country's mining communities was harsh i
terms, with striking miners receiving no pay and relying on union hardsh
for a prolonged period. Many families were divided between striking and
was further regional division between striking and non-striking parts of th
had been won in the government's favour, many mining communities bec
and high unemployment for many years to come.

Some cabinet ministers later admitted that despite the determined focus o
winning this struggle, there were times during the strike when it was uncl
and that Thatcher's career hung in the balance. Many *'One Nation'* Conser
aggressive and unsympathetic stance Thatcher adopted towards the mine
dispute, particularly as many mining communities suffered great hardshi
Thatcher was accused by her opponents of wanting to destroy the power o
the events of the 1970s, and was ultimately greatly strengthened by this in
cause by divisions between the miners themselves:

> *Thatcher was lucky to defeat the miners, the lack of unity amongst the miner*

Thatcher's determination was, therefore, aided by some political luck in th
unions did not comply with her new trade union legislation. With the Yo
Arthur Scargill calling the strike without an official ballot *(required by Tha*
alienated miners in Nottinghamshire in particular, the majority of whom c
the strike. This factor helped to strengthen the government's position sign
formally ended a year later in March 1985, with the miners beaten and div

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26 Norman Tebbit, *Upwardly Mobile* (1989), Ch. 11, p. 302.
27 Alan Sked & Chris Cook, *Post War Britain: A Political History* (4th ed., 1993), Ch. 14, p.
28 C Collette & K Laybourn, *Modern Britain Since 1979* (2003), Ch. 1, p. 9.

Consequently, many largely northern mining communities went into term
time trade union giant the NUM, which lost the bulk of its membership as
following years; indeed its membership fell by 72% between 1979 and 198
approach in defeating the miners was symptomatic of her belief that Britis
modernising, although whether in doing so she saved or destroyed Britain'
industrial base has been a matter of significant debate in subsequent years

Task

To find out more about the 1984–1985 miners' strike, particularly in relat
social and economic impact on Britain's mining communities, watch the
Brassed Off (1996) and *Billy Elliott* (2000) which are set during this period
industrial conflict. Again, be aware of bias along with factual evidence.
details on the 1984–1985 miners' strike, the following website has lots of
and information:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/uk/2004/miners_strike/default.stm

Questions and Talking Points

1. Why did Thatcher refer to the miners as the 'enemy within'?
2. How did the miners' strike fit in with the Conservatives' wider strat
   trade unions?
3. Why did the Thatcher Government defeat the miners' strike of 1984–

Thatcher and industrial relations

The miners' dispute was the crescendo in Thatcher's long-term strategy to
influence in British politics. Thatcher had come to power in 1979 promisi
control, and it was a key issue at the 1979 election. During her time in offi
significant legislation aimed at reforming the country's industrial relations
unions under control by preventing a return to the unrest of the 1970s.

Margaret Thatcher had been a government minister in Heath's doomed ac
and such an experience at the hands of the trade unions had sharpened he
of trade union power once and for all. The Thatcher administration subse
of key anti-union legislation throughout the 1980s that severely reduced t
following notable ways:

- Outlawing **'flying pickets'** – prohibiting workers picketing places of
- The **'closed shop'** made more difficult to enforce – outlawing a practi
  trade union in certain jobs/industries.
- Introducing regular elections to key union positions such as general s
- Requiring trade unions to regularly ballot members on who political
- Requiring ballots of members and notice to be given to employers bef
  take place.
- Making trade unions legally and financially responsible for any **'wild**
  industrial action).

Thatcher was particularly motivated by restoring the rule of law following had regularly occurred at industrial picket lines in the 1970s due to trade u ultimately felt that trade unions and the labour market in general needed control by a revised legal framework. This approach was part of a consist 1979 onwards that appeared to view the 'public sector' (state employees) a unionised sector in comparison to those employed by private companies (therefore, sought to encourage the extension of an enhanced non-unionise growth in small businesses as a means of altering the balance of the labou undermining trade union power.

Year	Union membership	% of the workf
1975	12 million	51
1979	13.5 million	53.4
1985	10.7 million	45.6
1991	8.1 million	37

***Source**: Trade Union membership levels, British Historical Studies, D Employment/Labour Force Survey*

http://www.unionancestors.co.uk/Images/TU%20membership%201

The table above indicates that by a combination of legislation and defeatin time she left office Margaret Thatcher appeared to have demoralised the tr influenced a notable decline in its membership base.

Thatcher's essentially individualist ideology put her at odds with the trad outlook. She also had particular problems with the extreme socialist and some of the prominent trade union leaders, most notably the NUM's milit whom she famously locked horns with in the 1984–1985 miners' strike. In membership was banned at the government's intelligence headquarters, G it was an infringement of workers' human rights. According to the *'Thatch* the main obstacle to British enterprise had been the privileged position an British trade unions.[29]

On an ideological level, Thatcher also appeared to be committed to embra Conservative position on law and order, and was committed to restoring t anarchy and violence that had regularly occurred at industrial picket lines union unrest. This could be linked to her moralistic and 'neo-conservative' which was critical of the permissive legislation of the late 1960s, and whic she and her political allies felt could be linked to rising crime levels. She w also aware of Labour's *'institutional'* links with trade unions and how som of these laws would create difficulties for Labour's organisation. Many Labour MPs and trade unionists must have wished they had accepted the more lenient terms of Barbara Castle's 'In Place of Strife' White Paper ten years previously. Thatcher's trade union proposals ultimately made strik action much more difficult to initiate.

[29] Alan Sked & Chris Cook, *Post War Britain: A Political History* (4th ed., 1993), Ch. 13, p.

The trade unions were weakened and the number of days lost to strike act
with **only one million working days** lost to strike action in 1990, compare
during the 1970s. However, trade unions were not killed off completely a
prominent pressure group within British society in future years, albeit wit
powers. *Margaret Thatcher therefore ultimately managed to curb trade union po
governments had failed.*

Questions and Talking Points

1. What historical events suggested the Conservatives and the trade uni
   to clash?
2. Was the ideology of 'Thatcherism' incompatible with trade unionism
3. In what ways were Margaret Thatcher's trade union policies a succes

Thatcher and privatisation

One of Margaret Thatcher's most controversial domestic policies was **priva** more assertive second term in office from 1983 onwards. Privatisation chi Thatcherism of *'individualism'*, and it involved releasing large swathes of i control of the state, which was viewed as an inefficient and inappropriate the Thatcher administration. Many Conservatives believed lots of the nationalised industries had been failing and badly run for many years and that something radical needed to be done with them as a result. Thatcher and her supporters subsequently talked about 'rolling back the frontiers' of the British welfare state and revising the post-war settlement in relation to key British industries.

Thatcher's privatisation policies were the most visible example of her government changing the post-war political settlement that had been base principles. By 1987, 14 major British companies including British Gas, Brit Aerospace, among others, had been sold to the private sector at great prof individual shareholders purchased shares in these companies, with the nu than trebling during the decade, from approximately 3 million to 11 millio capitalism' brought in considerable revenue for the Thatcher Government million a year between 1987 and 1989.

Such revenue gave the Thatcher administration the capacity to implement also a key part of its political strategy. Such a flagship policy was one of t her period of office, and it clearly changed British society in a fundamenta promoted the capitalist streak that the policy developed within individual provided the potential for people to make money and become **socially mo** important element of Thatcherism – allowing people from lower social cla ladder and improve their social position, and, while some people did ben something that more traditional and paternalistic Conservatives were as s supposedly dissolving and reducing class differences (although this didn' practice and class/social divisions remained apparent throughout the 198

Such policies generated wealth and led to the deregulation of such industr the state, as well as the creation of a more *'individualist'* society which was political goal. Such sentiments appeared to have been summed up in one famous interviews from this period:

> *And, you know, there is no such thing as society. There are individual men families. And no government can do anything except through people, and pe It's our duty to look after ourselves and then, also to look after our neighbour*

The above comments caused great controversy and many critics have atta perceived *'selfishness'* of Thatcherism, as well as highlighting the social div appeared to be creating. Supporters of Thatcher say such criticism has be ***such thing as society'*** comments are seen as a reflection of the political cul generation were prominent, young people who made large amounts of m markets and new businesses and who seemed a world away from the pov declining traditional industries found in coal and steel towns. This new 'y symbolise the social separation between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' in 198 deeply divisive nature of Thatcherism.

[30] Margaret Thatcher, Interview with Woman's Own Magazine, 31st October 1987: http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/106689

There were many critics of privatisation, most obviously the Labour oppo objections to such large-scale private ownership. It was also pointed out t switched from being uncompetitive public monopolies to uncompetitive p the chief executives of such privatised industries grew to excessively high was not a fair reward for their efforts. Many such private industries event Conservative ministers (after retirement) which also raised some concerns privatisation process.

Many new shareholders also didn't hold on to their sha make a profit in the short-term, which raised question m idea of 'popular capitalism' really was. There was also *Nation'* Tories, the most prominent being former prime *(left).* He compared the policy of privatising the nation's of ***'selling off the family silver'***, arguing that Britain wa national assets for good.

Critics of privatisation also argued that the industries were national assets wealthy individuals or capitalist speculators. It was also claimed that such provision of decent public services. Labour opposition was initially fierce policy became clearly popular, such hostility weakened in the face of its el ultimate victory from this policy was to see Labour abandon its historic po Tony Blair authorised the abolition of ***'Clause 4'*** of the Labour Party's cons supporters say that privatisation played a key role in the defeat of socialis

Task

The film *Wall Street* (1987), while based in the USA, is said to be a useful '*yuppie'* culture in the 1980s. The slogan '***greed is good***' is used by one of characters to reflect contemporary transatlantic attitudes within some pa business community.
While a useful reflection of the 1980s, always be aware of bias in such films.

Questions and Talking Points

1. Why were Margaret Thatcher's comments about 'society' viewed as
2. To what extent was Thatcher correct that society does not exist?
3. Outline the key arguments for and against privatisation.

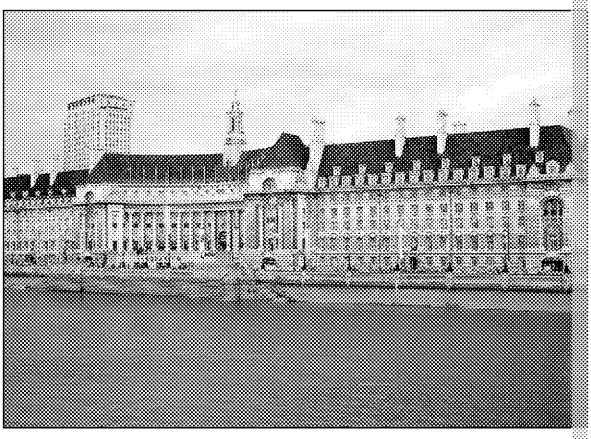
Wider privatisation

Thatcher's *'privatisation'* principles were extended to other areas
society. Thatcher's focus was always based on her roots as a gro
Lincolnshire – **seeking value for money, reducing waste and li**

Some of Thatcher's most frustrating political struggles came within the sp
when a number of left-wing Labour councils came into conflict with centra
levels of spending. Thatcher imposed strict limits on several London boro
city of Liverpool, which was briefly run by the left-wing **Militant Tenden**
spending cutbacks that were dictated by central government during the m

Such clashes led to the severe cutback or ***'capping'*** of local government po
order for central government to keep a tight rein on overall national spend
strategy. It also led to the introduction of controversial policies such as **Co**
Tendering (CCT) which brought private companies into the provision of l
extension of the privatisation phenomena, which also generated further op

In 1985 Thatcher's Government abolished the **Greater London Council** *(G*
metropolitan councils, claiming that they were an expensive and unnecess
The fact that all of these authorities were now run by the Labour oppositio
programmes) was cited by both critics and supporters as a further reason



Opponents of Thatcherism argue that she was fundamentally opposed to
British welfare state with its focus on collectivism and state intervention –
political concepts. Some have argued that she *'was seeking to roll back the s*
therefore reverse some of the more compassionate achievements of the post-1945 c

Thatcher's focus on the broader welfare state centred on the key areas of e
and the NHS. On an economic level, she believed that the welfare system
of expenditure and its high percentage of public spending. However, on a
that the welfare state was a restraining factor on people becoming *'socially*
potential. In 1980, as a symbolic sign of her overall approach, Thatcher ab
pensions and average earnings, instead linking the pension in with a muc
decision both saved the government money and encouraged people to bec
for their pension. Thatcher also sought to bring the principles of **privatisa**
wherever possible, and this was a highly controversial strategy which gen

[31] Stephen J Lee, Aspects of British Political History 1914–1995 (1996), Ch. 15, p. 231.

The NHS

Many Conservatives on the *'New Right'* resented the socialist origins of the (NHS) and viewed it as bureaucratic and expensive, and this viewpoint ha economic difficulties of the 1970s in particular. Thatcherites, therefore, so efficient, streamline it and ultimately make it better value for money. In th retrenchment and reductions in public spending saw aspects of the NHS t time of the second Thatcher Government from 1983 onwards, genuine cor run-down service, with cuts in hospital beds and lengthy waiting lists dev

The principle of privatisation appeared to be at the heart of Conservative N encouragement of greater private involvement in the health service and th *'internal market'*, where there would be greater competition in providing h providers. The idea was that hospitals and external providers of healthca with each other to provide the most efficient service and provide services GPs on behalf of their patients.

Many opponents baulked at the introduction of such capitalist principles i Thatcherites claimed it generated more efficiency and greater value for mo running a *'two-tier'* NHS with different standards across the service, with a place, but with variable levels of service provision existing in some parts o private investment and competition (that was not equally distributed to al

> *Although the NHS remained a public service, its internal structure was rebu into a non-market operation.*[32]

However, despite such *'marketisation'*, the NHS was one of the few policy a increase in real terms during the Thatcher years, as well as law and order a the long-term credibility of the NHS was questioned by opposition MPs w **tax cuts** had impacted on public services and investment in the NHS had, to meet the increased level of demand brought about by an ageing popula

Education – 'Thatcherite' choice

In line with the key *'Thatcherite'* principles of freedom and less state interv Government sought to promote greater **choice** for parents and their childr provision. Thatcher had been Education Minister in Heath's Government key decisions was to prevent the final phase of grammar schools becomin small number of grammars *(approximately 160 in England and Wales – 3% of* continued to exist with a **selective system** of education using the 11+ exam

The Thatcher Government then sought to bring in more *'individualism'* and education system by a series of acts and reforms, culminating in the **1988 E** created *'Grant Maintained Schools'* which were able to *'opt-out'* of local auth wing Labour politicians. Such schools were given greater independence i and spending their own budgets, another example of Thatcherite philosop were encouraged to compete with other schools for the best pupils, a furth the *'market'* being extended into state provision.

[32] Hugo Young, *One of Us* (1989), Ch. 22, p. 529.

Critics have claimed that Thatcher's education policies were blighted by s criticisms that her policies had created a divided *'two-tier'* system, where s selected the best pupils, while many others went into decline due to finan high concentration of weak academic pupils. This also created some signi teaching profession, a key group of public sector workers who became inc Conservative Party.

Housing policy

One of Margaret Thatcher's most popular social policies was the extensio houses for existing tenants. **The Housing Act of 1980,** introduced by then **Michael Heseltine**, saw the provisions for the state to sell council houses t rates. This policy was consistent with the *'New Right'* view of individualis and a reduced role for the state, with the houses sold becoming the prope to bureaucratic local councils. This policy of discounted sales made home option for many ordinary families who had previously believed that it wa It led to levels of housing owner-occupation rising from 55% to almost 65% 2.1 million properties were transferred from public to private ownership u continuing.

Sales figures peaked at over 200,000 in 1982–1983, and there were electora Conservatives, with many former Labour voting council tenants switchin gratitude for this opportunity of owning their own properties. Many of th were the skilled working-classes, often known as the C2s, who shifted to v significant numbers. This growth in home ownership was, therefore, refle success of the Conservatives throughout the 1980s, as they were rewarded of the million and a quarter that took this option over the course of the de £18 billion for the government in the process.

However, political critics accused the Conservatives of pursuing a short-si individual greed rather than the longer term social good. The governmen from replacing the council houses that were sold (in order to curb public s the consequences resulted in a shortage of affordable social housing that h of the twenty-first century *(see table below)*, as well as the emergence of a g the mid-1980s who had nowhere to live, as *'for the first time in a quarter of a became a fixture on city streets.'*[33] This suggested a clear failure of Thatcheri and that within an era of stubbornly high unemployment in some parts of underclass became a more common feature of British society by the late 19

Trends in housing tenure: 1981 to 1991			
All households – England			
Year	**Owners**	***Social renters***	
1981	9.86	5.46	
1984	10.99	5.03	
1988	12.248	4.706	
1991	13.05	4.436	

** All figures in millions*

[33] Andy McSmith, *No Such Thing as Society*: A History of Britain in the 1980s (2011), Ch.

Despite accusations from the Labour opposition that the Thatcher Govern
welfare state of funds, neither the NHS nor the education system was dism
feared. Indeed, it has been noted that *'Thatcher was never given the opportu*
Popular and party resistance to any such suggestion was just too strong'.[34] The
that the welfare state was required to cushion the impact of monetarism a
during the early years of her premiership. Such high levels of unemploym
welfare state, and this meant it was difficult to make financial savings in t

> *The impact of monetarist economic policies meant that the welfare state was*
> *with the growth of unemployment and poverty.*[35]

Questions and Talking Points

1. Why and how did monetarism impact on Thatcher's social policies?
2. What did Margaret Thatcher seek to do differently from past govern
broader welfare state?
3. What factors prevented Thatcher introducing even more radical cutb
welfare state?

Summary of key Thatcherite principles in social policy:

1. *Housing:* sale of council houses/privatisation of council house stock.
2. *Education:* grant-maintained schools provided greater control and ind
schools, head teachers and governors.
3. *NHS:* introduction of the ***'internal market'*** into hospitals and the heal
4. *Local government:* Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) in provis
5. *GP fundholders:* GPs controlled and managed own budgets in dealing

34 Stephen J Lee, *Aspects of British Political History 1914–1995* (1996), Ch. 15, p. 237.
35 Stephen J Lee, *Aspects of British Political History 1914–1995* (1996), Ch. 15, p. 237.

