

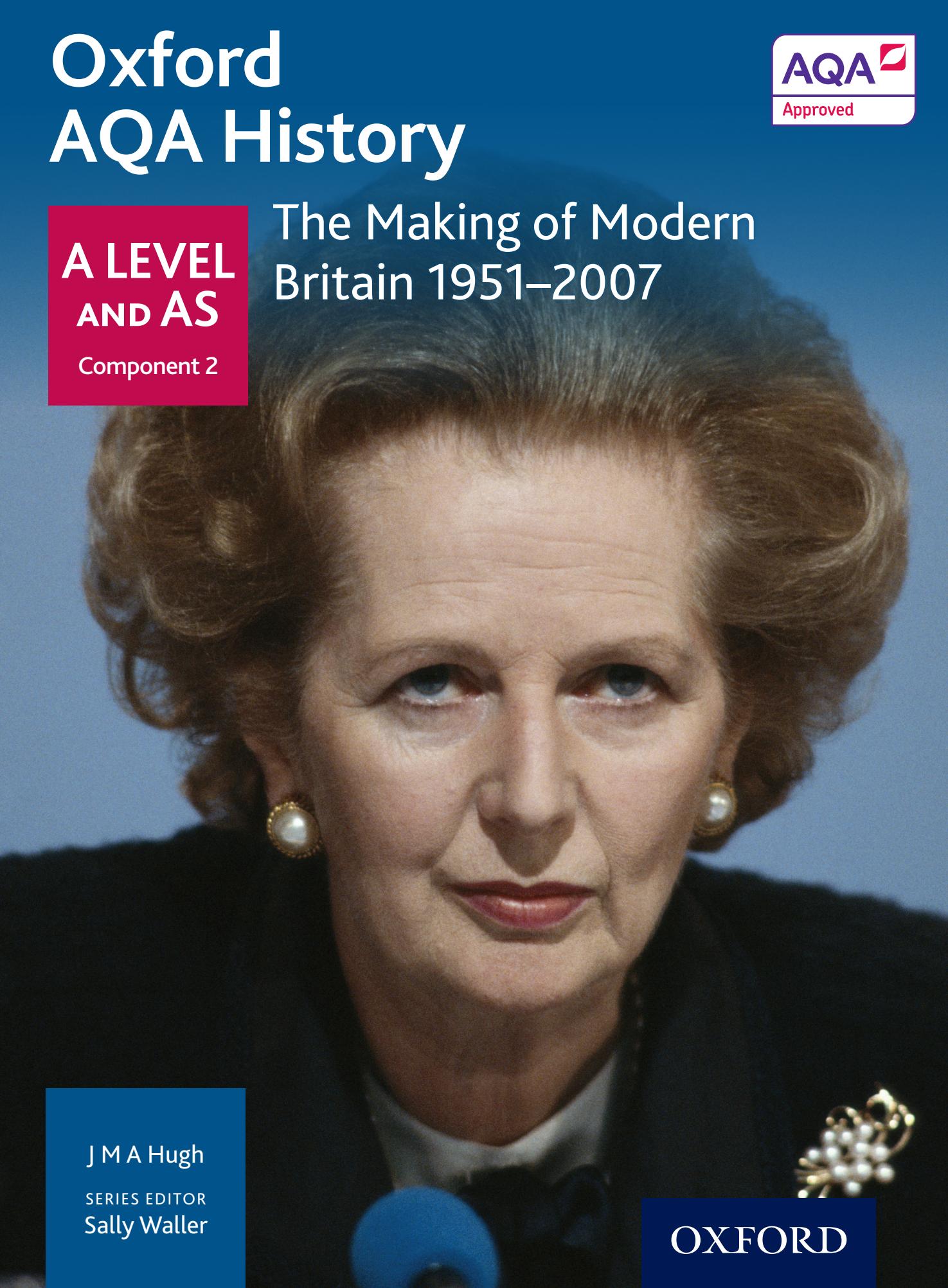
Oxford AQA History



A LEVEL
AND AS

Component 2

The Making of Modern Britain 1951–2007

A close-up portrait of Margaret Thatcher, showing her from the chest up. She has blonde hair styled in a voluminous, curly bouffant. She is wearing a dark, high-collared jacket over a light-colored blouse. Her makeup is classic, with dark eyeliner and red lipstick. She is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a faint smile. The background is a plain, light blue.

OXFORD
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J M A Hugh

SERIES EDITOR
Sally Waller

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contribution in the development of this book: Chris Rowe, Brian York
and Sally Waller.

Approval message from AQA

This textbook has been approved by AQA for use with our
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Full details of our approval process can be found on our website.

We approve textbooks because we know how important it is
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Please note that when teaching the AQA A Level History course,
you must refer to AQA's specification as your definitive source
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specification, it does not provide complete coverage of every aspect
of the course.

A wide range of other useful resources can be found on the relevant
subject pages of our website: www.aqa.org.uk.

Please note that the Practice Questions in this book allow students a
genuine attempt at practising exam skills, but they are not intended to
replicate examination papers.

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Introduction to features

The *Oxford AQA History* series has been developed by a team of expert history teachers and authors with examining experience. Written to match the new AQA specification, these new editions cover AS and A Level content together in each book.

How to use this book

The features in this book include:

TIMELINE

Key events are outlined at the beginning of the book to give you an overview of the chronology of this topic. Events are colour-coded so you can clearly see the categories of change.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the beginning of each chapter, you will find a list of learning objectives linked to the requirements of the specification.

SOURCE

EXTRACT

Sources introduce you to material that is primary or contemporary to the period, and **Extracts** provide you with historical interpretations and the debate among historians on particular issues and developments. The accompanying activity questions support you in evaluating sources and extracts, analysing and assessing their value, and making judgements.



PRACTICE QUESTION

Focused questions to help you practise your history skills for both AS and A Level, including evaluating sources and extracts, and essay writing.

STUDY TIP

Hints to highlight key parts of **Practice Questions** or **Activities**.

ACTIVITY

Various activity types to provide you with opportunities to demonstrate both the content and skills you are learning. Some activities are designed to aid revision or to prompt further discussion; others are to stretch and challenge both your AS and A Level studies.

CROSS-REFERENCE

Links to related content within the book to offer you more detail on the subject in question.

A CLOSER LOOK

An in-depth look at a theme, event or development to deepen your understanding, or information to put further context around the subject under discussion.

KEY CHRONOLOGY

A short list of dates identifying key events to help you understand underlying developments.

KEY PROFILE

Details of a key person to extend your understanding and awareness of the individuals that have helped shape the period in question.

KEY TERM

A term that you will need to understand. The terms appear in bold, and they are also defined in the glossary.

AQA History specification overview

AS exam

Part One content

Building a new Britain, 1951–79

- 1 The affluent society: Britain 1951–64
- 2 The Sixties, 1964–70
- 3 The end of post-war consensus, 1970–79

A Level exam

Part Two content

Modern Britain, 1979–2007

- 4 The impact of Thatcherism 1979–87
- 5 Towards a new consensus 1987–97
- 6 The era of New Labour, 1997–2007

AS examination papers will cover content from Part One only (you will only need to know the content in the blue box). A Level examination papers will cover content from both Part One and Part Two.

The examination papers

The grade you receive at the end of your AQA AS History course is based entirely on your performance in two examination papers, covering Breadth (Paper 1) and Depth (Paper 2). For your AQA A Level History course, you will also have to complete an Historical Investigation (Non-examined assessment).

Paper 2 Depth study

This book covers the content of a Depth study (Paper 2). You are assessed on the study in depth of a period of major historical change or development, and associated primary sources or sources contemporary to the period.

Exam paper	Questions and marks	Assessment Objective (AO)*	Timing	Marks
AS Paper 2: Depth Study	<p>Section A: Evaluating primary sources One compulsory question linked to two primary sources or sources contemporary to the period (25 marks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The compulsory question will ask you: '<i>with reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, which of these sources is more valuable in explaining why...</i>' <p>Section B: Essay writing One from a choice of two essay questions (25 marks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The essay questions will contain a quotation advancing a judgement and <u>could</u> be followed by: '<i>explain why you agree or disagree with this view</i>'. 	A02 A01	Written exam: 1 hour 30 minutes	50 marks (50% of AS)
A Level Paper 2: Depth Study	<p>Section A: Evaluating primary sources One compulsory question linked to three primary sources or sources contemporary to the period. The sources will be of different types and views (30 marks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The compulsory question will ask you: '<i>with reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these three sources to an historian studying...</i>' <p>Section B: Essay writing Two from a choice of three essay questions (2 x 25 marks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The essay questions require analysis and judgement, and <u>could</u> include: '<i>How successful...</i>' or '<i>To what extent...</i>' or '<i>How far...</i>' or a quotation offering a judgement followed by '<i>Assess the validity of this view</i>'. 	A02 A01	Written exam: 2 hours 30 minutes	80 marks (40% of A Level)

*AQA History examinations will test your ability to:

- A01:** Demonstrate, organise and communicate **knowledge and understanding** to analyse and evaluate the key features related to the periods studied, **making substantiated judgements and exploring concepts**, as relevant, of cause, consequence, change, continuity, similarity, difference and significance.
- A02:** **Analyse and evaluate** appropriate source material, primary and/or contemporary to the period, within the historical context.
- A03:** **Analyse and evaluate**, in relation to the historical context, different ways in which aspects of the past have been interpreted.

Visit www.aqa.org.uk to help you prepare for your examinations. The website includes specimen examination papers and mark schemes.

Introduction to the Oxford AQA History series

Depth studies

The exploration of a short but significant historical period provides an opportunity to develop an ‘in-depth’ historical awareness. This book will help you to acquire a detailed knowledge of an exciting period of historical change, enabling you to become familiar with the personalities and ideas which shaped and dominated the time. In-depth study, as presented here, allows you to develop the enthusiasm that comes from knowing something really well.

However, ‘depth’ is not just about knowledge. Understanding history requires the piecing together of many different strands or themes, and depth studies demand an awareness of the interrelationship of a variety of perspectives, such as the political, economic, social and religious – as well as the influence of individuals and

ideas within a relatively short period of time. Through an ‘in-depth’ study, a strong awareness of complex historical processes is developed, permitting deeper analysis, greater perception and well-informed judgement.

Whilst this book is therefore designed to impart a full and lively awareness of a significant period in history, far more is on offer from the pages that follow. With the help of the text and activities in this book, you will be encouraged to think historically, question developments in the past and undertake ‘in-depth’ analysis. You will develop your conceptual understanding and build up key historical skills that will increase your curiosity and prepare you, not only for A Level History examinations, but for any future studies.

Key Term, Key Chronology and Key Profile help you to consolidate historical knowledge about dates, events, people and places

SECTION 6 | The era of New Labour, 1997–2007

KEY PROFILE

Bill Clinton (b. 1946) served as the president of the United States from 1993 to 2001, having previously been the governor of Arkansas. He was extremely charismatic and remained popular despite facing a sex scandal in 1998 to 1999.

CROSS-REFERENCE

New Labour's belief in the Third Way is discussed in Chapter 21, page 108.

CROSS-REFERENCE

The break-up of Yugoslavia is covered in Chapter 20.

KEY PROFILE

George W. Bush (b. 1946) was the son of the former US President George H. Bush (1989–93). His presidency became dominated by the ‘war on terror’, a phrase he coined shortly after the terrorist attacks on the US on 9/11.

KEY TERM

liberal interventionism: a belief that a country should intervene in another country for liberal aims i.e. to support human rights

The ‘special relationship’ with the USA

New Labour was keen on maintaining the ‘special relationship’ with the United States. When Blair was elected in 1997, Bill Clinton was the president of the United States. There were a number of similarities between the two governments, both being influenced by the ideas of the Third Way. New Labour figures had forged even closer links with the US Democrats after 1992 to learn how a left-of-centre party could be electorally successful.

After the failure of the European Union and the United Nations to deal with the Yugoslavian crisis in the 1990s, Blair was utterly convinced that it was essential to keep the United States involved in European affairs and to make full use of NATO to defend the new world order that existed at the end of the Cold War. He believed that it was vitally important to maintain Britain’s ‘special relationship’ with the United States and that Britain had a key role in bringing closer together US and European policy.

The US Democrats lost the presidential election of 2000; the new Republican president was **George W. Bush**. Although it might have appeared to be likely that Blair would have less in common with Bush than he did with Clinton, the two men developed a close relationship, especially with regard to meeting the threat of global terrorism. However, this also led to accusations that British foreign policy became too dominated by US priorities during Blair’s premiership.

Military interventions and the war on terror

KEY CHRONOLOGY

Military interventions, 1997–2007

Mar 1999	NATO bombing of Yugoslavia led by British forces
May 2000	Intervention in Sierra Leone to resolve the civil war
Oct 2001	Invasion of Afghanistan and overthrow of the Taliban
Mar 2003	Invasion of Iraq by American-led coalition
Dec 2007	British withdrawal from Iraq announced by Gordon Brown

Blair firmly believed in **liberal interventionism** to prevent the recurrence of massacres and ethnic cleansing that had been seen in the Yugoslavian civil war.

SOURCE 2

Tony Blair set out what became known as the Blair Doctrine of liberal interventionism in a speech in Chicago in 1999. This was during the military intervention into Kosovo.

We are all internationalists now, whether we like it or not. We cannot refuse to participate in global markets if we want to prosper. We cannot ignore new political ideas in other countries if we want to innovate. We cannot turn our backs on conflicts and the violation of human rights within other countries if we want still to be secure. On the eve of a new Millennium we are now in a new world. We need new rules for international co-operation and new ways of organising our international institutions. Today the impulse towards interdependence is immeasurably greater. We are witnessing the beginnings of a new doctrine of international community. By this I mean the explicit recognition that today more than ever before we are mutually dependent,

CHAPTER 24 | Foreign affairs

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

Explain why the context of when this speech was made is important in understanding its value to the historian.

that national interest is to a significant extent governed by international collaboration and that we need a clear and coherent debate as to the direction this doctrine takes us in each field of international endeavour.

There are a number of examples of Blair’s liberal interventionism during his premiership.

Yugoslavia and Sierra Leone

When the final phase of the Balkan wars began as a result of Serbian attacks on Kosovo, Blair devoted his main diplomatic efforts to persuading a reluctant President Clinton to back military action against Serbia. In 1999, a prolonged NATO bombing campaign against Serbia forced Milošević into pulling his forces out of Kosovo. This early success in the Balkans moulded Blair’s thinking and did much to shape his later policies.

In 2000, when rebel forces in the civil war in Sierra Leone threatened to take over the capital city, Freetown, the British government sent armed forces. Initially this was to evacuate foreigners, but once there British forces supported the United Nations peacekeepers in securing the capital and helped bring about the end of the civil war a year later.

The war on terror

Later military interventions to support the war on terror proved more controversial and their success is harder to judge. The war on terror began after the Al-Qaeda terrorist attacks on the United States on 11 September 2001.

A CLOSER LOOK

Al-Qaeda is a terrorist organisation made up of a loose conglomeration of fighting cells with no clear chain of command. Before 2001 they had attacked the World Trade Center in New York in 1993 and had also carried out bomb attacks on US embassies in Africa in 1998.



Fig. 3 The attack on the Twin Towers, New York, 11 September 2001

This book also incorporates primary source material in the **Source** features. Primary sources are the building blocks of history, and you will be encouraged to reflect on their value to historians in trying to recreate the past. The accompanying questions are designed to develop your own historical skills, whilst suggestions for **Activities** will help you to engage with the past in a lively and stimulating manner. Throughout the book, you are encouraged to think about the material you are studying and to research further, in order to appreciate the ways in which historians seek to understand and interpret past events.

The chapters which follow are laid out according to the content of the AQA specification in six sections. Obviously, a secure chronological awareness and understanding of each section of content will be the first step in appreciating the historical period covered in this book. However, you are also encouraged to make links and comparisons between aspects of the period studied, and the activities will help you to relate to the key focus of your study and the key concepts that apply to it. Through intelligent use of this book, a deep and rewarding appreciation of an important period of history and the many influences within it will emerge.

Developing your study skills

You will need to be equipped with a paper file or electronic means of storing notes. Organised notes help to produce organised essays and sensible filing provides for efficient use of time. This book uses **Cross-References** to indicate where material in one chapter has relevance to that in another. By employing the same technique, you should find it easier to make the final leap towards piecing together your material to produce a holistic historical picture. The individual, group and research activities in this book are intended to guide you towards making selective and relevant notes with a specific purpose. Copying out sections of the book is to be discouraged, but recording material with a particular theme or question in mind will considerably aid your understanding.

There are plenty of examples of examination-style 'depth' **Practice Questions** for both AS Level, in Part One, and A Level in Parts One and Two of this book. There are also **Study Tips** to encourage you to think about historical perspectives, individuals, groups, ideas and ideology. You should also create your own timelines, charts and diagrams, for example to illustrate causation and

consequence, analyse the interrelationship of the differing perspectives, consider concepts and identify historical processes.

It is particularly important for you to have your own opinions and to be able to make informed judgements about the material you have studied. Some of the activities in this book encourage pair discussion or class debate, and you should make the most of such opportunities to voice and refine your own ideas. The beauty of history is that there is rarely a right or wrong answer, so this supplementary oral work should enable you to share your own opinions.

Writing and planning your essays

At both AS and A Level, you will be required to write essays and, although A Level questions are likely to be more complex, the basic qualities of good essay writing remain the same:

- **read the question carefully** to identify the key words and dates
- **plan out a logical and organised answer** with a clear judgement or view (several views if there are a number of issues to consider). Your essay should advance this judgement in the introduction, while also acknowledging alternative views and clarifying terms of reference, including the time span
- use the opening sentences of your paragraphs as stepping stones to take an argument forward, which allows you to **develop an evolving and balanced argument** throughout the essay and also makes for good style
- **support your comment or analysis** with precise detail; using dates, where appropriate, helps logical organisation
- **write a conclusion** which matches the view of the introduction and flows naturally from what has gone before.

Whilst these suggestions will help you develop a good style, essays should never be too rigid or mechanical.

This book will have fulfilled its purposes if it produces, as intended, students who think for themselves!

Sally Waller

Series Editor

Timeline

The colours represent different types of events, legislation and changes as follows:

- Blue: Economic events
- Yellow: Social events
- Red: Political events
- Black: International events (including foreign policy)

1951	1952	1953	1954
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Nationalisation of iron and steel ● Festival of Britain ● Conservative election victory returns Churchill as prime minister 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Britain's first atomic bomb test ● Mau Mau rebellion against British rule in Kenya 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mass television audience for coronation of Elizabeth II ● Steel and transport denationalised 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● British withdrawal from Egypt ● End of food rationing
1959	1960	1961	1962
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conservative election victory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Blue Streak missile abandoned in favour of American Polaris ● Macmillan's 'wind of change' speech ● Creation of EFTA as an alternative to the EEC ● End of National Service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Britain's application to join the EEC submitted ● Cold War tensions intensify with building of the Berlin Wall 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Macmillan's cabinet reshuffle, the 'Night of the Long Knives' ● Launch of <i>That Was the Week That Was</i> on BBC television ● Commonwealth Immigrants Act restricts immigration
1967	1969	1970	1971
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Deep budget cuts in military commitments East of Suez ● Devaluation of sterling by the Wilson government ● Liberalisation of laws on abortion and homosexuality ● Enoch Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' speech against mass immigration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Start of the Troubles in Northern Ireland ● Open University established 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Election victory for Conservatives under Edward Heath ● Equal Opportunities Act passed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Decimalisation of British currency ● Reform of the divorce laws
1976	1979	1981	1982
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Resignation of Wilson; Jim Callaghan becomes prime minister ● Terms of IMF loan require spending cuts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Industrial unrest leads to 'winter of discontent' ● Devolution for Scotland and Wales rejected in referendums 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Formation of SDP ● Riots in Brixton and Liverpool 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Victory in the Falklands War ● Unemployment rises above three million
1987	1988	1989	1990
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Third election victory of Thatcher ● Stock market crash in London and New York 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Section 28 outlaws the 'promotion of homosexuality' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fall of the Berlin Wall 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Poll tax riot ● Resignation of Thatcher; John Major becomes prime minister
1997	1998	1999	2001
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Landslide election victory for 'New Labour' ● YBA hold the 'Sensation' exhibition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Good Friday Agreement brings an end to the Troubles in Northern Ireland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Launch of the Euro in nine states of the EU but not Britain ● Devolved parliaments for Scotland and Wales established ● NATO bombing campaign expels Serb forces from Kosovo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Labour election victory ● Al-Qaeda attacks on New York, 9/11 ● NATO invasion of Afghanistan and overthrow of the Taliban ● Race riots in northern towns and cities

1955	1956	1957	1958
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Election victory of Conservatives under Eden ● Launch of ITV as commercial rival to BBC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Failure of Anglo-French invasion at Suez ● Financial crisis caused by Suez Crisis ● EEC formed without Britain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Anthony Eden replaced as prime minister by Harold Macmillan ● Independence achieved by Ghana and Malaya 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Formation of CND ● Serious anti-immigrant rioting in Notting Hill ● Motorway system opens with the M6 Preston bypass
1963	1964	1965	1966
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Britain's EEC application blocked by de Gaulle ● Independence granted to Kenya ● Profumo scandal ● Resignation of Macmillan; Douglas Home becomes prime minister 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Labour election victory under Harold Wilson ● Start of Rhodesia crisis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Death penalty abolished 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● England win the World Cup at Wembley ● Labour election victory with increased majority ● 'Swinging London' featured in Time magazine
1972	1973	1974	1975
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 'Bloody Sunday' in Derry ● Unemployment above one million for first time since 1930s 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yom Kippur War causes oil crisis ● British accession to the EEC alongside Ireland and Denmark ● Sunningdale Agreement for power sharing in Northern Ireland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Three-day week imposed ● Heath narrowly defeated in February election ● Collapse of Sunningdale Agreement after Ulster Workers' Council strike ● Victory of Labour in the October general election 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● EEC referendum results in 2:1 majority for the 'yes' vote ● Heath replaced as Conservative leader by Margaret Thatcher ● Sex Discrimination Act passed
1983	1984	1985	1986
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conservative victory in the general election ● Michael Foot replaced as Labour leader by Neil Kinnock 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● IRA bomb in Brighton ● Miners' strike begins 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Riots in major cities across Britain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Resignation of Michael Heseltine after the Westland affair ● Deregulation of financial markets in the 'Big Bang' ● Single European Act is signed
1991	1992	1993	1994
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Victory of coalition forces in First Gulf War ● Unemployment rises to over 2.5 million ● End of the Cold War 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Election victory of Major ● Resignation of Kinnock; John Smith becomes Labour leader ● 'Black Wednesday' forces British withdrawal from the ERM 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rebellion against Maastricht Treaty by Conservative Eurosceptics ● Murder of Stephen Lawrence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Death of John Smith; Tony Blair becomes Labour leader ● First women priests ordained
2003	2004	2005	2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Invasion of Iraq by US-led coalition forces ● Iain Duncan Smith replaced as Conservative leader by Michael Howard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Publication of the Hutton Report into the Iraq War ● Expansion of EU ● Civil partnerships introduced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Third election victory for Blair and Labour ● David Cameron becomes Conservative leader ● 56 people killed by terror attacks in London, 7/7 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Resignation of Blair; Gordon Brown becomes prime minister ● Growing financial crisis heralded by collapse of Northern Rock

Introduction to this book



Fig. 1 Winston Churchill: prime minister, 1951–55

This book explores the development of Britain from shortly after the Second World War to almost the present day. It shows the many changes which have taken place in British politics, society and Britain's position in the world, while at the same time recognising the continuities that have remained throughout the period.

The book begins in 1951 at the start of a long period of Conservative dominance. Although the Conservatives were in power until 1964, their governments were heavily influenced by the previous Labour government led by Clement Attlee. The Attlee government of 1945 to 1951 laid the foundations of what became known as the post-war consensus which survived until the 1970s.

The post-war consensus was based on a mixed economy, i.e. the belief that both the State and the private sector should play a role in promoting economic growth. This was based on the ideas of the economist John Maynard Keynes. In the 1930s, the economy had been left to the private sector but that era had seen a Great Depression with high levels of unemployment and hunger marches. In contrast, during the Second World War the State had intervened in the economy to make sure that the war effort was supported; in this way

Britain had defeated Nazi Germany so it seemed sensible that the State would also be involved in rebuilding in peacetime.

Just as the tide began to turn against the German enemy in the Second World War in 1942, the Beveridge Report was published calling for an end to the five 'Giant Evils' of want, squalor, ignorance, idleness and disease. It was a best-seller. The war effort had brought people together in a collective effort and made the middle classes more aware of the problems of poverty. By the end of the war the nation wanted to look forward to a better future. The Labour Party offered this and won a landslide victory. It then introduced the National Health Service (NHS) and a welfare state that would protect people 'from cradle to grave', and promised to create full employment by working with employers and trade unions.

Through the 1950s these key elements of the post-war consensus – regarding the economy and welfare – remained, although not everyone in the Conservative Party was convinced that this was the best way forward. But unemployment levels were low, affluence grew and developments in technology meant that many people enjoyed rising living standards. This in turn affected British society. Young people were able to create their own separate culture giving rise to the teenager; women's futures were changed as new appliances altered their lives in the home; greater educational opportunities broke down class barriers; and immigrants arrived from the Empire, encouraged by the job opportunities available. However, this did not mean that there were not underlying problems. Britain had large debts from the Second World War. In addition, its attempts to keep up in the arms race with the new superpowers of the United States of America and the USSR who were facing each other in the Cold War, and its belief in its world role as head of an Empire, put pressure on its finances.

By the early 1960s there were concerns that Britain was falling behind its European neighbours, particularly those that had joined together to form the European Economic Community in 1956; an attempt to join them failed. Moreover, the Conservative government looked increasingly out of touch with the new Britain that was emerging. Britain seemed to be at the centre of the modern world. It led the way in fashion and pop music; England even won the 1966 World Cup! It was hardly surprising that the Labour Party, led by the down-to-earth and state-educated Harold Wilson, and promising economic modernisation and scientific progress, won the elections of 1964 and 1966.

In many ways the later 1960s were a period of reform and modernisation. A swathe of liberalising legislation that encompassed abortion, homosexuality, censorship, capital punishment, divorce and education was passed and fundamentally changed British society. Nevertheless, the same underlying economic problems haunted the administration, limiting what it could do both domestically and in foreign affairs. Decolonisation meant that Britain sat at the head of a Commonwealth of states rather than an Empire, and this world role had to be balanced alongside Britain's relationship both with the United States and with Europe. Moreover, by the late 1960s, the optimism of earlier in the decade was tempered by increased stresses in society: anxiety over whether the permissive society had gone too far; increasing difficulty in working with trade unions; concerns about both the levels of immigration and the treatment of immigrants; violence in Northern Ireland; and student protests which turned into riots.

In many ways, the 1970s saw the issues that had been bubbling under the surface during the 1950s and 1960s come to a head. While entry into the EEC was finally achieved, the post-war consensus broke down as both the Conservative government of 1970 to 1974 and the Labour governments of 1974 to 1979 faced economic crises which they struggled to contain. Neither were able to prevent the escalation of the Troubles in Northern Ireland, and

both were indirectly brought down by conflicts with the trade unions. The emergence of punks and football hooligans seemed to indicate a country at war with itself.

The election of Thatcher in 1979 marked a break with the old consensus as the Conservative Party moved to the right. State intervention was reduced and the trade unions were tamed. Economic decline appeared to be halted, if not reversed. Britain also reasserted its role in the world both individually in the Falklands War and as the partner of the United States in the Cold War. But divisions in society – between rich and poor, North and South, black and white, in Northern Ireland – remained and in some ways grew more marked. This divided society was mirrored in politics as the breakdown of the post-war consensus led to the Labour Party moving to the left and eventually splitting in 1981. Three more election defeats for the Labour Party led to a fundamental reassessment; out of this emerged New Labour which seemed to accept some of Thatcherism's principles, perhaps indicating the early stages of a new consensus.

In 1997, after 18 years in government, the Conservative Party seemed tired and out of touch with changing social attitudes. It was increasingly split over Britain's role in Europe and had become bogged down in sleaze and scandal. Just as in 1964, the Labour opposition had a media-friendly leader and seemed to offer a new and modern alternative. Blair's Labour government came to office on a wave of optimism which seemed merited when it ended the conflict in Northern Ireland and presided over economic growth. However, Britain's position in the world continued to prove controversial, particularly its relationship with the United States in the context of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq; and at home this fuelled new tensions and divisions in society. Furthermore, despite the economic success, underlying problems remained.

This book will encourage you to reflect on how governments deal with political, economic and social challenges as well as the constraints that they face. You will come to appreciate how governments often have to deal with multiple problems, some of which appear insoluble, whose solutions conflict with other aims or create new (sometimes unforeseen) issues. Such developments take place against a backdrop of what Harold Macmillan is alleged to have called 'Events, dear boy, events'. All the time, politicians are influenced by their own beliefs, experiences, ideologies, ambitions, and, for the most part, are trying to convince the voters that they represent the best choice at the ballot box.

Key issues return time and time again throughout this period: the role of the State in the economy; Britain's position in the world; and changes in society, and the benefits such issues can bring, as well as the tensions they can cause. Debates such as these are as relevant today as they have been in the past. This period is one which is not only key to understanding what Britain is today, in terms of its politics, culture, society and its place in the world but also to appreciating how and why Britain has come to be as it is today.

1

The affluent society: Britain, 1951–64

1

Conservative governments



Fig. 1 A street party to celebrate the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953

SOURCE 1

Douglas Jay was a Labour Party MP from 1946 until 1983. He served in the cabinets of Attlee from 1947 to 1950 and of Wilson from 1964 to 1967. He was a follower of John Maynard Keynes' economic theories. He wrote his autobiography which chronicled his political career in 1980:

1951 was the most fiercely fought, passionate, neck-and-neck campaign of all the parliamentary elections I contested. But we had almost everything against us – the Bevanite quarrel, the loss of Ernest Bevin and the swing back of votes due to the revival of the anti-Labour propaganda in the national press. The result was very close – Labour won more votes than ever before – but the 1951 election determined the course of British politics for thirteen years afterwards. The Conservative government that won in 1951 was destined to coast along into the economically easy years of the 1950s. Thanks to the tough policies followed by the Attlee governments, there was the first real rise in living standards since the 1930s and a relaxation in restrictions and controls. If Attlee had not felt compelled to call an election in 1951, the Labour government itself might have coasted through to the easy years.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this chapter you will learn about:

- Conservative governments and reasons for political dominance: Churchill, Eden, Macmillan and Home as political leaders
- domestic policies
- internal Labour divisions
- reasons for the Conservatives' fall from power.

A CLOSER LOOK

The **Bevanite** quarrel refers to the split in the Labour Party in 1951 when Aneurin Bevan resigned as Minister of Labour over the Labour government's decision to introduce charges for prescriptions.

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

How valuable is Source 1 to an historian studying the significance of the 1951 election?

KEY TERM

first-past-the-post: a voting system whereby the candidate with the most votes in each constituency wins a seat in Parliament

Conservative governments and reasons for political dominance

In 1951 it was not immediately obvious that there would be a long period of Conservative dominance. Some Labour politicians were convinced they would soon return to power. Labour actually won more votes than the Conservative Party but the **first-past-the-post** electoral system meant that the Conservative Party won the most seats in the general election of that year and Winston Churchill became the new Conservative prime minister.

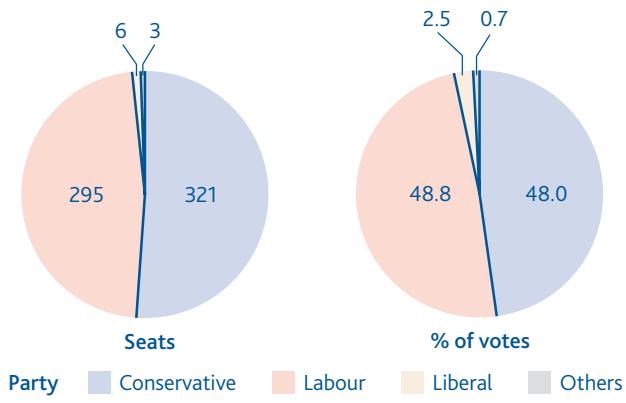


Fig. 2 General election results, 1951

Many Labour politicians regarded Churchill as a tired, old force and believed that the Conservatives would struggle with the intense economic difficulties Britain faced. They were wrong. Labour would not return to power for another 13 years.

Churchill, Eden, Macmillan and Home as political leaders

KEY CHRONOLOGY

- 1951** Bevanite quarrel
Churchill becomes prime minister for second time
- 1955** Eden becomes prime minister
- 1956** Suez Crisis
- 1957** Eden resigns; Macmillan becomes prime minister
- 1963** Britain's EEC application rejected
Macmillan resigns

KEY PROFILE

Fig. 3 Churchill led Britain through the Second World War

Winston Churchill (1874–1965)

had been a cabinet minister in both Liberal and Conservative governments between 1906 and 1940. He became prime minister in the war crisis of May 1940 and led Britain to victory by 1945. After the war, he continued to play the role of world statesman even though the Conservatives were in opposition. He was prime minister again from 1951 to 1955.



Fig. 4 Conservative politician Eden served three periods as foreign secretary

Anthony Eden (1897–1977) was a talented politician who had always been thought of as a future prime minister. He was a rising political star in the 1930s and played a key role in the Second World War as Winston Churchill's Foreign Secretary. On several occasions between 1951 and 1955 he was the acting prime minister in Churchill's absence. He became prime minister in 1955 but resigned in January 1957 after the Suez crisis, due to ill health.



Fig. 5 Butler was twice passed over for prime minister

R. A. Butler (1902–82) has become famous as 'the best prime minister the Conservatives never had'. He came to prominence as architect of the 1944 Education Act and played a key role in the reorganisation of the party and its policies in preparation for returning to power in 1951. He was chancellor from 1951 to 1955 and seen as a possible leader of the party both in 1957 after the fall of Eden and again in 1963 when Macmillan resigned.



Fig. 6 Macmillan was known for his pragmatism and wit

Harold Macmillan (1894–1986) was MP for Stockton-on-Tees and was Churchill's military liaison officer during the Second World War. He was a housing minister in Churchill's government from 1951 and Foreign Secretary in the Eden government. In 1957, he 'emerged' as the new Conservative prime minister after Eden's resignation. Macmillan's politics were shaped by two world wars and by the **Great Depression** of the 1930s when he was MP for Stockton-on-Tees in the depressed northeast. Attlee said in 1951 that Macmillan had very nearly joined the Labour Party in the 1930s. He was very much what has been described as a **one-nation Conservative**.

KEY TERM

Great Depression: this started in the United States with the Wall Street Crash when the value of shares on the stock exchange collapsed; economic activity was reduced across the whole world which led to mass unemployment in the 1930s; in Britain unemployment affected 25 per cent of the workforce

one-nation Conservative: believes that all classes in society have obligations to one another and that there is a particular responsibility for those who are better off to ensure the well-being of those who are worse off

Winston Churchill had gained his reputation for leading wartime Britain to victory but the Churchill of 1951 to 1955 was not really a great post-war prime minister. He was an old man (80 years old when he finally retired in 1955) with many serious ailments. He suffered a serious stroke in 1953 that left him with impaired speech, although this was kept secret at the time.

There were also other reasons for Churchill's inactivity in domestic politics beyond age and illness. Churchill had always thought of himself as an international statesman, not a domestic politician. He spent more time abroad, meeting world leaders or relaxing at his favourite holiday spots, than in Downing Street. He believed that his key priority was to help ensure that no new conflict would break out, particularly because of the dangers of nuclear war.

Churchill also believed that he was above party politics. He had started off as a Conservative but had joined the Liberals in 1904 and served as a Liberal cabinet minister before the First World War before rejoining the Conservative Party in 1924. As prime minister in the 1950s he attempted to persuade Liberals to join his cabinet. He also used non-Conservative peers to oversee ministries.

His absenteeism meant that day-to-day government was often left with the acting prime minister, Anthony Eden, and key ministers such as Rab Butler, the **Chancellor of the Exchequer**, and Harold Macmillan, minister for housing. Churchill aimed to avoid any controversy with these appointments:

KEY TERM

Chancellor of the Exchequer: the government minister responsible for economic and financial policy; the chancellor is often the most powerful person in the government after the prime minister

although Butler was not an economist Churchill believed that he would work well with Parliament and the trade unions and avoid any social and industrial conflict. Conservatives who were more critical of the post-war consensus had more limited roles in his government and suggestions of a radical break from the post-war consensus were rejected.

There were tensions within Churchill's government. Butler, Macmillan and Eden did not get on well; these rivalries lasted throughout the 13 years of Conservative rule. Relations also became strained between Churchill and Eden; as Churchill's heir-apparent, Eden frequently became impatient as he waited for Churchill to step down.

Eden as prime minister

When Eden at last took power in 1955, there were initially high hopes in the Conservative Party, especially when Eden called a general election and increased the Conservative majority from 17 seats to 60. Butler became Chancellor and Macmillan became Foreign Secretary.

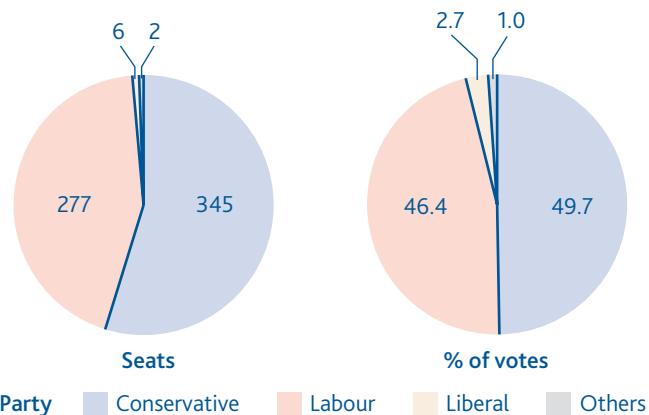


Fig. 7 General election results, 1955

CROSS-REFERENCE

The Suez crisis, involving military intervention over the Suez Canal in Egypt, is covered in detail in Chapter 4.

A CLOSER LOOK

Eden had told the House of Commons that Britain did not know that Israel planned to invade Egypt in December 1956; in reality the plan for France and Britain to intervene in Egypt after an Israeli invasion had been in place since October.

CROSS-REFERENCE

Edward Heath is profiled in Chapter 4, page 31.

Almost all of Eden's previous political experience had been in foreign policy and within six months some in the Conservative Party were voicing disquiet with his leadership as his lack of experience and interest in domestic affairs became more apparent. He was anxious about making decisions, and was particularly conscious of his lack of knowledge on economic issues. Like Churchill he aimed to prevent industrial conflict, and this led to criticism that he was too conciliatory with the trade unions. His weakness as leader was exemplified by his attempt to move Macmillan from the Foreign Office to the Treasury in October 1955. Macmillan did not want to move and managed to delay it until December.

However, it was Eden's decision to take military action during the Suez Crisis in 1956, ending in disaster, which really soured his reputation as leader. While Suez was first and foremost a diplomatic and military fiasco and a turning point for Britain's illusions of imperial power, it was also a political crisis. Eden came under heavy attack from the Labour Party in Parliament and from sections of the national press, notably the *Manchester Guardian*. He was accused of lying to the House of Commons and his reputation was badly damaged.

Suez also caused problems within the Conservative Party. The colonial minister, Anthony Nutting, resigned from the cabinet. There was a rebellion by nearly 40 Conservative MPs. The Chief Whip, **Edward Heath**, who was responsible for keeping the party in line was himself strongly opposed to Eden's actions. Worst of all for the government, the pressure from the

United States had exposed Britain's financial weakness. Eden never recovered from Suez and he resigned early in 1957, over ill health.

The Conservative Party was not, however, seriously damaged by Suez and although Macmillan had initially supported the intervention into Suez, he succeeded Eden as prime minister.

Macmillan's main rival was R. A. Butler. But Butler was not nearly as popular within the Conservative Party as he was with the country. His reputation had been damaged by introducing tax cuts shortly before the 1955 election which then had to be reversed after the election as the economy overheated. Most of Eden's cabinet preferred Macmillan and so he 'emerged' as the leader. Macmillan was seen as a safe choice and he had few enemies. There were also memories of the past: Macmillan had disagreed with the Conservative government in the 1930s, over both the policy of appeasement and the way to deal with the Great Depression and high unemployment. Butler, however, had been closely linked to the policy of **appeasement**.

KEY TERM

appeasement: a policy of making concessions in order to avoid conflict; in the 1930s the British government had aimed to prevent a war with Nazi Germany by following this policy, but failed

Macmillan as prime minister

Party unity was restored, without lasting splits. Apparent economic prosperity continued to gain approval from the voters. For five years, Macmillan appeared to be in full control of affairs. Butler became Home Secretary. In October 1959, Macmillan called a general election. Macmillan, by now nicknamed 'Supermac', led the Conservatives to a comfortable victory, pushing the Conservative parliamentary majority up to 100 seats.

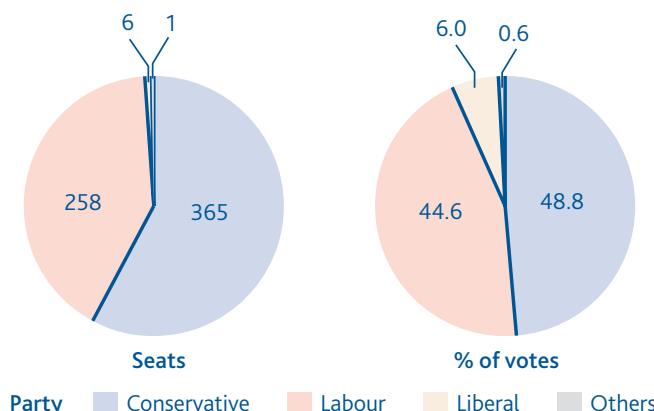


Fig. 8 General election results, 1959

The post-war economic boom was continuing. The Labour Party was in disarray, increasingly preoccupied with its own internal battles. Macmillan seemed to have the media in the palm of his hand, using the new political opportunities provided by television with flair.

ACTIVITY

In pairs make a list of all the ways that Conservative leaders helped to ensure their dominance between 1951 and 1959.

Domestic policies

Most Conservatives had accepted many of the reforms of the previous Labour government. Attitudes towards industry, the trade unions and social policy were going to have to be very different from the 1930s because the experiences of the war years had made people far more ready to accept the need for state intervention and planning. The National Health Service (NHS) had already assumed iconic status. Partly by conviction and partly by necessity, the new government accepted the existence of the so-called post-war consensus.

A CLOSER LOOK**Post-war consensus**

This is an understanding that after the Second World War there was a great deal of agreement between the main political parties on the major issues.

There is a great deal of dispute amongst historians regarding what level of a consensus there was and, if there was a consensus, when it ended. The key elements normally identified as part of this consensus are:

- a belief in a mixed economy: involvement by the State as well as private enterprise
- support for the NHS and the welfare state
- a wish to ensure full employment and to avoid the mass unemployment of the 1930s
- working with both trade unions and employers.

The post-war consensus is sometimes called Butskellism, after the Conservative politician R. A. Butler and the Labour leader Hugh Gaitskell. But within both the Labour and Conservative parties there were different opinions about all of these areas of policy.

- **Housing:** In 1951 the Conservative manifesto promised to build 300,000 houses a year. This would rebuild the housing stock destroyed during the war and replace many of the slums that people had lived in before the war. Macmillan, as housing minister, oversaw the success of this.
- **Education:** The Conservatives also continued the tripartite system in education which had developed after the Butler Act of 1944. Three kinds of school emerged: the grammar school for the intellectually gifted; the technical school which would concentrate on practical and vocational skills; and the secondary modern which would give a basic education to the majority. Children would take an 11+ test in their last year of primary school to determine what type of school they would go to. Financial restraints under Churchill meant that, in practice, most schools were either grammar schools or secondary moderns, although Eden did start to try and promote a greater emphasis on technical education during his brief time as prime minister. By the beginning of the 1960s some people were starting to question whether this system was fair.
- **Social reforms:** There were a number of social reforms during Macmillan's premiership. The Clean Air Act of 1956 aimed to prevent the smog of the early 1950s and the Housing and Factory Acts aimed to improve living and working conditions. Butler as Home Secretary (1957–62), was more liberal than many other Conservatives and action started to be taken on some more controversial social issues such as homosexuality and the death penalty. The Homicide Act of 1957 restricted when the death penalty would be imposed and in 1957 the Wolfenden Commission recommended that homosexual behaviour should no longer be a criminal act. These issues would return in the 1960s.

STUDY TIP

Identify what makes a good political leader and make a list of these qualities. When planning your essay make a list of all the pluses and minuses for both Churchill and Eden under each of these headings before coming to an overall judgement. You don't have to come to the same conclusion for each of them. You may also find it useful to read Chapter 2 so that you have a greater understanding of their economic policies.

ACTIVITY

Make a picture gallery of the key politicians of 1951 to 1964 and beneath each give a brief profile of their career and influence. If you have room you could display these on your classroom wall – 'red' Labour on the left and 'blue' Conservatives on the right.

**PRACTICE QUESTION**

'Neither Churchill nor Eden were effective political leaders in the years 1951 to 1956.' Explain why you agree or disagree with this view.



Fig. 9 Smog in London in the 1950s

Internal Labour divisions

The Labour Party had only narrowly lost the 1951 election. The total Labour vote, 14 million, was actually larger than in any of Labour's previous election victories. Many Labour activists believed they might soon return to power. In fact, the Labour Party was suffering from deep internal problems and these problems intensified during the 1950s. Attlee continued as leader until 1955 but the great wartime generation of Labour leaders was ageing and often in poor health. Party unity had been well maintained while in government but there was a growing split in the party, both in ideology and in personalities.

The key figures in this split were **Aneurin ('Nye') Bevan** and **Hugh Gaitskell** and the split seriously harmed the effectiveness of Labour's opposition to the Conservative government in the 1950s.

KEY PROFILE

Aneurin ('Nye') Bevan (1897–1960) had been minister of health in the Attlee government and was the architect of the NHS. He was a hero to the Labour Left. When Bevan resigned from the government in 1951 to protest against the introduction of prescription charges, he gained the support of many Labour MPs and trade unionists.

Hugh Gaitskell (1906–63) was the Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1950 to 1951 who introduced prescription charges. He was on the Right of the Labour Party and became the leader in 1955, defeating Bevan in the election. He attempted to reform the Labour Party but was unsuccessful.

The splits in the Labour movement widened during the later 1950s. Both Gaitskell and Bevan stood for the Labour Party leadership in 1955 when Attlee stepped down. Gaitskell, who was seen as being on the right of the Labour Party, defeated Bevan, who was seen as the leader of the left-wingers in the party.

KEY TERM

unilateral nuclear disarmament: the policy of renouncing the use and possession of nuclear weapons without waiting for any international consultation or agreement

CROSS-REFERENCE

For more detail on CND and debates surrounding nuclear deterrents, look ahead to Chapter 4.

The left-wingers wanted the Labour Party to be more socialist. In addition there was growing opposition to the party leadership from the trade unions and simmering divisions over Britain's nuclear weapons. Initially Bevan opposed Britain developing nuclear weapons but in 1957 he announced his opposition to **unilateral nuclear disarmament**, arguing that 'it would send a British Foreign Secretary naked into the conference-chamber'. However, many Labour left-wingers joined the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) and the links between CND and the Labour Left may well have turned some voters away from Labour.

Until the late 1950s, the unions had been happy with full employment and their leaders were essentially moderates. In 1956, however, a left-winger, **Frank Cousins**, became leader of one of the most powerful unions, the TGWU (Transport and General Workers Union). Cousins then led fierce union opposition to Gaitskell over Britain's nuclear weapons.

KEY PROFILE

Frank Cousins (1927–92) became leader of the TGWU in 1956. In 1958, he led an unsuccessful bus strike against the Macmillan government. In the Labour Party conference in October 1960, Cousins bitterly opposed Gaitskell's leadership of the Labour movement, specifically over nuclear weapons. Cousins had led the unions into taking left-wing positions hostile to the party leadership. These divisions carried on into the 1970s and 1980s.

Despite this, Labour entered the 1959 election campaign with some optimism. Gaitskell was a confident and effective campaigner, promoting moderate policies that Labour thought would be popular with voters. The extent of the defeat for Labour was a genuine surprise as well as a disappointment.

After this defeat the divisions became even more apparent and battles over the future direction of the Labour Party were fought out at the annual party conferences at Blackpool in 1959 and at Scarborough in 1960. At the 1959 conference, held just before the general election, Gaitskell put forward the idea of abolishing **Clause IV** of the party constitution, the clause that committed the party to **nationalisation**. It soon became clear, however, that opposition from the left wing and from some union leaders would be fierce; Gaitskell backed down without putting it to the vote. The Scarborough conference of 1960 became a legend in Labour's history because of Hugh Gaitskell's emotional speech when trying to convince the conference to reject unilateral nuclear disarmament. Although he lost the vote in 1960 he succeeded in overturning that result a year later.

CROSS-REFERENCE

The eventual rewriting of Clause IV in the Labour Party's constitution is covered in Chapter 18.

KEY TERM

nationalisation: State ownership of key industries; the demand for the State to control 'the commanding heights of the economy' had been a central principle of the Labour Party from its beginning

ACTIVITY

Draw a spider diagram that identifies the problems that the Labour Party had during the period 1951 to 1964.

SOURCE 2

In the debate over nuclear disarmament at the Labour Party conference in Scarborough in 1960, the leader Hugh Gaitskell tried to convince the party not to support unilateral nuclear disarmament:

We may lose the vote today, and the result may deal this party a grave blow. It may not be possible to prevent this, but there are some of us, I think many of us, who will not accept that this blow need be mortal: who will not

believe that such an end is inevitable. There are some of us, Mr Chairman, who will fight, and fight, and fight again, to save the party we love. We will fight, and fight, and fight again, to bring back sanity and honesty and dignity, so that our party – with its great past – may retain its glory and its greatness.

Labour's political position slowly improved after 1960. It appeared more united. Cultural shifts in the country made the public more critical of the Conservative government by the beginning of the 1960s. And, in 1963, the death of Hugh Gaitskell had opened the way for Labour to elect **Harold Wilson** as leader.

Reasons for the Conservatives' fall from power

Harold Macmillan's nickname, 'Supermac', reflected his sure touch in politics and his flair for presentation. From 1962, however, this began to slip. Macmillan's own classic explanation of the causes of political ups and downs had always been: 'Events, dear boy, events'. In 1961 to 1963, numerous events came together to weaken his grip on government, leading finally to his resignation as prime minister in October 1963.

By the early 1960s there were growing concerns over the economy. Britain made an application to join the EEC in 1961; this application was rejected in 1963.

SOURCE 3

Macmillan recorded his thoughts in his diary after Britain's application to join the EEC was rejected in 1963:

All our policies, at home and abroad are in ruins. Our defence plans have been radically changed, from air to sea. European unity is no more; French domination of Europe is the new and alarming feature; the popularity of our government is declining. We have lost everything except our courage and determination.

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

Read Source 2 carefully. What are Gaitskell's key arguments? Identify the key words and phrases that you think he is using to convince his audience of his argument.

CROSS-REFERENCE

Harold Wilson and his leadership of the Labour Party is covered in Chapter 5.

CROSS-REFERENCE

The application to join the EEC is covered in Chapter 4.

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

How useful is Source 3 in assessing the success of Macmillan's premiership?

Macmillan himself seemed to have lost his political touch. In response to the problems his government was facing, Macmillan radically reshuffled his cabinet in July 1962, sacking a third of it. This became known as the 'Night of the Long Knives'. It was intended to rejuvenate the government but it actually weakened it. Macmillan was made to seem clumsy. He also appeared increasingly out of touch. His image as an Edwardian gentlemen and his marriage into the aristocracy made him appear out of date. The economic situation also continued to cause concern.

Worse still, in the early 1960s came a series of spy scandals: George Blake was convicted of being a Soviet double agent in 1961; and in 1962 John Vassall, a civil servant, was discovered to have been blackmailed, on the basis of his homosexuality, to pass information onto the Soviet Union. But the most infamous scandal, combining sex, spying and high politics was the Profumo

A CLOSER LOOK

The Profumo affair

John Profumo, the Defence Secretary, had a brief relationship with Christine Keeler. She was also sleeping with a Soviet spy called Ivanov, which raised questions about possible leaks of Cold War secrets. Profumo was forced to resign in disgrace.

KEY PROFILE

Sir Alec Douglas-Home (Lord Home) (1903–95) served as Foreign Secretary under both Macmillan and under Edward Heath (1970–74). When he was chosen to be the Conservative Party leader in 1963 he gave up his peerage so that he could sit in the House of Commons rather than the House of Lords. He also introduced elections for the Conservative leadership, as a formal system hadn't existed before 1965.

ACTIVITY

Extension

1. Research Quintin Hogg, Iain McLeod and Reginald Maudling and write your own short biography for each of them.
2. Imagine that you are one of the Conservatives consulted about who the new leader should be. Write a paragraph that sets out your choice and clearly explains why yours is the best candidate.

affair in 1963. The politician at the centre was Macmillan's Secretary of State for War, John Profumo. In his statements to Parliament, and in his personal assurances to the prime minister, Profumo lied about his actions. A public inquiry, headed by a high court judge, kept the affair in the headlines for weeks on end. The political impact of the **Profumo affair** was actually short-lived but the image of Macmillan and the Conservative government as old and out of touch was reinforced.

Macmillan's position was finally undermined by a serious illness. He had a major abdominal operation that kept him in hospital for weeks in the autumn of 1963 and he resigned in October. Macmillan had not prepared the way for anyone to succeed him, and the Conservative Party faced a divisive power struggle. There was strong opposition to the two most obvious candidates, Rab Butler and Lord Hailsham, and, in the end, a compromise candidate, **Lord Home**, a peer, emerged as the leader. The whole business made the Conservative Party seem trapped in a bygone age.



Fig. 10 The emergence of a new Conservative leader after the 'customary processes of consultation'; cartoon by Vicky in the Evening Standard, October 1963
(left to right: unknown, Rab Butler, Quintin Hogg, Sir Alec Douglas-Home, Iain McLeod, Reginald Maudling, Edward Heath)

Summary

ACTIVITY

Summary

Hold a balloon debate. With reference to your picture gallery of prominent politicians from the Activity on page 6, choose individuals to argue the case for 'saving' one person. The rest of the class should vote on who should be thrown from the balloon!

**PRACTICE QUESTION****Evaluating primary sources**

With reference to Sources 1 and 2 and your understanding of the historical context, which of these two sources is more valuable in explaining the reasons why the Labour Party was unable to challenge the Conservative Party's political dominance between 1951 and 1964?

STUDY TIP

Read both sources carefully. Identify the key points that each source makes which are relevant to understanding the reasons why the Labour Party struggled in this period. Then think about the provenance of each source. Who has written the source? Are they in a good position to comment? Why might they want to make these points? Who are they speaking to? What else is going on at this time that might affect the speaker?

After you've done all this, think about how the answers to these questions might affect the sources' overall value.

**ESSAY QUESTION**

'The Conservative Party lost the 1964 election because they were outdated and out of touch with the electorate.' Assess the validity of this view.

STUDY TIP

This question is asking you about the reasons for the Conservatives' defeat in the 1964 election. Identify the evidence that agrees that the Conservatives lost because they were out of date. But you might also argue that they were not outdated and point to some of their more successful policies. Another way of answering this question is to look at other reasons why the Conservatives lost, and you might prefer to tackle this question after reading Chapters 2 and 3. There is no one right answer to this question but you should make sure that your overall conclusion is supported by the arguments and evidence you put forward.

2 Economic developments

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this chapter you will learn about:

- the post-war boom
- balance of payments issues and 'stop-go' policies.

A CLOSER LOOK

Inflation and deflation

Inflation is the increase in the price of goods and services which occurs when people have more money to spend than there are goods available. Some inflation can help an economy because it encourages manufacturers to expand their businesses and employ more people but too much can lead to the economy overheating as workers demand higher wages because of higher prices.

Deflation is a fall in the price of goods and services; inflation controls that curb spending such as 'freezing' wage rises, increasing taxation or making borrowing harder so that goods cannot be bought on credit bring down prices. Deflation can lead to unemployment as people have less money to spend so less goods and services need to be produced.

SOURCE 1

Harold Macmillan, addressing a large audience of Conservative supporters at Bedford football ground, July 1957. This was at a rally to celebrate 25 years of service by the local Conservative MP:

Let's be frank about it; most of our people have never had it so good. Go around the country, go to individual towns, go to the farms, and you will see a state of prosperity such as we have never had in my lifetime – nor indeed ever in the history of this country. What is beginning to worry some of us, 'Is it too good to be true?', or perhaps I should say, 'Is it too good to last?' For amidst all this prosperity there is one problem that has troubled us ever since the war. It is the problem of rising prices. Our concern today is, 'Can prices be steadied while at the same time we maintain full employment in an expanding economy?' For if **inflation** prices us out of world markets we shall be back in the old nightmare of unemployment. The older ones among you will know what this meant. I hope the younger ones never have to learn it.

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

1. What can be learned about Macmillan's attitude to the economic situation in the 1950s from Source 1?
2. In what ways is this source valuable for an understanding of economic developments in the 1950s?



Fig. 1 An advertisement for the Austin Metropolitan 1500 from 1957

The Britain of 1951 had been shaped by three episodes of its recent history. The first episode was the Great Depression of the 1930s, seen in 1951 as an awful time of misery, mass unemployment and a failure by government to solve or alleviate problems. The second episode was the Second World War where all parts of the nation had worked together to defeat the forces of evil

by a heroic national effort and shared sacrifice. The third episode was the rebuilding of post-war Britain under Attlee's Labour governments between 1945 and 1951, above all the establishment of the welfare state. Public and political opinion in Britain believed that never again should there be anything like the 'Hungry Thirties' or the terrible war that followed. Victory in the war and the sacrifice that enabled this should lead to a better, fairer Britain in the future. This was the basis of the so-called '**post-war consensus**'.

Post-war boom

In some ways the Conservative government was lucky in its timing, coming to power just as the beginnings of the post-Second World War economic recovery were beginning to show through. The general pattern of the 1950s was one of continued economic improvement. Food **rationing** finally came to an end in July 1954. The austerity of wartime was over and the British people were set to enjoy a higher standard of living than ever before.

There was a swift acceleration in the birth rate at the end of the Second World War leading to a fast-growing population. By 1961 there were 51 million people in Great Britain, which was 5 per cent (2 million) more than in 1951.

The global economy was booming as countries rebuilt after the war. This led to a sustained increase in overseas trade which brought high levels of earnings from exports and investments. This, together with the rising demand at home, ensured plentiful employment. By 1955 it was estimated that full employment had been achieved, with only 200,000 unemployed, less than 1 per cent of the workforce. Although the numbers employed in traditional occupations, such as agriculture, fishing, coal mining and shipbuilding, fell during this period, there was a huge expansion in electrical and engineering work, and more jobs in industries relating to cars, steel and other metals.

In addition, service industries that ranged from financial and professional services to transport and sales were growing. By 1960 nearly 5 million people were employed in service industries – this was 1 in 5 of the population and roughly the same number as in all heavy industry.

Economic growth and low unemployment brought rising wages and most people enjoyed a spectacular rise in income. In the run-up to the 1955 election, Rab Butler, the Chancellor, was able to boost Conservative election prospects with a 'give-away' budget that provided the middle classes with £134 million in tax cuts. People felt more affluent and there was a growth in consumerism.

The improvement in the terms of world trade in the later 1950s enabled Britain to import about 29 per cent more goods than it had in 1951 for the same number of exports.

Britain enjoyed a higher income per head than any other major country, except for the United States. However, this does not mean that the UK's growth rates exceeded those of elsewhere.

Table 1 A comparison of the industrial production 1952–59, using 1950 = 100 as a baseline

	1952	1955	1957	1959
West Germany	126	179	204	225
France	110	131	156	170
Italy	117	153	177	202
Netherlands	103	134	143	158
USA	111	124	127	133
UK	101	121	123	129

CROSS-REFERENCE

The post-war consensus is defined in Chapter 1, page 6.

A CLOSER LOOK

During the Second World War there was a shortage of many foods including meat, butter and sugar.

Rationing was introduced to prevent the price of food rising so much that only rich people would be able to afford to buy it. The rationed allowance was based on people's nutritional needs and although it was unpopular, it meant that many people's diets were healthier than before the war.

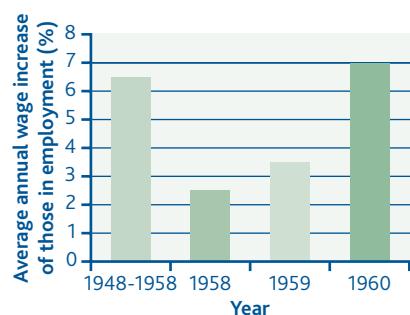


Fig. 2 Wage increases of those in employment

CROSS-REFERENCE

Rising living standards and the impact of affluence and consumerism are covered in more detail in Chapter 3.

ACTIVITY

Look at Tables 1 and 2.

- What happened to British industrial production and share of world trade during this period?
- Is it useful to compare Britain's performance to other countries? Explain your answer.

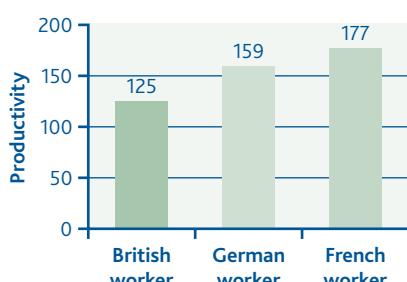


Fig. 3 Worker productivity by 1960, using 1950 = 100 as a baseline

KEY TERM

productivity: efficiency, i.e. getting more produced per worker, per shift, per hourly wage; in this way, costs are reduced, profits are increased and workers are freed up for other uses

ACTIVITY

- What does Fig. 3 tell you about productivity in Britain in 1960?
- Why does this matter?

A CLOSER LOOK

Trade unions had emerged in the nineteenth century to protect and fight for workers' interests in pay and working conditions. They used industrial action, such as strikes, to put pressure on employers and/or the government.

KEY TERM

'stop-go' economics: the economics of 'stop-go' derived its name from the tensions between an expanding economy, with low interest rates and rising consumer spending ('go') and the results of the economy overheating, with wages and imports exceeding productivity and exports, necessitating a deliberate slowing down, or deflating of the economy ('stop') through higher interest rates and spending cuts

	1950	1951	1959	1962
UK	25	22	17	15
USA	27	26	21	20
West Germany	7	10	19	20
Japan	3	4	7	7

Table 2 A comparison of shares in world trade in percentages, 1950–62

So the late 1950s were years of optimism. The British enjoyed more jobs, more money, more goods, better housing and the provisions of the new welfare state. The adults, who had been used to wartime deprivation, suddenly found themselves with money to spend on cars, new appliances, luxuries and entertainment, while the younger generation, growing up amid plenty and oblivious to past shortages and fears, sought to enjoy life to the full.

Balance of payments issues and 'stop-go' policies

However, the economic picture was not as positive as the growth in affluence might have suggested. The growth in wages was outstripping the rate of increase in production and this brought inflation.

The Conservative government was constantly faced with the task of how to maintain growth and employment at the same time as keeping prices steady. Macmillan's answer was partly in an appeal to industry and the public: 'What we need is restraint and common sense – restraint in the demands we make and common sense in how we spend our income.'

But it was difficult to persuade the **trade unions** that their members should not have high wage increases, particularly in some industries such as coal where miners felt that they were not gaining as much as other workers. Government controls had to be used to curb excessive inflation and taxation remained high, both to control excessive spending that would lead to an unwanted increase in imports and to pay for the rising costs of public services.

This pattern, where the government attempted to control growth when the economy was in danger of overheating, is known as '**stop-go** economics'.

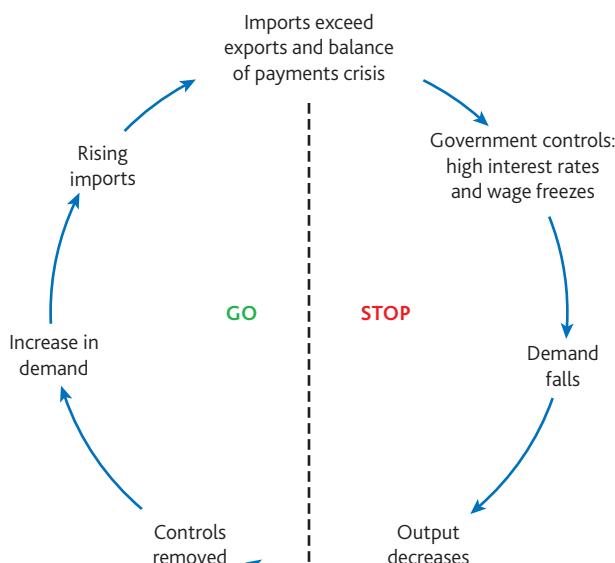


Fig. 4 The 'stop-go' economic cycle

Although higher salaries had created a large internal consumer demand, they did not encourage manufacturers to increase their export trade which would

have helped bolster the export industries. This led to a trade deficit which helped to cause problems with the **balance of payments**.

	Balance of visible trade	Balance of invisible trade	Overall trade balance
1946–50	–160	+104	–56
1951–55	–345	+326	–19
1956–60	–94	+226	+132

Table 3 The UK **balance of trade**, 1946–60, in £m

ACTIVITY

Look at Table 3.

- What has happened to the UK's overall trade balance?
- What has caused the overall trade balance to change in this way?
- Do you think politicians would have been pleased with these trade figures? Explain your answer.

The pressure from the United States over the Suez crisis exposed Britain's financial weakness and started a **run on the pound**. Macmillan's Chancellor, **Peter Thorneycroft**, believed in what a later generation would have called 'monetarism': he wanted to limit wage increases and to cut the money supply. Other cabinet ministers, such as Iain MacLeod, who were one-nation Conservatives, were strongly opposed to such a policy because it would lead to increased unemployment and cutbacks in housing.

KEY PROFILE

Peter Thorneycroft (1909–94) was a Conservative MP from 1938. Although he resigned as Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1958, he returned to the cabinet in 1960. He was later a great supporter of Margaret Thatcher and served as chairman of the Conservative Party from 1975 to 1981.

The crisis and the divisions in the cabinet carried on throughout the summer of 1957. It was a row that symbolised the problems of 'stop-go' economics.

In the end Macmillan sided with those who wanted to keep up an expansionist economic policy. When Thorneycroft proposed drastic spending cuts in 1958, Macmillan overruled him. Thorneycroft resigned, together with his junior ministers, **Enoch Powell** and Nigel Birch. The post-war consensus had remained in place.

KEY PROFILE

Enoch Powell (1912–98) was a Conservative MP from 1950 to 1970. He held a number of ministerial posts but was a critic of the post-war consensus. He became notorious for a speech he made about immigration in 1968 after which he was sacked from the shadow cabinet (see pages 47–48). In February 1974 he left the Conservative Party, instead urging people to vote for the Labour Party in the March election, because he was opposed to entry into the EEC. In the October 1974 election he was elected as an MP for the Ulster Unionist Party.

KEY TERM

balance of trade: the difference

between the goods that a country imports and what it exports; if a country imports more than it exports it is said to have a trade deficit; if it exports more than it imports it has a trade surplus

balance of payment: this includes invisible imports and exports i.e. services such as shipping, banking and insurance; the balance of trade is part of the balance of payments

CROSS-REFERENCE

The Suez crisis is covered in Chapter 4.

KEY TERM

run on the pound: a term describing a rapid fall in the value of the pound in international currency markets, especially in relation to the US dollar

CROSS-REFERENCE

Monetarism is discussed in Chapter 14, pages 117–118, with reference to Mrs Thatcher's governments from 1979.

ACTIVITY

Imagine you are a civil servant advising Harold Macmillan on the economy. What are the advantages and disadvantages of following Thorneycroft or of following Macleod's advice?

ACTIVITY

Sources 1 and 2 give different interpretations of Britain's economic position during the 1950s. Explain what these interpretations are and why they might be different.

KEY TERM

sterling: a term used by economists for the British currency, the pound sterling

ACTIVITY

Create a flow chart to show the 'stop-go' economic policies in this period.

SOURCE 2

In January 1958, Peter Thorneycroft said the following in a speech in Parliament, shortly after he resigned as Chancellor of the Exchequer:

We have slithered from one crisis to another. Sometimes it has been the balance of payments crisis and sometimes it has been an exchange crisis. It is a picture of a nation in full retreat from its responsibilities. It is the road to ruin. I do not believe that the problem is technical at all. I do not believe in an answer to the question whether we should use bank rate or physical controls. To tell the truth, neither of them works very well. The simple truth is that we have been spending more money than we should.

This financial crisis did not do lasting harm to the popularity of the Conservative Party, which improved dramatically by 1959. Typically, Macmillan shrugged off the resignations of Thorneycroft and Powell as 'a little local difficulty'. **Sterling** regained its value against the dollar. The economy expanded so much that the budget of April 1959 provided tax cuts of £370 million – even more than the Butler 'election give-away' budget of 1955. The general air of consumer affluence reflected in the budget is generally accepted as the key factor in Macmillan's comfortable re-election in October 1959.

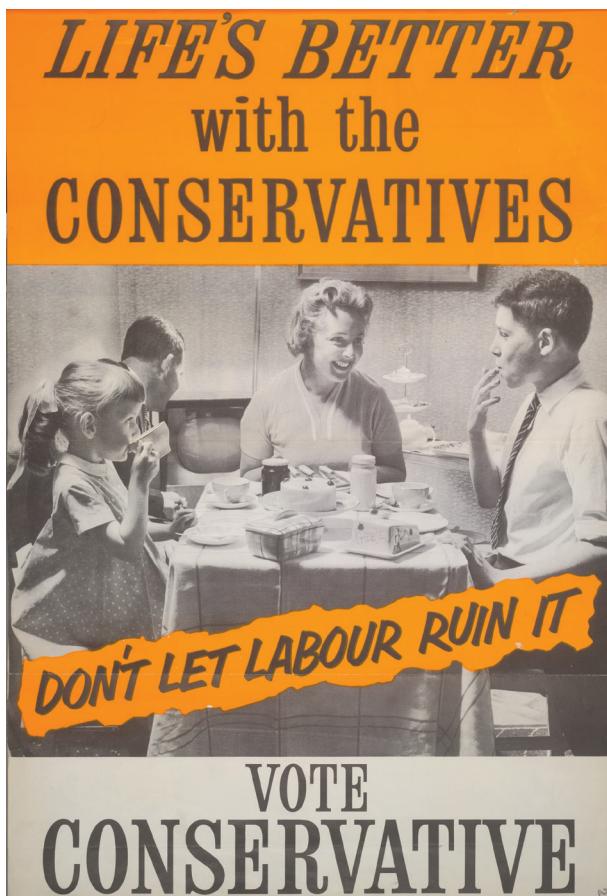


Fig. 5 A Conservative poster from the 1959 General Election

The British economy continued to grow and was at its peak between 1960 and 1964. However, the government became further trapped in a cycle of 'stop-go' policies in an attempt to maintain economic stability.

In 1961, worries about the economy overheating forced the government to introduce a 'pay pause' to hold down wage inflation, and to ask for a loan from the IMF (International Monetary Fund). The economic difficulties facing the Conservatives by 1962 were familiar ones: the balance of payments problem and the economics of 'stop-go'.

It was also becoming clear that economic growth in Europe, especially in West Germany, was leaving Britain behind and that trade with the Empire and Commonwealth was not sufficient to keep up. Therefore, Macmillan reversed his party's previous policy and decided it was essential for Britain's economy to be joined with Europe's. The 1961 application was a symbol of the sense of failure in bringing about economic modernisation.

To address this Selwyn Lloyd, Macmillan's third Chancellor of the Exchequer, set up the National Economic Development Council (NEDC, known as Neddy). This consisted of government representatives, academics, employers and the trade unionists, and it was made responsible for long-term planning. A National Incomes Commission (known as Nicky), to keep an eye on wages and prices, was added in 1962.

SOURCE 3

In April 1962 the left-leaning newspaper, *The Guardian*, reported:

BRITAIN BOTTOM OF THE CLASS

Britain economically came bottom of the class in the annual report published here tonight by the Secretariat of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. Britain has the 'sorry distinction of being the only Western country whose volume of national output was practically unchanged from the previous year' and is, 'the one country where the employment situation has seriously deteriorated'.

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

How valuable is Source 3 for an historian studying Britain's economic position by 1962?

ACTIVITY

Get into pairs. Check your understanding by individually writing one-sentence definitions of the following without looking back at the Key Term features: inflation; stop-go; balance of trade. Once you've had a go, check your partner's answers against the Key Term boxes.

CROSS-REFERENCE

Britain's application to join the EEC is covered in Chapter 4.

The rejection of Britain's application to join the EEC in January 1963 was a serious setback for Macmillan's economic policies. In his memoirs, Edward Heath claimed that he never saw Macmillan as bitterly depressed as he was after de Gaulle's veto.

In the autumn of 1963, the Beeching Report was published as part of a review into cutting public expenditure. It recommended massive cuts in Britain's rail network, including the closure of more than 30 per cent of the rail network, provoking public outrage. Hundreds of branch lines and thousands of stations were axed, causing fundamental social change, and leaving many rural areas more isolated. The government was no longer surfing on a wave of prosperity and economic success.

