

MUCH ADO ABOUT BREXIT

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by

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## **Abstract**

This analysis is meant to illustrate the past connections that have culminated in Great Britain's decisions to leave the European Union (Brexit). Through examinations of both primary and secondary source documents this essay traces the pattern of the British-European connection that has caused turbulence throughout the past two centuries. Starting from the Napoleonic War looking at each subsequent European conflict and continuing on through until the current day. The purpose is to analyze and explain the cultural sentiments, political rhetoric, and a divided social climate that lead to the culminating vote on June 23, 2016, and to expand on where Britain thinks their place is in Europe and on the world stage.

This document serves to illustrate a modern historical narrative of a British state separate from Europe and to explain where these sediments can trace their roots to. This is all in attempt to key the readers in to a very important historical narrative that is still currently taking shape. The ramifications of this decision can have drastic and looming consequences that will affect future generations of not only Britons but Europeans.

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## Introduction

*"We have our own dream and our own task. We are with Europe, but not of it. We are linked but not combined. We are interested and associated but not absorbed."*<sup>1</sup>

This quote was written by Sir Winston Churchill in "The United States of Europe" published in *The Saturday Evening Post* in United States and *John Bull* in Britain on February 15, 1930. This was the quote that began my interest in the topic of British separatism. From United States History I have learned about the ideas of patriotism and American exceptionalism and I asked the question is there a traceable pattern of British Nationalism/Separatism that has culminated in the landmark decision to leave the European Union. In this paper I will explain the pattern British nationalism that often conflicts with the European agenda through an examination of leaders during times of European conflict.

For pupils in the United States this question could be composed to read, "what would happen if Texas or California decided to succeed from the union." This accurately represents the impact of a single states influence on the rest of its parts and furthermore, serves as an accurate representation of the situation at hand. Like the United States, the history of the European Union is one plagued by periods of success and turbulence. The Union began as a joint venture in 1950 between the countries of Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands to establish the European Coal and Steel community(ECSC). This agreement came about during tensions heightening

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<sup>1</sup>"Wit and Wisdom." The International Churchill Society. September 11, 2013. Accessed May 1, 2018. <https://winstonchurchill.org/publications/finest-hour/finest-hour-104/wit-and-wisdom-12/>

between east and western Europe. The history of the Cold War is taught in American schools as an ideological war between the United Soviet Socialist Republic and the United States. However, this was not just an ideological war between the two countries but rather a world conflict. While the US was challenging the Soviet Union for super power status, the entirety of Europe was looking to the Soviet Unions advances into Europe as a cause for concern. The western European community used this opportunity to begin forging bonds with one another under the pending pressure from the USSR on the eastern front. This would culminate in the decision in 1957 with the introduction of the Treaty of Rome which established the European Economic Community (EEC) or as its natively called the Common Market.

Though it was originally founded with the same six members as the coal and steel community the EU has grown significantly over time. The first expansion came on January 1, 1973 when the newly formed EEC added Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom. In 1981 Greece becomes the tenth member of the EEC with Spain and Portugal joining just 5 years later in 1986. Europe would not remain stable with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 came a rush of immigrants spilling into central and eastern Europe.

The European Economic Community would formally sign the Maastricht Treaty on February 7, 1992 officially beginning the modern supranational body known as European Union. The largest expansion of the EU came about when tensions were finally eased enough between eastern and western Europe in 2004 to add Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia. In

2007, the market expanded again to include Romania and Bulgaria. And finally the last member state, Croatia, was added. When combined together these countries make for a very powerful economic force, according to 2016 data the European Union gross domestic product (GDP) was 16.85 trillion dollars putting them as the largest global market behind the United States with a GDP of 18.5 trillion dollars<sup>2</sup>.

When compared against the United States, a similar state, the true magnitude of European Union influence can accurately be seen. Currently there are 505.17 million people living within the European economic community which puts them in third in the world behind only China and India respectively. As stated above adding together their labor produces 16.85 trillion dollars in GDP for all the EU member states, which is second only to the United States. The unemployment rate currently stands at 12 percent which is relatively high compared with the 4.8 percent in the United Kingdom. Interestingly the United Kingdom's unemployment rate is currently at 4.3 percent, but more how this factors in later. The quality of life is great within the EU with a general life expectancy of 77.2 years old compared with an average of 77.8 in the United States. The median household income in the EU is ~\$34,485 dollars compared with the US at \$59,035 dollars<sup>3</sup>. All of these stats add up to a relatively high standard for quality of life within the EU so why would a member state choose to leave one of the most lucrative unions in the world?

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<sup>2</sup>"Report for Selected Country Groups and Subjects." International Monetary Fund. Accessed May 1, 2018. <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2016/02/weodata/weorept.aspx?pr.x=56&pr.y=8&sy=2016&ey=2016&scsm=1&ssd=1&sort=country&ds=.&br=1&c=001,998&s=NGDPD&grp=1&a=1>

<sup>3</sup>"European Union Statistics." www.statista.com. Accessed May 1, 2018. <https://www.statista.com/topics/921/european-union/>



When looking into the comparisons between the EU and the US the numbers were relatively equal in size and scale. However we will compare the EU statistics to the UK statistics to see any possible problems. The UK provides 65.65 million people to the total EU population of 505.17 million or about 13 percent. Currently the UK brings in ~2.6 trillion in GDP alone meaning that ~15.4 percent of the entire GDP of the EU is added by a single member state. In the same tone the UK pays in ~15.5 billion into the EU budget but receives back a mere ~4.5 billion in spending of EU funds. These three numbers are the most staggering in scope as they most accurately help to illustrate the grievances cited by a frustrated British public. With recent talks the EU is currently working with Prime Minister Theresa May on a “divorce bill” which is set to range anywhere from 40-60 billion euros and could be responsible for as much as 100 billion with all programs included. This would be paid out over the course of 40-50 years in payments and according to the article at the present time the government is optimistic it can pay it off sooner than expected<sup>4</sup>. With all these negatives it would appear the decision would be obvious however it's more complicated than that.

Despite the negatives the UK receives many benefits by being an EU member. These benefits take many forms but they are collectively called the “four freedoms” which are the movement of goods, services, people and capital across borders<sup>5</sup>. In

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<sup>4</sup> Reuters Staff. "Britain Close to Deal on Brexit Bill with EU." Reuters. November 29, 2017. Accessed May 01, 2018. <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-britain-eu-bill/britain-close-to-deal-on-brexit-bill-with-eu-sources-idUSKBN1DS2G8>

<sup>5</sup> Lewis, Kayleigh. "What Has the European Union Ever Done for Us?" The Independent. June 25, 2016. Accessed May 1, 2018. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/eu-what-has-european-union-done-for-us-david-cameron-brexit-a6850626.html>

addition they receive the benefit of EU consumer protections which guarantees for products assembled or manufactured within its borders. They also enjoy mutual defense among all member states which not only provides for defensive costs but offensive costs as well such as in the ongoing war with the Islamic State. Most importantly the EU is able to exert a much larger influence on the world stage when combined together as opposed to individual states. With Britain's decline following World War 2 and its relinquishing of most its abroad assets in the Caribbean, Pacific and Africa would ultimately strip the commonwealth of its superpower status among the global players. A weakened state was left with few options of which the most beneficial going forward would be to join the EEC. It would be just 43 years later the decision would be made to withdraw. Approximately 48 percent of people were in favor of the benefits listed above. It was the 52 percent that claimed that the costs had exceeded the benefits that made their voice heard on June 23, 2016. This marked a turning point not only for the UK, but for the entire world.

## **The Referendum**

“In a contest that saw 52% of the vote to leave (and a turnout was high at 72%), the vehicle of victory was a virulent populist nationalism stirred up by a campaign laden with wild and inaccurate claims that 80 million Turks were on the brink of gaining EU membership and that a British contribution to the EU was 350 million pounds a week might be spent on the National Health Service. The Thatcherite Tories who have long disliked the EU saw the main issue as one of restoring British sovereignty, but focus groups revealed that few ordinary voters had any idea what sovereignty means. In fact, the majority of Brexit voters cared much more about immigration.<sup>6</sup>”

This excerpt was published just 5 days after the referendum by Harvard Political Science professor Peter A. Hall, whose short essay helped to capture the spirit of an expert from the outside looking in. Hall mentions a couple things that are of interest to the discussion of what happened and why. The first is that he claims the vote was achieved based on “virulent populist nationalism.” This quote is much inline with the discussion that was (and still is) taking place all over the world as a result of many countries turning to a nationalism as a way to combat the problems befalling society.

