

Britain 1979-2007: Y13 Term 1 Overview

Margaret Thatcher-
1979-1990



Had become leader of the Conservatives in 1975, replacing Heath
Educated at Grantham grammar- different from 'the established' old Conservatives. Not a people-person and was good at policies but not politics. Conviction PM and destroyed the post-War Consensus
Key focus on industrial relations and economic modernisation
Promised tax-cuts for the wealthy, de-industrialisation and monetarism.
Targeted the trade unions with severe anti-TU laws and dismantled the NUM in 1984 following the bitter Miner's Strike.
Promoted a cynical individualistic culture through privatisation which challenged the collective, community spirit of 1951-1976.
Sold-off North Sea Oil and advanced Right To Buy in 1981-2.

John Major 1990-7



In 1990 Major became leader of the Conservatives and PM following an intense leadership challenge against Thatcher.
Major sought to challenge the Thatcher legacy by abolishing the Poll Tax and replacing it with the Council Tax in 1991.
Major adhered to scrapping the Post-War Consensus by privatising British Rail in 1995.
Major's foreign policy was distinctly anti-Thatcherite: he supported further European integration with Britain signing the Maastricht Treaty and Social Chapter.
Major was humiliated in the 1997 General Election with a multiplicity of factors (EU, Sleaze, Corruption, Black Wednesday) securing the end of 18 years Tory rule.

Tony Blair 1997-2007



Seen as a centre-right Labour leader following John Smith's death in 1995.
Challenged the hard left in Labour with New Labour and Third Way ideology, embracing the middle-classes.
Secured 3 landslides for Labour in 1997, 2001 and 2005.
Shifted the power in the UK to the regions with Devolution given to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
Great constitutional reformer: Human Rights Act, House of Lords reform, Supreme Court made independent in 2005, Directly Elected Mayors.
Pre-emptive strikes applied to Afghanistan and Iraq following 9/11 tainted Blair's government and raised big issues surrounding illegal wars and WMD.

Many industrial disputes in Thatcher's time - Miner's NUM, journalists, Government created strict anti-TU laws in 1981-1985 which forbade wild-cat strikes, limited secondary picketing and illegalised flying pickets by insisting on a national ballot.
The Miners eventually lost their strike in 1984 following Scargill's unwillingness to ballot the NUM, the stockpiling of coal by Thatcher's government and the break-away UDM in Nottingham which fractured industrial relations.
Following 1984, approximately 80 pits were closed and this event provided Thatcher with undisputed prominence in order to implement a wave of privatisations and haemorrhage the trade union movement permanently.
Trade Unions must ballot their members before industrial strikes and this has destroyed 'collective bargaining' with governments up to and beyond 2007.

MAJOR

Implemented the privatisation agenda following Thatcher's wave of de-regulated sell-offs.
Sold-off British Rail in 1994.
Kept the low-taxation regime for the wealthy and promoted the private sector in the housing market.
Faced the toxic shock of the ERM debacle and confronted Black Wednesday.

Northern Ireland under Major and Blair

Aimed for political solutions - backed the DUP and Sinn Fein to negotiate new solutions with the Downing Street Declaration 1992.
Major showed consistent strength and resilience in negotiating with the Irish Taoiseach, Albert Reynolds, and establishing a back channel with the IRA.
Blair's pivotal, landmark case was the Good Friday Agreement, 1998. Martin McGuinness, Gerry Adams, Sinn Fein and Dr Ian Paisley, DUP, had inter-party negotiations for a peace deal, multi-party democracy.
Blair successfully negotiated with the Irish Taoiseach, Bertie Aherne, in order to get the IRA to decommission weapons, cease-fire and establish Stormont, the Northern Ireland Parliament.

The Thatcher legacy - Major and Blair?

BLAIR

Failed to abolish Thatcher's strict anti-TU legislation.
Taxation remained low for the wealthy, less than 45%
De-regulated and outsourced economy caused the great economic crash of 2008.
PFI (Private Finance Initiatives) were simply an extension of the Thatcherite privatisation agenda. G4S, Per Capita and Serco etc.
The Academy Model in education merely extended the outsourced, privatised state in the public sectors: Health, Education, Prisons.
However, Blair massively invested in the public sector, NHS and education following 2002 to challenge the Thatcherite legacy.
The Minimum Wage of 1999 took approximately 3 million workers out of impoverished wages and slave labour conditions.
Big extensions of the Public Sphere came about with Sure Start, Connections and Tax Credit cuts to protect British society and regulate inequalities.
Blair failed to build newly affordable council housing and over-concentrated on the privatised, deregulated economy which led to the boom and credit bust of 2008. The UK economy was unstable and financially insecure.

REMEMBER: Loyalists/unionists - want to remain part of UK (e.g. UUP, DUP)

Republicans/nationalists - want to be part of Republic of Ireland/independent of UK (Sinn Fein, IRA)