The Conservatives always prided themselves as the *'party of law and order'* a believed that industrial protest had threatened the rule of law in the late 19 that this issue needed to be addressed. Thatcher had announced during th election campaign that Britain's priorities were ***'less tax and more law and***

One of the first actions of Thatcher's Government was to push through pa armed forces, a contrast to her attempts to reduce expenditure on the wid

spending on law and order did significantly increase d to the police force's appreciation, and an extra 10,000 o between 1979 and 1982. They would later play a key r miners and with other protestors such as the CND ca were women and feminist activists) hostile to Americ Common. Such a financial focus on law and order an *(compared to cutbacks in the welfare state)* was seen *'as a s Government's law and order priorities'.*[36]

Northern Ireland policy

Margaret Thatcher was a traditional unionist who supported most of the p and their desire to remain within the UK. There was, however, a significa (republican) viewpoint to end this 'union', and political violence had been province since the late 1960s. Thatcher had herself experienced this first h Ireland spokesman, Airey Neave MP, was assassinated by Irish republica a car park in Parliament in 1979. This event hardened her unionist beliefs determined not to give in to violence.

The Brighton Bombing (1984)

In the early hours of 12th October 1984, the IRA bombed the Grand Hotel i prominent Conservative politicians were staying for their annual party co ultimately an assassination attempt on the Prime Minister, but she emerge become the IRA's prime target following her refusal to grant *'political pris* **strikers** imprisoned within the H-blocks of the Maze prison in Belfast. Th terrorists, not political prisoners, and thus 10 hunger strikers (led by **Bobb** intervals throughout 1981.

> *Nothing like it had ever happened before in Britain. The scenes at the hotel, s gripped the nation.*
> **Hugo Young, *One of Us* (1989), Ch. 16, p. 372**

The attack at Brighton was, therefore, a long-term IRA response to how Th hunger strikers, and it killed five Conservative delegates, including Sir Ar 34 others. Senior cabinet member Norman Tebbit was among those who l tonnes of rubble, and his wife was permanently disabled as a result of the

[36] Eric J Evans, *Thatcher and Thatcherism* (2nd ed., 2004), Ch. 6, p. 75.

Many people felt that the party conference could not continue in such circu
was typically adamant that democracy should not be disrupted by terroris
true combative form, Margaret Thatcher looked undeterred as she made h
government will not weaken, this nation will meet the challenge, democra

Today we were unlucky, but remember we have only to be lucky once; you wi

This was the Irish Republican Army's *(IRA's)* chilling statement after they
outrageous crime in their history – an act that amounted to the attempted
cabinet on 12th October 1984. Not since Guy Fawkes and the Gunpowder P
audacious crime been attempted in the name of politics. IRA activist *Patri*
with the bombing and given eight life sentences and ordered to serve a mi
was controversially released after serving only 14 years in 1999 as part of t

Some have highlighted the Brighton bomb as a watershed in the Northern
appeared to make politicians of all sides realise the need for an urgent and
ongoing problem. As the *'Brighton Bomber'* Magee has himself said:

After Brighton, anything was possible and the British for the first time began

Questions and Talking Points

1. How can the Brighton bomb of 1984 be seen as a key stage in the roa
   Northern Ireland?
2. What did such ongoing violence suggest about the situation in North

Task

A controversial and recent film about the 1981 IRA hunger strikes, *Hunge*
worth watching to understand more about this event.
Always be aware of political bias in such films, however.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement (1985)

A further major turning point in Northern Ireland's turbulent history saw
Taoiseach Garret Fitzgerald sign the **Anglo-Irish Agreement (AIA)** at Hill
November 1985. It represented the most significant development in Angl
in 1920. The agreement was a treaty lodged at the United Nations and su
Parliament and Dáil Éireann *(Irish Parliament).*

The agreement came after years of negotiations between British and Irish g
attempt to put a lid on the escalating violence. To deal with the alienation
the north, a formal role was offered to Dublin. *'Joint Authority'* was a key
citizens of the province felt represented. Thatcher was an unlikely figure
having hardened her pro-unionist views following the assassination of Ai
Brighton bombing of 1984. However, even she saw the need to tackle the
two key aims:

1. *To increase the province's security*
2. *To halt the IRA's rise*

The agreement also established the **consent principle** – *that there would be
constitutional position without the approval of the majority of those living there.*

The agreement was welcomed by the moderate nationalist SDLP, but rejec
denounced in Ireland by opposition leader **Charles Haughey** who claimed
and accepted *'the British presence in Ireland as valid and legitimate'.* The unio
opposed to the agreement, resenting the involvement of the Irish Republic

This settlement represented a major review of British **sovereignty** within N
compromise between the British and Irish governments. In return for Dub
legitimacy of Northern Ireland *(for the first time),* London agreed to confer
matters relating to Northern Ireland's nationalist minority. The agreemen
joint authority it desired but it set up an *Intergovernmental Conference* head
Northern Ireland and the Irish Foreign Minister, with a permanent secreta
sides of the border. It monitored political, security and legal issues relatin

All 15 Unionist MPs forced by-elections on the issue in January 1986 and a
March 1986, leading to loyalist violence and trouble with the RUC. British
differed on the agreement's significance. Garret Fitzgerald considered the
Authority as one can get'. Thatcher maintained that Ireland's role was mere
Ireland's constitutional position unaltered. Nationalists were told it repre
united Ireland, while unionists were told it secured the union.

As a compromise solution to a complex problem, the agreement attempte
and it would survive to form the basis of later developments in this comp

Questions and Talking Points

1. How significant was the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement to the Irish pea
2. What was the irony of Mrs Thatcher signing the 1985 Anglo-Irish Ag her to do so?
3. Why did the Anglo-Irish Agreement offer something to both nationa

1987 General election and bey

Despite a modest Labour recovery, Margaret Thatcher won a third success 1987 with a stunning *'landslide'* majority of over 100 seats. She now appea political power, *'in an almost unassailable position, with the economy doing we down to 40 per cent by 1988, increased public spending and a revenue surplus'.*[37]

Party	*MPs* 1987
Con	376
Lab	229
Lib	22
Others	23

If she had resigned soon after this third election victory, she would have b successes and retained a largely positive legacy. However, many commen Thatcher clung to office for too long, and a catalogue of problems began to This began with a stock market crash in October 1987, a development whi *'economic boom'* that had been cultivated for the election earlier in the year, economic growth created by her government was not sustainable in the lo

Thatcher and her chancellor from 1983, **Nigel Lawson**, were accused by cr manipulating and artificially *'massaging'* the economy with tax cuts prior t order to maximise their party's popularity. Lawson had cut 2p off the bas income tax in successive budgets in 1987 and 1988, reducing the rate from the pound which proved to be hugely popular with voters (equating to a t £4 billion a year).

The basic rate of taxation had been 33p in the pound when the Conservativ higher rate of tax was cut again from 60% to 40%. Such tax cuts helped to g consumer spending and increased prosperity (for some at least), and this w that more jobs were being created by the flourishing free-market, as *'unemp 1986… and the Conservatives believed they were entitled to some recognition for*

37 C Collette & K Laybourn, *Modern Britain Since 1979* (2003), Ch. 1, p. 10.
38 Andy McSmith, *No Such Thing as Society: A History of Britain in the 1980s* (2011), Ch. 1

A key Thatcher philosophy was to liberate people from high taxes and to c
spending power. Cuts in taxation were a clear vehicle for people to achiev
this approach and attitude appeared to come to a head in 1987. Critics ha
cuts in taxation had a negative impact in the long term on the provision of
NHS and education which suffered funding cutbacks as a result, and whic
the poorer and most vulnerable members of society in an adverse way.

However, in the short term at least, the Conservatives pumped £7.5 billion i
social services in 1987 on the back of profits from privatisation. This goverr
broader consumer spending and appeared to be a complete break with mor
appearing to be part of a strategy to appeal to voters at election time. Neve
Thatcher's monetarist and tax-cutting emphasis over the course of a decade
the British economy, although whether for better or worse was the basis of

(Thatcher implemented) the greatest tax cuts by any administration in the tw

The 1987 election result also highlighted that Thatcherism was not winnin
over the entire nation. While the Conservatives continued to perform wel
the Southeast and parts of the Midlands, the northern cities, Scotland and
Wales actually witnessed a sharp drop in Tory support at this election, to
extent that most major cities in the north now had no Conservative MPs.
'Celtic' regions of the UK certainly didn't appear to be enthusiastic about
Thatcherism either. Many commentators referred to a *'North-South'* divid
political terms, with the industrial urban areas less enthused by tax cuts a
more concerned about spending cuts in some public services.

The Poll Tax and opposition to it

As the flagship policy of her third term in office, Thatcher clung resolutely
(Poll Tax), despite internal party objections and increasing public and elec
fully evident in a series of shattering by-election defeats in *Mid Staffordshir*
Eastbourne (to the Liberal Democrats in October 1990) on massive swings of o
swathes of the population would be financially worse off as a result of its
it was a fairer system than the existing rates (which she had been determi

It was scheduled for introduction in England in April 1990, but was rolled
a fact for which many Scots never forgave the Prime Minister. Riots again
Scotland, London and other cities throughout 1989 and into 1990, and it w
produced the biggest protest movement since CND',[40] with thousands of non-p
one Labour MP. However, despite such hostile opposition to this policy, t
her *'iron lady'* image and she refused to countenance a U-turn.

39 Stephen J Lee, *Aspects of British Political History 1914–1995* (1996), Ch. 15, p. 234.

40 Andy McSmith, *No Such Thing as Society: A History of Britain in the 1980s* (2011), Ch. 14

Such unrest and evidence of **'extra-parliamentary opposition'** and direct a
developed throughout the decade following the riots of 1981 and the indu
the miners' strike in the mid-1980s. Such 'extra-parliamentary opposition'
growing phenomenon during the 1980s, with urban riots across Britain in
unrest in 1984–1985 (miners' strike) and now further large-scale protests i
been due to the controversial nature of many of Thatcher's policies, or also
assertiveness of the British public after years of broadly accepting the natu
making during the 'years of consensus'.

Consequently, as a result of this inflexibility to respond to such large-scale
poll tax'[41] played a key part in Margaret Thatcher's downfall, particularly t
London riot in March 1990. Further protest and unrest became evident in
notably various anti-Poll Tax pressure groups, the media, satirists, arts an
and even religious bodies and certain churches. The slogan *'can't pay, won'*
associated with anti-Poll Tax campaigns, and non-payment was encourage
as a means of defeating the policy. In the early 1990s, one Labour MP, Ter
for 60 days for non-payment. The 'morality' and 'fairness' of the policy w
and wide-ranging objections to it.

The policy's electoral unpopularity was ultimately a key factor in why suf
seats, voted to remove her from office. However, while the Poll Tax cause
damage, it was a series of destabilising events since the 1986 Westland Aff
to her longer-term demise, with a notable surge in inflation during the late
further recession also weakening her political position. Her increasingly v
could be summarised as follows:

> *Thatcher was elbowed out of power by sections of the Conservative Party wh
> stuck in her ways that she would lead them to electoral disaster.*[42]

The Fall of Thatcher and her legacy

Margaret Thatcher's increasing political vulnerability stemming from her
the Poll Tax was highlighted by a *'stalking horse'* challenge to her leadershi
Meyer was a somewhat obscure backbench MP from the moderate, pro-Eu
Conservative Party who realised he had no realistic chance of ousting the
However, it was significant that this was the first time that she had been fo
becoming leader in 1975, evidence of growing opposition to her from with
33 of her MPs voted for Meyer, and 60 did not support her with abstentio
should have served as a warning of internal party unrest towards some of

Growing economic problems also saw interest rate
which had a severe and negative impact on the mo
numbers of homeowners. Within the same period
further weakened by the resignation of her Chance
it clear he was unhappy with her increasingly dom
her use of external political advisers and her hostili
European attempts to tackle inflation. Such a loss
that Thatcher's grip on power was weakening:

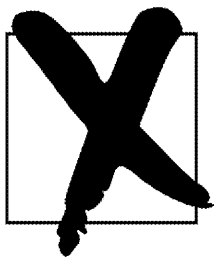
41 Geoffrey Wheatcroft, *The Strange Death of Tory England* (2005), Ch. 9, p. 171.
42 Stephen J Lee, *Aspects of British Political History 1914–1995* (1996), Ch. 15, p. 229.

Further troubles followed the demotion in July 1989 of Sir Geoffrey Howe fro Leadership of the House of Commons, as well as Nigel Lawson's sensational r October 1989, and the reluctant resignation in July 1990 of Nicholas Ridley f German and anti-EC views in a Spectator interview). The final straw was S 1st November 1990 to leave the government.[43]

By November 1990, former Chancellor and Foreign Secretary **Sir Geoffrey** he was treated by the Prime Minister and in particular of her anti-Europea damaging Britain's international position. His dramatic resignation speech and read to a stunned House of Commons, made it quite clear that he felt to stand down and for a more significant figure to challenge her. It was co allies as *'treachery'*, but it has been seen by many as the short-term catalyst eventual downfall, as outlined below:

Geoffrey Howe's venomous Commons speech in November 1990 triggered th Margaret Thatcher's rule.[44]

Already damaged by the Poll Tax and the weakening economy in particul attitude had pushed key minsters such as Howe over the edge in terms of support her. By the time of Howe's resignation in November 1990, the mo challenge appeared to be unstoppable, and former cabinet minister **Micha** horizon as a rival contender to the Prime Minister after spending four yea following his resignation over the *Westland Affair in 1986.*



When the leadership ballot of MPs actually occurred on won on the first round but the margin of victory was no rules to avoid a second round of voting. Such a level of almost half of her MPs failing to support her, meant tha wounded in political terms. After speaking to her cabin on 22nd November 1990, despite initially vowing to figh *'between ten and twelve members of the cabinet… did not thi* share of the total number. Her political demise was all the more difficult f *election triumphs, she had been the victim of the most ruthless acts of political ing Britain'*,[46] although this is a viewpoint of those who sympathised with her.

For her opponents (both inside and outside of her party), her demise was a proved that all political figures, however dominant, were ultimately held a actions and policies. In the second leadership ballot held a week later, **Joh** entered the fray in a bid to stop Heseltine taking the Conservative crown, b ultimately decided after Hurd dropped out and urged all his supporters to

Major had emerged largely unnoticed and had enjoyed a smooth rise towar been a cabinet minister only since 1987, yet had already held two prominen and Chancellor of the Exchequer (if only quite briefly). His working-class b political appeal, and he appeared to have fewer enemies within the Conserv than Heseltine. Major ultimately succeeded Thatcher and became her succe prime minister on 28th November 1990, when he topped the ballot of Conse opponents conceded defeat. It was the end of the Thatcher era and the start

43 D Butler & D Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 1992* (1992), Ch. 2, p. 23.

44 Source: Peter Oborne, *Daily Mail*, 13th September 2008.

45 Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years (1993),* Ch. 28, p. 854.

46 Alan Sked & Chris Cook, *Post War Britain: A Political History* (4th ed., 1993), Ch. 15, p. 5

Overview of Thatcher's legacy

Margaret Thatcher became something of an institution within British polit
1980s. This was due primarily to her length of tenure at No. 10 Downing S
longest serving prime minister of the twentieth century. Indeed, her eleve
were only surpassed in modern history by Lord Liverpool, who governed
increasingly powerful personality and controversial policies added weigh
and *'her ideas were forcefully delivered and backed by a personal dominance'*.[47]

Supporters of Margaret Thatcher and the *'Thatcher Revolution'* claim that sh
healthier economic state than in 1979 when it was viewed as *'the sick man o*
industrial unrest, inflation and economic decline. By the time she departed
of living had risen significantly for most people as share ownership and ho
class mobility became more apparent. In many people's eyes her time in o
British economy and British society into *'a land profoundly different'*,[48] althou
political disagreement between left and right whether this was for better o

In many respects, Britain had become the *'property-owning democracy'* she l
popular policies meant that she broadened the Conservatives' appeal amo
The employed workforce grew from 22.5 million in 1979 and peaked at 26
meant a higher standard of living for much of the population, with a signi
of various domestic goods and products. More people were generally bec
significant employment growths among women and within the service in

Consequently, more British families were able to purchase hi-tech consum
as the latest TVs, video players and kitchen appliances, while also enjoyin
Popular policies such as privatisation and council house sales also forced t
away from its traditional *'socialist'* policies. The advent of Tony Blair in 19
rejection of its previous 'left-wing' policies, and Blair maintained key That
cuts, privatisation and the free market economy once in power after 1997.
reforms were maintained and Tony Blair even modelled his leadership sty
Thatcher, adopting a centralising approach that often sidelined cabinet go

***It has indeed been claimed that New Labour's policies were generally clos
Thatcher than to the ideology of Old Labour.***

Thatcher's impact on British politics cast a large shadow over her next two
Tony Blair. Margaret Thatcher's influence and presence after 1990 was un
particular, found her legacy and, what he would consider, her interfering,
political progress. Major's supporters would later criticise her and say tha
his regime was a factor in the Conservatives' landslide defeat in 1997. The
policies were adopted by Labour under Blair, making it a far more electab
asked what her greatest achievement was, Thatcher once declared that it w
Labour', making a clear reference to how the bulk of her policy agenda had
change of government.

By 1990 the UK appeared to be a far more confident and prosperous nation
international stage, evident in the Falklands victory and in the close relatio

47 Stephen J Lee, *Aspects of British Political History 1914–1995* (1996), Ch. 15, p. 231.

48 Andy McSmith, *No Such Thing as Society: A History of Britain in the 1980s* (2011), Epilo

its President Ronald Reagan, where the *'special relationship'* was significantl
had become a figure of international standing on the world stage and playe
the ending of the **Cold War** in the late 1980s. Thatcher's policies in relation
and the welfare state were almost *'revolutionary'* in comparison to the previ

Critics argue that such cosmetic improvements masked a sharp division betw
with the wealth Thatcherism had generated, there was equal amounts of pov
created during the 11 years of her rule. Indeed, the period witnessed the lar
favour of the wealthy in modern economic history, leading to the resurrectio
twentieth-century economist J K Galbraith, that she had created *'private afflu*

Six Key Priorities of Thatcherism

- Reduce the state's role in the life of the individual
- Develop a 'Market Economy' to arrest Britain's economic
- To promote popular capitalism through privatisation
- To destroy inflation
- To cut the power of trade unions and end industrial conf
- To improve Britain's international status

Stephen J Lee, Aspects of British Political History 1914–1995 *(1*

Thatcher was viewed as a controversial prime minister particularly becaus
were very different from those of the previous 30 years. One commentator
secret of her dislike of political consensus between the parties'.[49] She ultimately be
help' and *'Victorian values'* as opposed to the belief in the need for state inte
the social and economic problems that had existed for much of the post-wa
consensus'. In adopting this approach, the relationship between the state a
altered in a less 'statist' and a more individualistic direction during her tim
over a number of conflicts, both international and domestic, and in this sen
one of divisive and conflicting politics that featured an increase in *'extra-pa*

[49] Stephen J Lee, *Aspects of British Political History 1914–1995* (1996), Ch. 15, p. 229.

