Jay Douglas was a Labour cabinet minister in 1951 and she wrote in her memoirs that 1951 was the “most fiercely fought, passionate and neck-and-neck campaign of all parliamentary elections”. The odds were against Labour during this period, the Bevanite quarrel, the death of Ernest Bevin and the loss of voters due to anti-Labour propaganda in the national press. Although the result was close, Labour winning more votes than ever before determined the course of Tory rule for thirteen years. In their 1964 manifesto, Labour referred to the period as “thirteen wasted years”.

Atlee’s legacy

The Britain of 1951 was moulded by three episodes of history: The first being the great depression of the 1930s, viewed as an awful time of misery and mass unemployment to never be repeated again. The second episode was the world war, regarded as a ‘good war’ whereby everyone contributed to the national war effort in defeating the Axis forces. The third episode was the rebuilding of post-war Britain under Atlee, particularly the establishment of the welfare state. The basis of the so-called ‘post-war consensus’ was that there should not be anything like the Hungry Thirties or the terrible war that followed ever again. And to a certain extent, the consensus did live up to these standards as seen from the full employment.

Historians have provided different interpretations of Attlee’s legacy, Peter Hennessy (social democratic outlook) regards the Attlee legacy as the foundation stone of all that is best about post-war Britain. Even Nigel Lawson, one of Thatcher’s chancellors, gives Attlee credit for setting the direction Britain would follow for a generation to come. David Coates, on the other hand, in his ‘struggle for socialism’ book demonstrates how left-wing socialists regarded the Attlee years as a lost opportunity and a failure to bring about true equality. Right-wing views, such as Correlli Barnett’s, of the post-war consensus say that it was a mistaken policy – the Conservatives should have broken with it much sooner and prevented Britain from becoming a ‘nanny state’.
The main achievements of the Attlee legacy:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Achievement</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Welfare state</td>
<td>Using the Beveridge Report, Labour implemented a National Insurance, National Assistance, Industrial Injuries system and a National Health Service. These signified the birth of the welfare state. Also, provided a system of social care for each citizen from ‘the cradle to the grave’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationalisation</td>
<td>The government took ownership of several industries like the coal and Bank of England (1946), road transports and electricity (1947), gas (1948) and iron and steel (1949)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Independence (1947)</td>
<td>India was to be divided into two distinct states: Pakistan and India. This symbolised that Britain could not longer maintain it's former imperial status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NATO</td>
<td>GB played a key role in the formation of NATO in 1949. This was a defensive alliance consisting of 10 Western European countries as a safeguard against Soviet expansion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuclear Power</td>
<td>Attlee’s government started the programme, which made Britain a nuclear power. In 1947, the Labour government initiated research that led to the detonation of a British atom bomb in 1952 and Hydrogen bomb in 1957.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>Started a major housing programme, resulting in millions of new homes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Why was there a post war consensus though?

- The Attlee legacy had become very popular and it invoked this feeling of national unity. The NHS was one of it’s kind and it’s popularity meant that getting rid of it would have been political suicide hence why the Conservatives complied with it. Complying with the Attlee legacy was easy due to the establishment of One Nation Conservatism. Also, the war made it easy for the Tories to realise that state intervention and planning were necessary
- Under Lord Woolton the Tory party was reorganised which witnessed the rise of One Nation Conservatism, which was a more pragmatic ideology that made Tories more willing to accept realities of post WW2. The Tory party saw the emergence of new younger leaders like R. Butler, which were more willing to accept the realities of post-war Britain than the older guys. The importance of a positive relationship with trade unions was noticed
- The election result played a huge role in the creation of a post war consensus. The Tories never had a significant Parliamentary majority to make any major radical changes or dismantle the Attlee legacy for good. Due to the plurality aspect of the FPTP system, any change to government policy by the Tories would quickly turn the electorate back to the Labour party

Conservative dominance 1951-1957

There were a few reasons for why the Tories now dominated the political system for such a long period of time. The first can be the reorganisation of the party machine after the dislocation caused by the war and the unexpected defeat in 1945. Lord Woolton as party chairman and R. A. Butler as a policy expert took leading roles in reorganising the party. The second was the split within the Labour party between the Bevanites (Ernest Bevan) and the Gaitskellites (Hugh Gaitskell). The third reason was 1951 marking the end of ‘austerity’ and the start of the long-post war boom. The fourth was the Conservatives recognising the extent of public approval for Attlee’s legacy.