Reginald Maudling, who had replaced Lloyd as Chancellor of the Exchequer, pushed the economy into a 'go' phase by lowering the bank rate to encourage consumer spending. Britain's growth rate rose from 4 per cent in 1963 to nearly 6 per cent in 1964. Nevertheless, while exports rose just over 10 per cent between 1961 and 1964, imports remained nearly 20 per cent higher.

ACTIVITY

Summary

In pairs, study the data in Tables 1 to 3 and Figs. 2 and 3. Using the information in these tables, and your own knowledge, prepare a report on the state of the British economy between 1951 and 1964. In your report you should:

- outline the position, as you see it – with suitable factual support
- explain how this situation has come about
- present your report to the rest of the class.

Summary

Although the British economy was still growing and living standards were still going up, the cycle of ‘stop-go’ economics had not been broken. Economic growth would still lead to the overheating of the economy through excessive, expensive imports and rising wage demands. Britain continued to slip behind foreign competitors such as West Germany, the United States and Japan. The economic problems apparent in the 1950s had not been solved.

STUDY TIP

Think carefully about who is the author of each of these sources. What do you know about them that might affect their view? Does this affect their value to the historian?



PRACTICE QUESTION

Evaluating primary sources

Look back at Sources 1, 2, and 3. With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these three sources to an historian studying the success of the British economy between 1951 and 1964.

STUDY TIP

To answer this question you will need to identify all the reasons that help explain why the Conservative Party was successful in this period. Look back at Chapter 1 to help you.



PRACTICE QUESTION

‘The Conservative Party won elections between 1951 and 1964 as a result of voters’ increasing prosperity.’ Explain why you agree or disagree with this view.

3 Social developments



Fig. 1 The Festival of Britain, 1951 was held on London's South Bank

SOURCE 1

Saturday Night and Sunday Morning is a novel, set in Nottingham, written by Alan Sillitoe and published in 1958. Sillitoe left school at 14 and went to work in a bicycle factory with his father. In this extract the main character, Arthur, reflects on the impact of the 1950s on his father:

The old man was happy at last, and he deserved to be happy, after all the years before the war on the dole, five kids and the big misery that went with no money and no way of getting any. And now he had a sit-down job at the factory, all the Woodbines he could smoke, money for a pint if he wanted one, a jaunt on the firm's trip to Blackpool, and a television set to look into at home. The thousands that worked at the bicycle factory took home good wages. No more short-term contracts like before the war. If the gaffer got onto you now you could always tell him where to put the job and go somewhere else. With the wages you got you could save up for a motor-bike or even an old car.

Britain in 1951 was a country still shaped by the experience of the Second World War. There were widespread visible signs of war damage. Much of British social life looked to the past. Regional and class loyalties were strong; it was usually easy to recognise people's origins and social background from their dress or accent. These class attitudes were reinforced by the familiar stereotypes that were commonly seen in films and on the radio.

But British society in 1951 was not static. The experiences of the war had caused significant social change; so had the introduction of the welfare state in the post-war years. Many of the people who attended the **Festival of Britain** in 1951 felt that they were on the edge of a new modern world, a world of technological and social progress. Children born in the '**baby boom**' after the war would grow up in a very different society than that of their

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this chapter you will learn about:

- rising living standards
- the impact of affluence and consumerism
- class and the 'Establishment'
- the position of women
- attitudes to immigration and racial violence
- the emergence of the 'teenager' and youth culture
- changing social attitudes and tensions.

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

1. Make a list of all the ways that Arthur's father's life had changed, as stated in Source 1.
2. Discuss with a partner whether novels can be useful sources for historians. Identify all the advantages and disadvantages you can think of.

KEY TERM

Festival of Britain: held a century after the Great Exhibition of 1851, this was intended to mark Britain's recovery from the war and to look forward to the future celebrating new design, culture and industry

baby boom: in the years after the end of the Second World War there was a rise in the number of babies born; those born between 1946 and 1964 are usually seen as the 'baby boomers'

parents' generation. In the years to 1964, there were to be significant shifts in population, growing social tensions including immigration and violence, and changes in attitudes to class.

KEY TERM

infrastructure: the physical environment of a modern developed society including the network of communications, such as roads, railways, airports and telecommunications, the industrial base, the public buildings, the schools and the housing stock

council house: a house built by local authorities to house the working classes, often to replace slums; rents tended to be lower than in privately rented accommodation

KEY TERM

hire purchase: a system whereby a buyer pays a deposit on an expensive item and then pays monthly instalments (including interest) to hire the item over the length of a contract; at the end of the contract the buyer can pay the remaining balance or return the item

Rising living standards

In 1951 Britain's **infrastructure** was run-down and it badly needed modernising. There was a desperate need for housing development to replace war damage and to deal with the decay of the housing stock that had been neglected for the previous decade. Pre-war slums were cleared and new towns were built, such as Harlow in Essex and Kirkby on Merseyside. The new towns, planned by Labour in the 1940s, such as Stevenage, Crawley, Corby and Cwmbran in South Wales, grew rapidly. The shifts in population as the slums were cleared meant that established traditional communities were broken up. This trend was intensified by the impact of private car ownership.

From 1952, most economic indicators pointed upwards. Men's weekly wages were going up (£8.30 in 1951 went up to £15.35 ten years later). There were massive increases in private savings. Farmers did very well economically, encouraged by the continuation of generous state subsidies. Food rationing ended completely in 1954.

Homeownership increased, helped by easy access to cheap mortgages, but people living in **council houses** and rented accommodation still substantially outnumbered private homeowners in Britain in the 1950s.

The impact of affluence and consumerism

The most obvious sign of the new affluence was the surge in ownership of consumer goods: televisions, washing machines, refrigerators and new furniture bought on **hire purchase**. A visible symbol of the affluence was the advertising industry, especially after ITV launched in 1955 and people became accustomed to the glossy adverts during and between popular programmes.

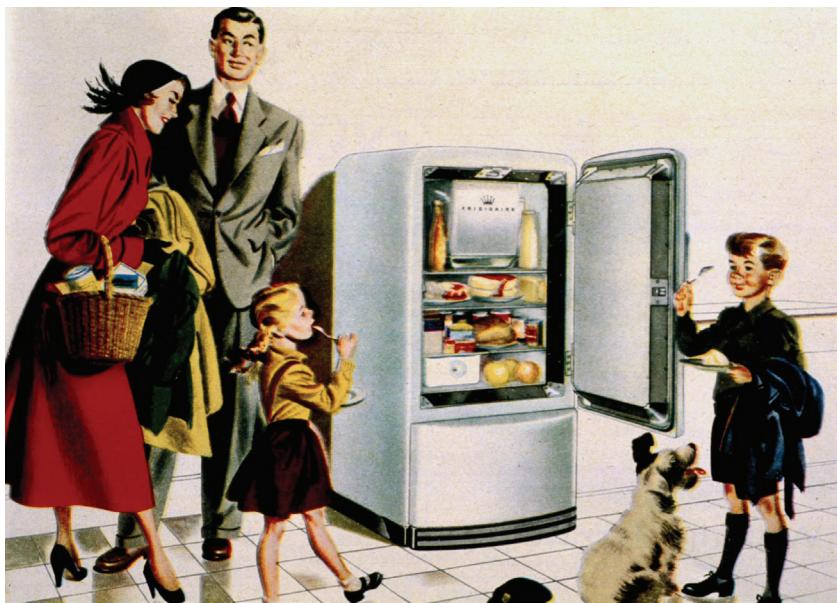


Fig. 2 Post-war prosperity: a 1950s refrigerator advertisement

Affluence also enabled new leisure opportunities. Between 1957 and 1959 the number of households owning a television rose by 32 per cent and by 1960 there were ten million television sets in use; it was estimated that 50 per cent of

the population watched television in the evening. The television was becoming more important than the radio. People also had more time and money to develop hobbies such as DIY and gardening which both became popular in the 1950s and television programmes started to reflect these interests.

There was a boom in car ownership, which rose by 25 per cent between 1957 and 1959, creating greater demand for new roads to be built, including the novelty of motorways. Car travel changed ideas of holidays and leisure and commuting by car began to push housing developments further outside towns and cities. Construction of the motorway system (the Preston bypass) began in 1958. Work on the M1 (London–Birmingham) commenced soon afterwards. Between 1957 and 1963, 1200 miles of new or upgraded main roads were completed.

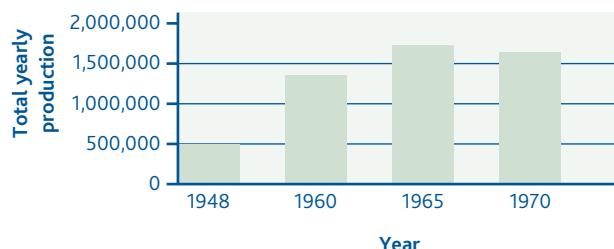


Fig. 3 Car production in Britain, 1948–70

Holiday camps reached their peak of popularity in the 1950s: 60,000 people holidayed each week with **Butlins**, as people had both paid time off work and enough disposable income to be able to afford to go away on holiday. Foreign holidays were possible but still a luxury enjoyed by less than 2 per cent of the population.

ACTIVITY

Extension

In groups research what day-to-day life was like in the 1950s for either a) working class people or b) the middle class. Each group should assess how different life was for their group from what life is like today.

A CLOSER LOOK

At the beginning of the 1950s television programmes were only broadcast from 3–6pm and then from 7–10:30pm. There was only one channel. Commercial television was introduced in 1955 and the later 1950s saw a much greater variety of programming including US-style game shows and the first soap opera, *Coronation Street*. The Queen's coronation in 1953 was televised and this proved a great spur to the purchase of television sets, demonstrated by the fact that 56 per cent of the population watched the coronation on television.

KEY TERM

Butlins: a chain of holiday camps founded by Billy Butlin in 1936; camps were built at popular seaside resorts like Skegness, Clacton and Blackpool; guests stayed in chalets and entertainment and activities were provided

Class and the 'Establishment'

Britain in 1951 was a deferential and conformist society, with an ingrained respect for authority. Class loyalties were very strong when it came to general elections; it is estimated that at the 1951 election, 65 per cent of working-class voters voted for the Labour Party and 80 per cent of middle-class voters voted for the Conservative Party.

By the late 1950s, there were signs of a shift in attitudes, hinting at the gradual breakdown of old social restrictions and a loss of deference. The **Suez Crisis** of 1956 exposed blatant lying and manipulation by the government. The rise of **CND** from 1958 encouraged the tendency to challenge authority. Britain appeared to be becoming a more individualist and less conformist society which was certainly less willing to follow the lead set by Britain's Establishment.

CROSS-REFERENCE

The Suez crisis and CND (Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament) are covered in Chapter 4.

A CLOSER LOOK

The Establishment

The 'Establishment' was a term for the informal networks that connected the social and political elites. These were privileged people (overwhelmingly male) who had influence and who 'knew the people who

mattered.' The Establishment included the aristocracy, politicians, civil servants, judges, bishops, diplomats, officers in the armed forces, and the leaders of business and the media. Most were very well off, but wealth was less important than background and connections. The natural progression was from the most exclusive public schools, to Oxford and Cambridge universities, and then into positions of power and influence. Because they had often been to the same schools and universities, it is sometimes called 'the old boys network'.

CROSS-REFERENCE

The Profumo affair and its political implications are covered in Chapter 1.

The press coverage of the Profumo affair showed this decline in deference. While the security aspects were found not to be serious, they provided an excuse for the popular press to investigate the sexual behaviour of those involved, and other prominent figures. Christine Keeler and her friend, Mandy Rice-Davies, became celebrities. Previous tactics used by governments to prevent the publication of sensitive or embarrassing information no longer worked.



Fig. 4 Christine Keeler at the height of the Profumo affair

ACTIVITY

1. Make a list of the key politicians you have come across in Section 1, both from the Conservative and Labour parties.
2. Which ones were members of the Establishment?
3. What would critics of the Establishment have said about the Establishment's mistakes in:
 - a. economic policy
 - b. foreign policy
 - c. education policy?

By 1960 there was also a 'satire boom'. Peter Cook, Dudley Moore, Jonathan Miller and Alan Bennett made a big impact with their satirical stage show *Beyond the Fringe*. From 1961, the magazine *Private Eye* rapidly established a loyal following for its witty disrespect for the great and famous. In 1962, the ground-breaking TV show, *That Was The Week That Was*, made its debut on BBC television, satirising and lampooning public figures.

Critics of the Establishment believed that Britain was being held back by its ruling elite. Their perception of the ruling elite was that it: emphasised arts education in preference to science; blocked talent from outside the Establishment; and tried to hide its own mistakes. The Conservative governments between 1951 and 1964 appeared to be dominated by the Establishment. Macmillan's government included a duke, the heir to a barony, a marquess and three earls; Sir Alec Douglas-Home, prime minister from 1963 had been the fourteenth Earl of Home, before giving up his peerage. Social scientists such as Richard Hoggart (*The Uses of Literacy*, 1957), Anthony Sampson (*The Anatomy of Britain*, 1961) and C. P. Snow (*The Two Cultures*, 1959) provided evidence of Britain's 'class-ridden' society,

its entrenched attitudes and the lack of social mobility. What Britain needed, it was argued, were leaders who had earned their positions through their personal merit and who better understood the modern, technical age in which they were living.

By the late 1950s a group of writers, who came to be known as the 'angry young men', led the way in using the arts to attack the behaviour and attitudes of the established upper and upper-middle classes. The first of these was a play called *Look Back in Anger* by John Osborne, staged in 1956 (see Source 4). It was very controversial. One critic called it 'the best young play of its decade'; another called it 'more than slightly distasteful'.

A CLOSER LOOK

Angry young men and rebel literary figures

The 'angry young men' is a term given to a group of writers who rebelled against traditional theatre and literature and produced plays and books that, they felt, reflected contemporary society. Their writing was sarcastic, bitter, intense and often bleak. Mundane settings and everyday language were used to show contemporary Britain. As well as John Osborne's play *Look Back in Anger* (1956), other notable works include: John Braine's *Room at the Top* (1957), Harold Pinter's *The Birthday Party* (1958); Alan Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958); David Storey's *This Sporting Life* (1960); and Stan Barstow's *A Kind of Loving* (1960).

However, although these attacks may have led to some changes in social attitudes the class system was certainly not broken.

The position of women

Women were seen primarily as housewives in the 1950s. The ideal woman was a wife and mother. The average age of marriage was 21 and 75 per cent of all women were married. Only 1 in 5 women went out to work in 1951.

In 1951 the Mass Observation Survey captured a woman's typical day. It was based on 700 working-class housewives in London:

Morning	Afternoon
Got up; washed	Started to cook lunch; cleaned hall while lunch cooked
Cooked and ate breakfast	Ate lunch; washed up lunch
Dressed baby	Ironing
Cleared breakfast	Brought in washing
Tidied and swept nursery	Tidied self and baby
Made children's beds	Fetched child from school
Put baby out in pram	Tea
Got dressed herself	Wrote letter
Made own bed; tidied bedroom	Went to post
Tidied bathroom; cleaned basin; polished floor	Cleared tea
Cleaned out fire grate; tidied living room	Bathed children and put them to bed
Tidied kitchen; washed up breakfast	Washed up tea
Laundry; hung out washing	Cooked supper
Took out rubbish	Supper
Brought in coal	Sat and knitted
Went out to shop	Read evening paper
More laundry	Went to bed

ACTIVITY

Extension

- Try to see some of the plays or read some of the novels (or watch the films based on them) mentioned in this chapter.
- Prepare a class presentation based on what you have seen or read, sharing what it has taught you about society in this period.

ACTIVITY

- Use the results of this survey to try and work out how much time a typical woman spent cooking and cleaning in 1951.
- Write a brief profile of a typical woman's day in 2015 and then compare it to that of a woman in 1951.

KEY TERM

family allowance: a weekly benefit paid for each child in a family; it was renamed child benefit in 1977

Family allowance, which was paid to women, was supposed to ensure that women did not need to work and the welfare state was based on the nuclear family and full employment for men. Mortgages and bank accounts were in men's names making women largely financially dependent on their husbands.

Although by 1964 the number of women working had risen, it was still relatively uncommon for married women, especially those with children, to go out to work. Trade unions tended not to support women working as they believed that this would lower wages. Many people believed that it would be damaging for children if their mothers worked. For those women who did work there were some improvements, though mainly for the middle classes, as equal pay for teachers (1952) and for civil servants (1954) was introduced.

However, women's lives in the home were improved by new labour-saving devices. Between 1957 and 1959 the number of households owning a washing machine rose by 54 per cent and a refrigerator by 58 per cent. One Hotpoint washing machine was even called 'The Liberator'. Without a washing machine, washing clothes would take a whole day and without a fridge, women needed to shop for fresh food each day.

Nevertheless, by the end of this period second-wave feminism, which argued that women were unfulfilled and trapped by the homemaker role, was beginning in the United States and would spread to Britain by the later 1960s.

CROSS-REFERENCE

Second-wave feminism is covered in Chapter 7.

KEY TERM

New Commonwealth: those countries which had recently gained independence, India, Pakistan, the West Indies and so on, as compared to the 'Old Commonwealth' countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa; the term became a useful, indirect way of differentiating between non-white and white populations

Attitudes to immigration and racial violence

At Queen Elizabeth II's coronation in 1953, there was evident enthusiasm for the **Commonwealth** ideal. Such ideas had to be balanced, however, against fears of Britain having to absorb too many new citizens at once. The **New Commonwealth** (i.e. 'coloured') immigrants who followed in the wake of West Indian migrants who arrived on the *Empire Windrush* in 1948, were a cause of both social change and social tensions.

A CLOSER LOOK

The *Empire Windrush* sailed from Kingston, Jamaica, to London in May 1948, carrying 492 migrant workers seeking a new life in Britain. Although the numbers were small, the *Windrush* voyage became a symbol of a new wave of Afro-Caribbean immigration into Britain.

There was a continuing flow of arrivals from the Irish Republic and, starting in 1948, about 250,000 immigrants arrived in Britain from the West Indies and other parts of the New Commonwealth.



Fig. 5 A group of well-wishers greet new arrivals from the West Indies at London's Waterloo Station, 1961

By 1958, about 210,000 Commonwealth immigrants had settled in Britain. Seventy-five per cent of them were male, working to support families back home. The largest number came from the West Indies, though the numbers coming from India and Pakistan was beginning to rise.

Public attitudes to immigration were mixed. For some there was a general feeling of tolerance and 'getting along'. But there were many unpleasant examples of outright racism from the host communities and instances of friction and resentment against immigrants.

At the same time there was also considerable outward migration from Britain. In the 1950s, Australia was particularly keen to attract new citizens, offering assisted passages and help with jobs and housing. There was also a steady flow of British emigrants to North America. In the 1950s, Britain received a total of 676,000 immigrants seeking permanent residence, while 1.32 million Britons left for a new life abroad. In the 1960s, the total inward migration was 1.25 million and outward migration was 1.92 million.

The authorities regarded immigration as economically desirable (immigrants filled many important low-wage jobs) and hoped that the social tensions would ease gradually over time. But by the late 1950s, perceptions were altered by racial tension. In August 1958 in Nottingham gangs of white youths went on what they called 'nigger hunts' after pub brawls and in Notting Hill, London, riots broke out in the same year.

A CLOSER LOOK

The Notting Hill riots, 1958

At the end of August 1958 there were outbreaks of serious violence in Notting Hill, an area that had a large concentration of people from the Caribbean. The area was very run-down and unscrupulous landlords exploited tenants with overcrowded and badly maintained housing. At first, the violence was mostly white youths attacking West Indians; later there was some concerted violence in the other direction. The police were unprepared and lacked experience of dealing with race riots.

The leader of British fascism, **Oswald Mosley**, tried to use the issue by standing as the Union Movement candidate in the 1959 election for Kensington North, which included the area of Notting Hill, on a platform of **repatriation**.

SOURCE 2

A reporter for the *Kensington News* described what he saw of the 1958 Notting Hill riots. This report appeared in the newspaper on 1 September 1958:

I saw a mob of over 700 men, women and children, stretching 200 yards along the road. Young children of ten were treating the whole affair as a great joke and shouting, 'Come on, let's get the blacks and the coppers'. In the middle of the screaming, jeering youths and adults, a speaker from the Union Movement was urging his excited audience to 'get rid of them' [the coloured people]. Groups of policemen stood at strategic points carefully watching the 'meeting'. Within half an hour the mob which had swelled to uncontrollable numbers had broken scores of windows and set upon two negroes who were lucky to escape with just cuts and bruises. As the crowd swung into Blenheim Crescent milk bottles rained down from the tenement buildings where coloured men were sheltering. Accompanied by a dozen bottles, down came a petrol bomb in the middle of the mob.

A CLOSER LOOK

'NO IRISH, NO BLACKS, NO DOGS'

Notice on the front door of a guest house in Birmingham, 1955

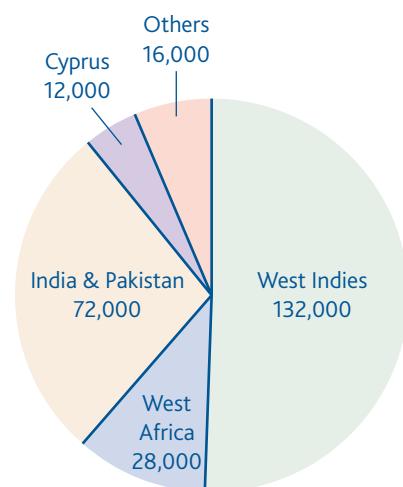


Fig. 6 New Commonwealth immigration, 1951–60

KEY TERM

repatriation: returning someone to their place of origin

KEY PROFILE

Oswald Mosley (1896–1980) was elected as a Conservative MP in 1918 but joined the Labour Party in the 1920s. Dissatisfied with the Labour government's response to the Great Depression in the early 1930s he set up the New Party, which later became the British Union of Fascists. He was interned during the war but in 1948 set up the Union Movement.

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

How valuable is Source 2 to an understanding of racial tension in the period 1951 to 1964?

This racial violence brought to national attention a problem that many politicians would have preferred to leave alone. In 1962, the Commonwealth Immigrants Act was passed. There had been a reluctance to use legislation to control immigration from countries with close historic links to Britain. The Labour Party strongly opposed the 1962 Act, but did not repeal it after the 1964 election. Government and local communities muddled along towards a multicultural society without any clear sense of direction.

KEY TERM

National Service: this conscripted young men for two years in military uniform; it was introduced in 1947 and lasted until 1960

A CLOSER LOOK

Teddy boys: the nickname ‘Teddy boys’ was derived from the Edwardian fashions, such as long coats, narrow trousers and winklepicker shoes, worn by young males; the dress sense and behaviour of the Teddy boys was seen as a challenge to older people and their ideas about social order

The emergence of the ‘teenager’ and youth culture

During the 1950s there was, for the first time, a discernible youth culture. Young people increasingly had more time: new labour-saving devices meant that girls did not need to help their mothers at home as much; boys no longer had to take part in **National Service** after 1960. They dressed differently to their parents, listened to different music, went to the new coffee bars rather than the old tea houses.

The post-war baby boom had swelled the number of teenagers. One survey in 1959 about the lives of teenagers estimated that there were 5 million teenagers in Britain, about 10 per cent of the population. This made them more visible and more economically important. Young people had money to buy records and fashion, helping to create their own culture. By the late 1950s there were magazines and TV programmes aimed specifically at this group. Changes in technology like the transistor radio helped spread the culture.

In the early 1950s, **Teddy boys** were the most obvious youth subculture. They were seen as a worrying phenomenon and were linked with juvenile delinquency and rising crime. By the later 1950s they were replaced with first the Rockers and then the Mods.

Rock and roll reached Britain in 1955 with Bill Haley’s *Rock Around the Clock*, closely followed by Elvis Presley. Rockers rode heavy motorcycles, wore leather and listened to rock and roll music. In contrast, Mods rode scooters, wore smart suits and preferred ‘sophisticated’ pop music.



Fig. 7 ‘The trouble with young people today’: fighting between Mods and Rockers at Margate

There were numerous clashes between Mods and Rockers in the early 1960s but the event that caused a national sensation was the large-scale, organised rioting in the south-coast holiday resorts of Clacton, Margate and Brighton, in May 1964. In Brighton, the fighting went on for two days, with large contingents of police struggling to restore order. The public reaction to these events has been described as a moral panic with hysterical descriptions of knife-wielding hooligans undermining the very foundations of society. The actual levels of violence were vastly exaggerated.

Changing social attitudes and tensions

All of these changes in British society affected attitudes, sometimes leading to increased tensions.

This was reflected in popular film and television programmes. Racial tension was the theme of *Sapphire*, a 1959 crime thriller with a then rather daring portrayal of sex and violence. On television, the cosy and comforting police series *Dixon of Dock Green* was shouldered aside by the gritty realism of *Z Cars* set in a new town on Merseyside. Gang violence was chillingly portrayed in Anthony Burgess's 1962 novel *A Clockwork Orange*. Television also produced campaigning programmes designed to raise controversy about social issues, such as *Cathy Come Home*, a powerful drama about homelessness by Ken Loach in 1962.

There was also a drive to break down censorship and social taboos. *A Taste of Honey* (1958), a play by Shelagh Delaney, told the story of a young unmarried woman who becomes pregnant after a relationship with a black sailor. *Victim* (1961), starring Dirk Bogarde, was the first English-language film to mention 'homosexual'. In 1962, Penguin Books caused a storm by publishing a paperback edition of D. H. Lawrence's sexually explicit novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. The result was a high-profile court case under the Obscenity Act. Penguin won the case and 2 million copies of the book were sold.

But this new culture was not universally popular and there was a backlash against the new 'immorality and depravity', led by Mary Whitehouse and supported by parts of the national press. There was also criticism from the left wing that the concentration on material affluence had also had negative effects, undermining decency in society. In general, the majority opinion in Britain remained socially conservative.

ACTIVITY

Draw a spider diagram that shows the reasons why a separate youth culture developed in the period 1951 to 1964.

SOURCE 3

In 1960 the left-wing journal, the *New Statesman*, looked back at the previous decade:

Few tears will be shed for the fifties. Cynical, flashy, selfish, the decade made the rich richer, the poor poorer. To the advanced countries of the West it brought unprecedented prosperity, achieved largely at the expense of the vast and growing working classes of Africa or Asia. The Tories imprisoned homosexuals and prostitutes and pacifists. But they allowed the striptease joint and the drinking club to multiply. They made Britain into a windfall state, a national casino with loaded dice; and when violence and dishonesty increased they clamoured for corporal punishment.

CROSS-REFERENCE

The social campaigner Mary Whitehouse, who began a 'moral crusade' in 1963 and continued it until the 1980s, is profiled in Chapter 7, page 63.

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

- Summarise in a sentence the criticism contained in Source 3.
- Use your own knowledge to find evidence that supports and challenges the view contained in this source.

SOURCE 4

In the play, *Look Back in Anger* (1956), Jimmy has married the upper-middle-class Alison. In this section she and her father, the Colonel, are talking about Britain in the 1950s. He had been a senior official in India until the country gained independence from the British Empire in 1947:

- COLONEL** Perhaps Jimmy is right. Perhaps I am a – what was it? an old plant who can't understand why the sun isn't shining any more. You can see what he means, can't you. I left England in 1914, and I didn't see much of my own country until we all came back in '47. Oh, I knew things had changed of course. People told you all the time the way it was going – going to the dogs. But it seemed very unreal to me, out there. I think the last day the sun shone was when that dirty little train steamed out of that crowded, suffocating Indian station. I knew in my heart it was all over then. Everything.
- ALISON** You're hurt because everything is changed. Jimmy is hurt because everything is the same. And neither of you can face it. Something's gone wrong somewhere, hasn't it?

ACTIVITY**Summary**

1. In pairs discuss whether 'everything is changed' or 'everything is the same'.
2. Find evidence to support these views and complete the following table:

'Everything is changed'	'Everything is the same'

3. Write a paragraph explaining why both the Colonel and Jimmy might be unhappy with Britain in the 1950s.

STUDY TIP

These are three different types of source. Firstly make sure you are clear about what each source can tell you about the impact of social change. Then think about the writer of each source and their purpose in writing it – how does this impact its value? Use your own knowledge when assessing the value of each source.

STUDY TIP

Plan your answer by making a list of all the social changes that happened in this period. Make sure you understand the consequences of each of them. This will allow you to assess the significance of each one of them and come to an overall conclusion that agrees or disagrees with the statement in the question.

**A
LEVEL****PRACTICE QUESTION****Evaluating primary sources**

Look back at Sources 1, 2, and 4. With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these three sources to an historian studying the impact of social change in the period 1951 to 1964.

**AS
LEVEL****PRACTICE QUESTION**

'The decline in deference was the most significant social change in the period 1951 to 1964.' Explain why you agree or disagree with this view.

4 Foreign relations

SOURCE 1

The Future Policy Study was presented to Harold Macmillan's cabinet in 1960. It highlighted the key principles of British foreign policy:

The core of our policy is the **Atlantic Alliance**. Our main task in the next decade will be to maintain, and to make even closer, the association between North America, the United Kingdom and the continental countries of Western Europe. We must therefore work to ensure continuation of the United States presence in Europe and the development of an economic and political community of interests embracing both the United States and Western Europe. We must also do all we can to strengthen the Commonwealth, which can be a valuable instrument for maintaining our influence as a Power with worldwide interests and for promoting our ideals, and can form a bridge between the Western world and the developing countries of Asia and Africa.

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

1. Explain what Source 1 tells us about Britain's position in the world.
2. What limitations, as a source to learn about Britain's position in the world, does it have?

The Second World War had left Britain badly damaged, burdened with massive debts, and in the shadow of two new military **superpowers**, the United States and the USSR. In 1947, Britain's ambassador in Washington had to inform the Americans that Britain faced bankruptcy and would have to withdraw from commitments in Greece, Turkey and Palestine. In the same year, independence was granted to India and Pakistan, marking the start of Britain's 'retreat from Empire'.

Nevertheless, political and public opinion was slow to see the implications for the future in terms of British foreign policy. The Future Policy Study (Source 1) presented to Macmillan's cabinet in 1960 showed Britain had accepted some but not all of the implications of the retreat from Empire. In 1962, Dean Acheson, who had been the US Secretary of State between 1949 and 1953, stated that 'Britain has lost an empire and has not yet found a role'.

EFTA and attempts to join the EEC



Fig. 1 Edward Heath negotiating entry into the EEC

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this chapter you will learn about:

- EFTA and attempts to join the EEC
- relations with and policies towards USA and USSR
- debates over the nuclear deterrent
- Korean War
- Suez
- the 'winds of change' and decolonisation.

KEY TERM

Atlantic Alliance: a term used to refer to NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organisation; formed in 1949 to defend the Western alliance in the Cold War, it was made up of 12 countries including Britain; it created a collective defence policy, i.e. if any one of its members was attacked it would be defended by all of them

superpower: an extremely powerful nation with influence on other countries

KEY CHRONOLOGY

Britain and the world, 1951–64

- 1954 Britain's first nuclear test
- 1956 The Suez crisis
- 1957 EEC formed by the Treaty of Rome
- 1959 The formation of EFTA
- 1960 Failure of Blue Streak missile programme
- 1963 Rejection of Britain's application to join the EEC

KEY TERM**EEC (European Economic Community)**

Community): an economic union, often known as the Common Market, first established by the Treaty of Rome in 1957; its six founder members were France, Germany, Italy and the 'Benelux' countries – Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg; the EEC became the European Union in 1992

Cold War: a term used to describe the tension between the West (the US, Western Europe including Britain, Canada) and the Communist states (the USSR and its allies) after the Second World War; it lasted until the collapse of communism in 1989 to 1990 and had a great impact on Britain's foreign policy throughout this period

'special relationship': term used to describe the close relationship between the United Kingdom and the United States, based on historical, diplomatic, cultural, economic, and military ties between the two countries; it was strengthened by being key allies during the Cold War, sharing the common objective of resisting the power of the USSR

KEY TERM**EFTA (European Free Trade Association)**

Association): created in 1960 by Britain along with Austria, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, and Switzerland as an alternative to the EEC; these were sometimes referred to as the 'outer seven' as opposed to the 'inner six' of the EEC; it created a free trade area, although each EFTA member could negotiate separately with non-EFTA members

The Schuman Plan of 1950, named after the French foreign minister, Robert Schuman, set out the proposals for a Coal and Steel Community that would integrate French and German heavy industry in order to promote rapid economic reconstruction and also to bind together the historic enemies, France and Germany, and eliminate the dangers of future wars between them. This was to be the foundation of the European Economic Community (EEC).

This scheme was strongly supported by Britain and the United States as an important contribution to the security of Europe. This was seen as vital at the beginning of the **Cold War**. However, Britain did not initially become involved. There were a number of reasons for this:

- There were very few politicians or journalists in favour of Britain taking up the leadership role in Europe that was on offer.
- The Left tended to be suspicious of the free-market principles behind the Common Market: the response of the Labour politician Herbert Morrison was that: 'the Durham miners won't wear it, I'm afraid.'
- The Right tended to regard the preservation of traditional trade links with Australia, Canada and New Zealand as far more important than those with Europe.
- There was a belief that this was an issue for continental Europe: the Germans had been deadly wartime enemies; France had been overrun and occupied; in contrast Britain had 'won the war'.
- There was an assumption that Britain was still a great world power.
- Britain wanted to balance its involvement in Europe with maintaining the '**special relationship**' with the United States.

The EEC took shape at an international conference at Messina, in Sicily, in 1955. A British delegation was present to observe and encourage but not to join. These agreements were then developed in detail and the Treaty of Rome launched the EEC, without Britain, in 1957. The EEC was dominated by the partnership between France and Germany. The French president from 1958, Charles de Gaulle, was determined to protect this partnership from 'les Anglo-Saxons' (Britain and, through Britain, the influence of the United States).

At that time, it was not clear how successful 'The Six' would become. But within a very short space of time, British attitudes began to shift. In 1959, Britain took the lead in the formation of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). This was only moderately successful and the new organisation was not able to match the economic growth of the EEC.

In 1961, the Macmillan government submitted Britain's application to join the EEC. The fundamental reason for Britain changing its mind about the EEC was economic. It was hoped that joining the EEC would:

- boost industrial production for a large-scale export market
- increase industrial efficiency with greater competition
- stimulate economic growth with the rapid economic expansion already seen in the EEC.

The United States was also keen to see Britain join the EEC for strategic reasons, seeing Britain as a vital link between Europe and America. Tensions were rising in the late 1950s in the Cold War. Finally, at the same time, belief in Britain's imperial power had been shaken by Suez and by the accelerating pace of decolonisation in Africa.

Despite the application to join the EEC, Britain wanted to keep its position in two other areas of world affairs: the Commonwealth and the United States. This made the negotiations with the EEC extremely complex and difficult. The EEC had already developed detailed economic structures, especially the Common Agricultural Policy, that Britain found difficult to conform to. Special exemptions for Britain's Commonwealth trade partners, such as lamb exports from New Zealand, which would have been blocked by EEC rules, had

to be sought. This took many months of hard bargaining, led on the British side by Macmillan's chief negotiator, **Edward Heath**.

The negotiations seemed to have reached a successful conclusion in January 1963; but at the last minute the French President **Charles de Gaulle** exercised France's right of veto and blocked Britain's application.

SOURCE 2

Edward Heath, the chief negotiator for Britain, wrote about the veto in his autobiography which was published in 1998:

When the Brussels negotiations resumed in January 1963 we were all very optimistic and an official English translation of the draft treaty was arranged. The French foreign minister was not present; we were told he had to attend de Gaulle's press conference. I concluded the meeting in an upbeat mood, saying: 'We all seem to be in complete agreement'. Immediately afterwards we were told what de Gaulle had said in his press conference. He claimed the negotiations had shown that Britain could not adapt to the ways of the Six; and criticised Britain's unwillingness to give up its 'special political and military relations' with the United States. We were all astonished and very worried about the future.

KEY PROFILE



Fig. 2 Heath implemented major reform to Britain's system of local government

Edward Heath (1916–2005) was the Conservative MP for Bexley, Kent from 1950 to 2001. He served as Chief Whip under Eden and shadow Chancellor under Douglas-Home before becoming leader of the Conservative Party from 1965 to 1975. He was prime minister from 1970 to 1974 but lost the party leadership to Margaret Thatcher in 1975, and was openly critical of her policies. Always pro-European throughout his life, he oversaw the entry of Britain into the EEC in 1973.

KEY PROFILE

Charles de Gaulle (1890–1970) was leader of the Free French Forces who fought on after France surrendered in 1940. He had many rows with his main allies, Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt, and remained suspicious of 'les Anglo-Saxons', especially the Americans, in his later career. He led France through the transition from dictatorship to democracy after the liberation of France in 1944. He retired in 1946 but returned as president in 1959, remaining in that position until 1969.

De Gaulle's intervention was a bombshell. The other five members of the EEC were as shocked and disappointed as the British negotiating team but were unable to persuade de Gaulle to carry on with the negotiations. His intervention caused bad relations between France and Britain for some time. It also meant that Britain remained outside the EEC.

ACTIVITY

1. Make a list of the reasons why Britain was not a member of the EEC by 1964. Which ones are long-term causes and which ones are short-term causes?
2. Rank the reasons in order of significance.



PRACTICE QUESTION

How important is President de Gaulle in explaining Britain's exclusion from the process of European integration between 1951 and 1963?

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

How valuable is Source 2 for an historian studying Britain's failure to join the EEC in 1961?

STUDY TIP

In order to answer this question you will need to assess the impact of de Gaulle against other reasons why Britain did not join the EEC in this period. Make sure that your conclusion includes a judgement about the extent of de Gaulle's importance.

Relations with, and policies towards, USA and USSR

British relations with, and policies towards, the United States and the USSR were dominated by the early years of the Cold War. Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union had been allies during the Second World War. In the post-war period, Britain and the United States stayed as allies in opposing the expansion of communism across Europe. Britain had become a founder

member of NATO in 1949 and substantial contingents of British troops were stationed in West Germany.



Fig. 3 A special relationship: Harold Macmillan and John F. Kennedy at Downing Street, June 1963

A CLOSER LOOK

The Cuban Missile Crisis occurred when Cuba, which was communist, requested the USSR to station nuclear weapons in Cuba. The United States feared this, Cuba being only 90 miles away, and set up a blockade to prevent Soviet ships from reaching Cuba. Tense negotiations eventually resulted in the Soviets withdrawing weapons from Cuba, while the United States secretly agreed to withdraw weapons from Turkey and Italy. It has been seen as the closest the world came to a nuclear war.

CROSS-REFERENCE

For further details about British involvement in the Korean War and the Suez crisis, see this chapter, pages 34–35.

Britain and the United States remained close allies in the Cold War throughout the period. Britain supported the United Nations in Korea. It also worked with the United States to sustain West Berlin. Harold Macmillan was involved in plans for a summit conference with Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev in 1960. He also established a particularly good relationship with President Eisenhower's successor, John F. Kennedy. Kennedy kept Macmillan informed with the events of the Cuban Missile Crisis, although the British Chancellor Peter Thorneycroft described Britain as 'bystanders' during the crisis. Nevertheless, in many respects, it appeared that Britain had kept its place at the international 'top table'.

However, this does not mean that the special relationship was not sometimes placed under strain. Examples include: the Burgess and Maclean affair; Britain's relationship with the EEC; and the Suez crisis.

A CLOSER LOOK

The Burgess and Maclean affair

Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean were highly placed officers in British intelligence. They defected to the Soviet Union in 1951. For years afterwards, there were concerns about finding the 'Third Man' who had tipped them off. The revelation that British spies had been leaking vital secrets to Moscow deeply worried the Americans, who became much less ready to share intelligence secrets with Britain.

On the other hand, Britain was still militarily overstretched and very dependent on American power. This was demonstrated by the costs of Britain's independent nuclear deterrent.

Debates over the nuclear deterrent

The Labour government after the war had committed Britain to developing an independent nuclear deterrent. The United States had stopped sharing its nuclear secrets with Britain so if Britain wanted to become a nuclear power

then it would have to do so itself. Labour Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, had famously said in 1946: 'I don't want any other foreign secretary of this country to be talked to or at by a secretary of state in the United States. We've got to have this thing over here whatever it costs. We've got to have the bloody Union Jack on top of it.'

Churchill continued this policy and Britain's first tests of the atomic bomb were in 1952. This made Britain the third country in the world to develop nuclear weapons, after the United States and the USSR. But by this point the United States and the USSR were already developing the more powerful hydrogen bomb; Britain's 'H' bomb was tested in 1957.

Concerns over these developments led to the formation of CND (the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament) in 1958. CND rapidly became the most powerful pressure group in Britain, backed by many intellectuals and mobilising middle-class protesters. They wanted Britain to reject nuclear weapons and instead follow a policy of unilateral nuclear disarmament. Around 8000 people took part in a demonstration at the weapons research base at Aldermaston in Berkshire in 1958; a second march on Aldermaston in 1959 was even bigger. CND's 'unilateralism' became a powerful magnet for anti-government protest and many Labour left-wingers joined in.

CROSS-REFERENCE

Labour divisions, including those over nuclear disarmament, are covered in Chapter 1.

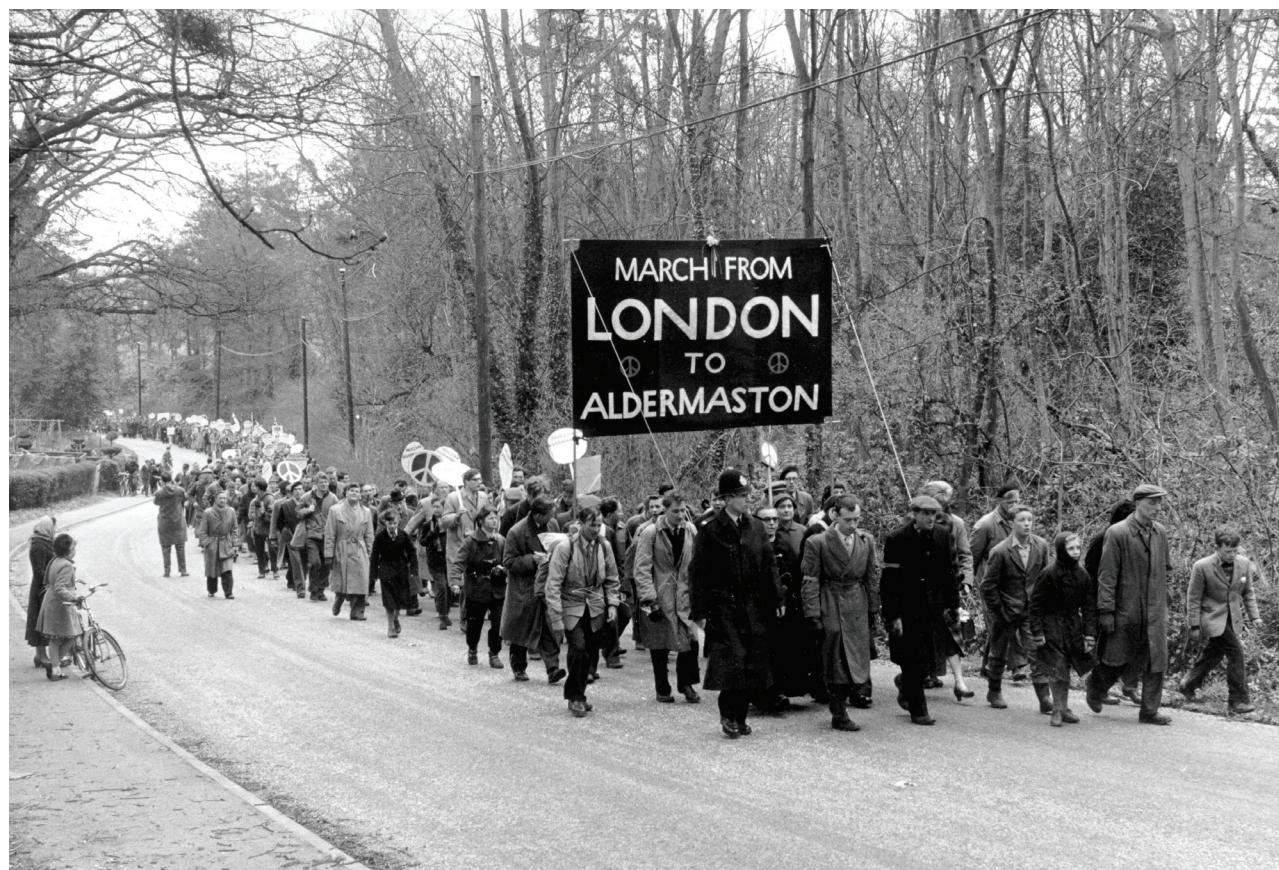


Fig. 4 CND on the march to Aldermaston, Easter 1958

By 1958, the United States had once again agreed to share nuclear technology with Britain under the Mutual Defence Agreement. Britain's own rocket project, Blue Streak, was abandoned in 1960. It was replaced by dependence on the American Polaris submarine weapons system. As it became clear that Britain would not have an independent nuclear deterrent, some in the Labour Party started to be more sceptical of supporting a pro-nuclear policy.

ACTIVITY

Set up a class debate about the arguments for and against Britain developing nuclear weapons in the period 1951 to 1964.

The Korean War, 1950–53

At the end of the Second World War, Korea, which had previously been ruled by Japan, was occupied by the Soviet Union in the north, and by the United States in the south. Two separate governments were subsequently set up, each one claiming to be legitimate. In 1950, forces from north Korea, supported by the Soviet Union and China, invaded the south. The United Nations condemned the action and sent UN forces to combat the invasion. Over 20 countries supplied troops. Britain sent over 90,000 soldiers, the second biggest contingent after the United States.

There was heavy fighting resulting in a stalemate. A ceasefire was agreed in 1953. Over 1000 British troops had died. Under the terms of the ceasefire it was agreed that Korea would be split between a communist North Korea and a non-communist South Korea.

The Korean War showed how the Cold War was being fought across the whole world. It also demonstrated Britain's willingness to continue to play a major role in world affairs, despite economic constraints. However, it was also clear that the United States was the greater power.

KEY PROFILE

Colonel Gamel Abd al-Nasser

(1918–70) was one of the leaders of a nationalist revolt against the old Egyptian monarchy. He became Egypt's president in 1956, remaining in that position until his death in 1970. He was neutral in the Cold War which concerned Britain and the United States.

Suez, 1956

The Suez Canal was the main artery connecting trade routes from the Mediterranean through to the Indian Ocean and beyond to Asia, Australia and New Zealand. Above all, the Suez Canal was the vital route for oil shipments: 80 per cent of Western Europe's oil imports passed through the canal.

The emergence of Egyptian independence under a new nationalist leader, **Colonel Nasser**, was deeply worrying for Britain's strategic interests. The United States and Great Britain had planned to invest in the Aswan Dam, but pulled out in 1956. In response, Nasser announced the nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company to provide finance needed for the Aswan Dam.

Nasser's action seemed to place Egypt on the Soviet side of the Cold War. The British prime minister, Anthony Eden, was considered an expert on foreign policy. But his understanding of the situation was influenced both by his belief that Britain was an imperial power and his experience in fiercely opposing appeasement in the 1930s. Eden saw Nasser as 'an evil dictator who could not be allowed to get away with unprovoked aggression.' Most of Eden's cabinet, including the Chancellor, Harold Macmillan, agreed with him.

Eden was encouraged by both France and Israel. A top-secret meeting was held at Sèvres, in Paris, at which Britain, France and Israel agreed a plan of action. Israeli forces would invade Egypt; British and French forces would then intervene. The excuse for intervention would be to enforce peace on Egypt and Israel; the real effect would be to seize control of the Suez Canal zone. The details of this plan were concealed from Parliament and from the Americans.

This plan was put into operation on 29 October when the Israeli attack was launched and the Anglo-French invasion followed. The military action did not go as smoothly as planned, though it might well have succeeded in the end. But it also caused a storm of political protest in Britain. The Labour Party opposed the conflict, anti-war protests were held and public opinion was split on the need for intervention.

Even more importantly, the United States opposed the action. And Britain was simply not strong enough in 1956 to stand up to American pressure; it was plunged into a serious financial crisis. Macmillan, one of the strongest supporters of the invasion, was the first to realise that it was essential to

CROSS-REFERENCE

The impact of the Suez crisis on domestic politics is covered in Chapter 1, pages 4–5.

ACTIVITY

Imagine you are a foreign policy adviser to the new prime minister, Harold Macmillan.

- What will you advise him are the lessons of Suez?
- What will this mean for Britain's foreign policy in the future?

pull out, even though this meant accepting failure and humiliation. Eden's reputation was fatally damaged. Suez also meant that Britain's position in the world now had to go through a fundamental reassessment in a number of ways. Firstly it brought into question Britain's reputation as a force for good in the world. Secondly, it highlighted the inability of Britain to act without, at least, the tacit support of the United States. Thirdly, it brought into sharp relief the impact that Britain's economic and financial policy had on the direction of foreign policy. Finally, it started to undermine the belief that, in the new global situation after the Second World War, Britain was still one of the world's major powers.

The 'winds of change' and decolonisation

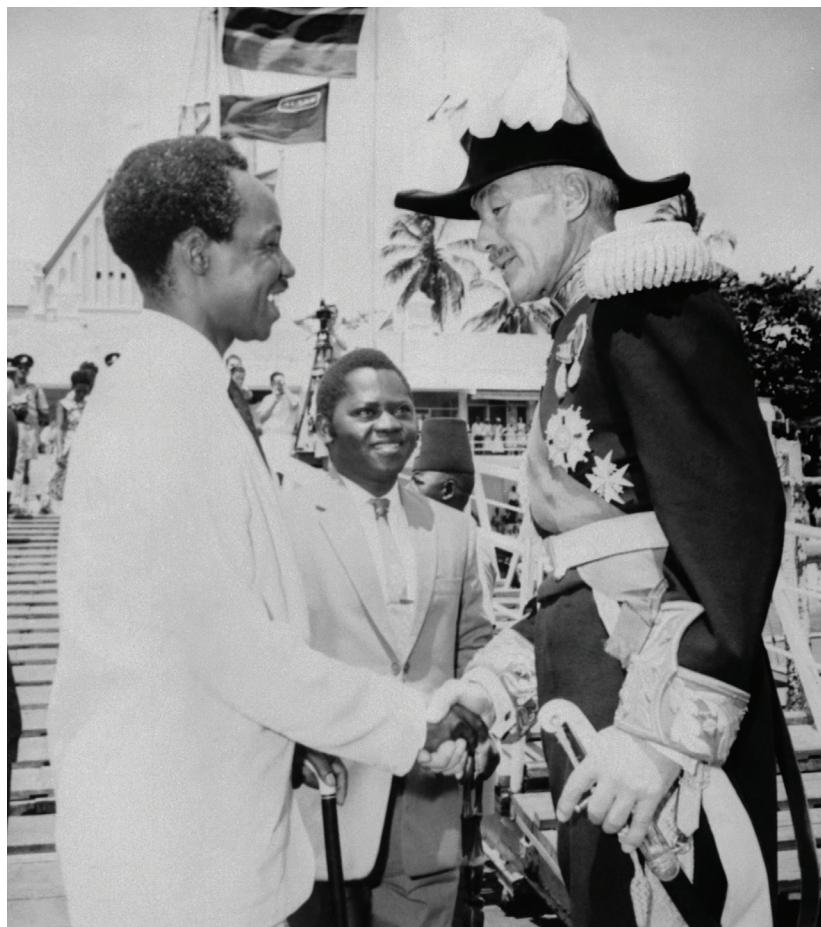


Fig. 5 President of Tanganyika, Julius Nyerere greets General Sir Richard Turnbull, the British governor of Tanganyika, prior to the proclamation of the country's independence with the new name, Tanzania, 1961

By 1951, Britain's retreat from Empire had already begun. The decision to withdraw from India in 1947 was the most dramatic example of this. During the 1950s, the pressures of colonial independence movements became harder and harder to contain. British forces found themselves fighting against national independence movements in Malaya, Kenya and Cyprus. It was not just Britain which faced these pressures: France faced even bigger challenges in Vietnam and in Algeria; Belgium and Portugal had to deal with revolts in their African colonies.

KEY CHRONOLOGY

Decolonisation, 1947–64

- 1947 Withdrawal from India
- 1952 Start of Mau Mau rebellion in Kenya
- 1957 Independence granted to Ghana
- 1960 Macmillan's 'wind of change' speech
- 1960 Independence granted to Nigeria and Cyprus
- 1961 South Africa leaves the Commonwealth
- 1963 Independence granted to Kenya

In the early 1950s, Britain's rulers believed they could manage a gradual transition from the Empire to the New Commonwealth and that colonial resistance movements could be controlled until their peoples were 'ready' for independence. Nobody had any idea of the sudden rush to independence that was waiting to happen. When the Mau Mau rebellion broke out in Kenya in 1952, it was assumed that it could be quashed by the military. At that time, independence for Kenya was unthinkable – but that was before Suez.

A CLOSER LOOK

The Mau Mau rebellion

The Mau Mau revolt in Kenya was one of several violent nationalist uprisings against British colonial rule after 1945. The leader of the revolt, Jomo Kenyatta, was imprisoned by the authorities but later emerged as president of an independent Kenya. In the 1950s, the struggle led to great bitterness on both sides. The Mau Mau fighters were accused of committing atrocities; on the other hand, revelations about brutal treatment of captives held at the Hola prison camp badly damaged Britain's reputation.

The difficult struggle to contain the Mau Mau rebellion in Kenya had already demonstrated the problems with Britain's colonial policies. After the Suez fiasco, British policymakers began to reconsider the pace of decolonisation. In 1957, Ghana (formerly the Gold Coast) became the first of Britain's African colonies to be granted independence. Nigeria and Cyprus also gained independence in 1960, Tanganyika and Sierra Leone in 1961, Uganda in 1962, Kenya in 1963. This shift in British policy was signalled by Macmillan's famous 'wind of change' speech.

A CLOSER LOOK

Macmillan and the 'wind of change'

Before 1960, the central aim of British imperial policy was to defeat nationalist revolts and to maintain control over Britain's African colonies. Other European colonial powers, including Belgium, France and Portugal, were fighting similar wars against nationalist uprisings. Macmillan's speech at Cape Town, describing the 'wind of change' blowing through the whole African continent was a significant change of policy, calling for decolonisation and recognition of independence movements. He was also seeking to persuade these countries to accept majority rule. South Africa preferred to follow minority white rule and voted in a referendum later that year to break all ties with Britain.

SOURCE 3

In 1960 in Capetown, South Africa, Harold Macmillan made a famous speech on foreign affairs, known ever since as the 'wind of change' speech:

The world today is divided into three main groups. First there are what we call the Western Powers. We in Britain belong to this group, together with our friends and allies in the Commonwealth. In the United States of America and in Europe we call it the Free World. Secondly there are the

Communists – Russia and her satellites in Europe, and China. Thirdly, there are those parts of the world at present uncommitted either to Communism or to our Western ideas. The great issue is whether the uncommitted peoples of Asia and Africa will swing to the East or to the West. Will they be drawn into the Communist camp? Or will the great experiments in self-government that are now being made in Asia and Africa, especially within the Commonwealth, prove so successful, that the balance will come down in favour of freedom and order and justice? What is now on trial is much more than our military strength or our diplomatic and administrative skill. It is our way of life.

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

How useful is Source 3 to understand Britain's policy of decolonisation?

In retrospect, the policy was extremely successful. The process did not always go as planned, but British decolonisation was completed more swiftly and with far less violence than was the case with other colonial powers such as Belgium and Portugal. By 1964, the transition from Empire to Commonwealth seemed to represent a significant achievement.



Fig. 6 Britain's decolonisation, 1947–64

ACTIVITY

Extension

In groups research Britain's decolonisation. Find out when the countries labelled in Fig. 6 gained their independence.

Summary

ACTIVITY

Summary

1. Create a timeline of the key events in British foreign affairs between 1951 and 1964. Beside each event, comment on the ways in which it was significant for Britain.
2. Below the timeline, list the key factors shaping British foreign policy during this time and explain their importance.



PRACTICE QUESTION

Evaluating primary sources

Look back at Sources 1 and 3. With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, which of these two sources is more valuable in explaining British foreign policy objectives between 1951 and 1964.



PRACTICE QUESTION

Evaluating primary sources

Look back at Sources 1, 2 and 3. With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these three sources to an historian studying British foreign policy objectives between 1951 and 1964.

STUDY TIP

Use the timeline you created in the Summary Activity to ensure that you can put the sources into the context of other events.

5 Wilson and the Labour governments



Fig. 1 Concorde: a symbol of the scientific and technological progress of the 1960s

SOURCE 1

Harold Wilson, the leader of the Labour opposition, gave a campaign speech at Birmingham Town Hall, in January 1964:

I want to speak to you today about a new Britain and how we intend to bring home to our people the excitement there will be in building it. For 1964 is the year in which we can take our destiny into our own hands. In two decades, the scientists have made more progress than in the past two thousand years. They have made it possible for mankind to reach out to the stars and to bring abundance from the earth. They have made it possible to end the dark ages of poverty. Yet Britain lags behind, lacking the will or the plan which can bring this future within the reach of all. The reason is not far to seek. We are living in the jet age but we are governed by an Edwardian establishment mentality. This is the time for a breakthrough to an exciting and wonderful period in our history, in which all can and must take part. This is what 1964 can mean. A chance for change. A chance to sweep away the grouse-moor conception of Tory leadership and refit Britain with a new image, a new confidence.

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

Think back to what you have learned about the period 1951 to 1964 in Section 1. How does your knowledge of the period 1951 to 1964 help you to understand why Harold Wilson made the speech in Source 1 at the beginning of 1964?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this chapter you will learn about:

- Wilson's ideology and leadership
- economic policies and problems including devaluation
- industrial relations and trade unions
- other domestic policies
- Labour divisions
- the beginning of the 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland
- the end of post-war consensus
- loss of the 1970 election.

KEY CHRONOLOGY

The Labour government 1964–70

1964 Oct	Victory in the general election
Sept	Launch of George Brown's National Plan
1966 Mar	Labour re-election victory
1967 Nov	Devaluation crisis
Nov	Rejection of Britain's application to join EEC
1970 June	Wilson government defeated in general election

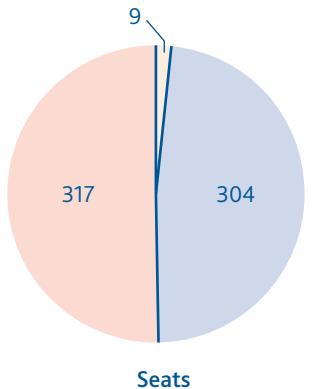


Fig. 3 General election results, 1964
 Party Conservative Labour
 Liberal Others

When **Harold Wilson** entered Downing Street in 1964, Labour seemed to be more in touch with the social and cultural trends of the 1960s. One of Wilson's most effective campaign speeches had promised Britain would catch up with 'the white heat' of technological change.

In 1966 Labour was able to consolidate its position with a further election victory that gave it a sizeable majority. Even though the Conservative Party had replaced Douglas-Home as leader with the more modern-looking Edward Heath, Heath was no match for Harold Wilson. Wilson was a better political tactician and was able to portray a more attractive image to the voters. In contrast, Heath came across as stiff and lacking in personality.

KEY PROFILE



Harold Wilson (1916–95) was a Labour MP from 1945 until 1983. He was leader of the party from 1963 to 1976 and prime minister from 1964 to 1970 and 1974 to 1976, winning four general elections. He cultivated a personal image as a great moderniser and being down to earth.

Fig. 2 Wilson had a relaxed political style

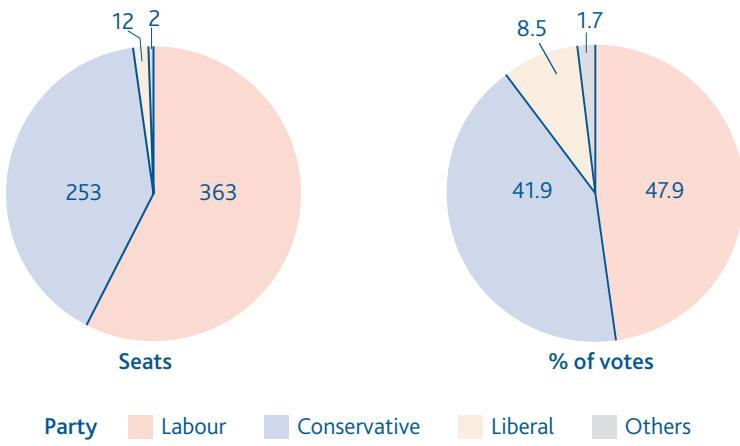


Fig. 4 General election results, 1966

Wilson's ideology and leadership

Initially Harold Wilson had appeared to be on the Left of the Labour Party. He had been a Bevanite, resigning in 1950 over prescription charges. However, he also served in Gaitskell's cabinet. Nevertheless, he challenged Gaitskell for the leadership from the Left in 1961. He lost – but this made him the Left's obvious candidate in future. In other ways, though, he did not seem to be of the Left. He supported Britain's nuclear deterrent and attempted to reform the trade unions.

Critics might argue that he was just an opportunist. But he did successfully link the Labour Party to modernisation in contrast to what were described as the 'wasted years' of the Conservative government.

CROSS-REFERENCE

See Chapter 1 for the divisions in the Labour Party in the 1950s.

This modernisation was reflected in Wilson's own image. He was seen as classless, an image far removed from the Old Etonian style of Eden, Macmillan and Douglas-Home. He was the first prime minister educated at state secondary school, and he smoked a pipe and spoke with a Yorkshire accent. He was also a relaxed and skilful performer on television.

However, in private he was anxious and insecure about his leadership. He was conscious of balancing out his potential rivals so that he would remain unchallenged. Wilson also relied heavily on a personal team of trusted advisers from outside the government and civil service. Wilson's team was dominated by the personality of Marcia Williams, his 'personal political secretary'. Others who took part in the informal discussions in the kitchen at 10 Downing Street included economic advisers and a few 'inner circle' MPs. Many people felt that this 'kitchen cabinet' reinforced his suspicions of party rivalries and prevented ministers from having access to him.

Economic policies and problems including devaluation

Modernisation of the British economy was one of the key priorities for the Labour government. By 1964, it was widely accepted that Britain was lagging behind other countries such as West Germany and Japan.

The affluence of the post-war boom had not been reflected in productivity or growth rates. Britain's economy seemed to be trapped in the cycle of 'stop-go', with bursts of prosperity always leading to inflation, runs on the pound and regular crises over the balance of payments. Reorganising the economy to break out of this cycle was the key aim of Wilson's government in 1964.

ACTIVITY

Provide a one-sentence definition for each of these terms: productivity, inflation, run on the pound, 'stop-go', balance of payments.

If you can't do this, go back to Chapter 2 and revise what these terms mean.

Moreover, Labour had inherited a deficit of about £800 million. The two classic economic solutions to this kind of problem were deflation or **devaluation**. But Wilson and his Chancellor of the Exchequer, **James Callaghan**, did not want to do either.

Deflation would support the value of the pound and prevent inflation. But deflation was the old 'stop-go' approach that the Labour Party was determined to break away from. Moreover, there were fears that it would stop the Labour Party from meeting its manifesto commitments of extra spending on welfare and technology.

Devaluation would make imports more expensive and help exporters by making British goods cheaper in other countries; this would in turn help the balance of payments. But devaluation would not only make Britain look weaker in the world, it would make Britain actually weaker as it would have to scale back its activities across the globe. Wilson also feared that the Labour Party would gain the reputation as the party of devaluation, as it had already devalued the pound under Attlee in 1949.

Instead, Wilson was convinced that problems could be solved by careful management and planning. A new department, the Department of Economic

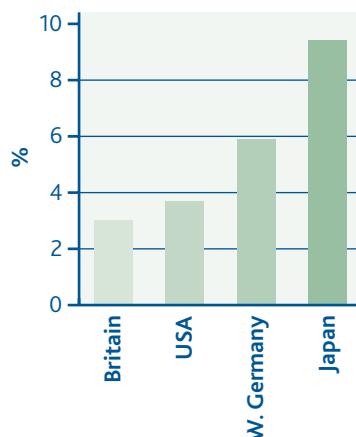


Fig. 5 Average growth in GDP, 1950–73

KEY TERM

GDP (Gross Domestic Product): a term used by economists for the total value of a nation's economy

devaluation: lowers the value of a currency in comparison to others in a fixed exchange system

KEY PROFILE



Fig. 6 Callaghan was Chancellor at a time of great economic turbulence

James Callaghan (1912–2005) entered Parliament as MP for Cardiff in 1945. Harold Wilson appointed him Chancellor in 1964; later on, he served as both Foreign Secretary and Home Secretary, becoming one of the few men to have held the three top cabinet posts. Associated with the centre-right of the party but with excellent links to the trade unions, Callaghan succeeded Wilson as prime minister in 1976.

Affairs (DEA), was set up, led by **George Brown**. Brown set growth targets and devised a national system of 'economic planning councils'. He also tried to establish voluntary agreement about wages and prices with industrialists, trade union leaders and civil servants. The aim was to secure the restraint needed to prevent inflation rising which the government would then need to stop with controls. In this way the 'stop-go' cycle of the 1950s could be avoided.

KEY PROFILE

George Brown (1914–85) came from a working-class trade unionist background and was on the Right of the party. He had a number of shadow cabinet and cabinet roles and was deputy leader of the Labour Party between 1960 and 1970. He was defeated by Wilson in the leadership elections of 1963. Many people regarded him as unpredictable, as he had a serious alcohol problem, and he frequently clashed with his cabinet colleagues. He resigned in 1968 after a row with Wilson.

But Brown's economic proposals came to nothing. They did not have united government support; Brown and the DEA were virtually in competition with the Chancellor, James Callaghan, and the orthodox economists at the Treasury. Some blamed Brown as he could be impulsive and inconsistent; others blamed the old-fashioned and anti-Labour civil servants at the Treasury and the Bank of England who they felt undermined Brown's efforts, refusing to pass over papers and even tapping his phone. Perhaps the real problem may have been political, caused by Harold Wilson trying to keep key personalities happy rather than pick the best team for the job. In 1966, Wilson moved Brown to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the DEA was abandoned in 1967.

Instead the government brought in a **prices and incomes policy** to keep down inflation, implemented by a Prices and Incomes Board. But there was another sterling crisis in 1966, caused in part by a long and bitter strike by the National Union of Seamen. The government defeated the strike but many, especially on the Left, were shocked by Wilson's critical attitude to the strikers. And, in the aftermath, the trade unionist Frank Cousins resigned from the cabinet over the incomes policy. The relationship between the government and the unions was starting to break down.

The Labour government survived sterling crises in 1965 and 1966. But in 1967, an outbreak of war in the Middle East affected oil supplies and a major national dock strike in August 1967 affected the balance of payments. The government decided that devaluation could not be avoided; the pound dropped by 14 per cent to 2.40 US dollars. Labour also made defence cuts and introduced hire purchase restrictions and higher interest rates. These were deflationary policies that looked little different from the 'stop-go' policies of previous Tory governments.

KEY TERM

prices and incomes policy:

government intervention to set limits on price rises and to call for wage restraint in negotiations between unions and employers

SOURCE 2

In a television broadcast in November 1967, Harold Wilson addressed the nation to explain his decision to devalue the pound:

Our decision to devalue attacks our problem at the root. Tonight we must face the new situation. First what this means. From now the pound abroad is worth 14 per cent or so less in terms of other currencies. That does not mean, of course, that the pound here in Britain, in your pocket or purse or in your bank, has been devalued. What it does mean is that we shall now be able to sell more goods abroad on a competitive basis. This is a tremendous

opportunity for all our exporters, and for many who have not yet started to sell their goods overseas. But it will also mean that the goods that we buy from abroad will be dearer, and so for many of these goods, it will be cheaper to buy British.

CROSS-REFERENCE

Britain's 1967 application to join the EEC is covered in Chapter 4, pages 29–31.

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

What is the value of Source 2 for an historian studying Labour's economic policy?

Labour had tried so hard to avoid devaluation that the devaluation crisis damaged its credibility. A few weeks later, Britain's second application to join the EEC was rejected. The application to join the EEC had been made above all on economic grounds as Wilson himself was lukewarm about Europe and much of the Labour Party did not want to join. Having the application rejected hard on the heels of the devaluation crisis made the government's economic policies look futile.

In fact, the economic situation improved markedly from this low point. Callaghan's replacement as Chancellor was **Roy Jenkins**, who had been strongly in favour of devaluation in 1964.

Jenkins used deflationary methods. He raised taxes and tightened up government spending in all areas of the economy, giving top priority to improving the balance of payments. These tough measures made the government unpopular but, by 1969, Jenkins had achieved a balance of payments surplus, although by 1969 to 1970 inflation was still running at 12 per cent. The improvement in the economic situation from 1969 was a key factor in making Labour confident of victory in the 1970 general election.

ACTIVITY

Draw a flow diagram to show the causes and impact of devaluation in 1967.

KEY PROFILE

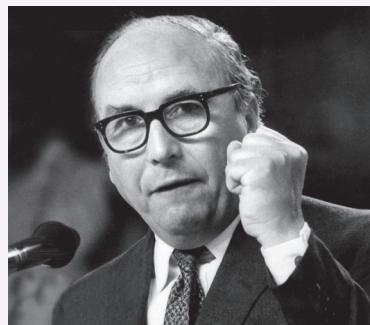


Fig. 7 Roy Jenkins

Roy Jenkins (1920–2003) was the son of a Welsh miner who had entered Parliament as a Labour MP in 1950. Under the premiership of Harold Wilson, he served as Home Secretary from 1965 to 1967 and Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1967 to 1970. He was a strong pro-European and considered to be on the Right of the Labour Party. In 1981 he went on to found and lead the Social Democratic Party (SDP).

AS LEVEL

PRACTICE QUESTION

'The Labour government had solved Britain's economic problems by 1970.' Explain why you agree or disagree with this view.

STUDY TIP

Identify the economic problems that Britain faced in 1964. You will need to assess the progress made in dealing with each one. You should decide which problems are the most important as the progress made in these will have more significance when you come to your overall assessment.

Industrial relations and the trade unions

One of the key elements in the post-war consensus was the influence of the trade unions. Since the war, all governments, Conservative as well as Labour, had seen it as essential to maintain full employment and to keep the unions happy. In opinion polls in the early 1960s, nearly 60 per cent of people said they had a favourable view of the unions. In 1964, Wilson made the trade unionist Frank Cousins minister of technology and Wilson was relying on union cooperation with his prices and incomes policies.

In 1966 and 1967, industrial relations with the trade unions began to deteriorate. Strikes by the seamen and the dockers caused economic problems for the government. These strikes also seemed to demonstrate that old-style union bosses were losing some of their control. A lot of strikes started with '**wildcat**' strikes by local activists who would not take orders from the top. The Conservative opposition under Edward Heath announced a policy that it called 'Fair Deal at Work'. Wilson and his new employment

KEY TERM

'wildcat' strikes: sudden, unofficial local disputes begun without reference to the national leadership

KEY PROFILE

Fig. 8 Castle was one of the longest-serving female MPs

Barbara Castle (1910–2002) was the Labour MP for Blackburn from 1945 to 1979. She held a number of cabinet posts, introducing the breathalyser when minister for transport, and putting through the Equal Pay Act as secretary of state for employment. She was on the Left of the party and was seen as a Bevanite. She was a Labour MEP between 1979 and 1989.

KEY TERM

white paper: a document written by the government that sets out a possible policy direction but makes no commitments

KEY PROFILE

Tony Benn (1925–2014) became an MP at age 25. When his father, Viscount Stansgate, died, he fought to remain an MP and did not take the peerage. He held a number of cabinet posts in the 1960s and 1970s but by the end of the 1970s he had moved to the Left of the party; his followers were known as Bennites. He stood for the deputy leadership in 1981, only narrowly losing by one per cent.

minister, **Barbara Castle**, also started planning to use the law to limit unofficial strikes.

Barbara Castle believed strongly in a powerful trade union movement but she was also convinced of the need for it to act responsibly. In January 1969, Castle produced her **white paper**, *In Place of Strife*. She knew it would be controversial, suggesting that it could be ‘political suicide’.

A CLOSER LOOK***In Place of Strife, 1969***

In many ways, Castle’s policy proposals would strengthen the unions in dealing with employers, but there were some key aspects that were difficult for the unions to accept:

- There was to be a 28-day ‘cooling off’ period before a strike went ahead.
- The government could impose a settlement when unions were in dispute with each other in ‘demarcation disputes’.
- Strike ballots could be imposed.
- An industrial relations court would be able to prosecute people who broke the rules.

Voters liked Castle’s proposals and the proposals were supported by many Labour MPs such as Roy Jenkins, the Chancellor, but the unions and the Left of the Labour Party hated them. There was a storm of protest from powerful union leaders such as **Jack Jones** of the Transport and General Workers’ Union, supported by the Home Secretary, James Callaghan and at least 50 Labour MPs who were ready to rebel. The row went on for months until Wilson gave in. In June 1969, the TUC negotiated a face-saving compromise but everyone knew it was really a humiliating climbdown by the government.