Her *'individualist'* ideology was clearly evident in her raft of significant tra
policies, such as privatisation, also played a major role in her long-term an
This made her a radical politician for her time, in many ways an unusual t
ultimately succeeded in moving the British political agenda towards a rigl
long period of it being located on the centre-left. It is for this determined a
political attitudes and beliefs that she is remembered as a landmark prime
removed from office in a somewhat *'ruthless'* manner, when her party dec
vote-winner but rather an electoral liability. A combination of her domine
significant policy differences appear to have been key factors in her demis
consolation that she had never been rejected by the electorate.

A good recent film focusing on events of the Thatcher years is the 'Iron L

The following BBC website is an excellent overview of the Thatcher years
and 1990: 'The Thatcher Years in Statistics'

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/629/629/4447082.stm

Historical Interpretations

The 'Thatcherite' or 'New Right' view of the 1980s is that the economic policies
reduced public spending and tax cuts were the radical shock that the British ec
stagnation and industrial unrest of the 1970s. Friedman and Hayek were key in
governance that rejected the principles of the post-war consensus that had dom
the Thatcherite view of this period claims that conditions were put in place for
as a result, many people were better off as the decade progressed. Trade union
was dealt with in an efficient way that past governments of all parties had faile

Left-of-centre and social democratic critics of this era took a contrasting view of
economic policies imposed were too harsh and that the associated social conse
gap between rich and poor subsequently grew to unacceptable levels and the le
significantly, with public services also adversely affected by such reductions in
perspective also claimed that the legislation introduced to deal with trade unio
sought to destroy these bodies in a politically-motivated approach. The 'Keyne
historians such as Eric Hobsbawm claimed that Thatcher's policies destroyed t
produced an economic 'Golden Age'.

Exercise 1: What were the key problems facing Britain i

Which were the most significant issues affecting Britain in the 1980s? Ran from the list below and briefly explain why:

- Wealth creation
- Unemployment
- Inflation
- Entrepreneurial culture
- Taxation
- Privatisation
- Social conflict

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.

Revision Exercise 2: Conservative Government 1979–1990

Outline the key successes and failures of the Conservative government (1979–1990).

Policy/Issue	Successes	
Political		
Economic		
Social		
Cultural		

Exercise 3: Key Revision Questions 1979–1990

Revision Quiz

1. The control of which economic indicator did Margaret Thatcher
Britain's economy to recover?

.....

2. Describe two conflicts which Margaret Thatcher found herself i
1980s (*e.g. military, social, industrial, political*).

.....

.....

3. What happened to the Labour Party in 1981 that helped the Co
electoral fortunes?

.....

.....

4. Which flagship policy played a key role in Margaret Thatcher's

.....

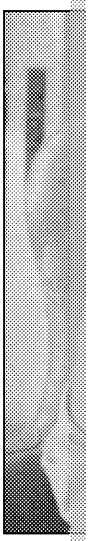
5. Which two prominent cabinet ministers resigned from Thatche
final year of her premiership?

.....

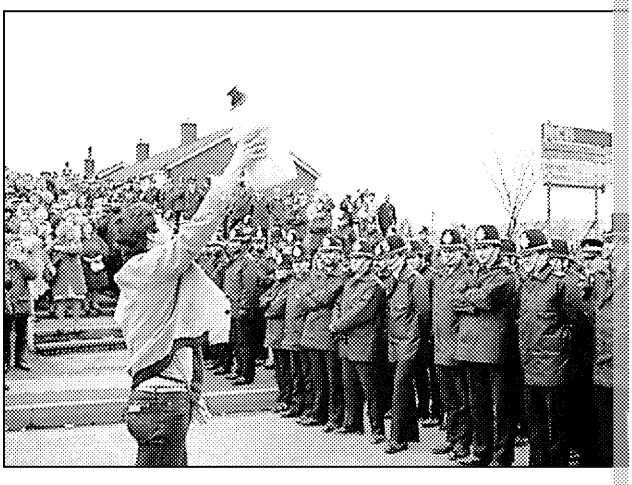
.....

T

Discussion Points



1. What were the key reasons for the Conservative Party's 1979 general election victory?
2. To what extent did the problems of the Labour Party from the late 1970s assist the Conservatives?
3. What was the impact of privatisation on Britain's economy and wider society during the 1980s?
4. What were the positives and negatives that arose as a consequence of the 1984–1985 miners' strike?
5. What evidence is there that there was significant 'extra-parliamentary' opposition to the Thatcher Government from 1979 onwards?
6. To what extent did the Thatcher Government transform the British e and was this for better or worse?
7. How significant was Margaret Thatcher's role as the Cold War came
8. What were the key reasons for Margaret Thatcher's fall from power



Major as leader (1990–19

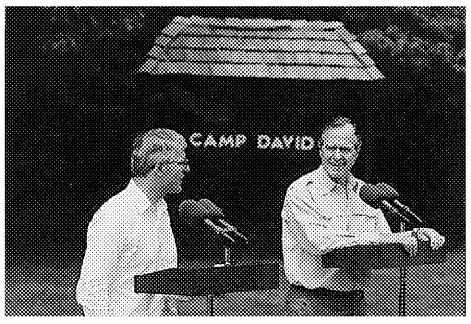
On taking office and succeeding the dominant figure of Margaret Thatche
Major announced that he wanted to preside over: **'A nation at ease with it**

Such a message appeared to be an implicit criticism of his predecessor, a s
that the country was somehow disunited following eleven and a half year
Thatcherism and that Major now sought another ideological direction, nar
post-Thatcher 'consensus' that acknowledged that some of her policies we
extreme, divisive and inflexible. This indicated some tension at the top ec
the Conservative Party following the turbulent end to Thatcher's time in o
Major subsequently had to live with unflattering comparisons and criticis
relation to his predecessor for the seven and a half years that he was prim

Major was, nevertheless, initially seen as the Conservative Party's 'continu
many of Mrs Thatcher's views, but this perception would gradually chang
would later proclaim that she would continue to be a 'backseat driver' und
suggesting that she would retain a degree of control over the party and th
Major, however, initially sought to unify the cabinet by bringing together a
symbolically appointing Thatcher's challenger, Michael Heseltine, to a pro
was part of a more 'consensual' overall approach to government, with Ma
and more emollient leadership style than his predecessor.

In reality, however, the Conservative Party was split, with Europe a defin
so for many years to come. Such a situation would seriously hamper Majo
onwards, with many Thatcherites, extremely bitter at the nature of her ous
divisions in the process. Such underlying factors played a key part in the
would lead the Conservative Party to in 1997:

> *It was thus a divided and uncertain party which Major inherited November*
> *all over the Thatcherite poll tax, with a deteriorating economy, and split over*



Having symbolically ditched the mu
found himself facing something of a
months of office. As Britain's first p
Major faced a less certain internation
into the coalition of support for the U
against Iraq *(January 1991).* The 'spe
with the USA would remain a priori
President George Bush Senior, left).

This was particularly so because the USA had now emerged as the world's
'unipolar' international power structure (with one power dominant). In c
and the UK government became involved in seeking a diplomatic settleme
war (1992–1995), and the humanitarian crisis that then developed in Bosni
This proved to be the bloodiest European conflict since World War II, desp
by various statesmen. Major also had to negotiate the controversial Europ
(December 1991), and then steer its passage through Parliament from 1992

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50 Anthony Seldon & Peter Snowdon, The Barren Years: 1997–2005, cited in Stuart Ball a
Power: The Conservatives in Opposition Since 1867 (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 20

1992 General election

Major clung to power until the very end of the maximum five-year term o
seen as a sign of desperation in the governing party. However, against all
in defiance of hostile opinion polls, Major was returned to power in April
healthy 7.6% lead in the popular vote, although the parliamentary majorit
was historically slim and would create difficulties as the years progressed
was seen as *'the electorate showing a preference for security and the known rath
for experimentation and change'*,[51] with signs of economic growth despite the
In the aftermath of the fourth successive election victory for the Conservat
Thatcher in November 1990 appeared to have been totally vindicated:

Party	*MPs*
	1992
Conservative	336
Labour	271
Lib Dem	20
Others	24

*The 1992 election provided a remarkable v
Conservatives. To win by such a margin o
(7.6%)…was totally unexpected. It was a
the longest depression since the 1930s and
campaign that had been much derided.*[52]

At last Major could shake off the image of having merely inherited power
his desire for a 'classless society', to soften the often harsh tone of Thatche
the negative social implications of his predecessor's policies. With many f
reassuring tones to Labour's uncertain message, Major subsequently recei
votes for a winning party at any post-war election – **over 14 million**. He c
be able to govern in his own right, sentiments that he quickly made public
confirmed:

> *I'm delighted I can now accept that the country has elected me in my own rig*
> ***(John Major, 9th April 1992**)*

Economic policy

John Major, who as Mrs Thatcher's Chancellor had strongly supported the
join the **Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM)** in 1990, continued with this ap
key plank of the government's strategy to keep inflation under control. M
described the ERM as *'the medicine to cure the ailment (of inflation)'*[53] but his
for this European-based policy would create a huge rift within the Conser
and its growing scepticism towards Europe, as Heath's pro-European lega
back to haunt the increasingly fractured Tories.

Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM)

Established in 1979 as a key preparation for the single currency (Euro), t
part of the European Monetary System in which participating governm
maintain the values of their individual currencies in line with the ECU (
provisional single currency).

51 Stephen J Lee, *Aspects of British Political History 1914–1995* (1996), Ch. 15, p. 243.
52 D Butler & D Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 1992* (1992), Ch. 13, p. 269.
53 John Major, *The Autobiography* (1999), Ch. 14, p. 341.

However, this determined desire to shadow the German mark ultimately l
and the shattering of the Conservatives' economic credibility. The high le
of economic activity within the UK and weakened the pound as part of a v
that cost the country about 3% of GDP. This economic strategy also resulte
events that culminated in **Black Wednesday** in September 1992.

Black Wednesday

Despite Britain being in the second significant **recession** since 1979, with u
bankruptcies and house repossessions spiralling, the Conservatives under
largely because of their perceived economic competence in the eyes of key
reputation in this sphere was shattered within months by the events of **'Bl**

This incident was a further legacy of the troubled Thatcher relationship w
attempts to maintain Britain's membership of the ERM in order to keep in
Consequently, on 16th September 1992 Chancellor **Norman Lamont** raised interest rates from 10% to 12%, then to 15%, and authorised the spending of billions of pounds to buy up the sterling being frantically sold on the currency markets due to the pound's falling value within the ERM. Four billion pounds of sterling was spent, the equivalent of £70 per person in the UK, and the impact of this day on the wider British politics cannot really be underestimated:

> *Black Wednesday…the day the pound toppled out of the ERM – was a political and economic calamity. It unleashed havoc in the Conservative Party and it changed the political landscape of Britain. On that day, a fifth consecutive Conservative election victory…became remote, if not impossible.*[54]

ERM

- EU member
of their curre
to the Germa
currency) as
under contro
- Consequentl
anti-inflation
Bundesbank
for high inte
- ERM membe
by Brussels t
single curren

This currency framework was viewed by many as a precursor to a single c
attitudes towards such an eventual policy. Eurosceptic critics of the ERM
result of the pound entering this European economic institution at an over
The pound, ultimately, could not maintain its value or alignment with oth
the financial cost was experienced by ordinary British voters in the long te
taxation would ultimately meet the cost of trying to remain within the ERM
people experienced unpredictable mortgage rates due to the volatile intere

Many commentators agreed with John Major's brutally honest assessment
the day the Conservatives lost the next election, whenever it was likely to b
a humiliation for a pivotal economic policy of Major's Government, *'and th*
economic policy was destroyed'.[55] The BBC's Peter Jay added that the event m
turn in government economic policy in 25 years', affecting both its economic r
with Europe. It has ultimately been described as:

> *The most humiliating moment for British politics since the IMF crisis of 197*
by what had happened.[56]

54 John Major, *The Autobiography* (1999), Ch. 14, p. 312.
55 Dennis Kavanagh & Anthony Seldon, *The Powers Behind the Prime Minister: The Hidden Influ*
56 Andrew Marr, *A History of Modern Britain* (2007), p. 492.

'Black Wednesday' was a watershed for many in the Conservative Party r
Europe and the European Union. There was a hardening of attitudes and
among many Conservatives due to a widespread belief that Germany's *'se*
rates was the root cause of Britain's economic suffering. The pound had e
Lamont failed to follow Callaghan's precedent in 1967 and resign, yet he h
laughing stock and target for the press and six months later Major sacked

Many felt Major should also have been clearing his desk, such was the neg
inflicted on Conservative Party morale and wider public support. While t
competence had been the key factor in its somewhat unexpected 1992 gen
the events of 'Black Wednesday', the party's economic fortunes were irrev
to a long-term weakening in their political support over subsequent years,
overwhelming rejection from office in 1997.

Task and Talking Point

Write a few brief paragraphs explaining the significance of 'Black Wedne
Party's economic reputation, its long-term electoral prospects and its imp
public support.

Other key economic policies

In a bid to further kick-start a post-Thatcher economic recovery, in the ear
Government abolished the National Economic Development Council ('NE
was established in the early 1960s and increasingly viewed as a corporatis
also removing the long-standing 'Wages Councils' for the low paid, he wa
layer of employment protection.

In following on from Margaret Thatcher's industrial policy of the 1980s, M
further coal-mine closures which provoked significant outrage in autumn
middle classes march with the miners'.[57] He also broke election promises not t
on fuel at 8% in 1993, and he then suffered an embarrassing parliamentary
increase it further in 1994. This was because of his small majority in Parlia
MPs voted with the opposition parties to prevent a further VAT rise on ho

This gave the impression of a lack of both compassion and economic comp
with ongoing Labour criticism that during the sustained Conservative yea
services, such as the NHS and the education system, were not satisfactoril
Major's administration was also criticised for the privatisation of British R
not appear to improve rail services, raised questions about economic valu
was branded by critics as a *'privatisation too far'*.

[57] Michael Heseltine, *Life in the Jungle* (2000), Ch. 18, p. 439.

As the first post-Cold War British prime minister, John Major did not face t
high-stakes diplomacy that Margaret Thatcher experienced with the Soviet
Union and the USA in the 1980s. However, in the wake of the destructive
developments over the issue of Europe during the latter years of the Thatc
period in office, John Major's premiership was haunted and fatally undern
by European matters (from 'Black Wednesday' onwards). This *'fault-line'* a
heart of the Conservative Party had clearly played a key role in the downf
to her increasing hostility to the European Community. It continued to ca

For most of the 1990s the party was polarised between 'Eurofanatics' and 'Eu

The Maastricht Treaty

Maastricht Treaty (1992)

This treaty was alternatively known as the 'Treaty on European Union' a
European Union (EU), further developing the establishment of the 'singl
motion plans for a single currency towards the end of the 1990s. Britain s
such as the Social Chapter, which regulated working conditions. Such op
parliamentary debates before it was formally approved in the UK.

Major was initially viewed as sharing Margaret Thatcher's growing scepti
but during the 1990s it gradually appeared that he was more positive abou
his period in office progressed, some of Major's Europe-related problems w
provocative public comments on the subject by his predecessor, and Majo
Thatcher's interventions as *'unforgivable'* behaviour.

The reality was that ever since Heath had signed Britain up to EEC membe
Conservatives had been divided towards this developing European entity
internal party storm on the European issue when he negotiated and signed
Treaty in 1991/1992, having proclaimed early on in his premiership that he
heart of Europe'.

This Treaty was aimed at making Europe more integrated, primarily by de
policies (notably preparing for a single currency), as well as changing the s
European Union. Major claimed to have achieved some key opt-outs and c
signing up to the Treaty that was finally agreed in 1992.

It was signed by Major despite many Conservative MPs demanding a refe
several backbench MPs, it was something they came to fiercely oppose. Th
that the Maastricht Treaty renamed the European community as the Europ
Conservative **Eurosceptics** had sinister **'federalist'** implications involving
central European level.

[58] Mark Garnett, 'Centre', in Kevin Hickson (ed.), *The Political Thought of the Conservative*

'Black Wednesday' had ultimately reopened Conservative wounds on the European issue and the prolonged Maastricht negotiations and parliamentary votes between 1992 and 1993 displayed Conservative splits on the issue in the full glare of the public.

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Subsequently, during this prolonged legislative process, the Conservative civil war over Europe was on full display. There were consequently several key parliamentary rebellions on this issue that undermined the government's small majority, eroding its image and authority in the process. Conservative opponents of Maastricht, who felt it was a European treaty too far, were sufficient in numbers to remove Major's majority if they rebelled. Margaret (Lady) Thatcher was manipulating many of them from the House of Lords, procla
have signed that Treaty' and that it was *'a recipe for national suicide'*. The end

> *A constantly shifting group of around 40–60 Tory MPs regularly worked with*
> *key parts of their government's main piece of legislation, and Major's day-to-d*

Although Major managed to just about keep the party's European division
to withdraw the party whip from eight **'Maastricht Rebels'** in late 1994, o
return to the fold some months later with few concessions apparently mad
irreparable weakness'[60] to his growing number of critics. Despite some very
a few embarrassing defeats relating to this treaty, Major did just about ma
on the premiership, but the internal party pressure on him was building u
pressures from a resurgent Labour Party under Tony Blair who was 'mod
terms of its policies and image, and successfully attacking the Conservativ
and particularly Major's perceived weak leadership.

In 1996/1997, further destabilising tensions with Europe emerged over the
banned exports of British beef due to alleged British farming methods and
disease BSE (found in British cows) and the deadly CJD, a brain disease th
number of people across Britain and Europe. Major's inconclusive **'wait a**
sought to steer a middle ground in terms of ongoing European integration,
divisions on European policy within his party. Many within the Conserva
remained hostile to this issue and Europe played a key role in party divisi
heavy general election defeats of 1997 and 2001. John Major's plight in rel
has been effectively summarised as follows:

> *John Major's majority slowly ebbed away, while the Eurosceptic forces remors*
> *public credibility.*[61]

59 Andrew Marr, *A History of Modern Britain* (2007), p. 493.
60 Peter Hennessy, *The Prime Minister: The Office and its Holders Since 1945* (2000), Ch. 17,
61 Michael Heseltine, *Life in the Jungle* (2000), Ch. 18, p. 417.

To divert increasing hostility from the formerly loyal sections of the Conse
to develop a distinctive policy agenda and he tried to place greater empha
health and education, in seeking to respond to critics who felt that the Tha
marginalised such policy areas.

During the first part of the 1990s, both economic and social policy-making
disjointed and lacking in terms of a coherent connected vision, as Major re
such as Europe and internal party divisions. He also faced some major po
the alarming statistic produced in 1993 that the gap between the highest a
had reached the widest levels since records began, and that levels of pove
since 1979 (despite average living standards rising). Prosperity was certai
mid-1990s Britain.