Hall goes on to cite two specific events that contributed the most to the anti-EU sentiment for British citizens. First, he cites the creation of the 1992 Maastricht Treaty which established the EU monetary union and open borders. This treaty bound all the signatory countries into an agreement to use the Euro as the standard method of payment

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<sup>6</sup> Hall, Peter A.. The Roots of Brexit: 1992, 2004 and European Union Expansion. Foreign Affairs. 2016.

for exchange between nations. This originally was a well liked idea because many saw it as an additional layer of stability to a currency system that wasn't solely dependent on a single government entity to issue its currency. This would be the case until the Greek economy began taking on massive debt shortly after its approval to join. Initially, there was much debate about the status of Greece joining on to the Eurozone as its debt to GDP ratio had ballooned to ~100% by 2001. Attention turned to the Greek government which was actively engaged in trying to minimize their debt and show a proactive willingness to work in connection with the EU for a resolution to their problem. What I purpose was the real problem was that the statistics and facts they presented to the EU were knowingly false and the government was betting everything on its ability to stabilize following its admission to the Eurozone(which it failed miserably at). Not surprisingly, Greece was able to successfully lobby the EU for admittance based on the fact that they had compiled a series of not just faulty but blatantly fraudulent statistics about status of their debt. The EU sets standards for which all member countries are to abide by to ensure the stability of the countries and currency for all other members. In addition, Greece was set to host the 2004 Olympics which is notable for being the first 11 figure total cost Olympic Games in history doubling and almost tripling the 6 billion spent by Australia just four years prior in 2000<sup>7</sup>. The games were a catastrophic failure for Greece and their debt began to snowball again. In 2008 the Financial Crisis would s and Greece began to suffer even more as a result. Between 1981 and 2004 the debt had

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<sup>7</sup>"The Economics of Hosting the Olympic Games." Council on Foreign Relations. Accessed May 1, 2018. <https://www.cfr.org/background/economics-hosting-olympic-games>.

gone from ~25 percent of GDP to just over 100 percent, however this was all kept under wraps until 2010 when it was discovered Goldman Sachs and other big investment banks had been helping the Greek government forge its economic statements to stay within the boundaries of the EU guidelines<sup>8</sup>. This would prove to be a massive disaster for the EU as its credibility and impact began to erode in the face of massive criticism from every member country who were all left wondering how this was allowed to happen. Instead of showing condemnation and taking control of the situation the EU struggled to find a solution only managing to offer bailouts in 2010, 2012, and 2015 and negotiated a large consolidation known as a “haircut” which in layman terms is a consolidation and evaluation of debt to which a percentage is agreed upon and that percent is removed off the top. The higher the number the riskier the investment, for example US Treasury Bonds would be considered low risk and would only be good for a 10% haircut seeing as how they are considered safe however Greece was given a 50% haircut meaning its debt was very risky and that this was likely the only way that any money could be retrieved from the severely in debt nation. By 2015 the debt hit its highest point at ~185% of Greek GDP. After all of this, the British public was done with the EU’s policy of redistribution. Hall cites the impact of the Greece debacle of this in his article by saying, “the euro’s travails had led the British voters (and other Europeans) with the impression the EU is a defective enterprise incapable of delivering prosperity”<sup>6</sup>. Through their initial ignorance, lack of meaningful punishment, inability to effectively produce a solution and the

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<sup>8</sup> Balzli, Beat. "Greek Debt Crisis: How Goldman Sachs Helped Greece to Mask Its True Debt" Spiegel L Online. February 08, 2010. Accessed May 01, 2018. <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/greek-debt-crisis-how-goldman-sachs-helped-greece-to-mask-its-true-debt-a-676634.html>.

continuation of the problems many years after their inception has created and fueled a distraught UK public to review its membership in the Union. In addition, I surmise the spirit of British nationalism/separatism explained through the 4 B's of Brexit played an essential role in the landmark decision to leave.

There are two defining dates for the big political impacts of the 21st century. The first comes from Hall's remarks on the 2004 vote to allow the Central European states known as "A10 countries" which are comprised of Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia into the EU. Hall states that allowing these countries in was actually supported and beneficial to the UK government overall as the population was in decline and immigration was helping keep the economy growing and steady. However, Hall notes, "But perceptions are everything in politics and, fed by hysterical stories in the tabloids, most people think the United Kingdom has three times more EU immigrants than it does."<sup>6</sup>

The Immigrant Crisis propaganda campaigns were seemingly launched simultaneously with the "Leave" campaign under the direction of Nigel Farage, a member of the UK Independence Party or UKIP. They represent the populist right-wing ideology which focuses on the eurosceptic ideology at its core. The party would launch a widely discredited propaganda campaign in 2015 that included inflated statistical numbers about the governments involvement with the European Union. The most discussed and speculated however was the number of immigrants that had been accepted by EU in the wake of the Syrian Civil War. The both sides British media quickly went to work to dispel faulty statistics and discredit Fargae. Currently UKIP does not occupy a

single seat in Parliament despite a claimed membership of 34,000<sup>9</sup> so the decision to leave is not just one based simply on immigration.

Here I would like to add an additional date to the two Hall has listed, 2013. This year would serve as a final straw to everything previously mentioned as it had finally culminated in a general public discontent and the public was ready to make a change. The people realized voting for the same parties and figures would lead to the same slow non-effective government they have had so they began looking to make a change. Cue David Cameron, a striking Conservative politician who burst onto the scene by making the bold claims he was going to “make people feel better about being conservative again.” He would find large success in 2005 but would take a backseat to Tony Blair and the Labour Party in the General Election. However, most people had lost favor with PM Blair and the Labour party on the heels of the Iraq War revelations. Seeing this Cameron began recruiting new allies to ensure his election, he was able to was able to pull together the support of the Liberal Democrats to assert his status as Prime Minister in 2010 but it would all fall apart quickly as allegations began that he was too conservative to be liberal and too liberal to be conservative. In 2013, everything reached a boiling point and Cameron was forced to make a last ditch effort to appease his conservative base by promising to hold a referendum about their EU membership. This promise would be the beginning of the end for Cameron for in 2015, he was re-elected but by the slimmest margin of any election. To the dismay of many, Cameron made good on his promise and

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<sup>9</sup> Keen, Richard, and Lydia Jackson. "Membership of UK Political Parties." Commons Library Briefing - UK Parliament. January 16, 2018. Accessed May 01, 2018. <https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN05125>

the vote was eventually held on June 23, 2016. Cameron voiced his adamant support for the EU and urged the public to remain, but by that point the damage was done and both sides were at odds leaving the fate of the country to the public vote. They would vote leave.

The year 2015 would see the rise and subsequent election of Nationalist juggernaut Donald Trump, surging French presidential candidate Marine Le Pen, who's father Jean-Marie Le Pen has headed the Nationalist movement in France since the early 1970's, Geert Wilders, founder of the Dutch Party for Freedom, Matteo Salvini, leader of Italy's Northern League and lastly the previously mentioned Nigel Farage, the former leader of the UK Independence Party<sup>10</sup>. The leaders listed above had varied amounts of success in their countries launching campaigns that fundamentally changed the way society began looking at its political, economic, and social issues. The Nationalist model preys (and thrives) on the fears and hopes of a distraught public looking for answers in uncertain times. For example, every nationalist candidate listed above was promising immigration regulation with anti-islamic rhetoric to combat terrorism, a return to economic prosperity following the catastrophic crash in 2008 and promises to return to the "glory days" of years past.