ACTIVITY

Working in groups, imagine you are political advisers to the Labour government in 1969.

Devise a list of points that support the case for abandoning *In Place of Strife* and a list of reasons why it is essential to push the policy through. When you have looked at both sides of the argument, decide what you will advise and put forward your case.

KEY PROFILE

Jack Jones (1913–2009) had worked as a docker. He joined the International Brigade to fight fascism in the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s. He was instrumental in defeating *In Place of Strife* in 1969 and was important in the setting up of Wilson’s Social Contract in the 1970s; in 1977 54 per cent of the population thought he was the most powerful man in Britain. After retiring in 1978 he became a campaigner for pensioners’ rights.

Other domestic policies

Although Wilson wanted to emphasise technology and science in modernising Britain’s economy, the government was hindered by a lack of expertise. Roy Jenkins, the first minister of aviation, later admitted that he had difficulty understanding his briefings because of his non-scientific mind, while the first minister of technology, Frank Cousins, had little interest in technological development. In 1966, when **Tony Benn** took over as minister, the department

performed better. But in some ways all Labour's domestic policies were overshadowed by economic problems.

Research and development was costly. Although Britain pursued some projects such as the supersonic plane Concorde which it developed in partnership with the French government, it could not compete with the USA, which spent vast government sums on research and development.

SOURCE 3

In January 1965, Tony Benn, the Postmaster General at the time, wrote in his diary:

Defence, colour television, Concorde, rocket development – these are all issues raising economic considerations that reveal this country's basic inability to stay in the big league. We just can't afford it. The real choice is, do we stay in with Europe or do we become an American satellite? I was always against the Common Market but the reality of our isolation is being borne in on me all the time. This country is so decrepit and hidebound that only activities in a wider sphere can help us to escape from the myths that surround our politics.

ACTIVITY

Extension

Research the developments that Tony Benn raises in this source (defence, colour television, Concorde, rocket development) and find out:

- what the issues that he is referring to were
- what the economic considerations at this time were.

Labour divisions

The divisions between the Left and the Right in the Labour Party remained in the period after 1964. However, after the death of Bevan, the leader of the Left, in 1960 and Gaitskell, the leader of the Right, in 1963, Wilson had emerged as a conciliatory leader of the party. Wilson's concentration on the Labour Party as the party of technological modernisation united both the Left and Right of the parties and minimised underlying tensions such as that over Clause IV.

Nevertheless, there were personal rivalries between Wilson and his most powerful cabinet colleagues. Wilson always feared that he might face a leadership challenge from Brown or Callaghan or Jenkins. Brown was hugely resentful that he had lost the leadership election to Wilson and was further disappointed that he was not made Foreign Secretary in 1964. Wilson was rumoured to have undermined Brown's reputation by keeping a record of any embarrassing incidents that he was involved in once he had been reshuffled to the Foreign Office. Wilson was also suspicious of Jenkins, a Gaitskellite. He did not really support Jenkins' liberalising legislation as home secretary. When the seaman's strike of 1966 caused a sterling crisis Jenkins tried to get the cabinet to support devaluation. Wilson interpreted this as a plot to replace himself and Brown with Callaghan and Jenkins.

This highlights Wilson's paranoia as it was highly unlikely that Callaghan and Jenkins would work together. Callaghan did not approve of Jenkins' pro-European stance nor of his liberalising legislation; Jenkins was critical of the failure to devalue when Callaghan was Chancellor and was a supporter of the trade union legislation that Callaghan helped to block.

It is possible to criticise Wilson as in some ways it appears that too much of his energy and attention was devoted to trying to keep the party united and in stopping any of his colleagues from being able to threaten his position. Wilson did not face any obvious challenger from the left of the party but those who were more left-wing in the unions, local government and young people were frustrated by his government and this made it likely that the divide between the Left and Right would re-emerge in the 1970s.

CROSS-REFERENCE

Liberalising legislation is covered in Chapters 6 and 7.

ACTIVITY

In groups of four each member should take one of the four main rivals: Wilson, Jenkins, Brown and Callaghan. Research your rival and write a speech as if you were them, explaining why you should be leader of the Labour Party.

The beginning of the 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland had been created in 1922, after the Irish War of Independence of 1919 to 1921. Ireland was partitioned between 6 counties in the north of Ireland that would remain part of the United Kingdom and the

KEY TERM

unionist: supporter of the union of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland to form the United Kingdom

nationalist: in the British context this usually means someone who supports independence for Scotland or Wales or is in favour of a united Ireland

other 26 counties which would be the Irish Free State, what would become the Republic of Ireland. The partition was extremely controversial at the time, leading to civil war, with **unionists** supporting the union with Britain and **nationalists** supporting a united Ireland.

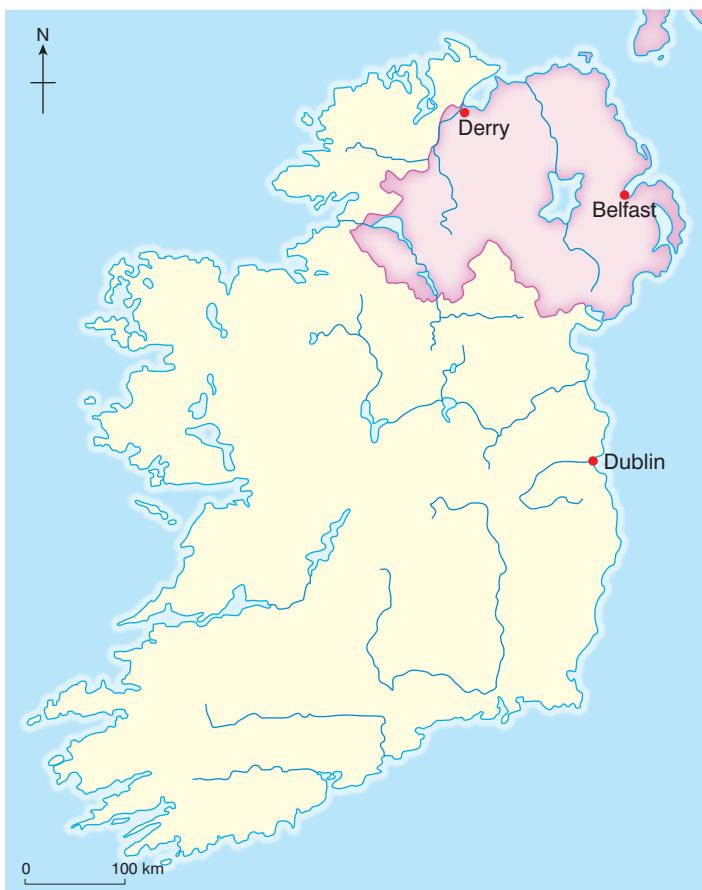


Fig. 9 Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland

KEY TERM

Irish Republican Army (IRA): organisation that fought for independence in the Irish War of Independence; it did not accept the partition of Ireland

paramilitary: a non-State military force

Apprentice Boys: a loyalist organisation that marches annually to commemorate the closing of the gates to the city of Derry to Catholic forces in 1688 by 13 apprentice boys

The majority of people in Ireland as a whole were Catholic but the majority of people in Northern Ireland were Protestant. This meant that the Belfast parliament at Stormont and the whole socio-economic system in Northern Ireland was dominated by Protestant unionists. By the mid-1960s there was mounting evidence that Catholics in Northern Ireland were discriminated against in employment and housing and that electoral boundaries had been deliberately drawn to prevent Catholics from being elected; in addition, there were accusations that the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), the Northern Irish police force, was biased against Catholics.

In 1964, the civil rights movement in Northern Ireland started to challenge this. Tensions rose as some unionists feared that the **Irish Republican Army (IRA)** would start a new campaign. These so-called loyalists started to set up **paramilitary** organisations to defend the union.

Civil rights marches were held in 1968 to protest against discrimination. They were attacked by loyalists. Catholics complained that the RUC failed to protect them. In 1969 the situation deteriorated further. The loyalist **Apprentice Boys** went ahead with their annual march in Derry and were attacked by nationalists in the Catholic area of the Bogside. The RUC tried to storm the Bogside but were held back in two days of rioting. Television pictures broadcast across the world showed RUC officers beating Catholics.



Fig. 10 *The Battle of the Bogside*

Riots spread to other towns and cities. The Stormont government offered concessions on housing and electoral boundaries; this sparked rioting from loyalists. In August 1969, the Wilson government sent in British army troops in an attempt to keep the peace.

The end of post-war consensus

By 1970 there were the first signs that the post-war consensus was breaking down. Britain's economic problems did not seem to have been solved by consensus policies. Trade unions were seemingly more uncooperative, forcing even the Labour Party to try and reform industrial relations. The Left of the Labour Party was dissatisfied by moderate consensus Labour policies. Social problems and poverty had not been ended. Meanwhile, in the Conservative Party, Edward Heath and his shadow cabinet were also starting to doubt the efficacy of key elements of the post-war consensus: as well as identifying the need for trade union reform, they were also questioning whether the State should take as great a role in planning the economy and in ensuring full employment.

The loss of the 1970 election

In some ways the victory of the Conservatives in the 1970 election seemed to be a surprise. The Wilson government had apparently come through its difficult times. Jenkins was credited with achieving economic and financial stability; Wilson was considered to be a master campaigner, far more experienced and more popular than the Conservative leader, Heath.

But beneath the surface, Heath had greater strengths than he was given credit for and Labour's position in 1970 was actually quite fragile. Heath was hard-working, conscientious and had an image of competence, even if he was perceived as dull. In addition, as this chapter has shown, between 1966 and 1969 Wilson's government had suffered a series of setbacks and real or perceived failures.

In 1968 Enoch Powell made his famous 'rivers of blood' speech which warned against further immigration. Although Heath sacked Enoch Powell

ACTIVITY

Extension

Research articles on the Troubles from newspapers of the period and share your findings with the class.

CROSS-REFERENCE

More detail on Enoch Powell's stance on immigration and the 'rivers of blood' speech can be found in Chapter 7, page 66.

from the shadow cabinet in 1968 and refused to let Powell take part in the election campaign, some people believed that Powell did make voters more likely to vote Conservative. Others believed that Heath's actions made him appear strong and principled. Furthermore, concern that the post-war consensus was not working meant that the Conservatives' new ideas gained support. Special polls in the key marginal constituencies showed a narrow Tory lead. Edward Heath told anyone in his party who would listen to him that he was confident of winning.

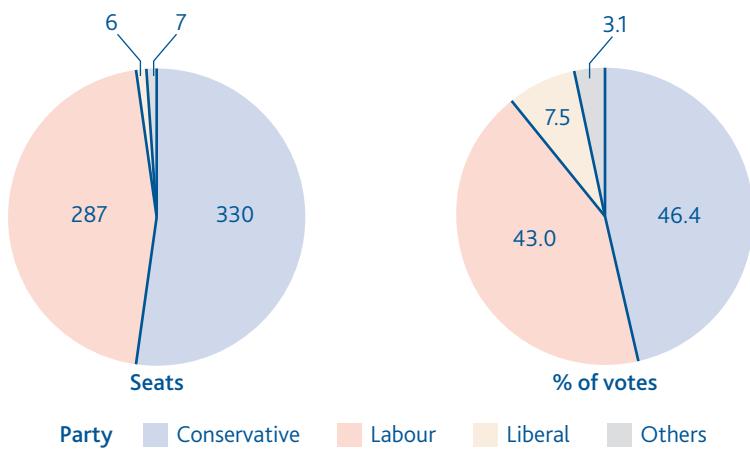


Fig. 11 General election results, 1970

Summary

ACTIVITY

Summary

In groups, look back at the events in this chapter. Make lists of:

1. reasons why you might have expected Labour to win in 1970
2. reasons why you might have expected Labour to lose in 1970
3. reasons why you might have expected the Conservatives to win in 1970.

Decide in your group which reason(s) were most important in the actual election result – a defeat for Labour.

STUDY TIP

Make sure you consider the purpose and audience of these sources as well as their content.



PRACTICE QUESTION

Evaluating primary sources

Look back at Sources 2 and 3. With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, which of these two sources is more valuable in explaining Britain's economy in the period 1964 to 1970?

STUDY TIP

You will need to clearly identify the failures of the Labour government in this period. For each failure, decide whether or not Wilson's leadership was a factor in the failure or whether there were other reasons. Remember that there can be more than one reason.



PRACTICE QUESTION

How important is Harold Wilson's leadership in explaining the failures of the Labour government from 1964 to 1970?

6 Liberal reforming legislation

SOURCE 1

In 1959 the Labour MP Roy Jenkins produced a book *The Labour Case*, in which he laid down the principles of a civilised society:

First there is the need for the State to do less to restrict personal freedom. Secondly there is the need for the State to do more to encourage the arts, to create towns which are worth living in, and to preserve a countryside which is worth looking at. Thirdly there is the need independently of the State to create a climate of opinion which is favourable to gaiety, tolerance, and beauty, and unfavourable to puritanical restriction, to petty-minded disapproval, to hypocrisy and to a dreary, ugly pattern of life. A determined drive in these three directions would do more to promote human happiness than all the 'political' legislation which any government is likely to introduce. In the long run these things will be more important than even the most perfect of economic policies.

Roy Jenkins was the Labour Home Secretary in Wilson's government from December 1965 so he found himself in a position to influence society. Society had already undergone considerable change since the 1950s, but changes in the law were needed if 'personal freedom' was to be allowed to develop further.

By the end of the 1960s, some of the old taboos and prejudices which Roy Jenkins had deemed prejudicial to 'civilised society' had begun to break down. Such change was, of course, a gradual evolution and not only the result of government legislation. Developments which had been occurring since the 1950s, greater affluence, youth culture and the spread of technology, also played a part. Indeed, it could be argued that changes 'from the top' merely reflected changes that were already in evidence 'from below'.

However, it is also the case that some of the changes that took place under the Labour governments were ahead of their time in terms of general acceptance. The abolition of capital punishment, the Abortion Act, the Sexual Offences Act, and divorce reform all met with a good deal of media criticism and public hostility.

Private members' bills

The Labour government did not set out with a 'liberalising' agenda; their manifestos made no mention of moral issues. Labour leaders, like Wilson and Brown, were conservative on moral issues and many working-class Labour MPs remained suspicious of change. But laws on what are considered moral questions are usually **free votes**. Labour also favoured the use of 'expert witnesses' and a technical and rational approach to alterations in the law.

Although the vast majority of proposed legislation passing through Parliament is government bills, there is also the provision for backbench MPs to propose legislation through private members' bills. The 1960s saw backbench MPs bring forward a number of reforms through this mechanism. They were successful because Jenkins, as Home Secretary, was sympathetic and so enabled enough parliamentary time to be available for the reforms to be passed.

The end of capital punishment

Arguments against the death penalty had been advanced in the 1950s and although public opinion remained sharply divided, the anti-hanging campaign had received a particular boost from the case of Ruth Ellis, a young mother who had murdered her unfaithful lover in 1955. In 1957, the Tories had

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this chapter you will learn about:

- liberal reforming legislation, and the use of private members' bills to bring it about
- the end of capital punishment
- divorce reform
- the legalisation of abortion
- the legalisation of homosexual relations
- educational reform.

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

1. With reference to Source 1, define a 'civilised society'.
2. In groups, consider Jenkins' views as expressed in Source 1. Do you agree with his view of the State's duties? Which group of voters do you think Jenkins was trying to appeal to when he wrote this in 1959? Which type of people might agree/disagree with him?

KEY TERM

free vote: individual MPs can vote according to their own conscience rather than following an official party line

reduced the number of offences carrying the death penalty, but the Labour backbencher Sydney Silverman continued to campaign tirelessly to win support for a total abolition. In 1965, on a free vote, hanging was abolished for a trial period of five years, and in 1969 this was made permanent.



Fig. 1 Ruth Ellis: the last woman to be hanged in Britain in 1955

KEY TERM

unanimity: this meant that all 12 jurors had to agree on the verdict; majority verdicts meant that a decision could be reached if at least 10 jurors agreed

Jenkins also refused to authorise the beating of prisoners, which ceased after 1967, and he brought in 'majority' verdicts for English juries rather than demanding **unanimity**. This helped convict many dangerous and professional criminals, though the abolition of hanging did not significantly reduce the number of murders or violent crimes, as its supporters had hoped.

Divorce reform

Until the 1960s, divorce law demanded evidence that one party had committed adultery. To gain this, the rich had used private detectives and cameras, but for others, a divorce was often impossible. Jenkins believed the laws were out of date, and the Divorce Reform Act was passed in 1969. This allowed for 'no fault divorce' following the 'irretrievable breakdown' of a marriage. Couples could divorce if:

- they had lived apart for two years and both partners agreed to a divorce
- they had lived apart for five years and one partner wanted the divorce.

However, not all MPs were in favour, as the following source makes clear:

SOURCE 2

Adapted from a speech made in the House of Commons by Victor Goodhew, Conservative MP for St Albans on 12 June 1969:

I say, quite firmly, that I shall vote against the bill because I see it as part of a pattern of gradual erosion of the standards of Christian upbringing which are being forced upon this country by a small minority. It has been suggested that the object or the effect of the bill will be to strengthen marriage. I cannot imagine that a young couple entering into marriage, whenever the bill comes

into force, and knowing that they have only to separate for two years and live apart to agree to the break-up of the marriage, would feel that that is strengthening marriage in their eyes. It almost makes it a trial marriage for however short a period people might like—and two years is a short period in which to break up. I feel that once they open the floodgates, the numbers will be much larger than they have ever imagined. This has happened with the demand for abortions and it will happen with the demand for divorces, and the law courts will be under pressure.

Following the reform there was a huge increase in the number of divorces. In 1950 there had been fewer than 2 divorce decrees per 1000 married couples in England and Wales, but by the mid-1970s nearly 10 in every 1000 marriages ended this way. This could, of course, be partly explained by growing female independence, but it is very likely the Act played a major role.

The legalisation of abortion

Until 1967, abortion (except on strictly medical grounds) was illegal. The only way of terminating a pregnancy was to find a private clinic, if you could afford the fees, or search out a backstreet abortionist if you could not. Between 100,000 and 200,000 illegal abortions were performed each year and around 35,000 women were admitted to hospitals with complications as a result. Worse still, between 1958 and 1960, 82 women died after backstreet abortions.

The Abortion Law Reform Association had campaigned for a reform in the law from 1945, arguing that legal obstacles to abortion ought to be removed to end these problems, but it was the thalidomide disaster of 1959 to 1962 that did more to sway public opinion than any of their arguments. Not everyone was convinced though; in 1966 the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child was set up to oppose any liberalisation of the law, fearing that any extension of abortion beyond strict medical grounds would lead to abortion on demand.

The Liberal MP **David Steel** led the reform campaign in Parliament, supported by the Labour government and also a number of Conservatives, and Roy Jenkins ensured an all-night Commons sitting in order to pass the bill.

A CLOSER LOOK

The thalidomide disaster

During the 1960s, the drug thalidomide, which was prescribed for pregnant women with morning sickness, was found to produce congenital deformities in children when taken in early pregnancy. Children were commonly born without the long bones of the arms and/or the legs. In reaction to this, opinion polls showed a majority in favour of abortions when an abnormality had been detected in a foetus.

The Abortion Act permitted the legal termination of a pregnancy within the first 28 weeks, under medical supervision and with the written consent of 2 doctors. Importantly, the only justification needed was the 'mental suffering' of the pregnant woman, not just her physical condition.

The pro-abortionists celebrated, but hoped that the availability of more effective contraceptives and better education would limit the need for abortion proved false. The number of abortions increased from 4 per 100 live births in 1968 (35,000) to 17.6 in 1975 (141,000).

ACTIVITY

List the arguments given here against the Divorce Reform Act. How might a supporter of the Act have responded?

KEY PROFILE



Fig. 2 Steel has been a member of the House of Lords since 1997

David Steel (b. 1938) entered the Commons as a Liberal in 1965, having won a by-election. He was the youngest MP in that parliament and he continued to serve until 1997, becoming Liberal leader in 1976. His key interest was in domestic affairs and social policy, and he was the party's employment spokesman from 1965 to 1967, before becoming Chief Whip in 1970.

KEY TERM

decriminalisation: removing an action or behaviour from the scope of the law so that the action or behaviour can no longer be subjected to prosecution or be liable to fines or imprisonment

The legalisation of homosexual relations

Up until the 1960s men could be imprisoned for two years for participating in homosexual acts. The Conservative government had rejected the Wolfenden recommendation to **decriminalise** homosexuality and the Labour government of 1964 was divided on the issue.

It was left to Leo Abse, a Labour backbencher, to take up the cause. Thanks to Jenkins' support he was able to get enough parliamentary time for his private members' bill to become law as the 1967 Sexual Offences Act. Although this did not legalise homosexual acts it decriminalised them where three conditions were met:

- both partners had to consent
- both had to be over the age of 21
- it had to be in private.

The Act was welcomed by men who had previously been afraid to declare their sexuality and, in some cases, been forced to lead double lives. However, the Act was strictly interpreted: 'in private' was interpreted as no one else being in the same building, so it did not mean the complete end of prosecutions for homosexual practices.

ACTIVITY

Create a chart like that below to record and assess the liberalising legislation of 1964 to 1970.

Act and date	Background/support and promoter	Details of Act	Impact	Success?

Educational reform**The development of comprehensive schools**

Fig. 3 Pupils congregating outside a comprehensive school in the 1960s

By the 1960s the idea that the different types of secondary school in the **tripartite system** were equal in status had long since passed. The secondary modern pupils were seen as 11+ failures and the whole system appeared socially divisive, with the majority of grammar school places going to those from a middle-class background.

Local Education Authorities (LEAs) were responsible for schools and in some areas, for example, Labour-controlled Greater London, they had established **comprehensive schools**. In comprehensive schools every child would have the same opportunities to learn at their own pace and sit exams according to their own abilities in each subject.

By 1964, 1 in 10 pupils was being educated in a comprehensive (10 times as many as in 1951) but it was still only a small minority. In 1965 **Tony Crosland**, a leading supporter of the comprehensive system, became minister of education which accelerated this process.

He issued Circular 10/65, to all Local Education Authorities, requesting them to convert to comprehensive schools. Although it was not a statutory requirement, many authorities responded especially after 1966 when the government made money for new school buildings conditional on the drawing up of plans for comprehensives. By 1970, only 8 authorities had failed to do so and there were 1145 comprehensive schools catering for 1 in 3 of all state-educated secondary school pupils.

It is hard to say how successful these new comprehensives were. The mergers and changes in status for schools caused considerable disruption in the early days. Wilson justified them by claiming that comprehensives meant a 'grammar school education for all', but many middle-class parents remained unconvinced. Some turned to the **direct grant schools** (which were allowed to continue) and independent schools, which meant that the idea of a truly 'comprehensive' system was flawed from the start.

The expansion of higher education and the inauguration of the Open University



Fig. 4 A student studying at a new polytechnic

CROSS-REFERENCE

The tripartite system is explained in Chapter 1.

KEY TERM

comprehensive school: one which provides secondary education for all the children in a given area; it does not select its pupils

KEY PROFILE

Tony Crosland (1918–77) was first elected as a Labour MP in 1950 but lost his seat in 1955, before winning the seat of Grimsby in 1959. Between 1955 and 1959 he wrote *The Future of Socialism* which was a hugely influential book on the right wing of the Labour Party. He later served as Foreign Secretary from 1976 to 1977.

KEY TERM

direct grant schools: mostly old, endowed grammar schools which admitted a substantial proportion of pupils on scholarships from the LEAs; they were phased out from 1976

Fears that Britain was slipping behind in science and technological education had already led to the establishment of the Robbins Committee in 1961.

The Robbins Report found that Britain lagged behind France, Germany and the United States in the provision of university places and that too many students followed arts-related courses to the exclusion of the study of science and technology. The Labour government responded by expanding higher education:

- Polytechnics replaced Colleges of Technology. Their focus was to be on applied education for work and science and they would concentrate on teaching rather than research.
- Nine Colleges of Advanced Technology became full universities and the Royal College of Science in Scotland became Strathclyde University.
- ‘New’ universities were to be founded (and charters given to some, like Sussex, which had recently been established).



Fig. 5 The spread of universities in the 1960s

By 1968, there were 30 polytechnics and 56 universities. New institutions brought new courses and it became possible, for example, to take a degree in town planning and architecture. The new polytechnics and universities opened up higher education for many whose families had never attended a university, although middle-class children still dominated the old universities so it was hard to persuade anyone of the parity of opportunity.

The Open University

Harold Wilson was later to say that he most wanted to be remembered for the creation of the Open University. It combined his enthusiasms for equal opportunities in education, modernisation and the 'white heat of technology' by attempting to offer high-quality degree-level learning in arts and sciences to people who had never had the opportunity to attend campus universities.

In March 1963, a Labour Party study group proposed an experiment on radio and television to be called the 'University of the Air'. Following his election success in 1964, Wilson appointed **Jennie Lee** to consider the project, and it was her commitment that saw it through.

SOURCE 3

Adapted from Jennie Lee's reminiscences of the 1960s in *The Open University*, 2010. Jennie Lee was the minister responsible for establishing the Open University:

Although a junior minister, I was working on my own, dealing directly with the Treasury and with the prime minister. The civil servants hated it: all very irregular. Harold Wilson asked me to go to Chicago and Moscow. Neither was anything like what I wanted to do. The Chicago lads were lovely but they were only short-circuiting the first year or two of the degree. In Moscow all they were doing was routine long-term broadcasting and some correspondence courses. I had a different vision from that and I hated the term 'University of the Air' because of all the nonsense in the press about sitting in front of the telly to get a degree. I knew it had to be a university with no concessions, right from the very beginning. After all, I had gone through the mill myself, taking my own degree, even though it was a long time ago. I knew the conservatism and vested interests of the academic world. I didn't believe we could get it through if we lowered our standards.

In September 1969, the Open University's headquarters were established in Milton Keynes and by the middle of 1970 there had been enough applications for the first students to begin their studies in January 1971. It became a rapid success. The university used radio and television in innovative forms of distance learning, and recruited largely part-time students with a totally different social profile from traditional students. It attracted the mature, women and the disadvantaged, and it helped raise the esteem of those who had previously regarded themselves as educational failures. By 1980, the Open University had 70,000 students and was awarding more degrees than Oxford and Cambridge combined.

ACTIVITY

Extension

Try to see Willy Russell's play or the film *Educating Rita* (1979 and 1983). It concerns Rita, a 26-year-old hairdresser from Liverpool, who enrolls in the Open University because she wants to be a different person. It shows the impact that the Open University had.

KEY PROFILE



Fig. 6 Lee was a Labour politician

Jennie Lee (1904–88) came from a working-class family and had only been able to attend Edinburgh University with support from a trust which agreed to pay half her fees. During the General Strike of 1926 she gave some of her bursary money to her family, as her union-activist father lost his job. She was first elected to Parliament in 1929, and in 1964 was appointed arts minister. She retired in 1970 and was created Baroness Lee of Ashridge.

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

1. In what ways are Lee's reminiscences in Source 3 helpful in understanding the influences behind the support for the Open University in the late 1960s?
2. How does your understanding of the context of this period help you to understand the establishment of the Open University?

ACTIVITY

1. Draw a spider diagram of all the causes for educational reform you can find in this chapter.
2. Write a paragraph that explains which cause you think is the most important and why.

Summary**ACTIVITY****Summary**

1. Make a list of all the social changes that this chapter covers.
 2. Identify who was affected by each change.
 3. Which change do you think was the biggest?
- Compare your conclusions with the rest of the class.

STUDY TIP

You will need to identify the causes identified in each source. Remember that not all the authors may have been in favour of the changes. How might this affect their value?

**A
LEVEL****PRACTICE QUESTION****Evaluating primary sources**

Look back at Sources 1, 2 and 3. With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these three sources to an historian studying the causes of social change in the 1960s.

STUDY TIP

The key word in this quotation is ‘transformed’, which might be considered to mean ‘completely changed’ – i.e. so much so that there was no going back. You will therefore need to consider what would be ‘completely changed’ as a result of legislation, what would be partially changed and what remained unchanged. Also, don’t forget that ‘society’ is made up of many different elements. Since the quotation offers a strong one-sided view, you should find plenty to challenge!

**AS
LEVEL****PRACTICE QUESTION**

‘Liberalising legislation between 1964 and 1970 transformed British society.’ Explain whether you agree or disagree with this view.

7

Social and cultural change



Fig. 1 Dancing at the Isle of Wight festival in 1969

SOURCE 1

Roy Jenkins, during a speech in Abingdon in July 1969, commented on how society between 1964 and 1969 had been radically reformed:

Despite the successes, the forces of liberalism and human freedom are now to some extent on the defensive. The 'permissive society' – always a misleading description – has been allowed to become a dirty phrase. A better phrase is the 'civilised society', a society based on the belief that different individuals will wish to make different decisions about their patterns of behaviour, and that, provided these do not restrict the freedom of others, they should be allowed to do so, within a framework of understanding and tolerance.

The expansion of the mass media

In the 1960s the mass media grew in size and type. Television became available everywhere, which started to create a uniformity of culture and ended the isolation of distant communities. The news was no longer relayed by a disembodied voice or lifeless newspaper. Television rapidly supplanted the cinema as a means of entertainment.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this chapter you will learn about:

- the expansion of the mass media
- growth in leisure activities
- the impact of scientific developments
- the reduction in censorship
- progress towards female equality
- changes in moral attitudes and the 'permissive society'
- youth culture
- anti-Vietnam War riots
- issues of immigration and race.

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

1. With reference to Source 1, define a 'civilised society'.
2. Look back at Source 1 in Chapter 6, page 49, and your answer to the Activity there. Are your definitions the same?
3. Why do you think Jenkins is making the case for a 'civilised society' again in 1969? How does this help you put Source 1 into context?

1950	1955	1960	1965	1975
344,000	4,504,000	10,470,000	13,253,000	17,701,000

Table 1 The growth in the number of television licences

KEY PROFILE

Hugh Greene (1910–87) was Director-General of the BBC from 1960 to 1969. He introduced new programming such as satire, realistic drama such as *Z Cars* (1962–78), unconventional sitcoms such as *Steptoe and Son* (1962–74) as well as the often controversial *The Wednesday Play* (1964–70), which dealt with issues like mental breakdown, alcoholism and homelessness. Some plays also contained nudity and 'offensive' language.

A CLOSER LOOK

In 1964 a 'pirate station' – Radio Caroline – began to broadcast from a ship moored outside territorial waters off the Essex coast. Other 'pirate' stations followed. Despite a fierce campaign to 'save the pirates', the UK government introduced the Marine Broadcasting Act in August 1967, designed to make offshore radio illegal.

CROSS-REFERENCE

Rupert Murdoch is profiled in Chapter 15, page 128.

A CLOSER LOOK

DIY and gardening activities were encouraged by television programmes, featuring personalities such as Barry Bucknell (*Bucknell's House*) and Percy Thrower (*Gardeners' World*).

By 1961, 75 per cent of the population had a TV in their home and by 1971 it was 91 per cent.

When **Hugh Greene** became Director-General of the BBC in 1960, he set out to transform it. Money was diverted from radio to television, guidelines on nudity and swearing were revised, a new style of news presentation and more popular programmes were commissioned.

The launch of ITV in 1955 had allowed advertising to expand. Advertisers could get straight into the family sitting room and tempt customers with attractive models that reinforced the brand names of goods. BBC2 was launched in April 1964 allowing BBC1 to grow more populist and, in July 1967, BBC2 became the first channel to broadcast regular colour programmes.

Radio survived, helped by the development of the cheap and portable transistor and the spread of car radios. These, together with the long-life battery and earphones, meant that radios could be taken out or listened to in the privacy of the bedroom. Teenagers no longer had to listen to what their parents wanted to hear and personal radios meant that programmes could be targeted at different audiences.

At the beginning of the 1960s, there were just three BBC radio stations. Commercial enterprise seized on this gap in the market. Young people who could obtain the signal started to listen to the nightly broadcasts of pop music from Radio Luxembourg and from 1964 the 'pirate stations'. After the pirate stations were banned, a BBC pop music station, Radio One, was started. The station made use of former pirate DJs such as Tony Blackburn, and soon won many converts.

Some predicted that the arrival of the TV would mark the end of the print media. Advertising revenue fell along with readership, but those newspapers and magazines that survived, changed and grew stronger. *The Sun*, for example, launched in 1964, replaced the serious working-class newspaper, the *Daily Herald*, and set out to be 'the only newspaper born of the age we live in'. In 1969, *The Sun* was bought by the Australian newspaper tycoon Rupert Murdoch. He associated it with the more permissive attitudes of the age and its popularity grew enormously.

Growth in leisure activities

By the 1960s leisure time expanded as fewer people were expected to work on Saturday mornings and weekends could be given over to leisure activities.

Home remained the centre of many leisure activities and this was extended by TV. By 1969, TV accounted for 23 per cent of leisure time. 'Do-it-yourself' (DIY) and gardening became popular hobbies. Cookery, needlework and knitting still had a place in the 1960s home, and were encouraged by both new gadgetry and the ease with which tasks such as knitting could be combined with TV viewing. Live theatre, on the other hand, shrank rapidly, especially outside major cities, while attendance at football matches and other 'live' events also suffered.

Car ownership accelerated rapidly in the 1960s. Passenger bus, coach and train travel declined as the use of the car grew to account for 77 per cent of journeys by 1974 (up from 39 per cent in 1954). Technological improvements meant that cars had become more affordable. Cars permitted travel to alternative shopping centres and leisure facilities and activities from caravanning to golf and sailing all built up a devoted following. For the

providers of equipment and facilities, leisure had become a profitable business. Shopping became a leisure activity in its own right as mass production grew, fuelled by advertising.

The 1960s also saw leisure travel turn into mass tourism as the number of holidays (stays of more than three days at a tourist destination) increased.

	1951	1961	1971
Holidays in total	27 million	34 million	41 million
Holidays abroad	2 million	4 million	7 million

Table 2 Holidays, 1951–71

Britannia Airways was founded in 1964 to serve holidaymakers wishing to fly to Spain, the Canary Islands, Malta, Bulgaria and North Africa. However, the costs of air travel meant that for most of the 1960s holidays abroad were still largely the preserve of the middle classes. Package holidays were still in their infancy by the end of the 1960s, although they had grown from under 4 per cent of total holidays in 1966 to 8.4 per cent in 1971. Travel abroad also began to inject some continental flavour into British tastes, even if it was only among the better-off middle classes. Restaurants and wine bars appeared, to cater for these new tastes.

A CLOSER LOOK

Spain encouraged the development of tourist resorts. With two weeks in Spain costing as little as £20, it is not surprising that 30 per cent of all overseas package holidays were taken there.

Impact of scientific developments

The 1960s were a time of great development in science and technology. In 1961 the first person had gone into space and by 1969 the United States had landed on the moon. The Labour government had made scientific development a key aim. Despite economic problems and financial restraints, there was progress. The Anglo-French partnership continued to develop the supersonic Concorde aircraft. The Post Office Tower, then the tallest building in Britain, opened in 1965 to improve telecommunications.

Probably more important to the lives of ordinary people were the developments that affected their day-to-day lives.

ACTIVITY

Extension

Use this chapter and other sources to research the scientific developments that affected ordinary people's lives. Summarise their impact in a table, such as the one below:

Scientific development	What changed?	Who did this impact?	Significance?
Media – television and radio			
Travel			
Fashion			
Contraceptive pill			
New household appliances			

Write a paragraph explaining which one you think is most significant and why.

KEY TERM

Lord Chamberlain's Office: a department of the queen's household; since the eighteenth century, it had the power to prevent plays being performed or order changes to be made to them

censorship: the attempt to limit what people can read, see, hear and do through state controls and regulation

A CLOSER LOOK

Edward Bond's play *Saved* was refused a public performance licence in 1965 and *Early Morning* was closed by censorship after two performances. Bond's plays were judged to be too violent, shocking and immoral.

ACTIVITY**Evaluating primary sources**

- What did Darlington think about the production he reviewed?
- Are reviews, such as this one, valuable for historians who want to understand social issues?

Explain your answer.

Reduction in censorship

Playwrights began experimenting with new styles of plays, often addressing social issues with a frankness that led to clashes with the office of the **Lord Chamberlain**. New plays had to gain a licence from the Lord Chamberlain's Office before they were allowed to be performed. The Lord Chamberlain's Office could demand that material that it considered to be inappropriate or immoral was removed. Theatre owners could be prosecuted if a play did not have approval.

The Royal Court Theatre in London was at the centre of innovation. After Edward Bond's controversial play *Early Morning* was banned in 1967, the backbencher George Strauss introduced a bill to abolish theatrical **censorship**. With Roy Jenkins' support, and the testimony of the famous actor Laurence Olivier, the bill passed into law in 1968.

The removal of theatrical censorship permitted nudity on stage, and the new Act was celebrated when 13 members of the cast of *Hair*, an American musical in production at the Shaftesbury Theatre in London, stood up and faced the audience naked for 30 seconds in 1968.

SOURCE 2

William A. Darlington, who had served as the *Telegraph's* chief theatre critic for 48 years before retiring in 1968, reviewed the musical, *Hair*:

I have seldom been more out of anything as I was of this production. Obviously I am the wrong age for it and possibly the wrong nationality. To me the evening was a bore. It was noisy, it was ugly and quite desperately unfunny. As for the much discussed nudes, there were some bare looking skins at one point in the shadows at the back of the stage, but if that's all it amounts to, some people are going to be disappointed. The company have enormous vitality and a great sense of rhythm. This, added to their infantile desire to flout established standards, may earn them a success. But I doubt it.

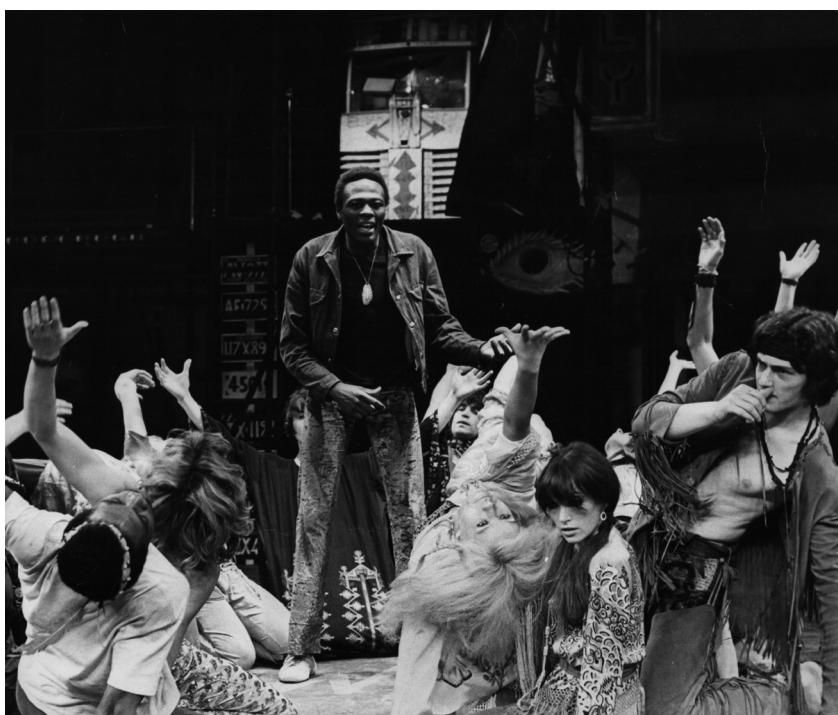


Fig. 2 A scene from the controversial musical, *Hair*

Films remained subject to strict categorisation by the British Board of Film Censors. Nevertheless, the 1960s saw a gradual broadening of what was considered acceptable. Films of the mid-1960s grew more daring, with examples such as *Darling* (1965), *Alfie* (1966) and *Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush* (1967). By the end of the decade, screen violence and sex had become more acceptable and more explicit. Nevertheless, the reduction of censorship did not create an immediate wave of decadence and it largely legitimised changes that had already taken place.

TV was both affected by, and helped to develop, more liberal attitudes. As the 1960s progressed, issues of sex, violence, politics and religion, which had previously been banned or considered unsuitable for public broadcasting, were tackled.

Progress towards female equality

The belief that the duty of a woman was to be a good wife and mother, keeping a clean home and feeding children and husband, remained strong for most of the 1960s, as it had been in the 1950s, particularly among the working classes.

Second-wave feminism had started in the United States when Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique*, published in 1963, argued that women were unfulfilled with these restricted lives. This spread to Britain, where the growth in female education, especially for the middle classes, contributed to growing frustration. Few made it to the top professions. Women accounted for only 28 per cent of students in higher education in 1970 and only 5 per cent of women ever reached managerial posts.

At the lower end of the social scale, girls' education still carried a domestic slant and girls frequently left school at the minimum age and married young. There was no shortage of jobs for women (not least because, before 1970, employers could pay them less than men) but many of these were in the clerical and service sector with no prospects and poor pay. Some women wanted to work, even when they had children, but working mothers were still often portrayed as unnatural and selfish by the media. Childminders were rare in the 1960s and private nurseries were only available for the wealthy.

The National Health Service (Family Planning) Act of 1967 allowed local authorities to provide contraceptives and contraceptive advice for the first time. However, changing attitudes meant that the number of illegitimate births rose from 5.8 per cent in 1960 to 8.2 per cent in 1970, and the number of marriages ending in divorce also rose.

The feminist movement was encouraged by the publication of articles and books exploring the position of women such as *Women: The Longest Revolution* (1966) by Juliet Mitchell and *The Female Eunuch* by Germaine Greer (1970). A number of 'Women's Lib' groups sprang up around the UK to campaign for social and economic equality for women.

A rally in Britain in 1969 led to the establishment of the Women's National Co-ordination Committee, which brought the various strands of the feminist movement together. At the first National Women's Liberation Conference held at Ruskin College, Oxford in February 1970, four demands were put forward:

- equal pay
- free contraception and abortion on request
- equal educational and job opportunities
- free 24-hour childcare.

Some progress was made: the 1970 Matrimonial Property Act established that the work of a wife, whether in paid employment or in the home, should be taken into account in divorce settlements. Furthermore, the 1970 Equal Pay Act established the principle of equal pay for equal work, although it did not come into force for a further five years.

A CLOSER LOOK

The Wednesday Play (BBC, 1964–70) featured issues such as abortion, while even the populist *Coronation Street* (launched in 1960 by ITV) shocked older audiences with its realistic portrayal of failed marriages and illicit affairs. Kenneth Tynan was the first to use a four-letter word on TV in 1965, and once the barrier was broken the floodgates opened.

A CLOSER LOOK

The extent of liberation

The advent of better methods of contraception that took away the inevitability of pregnancy was certainly liberating, but this was true for men as well. The ability to divorce more easily liberated women in that they were more able to escape difficult relationships, yet it was often the women who were left struggling to support themselves and children.

However, the feminist movement did not really make much headway until the 1970s. Despite some breakthroughs, by the end of the 1960s, inequalities and discrimination still existed and the traditional stereotyping of roles remained strong. Times were changing, but the 1960s were a period of evolution, not revolution, for women.

ACTIVITY

Consider the following contradictions:

Labour-saving devices in the home freed women from the drudgery of the kitchen	BUT	Advertising of these reinforced the female role as a housewife
Increased education and access to higher education encouraged women to develop higher expectations		Slow and difficult progress along career paths was all the more frustrating
The increased availability of jobs gave women greater independence		Still responsible for home and children
Greater control over family planning liberated women from unwanted pregnancy		Men could avoid responsibility for family planning
Easier divorce created greater freedoms		But still a lack of economic independence

Discuss the changes that took place in women's lives in this period. Were women likely to feel more or less valued and fulfilled as a result of the changes that took place?

Changes in moral attitudes and the 'permissive society'

SOURCE 3

A poem, 'Annus Mirabilis', by Philip Larkin, published in 1974, claims:

Sexual intercourse began
In nineteen sixty-three
(which was rather late for me) –
Between the end of the Chatterley ban
And the Beatles' first LP.

CROSS-REFERENCE

Liberalising legislation is covered in Chapter 6.

ACTIVITY

Extension

Look back at Chapter 6. Remind yourself of the liberalising legislation of 1964 to 1970 and discuss in groups how it encouraged a 'permissive society'.

In this poem, Larkin links the 1960s to the birth of the 'permissive society'. This refers to a time of general sexual liberation, with changes in public and private morals and a new openness. Critics used the term in a negative way, believing it was a decline in conventional moral standards, encouraged by the contraceptive pill, the spread of the mass media and the enactment of liberal legislation.

The Catholic Church was hostile to the contraceptive pill, arguing that it was contrary to God's law and therefore sinful. Not all prominent Catholics

agreed and the Catholic MP Norman St John-Stevas wrote a critical essay entitled 'The Pope, the Pill and the People' in 1968.

Permissive ideas were spread by the media, from 'teen' magazines through to a growing number of uncensored novels. Previously taboo subjects were discussed in books, on the radio and on television. But also by the end of the decade, rates of sexually transmitted infections were on the rise, especially among the young.

The moral campaigner **Mary Whitehouse** was concerned by these changes.

SOURCE 4

On 5 May 1964, Mary Whitehouse addressed a meeting attended by over 3000 people in Birmingham Town Hall:

The immediate object of this campaign is to restore the BBC to its position of respect and leadership in this country. The BBC says that it should show the work of playwrights which write of the world in which they live. If that is the world in which they live then I am truly sorry for them. But it is not our world and it is not the world of the vast majority of the people in this country and we don't want it in our homes. If violence is constantly portrayed as normal on the television screen it will help to create a violent society. I am not narrow-minded or old-fashioned. But I am square, and proud of it, if that means having a sense of values.

The publicity and support that Mrs Whitehouse received led to the setting up of the National Viewers' and Listeners' Association in 1965, and this soon had 100,000 members. However, despite her lobbying, Whitehouse failed to have any impact on the programmes shown.

The permissive society was also seen in the spread of the drug culture. Cocaine and heroin addiction became ten times more prevalent in the first half of the 1960s and the use of soft drugs was more commonplace by the end of the decade. The 'hippy lifestyle', with its emphasis on 'free love' and 'flower power', promoted the drug culture and even the Beatles turned to LSD.

The Dangerous Drugs Act 1967 made it unlawful to possess drugs such as cannabis and cocaine. The Wootton Report of 1968 suggested legalising soft drugs like cannabis, but this was rejected by the Home Secretary, James Callaghan (who was much less liberal than his predecessor, Roy Jenkins), and who wanted 'to call a halt to the rising tide of permissiveness'. In 1970 the maximum sentence for supplying drugs was increased to 14 years' imprisonment.

The degree to which liberal permissiveness actually influenced attitudes and behaviour in the 1960s can also be exaggerated. Surveys by Michael Schofield on the sexual behaviour of young people (1965) and Geoffrey Gorer on *Sex and Marriage in England Today* (1969, published 1971) found most young people were either virgins on marriage or married their first and only sexual partner. A mixture of ignorance and social constraints remained and while liberal legislation opened the way to change, it represented only an inroad into the old religious and moral restraints.



PRACTICE QUESTION

'The extent of the permissive society was still limited by 1970.' Explain why you agree or disagree with this view.

KEY PROFILE

Mary Whitehouse (1910–2001) was a Birmingham housewife. In 1963, she began her own 'moral crusade' against what she saw as a 'tide of immorality and indecency' in Britain at that time; her crusade was particularly directed at the Director-General of the BBC, Sir Hugh Greene. Mrs Whitehouse gained a lot of public support when she launched her 'Clean Up TV' campaign in 1964. In 1965, she founded the National Viewers' and Listeners' Association. Her campaign continued until the 1980s.

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

How valuable is Source 4 to an historian studying social change in the period 1964 to 1970?

STUDY TIP

Make sure you clearly define what you understand by the permissive society. When planning your answer identify all the evidence that supports and challenges the view in the question. Use information from Chapter 6 as well as from this chapter.

Youth culture

The coincidence of increased living standards, the spread of education and the growth of leisure time helped to create a youth generation that was more inclined to question norms and more ready to assert its right to choose.

Young people clashed with their parents over fashion, musical tastes and moral standards, and as seen above there was a greater questioning of previous norms around sex and drugs. Such behaviour caused a good deal of concern among the older generation. Nevertheless, the extent of teenage promiscuity and drug-taking must be kept in proportion. Alcohol, tobacco and caffeine were used more than illegal drugs and, according to a survey in 1969, young people spent more time listening to music in their bedrooms than at youth clubs or rock festivals.

Youth culture was largely defined by fashion and music. For a short while in the 1960s, London was the capital of the fashion world. Traditional rules were abandoned. It became acceptable to wear the same outfit to work and for the evening. Women wore trousers, and men started to wear velvets, satins and brightly coloured fabrics. As the decade progressed, these trends became more extreme. Changing fashions, in their own way, thus helped override, or at least mask, some of the old social divisions, both between sexes and between classes.

Young people listened to popular music by tuning in to one of the pirate radio stations or, from 1967, BBC Radio One. Television responded to demand with programmes like *Ready Steady Go!* (ITV, 1963) and *Top of the Pops* (BBC, 1964), which helped spread the latest trends in music, dance, jargon, attitude and dress. New technology that enabled cheap plastic record players and records made music accessible to all.

Different youth subcultures emerged. By the end of the 1960s, skinheads, characterised by their shaven heads, braces and Dr Marten boots, had evolved from the mods. Meanwhile, hippies rejected social convention and Establishment attitudes. They embraced 'flower power', which emanated from America, and favoured alternative lifestyles with an emphasis on environmentalism, free love and peace.

Anti-Vietnam War riots

Youth culture and political activism merged in opposition to the controversial Vietnam War in the late 1960s. In the summer of 1965, there were teach-ins on Vietnam at Oxford University and the London School of Economics (LSE). The Vietnam Solidarity Campaign or VSC was set up in 1966 gaining considerable support among university students.

On 17 March 1968, there were violent scenes at an anti-Vietnam War demonstration in London, near the American Embassy in Grosvenor Square. On 28 March a still more violent protest known as the Battle of Grosvenor Square took place, ending with over 200 people being arrested. The final demonstration in October 1968 in which 30,000 people took part was, however, relatively peaceful.

The year 1968 also saw a number of other anti-war protests, often combined with demands for more student power, in a variety of different universities. At Sussex, a speaker on the Vietnam War, from the American Embassy, was covered in red paint, while at Essex, two Conservative MPs were physically attacked. The Labour Secretary of State for Education and Science was shouted down in Manchester, and Denis Healey, the Labour Defence Secretary, almost had his car overturned by Cambridge students.

A CLOSER LOOK

Clashes between teenagers and parents

Teenage boys, for example, might show their rebellious tendencies by growing their hair long (no National Service meant no need for a military crew cut), while the girls horrified their mothers by walking out in miniskirts.

ACTIVITY

Extension

In groups find out more about one of the youth cultures of this period: fashion, music, lifestyle, or politics. Present your findings to the class.

CROSS-REFERENCE

The Vietnam War had begun in 1955 but US involvement had grown significantly after 1964 as it attempted to prevent the communist north of the country taking over the non-communist south. Graphic pictures and film of the impact of the conflict on civilians increased opposition. The Vietnam War, including Britain's policy on it, is covered in Chapter 8, pages 69–70.



Fig. 3 *The Battle of Grosvenor Square, 1968*

A CLOSER LOOK

1968 was a defining year for protest. There was a wave of upheavals, mainly in the form of street protests, in the USA, France, Italy, and in communist Eastern Europe. The most extreme riots, in Paris in May, provoked a crisis of public order, bringing the country close to political revolution. In the United States, African Americans fought for civil rights and in Northern Ireland, protests grew about the discrimination against Catholics (see Chapter 5).

Issues of immigration and race

The continuing influx of immigrants from the New Commonwealth meant that the social tensions experienced in the late 1950s and early 1960s did not go away. A survey in North London in 1965 showed that one in five objected to working with black people or Asians, half said they would refuse to live next door to a black person and nine out of ten disapproved of mixed marriages.

In 1965 the Labour government passed the first Race Relations Act. This forbade discrimination in public places 'on the grounds of colour, race or ethnic or national origins'. However, discrimination in housing and employment were excluded. Complaints were to be referred to the **Race Relations Board** whose job was to conciliate between the two sides.

A CLOSER LOOK

The **Race Relations Board** was set up to consider discrimination complaints and take part in publicity, research, finance and other aspects of race relations. However, the board could not compel witnesses to attend hearings and although it handled 982 complaints in its first year, 734 were dismissed through lack of evidence.

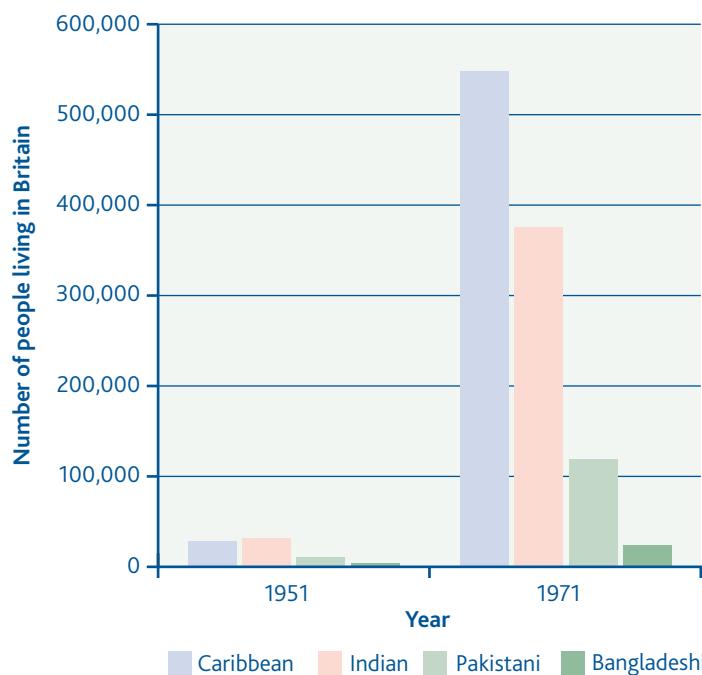


Fig. 4 *Growth of ethnic groups in Britain, 1951–71*

In February 1968, alarm over the sudden influx of Kenyan Asians prompted the government to pass a new Commonwealth Immigration Act, limiting the right of return to Britain for non-white Commonwealth citizens. The furore over the arrival of the Kenyan Asians prompted Enoch Powell to make his notorious 'rivers of blood' speech in April 1968.



Fig. 5 Asian immigrants in a street of terraced houses, late 1960s

SOURCE 5

Enoch Powell addressing the Conservative Political Centre at the Midland Hotel Birmingham, April 1968:

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

How valuable is Source 5 to an historian studying attitudes to immigration in the period 1964 to 1970?

Here is one of my constituents, a decent ordinary fellow in my own town of Wolverhampton, telling me that the country will not be worth living in for his children. I simply do not have the right to shrug my shoulders. What he is saying, hundreds of thousands are saying and thinking in the areas that are undergoing the total transformation to which there is no parallel in a thousand years of British history. For reasons they could not comprehend, on which they were never consulted, they found themselves made strangers in their own country. We must be mad, literally mad to allow the annual inflow of 50,000 dependants. So insane are we that we actually permit unmarried persons to immigrate for the purpose of founding families with spouses they have never seen. As I look ahead, I am filled with foreboding. Like the Roman prophet, 'I see the Tiber foaming with much blood'.

Powell was strongly condemned by the liberal Establishment. Heath not only sacked him from the shadow cabinet but never spoke to him again. The reaction from public opinion was very different. There were strikes by dockers and meat porters in London and a protest march to Downing Street in response to his sacking. A Gallup poll found that 75 per cent of the population supported what Powell had said.

A further Race Relations Act was introduced in 1968. This Act banned racial discrimination in housing, employment, insurance and other services. The Race Relations Board was given stronger powers. However, there were still loopholes. Employers could discriminate against non-whites in the interests of 'racial balance' and complaints against the police were excluded from the law. Furthermore, the Race Relations Board upheld only 10 per cent of the 1241 complaints it received about discriminatory employment to January 1972 and the number of complaints remained low because victims had little faith in getting effective redress.

However, there were also positive aspects to immigration and evidence of communities living together without problems. The Notting Hill Carnival became an annual event from 1964. The appearance of Asian corner shops and Chinese takeaways introduced new foodstuffs. Youth culture also drew from the ethnic communities in music, fashion and street life. Hippies of the late 1960s wore Indian and African cottons, kaftans, Arabian pants, Indian scarves and ethnic beads. Others enjoyed West Indian styles of music, jazz and ska or were attracted by Eastern ways and customs following the Beatles' 'conversion' under the guidance of the Maharaja Mahesh Yogi to meditation, yoga, 'love and peace' as well as soft drugs.

Summary

ACTIVITY

Summary

1. In groups make a list of all the social and cultural changes that you can identify from the period 1964 to 1970.
 2. Draw a series of spider diagrams on A3 paper that show the factors that helped to produce these changes. Which do you think were the most important?
- Compare your findings with those of other groups in your class.

CROSS-REFERENCE

The political impact of Powell's views on immigration is covered in Chapter 5.

A CLOSER LOOK

The Notting Hill Carnival was set up by the West Indian immigrants of the area to try to improve community relations and encourage people to mix socially. The festival has since evolved as a regular attraction on August bank holiday, with spectacular floats and steel bands playing traditional Trinidadian calypso music. The carnival features bright costumes, imaginative floats and dancing on the streets. It is accompanied by stalls serving typical Caribbean food, particularly jerk chicken, rice and peas and rum punch.



PRACTICE QUESTION

Evaluating primary sources

With reference to Sources 1 and 2 and your understanding of the historical context, which of these two sources is more valuable in understanding attitudes towards the permissive society between 1964 and 1970?



PRACTICE QUESTION

To what extent did women's lives change in the period 1964 to 1970?

STUDY TIP

Think carefully about who the authors of these two sources are and how this affects their value to the historian.

STUDY TIP

You will need to show that you understand both where there was change and where there was continuity. Plan your paragraphs to reflect a range of different aspects of women's lives.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this chapter you will learn about:

- relations with and policies towards USA, particularly the issue of Vietnam
- response to world affairs and relations with Europe
- decolonisation including 'withdrawal East of Suez' and Rhodesia.

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

Explain why a knowledge of provenance helps with an understanding of the value of Source 1.

KEY PROFILE

Michael Foot (1913–2010) was a popular and respected left-winger, a great admirer of Bevan (see Chapter 1). He was a talented journalist, with a regular column in the *Daily Herald*. His first experience of being in the government was as Wilson's minister of employment in 1974. He was on the left wing of the party, strongly supported CND and was fervently opposed to Britain joining the EEC. He became leader of the Labour Party in 1980, after Labour's defeat in 1979.

CROSS-REFERENCE

For the beginnings of decolonisation and the 'wind of change', look back to Chapter 4, pages 35–37.

The Atlantic Alliance and Cold War are explained in Chapter 4.



Fig. 1 Harold Wilson with the US president, Lyndon B. Johnson, 1966

SOURCE 1

In June 1966, the left-wing Labour MP **Michael Foot** wrote a denunciation of Wilson's government which appeared on the front page of the left-wing magazine *Tribune*:

WHAT'S WRONG WITH OUR GOVERNMENT?

The short answer is plenty. No glimmer of a changed strategy, an enlarged vision, since the election. Pathetic acceptance of the Tory legacy in defence and foreign policy. We and our Labour government share the guilt for the continuance of the infamy of Vietnam.

By 1964, the 'wind of change' had brought independence to 18 New Commonwealth states. The Wilson government hoped to continue this process. This would mean not only more decolonisation but also reducing Britain's military responsibilities, especially 'east of Suez'. This was complicated by the fact that there was still a great deal of both political and public opinion which still believed that Britain had an important world role.

The other main issues were Britain's 'special relationship' with the United States and its relationship with the rest of Europe. These were highlighted by Britain's attitude to America's war in Vietnam from 1964 and its attitude to joining the EEC.

Relations with and policies towards USA, particularly the issue of Vietnam

Harold Wilson was himself pro-American and was a keen supporter of the Atlantic Alliance. The Cold War was ongoing and Britain wanted to ensure that the United States stayed committed to the defence of Europe. The continuing possibility of the Soviet threat was highlighted by the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia that stopped the communist system becoming diluted there.

A CLOSER LOOK

Between January and August 1968 the new leader of Czechoslovakia, Alexander Dubcek, had introduced reforms which increased freedom of speech and movement and started to decentralise the economy. In August 1968 the Soviet Union led a military invasion into Czechoslovakia to suppress this 'anti-communist' activity.

SOURCE 2

Harold Wilson visited the United States in December 1964 – his first time there as prime minister. The visit was hosted by President Johnson and senior politicians from both the United States and Britain were in attendance. Wilson gave a speech which outlined his understanding of the relationship between Britain and the United States:

In the changed circumstances of the sixties, we seek still a closer relationship based on common purposes and common aims. We have our differences. There are always differences between friends. We are good enough friends to speak frankly to one another, but there will never be anything peevish or spiteful. If we ever have differences, we will look you straight in the eye – and we will expect you to look us straight in the eye – and say what you would expect we can do as friends and only what we can do as friends.

ACTIVITY**Evaluating primary sources**

How valuable is Source 2 to an historian studying the relationship between Britain and the United States between 1964 and 1970?

However, the relationship between Britain and the United States came under strain over the **Vietnam War**.

A CLOSER LOOK

The **Vietnam War** had begun in 1955. Vietnam had divided into two states, a communist north and a non-communist south. The United States supported the government of the non-communist south against the Viet Cong rebels, northern communist guerrilla soldiers. Up until 1964 this support had been limited but it escalated after 1964. The war ended in 1975 when the United States withdrew and the Viet Cong took over the whole country. The war was extremely controversial and became increasingly unpopular as both casualties and evidence of atrocities mounted.

From the time that the escalation of the Vietnam War began in 1964, the US president, Lyndon Johnson, wanted to gain support and approval from the United States' allies. Australia sent troops to Vietnam and Johnson wanted Britain to do the same. Wilson, however, resisted any direct military involvement despite his good relationship with Johnson.

The British response to the Vietnam War was a difficult balancing act for Wilson: he wanted to maintain the Atlantic Alliance but the Vietnam

KEY CHRONOLOGY**Britain and the world, 1964–70**

- 1964** Escalation of the Vietnam War
- 1964** Independence granted to Zambia and Malawi
- 1965** Unilateral Declaration of Independence proclaimed for southern Rhodesia
- 1966** Second EEC application agreed by Wilson government
- 1966** Wilson–Smith talks on HMS *Tiger*
- 1967** EEC application vetoed by de Gaulle
- 1967** British pull-back from east of Suez
- 1968** Hungarian rising crushed by Soviet forces
- 1968** Wilson–Smith talks on HMS *Fearless*

CROSS-REFERENCE

Look back at Chapter 7 to learn about the protests that took place against the Vietnam War.

War became hugely unpopular in Britain, especially with the Left, so he risked losing political support if he was too supportive of it. Also, there were economic and financial considerations. Britain could not really afford military involvement; but Wilson also needed the support of the United States to support the value of sterling and to avoid devaluation, so he could not afford to alienate the United States. In the end the policy can be summed up as giving moral support without military support. This annoyed not only the United States who wanted greater backing, but also a number of Labour MPs and supporters who wanted the Labour government to condemn the United States.



Fig. 2 Wilson opens the Hampstead Festival Fair in front of a large group of anti-Vietnam War protestors, June 1967

ACTIVITY

Discuss in groups the policy options for Harold Wilson over the Vietnam War. Do you feel Wilson made the correct decision? Write a letter to a newspaper setting out your view.

KEY TERM

Europhiles: a term used to describe people who were enthusiastic about Britain's membership of the EEC/EU

Response to world affairs and relations with Europe

The Labour government that came to power in 1964 was not very committed to continuing the Conservative policy of seeking entry into the EEC. In 1962, Hugh Gaitskell had fought passionately against Britain's first application – he told the Labour Party conference that: 'it would be the end of a thousand years of history.' Hugh Gaitskell's opposition was based on the fear that the EEC was the first step towards a federal political union.

In addition, many on the Labour Left, such as Michael Foot and Barbara Castle, and the trade unions were equally hostile. They saw the EEC as a club for capitalists that would prevent Britain from following socialist policies. On the other hand there were several **Europhiles** in the cabinet, especially Roy Jenkins and George Brown, who had become the foreign secretary in 1966. Harold Wilson himself was more ambivalent; he preferred the Atlantic Alliance and stronger links with the Commonwealth but he could also see the strength of some of the economic reasons for

joining. He was also very conscious of needing to keep the Labour Party united on the issue.

By 1966 Wilson was becoming more convinced of the economic arguments and, in October, Wilson's cabinet agreed to back a new application for EEC membership. The prospects of it succeeding were not very good. The British bid was in danger of seeming half-hearted because of the doubts within Labour. More importantly, de Gaulle was still President of France and there was little sign he had changed his mind about British entry. The fact that Britain's chances of joining were poor prevented those on the left wing of the party being too vociferous in their opposition.

Wilson and George Brown went to Paris to meet de Gaulle in January 1967 and they thought the meeting went quite well. They then toured the other five EEC countries, trying to gain support. In June 1967, Wilson went back to Paris again. De Gaulle put him on the spot, demanding assurances that Britain would detach itself from the 'special relationship'. There was no way Wilson would do this. In November, de Gaulle used his veto against British entry. Britain's application was again rejected.

Decolonisation including 'withdrawal East of Suez' and Rhodesia

The Labour government continued the decolonisation policy that had started under the Conservatives and accelerated after Macmillan's 'wind of change' speech.

Withdrawal from 'East of Suez'

The Labour government knew from 1964 that there would have to be a reduction in Britain's military commitments for economic reasons. The minister of defence, **Denis Healey**, started a process of spending cuts designed to bring the defence budget below £2 billion by 1970. Healey's defence white paper in 1967 set a timetable for troop withdrawals from Aden, the Middle East, Malaysia and Singapore.

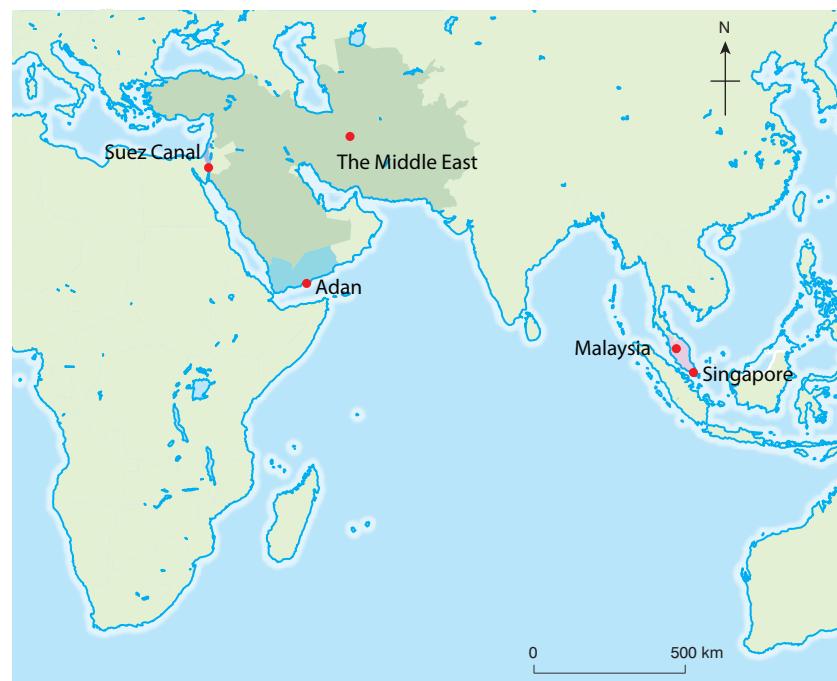


Fig. 3 The areas involved in the British withdrawal from 'East of Suez'

CROSS-REFERENCE

Look back at Chapter 4 for Britain's 1961 application to join the EEC.

ACTIVITY

Extension

Look back at Chapter 4 to remind yourself of Britain's first application to join the EEC. Draw a table to show the similarities and differences between the two applications.

CROSS-REFERENCE

Look back at Chapter 4 to remind yourself of Macmillan's speech and the decolonisation that had taken place already by 1964.

KEY PROFILE

Denis Healey (b. 1917) was a Labour MP from 1952 until his retirement in 1992. He was the minister of defence between 1964 and 1970 and Chancellor of the Exchequer between 1974 and 1979. He was on the right wing of the party and was deputy leader of the party between 1980 and 1983.

CROSS-REFERENCE

The government's position on nuclear deterrence before 1964 is outlined in Chapter 4, pages 35–37.

The 1967 devaluation crisis is covered in Chapter 5.

ACTIVITY**Evaluating primary sources**

Consider the context of when and where this speech was made. Does this increase or decrease its value to an historian studying Wilson's foreign policy?

Some might argue that, given the economic situation that the Labour government inherited, these cuts did not go far enough or fast enough. But Wilson believed in both the Atlantic Alliance and in Britain continuing to have a world role. Therefore, there was no serious debate about giving up the **nuclear deterrent** despite its expense. The Wilson government announced that it would continue to deploy US Polaris missiles. Indeed, in 1967, a commitment was made to upgrade the system.

All this changed in January 1968, with the drastic spending cuts introduced by Chancellor Roy Jenkins after the **1967 devaluation crisis**. Withdrawal from East of Suez was rapidly accelerated. Troops were to be pulled out of Aden, the Arabian Gulf, Malaysia and Singapore by the end of 1971. Despite the wishes of both Wilson and Healey, the development of a new high-tech warplane, the TSR2, was abandoned because it was too costly.

SOURCE 3

In the leader's speech at the Blackpool Labour Party conference in 1968, Harold Wilson set out his vision of British foreign policy:

We cannot succeed unless our people are prepared to accept Britain's new role in the world for the later 1960s and the 1970s. This is not easy. Two years ago I told this Party that never again would Britain engage in any war, other than self-defence, except on a basis of collective security. Our whole defence policy has been based on the rejection of unilateral, go-it-alone, do-it-yourself, military adventures, the rejection equally of Suez imperialism, and the delusion of the so-called independent deterrent. We recognise 'that our security lies fundamentally in Europe and must be based on the North Atlantic Alliance'. And even with the strengthening of the industrial base which we are achieving, we can no longer afford the role of world policeman.

A CLOSER LOOK

In 1961, South Africa, which rejected the idea of majority rule, had left the Commonwealth and moved towards an apartheid system – strict segregation between whites and non-whites. This led to political, economic and social discrimination against non-whites.

Rhodesia

Macmillan had chosen Cape Town as the place to make his 'wind of change' speech because his target was the white minority regimes who thought they could resist reform, rather than the colonial peoples who wanted independence. But the white minority regimes were not persuaded. In southern Africa, Macmillan's 'wind of change' speech was seen as a challenge and a threat.

In 1963, the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland had broken up into three separate entities. In 1964, northern Rhodesia became the new independent state of Zambia; Nyasaland became independent Malawi. Southern Rhodesia hoped for independence at the same time but Britain made it clear that this could not happen until majority rule replaced the political domination by the white population.

A political row blew up when **Ian Smith** became prime minister. In 1965, Smith issued a Unilateral Declaration of Independence for Rhodesia without accepting majority rule.

SOURCE 4

In 1966 at the Labour Party conference in Brighton, Harold Wilson set out the government's policy towards Rhodesia:

It is Britain's insistence on standing by principles in the Rhodesian conflict which has kept the Commonwealth together – the Commonwealth which our opponents were prepared to see destroyed. It is that same insistence on principles which proclaims to the world that in Britain's long and not inglorious history of granting freedom to previously dependent territories, we are determined to see that the last chapter shall not be allowed to tarnish those that have gone before. To those principles we shall adhere. For while we have

KEY PROFILE

Ian Smith (1919–2007) was the first prime minister of Rhodesia to be born there rather than in Britain. He had been a farmer before entering politics. He remained prime minister until the Lancaster Agreement of 1979 when Rhodesia, now named Zimbabwe, had its independence officially recognised.

shown, in the Commonwealth Conference, and since, our willingness to go to the limit in securing an acceptable agreement, we shall not be prepared to abandon the principles that have inspired two successive governments in this country, principles which are essential, not only to preserve the Commonwealth on which so much depends Britain's standing, in the world, but principles which in their moral inspiration represent the very basis of our democracy and everything which this movement stands for.

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

How useful is Source 4 to the historian studying the success of Britain's decolonisation policies between 1964 and 1970?

Smith's action was a direct challenge to the Labour government. But Wilson hoped he could reach a solution in weeks rather than months, either through oil sanctions or by a negotiated solution. Wilson met Smith for face-to-face talks on board HMS *Tiger* off Gibraltar in December 1966. This meeting seemed to make progress but Smith then disavowed everything he had said as soon as he got back home.



Fig. 4 No meeting of minds: Harold Wilson and Ian Smith all at sea on board HMS *Fearless*

Wilson's frustrations continued throughout 1967. Oil sanctions did not have much effect. It was too easy for Rhodesia to get supplies through the Portuguese colony of Mozambique, and the big oil companies often openly ignored the sanctions policy. In addition, South Africa continued to trade with Rhodesia.

