

Thatcherism And British Politics: The End Of Consensus

Thatcherism

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Thatcherism is a form of British conservative ideology named after Conservative Party leader Margaret Thatcher that relates to not just her political platform and particular policies but also her personal character and style of management while in office. Proponents of Thatcherism are referred to as Thatcherites. The term has been used to describe the principles of the British government under Thatcher from the 1979 general election to her resignation in 1990. In international terms, Thatcherites have been described as a part of the general socio-economic movement known as neoliberalism, with different countries besides the United Kingdom (such as the United States) sharing similar policies around expansionary capitalism.

Thatcherism represents a systematic, decisive rejection and reversal of the post-war consensus inside Great Britain in terms of governance, whereby the major political parties largely agreed on the central themes of Keynesianism, the welfare state, nationalised industry, and close regulation of the British economy before Thatcher's rise to prominence. Under her administration, there was one major exception to Thatcherite changes: the National Health Service (NHS), which was widely popular with the British public. In 1982, Thatcher promised that the NHS was "safe in our hands".

The exact terms of what makes up Thatcherism and its specific legacy in British history over the past decades are controversial. Ideologically, Thatcherism has been described by Nigel Lawson, Thatcher's Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1983 to 1989, as a political platform emphasising free markets with restrained government spending and tax cuts that gets coupled with British nationalism both at home and abroad. Thatcher herself rarely used the word "Thatcherism". However, she gave a speech in Solihull during her campaign for the 1987 general election and included in a discussion of the economic successes the remark: "that's what I call Thatcherism".

The Daily Telegraph stated in April 2008 that the programme of the next non-Conservative government, with Tony Blair's "New Labour" organisation governing the nation throughout the 1990s and 2000s, basically accepted the central reform measures of Thatcherism such as deregulation, privatisation of key national industries, maintaining a flexible labour market, marginalising the trade unions and centralising power from local authorities to central government. While Blair distanced himself from certain aspects of Thatcherism earlier in his career, in his 2010 autobiography *A Journey*, he argued both that "Britain needed the industrial and economic reforms of the Thatcher period" and as well that "much of what she wanted to do in the 1980s was inevitable, a consequence not of ideology but of social and economic change."

Reform UK

according to The Guardian many of its leading members had downplayed or denied climate science consensus. This is a marked change in British politics which up

Reform UK is a right-wing populist political party in the United Kingdom. Nigel Farage has been Leader of Reform UK since 2024. It has four members of Parliament (MPs) in the House of Commons, one member of the London Assembly, one member of the Senedd and one Police and crime commissioner. The party also controls twelve local councils. The party is considered to sit on the right-wing of the political spectrum, generally to the right of the Conservatives.

Co-founded by Farage and Catherine Blaiklock in 2018 as the Brexit Party, advocating a no-deal Brexit, it won the most seats at the 2019 European Parliament election in the UK, but won no seats at the 2019 general election. The UK withdrew from the European Union (EU) in January 2020, later in the same year the COVID-19 pandemic began in the UK. The Conservative government imposed a series of national lockdowns and Farage focused on anti-lockdown campaigning. The party formally changed its name to Reform UK in January 2021. Farage stepped down as leader in 2021 and was succeeded by Tice.

Since 2022, the party has campaigned on a broader platform, pledging to limit immigration, reduce taxation and opposing net-zero emissions. In 2024, Lee Anderson, who was elected in 2019 as a Conservative MP, defected to Reform UK, becoming its first MP. On 3 June 2024 Tice announced that Farage would become leader once more, with Tice continuing as chairman. It won five seats at the 2024 general election – the first time that Reform UK had MPs elected to the House of Commons.