Consequently, there were determined attempts to get people back into wo
reduce welfare, with policies such as the 'Jobseekers Allowance' (1996) pu
work, and making some benefits 'conditional'. Yet despite economic impr
fundamental social problems and levels of poverty (arguably caused by p
were somewhat overlooked by Major's continued faith in free-market poli
Poverty Action Group claimed that 1996 marked a post-war peak in pover
one in four British children living in poverty, compared to just one in ten i
a minimum wage was opposed by the Conservatives who said it would c
people had jobs but were poorly paid.

There was, therefore, notable debate both at the time and since as to whet
was a more 'moderate' and 'compassionate' version than that of his prede
argued that he continued with much of the neo-liberal economic agenda o
Thatcherites certainly viewed him as having backtracked from her legacy
Europe, taxation and public spending (which had started to creep up agai
during the Thatcher years – see table below). This arguably indicated som
in key public services (NHS, education, etc.) at a time of recession and as a
economic recovery and maintaining a key role for the state.

Public spending as a percentage of GDP (Gross Domestic Product), 199

1990–91	39.4
1991–92	41.9
1992–93	43.7
1993–94	43.0
1994–95	42.5
1995–96	41.8
1996–97	39.9

Source: *http://www.ukpublicspending.co.uk/*

As alternative social programmes, Major launched initiatives such as the '
the ill-fated campaign of **'Back to Basics'** (1993). The former policy sough
public services, but, as a charter of improving quality, it became vague an
subsequently began to ridicule aspects of it, in particularly the 'traffic con
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/7772818.stm

Critics ultimately claimed that such policies were somewhat vague and un
that the Conservatives appeared to have run out of genuine policy ideas.
success was the launch of the 'National Lottery' in 1994, which in subsequ
pounds for good causes and various sporting and community projects.

Citizen's Charter

A 1991 policy initiative by John Major's Government that was launched to imp
services. Major described it as 'the central theme for public life 'in the 1990s, an
redefine post-Thatcher conservatism. Critics attacked it as being too vague and

Back to Basics

An attempted policy relaunch by John Major's Government in 1993, this appro
tone into political life and policy-making. It backfired as it generated significan
lives and led to a series of high-profile government scandals that cost several m

Political sleaze

'Back to Basics' was launched at the 1993 Conservative Party Conference a
traditional values such as law and order and educational standards across
'innermost personal beliefs'.[62] However, the 'back to basics' message appeare
sexual and financial scandals taking place in the private lives of several Co
were subsequently accused of hypocrisy by some elements of the press for
that they appeared to be preaching.

An example of one notable scandal from this period was the 'cash for ques
appeared in the mid-1990s, which saw several Conservative MPs accused
questions in Parliament (notably Tim Smith and Neil Hamilton), and not p
donations. Such a practice was somewhat unethical to put it mildly, and i
of the regulations in subsequent years.

As the 1997 general election loomed on the horizon, Smith would stand do
refused to do so and was subsequently challenged by 'anti-sleaze campaig
journalist Martin Bell (who won Hamilton's formerly safe seat from him).
'Arms to Iraq' scandal of the mid-1990s, when it appeared that the govern
international arms embargo by selling weapons to Iraq.

The moralistic tone of Major's crusade for better standards, therefore, app
his administration became tarred with the allegation of 'sleaze' (both sexu
the high-profile episodes above. This certainly damaged the party as a ne
general election defeat. However, Major always denied that this was a po

> *'Back to basics'… became a tool in the hands of newspaper critics… (It was)*
> *statement about personal morality.*[63]

62 John Major, *The Autobiography* (1999), Ch. 16, p. 387.
63 John Major, *The Autobiography* (1999), Ch. 16, p. 387.

Major himself started to be remorselessly mocked and satirised, with *The* cartoons ridiculing him by constantly depicting him with his shirt tucked (worn over his trousers!), see example below:

http://www.belltoons.co.uk/bellworks/index.php/leaders/1994/0528–25–11–94_PAN

In a similar satirical vein, the *Spitting Image* TV show depicted Major as a ' personality or charisma. Close associates of Major claimed that his own m affected by such ongoing media criticisms.

Major and Northern Ireland

Following on from the Thatcher years and the steady levels of violence tha erupted in Northern Ireland, terrorism and bloodshed continued into the 1 This was despite the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement that was supposed to de greater political stability, yet which failed to tackle the IRA and drain it of and ability to function, as had been its intention. This was evident in IRA activity such as the 1993 Bishopsgate bombing in London's financial distri 1993 Warrington bombing which killed two young boys, and the 1996 Ma bomb which destroyed a huge part of the city centre.

A large amount of the attacks were against commercial interests and desig damage, but Warrington proved that innocent bystanders were also often ongoing religious-fuelled killings between Protestant and Catholic terroris Northern Ireland, with total casualties related to 'The Troubles' for this pe

Deaths relating to 'The Troubles' (1990–199

1990	81
1991	97
1992	88
1993	88
1994	64
1995	9
1996	18
1997	22

However, despite the British government's repeated mantra that *'we do no* more conciliatory image and manner (in comparison to Thatcher) created to develop from the early 1990s, and which were kept confidential from th government machine. During such talks, direct contact was made betwee reliable IRA sources who informed the Prime Minister that the *'war is over* that such talks were a risk worth taking if it meant an eventual peaceful o a possibility.

Despite much furore from Conservative and Unionist figures when the tal
Major could justify them by the fact that such negotiations helped to initia
1994; the first of its kind in 25 years. This had followed on from the **Down**
with the Irish government, which had publicly announced a framework fo
violence. Major remarked on this development as follows:

> *The Declaration was a powerful symbol. After twenty-four years of conflict a*
> *partition, it showed that there was a set of principles which the British and I*
> *accept… Unionists were assured that a united Ireland would not be imposed*
> *assured that their traditions and aspirations would be respected…. The Deci*
> *blueprint for a settlement, but it paved the way.'*[64]

However, Major's policy on Northern Ireland didn't produce a sustained a
negotiating hand was weakened by the fact that he had a small parliamen
reliant on Ulster Unionist MPs. Unionist anger at his talks, therefore, limi
while Republican paramilitary forces in the IRA seemed to be willing to n
violence as a back-up option. Yet it is still viewed by many political obser
breaking diplomacy, Major arguably laid the foundations for the landmar
1998, and for this he deserves notable credit.

Major's leadership challenge (1

In the wake of fierce European divisions, growing political unpopularity,
and Major's perceived weak leadership, many die-hard Thatcherite Conse
1993/1994 that John Major was a pale imitation of his predecessor, whom
reverence. As a result of this, an increasing number of government backb
for the increasingly beleaguered Prime Minister and many felt that he was
inevitable defeat at the next general election. As a consequence of this dar
within the parliamentary party:

> *Never in the last century had the leader been treated with so little respect by*
> *Conservative press at large.*[65]

By the middle of 1995, the various pressures on Major appeared to reach b
with repeated media stories of possible challenges to his leadership from v
June 1995 he subsequently took a drastic and somewhat unorthodox politi
party leader and triggering a re-election process which he would again sta
his part, but it was ultimately an attempt to get his internal political oppo
his actions triggered a Conservative leadership election which only sitting
This gamble appeared to pay off in the short term at least, and Major was
heavyweights and more threatening contenders such as **Michael Portillo**
remained loyal and did not challenge him.

64 John Major, *The Autobiography* (1999), Ch. 19, p. 455.

65 Anthony Seldon & Peter Snowdon, 'The Barren Years: 1997–2005', cited in Stuart Ball
Recovering Power: The Conservatives in Opposition Since 1867 (Palgrave Macmillan, Basi

Major won the subsequent leadership contest against his former cabinet co
minister **John Redwood**, who was his only challenger for the position. Th
1995 saw him gain 218 MPs' votes in comparison to Redwood's 89, alongs
abstentions. Yet it was a far from overwhelming victory, and over 100 Co
(approximately one third of the parliamentary party), failed to support hi
saw a serving prime minister seek re-election as leader of his own party. M
margin of victory had only just been within the acceptable target that he h
realised that it indicated further political difficulties lay ahead within the l

> *I felt deflated. There was no elation. The leadership had been settled for the p*
> *John's (Redwood's) vote meant there were many storms ahead.*[66]

Major's downfall

In short, following this somewhat turbulent re-election as party leader, mo
to be taken up with ensuring the short-term political survival of his admin
parliamentary majority of just 21 (1992–1997), and by *'December 1996 the go
Parliament altogether'*,[67] following a series of defections, deaths and by-elec
and divided government stumbled on for a few months, clinging to powe
more positive turn of events to save it from what seemed to be an inevitab
electorate. Its fortunes appeared to reflect a bitterly split post-Thatcher Co
1997 its term of office had expired and it was defeated on an unprecedente
'New Labour' juggernaut under Tony Blair, that had modernised itself an

Overview: The Major years

John Major headed a divided party that had arguably been in power for to
and had run out of steam. Major himself later commented that perhaps hi
unexpected election victory in 1992 had *'stretched the elastic of democracy too*
implying that four consecutive terms for one party was perhaps not an ide
democratic development. Major faced a wide range of difficult problems,
which were European and economic related, although he undoubtedly ma
of the difficulties for himself due to his perceived failure to make decisive
and to prefer a 'consensual' approach to political leadership. His somewha
and 'boring' image was attacked and ridiculed by elements of the press, p
contrast he provided following the colourful and controversial figure of M

Major complained that he never had the luxury of the large parliamentary
Thatcher, and this certainly made life at Downing Street more difficult. W
was in visible decline due to deaths, by-election losses and defections. Wi
constructive progress with the Northern Ireland peace process, most of Ma
of the period up to 1997 appeared to be crisis-ridden. Whether such probl
parliamentary majority or weak leadership (or a combination of both), has
subsequent debate.

66 John Major, *The Autobiography* (1999), Ch. 25, p. 645.

67 Anthony Seldon & Peter Snowdon, 'The Barren Years: 1997–2005', cited in Stuart Ball
Recovering Power: The Conservatives in Opposition Since 1867 (Palgrave Macmillan, Basi

Many voters ultimately suffered due to Conservative economic policies du
particular (e.g. a recession and 'Black Wednesday') and were unwilling to
casting their vote in 1997. However, as a positive footnote to an otherwise
John Major would later claim that it was his government that had dragged
despite an overall mixed economic record, had ultimately made the tough
presented Tony Blair's incoming Labour Government with a *'golden econo*
He could therefore proclaim:

> *During my premiership interest rates fell from 14 per cent to six per cent; unem*
> *when I took office, and at 1.6 million and falling upon my departure… The eco*
> *0.5 per cent in 1990, shrinking by 1.5 per cent in 1991 before recovering to gro*

John Major could ultimately claim to take some positive experiences from
as prime minister, despite the period (1990–1997) being generally viewed
and his political party.

Questions and Talking Points

1. Why did the nature of Margaret Thatcher's departure from office cre
   Major's premiership?
2. Explain how Europe was the source of many of John Major's proble
3. What were the key factors that forced John Major to call a leadership
4. Explain the view that 'Black Wednesday'(1992) sealed the Conservati

[68] John Major, *The Autobiography* (1999), Ch. 27, p. 689

Revision Exercise 4: John Major's Government 1990–1997

Outline the key successes and failures of the Conservative government of 1990–1997.

Policy/Issue	Successes	
Political		
Economic		
Social		
Cultural		

Exercise 5: Key Revision Questions 1990–1997

Revision Quiz

1. What key factors helped John Major win the 1992 general election?

   .....

   .....

2. What key factors weakened John Major throughout his five years in off

   .....

   .....

3. What name is given to the day John Major's Government was forced Rate Mechanism (ERM) in 1992?

   .....

4. What impact did the issue of Europe have on the Major premiership?

   .....

   .....

5. Outline three key policy areas that damaged John Major's Governme defeat in 1997.

   .....

   .....

   .....

The Era of New Labour (1997

By the mid-1990s the Conservative Party had been in power for over 15 ye confirmed its image as the *'natural party of government'*, a position it had re twentieth century. It had won four successive general elections, the most the odds and with a record number of votes, but events following this elec undermine the prospects of a fifth election victory in a row.

The five years between 1992 and 1997 were marked by contrasting fortune combatants of British politics. The governing Conservative Party was cons division and a seemingly irreconcilable split over the issue of Britain's relat The major economic setback of **'Black Wednesday'** in September 1992 seen the next election, whenever it was called. All of these factors seriously und John Major that had remained in power with a very small parliamentary m

From Kinnock to Blair (1983–1994)

The Labour Party had been undergoing a process of gradual 'modernisati annihilation in the 1983 general election, with leaders Neil Kinnock (from Smith (from 1992), bringing its policies back towards the crucial 'centre gr spectrum, the location where general elections were said to be won. Kinn in expelling various left-wing groups such as the Militant Tendency from late 1980s, and his leadership had gradually reduced the Conservative pa the 1987 and 1992 general elections. In this context, it is perhaps unfair to recovery and change of image to Tony Blair. It was, therefore, the case tha tendencies were already underway when Blair became leader in 1994, alth their pace.

Some progress under Kinnock was evident, but there was both disappoint party failed to win power in 1992, despite many of the opinion polls sugg outcome in the run-up to polling day. Having himself lost two general ele row, Kinnock knew his time had gone.

The Labour Party, therefore, suffered yet another trauma when it endured 1992, and this sense of shock was further compounded when its relatively suddenly of a heart attack in May 1994. Yet from such a personal tragedy opportunity for the party, and in deciding to skip a generation and select succeed Smith as party leader, the Labour Party was seeking to embrace it modernisation.

Neil Kinnock

Labour Party leader (1983–1992). A Welsh MP originally from the party's radica
the party leadership following the 1983 general election landslide defeat, the pa
result. He then began the process of moving the party's policies away from left-
develop a more moderate appeal to floating voters. Lost two successive election
reduced the Conservative parliamentary majority and moved Labour closer to a

John Smith

Labour Party leader (1992–1994), previously serving as Shadow Chancellor of t
Scottish MP from the more moderate wing of the party, Smith had served in th
in the 1970s and was seen as a 'safe pair of hands' in succeeding Kinnock in 199
'modernisation' and initiated one last push for power after four general electio
suddenly of a heart attack in May 1994 (aged only 55), an unforeseen developm
'skip a generation' and elect a much younger leader in the form of Tony Blair (a
to accelerate the party's modernisation process.

Blair as leader: Character and ideology

In July 1994, therefore, Labour selected 41-year old **Tony Blair** *(right)* as its
leader, a non-ideological moderate who was not associated with the party
wing baggage that had damaged it at recent elections. Blair became leade
the more established leadership claims of his long-time colleague and sup
senior, Gordon Brown, and an agreement was reached between both men
Brown agreed not to run against Blair in return for key powers within a fu
Labour government. This failure of Brown to become leader at this specif
time would cause considerable difficulties in the Blair–Brown relationship
years. The selection of Blair as leader appeared to pose a significant threa
Conservative electoral hegemony of recent years.

Blair was quite clear in his overall analysis that Labour had not been prog
recent elections. On this basis, he sought to 'radically modernise' and alte

> *… the party had lost (in 1992) because we had failed to modernise sufficientl
> shades but by bursts of vivid colour.*[69]

Blair subsequently began a drastic review of existing Labour Party policy,
'socialist' proposals that had appeared to cost it votes in middle-class 'Mid
elections. The most notable example of this was the decision to abandon t
party constitution in 1995 which had affirmed the party's commitment to n
displayed strong and determined leadership in distancing his regime from
heritage, and in doing so began to deliberately use the term **'New Labour'**
apparently in a deliberate attempt to rebrand its overall image.

Blair was helped by skilled media operators and 'spin-doctors' such as Ala
tabloid journalist who mastered the art of effectively communicating with
right political message across, helping New Labour win the support of key
in the process. *The Sun* was the biggest selling national newspaper whose
in 1992 had been seen as a crucial factor in their election victory, and its ov
viewed as someone who needed to be won over by the New Labour leade

[69] Tony Blair, *A Journey* (2010), Ch. 2, p. 52.

The 1997 general election

By the time of the (May) 1997 general election, the 'New Labour' project h
in altering the wider public's perception of the Labour Party:

> *By the time of the general election in 1997, Labour's image had been transfor
> voters now saw it as much more united, trustworthy, economically competen
> a whole than the Conservative Party.*[70]

The 1997 election was therefore a **'watershed'** political event that saw the
party of government' that had generally experienced *'periods of opposition t
norm'*[71] found itself in a state of utter political disarray, *'being reduced to a rump'* and experiencing its heaviest electoral defeat *'since the birth of mass democratic politics in 1918.'*[72] There was a massive 10% direct 'swing' in public opinion from Conservative to Labour, and the 165 Conservative MPs elected was the lowest figure for the party since 1906.

An histori
significant
'turning p

Party	MPs
	1997
Labour	418
Conservative	165
Liberal Democrat	46
Others	30

By contrast, Labour had ach
triumph of the twentieth ce
parliamentary majority of 1
elected. At the age of 43, Bl
minister for almost 200 year
Liverpool who was 42 when
in 1812.

Blair had no previous ministerial experience, and neither did much of his
few who had served as junior ministers in the last Labour government of t
experience was explicitly acknowledged by Blair:

> *On 2 May 1997, I walked into Downing Street as prime minister for the firs
> even as the most junior of junior ministers. It was my first and only job in g*

Whether such a lack of experience was a good or a bad thing would be the
debate in the ensuing years of New Labour rule. What was not in doubt w
majority so huge, Blair and his government were in a very powerful positi
political, economic, social and cultural changes to the UK.

A long-term spell in opposition for the Conservative Party appeared some
of this defeat, and such an electoral annihilation at the hands of a revitalis
Labour' juggernaut represented the nadir of Conservative twentieth-centu
of both parliamentary seats and wider public support.

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70 Dennis Kavanagh & Anthony Seldon, *The Powers Behind the Prime Minister: The hidden infl*

71 Anthony Seldon & Peter Snowdon, 'The Barren Years: 1997–2005', cited in Stuart Ball a
Power: The Conservatives in Opposition Since 1867 (2005), Ch. 11, p. 243.

72 Anthony Seldon & Peter Snowdon, 'The Barren Years: 1997–2005', cited in Stuart Ball a
Power: The Conservatives in Opposition Since 1867 (2005), Ch. 11, p. 247.