More talks were held on board HMS *Fearless* in October 1968, but by then Ian Smith felt stronger rather than weaker. Smith also believed he could rely on support from the right wing of the Conservative Party and that all he had to do was to wait for Britain to give in. Wilson's diplomacy got nowhere. The situation upset the Commonwealth and many on the Labour left wing, and at the same time made Britain look weak.

Summary

ACTIVITY

Summary

Create a table and fill in the key events under each heading:

Britain and the United States	Britain and Europe	Britain and the Commonwealth

STUDY TIP

In order to answer make sure you are clear about:

1. how the provenance of each source affects its value
2. when each source was written so you can trace change
3. what each source tells you about Britain's position in the world.

**A
LEVEL****PRACTICE QUESTION****Evaluating primary sources**

Look back at Sources 2, 3 and 4. With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these three sources to an historian studying how Britain's position in the world changed during the period 1964 to 1970.

STUDY TIP

Identify clearly what Wilson's foreign policy aims were. Structure your essay around these, discussing the extent of success or failure in each one. You will then need to come to an overall judgement, so think about which were the most important or significant aims.

**AS
LEVEL****PRACTICE QUESTION**

'Wilson did not achieve any of his foreign policy aims.' Explain why you agree or disagree with this view.

STUDY TIP

You will need to look back at Chapter 5 to help you answer this question. Draw a timeline and mark on key economic events in one colour and key foreign policy events in another to help you work out the links between economic problems and foreign policy.

**A
LEVEL****PRACTICE QUESTION**

How significant were economic problems in determining the direction of Britain's foreign policy between 1964 and 1970?

9 Heath's government

SOURCE 1

In 1972 the prime minister, Edward Heath, reviewed his government's progress at the Conservative Party conference in his leader's speech:

Throughout this Parliament we have been continuously engaged in the battle against inflation. Let no one say that we have not fought, and fought hard. When we have had setbacks, as we have, they have not been for the lack of will in trying to overcome them. At all times we have sought co-operation with those concerned in the country's economic organisation. It was through no fault of ours that sometimes events led to confrontation. We were returned to office with a clear mandate from the electorate – a mandate to reform the law on industrial relations, to reform the system of housing finance, to reform the social services, to reform the tax system and to reduce taxation. All of this mandate has been carried out. Yes – and we were given a mandate to reduce inflation. That we knew had to include bringing down inflationary wage settlements throughout the economy to something much more in line with production. We have been given all too little credit for the success we achieved.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this chapter you will learn about:

- Heath as leader
- political and economic policies
- industrial relations and the miners' strikes
- the Troubles in Northern Ireland, including the Sunningdale Agreement.

CROSS-REFERENCE

To recap on the post-war consensus, look back to Chapter 1, page 6.

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

1. Summarise Heath's assessment of his government's success by 1972.
2. How does the speaker and the audience of Source 1 affect its value to the historian studying the success of the Conservative government from 1970 to 1974?

CROSS-REFERENCE

Edward Heath is profiled in Chapter 4, page 31.

KEY CHRONOLOGY

Britain, 1970–75

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| 1970 | Conservative Party wins the general election |
| 1971 | Decimalisation of the currency |
| 1972 | 'Bloody Sunday' in Northern Ireland |
| 1973 | OPEC oil crisis
British entry to the EEC
Miners' strike and imposition of three-day week |
| 1974 | Feb: General election and fall of Heath
Collapse of Sunningdale Agreement for Northern Ireland
Oct: General election |
| 1975 | Heath replaced as party leader by Mrs Thatcher |

Heath as leader

When Edward Heath became prime minister he had a clear and detailed programme of policies for the modernisation of Britain. He had already been leader of the opposition for five years, longer than any Conservative leader since the war apart from Churchill.

He was the first Conservative Party leader to have been elected to the leadership of the Conservative Party and had been educated at state schools. He therefore came from a different social background from the Old Etonians who had previously dominated the Conservatives. He was often perceived to be rather stiff and prickly in dealing with people. Unlike Wilson, he was not seen as devious or interested in plots and intrigue; many of his colleagues regarded him as too honest for his own good and not skilful enough in pleasing political allies. Heath was good at policies but not at politics.

KEY PROFILE

Keith Joseph (1918–94) was Conservative MP for Leeds North East from 1956 to 1987 and held posts in the cabinets of four prime ministers between 1961 and 1986. He was a deep thinker on economic policy, with strong views on the need for free-market policies. He supported Margaret Thatcher in the leadership campaign in 1975 and had a great deal of influence on her early policy decisions.

Margaret Thatcher (1925–2013) became MP for Finchley in 1959. She gained her first cabinet post in 1970, as education secretary in Edward Heath's government. In 1975, she emerged as the surprise candidate challenging Heath for the party leadership. She became prime minister after the 1979 general election and dominated British politics for the next 11 years (Section 4).

Heath seemed well prepared for government. He had spent his time in opposition developing detailed policies, especially on industrial relations and economic modernisation. He also knew the issues surrounding EEC entry inside out, having been the chief negotiator in 1961 to 1963.

However, after the economic and industrial problems of the period 1970 to 1974 and the election defeats of 1974, several backbench MPs were determined to force a leadership contest. **Margaret Thatcher** emerged as the key challenger. Her policies were generally to the right of Heath and Macmillan and she had become sympathetic to monetarist and free-market policies put forward by Enoch Powell and **Keith Joseph**.



Fig. 1 New Conservative leader: Margaret Thatcher, outside the House of Commons after winning the party leadership, February 1975

A CLOSER LOOK

Many people who supported Thatcher did so because there was nobody else. Powell had left the Conservative Party and Joseph had made a controversial speech in which he raised concerns about certain sections of society having children. Another factor was Heath's inability to win over the doubters – he was not very good at schmoozing. Thatcher did not have widespread support for her specific policies. But she exploited the sense that things were going badly wrong both with the party and with the country.

ACTIVITY

Make a list of reasons why Heath lost the leadership of the Conservative Party in 1975.

Thatcher defeated Heath in the leadership election in 1975 and following this, Heath's reputation took a battering from supporters of Thatcherism who repudiated much of his legacy.

KEY TERM

'lame duck' industry: one that is unable to compete and survive without support from the State

Political and economic policies

In the January before the 1970 election, the Conservatives held a conference at Selsdon Park to approve a policy programme which would form the basis of the Conservative Party's manifesto at the election: tax reform; better law and order; reforms to trade unions; immigration controls; cuts to public spending; and the end to public subsidy of '**'lame duck'** industries.

However, Heath still believed in 'One Nation Toryism' and the post-war consensus. The Selsdon Park programme was not intended to be an all-out rejection of post-war consensus politics.

During the Heath premiership there were a number of reforms. The school leaving age was raised to 16, local government was reorganised and the British currency went **decimal**; however, the administration was dominated by the economy and industrial relations.

The new Chancellor, Anthony Barber, initially introduced cuts in public spending. He also introduced tax cuts to try to encourage investment. What was called the 'Barber boom' began, with a rapid rise in inflation. However, inflation was not accompanied by economic growth. Unemployment actually went up, something that was highly unusual at the same time as inflation. This led to the invention of a new word, '**stagflation**'.

As unemployment started to edge towards a million the government which had wanted to reduce state intervention in industry felt compelled to take action. The prestigious engineering firm Rolls Royce was nationalised in 1971 and government money was also poured in to prevent Upper Clyde Shipbuilders going bankrupt. This was the famous **U-turn**.

But by 1973 the investment the government had made into modernising industry seemed to be working. Unemployment had fallen back to 500,000. However, this was to change with the oil price crisis of 1973 and the energy crisis that followed.

The trigger for the crisis in October 1973 was the Yom Kippur War in the Middle East. The war prompted OPEC to declare an oil embargo. Exports suddenly stopped. The price of oil rocketed to four times the usual levels. Long queues formed outside petrol stations.

This was the context for the National Union of Miners (NUM) to demand a huge new pay rise in November 1973. The stage was set for a dramatic struggle between the NUM and the government.

Industrial relations and the miners' strikes

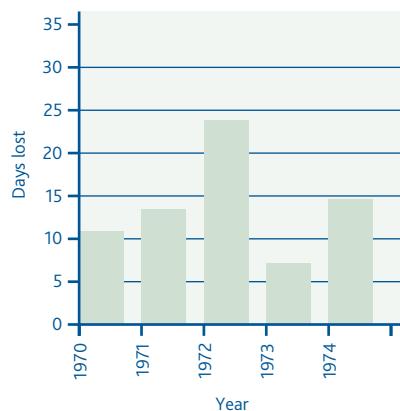


Fig. 2 Working days lost to industrial action, 1970–74

From the start of Heath's premiership there were industrial disputes to deal with: a dockers' strike, a large pay settlement for dustmen, a postal workers' strike and 'go-slow' by power workers which led to power cuts. In response to the problems in industrial relations, the government brought in the Industrial Relations Act. This was very similar to Barbara Castle's proposals in her white paper, *In Place of Strife*. Heath also abolished the National Board for Prices and Incomes.

KEY TERM

decimalisation: this had been agreed in 1965 but came into force in 1971; the new British currency would have 100 new pence, rather than 144 old pennies in the pound, bringing it more in line with the currencies of other European countries

stagflation: a word invented by economists to describe the unusual combination of inflation and stagnant economic growth (which often produces unemployment) occurring at the same time

ACTIVITY

Explain why rising unemployment and rising inflation would be an unexpected combination. Look back at Chapter 2 if you are unclear about the meaning of these economic terms.

KEY TERM

U-turn: a reversal of a previous policy; Edward Heath's U-turn in 1971 to 1972 was his retreat from the free-enterprise economic principles his government had tried to follow from 1970

KEY TERM

OPEC (Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries): led by Saudi Arabia this aimed to protect the interests of its members; OPEC agreed to fix levels of production to prevent prices from falling too low

CROSS-REFERENCE

Look back to Chapter 5 to revise *In Place of Strife* and Wilson's attempts to manage wage demands.

KEY PROFILE

Arthur Scargill (b. 1938) played a big part in the successful strikes of 1972 and 1974 as the leader of the Yorkshire miners. In 1981, he succeeded the moderate Joe Gormley as president of the NUM and led the NUM in the unsuccessful strike of 1984 to 1985 (see Chapter 15). In 1993, Scargill founded a new party to promote 'real socialism' but made little impact.



Fig. 3 Joe Gormley and Arthur Scargill: the moderate and militant faces of the union movement

KEY PROFILE

Willie Whitelaw (1918–99) was an old-style upper-class Conservative with centrist ideas similar to those of Harold Macmillan. He was a highly effective negotiator in the Northern Irish Sunningdale negotiations. In December 1973, he moved to the Department for Employment in an attempt to get a compromise solution to the miners' strike. In the 1980s, he became a loyal deputy prime minister to Mrs Thatcher.

ACTIVITY**Evaluating primary sources**

How valuable is Source 2 to an historian studying industrial relations in the period 1970 to 1974? You need to think about the speaker, the audience and the context to assess how this source could be used.

The Industrial Relations Act set up an Industrial Relations Court and provided for strike ballots and a 'cooling off period' before official strikes could begin. The policy did not work as expected. Both the Trades Union Congress (TUC) and the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) were opposed to it.

There were major strikes in 1972: by the miners, ambulance drivers, firefighters, civil servants, power workers, hospital staff, and engine drivers. 1972 saw the highest number of days lost in strikes since the General Strike of 1926 – 23,909,000.

A CLOSER LOOK

The miners' strike started on 9 January 1972 at a time of harsh winter weather. The use of flying pickets, particularly the Yorkshire miners, led by **Arthur Scargill**, virtually stopped the movement of coal around the country. By 9 February the government declared a State of Emergency as schools were closed and 1.2 million workers were laid off. It set up the Wilberforce Committee to examine the miners' demands and announced a three-day week to save electricity. The Wilberforce Committee came down on the side of the miners and the NUM leader, Joe Gormley, was able to negotiate a generous wage settlement.

Heath also returned to the policy of trying to manage wage demands with the passing of the Industry Act of 1972 which aimed to involve the government, the TUC and the CBI in agreeing wages, prices, investment and benefits. This policy was heavily criticised by some on the Right of the Conservative Party such as Enoch Powell.

Despite this there were further industrial disputes with firefighters and power workers and in November 1973 the oil crisis led to another increased wage demand from the miners, which was beyond the limits the government wanted to impose to hold down inflation. The miners introduced an overtime ban to strengthen their demands. Heath hoped that a compromise could be reached and a strike avoided but he also announced that a three-day-week would be re-introduced from the beginning of 1974. He moved **Willie Whitelaw** from the Northern Ireland Office to be minister of employment as he was considered a skilled negotiator. This failed. The miners refused to accept the pay offer and the government refused to treat the miners as a special case. In January 1974, the NUM called a national strike.

SOURCE 2

In 1975 Arthur Scargill was interviewed by the journal *New Left Review*. In this interview he reflected on the miners' strikes of 1972 and 1974:

The biggest mistake we could make is that of suggesting that a wage battle is not a political battle. You see we took the view that we were in a class war. We were out to defeat Heath and Heath's policies because we were fighting a government. Anyone who thinks otherwise was living in cloud cuckoo land. We had to declare war on them and the only way you could declare war was to attack vulnerable points. They were the points of energy; the power stations, the coke depots, the coal depots, the points of supply. And this is what we did. Well, the miners' union was not opposed to the distribution of coal. We were only opposed to the distribution of coal to industry because we wished to paralyse the nation's economy. It's as simple as that.

The **three-day week** was imposed by the Heath government to conserve electricity in response to a wave of industrial action by engineers, dockers and firefighters and the looming threat of a national coal strike in the middle of an energy crisis.



Fig. 4 Saving energy living with the three-day week

Heath called a general election for 28 February 1974, intending the central issue of the election to be 'who governs Britain?' For most of the campaign, the opinion polls favoured the Conservatives but the final result showed a small swing against them. Labour won five more seats than the Tories. Indirectly, the miners' strike had brought down the government. But the general election result of February 1974 was also inconclusive, leading to a **hung parliament** in which no party had an overall majority.

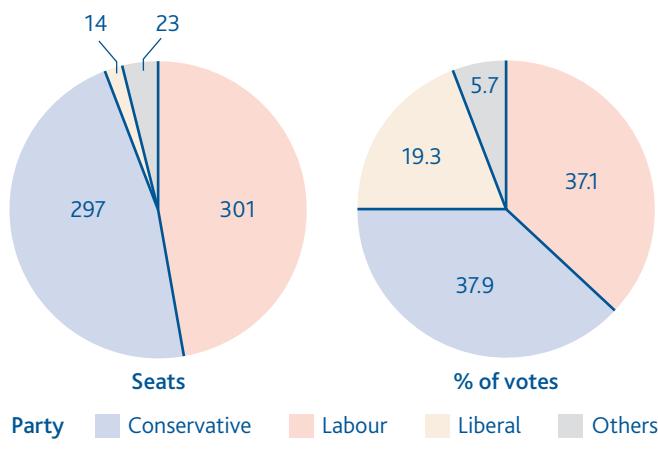


Fig. 5 General election results, February 1974

A CLOSER LOOK

During the **three-day week**, fuel was rationed and a speed limit of 50 miles per hour was imposed on all roads. Deep cuts were made to the heating and lighting of public buildings and TV closed down at 10:30pm. Many industries were forced to lay off workers and there was a huge surge in the number of people signing up for temporary unemployment payments. Other workers found they did long shifts on the days when they were in work to make up their hours. The impact of this is difficult to measure but neither productivity nor wages declined by very much. The shortage of coal, together with rising oil prices led to a balance-of-payments crisis.

ACTIVITY

Explain how the situation in 1973 to 1974 would lead to a balance of payments crisis. Go back to Chapter 2 if you need to remind yourself about this economic term.

KEY TERM

hung parliament: a situation where no political party has an overall majority in the House of Commons

A CLOSER LOOK

The 1974 general election result reinforced the idea that 1974 was a year of political crisis not just economic crisis. Voters were not enthusiastic about either of the two main parties. There was also an increase in representation

KEY TERM

minority government: a government that doesn't have an overall majority in Parliament

STUDY TIP

In many ways it seems obvious that it was the miners who brought down the Heath government in 1974 and there is plenty of evidence to support that. However, you also need to show an awareness of the other side of the argument so think about other relevant factors such as the Yom Kippur War, other economic problems, perceptions of Heath, the positive points about Wilson, and the Labour Party.

KEY TERM

sectarian: relating to divisions in society which in Northern Ireland were based on religion

CROSS-REFERENCE

The beginning of the Troubles in Northern Ireland is covered in Chapter 5.

KEY TERM

internment: locking up suspects without trial

for other parties. The Liberals now had 14 seats; the Nationalist parties from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland had 23. For a few days, Heath attempted to make a deal with the Liberals but failed. Labour as the largest party formed a **minority government**.

AS
LEVEL**PRACTICE QUESTION**

'It was the miners who defeated Heath in 1974.' Explain why you agree or disagree with this view.

The Troubles in Northern Ireland, including the Sunningdale Agreement

The Heath government inherited huge problems in Northern Ireland in 1970. There was an explosion of **sectarian** violence, the British army was struggling to keep the peace and the political situation in Belfast was close to complete breakdown.

As the situation deteriorated a number of paramilitary organisations sprang up on both sides:

IRA	Irish Republican Army – split between the Official IRA and the Provisional IRA in 1970	Republican
INLA	Irish National Liberation Army – formed out of Official IRA in 1974	Republican
UDA	Ulster Defence Association	Loyalist
UVF	Ulster Volunteer Force	Loyalist

Edward Heath's government made strenuous attempts to find a political solution. Since 1912, the Ulster Unionists had always been part of the Conservative and Unionist Party and had tended to support them. At first, Heath backed Brian Faulkner, the UUP (Ulster Unionist Party) leader who led the Belfast government, going along with the policies of imposing night-time curfews and the introduction of **internment** in 1971. But these were ineffective as security measures and they alienated the nationalist communities – 95 per cent of those interned between 1971 and 1975 were Catholics: Jim McVeigh, an IRA commander, is quoted as saying that internment was, 'among the best recruiting tools the IRA ever had.'

A CLOSER LOOK

A selection of events from the Troubles, 1970–74

- | | |
|----------|---|
| Mar 1971 | 3 British soldiers killed – Provisional IRA thought to be responsible |
| | 4000 shipyard workers march to demand internment for IRA leaders |
| Aug 1971 | 300 people interned |
| Dec 1971 | McGurk's bar – 15 killed by UVF bomb |
| Jan 1972 | Bloody Sunday – 13 killed by British army |
| Feb 1972 | Aldershot Barracks in England – 7 killed by IRA bomb |
| Dec 1972 | Irish parliament in Dublin – 2 killed by loyalist bomb |
| Dec 1973 | Sunningdale Conference |
| Feb 1974 | M62 army coach – 12 killed by IRA bomb |

These measures meant that the British Army came to be regarded as an enemy occupying power by Catholics and nationalists. The situation was made worse on 30 January 1972. The Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association had organised a march to protest against internment. Attempts to control the march resulted in British soldiers firing live ammunition. Twenty-six unarmed civilians were shot, with thirteen being killed on the day. The day became known as **Bloody Sunday**.

SOURCE 3

Martin McGuinness was the leader of the Provisional IRA in Derry at the time of Bloody Sunday. He was interviewed in the early 1990s for a book about Irish Republicans during the Troubles:

The decision was taken that Republicans would attend the march and there would be no aggro whatsoever. It was important to have thousands of people marching in the street against internment as opposed to us trying to take advantage. We all went to the march and we ended up in the Bogside with all the paratroopers shooting people dead. I saw people being killed all around me but there was nothing I could do. I was absolutely raging.

KEY PROFILE

Martin McGuinness (b. 1950) was a member of the Provisional IRA in the early 1970s, although he claims to have left the organisation in 1974. He was elected as an MP for Sinn Fein in 1997 (although like all Sinn Fein members he did not take his seat). He was Sinn Fein's chief negotiator at the talks that led to the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. He later became deputy first minister in the devolved Northern Irish Assembly after 2007.

A CLOSER LOOK

Bloody Sunday

The Widgery Tribunal reported in April 1972 that the army had acted in self-defence but it was widely considered a whitewash. A new enquiry was set up in 1998 by Tony Blair. The Saville Enquiry reported in 2010 and found that the deaths were 'unjustified and unjustifiable' and the British government issued an apology.

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

In the context of your knowledge how valuable is Source 3 for understanding the situation in Northern Ireland in the early 1970s?



Fig. 6 A stand off between Catholic protestors and the army, July 1972

Following Bloody Sunday, the British Embassy in Dublin was burned down. Support for the IRA grew and they were able to raise a lot of funds in the United States. 1972 turned into the bloodiest year of the Troubles: there were 1382 explosions, 10,628 shooting incidents and 480 people were killed. Heath suspended the Stormont Parliament in March 1972 and brought in **direct rule** from Westminster, appointing Willie Whitelaw as secretary of state.

KEY TERM

direct rule: Northern Ireland would be ruled from London rather than having its own separate parliament

Heath's policy was not only to try to defeat the IRA, as the unionists and loyalists wanted, but to look for a permanent political solution that would ensure peace. This led to negotiations with the main Northern Irish political parties.

Political parties in Northern Ireland

Unionist and loyalist parties

Ulster Unionist Party (UUP)	The only major unionist party in Northern Ireland until the Troubles; it ruled Northern Ireland between 1921 and 1972
Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)	Formed in 1971 by the Reverend Ian Paisley and other unionists disillusioned with moderate unionists in the UUP; Paisley remained its leader until 2008
Alliance	Formed in 1970 to be a moderate unionist party and aimed to gain support from both Catholics and Protestants; over time it has become neutral in its view about the future of Northern Ireland

Nationalist and republican parties

Social Democratic Labour Party (SDLP)	Formed in 1970 by nationalists such as John Hume to fight for civil rights for Catholics and a united Ireland but rejecting violent methods
Sinn Fein	A republican party that dated back to 1905, although in 1970 it split; the new Sinn Fein Party supported the Provisional Irish Republican Army; it was excluded from negotiations

KEY PROFILE

Ian Paisley (1926–2014) led the loyalist opposition to the Catholic civil rights movement in the 1960s and was involved in setting up paramilitary loyalist organisations. Paisley was an evangelical Protestant, establishing the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster in 1951, and was outspoken in his criticism of Catholics, famously denouncing the Pope as the Antichrist. He was an MP from 1970 to 2010 and an MEP from 1979 until 2004. The DUP was fiercely opposed to any form of power sharing or compromise throughout the Troubles and was initially opposed to the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, although Paisley eventually served as first minister of Northern Ireland from 2007 to 2008 under its terms.

John Hume (b. 1937) was involved in the Irish civil rights movement of the 1960s. He co-founded the Social Democratic Labour Party (SDLP) and became its leader in 1979. He was instrumental in working with Sinn Fein to bring about the IRA ceasefires in the 1990s and in bringing Sinn Fein and the British government together for talks. He won the Nobel Peace Prize (jointly with David Trimble) in 1998 for his role in the Good Friday Agreement (see Chapter 21).

In 1973, Heath and Whitelaw negotiated the **Sunningdale Agreement**, a complex plan for a power-sharing government with the support of the SDLP and the Alliance and the leadership of the UUP.

KEY TERM

proportional representation: a system of voting whereby those elected are in proportion to the number of votes received

A CLOSER LOOK

The **Sunningdale Agreement** was named after the hotel in Berkshire where the negotiations took place.

It proposed:

- a power-sharing Executive of both nationalists and unionists – both sides would be guaranteed representation
- a new Northern Ireland Assembly elected under a system of proportional representation
- a Council of Ireland that would have some input from the Republic of Ireland.

ACTIVITY

Imagine you are a supporter of one of the Northern Irish political parties. What is your opinion of the Sunningdale Agreement? Write a letter to a newspaper setting out your views.

CROSS-REFERENCE

The details of the subsequent collapse of the Sunningdale Agreement are covered in Chapter 10.

Extremists, both republicans and loyalists, denounced Sunningdale as a sell-out. Both the UVF and UDA were opposed. The UUP then voted to pull out in January 1974 and Brian Faulkner, the head of the Executive, was replaced as leader of the UUP by Harry West who was opposed to the agreement.

Even worse, the prospects of a settlement were further undermined by the problems that were ongoing in mainland Britain, the miners' strike and the February 1974 general election. Those parties opposed to Sunningdale put up a single candidate in each constituency in Northern Ireland. In contrast, the pro-Sunningdale votes were split. Eleven of the twelve constituencies returned candidates that opposed the agreement. Moreover, concern about the Sunningdale Agreement meant that the Conservative Party could not rely on the support of the UUP, as might have been expected, preventing the Conservatives from continuing in government.

Summary**ACTIVITY****Summary**

Heath's government had to deal with three serious issues:

- Britain's economy
- relations with the trade unions
- the Troubles of Northern Ireland.

In groups discuss these and decide:

1. which was the most serious
2. which was dealt with most successfully.

**PRACTICE QUESTION****Evaluating primary sources**

With reference to Sources 1, 2 and 3 and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these three sources to an historian studying the Conservative government's problems in the years of 1970 to 1974?

STUDY TIP

Make sure you are clear about what these sources tell you about the different problems in this period. Then think about who the authors are. How does this affect their value?

**PRACTICE QUESTION**

'Sunningdale failed because of problems in mainland Britain.' Explain why you agree or disagree with this view.

STUDY TIP

You may find it useful to map out a timeline of events in the Troubles in Northern Ireland and events happening in Britain. Think about how they affected each other.

10 Labour governments of Wilson and Callaghan

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this chapter you will learn about:

- political, economic and industrial problems and policies
- problems of Northern Ireland.

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

1. Make a list of the problems that James Callaghan identifies in Source 1. Write a sentence about each, relating it to the context of 1974.
2. How valuable is Source 1 to an historian studying the problems of the Labour government between 1974 and 1979?

SOURCE 1

James Callaghan recalled in his memoirs, published in 1987, an informal cabinet meeting held at Chequers in the winter of 1974, just after the October election victory. At the time he was the foreign secretary:

Everyone was free to express his views on the medium term outlook. I was feeling particularly gloomy: 'Our place in the world is shrinking: our economic comparisons grow worse. The country expects both full employment and an end to inflation. We cannot have both unless people restrain their demands. If the pay guidelines are not observed, we shall end up with wage controls, even a breakdown of democracy. Sometimes when I go to bed at night I think if I were a young man I would emigrate.'



Fig. 1 Harold Wilson and James Callaghan

Political, economic and industrial problems and policies

When the Labour government came back into power in March 1974, Harold Wilson found himself in a much less promising position than he had been in 1964. The economic situation was awful: inflation was at 15 per cent and the balance of payment deficit was £3 billion. The trade unions would need to be dealt with; the Northern Ireland situation was precarious. The Labour Party was less united than ever and Wilson himself was older and less energetic. In addition, as a minority government Labour had to depend on support from other parties to get legislation through Parliament.

But by October 1974, Wilson felt safe enough to call a new election. Voters still associated Heath and the Conservatives with the three-day week and conflict with the miners. Wilson won his majority, but only just. Labour gained 18 seats. The Conservatives lost 21. Labour had 42 more seats than the Conservatives but their overall majority was only 3.

CROSS-REFERENCE

The three-day week and conflict with the miners are discussed in Chapter 9.

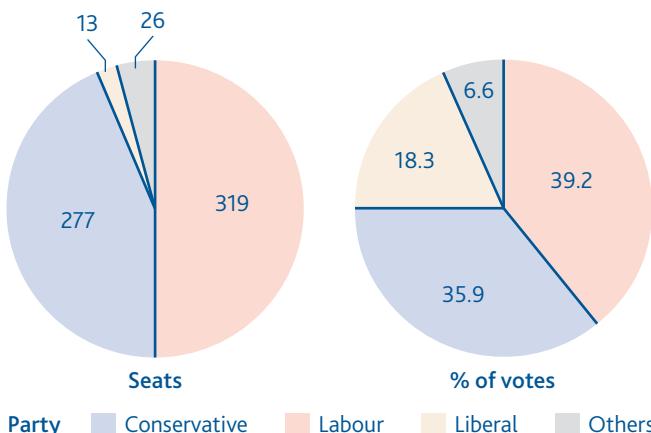


Fig. 2 General election results, October 1974

Industrial relations, 1974–76

When Labour came into government, Wilson acted quickly. He wanted to demonstrate that the Labour Party was better equipped than the Conservatives to work with the trade unions. In 1973, while in opposition, he had negotiated the **Social Contract** with the Trades Union Congress (TUC).

The trade unions were sent a clear message that the government was not looking for any confrontations. Agreement was quickly reached with the National Union of Miners (NUM) allowing Wilson to end the state of emergency and the three-day week. Two left-wingers, **Tony Benn** and **Michael Foot**, were put in charge of the departments of Industry and of Employment. Wilson's new chancellor, **Denis Healey**, issued two budgets, first in March and then in July, both aiming to deal with the economic crisis without annoying the unions.

KEY TERM

Social Contract: this would involve voluntary pay restraint by the trade unions and in return the government would repeal Heath's Industrial Act and pay board

Economic reforms, 1974–76

The first major problem was a surge in inflation due to the rush of large wage increases that were deemed necessary to get out of the industrial crisis that had brought down Heath. In January 1975, Chancellor Denis Healey made a speech in Leeds, giving a stern warning of the dangers: that wage inflation caused unemployment and that it was vital to control public spending. In April 1975, Healey's budget imposed steep rises in taxation, and public spending was cut.

The National Enterprise Board (NEB) was also set up in 1974 under Tony Benn to administer the government's share holdings in private companies. It could also give financial aid. While the NEB's aim was to increase investment, by 1975 its effectiveness was being questioned. The government's decision to nationalise the failing car manufacturer British Leyland caused renewed controversy about the role of government in rescuing 'lame-duck' industries. It was also becoming apparent that the Social Contract was not limiting wage demands. By 1975 a more formal pay restraint policy was introduced. These shifts in policy intensified party divisions. Left-wingers like **Michael Foot** and **Tony Benn** did not want to put so much pressure on the unions and they also believed in more, not less, State intervention in industry.

In March 1976, Harold Wilson suddenly resigned as leader of the Labour Party.

CROSS-REFERENCE

Foot and Healey are profiled in Chapter 8 and Benn in Chapter 6.

A CLOSER LOOK

Because Wilson's departure was so unexpected, all kinds of conspiracy theories were dreamed up to explain it. Wilson encouraged some of this speculation because he believed he was being bugged by the security services. However, Wilson also had concerns about his health and he had promised his wife that he would step down after two more years.

SOURCE 2

In 1979, in his memoirs about the period 1974 to 1976, *Final Term*, Harold Wilson commented on his leadership of the Labour Party:

To bridge a deep political chasm without splitting a party or provoking dramatic ministerial resignations is sometimes regarded as something approaching political chicanery. The highest aim of leadership is to secure policies adequate with any situation without major confrontations, splits and resignations. It may be bad for the

ACTIVITY**Evaluating primary sources**

Do you agree with Harold Wilson's own assessment of his leadership of the Labour Party given in Source 2?

Draw up a table with two columns – agree and disagree – and summarise the evidence to support your answer. Remember to consider the whole period of his leadership.

CROSS-REFERENCE

Callaghan is profiled in Chapter 5, page 41.

KEY TERM**International Monetary Fund (IMF):**

formed at the end of the Second World War, it was designed to promote economic stability and growth across the world

ACTIVITY

Use Table 1 to assess the success of Labour's economic policies from 1974 to 1979.

headlines and news placards, but it has been sought and achieved by our greatest leaders, Conservative as well as Liberal or Labour. Baldwin, Macmillan, Churchill always sought consensus. It is sometimes galling to be criticised for achieving it.

Callaghan's premiership, 1976–79

Wilson's successor as prime minister was James (Jim) Callaghan, a 'safe pair of hands' with long experience and good links to the unions. Callaghan was seen as an ideal leader to maintain party unity.

This was not easy because the government faced difficult problems over the economy. Throughout 1976 the poor balance of payments was putting pressure on sterling and there were concerns that Britain did not have enough reserves of currency to support it.

In September 1976 Callaghan gave a speech to the Labour Party conference where he warned the party that the 'cosy world' whereby the government could ensure full employment was gone. Productivity would need to improve to avoid what he called 'the twin evils' of unemployment and inflation. He argued that governments of the previous 20 years had failed to sort out this problem. This seemed to be a criticism of both previous Labour and Conservative governments.

This speech was made to help prepare the Labour Party for the fact that the government was planning to apply for an emergency loan from the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)**. It was anxious that there might be a run on the pound. In December the chancellor, Denis Healey, received a loan of £3 billion. In return, the government had to make big spending cuts.

In fact the economic situation was not as dire as the Labour government had feared. Callaghan handled the IMF crisis well and the economy recovered, but it reinforced the image of Britain as being in economic decline. The Conservatives denounced this as a national humiliation. The left wing of the Labour Party saw it as a betrayal, caving in to international financiers. Although Callaghan maintained unity among Labour MPs, there was a growth of leftist militancy in some public-sector trade unions and in local councils.

However, the economic situation did begin to improve as North Sea oil came on stream. By 1978, there were nine oilfields in production. Inflation rates fell to 10 per cent. Unemployment at 1.6 million was still considered high but had started to fall and the number of days lost to industrial disputes had fallen to a ten-year low.

Table 1 The economy, 1974–79

	Weekly earnings – change in %	Retail prices – change in %	Average % of workforce unemployed	Working days lost in strikes in millions	GDP – change in %	Balance of payment (£m)
1974	+17	+16	2.6	14.75	+0.2	-3565
1975	+27	+24	3.9	6.01	-1.6	-1671
1976	+16	+17	5.3	3.31	+2.3	-1404
1977	+10	+16	5.7	10.14	+0.9	+154
1978	+13	+8	5.7	9.28	+3.4	+254
1979	+18	+13	5.1	31.19	+2.2	-902

KEY TERM

vote of no confidence: a vote on whether the government is considered able to continue governing; if it is lost then the government must call a general election

devolution: the transfer of powers to a lower level of government

Devolution

By 1977 the Labour majority in the House of Commons had disappeared so Callaghan strengthened the government by making the 'Lib-Lab pact'. In this way he was able to defeat a **vote of no confidence** tabled by the Conservative Party. This deal meant that the 12 Liberal MPs agreed to vote with the government in Parliament and in return Callaghan promised to move ahead with **devolution** for Wales and Scotland.

Nationalists in Scotland and Wales, who had been growing in strength since the late 1960s, welcomed this opportunity but the majority of MPs in

the Conservative Party and many within the Labour Party were against any form of devolution. There were lengthy debates in Parliament but eventually in 1978 devolution Acts for Scotland and Wales were passed opening the way for **referendums**. Nevertheless the terms of the referendum were set up in order to make it unlikely that devolution would pass. A Labour MP opposed to devolution inserted a clause that at least 40 per cent of the electorate had to approve of devolution in order for it to pass.

Table 2 Results of devolution referendums, March 1979

	Scotland – turnout 62%	Wales – turnout 59%
Yes	51.6%	20.3%
No	48.4%	79.7%

The referendums were held on 1 March 1979. The vote in Wales was conclusively against devolution. In Scotland, more people voted in favour of devolution than against it, but the rules stating that a simple majority was not enough meant that devolution was defeated. The disappointed Scottish nationalist MPs withdrew their support from the Labour Party. This was to prove decisive in the aftermath of the events of the winter of 1978 to 1979.

The winter of discontent

In the autumn of 1978 the TUC rejected the Labour government's proposed wage increase limit of 5 per cent. This encouraged trade unions to put in higher demands. Ford lorry drivers achieved a 15 per cent increase in December after a nine-week strike. More unions followed their example.

The wave of industrial action included disruption to transport, through strikes by lorry drivers and the train drivers' union ASLEF. There was also shock and outrage in reaction to strikes by public sector workers, such as hospital porters and clerical staff in local councils and, above all, by dustmen and gravediggers.

The industrial unrest that gripped Britain in the winter of 1978 to 1979 was not on a massive scale and it was not as serious a challenge to the government as the miners' strike of 1974. The disputes were only brought to an end in March 1979 and the average pay increase achieved was 10 per cent but the psychological effect of the winter of discontent had a devastating impact on the public mood.

KEY TERM

referendum: a public vote held on a particular issue

ACTIVITY

Extension

Research the growth of nationalism in Scotland and Wales between 1967 and 1979. Draw a spider diagram that sets out the reasons for this growth.

CROSS-REFERENCE

To compare the winter of discontent with the miners' strike of 1974, look back to Chapter 9, page 78.



Fig. 3 Ready for emergencies: army ambulances in the winter of discontent, 1979

SOURCE 3

On 20 January 1979 the right-wing journal *The Economist* commented:

ACTIVITY**Evaluating primary sources**

- What view is put forward in Source 3? How does the style and tone of the source emphasise that view?
- Explain why the date of Source 3 is important to understanding its content.

If trade unions and their pickets are allowed to be above the normal laws of contract, then a free society based on the law of contract will break down. It will be glum if Lancastrians during a water strike have to get appalling diseases, if Merseyside children during the social workers' strike have to continue to be battered, if housewives in an island blockaded by lorry drivers have to go hungry, if patients deprived of ambulances and other emergency transport have to die, if many more small firms have to go bust, many more workers to become unemployed, more of Britain's exports and imports have to stay stuck at the docks, if sewage has to run in the streets, hyperinflation has to escalate, before Britain's politicians recognise the fact.

The general election, 1979

At the 1978 Labour Party conference, Jim Callaghan teased the delegates about the timing of the election. In the event, he decided to wait. This turned out to be a mistake. By the spring of 1979, the political landscape had been reshaped by the 'winter of discontent'. The economic situation had deteriorated and the reputation of the trade unions had been damaged; even many skilled and unskilled workers began to consider voting Conservative.

Then, in March 1979, the government lost a vote of no confidence in Parliament, on the issue of Scottish devolution. The government was forced to resign, the first time since 1924 that a government was brought down by a confidence vote.

The images of the 'winter of discontent' dominated the media and the press for weeks on end. Most of the press, including *The Times*, *The Sun*, the *Mail* and the *Express*, were supporting the Conservatives. The Conservatives were able to fight the campaign mostly by hammering away at the unpopularity of the government, especially on the issues of unemployment, law and order, and the excessive power of the unions. In fact, many of the strikes in 1979 showed the weakness of the old union leaderships and their failure to control the new militancy of their workers.

Even with all these problems for Labour, the outcome of the election was not a foregone conclusion. The Labour vote actually held up quite well, dipping by 3 per cent overall. However, the Conservatives benefited from a sharp drop in support for the Liberals and for the Scottish Nationalist Party. The result was by no means a landslide, but produced a comfortable working majority of 43 for the Conservatives.

ACTIVITY

Produce your own poster for the 1979 general election for either Labour or the Conservatives.

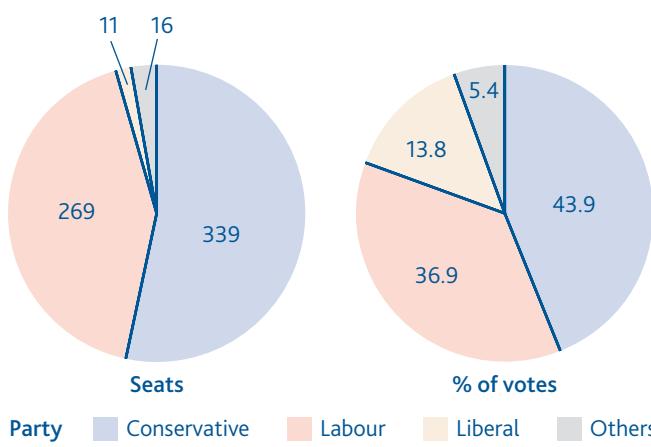


Fig. 4 General election results, 1979

**A
LEVEL****PRACTICE QUESTION**

How important is the winter of discontent in explaining why the Labour Party lost the 1979 election?

STUDY TIP

In order to assess the importance of the winter of discontent you need to compare it to other reasons. Identify all the relevant reasons and structure your essay around these, making sure that you clearly show their impact on the election result.

Problems of Northern Ireland

As well as the economic, political and industrial problems that the Wilson government inherited in 1974, the Northern Irish Troubles were continuing.

A CLOSER LOOK**Selected events in the Northern Irish Troubles, 1974–79**

14 May 1974	Ulster Workers' Council strike
17 May 1974	Loyalist car bombs kill 26 in Dublin and 7 in Monaghan
28 May 1974	Sunningdale Agreement collapses
October 1974	Guildford pub bomb kills 5
November 1974	Birmingham pub bomb kills 19
October 1975	12 people killed in Northern Ireland in a series of UVF attacks
October 1976	Republican prisoners began the 'blanket protest'
March 1979	Airey Neave, the Conservative spokesman on Northern Ireland killed by an IRA car bomb in House of Commons car park

A CLOSER LOOK

The Ulster Workers' Council strike was supported by politicians such as Ian Paisley as well as the UDA and UVF. The paramilitary organisation ensured that the strike was supported by unionists, and at the same time set off bombs in the Republic of Ireland and attacked Catholic civilians in Northern Ireland.

CROSS-REFERENCE

The Sunningdale Agreement of 1973 is discussed in Chapter 9, page 82.

Although the Heath government had negotiated the Sunningdale Agreement with the UUP, the SDLP and the Alliance, both loyalists and republicans were opposed and the UUP were turning against it.

The Ulster Workers' Council was set up by a shipyard worker, Harry Murray, and it was determined to bring down the Executive. They announced a strike to start on 15 May 1974. The strike severely limited power and telecommunications and the British government declared a state of emergency. Within a fortnight Faulkner resigned as the chief executive of the power-sharing Executive. Wilson was forced to reimpose direct rule. The Sunningdale Agreement had collapsed.

The Troubles continued. Wilson announced the establishment of a Northern Irish Constitution Convention, an elected body that would determine the future of government in Northern Ireland.

SOURCE 4

In December 1974 the Northern Ireland secretary, Merlyn Rees, set out the aims of the Constitutional Convention in the House of Commons:

The Executive fell in May. This is a sober and testing time for the people of Northern Ireland. It is they who must create the circumstances in which progress can be made. Law, order and stability are not brought about by armies or by the police alone. They depend upon the desire, willing co-operation and indeed positive support of the people of Northern Ireland. Law and order, as we know it, depends on the responsible and willing co-operation of politicians and people alike in Northern Ireland. The Government are pursuing a steady and consistent policy of giving the people of Northern Ireland a chance to show, through the Convention, that they can work together responsibly to devise institutions of government which are fair to all.

ACTIVITY**Evaluating primary sources**

1. What does Source 4 tell you about the problem of the Troubles in Northern Ireland in the period 1974 to 1976?
2. How useful is it as a source?

The elections in July 1975 resulted in a majority for unionists who were opposed to any form of power sharing. An agreement with nationalists would not be possible. The Convention was dissolved in 1976.



Fig. 5 A mural depicting the 'blanket protesters' in a republican area of West Belfast

From 1976 Special Category Status was removed from terrorist prisoners; this meant they were no longer considered political prisoners but would be treated as criminals. This was disliked by paramilitaries, who believed that they were engaged in a war. As criminals they had to wear the prison uniform. Their refusal led to what became known as the 'blanket protest' by INLA and IRA prisoners whereby prisoners were either naked or wore only blankets. This escalated to become the 'Dirty Protest' after 1978. Republican prisoners, alleging ill treatment by prison guards, refused to leave their cells. This meant they were unable to 'slop out' and instead they smeared excrement on their cell walls. By 1979 over 250 prisoners were taking part in the protest and demands were growing for them to regain their political status.

Summary**ACTIVITY****Summary**

Think back to the three issues that you used to assess the Conservative government of 1970 to 1974 in the last chapter: economic problems; industrial relations; the Troubles in Northern Ireland.

Use the same three issues to assess the governments in the period 1974 to 1979. Then, return to your groups and discuss the following questions:

1. What are the similarities and differences between the problems faced in 1970 to 1974 and 1974 to 1979?
2. Do you think the Conservative government of 1970 to 1974 or the Labour governments of 1974 to 1979 were more successful in dealing with these problems?

**A
LEVEL****PRACTICE QUESTION****Evaluating primary sources**

Look back at Sources 1, 3 and 4. With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these three sources to an historian studying why Britain was so difficult to govern in the period 1974 to 1979.

STUDY TIP

Read the sources carefully and make a list of all the issues they identify that made Britain difficult to govern in this period. Think about why these sources include these problems and if that affects their value.

**AS
LEVEL****PRACTICE QUESTION**

'The period 1974 to 1979 saw the end of the post-war consensus.' Explain why you agree or disagree with this view.

STUDY TIP

Make sure you are clear about what the post-war consensus means. Identify different aspects of it and see what the situation was for each of these aspects in this period. This is an opinion which is highly disputed so you can agree or disagree – as long as you produce the evidence to support your view.

11 Society in the 1970s

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this chapter you will learn about:

- progress of feminism and the Sex Discrimination Act
- race and immigration
- youth
- environmentalism.

ACTIVITY

Extension

Research the lyrics of 'London Calling', a song released by the punk rock band The Clash in 1979.

1. What message do the song lyrics convey?
2. Discuss in groups whether popular culture as reflected in song lyrics, for example, is useful to historians studying culture and society.

CROSS-REFERENCE

Look back at Chapter 7 to remind yourself about the position of women by 1970 and the start of second-wave feminism.

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

1. What was the position of women in the early 1970s according to Source 1?
2. How useful is Source 1 to an historian studying attitudes to women in the 1970s?

KEY TERM

patriarchy: a social structure that privileges men

reproductive rights: the rights to have information about, and the ability to make decisions regarding, having children; this would include both contraception and abortion

Progress of feminism

The 1970s saw the high point of second-wave feminism which had developed in the 1960s and in some ways saw the fruition of changes that had started then. This was a movement that had support across the world as can be seen in the inauguration of International Women's Day by the United Nations in 1977.

Following the initial Women's Liberation meeting in 1970, Women's Liberation groups sprang up all over the country aiming to give support to women. Women's Lib organisations disrupted the 1970 Miss World Contest held in November because they felt that it objectified women. The host, Bob Hope, was heckled and protesters threw stink and smoke bombs onto the stage. Women's Lib also organised demonstrations in both London and Liverpool in March 1971 demanding equal pay for women and free 24-hour nurseries.



Fig. 1 Women's Liberation march in March 1971

SOURCE 1

The feminist magazine *Spare Rib* was set up in 1971. One of its founders, Marsha Ware, was interviewed for a modern feminist website in 2008:

In the counter culture there were all classes and races, but by the end of the 60's the so-called freedoms were no longer freeing. It turned out that women really didn't have a voice and what had been freeing was imprisoning because women were more objectified. People were very frightened of feminism. We were always seen as such a threat. We really wanted to change the relationship between work and home, but we didn't really have answers. When we started *Spare Rib* we wanted to reach out to other women who had been repressed. At that time even pop music was male dominated. I remember going to the Isle of Wight festival in 1970, and Joni Mitchell and Joan Baez were the only two women performing in the whole festival, all the others were men.

However, feminism was also split between different ideologies. Radical feminists, who were sometimes also separatists, believed that women were oppressed by the **patriarchal** society and campaigned particularly on issues such as **reproductive rights**. Socialist feminists identified a clearer class

dimension to women's equality and campaigned on issues that would enable women to achieve financial independence.

Progress was made in advancing reproductive rights. Although the birth control pill had been available in the 1960s its use became much more widespread once it was available through the NHS in 1971. Attempts were also made to tackle violence against women. The first rape crisis centre opened in London in 1976 and also in 1976 the Domestic Violence Act made it possible for women to take out court orders restraining violent partners. A year later, 'Reclaim the Night' marches were held in cities across Britain in response to the murders of the Yorkshire Ripper.

The Sex Discrimination Act

The Sex Discrimination Act was passed in 1975. It was passed to end discrimination against men or women on the basis of their gender or their marital status. It also aimed to ensure equality of opportunity in the fields of employment and education and to outlaw harassment.

The Act also set up the Equality Opportunities Commission. This was set up to oversee both the Sex Discrimination Act and the Equal Pay Act. It could bring court proceedings against any party it judged not to be compliant with these Acts. However, the Equality Opportunities Commission only launched nine investigations in eight years between 1976 and 1983 and only ten per cent of sex discrimination claims in the workplace were successful as it was so difficult to prove.

But women's economic position did start to improve during the 1970s. From 1971 women were able to take out a mortgage without a male guarantor. The Equal Pay Act which had been passed in 1970 came into force in 1975. In the same year Barbara Castle steered through reforms to the State Earnings Related Pension Scheme with the Social Security Pensions Act; this became more generous to women whose contributions had been limited by caring responsibilities. The Employment Protection Act 1975 introduced paid maternity leave and outlawed dismissal on the grounds of pregnancy.

However, there continued to be inequalities. Trade unions still tended to be dominated by men and suspicions remained that women in the workplace would suppress wages for men. It was not until 1979 that the TUC published a charter, *Equality for Women within Trade Unions*. Furthermore, the Equal Pay Act did not solve all the concerns that women were not treated equally; employers could get around it by making the tasks slightly different and therefore not comparable. Nevertheless women's wages did go up from 59 per cent of men's wages in 1970 to 70 per cent by 1977.



PRACTICE QUESTION

'Feminism did not have much impact on women's lives in the 1970s.' Explain why you agree or disagree with this view.

Race and immigration

Immigration continued to be a source of social concern. In 1971 the Conservative government passed the Immigration Act which restricted the right of people from the New Commonwealth from coming to Britain; they would need to have a guaranteed job and have at least one grandparent born in Britain.

There remained a steady flow of immigrants from the Indian subcontinent (India, Pakistan and Bangladesh) and events abroad often caused sudden

A CLOSER LOOK

Peter Sutcliffe, the Yorkshire Ripper, murdered 13 women and attempted to murder at least 7 more between 1975 and 1980.

CROSS-REFERENCE

Barbara Castle is profiled in Chapter 5, page 44.

KEY CHRONOLOGY

Measures affecting women, 1970–79

- 1970** Equal Pay Act passed [see Chapter 7]
- 1971** Birth control pill available on the NHS
- 1975** Employment Protection Act passed; Sex Discrimination Act passed; Equal Pay Act comes into force
- 1977** International Women's Day established by the United Nations in 1977
- 1979** TUC publishes charter, *Equality for Women within Trade Unions*

STUDY TIP

Define what you understand feminism to be in the 1970s. Can you link feminism to changes in women's lives at this time? You may find it useful to look back at Chapter 6 so you are clear about the position of women at the beginning of the period.

A CLOSER LOOK

By the late 1970s, the Brick Lane area of London was known as 'Banglatown' because so many immigrants were concentrated there. The Asian population of Bradford reached nearly 50,000. More than 20,000 of the East African Asians moved to Leicester.

KEY TERM

National Front: political party founded in 1967 by John Tyndall to oppose non-white immigration

influxes. In the early 1970s, the dictator of Uganda, Idi Amin, persecuted and then expelled the Ugandan Asians. Many of those affected had British passports, having moved from India to Uganda when India was still a British colony. These were made exceptions from the Immigration Act and Heath set up a resettlement board; 28,000 arrived in Britain. Similarly, there was also a sudden rush of immigrants from Bangladesh after its breakaway from Pakistan in 1974.

By 1974 over 1 million New Commonwealth immigrants had come to Britain: 325,000 from the West Indies, 435,000 from India and Pakistan and 150,000 from Africa. These immigrants tended to settle in the same areas where there were already cultural and familial networks. However, despite this, political representation in these areas remained limited. For example, in 1974 in the London Borough council elections only 10 non-white councillors were elected; by 1978 this had gone up to 35 but this did not reflect the size of the immigrant population.

Despite strict immigration rules, race relations continued to be an issue. In 1976 the Labour government passed another Race Relations Act to try and tackle discrimination on the basis of race. It established the Commission for Racial Equality which had the power to instigate investigations and to compel witnesses to appear in front of it.

The **National Front** became very active in parts of London where immigrants had settled, such as Brick Lane and Southall. Although it never won any elections, its popularity grew in the 1970s and it had up to 20,000 members by 1976. In February 1974 it put up 90 candidates in the general election and by 1977 it was being described as Britain's fourth largest political party.

The growth of the National Front that seemed to indicate ongoing concern over immigration produced a response by the main political parties. By the late 1970s, the Conservative Party announced that they would toughen up immigration policy even further in order to limit the number of immigrants coming into Britain.

SOURCE 2

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

Explain how an understanding of the context of the 1970s helps with an appreciation of the content of Source 2.

In 1978 the leader of the Conservative Party, Margaret Thatcher, gave a television interview to ITV. She was asked by how much a future Conservative government would limit immigration:

By the end of the century there would be four million people of the New Commonwealth or Pakistan here. Now, that is an awful lot and I think it means that people are really rather afraid that this country might be rather swamped by people with a different culture and, you know, the British character has done so much for democracy, for law and done so much throughout the world that if there is any fear that it might be swamped people are going to react and be rather hostile to those coming in. So, if you want good race relations, you have got to allay peoples' fears on numbers. So, we do have to hold out the prospect of an end to immigration except, of course, for compassionate cases. Therefore, we have got to look at the numbers who have a right to come in.

ACTIVITY

Design a placard that the Anti-Nazi League could use at a demonstration.

Some people complained that Thatcher's words were designed to appeal to racists. She said afterwards that she received hundreds of letters in support and the Conservative Party opened up an 11-point lead in the opinion polls following it.

One strategy of the National Front was to hold marches and demonstrations particularly in areas where there were high levels of immigrants living. These were considered provocative and were often marked by violence. The Trades Council of East London gave details of over 100 incidents including 2 murders between January 1976 and August 1978 and assaults on, and robberies of, Asians

and Afro-Caribbeans rose by a third. The pressure group, the Anti-Nazi League, was set up in 1977, in part to combat this.



Fig. 2 A National Front march, c1975

Some skinheads were attracted by National Front ideas. They were often behind violent attacks on people from other ethnic backgrounds, what was sometimes called 'Paki-bashing'. However, other young people fought against racist attitudes. Rock Against Racism started in 1976 as a reaction to comments made by the rock guitarist Eric Clapton in support of Enoch Powell. A huge demonstration and concert held in Trafalgar Square in April 1978 attracted 100,000 people. The concert was headlined by The Clash (see Source 1) who drew on **reggae and ska** influences as well as punk rock.

SOURCE 3

David Widgery was a left-wing writer and activist who went to the Rock Against Racism concert in April 1978. He wrote a book, *Beating Time*, about the movement, which was published in 1986:

As the park slowly filled up one could float through three generations of the Left. At the outskirts there were couples who might have been in Trafalgar Square when Bevan spoke against the Suez invasion. Their sensible footwear had been learnt on the Aldermaston march. The middle group was the generation of 1968. They had henna on for the occasion even if it did remind them of a commune they'd rather forget. They quite liked Tony Benn's speech. And finally there were the front-line punks. This was their Grosvenor Square. The punks didn't like any of the speakers but knew exactly what the music was saying.

There was also distrust regarding the police's treatment of ethnic minorities. In 1976 there were only 70 police officers with a black or ethnic minority background in the Metropolitan Police out of a total workforce of 22,000. Young black people often felt that the police were harassing them unnecessarily. Tensions were often apparent at events like the Notting Hill Carnival. In 1976 this hostility erupted into a riot where over 300 people were injured and following this there were calls to ban the event.

KEY TERM

reggae and ska: styles of popular music originating in Jamaica and characterised by a strong offbeat

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

1. Look back at previous chapters to make sure you are clear about what the writer of Source 3 means by:
 - Suez
 - the Aldermaston march
 - the generation of 1968
 - Grosvenor Square.
2. What point is the writer trying to make about Rock Against Racism by mentioning these four incidents?



Fig. 3 Arrests made at the 1976 Notting Hill Carnival

Suspicions regarding police attitudes were highlighted by events such as the death of Blair Peach in 1979. Blair Peach was a teacher and Anti-Nazi League supporter who was killed when a demonstration was blocked by police; it was alleged that he was struck on the head by a police truncheon. The Metropolitan Police finally admitted responsibility for his death in 2010.

Both progress in race relations and ongoing racism were also visible in popular culture. Black footballers such as Justin Fashanu and John Barnes became increasingly common on the pitch and in 1978 Viv Anderson became the first black player to be picked for the England team. Reggae and ska music became increasingly popular. Local authorities began to follow **multipolarist** policies. These sought to recognise and respect the different cultures of different ethnicities equally.

However, football terraces were also scenes of overt racism with fans making monkey noises and throwing banana skins at black players. Comedians still felt able to make racist jokes; *The Black and White Minstrel Show*, in which white actors 'blacked up', continued to be made until 1978. By 1980 the Commission for Racial Equality was warning: 'Racial prejudice is still rife, and so is racial discrimination, while the response of the Government has been disappointingly inadequate'.

KEY TERM

multipolarist: policies that support ongoing cultural diversity

ACTIVITY

In pairs find evidence to both support and challenge the following statement:
'Race relations were improving in the period 1970–79.'

Youth

Youth culture in the 1970s continued to cause concerns for older generations. In many ways youth subcultures reflected the social, political and economic battles going on elsewhere.

In 1975 to 1976 the punk movement started. It was influenced by bands from the United States such as the New York Dolls who rejected commercialism. British bands like the Sex Pistols, The Clash, The Damned and the Buzzcocks played loud, fast guitar music where the words were often shouted over the top of the music. Much of the punk philosophy was nihilistic. It rejected the hippy culture that had gone before and embraced a DIY attitude – being able to play musical instruments was less important than the attitude. The lyrics reflected the social alienation that many young people felt, such as those in Source 1.

The image of punks was also designed to be shocking. Punks wore bondage gear, safety pins and ripped T-shirts, and had spiky hair. Vivienne Westwood and Malcolm McLaren opened a boutique called SEX on the Kings Road in Chelsea, London which sold these items and was extremely influential on the punk image. At punk concerts both performers and audience spat at each other and there were often violent scuffles. Punk created a moral panic. The Sex Pistols, managed by Malcolm McLaren and fronted by Johnny Rotten, swore live on TV; newspaper headlines such as 'The Filth and the Fury' and 'TV Fury Over Rock Cult Filth' followed. The Sex Pistols also released a controversial single, 'God save the Queen', during the Queen's Silver Jubilee year, 1977. The BBC refused to play it but it reached number two in the charts.



Fig. 4 Punks in London

Skinheads had developed from Mod culture at the end of the 1960s. They tended to be working class and were initially influenced by Jamaican music and culture. Although many skinheads were apolitical, by the end of the 1970s some skinheads were becoming increasingly linked to the National Front and football hooliganism.

Football hooliganism was already a growing problem at the beginning of the 1970s but it gradually worsened over the decade. Organised hooligan groups were set up linked to particular football clubs, such as the Chelsea Headhunters, and scenes of violence became so common that football hooliganism became known as 'the English disease'.

ACTIVITY

Extension

- Choose to research either skinheads or punks. Find out why people were concerned about the development of this youth subculture.
- Imagine you are a member of this subculture. How would you defend yourself against this criticism?

Environmentalism

Environmentalism as a political philosophy covers a multitude of topics connected by their impact on the planet: industrial pollution, protection of wildlife, organic farming, and the dangers from radiation and nuclear waste. Pictures taken of the earth from space had a big impact on people's views of the planet as they highlighted the earth's fragility. A new word, 'ecology', entered the vocabulary, defining the health of the natural environment. It drew on a number of issues that had emerged in the 1960s but by the 1970s had gained enough potency to impact more greatly on the public consciousness. These ideas also drew on the counterculture of the 1970s that had rejected consumerism and commercialisation, and on emerging fears of a downside to what had been perceived as scientific progress.

A CLOSER LOOK

Increasing environmental awareness

In 1962, *Silent Spring*, by the American biologist Rachel Carson, had an enormous international impact. The book sounded the alarm about the decline in birds and other wildlife in the farming countryside. The root cause was attributed to overuse of chemical pesticides, especially DDT, and the book also linked the use of these chemicals to cancer. In 1963, the Hunt Saboteurs Association was formed to carry out direct action against the cruelty of fox hunting. In 1967, the wreck of a giant oil tanker, *Torrey Canyon*, caused a massive oil spill and polluted a stretch of the coastline of southwest England. In 1968, a campaigning book, *The Population Bomb* by Paul Ehrlich, dramatised the threat to the environment from overpopulation.

CROSS-REFERENCE

Protest against nuclear deterrents in the 1960s, including CND, is discussed in Chapters 4 and 15.

1970 was announced to be the year of European conservation and in the early 1970s, disparate environmental concerns began to coalesce into organised campaigns. The environmental pressure group Friends of the Earth was formed in the United States in 1969 and expanded to include Britain, France and Sweden in 1971.

Whereas the original drive behind CND had been protest against atomic weapons, a new form of anti-nuclear protest campaigned against the use of nuclear power to generate electricity because of the long-term dangers in dealing with radioactive nuclear waste and the potential for accidents. Between 1957 and 1979 there had been five incidents at the nuclear power station Sellafield which was on the Cumbrian coast. The partial nuclear meltdown at Three Mile Island, New York in 1979 further increased anxieties.

Direct action was an issue that split the environmental movement. The radical organisation Greenpeace was founded in Vancouver, Canada in 1971, to campaign against whaling. Greenpeace UK was formed in 1977. There was outrage in 1975 when it was discovered that beagles in laboratories were being forced to smoke 30 cigarettes a day to study the effects. Animal rights protesters carried out violent attacks on pharmaceutical laboratories from 1973. The Animal Liberation Front, formed in 1976, adopted extreme violence: letter bombs were sent to politicians, including Thatcher, in 1984.

ACTIVITY

In groups choose one of the pressure groups mentioned in this chapter. Research its activities and prepare a class presentation that explains its ideas.

A CLOSER LOOK

Gaia theory argued that the earth was sustained through a complex connected and evolving system and that unbalancing this through environmental damage would have devastating consequences for its future.

Alongside environmental pressure groups, there was a general increase in interest in the natural environment and the need for conservation. Television programmes, many made at the BBC Natural History Unit in Bristol, did a lot to raise awareness. In 1979, David Attenborough's *Life On Earth* series used new techniques of colour photography and gained massive television audiences worldwide. In the same year, the British thinker James Lovelock gained many adherents for his Gaia theory, about the interconnectedness of all ecological issues.

Environmental concerns were also reflected in popular culture. The book *Watership Down*, about a group of rabbits forced to move by a road development, was published in 1972 and became a bestseller. A situation comedy, *The Good Life*, which started airing in 1975, depicted a couple trying to be self-sufficient in a suburban house.

Teddy Goldsmith published *A Blueprint for Survival* in 1972 which advocated a return to self-sufficiency and a de-industrialised society. This formed the political platform of The People's Party which was set up in 1973. The People's Party put up 5 candidates in February 1974, including Goldsmith. It changed its name to the **Ecology Party** in 1975 and put up 53 candidates in the 1979 general election. By the end of the 1970s, environmentalism had carved a permanent place on the political scene.

Summary

ACTIVITY

Summary

Using Chapters 9 and 10 as well as this chapter, draw a timeline of key events in the 1970s. Use a colour code to differentiate between political, economic and social/cultural events.



PRACTICE QUESTION

Evaluating primary sources

With reference to Sources 3 and 4 and your understanding of the historical context, which of these two sources is more valuable in explaining attitudes to race in Britain in the 1970s?



PRACTICE QUESTION

'The growth of environmentalism was a reaction to the political and economic problems of the 1970s.' Assess the validity of this view.

ACTIVITY

Extension

Find some clips of *The Good Life* on the Internet. Can they tell you anything about life in the 1970s?

Discuss whether television programmes like this can be useful sources.

KEY PROFILE

Teddy Goldsmith (1928–2009)

was the heir of a wealthy family. During the late 1960s he travelled across the world to learn about tribal peoples and campaigned against the destruction of the Amazon rainforest. In 1970 he set up the journal, *The Ecologist*, to publicise environmental issues. His brother James Goldsmith later set up the anti-European Referendum Party in the 1990s.

A CLOSER LOOK

The Ecology Party changed its name to the Green Party in 1985.

STUDY TIP

Think about the political beliefs of the authors – how might this affect their views? You also need to consider what the purpose of each source is.

STUDY TIP

The timeline you drew for the summary activity should help you put the different aspects you need to think about in this question into a framework that allows you to look for links between them.

12 Foreign affairs

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this chapter you will learn about:

- Britain's entry into and relations with Europe
- the state of the 'special relationship' with the USA
- attitudes to the USSR and China.



Fig. 1 Edward Heath agreeing Britain's entry into the EEC

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

1. What can you learn from Source 1 about attitudes in the 1970s towards Britain's position in the world?
2. When you have read the whole of this chapter come back to this source and explain how your understanding of foreign relations in the 1970s helps you to put this source in context.

SOURCE 1

On 9 February 1976 the House of Commons had a debate about the links between foreign policy and morality. The Labour backbench MP, Colin Jackson, said the following:

A British statesman, Palmerston, said that Britain had no eternal enemies and no eternal friends, only eternal interests. Even today, 100 years later, an element of that must exist because we are an international trading nation dependent upon links around the world. The two superpowers, the United States of America and the Soviet Union, have massive amounts of armaments and show a considerable degree of immorality in the way they exercise their power. The medium nations come next. I believe that the French are just a little too pushing in the pursuance of their ambitions. Nations like the United Kingdom are a potential example of how morality can show itself in international relations. The United Kingdom is important because in terms of history, international connections and even of power we are significant. In my view, it is extremely important that we should debate this matter and in particular look at the way Britain conducts herself.

Britain's entry into and relations with Europe

In 1973, and at the third time of asking, Britain finally joined the European Economic Community (EEC). However, the debate was far from over. Both the Labour and Conservative parties remained divided on the issue throughout the 1970s.

Entry into the EEC

By the time Britain's third application to join the EEC was being prepared in 1971, the situation was very clear. Everyone knew in advance that Britain's bid was likely to be accepted.

Instead of Harold Wilson, who was uncommitted to European membership and worried about maintaining unity within the Labour Party, the British prime minister was the passionately pro-European Edward Heath. Heath's first speech in Parliament had been about the Schuman Plan, the forerunner to the EEC. As a student he had visited Germany in the 1930s and been appalled by the Nazi government; he saw European cooperation as key to preventing any repetition.

Instead of Charles de Gaulle, the French president who was suspicious of Britain's links with the United States, France was led by Georges Pompidou, a man convinced that the EEC needed Britain as much as Britain needed Europe. In addition, all the hard, detailed arrangements and exceptions were already in place, as a result of the work done in 1962 by Heath's team of negotiators. The formal process of Britain's accession, along with Ireland and Denmark, took more than two years but it was mostly a foregone conclusion.

The bigger issue was gaining parliamentary approval in Britain. There were doubters in the Conservative Party, partly from those who believed strongly in the Commonwealth and also from those who believed that Britain would be surrendering her sovereignty. One of the most vociferous critics was Enoch Powell. His relationship with Heath was already very poor in the aftermath of the 'rivers of blood' speech.

Powell voted against the passage of the European bill through Parliament at every single stage. He believed that Heath had betrayed the country by signing the treaty before it had been debated in Parliament. He refused to stand as a Conservative candidate in the February 1974 election and even called on his supporters to vote Labour.

CROSS-REFERENCE

Look back at Chapter 7 to see Powell's speech and reaction to it.



Fig. 2 The expansion of the EEC in 1973

The Labour Party was even more badly divided on the issue of Europe. There were some who were committed pro-Europeans, such as Roy Jenkins, but the Labour Left was mostly hostile. Wilson himself was neither strongly for nor against membership and he continued to be obsessed with ensuring party unity – a difficult task on this issue.

The Labour Party officially opposed Heath's plans when they came to Parliament. However, the Labour Party could not argue against joining on principle as there were too many pro-Europeans in the party. Instead Wilson argued that the terms offered were not good enough. Even this compromise didn't satisfy everyone. In the end Wilson could only keep the party together by promising a re-negotiation and national referendum – an idea of Tony Benn's – as and when Labour came back to power. In the end, 69 rebel Labour MPs helped the Conservative government to win the decisive Commons vote with 20 more abstaining. In January 1973, 'The Six' became 'The Nine'.

Heath's persistence and commitment had at last brought Britain into Europe but the likelihood of a referendum in the future meant that there was still uncertainty. Others feared that Britain's membership was 16 years too late and Britain would suffer adversely from missing out on the formative years of the EEC since 1957.

KEY TERM

abstaining: voting neither for nor against a motion in the House of Commons

STUDY TIP

You will need to compare Heath's leadership to other reasons why Britain joined the EEC in 1973. You should think about some of the long-term developments so you may find it helpful to read back over Chapters 4 and 8.

CROSS-REFERENCE

Michael Foot is profiled in Chapter 8, page 68.

The UUP and DUP are explained in Chapter 9.

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

- What does Source 2 argue are the problems with EEC membership?
- How valuable is Source 2 to an historian studying the debate about Britain's membership of the EEC in the 1970s?



PRACTICE QUESTION

How significant was Edward Heath's leadership in explaining Britain's entry into the EEC in 1973?

The European referendum

When the Labour Party returned to government in 1974, Wilson's main aim was party unity. This was demonstrated in the referendum campaign of 1975. Wilson's strategy was to allow his anti-European cabinet colleagues to campaign according to their own views, rather than trying to enforce a party line. Wilson and Callaghan argued that they themselves were neutral.

By 1975, voter support for Britain staying in the EEC was much stronger than before. The economic mess the country was in seemed to prove Britain needed to be in for its own economic survival. Most of the press was strongly in favour. The 'Yes' campaign was well financed by business supporters; a survey in 1975 found that of 419 company chairmen, only 4 wanted to leave the EEC. The politicians at the head of the 'Yes' campaign included most of the cabinet led by Roy Jenkins, plus Edward Heath and most senior Conservatives, and also the Liberal leader, Jeremy Thorpe. They therefore made a bigger impression on public opinion than those on the other side.

The 'No' campaigners fell into two main categories. There were those who argued that it would be bad for British workers – these included Barbara Castle and Michael Foot, both from the Left of the Labour Party. There were also those who were against membership on the basis that Britain would lose its independence. These included Tony Benn from the Labour Party, as well as Enoch Powell, formerly of the Conservative Party but now a UUP MP, and Ian Paisley of the DUP.

SOURCE 2

'Why you should vote NO' was a leaflet delivered to all homes in Britain and an example of the 'No campaign' literature from the referendum in 1975:

For the British people, membership of the Common Market has already been a bad bargain. What is worse is that it sets out by stages to merge Britain, Germany and Italy and other countries into a single nation. This will take away from us the right to rule ourselves which we have enjoyed for centuries. The

Common Market increasingly does this by making our laws and deciding our policies on food, prices, trade and employment – all matters that affect the lives of us all. As the system tightens – and it will – our right, by our votes, to change policies and laws in Britain will steadily dwindle. Those who want Britain in the Common Market are defeatists; they see no independent future for our country.

The question asked in the referendum was: 'Do you think that the United Kingdom should stay in the European Community (the Common Market)?' 17 million (68.3 per cent) voted 'yes' in July 1975; 8 million (32.5 per cent) voted 'no'. Britain's membership was confirmed.

ACTIVITY

Create your own campaign leaflet on the EEC entitled 'Why you should vote YES'.

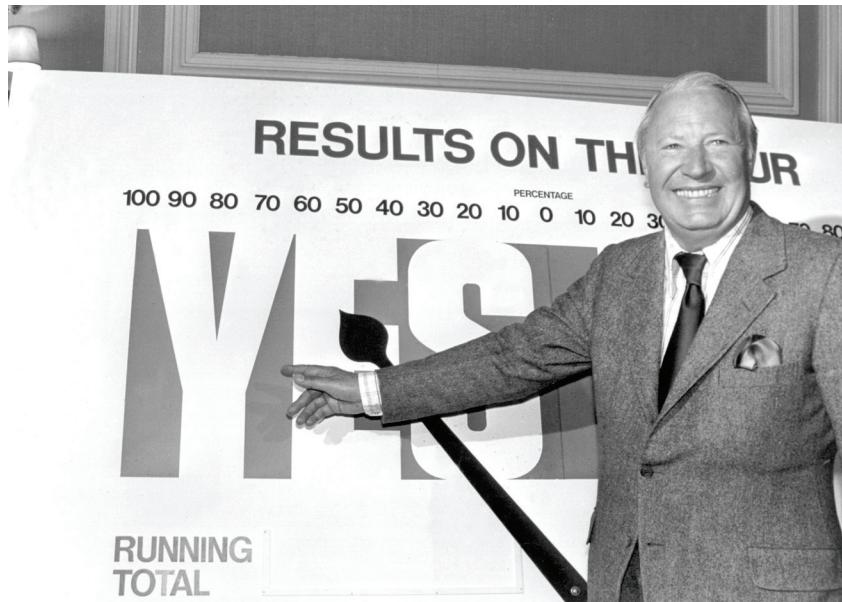


Fig. 3 Edward Heath celebrating the result of the 1975 referendum

The margin of victory was decisive, by more than two to one. This looked reassuring, proof that Britain really was 'in', but the fact that the referendum was held at all could be seen as a worrying sign of a lack of commitment. For Wilson personally though, the referendum was a triumph; he had successfully avoided a Labour split.