Post-war consensus

eds. *The Myth of Consensus: New Views on British History, 1945–64* (1996) pp. 97–119 excerpt Dennis Kavanagh, "Thatcherism and the End of the Post-War

The post-war consensus, sometimes called the post-war compromise, was the economic order and social model of which the major political parties in post-war Britain shared a consensus supporting view, from the end of World War II in Europe in 1945 to the late-1970s. It ended during the governance of Conservative Party leader Margaret Thatcher. The consensus tolerated or encouraged nationalisation, strong trade unions, heavy regulation, high taxes, and an extensive welfare state.

The notion of a post-war consensus covered support for a coherent package of policies that was developed in the 1930s and promised during the Second World War, focused on a mixed economy, Keynesianism, and a broad welfare state. Historians have debated the timing of the weakening and collapse of the consensus, including whether it ended before Thatcherism arrived with the 1979 general election. They also suggest that the notion might not have been as widely supported as some claim, and that the word consensus might be inaccurate to describe the period. Embedded liberalism has been applied to describe the post-war consensus on a global stage, around the same period from World War II to the crisis of the 1970s, and contrast it with the paradigm shift led by neoliberalism that followed.

Premiership of Margaret Thatcher

Kavanagh, Dennis (1990), Thatcherism and British politics: the end of consensus?, Oxford UP ——— (2015), "Thatcher and Thatcherism. Do They Still Matter?"

Margaret Thatcher's tenure as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom began on 4 May 1979 when she accepted an invitation from Queen Elizabeth II to form a government, succeeding James Callaghan of the Labour Party, and ended on 28 November 1990 upon her resignation. She was elected to the position in 1979, having led the Conservative Party since 1975, and won landslide re-elections for the Conservatives in 1983 and 1987. She gained intense media attention as Britain's first female prime minister, and was the longest-serving British prime minister of the 20th century. Her premiership ended when she withdrew from the 1990 Conservative leadership election. As prime minister, Thatcher also served simultaneously as First Lord of the Treasury, Minister for the Civil Service, and Leader of the Conservative Party.

In domestic policy, Thatcher implemented sweeping reforms concerning the affairs of the economy, eventually including the privatisation of most nationalised industries, and the weakening of trade unions. She emphasised reducing the government's role and letting the marketplace decide in terms of the neoliberal ideas pioneered by Milton Friedman and Friedrich Hayek, promoted by her mentor Keith Joseph, and promulgated by the media as Thatcherism. In foreign policy, Thatcher decisively defeated Argentina in the Falklands War in 1982. In longer-range terms, she worked with Ronald Reagan to actively oppose Soviet communism during the Cold War; however, she also promoted collaboration with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev in

ending the Cold War.

In her first years, Thatcher had a deeply divided cabinet. As the leader of the "dry" faction, she purged most of the One Nation "wet" Conservatives and took full control. By the late 1980s, however, she had alienated several senior members of her Cabinet with her opposition to greater economic integration into the European Economic Community, which she argued would lead to a federalist Europe and surrender Britain's ability to self govern. She also alienated many Conservative voters and parliamentarians with the imposition of a local poll tax. As her support ebbed away, she was challenged for her leadership and persuaded by Cabinet to withdraw from the second round of voting – ending her eleven-year premiership. She was succeeded by John Major, her Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Conservatism

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Conservatism is a cultural, social, and political philosophy and ideology that seeks to promote and preserve traditional institutions, customs, and values. The central tenets of conservatism may vary in relation to the culture and civilization in which it appears. In Western culture, depending on the particular nation, conservatives seek to promote and preserve a range of institutions, such as the nuclear family, organized religion, the military, the nation-state, property rights, rule of law, aristocracy, and monarchy.

The 18th-century Anglo-Irish statesman Edmund Burke, who opposed the French Revolution but supported the American Revolution, is credited as one of the forefathers of conservative thought in the 1790s along with Savoyard statesman Joseph de Maistre. The first established use of the term in a political context originated in 1818 with François-René de Chateaubriand during the period of Bourbon Restoration that sought to roll back the policies of the French Revolution and establish social order.