The new Conservative government accepted the post-war consensus. The concept of a post-war consensus is difficult to define but it was not a unanimous agreement since there were many conflicting policy ideas between the Conservatives and Labour, but there were broad lines of convergence.

- The central issue was the mixed economy: Labour demonstrated that they did not want to go all-out socialism on the economy and accepted private enterprise and the capitalist system. The Conservatives, however, were quick to denationalise the steel and road transport industry in 1951. Everything else Labour had nationalised was left alone
- Just like in the war-time coalition, ministers from all the major parties had shared the responsibility for handling domestic policies
- The idea of a ‘big government’ continued. Conservatives were now more accepting of the need for government intervention in social and economic policies
- Mass unemployment was something the Conservatives now sought to avoid, as seen from the 1930s, they no longer wanted to be seen as the party of ‘mass unemployment’
- Conservatives wanted a cooperative relationship with trade unions because they had become more powerful and exerted more influence
- After they had seen the popularity of Labour’s policies such as the NHS, Conservatives became less hostile towards the welfare state
Position of Britain by 1964

- British troops fighting the commies in the Korean War
- Britain was a founding member of NATO and a lot of British troops were stationed in West Germany
- Close cooperation between Britain and the US on producing nuclear weapons
- Several occasions whereby the special relationship was put under strain – Burgess and Maclean affair. Suez affected Anglo-American relations
- Macmillan had a good relationship with John F Kennedy
- Still very dependent on American power – demonstrated by the costs of Britain’s independent nuclear deterrent. In 1960, Britain had no choice but to abandon its own rocket project, Blue Streak – replaced by dependence on the American Polaris submarine weapon system
- When Wilson’s government came to power in 1964, it had to confront the need for deep cuts in Britain’s military commitments
- British politicians kept on reinforcing this whole rhetoric that Britain still remained a very strong imperial power. The sentimental myths of Britain’s glorious past as an empire were hard to shake off

Did Britain ‘miss the bus’ on Europe, 1950-1957?

In 1957 the ‘Six’ (France, West Germany, Italy and the Benelux countries – Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg) signed the Treaty of Rome, setting up the European Economic Community, the result of talks begun at Messina two years earlier. The European Coal and Steel Community originated from a Plan by the French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman.

The Schuman Plan

Yes, Britain missed the bus:
- Edmund Dell, historian and Labour MP in the 1970s: Bevin failed to participate in the Schuman plan talks
- Officials and ministers should have appreciated the drive towards integration
- Ministers should have had the imagination to sell the idea of ‘Europe’ to the public
- France did want Britain to participate in the Schuman plan. Jean Monnet was on the phone to Britain to ask it to join frequently and the French ambassador at the time, Rene Massigli, was also very pro-British.
- Failure to join in the ECSC made failure to participate at Messina inevitable because the Six learnt they could forge ahead without Britain.

No, Britain did not miss the bus:
- Regardless of not joining, Britain continued to make initiatives in Europe, e.g. in the Council of Europe in 1949, or the Eden Plan in 1952. Bullock shows that Britain did establish leadership through NATO and the OEEC (Organisation of European Economic Co-Operation) – HOWEVER, French preferred supranationalism in 1950 through the Schuman Plan and the Eden Plan was ignored
- Whitehall did not just dismiss the Schuman Plan, they contemplated the plan and then decided membership was not in British interest. The Plan demands that participants lose sovereignty, which evidently Britain was not to keen on. Accepting supranationality would be, as Bevin put it: ‘putting the roof on before you have built the house’. The Foreign Office believed that without the British, the Schuman plan would meet with little success
- Britain had the strongest coal and steel industries in Europe and saw no reason to share this around. Coal and steel were politically important to Labour. British industrialisation had been built on the back of coal and steel, and Labour had recently nationalised the industries
- Roger Bullen argues that the French made it difficult to participate. They didn’t inform Britain of the plan when it was first developed and in May 1950, Bevin requested more time to consider it but the French only gave him 24 hours to decide. This attitude persuaded the British to say no. Bevin felt that the French did not want them in