After the referendum the European issue quietened. Roy Jenkins, one of the key Labour supporters of membership, left Parliament to become a **European commissioner**. The Labour Party was increasingly anti-European and those Conservatives who were opposed to the increasing influence of Europe had not changed their opinions; but the people had voted to stay in so the debate was closed for the time being.

KEY TERM

European commissioner: the equivalent of a minister at a European level, each appointed by national governments

ACTIVITY

Extension

Use the evidence in this chapter and the evidence in Chapters 4 and 8 to write a paragraph explaining the reasons why Britain's membership of the EEC came about between 1971 and 1975 but not before.

The state of the 'special relationship' with USA

Because Edward Heath's approach was orientated towards Europe he was less inclined to strengthen the Atlantic Alliance. He rejected attempts by the United States' secretary of state, Henry Kissinger, to use Britain as a link with Europe and insisted that the United States should negotiate with the European Community as a whole, rather than using Britain as a go-between.

Kissinger commented that Heath 'dealt with us with an unsentimentality totally at variance with "the special relationship"'. However, Heath personally got on with the US president, Richard Nixon, and he was more forthright in his support for the United States' policy in Vietnam than Harold Wilson had been.

A CLOSER LOOK

The **Yom Kippur War** was a short war in October 1973 between Israel and a coalition of Arab states including Egypt and Syria. The United States supported Israel and the USSR supported the Arab states so the conflict also had implications for the Cold War.

KEY TERM

30-year rule: government documents (where there are no security restrictions) are automatically released to the public after 30 years

ACTIVITY**Evaluating primary sources**

1. In pairs, think about Source 3 and make a list of advantages and disadvantages of using this kind of source.
2. What does the source tell you about how the EEC might affect Britain's position in the world?

But relations between Britain and the United States worsened in October 1973 during the **Yom Kippur War**. The US wanted to use NATO bases in Europe for an airlift of supplies to Israel. Most European states, including Britain, refused permission; this was because they feared that supplies of oil from the Middle East would be put at risk. This put Anglo-American relations under great strain.

SOURCE 3

In November 1973 Edward Heath and Georges Pompidou, the president of France, met at Chequers; they each took one official to the meeting. The official record of their conversation was made by a senior civil servant but was kept secret until it was released under the **30-year rule** in 2005:

As an example the prime minister took the present Middle Eastern Crisis. From the outset the position of Britain and France had been very clear and clearly known to each other. But he did not think that either of them had consulted as fully with other members of the Community (EEC) nor had those others consulted with each other. In logic, if there was to be a common policy in the economic field and support for each other therein, there should also be a common foreign policy approach and agreement that each would support the other in that as well. The prime minister said that the Community was now establishing with some success its position as a European entity in its relationship with the United States. It might be useful to consider a similar process of definition in respect to the Community's relationship with other countries or groups of countries in the world.

Wilson and Callaghan were both still keen on the Atlantic alliance. Callaghan forged a strong personal relationship with Kissinger and negotiated the replacement of Polaris nuclear missiles with Trident in 1979 with President Jimmy Carter. Nevertheless, they completed the withdrawal from East of Suez that had been started in the 1960s despite US disquiet.

Attitudes to the USSR and China

One of the reasons that Britain and the United States continued to work together in the 1970s, despite disagreements, is that they continued to share the foreign policy objective of holding back communism.

The USSR and China were the most powerful communist nations in the world. The context of the ongoing Cold War meant that relations between Britain and these countries had been based on suspicion, bordering on hostility.

However, in the 1970s the United States' relationship with both the USSR and China improved – and in both cases Britain followed the United States' lead.

Attitudes to USSR

During the 1970s there was what was called a **détente**. After the tension of the Cuban Missile Crisis, successive presidents of the US and the USSR tried to prevent such a situation recurring by establishing direct contact. This led to meetings and eventually agreement to limit the build-up of arms.

Nevertheless, an underlying tension remained as there were still fears about the USSR's influence in Eastern Europe. This was demonstrated by the Georgi Markov affair. Markov was a Bulgarian who defected to the West in 1969 and was outspoken in his criticism of the Bulgarian communist regime. He was assassinated in London in 1978, supposedly by a poisonous pellet fired from an umbrella; the Russian secret service, the KGB, were suspected of being behind it though this was never proven.

KEY TERM

détente: an easing of hostility between nations

CROSS-REFERENCE

The Cuban Missile Crisis is outlined in Chapter 4, page 32.

Attitudes to China

Up until the early 1970s relationships between China and Britain, the United States and Western Europe were strained.

This changed suddenly in July 1971 when Nixon surprisingly announced a thawing of relations followed by a visit to China in February 1972 where he held meetings with the Chinese leader **Mao Zedong**.

In March, Britain followed suit, agreeing an exchange of ambassadors with China. Edward Heath made many visits to China from 1974 onwards, and was awarded the title of 'People's Friendship Envoy', the highest possible honour given by the Chinese government to a foreigner. By the end of the decade, improved relations meant that in October 1979, the Premier Hua Guofeng visited Britain as part of a European tour; this was the first visit to Britain by a Chinese leader since the communist revolution.

A CLOSER LOOK

China had had a communist revolution in 1949. It had supported the communists in the wars in Korea and Vietnam which had caused tension between China and the Western world.

KEY PROFILE

Mao Zedong (1893–1976) led China from the communist revolution until his death. By the late 1960s there was growing friction between China and the Soviet Union which led Mao to look for a rapprochement with the United States.

Summary

ACTIVITY

Summary

1. Using Chapters 4 and 8 as well as this chapter, in groups jot down the key features of the following aspects of British foreign policy in the periods: 1951 to 1964; 1964 to 1970 and 1970 to 1979.
 - a. Relations with the United States.
 - b. Relations with Europe.
 - c. Relations with the rest of the world.
2. Agree on a ranking of importance in each period.
3. Do your findings suggest that British foreign policy objectives changed in the period 1951 to 1979?



PRACTICE QUESTION

Evaluating primary sources

With reference to Sources 2 and 3 and your understanding of the historical context, which of these two sources is more valuable in explaining the impact of British membership of the European Economic Community between 1970 and 1974?

STUDY TIP

These are two very different sources with two very different purposes. You need to think carefully about how this affects their value to the historian. Don't just assume that a source has no value just because of its purpose but be prepared to explain how purpose can affect value.



PRACTICE QUESTION

'The "special relationship" with the United States of America broke down in the period 1970 to 1979.' Assess the validity of this view

STUDY TIP

Make sure you define what you mean by the special relationship – remember that it can include political, economic, diplomatic, military and cultural aspects.

4

The impact of Thatcherism 1979–87

13 The Thatcher governments

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this chapter you will learn about:

- Mrs Thatcher as leader and what 'Thatcherism' means
- Thatcher's ministers, and support and opposition to her policies
- the divisions in the Labour Party and the formation of the SDP
- why the Conservative Party won the 1983 and 1987 elections
- the continuation of 'the Troubles' in Northern Ireland.



Fig. 1 No more consensus: Margaret Thatcher in Downing Street after victory in 1979

CROSS-REFERENCE

Thatcher is profiled in Chapter 9, page 76.

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

1. What can an historian learn about Thatcherism from Source 1?
2. Does the provenance make it more or less valuable?

CROSS-REFERENCE

Willie Whitelaw is profiled in Chapter 9, page 78, and Enoch Powell in Chapter 2, page 15.

KEY TERM

conviction politician: someone who follows policies based on their own beliefs rather than because they are popular or to follow what had gone before

Thatcher as leader: character and ideology

SOURCE 1

John Ranelagh, a Thatcherite who worked for the Conservative Research Department during the 1970s, described the Conservative Party's relationship with political theory:

'The Tory Party does not like brains', **Willie Whitelaw** once remarked to an aide as he walked down the committee room corridor of the House of Commons. Then he paused, shaking his head sadly, 'Thank God I don't have any!' One of the great shocks delivered to the Conservative Party by Thatcher and her people was that they did like brains. Thatcher herself was not an intellectual, but she respected intellect and looked for it in her people. 'When people don't enjoy thinking', said **Enoch Powell**, 'but have a feeling that a thought or two will come in handy, then they look for somebody who can supply them: "Here you! Give me a thought! There must be a theory behind this. Kindly explain to me what it is."

A style of leadership

In some ways Thatcherism was a style rather than an ideology. Margaret Thatcher described herself as a **conviction politician** and was dismissive of the post-war consensus which she saw as responsible for Britain's ills.

Thatcher's policies reflected her own personal beliefs and instinct which were very much based on her own experiences. She was resolutely middle class, the daughter of a grocer, Alf Roberts, who was a local councillor, and a Methodist lay preacher. Self-reliance and self-improvement lay at the heart of Thatcher's upbringing and this influenced her political beliefs.

SOURCE 2

In an interview on London Weekend Television in January 1983 Thatcher explained how her beliefs and background affected her politics:

Compassion isn't determined by how much you get together demonstrations in the street to protest to government that government, which is other tax-payers, must do more. It's determined by how much you are prepared to do yourself. Of course we have basic social services, we will continue to have those, but equally compassion depends upon what you and I, as an individual, are prepared to do. I remember my father telling me that at a very early age. Compassion doesn't depend upon whether you get up and make a speech in the market-place about what governments should do. It depends upon how you're prepared to conduct your own life, and how much you're prepared to give of what you have to others.

Thatcher was also an outsider; although she went to Oxford and became a lawyer she was not from a traditional Tory background, being suburban, from trade and a woman. She was not a traditional Tory and was sometimes dismissive of Tory grandes.

Her style as a conviction politician meant that she said at the peak of discontent with her policies at the 1981 party conference: 'You turn if you want to – the lady's not for turning.' This not only created the image of her as a conviction politician but was also a sly criticism of the Heathites who had **U-turned** in 1972.

Ideology

As Source 1 indicates Thatcher was not herself an intellectual but she was influenced by other intellectuals in the Conservative Party. Thatcherism was based on some traditional Conservative thinking, by some Tory intellectuals such as Enoch Powell, and by Thatcher's own political and social instincts; but it was also heavily influenced by a number of 'New Right' think tanks and academics.

A CLOSER LOOK**The New Right**

The New Right is a collective name for a number of academic and theoretical organisations which challenged the Keynesian orthodoxy. They drew on the work of Milton Friedman and Friedrich von Hayek both of whom worked at the Chicago School of Economics. The New Right included the Centre for Policy Studies, established by Keith Joseph after the 1974 election defeat, and the Adam Smith Institute formed in 1977 to promote free-market policies. It attracted a number of converts such as Peter Jay, an economist who was also James Callaghan's son-in-law, and a previous editor of the left-wing *New Statesman* magazine, Paul Johnson.

The New Right's analysis of Britain's economic decline meant that they rejected Keynesian economics in favour of monetarism and free-market economics. In addition, just as Thatcherites viewed Britain's economic decline as the result of the failures of successive post-war governments so its supporters also identified a moral decline linked to this consensus. For Thatcherites the free market was moral because it encouraged individuals to take responsibility for their own actions. And this was equally as true in personal decisions as much as in economic ones.

ACTIVITY**Evaluating primary sources**

- What can be learned about Thatcherism from Source 2?
- How might the date of the interview in Source 2 affect what Thatcher said? Does this affect its value to an historian?

CROSS-REFERENCE

Heath's U-turn in government is described in Chapter 9, page ??.



Fig. 2 Thatcher sometimes took a quite pragmatic approach to politics

KEY TERM

think tank: an organisation that researches potential social, political and economic policies; it can be attached to a particular ideology or be neutral

CROSS-REFERENCE

Keith Joseph is profiled in Chapter 9, page ??.

ACTIVITY

In pairs think about the ways in which Thatcher's conviction politics fitted with New Right ideology with regard to economic policy.

SOURCE 3

Rhodes Boyson was a former headteacher and a junior minister in the Thatcher government. He was a social conservative, arguing that schools should use the cane to discipline pupils and that capital punishment should be reinstated. He was critical of the 1960s:

Some people look with amusement or even horror at the self-help of the Victorian age, but its virtues of duty, order and efficiency have been replaced in the muddled thinking of our age by a belief in individual irresponsibility. The predictable outcome is seen in disorder, crime and lack of civic duty and in the palsied inefficiency so often visible in the public service.

CROSS-REFERENCE

The ideas of John Maynard Keynes are outlined in the Introduction.

Thatcher's economic policies and key terms such as monetarism and free-market economics are explored in detail in Chapter 14.

ACTIVITY

Write a paragraph that explains how Thatcherism linked economic decline to moral decline.

CROSS-REFERENCE

The impact of Thatcherism on society, including the miners' strike, will be explored in further detail in Chapter 15.

ACTIVITY**Extension**

Look back to Chapters 1, 2 and 9. Draw up a table of similarities and differences between the Thatcherite Conservative Party and previous Conservative administrations.

KEY TERM

wet: a derisive nickname given to a member of the Conservative Party by Mrs Thatcher and her supporters for being soft and squeamish about the social consequences of monetarist economic policies; they could also be seen as one-nation Conservatives

This belief was echoed by **Norman Tebbit**, who in a lecture to the Disraeli Society in 1985 said 'The trigger of today's outburst of crime and violence lies in the era and attitudes of post-war funk which gave birth to the "Permissive Society" which in turn generated today's violent society.'

Thatcherites put a great deal of emphasis on order in society. They saw the family as the bulwark of this. When Thatcher famously said: 'Who is society? There is no such thing as that!' she went on to say: 'There are individual men and women and there are families'. Therefore, to Thatcherites, threats to the family were serious because they were threats to order in society.

KEY PROFILE

Norman Tebbit (b. 1931) was an outspoken Essex MP who was appointed Trade Secretary in Margaret Thatcher's first cabinet and later became party chairman. His down-to-earth and abrasive style made him very popular with the new Thatcherites though not their opponents; Michael Foot described him as 'a semi-house-trained polecat'. In 1987, he left the government, though he remained loyal to Thatcherite ideals.

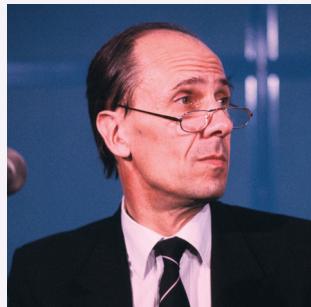


Fig. 3 Tebbit was always loyal to Thatcherite ideals

For the same reasons Thatcherites were supportive of the police and tough on law and order issues. This was an important thrust of their manifesto in 1979 and continued throughout Thatcher's premiership. By the mid-1980s this led to accusations that the police had become politicised, especially during industrial disputes.

However, when the Conservative Party won the 1979 election Thatcherism did not really exist and in many ways it is still a disputed term. It is perhaps unhelpful to think of Thatcherism as a political philosophy or ideology. It is tied too much to the personality of Margaret Thatcher, to the problems identified in the United Kingdom in the 1970s, and to the solutions brought to bear upon these in the 1980s, to be wholly transferable to other times or places. What it meant in practice will be explored in Chapters 14 to 17.

Ministers: support and opposition

Although the Conservative Party won the 1979 election it would be wrong to see the party as a Thatcherite one. There were still many senior Tories who were, what she termed, 'wets', and Thatcher's first cabinet contained several,

for example, Willie Whitelaw was appointed Home Secretary. Thatcher did, however, ensure that most of the key posts, especially on the economy, were held by people she regarded as 'one of us' – 'dries'. **Geoffrey Howe** became Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Department of Industry went to Keith Joseph. Other key economic posts were given to John Biffen and **Nigel Lawson**, two men with a 'dry' approach to economy and finance. One exception was Jim Prior, a 'wet' who became employment minister.

As might have been expected, there were disagreements between Prior and Thatcher; these were mainly over anti-union legislation as the Thatcherites believed that Prior was too friendly with trade union leaders. Prior was moved to the Northern Ireland Office in 1981 (a demotion) and replaced by the Thatcherite Norman Tebbit.

Success at the 1983 general election consolidated Margaret Thatcher's position, both as prime minister and as party leader. Most of the wets in her party were marginalised. Mrs Thatcher was now a commanding leader at the head of a team of Thatcherites, such as the Chancellor, Nigel Lawson, and Foreign Secretary, Geoffrey Howe.

However, this does not mean that Thatcher did not face some opposition from ministers. Some of this opposition was due to personal disagreements. Both John Biffen and Norman Tebbit eventually fell out of favour despite being Thatcherites. But the most serious challenge to Thatcher's authority was what became known as the **Westland affair**; **Michael Heseltine** stormed out of a cabinet meeting, resigning his position and claiming that Thatcher was acting unconstitutionally.

Although Thatcher survived Westland, Heseltine became a focus of discontent for those Conservative MPs who were unhappy with Thatcher's rule. This was to come to a climax in 1990.

KEY TERM

dry: a nickname given to Conservatives who were firm and uncompromising in their support for monetarism

KEY PROFILE

Sir Geoffrey Howe (b. 1926) served as trade minister in Heath's government until 1974 and was Mrs Thatcher's first Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1979 to 1983. He presided over the application of monetarist principles to economic policies. From 1983 to 1989, he was foreign minister but his views on Europe came into conflict with Thatcher's. His resignation speech in 1990 helped to cause her fall from power.



Fig. 4 Howe was Thatcher's longest-serving cabinet minister

Nigel Lawson (b. 1932) served in Thatcher's first term as Howe's number two at the Treasury and replaced Howe as Chancellor in 1983. His expansionary budgets of 1987 and 1988 created the 'Lawson boom'. In 1989, Lawson resigned from the government, furious about the excessive influence wielded by Thatcher's private economic adviser, Professor Alan Walters.



Fig. 5 Lawson created the 'Lawson boom'

CROSS-REFERENCE

The Westland affair is covered in more detail in Chapter 16.

Heseltine's part in the fall of Thatcher is covered in Chapter 17.

KEY PROFILE

Michael Heseltine (b. 1933) was a millionaire who became a leading Conservative politician in the 1980s. Because of his long hair and flamboyant style, his nickname was 'Tarzan'. His 'One Nation' and pro-European views brought him into conflict with Thatcher and he resigned from her cabinet in 1986 over the Westland affair. Many Thatcherites blamed him for the fall of Thatcher in 1990. He was later deputy prime minister to John Major.



Fig. 6 Heseltine was a prominent figure in the governments of Thatcher and Major

ACTIVITY**Extension**

In pairs, pick one of Thatcher's ministers. Research their political career and give a presentation on them to the rest of the class.

CROSS-REFERENCE

Aneurin Bevan, who played a part in earlier splits in the Labour Party, is introduced in Chapter 1, page 7.

Tony Benn is profiled in Chapter 5, Michael Foot in Chapter 8 and Denis Healey in Chapter 8.

Ongoing tensions within the Labour Party are covered in Chapters 1, 5 and 10.

Divided opposition, 1979–87: Labour and the formation of the SDP

Between 1979 and 1983, the Labour Party came close to political oblivion. Internal divisions boiled over as the Labour Party descended into its worst crisis of the post-war period. Key personalities broke away to found a completely new party, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) in 1981. This led to catastrophic defeats in 1983 and 1987. Many commentators started to believe that the Labour Party would never win office again.

The crisis began when the left-wing candidate, **Michael Foot**, a Bevanite and a supporter of unilateral nuclear disarmament. Foot was elected leader in 1980 instead of the 'obvious' candidate, **Denis Healey**, from the centre-right of the party. Later, at the Blackpool party conference in September 1981, Healey narrowly defeated Tony Benn in a bitter contest for the deputy leadership.

The emergence of the SDP

The Social Democratic Party (SDP) was born at the end of January 1981, when a group of leading Labour politicians, the so-called 'Gang of Four', David Owen, Roy Jenkins, Shirley Williams and Bill Rodgers, issued their 'Limehouse declaration', announcing the formation of the Council for Social Democracy. The leaders of the new SDP and the 28 Labour MPs that followed them believed that they had been driven out of the Labour Party by the extremists who were now taking over. They believed that the best way to save the Labour Party was not to fight a losing battle against the 'Bennite' Left (supporters of **Tony Benn**) within the Labour Party, but to build a new centrist alternative capable of appealing to the middle ground. The snapping point had come earlier in January 1981, at a special party conference held at Wembley, dominated by the Labour Left. The Wembley conference was notorious for the hostility shown towards speakers by hard-left

hecklers. This helped to convince moderates such as Shirley Williams that it was time to give up on Labour.



Fig. 7 The 'Gang of Four': Owen, Rodgers, Williams, Jenkins

The new SDP soon made an impact on national politics. Shirley Williams won a sensational by-election in the Conservative seat of Crosby in November 1981 and the following March, Jenkins won Glasgow Hillhead. In another by-election, in the previously 'safe' working-class seat of Bermondsey in East London, Labour was resoundingly defeated by the Liberals, who claimed they had 'broken the mould' of the old two-party system.

The two centre parties forged a formal agreement known as the SDP-Liberal Alliance (which became known as 'the Alliance') and worked together in both the 1983 and 1987 elections. However, relationships between the two parties were often tense and there were differences between the leaders, the 'Two Davids', Steel and Owen. Even so, the Alliance seemed able to have overtaken Labour as the credible opposition to Margaret Thatcher's government until 1987. Labour was widely regarded as unelectable.

Demographic changes

As well as facing the Liberal revival, the new SDP, and internal bitterness, the Labour Party could no longer depend on its traditional working-class support. Press coverage of Labour was almost universally hostile. Whole sections of Labour's traditional political support leaked away. Some Labour voters became 'Thatcher Conservatives'; some voted Liberal or SDP. Some supported the far Left in attacking the Labour leadership from within. Some became apathetic and did not vote at all.

The collapse in Labour's popularity would not prove easy to turn around. The basic foundations of the Labour Party were crumbling as demographic change loosened the traditional loyalties of the working class. The unions were no longer such a source of strength. Many traditional Labour strongholds in local government were seen as having lost touch with the people they were supposed to serve. It seemed that the Labour Party might have passed the point of no return and might cease to be a potential party of government. Pundits speculated about the 'fundamental realignment of British politics'.

KEY PROFILE

Neil Kinnock (b. 1942) was a left-wing Labour MP from South Wales. He succeeded Michael Foot as party leader in 1983. Kinnock changed his mind on key left-wing causes such as unilateralism, nationalisation and withdrawal from the EEC. He strongly attacked the hard Left and set out to move the Labour Party back towards the political middle ground. He also started the process of modernising the party organisations and improving party discipline. Kinnock led Labour to two election defeats in 1987 and 1992 but did much to restore Labour's political credibility.

CROSS-REFERENCE

Scargill and the miners' strike are covered in Chapter 15.

ACTIVITY**Evaluating primary sources**

How does Neil Kinnock show his anger about Militant Tendency in Source 4?

CROSS-REFERENCE

In this speech Kinnock is referring to the rate-capping rebellion that is described in Chapter 14, page 118.

A CLOSER LOOK**Trotskyism**

Trotskyite is a term used to describe those on the Left who follow the ideas of Leon Trotsky. Trotsky was one of the leaders of the Russian Revolution in 1917. He was a Marxist who believed in a permanent international revolution of the working classes. He became involved in a power struggle with Stalin in the 1920s and was expelled from the Communist party in 1927 and from the Soviet Union in 1929. He was assassinated on Stalin's orders in 1940.

Labour divisions 1983–87

When Neil Kinnock replaced Michael Foot as Labour leader in 1983, Labour was in danger of being marginalised by Thatcherism and by the rise of the SDP. Kinnock played a big part in dragging Labour back into the political mainstream.

Although Kinnock had come from the Left of the Labour Party he took on the extremists **Militant Tendency** and the 'Bennites', and the union leaders. He criticised Arthur Scargill for failing to hold a strike ballot during the miners' strike of 1984.

SOURCE 4

At the 1985 Labour Party conference Kinnock condemned the Militant Tendency-controlled Liverpool City Council saying:

I'll tell you what happens with impossible promises. You start with far-fetched resolutions. They are then pickled into a rigid dogma, and you end in the grotesque chaos of a Labour council – a *Labour council!* – hiring taxis to scuttle round a city handing out redundancy notices to its own workers. I'm telling you, and you'll listen, you can't play politics with people's jobs and people's services.

In 1986 Kinnock was successful in expelling Militant Tendency from the Labour Party but it was still perceived as dominated by the Left and the trade unions.

A CLOSER LOOK

Militant Tendency derived its name from the *Militant* newspaper that promoted **Trotskyite** revolutionary socialism. *Militant* was an 'entryist' organisation, seeking to infiltrate the Labour Party from within. The Militant Tendency gained a foothold in Bradford and some London boroughs but its biggest success was in Liverpool, where it gained control of the city council, with Derek Hatton as deputy council leader. Their slogan was: 'Better to break the law than break the poor'.

Conservative electoral success

At the beginning of 1982, Margaret Thatcher was one of the most unpopular prime ministers in living memory. Yet in the 1983 general election the Conservative Party won a huge landslide victory. The Conservative Party slumped in popularity again between 1983 and 1987 but won another big victory in 1987. How was this possible?

The 1983 election

The political landscape was transformed in 1982 by the impact of the war in the Falklands on domestic politics. The military regime in Argentina invaded the Falklands Islands in April 1982. Thatcher's immediate response was a full-scale military effort to recover the islands. This decision was a gamble that could easily have gone wrong but British forces achieved complete success. This decisive and relatively painless victory was seen as a vindication of Thatcher's bold leadership. There had been some opposition to the war but, largely, the war had unleashed a wave of patriotism around the country. There was approval from most of the national press and even most of the Labour Party supported the recovery of the Falklands.

The 'Falklands factor' galvanised the grass-roots Conservative activists. Thatcher gained in self-confidence and began to dominate the party in a way she had not been able to before. Her ability to make tough but ultimately successful decisions meant that people believed that she could do the same

at home as well. Without a doubt, victory in the Falklands conflict in 1982 helped to bring about a landslide victory for the Conservatives and it probably slowed the rise of the Alliance. But the Falklands factor does not wholly explain the result.

The Labour leadership lacked credibility. Michael Foot struggled to deal with the divisions within the Labour Party and performed badly on television. Furthermore the Labour election manifesto was dominated by left-wing promises, including unilateral disarmament, withdrawal from the EEC and the abolition of fox hunting. One Labour MP, Gerald Kaufman, labelled the manifesto as 'the longest suicide note in history'.

Another crucial factor was the splintering of political opposition as a whole. Even discounting the nationalist parties, the anti-Conservative vote totalled 16 million, 3 million more than the pro-Conservative vote, yet the Conservatives had a huge majority of 144 seats. The 1983 result was an example of the distorting effect of the first-past-the-post system. The Alliance got only half a million fewer votes than Labour but had 186 fewer seats in Parliament.

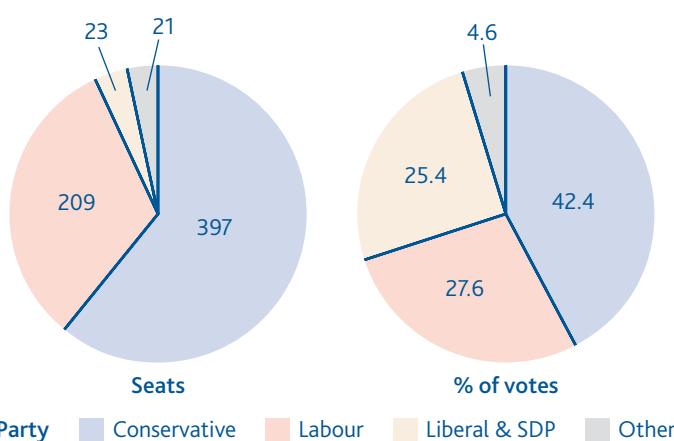


Fig. 8 General election results, June 1983

The 1987 election

The Conservative Party fought the election on the issues of a strong defence, a growing economy and promised lower taxes. They continued to have the backing of the majority of the press.

As has already been discussed, after its heavy defeat in 1983 the Labour Party's new leader, Neil Kinnock, was determined to move the party along the long road back to political credibility but this was a huge task. By 1987, Kinnock's leadership had already done a lot to restore party discipline and to make the party organisation more efficient but, even so, Labour suffered yet another heavy defeat.

There was also a loss of momentum for the SDP-Liberal Alliance, which found it hard to keep the levels of support gained in 1981 and 1982. This was partly due to ideological differences; opposition to Thatcher was not enough to provide unity by itself. There were also personal differences between the two Davids. The Alliance got 24 per cent of the vote in the 1987 election, nowhere near the peak of 40 per cent it had polled just before the Falklands War.

The SDP began to shrink. It had only come into existence because the Labour Party of 1981 was increasingly seen as unelectable. Moderate socialists had felt compelled to leave the Labour Party to fight against hard-left extremism. Now, as Neil Kinnock established his grip on the party, it

ACTIVITY

Write two letters to a national newspaper. One should support Kinnock's leadership of the Labour Party and his attempts to reform it, and the other should oppose it. Give reasons in each case.

CROSS-REFERENCE

See Chapter 16 for an examination of the Falklands conflict.

CROSS-REFERENCE

The further realignment of the Labour Party after 1987 is covered in Chapter 18.

ACTIVITY

Extension

In groups, find out about the Conservative, Labour and Alliance election campaigns in 1983 and 1987. What were the key issues? Each group can design a poster for one party at one election. You can find all the manifestos online at www.politicsresources.net

seemed that moderate socialism was back in business and the SDP had no real identity or purpose. In 1988, the Liberal Party and the SDP formally merged to form the Liberal Democrats. David Owen disagreed with the merger and resigned. Many other MPs switched their allegiance back to Labour. The Liberal Democrats remained a force in politics especially through their slick campaigning in by-elections and local elections but the hopes of 'breaking the mould' melted away.

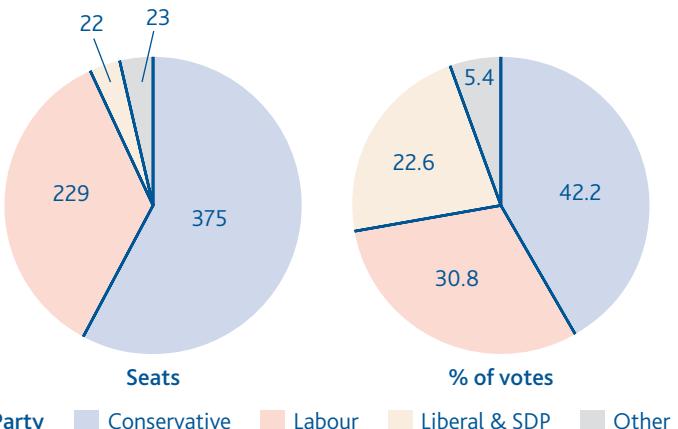


Fig. 9 General election results, June 1987

STUDY TIP

Make sure you are clear about what the economic terms mentioned in Source 5 mean. Use the Glossary and Chapter 14 to check.

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

Read Source 5 carefully. Do you think Paul Hirst is supportive or critical of Thatcher's economic policy. What words or phrases led you to your conclusion?

KEY PROFILE

Bobby Sands (1954–81) joined the IRA as a teenager in 1972. He said he did this because of his experiences growing up in Belfast. His family was moved three times as Protestants used violence and intimidation to force Catholics out of their houses. The final straw came when he was forced by gunmen to leave his job. He was arrested in 1972 for possession of firearms; after his release in 1976 he was involved in the bombing of a furniture showroom and sentenced to 14 years in prison. While in prison he wrote poetry and articles about the IRA prisoners. His death, at the age of 27, made him a martyr for the republican movement.

SOURCE 5

In 1989 the left-wing academic Paul Hirst wrote about the Conservatives' electoral success:

Mrs Thatcher's governments since 1979 have blended the new economic doctrine with opportunism. The virtues of the free market and the private firm, the hostility to nationalisation, the opposition to high taxes and a willingness to cut public expenditure, and the preference for sound money and a strong pound have all been consistent factors in Conservative thinking and rhetoric since the 1920s. Yet she threw away monetarism when it became a political liability. She abandoned much of the substance of her economic ideas in order to seek the pragmatic goal of prosperity. For the beneficiaries of this boom it has indeed become the case that they 'had never had it so good' – in 1987 they voted with their wallets.

Northern Ireland and the Troubles

The Troubles in Northern Ireland continued. Thatcher had strong unionist sympathies; in addition she was determined not to give in to terrorism. She soon faced a crisis over the ongoing campaign for Special Category Status by IRA prisoners held in H-Block of the Maze prison in Belfast. They wanted to be recognised, and treated, as political prisoners. Hunger strikes, led by **Bobby Sands**, began in 1980 as a protest. The hunger strikers gained a lot of attention and support. The death of an independent republican MP in Fermanagh South Tyrone presented Sinn Fein, the political wing of the IRA, with an opportunity. Still on hunger strike, Sands was nominated to stand in the by-election as the Anti-H-Block candidate and he won the seat. A few weeks later he died. Nine more hunger strikers died before the protest was called off in October 1981.

Margaret Thatcher claimed that the hunger strikes were a defeat for the IRA because their main aim, Special Category Status for IRA prisoners, was not granted. However, the hunger strikes did have a big impact.

Thatcher's intransigence meant that she became a hate figure for republicans in Northern Ireland, while Bobby Sands and the other strikers became republican heroes. Both unionists and republicans hardened their stances. Moreover, the electoral success in Fermanagh and South Tyrone meant that republicans such as **Gerry Adams**, who became president of Sinn Fein in 1983, began to see that there were advantages to using the 'ballot box and the gun' as a twin-track strategy and Sinn Fein became more focused on winning parliamentary seats.

In October 1984, the IRA exploded a bomb in the Grand Hotel in Brighton during the Conservative Party conference. The main target of the Brighton bomb, Margaret Thatcher, was unhurt, but five people were killed. There was national outrage in Britain.



Fig. 10 The Grand Hotel in Brighton after the IRA bomb, 1984

Despite Thatcher's public stance of never negotiating with terrorists, and despite the Brighton bomb, there were always secret contacts through go-betweens. At the same time the London and Dublin governments discussed proposals for a constitutional settlement in Northern Ireland. And in November 1985, the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed at Hillsborough. This set up permanent intergovernmental cooperation between the UK and the Republic of Ireland. The Conservative government hoped that this would enhance security cooperation between the Irish Republic and the UK. It also aimed to strengthen moderate nationalists against Sinn Fein and was supported by the SDLP and the Alliance. Republicans, however, opposed the Agreement because it confirmed that Northern Ireland was part of the United Kingdom.

The Hillsborough Agreement gave the Irish government an advisory role in Northern Ireland. This involvement of the Irish government in Northern Ireland caused a furious unionist and loyalist backlash. 200,000 people attended a protest rally in Belfast where the leader of the DUP, the Reverend **Iain Paisley**, addressed the crowd: 'Where do the terrorists operate from? From the Irish Republic! Where do the terrorists return to for sanctuary? To the Irish Republic! And yet Mrs Thatcher tells us that the Republic must have some say in our Province. We say never, never, never, never!' A new unionist paramilitary organisation, Ulster Resistance, was set up in response in 1986. There was a series of atrocities on both sides. There seemed to be no way out of the cycle of violence and retaliation.

KEY PROFILE

Gerry Adams (b. 1948) became leader of Sinn Fein, the political wing of the IRA, in 1981. He was elected MP for West Belfast in 1983 but refused to attend the 'English parliament' because this would entail swearing an oath of allegiance to the queen. Adams was one of the architects of Sinn Fein's twin-track strategy, using 'the armalite and the ballot box'. In the 1990s, he played a leading role in the IRA ceasefires and the peace process that led to the Good Friday Agreement (see Chapter 21, pages 185–187).

CROSS-REFERENCE

Ian Paisley is profiled in Chapter 9.

A CLOSER LOOK**A selection of events from the Troubles in 1979–87**

- Jul 1982** Hyde Park/Regent Park bombings, London – 11 soldiers killed by IRA
- Dec 1982** Droppin Well bomb, Ballykelly, N. Ireland – 11 soldiers and 6 civilians killed by INLA
- Dec 1983** Harrods, London bombing – 6 people killed by IRA
- Oct 1984** Brighton bomb at Conservative Party conference – 5 people killed by IRA
- Feb 1985** 9 RUC officers killed by an IRA mortar attack in Newry
- May 1987** 8 IRA volunteers and 1 civilian shot by SAS
- Nov 1987** Remembrance Day bomb, Enniskillen, N. Ireland – 12 people killed by IRA

STUDY TIP

Make sure you clearly identify what the Conservative government did in Northern Ireland at this time. Use the Closer Look above to help you put the government's actions in the context of what was happening during the Troubles.

**PRACTICE QUESTION**

The Conservative government's policies in Northern Ireland between 1979 and 1987 made "The Troubles" worse.' Assess the validity of this view.

Summary**ACTIVITY****Summary**

Working in groups, make a list of the reasons why the Conservatives were so electorally successful between 1979 and 1987. Decide which of these reasons are the most significant.

STUDY TIP

Make sure you consider the different aspects of Thatcherism when you answer this question.

**PRACTICE QUESTION****Evaluating primary sources**

Look back at Sources 2, 3 and 5. With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these three sources to an historian studying the meaning of Thatcherism.

STUDY TIP

This question is asking you to compare the relative importance of two reasons for the electoral success of the Conservative Party during the 1980s. In order to answer it you need to explain the impact of each of these reasons AND support an argument about which was most important. The Summary Activity on this page should help you do this.

**PRACTICE QUESTION**

'The electoral success of the Conservatives under Thatcher was due more to the divisions of the Labour Party than to the ideology of Thatcherism.' Assess the validity of this view.

14

Thatcher's economic policies and their impact

Thatcher's economic policies and their impact



Fig. 1 Thatcher visiting Teesside in 1987; she went to launch the Teesside Development Corporation and walked around the post-industrial landscape

SOURCE 1

Thatcher looked back on the economic reforms of her premiership in her autobiography, *The Downing Street Years*, which was published in 1993:

The 1980s saw the rebirth in Britain of an enterprise economy. This was by and large a decade of great prosperity, when our economic performance astonished the world. Whereas most European economies in the 1980s grew more slowly than they had the previous decade, the British economy grew faster. Trade union power, training, housing and business regulation – were areas in which in varying degrees we made progress in strengthening the 'supply side' of the economy. But the most important and far-reaching changes were in tax reform and privatisation. Tax cuts increased incentives for the shop floor as well as the board room. Privatisation shifted the balance away from the less efficient state to more efficient private business. They were the pillars on which the rest of our economic policy rested.

Monetarism

From its first budget in 1979, Thatcher's government set out to reduce government spending according to **monetarist** principles: controlling the money supply which, it was believed, would reduce inflation and lead to economic growth.

By 1980 the economy had plunged into a serious recession, hit both by inflation, above 15 per cent, and also by sharply rising unemployment, going

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this chapter you will learn about:

- the economic policies of the Conservative governments, including monetarism, privatisation and deregulation
- the issues of inflation and unemployment
- economic realignment and the impact of these policies.

CROSS-REFERENCE

Use the Glossary and previous chapters to remind yourself of any economic terms, such as 'stagflation', that you're unsure of. Chapters 2 and 9 are particularly relevant.

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

How valuable is Source 1 to an historian studying Thatcher's economic policies?

CROSS-REFERENCE

You may want to look back at Chapter 13 to remind yourself about Thatcherism as an ideology.

KEY TERM

monetarism: an economic theory promoted by Milton Friedman and the 'Chicago School' of economists; they argued that the best way for governments to control inflation was by restraint of government spending and borrowing and, above all, by strict curbs on the money supply, i.e. the amount of currency in circulation

above 2 million. ‘Stagflation’ was back. It is likely that the economy would have been in an even more disastrous state and there would have been a serious run on the pound but for the flow of North Sea oil and gas that saved Britain from what would otherwise have been a severe balance of payments crisis.

Many people expected the government to reverse its policy. Instead the 1981 budget applied even further monetarist measures. Government borrowing went down. Grants to local councils were cut and benefits were frozen. A government economic advisor described the budget as the ‘biggest fiscal squeeze of peacetime’. Howe called it ‘the most unpopular budget in history’.

However, there was another reason why Thatcherites wanted to cut public spending: they believed that individuals spent their money better than governments did.

The belief that people rather than governments spent money more efficiently led to a shift away from direct taxation, such as income tax, to indirect taxation such VAT: i.e. away from taxes on people’s incomes or property and towards taxes on the goods and services on which they chose to spend their money. Hence the top rate of income tax fell from 83 per cent to 40 per cent by 1988 and the standard rate fell to 25 per cent from 33 per cent over the same period, but VAT went up from 8 per cent to 15 per cent in 1979. Similarly, taxes on petrol, cigarettes and alcohol went up in almost every single budget between 1979 and 1987. Supporters argued that reducing direct taxation would incentivise wealth creation by allowing people to keep more of what they earned. Critics argued that transferring the burden onto an indirect taxation system was less progressive and hit poorer people harder.

Cutting public spending also led to a series of clashes between the Conservative central government and many Labour-controlled local councils. The Thatcher government saw left-wing local councils as enemies, both in terms of their ideology and because they blamed them for wasting resources. One of the fiercest battles was fought with the Greater London Council (GLC) headed by the left-winger **Ken Livingstone**. Margaret Thatcher treated many GLC policies in education and public transport as provocations. Ken Livingstone was demonised as the face of the ‘**loony left**’.

A CLOSER LOOK

What was the ‘loony left’?

The ‘loony left’ was the name given by the right-wing press to left-wing local councils that promoted liberal and politically correct policies. These ranged from the promotion of multicultural initiatives and gay and lesbian rights to the creation of nuclear-free zones and support for controversial issues such as Irish republicanism and communism in Cuba and Nicaragua. Some of these stories were myths such as Hackney Council banning *Baa baa black sheep* for being racist; others are now ideas which are much more mainstream today; but there were examples, which even today might seem ridiculous, which harmed the Labour Party’s electoral credibility.

KEY PROFILE

Ken Livingstone (b. 1945) made his name as a left-wing activist on Lambeth Borough Council. In 1981, he became leader of the GLC and remained leader until the GLC was abolished in 1986. He was the first elected Mayor of London from 2001 to 2008. Livingstone was regarded as an unreliable maverick by the Labour Party leadership, who tried to block his election in 2001. After he proved popular and successful, he was allowed to rejoin the party in 2005.

CROSS-REFERENCE

Look back at Source 4 on page 112 in Chapter 13 to see the attitude of the Labour Party leadership to the rate-capping controversy.

KEY TERM

Rates: local taxation charged by local councils on all privately owned business and houses; the controversial Community Charge was introduced to replace domestic rates in 1990

In order to control the overspending of Labour local authorities the Conservative government introduced **rate capping**. This limited the amount of money that the council was allowed to raise in local taxation. In 1985 a number of authorities, including Sheffield and Liverpool, tried to rebel against the cap and refused to set budgets. Eventually, threatened by bankruptcy, they had to back down. In 1986, the Local Government Act abolished the big metropolitan local authorities that had been set up by the Heath government; the powers of the central government were greatly increased at the expense of local government. In the short term, this was a clear victory against the ‘loony left’ but, in the longer term, it damaged local accountability.

However, despite the rhetoric on controlling public spending, Thatcher in fact never managed to cut public spending in real terms, partly because spending on social security went up due to high levels of unemployment.

Privatisation and deregulation

The experiment with monetarism was effectively ended by Thatcher's second term. The final nail in the coffin was Lawson abandoning spending targets in 1986. But this did not mean a return to pre-Thatcherite economic policies. There continued to be a greater emphasis on supply side economics rather than a return to the demand side economics of the post-war consensus. This concentrated on market reforms such as privatisation and deregulation.

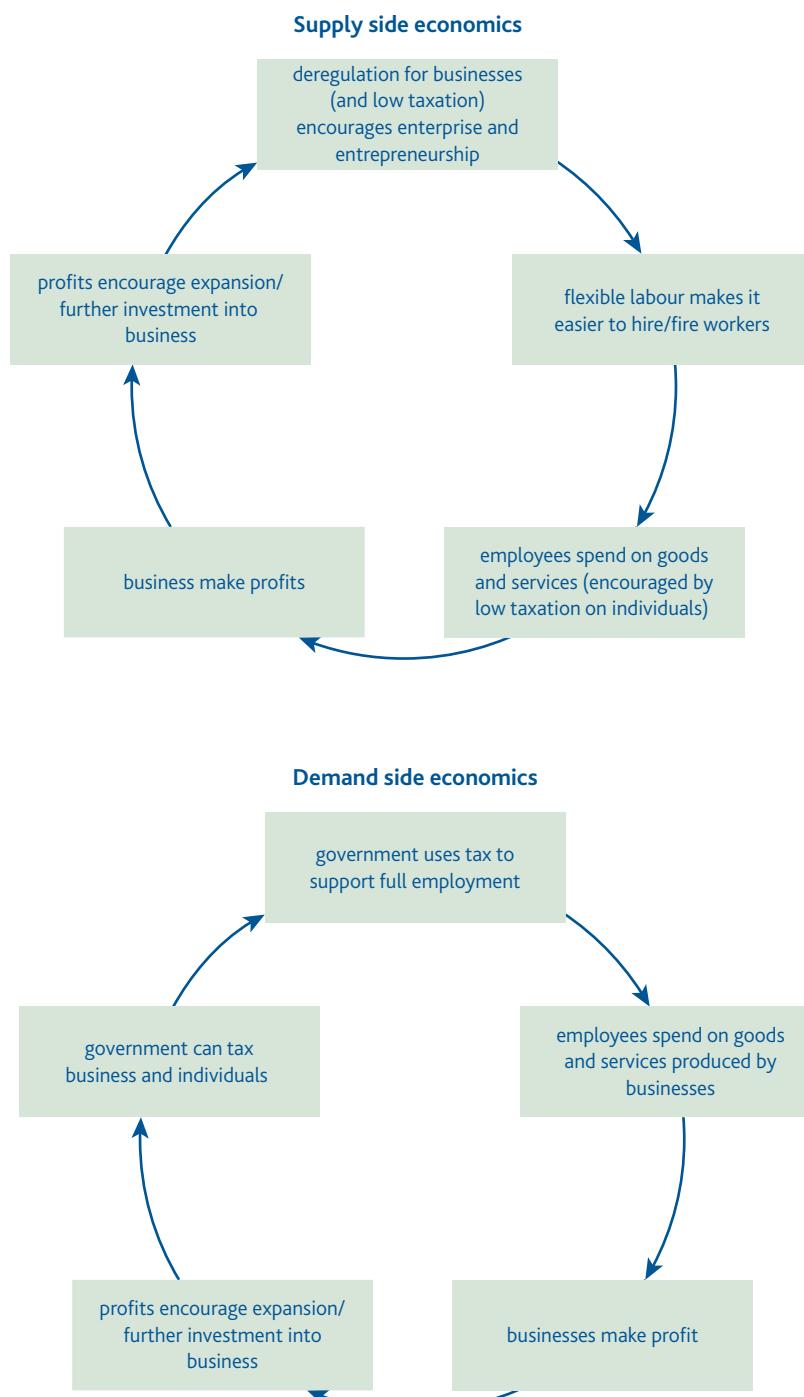


Fig. 2 Supply side economics and demand side economics

CROSS-REFERENCE

For more about the context in which the Community Charge was introduced, see Chapter 17, page 145.

ACTIVITY

Write a letter to a newspaper: either urging Thatcher to U-turn on the introduction of monetarist economic policies or arguing why she should continue.

ACTIVITY

Look at Fig. 2. What are the key differences between supply side economics and demand side economics?

KEY TERM

denationalisation: the selling off of publicly owned industries to the private sector

A CLOSER LOOK**The Thatcher governments' privatisations**

Oct 1979	British Petroleum
Feb 1981	British Aerospace
Oct 1981	Cable & Wireless
Feb 1982	National Freight Corporation
Nov 1982	Britoil
Feb 1983	Associated British Ports
Jul 1984	Enterprise Oil
Aug 1984	Jaguar
Dec 1984	British Telecommunications
Dec 1986	British Gas
Feb 1987	British Airways
May 1987	Rolls-Royce
Jul 1987	British Airports Authority
Dec 1988	British Steel
Dec 1989	Water
Dec 1990	Electricity

ACTIVITY**Extension**

Pick one of these privatised companies. Research what happened to it after privatisation. Compare your results with others in your class.

KEY TERM

financial deregulation: the loosening of controls on banks and financial markets, which led to a massive boom in investment banking and financial speculation; the issue of deregulation became very controversial in the Great Crash of 2008

Privatisation

Denationalisation, or privatisation, became central to Thatcherite economic policy. A few steps had been taken in this direction in the first term: BP had been privatised in 1979 and British Aerospace in 1980. But the drive for privatisation gained real momentum with the successful sale of British Telecom in 1984. The sale of British Gas in 1986 became the biggest share offer in history, and was accompanied by a high-profile advertising campaign seeking to maximise the purchase of shares by ordinary people. Between 1979 and 1990, the number of individuals owning stocks and shares went up from 3 million to 9 million.

Privatisation was driven by an anti-socialist ideology. Just as Thatcherites believed that private individuals were better at spending money than government, it was also a core belief that the private sector was more dynamic and efficient than the public sector at running and delivering goods and services. Businesses would compete with others in the marketplace, which would encourage improvements and innovation. At the same time the financial pressures that local government was under also led to a 'rolling back the frontiers of the state'. 'Outsourcing', whereby private companies took on contracts to deliver goods and services previously provided by the State, became increasingly widespread: for example, in refuse collection.

Privatisation brought a lot of revenue for the government. Critics argued that privatised enterprises were sold off cheaply in order to ensure all shares were taken up. And it did sometimes make life more insecure for many employees; some lost jobs as the privatised enterprises cut back on staff; others found that they could no longer rely on long-term job security and on reliable pension provision.

Radical Thatcherites wanted to push ahead with further privatisations, including the coal industry and the railways, and drew up plans to privatise parts of the NHS. These plans were not pursued until the 1990s but, even so, the privatisation of State concerns during the Thatcher years marked a significant shift in the British economy. Perhaps more than any other factor, the drive for privatisation signalled the end of the post-war consensus about economic management.

Deregulation

The other key element of supply side economic policy was deregulation. The government would interfere as little as possible. This meant removing 'red tape', making it easier for businesses to trade and grow and therefore encouraging entrepreneurship and wealth creation. The government also introduced other measures to encourage start-up companies. The Loan Guarantee Scheme made it easier for small businesses to borrow money and the Enterprise Allowance Scheme encouraged the unemployed to start up their own businesses by giving them £40 a week for up to a year to get their business off the ground.

Financial deregulation freed up **the City** of London and the financial markets from the tight controls of the Bank of England. The 'Big Bang' on 27 October 1986 deregulated the London Stock Exchange, opening the way for computer screen trading and replacing the 'old boys' network' with



Fig. 3 Yuppie in the 1980s with his mobile phone and Filofax

free competition. Foreign banks could now operate as stockbrokers. It blew away old tradition and is credited with restoring London's position as a world financial centre. A new breed of dealers and speculators took over. The 'yuppie' became an iconic image of the 1980s and the City became a place where bigger risks were taken and bigger fortunes could be made. It made London one of the financial capitals of the world and allowed it to compete with Wall Street. Financial services became one of the UK's most important export industries.

There is no doubt that the economy grew during Thatcher's premiership. However, productivity did not increase by much. And overall, at 2.2 per cent, growth in GDP (Gross Domestic Product) during the 1980s was no better than in the 1970s. This was because the growth in the second half of the decade was balanced by the underperformance at the beginning of the decade.

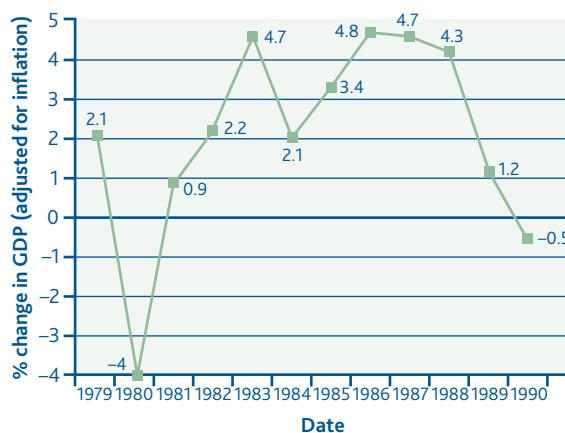


Fig. 4 Annual percentage growth rate

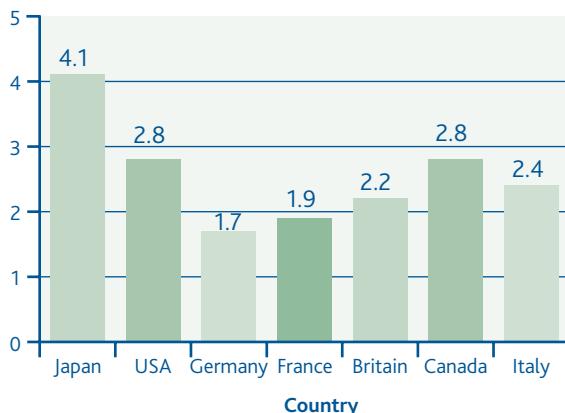


Fig. 5 Average annual percentage growth rate 1980–88

SOURCE 2

The Conservative manifesto at the 1987 election boasted that the Conservative government had reversed the decline of the British economy:

For the first time in a generation this country looks forward to an era of real prosperity and fulfilment. A vast change separates the Britain of today from the Britain of the late 1970s. Is it really only such a short time ago that inflation rose to an annual rate of 27 per cent? Remember the conventional wisdom of the day. The British people were "ungovernable". We were in the grip of an incurable "British disease". Britain was heading for "irreversible decline". Well, the people were *not* ungovernable, the disease was *not* incurable, the decline *has* been reversed. What matters is the feel of the country – the new enthusiasm for enterprise, the new spirit that Britain can make it, that we can prosper with

KEY TERM

the City or the Square Mile:

shorthand for the financial district of London in which the London Stock Exchange and the Bank of England are based, as well as the headquarters of many multinational corporations; the City is governed by the City of London Corporation which is headed by the Lord Mayor and it has its own police force separate to the Metropolitan Police

KEY TERM

Yuppie: short for young urban professional; in the 1980s it was used to describe people working in cities with large amounts of disposable income which was spent on consumer goods such as cars and the very first mobile phones

ACTIVITY

What conclusions about the success of Thatcher's economic policies would you come to from these graphs?

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

How valuable would Source 2 be to an historian studying the success of Conservative economic policies in the 1980s?

the best. Investment in British industry is rising strongly. Our services sector, employing almost two-thirds of our workforce, generates a vast surplus of foreign earnings. And our manufacturers are travelling the globe with a new confidence born of the knowledge that Britain is internationally competitive again.

CROSS-REFERENCE

The New Right is explained in Chapter 13, page 107.

Issues of inflation, unemployment and economic realignment

Thatcherites, following the ideas of the **New Right** and the principles of monetarism, believed that inflation was a threat to the economy. They looked back to the recurring problems that the British economy had faced in the post-war period and blamed Keynesian economic policies which had allowed inflation to rise. This analysis concluded that if inflation could be controlled then the economy would grow and be more successful. This was a reversal of the post-war consensus when unemployment was seen as the greater evil.

The control of inflation

Interest rates were used as a mechanism to control inflation; they were raised to 17 per cent in 1979. However, the downside was that the higher interest rates made it more expensive for businesses to borrow. They also increased the value of the pound which made it more difficult for businesses to export. Therefore the high interest rates of the early 1980s led to a decline in both output and demand. The economy went into recession with many businesses going bankrupt, which in turn led to high unemployment.

Even worse, initially inflation went up, peaking at 22 per cent in May 1980. Thereafter it fell, reaching a low of 2.5 per cent in 1986. Attempts to control inflation in the later 1980s led to a further recession and eventual entry into the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM). By 1990 it had again reached double figures.



Fig. 6 Inflation 1979–90

Unemployment

Because the Thatcher government saw the control of inflation as the key economic threat to the British economy, maintaining low levels of unemployment was no longer seen as the primary aim. Instead British industry had to be prepared to be more competitive and if this led to a rise in unemployment then that had to be accepted. In fact the impact of monetarist economic policies in the early 1980s on industry was drastic. Many industrial plants closed down permanently. The worst hit areas were the Midlands, the North, central Scotland and South Wales. Areas in the south and southeast were not hit as badly. Some commentators described what was happening as

the 'deindustrialisation of Britain'. Manufacturing output fell by 15 per cent in 2 years. In the West Midlands production fell by a quarter. Steel production alone was cut by 30 per cent, to less than 14 million tons.

By 1983 unemployment rose to over 3 million, the highest it had been in the post-war period. This was 13.5 per cent of the total workforce. The government did introduce some policies to combat this. Youth Employment Schemes were created whereby employers received a subsidy to take young people on, and employer National Insurance rates were reduced for lower paid jobs. Nevertheless the unemployment rate did not fall below 3 million until 1987. The government remained firm in its conviction that controlling inflation was more important than controlling unemployment. In some areas which had been dependent on heavy industry, such as Liverpool, the employment rate went as high as 25 per cent and remained in double figures throughout the 1980s. In particular, far fewer people were being employed in manufacturing industry. Workers found their traditional skills were not in demand because they had been rendered out of date by mechanisation or by flexible working practices. The economic realignment towards service industries also meant that men were hit harder than women and in many homes women became the main breadwinners.

Year	Number employed (millions)
1979	7.1
1981	6.1
1984	5.3
1987	5.1
1990	5.0

Table 1 Employment in manufacturing, 1979–92

KEY TERM

service industry: an industry that offers a service rather than a physical product – these services can be in a wide variety of areas including travel, finance, media and retail

Date	% of workforce unemployed	Number of people unemployed
Apr-Jun 1979	5.3	1,405,000
Apr-Jun 1980	6.3	1,700,000
Apr-Jun 1981	9.6	2,588,000
Apr-Jun 1982	10.6	2,841,000
Apr-Jun 1983	11.4	3,049,000
Apr-Jun 1984	11.9	3,265,000
Apr-Jun 1985	11.4	3,152,000
Apr-Jun 1986	11.3	3,159,000
Apr-Jun 1987	10.7	3,021,000
Apr-Jun 1988	8.7	2,490,000
Apr-Jun 1989	7.2	2,083,000
Apr-Jun 1990	6.9	2,002,000

Table 2 Unemployment, 1979–90

Economic realignment

Even without the government's economic policies, long-term economic trends were already affecting Britain's old industries. These old, labour-intensive industries were facing challenges from foreign competition and from technological innovation. Britain's economy was moving away from being based on manufacturing and heavy industry and becoming based on services. The Thatcher governments embraced this shift.

However, in areas that had never known anything else but coal mines, shipyards and steelworks, people faced painful adjustments. The foundations of the working class and of the communities they lived in were crumbling. This sharpened the **north-south divide**, as old traditional industries contracted, leaving behind large tracts of dereliction in the Midlands, the northwest, the northeast, Scotland and South Wales.

KEY TERM

north-south divide: a term frequently used to express the difference between the prosperous South of Britain and the less prosperous North

	Unemployment level as % of population (May 1986)	Job losses or gains (1979–86)	Average weekly household income (1985)	Owner-occupiers as % of population (1985)
Scotland	15.8	−149,000	198	41
Wales	17.3	−130,000	187	67
Northern Ireland	21.7	−64,000	179	61
North/Northeast	19.1	−215,000	170	62
Northwest	16.3	−278,000	183	65
Yorkshire and Humberside	15.8	−266,000	173	55
West Midlands	15.5	−301,000	187	63
East Midlands	12.9	−118,000	203	66
Southwest	12.2	−39,000	209	69
East Anglia	11.2	+23,000	205	66
Southeast	10.1	−73,000	248	64

Table 3 Regional trends during the Thatcher years**ACTIVITY**

What can be learned about the north-south divide from Table 3?

SOURCE 3

The left-leaning journalist Peter Jenkins wrote his book, *The Thatcher Revolution: the death of the Socialist Era*, in 1987 just after the Conservative election victory. In it he commented on the impact of economic realignment in the 1980s:

It is impossible exactly to disentangle the positive (or negative) effects of Thatcherism from changes that were already in train. Unemployment was already rising when she came to power, the trend towards a greater inequality of income already well established, and the new underclass of the cities was already growing. We call this 'Mrs Thatcher's Britain' but it is not a Britain of her making. What is described here is not a dislocation brought about by Thatcherism. However, the process of polarisation between the People and the Underclass was exacerbated by policies designed to speed the adjustment rather than to soften its economic and social pains. It was a tougher regime she ushered in and she presided over some of its consequences, it may be thought, with too great an equanimity. This polarisation was qualitative as well as quantitative. The Britain of the peripheral council estates, planning disasters on a vast scale, and of the declining inner city areas has become increasingly another country.

ACTIVITY**Evaluating primary sources**

How useful is Source 3 to understanding the economic realignment of Britain during the 1980s?

This economic realignment could also be seen in the urban decay of many inner city areas. There were increased problems of ill health and depression, and also alcoholism and drugs. Young people could no longer expect to follow their parents into work. Many were forced to move away. Long-term trends were shifting economic activity towards London and the south, changing the face of many towns and cities. In 1981 Howe advised Thatcher that cities such as Liverpool could be left to 'managed decline'.

In 1981 there were a series of riots between April and July in Brixton, London; Handsworth, Birmingham; Toxteth, Liverpool; and Chapeltown, Leeds.



Fig. 7 Rioting in the Toxteth district of Liverpool, July 1981

The Scarman Report was commissioned to examine the causes of the 1981 riots. It identified poverty and race as the key components. The areas in which riots had happened were suffering high levels of unemployment and deprivation. This was exacerbated by the fact that these were also areas where young black and Asian people felt the '**sus law**' meant that the police unfairly targeted them. Despite the Scarman Report, and subsequent changes in policing policies, there were further riots in 1985.

A CLOSER LOOK

The '**sus law**' gave police officers permission to stop and search suspected persons if they thought they might commit a crime. Black people and those from ethnic minorities believed that the police unfairly targeted them. Shortly before the Brixton riots Operation *Swamp*, which aimed to reduce street crime, stopped 1000 people in 6 days. Sus law was repealed later that year.

This economic realignment did also lead to investment and regeneration in some of these areas. Michael Heseltine, who continued to argue for greater government intervention, spearheaded redevelopment projects in the dockland areas of both London and Liverpool. In London, the Canary Wharf development on the old West India Docks became the second most important financial district in the country after the City of London; a symbol of the shift to the service industries.

KEY CHRONOLOGY

Riots caused by social unrest

Apr 1980	St Pauls, Bristol
Apr 1981	Brixton, London
Jul 1981	Moss Side, Manchester
Jul 1981	Handsworth, Birmingham
Jul 1981	Toxteth, Liverpool
Jul 1981	Chapeltown, Leeds
Sept 1985	Brixton, London
Sept 1985	Handsworth, Birmingham
Oct 1985	Tottenham, London

ACTIVITY

Imagine you are one of the following people. What is your view of the economic changes in the period 1979 to 1987?

- A factory worker in Scotland
- A stockbroker in London
- A young person in Manchester

Summary

Overall the economic realignment that resulted from Thatcher's economic policies depended on perspective. Britain looked a different place depending on whether you were in Sheffield or Swindon.

ACTIVITY

Use an outline map of the British Isles. Mark on it the following areas:

- where there was a lot of traditional manufacturing industry which was in decline in the 1980s
- where there were new economic activities growing during the 1980s
- where there was social unrest.

What does this tell you about the north-south divide?

ACTIVITY**Summary**

Draw and complete a table which summarises the success and failure of Thatcher's economic policies.

Economic policy	Successes	Failures
inflation		
employment		
privatisation		
deregulation		
growth		

STUDY TIP

Think about how the authors affect the value of the sources. What messages are they trying to put across. What evidence do they use – what do they omit?

**PRACTICE QUESTION****Evaluating primary sources**

Look back at Sources 1, 2 and 3. With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these three sources to an historian studying the impact of Thatcher's economic policies.

STUDY TIP

In order to assess differences you may find it useful to structure your answer by using the economic policies listed in the table in the Summary Activity above. This is not a definitive list though and you may wish to add your own policies. You will also need to look back at Chapters 2 and 9. Try to avoid describing the economic policies without commenting on what is similar or different.

**PRACTICE QUESTION**

To what extent were Thatcherite economic policies different from those followed by previous Conservative governments?

15 The impact of Thatcherism on society

SOURCE 1

Edwina Currie was the Conservative MP for South Derbyshire between 1983 and 1997. In her autobiography, published in 1989, she commented on how the lives of her constituents had changed:

In the early 1980s he would have worked underground, led by a demagogue who once stood for election carrying the banner of the Young Communist League. He would have come home dirty on a bike to a house he did not own. His idea of a night out would have been darts in the local on a Saturday night, and his idea of a holiday was a week in Skegness. He expected his son would leave school at the earliest opportunity and follow him down the pit. And he took it for granted that everybody round here votes Labour. Now he works somewhere else, cleaner, safer, better paid, where he isn't obliged to be a member of a union. Perhaps he is even in his own small business. He drives home in a smart car with a foreign name to the house he bought a couple of years ago. He takes two weeks holiday a year with everyone else in Marbella. He's using his British Telecom shares as collateral for a loan. His son is in college and wants to design cars for Toyota. And nobody takes their votes for granted anymore.

Thatcherism had a deep impact on British society. This sometimes caused tension and opposition, both within Parliament and outside of it.

Sale of council houses

A key aim of the Thatcher government was to turn Britain into a property-owning democracy. The Housing Act of 1980 gave council tenants the **right to buy** their council house. They received a discount of between 33 and 50 per cent depending on how long they had lived in the house. By 1988, approximately 2 million new homeowners had taken advantage of the scheme to buy the homes they had previously rented. It became a symbol of the success of Thatcherism. The Labour Party initially opposed the Right to Buy scheme but later dropped its opposition because it was so popular with the public, particularly in the south of the country.



Fig. 1 Thatcher visiting a family who bought a council house under the Right to Buy scheme

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this chapter you will learn about:

- the sale of council houses
- the miners' strike and other industrial disputes
- disputes over the Community Charge – poll tax
- extra-parliamentary opposition to the Conservative governments between 1979 and 1987.

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

How valuable is an autobiography of Edwina Currie as a historical source for gaining an understanding of society in the early 1980s?

KEY PROFILE

Edwina Currie (b. 1946) was elected as a Conservative MP for Derbyshire South in 1986. She was a strong supporter of Thatcher and served as junior health minister between 1986 and 1988. She was famous for making controversial statements and had to resign her ministerial post after claiming that most egg production was affected with salmonella; it was later shown that she was right. She lost her seat at the 1997 election.

A CLOSER LOOK

Right to Buy was not a new idea in 1980. Councils had always had the power to sell council houses to tenants but it was rarely used. In the late 1960s, Horace Cutler, the leader of the Greater London Council (GLC), promoted the idea of large-scale council housing sell-offs. Cutler's scheme was halted in the 1970s, when the GLC was under Labour control until Cutler returned as leader in 1977. In 1980, Right to Buy became a key policy of Margaret Thatcher's government.

A CLOSER LOOK

Nurses, ambulance workers, teachers, steelworkers as well as miners and print workers all went out on strike during the 1980s. Much of the time it was because of pay disputes, especially during the early 1980s when inflation was high. Some of these disputes, especially those involving NHS workers, enjoyed high levels of public support and the government did sometimes agree to their demands.

KEY TERM

secondary picketing: picketing a location not directly involved in the dispute i.e. it might supply or sell the products involved

KEY PROFILE

Rupert Murdoch (b. 1931) was already famous before the rise of Sky satellite television in the 1990s. He had made a fortune in Australian and American newspapers when he started to build up his British newspaper empire in the 1980s. He took over *The Sun* and made it the fastest-selling tabloid. He also bought *The Times*, *The Sunday Times* and the *News of the World*. The Murdoch press became very influential politically, mostly giving very strong support to Margaret Thatcher, not least against the unions. In the 1990s, support from the Murdoch press was crucial for the rise of New Labour.

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

1. Use Source 2 to identify the short-term and long-term consequences of the miners' strike and its aftermath.
2. Does Liz Marshall offer a valuable source of information about the miners' strike? Explain your answer.

On the other hand, Right to Buy did have many negative consequences. The sale of council housing was predominantly in better-off areas and did not have a great impact in less desirable estates. Councils were ordered to use the profits from council house sales to reduce debts, not to build new council housing. The number and quality of homes available for rent was sharply reduced and waiting lists for rented homes got longer. Many people were housed in emergency B & B accommodation which was expensive for councils to provide and not always suitable for the families involved.

The miners' strike and other industrial disputes

Thatcher's economic reforms aroused hostility from a number of trade unions. Unions representing public sector workers, such as COHSE (Confederation of Health Service Employees) and NUPE (National Union of Public Employees), became more militant and the teachers' unions, which had never previously been associated with industrial unrest, carried on a lengthy dispute over working conditions in the mid-1980s.

The role of the unions was constrained by new laws. In 1980 **secondary picketing** was outlawed and in 1984 unions were put under pressure to hold ballots before strike action was called. In addition more employers tried to keep the unions out of their workplaces. Newspaper proprietors, led by the Australian press baron **Rupert Murdoch**, tried to reduce the power of the print unions and there was a major confrontation at Murdoch's Wapping plant starting in January 1986. The print unions failed to prevent the publication or distribution of any newspapers and the strike collapsed after 13 months.

The longest and most symbolic episode in the industrial struggles of this period was the miners' strike in 1984 to 1985. Thatcher compared the dispute to the Falklands conflict with the striking miners as 'the enemy within'.

The miners' strike, 1984–85

SOURCE 2

Liz Marshall was a canteen assistant at a colliery in Scotland and stayed out on strike for the whole duration. Her memories were recorded for an exhibition put together by the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) which collected memories of the strike on the twentieth anniversary in 2005:

I worked as a canteen assistant in Killoch Colliery. It worried me going in through these picket lines. I tossed and turned on the Friday night and thought no, I'm not doing it. I phoned the canteen manageress to say I would not be going back to work on Monday. We lived a lot on sausages and spam. One old woman was in every week with £1, £2 or £3, other folk gave in baking, scones, pancakes. It wasn't charity, you wouldn't have wanted that, it was a means of survival. As a 'striking miner' with two children I got £17.95 per week in child benefit. The after Christmas folk [miners who went back to work in 1985] don't have the same stigma attached to them because folk were on their knees, there's no two ways about it. Today we have a generation of young people who have never seen their parents working and we have all the ills of society – they were not here twenty years ago.

In 1981, the National Coal Board (NCB) warned of the need to close 23 pits. The government had not felt ready for a rerun of the events of 1973 to 1974 and had compromised, reducing the amount of coal imported and protecting the subsidy to the NCB, and had thus prevented the closures. Now, in 1984, the government was fully prepared and confident. Huge stocks of coal had been built up at

power stations. The flow of North Sea oil made it much less likely that there would be an energy crisis as had happened in 1973. Moreover, Ian MacGregor, the new chairman of the NCB, had government backing for taking a tough line.

In 1984 the NCB announced the need to close 20 pits. Arthur Scargill, the President of the NUM, claimed he had seen a secret plan to close 70 pits. MacGregor rejected this but cabinet papers released under the 30-year rule in 2014 showed that there was indeed a strategy to close 75 pits over the following 3 years.

Scargill was a charismatic leader but he did not gain total support for a national strike. His refusal to hold a strike ballot weakened his case and he failed to overcome the historic regional divisions among the miners. The Nottinghamshire miners formed a breakaway union, the Union of Democratic Mineworkers (UDM). There were bitter recriminations. Scargillites accused the UDM of being 'scabs' and 'traitors'; the UDM accused Scargill of caring more about hard-left politics than the interests of the miners he was leading to defeat.

One key factor was the role of the police. They now had new equipment, more experience of riot control and better tactics. Margaret Thatcher's critics blamed her for the politicisation of the police, claiming they were used to defeat the miners, rather than being impartial protectors of law and order. Among many confrontations, the most famous was the **Battle of Orgreave**.



Fig. 2 *Us against Them: a miner faces the police at Orgreave Colliery, June 1984*

Another key factor in the defeat of the NUM was probably Arthur Scargill himself. Scargill alienated moderates; he never got the support of the Labour Party

ACTIVITY

Extension

Create a timeline of industrial disputes in the 1980s. Conduct some research to find out what the disputes were about. What were the outcomes?

CROSS-REFERENCE

The events of 1973 to 1974 were discussed in Chapter 9, page 78.

A CLOSER LOOK

The Battle of Orgreave

In June 1984, there was a mass picket of the coke plant at Orgreave in South Yorkshire by 5000 miners. They were faced by up to 8000 police officers assembled from all over the country. The result was a series of violent confrontations. More than 50 picketers (including Arthur Scargill) and more than 70 police officers were injured. The result of the battle was a long-lasting controversy over accusations of police brutality – in 1991, South Yorkshire Police was ordered to pay compensation – but the immediate outcome was a defeat for the NUM because the lorries kept rolling in and out of Orgreave.

leadership. Many people felt sympathy for the mining communities but it was easy for Mrs Thatcher and her allies in the press to demonise Scargill as a dangerous revolutionary challenging the democratically elected government. Neil Kinnock later commented: ‘The miners didn’t deserve him, they deserved much, much better. My view is Margaret Thatcher and Arthur Scargill deserved each other. But no-one else did’.