Conservatism has varied considerably as it has adapted itself to existing traditions and national cultures. Thus, conservatives from different parts of the world, each upholding their respective traditions, may disagree on a wide range of issues. One of the three major ideologies along with liberalism and socialism, conservatism is the dominant ideology in many nations across the world, including Hungary, India, Iran, Israel, Italy, Japan, Poland, Russia, Singapore, and South Korea. Historically associated with right-wing politics, the term has been used to describe a wide range of views. Conservatism may be either libertarian or authoritarian, populist or elitist, progressive or reactionary, moderate or extreme.

Right-wing politics

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Right-wing politics is the range of political ideologies that view certain social orders and hierarchies as inevitable, natural, normal, or desirable, typically supporting this position based on natural law, economics, authority, property, religion, or tradition. Hierarchy and inequality may be seen as natural results of traditional social differences or competition in market economies.

Right-wing politics are considered the counterpart to left-wing politics, and the left–right political spectrum is the most common political spectrum. The right includes social conservatives and fiscal conservatives, as well as right-libertarians. "Right" and "right-wing" have been variously used as compliments and pejoratives describing neoliberal, conservative, and fascist economic and social ideas.

Washington Consensus

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The Washington Consensus is a set of ten economic policy prescriptions considered in the 1980s and 1990s to constitute the "standard" reform package promoted for crisis-wracked developing countries by the Washington, D.C.-based institutions the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and United States Department of the Treasury. The term was first used in 1989 by English economist John Williamson. The prescriptions encompassed free-market promoting policies such as trade liberalization, privatization and finance liberalization. They also entailed fiscal and monetary policies intended to minimize fiscal deficits and minimize inflation.

Subsequent to Williamson's use of the terminology, and despite his emphatic opposition, the phrase Washington Consensus has come to be used fairly widely in a second, broader sense, to refer to a more general orientation towards a strongly market-based approach (sometimes described as market fundamentalism or neoliberalism). In emphasizing the magnitude of the difference between the two alternative definitions, Williamson has argued that his ten original, narrowly defined prescriptions have largely acquired the status of "motherhood and apple pie" (i.e., are broadly taken for granted), whereas the subsequent broader definition, representing a form of neoliberal manifesto, "never enjoyed a consensus [in Washington] or anywhere much else" and can reasonably be said to be dead.

Discussion of the Washington Consensus has long been contentious. Partly this reflects a lack of agreement over what is meant by the term, but there are also substantive differences over the merits and consequences of the policy prescriptions involved. Some critics take issue with the original Consensus's emphasis on the opening of developing countries to the global marketplace and transitioning to an emerging market in what they see as an excessive focus on strengthening the influence of domestic market forces, arguably at the expense of governance which will affect key functions of the state. For other commentators, the issue is more what is missing, including such areas as institution-building and targeted efforts to improve opportunities for the weakest in society through equal opportunity, social justice and poverty reduction.

Nigel Lawson

values" (of the Samuel Smiles self-help variety), privatisation and a dash of populism. Lawson's definition of Thatcherism Following the Thatcher government's

Nigel Lawson, Baron Lawson of Blaby, (11 March 1932 – 3 April 2023) was a British politician and journalist. A member of the Conservative Party, he served as Member of Parliament for Blaby in Leicestershire from 1974 to 1992, and served in Margaret Thatcher's Cabinet from 1981 to 1989. Prior to entering the Cabinet, he served as the Financial Secretary to the Treasury from May 1979 until his promotion to Secretary of State for Energy. He was appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer in June 1983 and served until his resignation in October 1989. In both Cabinet posts, Lawson was a key proponent of Thatcher's policies of privatisation of several key industries.

Lawson was a backbencher from 1989 until he retired in 1992 and sat in the House of Lords from 1992 to his further retirement in 2022. He remained active in politics as the president of Conservatives for Britain, a campaign for Britain to leave the European Union, and was a prominent critic of the EU. He also served as the chairman of the think tank The Global Warming Policy Foundation and was an active supporter of Vote Leave.