According to Hall, the Thatcherite Tories were the orchestrators of the movement as they have long disliked the EU because they saw it as a check on British sovereignty. Without getting into Thatcher herself, this particular label is given to specific type of

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<sup>10</sup> Calanni, Antonio. "In Europe, Nationalism Rising." Harvard Gazette. March 01, 2017. Accessed May 01, 2018. <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2017/02/in-europe-nationalisms-rising/>



British nationalists who rejected the post war expansion of Keynesian economics, welfare programs, nationalized industry, and stressed the importance of self governance. These were all pillars set fourth by Thatcher in the mid 1970's for which much of the public still remembers and holds in high regard similar to the Regan phenomenon at the time in the United States. These days are remembered by UK masses as days of strong leadership, economic prosperity, and a mutual disdain for the communists. This fits right in with upstart MP David Cameron who in 2005 began his crusade to make conservatives empowered again following the fall of Thatcher. However, Cameron realizing his own situation knew he was not appealing the ardent conservatives as much as he needed to and began the process of bringing over the Liberal Democrats to help bolster his base. This didn't go over well as Cameron began tanking in support among more conservatives and rising in some support from moderate democrats but it did not matter as his coalition was able to manage a narrow victory in both 2010 and 2015. In 2016 he cast his support to remain a member of the EU and when the vote was revealed in favor of leaving, he resigned. Cameron's prime ministership was one of constant struggle to stay afloat and when he took his stand on the eve of the vote it doomed him. He would resign on July 13, 2018 pledging to remain in parliament and serve on the Conservative side going forward. On September 12, 2018 he resigned his seat in parliament effective immediately, Cameron immediately claimed it was to allow his successor Theresa May to run her administration without incident from him, but it was seen by many as his way out of the spotlight and government in general. However, this only covers the events leading up to

the vote, to see the full story develop over time we must look to the first true European conflict, The Napoleonic Wars.

## **William Pitt the Younger, King George III and the Napoleonic Wars**

The most important thing to know about this era is that there are two entities competing for the power at the time, the King and the Prime Minister(PM). The King at the time was the infamous King George III and the PM was William Pitt the Younger. At this time all exercisable power resided with the PM, as his influence on the body helped to dictate real policy since legislative authority had been stripped from the King following the Glorious Revolution and the passing of the English Bill of Rights in 1689 making the King more of a symbolic figure of power rather than being able effect real change through decrees as other kings had done in the past.

First, I will explain the role of King George as he played an important role in the narrative then get into the real politics going in parliament with William Pitt. King George was an elderly monarch by this point. He battled major fits of illness from 1788-1790 and again from 1801-1804 which left him largely incapable of signing any necessary documents, knowing this many members of parliament tried to use this to gain more political power however this would all be stopped by Pitt<sup>11</sup>. Pitt and George had a complicated relationship. To George, he was the rightful leader and saw his power extending as far as his title would allow it, often leveraging the House of Lords to bend the laws to his liking as he had no control over the House of Commons lead by Pitt where the more impactful legislation was being passed regularly. As time went on the George aged quickly, “Elderly, blind and deaf, George was far less fit than he had been in

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<sup>11</sup> Black, J. (2006). *George III: America's Last King*. Yale University Press. Accessed on May 1, 2018. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt5vm6fj>

1788-9.” This shows that George would mostly stay as a figured head for most of the Napoleonic Wars, Dr. Robert Willis would take control of the aging monarch's health in 1811 until his death in 1820. However in the face of Napoleon their King would become their symbol of Nationalism. From *Britons* by Linda Colley, she tells us the strategy for helping to embolden the people to rally around their country, “First, British patriotic and public display was rendered distinctive by focusing it on the monarch. Where revolutionary and Napoleonic France had retained many of their ceremonies used by Louis XVI and his predecessors, giving them a far more nationalist and militarist emphasis, in wartime Britain almost all official celebrations subsumed national achievement in glorification of the monarch.<sup>12</sup>” This fundamental rejection of the French system of “nationalism” by looking to the monarch as a source of national pride became part of the new identity of British nationalism. Interestingly, George would have the most impact on national unity at the end of his life due to his ailments, “From now on, ill-health, reduced activity and ultimately old age would serve to protect George III (as they later protected Queen Victoria) from the kind of scathing criticism and controversy that previously dogged him. In these new circumstances it was far easier for propagandists to argue the monarchy was *the* uncontested point of national union<sup>12</sup>” This would be the breaking point going forward that helped to establish a separate British identity which prior to, was still tied to the Hanoverian Kings that ruled over Europe for centuries.

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<sup>12</sup> Colley, Linda. *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992.

However impactful Georges presence would be in helping rally the nation it would largely be over-shadowed.

William Pitt the Younger is one of the more extraordinary persons to ever hold the office of Prime Minister. Pitt was a master of politics, learning much from his father who served 25 years as Prime Minister. Pitt himself would serve 4 premierships consecutively before resigning and coming back for his fifth in 1804. This shows how genius of leader Pitt was, for the most part he acted as a one man show in the King's absence. The King was his only check as he was a master politician in every sense of the word having a commanding presence in Parliament and with the societal elite. As former Chancellor of the Exchequer he was familiar with the tax system and how to move money around to finance the costs associated with any wars. This would be crucial to his success fighting the rise of Napoleon and expanding the military quickly. Pitt quickly went to work using Britain's superior financial resources to combat France, "Britain used its economic power to expand the Royal Navy, doubling the number of frigates and increasing the number of large ships of the line by 50%, while increasing the roster of sailors from 15,000 to 133,000 in eight years after the war began in 1793. France, meanwhile, saw its navy shrink by more than half.<sup>13</sup>" This would have a profound impact on Pitt as it seemed that the country had banded together when faced with a potential invasion from the French. In 1797 it would all come to a head at the Battle of Fishguard in February 1797. Often called the "last invasion of Britain" it was a small but meaningful skirmish that served as

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<sup>13</sup>" Napoleonic Wars." World Heritage Encyclopedia. Accessed May 1, 2018. [http://www.self.gutenberg.org/articles/eng/Napoleonic\\_Wars](http://www.self.gutenberg.org/articles/eng/Napoleonic_Wars).

the example of British strength when 300 reservists, 250 militiamen and 150 sailors defeated 600 french troops, 800 irregular troops seizing a French frigate and corvette in the process. This battle is prefaced by Pitt in a speech given on December 3, 1797 titled *The Spirit of Mercantile Britain*, Pitt says “..and by which you have given a grand and edifying lesson to dismayed Europe, that safety and honour, and repose must ever depend on the energy with which danger is met and resisted. You have shown a power of self-defense for which is persistent and unassailable. Standing upon the principals you have assumed, the wild and extravagant hopes of any enemy will be thwarted; Europe will be aroused and animated to adopt a course so honorable”<sup>14</sup> From the speech, Pitt is speaking to the UK public about what makes them different from the rest of Europe and how they are the shining example of how to defend their homeland from attack. Pitt clearly makes the distinction between Great Britain and Europe by praising the actions of his people in service to their country and leaders. More importantly he goes beyond praise into how the public can serve as an example to Europe.

Fresh from their defeat of Napoleon the countries morale had reached a peak. The British had assembled (at the time) the most impressive navy that would be instrumental in helping to defeat one of the greatest strategic military minds ever. However, post Napoleon there emerged a power vacuum in Europe. To Britons their imperial century had arrived and they would take full advantage of it through the exploitation of their colonies across the world. Much of this time period would come to be dominated by not

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<sup>14</sup> Milford, Humphrey, and Reginald Coupland. *The War Speeches of William Pitt, The Younger*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1915.

just exceptionalism but arrogance towards anyone seen as an inferior person. All peoples of any ethnicity, other than white europeans, in British colonies were treated as lesser citizens by the British subjects who ruled over them. Due to the many works on the subject general knowledge is so wide spread and accepted as genuine fact I will be passing over the Victorian era as it offers no value in helping to advance the point of a narrative of separatism/nationalism at a time where it was accepted as the cultural norm.

## **The Boer War, Propaganda and Public Opinion**

While I will be skipping over the Victorian Era in British history for the most part, the Second Boer war is essential in helping to establish a shift in the narrative of British public opinion connected to its leaders. The Boer War erupted on October 11, 1899 which pitted the British against the South African Republic and Orange Free State due to the empire's seemingly constant interference in South Africa. The war itself was very straightforward, the Boers won the first couple skirmishes which forced the British to begin sending massive amounts of help quell the problem. The Boers would transition to guerrilla warfare tactics to combat the sheer amount of troops Britain was able to amass. Like most wars this war would feature publications about what was going on near the battlefields but this war would change the rules of publication. In this war Government would take a directly intervening step in regulating public opinion by influencing the media. British leaders sought to protect their imperial supremacy by seeking to cultivate a unified, patriotic domestic population. They pushed English newspapers to distribute jingoistic material in order to gather public support for empire during the days of the South African campaign. All this is to say that if the politicians could no longer hide the army's failings from the public, they would attempt to soften the blow with misleading propaganda campaigns.