The Messina Conference

Yes, Britain missed the bus:
- Britain fully understood the dangers of exclusion from such an organisation
- Ministers should have re-evaluated the importance of Europe and should have appreciated that federalism would not harm British interests
- They knew well enough that by 1955 Commonwealth trade preferences were less important to British interests than it had been, and they were no longer preoccupied by the Soviet threat
1970 General Election
This came as a shock. Labour had finally recovered from all of its difficulties by 1967-1969 (e.g. Roy Jenkins credited with achieving economic + financial stability). Conservative’s were always ahead in opinion polls > even though Heath’s approval ratings were not so good. Cons did well in local govt elections. Powell was credited with winning the election even though he was kicked out of the party by this time.

1970-75 Edward Heath’s government
Heath was a formidable politician with a clear programme of policies for modernising Britain. He was close to achieving his goals but his timing was bad. His time in office coincided with the end of the long post-war boom in 1973 and the economic & political crisis that followed. He was a new type of Conservative: son of a carpenter, educated at a state school; he came from a different social background to those Old Etonians who previously dominated the party.

Some key cabinet members:
• Chancellor Anthony Barber
• Willie Whitelaw as Northern Ireland Secretary
• Jim Prior as Employment Minister
• And then two who were lukewarm about Heath’s economic policy: Margaret Thatcher as Education Secretary and Sir Keith Joseph

In January 1970 a conference was held by the Conservatives to discuss and approve Heath’s policy programme. The Selsdon meeting set out several tough approaches to economic problems, many influenced by Sir Keith Joseph.
• Heath made his famous ‘U-Turn’ in 1972, making it look like he had completely given up on his aims and objectives and lacked a coherent sense of direction
• But > It’s been argued that they were blown off course by the economic conditions and Heath’s main belief in a post-war consensus + One Nation Toryism still remained intact
• One key aim of Heath was too get into the EEC, first he had to seek Parliament’s approval which was a bit difficult because the Tory’s were sceptical and Labour were divided on the issue. In the end though, he got permission + 69 Labour PM’s rebelled and voted in against

THE NORTHERN IRELAND ISSUE 1969-1974
This only screwed over the government even more. Since late 1968, civil rights movements in Northern Ireland were challenging the domination of the Belfast parliament, whole socio-economic system by Protestant Unionism.
Cabinet members admitted that they were not certain who would win Thatcher’s career hung in the balance. Many ‘One Nation’ Conservatives were alarmed by the aggressive and unsympathetic stance by Thatcher particularly as many miners suffered hardships she was accused of wanting to destroy the power of the unions in revenge for the events of the 1970s. Union membership fell by 72% between 1979 and 1986. The Trade Unions

- Scargill’s aggression alienated other unions within the mining industry → strike was never solid as seen from Nottinghamshire’s miners, few other unions were willing to support the strike
- Scargill’s refusal to hold a ballot → looked like he was undemocratically forcing unions to strike
- Miners claimed it was the police which started the violence but public perception was that it was the miners and public opinion became very pro-govt
- Govt already made careful preparations prior
- Labour performed badly during the strike and it did not convince voters that Labour had a logical response to the strike (Neil Kinnock as leader tried to take a middle path, condemning violence but was sympathetic to miners)
- Police forces successful in enabling strike-breakers to get into work and deliver lorries to get through picket lines
- Coal was no longer a vital source of energy and since coal was of declining industrial importance, there was a sense that the strike was a hopeless act → belonged to an age that had passed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Union membership</th>
<th>% workforce</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>12m</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>15.6m</td>
<td>53.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>10.7m</td>
<td>45.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>8.1m</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reasons why the strike failed:

- Scargill’s aggression alienated other unions within the mining industry → strike was never solid as seen from Nottinghamshire’s miners, few other unions were willing to support the strike
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With regards to local councils: 1986 Local Government Act abolished big metropolitan local authorities set up by Heath → shows Thatcher reversing post-war consensus policies → powers of central govt increased at the expense of local govt. This was seen as a victory against the loony left BUT created problems for the central govt as they were responsible for issues they had never been responsible for before.
Thatcher got along very well with the French president, François Mitterrand and cooperated closely over the complexities of the Channel Tunnel projects (agreed in 1986, finally opened in 1994) and creation of such a symbolic link between Britain + France is hardly proof she was anti-Europe. This relationship, though, was not present between Thatcher and German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl. The pair couldn’t stand eachother despite their being broad agreements in policy (part of style). Thatcher was rather anti-German, continuously pointing out how Europe had to be saved twice from German domination. “The man is so German!”