73 Tony Blair, *A Journey* (2010), Ch. 1, p. 1.

The 1997 general election result was described as a 'Triumph' (*The Guardia* 'Landslide' (*Daily Telegraph*) and a 'Massacre' (*Daily Mail*), with the genera consensus that *'it was all of these'*.[74] Fundamental reasons for such plumm of popular appeal were rooted in the party's ideology, unpopular policies a wider public perception (with the party's image and identity seeming to b damaged and diminished in terms of policy direction) of a lack of long-ter vision, and being out of touch with the contemporary public mood.

Summary – key reasons why Labour won and the Conservatives los

- The Conservative Party appeared to be tired and exhausted after 18 su
- By contrast, Labour had been re-energised and more focused on regai launched his 'New Labour' agenda in 1994.
- Confidence in Conservative economic competence had been badly dam Wednesday' (1992) and the recession of the early 1990s.
- The Conservatives and their policies appeared to be increasingly out o changing British society in terms of attitude to gender, race, modern li
- John Major had been damaged as prime minister by party divisions an had struggled to develop a clear message in the years following the en leadership (1990 onwards).
- Significant sections of the tabloid press switched their support to the L newspaper.
- The Conservative Party had been damaged by a succession of stories a sleaze.
- Labour's former reputation of left-wing extremism had been replaced t that appealed to 'Middle England'.

Changing British society

Ultimately, the 1997 Conservative Party appeared to be out of touch with a of a rapidly changing and gradually more diverse British society. In many be made with how Labour had been similarly out of touch in 1983, and in s national political office the Conservatives would also have to 'modernise' a

A greater degree of social tolerance towards minority groups such as gays variety of ethnic groups had generally developed among the wider popula duration in office. Yet the general Conservative attitude towards such gro hostile and indifferent. Such changes in key **'social attitudes'** had meant t become a more diverse, tolerant and multicultural society, yet this dynam unerringly evolved while the Conservatives were preoccupied with the po with a primary focus on the fundamental economic restructuring of the co

> *After nearly two decades of Conservative rule, the needs, anxieties, priorities had become harder for the party to decipher and comprehend. Many simply f society had changed in the 1990s.*[75]

74 David Butler & Dennis Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 1997* (1997), Ch. 13, p.

75 Anthony Seldon & Peter Snowdon, 'The Barren Years: 1997–2005', cited in Stuart Ball *Recovering Power: The Conservatives in Opposition Since 1867* (2005), Ch. 11, p. 248.

Therefore, despite the constant hum of such unerring background social d
Party of the mid-90s appeared to be detached from such trends and social
and this issue would go to the heart of the party's definitive identity probl
as outlined in the quote below from a Conservative MP:

> *My children... are all bright… and in their mid or late twenties, and probabl
> Tories. But none of them would ever vote Tory. They think the party is total
> touch... We have not selected a woman or an ethnic minority candidate for a
> winnable seat. That's the sort of party we have become.*[76]

Tony Blair ultimately exploited such trends in Labour's favour by advocat
enhanced social liberalism and would develop policies that improved righ
various minority groups. This included homosexuals (see social policy lat
ethnic minorities.

Race relations and multiculturalism

In terms of race relations, there were clearly ongoing tensions in some par
within some unofficially segregated towns and inner cities, where the ethn
together and lived apart from the white population. The UK's Black Mino
was estimated to have doubled in size from 3 to 7 million between 1991–20
approximate 8% of the UK overall population, although much higher in so

In 2001, there were race riots in Oldham in Lancashire, with cultural differ
over between white and Asian youths. Further smaller riots followed in o
Burnley, Bradford and Leeds, where there were also significant Asian com
highlighted the ongoing practical difficulties of racial integration and mul
century Britain.

The most extreme tensions emanating from poor race relations were addre
government's decision to establish the MacPherson Inquiry in 1997 follow
teenager Stephen Lawrence in 1993. The Conservatives would not hold su
that such episodes were a stain on Britain's position as a multicultural soc
This official judicial inquiry reported back in 1999, and the subsequent **Ma**
that there was 'institutional racism' within the Metropolitan Police, and se
were made to address this situation going forward.

Further immigration from 1997 onwards, notably from the European Unio
in 2004, would mean that Britain would become an even more diverse and
twenty-first-century commenced. Politicians of all parties would, therefor
terms and attitudes accordingly, and this remained an ongoing difficulty a
political parties such as UKIP.

[76] David Curry, Conservative MP, Interview with Hugo Young, 3 September 2000, cited
Journalist's Notes from the Heart of Politics, Ion Trewin (ed.) (2009), p. 667.

Social liberalism and gender equality

So-called 'third wave feminism' also spread its influence across Blair's 'Ne feminism and promote a further generation of women's equality (despite p made). An example of such a new form of feminism could be seen in the *R* band from the USA, which encouraged women to express their identities m done in the past. This indicated an ongoing impatience from feminists tha not been achieved, despite progress since the 1970s, in particular, as well a female prime minister.

New Labour's egalitarian approach to such race and gender issues also en discrimination'. This was further reflected in its ongoing advocacy of all-w percentage of female MPs up from just 60 in 1992 to 128 (98 of whom from the 2010 Equality Act in its final year in power. In addition to this, in 2006 first ever female Foreign Secretary, and only the second after Margaret Th great offices of state.

Blair's Government also sought to embrace more modern attitudes to the r them to modernise for the twenty-first-century, particularly after the death Blair referred to as *'The People's Princess'*). There was also more general tole conventional family units, with divorce being something the royal family i

The new prime minister also associated himself with various younger pop embracing the youth culture for political popularity, and inviting 'Britpop' to high-profile Downing Street receptions as part of his so-called *'Cool Brit* photographed playing a guitar and spoke publicly about his interests in ac being pictured with various sporting stars. This focus on an enhanced cul experience was further reflected when Blair's Government made admissio everyone in 2001. By such policies, attitudes and events, even though criti were gimmicks, Blair seemed to be in tune with public opinion and 'progr Overall, by embracing such examples of social liberalism, and in the proce traditions, his Government could be viewed as being anti-establishment.

Questions and Talking Points

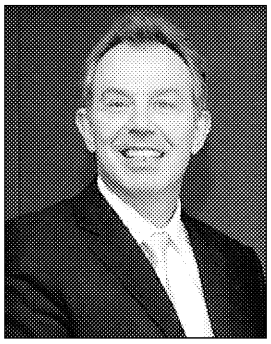
1. Why was Tony Blair's image seen as being appealing in the mid-199
2. Was it the influence of Tony Blair or the weaknesses of the Conserva Labour winning power in 1997?
3. In what ways had British society and social attitudes changed by the the political repercussions of this?

Labour in power: First term (1997–2001)

Tony Blair sought to govern differently from previous Labour governmen explicitly rejected the old ideological divisions between 'left' and 'right' as his 'New Labour' project. On being elected he pledged to govern as 'New and subsequently devised an approach known as *'The Third Way'*, often in the fusion of private and public funding in delivering public services, a fa the more 'socialist' approach of Labour governments of the past.

At the heart of Blair's system of government was the delicate relationship with his Chancellor of the Exchequer **Gordon Brown** *(right)*, a potential ri party leader who had been given a huge amount of power and influence o making in a bid to appease his own ambitions to become prime minister:

> *New Labour looked destined to govern Britain for many years, and its two a authority permanently to change the country… Their agreement to divide t reconfirmed. Through the Treasury, Brown would control the domestic age*



The nature of the intense relations between these tw administration's major strength and weakness. On working constructively together in harmony, Blair a effective political team which the Conservative Part they planned to significantly invest in and 'modern bringing the country's creaking infrastructure into t process, while also seeking greater levels of social ju competence. Blair, in particular, wanted to instil gr the key public services such as health and educatio investment in such policy areas. However, from a negative perspective, t men held towards each other and the rival teams of advisors and supporte of instability and lack of focus during this longest ever period of Labour i

Brown's unfulfilled desire to be prime minister seemed to erode their rela stayed in office, the more impatient to succeed him Brown seemed to beco relationship was linked to Blair assuming the leadership of the Labour Pa and this legacy was the source of Brown's significant power as Chancellor tensions at the centre of government:

> *Brown had demanded guarantees that he would have suzerainty over not jus overlordship of social policy as well. From a mixture of obligation, guilt, dep admiration… Blair had ceded much to Brown, though it would never be quit*

In the early years of New Labour in power, Blair was the figurehead and p government with appropriate charisma for this role, while Brown was inte taxation issues and reforms of social policy. While the economy was boom power, the partnership appeared to work fairly well, although tensions un from social and economic issues, this first term witnessed, in particular, so constitutional terms for almost a century, with devolution introduced to S Ireland and Greater London and the majority of hereditary peers losing th House of Lords.

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77 Tom Bower, *Gordon Brown* (2004), Ch. 6, p. 200.

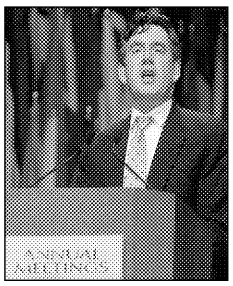
78 Andrew Rawnsley, *Servants of the People: The Inside Story of New Labour* (2000), Ch. 2, p

Regardless of such titanic personalities at the centre of government, New L
on restoring the party's economic record while in power following the fail
Tony Blair, in close partnership with Brown throughout, wanted to run th
friendly' approach broadly along the 'free-market' principles established b
1980s, but with a greater focus on tackling the often harsh social conseque
for some state intervention to challenge this. As previously mentioned, th
Way', an ideology that critics described as 'vague' due to its apparent end
right-wing values, emphasising economic liberalism with a degree of state

> *The Third Way is not laissez-faire, nor is it state control: it implies an active g*
> *improving the employability of the workforce.*
> ***Tony Blair (1998)***

The level of interest rates and their impact on mortgage payments and inf
aspect of government economic policy-making from the 1980s onwards. T
influenced the economic outlook of Tony Blair's Labour Government that
years in political opposition, and which wanted to enhance Labour's econ
after the failings in this crucial policy area of previous Labour governmen
in particular was focused on ensuring that this Labour government achiev
competence that previous Labour administrations had lacked.

One of the first acts of the incoming Labour government was to give contr
Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Bank of England, a distinctive a
the Conservative opposition by surprise. This effective privatisation of th
control of interest rates away from the elected government and passed it o
economists, although the government set targets for the Bank's Monetary P



Prime Minister Tony Blair and his Chancellor **Gordon B**
policy as a means of providing greater economic **stabil**
government's power to manipulate the economy for el
'boom and bust' style economics. Given that past Lab
over rising inflation and high taxation, this mechanism
device in improving Labour's economic reputation in
establishment of the MPC:

> *turned out to be particularly helpful to Labour ministers since it removed at*
> *they would favour high employment over low inflation.*[79]

[79] Andrew Marr, *A History of Modern Britain* (2007), p. 532.

For the majority of their years in office from 1997, New Labour presided o
boom, and they were rewarded for this with further election victories in 20
economically trustworthy and Brown viewed as the *'Granite-and-iron Chan*
politicians claimed that Tony Blair and Gordon Brown had inherited a 'go
the Conservatives, buoyed by a booming housing market that created an environment of enhanced prosperity. While who should be credited for the economic boom is debateable, there is little doubt that New Labour maintained the general economic approach and priorities of the previous Conservative years, accepting *'the neo-liberal economic settlement'*. This 'liberal' economic settlement focused on low inflation, low taxation, along with the acceptance of economic deregulation and privatisation. This 'Thatcherite' style of economics was actually aligned with **'classical liberal economics'**, focusing on limited government intervention in the economy.

New Labour presided over low levels of unemployment also, and only aft
did economic difficulties began to appear in earnest from 2007 onwards. C
progressively high levels of unsustainable public spending during the 'bo
term economic planning, damaged the UK economy in the long term, and
public (government) and private (consumer) debt.

Task 1

***To what extent did New Labour (1997–2007) pursue the same economic p
Party from 1979–1997?***

Evidence of economic policies similar to Conservatives	Evidence of disti economi

[80] Andrew Marr, *A History of Modern Britain* (2007), p. 532.

Taxation and public spending

On taking office in 1997, New Labour had pledged not to increase direct ta
income tax. This was a concerted attempt to eradicate Labour's previous i
spend' party that had been used against it effectively at previous elections
Labour maintained Conservative spending plans for its first two years in o

> *proved central in overturning views that Labour was still a 'tax and spend' p*

On winning office they, therefore, maintained this high-profile taxation pl
to the public spending levels of the previous Conservative government (fo
new economic agenda that disheartened many left-wing 'Old Labour' sup
governments had spent heavily in their early phases and run into econom
and Chancellor Gordon Brown was determined not to repeat this:

> *doing the opposite of what earlier Labour chancellors had done. They had arr*
> *spending, and then had to….. raise taxes later on.*[82]

Such emphasis on maintaining levels of direct taxation helped to reassure
of middle-class voters), and enabled the party to secure re-election in 2001
apparently responsible and 'prudent' economic record. While Chancellor
(1997–2007), Gordon Brown reduced the basic rate of taxation from 23% to
further 2% to 20% in 2007.

Public spending: The political debate

Following the Thatcherite agenda of the 1980s when tax cuts appeared to l
increased public spending, the narrative of this debate was increasingly re
from 1997 onwards. The Conservative administration (1979–1997) had bro
government spending of the 1970s under control, and public spending as a
the early 3% range by the late 1980s. However, in pursuing such an econo
were accused of neglecting vital services in the process.

For four years after 1997 there was initial caution and '**prudence'** *(in the wo*
Labour adhered to Brown's **'Golden Rules'** of only borrowing money to s
Labour appeared to pursue Tony Blair's philosophy of the **'Third Way'** wh
investment within a model of economic efficiency *and* social justice. Howe
election for a second term in 2001, the curve of public spending steadily in
approximately 36% of GDP in 1999–2000, the lowest figures since 1960, pu
continued to rise, reaching 44% of GDP by 2009.[83]

However, not all spending and investment came directly from the state, an
key policies inherited from the previous Conservative government, e.g. **Pri**
that controversially involved private companies investing in key public bu
hospitals. While they could deliver key improvements to the infrastructure
term, critics claimed such projects were bad value for money as they involv
term debt that the government had to pay (in inflated profits) to the private

81 Dennis Kavanagh & Anthony Seldon, *The Powers Behind the Prime Minister: the hidden infl*

82 Andrew Marr, *A History of Modern Britain* (2007), p. 534.

83 **Source**: *http://www.ukpublicspending.co.uk/uk_20th_century_chart.html*
and Andrew Marr, *A History of Modern Britain* (2007), p. 534.

Public Spending in UK as a Percentage of G

Year	% of GDP
1975-76	49.7
1989-90	39.2
1997-98	38.2
2000-1	34.5
2007-8	41

Source: *http://www.ukpublicspending.co.uk/*

Gordon Brown clearly became bolder in his explicit increase of taxation a key moment appeared to be the decision to increase National Insurance c According to one commentator:

> *He began as Scrooge and quietly fattened up for Santa. There was an abrupt dramatic shift and public spending soared.*[84]

Such increased direct taxation has been attacked by political opponents as punitive (punishing) for high earners and a disincentive to earn money, although the Conservatives had refused to commit to cutting such taxes. Brown used much of this money to invest in public service such as the NH education, or alternatively to fund his complex 'tax credits' system that w again aimed at targeting additional resources at those on low incomes an make work worthwhile as opposed to claiming benefits.

For much of their period in political opposition after 1997, the Conservati public investment and generally pledged to match Labour's tax and spend time, supporting his investment in key areas of social policy in the process traditional Conservative instincts for tax cuts and criticism that New Labo *scenario'* from the previous Conservative government. New Labour's ove making approach was, however, criticised by various left-wing commenta for presiding over a growing inequality between the rich and poor since c survey by the **National Equality Panel** indicated that the gap between the its greatest level for 49 years in the wake of over a decade of Labour in go *http://www.equalities.gov.uk/pdf/NEP%20Report%20bookmarked.pdf*

Traditional Labour Party (and social democrat) economic policy had alway system to **redistribute** wealth and reduce inequality of income, principally the better-off members of society. While there was clear economic growth appear to have been shared evenly across all parts of society, and key socia education could arguably have been more generously funded as a result. A improved their income between 1997-2007, but the wealthier groups did s

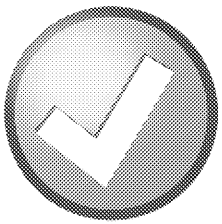
Redistribution

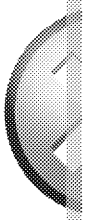
Transferring income, wealth or property from some groups or individua

[84] Andrew Marr, *A History of Modern Britain* (2007), p. 534.

Summary – positives and negatives of New Labour economic

Positives	Ne
• Inflation kept historically low for most of the period. • Direct taxation remained relatively low. • Bank of England independence created economic stability and interest rate influenced by long-term economic decisions, not short-term political ones. • Growth in property prices and home-ownership linked to interest rate stability. • Progressive increase in public spending on key public services and economic intervention during recession.	• Indirect taxation 'stealth taxes'. • Large scale PFI p for money for th • Excessive and u spending on key country's nation levels during Ne • The gap betwee to grow after 19 • Unemployment during New Lab





Social policy

Conservative and Liberal Democrat critics claimed that Labour had redire **stealth taxes,** on local council taxes, consumer goods, fuel and items assoc purchases. This allegation appeared to be reflected in increased levels of c longer Labour was in power, investing in public services and creating a si public sector jobs in the process. Labour acknowledged that there had bee spending over the course of its time in office from 1997 onwards (despite a investing in the national infrastructure to create jobs and provide greater e the long-term unemployed, improving social conditions and quality of life

Labour also introduced a **windfall tax** on the excessive profits of privatise election victory in 1997 to fund its costly socio-economic policies such as t tackle long-term unemployment (and addressing youth job prospects). Th unemployment and helping those at the bottom end of the social scale wa of the minimum wage in 1999, although its initial rate of £3.60 for adults w politicians and trade unions (who were also critical of its lower rate for un

In the crucial education and health policy areas, Labour had been elected t significantly in many services, and NHS spending approximately doubled office, with numerous new and modern hospitals invested in and more do the education sector, there was further infrastructure investment in new s some were critical in how PFI was used for this purpose. The construction prohibited in 1998, while more autonomous academies were opened to re Labour was in power. Somewhat controversially, annual tuition fees of a introduced for university students in 1998 and then trebled in 2004, despit public opposition.

Despite promising to reform and review the cost and bureaucracy of the c
Blair's administration ultimately failed to tackle and address the ongoing
were cutbacks in some welfare benefits, but other new policies, such as 'ta
generated extra cost and expense, targeting those most in need but being e
to administer. The country's ageing population put further strains on the
key issues such as pensions, unemployment benefits and disability benefit
solutions by the time Blair left office.