The government would use *The Times*, one of the longest and most respected newspapers, to further its war aims through propaganda. *The Times* would begin publishing negative articles about the Boer population in South Africa. They were ascribed to be savages that were incapable of self government. *The Times* also published



highly exaggerated articles that detailed things such as, "a Boer snatched a baby from the arms of its mother with the object of provoking the father. Burghers poked rifles through the windows of the railway carriages" in order to "frighten the women." An Englishman who refused to give up "his British sympathies" was physically abused by a Boer policeman and "flung into a cattle truck." In another incident, "a Boer struck [a lady] in the mouth with the butt-end of his rifle, and hit another lady in the throat with his fist."<sup>15</sup> Examples such as these were used to detail the Boer population as uncivilized and anti-British. Notice the careful consideration given to the victims, most of which are women and children who are given the most sympathy in cases of mistreatment. It would be stories like these that would help to turn the opinion of the public from unjust war to "stopping the savages". These themes can be seen throughout the entire British colonial period as media sought to portray any group they disagreed with as less human making it far easier to hate that group. However, the Second Boer War would serve to fracture the trust between the press, government and public.

In 1900 Emily Hobhouse began receiving details about how the Boer women were being treated by British troops. She immediately got to work setting up the Relief Fund for South African Women and Children with the aims of hoping to offset the destruction done by the British military during their engagement. As Emily became increasingly vocal about her opposition to the war and the possibility of atrocities being committed she was allowed to visit South Africa in 1901. Here she would visit and tour a

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<sup>15</sup> Kent, Kelley. "Propaganda, Public Opinion, and the Second South African Boer War." *Inquiries Journal*. October 01, 2013. Accessed May 01, 2018. <http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/articles/781/2/propaganda-public-opinion-and-the-second-south-african-boer-war>.

concentration camp that was used by the British to house Boer families as a reaction to the war. The conditions were deplorable and Hobhouse returned publishing in full detail the atrocities that have been committed by the British government during their occupation in the *Guardian*, the other major newspaper in Britain at the time<sup>16</sup>.

The public outcry would be massive. The public had been reading 2 years of carefully crafted British military propaganda in the news every day. Much like Watergate in the United States this breach of trust with the public would never see a recovery as the public became more skeptical of their government and its intentions. After enough backlash the government established the Fawcett Commission which was tasked with investigating the Hobhouse claims among others. This commission would confirm most of what Hobhouse described in her article including that at least 28,000 Boers had died while imprisoned<sup>16</sup>. This would serve as a turning point to the British public who usually saw themselves as upright moral models to the rest of the world. This disgrace would carry significant weight as the country wrestled with how to restore their image.

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<sup>16</sup> Worthington, Daryl. "The Woman Who Exposed British Concentration Camps." *New Historian*. June 05, 2016. Accessed May 01, 2018. <https://www.newhistorian.com/woman-exposed-british-concentration-camps/6602/>

## **David Lloyd George**

Like William Pitt and many of the great Prime Ministers of British politics David Lloyd George was the next great orator in line. He was elected parliament in 1890 but would make his voice heard when he became the unappointed leader of the opposition to the Boer War. He began campaigning making many speeches on the war itself calling into question the morality and humanity of not just other members of parliament but the country itself. His most damning speech, Boer War Criticized, came in 1900 and this speech would see George directly call into question the morality of the “British prestige”. This can be best accentuated with his quote,

I ask hon. Members, will they venture to say that this war has re-established British prestige in South Africa or elsewhere? A force of 250,000 of the picked and trained men, not only of this country, but of the colonies, is required to crush 35,000 peasants. [HON. MEMBERS: Oh!...] British prestige has suffered, and no one will deny that this great war has done nothing more than to multiply grief and poverty. As for our military reverses, it is not for me to dwell upon them; but, at any rate, there is in them no restoring of prestige. I remember perfectly well the great cry at the last General Election was "Support home industries," and the Government, and above all, the Minister who got his party into power on the prohibition of foreign brushes, is now engaged in the task of restoring British prestige with guns made in Germany, soldiers fed on French vegetables and South American meat, Hungarian horses provided with American saddles, and foreign fodder carried by Spanish mules. That is how we are restoring British prestige

and the credit of the country. The fact is that this war was based on a gross miscalculation—upon a series of miscalculations.<sup>17</sup>

George would give many speeches along these lines but this would be the most impactful and famous on the subject. Above all George was a humanitarian who realized that the height of prestige is not defined by conquest and bloodshed its defined by taking care of people and working to a successful compromise.

In this light one of the most important facets of George's influence would be establishment of the beginnings of the modern welfare state. "Inspired by a visit to Germany (1908), where he studied the Bismarckian scheme of insurance benefits, Lloyd George decided to introduce health and unemployment insurance on a similar basis in Britain."<sup>17</sup> This would be the first time social welfare programs would be introduced in Britain. The result would see a combination of responses mostly negative. The ardent conservatives cited England's Poor Laws as enough justification for managing the poor. While the most ardent liberals in his party claimed it would destroy the in place system of regional unemployment and health devised by the public labor unions which put their operations at stake. Through his masterful oratory skill George was able to persuade most of the liberals to vote in favor of the act and it successfully passed in 1911.

The impact of Georges narrative does not serve to further anti-europeans aims or even British nationalism like the leaders before him. George was always focused on

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<sup>17</sup> George, David Lloyd. "The Boer War Criticized." David Lloyd George, *The Boer War Criticized* (1900). 1900. Accessed May 01, 2018. <http://historymuse.net/readings/GeorgeBOERWARCRITICIZED1900.htm>.

domestic affairs and humanity often leaving foreign policy in the hands of his colleagues. George was a prime minister set on redefining what “prestige” meant to the Nation after the disgrace of the Boer War. He looked to do this through welfare programs which he saw as helping to elevate the British prestige further than any war could. This would influence how many citizens, particularly the Liberal party, started to derive British pride from internal prosperity among its peoples as opposed to amassing and controlling a worldwide empire. This shift is essential in helping to create the channel for which supranational humanitarian organizations like the European Union would even be possible much less accepted by the British public. This shift will become more pronounced as George lead the country through the horrors of WWI and leading up to WWII.

## **Neville Chamberlain**

“Germany is arming fast, and no one is going to stop her. I dread the day when the means of threatening the heart of the British Empire should pass into the hands of the present rulers of Germany .... I dread that day, but it is not, perhaps, far distant.”<sup>18</sup> This quote was spoken by Winston Churchill in March of 1934 to Parliament during the rise of Hitler and the Nazis. However, this speech fell on deaf ears to all but a few as Churchill was dismissed as war-monger preying on post war fears. The Great War was over and Europe was yearning for peace following the most brutal fighting ever seen, so a warning coming from backbench MP, who’s seat was based on his father being PM, was not taken as seriously as it should have been. Whether Parliament did not want to heed the warning or simply didn’t believe it, it can be said for certain he would be proved correct as Germany began re-arming, in secret, at an alarming rate. On March 19, 1935, Europe would learn of Hitler’s violation of the Treaty of Versailles when he announced mandatory conscription for the Germany military. Additionally, it was revealed the Nazis were in possession of 2,500 war plans in its Luftwaffe and a standing army of 300,000 men. Britain, Italy, France and the then League of Nations all issued statements condemning the German leaders actions but no penalty was issued.

Hitler would continue his military expansion until March 12, 1938, when it was announced Nazi Germany had annexed Austria. Coined “Anschluss”, this was widely viewed by most European states as German unification as the states had been separated

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<sup>18</sup> "Gathering Storm." National Churchill Museum. Accessed May 01, 2018. <https://www.nationalchurchillmuseum.org/winston-churchill-and-the-gathering-storm.html>

following World War I but a large amount of time had passed since Germany's request at the Paris Peace Conference many years earlier. Austria has always enjoyed a special relationship to the Germans and their territory was comprised of German speaking citizens and of land stripped from Germany following the war. Knowing this many states did not see it as a cause for concern. However, unbeknownst to Europe, Hitler had no plans to stop his demands as he shifted his eye to another region that was ceded following the war, Czechoslovakia.

It must be stated that as general rule many of these concessions were allowed to happen based on Germany's specific circumstance. The Treaty of Versailles punished Germany severely (for many too severely) following World War I and as a result many countries began to feel as if they had unfairly crippled Germany by passing such harsh punishments so these concessions were seen by many as helping Germany get itself reorganized and assimilated back into their place in Europe. Well at least that was the hope of Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain.