Thatcher failed to realise that the USA was not a ‘better’ ally for the UK and that while being geographically situated in Europe, Britain could play a valid + viable role which was of real benefit to the UK. She failed to provide effective leadership in this area. She should have worked much more closely with the UK’s European partners for the common good rather than constantly attacking them, cooperations not confrontation. Strongest critics of Thatcher’s EU policy come from her own party, particularly Ian Gilmour and Nigel Lawson. Will Hutton criticised her savagely (The State We’re In).

The Special Relationship + the Cold War

- Perhaps the main reason Thatcher and Reagan got along was because of their similar ideologies: both far right conservatives with similar views on the economy in particular
- Close Anglo-American relations were key to safeguarding the interests of the free world
- Maintenance of Britain’s independent nuclear deterrent = most effective contribution that Britain could make to the special relationship replaced Polaris submarine with Trident I and later (’82) more expensive Trident II from the US govt (£2bn)
- US Cruise missiles were stationed in British bases (’83-’88) + Apr 1986, Thatcher permitted Reagan to bomb Libya from bases in Britain (no other EC leader allowed US similar license)
- At a speech to US Congress in 1985 Thatcher made claims that Europe should continue to acknowledge its debt to US assistance during WWII and post-war period of reconstruction
- Ronnie and Maggie show, America’s poodle, loved abroad hated at home

Tensions:

- The fact remains that America never regarded Britain as an equal partner in the relationship.
- Reagan announced a new Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) using complex and real missile systems it was called ‘Star Wars’ SDI was a source of worry for a small Europe because if America used this system they would become impregnable to nuclear attack and would see no more need for NATO.
- Relationship was already strained from 1970s because Britain refused to aid the US in Vietnam
- The US invaded Grenada in Oct 1983 a Commonwealth country because they feared that events in Grenada, an island with a Marxist regime, was out of control and another extremist left group, would destabilise the region. Thatcher was vehement and told Reagan she was ‘deeply disturbed’ + US invaded Grenada because they thought it was an invasion Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe told PM, he knew of no invasion plans despite being notified previously Reagan was considering

Cold War:

- “She used her good relationship with Gorbachev to demonstrate that she was a key player on the world stage, able to move easily between the superpowers” (Evans)
- Mikhail Gorbachev emerged as the Soviet leader in 1985 and from 1987 onwards he pledged a range of new ideas such as perestroika (restructuring and modernisation) and glasnost (openness) in reforming the Soviet Union he was willing to end the Cold War and let Soviet satellite states go their own way
- Thatcher’s contribution to the Cold War rested on two pillars: her combative style + determination to confront the USSR and her willingness to negotiate with Gorbachev: “I like Mr Gorbachev, we can do business together”
- She visited the Soviet Union in 1987 projected her as a world states woman, generating powerful images that enhanced her reputation in the run-up to the 87 election

Labour in opposition, 1983-1987

- Neil Kinnock became Labour’s leader (1983-1992) & sought to put the party back on the road to political credibility + Unlike Foot, Kinnock was drifting away from the loony left and had changed his mind on key left-wing causes like unilateralism, nationalisation and Europe strongly attacked the hard left
- Kinnock is responsible for starting the process of reorganising and reforming the party
- 1985 party conference in Bournemouth he attacked the Militant Tendency leaders of the city council in Europe, blasting them for leading to city to the edge of bankruptcy Kinnock at the same time was distancing himself from supporters of Tony Benn and Arthur Scargill
- By 1987 a lot had been reformed but Labour still lost, from this year on modernisation of the party was key → Labour became more moderate through leaders like Peter Mandelson, Tony Blair and Gordon Brown
- SDP-Liberal Alliance lost momentum who found it hard to keep on getting high levels of support, Alliance got 24% of vote in 1987 nowhere near peak of 40% before Falklands. In 1988 the two parties merged and formed the Liberal Democrats
- Many SDP MPs switched back to Labour Party, it’s leader David Owen resigned in 1988

1987 General Election – landslide majority

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Seats</th>
<th>% Vote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservatives</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>42.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal + SDP</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1987 highlighted that Thatcherism was not winning over the entire nation. Cons did well in Southeast and Midlands, the northern cities, Scotland and Wales witnessed sharp drop in Tory support, to a point where major northern cities had no Tory MPs.