Labour also sought to reflect the more liberal and tolerant values of twent
wide range of equality legislation and some significant legislation that pro
homosexuals, notably the lowering of the age of consent to 16 (2000). This
sexual orientations, and in a similar vein there followed the introduction o
those of the same sex who wished to formalise their relationship in the eye
government also granted adoption rights for same-sex couples.

Blair and trade unions

During the Blair years, trade unions were treated with *'fairness not favours'*
Minister. This referred to the fact that as a key pressure group they would
and their viewpoint considered (unlike for much of the Conservative gove
However, they would be given no special or favourable treatment (unlike
1970s, and the so-called cosy 'beer and sandwiches' relationship). This wa
argued made 'New Labour' different from previous governments of both
subsequently sought to distance its links with the trade unions and sough
business' image.

Trade unions did, however, receive improved recognition and employme
workplace, and alongside the minimum wage and improved investment i
mainstream trade unions were broadly positive towards the Blair adminis
previous Conservative regime. Trade unions, of course, continued to sign
Party during this period, as they had always historically done. However,
trade unions during the 1970s, Blair sought to reduce the party's financial
indicating that he found them something of an embarrassment to his rebra

Blair instead sought greater donations from other more diverse sources (n
would create subsequent allegations of 'cash for favours'. This came to a h
affair of 2000, which saw Labour accused of changing health (tobacco adv
appease a prominent donor, Formula One owner Bernie Ecclestone, see m
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/937232.stm

Ecclestone was said to be concerned about the financial impact of the toba
motor sport industry, so the government agreed to exempt Formula One f
claimed this was not an example of favours for donors, the public percept
appeared to be. The Labour Party subsequently returned a £1 million don
angered some trade unions who had consistently claimed that their financ
represented 'the cleanest money in politics'.

It was a particularly embarrassing 'sleaze' story for the image-conscious B
'pretty straight sort of guy' in an earlier media interview, and who had, of

Conservatives for their sleazy reputation prior to 1997. Reputational dam
primarily because while Blair *'had not proved himself worse than any other oc*
was that he claimed to be so much better.'[85]

Various left-wing trade union figures also criticised Labour under Blair fo
in that it was unwilling to forcefully challenge the Thatcherite political na
during the 1980s. For example, Blair did very little to overturn many of th
imposed during the 1980s, which restricted their right to strike and take o
However, Blair believed this specific debate had been settled and it was ti

Constitutional policy

One of New Labour's most radical and enduring legacies was the signific
constitutional reform it initiated, particularly during its first term betwee
period Tony Blair's Government introduced key policies such as the dece
for Scotland, Wales and London (using systems of proportional represent
majority of hereditary peers from the House of Lords, a body which many
being outdated and undemocratic. Such achievements meant that in this s
delivered where all previous progressive governments failed.'[86] These were long
policies of the British left-of-centre political tradition and were praised by
representing *'The transformation of the British Constitution'.* (A Kaletsky, *Th*

Other key constitutional policies introduced during this period included t
and various modernisations to the House of Commons in terms of workin
reforms would go on to have a major impact on how the UK's political sy
some Conservative critics felt that such reforms set in motion dangerous f
stabilise the United Kingdom in the long term, and more radical voices w
Lords reform was never completed.

Northern Ireland and the Good Friday Agreement

Context and background

Tony Blair's Government inherited a burgeoning peace process from the previous Conservative administration, and the new Prime Minister maintained much of John Major's behind-the-scenes diplomacy with the various groups as part of a bipartisan approach to the troubled province. Yet Blair was in a much stronger political position than Major due to his majority in Parliament, and he eventually initiated more advanced talks and took an active part in the negotiations, spending a huge amount of his premiership on an issue that had occupied and frustrated British politicians for most of the twentieth century.

85 Andrew Rawnsley, *Servants of the People: The Inside Story of New Labour* (2000), Ch. 6, p
86 Andrew Rawnsley, *The End of the Party: The Rise and Fall of New Labour* (2010), Ch. 1, p

Key events and consequences

Blair energetically cultivated previous links with the Irish government and (terrorist) bodies, and such diplomatic progress came to a head with the la **Agreement'** of 1998, an event that heralded a long-term ceasefire and an a than a violent solution to the Northern Ireland problem by all key players most Unionist paramilitary groups. Many mainstream 'constitutional' No both communities were apprehensive about involving those with links to but Blair and the Irish government felt that this inclusive approach was th (depending on terrorists on both sides eventually disarming).

Blair was supported in his process by charismatic Northern Ireland Secret popular public figure. The Agreement, which established a formalised pe been viewed as one of Tony Blair's greatest political achievements and its as follows:

> *(The Agreement) brought gains in investment and jobs, and great strides tow Northern Ireland. Put at its very simplest, its most human, there are fathers sisters, sons and daughters alive today because of the agreement.*[87]

The final Agreement was widely distributed across Northern Ireland and referendum on 22nd May 1998 and it was also held in the Irish Republic. T favour of the Agreement:

> *71.2% of people in Northern Ireland and 94.39% in the Republic voted 'Yes'*

A devolved assembly was elected in September 1998, and overall the Ulst share of the vote and 30 seats. Also, from the Protestant community, the m Unionists (DUP) won 24, while, of the Catholic/Nationalist parties, the SD won 17 – meaning that any future devolved government would have to in **power-sharing.** This deal brought together some previous bitter enemies Adams and Martin McGuiness (with links to republican terrorists in the II well as prominent pro-British Unionists such as the DUP's Reverend Ian P leader (and incoming First Minister) David Trimble.

[87] Andrew Rawnsley, *Servants of the People: The Inside Story of New Labour* (2000)

Summary of Northern Ireland and British Prime Min

Margaret Thatcher (1979–1990)

- A premiership of two contrasting halves in her Northern Ireland policy.
- Traumatised into hardline position by assassination of her Northern Irelan (1979) and the Brighton bombing (killed five, injured 30 in 1984). Would n strikers in 1981. Appeared as champion of the Ulster Unionist cause.
- However, escalating violence forced her to reassess and adopt a more conc 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement).
- Protestant loyalists viewed this action as a great betrayal that undermined
- Retained her basic Unionist convictions, although secret talks were initiate

John Major (1990–1997)

- A more conciliatory personality – sought consensus and compromise and Thatcher's abrasive and often hostile approach.
- Initiated further secret talks and made direct contact with the IRA who inf
- Helped initiate the first major IRA ceasefire in 1994 as part of the Downing the Irish government.
- Weakened by his small government majority and his reliance on the Ulste Commons.
- A rather unsung role in the peace process who did lots of the groundwork Good Friday Agreement.

Tony Blair (1997–2007)

- Maintained much of Major's behind-the-scenes diplomacy in a bipartisan
- Initiated more advanced talks and took an active part in the negotiations a Friday Agreement (1998).
- Was weakened slightly by Secretaries of State with a 'green' pro-Catholic l which earned him the distrust of many Unionists who saw Labour as a mo
- Maintained the devolved Northern Ireland Parliament despite a number o threats of terrorist violence.

Key difficulties in implementing the 1998 Good Friday Agree

- Nearly a third of all Northern Ireland voters rejected the Good Friday Referendum.
- The Agreement was vague and unclear in some areas, e.g. how quickl weapons) should take place. This allowed each side to blame the othe
- Continued threat and use of violence and non-constitutional tactics by
- The controversial Patten Report and the proposals for the reform of th 'RUC' (police force).
- Each side had quite fragile support for the peace process which could
- Continued sectarian hatred and mistrust evident between the Catholi

Mistrust between the two rival communities did continue, and this was w Omagh bombing of August 1998, when a splinter group of hardline repub killed 29 people. However, with American diplomatic support, the North somehow prevailed and some degree of trust between the key figures with established. After much negotiation, devolution came into effect in North was suspended several times after this (most notably between 2002–2007).

The 2001 general election

Given the huge size of the swing to Labour at the 1997 general election (10
parliamentary majority (179), it would have been extremely difficult for th
power when the next general election was called at Tony Blair's choice wi
parliamentary cycle.

In this context, the Conservative Party leader, William Hague, faced a hug
to take power, requiring a swing of unprecedented proportions to remove
supremacy. What he could best hope for was to reduce the size of Labour
mood still appeared somewhat hostile to the Conservatives, and still seem
Conservatives for their perceived failures in national office up to 1997. Th
trend of anti-Conservative tactical voting among Labour and Liberal Dem
evident in all three general elections from 1997–2005). Hague himself regu
favourable polling ratings than Blair, and he appeared to be seeking to ap
vote rather than the centre-ground of British politics.

Party	2001
	MPs
Labour	412
Conservative	166
Liberal Democrat	52
Others	29

As incumbent prime ministe
election was at the choice of
in a strong position tend to g
term in office is up. Blair sul
in June 2001, despite a sligh
mouth crisis' that severely a
the countryside.

Once victory was secured in such a comfortable manner, with a record sec
an election result extremely similar to 1997), speculation grew as to wheth
in office would be more radical and progressive than the first, in a similar
second term was in the 1980s. Blair had achieved many significant policy
term of office and many supporters hoped that the second term would be
the single European currency a rumoured key objective. However, in mar
been viewed as the most constructive of his Government's three terms in p
relating to foreign policy would occur during this second term that would
project and alter the public perception of Tony Blair irrevocably.

Background: Anglo-American cooperation in the 1990s

During Blair's first term in office in particular (1997–2001), Britain enjoyed relations with the USA. Building on the historic **'special relationship'** tha countries, Blair enjoyed a particularly close political and personal relation **Clinton** *(right),* a fellow moderate who, like Blair, had sought to adopt a m image for his political party (the Democrats).

Apart from the similar moderate outlook regarding domestic policies that on pursuing a *'radical centre'* as opposed to traditional left and right politic arguments, Blair and Clinton worked closely together in foreign policy als Much of this cooperation in foreign affairs was linked to the growing dem *'nationalism'* from many states and aspiring nations following the ending o Cold War. As head of the only remaining superpower in the 1990s, Clinto provided a valuable external impetus in the successful Northern Ireland p process which culminated in the **1998 Good Friday Agreement,** a historic settlement that Blair was also heavily involved in. However, both leaders faced a more difficult scenario in dealing with the emerging nationalism w various parts of Europe, in particular the aftermath of the Yugoslav Civil W Balkans region from 1992 to 1995.

The Balkans campaign: 1995–1999

Although the destructive conflict in the Balkans region (former Yugoslavia 1995, world leaders were faced with a huge challenge of imposing long-te been the spark that ignited World War I in 1914. While this problem was and was primarily a problem for EU nations, the USA also took an active r conjunction with the United Nations.

By the mid-1990s the worst of the fighting of this bitter ethnic dispute appeared to be over, with various parts of former Yugoslavia dissolving into a number of smaller nation states. Towards the end of 1995 the two major combatants, Serbia and Croatia, had agreed an uneasy peace, and this was followed by a diplomatic resolution of the conflict in the ethnically balanced state of Bosnia in December 1995, with the new nation effectively carved up into three separate parts as a result of the 1995 US-led *'Dayton Accords'.* UN peace-keeping forces were required to provide stability on the ground in the short term at least.

However, further trouble erupted from early 1998 onwards when the prec of Kosovo sought to break away from the larger state of Serbia. Civil war 1998 between separatist Kosovan forces with loyalties to neighbouring All Serbian regime. The West eventually chose to intervene by military mean conflict, with Tony Blair and Bill Clinton working in partnership through **(North Atlantic Treaty Organisation),** a body set up during the Cold War limited relevance to the modern world, but which now sought to tackle ar direct consequence of the Cold War ending.

From March to June 1999, and despite some reluctance from a number of European countries, NATO planes controversially bombed parts of Serbia and Kosovo in a bid to defeat the efforts of Serb leader Slobodan Milosevic (later indicted as a war criminal) to suppress legitimate Kosovan independence by brutal means. This Serbian policy was often referred to as 'ethnic cleansing', involving the indiscriminate killing of Kosovan Albanians wished to maintain control over.

Such actions by NATO ultimately secured the withdrawal of Serbian forces independence (2008), but only after fairly intensive bombing raids over se significant damage and casualties. It also resulted in the creation of a Kos crisis that took some years to resolve as well as the emergence of tensions b alliance of Blair and Clinton. Blair was most keen to intervene in this conf Americans and much of the EU, and in doing so took *'a bold and risky posit Muslim Kosovars from ethnic cleansing.'*[88]

Blair's greater enthusiasm for military intervention in this episode led to n Kosovans but it often irritated Clinton and the Americans who at times fel charge of the situation within NATO from a more powerful ally. Blair's m Kosovan campaign has been summarised by a close observer of such even

> *as far as he (Blair) was concerned, this (Kosovo) was a moral challenge and a*

Blair's 'moralistic' actions appeared to push Britain into a central role of th with the USA but alienating some European partners in the process. This to come in the context of the Iraq conflict some years later, but Blair was ce prominent role for Britain in world affairs, although possibly at the cost of members of the EU such as Germany and France. Blair's willingness to pu response on behalf of the Kosovans was praised in some quarters, but oth 'liberal interventionist' approach to foreign policy.

New Labour's second term (2001–

On being re-elected with a second successive landslide election victory in 2 succeeded in achieving their much-desired aim of a full second term in off Labour government had achieved:

> *No previous Labour Prime Minister had secured a second full term in a cent was won with a second landslide, a rare result in British politics.*[90]

Many on the centre-left of British politics had great optimism about the fu country. The once-dominant Conservative Party appeared to be in politica hardly any progress at the 2001 general election. In addition to this, Tony political style and his moderate policies combining both investment in pul of many Conservative economic policies of the 1980s, ensured that he rem opinions and demands of many key groups of voters.

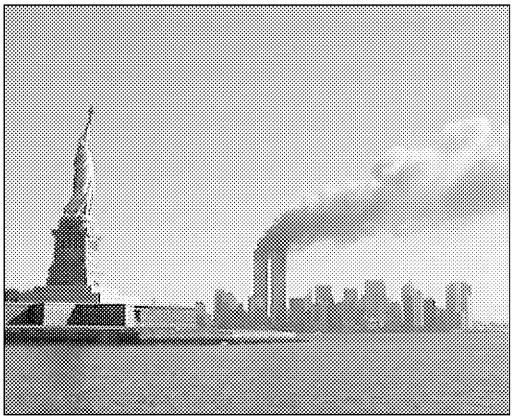
88 Andrew Rawnsley, *The End of the Party: The Rise and Fall of New Labour* (2010), Ch. 1, p

89 Alastair Campbell, *The Blair Years: Extracts from the Alastair Campbell Diaries* (2007), Di

90 Andrew Rawnsley, *The End of the Party: The Rise and Fall of New Labour* (2010), Ch. 1, p

However, it would ultimately be foreign affairs and developments abroad would erode Blair's seemingly impregnable position. In November 2000 t wing Republican **George W Bush** *(right),* was elected to the American pre development that signalled the end of three and a half years of close relati a Democrat president with a similar political outlook, Bill Clinton, who ha his maximum eight-year term at the White House. It would be events ste from the USA just months after Blair's second landslide election victory th cause both him and the governing Labour Party some of the biggest probl time in office.

9/11 and the 'War on Terror'



On 11th September 2001 (later kn 3,000 innocent people died in a s USA. The attacks were coordina network and resulted in four aer targets and public buildings, the twin towers *(left),* which comple

The implications of this attack w shocked USA and most other we particular, were also reeling fro attacks had major repercussions domestic policies of most countr forced to respond at home with a wave of draconian anti-terror laws, whil international perspective for the inevitable American military response to Government was aware from an early stage that President Bush's regime p military line against those nations and organisations that it felt were respo attack:

> *We were at war. We could not ignore it. But how should we deal with it? An person? A group? A movement? A state?*[91]

As the US military moved into gear and planned its reprisals, Blair made i stand *'shoulder to shoulder'* with the Americans as part of the long-standing between the two nations, but there were many fearful that Blair was willin support Bush in any circumstances, and this fear would grow in the mont and years that followed.

Afghanistan was swiftly identified as the source of much of the active trai for Al-Qaeda operatives and military attacks on the country's perceived locations of terrorist activity were launched within months of 9/11. Howe **Saddam Hussein's** *(right)* regime in Iraq was also identified by American 'hawks' as another source of terrorist activity, although this allegation wa from clear cut. The Americans had some unfinished business with Saddar Iraq following the 1991 Gulf War, and Blair appeared to have quickly pick the vibes after 9/11 that the Iraqi regime would be the next American targe after Afghanistan:

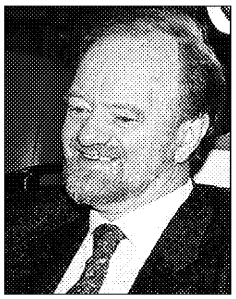
> *The issue of Saddam and his ten-year obstruction of weapons inspection was he had to be confronted, brought into line or removed was, on any deeper ana*

91 Tony Blair, *A Journey* (2010), Ch. 12, p. 343.
92 Tony Blair, *A Journey* (2010), Ch. 12, p. 357.

As the American bombardment of Afghanistan raged in late 2001 in a bid t
hotspots, preparations for a military campaign against Iraq were also und
keen to use the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on the USA to remove Sad
seeking a convincing reason to do so, but his major problem was that there
between the Iraqi dictator and the events of 9/11.

In meetings between Blair and Bush from early 2002 onwards, it became e
were discussing the possibility of attacking Iraq, and both at the time and
willingness to support the American President with few apparent conditio
was the cause of some considerable divisions within the governing Labou
the tensions between Iraq and the West grew, and the prospect of war incr
to cooperate with United Nations' (UN) weapons inspectors who were inv
country was developing Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs).

By early 2003 US troop movements in the Gulf region indicated war was l
keen to secure the support of other countries in this controversial policy, n
such as Britain. There was opposition to the use of military force against I
as France and Germany, as well as from the wider British population, with
marching through London in February 2003 as part of a *'Stop the War Coal*
protests around the world). Despite this, on the eve of proposed military
Blair sought parliamentary approval for British military activity against Ir
described as *'the most important speech I had ever made'*.[93]



However, in doing so he sowed the seeds of his eventu
voted against the motion proposing to use military for
far the biggest parliamentary rebellion of the Blair era,
resigning from office, the most prominent being **Robi**
Secretary and the Leader of the Commons. Significant
questionable lack of United Nations authority to pursu
Despite last-minute efforts for a UN diplomatic solutio
willing to support the American use of armed forces d
international support.

Although, with Conservative support, Blair won the vote comfortably by 4
biggest ever rebellion within his own party meant that he had been severe
The damage would get worse in the months following the eruption of war
prolonged conflict and lack of post-war planning were primarily blamed o
Iraq conflict would go on to dominate the rest of Blair's second term in off
domestic reforms of public services were sidelined as a consequence.