The last months of the strike were particularly demoralising. There was a steady drift back to work while the hard core of strikers determined to stick it out to the end depended on charitable handouts.

The outcome of Scargill’s campaign to prevent pit closures was utter failure. In 1979, the coal industry employed 200,000; by 1990, the total was down to 60,000 and still falling. But the results of the miners’ strike went far beyond the coal industry. The power of the unions was dramatically reduced. By 1990, total union membership was only two thirds of what it had been in 1979. Other state industries such as British Steel and British Airways were reorganised, with massive job losses. The ability of the unions to intimidate governments was gone for good. Margaret Thatcher was quick to draw comparisons between her bold actions and the weakness of Edward Heath in 1973 to 1974, or Jim Callaghan in the winter of discontent.

Many Thatcherites saw the defeat of the strike as the defining moment of Thatcherism. Norman Tebbit, reflecting on the strike in his autobiography in 1988, wrote ‘Had the Thatcher government been broken and the craven Mr Kinnock been installed in office by Scargill’s thugs Britain would have been a grim place indeed’.

ACTIVITY

In groups discuss why there was so much industrial unrest during the 1980s. Make a list of reasons that explain why the unions were less successful than they had been in the 1970s. Which do you think are the most important reasons?

CROSS-REFERENCE

Thatcher’s earlier battles with local government are covered in Chapter 14.

CROSS-REFERENCE

The unpopularity of the poll tax was one of the reasons for Thatcher’s downfall, which will be explored in Chapter 17.

The poll tax

The Community Charge, or the ‘poll tax’ as it was better known, was Thatcher’s final attempt to reform local government finances. Its aim was to make local councils more accountable to their electors by ensuring that everyone contributed. Previously, under the old rates system, local taxation was based on property and so was only paid by homeowners. Thatcherites believed that if everyone contributed it would be fairer, and they thought that councils would be forced to be more efficient and more responsible in their spending.

What became clear quite quickly is that even under Conservative councils, local taxation was likely to go up. In addition ministers found it difficult to justify why a poor pensioner would pay the same as a millionaire.

The poll tax was introduced into Scotland in 1989. It was extremely unpopular from the outset. The Conservatives’ reputation in Scotland had already been severely damaged by the deindustrialisation and recession of the early 1980s; this harmed the Conservative Party even further. Despite its unpopularity it was introduced into England and Wales the following year. Thatcher’s unwillingness to alter course seemed to highlight her increasing aloofness and a failure to connect with ordinary people. Anti-Poll Tax Unions were set up across the country urging people not to pay. In some areas up to 30 per cent of people were non-payers. The police, courts and councils were unable to enforce payment.

ACTIVITY

Write a letter to a national newspaper either supporting the poll tax or supporting the Anti-Poll Tax Unions.

In March 1990 there was an anti-poll tax demonstration in Trafalgar Square which more than 200,000 people attended. By the evening the demonstration had turned into a riot. Nearly 5000 people were injured, mostly rioters but also numerous police officers and many bystanders who had nothing to do with the demonstration. Cars were overturned and set on fire. Many shop windows were smashed, followed by extensive looting. Over 300 arrests were made. The police were seen to have lost control. Many comparisons were made with the Battle of Orgreave in 1984 and there was, once more, criticism of the politicisation of the police.



Fig. 3 A riot waiting to happen: the anti-poll tax demonstration in Trafalgar Square, just before the outbreak of violent rioting in the West End, March 1990

Extra-parliamentary opposition

Thatcher's economic policies and their impact on society were hugely controversial. As was seen in Chapter 13 the opposition parties at this time were quite weak and divided. So people who were unhappy with Thatcher's policies often voiced their disagreement in other ways.

Education and the arts

Oxford University voted against giving Thatcher an honorary degree, an honour it had given to every other Oxford-educated post-war prime minister, because of public spending cuts to higher education. Similarly, the artistic establishment tended to be anti-Thatcher, partly because of cuts in public spending to the arts. Playwrights such as Caryl Churchill, David Hare and Alan Ayckbourn wrote plays that satirised Thatcherism. Red Wedge was a musical collective including Billy Bragg, Paul Weller and Madness who campaigned against Thatcher in the late 1980s; they were also joined by 'alternative' comedians such as Alexei Sayle and Ben Elton. There were also a number of TV programmes which showed the social consequences of Thatcherite policies such as *Boys from the Blackstuff*.

ACTIVITY

Extension

Find and watch some clips from *Boys from the Blackstuff* or *Red Wedge* on the Internet.

A CLOSER LOOK

Boys from the Blackstuff

The author, Alan Bleasdale, was a former Liverpool teacher turned dramatist. *Boys from the Blackstuff* was a black comedy, funny but bitter, following the adventures of casual labourers and their hand-to-mouth existence. One character, Yozzer, had a catchphrase, 'Gizzajob', that seemed to strike a chord in Thatcher's Britain.

The Church

The Church of England published a report in 1985 called *Faith in the City* which called on the government to do more to help deprived communities, and bishops such as David Jenkins in Durham and David Sheppard in Liverpool were outspoken in their criticism of Thatcherite policies and their impact on society.

SOURCE 3

An adapted extract from *Faith in the City*, a report commissioned in 1985 by the Archbishop of Canterbury to examine the situation in the inner cities and to make recommendations about changes:

The main assumption on which present economic policies are based is that prosperity can be restored if individuals are set free to pursue their own economic salvation. The appeal is to economic self-interest and individualism, and freeing market mechanisms through the removal of 'unnecessary' governmental interference and restrictive trade union practice. Individual responsibility and self-reliance are excellent objectives. But pursuit of them must not damage a collective obligation and provision for those who have no choice, or whose choices are at best forced ones. If it is by their outcomes that economic policies must be judged, we are united in the view that the costs of present policies, with the continuing growth of unemployment, are unacceptable in their effect on whole communities and generations. A degree of hardship may be needed but it is unacceptable that the costs of transition should fall hardest on those least able to bear them.

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

Is a commissioned report, such as Source 3, valuable to historians? Explain your answer.

CROSS-REFERENCE

See Chapter 16 for detail about Thatcher's policy of deterrence and Cruise missiles.

CROSS-REFERENCE

The Aldermaston marches are outlined in Chapter 4, page 33.

Pressure groups

There were many protest movements that worked outside the traditional framework of parliamentary politics, some of which tried to involve people in direct action. Among these movements were charities such as Shelter which campaigned against the increasing homelessness problem and Age Concern which campaigned against pensioner poverty.

From 1958, the most significant protest movement in Britain had been the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND). CND continued to attract a lot of support and was given a new lease of life by Margaret Thatcher's determined backing for the policy of deterrence and stepping up the arms race against the USSR in the so-called New Cold War of the early 1980s.

Pacifism and feminism: the Greenham women

In 1979, the decision was taken to station American Cruise missiles at bases in Britain. In reaction to this, CND organised mass protest marches reminiscent of the Aldermaston marches twenty years earlier.

In September 1981 a group of women protestors set up a camp outside the Greenham Common base, where the Cruise missiles were to be based. Other women joined them there as the camp became a focal point for feminism as well as pacifism; the camp was to remain in place for 19 years.

In April 1983, when the Cruise missiles were due to arrive, 70,000 protesters formed a 14-mile human chain of protest stretching from Greenham to Aldermaston. In 1984, the Newbury local council evicted the women and demolished the camp. The women returned after dark and rebuilt it. The camp remained a powerful symbol during the 1980s. Even after Cruise missiles left the site in 1991 the Greenham women kept their camp going to protest against Trident. It was not finally closed until 2000.



Fig. 4 'Cruise missiles out!' The Greenham women protesting at Greenham Common airbase, 1984

Environmentalism

An awareness of environmental concerns continued to grow in the 1980s. This was partly because of a series of disasters: industrial accidents such as the 1984 Bhopal gas leak in India and the Chernobyl nuclear accident in Russia in 1986; a growing understanding of the long-term implications of pollution such as the 1985 discovery of the Antarctic ozone hole caused by CFCs in the atmosphere, and the damage done to limestone buildings and freshwater lakes by acid rain. Environmental pressure groups such as Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth grew in strength.

A CLOSER LOOK

CFCs or chlorofluorocarbons are chemical compounds which deplete the ozone in the upper atmosphere of the earth. This means that harmful radiation from the sun is not filtered out as effectively. To combat this the United Nations agreed the Montreal Protocol of 1987, which phased out the use of CFCs. By 2009 it had been ratified by all members of the United Nations and was considered one of the most successful environmental changes ever made by the international community.

A CLOSER LOOK

Environmental disasters

Bhopal, India: In December 1984 a gas leak at a pesticide factory killed between 3000 and 8000 people. Thousands more suffered long-term health effects, many disabling.

Chernobyl, Soviet Union: There was an explosion and fire at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in April 1986 in Ukraine (which was part of the USSR). This released radioactive particles into the atmosphere. Although the number of people who died at the time was relatively small, thousands have gone on to develop cancers from the radiation cloud.

ACTIVITY

Extension

Choose one of the pressure groups covered in this section. Find out some more about their campaigns in the 1980s and design a poster which sets out their concerns.

CROSS-REFERENCE

The emergence of the environmental movement is covered in Chapter 11; the further growth of environmentalism in the 1990s is covered in Chapter 19.

Summary

ACTIVITY

Summary

Chapters 14 and 15 summarise the different types of social unrest that existed in Britain between 1979 and 1987.

List these at the top of an A3 sheet. Brainstorm the causes – use colours to join common causes.

STUDY TIP

You will need to show an understanding of both sides of the argument. In your planning, identify the evidence that demonstrates success. Use your knowledge and understanding of the previous experiences of British governments regarding industrial disputes in order to put this period into context. Then, make sure you identify the downsides that occurred as a result of the government's handling of industrial disputes – think about the effects on different people or different parts of the country. Finally, you should come to an overall judgement.

**PRACTICE QUESTION**

How successful was the Conservative government's handling of industrial disputes in the period 1979 to 1987?

STUDY TIP

Think about what the purpose of each of these sources is. Does this affect their value?

**PRACTICE QUESTION****Evaluating primary sources**

Look back at Sources 1, 2 and 3. With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these three sources to an historian studying divisions in society during the 1980s.

16 Foreign affairs

SOURCE 1

Margaret Thatcher in a speech at a Conservative rally in Cheltenham after the victory in the Falklands conflict in June 1982:

We have ceased to be a nation in retreat. We have instead a newfound confidence – born in the economic battles at home and tested and found true 8000 miles away. And so today we can rejoice at our success in the Falklands and take pride in the achievement of the men and women of our task force. But we do so, not as at some flickering of a flame which must soon be dead. No – we rejoice that Britain has rekindled that spirit which has fired her for generations past and which today has begun to burn as brightly as before. Britain found herself again in the South Atlantic and will not look back from the victory she has won.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this chapter you will learn about:

- the Falklands conflict
- the special relationship
- moves to end the Cold War
- Thatcher as an international figure
- attitudes towards Europe
- divisions within the Conservative Party.

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

1. What message is Thatcher putting across in this speech?
2. How valuable is this speech for an understanding of the impact of the Falkland conflict in Britain?

It was the issue of the previously obscure Falkland Islands that dominated British foreign policy in the early 1980s. In the long view of history, however, the Falklands War was merely a minor episode in Britain's retreat from Empire. The big issues affecting Britain's position in the world were relations with Europe and the developments in the Cold War.

The Falklands

The Falkland Islands, 300 miles east of the South American mainland, had been a British colony and naval base since 1833. Ownership of the islands, known to the Argentinians as Las Malvinas, had been claimed by Argentina since independence in 1817, based on previous Spanish claims. By the 1970s, the Falklands no longer had much strategic importance and Foreign Office officials were prepared to negotiate with Argentina over the future of the islands. However, the islanders themselves were keen to remain British.

In 1981, the Foreign Secretary, Lord Carrington, and the Defence Secretary, John Nott, approved the withdrawal of HMS Endurance, leaving the South Atlantic without any British naval presence. The Argentinian military junta, in power since 1976, took this as a hint that Britain was willing to let the Falklands go. The leader, General Galtieri, sent an invasion force to occupy the Falklands, claiming Argentine sovereignty over Las Malvinas. Lord Carrington resigned: a very principled resignation as he had advised against pulling out Endurance but had been overruled.

The British government faced a dilemma. Winning back the islands by force would be very difficult and dangerous; in any case, the government had already seemed to show that it was willing to negotiate over the islands' future. Despite this, Thatcher's response was the immediate announcement that a naval task force would be sent to remove the Argentine forces and assert the right of the Falkland Islanders to self-determination.

KEY PROFILE

Lord Carrington (b. 1919)

inherited a seat in the House of Lords in 1938. He served in Heath's government as Defence Secretary. He became Foreign Secretary in 1979 but resigned when Argentina invaded the Falklands, taking responsibility for the decision to withdraw the *Endurance*. He was later Secretary General of NATO and involved in the negotiations over the break-up of Yugoslavia (see Chapter 20).

KEY TERM

junta: a military group that rules a country after taking power by force



Fig. 1 The location of the Falkland Islands and the sinking of the Belgrano

CROSS-REFERENCE

The impact of the Suez crisis is discussed in Chapter 4, pages 34–35.

This decision was the making of Thatcher, sending her previously unpopular government soaring in the opinion polls. It was, however, a very risky gamble that could have ended in a disaster of Suez proportions. The patriotic national mood took most people, including TV reporters at the scene, completely by surprise. The headline in the American magazine *Newsweek* was ‘The Empire Strikes Back’.



Fig. 2 The British task force sailing to the Falklands

Although a task force had been sent, there were still diplomatic efforts being made to get Argentina to pull its troops back. On 2 May, the last chance of a peaceful settlement disappeared, when a British submarine sank the Argentine battleship, *General Belgrano*, causing heavy loss of life. The sinking was controversial, as the *Belgrano* was heading away from the battle zone at the time. Many applauded the action (the headline in *The Sun* the next day was simply: 'GOTCHA!') but many anti-war protesters claimed that the sinking had been unnecessary and was designed to finish off the chances of a peaceful outcome.

It was also necessary to get assurances of support from the United States. It would be impossible to fight battles 8000 miles from home without the use of American bases like Ascension Island. Unlike Suez in 1956, the Americans gave the green light to go ahead. This strengthened the special relationship and the personal ties between Thatcher and Reagan.

Victory did not take long but it was a close-run thing. On 4 May, an air-launched Exocet missile destroyed the British warship HMS *Sherfield*. American diplomatic intervention was crucial in preventing the Argentine forces from obtaining enough missiles to severely weaken the British task force. On 21 May, British troops landed at San Carlos Water, the passage between East and West Falkland. Once the landings were secured, however, victory was certain. The Argentine forces surrendered on 14 June.

The impact on Britain's foreign position was less clear-cut. Thatcher's critics believed that the war was unnecessary because Britain would sooner or later end up negotiating a deal with Argentina over the Falklands. On the other hand, the psychological impact was important. In the 1970s, Britain's international position had seemed to be in decline; now there was a resurgence of national pride in Britain. This was not true for everyone: some objected to the gloating of the tabloids and what they saw as Thatcher's triumphalism in celebrating victory as if it was the Second World War all over again.

In the wider context, the Falklands War made it even less likely that Britain would force the people of Gibraltar to accept being handed to Spain. Otherwise, the war proved to be a stand-alone event. It did not stop the continued tidying up of Britain's imperial legacy. Diplomatic relations with Argentina reopened in 1989. Overall, the Falklands was merely a blip in world affairs.

A CLOSER LOOK

Britain's imperial legacy

In the 1980s there were still a number of British territories across the world. The Falkland Islands can be seen as an example of this. Gibraltar, situated at the southern end of the Iberian peninsula, has been a British territory since the early eighteenth century but its location means that it has been claimed by Spain; the Gibraltarians have repeatedly confirmed their wish to remain a British territory. Hong Kong became a British colony in the nineteenth century. In 1984 the Sino-British Declaration agreed that Hong Kong would be handed over to China in 1997.

ACTIVITY

Set up a class debate between those who supported the Falklands War and those who were critical of it.

KEY PROFILE

Ronald Reagan (1911–2004) was the President of the USA from 1981 to 1989. He had been a Hollywood actor in the 1930s and 1940s before entering politics. He served as the Governor of California from 1967 to 1975. Like Thatcher, he supported the extension of supply side economics and his economic policies were nicknamed 'Reaganomics' in the USA. He also shared Thatcher's dislike of trade unions.

The 'special relationship' with USA

There was a strong bond between Margaret Thatcher and **Ronald Reagan**, both personal and ideological. Both were from the generation whose lives had been shaped by the Second World War. Thatcher was particularly influenced by her wartime memories. Her special hero was Winston Churchill. Her view of twentieth-century history revolved around the idea that American armies had twice ridden to the rescue after 'those Europeans' had made a mess of things.

Throughout the 1980s, on issues such as the Falklands War, deploying Cruise missiles and being tough with the USSR, the Thatcher–Reagan link was powerful. In 1986 Thatcher gave permission for the US to use British air bases to bomb Libya despite it being an unpopular decision in Britain. However, there were still some differences. In 1983 the US invaded Grenada after a Communist coup against the advice of Thatcher.



Fig. 3 A very special relationship: Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, Camp David, 1984

CROSS-REFERENCE

The public reaction to the deployment of Cruise missiles is described in Chapter 15.

The Thatcher-Reagan bond lasted long after they were out of politics. At Ronald Reagan's funeral in 2004, Lady Thatcher's eulogy was played on videotape: 'We have lost a great president, a great American and a great man. And I have lost a dear friend. We here still move in twilight. But we have one beacon to guide us that Ronald Reagan never had – his example.'

KEY PROFILE

Pope John Paul II: Karel Woytyla (1920–2005), Archbishop of Cracow, was elected Pope in 1979. John Paul II was a staunch anti-communist and his influence was greatly feared by the communist leaderships in Poland and the USSR. His official visit to Poland in 1980 drew enormous crowds and greatly strengthened the demands for reform from the Polish Solidarity movement – a trade union led by Lech Wałęsa.

Moves to end the Cold War

By the late 1970s the West seemed to be losing the Cold War. When Soviet forces invaded Afghanistan in 1979, it was thought in the West that this was a dangerous threat to Western interests. In reality, it was a disastrous venture, bleeding away what was left of Soviet military might. After the opening of Soviet archives from 1991, it became obvious that the Soviet Union was on its last legs by the early 1980s, hopelessly overstretched militarily and led by a generation of old men eking out the last days of their power.

Thatcher and the second Cold War 1979–85

Nobody in the West knew how weak the Soviet Union was at this time. Between 1979 and 1981, three new 'cold warriors' emerged, a British prime minister, a Polish Pope and an American president, each determined to challenge Soviet power, both militarily and ideologically. The new Cold War began. It was marked by tough rhetoric and rising tension.

A CLOSER LOOK**The new Cold War, 1979–87**

- 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan
- 1981 Election of Ronald Reagan who believed USSR an 'evil Empire' and committed USA to the development of SDI
- 1983 Cruise missiles based at Greenham Common
- 1984 First meeting between Thatcher and Gorbachev
- 1985 Gorbachev becomes leader of the USSR
- 1986 Gorbachev launches perestroika and glasnost and summits with USA begin
- 1986 Reagan and Gorbachev meet in Reykjavik, Iceland

Thatcher's willingness to support the United States can be seen by her agreement to the deployment of US **cruise missiles** in Britain.

The ratcheting up of international tension meant that there was genuine fear that nuclear war between the East and West was likely. The government published *Protect and Survive* booklets which told people what to do in the event of a nuclear attack. These fears were also reflected in popular culture. The BBC TV drama *Threads* of 1984 was a documentary-style account of the aftermath of a nuclear conflict in a British city. *When The Wind Blows* was a cartoon book by Raymond Briggs, published in 1986, which showed how an elderly couple prepared for a nuclear conflict. There were a number of pop songs about the possibility of nuclear war including those by Kate Bush, Frankie Goes to Hollywood, and Sting. In 1983 200,000 people marched with CND in London to oppose nuclear weapons. Similar demonstrations were held across Europe, including one with 600,000 people in West Germany.



Fig. 4 Marches in support of CND were held across Europe

Thatcher's involvement in ending the Cold War 1985–87

Margaret Thatcher's contribution to ending the Cold War rested on three pillars: her combative style and determination to confront the USSR in the early 1980s; her willingness to negotiate with the new reformist Soviet leader, **Mikhail Gorbachev**, from 1985; and above all, the fact that Thatcher's foreign policy was founded on Britain's special relationship with the United States.

ACTIVITY**Extension**

Research the events of the new Cold War and in groups discuss how real the threat of nuclear conflict was at this point.

A CLOSER LOOK**Cruise missiles**

Cruise missiles were remote-controlled rockets carrying powerful warheads and capable of hitting targets from many hundreds of miles away. They were later to play a prominent part in the First Gulf War of 1991. Stationing the missiles in Britain was part of the deliberate policy of deterrence: stoking up the pressure on the USSR and convincing the Brezhnev regime that it was impossible to keep pace with the West in the new high-technology arms race.

KEY PROFILE

Mikhail Gorbachev (b. 1931) was the man who tried to reform the Soviet communist system in order to save it. He emerged as leader of the USSR in 1985 and from 1987 he promoted his key ideas of perestroika (restructuring and modernisation) and glasnost (openness). In trying to reform the USSR, Gorbachev was willing to end the Cold War and let the Soviet satellite states in east Central Europe go their own way. Gorbachev succeeded in ending the Cold War, but could not prevent the total collapse of communism.

SOURCE 2

Margaret Thatcher set out her attitude to the Cold War in a speech to the Conservative Party conference in 1981:

Had it not been for the magnanimity of the United States, Europe would not be free today. One thrust of Soviet propaganda is concerned to persuade the world that the West, and the United States in particular, is the arms-monger, not the Soviet Union. Nothing could be further from the truth. Until we negotiate multilateral disarmament we have no choice but to retain sufficient nuclear weapons to make it clear to any would-be aggressor that the consequences of an attack on us would be disastrous for them. To those who want us to close down the American nuclear bases in this country, let me say this. We in Britain cannot honourably shelter under the American nuclear umbrella and simultaneously say to our American friends 'You may defend our homes with your home-based missiles, but you may not base those missiles anywhere near our homes.' The cost of keeping tyranny at bay is high but it must be paid, for the cost of war would be infinitely higher and we should lose everything that was worthwhile.

ACTIVITY**Evaluating primary sources**

How valuable is Source 2 for an historian studying Thatcher's relationship with the USSR and the USA?

CROSS-REFERENCE

Further progress towards ending the Cold War is discussed in Chapter 20, page 174.

Gorbachev became leader of the Soviet Union in 1985. He was 30 years younger than his predecessors who had led the USSR until 1985. He was a realist who knew things could not go on as they were. His favourite saying as he promoted reform of the USSR was: 'If not us, who? If not now, when?' Gorbachev made a remarkable impression on the hard-line conservatives, Thatcher and Reagan. Thatcher met Gorbachev for the first time in 1984 and declared herself to be impressed. 'I like Mr Gorbachev', she said, 'He and I can do business together.'

Thatcher encouraged Reagan to negotiate with Gorbachev and in 1986, at the Reykjavik summit, Reagan and Gorbachev discovered that each was prepared to make compromises. Although that meeting ended without agreement, it paved the way for future progress. In 1987 the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty was signed in Washington. This historic treaty limited short-range weapons and began a process of mutual disarmament. The Cold War had not yet ended but for the first time in many years it appeared an end might be possible.

KEY TERM

'handbag diplomacy': a term used to describe Thatcher's more abrasive style of negotiation in comparison to the more measured and patient negotiations that was more usual for Foreign Office diplomats

Thatcher and Britain's relationship with Europe

Thatcher's relations with the EEC were marked by many contradictions. There were occasions when her '**'handbag diplomacy'**' caused consternation and ruffled the consensual politics favoured by other European leaders, but there were also many issues on which Britain cooperated closely with Europe.

SOURCE 3

In her final speech as prime minister to the House of Commons in November 1990, Thatcher reflected on her government's relationship with Europe:

During the past 11 years, this Government have had a clear and unwavering vision of the future of Europe and Britain's role in it. It is a vision which stems from our deep-seated attachment to parliamentary democracy and commitment to economic liberty, enterprise, competition and a free market economy. For us part of the purpose of the Community is to demolish trade barriers and eliminate unfair subsidies, so that we can all benefit from a great expansion of trade both within Europe and with the outside world. The fact is that Britain has done more to shape the Community over the past 11 years than any other member state.

Britain is leading the reform of the common agricultural policy, getting surpluses down, putting a ceiling on agricultural spending. We have been the driving force towards the single market which, when it is completed, will be the most significant advance in the Community since the treaty of Rome itself. With all this, we have never hesitated to stand up for Britain's interests.

Thatcher's first priority in Europe was to secure a better deal for Britain over financial contributions to the EEC. Britain was paying in much more to the EEC than was being returned in benefits. Thatcher's persistent campaign for Britain to be given a rebate eventually achieved success in 1984. It played well to her supporters at home but irritated some of her European partners.

Thatcher established a good working relationship with the French president, François Mitterrand (president from 1981 to 1995). They cooperated closely over the Channel Tunnel project, which was agreed in 1986 (opening in 1994). Sharing in the creation of such a symbolic link between Britain and France was hardly proof of any anti-Europeanism on Mrs Thatcher's part.

In 1986 Thatcher negotiated the Single European Act with the other members of the EEC. This was the most important piece of European legislation since the United Kingdom had joined. Thatcher was enthusiastic about the Single European Market when it was negotiated in 1985 to 1986. It changed the Assembly into the European Parliament and mentioned the possibility of future **European monetary union**. For Thatcher and her supporters it would make a free market in Europe a reality. But at the same time, in hindsight, it is obvious that it also surrendered some elements of British sovereignty. The European Court became an important arbiter in disputes between members. At the time either Thatcher did not seem to realise this, or she ignored these implications. She recommended support for the Act and it was passed with little controversy. In 1987 it was clear that the Conservative Party still appeared to be a broadly pro-European party and Britain's future was clearly within the EEC.



PRACTICE QUESTION

'The Conservative Party was a pro-European party between 1973 and 1987'. Assess the validity of this view.

Divisions within the Conservative Party over Europe

When Thatcher first became prime minister the divisions in the Conservative Party were between the '**wets**' and the '**dries**'. As the decade progressed the '**dries**' started to dominate the Conservative Party. Thatcherite ideas had prevailed. Electoral successes in 1983 and 1987 and the improvements in the economy vindicated Thatcher's leadership. The Conservative Party appeared united behind their leader.

Certainly it was not apparent that a serious schism would emerge over Europe. During the early 1980s most cabinet ministers were pro-European and favoured its expansion. The creation and strengthening of a free market across the members of the European Economic Community was in line with Thatcherite economic goals.

However, already there were starting to be some visible differences. For example, the **Westland affair** was, in part, about whether European ties should be encouraged above other ties.

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

How valuable is Source 3 for an understanding of Thatcher's view of Britain's position in Europe?

KEY CHRONOLOGY

Nov 1984	British rebate obtained by Margaret Thatcher
Jan 1986	Anglo-French agreement to build Channel Tunnel
June 1986	Single European Act passed

KEY TERM

European monetary union: a shared currency across the European Union. The Maastricht Treaty (covered in Chapter 20) set out the conditions for this. It came into being in 1999 (covered in Chapter 24)

STUDY TIP

Look back at Chapter 10 as well as this chapter. Identify the evidence that shows that the Conservative Party was a pro-European party as well as the evidence that challenges this view. Try to avoid answering the question by describing the events between these dates – make sure you are analytical in your approach by explaining how the events support or critique the view in the question.

CROSS-REFERENCE

The split between the '**dries**' and '**wets**' is covered in Chapter 13.

A CLOSER LOOK

The Westland affair, 1986

On the surface, the Westland affair was about who would take over the failing British helicopter company Westland. However, what this dispute really showed was deep divisions about the role of government in economic decisions, Thatcher's style of leadership and Britain's relationship with Europe. Michael Heseltine, the Defence Secretary, favoured a takeover from a European consortium. Thatcher favoured no interference from government even if that meant the company would go to the US company Sikorsky. Heseltine believed that Thatcher blocked discussion about the decision in cabinet and would not let concerns about a US takeover be made public. He stormed out of a cabinet meeting and resigned. Thatcher later said that this crisis was the closest she ever came to resigning.



Fig. 5 Michael Heseltine leaving his home the day after his resignation over Westland in 1986

However, when the Single European Act was debated in Britain, there were only a few Conservative backbenchers such as Enoch Powell who spoke against it. Even some MPs who became serious **Eurosceptics** in the 1990s voted for it without complaint. But the seeds for later discord were being sown.

ACTIVITY

Take the view of either a supporter or a critic of Thatcher's foreign policy. Write a speech that sets out your argument.

ACTIVITY

In pairs, compile a list of reasons for splits in the Conservative Party. You should look back at Chapter 13, too.

Thatcher as an international figure

Margaret Thatcher was not very experienced in foreign affairs when she became prime minister. By 1987 she was a respected stateswoman. Her tough stance against the Soviets earned her the nickname 'the Iron Lady' and she gained admiration across the world for being instrumental in bringing Gorbachev and Reagan together. Supporters pointed to her revival of the 'special relationship' with the USA. Other people thought she would not stand up to Reagan; the Labour politician Denis Healey called her 'Reagan's poodle' and Enoch Powell, for example, feared the UK was becoming a satellite of the USA. Her combative style in Europe won Britain a rebate, although this style also limited her allies. But at the same time she had shown herself willing to work with her European allies in strengthening the EEC.

Summary

ACTIVITY

Summary

Draw a timeline and record key foreign policy events on it. Mark on it Thatcher's relationship with Europe, the USA and the USSR in each term of office.



PRACTICE QUESTION

Evaluating primary sources

Look back at Sources 1, 2 and 3. With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these three sources to an historian studying Thatcher's foreign policy.

STUDY TIP

These three sources are all speeches by Thatcher. Make sure you consider the context in which they were made in order to assess their value: i.e. what else was happening that might have affected what she said?



PRACTICE QUESTION

'The Falklands conflict had a greater impact domestically than it had on Britain's position internationally.' Assess the validity of this view.

STUDY TIP

Make sure you clearly identify what Britain's international position was at this time and how it was affected, if at all, by the Falklands conflict. This would include Britain's relationship with the two superpowers, the USSR and the USA; with Europe; and with the Commonwealth.

17 The fall of Thatcher and the rise of Major

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this chapter you will learn about:

- the fall of Thatcher and her legacy
- Major as prime minister
- economic developments including 'Black Wednesday' and its impact
- political sleaze, scandals and satire
- political policies
- the approach to Northern Ireland
- Conservative divisions.



Fig. 1 Major and Thatcher at Teesside Development Park, 1993

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

1. What is the difference between the myth and the reality of Thatcher's fall from power according to John Major?
2. Do you think John Major provides a valuable account of how he became prime minister? Explain your answer.

KEY PROFILE

John Major (b. 1943) was from a working-class background in Surrey. He left school at the age of 16 but worked his way up to executive level in the banking industry. He became a Conservative councillor in the 1970s and was elected as an MP for Huntingdonshire in 1979. He joined Thatcher's cabinet as Chief Secretary of the Treasury in 1987, and was promoted to Foreign Secretary and then Chancellor in 1989 before becoming prime minister in 1990.

The fall of Thatcher and her legacy

SOURCE 1

John Major explained the circumstances in which he replaced Margaret Thatcher as prime minister in his autobiography which was published in 2000:

Within the folklore of the Conservative Party a myth has taken root which so confounds reason and reality that psychoanalysts may understand it better than historians. The myth is that in a moment of inexplicable folly and conspiracy, even madness, Conservative MPs ejected a leader at the height of her powers, presiding over a healthy party, a calm nation and a benign set of outside circumstances. It really was not like that. In the autumn of 1990 the British economy was in deep-seated trouble; huge internal disputes were raging over Europe; the Poll Tax, hated by millions, had proved unworkable; the party was far behind Labour in the opinion polls; and within the parliamentary Conservative Party a sense of exasperation with the leadership was obvious.

The fall of Thatcher

In some ways the decline of Margaret Thatcher can be traced back to 1987, as it was then that a number of problems began to surface.

The first problem was economic. In 1987 the stock market crashed following the 'Big Bang', the deregulation of the City in 1986. The policies of Thatcher's Chancellor, Nigel Lawson, especially his 1988 budget, led to the rapid expansion of the economy in the 'Lawson boom'; this resulted in a balance of payments problem. By 1990, inflation had risen to 10.9 per cent, higher than it had been in 1980. This was a problem for a government that had set as its key economic objective, low inflation.

The second problem was political. Many Conservative MPs feared defeat at the next election. The loss of the ultra-safe seat of Eastbourne to the Liberals in a by-election in October 1990 was especially alarming: if the Conservatives could lose Eastbourne, they believed they could lose anywhere.

The Conservative Party's unpopularity was partly caused by economic problems. But it was also due to the introduction of the Community Charge or poll tax. Mrs Thatcher was strongly advised to drop the scheme. She ignored the advice and pressed on. After the poll tax riot in March 1990 the government's popularity in the opinion polls fell sharply.

These problems helped to heighten division within the Conservatives: over economic policies, over Europe, over Thatcher's style. At the same time, by 1990, the Labour Party's recovery under Neil Kinnock and John Smith was evident. It led the Conservatives in the opinion polls throughout 1990. At that point tensions within government came to a head when Sir Geoffrey Howe resigned from the government. This proved to be a catalyst.

Howe's resignation speech galvanised Michael Heseltine, who had been a long-standing critic of Thatcher ever since Westland, into action. He announced a leadership challenge. After failing to win on the first ballot Thatcher resigned as prime minister.

The Thatcher legacy

Assessing the legacy of Margaret Thatcher's years in power is both difficult and controversial. She undoubtedly changed Britain and British politics. However, she continues to polarise opinion about whether these changes were for the better. In any case, she did not disappear quietly from the political scene. Even when she left office she promised she would be 'a very good back-seat driver'. She remained an important influence on the Conservative Party for the next 15 years and her premiership also affected the development of the Labour Party.

ACTIVITY

Draw a spider diagram of all the reasons why Thatcher fell from power in 1990.

Major as leader

John Major was Thatcher's choice of successor and one key reason for Major's rise to the leadership was that Thatcherites saw him as 'one of them'. In fact, this view of John Major was not especially accurate. Major's natural instincts were to unify the party. This would be a difficult job; there was ongoing hostility to Michael Heseltine and a fierce determination amongst some to take revenge against those who had 'betrayed Maggie'.

Nevertheless the Conservatives jumped ahead in the opinion polls and the tone of the national press was very positive. Some of this was the 'honeymoon effect' experienced by new governments; but it also reflected Thatcher's unpopularity by 1990.

John Major's first big task involved foreign affairs and Europe. Britain was already fighting the First Gulf War, which reached a successful conclusion in March 1991. Major then turned his attention to Europe, making a speech that set out his aim to see Britain take a place 'at the very heart of Europe'. Major and his supporters hoped that it would be possible to follow a middle way on Europe.

At home Major needed to deal with the poll tax. Many wanted him to scrap it immediately but this risked splitting the party. Only in November 1991, after very lengthy discussions, was the poll tax abandoned in favour of the new council tax.

CROSS-REFERENCE

Thatcher's economic policies up until 1987 are covered in Chapter 13.

The poll tax riot is covered in more detail in Chapter 15.

A CLOSER LOOK

Thatcher's fall

In the first ballot, Thatcher got 204 votes against Heseltine's 152. Under Conservative Party rules this was not sufficient and a second ballot was needed. At first, Thatcher intended to fight on. However, after meeting with her cabinet ministers, one at a time, she found that most of them advised her that she would not win. This allowed cabinet ministers Douglas Hurd and John Major to enter the race as anti-Heseltine candidates. It would have been seen as disloyal to do this if she was still running.

ACTIVITY

Extension

1. Assess the impact of Thatcher on Britain between 1979 and 1990.
2. Working in groups look back at Chapters 13 to 17. Each member of the group can take a different policy area: economics; social policy; industrial disputes; foreign policy. Consider:
 - a. How successful were Thatcher's policies?
 - b. Where was success more limited?

Discuss your conclusions with the rest of your group. Can you come to an overall assessment?

CROSS-REFERENCE

Foreign policy between 1987 and 1997 including the First Gulf War and Europe will be covered in Chapter 20.

Doing this meant that £1.5 billion had been wasted but it allowed Major to get away from an unpopular policy that could be blamed on his predecessor.

The Conservative election victory of 1992

Major called the election in March 1992, almost the last possible moment before the end of the five-year parliamentary term. The opinion polls placed the Conservatives on an average 29 per cent, with Labour ahead on 41 per cent and the Liberals at 15 per cent. Most observers predicted a Labour victory. John Major himself, however, was surprisingly upbeat and his optimism was vindicated. Towards the end of the longer than usual election campaign, opinion swung back towards the Conservatives.

The Conservatives ran a good campaign. John Major won a lot of respect for his old-fashioned 'soapbox' politics, making impromptu speeches on the street in towns like Luton, standing on his soapbox. Although people blamed the Conservatives for the economic recession, they were still seen as the party best able to get the country out of the mess.

Elections are always lost as well as won. In 1992, Labour's weaknesses mattered as much as the strengths of the Conservative campaign. Many voters probably just did not feel Labour had reformed enough; memories of the 1980s were still too strong.

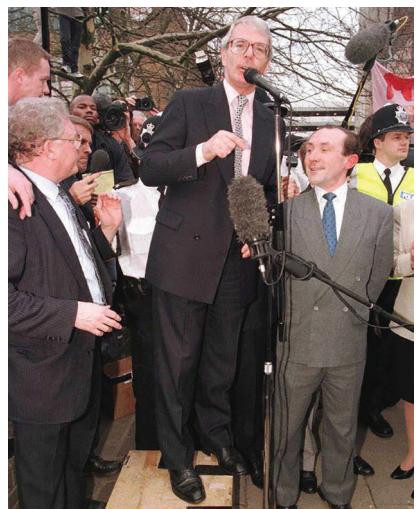


Fig. 2 John Major campaigning in the 1992 election

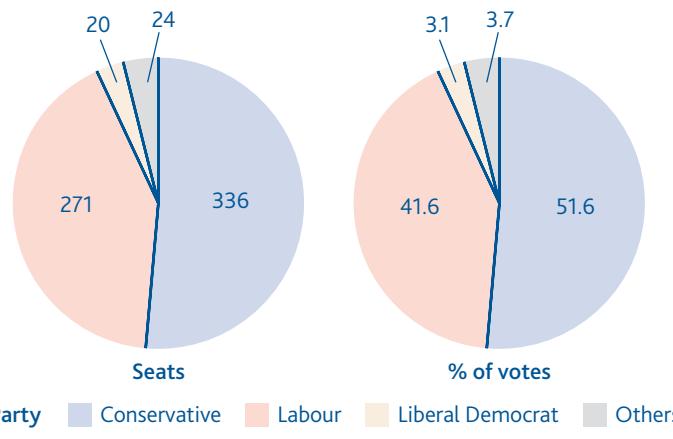


Fig. 3 General election results, April 1992

SOURCE 2

The political journalist John Sergeant reflected on the 1992 election in 2005. He joined the BBC in 1970, becoming its chief political correspondent in 1992. This meant he had good access to leading politicians:

The two party leaders who fought each other in the 1992 election, Mr Major and Mr Kinnock, are both convinced Mrs Thatcher would not have won. Mr Kinnock argued that Mr Major was able to defuse the row over the poll tax, which she would not have been able to do, and was above all able to present himself as the candidate for change. After eleven years of Mrs Thatcher the country was longing for new leadership and Mr Major was able to capitalise on that feeling. On the day Thatcher resigned, Kinnock is convinced, Labour lost its biggest electoral asset. Mr Major is equally dismissive of the idea his predecessor could have achieved the result he did. But the argument that Mrs Thatcher could have won has at least one important advocate in the Labour Party – Tony Blair. In the summer of 2002 I asked him, 'Could she have won?' He replied, 'I am one of the few people who would unhesitatingly say yes. Although Neil Kinnock made absolutely heroic efforts to change the Labour Party, by 1992 we were not sufficiently, fundamentally changed'.

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

- What reasons does this source put forward to explain why the Conservative Party won the 1992 election?
- Which reasons do you think are most believable? Explain your answer.

Economic developments including 'Black Wednesday'

John Major's government had inherited a difficult economic situation at the end of 1990. The British economy was suffering from a declining manufacturing output, high interest rates, a steep rise in unemployment, and a slump in house prices.

Economic developments before the 1992 election

From mid-1991 to early 1992, unemployment rose from 1.6 million to 2.6 million. Many homeowners were trapped in 'negative equity' (having to repay mortgages that were higher than the current value of their homes). Many had their homes repossessed. Unlike in the recession of the early 1980s which largely hit working-class and northern communities, this affected traditional Tory voters.

With an election imminent, Major's government resorted to high public spending. Half of this spending was forced, as a result of rising unemployment, but huge government borrowing was used for subsidies on transport and increased spending on the NHS.

KEY TERM

Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM):

set up in 1979, it aimed to stabilise the exchange rates between different currencies in the European Economic Community by limiting how much their value could change

Black Wednesday and its impact

Within a few months of winning the general election, Major's government suffered a severe crisis and Britain was forced to leave the **Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM)**. What became known as Black Wednesday came to dominate the rest of Major's premiership.

Britain joined the ERM in 1990 when Thatcher was persuaded that it would help to combat inflation which was starting to rise. The ERM required Britain to maintain a fixed rate of exchange (2.95 German marks to the pound) with a narrow band allowed for fluctuations. By September 1992, the British currency (together with several other ERM currencies) came under pressure. It reached a climax on 16 September. Major's government was determined to avoid any devaluation of the pound and to remain within the ERM. But despite all the government's efforts, the pound continued to sink. At 7pm, Norman Lamont announced the decision to leave the ERM live on television.

The effects of Black Wednesday on the British economy proved much less catastrophic than was feared at the time. Within a relatively short time, the economy stabilised and it could be seen that leaving the ERM had many beneficial effects. The political consequences, however, were disastrous for the Conservative government. The long-standing Conservative electoral asset of being trusted on the economy was thrown away. There was a steep drop in support for the Conservatives in opinion polls. John Major's personal authority was badly weakened. He was fiercely criticised by newspapers that had previously supported him. The Labour Party shot ahead in the polls. Many observers, including John Major himself, looked back at the events of 16 September 1992 as 'the beginning of the end'.

A CLOSER LOOK

Black Wednesday

Foreign exchange speculators buy and sell currency. If a lot of speculators want to buy pounds the pound will gain in value in comparison to other currencies. If they sell a currency it will fall in value. In September 1992 there was a wave of speculative selling of the pound on financial markets. The Chancellor, Norman Lamont, announced an increase in interest rates (already high at 10 per cent) to 12 per cent and then to 15 per cent, hoping to persuade foreign investors to buy pounds again. The Bank of England spent huge amounts from its reserves in buying up pounds.

ACTIVITY

Write a newspaper headline and brief article for the day after Black Wednesday.

CROSS-REFERENCE

Look back at Chapter 14 to remind yourself what the economic terms in this section mean.

The British economy after Black Wednesday

Britain's economic situation started to improve almost immediately after Black Wednesday in 1992. Leaving the ERM prevented Britain from having to keep high interest rates to protect the stability of sterling and it allowed exchange rates to float downwards, which helped British exporters. Unemployment rates slowed down and the housing market began to pick up. At the same time the American economy was coming out of recession and world trade was expanding. The British economy was also benefiting from the impact of financial deregulation and flexible working practices which the Conservative Party had introduced since 1979. In comparison, the German economy was struggling with the huge costs of unification and had sluggish growth rates compared with Britain.

By 1997 most economic indicators were positive. Unemployment was down. Productivity was up, though not by much. Consumer spending went up. Car ownership increased. House prices rose and negative equity became a thing of the past. Business was supportive of government policies. Yet people were surprisingly reluctant to give Major's government credit for this. The 'feel-good factor' was missing.

Political sleaze, scandals and satire

Part of the reason that Major's government found it difficult to claim credit when things went right is that it became associated with things going wrong. This was partly because of the ERM crisis. But this perception was strengthened by scandals and accusations of 'Tory sleaze' that dogged Major's years in office. There were more than a dozen sex scandals involving MPs having extramarital affairs including two cabinet ministers, David Mellor and Tim Yeo, both of whom were forced to resign.

Other scandals centred on corruption. In 1994, the Scott Enquiry, set up by Major to investigate illegal arms dealing, proved that government ministers had broken the rules and been 'economical with the truth' in enabling the arms company Matrix Churchill to supply arms components to Iraq. Two leading Conservatives, the novelist Jeffrey Archer and the former minister Jonathan Aitken, were convicted of perjury. Finally, the so-called '**Cash-for-questions**' affair erupted; it was very damaging to the Major government because it lasted such a long time and kept 'Tory sleaze' in the news right through the 1997 election campaign.

ACTIVITY

Research Martin Bell and Neil Hamilton. Write your own key profiles on them.

A CLOSER LOOK

Cash for questions

The Cash-for-questions affair arose when Neil Hamilton and other Conservative MPs were accused of accepting money in return for lobbying (asking questions in Parliament) on behalf of the controversial owner of Harrods, Mohammed Al Fayed. Hamilton was ruined by losing a very public libel case, but refused to resign, to the intense irritation of John Major. In the 1997 election, Hamilton was humiliatingly defeated by an independent candidate, the former BBC journalist Martin Bell, who made 'sleaze' the keynote of his campaign.

A CLOSER LOOK

Adrian Mole was the comic creation of Sue Townsend. His adolescent diaries were bestsellers in the early 1980s. Adrian's diaries showed him to be socially inept and inadequate – although he didn't always realise it.

The sleaze and scandals made the Major government ripe for satire. *Private Eye* created an **Adrian Mole** spoof, *The Secret Diary of John Major aged 47 and three-quarters*. The puppeteers of *Spitting Image* presented Major as dull and boring. The *Guardian* cartoonist Steve Bell caricatured him as a grey superhero wearing his Y-fronts on top of his trousers. None of this satire was vicious and Major remained personally more popular than his party; but the image of Major as a well-meaning but inadequate leader stuck to him.

ACTIVITY

Extension

Watch some clips of *Spitting Image* on the Internet and find out how the following politicians were portrayed:

Margaret Thatcher; Norman Tebbit; John Major; Neil Kinnock; Tony Benn; Ken Livingstone.

Do their portrayals tell you anything useful?



Fig. 4 John Major's 'Cones Hotline' became the subject of much satire

ACTIVITY

You can look at more Steve Bell cartoons on his website: www.belltoons.co.uk.

Pick an event during Major's premiership and try and come up with your own version of a satirical cartoon.

Political policies

A number of other Conservative policies in the 1990s also proved controversial and confirmed the feeling that the Conservative government was prone to crisis. Major's government continued the policy of privatisation. The coal industry was privatised in 1994, the railways in 1996. The government also set about privatising the Post Office but ran into opposition and eventually abandoned the scheme due to public concern. Major also introduced the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). These were public-private partnerships that meant private companies would fund infrastructure improvements and then deliver public services that the State would pay for over the length of the contract.

Major also introduced the Citizen's Charter in 1991. This was an attempt to give public service users more power over the quality of the services they received by providing information about the standards they should expect. For example, in education there would be more testing and schools would publish the results. However, some elements such as the 'Cones Hotline' – a phone number motorists could call if motorway lanes were closed off without any sign of roadworks – became targets of the satire discussed above.

Pit closures continued. In 1991 Heseltine announced the closure of 31 pits including some in Nottinghamshire; this was seen as a poor reward by Conservatives who remembered that it was the Nottinghamshire miners who had stood against Scargill. The outcry forced Heseltine into a U-turn in the short term though eventually the closures went ahead.

Major's government also had to deal with the BSE (Bovine spongiform encephalopathy) crisis, better known as 'Mad Cow Disease'. This had been first identified in the mid-1980s but was recognised as a potential threat to human health in 1996. This led to British beef being banned in Europe.

None of these policies or events in themselves appears to be big enough to undermine a government's reputation. But together, and combined with the other issues discussed in this chapter, they helped to cement an image of incompetence.

CROSS-REFERENCE

The issue of pit closures, including the actions of the Nottinghamshire miners, is discussed in Chapter 15 pages 128–130.

KEY TERM

benighted: Using this word, meaning ‘overcome by darkness’, allows Brandreth to make a pun, comparing Major’s situation with Sir David Frost, who had been given a knighthood in 1993

ACTIVITY

Working in pairs, what crises does Brandreth identify? Write three bullet points on each of them and include a comment on the importance it had to Major’s government.

SOURCE 3

Gyles Brandreth's diaries, published in 1999, show how Tory backbenchers reacted to the government's problems. Brandreth was a broadcaster who was elected as a Conservative MP in Chester in 1992. He was promoted to a junior minister role in 1995 but lost his seat at the 1997 election:

Sunday January 3 1993

The **benighted** John Major and the newly knighted David Frost got together on the box this morning and the PM admitted that perhaps he hadn't offered sufficient clarity as to what his government is all about – and then proceeded to devote most of the interview to talking about the Prince of Wales' marriage and the Citizen's Charter. Maastricht, Mellor, the ERM, unemployment, the pits; we judder from shambles to catastrophe to disaster and still our leader speaks of the Citizen's Charter.

Palm Sunday April 4 1993

No loud hosannas for the government as we approach our first anniversary. The Sunday papers can't remember another administration that has become mired so quickly. Apparently we won't be fielding senior ministers to talk up our year's achievements.

The 150th Grand National has turned into a farce, with two false starts and the race declared void. Can't Mr Major get anything right?

Approach to Northern Ireland

Thatcher's policy towards Northern Ireland did not change in the final years of her administration. The government banned organisations which were believed to support terrorist activities from broadcasting in Britain; broadcasters got around this ban by employing actors to read the words of those affected.

However, the State's activities during the Troubles also came under scrutiny. There were accusations of a 'shoot to kill' policy after three IRA members were killed by the SAS (Special Air Service, one of the British military's Special Forces) in Gibraltar in 1988; high-profile miscarriages of justice such as the Birmingham Six and the Guildford Four were revealed. Meanwhile the atrocities continued; loyalists and republicans engaged in 'tit for tat' killings and the IRA started to target mainland Britain.

A CLOSER LOOK**The Birmingham Six and the Guildford Four**

The Guildford Four were jailed in 1975 for life for the bombing of 2 Guildford pubs in which 5 people died. The verdict was overturned in 1989. In 1993 a film, *In the Name of the Father*, starring Daniel Day-Lewis, told the story of the wrongful convictions. The Birmingham Six were jailed in 1975 for life for the bombing of 2 Birmingham pubs in which 21 people were killed. The verdict was overturned in 1991.

A CLOSER LOOK**A selection of events from the Troubles in 1987–93**

Mar 1988 Milltown cemetery attack – three people killed at the funeral of one of those killed in Gibraltar by loyalist, Michael Stone

Mar 1988 Two off-duty soldiers killed by IRA mob at the funeral of one of those killed at Milltown cemetery

- July 1989** London Stock Exchange bombed by IRA
Feb 1991 Three mortar shells fired at 10 Downing St by IRA
Jan 1992 Teebane landmine attack on Protestant civilians working at a British Army base – eight killed by the IRA
Feb 1992 Bookmaker's shooting – five Catholic civilians shot by loyalists in retaliation for the Teebane attack
Apr 1992 Baltic Exchange, London bombing – three killed by IRA
March 1993 Warrington bomb – two children killed by IRA

There was, however, a political breakthrough in Northern Ireland under John Major. From 1993, the government received secret messages hinting that Sinn Fein was ready to discuss a peace agreement. There were still big obstacles to be overcome. Unionists were fearful of being 'sold out by the British'. On the republican side, there was deep-rooted hostility to the British. However, the fact that the first steps in the peace process were taken by a Conservative prime minister was helpful. A Labour leader might have found it easier to get the trust of the republicans, but may have struggled against a Conservative and unionist backlash. Major also had a good working relationship with the Irish **Taoiseach**, Albert Reynolds. The new American president, Bill Clinton, also made a constructive contribution, encouraging Sinn Fein away from armed struggle.

Major and Reynolds went public in 1993 with their joint Downing Street Declaration. In 1994, the IRA announced a ceasefire. Loyalist paramilitaries matched this with a ceasefire of their own. There was a strong sense of war-weariness on both sides of the conflict. A former IRA gunman, Eamon Collins, wrote in his memoirs in 1997: 'I like to think that both sides looked down into a Bosnia-style abyss; gulped and then stepped back.'

Getting a final agreement was very difficult. Unionists did not believe in the IRA's commitment to peace. The IRA got impatient and went back to violent methods. Bomb attacks damaged the financial district at Canary Wharf, London and destroyed the centre of Manchester in 1996. But the peace process continued.

KEY TERM

Taoiseach: the prime minister of Ireland

CROSS-REFERENCE

The Balkans including Bosnia will be covered in Chapter 20.

ACTIVITY

Produce a timeline of the key events in the Troubles with the timeframe 1979 to 1997.



Fig. 5 Major with the Irish Taoiseach, Albert Reynolds, prior to issuing a joint declaration to bring peace to Northern Ireland

CROSS-REFERENCE

Earlier splits in the Conservative Party are covered in Chapters 13 and 16.

Conservative divisions

By the last years of Thatcher's premiership divisions had become more apparent in the Conservative Party.

While Thatcher was seen as an electoral asset these disagreements did not seem to matter but as her popularity waned they became more open. Thatcher's use of Professor Alan Walters as an economic adviser infuriated her Chancellor, Nigel Lawson, who resigned in 1989. Thatcher then alienated Geoffrey Howe by moving him from the Foreign Office to a lesser post and he resigned a year later. These resignations were partly about her style of leadership. In his resignation speech in Parliament, Howe complained that Thatcher's undermining of her ministers over Europe was 'rather like sending your opening batsmen to the crease, only for them to find, as the first balls are being bowled, that their bats have been broken before the game by the team captain.'

Despite Major's efforts to unify the party, and despite the election success of 1992, the divisions in the Conservative Party worsened. Right-wingers pushed for more radical social policies. Politicians with leadership ambitions saw a chance to advance their claims. Eurosceptics saw an opening to push the government to the edges of Europe, if not out of the EU altogether. Like the scandals and sleaze, these divisions had the effect of drowning out any achievements.

Press speculation continued about possible challengers for the leadership from disaffected cabinet ministers. The names of Michael Portillo and John Redwood were frequently mentioned. Comment in the right-wing press was relentlessly hostile, openly calling for a strong leader to replace Major and 'save the party'. By the summer of 1995, Major felt so insecure that he called for a leadership election so that he could be re-elected to his own job. It was a case of 'back me or sack me'.

A CLOSER LOOK**The re-election of John Major as Conservative leader**

On 22 June 1995 John Major initiated a Conservative leadership election to try to silence his critics and to re-establish his authority. **Michael Portillo** decided not to run so the main challenger was **John Redwood**, who was backed by Thatcherites and Eurosceptics. Before the ballot Major met with Heseltine and agreed that Heseltine would become deputy prime minister. Heseltine made sure everyone in the party knew he had voted for Major. The result of the first ballot was decisive: 218 for Major, 89 for Redwood. There was no need for a second ballot.

KEY PROFILE

Michael Portillo (b. 1953) was a keen admirer of Thatcher and a Eurosceptic.

Despite rumours that he would stand against Major he stayed loyal and served as Defence Secretary between 1995 and 1997. After famously losing his seat in the 1997 election, he won the Kensington and Chelsea by-election in 1999 and served as shadow Chancellor. He stood unsuccessfully for the party leadership in 2001 and in 2005 left the House of Commons to work in television and radio.

ACTIVITY

Work in pairs. One of you write a leadership speech for Major and the other for Redwood. Present them to the class and vote for the most impressive.

However, despite this win Major faced problems. Eighty-nine Conservative MPs had voted against him, when his government only had a small majority, and the attitude of the press remained hostile as ever. At Prime Minister's Question Time Major was mocked by Tony Blair, the Labour Party leader: 'I lead my party. You follow yours.'

Adding fuel to the criticism of Major was Thatcher. She encouraged the Eurosceptic rebels by demanding a referendum on Europe. Her memoirs, published just after the party conference in 1993, were lukewarm about Major. She gave her support to John Redwood in his challenge to Major in 1995. In the run-up to the 1997 election, her comments seemed to show more approval of Tony Blair than of John Major.

Summary

ACTIVITY

Summary

Compare Major's government with Thatcher's government. What similarities and differences can you identify?

Policy area	Similarities	Differences
Unemployment and inflation		
Deregulation and privatisation		
Poll tax		
Northern Ireland		
Europe		

CROSS-REFERENCE

The 1997 election is covered in Chapter 18, pages 158–161.

ACTIVITY

1. Draw up two columns. In one make a list of John Major's successes as prime minister; in the other make a list of the difficulties he faced.
2. How successful do you think he was overall? Write a concluding paragraph.



PRACTICE QUESTION

Evaluating primary sources

Look back at Sources 1, 2 and 3. With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these three sources to an historian studying the problems John Major's governments faced from 1990 to 1997.

STUDY TIP

Think about who is writing these sources and why they are writing them. Does this affect their value to the historian?



PRACTICE QUESTION

'John Major was an unlucky prime minister.' Assess the validity of this view.

STUDY TIP

In order to answer this question you will need to consider how much John Major was responsible for the problems he faced and how well he dealt with them. You should also consider his inheritance and think about the extent he was able to control the situation. In addition, you might consider whether 'luck' is a suitable concept for historians to use.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this chapter you will learn about:

- the Labour Party under Kinnock, Smith, Blair
- reasons for Labour victory in the 1997 election.

CROSS-REFERENCE

Kinnock is profiled on page 111, Smith and Blair on page 156, and Beckett on page 199.

KEY TERM

Clause IV: one of the iconic socialist principles that had been enshrined in Labour's constitution – the commitment to state ownership of key industries; the rewriting of Clause IV meant that the Labour Party was no longer committed to nationalisation; in effect they had accepted the privatisations of Thatcher and Major

KEY TERM

New Labour: the term used by Labour modernisers after 1994 to demonstrate to the electorate that the party was different to the Labour Party of the past which had failed to attract sufficient voter support to win an election between 1979 and 1992



Fig. 1 Five leaders of the Labour Party Gordon Brown, John Smith, Neil Kinnock, Margaret Beckett, Tony Blair

Realignment under Neil Kinnock, John Smith and Tony Blair

SOURCE 1

Tony Blair became the leader of the Labour Party in 1994. He reflected on the contribution of his two predecessors, Neil Kinnock and John Smith, at the 1995 Labour Party conference. It was at this conference that **Clause IV** was rewritten:

New Labour was born of the courage of one man. We would not be here, proud and confident today, but for that man – Neil Kinnock. And then it grew under the wisdom of John Smith, who guided us through the revolution in our party democracy and whose memory we honour. In this last year we have transformed our party – our constitution rewritten, our relations with the trade unions changed and better defined for today's world, our party organisation improved, new policy breaking new ground. I did not come into politics to change the Labour Party. I came into politics to change my country and I honestly believe that if we had not changed, if we had not returned our party to its essential values, free from the weight of outdated ideology, we could

not change the country. For I do not want a one term Labour government that dazzles for a moment, then ends in disillusion. I want a Labour government that governs for a generation and changes Britain for good.

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

- What might Tony Blair be referring to when he mentions 'a one term Labour government that dazzles for a moment, then ends in disillusion'?
- Why do you think he uses this description?

The revival of the Labour Party in the 1990s seemed to be dominated by the ideas and personality of Tony Blair. But the transformation of the Labour Party's fortunes was not only due to Blair. His predecessors, Neil Kinnock and John Smith, also made important contributions.

The Labour Party under Neil Kinnock 1987–92

Despite Kinnock's changes between 1983 and 1987 the Labour Party was heavily defeated again in the 1987 general election. Kinnock then sought to further reorganise the party and moved its policies towards the centre ground. The party organisation was overhauled and the party became much more professional in its presentation. The mastermind of this was **Peter Mandelson**, who became Kinnock's director of communications in 1985. John Smith, who became the shadow chancellor of the exchequer in 1987, gave Labour a more reassuring image of moderation and competence. A policy review was launched after the election defeat of 1987, and by 1988 much of the 1983 manifesto had been ditched, including withdrawal from the EEC, unilateral nuclear disarmament and rises in taxation on high incomes.

SOURCE 2

At the 1988 Labour Party conference Neil Kinnock explained the purpose of the policy review:

When we make those arguments about individuals and consumers and competitiveness it is not long before we hear people saying that we are proposing 'to run the capitalist economy better than the Tories'. Even after that has been the implemented programme of a Labour government for years, there will still be a market economy. What will be different will be the condition of the people who have had the chance to train, who will have been engaged in the new industries, who will have benefited not just from the greater production but from the fairer distribution that it finances. That will be applying our values, our vision in practice instead of just talking about it. There is no 'slide to the right' in that. There is no 'concession to Thatcherism' in any of that. In any case, let me tell this party what so many in this party tell me: the greatest concession to Thatcherism is to let it win again. That is the ultimate concession.

Many on the Left of the party were concerned about the proposals. Furthermore, Kinnock signalled a split with the trade unions by ending the Labour Party's support for **closed shop** union agreements in 1989. As the Conservative government became more unpopular, Labour started to look like an alternative government. They were ahead in the polls before Thatcher left office and even after John Major became prime minister the Labour Party was still the favourite to win the 1992 election.

CROSS-REFERENCE

The debate over Clause IV will be discussed on page 157 of this chapter.

KEY PROFILE

Peter Mandelson (b. 1953) became famous as the **spin doctor** who was behind the slick presentation of New Labour. He entered Parliament in 1992 and became a close adviser to Tony Blair. He was twice a cabinet minister but on each occasion had to resign after a scandal; as industry minister in 1998 and as Northern Ireland secretary in 2001. He then left British politics to become an EU commissioner but returned to join Gordon Brown's cabinet in 2008.

KEY TERM

spin doctor: a spokesperson employed to give a favourable interpretation of events to the media, especially on behalf of a political party

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

- How does Kinnock convey his message in Source 2?
- Explain why he is putting forward this argument in 1988.

KEY TERM

closed shop: workers all have to be members of a particular union in order to work in a particular job

CROSS-REFERENCE

The 1992 election is covered in Chapter 17.

KEY PROFILE

John Smith (1938–94) was MP for Monklands East, a Labour stronghold in the west of Scotland. He was popular and respected at Westminster, with a political style that was calm and reassuring; he was a skilful performer in Parliament and on television. Smith became Labour leader in 1992, succeeding Neil Kinnock. Smith might well have become prime minister but for his sudden death from a heart attack in 1994.

KEY TERM**One Member, One Vote (OMOV):**

individual members of the Labour Party would vote on the selection of parliamentary candidates. This lessened the influence of the trade unions

ACTIVITY**Extension**

Find out some more about John Smith and write an obituary for him.

Given this, some therefore blamed Kinnock for losing the **1992 election** and he resigned as leader four days later. At an election party rally in Sheffield, shortly before election day, he had been greeted as a conquering hero and was later accused of over-confidence. It is certainly true that some voters had difficulty seeing Neil Kinnock as prime minister. *The Sun's* headline on election day was: 'If Kinnock wins today will the last person to leave Britain please turn out the lights'. Nevertheless, the Labour Party Kinnock left behind in 1992 was infinitely stronger than it had been in 1983.

John Smith 1992–94

Kinnock's successor was **John Smith**, his shadow chancellor. As the Conservative Party's troubles grew after Black Wednesday, Smith seemed ideally suited to lead Labour towards victory. He was seen as serious and someone to be trusted on the economy. John Smith signalled a shift in the Labour Party by moving to abolish the trade union block vote by introducing '**One Member, One Vote**' (OMOV) for parliamentary candidates in 1993.

John Smith's death from a heart attack in 1994, at the age of 55, was a shock to the whole nation. Many people have argued that Smith might have achieved all that Blair did, perhaps more. Others have argued that Smith was innately very cautious and would not have acted as boldly and decisively as Blair did. He was wary of extending OMOV to conference motions that decided Labour Party policy, which frustrated modernisers like Tony Blair.

Tony Blair 1994–2007

After John Smith's death in 1994, the danger of a divisive leadership contest was avoided by a deal between **Tony Blair** and his main rival, **Gordon Brown**.

KEY PROFILE

Fig. 2 Blair led Labour to a landslide victory in 1997

Tony Blair (b. 1953) was educated at a Scottish private school, Fettes College. He was much more typical of the 'Middle England' he wanted to win over than he was of Labour loyalists. Blair had few hang-ups about political ideology; he argued that what matters is what works and because he did not join the Labour Party until after university he had fewer ties to its history. He was prime minister from 1997 until he stepped down in 2007.



Fig. 3 Brown was the longest-serving Chancellor of modern times

Gordon Brown (b. 1951) was elected MP for Dunfermline in 1983 and was a protégé of John Smith. He had a key role in modernising the Labour Party and in planning for the 1997 election. After Labour came to power, he was Chancellor of the Exchequer for ten years, longer than any other chancellor in modern times. His relationship with Blair was often tense but they made a powerful and effective team. Brown succeeded Blair as prime minister in 2007.

A CLOSER LOOK

Blair and Brown had both entered Parliament in 1983. They shared an office and were both modernisers in the Labour Party. At the time of John Smith's death, Brown would have been regarded as the more experienced of the two but it was agreed at a dinner at the Granita restaurant in Islington that Blair would stand as leader and work in close partnership with Brown who would act as a strategist and policy expert. Afterwards, it was widely believed that Blair had agreed to step down at some point in the future to allow Brown to have his turn as leader. The question of when exactly Brown would take over later caused tensions between 'Blairites' and 'Brownites' within the Labour government.

CROSS-REFERENCE

The relationship between Blair and Brown in government is explored more fully in Chapter 21.

ACTIVITY

Imagine you are a Labour Party member in 1994. Decide whether or not you would prefer Blair or Brown to lead the party. Write a letter to your preferred candidate explaining why you support them.

Blair set out to further remodel the Labour 'brand'. The promotion of 'New Labour' was intended to end the perception from the 1980s that Labour was unelectable. To do this Blair wanted a dramatic shift in policy to show how Labour was breaking with its past. In 1995 he persuaded the Labour Party conference to rewrite Clause IV of the Labour Party constitution. Following the **collapse of communism** in Eastern Europe, socialism as a political philosophy seemed dead. Blair wanted the Labour Party to drop the socialist ideas that appeared outdated and to instead embrace the modern capitalist economy.

The Labour Party also worked hard to ensure that it was no longer perceived as the party of 'tax-and-spend' economic policies. Gordon Brown wanted to convince people that Labour was the party of prudence and economic competence. To do this he promised that the Labour Party in government would follow the Conservative spending plans. This made it difficult for the Conservatives to attack Labour's economic promises. It also meant that business was, at the very least, no longer fearful of a Labour government.

SOURCE 3

The Labour Party manifesto in 1997 spelt out what was 'new' about 'New Labour':

In each area of policy a new and distinctive approach has been mapped out, one that differs from the old left and the Conservative right. This is why new Labour is new. New Labour is a party of ideas and ideals but not of outdated ideology. What counts is what works. The objectives are radical. The means will be modern. We believe in the strength of our values, but we recognise also that the policies of 1997 cannot be those of 1947 or 1967. More detailed policy has been produced by us than by any opposition in history. Our direction and destination are clear. The old left would have sought state control of industry. The Conservative right is content to leave all to the market. We reject both approaches. Government and industry must work together to achieve key objectives aimed at enhancing the dynamism of the market, not undermining it.

CROSS-REFERENCE

The collapse of communism is covered in Chapter 20.

ACTIVITY**Evaluating primary sources**

How valuable is Source 3 for an understanding of New Labour?

CROSS-REFERENCE

The problems of the Conservative Party in this period are covered in Chapter 17.

Tony Blair himself was a skilful communicator, particularly effective in presenting an air of moderation and winning over 'Middle England'. He was also attractive to women and young voters. The Labour Party had all-women shortlists leading to a record number of female candidates. The Labour Party appeared fresh and vibrant, especially in comparison to the Conservative Party which, mired down in sleaze and scandal, appeared tired and out of touch. It was no coincidence that the Labour Party chose a modern pop song *Things can only get better* as its campaign theme in the 1997 election.

KEY PROFILE

Alastair Campbell (b. 1957) was Tony Blair's press secretary from 1994 to 2003. He had worked as a journalist for several newspapers including the *Daily Mirror*.

Campbell had great success in improving Labour's press coverage through well-organised briefing to journalists. He was particularly effective in rebutting hostile news stories as soon as they appeared.

ACTIVITY

Design a poster for New Labour – think about how you will highlight the 'New'.

These contrasting images were reflected in the national press. In the past, the Conservatives had enjoyed greater support from the national press; negative press coverage of Neil Kinnock in the 1992 election campaign was just one example of this. Blair's press secretary, **Alastair Campbell**, used his experience as a former journalist to change Labour's relationships with the press and media. Journalists and newspaper owners, many of them unenthusiastic about John Major anyway, were won over. One of the Conservative Party's most powerful weapons had been neutralised.

In addition, the Labour campaign was run by a disciplined 'spin machine' that was very effective in dealing with the media and the press, both in refuting Conservative attacks and in selling Labour policies. Labour spokespeople were always 'on message' with access to up-to-date information. Peter Mandelson ran the efficient machinery coordinating public statements and keeping all elements of the party 'on message'.

The 1997 general election**SOURCE 4**

John Major, the Conservative Party leader from 1990 to 1997, gave his interpretation of why Labour won the 1997 election in his autobiography which was published in 1999:

'You never stood a chance.' 'It was always inevitable.' 'Nothing more you could have done.' After the election was over, these were the common refrains. People believed that new Labour was bound to win before the campaign even started. They were right. But why did the fight look (and feel) so much a struggle against the tide, even from the start? The longer you've been around, the longer the list of failures which attaches to you. With every reform, somebody had inevitably lost out. People had suffered high interest rates and the pain of recession. Voters did not balance the harsh decisions of earlier years against the buoyant economic conditions that were now all around them. All they heard was the daily message on sleaze and Europe. All they saw were the exotic follies of a handful of MPs. And they knew that we had made our fair share of policy mistakes. But in one respect Labour did indeed create their victory. The party managed not to seem frightening any more.

ACTIVITY**Evaluating primary sources**

How valuable is John Major's assessment of the reasons for the Labour Party's victory in 1997?

Although opinion polls during the campaign showed a large Labour lead, many Labour supporters still genuinely feared that the power of the Tory electoral machine might cause yet another disappointment like 1992. Tony Blair secretly discussed the possibility of a coalition with the Liberal Democrat leader Paddy Ashdown. The Labour Party manifesto included pledges such as referendums on devolution which had been longstanding Liberal aims.

The Labour Party also created a pledge card which contained five promises. These were clear, easy to understand and designed to attract a range of potential voters.

- cut class sizes to 30 or under for 5, 6 and 7 year-olds by using money from the assisted places scheme
- fast-track punishment for persistent young offenders by halving the time from arrest to sentencing
- cut NHS waiting lists by treating an extra 100,000 patients as a first step by releasing £100 million saved from NHS red tape
- get 250,000 under-25 year-olds off benefit and into work by using money from a windfall levy on the privatised utilities
- no rise in income tax rates, cut VAT on heating to 5 per cent and inflation and interest rates as low as possible

Fig. 4 Labour's pledge card for the 1997 election

The Labour Party was no longer an easy target for attack. Both its organisation and its policies meant that previously successful Tory tactics of frightening voters away from Labour's 'socialist extremism' simply did not work any more. In fact the Conservative message was confused as it veered between, on the one hand, complaining that Labour had 'stolen Conservative policies' and, on the other, that 'New Labour' was just 'Old Labour' in disguise. Neither argument worked.

In addition the accusations of 'Tory sleaze' were damaging. In Tatton, Martin Bell's campaign for clean politics against Neil Hamilton dominated evening news bulletins, reminding voters of the sleaze and scandal. The Labour and Liberal Democrat parties did not run candidates there so the spotlight was fully on the Conservatives.

CROSS-REFERENCE

The scandal caused by Neil Hamilton and the Cash-for-questions affair is outlined in Chapter 17, page 148.



Fig. 5 The independent candidate, Martin Bell, confronts the Conservative MP, Neil Hamilton, over 'Cash for questions' during the 1997 election campaign

The battles over Maastricht and Europe continued to resonate. The Referendum Party was set up, by Sir James Goldsmith, specifically to fight the 1997 election on the sole promise to hold a referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union. It won no seats but kept the Conservative splits on Europe in the news and may have attracted enough voters to cause Conservative defeats in some marginal seats, such as in the defeat of David Mellor in Putney.

CROSS-REFERENCE

Conservative divisions over Europe are discussed in Chapter 17, page 152.

Most Conservatives, including John Major and Michael Heseltine, accepted that defeat was inevitable. In the end, Labour won by a landslide. Election night was a grim experience for Conservatives. Half of all Conservative MPs lost their seats. Many of the casualties were high-profile personalities: Michael Portillo, David Mellor, Norman Lamont, Malcolm Rifkind. The Conservatives got 31 per cent of the vote, the lowest figure since 1823. They now had only 165 seats in the Commons, with not a single seat in Scotland. It was a bigger disaster than 1945.