Lawson was the father of six children, including Nigella Lawson, a food writer and celebrity cook, Dominic Lawson, a journalist, and Tom Lawson, headmaster of Eastbourne College.

Labour Party (UK)

"From Thatcherism to New Labour: Neo-liberalism, Workfarism and Labour-market Regulation". In Overbeek, Henk (ed.). The Political Economy of European

The Labour Party, often referred to as Labour, is a political party in the United Kingdom that sits on the centre-left of the political spectrum. The party has been described as an alliance of social democrats, democratic socialists and trade unionists. It is one of the two dominant political parties in the United Kingdom; the other being the Conservative Party. Labour has been led by Keir Starmer since 2020, who became Prime Minister of the United Kingdom following the 2024 general election. To date, there have been 12 Labour governments and seven different Labour Prime Ministers – MacDonald, Attlee, Wilson, Callaghan, Blair, Brown and Starmer.

The Labour Party was founded in 1900, having emerged from the trade union movement and socialist parties of the 19th century. It was electorally weak before the First World War, but in the early 1920s overtook the Liberal Party to become the main opposition to the Conservative Party, and briefly formed a minority government under Ramsay MacDonald in 1924. In 1929, Labour for the first time became the largest party in the House of Commons with 287 seats, but fell short of a majority, forming another minority government. In 1931, in response to the Great Depression, MacDonald formed a new government with Conservative and Liberal support, which led to his expulsion from the party. Labour was soundly defeated by his coalition in the 1931 election, winning only 52 seats, but began to recover in 1935, with 154 seats.

During the Second World War, Labour served in the wartime coalition, after which it won a majority in the 1945 election. Clement Attlee's government enacted extensive nationalisation and established the modern welfare state and National Health Service before losing power in 1951. Under Harold Wilson and James Callaghan, Labour again governed from 1964 to 1970 and from 1974 to 1979. The party then entered a period of intense internal division which ended in the defeat of its left wing by the mid-1980s. After electoral defeats to the Conservatives in 1987 and 1992, Tony Blair took the party to the political centre as part of his New Labour project, which governed under Blair and then Gordon Brown from 1997 to 2010. After further electoral defeats in the 2010s, Keir Starmer moved Labour to the political centre since becoming its leader in 2020.

The party includes semi-autonomous London, Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish branches. Labour is the largest party in the Senedd (Welsh Parliament), and the only party in the current Welsh government.

Adam Smith Institute

from the original on 1 October 2007. Retrieved 19 January 2010. Kavanagh, Dennis (1987). Thatcherism and British politics: the end of consensus?, Oxford

The Adam Smith Institute (ASI) is a UK-based neoliberal think tank and lobbying group, named after Adam Smith, a Scottish moral philosopher and classical economist. The Institute advocates free market and classical liberal ideas, primarily via the formation of policy options with regard to public choice theory, which political decision makers seek to develop upon. ASI President Madsen Pirie has sought to describe the activity of the organisation as "[w]e propose things which people regard as being on the edge of lunacy. The next thing you know, they're on the edge of policy".

The ASI formed the primary intellectual force behind the privatisation of state-owned industries during the premiership of Margaret Thatcher, and alongside the Centre for Policy Studies and Institute of Economic Affairs advanced a neoliberal approach toward public policy on privatisation, taxation, education and healthcare. A number of the policies presented by the organisation were adopted by the administrations of John Major and Tony Blair and members of the ASI have also advised non-United Kingdom governments. Beyond policy development, the organisation advocates free market ideas through the publication and distribution of literature, the promotion of Tax Freedom Day, the hosting of speaker events for students and young people, media appearances and blogging.

The ASI is rated as one of the least transparent think tanks in the United Kingdom in relation to funding and received 3% of its funding from the tobacco industry in 2011.

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