While Blair placed much emphasis on the need to loyally support long-ter
much heralded *'War on Terror'* following 9/11, the consequences of this we
as being unable to pursue a foreign policy independent of the USA and wa
for appearing to be subservient and weak in the face of American demand
weakened in political terms on a domestic level, particularly following the
government weapons inspector Dr David Kelly in the summer of 2003.

Although his Government's actions in relation to the build-up to the war w
exonerated by the Hutton Report (2003) and the Butler Report (2004), inter
claimed that it left Britain vulnerable to terrorist attacks of its own, and thi
case following the 7th July attacks of 2005, when four Al-Qaeda suicide bo
underground and killed 52 innocent people in the process.

93 Tony Blair, *A Journey* (2010), Ch. 14, p. 436.

The Labour government's approach

Like the Conservatives, the Labour Party has traditionally struggled with i
the concept of European policy-making. However, due to the fact that Lab
years in the post-war period, its European troubles have often been less we
of European debate after World War II, many within the Labour Party wer
integration, viewing it as a capitalist, big business, international organisati
were detrimental to ordinary working people and in conflict with socialist
strong pacifist tendency within the party that supported greater internatio
desired to prevent the outbreak of further military conflict in Europe and w
enhanced European cooperation in terms of peaceful stability, trade and e

As the 1980s progressed, the Labour Party had sought to modernise itself
political recovery and preparing itself for national office once again, and t
European policy and embracing the increasingly globalised economy. On
where 'Old Labour' was replaced by 'New Labour' was evident in the par
the issue of Europe, and by the early 1990s, the party had a broadly pro-Eu
ongoing left-wing dissent and Euroscepticism. Many within the Labour P
conclusion that some of the progressive social policies emanating from Eu
free-market deregulation of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative regime dur

By the time Labour was back in power in 1997 under **Tony Blair** *(right)*, th
promoted itself as having a far more positive and constructive attitude tow
was now the European Union than the desperately split Conservative Par
clearly evident in signing up to the Social Chapter (1997), as well as the co
harmonious participation in the Amsterdam Treaty (1997) and the Nice Tr
which focused on preserving Britain's interests within an enlarged EU.

Indeed, Blair's European ambitions were such that he sought to *'place Brit
joining the single currency'*.[94] In declaring that Britain would be ***'at the hear***
expressing sentiments expressed by his predecessor John Major, but appe
position to deliver such a pro-European position given the size of his parli
generally more Europhile party mood. However, during this period in of
Labour faced further European problems, particularly in relation to failing
the single currency (as promised in 1997) and also to ratify the 2007 **Lisbo**

Critics have claimed that Blair's administration did not pursue these optio
public opinion as well as splits on the single currency issue between Tony
and Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown (who was apparently relu
Blair, therefore, did not ultimately succeed in his original ambition of pres
membership of the single European currency, despite the fact that twelve
from 2002 onwards.

94 Andrew Rawnsley, *The End of the Party: The Rise and Fall of New Labour* (2010), Ch. 1, p

Blair's determination to support the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 also ca
member states such as France and Germany, while there were concerns ab
public opinion caused by the increased immigration from Eastern Europe
EU in 2004. A minority left-wing element within the Labour Party has rem
provided some internal dissent on further European integration, viewing
aims of the EU as a restraint on the evolution of any potential socialist-orie
United Kingdom.

Key European Union Events and Issues (1

The Social Chapter (1992): The Social Chapter was a key part of the 1991 negot
It focused on common employment rights for workers across the EU, but it ang
politicians who believed it represented excessive regulation in the workplace. T
opted out of this policy in 1992, while Labour signed up to it in 1997.

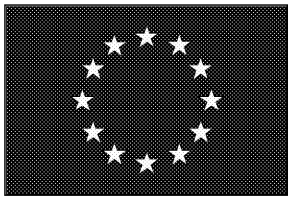
The Amsterdam Treaty (1997): Further updated the aims of the European Unio
from the Maastricht Treaty (1992) and giving greater democratic powers to the
countries the opportunity to integrate at different paces ('two speed Europe'), a
enlargement and setting in motion plans for common foreign and security poli
Schengen Agreement into EU law, which opened up the borders of continental
out of this aspect).

The Nice Treaty (2000): This treaty prepared for the enlargement of the EU in 2
joined from Eastern Europe. New allocations of voting powers under Qualified
mechanisms were the subject of much debate.

The Lisbon Treaty (2007): The Treaty of Lisbon (initially known as the Reform
update of the evolving European Union, with the establishment of political insti
accordance with the draft European Constitution. New positions such as an en
Affairs Minister were established, and the use of QMV was revised and extend
this treaty was focused on ongoing EU reform as opposed to radical further int
2009 and was certainly not as radical as the Single European Act or Maastricht

Although the Conservative Party appeared to make electoral progress unc
Cameron *(right)* since he became leader in late 2005, it continued to experi
difficulties in dealing with European matters. The decision as to whether
Conservative government would hold a referendum on the 2007 **Lisbon T**
caused much internal party debate, with some Conservatives fearing the l
votes to more Eurosceptic political parties such as **UKIP (United Kingdon
Independence Party)** over this issue. Given this difficult history on the su
Europe, some commentators prophetically observed that *'the issue of Europ
have the potential to destabilise a future Conservative government'.*[95]

In relation to European issues, from the outset of his leadership Cameron
Party's commitment to **never** joining the single currency (Euro), endorsing



predecessors as party leader Iain Duncan Smith in
affirmation against the Single European Currency
'toughening' of the party's position in relation to l
party leader, William Hague (1997–2001). Hague
but only in the *'lifetime of the next parliament'*, a son
commitment.

Michel Howard, who succeeded Duncan Smith as leader from 2003–2005,
definite position to Britain ever joining the Euro. This progressively more
years since 1997, particularly among younger Conservative politicians, re
hardening of John Major's position in the 1990s, a reflection of the situatio

> *His (Cameron's) generation of Conservatives have been imbued... with That*

For their part, the third party in British politics during this period, the Lib
in favour of the European Union and appeared to be the most 'Europhile'
political parties.

95 Simon Lee, 'David Cameron's Political Challenges', cited in Simon Lee & Matt Beech
Cameron: Built to Last? (2009), Ch. 1, p. 15.

96 Matt Beech, 'Cameron and Conservative Ideology', cited in Simon Lee & Matt Beech
Cameron: Built to Last? (2009), Ch. 2, p. 24.

Summary – similarities and differences between Labour and C
European policy in the 1990s

Having alternated in power for much of modern British history, Labour ar
Conservatives have had many policy disagreements on Europe at differen
They ultimately shared both differences and similarities regarding their Eu
policies from the early 1990s onwards.

Similarities:

- Both signed significant EU treaties in office that have represented furth
  Maastricht Treaty under John Major in the early 1990s, Lisbon under G
- Neither party in power took significant steps to joining the Euro (sing
  with wider public opinion.
- The leadership of both parties appeared to view Britain's *'special relatio*
  significant than its relations with Europe, evident in cross-party suppo
  Iraq, despite major EU objections.

Differences:

- From 1990 onwards, Labour tended to adopt a more constructive and
  dealings with Europe, while Conservative governments, notably in th
  Thatcher's rule, were more hostile in terms of rhetoric in particular.
- Official party policy in relation to the Euro was different, with Labour
  Conservatives appearing to rule the policy out indefinitely.
- Labour signed the 2007 Lisbon Treaty while in government, while the
  opposed it from opposition.

UK's global status by 2007

Britain was viewed as an 'awkward partner' by much of the European Un
under both Conservative and Labour administrations, although which pa
constructive links while also defending Britain's key national interests is a
From the 1990s onwards, Tony Blair was arguably more openly pro-Europ
relations with the EU, while Major's wishes for improved EU relations we
parliamentary majority and Eurosceptic MPs. Given the subsequent prob
it could be said that both parties deserve credit for keeping Britain outside

As a consequence of the various events and consequences connected to th
Blair left office in 2007 Britain found itself more vulnerable to security risk
other key nations, notably within the EU, although the *'special relationship'*
strong as ever. Tony Blair ultimately paid a heavy political price for supp
pursuing the 'War on Terror' in the way that he did.

Questions and Talking Points

1. What were the key differences in attitudes towards the European Union be
   and that of Tony Blair's? Were there more similarities than differences?
2. By the end of Tony Blair's period in office in 2007, was Britain more or less
   community than it had been in 1997?

Task and Talking Point

Write a few paragraphs on how Britain's position in the European Union community altered between 1990 and 2007. Did it change for the better o your answer with some supporting evidence.

Conservative leaders and reasons for division

Despite the fall-out from Iraq and the slow pace of public service reform, i disarray within the Conservative Party and the relatively healthy state of t decisive factors in Blair achieving his third successive election victory in 2 ultimately still preferred Blair to the Conservative alternative for prime m Thatcherite former cabinet minister Michael Howard, whose image and li not appeal to key groups of voters. Howard had followed other unpopula William Hague (1997–2001) and Iain Duncan Smith (2001–2003). The Con to be distrusted by key sections of the electorate, with its popular vote onl 1997 and 2005, despite New Labour's various difficulties in office.

The Conservatives ultimately seemed to have struggled to carve out an eff identity since the demise of Margaret Thatcher in 1990 and to overcome th political legacy. However, after three general election defeats in a row, th leadership from the end of 2005 appeared to indicate that they themselves similar way that Labour had in the 1990s if they were ever to regain powe new generation of twenty-first-century Conservative 'modernisers' endors liberalism and even referred to himself as the 'heir to Blair', despite comin party. Cameron would go on to fulfil some of this early promise by leadin power and becoming prime minister in 2010.

Third term and Blair's exit (2005–2007)

Party	2005
	MPs
Labour	355
Conservative	198
Liberal Democrat	62
Others	31

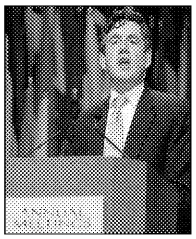
Severely damaged by the or with growing internal party somewhat limped to victory returning to power with a re but with a much reduced pa This represented a poor elec relation to the previous two popular support and as a re

> *Rarely had Britain returned a government with such a palpable lack of enthu tasted like defeat.*[97]

Blair's 1997 coalition of voters had now been badly fractured, with studen particular deserting the party at this election primarily due to opposition t resulted in the loss of a significant number of parliamentary seats (47), an 1997. Indeed, Labour's winning percentage of 35.2% was the lowest recor victory since the First Reform Act of 1832!

[97] Andrew Rawnsley, *The End of the Party: The Rise and Fall of New Labour* (2010), Ch. 19,

However, despite the extent of his political authority being damaged in th
enthusiasm for power did not appear to be diminished, and he *'began his t
agenda of public service reform'*.[98] Although there had been a significant inv
the previous eight years, using increased public investment and innovativ
necessary improvements in public services had been slow and disappoint
sought to improve such areas of policy-making further, but what he ultim
level of growing opposition to him within his own MPs, many of whom fe
party seats and votes at the 2005 general election largely due to his associa



Such growing levels of internal party opposition led to Bl
parliamentary defeat in late 2005 over his proposal to det
90 days without charge, perhaps a sign of increased dislo
MPs as well as his own declining authority. Internal part
fuelled by his increasingly frustrated Chancellor Gordon B
time the replace the increasingly tarnished Prime Ministe
politically astute enough not to appear obviously disloya

In the autumn of 2006, 15 MPs from the 2001 intake wrote a letter demand
departure, with the aim of him leaving office sooner rather than later. Bla
and managed to survive in the short term at least, but such opposition wa
felt my many of his inner circle that Gordon Brown and his supporters we
and destabilising the government in the process, as supported by the com

> *One person at the heart of Brown's inner circle believes: 'He (Brown) would
> light to cause trouble'*.[99]

Under increasing internal opposition and pressure, however, Blair subseq
September 2006 that the forthcoming Labour Party Conference would be l
although he stubbornly *'stopped short of setting a date for his departure'*.[100] Ho
pressures grew, Blair announced that he would stand down at some point
the various elections of May 2007 but before the annual party conference i
compromise with internal party critics who wanted him to depart sooner
allowed him a symbolic ten years in the premiership, although it was certa
forced to depart sooner than he had intended'.[101]

As part of the 'orderly transition of power', on 17th May 2007 Gordon Brow
Blair's successor by Labour MPs, and was formally endorsed as the next p
minister given that Labour was in power) at a special party conference on 2
later Tony Blair formally resigned as prime minister and the eventful and
was over.

98 Dennis Kavanagh & Philip Cowley, *The British General Election of 2010* (2010), Ch. 3, p
99 See Andrew Rawnsley, *The End of the Party: The Rise and Fall of New Labour* (2010), Ch.
100 Dennis Kavanagh & Philip Cowley, *The British General Election of 2010* (2010), Ch. 3, p
101 Andrew Rawnsley, *The End of the Party: The Rise and Fall of New Labour* (2010), Ch. 24,

Overview – Tony Blair's lega

The Blair years (1997–2007) represented a distinct new approach to politics the Labour Party stormed back to power in 1997 with a landslide victory a promising to govern in a different style to both previous Labour and Cons

Blair had a very limited ideological background, and he sought to reject th *'left and right'*. Instead he spoke of the *'Third Way'*, a somewhat vague poli 'vision' of a modernised Britain where key public services such as schools revitalised by a combination of public and private investment, providing i greater individual choice for citizens in the process. This approach was c ingredient of economic growth, and for the majority of his ten-year spell i over a booming economy, with historically low levels of unemployment, i (three of the key economic indicators).

The period, therefore, featured significant investment in key public servic example a record number of police officers and unprecedented levels of sp the health and education systems. Such a situation meant that more publi jobs were created and overall spending power grew among the wider pop and, therefore, throughout *'the New Labour years, with low inflation and stea most of the country grew richer'*,[102] a factor that ultimately led to ongoing ele success between 1997 and 2005. Indeed, the period 1997–2007 saw one of sustained periods of economic growth since World War II. Conservative c however, claimed that he had inherited a *'golden economic legacy'* from the Brown's policies had merely built on the solid foundations that they had l

Summary – key reasons why Labour won the 2001 and 2005 ge

- The Conservative Party had a succession of unpopular leaders and still enough section of the population, focusing on unpopular and divisive i Union and public spending cuts.
- There was ongoing anti-Conservative 'tactical voting' and the Conserva recover from the landslide of 1997.
- Labour continued to receive significant media support, e.g. from the M
- Tony Blair still appeared to be the most popular party leader, despite b
- Labour maintained a moderate stance on most key domestic political is
- The economy continued to grow and living standards rose, with the in politically rewarded for this.
- Opposition to Labour was divided, and the growth in Liberal Democra helped Blair retain power.

The record of Blair's administrations in delivering public service reforms w undoubted investment in the national infrastructure and significantly incr expenditure, but there were mixed results in terms of public satisfaction a were also some major constitutional and political reforms, most notably d wage, two policies that had been much desired by left-of-centre governme reverse the majority of the Thatcher policies of the 1980s, and he, indeed, e liberalism that she established, but he did seek to restore an increased infl while still maintaining the emphasis on choice and individual economic fr

[102] Andrew Marr, *A History of Modern Britain* (2007), p. 572.

Blair's dominant style of leadership was viewed as strength by allies but r
generated increased internal party opposition the longer he was in power,
in his departure from office. He was viewed as a very effective communic
however, his political legacy was ultimately tainted by a hugely controver
public opinion and would severely undermine the initial goodwill that mu
displayed towards his political message in 1997.

When Tony Blair somewhat reluctantly stepped down from the premiershi
tremendous electoral success and won three general election victories, but b
public and his own political party had ultimately tired of him due to his aut
leadership and his perceived policy failures both at home and abroad. In th
commentators have argued that despite two huge parliamentary majorities,
deliver what could have been achieved on a domestic level, in particular, an
office represented a wasted opportunity for further reforms and more signi

Questions and Talking Points

1. How did Tony Blair's approach to governing differ from that of prev
particularly Labour ones?
2. Outline the key reasons why Tony Blair's position as prime minister
and 2007.
3. Compare and contrast Blair's domestic policy achievements with his
Which could be considered to be the most successful policy-making
your answer.

Historical Interpretations

There are both right and left-wing historians and commentators who view the N
Blair as little more than a continuation of the Thatcher and Major Governments.
Rupert Murdoch happily switched the support of key newspapers such as *The S*
the fact that Blair's Government abandoned Labour's left-wing ideological bagg
vast majority of the 'neo-liberal' economic agenda pursued by both the Thatche
between 1979 and 1997. The gap between rich and poor grew wider than ever a
involvement in public services as the Conservatives had done.

The more radical historical interpretation of the Blair years is that it achieved a g
change that would not have occurred under a Conservative administration. Key
social policy initiatives marked it out as a radical, reforming and 'modernising'
sympathetic commentators and historians such as Andrew Marr. Its record leve
services under the effective economic management of Gordon Brown saw some
public services, providing greater choice for ordinary citizens and making genu
resources to the poorer members of society. However, even such positive asses
Labour could perhaps have delivered more of its desired reforms and been mor
parliamentary majorities.

Revision Exercise 5: Tony Blair's Government 1997–2007

Outline the key success and failures of the Labour government of 1997–2007.

Policy/Issue	Successes	
Political		
Economic		
Foreign		
Social		
Cultural		

Exercise 6: Key Revision Questions 1997–2007

Revision Quiz

1. Outline two key reasons why Tony Blair and New Labour wor

   .....

   .....

2. What key area of policy-making was Blair keen to improve in r governments, and why was this so?

   .....

   .....

3. What enhanced powers did Tony Blair give to Gordon Brown a Exchequer, and why did he do this?

   .....

   .....

   .....

4. Outline three key issues that undermined Tony Blair's position

   .....

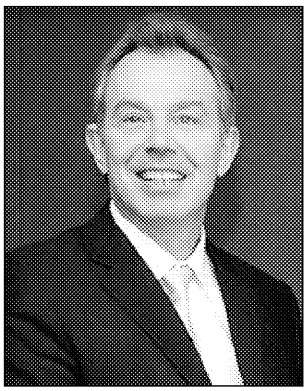
   .....

   .....

T

Discussion Points

1. What were the key sources of division and tension within John 1990 onwards?
2. In what key ways did the Labour Party transform itself from th
3. Why did 'New Labour' win the 1997 general election by a 'lanc
4. Compare the economic record of the Major Government (1990– Government (1997–2007). Which one had the strongest record
5. Did the foreign policy of the Blair Government from 1997 affec world for better or worse?
6. How did both the Major and Blair Governments deal with the between 1990 and 2007? Were there more similarities than dif approaches?
7. What factors explain the further Labour general election victor
8. What evidence was there to suggest that Britain was a more di society by 2007?