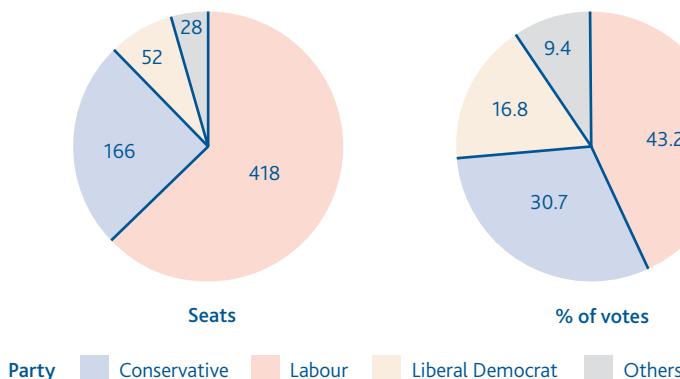


Fig. 6 Election results, 1997

CROSS-REFERENCE

Portillo is profiled in Chapter 17, page 152.

The Conservative Party after 1997 is covered in Chapter 22.

A CLOSER LOOK

A ‘Portillo moment’ has now become shorthand for a senior politician losing their seat. Michael Portillo himself acknowledged in 2010 that his name ‘is now synonymous with eating a bucketload of shit in public’. The question, ‘Were you still up for Portillo?’ (which became the title of a book about the 1997 election), indicates that it was also symbolic as the moment when the scale of the Conservative defeat became apparent.

ACTIVITY

Look at the landslide election victory for the Labour Party in 1997 and the landslide election victory for the Conservative Party in 1983 in Chapter 13, pages 112–113.

Write a paragraph that explains the impact of the first-past-the-post system on election results.

For many people, the symbolic image of election night came from Enfield, where a previously unheard of young Labour candidate, Stephen Twigg, defeated one of the Conservative ‘big beasts’, Michael Portillo. Portillo’s losing of his seat went on to have a longer-term impact on the Conservative Party in opposition.



Fig. 7 Tony Blair launching the 1997 Labour manifesto with his shadow cabinet

The election results also indicated widespread tactical voting, with Labour supporters voting Liberal Democrat (and vice versa) according to how the anti-Conservative vote could be maximised. This behaviour by the electorate neutralised another advantage that the Conservative Party had had in the 1980s – the split on the Left/centre-Left which had existed since the formation of the SDP in 1981.

In one sense, explaining the Conservative defeat in 1997 is easy. In a democracy, no government lasts forever. Sooner or later the pendulum of

party politics always swings and the voters decide it is 'time for a change'. This happened to the Conservatives in 1964 and to Labour in 1979. But there were particular reasons that explain the election result in 1997.

Summary

ACTIVITY

Summary

Using the table below, find the reasons identified in this chapter and number them in order of importance. Justify your choice.

Reasons for the result of the 1997 general election	Page numbers and comment	Order of importance
Conservative splits over Europe including the impact of the Referendum Party		
Accusations of Tory sleaze		
Memories of Black Wednesday		
Attitude of the national press		
Labour's discipline and organisation		
Labour's policy messages		
Tony Blair's leadership of the Labour Party		
Anti-Conservative tactical voting		

The Labour landslide of 1997 ended 18 years in opposition. A Labour government had a strong parliamentary majority for the first time since 1966. Many people thought of 1945 and the hopes of a new era. The fact that so many new Labour MPs were youthful or female was in tune with the ideas of a new beginning. The Conservative Party had suffered its worst defeat since the nineteenth century. John Major did not hang around. On the day Tony Blair moved into 10 Downing Street, Major made it clear he was resigning as party leader and then went to the Oval to watch cricket.



PRACTICE QUESTION

Evaluating primary sources

Look back at Sources 1, 2 and 3. With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these three sources to an historian studying why the Labour Party changed in the period 1983 to 1997.

ACTIVITY

Think about how different people might have felt after Labour won the 1997 election. Write diary entries for a Labour Party and a Conservative Party voter that express your hopes and fears.

STUDY TIP

You may find it helpful to look back at Section 4 to remind yourself of the historical context.



PRACTICE QUESTION

How significant was Neil Kinnock in the development of 'New Labour', 1983 to 1997?

STUDY TIP

Identify the ways that Neil Kinnock contributed to the development of New Labour and balance these against the contribution of individuals and circumstances. You will need to look back to Chapter 13 as well. Make a judgement about the extent of Kinnock's importance.

19 Social issues

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this chapter you will learn about:

- the extent of social liberalism
- anti-establishment culture
- the position of women
- race relations.



Fig. 1 A march against the introduction of Clause 28 in 1988

The extent of social liberalism

SOURCE 1

At the Conservative Party conference in 1993, John Major launched what became known as his 'Back to Basics' campaign. In 1992 he had won the election but also suffered the ERM crisis:

We live in a world that sometimes seems to be changing too fast for comfort. Old certainties crumbling. Traditional values falling away. And people ask, 'Where's it going? Why has it happened?' And above all, 'How can we stop it?' Let me tell you what I believe. For two generations, too many people have been belittling the things that made this country. We've allowed things to happen that we should never have tolerated. We have listened too often and too long to people whose ideas are light years away from common sense. The truth is as much as things have changed on the surface, underneath we're still the same people. The old values – neighbourliness, decency, courtesy – they're still alive, they're still the best of Britain. They haven't changed. It is time to return to those old core values, time to get back to basics, to self-discipline and respect for the law, to consideration for others, to accepting a responsibility for yourself and your family and not shuffling off on other people and the state.

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

1. What do you think John Major meant when he suggested that it was 'time to get back to basics'?
2. Why do you think Major wanted to convey this message in his speech?
3. What impact does this knowledge have on your assessment of the value of this source?

John Major's speech reflected a period of time when there was substantial changes in society that many people found disconcerting. The beginning of this period was, in many ways, socially conservative but over the ensuing decade this was challenged and Britain seemed to become a more socially liberal country.

Both the social conservatism of Thatcherism and the changes in attitudes in this period can be exemplified in attitudes to homosexuality. Negative attitudes grew during the 1980s, reaching a peak in 1987. Part of this may have been because of the identification of AIDS. The first case in the UK was recorded in 1981 and because gay men seemed to be particularly at risk, it was referred to as a 'gay plague'.

CROSS-REFERENCE

The social element of Thatcherism is covered in Chapter 13 and the impact on society of Thatcher's policies in Chapter 15.

A CLOSER LOOK

The fact that gay men and intravenous drug users were most at risk of contracting the HIV virus which caused AIDS meant that involvement by the government was considered controversial. Nevertheless the government started a prevention campaign in 1985; needle exchanges were set up and leaflets were distributed to all households and schools. Billboards and TV and radio advertisements advised people: 'Don't die of ignorance'. In 1987 Diana, Princess of Wales challenged these popular prejudices about AIDS by shaking hands with a patient with AIDS at the Royal Middlesex Hospital, a hugely significant move in de-stigmatising AIDS patients.

A CLOSER LOOK

AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) is caused by HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus). It is estimated that over 40 million people worldwide have died of AIDS since 1981. There is no cure or vaccine although anti-viral drugs are increasingly effective at limiting the disease's impact.



Fig. 2 The Princess of Wales meeting an AIDS patient in 1987

There is no doubt that fear of AIDS stirred up greater prejudice about gay people. 'Loony left' councils were accused of 'promoting' homosexual 'lifestyles' by funding support groups. There was a tabloid outcry in 1986 over a book, *Jenny Lives With Eric And Martin*, which was stocked in some London school libraries. In response to this, Section 28, a law which banned the promotion of homosexuality by local authorities, was passed in 1988. Although it was not directly aimed at schools, many people believed that it made it illegal to discuss homosexuality in schools.

CROSS-REFERENCE

'Loony left' councils and their disputes with the Conservative governments are covered in Chapter 14.

SOURCE 2

The human rights campaigner Peter Tatchell was one of the co-founders of the pressure group Outrage! He recalled the experience of the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) community in the 1980s in 2012 in an introduction to a debate about life in the 1980s:

The 1980s were a period of intensified homophobia, sanctioned from the top of society. The Conservative government of Margaret Thatcher was at war with the LGBT community. She launched a series of homophobic and sexist moral crusades under the themes of ‘family values’ and ‘Victorian Values’. Labour councils that supported local LGBT communities were denounced by the Tories. On top of all this, the AIDS epidemic was demonised as the ‘gay plague’. It was manipulated to blame and vilify LGBT people – and to justify increasing homophobic repression. At the 1987 Tory party conference Thatcher attacked the right to be LGBT. The following year, her government legislated the notorious Section 28, which banned the so-called ‘promotion’ of homosexuality by local authorities; leading many authorities to impose self-censorship to avoid prosecution. Unexpectedly, this was the making of the LGBT community in Britain. It mobilised people as never before. The 1988 London Pride parade was double what it had been in previous years increasing to 30,000 marchers. Stonewall and OutRage! exploded into existence and began the successful fight back.

ACTIVITY**Evaluating primary sources**

1. Find out what is meant by ‘Victorian values’.
2. What links can you make between Victorian values and Thatcherism? Looking back at Chapter 13 may help you.
3. How valuable is Source 2 by Peter Tatchell for an understanding of social attitudes in the 1980s?

A CLOSER LOOK

The changes in attitude are demonstrated by the British Social Attitudes Survey which found that the percentage of people who believed that sexual relations between two adults of the same sex were always or mostly wrong fell from 75 per cent in 1987 to 50 per cent in 1998.

KEY PROFILE

Peter Lilley (b. 1943) was first elected as a Conservative MP in 1983, after working as a stockbroker. He was a cabinet minister under both Thatcher and Major and stood in the leadership election of 1997. He was a strong Thatcherite, although he later became more socially liberal, advocating the legalisation of cannabis.

CROSS-REFERENCE

Conservative sleaze and scandal is covered in Chapter 17.

Outrage! used direct action, threatening to ‘out’ gay clergy and MPs. Stonewall backed test legal cases at the European Court of Human Rights, challenging the unequal age of consent and the ban on homosexuals in the armed forces. This led to a reduction in the age of consent for gay men from 21 to 18 in 1994. However, equality wasn’t achieved until 2000 when the age was lowered to 16; similarly it wasn’t until 2000 that the lifting of the ban on homosexuals in the military was eventually passed.

The 1980s saw a series of other moral panics, many of which had subsided by 1997. Family campaigners feared for the future of marriage as the divorce rate hit record highs in the 1990s and the percentage of babies born to unmarried parents more than doubled from 12 per cent in the early 1980s to 30 per cent by the early 1990s. Single mothers and absent fathers were particularly criticised. In 1992 **Peter Lilley**, the Secretary of State for Social Security, sang a song to the Conservative Party conference including the words: ‘There’s young ladies who get pregnant just to jump the housing queue / And dads who won’t support the kids / of ladies they have ... kissed’. To counter this, the Child Support Agency was set up in 1993 to try to ensure that absent parents paid maintenance for their children.

Concern about under-age sex was seen in the campaign, led by Victoria Gillick, against the availability of contraceptive advice to girls under the age of consent without their parents’ knowledge. Initially the high court ruled that this advice could only be given with the consent of a parent or guardian, though this was overruled in 1985 by the House of Lords. Mary Whitehouse, the moral campaigner, continued her work until the late 1980s, coining the phrase ‘video nasty’ and influencing the passing of the Video Recording Act in 1994 which ensured that videos had British film classifications attached to them. It is also clear from the impact of the scandals that enveloped Conservative MPs during the 1990s that public expectation about the behaviour of public figures was still high. Extramarital affairs, illegitimate children and issues of sexuality all led to MPs resigning as ministers or stepping down.

Anti-establishment culture

When John Major became prime minister in 1990 he outlined an aim to create a classless society in Britain. Certainly this period did see an increase in people's willingness to challenge traditional sources of authority, especially if they did not live up to expectations. This can be seen in the increasing criticism of the monarchy. Some commentators see this as an inevitable consequence of Thatcherism; Thatcher herself was an outsider and Thatcherism had championed the questioning of much of the received wisdom of the post-war period.

SOURCE 3

On 24 November 1992 the Queen gave a speech at the Guildhall to the Lord Mayor and City of London Corporation. This speech was given to mark the fortieth anniversary of her accession:

1992 is not a year on which I shall look back with undiluted pleasure. It has turned out to be an 'Annus Horribilis'. No section of the community has all the virtues, neither does any have all the vices. There can be no doubt that criticism is good for people and institutions that are part of public life. No institution – City, Monarchy, whatever – should expect to be free from the scrutiny of those who give it their loyalty and support, not to mention those who don't. But we are all part of the same fabric of our national society and that scrutiny can be just as effective if it is made with a touch of gentleness, good humour and understanding. Forty years is quite a long time. I am glad to have had the chance to witness, and to take part in, many dramatic changes in life in this country. One unchanging factor which I value above all is the loyalty given to me and to my family by so many people throughout my reign.

The changing attitude to the royal family reflected a general decline in deference to the Establishment. The period 1987 to 1997 was a difficult one for the monarchy. The marriages of three out of four of the Queen's children broke down. Details of extramarital affairs including recordings of telephone conversations were splashed all over the tabloids. The shift in attitude can be seen in the public disquiet about the financing of the restoration of Windsor Castle after a devastating fire in 1992. The debate led to the Queen agreeing to pay tax on her private income and a reduction in the **civil list**. Nevertheless, damaging revelations, especially from the Princess of Wales about her treatment at the hands of the royal family, continued to damage the monarchy's reputation. The trough of public support for the monarchy was reached in 1997, in the aftermath of the death of the Princess of Wales in a car crash; the Queen was accused of not caring, while the country was in mourning.

Anti-establishment culture can also be seen in the arts. The Young British Artists (YBA) led by Damian Hirst, Sarah Lucas and Tracey Emin, challenged ideas about what art was. YBA created art from materials and processes not usually associated with art such as dead animals or ephemeral detritus. Charles Saatchi, the advertising executive, was an important patron and it was his collection of YBA work that formed the basis of the Sensation exhibition held in 1997.

Youth culture also challenged the Establishment. In the late 1980s 'acid house', dance music with a psychedelic edge, arrived from the USA. 1988 and 1989 have both been nicknamed the 'Second summer of love' and they saw an explosion of raves and free parties. These were linked to the use of ecstasy (MDMA), which provoked a moral panic about drug-taking and a tabloid backlash.

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

- What does 'annus horribilis' mean? Find out why the Queen described 1992 like this.
- Is a speech by the Queen, such as Source 3, a valuable source for an historian? Explain your answer.

KEY TERM

civil list: the members of the royal family who are supported by public funds

ACTIVITY

Extension

Research the YBA movement. Find some examples of their work. Present your findings to the class, and discuss why this art was so controversial.

A CLOSER LOOK

Often hundreds and sometimes thousands of young people followed instructions to find secret venues where the rave would be held. In the biggest of these up to 40,000 people congregated at Castlemorton in 1992 for a week-long free festival.

In response, the government passed the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act in 1994 which gave more powers to the police to break up these free parties; in it rave music was famously defined as including ‘sounds wholly or predominantly characterised by the emission of a succession of repetitive beats’.

The free party and rave movement also overlapped with the growing direct action environmental movement. A series of protests against road developments started at the Twyford Down M3 extension in 1992 and spread to other sites such as the Newbury bypass and the M11 link road. They brought together a wide range of people, ranging from local residents, often middle-class first-time protesters, to new-age travellers, to dedicated environmental campaigners. The protesters used a variety of innovative direct action measures to delay or block work, including climbing and chaining themselves to trees which were due to be uprooted, and building tunnels and living underground.



Fig. 3 The protest against the development of the M11 link road

STUDY TIP

You will need to be clear about what you mean by ‘the established order’ – in politics, society and culture. You’ll need to assess what the challenge was and how much impact it had.

Remember that it might have more significance in some areas than others.

A
LEVEL

PRACTICE QUESTION

How significant was the anti-establishment challenge of 1987 to 1997 to the established order?

ACTIVITY

Write one-sentence definitions of:

- first-wave feminism
- second-wave feminism
- third-wave feminism

The position of women and race relations

Long-term shifts in society regarding women and race relations continued.

The position of women

The beginning of the 1990s saw the start of what has been termed ‘third-wave feminism’. This was both a critique and a step forward from the second-wave feminism of the 1960s. It was broader than just legal and financial equalities including more emphasis on breaking down stereotypes about women involving race, gender and sexuality. Out of this grew the underground Riot Grrrl movement: female bands such as Bikini Kill and Huggy Bear which had a punk sensibility and sang about feminist issues. By the mid-1990s the message of ‘girl power’ had become a more mainstream one, led by the pop group the Spice Girls.

A CLOSER LOOK

The phenomenon of girl power has also been linked to the emergence of powerful female characters on TV such as in *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*. At the same time the 'ladette' became a cultural phenomenon exemplified by women such as Ulrika Jonsson and Zoe Ball: ladettes talked openly about sex and drinking in the same way as men did.



Fig. 4 The Spice Girls popularised girl power

Obviously, Thatcher's position as prime minister showed that women could achieve highly. However, Thatcher's own relationship with feminism is more difficult to measure. One member of the Spice Girls, Geri Halliwell, described Margaret Thatcher as 'the first lady of girl power' after Thatcher's death in 2013. Critics argued that she did little for women when she was in power; she had only one female cabinet minister and did nothing to encourage other women into Parliament. She herself said: 'I owe nothing to Women's Lib' in an interview in 1982.

Nevertheless, there were further indications of progress in women's rights in this period. The first female Speaker in the House of Commons, Betty Boothroyd, and the first female head of MI5, Stella Rimmington, were both appointed in 1992. The first ordination of women as priests in the Church of England came in 1994. In 1994 rape within marriage became a criminal offence. It also became increasingly normal for women to work; by 1993 68 per cent of women of working age were in employment and by 1996 50 per cent of employees were women. Women's pay also improved relatively in the period (even though it remained at 80 per cent of men's earnings) and married women were able to be taxed separately from their husbands for the first time.

Race relations

By the later 1980s there appeared to be good progress in race relations and Britain started to be seen as more comfortable with multiculturalism. Unlike in the period between 1979 and 1987 there were no mass outbreaks of disorder with a racial component as were seen in 1981 and 1985. A series of riots that happened in 1991 and 1992 in towns and cities across the

ACTIVITY

Find some examples of Riot Grrrl music to listen to. In what ways do the lyrics reflect the concerns of third-wave feminism?

CROSS-REFERENCE

Punks and feminists are introduced in Chapter 10.

KEY TERM

MI5: the British agency responsible for national security

ACTIVITY

Write your own key profiles for Stella Rimmington and Betty Boothroyd.

CROSS-REFERENCE

The 1981 and 1985 riots are covered in Chapter 14.

country from Oxford to Newcastle to Burnley involved mainly young white men on deprived council estates. Moreover, in the 1987 general election four non-white MPs were elected, the first since the 1920s; all held their seats in 1992.

Nevertheless, progress was not always consistent. In 1992 the black Conservative candidate for Cheltenham, John Taylor, lost to the Liberal Democrats amid rumours of racism from some local Conservatives. Similarly, there remained tensions between young black men and the police. This was best exemplified by the murder of Stephen Lawrence.

KEY TERM**Crown Prosecution Service (CPS):**

the state organisation which presents to the court the arguments needed to prosecute someone for criminal activity; it is independent of the police who investigate crime, and it is independent of anyone who is a victim of crime

institutional racism: the failure of an organisation to deal with people appropriately because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin; this might lead to discrimination through unthinking prejudice and racist stereotyping

A CLOSER LOOK

In 1993, a black A-level student, Stephen Lawrence, was murdered by a gang of white youths at a bus stop in southeast London. The identity of the youths was believed to be known but the **Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)** decided that there was not sufficient evidence to convict them. The actions of the police were widely criticised for failing to investigate the case properly and for assuming that a black teenager was likely to be a perpetrator of crime rather than a victim. After failing to get any convictions in a private prosecution, Stephen's parents, Neville and Doreen, continued to campaign for justice. The murder and the failure to convict became a national issue and eventually a landmark in race relations. Following a campaign in the *Daily Mail*, in 1998 the Labour government ordered a public enquiry into the case chaired by a High Court judge. The MacPherson Report concluded that the Metropolitan Police, while not corrupt, had been incompetent and was '**institutionally racist**'.

New stresses on social cohesion also arose. In the 1990s, there was a sharp increase in the number of asylum seekers, fleeing from violent upheavals in places such as Somalia, Afghanistan and Iraq. As well as this, migration into Britain continued to include many immigrants from New Commonwealth countries such as India, Pakistan and Bangladesh; these were often relatives of people already living in the UK. Many of these immigrants were Muslims and concerns started to be raised about Muslim integration into British society. In 1988 the British Indian author Salman Rushdie published a novel, *The Satanic Verses*, which was considered blasphemous by many Muslims. The Iranian Ayatollah issued a fatwa, a death threat, and Rushdie had to go into hiding. Some British Muslims accepted that publishing the book was acceptable in British culture; others protested and burned the book. It was clear that there was a tension between British societal values and Islamic beliefs which some Muslims found difficult to reconcile.

Summary

In his book, historian Alwyn W. Turner argues that the 1990s were greatly influenced by the social liberalism of the 1960s. He claims that this was, in part, because the people who had grown up in the 1960s were now the people in power.

EXTRACT 1

It was the 1960s that seized the nation's attention. The phenomenon was initially cultural, but it swiftly acquired a social and political dimension. For if Major's talk of society, however classless, could be seen as a repudiation of Thatcherism, this public embrace of the 1960s was even more so. In one of her

last speeches as prime minister, Thatcher had talked of 'the waning fashions of the permissive 1960s', but she spoke too soon. Even at the height of her popularity, she had been unable to convince the nation of her perspective; a Gallup poll conducted in 1986 found that 70 per cent of the population thought the 1960s were the best decade of the century, and much of the 1990s would see coming to fruition seeds that had been planted a quarter of a century earlier.

A Classless Society: Britain in the 1990s by Alwyn W. Turner (Aurum Press, 2013)

ACTIVITY

Summary

Look back at Chapters 6 and 7. Compare the changes in the 1960s with the period 1987 to 1997. What similarities and differences can you find?

A
LEVEL

PRACTICE QUESTION

Evaluating primary sources

Look back at Sources 1, 2 and 3. With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these three sources to an historian studying the consequences of social change between 1987 and 1997.

STUDY TIP

Make sure you are clear about what you can learn about the *consequences* of social change from these sources, considering both provenance and content – don't just describe the social change.

A
LEVEL

PRACTICE QUESTION

To what extent was Britain a tolerant, multicultural society in the 1990s?

STUDY TIP

In order to answer this question you will need to define what you mean by a tolerant and multicultural society and be clear about how you will measure this.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this chapter you will learn about:

- relations with Europe, including the impact of the Single European Act and Maastricht Treaty
- contribution and attitude to the end of the Cold War
- interventions in the Balkans.

ACTIVITY**Evaluating primary sources**

Explain why Thatcher might want to define her understanding of Britain's place in Europe at this time.

SOURCE 1

In September 1988 Margaret Thatcher gave a speech to the College of Europe in Bruges, Belgium. She took the invitation to speak here as an opportunity to set out her attitude towards Europe and how she thought the EEC should develop in the future:

Let me be quite clear. Britain does not dream of some cosy, isolated existence on the fringes. Our destiny is in Europe as part of the Community. But to try to suppress nationhood and concentrate power at the centre of a European conglomerate would be highly damaging. Europe will be stronger precisely because it has France as France, Spain as Spain, Britain as Britain, each with its own customs, traditions and identity. It would be folly to try to fit them into some sort of identikit European personality. Indeed it is ironic that, just when countries such as the Soviet Union are learning that success depends on dispersing power away from the centre, there are some in the EEC who seem to want to move in the opposite direction. Certainly we in Britain would fight attempts to introduce collectivism and corporatism at the European level – although what people wish to do in their own countries is a matter for them.

Relations with Europe, including the impact of the Single European Act and Maastricht Treaty

KEY CHRONOLOGY

Oct 1988	Margaret Thatcher's speech in Bruges
July 1990	British entry into the ERM
Nov 1992	Britain withdraws from the ERM
Feb 1992	Treaty on European Union, Maastricht, extending inter-government cooperation
June 1993	Maastricht ratified
Jan 1995	Expansion of EU from 12 states to 15: accession of Austria, Finland and Sweden
Jun 1995	Major's 'back me or sack me' resignation

CROSS-REFERENCE

The passing of the Single European Act in 1986 is discussed in Chapter 16, page 141.

KEY TERM

federalism: a political system in which power is distributed between a central government and the smaller parts of the nation state; the USA has a federal system in which power is divided between central government and the individual states

Although Thatcher had, in 1986, signed the Single European Act (SEA) which had appeared to be pro-European, she seemed to become more negative about Britain's relationship with Europe after this. Thatcher wanted a single market as this reflected her economic philosophy. She later claimed that she had not fully understood how the SEA would be used to change Britain's relationship with Europe. It soon became apparent that the SEA limited the influence of individual nation states. This worried Thatcher and a growing number of Conservative MPs.

To counter the direction Thatcher feared the EEC was moving in she made a speech in Bruges in 1988 to set out her vision of the future of Europe (see Source 1). Thatcher wanted to emphasise that the EEC was a trade association between sovereign states. She was resolutely opposed to **federalism** and the idea of 'ever closer political union', whereas there were elements of the

European Commission, including its president, Jacques Delors, who thought that was precisely the direction in which the EEC should be going.



Fig. 1 Thatcher frequently clashed with Delors, egged on by the mainly Eurosceptic tabloid press

ACTIVITY

Look at Fig. 1.

1. What do you think the *Sun's* editor's intention in creating this front cover was?
2. Explain how you think this front cover might reflect the mood of the British public at the time.

While her speech was intended to be positive it infuriated other European leaders and raised doubts about Britain's commitment to further European integration. Meanwhile, in Britain, the Bruges speech so enthused the Eurosceptics MPs that the Bruges Group was formed to focus opposition to any European federal state.

Thatcher's more negative line on Europe caused tension within her government. People like Geoffrey Howe and John Major thought she was backtracking from positions she had already agreed to since 1985. On the other hand, Eurosceptics, such as the Bruges Group, argued that it was the federalists in Brussels who were changing the EEC into something different from the Common Market that Britain had joined in 1973.

After the collapse of communism, Thatcher was enthusiastically in favour of expanding the EEC to include the new states in Eastern Europe. This was to extend free trade and to ensure that communism was truly defeated. However, it was also partly to weaken the power of the European Commission in Brussels; she favoured a wider and shallower union instead of a deeper union. However, it is also true that Thatcher was never openly anti-European before she left office; that was something that developed later.

CROSS-REFERENCE

The collapse of Communism in 1989 is covered later in this chapter, on page 174.

CROSS-REFERENCE

For further details on Europhiles and Eurosceptics, see Chapter 8, page 70 and Chapter 16, page 142.

KEY TERM

Social Chapter: part of the Maastricht Treaty which aimed to regulate working conditions such as maximum hours for the working week and employment rights for part-time workers; the Conservatives opposed it because they favoured deregulation

ACTIVITY

Write two newspaper headlines, one in favour of the Maastricht Treaty and one against it, in the style of *The Sun* newspaper – see Fig. 1.

CROSS-REFERENCE

Major's problems as leader of the Conservative Party are further explored in Chapter 17.

The 1997 election is covered in Chapter 18.

Major and Europe

John Major inherited a Conservative government that was starting to be openly divided by the issue of Europe. There were still many supporters of Britain's involvement in Europe, with Europhile cabinet ministers such as **Ken Clarke** and **Chris Patten**. However, the Eurosceptics were becoming increasingly important and vocal; these included cabinet ministers like Michael Portillo and John Redwood and influential backbenchers such as **Iain Duncan Smith** and Bill Cash. They were encouraged by Thatcher's increasingly anti-European interventions. The Maastricht Treaty of 1992 gave them the opportunity to voice their concerns about the direction of the European Union.

The Maastricht Treaty was designed to set up new structures to deal with the expansion of the EEC. Under the terms of the treaty, the EEC became the European Union and the conditions were set up for a single currency to come into being in 1999. The treaty was agreed in December 1991 and signed in February 1992 by European member states. Major's style had enabled him to establish good personal links with other heads of government, particularly with the German chancellor, Helmut Kohl, and his diplomatic skills enabled him to secure opt-outs for Britain from the plans for a single currency and from the **Social Chapter**. Selling the deal to sceptical political and public opinion at home was much harder. While the opt-outs won over most doubters in the Conservative Party, they did not eliminate them all.

A CLOSER LOOK**Major and the Maastricht rebels**

In July 1993, rebel MPs blocked Major's attempt to get Parliament to ratify the Maastricht Treaty. Major won the vote by threatening a vote of no confidence which, if he had lost, would have led to the dissolution of Parliament and a general election. The Conservatives were far behind in the polls so this threat made sure he got sufficient support. But it damaged Major's authority and made him appear weak. His inability to silence the rebels was shown when he was asked 'off the record' by a TV reporter why he did not sack them. Thinking the microphone was switched off, Major replied: 'Think from my perspective, a prime minister with a majority of eighteen. Do we want three more of the bastards out there?' The quote leaked to the *Daily Mirror*, became headline news and made it harder for Major to position himself with the Eurosceptics.

The Maastricht Treaty was eventually ratified by Parliament after 18 months. However, this did not bring an end to the divisions over Europe. Conservative Eurosceptics continued to oppose Major on European issues. Losing the party whip or being threatened with deselection did not stop the rebels. Even Major's 'back me or sack me' resignation did not really strengthen his position. In addition, the debate mobilised anti-Europeans outside Parliament. The Anti-Federalist League, the forerunner to the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), was set up in 1993, and in 1994 the wealthy financier Sir James Goldsmith set up the Referendum Party to fight the 1997 election on the single issue of demanding a referendum of Britain's relationship with Europe.

ACTIVITY

1. Hold a class debate between the pro-Europeans and the Eurosceptics in the Conservative Party.
2. Write a paragraph that explains why the Conservative Party was so divided over Europe by 1994.

KEY PROFILE

Europhiles



Fig. 2 Clarke's pro-Europe stance was at odds with most Conservatives

Kenneth Clarke (b. 1940) served in Thatcher's cabinet as the Secretary of State for both health and education, and was John Major's Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1993 to 1997. He stood for the Conservative Party leadership in 1997, 2001 and in 2005, losing each time, partly because of his pro-European stance.



Fig. 3 Patten is one of Britain's most influential Roman Catholics

Chris Patten (b. 1944) was Conservative chairman between 1990 and 1992, overseeing Major's election victory. However, he lost his seat at the 1992 election. He was appointed as the governor of Hong Kong and oversaw the handover to China in 1997. He later became a European commissioner and chairman of the BBC.

CROSS-REFERENCE

The full Key Profiles of Michael Portillo and John Redwood can be found in Chapter 17, page 152.

Eurosceptics



Fig. 4 Duncan Smith was Conservative leader for two years

Iain Duncan Smith (b. 1954) came from a military background, and was educated at HMS Conway and the army college at Sandhurst. He was one of the original Maastricht rebels against John Major. He became leader of the Conservative Party in 2001 but made little impact in the opinion polls and was ousted in 2003.



Fig. 5 Portillo is also a journalist and broadcaster

Michael Portillo (b. 1953) was a Thatcherite Eurosceptic and is believed to have been one of the 'bastards' that Major referred to. However, he stayed loyal to Major during the leadership election of 1995. After leaving Parliament in 2010, he advocated that Britain leave the European Union in 2013.



Fig. 6 Redwood stood for election in 1995

John Redwood (b. 1951) was another of the alleged 'bastards' in Major's cabinet and he stood against Major in the 1995 leadership election as the Eurosceptic and right-wing candidate. He was supported by *The Sun* newspaper and by Thatcher.



Fig. 7 Victory in the Cold War: celebrating the end of the Berlin Wall, 10 November 1989

KEY CHRONOLOGY

Key events in the ending of the Cold War

June 1987	USA and USSR agree to limit ballistic missiles
Feb 1989	USSR withdraws from Afghanistan
Nov 1989	The fall of the Berlin Wall
Dec 1989	Gorbachev and Bush announce the end of the Cold War at the Malta Summit
Aug 1990	USSR and USA work together to end the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait
Dec 1991	USSR officially dissolved

CROSS-REFERENCE

Gorbachev is profiled in Chapter 16, where his early reforms are also outlined.

Contribution and attitude to the end of the Cold War

When the final end of the Cold War came it was not how anyone predicted. The peoples of Eastern Europe voted with their feet. 1989 became known as the 'year of miracles' as communism collapsed across Europe.

A CLOSER LOOK

Collapse of communism in Eastern Europe

Mikhail Gorbachev was a reformer. By the mid-1980s it was obvious that the Soviet economy was in deep trouble. Although he had introduced some market reforms with glasnost and perestroika they had had limited impact, except in allowing people to be more critical of the government. When Poland announced it was going to hold free elections, Gorbachev made it clear that the Soviet Union would not intervene, even when the anti-communist trade unionist Lech Walesa won the presidency. This was a repudiation of the Brezhnev Doctrine whereby the Soviet Union had interfered in the domestic affairs of other communist states. Realising the Soviet Union would not intervene led to a domino effect across Eastern Europe.

It was Reagan's and Thatcher's insistence on taking a strong line with the USSR which forced Gorbachev to realise that the USSR was no longer strong enough to compete; at the same time Reagan's and Thatcher's willingness to negotiate with Gorbachev meant that the Cold War came to a peaceful end. However, in bringing about the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s, all the key players failed to see it through to the end. Ronald Reagan's second presidential term finished in 1988 so it was his successor, George Bush Senior, who oversaw the end of the Cold War. Mikhail Gorbachev was overtaken by events as the Soviet Union fell apart in 1991; he effectively lost power in a coup in August and resigned at the end of the year. Margaret Thatcher fell from power in November 1990.

Thatcher had feared a German superstate dominating Europe, but she was unable to stop it. Helmut Kohl became the hero of the hour, at the head of the new unified Germany, now with a population of 80 million. Because of her strained relationship with Germany and her opposition to its reunification, unlike Gorbachev and George Bush Senior, Thatcher was not invited to the tenth anniversary of the fall of the Wall in 1999. In the new Eastern European states, however, there were no such divided opinions. In these newly independent states, Margaret Thatcher was widely admired.

SOURCE 2

Charles Powell was Thatcher's private secretary from 1983 to 1990. He was her key foreign policy advisor during this period. In 2007 he gave an interview to an international conference where he reflected on her success:

Margaret Thatcher's policy towards East and Central Europe and the Soviet Union was a huge success. Of course it wasn't all down to her; the Americans had by far the greatest role in relation to the Soviet Union. But she worked extremely closely with President Reagan, shared his outlook on almost everything, and indeed had briefed him from her very first meeting with Mr Gorbachev, that here was a different sort of man. And therefore the negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union on arms control, which had been broken off, were restarted, and you see all the subsequent steps which were taken towards reducing nuclear weapons. So I can't believe anyone can see this other than a great success for American, British and to some degree other European diplomacy, in which she played an extraordinarily prominent part, because of the very hard line she had taken against communism and the Soviet Union at the beginning, and because of the relationship she had forged with Mr Gorbachev, and because of her approach to Eastern Europe.

ACTIVITY

Assess the roles of Thatcher, Reagan and Gorbachev in bringing an end to the Cold War. Write a paragraph explaining who you think was most important. You might want to look back to Chapter 16 to help with your answer.

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources
How valuable is Charles Powell's view to an historian studying Thatcher's success in foreign policy?



Fig. 8 The First Gulf War: oilfields burning in Kuwait, 1991

CROSS-REFERENCE

The Iraq War and a profile of Saddam Hussein can be found on page 210.

The Cold War had dominated international relations since the Second World War. No one at the time knew what the new world would look like. In fact, even as it was ending, war broke out in the Middle East. **Saddam Hussein**, the President of Iraq, sent forces to conquer the oil-rich state of Kuwait in the Arabian Gulf in August 1990. In 1991, an American-led coalition, including Britain, which was backed by a United Nations resolution, expelled Iraqi forces from Kuwait in a short military campaign. Although Iraq lost the war, Hussein remained the leader of Iraq.

KEY PROFILE

Douglas Hurd (b. 1930) became Foreign Secretary in 1991, in John Major's government, after standing in the 1990 leadership election. He was an experienced Conservative politician from the pro-Europe wing of the party, loyal to Mrs Thatcher in many respects but very different in his approach to Britain's role in Europe. He was closely involved with European attempts to mediate in the Balkan conflicts between 1992 and 1995 but these efforts met with little success as Slobodan Milosevic consistently went back on the agreements.

Interventions in the Balkans

Although some feared that the end of the Cold War would lead to new arenas of conflict, others were optimistic that the expanding European Union would now play a bigger part in world affairs, setting up new arrangements for collective security and the peaceful resolution of disputes. This optimism was shattered by the problems of the Balkans as Yugoslavia disintegrated.

The crisis in Yugoslavia was not a sudden one and it stemmed from the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe. From 1989, the Yugoslav president, Slobodan Milosevic, was transforming from Communist Party leader to an extreme Serbian nationalist and threatening violent action against the Albanian population in the province of Kosovo.

In 1991, the prosperous northern republic of Slovenia declared independence and the Yugoslav state began to break up. There were violent clashes between the two largest republics, Serbia and Croatia, between people of different ethnicities and religions.

Both the EU and the UN began urgent diplomatic efforts to maintain the peace. The British Foreign Secretary, **Douglas Hurd**, was optimistic that international mediation would be effective and that Britain could make a major contribution. However, the efforts of European diplomats failed. It was not clear



Fig. 9 The price of the failure of diplomacy in the Balkans: UN forces removing dead bodies after ethnic violence, Vitez in Bosnia, 1993

whether the aim was maintaining a multi-ethnic Yugoslavia, or allowing it to break up altogether.

War began in Bosnia in April 1992. The Muslim population of eastern Bosnia was driven out by violent 'ethnic cleansing', carried out by Bosnian-Serb paramilitaries backed by Milosevic's government.

In August 1992 John Major hosted a joint EU and UN conference in London and a UN peacekeeping force was put in place. In October 1992, the Vance–Owen plan, by Cyrus Vance, a UN representative, and the former British Foreign Secretary, David Owen, set out a framework for a lasting settlement. At the time, Major was widely praised for his actions but there was no concerted European pressure. The United States remained reluctant to intervene in Europe. Serb aggression continued. The war in Bosnia carried on for three more years, with Sarajevo under constant siege. British and European mediation was seen as ineffectual, especially after the massacre of Srebrenica in July 1995.

KEY PROFILE

David Owen (b. 1938) was the British Foreign Secretary between 1977 and 1979. He was also one of the 'gang of four' who left the Labour Party in 1981 to form the SDP.

A CLOSER LOOK

The massacre at Srebrenica

In 1995, Bosnian Serb forces entered Srebrenica. There was a small force of Dutch UN peacekeepers stationed at Srebrenica but they had orders not to intervene. More than 7000 Bosnian men and boys were massacred in one of the worst atrocities to occur in Europe since the end of the Second World War. Srebrenica was not important just because it was an atrocity; there were many atrocities in the Balkan wars, committed by all sides. Its importance lay in the recriminations that followed about the failure of UN peacekeeping missions. It showed the limits of EU diplomacy and UN peacekeeping.

Events in the Balkans, 1995–97

After the horrors of the siege of Sarajevo and the Srebrenica massacre, Britain turned to the United States and **NATO**. President Clinton was persuaded to intervene; the central command and the military power of NATO were seen as essential to force the warring Balkan political leaders to negotiate. American air strikes on Serb forces led to a peace conference at Dayton, Ohio. A peace treaty was signed in Paris in December 1995. This guaranteed Bosnian independence, protected by a UN force and with substantial economic support from the international community.

There is no doubt that Britain's place in the world was changing after 1987. Europe's centre of gravity was shifting eastwards as states in Eastern Europe broke free from Soviet domination and moved towards the EU. And at the same time Britain's place in the EU was increasingly being questioned. The end of the Cold War meant that NATO had to find a new role. Post-Soviet Russia was weak, both economically and politically. The dominance of the United States seemed to be unchallenged and Britain, with its special relationship with the United States still strong, expected to play a role in the new world order.

A CLOSER LOOK

NATO

Involving NATO in peacekeeping in the Balkans was far more effective than using the United Nations, because the UN depended on member states to provide troops, whereas NATO had a unified central command under American leadership.

ACTIVITY

1. Discuss with a partner the influences on Britain's foreign policy between 1987 and 1997. Make a list of instances when Britain got involved in foreign affairs.
2. Draw two columns and identify the advantages and disadvantages of Britain intervening in the Balkans.

Summary

ACTIVITY

Summary

Identify the ways in which Britain's place in the world had changed between 1987 and 1997. Which do you think were the most significant changes? Explain your answer.

STUDY TIP

Make sure you consider the impact at the time and also the longer-term impact.



PRACTICE QUESTION

Evaluating primary sources

Look back at Sources 1 and 2. With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these two sources to an historian studying Thatcher's impact on British foreign policy between 1987 and 1997.

STUDY TIP

In order to compare John Major's foreign policy with his domestic policy, you will need to look back to Chapter 17. Identify the successes and failures of both policies and consider their significance before you begin. Set out your view in your introduction and look at different areas of policy analytically whilst conveying your own judgement.

PRACTICE QUESTION

'John Major was more successful in foreign affairs than he was in domestic policies.' Assess the validity of this view.

21 The labour governments

SOURCE 1

Tony Blair made a speech outside 10 Downing Street on the day after he won the 1997 general election by a landslide:

As I stand here before No. 10 Downing Street, I know what this country has voted for today. It is a mandate for New Labour. We ran for office as New Labour, we will govern as New Labour. This is not a mandate for dogma or for doctrine, or a return to the past, but it was a mandate to get those things done in our country that desperately need doing for the future of Britain. A new Labour Government that remembers that it was a previous Labour Government that formed the welfare state and the National Health Service. It shall be our job to modernise it for a modern world. We will work in partnership with business to create the dynamic economy, the competitive economy of the new century and new age. It will be a government that seeks to restore trust in politics in this country. That cleans it up. And it shall be a government that gives this country strength and confidence in leadership both at home and abroad, particularly in Europe.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this chapter you will learn about:

- Blair as leader, character and ideology
- constitutional change
- domestic policies
- Brown and economic policy
- Northern Ireland and the Good Friday Agreement.

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

1. What message is Tony Blair trying to convey about New Labour in government in Source 1? Which would you identify as the key words and phrases in this speech?
2. What are the limitations that an historian has to consider when using this kind of source?



Fig. 1 Tony Blair walking up Downing Street after his election victory in 1997

CROSS-REFERENCE

Tony Blair is profiled on page 156; the changes he made to the Labour Party are covered in Chapter 18.

Gordon Brown and Peter Mandelson are profiled in Chapter 18.

KEY TERM

the Third Way: a term used to describe a middle way between the socialism of 'Old' Labour which championed the role of the State and the Thatcherite policies of the Conservative Party after 1979 which favoured the market; the theory was developed by Anthony Giddens at the London School of Economics and was influential on both Blair's 'New' Labour in Britain and Bill Clinton's Democrats in the USA

Blair as leader, character and ideology

Tony Blair was a new kind of Labour politician. His father had been a Conservative supporter and Blair had not joined the Labour Party until after he had graduated from Oxford University. This made it easier for him to move the Labour Party away from its traditional policies and beliefs. He and fellow Labour modernisers such as Gordon Brown and Peter Mandelson argued that this was necessary if the Labour Party was going to remain relevant in the modern world. The changes in British society and economics meant that the Labour Party could no longer rely on the working-class vote electing them into government.

Blair was a charismatic leader who was comfortable with the media. As well as performing well in Parliament he was extremely adept at appearing on non-political TV programmes. Despite his privileged background, he portrayed himself as an ordinary person, in both his speech and interests: he wore casual clothes; he had been in a rock band while at university; he watched football and supported his local team, Newcastle United. He was also able to show he was in touch with the electorate: when the popular Princess of Wales died in 1997, only a few months after he became prime minister, he paid tribute to her, using the phrase 'the people's princess'; his ability to tap into what many people were thinking contrasted starkly with the royal family who faced unprecedented criticism for their lack of empathy. Blair's popularity soared to 93 per cent according to an internal Labour Party poll.

ACTIVITY**Extension**

Working in groups look back at Chapters 14, 15, 17 and 19. Make a list of reasons why changes in British society and economics might affect Labour Party support.

Blair did not want to reverse many of the policies of Thatcher and Major. Much of the Conservative Party's trade union reform was accepted; there would be no re-nationalisation of the privatised industries; and he argued that it did not matter whether it was the State, or private companies or charities, which delivered public services as long as the quality of the service was what users wanted. He called this **the Third Way**.

Critics argued that Blair did not really stand for anything; that he had jettisoned traditional Labour policies and accepted Thatcherite ideas simply to win power.

The methods which helped the Labour Party win the 1997 election continued after it. Despite the landslide victory and despite the problems in the Conservative Party, many people in the Labour Party were worried that this success could not last. There was tight control over the media message and splits within the party, especially between Blair and Brown, were hidden. By 2007 this 'control freakery' was increasingly disliked and was adding to a feeling that politicians could not be trusted.

CROSS-REFERENCE

The Conservative Party and the elections in 2001 and 2005 are covered in Chapter 22.

A CLOSER LOOK**The Blair–Brown relationship**

Blair made Gordon Brown his Chancellor of the Exchequer. Brown had control over economic policy which also gave him a great deal of power on all domestic policy. He was too popular within the party and successful as chancellor for Blair to remove him so despite ongoing tension the two

men had to work together. Brown believed that Blair had agreed to step down during his second term so, after 2001, the relationship deteriorated further. Brown's supporters increasingly put pressure on Blair to step down and this partly explains why he did so in 2007. Brown then became prime minister. However, despite the strains in their relationship, the Blair–Brown partnership and its role in the creation and government of New Labour was very important and helps to explain its success.

Constitutional change

Acceptance of many policies of the Conservative governments of 1979 to 1997 did not mean that Blair's government did not make great changes to Britain. In fact New Labour fundamentally reshaped the British constitution.

Devolution

The unpopularity of the Conservatives in Scotland had strengthened calls for Scottish independence during the 1980s and 1990s. By 1997 the Conservatives had no MPs in Scotland. There was growing resentment that Scotland was ruled by a party in Westminster that it had not voted for. The Labour Party manifesto in 1997 promised new **referendums on devolution**.

Devolution referendums were held in 1997. The Scottish people voted in favour of devolving power to a Scottish parliament and also in favour of this parliament having tax-raising powers. This led to a new Scottish Assembly being established at Edinburgh, based on a system of proportional representation. Similarly, the referendum in Wales agreed to the setting up of a Welsh Assembly in Cardiff, although with more limited powers. Government in Northern Ireland was also devolved after the **Good Friday Agreement** in 1998. Another reform was the introduction of an elected mayor for London in 1999. There were some moves to introduce further assemblies in England as well. A referendum was held in the northeast in 2004; when it was overwhelmingly rejected, plans to extend devolution any further were halted too.

However, these changes did not always have the effect that the Labour government hoped for. In Scotland and Wales, the Scottish Nationalists (SNP) and Plaid Cymru (PC) continued to gain support contrary to the belief that devolution would take away their momentum.

Introducing the office of an elected mayor of London proved to be a successful change. However, in the first election in 2000, Blair blocked **Ken Livingstone** from being the Labour candidate. To Blair, Livingstone, as leader of the Greater London Council, represented all that had been wrong with the 'loony left' Labour Party of the 1980s; he feared that Livingstone would harm the image of 'New Labour' that the modernisers had since created. Livingstone subsequently left the Labour Party, ran as an independent and won the election, with the official Labour candidate coming third behind the Conservative candidate. Blair was forced to accept Livingstone back into the party.

The Labour government also made a major political effort to reform the House of Lords in 1999; it ended with a rather messy compromise in which hereditary peers were not abolished but cut to 92. House of Lords reform was seen as unsatisfactory by almost everyone.

Reforms to Parliament

Pre-election discussions had been held with the Liberal Democrats about possible reforms to the electoral system. A commission led by **Roy Jenkins** was set up to examine alternative voting systems. It reported in 1998 and

KEY CHRONOLOGY

Constitutional changes, 1997–2007

1998	Scotland Act, Government of Wales Act, Human Rights Act
1999	House of Lords Act
2000	First election for mayor of London
2000	Freedom of Information Act
2006	Extension of powers to Welsh Assembly

CROSS-REFERENCE

Look back at Chapter 10 to remind yourself of what happened in the devolution referendums in Scotland and Wales of 1979.

CROSS-REFERENCE

The Good Friday Agreement of 1998 and its impact are covered on page 186 of this chapter.

CROSS-REFERENCE

Ken Livingstone is profiled on page 118.

Look back to Chapter 14 to read about the 'loony left'.

CROSS-REFERENCE

Jenkins is profiled in Chapter 5, page 43; his role in the SDP split from Labour is covered in Chapter 13.

A CLOSER LOOK

The European Convention on Human Rights was drafted by European states, including the United Kingdom, after the Second World War and was an attempt to prevent the abuses of human rights which had been seen in the 1930s and 1940s. It set up a European Court of Human Rights that any European citizen could appeal to if their human rights were infringed. Incorporating it into British law meant that British courts would consider the Convention in coming to their judgement. This meant that individuals would not have to take cases to the European Court.

ACTIVITY

Discuss with a partner how much the British constitution changed between 1997 and 2007. How were people affected?

CROSS-REFERENCE

To recap on Labour's pledge card look back to Chapter 18, page 159.

ACTIVITY

Extension

Do some research to find out how and when the five pledges were met.

CROSS-REFERENCE

Other policies which affected workers, women and young people are covered in Chapter 23.

recommended that first-past-the-post be replaced with a more proportional system. But no changes were made.

Citizens' rights

A Freedom of Information Act was passed in 2000. This gave people the right to request information from public bodies. By 2006 over 100,000 requests were being made each year. Tony Blair later described this as a mistake and himself as a 'naive, foolish, irresponsible nincompoop' for passing it. He argued he had not realised its implications because he had only just become prime minister but that its existence would prevent politicians from making difficult decisions because they feared their actions would become public knowledge.

The **European Convention on Human Rights** was incorporated into British law through the Human Rights Act 1998. However, the way judges interpreted this sometimes created unexpected difficulties for the government. For example, in 2004 the government was forced to amend anti-terrorist legislation which allowed the indefinite detainment of UK non-nationals suspected of terrorist activities because the House of Lords ruled that this was incompatible with the Act.

Domestic policies

Labour had won the 1997 election with a manifesto which concentrated on improving public services. The pledge card identified how they would do this and by 2001 all of these five pledges had been met.

The pledges made in the 1997 election were not overly ambitious and in many other ways the policies that the Labour government followed developed the policies of the previous Conservative government. Tony Blair had promised that 'education, education, education' would be Labour's key commitment. In education, the Labour government kept the league tables and inspections introduced by Major's administration. Targets were extended and more specialist schools were encouraged. Similarly, as shadow home secretary, Blair had promised that Labour would be 'tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime'. This was designed to counter the belief that only the Conservative Party was strong on law and order issues. There were measures to reduce social exclusion – one of the causes of crime – but this was paired with longer prison sentences.

At the 2001 election the Labour Party promised more investment in health and education that, combined with reform, would improve their quality. There would be more teachers, doctors and nurses but also more accountability to parents and patients to ensure improving exam results and shorter waiting times for operations. A special delivery unit was set up in July 2001 to ensure that reforms were implemented and increasingly targets were used to try and enforce change. However, Blair himself remained disappointed by the slow progress of these reforms and later argued that he should have been prepared to be more radical earlier.

Blair's government also had to face some crises. Rising fuel prices led to a blockade in 2000 by farmers and lorry drivers; foot and mouth disease hit farmers of cattle and sheep leading to a cull of ten million animals. People in the countryside more generally felt that the Labour Party was too urban and did not properly understand their issues. This came to a head when the Labour government tried to ban hunting with dogs. There was a long battle with the House of Lords over the issue and the pressure group the Countryside Alliance organised a march which half a million people attended in 2002 before the ban was finally passed in 2004.



Fig. 2 The Countryside Alliance marches through London in 2002

ACTIVITY

Write a letter to a national newspaper in support of the Countryside Alliance.

SOURCE 2

Stuart Hall was a left-wing political commentator. In 2003 he wrote an article in the left-leaning newspaper *The Guardian* arguing for a left-wing alternative to New Labour:

The Labour election victory in 1997 took place at a moment of great political opportunity. Thatcherism had been rejected by the electorate. But 18 years of Thatcherite rule had radically altered British society. There was, therefore, a fundamental choice of direction for the incoming government. One was to offer an alternative radical strategy to Thatcherism, attuned to the shifts that had occurred in the 1970s and 1980s. The other choice was, of course, to adapt to Thatcherite, neo-liberal terrain. New Labour is difficult to characterise. The fact is that New Labour is a hybrid regime, composed of two strands. However, one strand – the neo-liberal – is in the dominant position. The other strand – the social democratic – is subordinate. At the moment, the resistance to the New Labour project is coming mainly from the backwash of the invasion of Iraq. We need to build the different, particular points of opposition (the war, private-public initiatives, opposition to privatisation) into a more substantive critique in order that a more coherent vision can emerge from the left.

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

How valuable is Source 2 to an historian seeking to understand New Labour?

Brown and economic policy

Gordon Brown was an extremely important New Labour figure throughout the period 1997 to 2007. Part of the agreement that he would not stand for the Labour Party leadership against Blair was that he would have complete control over economic policy and he remained as Chancellor of the Exchequer throughout this period.

Labour inherited very favourable economic circumstances in 1997. Brown's initial priorities were to keep inflation low, to keep government spending

CROSS-REFERENCE

The circumstances in which Tony Blair became leader are explained in Chapter 18.

CROSS-REFERENCE

Look back at Chapters 13 and 14 to remind yourself of Thatcherite economic policy.

under control and to prove to Middle England that Labour was pro-business and could be trusted with running the economy. This would enable Labour to escape from its previous image as a ‘tax-and-spend’ party.

Brown also made the Bank of England independent from the government. This meant that the government would set a target for inflation but it was up to the Bank of England to decide where to set interest rates to meet this target. Brown also set the Treasury rules about how much could be borrowed by the government. In effect he was partly following the Thatcherite belief that the supply of money needed to be controlled.

This was, however, ‘prudence with a purpose’ according to Brown. The purpose of a stable growing economy was to improve public services. So after 2001 there was an injection of money into public services. The big increases in investment were reflected in new schools and hospitals and pay rises for doctors, nurses and teachers. Exam results went up and waiting lists went down. The Labour government argued that this spending was necessary to make up for years of under-funding and neglect under the Conservative administrations of 1979 to 1997.

SOURCE 3

Gordon Brown, the Labour chancellor from 1997 to 2007, set out the principles behind New Labour’s economic policy in a speech to the Labour Party conference in 2003:

With a Labour Government economic progress and social justice are not in conflict. With a Labour Government economic progress and social justice can advance together. These reforms show that our economic strength didn’t just happen, we made it happen. Labour values made it happen. Don’t ever let people tell you this happened because we were lucky, it happened because we are Labour. It’s because we understood a Labour truth, that recessions hit pensioners, the low paid, small businesses; it’s because we recognised a Labour reality, that high and volatile inflation may help the speculator but hurts the poor; it’s because we were driven forward by a Labour cause, rooted in our beliefs, that economic stability matters most to hard working families; it’s because we never forgot where we come from and where we want to take Britain. And what our economic policy is proving is that you do not defeat the Tories by imitation or just by better presentation but by Labour policies and Labour reforms grounded in Labour values.

ACTIVITY**Evaluating primary sources**

How valuable is Source 3 for an understanding of Labour economic policy between 1997 and 2003?

CROSS-REFERENCE

The Private Finance Initiative is explained in Chapter 17, page 149.

In order to avoid raising taxes, Labour, like the Conservatives, continued to use private sources of funding for improvements to public services. There was some criticism of the funding of new projects through the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). The buildings usually got completed quickly but debts were stored up for the future.

By 2007 Gordon Brown had completed an unprecedented ten years as chancellor. Throughout this time, inflation was kept under control and record numbers of people were in work. Living standards remained high and the consumer economy boomed. On the other hand, some economists, such as Will Hutton, warned that the consumer boom was based on rising house prices and on high levels of credit-card spending and personal debt, rather than increased productivity. There was a danger that this ‘bubble’ might not last.

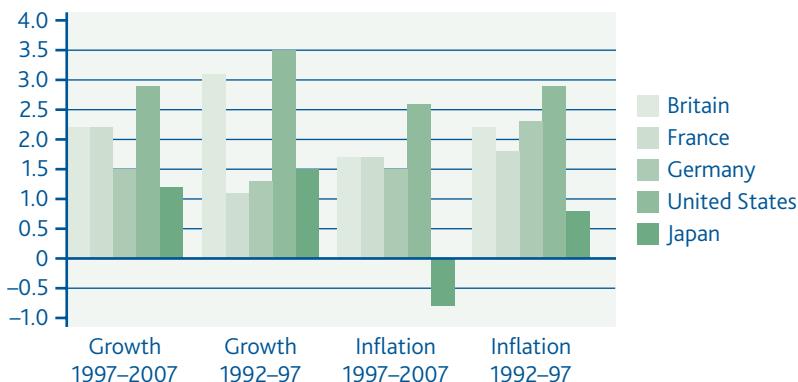


Fig. 3 Average annual growth and inflation rates (%), 1992–2007

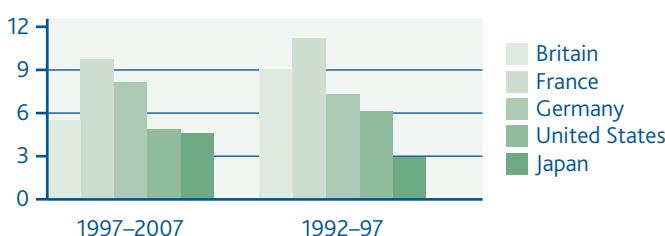


Fig. 4 Average annual unemployment rates (%), 1992–2007

ACTIVITY

Look at the statistics on growth, inflation and unemployment in Figures 3 and 4. Outline the arguments for and against the claim that the British economy was performing well between 1997 and 2007.

Northern Ireland and the Good Friday Agreement



Fig. 5 David Trimble and John Hume receive the Nobel Peace Prize in 1998

Tony Blair inherited a great political opportunity in Northern Ireland in 1997. A lot of the vital work in building confidence between the unionists and nationalists/republicans had been done under John Major, meaning there was potential to bring an end to the Troubles in Northern Ireland. There had been talks involving all the different parties in Northern Ireland on and off since 1996. John Hume, the leader of the Social Democratic Labour Party (SDLP), had persuaded Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness of Sinn Fein that a negotiated settlement was possible.

Both sides, the unionists and the republicans, trusted the chairman of the talks, George Mitchell, a former US senator who was Bill Clinton's special envoy for Northern Ireland. There was also a further international dimension.

CROSS-REFERENCE

Major's government and Northern Ireland is covered in Chapter 17.

John Hume and Martin McGuinness are profiled in Chapters 9 and 10, pages 82 and 81 respectively.

Blair developed a close working relationship with the Irish Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, which continued throughout the period 1997 to 2008; this helped keep the support of the republicans. The Labour secretary of state for Northern Ireland, **Mo Mowlam**, kept the paramilitaries on board by visiting them in the Maze prison. However, Blair's personal commitment was also vital and Blair proved capable of reassuring **David Trimble** and the Ulster Unionists that Sinn Fein could be trusted.

KEY PROFILE

Mo Mowlam (1949–2005) was the Labour MP for Redcar between 1987 and 2001. She was the secretary of state for Northern Ireland between 1997 and 1999. She was credited for helping bring about the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, often being quite unorthodox: she was well known for being irreverent and was prepared to take political risks, for example, visiting loyalist prisoners to persuade them to support the process.

David Trimble (b. 1944) was elected as an MP for the Ulster Unionist Party in 1990 and became its leader in 1995. He was extremely important in getting his party to accept the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 and received the Nobel Peace Prize (jointly with John Hume) later that year for this work. He served as the first minister in the devolved Northern Irish Assembly between 1998 and 2007.

The tense final negotiations in April 1998 went on for 17 hours after the final deadline set by Mitchell was missed. One of the UUP negotiators, Jeffrey Donaldson, walked out on 9 April 1998 in protest at the lack of progress in ensuring that the IRA would **decommission** its arms, leading to fears that the negotiations would collapse. However, on 10 April George Mitchell announced that an agreement had been reached and that this agreement would be put to a referendum of the people, both in Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland.

The Good Friday Agreement 1998

The key elements of the agreement include:

- both the UK and the Irish Republic would give up their claim on Northern Ireland as it would be up to the people of Northern Ireland to decide whether they would remain part of the United Kingdom or join the Irish Republic
- a devolved Assembly along with a power-sharing Executive would be set up
- links between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, and between Britain and the Republic of Ireland would be strengthened
- parties would use their influence to ensure the decommissioning of arms
- there should be an independent commission to oversee reform of policing
- there could be early release of prisoners where paramilitary organisations were committed to peace.

The referendum was held on 22 May: in Northern Ireland 71 per cent voted for the agreement and in the Republic, 94 per cent voted yes. However, there was opposition to the Good Friday Agreement from both sides. The leaders of Sinn Fein, Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness, were very nervous of a republican backlash against them 'selling out'. David Trimble and the Ulster Unionists feared the powerful negative influence of Dr Ian Paisley, the leader of the hard-line Democratic Unionist Party (DUP). Some of these fears were realised: the Omagh bombing in 1998, which killed 30 people, was carried out by dissident republicans in the so-called Continuity IRA; and over the next 10 years unionists became disillusioned with some parts of the agreement and the DUP overtook the UUP as the main unionist political party in Northern Ireland.

KEY TERM

decommissioning: weapons would be put 'beyond use'; this would be overseen by independent trusted witnesses

Blair remained closely involved in Northern Ireland throughout his premiership. In the following ten years there were a number of disagreements: over whether the paramilitaries were really decommissioning arms; over the early release of convicted terrorists; over the right of the Protestant Orange Order to march on its traditional routes. The devolved institutions had to be suspended in 2002 until the St Andrews Agreement in 2006 which reiterated key elements of the Good Friday Agreement. However, although not all problems were solved, many people regarded Northern Ireland as Blair's greatest single achievement.

ACTIVITY**Extension**

Use the evidence in this chapter and in Chapters 13 and 17. Working in small groups, make a list of the three most significant factors for the success of the peace process in Northern Ireland and place them in order of importance.

Summary**ACTIVITY****Summary**

Draw a timeline of the Labour Party in government. Add the key political developments and colour-code them with the headings from this chapter.

**PRACTICE QUESTION****Evaluating primary sources**

Look back at Sources 1, 2 and 3. With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these three sources to an historian studying what was new about New Labour.

STUDY TIP

Think carefully about the authors of these sources. What is their position? Think about their audience – who are they speaking to? Make sure you are clear about New Labour too. It might be helpful for you to read back over Chapter 18.

**PRACTICE QUESTION**

How important was the leadership of Tony Blair to Labour's electoral success from 1997 to 2005?

STUDY TIP

In order to answer this question you will need to assess Blair's contribution as leader to Labour winning the elections of 1997, 2001 and 2005 and compare this against other relevant reasons for Labour's success. Remember you need to consider the opposition as well so you should also look ahead to Chapter 22.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this chapter you will learn about:

- Conservative Party leaders from 1997 to 2007
- the reasons why the Conservatives were defeated in the 2001 and 2005 elections.

ACTIVITY**Evaluating primary sources**

Using your understanding of the historical context of the Conservative Party in 1997, does Source 1 identify the key problems that the Conservative Party faced in this year?

SOURCE 1

Following the election defeat in 1997, key issues were identified by a group of Conservative modernisers that they believed needed to be addressed for the Conservative Party to become electable again:

First we must understand that, the more the Conservatives talk like (and, as a party look like) the rest of Britain – in both language and content – the more credible our political messages will be and sound. Second we must ensure that we are once again trusted more than Labour on the economy. Third we must neutralise our vulnerabilities on key policy issues – principally the perception that our instincts are to undermine and under-fund public services, especially schools and hospitals. Other things being equal we will not win re-election while people suspect our motives on those issues. Fourth out of the issues we identify and the new ideas we develop – we must define our purpose for the years ahead, fashioning a new narrative, which embraces the exciting opportunities as well as the new threats and challenges facing Britain in a new century.

Leaders and reason for divisions

Fig. 1 John Major leaving Downing Street after losing the 1997 election

KEY CHRONOLOGY**The Conservative Party
1997–2007**

May 1997	Election defeat
June 1997	Election of William Hague
June 2001	Election defeat
June 2001	Election of Iain Duncan Smith
May 2003	Duncan Smith replaced by Michael Howard
May 2005	Election defeat
June 2005	Election of David Cameron

After the election defeat in 1997 John Major immediately resigned as Conservative leader. The scale of the election defeat in 1997 produced a crisis in the Conservative Party, even though this was not apparent to everyone immediately. The divisions of Major's premiership remained, particularly on Europe, and the wound of Thatcher's fall was still unhealed with bitter recriminations against those who had 'betrayed Maggie' continuing. But the crisis in the Conservative Party also became increasingly focused on the future direction of the Conservative Party. To some the Labour Party's acceptance of many of Thatcher's reforms, such as privatisation, meant that the Conservative Party could wait for the electorate to come to their senses and realise that the Conservatives were the 'natural party of government'; others recognised that the 1997 election, like the 1979 election, was a turning point, and that the

Conservative Party, like the Labour Party in the 1980s, would have to change if it was to be electable again.

William Hague 1997–2001

The Conservative Party after the 1997 election was only half the size of the party that had chosen John Major in 1990. The party was more Eurosceptic and Thatcherite than it had been previously; one estimate is that 145 of the remaining 165 Conservative MPs were Eurosceptic and the party had lost some of its big hitters on the pro-European wing, such as Chris Patten.

Major's immediate resignation announcement meant that a new leader would be elected quickly. Michael Heseltine had suffered some ill health during the election campaign and decided not to stand in the leadership contest. It is unlikely he would have been successful in any case, being both pro-European and having not been forgiven for challenging Thatcher in 1990. Ken Clarke was well regarded by the electorate, both for his success as Chancellor of the Exchequer between 1992 and 1997, and because, with his professed love of jazz, cigars and whiskey, he was seen as being down to earth. But he was pro-European and was one of Thatcher's cabinet who had advised her to resign in 1990. The obvious candidate from the Right, and the more Eurosceptic wing of the party was Michael Portillo, but he had surprisingly lost his seat. The candidates from the Right of the party were therefore Michael Howard, John Redwood, Peter Lilley and William Hague.

CROSS-REFERENCE

Chris Patten is profiled in Chapter 20, page 173.

CROSS-REFERENCE

Heseltine is profiled on page 110, Clarke on page 173, Redwood on page 152, and Lilley on page 164.

The fall of Thatcher is covered in Chapter 17, page 144.



Fig. 2 Kenneth Clarke: his pro-European views helped to ensure that he failed to become the Conservative Party leader in 1997 and 2001

The leadership campaign was dominated by the 'anyone but Clarke' attitude of many Conservative MPs. Instead the new leader was **William Hague**,

KEY PROFILE

William Hague (b. 1961) was first noticed at the age of 16, making an assured speech at the 1981 Conservative Party conference. He became a popular and effective MP for Richmond, known for his Eurosceptic views and for his skill as a debater. As party leader, Hague attempted, at least at first, to make Conservative policies more socially inclusive but after 1999 concentrated on the Conservative core vote. He became foreign secretary in the coalition government after 2010.

CROSS-REFERENCE

New Labour in government is covered in Chapter 21.

ACTIVITY

Look back to Chapter 13 to remind yourself about Thatcherism's view of the State and write a paragraph explaining why Lilley's speech might have been seen as controversial.

KEY TERM

Mods: the modernisers; they were broadly Eurosceptic but tended to be more pragmatic; they were economic Thatcherites but influenced by 'compassionate conservatism'; they were socially liberal and wanted the Conservative Party to appear more inclusive

Rockers: those who were seen as resistant to change; they tended to have more hard-line views on Euroscepticism and Thatcherism, although some were also influenced by 'compassionate conservatism'; the biggest divide with the Mods was on social and moral issues where the Rockers were socially conservative

ACTIVITY**Evaluating primary sources**

How valuable is Source 2 for an understanding of the divisions that existed in the Conservative Party in 2001?

KEY PROFILE

Ann Widdecombe (b. 1947) was a Conservative politician who served as a minister under John Major and was shadow Health Secretary and shadow Home Secretary under William Hague. She was on the right of the party: Eurosceptic and socially conservative. She stood down from Parliament in 2010.

a 36-year-old with limited political experience. He believed that he could represent a fresh start, but won largely because he had fewer enemies than his rivals and because he was Mrs Thatcher's preferred choice. Thatcher was quoted as saying: 'Vote for William Hague to follow the same kind of government I did.'

After 1997 the Labour Party enjoyed an extended honeymoon with the electorate but it was not simply due to the popularity of Tony Blair and New Labour that the Conservatives remained far behind in the polls. Even when William Hague had largely unified the party on Europe by ruling out entry into a single currency 'in the foreseeable future', the Conservatives remained unpopular. Some in the party started to identify that the Conservative Party needed to change both its policies and its image. They argued that the Conservative Party was seen as uncaring, intolerant, old-fashioned and obsessed with Europe. But this proved extremely controversial.

In 1999 Peter Lilley, previously an arch Thatcherite, delivered a speech which seemed to criticise some elements of Thatcherism. He warned that although the public had accepted Thatcher's economic reforms as necessary to tackle the issues that Britain faced in the 1980s, they were suspicious of further such reform. The public was cautious about further privatisation as Major had found out when the possibility of Royal Mail being sold was discussed. The electorate were even more resistant to more private involvement in public services such as education and health, preferring them to be run and delivered by the State. They had voted for the Labour Party in 1997 partly because they thought that Labour would better protect these public services; and they tended to believe that the Conservatives wanted a smaller State for ideological reasons, rather than because it would provide better public services. The speech caused uproar as it was interpreted as a repudiation of Thatcherism. Hague was forced to reiterate his support for Thatcher. The Conservative Party was starting to divide between those who believed that the Conservative Party needed to change – the **Mods** – and those who resisted this – the **Rockers**.

SOURCE 2

Ann Widdecombe had served in William Hague's shadow cabinet between 1998 and 2001. Shortly after the general election defeat in 2001 she looked back at the problems the Conservative Party had faced in an article in the left-wing *New Statesman* periodical:

To fill the gap left by Euro wars, the press invented a new division: mods versus rockers. Initially, I gave little credence to such classifications. There had always been a mix of views, in all parties, over moral issues such as abortion, the age of consent or divorce laws, and there for ever would be. There is no inherent contradiction in appealing to a core vote and reaching out to a broader electorate. An emphasis on law and order, for example, will especially benefit those trying to live decent lives in deprived inner-city areas. A wide range of views is beneficial, not detrimental, because it indicates a party with a broad base. But throughout my time in the shadow cabinet, we argued endlessly about whether we could seize the high ground from Labour on the issues of health and education, never reaching a conclusion, and that policy stagnation, not factionalism, was our biggest single weakness.

The Conservative Party failed to make any progress in the polls. Hague felt his leadership was even more threatened after 1999 when Portillo was elected to Parliament in a by-election. To some on the right Portillo was the man who should have become leader in 1997 and Hague felt obliged to appoint him as shadow chancellor. After the Conservatives went down to another crushing defeat in 2001, Hague resigned the leadership immediately.

Iain Duncan Smith 2001–03

After Hague's resignation in 2001, the strongest candidates for the Conservative leadership were Kenneth Clarke and Michael Portillo. Clarke had remained popular with the broader electorate but was still viewed with suspicion by many Conservatives because of his European views, particularly after appearing with Tony Blair at a pro-European event in 1999. Michael Portillo, still a strong Eurosceptic, had reinvented himself as a social liberal and promised to make the party more modern and inclusive but this made him unpopular with many traditional Conservatives. Under the new rules for the leadership introduced by William Hague, the party members chose **Iain Duncan Smith** over Kenneth Clarke in the final round.

ACTIVITY

In pairs, one person taking the side of Clarke and one Duncan Smith, give reasons why the Conservative Party membership should support you in the leadership contest.

A CLOSER LOOK

Under the new leadership rules, MPs would vote in a succession of ballots until only two candidates remained. The vote would then go to the party membership. The aim of this was to prevent a situation such as when Thatcher lost office in 1990 against the wishes of many party activists. Critics of the system argued that the nature of party members – the average age was 64 – meant that they might not elect someone who had the support of MPs and/or would be attractive to the wider electorate.

CROSS-REFERENCE

Iain Duncan Smith is profiled in Chapter 20.