Thatcher and Northern Ireland

IRA prisoners in the maze prisoner demands ‘special category’ status. Bobby Sands led the hunger strikes, he was nominated for a parliamentary seat and won but died a few weeks later. His funeral drew crowds of 100,000. In 1981 10 people died from hunger strikes, the protest lasted 217 days in total. Thatcher claimed the hunger strikes were a defeat for the IRA because their main aim (special category status). In 1984 at the Grand Hotel in Brighton the IRA exploded a bomb, the main target was Thatcher but she survived and four others were killed. In Nov 1985 the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed which set up permanent intergovernmental cooperation → major unionist and loyalist backlash, 200,000 attended a protest rally, there was no way out of the endless cycle of violence and retaliation.

More economy, 1979-1990

Privatisation

Many Cons believed lots of the existing nationalised industries had been in a state of decline, were not profitable, efficient and were badly run for years → So, Thatcher chose to privatise to encourage competition and efficiency → this revolves around her whole idea of promoting individualism and decreasing the scope of government.

- Over 50 businesses were privatised incl: British Airways, British Steel, British Gas, Cable and Wireless, British Telecommunications, Britoil → £4.7bn raised from share subscriptions, average £4,700m was invested & individuals owning shares increased from 3m → £50bn raised in total
- Evans said: “crucial ingredient of Thatcherism”
- Privatisation was probably the most obvious indication that consensus policies were being overturned, ‘rolling back the state’

BUT, it did mean employment was not as secure for employees, some lost jobs as privatised industries cut back in staff and others could not rely on pension provision nor long-term job security (200k lost jobs as a result of coal privatisation, 20k in British Steel). At the same time it allowed for social mobility (allowing lower social classes to rise up against the economic ladder).

- Former PM Macmillan criticised privatising the nations assets as “selling off the family silver”
- Other critics said these industries were national assets that should not be sold off to the wealthy or capitalist speculators → this policy put profit before the provision of decent public services
- Shares in the privatised industries were mostly bought up by big commercial concerns, not by the ‘little people’ as government advertising had implied

Further economic policy

- Financial Deregulation → loosening of controls on banks & financial markets
- October 1986 – Big Bang → London Stock Exchange was deregulated, paving the way for computer screen trading and replacing the ‘old boys’ network’ with free competition. The Big Bang has been credited with restoring Britain as one of the financial capitals of the world
- In 1983 Nigel Lawson + Thatcher were accused by critics of manipulated and artificially ‘massaging’ the economy with tax cuts prior to elections in order to maximise their party’s popularity
- Lawson cut 2p off basic rate of income tax in successive budgets in 87 and ‘88, reducing rate from 29p to 25p in the pound → hugely popular among voters
- Higher rate tax cut again from 60% to 40%
- Tax cuts generated the “Lawson boom” → key Thatcherite policy was to liberate people from high taxes and create greater individual spending power
John Major