Chamberlain ascended to Prime Minister when Stanley Baldwin retired in May of 1937. From the start Chamberlain was tasked with dealing with an alarmingly aggressive German state that was making demands seemingly at will. Chamberlain knowing full well his country was not prepared to fight a war called for a meeting with the German leader. The meeting was held at Hitler's retreat in Berchtesgaden. At the meeting Chamberlain and Hitler agreed that it was in the best interest to allow Germany to seize what became known as the "Sudetenland" or the German speaking border surrounding

Czechoslovakia that was also stripped from Germany following WWI. This compromise stated that Germany was given some control of the Sudetenland on the promise that no further military action would be taken without consent. Chamberlain quickly went to work trying to persuade France's Premier Édouard Daladier to agree as well. Reluctantly Daladier agreed but only if they allowed occupation of 50 percent of the territory specified. Interestingly, Chamberlain choose to leave out the Czechoslovak government out of the negotiations entirely essentially negotiating with Hitler on their behalf. They all reluctantly accepted the terms and Chamberlain would return to Germany to finalize the agreement but Hitler's terms had stiffened. Now Hitler was requesting the entirety of the area be occupied and a total evacuation of the Czechoslovaks in the area by the end of September. Chamberlain took the new demands and submitted them to the French Premier, Czechoslovak government and British Parliament all of whom rejected the offer. As a last ditch effort to avoid war Chamberlain called for a "power four" convention to be held in Munich. Britain, France, Italy and Germany would attend the conference to decide the fate of the Sudetenland. Headed by Italian leader Benito Mussolini the "Munich Agreement" was drawn up that allowed the German military occupation of the Sudetenland by October 10th and a commission would be appointed to decide the future of the remaining disputed areas. Chamberlain relayed the news the Czechoslovak government who initially rejected the offer but was given the choice to resist Germany alone or prescribe to the plan. Reluctantly the Czechoslovak government agreed to submit to the accords<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> Smetana, Vít. 2014. In the Shadow of Munich : British policy towards Czechoslovakia From The Endorsement to the Renunciation of the Munich Agreement. Karolinum Press, 2014. Accessed May 1, 2018.



This would be the final piece of what would come to be known as the policy of Appeasement. This term would lump together the concessions of the European leaders to Hitler in an attempt to stave off war. Originally, this policy was applauded by the British public, at least for a little bit, as if they had successfully avoided conflict and managed an agreement between the power four countries for peace. Again the pattern is seen of Britain working as the facilitators for peace on the continent just as David Lloyd George had done so many years prior. Chamberlain viewed his compromise as a triumph for Britain saying "peace with honour. I believe it is peace for our time."<sup>19</sup> This would be one of the only positive speeches Chamberlain would ever deliver to the British public and it would be met with much criticism as not everyone believed Chamberlain had made the correct choice.

The dissenters particularly the conservatives immediately attacked Chamberlain calling his actions cowardly as many saw the concessions as a show of weakness and foolishness. Many of the members of Parliament had varying degrees of suspicion of Hitler's intentions but one member rose above the rest Winston Churchill. Churchill directly attacked the PM using his own words against him saying, "You were given the choice between war and dishonour. You chose dishonour and you will have war."

On September 1, 1939 Germany invaded Poland officially starting World War II. Chamberlain was abhorred, his deal with Hitler was voided and as a result Britain declared war on Germany on September 3, 1939. With little resources and no in place outlets for structure among the military Chamberlain begrudgingly appointed Churchill as Lord of the Admiralty. However this appointment was not enough to stave off

Chamberlain's incompetence as he demanded Labour join in the coalition to serve as a united front. Head of Labour and future PM Clement Attlee would reject Chamberlain's offer saying that the party did not wish to serve under the leadership of Chamberlain but would yield if there were leadership change. Chamberlain, ever a man of honor, went to the King with resignation letter in hand and demanded the appointment of Churchill over the largely favored Viscount of Halifax Edward Wood. Chamberlain would pass from a fit of bowel cancer during the war on November 9, 1940.

Chamberlain's premiership was one characterized best by response to his situation. He was the leader the country needed at that time. Like David Lloyd George he was a man of people and wished for nothing more than to avoid war at all costs. However, in doing so and refusing to heed the warnings of Churchill, he nearly doomed the country in its entirety. Chamberlain's dealings with Hitler would serve to show how weak and unprepared the British state was and this was sensed by Hitler as he began his blitz campaign just a few months after the resignation.

## Winston Churchill and World War II

When Britains remember World War II there is one figure who rises above the rest. Being named Greatest Briton of All Time in 2002 by BBC, Sir Winton Churchill needs little introduction.<sup>20</sup> His status among the population is iconic, his speeches inspired a nation to fight on from its most broken form. While under constant bombardment Churchill remained stateside opting to work and plan in his country during the nearly four month long German Blitz. He resonated with the public like no leader has before, with Churchill at the helm Britain would rise to the occasion and truly epitomize their finest hour.

From the beginning Churchill was given a deck stacked against him. Chamberlains failure to preemptively prepare for war with Germany gave Churchill no time to mount an offensive to stop an advancing Hitler. In his first speech as Premier Churchill sought to entrench the narrative of reliance among the public with, "You ask, what is our aim? I can answer in one word: Victory. Victory at all costs—Victory in spite of all terror—Victory, however long and hard the road may be, for without victory there is no survival."<sup>21</sup> With this speech Churchill was able to unite all parties under his leadership. He realized that without unity in the government there would be no chance of victory for a divided government would seek to undermine him at every step.

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<sup>20</sup> "100 Greatest Britons (BBC Poll, 2002)." 2002. Accessed May 01, 2018. <https://www.geni.com/projects/100-Greatest-Britons-BBC-Poll-2002/15375>.

<sup>21</sup> Dockter, Warren. "Winston Churchill's 10 Most Important Speeches." The Telegraph. January 26, 2015. Accessed May 01, 2018. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/winston-churchill/11366880/Winston-Churchills-10-most-important-speeches.html>

His first major victory would come by way of a very successful retreat at Dunkirk. The British army had been forced back and the scene was beginning to look very grim for the ~400,000 allied soldiers who had retreated to the port. At Churchill's command ship after ship poured in to the port taking as many men as possible back to the isle. While this was happening Churchill was already planning his next move as he realized that once the battle on the mainland had concluded there was only a single country left in opposition on the western front. Hitler quickly turned his attention to Britain as the bombing campaigns started just a month later. Churchill would opt to remain stateside meeting with his war cabinet and making speeches to raise public moral. In one of his most gripping speeches, We Shall Fight on the Beaches, Churchill stated "We shall defend our Island, whatever the cost may be; we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender..."<sup>21</sup> Just some 2 weeks later Churchill would give his most famous speech ever with an ultimatum of fight or die to the people with his "Finest Hour Speech,"

Hitler knows that he will have to break us in this Island or lose the war. If we can stand up to him, all Europe may be free and the life of the world may move forward into broad, sunlit uplands. But if we fail, then the whole world, including the United States, including all that we have known and cared for, will sink into the abyss of a new Dark Age made more sinister, and perhaps more protracted, by the lights of perverted science. Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and

so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, "This was their finest hour."<sup>21</sup>

What would follow would be 4 months of unimpeded German blitz which would flatten nearly every aspect of British society. But from the ashes would rise a British public ready to defend their nation at all costs. Fortunately, Hitler had set his sights on an invasion of Russia which allowed Churchill to begin requesting help from the Americans by borrowing supplies to begin a new western front offensive against Hitler forcing him to fight a two front war. D-Day would prove the turning point as the Germans were beaten back on the French coast and were forced to retreat inland. Eventually the allied forces would break through forcing the German surrender on May 7, 1945. At last their war was over Churchill was heralded as a hero who had inspired the nation through its darkest time.