Iain Duncan Smith won in 2001 because of negative voting against Clarke and Portillo. It appeared as if the Rockers had defeated the Mods. However, Duncan Smith had little charisma and was no match for Tony Blair. The Conservatives remained behind in the opinion polls and within a few months of his emergence as leader, some Conservative MPs were plotting to get rid of him. Duncan Smith made some efforts to introduce **compassionate conservatism**; visiting the deprived Easterhouse estate in Glasgow convinced him that the Conservative Party had to do more to tackle poverty.



A CLOSER LOOK

Compassionate conservatism is a political philosophy characterised by an awareness of the social implications of economic policy. It was promoted by the Republicans in the USA in the 2000s and tends to support strong families and reformed welfare systems as ways of mitigating poverty. It has influenced Conservatives in the UK both from the socially conservative wing, such as Iain Duncan Smith, and from the socially liberal wing, such as George Osborne.

Fig. 3 Iain Duncan Smith visiting the Easterhouse estate in Glasgow

But he was also aggressively Eurosceptic and reopened the divisions over Europe. Under his leadership, the Conservative Party also remained socially conservative – voting against both the repeal of Section 28 and

CROSS-REFERENCE

To recap on Section 28, and the controversy it caused, look back to Chapter 19, pages 163–164.

ACTIVITY**Evaluating primary sources**

1. Discuss why Theresa May would make a speech like this at the Conservative Party conference of 2002.
2. Does this affect its value to an historian studying the Conservative Party at this time?

KEY PROFILE

Theresa May (b. 1956) worked in the banking industry before becoming the MP for Maidenhead in 1997. She held various posts in the shadow cabinets of Hague, Duncan Smith and Howard before becoming home secretary in the coalition government after 2010.

CROSS-REFERENCE

The Iraq War is covered in Chapter 24.

KEY PROFILE

Michael Howard (b. 1941) was an experienced and able politician but had become something of a hate figure as an extremely unpopular home secretary in the 1990s. As leader, Howard performed strongly against Tony Blair in the Commons and improved party organisation and morale. The party that Howard led, however, was still obsessed with Europe, and did not significantly alter its policy direction.

against allowing unmarried couples to adopt. These issues demonstrated the divisions in the party as modernisers such as David Cameron and George Osborne refused to follow the party line. And as Duncan Smith had been such a key architect of the rebellions that Major had faced over Maastricht, he now found it difficult to demand loyalty from his backbenchers as leader.

SOURCE 3

Theresa May, the chair of the Conservative Party, highlighted the problems the Conservative Party faced in making itself attractive to the electorate at the 2002 party conference:

The Conservative Party, its principles, its people, have been let down in recent years by the failure of some to represent faithfully the best in Conservatism. Some Tories have tried to make political capital by demonising minorities instead of showing confidence in all the citizens of our country. Some Tories have indulged themselves in petty feuding or personal sniping instead of getting behind a leader who is doing an enormous amount to change a party which has suffered two massive landslide defeats. Never forget this fact. Twice we went to the country unchanged, unrepentant, just plain unattractive. And twice we got slaughtered. Soldiering on to the next election without radical, fundamental change is simply not an option. There's a lot we need to do in this party of ours. Our base is too narrow and so, occasionally, are our sympathies. You know what some people call us – the nasty party. I know that's unfair. You know that's unfair but it's the people out there we need to convince.

Duncan Smith also supported the British entry into the **Iraq War**. This was heavily criticised by some, including Kenneth Clarke, as it made it difficult for the Conservatives to criticise the Labour government for this unpopular decision, especially as the war dragged on; instead the Liberal Democrats emerged as the anti-war party to challenge Labour. Finally, amid press speculation about the salary he paid to his wife to act as his secretary, Duncan Smith faced a vote of no confidence. Despite the fact that subsequently no wrongdoing was found, the damage was done; Duncan Smith was ousted from power and Michael Howard was installed as leader, unopposed.

Michael Howard, 2003–05

When Michael Howard took over the Conservative Party leadership he did so as a unifying figure, having support from both Mods and Rockers. This had less to do with Howard himself and was more the result of the party's realisation about the state it was in; one MP said 'Many of us who hate everything Michael Howard stands for politically will back him because we are tired of being embarrassed'. However, like Hague and Duncan Smith, Howard struggled to compete with Tony Blair in the opinion polls. Much of the work that Duncan Smith had done on social justice was abandoned and the Conservatives remained distrusted on key policy areas such as health and education. However, Howard did bring stability to the party. And despite the fact that he was on the right of the party and was socially conservative, Howard promoted modernisers in his cabinet. After the election defeat in 2005 David Cameron became shadow education secretary and George Osborne shadow chancellor. Howard made it clear that his preference was for his successor to be a moderniser.

David Cameron, 2005–present

In the leadership contest, held in the autumn of 2005, **David Cameron** defeated **David Davis**, the right-wing candidate, partly due to an impressive note-free speech at the Conservative Party conference.

SOURCE 4

As a leadership contender for the Conservative Party, David Cameron set out his vision of its future direction in a speech to the Policy Exchange think tank. This think tank was set up by modernisers in the Conservative Party in 2002:

A dynamic economy. A decent society. A strong self-confident nation. These goals are forward-looking, inclusive, and generous. I am absolutely clear that the Conservative Party is and will always be passionately concerned not just with individuals but with society. Conservatives believe profoundly that there is a 'we' in politics as well as a 'me'. I am absolutely clear that the Conservative Party has always stood for and will always stand for aspiration and compassion in equal measure. I am a Conservative. I'm also a moderniser. I don't see any contradiction between these two statements. Now I know what you're thinking. 'He's mentioned the "m" word. I know what's coming next. Here comes the bit of his speech where he's going to talk about the need to respect diversity in society. The importance of having more women in leading roles. The need to be less confrontational. The need to be more informal and personal.' Well, of course we need to do each and every one of these things to be relevant in the modern world. It's just common sense.

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

How useful is Source 4 in explaining why David Cameron won the leadership of the Conservative Party in 2005?

As leader, Cameron set about detoxifying, or modernising, the Conservative Party. Cameron and his fellow modernisers understood that it was essential to reach out beyond the narrow 'core' support for the Conservatives to make the party more tolerant and inclusive, no longer hostile to all kinds of social groups including ethnic minorities, gay people, single mothers, and young people.

To do this he highlighted policy areas and positions which were not traditional Conservative ones. He promised that a Conservative government would take seriously the issue of climate change; he visited the Arctic himself and cycled to Westminster. He was in favour of gay rights and wanted to increase overseas aid. He praised the way the NHS had cared for his disabled son and promised that a future Conservative government would protect it. Though still Eurosceptic, the Conservative Party started to talk less about the European Union. Instead Cameron's shadow chancellor, **George Osborne**, promised to maintain Labour levels of spending on public services, effectively ruling out tax cuts. The Conservative Party would be more centrist, tolerant and outward looking.

The Labour Party found it more difficult to attack Cameron than his predecessors. This was partly because the Labour Party's popularity was in decline by this point. But it was also because the Conservative Party had started to look electable again. For the first time since 1997, the Conservatives seemed to offer a credible alternative.

KEY PROFILE



Fig. 4 David Cameron has been the Conservative leader since 2005

David Cameron (b. 1966) came from a wealthy background and was educated at Eton and Oxford. His early career was in public relations; he was also a policy adviser to Norman Lamont at the time of Black Wednesday in 1992 and later to Michael Howard. Cameron was elected MP for Witney in 2001, only four years before he became party leader. He became prime minister leading the coalition government in 2010.

David Davis (b. 1948) came from a working-class background. He became the Conservative MP for Haltemprice and Howden in 1987. He is socially conservative but a great supporter of civil liberties, resigning from the shadow cabinet in 2008 to force a by-election where he stood as an opponent of policies which, he believed, eroded these.

George Osborne (b. 1971) was elected as the Conservative MP for Tatton in 2001. Previously he had worked for the Conservative Party both during the 1997 election campaign for Major and as a speech-writer for William Hague. He was a moderniser, socially liberal though economically Thatcherite, and was influenced by George W. Bush's compassionate conservatism. He became Chancellor of the Exchequer in the coalition government after 2010.

CROSS-REFERENCE

Tebbit is profiled in Chapter 13, page 108.

STUDY TIP

Make sure you clearly identify all the different divisions that existed. You'll also need to assess the amount of agreement there was in the party in order to come to an overall judgement.

CROSS-REFERENCE

Britain's possible entry into the Euro and the increasing importance of immigration as a political issue between 1997 and 2007 are discussed in Chapters 23 and 24.

Many on the right wing of the Conservative Party remained sceptical of this shift and some such as **Norman Tebbit** were openly critical of what they perceived as a rejection of Thatcherism. However, by and large, the party seemed more united than it had been for over a decade. Perhaps this was because many Conservatives hoped for victory at the 2010 election against an increasingly unpopular Labour government and realised that only a united party could achieve this. Certainly, by the time Tony Blair left office in 2007, Cameron's Conservative Party seemed to have recovered much of the ground lost since 1992.

**PRACTICE QUESTION**

How divided was the Conservative Party between 1997 and 2007?

Reason for electoral failures in 2001 and 2005

As the previous section describes, there are a number of reasons for the Conservative electoral defeats which are common to both 2001 and 2005: the failures of the leadership; the divisions in the party over Thatcher, over Europe, over social liberalism; the failures to learn lessons from electoral defeats; and the resistance to reform. In addition to this the Labour governments remained fairly popular, at least until 2003. As is true in many elections in the UK, the first-past-the-post electoral system also distorted the results in terms of the number of seats won. But there were also particular issues with each of these elections.

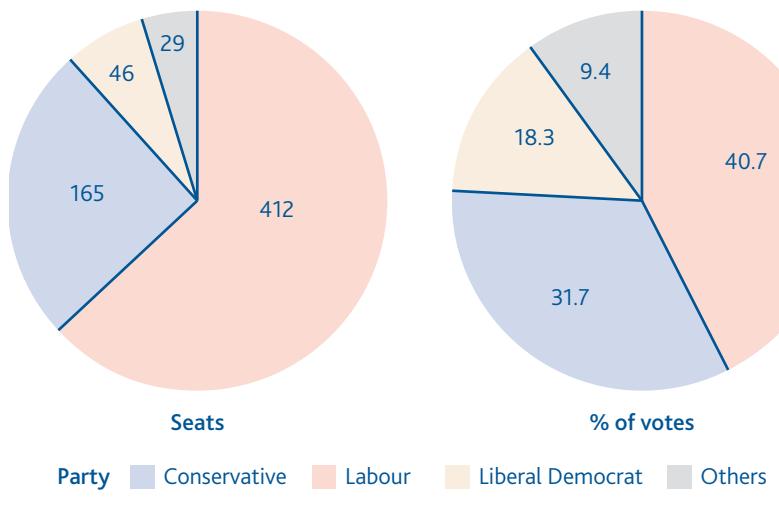
Hague found it difficult to be taken seriously, especially his attempts to appear ordinary and live down his teenage political speech-making. He was mocked for wearing a baseball cap, for appearing at the Notting Hill Carnival and for his boast of drinking 14 pints a day as a teenager.

The divisions in the Conservative Party and his own personal weaknesses in the opinion polls meant that by the time of the 2001 election, Hague had retreated to right-wing policy positions designed to shore up the Conservative core vote: 'the fight to save the pound' and a hard line against immigration.

Furthermore, Thatcher appeared at an election rally quipping that she had seen an apt billboard advertising the film *The Mummy Returns*. While her involvement was attractive to many Conservative activists, it did not widen the Conservative Party's appeal any further. Instead it further undermined Hague's leadership and reminded some voters of why they had rejected the Conservative Party previously. The Conservative Party lost by another landslide.



Fig. 5 A Labour campaign poster depicting William Hague with the superimposed hair and earrings of Margaret Thatcher

**Fig. 6** Election results, 2001

In some ways the defeat in 2001 was even worse than the defeat in 1997. The party had made no progress after its worst result since 1832. And it could no longer be argued that the electorate just wanted a change in government.

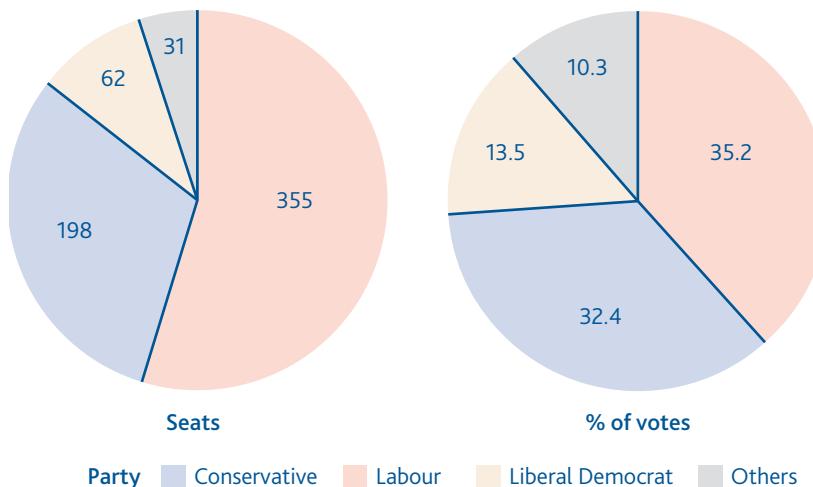
In 2005, the Conservatives suffered a third successive defeat. This was despite the Labour Party's unpopularity over the war in Iraq and more obvious divisions appearing between the Blairites and the Brownites.

Although Howard had made some noises about moving to the centre, he himself was on the right of the party. He was also associated with the previous Conservative governments of Major and Thatcher; voters therefore found it difficult to believe that the Conservative Party had changed. Its manifesto at the 2005 election seemed to reinforce this: a tough line on immigration, travellers, and law and order, combined with tax cuts and a reduction to the public sector. Michael Portillo described it as the 'Victor Meldrew' manifesto – a grumpy old man complaining about the state of modern Britain. When the Conservative deputy chairman was recorded at a private dinner promising that the Conservative Party would be much more radically Thatcherite in government than the modernisers would admit in public it seemed to confirm suspicions that the Conservative Party was still the same party of the 1980s and 1990s.

ACTIVITY

Extension

Find some examples of Conservative Party posters from 2001 and 2005. What are the key messages? What are the similarities and differences between them?

**Fig. 7** Election results, 2005

Although the Conservatives made some progress in 2005 it was still limited, particularly in context. The shift to the right had prevented a rise in support for UKIP but little had been done to make the party more attractive to the centre. Modernisers in the party who wanted to ensure that this defeat was finally the spur to change pointed out that the Conservative Party's popularity was still falling amongst women, young people, and in the north.

A CLOSER LOOK

UKIP (UK Independence Party) was formed in 1993 with the key aim of ensuring UK withdrawal from the European Union. After 1997 it became the main anti-European political party, gaining 3 seats at the 1999 European elections. In 2004 it finished above the Conservative Party in a by-election in Hartlepool. At the 2005 general election it polled 2.3 per cent of the votes. It did not win any seats but as a party came fourth in the popular vote.

Summary

ACTIVITY

Summary

Look back at Source 1. Give examples of where the Conservatives a) followed this advice and b) failed to do so in the period 1997 to 2007.

STUDY TIP

You may find it useful to look back at Chapters 17 and 21 so you have a good understanding of the context in which these elections took place.

A
LEVEL

PRACTICE QUESTION

Evaluating primary sources

Look back at Sources 1, 2 and 3. With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these three sources to an historian studying why the Conservative Party was electorally unsuccessful between 1997 and 2005.

STUDY TIP

This question requires you to show an understanding of the context in which Hague, Duncan Smith and Howard became leaders. It might seem easy to formulate an argument that they were the wrong people to elect and explain the problems they had. But your answer needs to be balanced so you need to show an awareness of the reasons why they were elected, including: who they represented and what the Conservative Party stood for, and who the alternatives were and why they weren't chosen.

A
LEVEL

PRACTICE QUESTION

'The Conservative Party elected the wrong people to lead it between 1997 and 2005.' Assess the validity of this view.

23 Social issues

SOURCE 1

Matthew Parris was the Conservative MP for West Derbyshire from 1979 to 1986, having previously worked as Thatcher's secretary. He later became a journalist and was challenged by a friend to write a positive column about Tony Blair. In December 2006 he published the following in *The Times*:

The truth is that there is just one good thing I can say about this Prime Minister, but it is a very big thing indeed. Britain is a nicer place than when he entered Downing Street nearly ten years ago. His premiership has helped to make it so. Tony Blair has placed his personal stamp on a genuinely new era for Britain – an altered culture, a permanent change in our national mood. Without any shadow of doubt, Mr Blair will leave a happier country than he found. Concrete examples are legion: civil partnerships, the scrapping of the 'section 28', the minimum wage (towards which I was at first sceptical), childcare provision, the 'social inclusion agenda', relaxations on licensing hours, the reclassification of cannabis, a relentless campaign of oratory and example on religious tolerance, and a brave opening of the doors to Eastern European labour from the new EU members. That at least is a legacy of which he should be proud.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this chapter you will learn about:

- workers, women and youth
- the extent to which Britain had become a multicultural society.

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

How valuable is Source 1 for an understanding of the impact of New Labour on British society between 1997 and 2007?



Fig. 1 Notting Hill Carnival, 2007

Workers, women and youth

Between 1997 and 2007 a number of changes affected different parts of society.

Workers

Historically the Labour Party was the party of the workers. So when the Labour Party was elected to government in 1997 many believed that their long connection with the trade unions would make them much more sympathetic to trade union concerns. However, the decline of trade unions, which had begun in the 1980s, continued. The percentage of the workforce with membership of a union fell from 29 per cent to 26 per cent – though this rate of decline was much smaller than it had been previously.

Furthermore, despite the hopes of many trade unionists, New Labour did not repeal the trade union legislation that had been passed by the Conservative governments between 1979 and 1997. In fact the Labour

CROSS-REFERENCE

The ‘winter of discontent’ is covered in Chapter 9.

Labour’s election defeats are covered in Chapters 13 and 17.

Reforms to the Labour Party are covered in Chapter 18.

government was often openly critical of strike action by trade unions. This is not really surprising. New Labour believed that the Labour Party’s links with the trade union movement and memories of the ‘winter of discontent’ was one of the reasons that it had not been electable in the 1980s. Instead the influence that trade unions had on the Labour Party, for example through the block vote, had already been limited in the reforms passed by Smith and Blair; New Labour preferred to emphasise its pro-business attitude.

Some trade unions were also extremely critical of the Labour government for continuing to pursue policies such as outsourcing and PFI, which had been introduced by the Conservative Party in the 1980s and 1990s. Although the Labour government protected the employment rights of workers who moved from the public to the private sector in this way, they allowed contracting out to continue. Similarly, the Labour government not only did not reverse the privatisations of the 1980s and 1990s, it extended them. The Air Traffic Control organisation was sold off; London Underground moved to a public-private partnership; there were even discussions about selling off Royal Mail, which Major had not dared to do. Many trade unions were dismayed by this. By 2004, the RMT, the Transport Workers’ Union, had been expelled from the party because some of its local branches had decided to donate to other, more left-wing, political parties.

SOURCE 2**ACTIVITY****Evaluating primary sources**

Using your understanding of the historical context, how valuable is Source 2 for an understanding of the relationship between New Labour and the trade unions in the period 1997 to 2007?

CROSS-REFERENCE

The European Social Chapter was one of the opt-outs negotiated by John Major in the Maastricht Treaty which is covered in Chapter 20.

KEY TERM

globalisation: the process by which the world is increasingly economically and culturally inter-connected; it was accelerated from the 1990s by the development of the Internet and better transportation

Tony Blair gave a speech to the Trades Union Congress in September 2004.

In July the Labour Party and many trade unions had come to the Warwick Agreement which set out agreed priorities for the 2005 Labour Party manifesto:

As ever, before the TUC speech, I’m not short of advice. The difference this year is that I agree with it. All have told me not to lose touch with the concerns of the hard-working families it’s our and my duty to represent. So I come here to advocate social partnership not belittle it. And above all to demonstrate that our and my priority is and always will be the quality of life of Britain’s hard-working families, who struggle with the modern burden of work and family life, and don’t ask for or expect miracles just a fair chance to make the most of life for them and their children. Over the weekend I got out the first speech I ever made to a Labour Party conference as Employment spokesman back in 1990. I said: a Labour government would introduce a minimum wage; a legal right to union recognition; sign the social chapter; improve maternity leave; introduce paid holidays; end blacklisting; and remove the power of automatic dismissal for those lawfully on strike. We have done every one of those things.

However, the Labour government did opt back into the European Social Chapter. This meant that Britain would now follow European policies regarding employment and social rights. So, for example, all employees were now entitled to request up to three months unpaid parental leave to care for a child who was under the age of eight years old. Nevertheless, the Labour government also retained its ability to opt out of some employment legislation, for example maximum working hours.

The Labour government also welcomed **globalisation** as an opportunity for economic growth. It argued that Britain had to learn to better compete in the new globalised world economy by increasing the skills of its workers. This would allow Britain to develop a ‘knowledge economy’ that would add value with more efficient systems and processes, often utilising new technologies. This new efficiency would increase productivity.

Although there was not an explicit commitment to full employment, there was an emphasis on supporting people into work. Blair expressed it as ‘work for those who can, security for those that can’t’. The New Deal programme targeted particular groups of the unemployed – young people, older workers, the disabled, lone parents – and promised support to help them find work. This might be training or guidance, work in the voluntary sector to gain experience, or a subsidised job placement. Critics argued that the support was often limited and complained that the sanctions imposed if people did not take up the support were unfair and counter-productive.

There was also a great deal of emphasis on ‘making work pay’. In 1998 the Labour government introduced the National Minimum Wage. A Low Pay Commission was set up to oversee and set the wage, though initially it was set at an extremely low rate. In addition, Brown introduced tax credits, which were means-tested benefits paid to people with low incomes, with specific elements targeted at, for example, those with children or with a disability.

Women

In 1997 the number of women elected as MPs rose to 120, double the previous number. Of these, 101 were Labour MPs. Labour had introduced all-women shortlists to half of what it considered its most winnable seats in a deliberate attempt to try and increase the number of women in Parliament. Blair also appointed women to prominent positions in his cabinet including **Margaret Beckett** as foreign secretary (2006–07), the first woman to serve in this role.

Women were often the main beneficiaries of New Labour’s policies. Childcare provision was extended: by 2007 all 3- and 4-year-olds were entitled to 12.5 hours a week of free nursery education which was to rise to 15 hours by 2010. Similarly, women were given pension credits when unable to work because of caring responsibilities.

Women were also making progress, albeit slow, in the board room. Between 1999 and 2007, the percentage of **FTSE 100** companies that had no women on the board fell from 36 per cent to 24 per cent. However, critics argued that there was limited progress on other issues such as the pay gap, with women still only earning 87 per cent of what men did in 2007. Critics also argued that New Labour’s emphasis on paid employment undervalued the unpaid work in the home and with the family which women did; one report found that, by 2007, when couples were compared, women still did three times the amount of housework as men.

ACTIVITY

Look back at Chapter 7 and the demands of the Women’s Lib movement in 1970. Find out which demands had been met by 2007.

Youth

There was a great deal of focus on youth by the New Labour government. The government itself was seen as a youthful alternative to the Conservatives. Tony Blair was the youngest prime minister to have been elected. He had three school-age children, and a fourth was born in 2000. This was an image which was emphasised. Not long after the election victory in 1997, Blair hosted a celebrity party at 10 Downing Street; attendees included Noel Gallagher from the band Oasis, the fashion designer Vivienne Westwood, who had risen to notoriety during the punk era of the 1970s, and the actress Helen Mirren.

ACTIVITY

Extension

Look back at other periods when the Labour Party was in government (Chapters 6 and 10) and draw a table of the similarities and differences in the party’s attitude towards, and policies for, workers.

KEY PROFILE

Margaret Beckett (b. 1943) has been the Labour MP for Derby South since 1983. She was the deputy leader of the Labour Party under John Smith and briefly led the party after his death, before Blair’s election.

KEY TERM

FTSE 100: a list of the top 100 companies on the London Stock Exchange



Fig. 2 Noel Gallagher meeting Tony Blair at Downing Street in 1997

KEY TERM

social exclusion: term for problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown that affect individuals or local areas

CROSS-REFERENCE

The emphasis New Labour had on education policy is covered in Chapter 21.

KEY TERM

NEETs: 16–24-year-olds Not in Education, Employment or Training

ACTIVITY

In groups compare how life changed for workers, women and young people. Which group do you think experienced the most change?

A concentration on issues that affected young people also complemented New Labour priorities. A key objective was to end **social exclusion** and the Social Exclusion Unit was set up in 1997 to coordinate this effort.

The aim to end social exclusion led to the establishment of Sure Start centres. These centres aimed to help families with children by providing guidance and information and ensure that preschool children were supported to be ready for school. In addition Blair, in 1999, pledged to end child poverty in 20 years, and through policies like child tax credit had brought it down by a quarter by 2005.

Similarly, the Connexions service was created to advise teenagers about the choices they had when they left school. New Labour also aimed for 50 per cent of young people to go to university, believing that this would produce the highly skilled workforce needed to compete in the globalised world economy.

However, there were also concerns about youth issues. Despite the New Deal for Young People, the number of NEETs had increased to almost 20 per cent by 2007. And it was partly fears over youth crime that led to the introduction of the Antisocial Behaviour Order (ASBO). An ASBO was a court order which would put limits on what the defendant could do. For example, it could impose a curfew or ban someone from going to a particular estate or shopping centre. Breaching an ASBO was a criminal offence. ASBOs aimed to prevent antisocial behaviour such as graffiti, vandalism, or intimidation. These were not solely aimed at young people although they became the main recipients: by 2005 46 per cent of ASBOs went to under-17-year-olds.

The extent to which Britain had become a multicultural society

Ethnic diversity had been a fact of life in Britain for a long time. But between 1997 and 2007 the nature of multicultural Britain was being debated. Globalisation had accelerated the movement of people. So did the consequences of famines and regional conflicts. The rapid expansion of the European Union had opened the way for people from Central and Eastern Europe to move to Britain.

These migrants included: skilled workers and professionals, coming to fill skills shortages; the families of immigrants already living in Britain; foreign students at British universities; people from the new states who acceded to the EU in 2004 and 2007; asylum seekers displaced by the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and other conflicts in the world. The changing nature of immigration sometimes raised tensions.

In some ways there was a lot of evidence that Britain was a multicultural society and was comfortable with this. The year 2002 saw the first black cabinet minister appointed, when Paul Boateng became the chief secretary to the Treasury. Mosques were a familiar feature of many towns and cities. Schools, local government and corporate organisations launched initiatives to celebrate the cultural background of people from ethnic minorities, many of whom had been born in Britain. Festivals like the Notting Hill Carnival (see Fig. 1) attracted millions. Many people took pride in the progress made towards a genuinely multicultural society; in 2005 London successfully bid to hold the 2012 Olympic Games and one of its key selling points was the multiculturalism of the city.

This did not mean that there was no racial tension. The Macpherson Report, published in 1998, about the murder of Stephen Lawrence, identified problems of 'institutional racism' in the Metropolitan Police. The BBC chairman, Greg Dyke, acknowledged that his workforce was 'hideously white' in 2001, believing that the organisation did not do enough to attract and retain people from ethnic minorities.

There were also complaints that not enough emphasis was being placed on the responsibilities of immigrants to properly integrate into Britain and that even some people who were born in Britain were alienated from British society and culture. This was highlighted by the terrorist attack on London in July 2005. On 7 July 52 people were killed as 4 suicide bombers attacked 3 underground trains and a bus.

CROSS-REFERENCE

The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are covered in Chapter 24.

CROSS-REFERENCE

The murder of Stephen Lawrence is covered in Chapter 19.



Fig. 3 Tavistock Square bombing, London, 7 July 2005

When the bombers were identified it was discovered that three of them were British-born citizens who had appeared to be wholly assimilated into society. The leader of the group, Mohammed Sidique Khan, had been a well-respected community worker in West Yorkshire.

SOURCE 3

The mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, was in Singapore when the attack happened. The following is an extract from the speech he made after hearing the news. The attack happened the day after London learned it had been successful in its bid to host the Olympic Games in 2012:

I want to say one thing specifically to the world today. This was not a terrorist attack against the mighty and the powerful. It was not aimed at presidents or prime ministers. It was aimed at ordinary, working-class Londoners, black and white, Muslim and Christian, Hindu and Jew, young and old. It was an indiscriminate attempt to slaughter, irrespective of any considerations for age, for class, for religion, or whatever. That isn't an ideology, it isn't even a perverted faith – it is just an indiscriminate attempt at mass murder and we know what the objective is. They seek to divide Londoners. They seek to turn Londoners against each other. I said yesterday to the International Olympic Committee, that the city of London is the greatest in the world, because everybody lives side by side in harmony. Londoners will not be divided by this cowardly attack. They will stand together in solidarity alongside those who have been injured and those who have been bereaved and that is why I'm proud to be the mayor of that city.

ACTIVITY**Evaluating primary sources**

How valuable is Source 3 for an understanding of community relations in Britain between 1997 and 2007?

Two weeks later, on 21 July 2005, four more suicide bombers attempted a similar attack but the bombs failed to explode. There was an extensive manhunt for those involved and on 22 July a young Brazilian, Jean Charles de Menezes, was mistaken for one of the terrorists and shot dead by armed police. Four men were later convicted for the attempted attacks. Although they had been born in Ethiopia and Somalia they were naturalised British citizens. The attacks caused much soul-searching about security issues and about community relations.

There were two main responses to these terrorist attacks. Some people argued that it was necessary to find out why men like Khan had become so alienated and how relations with ethnic minorities could be improved so that they did feel more British. One common belief was that Britain's foreign policy, especially the war in Iraq, had dangerously alienated British Muslims. In 2006 the post of secretary of state for local government and communities was created; one aim of the role was to work with local communities to prevent extremism.

Others argued that the essential need was for greater security. In 2006 the Labour government passed the controversial National Identity Card Act arguing that identity cards were needed to fight terrorism; likewise the Terrorist Act 2006 increased the time that a suspect could be held without charge to 28 days, though this was fewer than the 90 days the government had wanted. Critics looked at the experience of the Irish Troubles between the 1970s and the 1990s, emphasising the importance of not overreacting and cutting back civil liberties; they pointed out that the introduction of internment of terrorist suspects in Ireland in the early 1970s had simply encouraged recruitment to these organisations.

Table 1 From a MORI opinion poll for the BBC, August 2005

Which statement is closest to your view?	General	Muslims
Multiculturalism makes Britain a better place.	62%	82%
Multiculturalism threatens Britain's way of life.	32%	13%
People who come to Britain should adopt the values and traditions of British culture.	58%	29%
Britain should deport foreigners who encourage terrorism.	91%	74%
I feel proud when British sports teams do well.	90%	88%

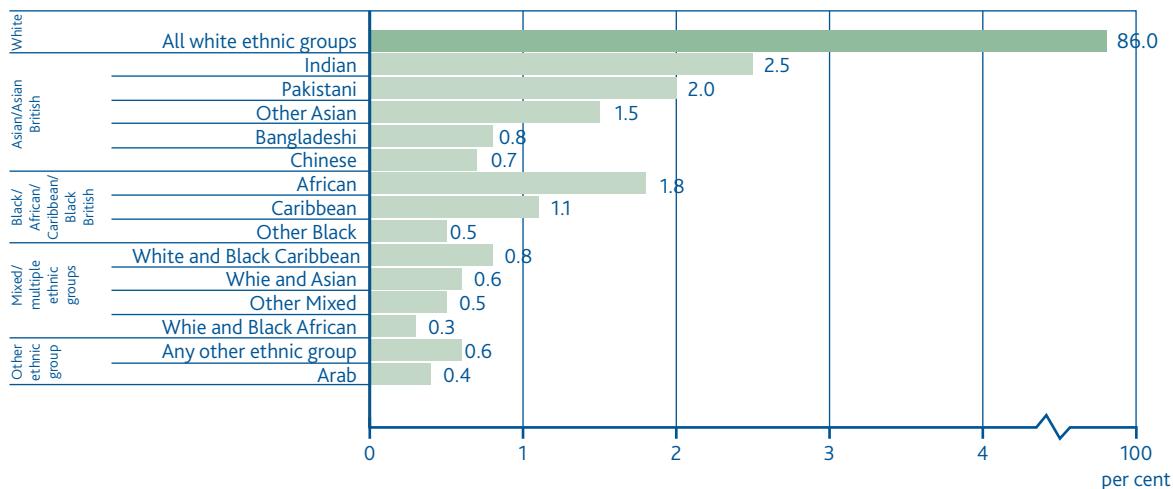
ACTIVITY

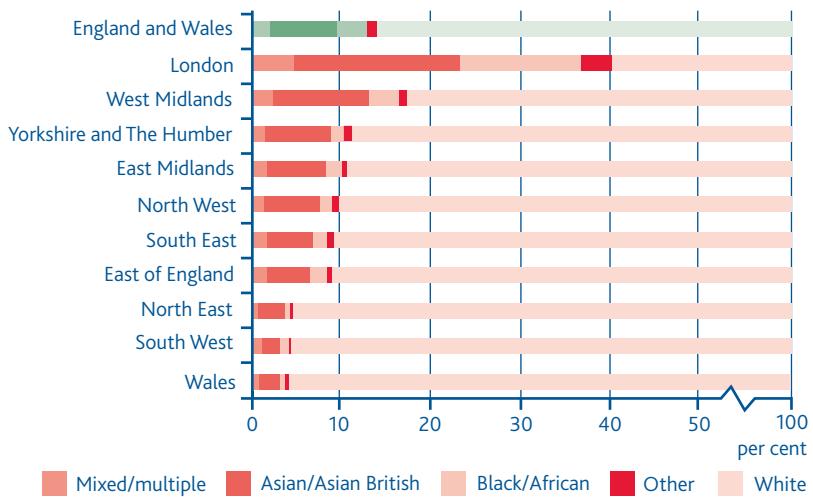
Look at Table 1. What conclusions about community relations in 2005 can be drawn from this survey?

These terrorist incidents highlighted broader concerns about multicultural Britain. Pressure groups, Internet blogs and some sections of the national press claimed that this was a problem that threatened social cohesion and the 'British way of life'. In the 2001 election, opinion polls found that immigration was regarded as a vital issue by only 3 per cent of voters; similar polls in 2007 put the figure at nearly 30 per cent.

It was hard to separate myths from realities. Some newspapers like the *Daily Express* focused on the potential problems, associating migrants (particularly from Eastern Europe) with criminal behaviour and with taking jobs away from local people, or driving down wage levels by accepting low pay. The pressure group MigrationWatch, headed by a retired diplomat, Sir Andrew Green, focused on the dangers of large numbers of immigrants arriving so quickly that public services such as health and education were overstretched.

Most economists argued that the nation benefited economically from migrants: they filled labour shortages, brought valuable skills, set up useful small businesses and were a net gain to the economy. They argued that most migrants were young, active and healthy, so they did not make heavy demands on public services and often worked in them. Migrant families tended to have more children at a younger age, with a beneficial impact on overall birth rates. It was also pointed out that migration did not flow only one way. Many migrants returned home; about one third of migrants from Poland did so. Similarly, many British people were leaving to work abroad or to buy retirement homes in Spain.

**Fig. 4** The breakdown of the UK population by ethnicity in c2007 (Source: ONS)

**ACTIVITY**

Look at Figs. 4 and 5. What do these graphs tell you about the nature of multicultural Britain?

Fig. 5 The ethnicity of the UK population by region in c2007 (Source: ONS)

Summary

STUDY TIP

Don't be afraid to show the complexity of causes and consequences. A cause of one change might be a consequence of another or vice versa.

ACTIVITY

Summary

Make a list of changes in British society that occurred between 1997 and 2007. For each change list some of its causes and consequences.

STUDY TIP

Remember that different people might have been affected in different ways.

A LEVEL PRACTICE QUESTION

Evaluating primary sources

Look back at Sources 1, 2 and 3. With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these three sources to an historian studying how far Britain changed between 1997 and 2007.

STUDY TIP

You may find it useful to draw a timeline that sets out British foreign policy using Chapter 24. Think about which areas of it might affect attitudes to immigration, both positively and negatively. You should also show your broader understanding of the debate about immigration dating back to the 1950s to identify if and how the debate had changed by the period 1997 to 2007.

A LEVEL PRACTICE QUESTION

To what extent did Britain's foreign policy between 1997 and 2007 influence the debate about immigration?

24 Foreign affairs



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this chapter you will learn about:

- attitudes to Europe
- the 'special relationship' with the USA
- military interventions and the 'war on terror'
- Britain's position in the world by 2007.

Fig. 1 Tony Blair with the US president, George W. Bush

SOURCE 1

Robin Cook was the foreign secretary between 1997 and 2001. Ten days after the 1997 election victory he set out New Labour's foreign policy aims in a speech to diplomats and journalists:

Today, I set out the strategic aims of our foreign strategy by which we can measure its success over a full, five-year parliament. We aim: to make the United Kingdom a leading player in Europe; to strengthen the Commonwealth; to secure reform for a more effective UN. The Labour government also sets as one of its benchmarks a commitment to foster a people's diplomacy to increase respect, understanding and goodwill for Britain among nations as well as governments. Today's Mission Statement sets out new directions in foreign policy. It makes the business of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office delivery of a long-term strategy, not just managing crisis intervention. It supplies an ethical content to foreign policy and recognises that the national interest cannot be defined only by narrow realpolitik. It aims to make Britain a leading partner in a world community of nations, and reverses the Tory trend towards not so splendid isolation.

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

How valuable is Source 1 for an understanding of New Labour's foreign policy between 1997 and 2007?

KEY PROFILE

Robin Cook (1946–2005) was a Scottish Labour MP first elected to Parliament in 1974. As shadow foreign secretary he had been extremely critical of the Conservative government's handling of the Arms to Iraq affair (see Chapter 17). After 2001 he served as leader of the house, but resigned from the cabinet over Britain's entry into the Iraq War in 2003. His resignation speech received a standing ovation.

Between 1997 and 2007 the British government wanted to use Britain's position to build a diplomatic bridge between the Europeans and the Americans. The attempts to achieve this had only partial success and relations between Britain, the United States and Europe were placed under great strain by post-Cold War conflicts in the Balkans and in the Middle East.

Attitudes to Europe

KEY CHRONOLOGY

Key events in the European Union, 1997–2007

- 1997** Treaty of Amsterdam: amendment and consolidation of existing treaties
- 1999** Launch of the Euro
- 2001** Treaty of Nice: reform of institutions to cope with expansion
- 2004** Expansion of EU from 15 to 25 states: accession of Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia
- 2004** Establishment of a constitution
- 2007** Enlargement of the EU to 27 states: accession of Bulgaria and Romania
- 2007** Treaty of Lisbon: to increase efficiency and democracy (replacing the 2004 constitution)

ACTIVITY

On an outline map of Europe, shade in the different members of the European Union by when they joined. Look back at previous Chapters 4, 12 and 20 to see the development of the EU over the whole period.

KEY TERM

Euro: a common European Currency was set up by the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992; Britain had negotiated an opt-out and chose not to join when it launched in 1999

Many people hoped that the New Labour government would transform Britain's role within the EU. Blair had already called for Britain to develop a new, more positive, relationship with its European partners, for example opting back into the European Social Chapter. Throughout his ten years as prime minister, Blair had a high personal standing and good relationships with other European leaders. This allowed Britain to take a leading role in negotiations for EU enlargement and in the discussions about the Treaty of Nice of 2001, which extended the institutions of the EU. Blair was also enthusiastic about the possibility of Britain joining the European currency, the **Euro**. However, Gordon Brown, as chancellor of the exchequer, was far less keen on this and set up a number of economic conditions that had to be met before Britain would give up the pound; they were so stringent, they were unlikely to be met.



Fig. 2 *The world statesman: Tony Blair with UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and the German Chancellor Angela Merkel, at the G8 summit, Heiligendamm, 2007*

Blair was especially enthusiastic about strengthening the role of the EU in the wider world. Blair took the lead in European initiatives on issues such as climate change, world trade, and in aiming to 'make poverty history' by reforming aid to Africa. Britain was also at the centre of efforts to develop a common European strategy against the threat of global terrorism after the events of 11 September 2001. Blair tried to make Britain a bridge between Europe and the United States, above all in action against Iraq in 2002 and 2003, but also towards the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians and towards Iran.

By 2007 the European Union had expanded to 27 states and was involved in negotiations with even more new applicants for membership, including Turkey, Croatia, Serbia and the Ukraine. This rapid enlargement had forced many changes in the nature of the EU and its methods of reaching decisions. It also presented new and difficult challenges for British foreign policy. What had started out as 'The Six', an economic community dominated by the partnership between France and West Germany, was now becoming a much more political organisation in which the states of the 'New Europe', the former communist states of the USSR, were bound to play a prominent role. British policymakers had to decide how much Britain would actually be 'at the heart of Europe'.

By the time Blair resigned as prime minister in 2007, his personal prestige in Europe was still high and he still enjoyed excellent relationships with the leaders of other European countries including the French president, Nicolas Sarkozy, as well as with the German chancellor, Angela Merkel, and with the 'new Europe'. But there were few concrete achievements. Progress on climate change and aid in Africa was frustratingly slow. Britain seemed unlikely to join the Euro. Attempts to reform the workings of the EU ended in the rejection of a proposed new constitution. A new, diluted scheme for reform was finally presented in the form of the Lisbon Treaty, at the end of 2007, but this aroused considerable controversy and there was no certainty that all 27 states would ratify the treaty.

CROSS-REFERENCE

Look back to Chapter 23 to see the impact of opting into the European Social Chapter.

CROSS-REFERENCE

The threat of global terrorism, including the events of 11 September 2001, is covered on pages 209–210.

ACTIVITY

Draw up a balance sheet of the positive and negative aspects of Britain's relationship with Europe between 1997 and 2007.

KEY PROFILE

Bill Clinton (b. 1946) served as the president of the United States from 1993 to 2001, having previously been the governor of Arkansas. He was extremely charismatic and remained popular despite facing a sex scandal in 1998 to 1999.

CROSS-REFERENCE

New Labour's belief in the Third Way is discussed in Chapter 21, page 108.

CROSS-REFERENCE

The break-up of Yugoslavia is covered in Chapter 20.

KEY PROFILE

George W. Bush (b. 1946) was the son of the former US President George H. Bush (1989–93). His presidency became dominated by the 'war on terror', a phrase he coined shortly after the terrorist attacks on the US on **9/11**.

KEY TERM

liberal interventionism: a belief that a country should intervene in another country for 'liberal' aims i.e. to support human rights

The 'special relationship' with the USA

New Labour was keen on maintaining the 'special relationship' with the United States. When Blair was elected in 1997, Bill Clinton was the president of the United States. There were a number of similarities between the two governments, both being influenced by the ideas of the Third Way. New Labour figures had forged even closer links with the US Democrats after 1992 to learn how a left-of-centre party could be electorally successful.

After the failure of the European Union and the United Nations to deal with the Yugoslavian crisis in the 1990s, Blair was utterly convinced that it was essential to keep the United States involved in European affairs and to make full use of NATO to defend the new world order that existed at the end of the Cold War. He believed that it was vitally important to maintain Britain's 'special relationship' with the United States and that Britain had a key role in bringing closer together US and European policy.

The US Democrats lost the presidential election of 2000; the new Republican president was **George W. Bush**. Although it might have appeared to be likely that Blair would have less in common with Bush than he did with Clinton, the two men developed a close relationship, especially with regard to meeting the threat of global terrorism. However, this also led to accusations that British foreign policy became too dominated by US priorities during Blair's premiership.

Military interventions and the war on terror**KEY CHRONOLOGY****Military interventions, 1997–2007**

Mar 1999	NATO bombing of Yugoslavia led by British forces
May 2000	Intervention in Sierra Leone to resolve the civil war
Oct 2001	Invasion of Afghanistan and overthrow of the Taliban
Mar 2003	Invasion of Iraq by American-led coalition
Dec 2007	British withdrawal from Iraq announced by Gordon Brown

Blair firmly believed in **liberal interventionism** to prevent the recurrence of massacres and ethnic cleansing that had been seen in the Yugoslavian civil war.

SOURCE 2

Tony Blair set out what became known as the Blair Doctrine of liberal interventionism in a speech in Chicago in 1999. This was during the military intervention into Kosovo:

We are all internationalists now, whether we like it or not. We cannot refuse to participate in global markets if we want to prosper. We cannot ignore new political ideas in other countries if we want to innovate. We cannot turn our backs on conflicts and the violation of human rights within other countries if we want still to be secure. On the eve of a new Millennium we are now in a new world. We need new rules for international co-operation and new ways of organising our international institutions. Today the impulse towards interdependence is immeasurably greater. We are witnessing the beginnings of a new doctrine of international community. By this I mean the explicit recognition that today more than ever before we are mutually dependent,

that national interest is to a significant extent governed by international collaboration and that we need a clear and coherent debate as to the direction this doctrine takes us in each field of international endeavour.

There are a number of examples of Blair's liberal interventionism during his premiership.

Yugoslavia and Sierra Leone

When the final phase of the Balkan wars began as a result of Serbian attacks on Kosovo, Blair devoted his main diplomatic efforts to persuading a reluctant President Clinton to back military action against Serbia. In 1999, a prolonged NATO bombing campaign against Serbia forced Milošević into pulling his forces out of Kosovo. This early success in the Balkans moulded Blair's thinking and did much to shape his later policies.

In 2000, when rebel forces in the civil war in Sierra Leone threatened to take over the capital city, Freetown, the British government sent armed forces. Initially this was to evacuate foreigners, but once there British forces supported the United Nations peacekeepers in securing the capital and helped bring about the end of the civil war a year later.

The war on terror

Later military interventions to support the war on terror proved more controversial and their success is harder to judge. The war on terror began after the Al-Qaeda terrorist attacks on the United States on **11 September 2001**.

ACTIVITY

Evaluating primary sources

Explain why the context of when this speech was made is important in understanding its value to the historian.

A CLOSER LOOK

Al-Qaeda is a terrorist organisation made up of a loose conglomeration of fighting cells with no clear chain of command. Before 2001 they had attacked the World Trade Center in New York in 1993 and had also carried out bomb attacks on US embassies in Africa in 1998.



Fig. 3 The attack on the Twin Towers, New York, 11 September 2001

A CLOSER LOOK

9/11

On 11 September 2001, four civilian airliners were hijacked from US airports by Al-Qaeda terrorists. Two destroyed the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York and a third hit the Pentagon in Washington. A fourth aircraft, United 93, crashed before reaching its intended target. Almost 3000 people died and the event caused immense shock and outrage across much of the world.

KEY TERM

Taliban: a fundamentalist Islamic movement; the Taliban had taken over Afghanistan in the aftermath of the civil war which followed the withdrawal of Soviet troops in 1989

Afghanistan

Before 9/11, the United States had felt invulnerable from outside attack so the events of 9/11 came as a shock. Almost immediately, preparations began for NATO forces to invade Afghanistan, where the **Taliban** government had allowed Al-Qaeda to use the country as a base for training and planning terrorist operations.

On 7 October 2001, Britain joined the United States in a military campaign to overthrow the Taliban and expel Al-Qaeda from Afghanistan. This was supported by both NATO and the United Nations. Initially it was hoped that a new Afghanistan might quickly develop into a modern democratic state and again show the benefits of liberal interventionism; however, there was no instant pacification of the country and the leaders of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda escaped. A new democratic regime was established but progress towards economic and political development was slow. Furthermore, from 2002, attention was drawn towards Iraq; critics argued that this allowed the Taliban to regroup in 2006 and 2007.

Iraq

After the First Gulf War of 1990 to 1991, Saddam Hussein had been ‘contained’ by economic sanctions and by ‘no-fly zones’ enforced by NATO air patrols. But by 2002 there were increasing fears of the threat Saddam might represent to the West. The first fear was that Iraq might link up with Al-Qaeda and provide a new base for terrorism, in the way that Afghanistan had been before 2001. The second was that Iraq might develop **weapons of mass destruction (WMD)**.

CROSS-REFERENCE

The First Gulf War is outlined in Chapter 20, page 175.

KEY TERM

weapons of mass destruction

(WMD): nuclear, chemical or biological weapons; Saddam Hussein was known to have used chemical weapons previously but had expelled UN weapons inspection teams in 1997

KEY PROFILE

Saddam Hussein (1937–2006) seized power in Iraq in 1968. From 1979, he ruled as a dictator. He fought a long war against Iran in the 1980s and invaded Kuwait in 1990, provoking the First Gulf War. He was overthrown in April 2003 during the Second Gulf War and was executed by the new government of Iraq in 2006.

ACTIVITY

Extension

Search some newspapers' archives on the Internet to find an article on the Iraq War. What message is the article trying to get across and how does it achieve this? Prepare a short presentation for the rest of your class.

A United Nations resolution in November 2002 had forced Saddam Hussein to allow weapons inspectors back into Iraq. However, by early 2003 the USA believed that Saddam Hussein was not properly cooperating. There was a dispute within the United Nations about whether this first resolution had given the international community permission to use military force in these circumstances. In order to reach agreement, Blair made strenuous efforts to win over his European allies by pushing for a second UN resolution but was ultimately unsuccessful.

The invasion of Iraq was launched by American forces in March 2003 backed by a ‘coalition of the willing’ including Britain, Poland and Italy among others. Blair’s critics claimed that he knew Bush was going to invade Iraq anyway, that he

agreed with Bush's aim of regime change and was simply using UN resolutions as a way of bringing Europe round. Blair's defenders argue that he was genuinely convinced about the dangers of WMD and that he was correct in his analysis of the need to ensure that the United States continued to be part of the international world order and not retreat to unilateral action or **isolationism**.

Military victory and the overthrow of Saddam Hussein was complete by April 2003, but there was no neat or decisive end to the war. British troops found themselves bogged down in a long struggle. Although by 2006 there were improvements in the security situation and the Iraqi government had become more stable, few of the expectations when the war was launched in 2003 had been proved right.

KEY TERM

isolationism: a foreign policy strategy whereby a country does not get involved in the affairs of other countries



Fig. 4 The 'stop the war' march through London in February 2003

ACTIVITY

Write a letter to a national newspaper in February 2003 either urging Britain to take part in the war in Iraq or in support of the 'Stop the War' movement. Make sure your letter explains clearly your reasons for your attitude to the war.

British involvement in the invasion of Iraq in 2003 had been extremely controversial. Four ministers, including the foreign secretary, Robin Cook, resigned over the issue. A 'Stop the War' march through London in February 2003 had attracted more than a million people. The failure to find evidence of WMD, which had been used to justify the invasion, heightened criticism. By May 2003 the British government was being accused of having exaggerated the threat. In addition, as the war dragged on, British and US troops were accused of mistreating Iraqi prisoners of war.

By the end of 2007, Britain had achieved only very limited and partial success in Iraq, well short of the ambitious goals set out in 2003. In any case, troop reductions in Iraq were countered by the need to reinforce the British war effort in Afghanistan, which also remained insecure.

SOURCE 3

On the third anniversary of the invasion of Iraq in 2006, Tony Blair gave a speech to the think tank, the Foreign Policy Centre. This think tank had been set up by the former Labour foreign secretary, Robin Cook, in 1998:

The true division in foreign policy today is between those who want the shop 'open' against those who want it 'closed'; between those who believe that the long-term interests of a country lie in its being out there, engaged and interactive, as opposed to those who think the short-term pain of such a policy is too great. In the era of globalisation, where nations depend on each other and our security is held in common or not at all, the outcome of the struggle between extremism and progress will be what determines our future here in Britain. We can no more opt out of this struggle than we can opt out of the climate changing around us. Inaction, pushing the responsibility onto America, deluding ourselves that the problem would go away, this too is a policy, and it's a policy that is profoundly, fundamentally wrong.

ACTIVITY**Evaluating primary sources**

Look at the extract from Tony Blair's speech in Source 3.

1. Why do you think this speech was made in 2006?
2. How useful is this speech for the historian studying British foreign policy in the 2000s?

When Tony Blair left Downing Street in 2007, it was still too early to make a definitive judgement on the success or failure of the Iraq War. But it was apparent at this point that the war had damaged Blair's reputation, and that of Britain. On the other hand, a democratic government existed in Iraq instead of Saddam Hussein's dictatorship and it could still be hoped that this government might have a stable and successful future in the long term.

Britain's position in the world by 2007

In 1997 the New Labour government had set out a clear foreign policy strategy including:

- making the United Kingdom a leading player in Europe
- fostering a people's diplomacy to increase respect, understanding and goodwill for Britain
- to supply an ethical content to foreign policy
- making Britain a leading partner in a world community of nations.

**PRACTICE QUESTION**

'The Labour government, 1997–2007, failed it meets its own foreign policy objectives.' Assess the validity of this view.

By 2007, in many ways 'Blair's war' in Iraq was the defining issue of his political career and of Britain's position in the world. It was still possible to hope that future developments would eventually lead to a new, secure Iraqi state, but the war had had a cost in lives, expense and diplomatic effort. Blair's involvement in Iraq had also undoubtedly damaged the reputation of his government within Britain. His ideal of liberal interventionism was discredited; it would be much harder for a British government to convince the public of the need for military intervention in future. Some argued that this would ensure that Britain could concentrate on defending its own interests; others raised the possibility that not being willing to play such an influential role in world affairs in future might mean that Britain's position in the world would decline.

The war in Iraq also had other implications for Britain's position in the world. Blair had made efforts to mediate in the Middle East in the ongoing conflict between the Palestinians and the Israelis, both through direct diplomacy and through working with the EU. But while he had a genuine commitment to the peace process, the Iraq War, and his close relationship with Bush, made this difficult. Britain was not seen as an independent and fair judge of international disputes.

Similarly, the 'special relationship' with the United States had undoubtedly been strengthened, but Britain's position in Europe remained ambivalent. Britain did not join the Euro on its launch in 1999 and seemed as far away from joining as ever in 2007. Much of the national press remained hostile to all things 'Europe'. And deep divisions between the European countries who had opposed intervention and Britain were opened up by the war in Iraq. Moreover, while Britain had played a major role in foreign affairs between 1997 and 2007, some believed that it had so obviously been dominated by the United States that it merely confirmed that Britain was very much the junior partner in the 'special relationship'.

Summary

By 2007 it was clear that Britain remained a major power in worldwide affairs. However, its future role and ongoing relationships with the United States, with Europe and with the rest of the world, would continue to be debated.

ACTIVITY

Summary

Working in groups, prepare the subheadings for a brief speech supporting or opposing the view, 'Tony Blair's foreign policies gravely weakened Britain's position in the world'. When you have delivered your speeches in class, take a vote to ascertain the majority view.

STUDY TIP

Find evidence to support and challenge the Labour government's success in meeting each of these four elements of its foreign policy strategy as given in the bullet points above. Make sure that you don't just describe what happened, but that you argue how what happened either helped or hindered the success of Labour's foreign policy strategy.

A CLOSER LOOK

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict dates back to the formation of Israel in 1948. It has been marked by ongoing violence and terrorism as the Palestinians seek the creation of an independent Palestine.

STUDY TIP

You will need to read the sources carefully in order to identify what the aims are. Use the timeline of foreign policy that you produced in Chapter 23 to map the context of these sources. Think about how this might affect what is said. Also be aware that the audience might affect a source's content.

**PRACTICE QUESTION****Evaluating primary sources**

Look back at Sources 1, 2 and 3. With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these three sources to an historian studying the aims of New Labour's foreign policy in the period 1997 to 2007.

STUDY TIP

You will need to identify a number of different influences on British foreign policy in order to assess whether maintaining the 'special relationship' was the most important one. Make sure you don't fall into the trap of describing British foreign policy but that your essay is clearly focused on the reasons for it.

**PRACTICE QUESTION**

'Maintaining the "special relationship" was the most significant influence on the direction of British foreign policy in the period 1997 to 2007.' Assess the validity of this view.

Conclusion



Fig. 1 Gordon Brown speaking to pensioners in Fife, Scotland, shortly before he replaced Tony Blair as prime minister

In 2007 the Labour Party had been in power for a decade. Britain had a developed service-based economy, and most of its trade was with its partners in the European Union. This seems a far cry from Britain in 1951: 13 years of Conservative government were about to begin; Britain still had a large manufacturing base and was still an imperial power. But this hides a more detailed understanding of Britain, and the relationship between Britain and Europe, in the years 1951 to 2007.

The two main political parties, Labour and Conservative, survived throughout the period. They each had long spells in government and opposition. Both parties were able to reinvent their image and policies to re-attract the electorate, despite suffering serious crises. Such crises arose from dealing with the problems of government, but also sometimes from reacting to social and economic changes.

There were vast economic changes between 1951 and 2007. Whole areas of Britain were transformed by deindustrialisation. Shopping had been taken over by new forms of retailing, such as supermarkets, out-of-town shopping centres and, from the late 1990s, by the Internet. For most people, living standards were vastly higher than in 1951 and this was coupled by much

greater expectations. Most people treated cars, household appliances such as fridges, and even foreign holidays as necessities rather than luxuries, as their grandparents would have seen them.

Even so, there was much continuity. Despite the hopes of successive governments, the pace of economic modernisation was almost always slow and uneven. Consistent economic problems of underinvestment, low productivity, worries about skills shortages, inflation and the balance of payments, seemed always to persist. While the British economy was very different in nature in 2007 from 1951, old problems remained.

It is often claimed that Britain experienced a social revolution in this period. There were periods of accelerated social change and, in many ways, large parts of Britain looked remarkably different in 2007 from how they had looked in 1951. There was a cleaner environment, more urban development, greater diversity and tolerance in culture and ethnic background, and women, who in 1951 had been predominantly housewives, were much more likely to be in the workplace. But not all issues regarding equality had been resolved. There remained examples of prejudice and discrimination, and some parts of the country, untouched by urbanisation and immigration, had changed remarkably little.

There also appeared to have been changes in social class. A number of prime ministers between 1951 and 2001 had been educated at state secondary schools. The Conservative Party was no longer wholly dominated by the upper middle classes as it had been in the 1950s, and the Labour Party had increasingly moved away from its old working-class roots. By 2007 politicians from all parties sought to be seen as classless and in tune with society, no matter what background they had.

Despite this, Britain was less changed than might be assumed. Queen Elizabeth II had reigned since 1952. Royal scandals had done little lasting damage to the monarchy and the House of Lords still contained hereditary peers. The BBC was still a national institution, funded by the licence fee. Large parts of the 'Establishment' were still intact. By 2007 an analysis of the background of 500 leaders in the fields of politics, the media, law, journalism and business found that 53 per cent had been educated at independent schools and 47 per cent had been to either Oxford or Cambridge University.

At first glance Britain's position in the world seemed to have been transformed. In 1951, although decolonisation had already begun, Britain still held a substantial empire. Britain had an ambivalent relationship with Europe, encouraging integration from the sidelines but not willing to fully engage in it. Britain's foreign policy was dominated by the 'special relationship' with the United States and by the pressures of the Cold War. By 2007, the international context was much changed: the Empire was gone; the Cold War was over too; Britain was now a member of the European Union.

But this did not mean a complete transformation. While the Empire was gone, some of the old attitudes of Empire persisted; Britain retained its place at the 'top table' as well as possessing a nuclear deterrent. Likewise, upholding the relationship with the United States had been a constant preoccupation of almost all governments since 1951.

So the period 1951 to 2007 was in many ways one of rapid change, yet it somehow encompassed many continuities. These changes and continuities – in politics, culture, society and economy – are intertwined; it is the untangling of the complexity of these relationships that enables a depth of understanding of Britain in this period.

Glossary

30-year rule: government documents (where there are no security restrictions) are automatically released to the public after 30 years

A

abstaining: voting neither for or against a motion in the House of Commons

Al-Qaeda: a terrorist organisation made up of a loose conglomeration of fighting cells with no clear chain of command

AIDS: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome caused by HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus)

appeasement: a policy of making concessions in order to avoid conflict; in the 1930s the British government had aimed to prevent a war with Nazi Germany by following this policy but failed

Apprentice Boys: a loyalist organisation that marches annually to commemorate the closing of the gates to the city of Derry to Catholic forces in 1688 by 13 apprentice boys

B

baby boom: in the years after the end of the Second World War there was a rise in the number of babies born; those born between 1946 and 1964 are usually seen as the 'baby boomers'

balance of payment: this includes invisible imports and exports i.e. services such as shipping, banking and insurance; the balance of trade is part of the balance of payments

balance of trade: the difference between the goods that a country imports and what it exports

Butlins: a chain of holiday camps founded by Billy Butlin in 1936

C

censorship: the attempt to limit what people can read, see, hear and do through state controls and regulation

Chancellor of the Exchequer: the government minister responsible for economic and financial policy;

the Chancellor is often the most powerful person in the government after the prime minister

the City: or 'Square Mile'; shorthand for the financial district of London

civil list: the members of the royal family who are supported by public funds

Clause IV: one of the iconic socialist principles that had been enshrined in Labour's constitution – the commitment to state ownership of key industries

closed shop: workers all have to be members of a particular union in order to work in a particular job

Commonwealth: an international association consisting of the UK together with states that were previously part of the British Empire, and dependencies

compassionate conservatism: a political philosophy characterised by an awareness of the social implications of economic policy

comprehensive school: one which provides secondary education for all the children in a given area; it does not select its pupils

conviction politician: someone who follows policies based on their own beliefs rather than because they are popular or to follow what had gone before

council house: a house built by local authorities to house the working classes, often to replace slums; rents tended to be lower than in privately rented accommodation

Crown Prosecution Service

(CPS): the State organisation which presents to the court the arguments needed to prosecute someone for criminal activity

Cuban Missile Crisis: an international crisis in October 1962, which has been seen as the closest the world came to a nuclear war

D

decimalisation: the new British currency which came into force in

1971, with 100 new pence, rather than 144 old pennies, in the pound

decriminalisation: removing an action or behaviour from the scope of the law so that the action or behaviour can no longer be subjected to prosecution or be liable to fines or imprisonment

deflation: a fall in the price of goods and services

denationalisation: the selling off of publicly owned industries to the private sector

détente: an easing of hostility between nations

devaluation: lowers the value of a currency in comparison to others in a fixed exchange system

devolution: the transfer of powers to a lower level of government

direct grant schools: mostly old, endowed grammar schools which admitted a substantial proportion of pupils on scholarships from the LEAs; they were phased out from 1976

dry: a nickname given to Conservatives who were firm and uncompromising in their support for monetarism

E

EEC (European Economic Community): an economic union, often known as the Common Market, first established by the Treaty of Rome in 1957

EFTA (European Free Trade Association): created in 1960 by Britain along with Austria, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, and Switzerland as an alternative to the EEC

European monetary union: a shared currency across the European Union, the conditions of which were set out in the Maastricht Treaty; it came into being in 1999

Europhile: a term used to describe someone who is enthusiastic about Britain's membership of the EEC/EU

Eurosceptic: a term used to describe someone who is opposed to the

increasing influence and power of the EEC

Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM): set up in 1979, it aimed to stabilise the exchange rates between different currencies in the European Economic Community by limiting how much their value could change

F

family allowance: a weekly benefit paid for each child in a family; it was renamed child benefit in 1977

federalism: a political system in which power is distributed between a central government and the smaller parts of the nation state

first-past-the-post: a voting system whereby the candidate with the most votes in each constituency wins a seat in Parliament

FTSE 100: a list of the top 100 companies on the London Stock Exchange

G

GDP (Gross Domestic Product): a term used by economists for the total value of a nation's economy

globalisation: the process by which the world is increasingly economically and culturally inter-connected

H

'handbag diplomacy': a term used to describe Thatcher's more abrasive style of negotiation in comparison to the more measured and patient negotiations that was more usual for Foreign Office diplomats

hire purchase: a system whereby a buyer pays a deposit on an expensive item and then pays monthly instalments (including interest) to hire the item over the length of a contract

hung parliament: a situation where no political party has an overall majority in the House of Commons

I

inflation: the increase in the price of goods and services which occurs when people have more money to spend than there are goods available

infrastructure: the physical environment of a modern developed society including the network of communications, such as roads, railways, airports and telecommunications, the industrial base, the public buildings, the schools and the housing stock

International Monetary Fund (IMF): formed at the end of the Second World War, it was designed to promote economic stability and growth across the world

internment: locking up suspects without trial

Irish Republican Army (IRA): organisation that fought for independence in the Irish War of Independence; it did not accept the partition of Ireland

isolationism: a foreign policy strategy whereby a country does not get involved in the affairs of other countries

J

junta: a military group that rules a country after taking power by force

L

'lame duck' industry: one that is unable to compete and survive without support from the State

liberal interventionism: a belief that a country should intervene in another country for 'liberal' aims i.e. to support human rights

'loony left': the name given by the right-wing press to left-wing local councils that promoted liberal and politically correct policies

M

M15: the British agency responsible for national security

Mods: the modernisers; they were broadly Eurosceptic but tended to be more pragmatic

monetarism: an economic theory which argued that the best way for governments to control inflation was by restraint of government spending and borrowing and by controls on the amount of currency in circulation

N

National Front: political party founded in 1967 to oppose non-white immigration

National Service: this conscripted young men for two years in military uniform; it was introduced in 1947 and lasted until 1960

nationalisation: state ownership of key industries

nationalist: in the British context this usually means someone who supports independence for Scotland or Wales or is in favour of a united Ireland

NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation): an association of European and North American states, formed in 1949 for the defence of Europe and the North Atlantic against the perceived threat of Soviet aggression

NEETs: 16-24-year-olds Not in Education, Employment or Training

New Commonwealth: those countries which had recently gained independence, India, Pakistan, the West Indies and so on

New Labour: the term used by Labour modernisers after 1994 to demonstrate to the electorate that the party was different to the Labour Party of the past

O

One Member, One Vote (OMOV):

individual members of the Labour Party would vote on the selection of parliamentary candidates; this lessened the influence of the trade unions

one-nation Conservative: believes that all classes in society have obligations to one another and that there is a particular responsibility for those who are better off to ensure the well-being of those who are worse off

OPEC (Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries): led by Saudi Arabia this aimed to protect the interests of its members;

OPEC agreed to fix levels of production to prevent prices from falling too low

P

paramilitary: a non-State military force

patriarchy: a social structure that privileges men

prices and incomes policy:

government intervention to set limits on price rises and to call for wage restraint in negotiations between unions and employers

productivity: efficiency, i.e. getting more produced per worker, per shift, per hourly wage

R

Race Relations Board: set up

to consider discrimination complaints and take part in publicity, research, finance and other aspects of race relations

referendum: a public vote held on a particular issue

repatriation: returning someone to their place of origin

Right to Buy: a key policy of Margaret Thatcher's government, this was the selling of council houses to tenants

Rockers: those who were seen as resistant to change; they tended to have more hard-line views on Euroscepticism and Thatcherism

run on the pound: a term describing a rapid fall in the value of the pound in international currency markets, especially in relation to the US dollar

S

secondary picketing: picketing a location not directly involved in the dispute i.e. it might supply or sell the products involved

sectarian: relating to divisions in society which in Northern Ireland were based on religion

Social Chapter: part of the Maastricht Treaty which aimed to regulate working conditions such as maximum hours for the working week and employment rights for part-time workers

Social Contract: this would involve voluntary pay restraint by the trade unions and in return the government would repeal Heath's Industrial Act and pay board

social exclusion: term for problems such as unemployment,

poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown that affect individuals or local areas

'special relationship': term used to describe the close relationship between the United Kingdom and the United States

spin doctor: a spokesperson employed to give a favourable interpretation of events to the media, especially on behalf of a political party

stagflation: a word invented by economists to describe the unusual combination of inflation and stagnant economic growth (which often produces unemployment) occurring at the same time

'stop-go' economics: derived its name from the tensions between an expanding economy ('go') and the results of the economy overheating ('stop')

'sus law': a law which gave police officers permission to stop and search suspected persons if they thought they might commit a crime

T

Taliban: a fundamentalist Islamic movement; the Taliban had taken over Afghanistan in the aftermath of the civil war which followed the withdrawal of Soviet troops in 1989

Taoiseach: the prime minister of Ireland

Teddy boys: their dress sense and behaviour was seen as a challenge to older people and their ideas about social order

think tank: an organisation that researches potential social, political and economic policies; it can be attached to a particular ideology or be neutral

the Third Way: a term used to describe a middle way between the socialism of 'Old' Labour which championed the role of the State and the Thatcherite policies of the Conservative Party after 1979 which favoured the market

trade unions: fight for workers' interests in pay and working conditions; they use industrial action, such as strikes, to put pressure on employers and/or the government

Trotskyite: term used to describe those on the left who follow the ideas of Leon Trotsky, a Marxist who believed in a permanent international revolution of the working classes

U

unanimity: agreement by all people involved

unilateral nuclear disarmament: the policy of renouncing the use and possession of nuclear weapons without waiting for any international consultation or agreement

unionist: supporter of the union of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland to form the United Kingdom

V

vote of no confidence: a vote on whether the government is considered able to continue governing; if it is lost then the government must call a general election

W

wet: a derisive nickname given to a member of the Conservative party by Mrs Thatcher and her supporters for being soft and squeamish about the social consequences of monetarist economic policies

white paper: a document written by the government that sets out a possible policy direction but makes no commitments

'wildcat' strikes: sudden, unofficial local disputes begun without reference to the national leadership

Y

Yom Kippur War: a short war in October 1973 between Israel and a coalition of Arab states including Egypt and Syria

Yuppie: short for young urban professional; in the 1980s it was used to describe people working in cities with large amounts of disposable income which was spent on consumer goods

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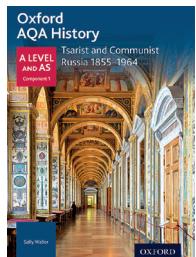
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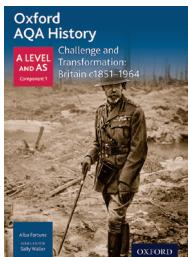
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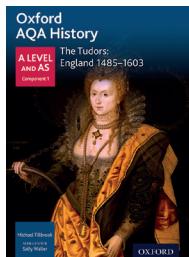
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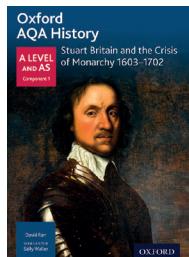
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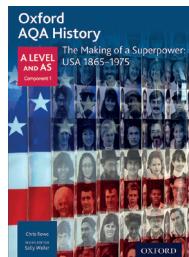
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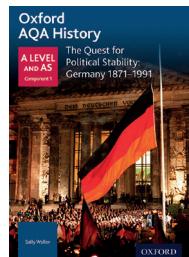
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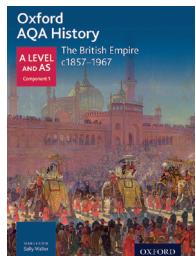
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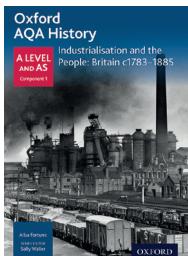
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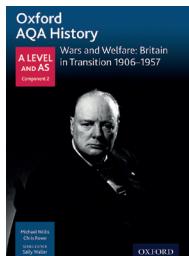
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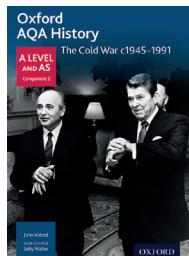
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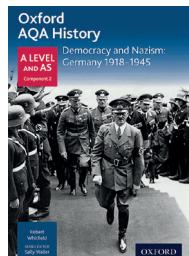
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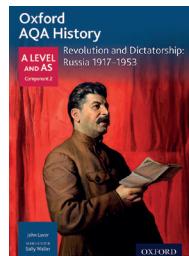
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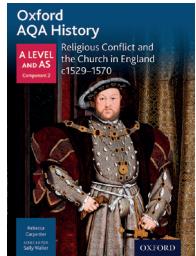
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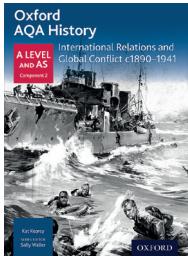
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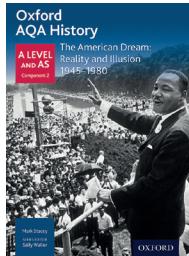
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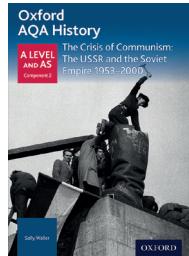
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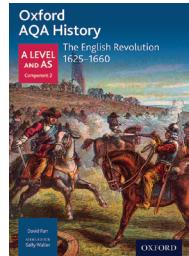
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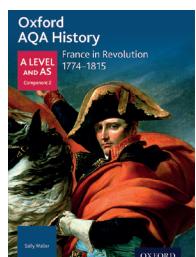
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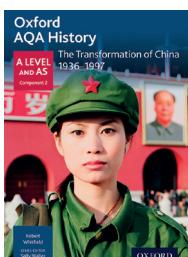
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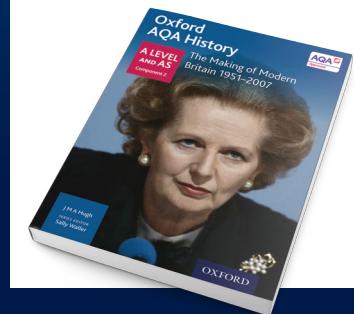
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