- 1991 announced the abolition of the poll tax → replaced in 1993 by a council tax
- Brief and successful Gulf War (1991) sweetened public mood
- Lowered inflation and bank rates provided further reasons for Conservatism optimism
- Consumer price rises declined from 9.5% in 1990 to 3.7% in 1991-2
- Major played an open and emollient personality contrasted sharply with Thatcher
- More people (14.1m) voted for his Con govt in 1992 than for Thatcher in any of her 3 elections
- Thatcher vanished into political mists → acted as a ‘very good back-seat driver’. Major was a disappointment to Thatcher because she considered him a poor leader who failed to deal decisively with political crises occurring around him and a poor figure on the world stage. She thought he failed to follow her example – over Europe in particular
- Taxation policy + privatisation = 2 areas Major remained loyal to the Thatcher legacy: kept direct taxation low at 25% for the standard rate and 40% for the higher (thought taxes were overall raised in the 1993 budget).
- Privatisation continued (disastrous breakup of British Rail in 1995, accused of creating a poll tax on wheels)
- Overall, he did not continue to uphold Thatcher’s values → Public expenditure went up
- Forced withdrawal of the govt from the ERM in October 1992 → allowed Thatcher to remind followers that she was reluctant to join the ERM → ERM = considerable economic benefits but was a political disaster. Kenneth Clarke as Home Secretary said: “This is the first time I’ve been in a government which hasn’t got an economic policy”
- 1992-3 Thatcher opposed Maastricht Treaty → promised to increase size of EC, Major argued the treaties aims were trivial → Thatcher helped form a parliamentary rebellion against Maastricht
- Thatcher continued to use immense residual influence in the party and constituencies to undermine Major
- Major resigned as Conservative leader in 1995 → sought a fresh mandate through election and did. Michael Heseltine and Michael Portillo may have defeated him had they stood in a first ballot
- Major recalled that his govt was ‘mORTALLY wounded over Europe, our blood was in the water’ as rows over Europe broke out nearly weekly
- Public interest turned to ‘sleaze’, sexual scandals broke out throughout Majors govt which was embarrassing for a PM who wanted his ministers and govt to ‘get back to basics’
- Cabinet minister Jonathan Aitken, Party Vice-Chairman, Jeffrey Archer were jailed for perjury arising from scandals revealed during the Major years Tim Smith and Neil Hamilton were for accepting £ from minor govt posts for accepting ££ from businessman + owner of Harrods, Mohammed
- 1997 was a Conservative disaster, biggest defeat since 1832 with only 165 seats to Labour’s 419
- Thatcher’s economic policies did ‘lilac’ damage to the old industrial towns of Scotland, Wales and Northern England, so the result in 1997 may have been a delayed but logical outcome of those policies → Cons also polled nearly 5m votes fewer than Labour

The Legacy

- Her perception of society made her look selfish and heartless, it was competitive and not collaborative
- Her economic legacy is mixed: Her central objective was to reduce the burden of taxation which failed, by 1996 taxation accounted for 37.2% of a taxpayer’s annual income, in 1979 it was just 31.1%. The burden of direct taxation went down from 19.9% to 17.7%
- Annual growth rates in the years 1979-88 and 1988-97 were at 1.9% and 1.5% respectively, which were higher than those in 1973-9. However, even this stands as relative failures in comparison with other developed economies, growth rates in the Butskellite Consensus years were much higher than what it was in the Thatcher years.
- “By design, Britain became a more unequal society under Thatcher”
- Lawson boom brought about widespread economic benefits, general consumption levels increased sharply (78-88) proportion of families with telephones went up to 85%, central heating from 54 to 77%, those at the bottom of society however, failed to benefit, number in poverty increased from 5m in 1979 to 14.1m in 1992, proportion of families with no full-time worker also rose from 29% to 37%
- Thatcherite Toryism brought overall prosperity → real income of British fans rose by 1979 and 1992 by 37%, however, real incomes of British families rose by (1979-1992) 37%. However, real income of the poorest 10% declined by 18% while those of the richest 10% increased by 61%. In 1997 the richest 10% of the population held 20.6% of the nation’s wealth and the poorest 10% held 4.3%, in 1991 it was 26.1% and 2.9% respectively
- “The greatest paradox of the 1980s is that a regime which came to power vowing to get the state off people’s backs ended up substantially increasing the power of central government”
- “The list of those things Thatcherism attacked or demeaned is far longer: welfare, the power of the state to improve people’s lives, the professional ethic of service, local government, trade unions, the notion of community, Europe. Margaret Thatcher’s ‘conviction politics’ led her to more readily to destroy than to create her abiding narrowness of vision prevented her from seeing the likely medium and long-term consequences of her policies.”
Blair disassociated himself from the party’s extremism in the 1980s. Neil Kinnock and John Smith also made incredibly contributions to the revival of the Labour Party.

The process began under Neil Kinnock who dragged Labour back into political mainstream, he attacked the extreme left (represented by Militant Tendencies and ‘Bennites’). After defeat in 1987 Kinnock moved Labour’s policies closer to the centre ground. The Labour Kinnock left behind was without a doubt stronger than it had been in 1983.