However great a wartime leader Churchill was, Chamberlain's policy of appeasement, refusal to arm, and massively deepened recession served to doom the Conservative Party in the election of 1945. The public instead opted to elect Labour leader Clement Attlee who was promising a myriad of social programs such as the modern National Health Service and a new welfare to help get Britain moving again. Just as PM George laid the foundation for the welfare state, Attlee would implement and expand it. He would nationalize industry creating thousands of jobs for workers as they rebuilt their country following the war. But this would all be for naught as his support for decolonization of India, Pakistan, Burma, Ceylon and Jordan, and the creation of Israel upon Britain's withdrawal from Palestine would destroy all rapport with the public he had

managed to accrue until that point. In a lapse of judgment Attlee would call for a snap election thinking the party could acquire more seats. To his surprise the public voted in favor of the Conservatives, and Churchill would assume his second tenure as PM proving how much the public valued their Empire as a show of national pride and superiority. The public claimed they did not fight the war in its entirety only relinquish their colonial possessions in the face of a demanding peace accord following WWII. The public instead demanded a peaceful Europe lead by strong British Empire which saw their influence as unwavering and hoped Churchill would be the man to see it through.

As stated he would be elected to second term following Attlee but his most important role in defining Britains future would come as leader of the opposition. As opposition leader Churchill had remained an active member of Parliament working to ensure the best solution for the public regardless of political alliances. He had emerged from the war a changed man. Whether it was the valiant fighting and death of his own people in front of him or the horrors of the Nazi's that were discovered during liberation he had a new resolve, peace. With the Labour party in control of Parliament, Churchill as leader of the opposition turned once again to his rhetorical prowess to make his ideas known if he was to influence the rebuilding of the world around him. In one of his most controversial speeches, "The United States of Europe", Churchill addressed the University of Zurich in Switzerland on September 19, 1946 where he outlined his plans for how he envisioned the future of Europe. He said, "I am now going to say something that will astonish you. The first step in the re-creation of the European family must be a partnership between France and Germany. In this way only can France recover the moral

and cultural leadership of Europe. There can be no revival of Europe without a spiritually great France and a spiritually great Germany.”<sup>22</sup> Here Churchill seems to advocating for a collective European state that would restore unitary fabric of Europe back to peace however, he makes careful consideration to leave Britain out of this collectivization instead mentioning his plan for Britain in a different section saying,

There is no reason why a regional organisation(sic) of Europe should in any way conflict with the world organisation of the United Nations. On the contrary, I believe that the larger synthesis can only survive if it is founded upon broad natural groupings. There is already a natural grouping in the Western Hemisphere. We British have our own Commonwealth of Nations. These do not weaken, on the contrary they strengthen, world organisation. They are in fact its main support.<sup>22</sup>

These two quotes together show the vision Churchill had for Britain’s relation to Europe. He imagined Britain taking the role of facilitator and helping to bridge the peace between the European nations, not be part of it. However, timing is key. I believe Churchill advocated for these things when he saw the British state as an Empire when he famously remarked in 1951, "I will not preside over a dismemberment (of the empire)" when dealing with a rebellion crisis in Kenya.<sup>23</sup> Churchill would send in troops to quell the rebellion proving his intent to keep what was left of the British Empire intact at all costs. Churchill saw the British state as having modern day “superpower status” which was

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<sup>22</sup> Churchill, Winston. "Speech to the University of Zurich." September 19, 1946. Accessed May 1, 2018. <https://rm.coe.int/16806981f3>.

<sup>23</sup> Jenkins, Roy. Churchill: A Biography by Roy Jenkins. New York: Penguin Group, 2002.

quite the opposite as the empire quickly crumbled beneath him. Realizing his own aging and poor health Churchill would retire from office in 1955. He would die on January 24, 1965.

With a heavy heart the nation said goodbye to one of its greatest and most iconic leaders of all time. Churchill proved he was always a man with a vision even if others could not see it. Where people saw darkness, he saw light. His legacy carries on today through the speeches that inspired and steered a proud nation at its lowest point. Today his quotes are used by both pro and anti-european groups to further their own aims but I believe Churchill was a true Briton above all and just wished for peace and prosperity for his country and people.

Britain would lose most of its empire in the subsequent decades being reduced to just a couple dozen islands and territories. Now a shell of its former self Britain now began to see its future as lying with Europe as opposed to the “Third Superpower” next to the United States and The Soviet Union. Britain would attempt to join the EU multiple times each being blocked by French President Charles DeGaulle who accused Britain of attempting to join just to spread US influence through the “special relationship.”

DeGaulle also cited Britain’s lack of commitment to the European Economic Community’s political aims of economic dependence between states as reason for denial. To DeGaulle, Britain was not fully committed to the European identity, instead choosing nationalism over collective unity.

However after DeGaulle’s departure the Treaty of Accession was signed by conservative PM Edward Heath in January of 1972 officially making the United



Kingdom a member of the European Community. They would begin their tumultuous road of membership on January 1, 1973.

## **Margaret Thatcher**

*"The world has lost one of the great champions of freedom and liberty, and America has lost a true friend. As a grocer's daughter who rose to become Britain's first female prime minister, she stands as an example to our daughters that there is no glass ceiling that can't be shattered. As prime minister, she helped restore the confidence and pride that has always been the hallmark of Britain at its best. And as an unapologetic supporter of our transatlantic alliance, she knew that with strength and resolve we could win the Cold War and extend freedom's promise."*<sup>24</sup>

This quote was given by then President Barak Obama on the day that one of Britains most iconic leaders passed away. This quote was chosen because it best exemplifies the true spirit of what Thatcher meant to the world and her country. She took a disheveled and down-trot public and restored the confidence and pride that since the beginning of their empire was was accepted as the norm.

Lead from the Front. These are the most accurate words to describe Margaret Thatcher and how she lived her life. From a young age Margaret was always a determined individual which translated into just about every aspect of her life, from college to politics she was always pushing the limits of what she could achieve. To get better idea of where her political ideologies were formed its best to start at the beginning.

She grew up in Grantham, Lincolnshire as the daughter of a grocery store owner. Raised in in a liberal household she saw herself more as an independent. She graduated

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<sup>24</sup> "Margaret Thatcher Dies: Reaction in Quotes." BBC News. April 08, 2013. Accessed May 01, 2018. <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-22071506>.

with a chemistry degree from Oxford, which was a rare field for women at the time, but she always had a main interest, politics. She devoted almost all of her free time to study of politics and law, eventually becoming a candidate for the known safe Labour seat in Dartford. She would try twice, losing both times but giving up was not her nature. By 1958, she began looking for a conservative seat to occupy and was selected by Finchley in the 1959 General Election. She would serve 11 years in parliament and 4 years under Prime Minister Heath as his Secretary of State for Education and Science. The Heath ministry faltered as the oil embargo and labor union strikes would take a significant toll on the support for the Conservative Party, subsequently they were reduced to minority government status. They go on to lose their majority in the 1974 General Election thanks none in part to Heath who resigned his lead in 1974 to Thatcher who beat not just one but two candidates to assume control of the party. Here she begin forging her legacy as a vehement Conservative that opposed the Welfare State as it had come to exist. In 1979, after a series of attacks on their policies by Thatcher, Parliament cast a vote of no confidence for the Callaghan Ministry and just like that Labour was ousted as soon as it had entered.

Margaret quickly went to work during her prospect year making a strong case for herself as Prime Minister. The most pressing issue at the time was the public outcry from the Asian Immigrant crisis actively unfolding before her. While appearing on World in Action in 1978, she gave an interview in which she said, “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.<sup>25</sup> This would prove to be a brilliant move as after the interview public support for Thatcher had swelled and she was now leading in all polls. She would win her majority and assume the Premiership on May 4, 1979. Thatcher however would be off to a rocky start as conditions within the country continued to worsen over the course of three years due to the previous administrations shortcomings and the the continuation of labor strikes across the country.

Everything would change when on April 2, 1982 when Argentina invaded the Falkland Islands forcing a down trot Thatcher to make crucial decisions. From an article titled *How Thatchers Falklands Gamble Paid Off* by Simon Jenkins we learn that “From the moment the disaster was imminent, on the night of 31 March, Thatcher knew she faced humiliation and possible resignation. Overnight she came into her own, changing from a Chamberlain to a Churchill.”<sup>26</sup> This would come to represent a fundamental shift in the way Thatcher would run and operate her government going forward. She took firm control of the situation sending an emergency task force to retake the islands almost immediately. What started as an intervention quickly developed into all out war between the nations. It would be Thatchers swift and decisive actions that would not only save her countrymen but her political career. As mentioned previously Thatcher was trending downwards in public support prior to the war but after her legacy only grew as she would be re-elected with ease.

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<sup>25</sup> Margaret Thatcher: At Her Zenith: In London, Washington and Moscow. Knopf Publishing Group, 2016.