Writing Frame 3: Essay Structure Plan

Question Title:

To what extent was the electoral success of Tony Blair (1997–2007) due to New L
weaknesses? (25 marks)

Introduction (focus on and address the question title)

- *Address the focus on Tony Blair's electoral success (1997–2007) as identifi*
- *Acknowledge that there are arguments that it was New Labour's strengths*
  success, as well as alternative viewpoints that it was Conservative weaknes

Analysis of alternative viewpoints and interpretations

Evidence that electoral success was due to New Labour's st

-
-
-
-
-
-

Evidence that electoral success was due to Conservative we

-
-
-
-
-
-

Conclusion (focus on the question title and address the issues raised in t
attempting to reach a measured judgment if possible).

Full analysis and explanation of all above points are required.

Answers and Feedback

Exercise 1: What were the key problems facing Britain in the 1980s?

Broad answers/feedback

The final sequence of what issues are deemed to be most significant will ultimately dep
some suitable reasons for each point listed:

Wealth creation

Britain became a much wealthier nation during the 1980s, with economic growth lea
improving. In the 1970s it had been referred to as the *'sick man of Europe'*. Critics hi
evenly distributed and great poverty remained in certain sections of society.

Unemployment

Unemployment remained historically high throughout the 1980s. It twice exceeded
at the end of the decade, with the country plunging into the two worst recessions sin
government argued that such unemployment was due to a necessary economic shak
unproductive industries such as steel and coal.

Inflation

During the 1970s the rate of inflation *(cost of goods)* had been out of control, and its
business and the overall economy. Thatcher's Government cut public spending and p
1980s in order to bring inflation under control. Later in the decade, European Union
were pursued to bring inflation down. Inflation was reduced compared to the 1970s
completely under control in the 1980s.

Entrepreneurial culture

Creating a more individualistic, entrepreneurial culture was arguably a key aim of Th
Thatcher believed that the power of the state was excessive and that people needed
placed great emphasis on individuals starting their own businesses and contributing
entrepreneurial manner, and this culture was a key element of the 1980s.

Taxation

Thatcher's Government drastically reduced the direct levels of taxation, again due to
high and had damaged the British economy and made it uncompetitive in the 1970s.
the end of the 1980s were seen as key factors in maintaining the Conservatives' elect
taxes were cut too much and this had a detrimental effect on the funding of public se

Privatisation

This was a key part of the Conservatives' policy agenda from the second term onwar
popular with significant sections of society, and it seemed to represent a particular i
could have a stake in capitalism. Key industries formerly owned and managed by the
individual shareholders, helping to create the property-owning democracy that That

Social conflict

The 1980s was seen as a decade of division given that there was significant social co
included the inner-city race riots of 1981, the prolonged miners' strike of 1984–1985
disputes and the Poll Tax riots of 1989–1990. Government critics claimed that such
damaging and divisive social policies of the Thatcher Government, which had provok
other social groups. The Conservative government would claim that such unrest was
the difficult but necessary decisions that needed to be taken to tackle Britain's socio-

Revision Exercise: Conservative government 1979–1990

Key Successes:

- Brought excessive trade union power under control (social, economic and politi
- Got the excessive levels of inflation under control (economic)
- Large-scale privatisation programme created many shareholders and significan
- Created a more efficient free-market economic system with significant cuts in p political)
- Achieved a higher international profile for Britain due to the Falklands War and
- The state did less and Britain became a more consumerist, free-market society (

Key Failures:

- Presided over two recessions where unemployment reached three million, the l (social, economic and political)
- Presided over a massive widening of the gap between the rich and poor (econor
- Policies led to deindustrialisation and urban decay in many towns and cities (so
- Cuts in taxation led to underinvestment in key public services (economic and so
- Increasingly alienated European partners with growing hostility to the Europea
- Racial and social divisions became more apparent (cultural)

Not exhaustive

Exercise 3: Key Revision Questions 1979–1990

1. The control of which economic indicator did Margaret Thatcher prioritise in order f
   Inflation

2. Describe two conflicts which Margaret Thatcher found herself involved in durin industrial, political).
   Falklands War (1982), miners' strike (1984–1985)

3. What happened to the Labour Party in 1981 that helped the Conservative Party
   Breakaway of the SDP to form a new political party

4. Which flagship policy played a key role in Margaret Thatcher's fall from power?
   The Poll Tax

5. Which two prominent cabinet ministers resigned from Thatcher's Government premiership?
   Nigel Lawson and Geoffrey Howe

Revision Exercise 4: John Major's Government 1990–1997

Key Successes:

- Re-elected for a fourth term in 1992 against the odds (political)
- Continued with popular policies that changed UK culture and society, e.g. privatis cultural and political)
- John Major managed to overcome the latter unpopularity of Margaret Thatcher a fortunes (political)
- Got inflation under control and the economy was growing again by the mid-1990
- Public spending increased to key public services (economic and social)
- Sought to protect British interests in Europe and played an important role in 199
- Achieved some success in bringing further stability to Northern Ireland (political

Key Failures:

- Humiliated on *'Black Wednesday'* (1992) when Britain left the ERM (economic an
- Conservative Party divided and split on the issue of Europe (political and cultural
- Failed to maintain a parliamentary majority and became a minority government b
- Taxes were raised despite promises not to do so (economic and political)
- Critics claimed that key public services such as the NHS and education were unde
- Had a weak personal image (political)
- The country became more divided in social and economic terms (social and cultu

Not exhaustive

Exercise 5: Key Revision Questions 1990–1997

1. What key factors helped John Major win the 1992 general election?
   New leadership after Thatcher, fear of Labour policies, slight economic rec
2. What key factors weakened John Major throughout his five years in office from 1
   Small parliamentary majority
3. What name is given to the day John Major's Government was forced to leave the
   in 1992?
   Black Wednesday
4. What impact did the issue of Europe have on the Major premiership?
   Divided Conservative Party after Maastricht Treaty
5. Outline three key policy areas that damaged John Major's Government and led t
   **Select from Europe, political sleaze, economic problems (recession), increa
   in key public services.**

Task 1

Evidence of economic policies similar to Conservatives	Evidence of eco
Focus on keeping direct taxation low, in line with 1980s Thatcherite agenda.	Introduced more indire Labour 'tax and spend'
Focused on keeping inflation under control as a key economic priority, even at the expense of rising unemployment.	Higher levels of investm they were in power (Ke
Broadly accepted the neo-liberal economic settlement with limited trade union powers, deregulation, privatisation and reduced role for government.	Gave independence to t rates to avoid political economic instability.

Revision Exercise 5: Tony Blair's Government 1997–2007

Key Successes:

- Won three successive general elections (political)
- Presided over economic growth for the majority of the government's time in po standards (economic and social)
- Increased investment in key public services such as schools and hospitals (polit
- Successful diplomatic successes in Kosovo and Northern Ireland, along with a h e.g. after 9/11 and during the Iraq War (foreign)
- Key constitutional and political reforms introduced within UK (political)
- Sought to address some major racial, sexual and cultural divisions by embracing improved rights for the gay community and ethnic minorities (social and cultur

Key Failures:

- Increased investment in public services did not always lead to visible improvem
- Involvement in the Iraq War divided public opinion and resulted in loss of popu
- Had difficult relations with Chancellor Gordon Brown and this weakened the go
- Failed to close the gap between rich and poor that this government had sought t
- Indirect taxation (stealth taxes) steadily grew during Blair's premiership (econo
- There were continued racial and cultural tensions and violence (social and cultu

Not exhaustive

Exercise 6: Key Revision Questions 1997–2007

1. Outline two key reasons why Tony Blair and New Labour won the 1997 general
   1. **Fresh new moderate Labour policies.**
   2. **Conservatives were discredited and divided and voters wanted chang**
2. What key area of policy-making was Blair keen to improve in relation to past La this so?
   Blair was particularly keen that Labour could prove its economic compete negative image of past Labour governments and the way they had run the
3. What enhanced powers did Tony Blair give to Gordon Brown as Chancellor of th this?
   Brown was given unprecedented powers as Chancellor of the Exchequer, w the direction and detail of economic and social policies in particular. Man Brown standing aside to let Blair become Labour leader in 1994, and such supportive of Blair.
4. Outline three key issues that undermined Tony Blair's position from 2003 onwa
   1. **The Iraq War.**
   2. **Ongoing tensions with Gordon Brown.**
   3. **Declining loyalty among his own MPs in Parliament due to various po style of leadership.**

Writing Frame 3: Essay Structure Plan

To what extent was the electoral success of Tony Blair (1997–2007) due to New Labou weaknesses?

Introduction *(focus on and address the question title)* • *Address the focus on Tony Blair's electoral success (1997–2007) as identified in ti* • *Acknowledge that there are arguments that it was New Labour's strengths that e well as alternative viewpoints that it was Conservative weaknesses.*	
Analysis of alternative viewpoints and interpretations	**Evidence that electoral success was due to New Labour's strengths:** • Tony Blair had a fresh and 'modernising' political image that appeale viewed as having great charisma and being a good communicator. • Blair had abandoned the Labour Party's left-wing policies (Clause 4, 1 the Conservative economic ('free-market') reforms of the 1980s. • Tony Blair and Gordon Brown formed a formidable political partners both in opposition and in power. • New Labour was very disciplined and appeared to be better organise the Conservatives for much of this period. • Blair managed the media extremely well, utilising the role of 'spin do to get the government's political message effectively across. • While Blair is viewed as the key figure in New Labour's appeal, some Kinnock, who began the process of modernising the party during the 1
	Evidence that electoral success was due to Conservative weaknesses • The Conservative government of 1990–1997 had seen its record for e by events such as 'Black Wednesday' (1992). • John Major was viewed as a weak and indecisive leader who struggle • The Conservative Party had been damaged by a series of sexual and f the 1990s. • The Conservatives went through a succession of unpopular and ineff compete with Tony Blair and Gordon Brown from the mid-1990s onw • The Conservatives were badly split on some key political issues, mos Europe. • The Conservatives appeared to lack a clear political identity in the po damaged by some aspects of her unpopular policies.
Conclusion (focus on the question title and address the issues raised in the main b reach a measured judgment if possible). Perhaps introduce the notion that while B terms, his popularity was exaggerated by Conservative disarray and his political ac they could have been (as argued by Andrew Rawnsley).	

Full analysis and explanation of all above points are required.

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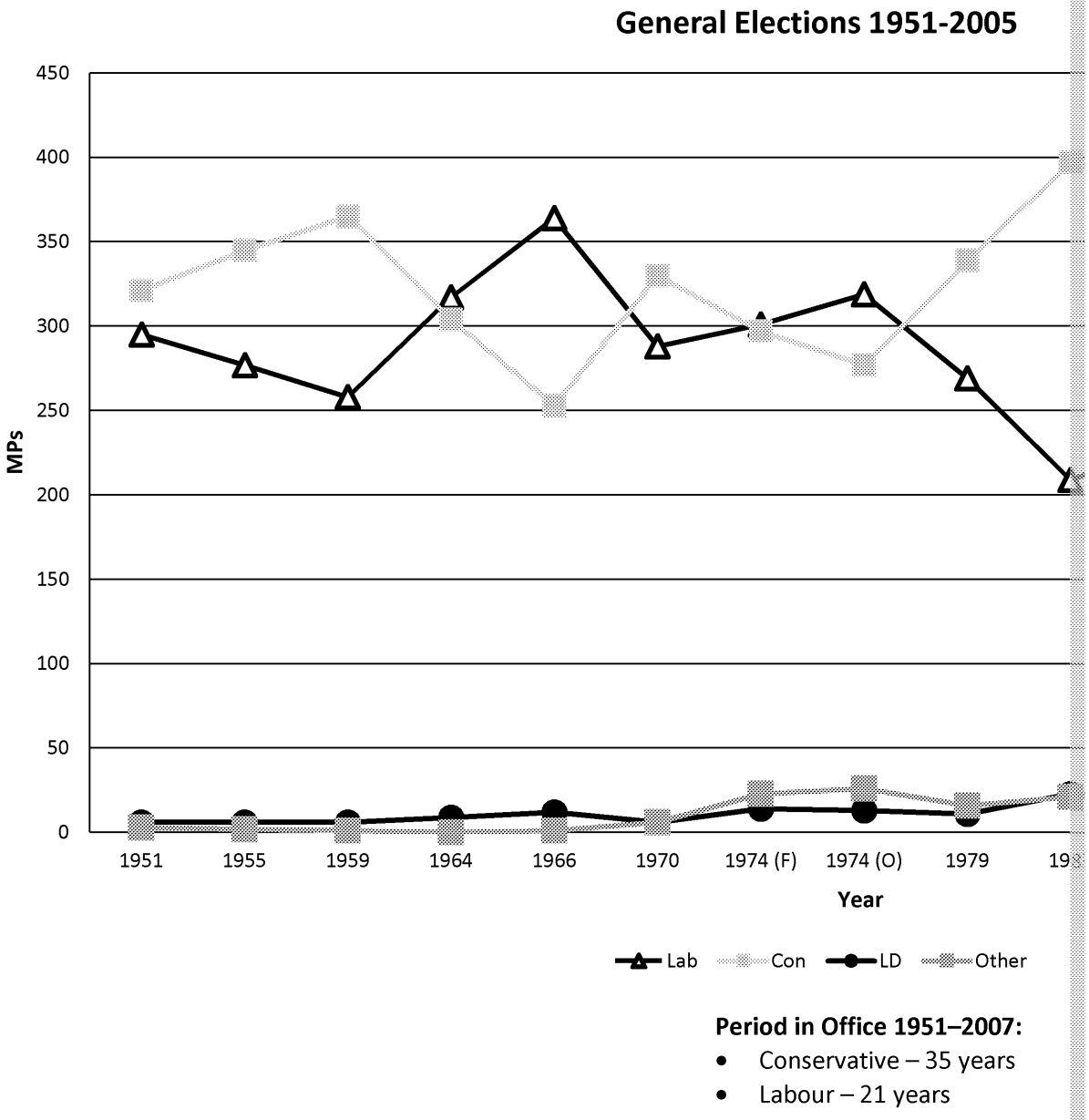
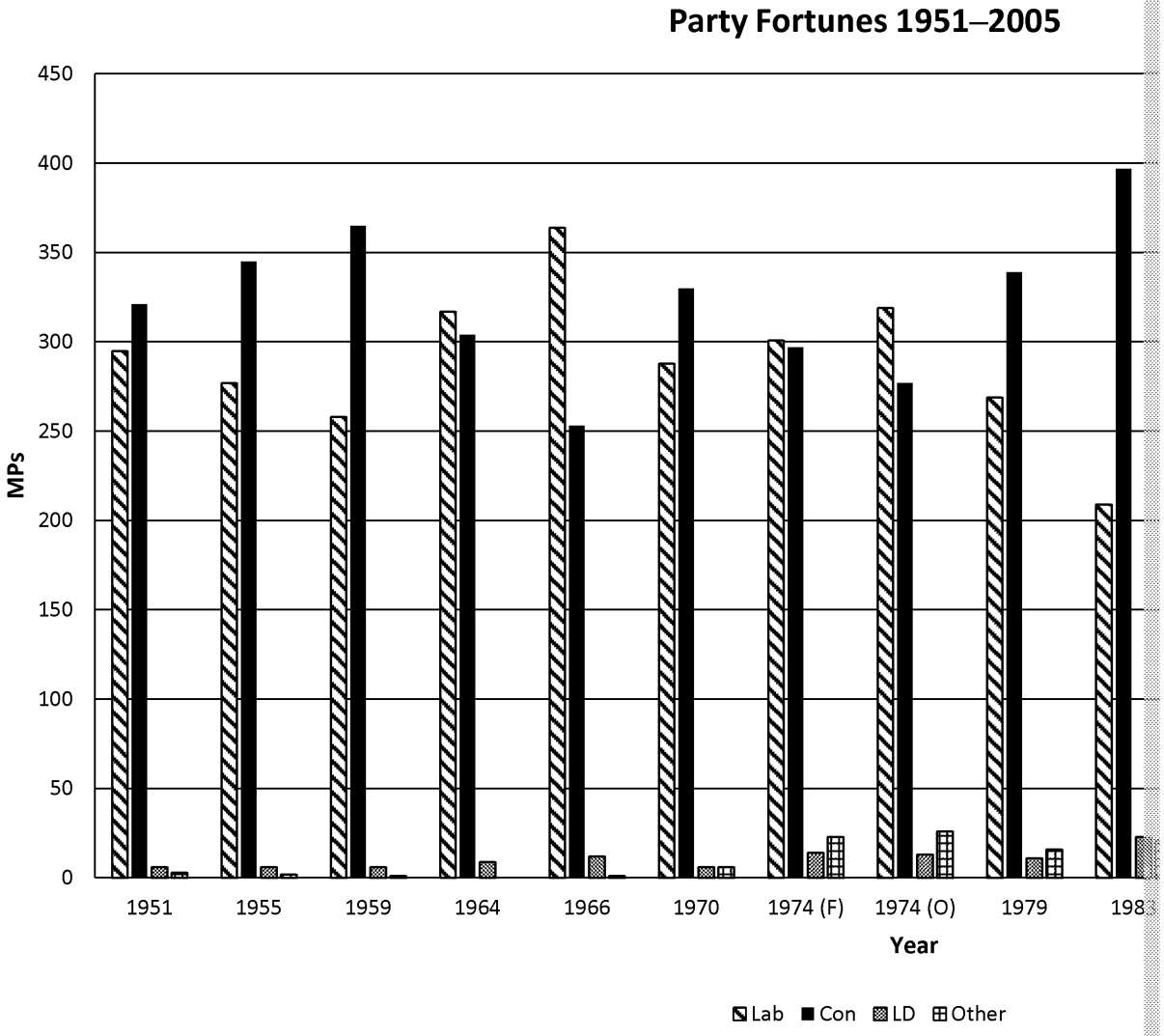
Appendix – Charts and



Period in Office 1951–2007:

- Conservative – 35 years
- Labour – 21 years



Summary of UK General Election Result

	Party		
Year	Conservative	Labour	Libe
1951	*321*	*295*	*6*
1955	*345*	*277*	*6*
1959	*365*	*258*	*6*
1964	*304*	*317*	*9*
1966	*253*	*363*	*12*
1970	*330*	*288*	*6*
1974 (F)	*297*	*301*	*14*
1974 (O)	*277*	*319*	*13*
1979	*339*	*269*	*11*
1983	*397*	*209*	*23*
1987	*376*	*229*	*22*
1992	*336*	*271*	*20*
1997	*165*	*418*	*46*
2001	*166*	*412*	*52*
2005	*198*	*356*	*62*

(Source: Dennis Kavanagh & Philip Cowley, *The British General E*