John Smith took over from Kinnock who was ideally suited to lead Labour towards victory but died from a heart attack in 1994. Historians have speculated how Labour would have done if Smith was in charge rather than Blair, many have suggested he may have achieved the same as Blair did, if not, more or not enough given the fact he was too cautious. Reform of the Labour Party continued: Smith already prepared the way by moving towards abolishing the trade union block vote by introducing ‘One Member One Vote’ (OMOV) in 1993. The second big reform was the abolition of Clause IV (the commitment to state ownership of key industries) of the Labour constitution. By this time Blair aimed to breakaway from the old outdated traditional socialist ideas and embracing the modern capitalist economy. Removing Clause IV gave Blair a modernising image.

Party discipline was given much attention, Philip Gould monitored public opinion closely and Peter Mandelson ran the efficient machinery coordinating public statements and keeping all elements of the party ‘on message’ → Labour Party stopped making errors. Blair’s press secretary, Alastair Campbell (experienced former journalist) changed Labour’s relationship with the press and media. They turned one of the Conservatives most powerful weapon against the Tories.

**Summary of John Major**

**INHERITED PROBLEMS**

- Recession – high inflation (10.9%), high unemployment, high house prices. However, Major was Chancellor under Thatcher from 1989-1990 so he arguably takes the blame for some issues
- European tensions within the party and also Britain’s reputation as an ‘awkward neighbour’ in Europe due to Bruges Speech in 1988
- Involvement in the ERM
- Social tensions: anti-poll tax campaigns, high unemployment, north-south divide, breakdown of industrial communities, more individualism
- Political problems: loss of female vote, party willing to oust its leader

**AIMS & OBJECTIVES**

- Sound European relations – place Britain at the ‘very heart of Europe’
- Solve the recession
- Escape negativity towards Thatcherism – disassociate himself
- Ensure party unity
- Remain in power despite Labour’s revival
- Help resolve the troubles in Ireland
- Heal social tensions

**FAILURE 1: ECONOMICS**

*Point.* Inheritance of recession, due in part to the fact that previous chancellors up, saw the credibility of Conservatives as party of economic competence undermined and encouraged party divisions over European economic policies

*Evidence.* Black Wednesday 1992 → £ trade low level close to minimum 2.77 marks, wave of speculative selling → interest rates hit 12.5% and 15%, humiliating withdrawal from ERM, scrapping of poll tax - £1.5b had been wasted trying to implement it but was scrapped instead

*Explanation.* Led to loss of support of press and opposition used Black Wednesday to target Major → 15 Labour lead in opinion polls, destroyed Tory reputation as party of economic competence + splits in party

**FAILURE 2: INTERNAL AND SABOTAGE**

*Point.* Failure to introduce new policies during first 18 months of power and attempt to emulate Thatcherism saw him unable to stamp authority as a leader on the party, allowing for deeper party divisions.

*Evidence.* Attempt to unite Cabinet through reshuffles in 1994 which were still unsuccessful resulting in ‘back me or sack me’ leadership election → 87 voted against him but he won.

*Explanation.* 1995 party leader election perceived by some as weak, press and opposition able to exploit open divisions which impacted on reputation as being a united party or party able to see Britain through difficult times. Party leadership election fuelled press hostility.

**FAILURE 3: SLEAZE AND SCANDALS**

*Point.* Combination of sleaze and scandal undermined authority of Major + morality and respect of Tory’s from both press and public.

*Evidence.* Splitting image (that puppet TV show) portrayed Major as the ‘grey man’, Yeo and Mellor sex scandal, Scott Enquiry 199, Archer and Aitken perjury scandal, cash for questions.

*Explanation.* Mocking meant that Major was an easy target, respect declined, giving press fuel. Sleaze = similar impact as Profumo Affair on Macmillan in 1962 → seen as out of touch, untrustworthy, too preoccupied with own traumas than those of Britain in comparison to a

**FAILURE 4: EUROPE**

*Point.* Conflict over ratification of Maastricht Treaty led to desperate measure to get party support. Thatcher backed Tory rebel backbenchers in opposing the treaty.

*Evidence.* July 1993 organised resistance by Eurebels defeated a key Bill necessary for the Treaty to come into effect in November 1993. Forced to use desperate tactics: reintroduced the proposals to accept the Maastricht Treaty and made it part of a formal vote of confidence, Major referred to them as ‘bastards.’

*Explanation.* Highlighted divisions within party and lack of respect for/authority of Major – lack of support from cabinet caused problems for premiership, came at a time of