<sup>26</sup> Jenkins, Simon. "How Margaret Thatcher's Falklands Gamble Paid off." *The Guardian*. April 09, 2013. Accessed May 01, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/apr/09/margaret-thatcher-falklands-gamble>.

With the country now solidly behind her she began implementing her new brand of politics on the country. As an ardent conservative Thatcher's first order of business was always to reform the Welfare State that had developed following the end of the World War 1 and subsequently increased following World War II.

Thatcher much like Ronald Regan in the United States came from a different time that placed value of self reliance above all else, a theme that can be seen all the way through Thatchers time in office. In a piece published to History and Policy by Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, she perfectly encapsulates Thatchers thoughts on not just the welfare state but unions;

Thatcher's fears about the welfare state were twofold. First, she and her advisers thought that generous collective provision for unemployment and sickness was sapping some working-class people's drive to work. Second, they feared the corrupting influence of what Thatcher's close ally Keith Joseph called 'the Father Christmas state' on the middle class, who were thought to be in danger of relying increasingly not on their own hard work and thrift, but on collective action through trade unions and state hand-outs<sup>27</sup>

As a leader, Thatcher placed the upmost value on individualism which she saw as part of helping to restore value to the British identity. To her the ideas of social welfare programs and individualism could not exist simultaneously. This likely stems from being born into and raised in a world where the largest empire the world has ever seen was

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<sup>27</sup><http://www.historyandpolicy.org/opinion-articles/articles/margaret-thatcher-individualism-and-the-welfare-state>

reduced to just the UK and some small territories. I believe this had a profound impact on where Thatcher saw the UK's place in the world as they were no longer the powerful force that could make demands and threats to any country. To Thatcher, the country and the people had become weak and reliant instead of strong and resilient like decades prior, the welfare state had become an abomination of what it was intended to be and was eroding the foundation of the hard working public. This was skewed by the liberals as an attack on the poor and the underprivileged as it removed many of the safety nets of guaranteed income but this was not her goal, "The aim was not to abolish the welfare state entirely, but to chip away at it, leaving social security as a last resort for the very poorest minority, and making it irrelevant to those on middle and high incomes, who would choose private provision instead"<sup>27</sup> The real goal of Thatcher was to remove the safety nets that were regularly being exploited and taken advantage of leaving only the government to pay for only the truly poor and the National Health Service. To some of the public Thatcher positively represented a radical departure from the downward trajectory of years past and to others she represented a step backwards for the country. Now that policy changes had begun at home she turned her attention the EU.

Thatcher is commonly described many as a Eurosceptic to which they are absolutely correct. "From the first day she came into office in May 1979, Mrs. Thatcher had been arguing that Britain should "get our money back" from the European Community."<sup>25</sup> That isn't to say she despised the idea of a connected Europe, much like Churchill, she was in favor of anything that could prevent the next great war so long as

Britain was treated fairly and its sovereignty respected, but to Thatcher this is not what happened.

Originally joining the EU in 1973 what was seen as mostly weak supranational body had seen its power grow increasingly over the course of its lifetime needing more money each year from member states to continue its operations. Knowing it couldn't budge money out of the struggling countries the EU began asking for larger contributions from its more prosperous members. Originally, the Heath government had signed on for a net contribution of 102 million pounds per year but by 1979 that number had ballooned to an astronomical 947 million pounds. Thatcher displeased even with the first agreed upon sum of £102m began to shape her campaign to appeal to the conservatives and nationalists who were equally as discontent with their status within the EU. I want to call this group the Prexiters as they were the original group of conservatives who began looking at the EU monetary policy and expansion of power as a threat to British sovereignty but with the divided nature of the world around them they had little options. Reminded by the horrors of World War II in the rearview mirror and no sign of relief from the Cold War this left a very discontent Britain in uncertain fate because to leave the EU would mean an end to its collective support and defense of all nations but to stay would risk financial ruin. There existed one choice for Thatcher to fulfill her campaign promise using her negotiating skills to receive a rebate.

On March 19-20, 1984 The European Council hosted the Brussels Summit, to discuss monetary issues most notably with the UK. Thatcher would arrive with plans in hand demanding a rebate of more than 70 percent. The EU would not come anywhere

close to that on its offer, as it was mainly negotiating against France and Germany, meaning Britain had a hard time making demands as it was not a fully participating member and was not contributing as much monetarily as the other side of the table was.

Unsurprisingly, the negotiations failed. Thatcher would return with no deal in hand but she was not without an ace in the hole. Immediately rumors began to swirl that Britain was considering withholding its payment to the EU if the rebate were not dealt with properly. On May 2, she hosted a bilateral talk with German Chancellor Helmut Kohl. Though the meeting was private a note from their conversation reports her saying, “We were passionate Europeans. We joined the Community so that conflicts that happened in the past could not recur in the future”<sup>25</sup>. This shows Thatcher not as the anti-European contrarian the media and the left made her out to be but rather in full support of the ultimate goal of maintaining peace in the region through union all the while not being taken advantage of in the process. The stalemate would hold.

In June 1984, talks would resume at Fontainebleau, France. Thatcher arrived not knowing what was about to unfold. She laid down her budget proposal having no idea where she stood but knowing it had to be better than the last. At 11:30 that evening the ministers joined the heads of government and proposed a refund so low Thatcher found it insulting.<sup>25</sup> As she often did Thatcher wrote down her thoughts following major events she wrote, “I was in despair and said we have never been treated fairly and that if it was the best they had to offer Fontainebleau would prove to be a disaster”<sup>25</sup> She had reached a breaking point and decided to leave. From her finance minister we learn that France was offering 50 percent on the surface but was hoping to stick more around 60 percent while



the German's were holding steady at 60 percent. The talks would resume the next day but with no agreement imminent French President Mitterand suggested breaking into bilaterals. Seeing Mitterand and Kohl talking separately, Thatcher approached telling the French president "I told Kohl we would accept a 2/3 refund... Kohl offered 65%." Kohl recalled the situation noting "(Thatcher) became very vehement towards me. In essence, she said that the Federal Republic(Germany) had to support Great Britain on the ground that there were British soldiers stationed in our country"<sup>25</sup> This is a pinpoint example of why Thatcher was so effective as Prime Minister. Though a combination of persuasion, persistence and political skill, Thatcher was able to leverage her hand on outside forces to bring about the result she desired. Many saw this as a push to far by Thatcher thinking that insisting on 65 percent was outlandish. To everyones surprise they accepted the 65% but Thatcher was out to prove a point. She called a "time out" to meet with her ministers. They all instructed her to accept the 65 percent as asking for more would almost certainly end the deal but that's not who Thatcher was or what she promised her people all those years ago. To quote her directly, "If I've got 65 per cent, I can add one more per cent."<sup>25</sup> With her ministers unsure of what was about to happen Thatcher retuned to the full session and demanded the full 2/3 or 66 percent. Mitterand responded with "Of course, Madame Prime Minister if you must have it" and just like that a deal promised five years ago had become a reality. The official treasury figure for the amount saved by Britain in 2015 was £78 billion the largest savings by any piece of legislation in its history.

There exists few leaders in the course of British history that are as contentious as Margaret Thatcher. To some she represented the rebound of British prestige after decades

of decline. To others she represented a step backwards for Britain as her policies would impact the fundamental way in which British society was structured.

Beginning in 1979, Thatchers theme for domestic policy was privatization and reform. There were two major time periods for nationalization of industry in Britain. The first was post World War I and the second was post World War II. The first set of nationalizations were more obscure things such as the postal service, forestry service and British Broadcasting Network(BBC). The second set contain the more contentious services such as coal, steel, electric, gas, transportation and airway traffic. These were nationalized following the end of the war in an attempt to keep prices low for consumers and the economy trending in an upward direction following the destruction the war brought. As a result of being nationalized during the war effort the industries stayed that way until Thatchers election in 1979.

The first test of Thatcher's deregulation style economic policy would be the sale of British Telecom in 1984. The telecom company was beginning to lose ground to private companies who were much more effective at using money than their government owned counterpart. As part of the Telecommunications Act of 1984, British Telecom would sell 51% of its shares to private investors. This act was essentially a beta program to see what effect investment of private capital into nationalized industry would have on competitiveness. It would serve to be a success and more industries under Thatcher such as gas, steel, electricity, water, and coal would be privatized as a result.<sup>28</sup> These were all

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<sup>28</sup> Bolick, Clint. "Thatcher 's Revolution: Deregulation and Political Transformation." *Yale Journal on Regulation* 12, no. 2 (1995). Accessed May 1, 2018. <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/f8c5/e9cbbccd7f992bd9345f19ccbab3bf50e889.pdf>.

contentious and served to hurt the Prime Ministers popularity as she battled labor unions and mass strikes every step of the way. Many of the public saw this as the unleashing of the economy and a step in the direction towards global competitiveness. Other saw it as a destruction of industry and a gross overstep by the government.

Lastly, I would like to detail one final factor of Margaret Thatchers time in office which cannot be ignored. That is the zeitgeist of the 1980's. Brought about as a reaction the Cold War, the zeitgeist of the 1980's featured the overarching narrative of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan versus Communism. If there was one thing that seemed to be agreed upon by the entire west, it was that was a powerful figure in charge of the country was the best way to combat the growing threat of communism. For example, “By contrast, the public was often significantly less positive about Margaret Thatcher between general elections, with both her and her party experiencing some of the worst periods of significant unpopularity between elections. Support for the Conservative Party dipped as low as 23% between 1979 and 1983, and to 24% between 1983 and 1987.” Initially these numbers seem fairly impossible to achieve and still win each election. However, in practice I attribute this to the public expressing its discontent with Thatcher’s domestic policy rather than their satisfaction overall.

Figure1.1

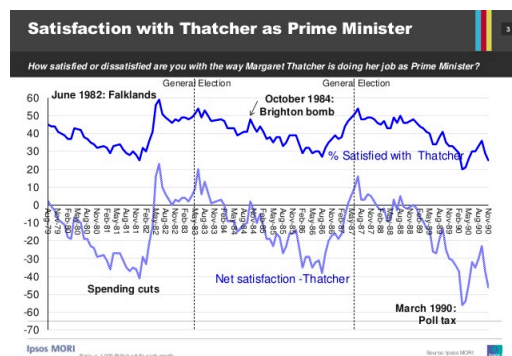


Figure 1.2

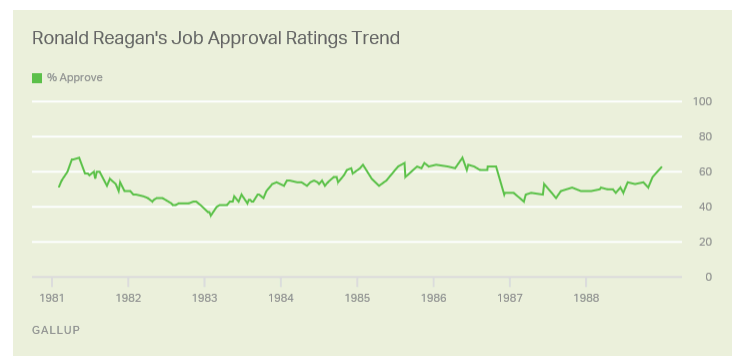
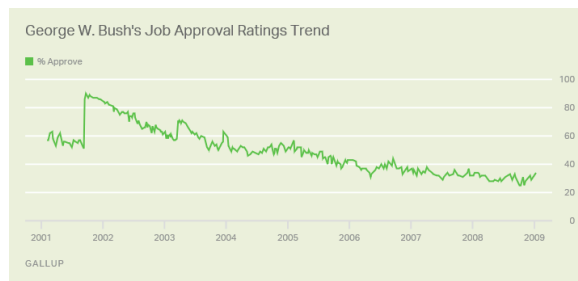


Figure 1.1<sup>29</sup> represents Margaret Thatchers approval rating across all of her terms. Figure 1.2<sup>30</sup> is Ronald Reagan's approval rating across his two terms in office. Here it can be seen that both leaders tend to trend down in their political offseason but receive support spikes closer to election time such as Regan from 83-85 and Thatcher from 86-87. I attribute this to their tenacity as leaders being reflected by support from the public. As final proof lets look to the numbers of George W. Bush in 2001 following the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Figure 1.3<sup>30</sup>



A similar spike can be seen on Bush's approval ratings as the American public rallied around Bush in the face of conflict but the numbers trended downwards as a reaction to the discontent over Bush's domestic policy and general incompetence.

As one of the most polarizing figures of modern British politics Margeret Thatcher left an infallible mark on British society. From her victory in the Falklands to her fall from grace and resignation in 1990 Thatcher presided over some of the most tense and troubling times the free world has ever seen but she always faced them with strength and resilience. Mostly knocked for her euro-skepticism it can be see that Thatcher wasn't

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.slideshare.net/IpsosMORI/margaret-thatcher-poll-rating-trends>

<sup>30</sup> <http://news.gallup.com/poll/116677/presidential-approval-ratings-gallup-historical-statistics-trends.aspx>

the bullish anti-European dictator she was often made out to be but rather just wanting the the pride and prestige restored the United Kingdom following a brutal WWII and decreased reliance on the European Union as its powers steadily grew.

As one of her last orders of business as prime minister in 1990 before resigning at the suggestion of her cabinet she entered the pound in the European Exchange Rate Mechanism(ERM) This would serve as the first step toward the establishment of a European standard currency. The EU passed the ERM in March of 1979, which put in place a semi pegged system of evaluation, meaning that currencies of member countries change within a given percentage in relation to the strength of of the European Currency Unit(ECU). The measure of this unit was taken by adding the average value of all respective country currencies and averaging it leaving the most valuable currencies to balance out the less valuable ones. In 1985 the country would be faced with rising inflation with few ways to curb its advances. The minority party began campaigning for the linking of the pound to the ERM as a way to help cap inflation.

Most countries would generally move to raise interest rates to cut back on the amount of money being produced and lent out. However, with Thatchers popularity waning it was seen by her party as an opportune time to begin looking to Europe for solutions. In 1987, the country would experiment with linking the British pound unofficially to the ECU without joining the zone itself by secretly shadowing the German Deutschmark. The result was mixed and the pound would return to free flowing status shortly after in 1988. Thatcher was displeased with the result and in her famous Bruges speech in 1988, Thatcher lampooned the European Union saying, “No. No. No. We have

not successfully rolled back the frontiers of the state in Britain, only to see them re-imposed at a European level, with a European super-state exercising a new dominance from Brussels.”<sup>31</sup> This would serve as one of her final stands as Prime Minister as the ardent Tory’s in her coalition cheered the rest of her party were left horrified.

Following the speech Thatcher knew something had to be done if she was ever to retain place in Downing Street. Heeding the advice of her party lead by Foreign Minister Geoffrey Howe, Chancellor of the Exchequer Nigel Lawson and Secretary of the Treasury John Major, convinced Thatcher to sign the country up to join the ERM. Thatcher would almost immediately come to regret this decision as she felt it had been forced upon her and as a result removed the Lawson following the incident. Shortly after though Howe would resign from the cabinet citing her hostility to the EU as the reason for his departure. Howe was the last remaining cabinet member from her first term, Thatcher was now all alone at the top of her party. Just two weeks later Thatcher would receive her challenge for leadership from Michael Heseltine. He would win the first ballot against Thatcher but she declared her intent to fight on before consulting with her cabinet and coming to the conclusion it would be best if she stepped down. She resigned on November 28, 1990. Interestingly, her replacement for Chancellor of the Exchequer, following Lawson, John Major would win the second ballot against Heseltine and assume control of the Conservative Party. His party would rally around him and in 1992 he would win the General Election and assume his premiership.

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<sup>31</sup> Thatcher, Margaret. "Speech to the College of Europe ("The Bruges Speech")." Margaret Thatcher Foundation. September 20, 1988. Accessed May 01, 2018. <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/107332>.

## **Major Damage on Black Wednesday**

Essential to the narrative of euro-skepticism there is one defining event under a rather unremarkable leader that would leave a lasting impact of what results from Britain entangling itself in the European Union. On September 16, 1992 or more commonly called “Black Wednesday,” was the day in which the British pound had fallen out of the lower end range allotted by the ERM. This would have a disastrous effect on not just the economy but the public and government as well.

As mentioned previously beginning in 1990 Thatcher had entered the UK into the ERM mostly against her will. With the backing of the party Major, Lawson and Howe had successfully lobbied and forced their leader to sign up for the program in which they saw as have the most benefit in helping to further British/European relations. Whether a ploy of to concentrate power in his own hands or not Major was the leading figure in conservative advances towards a connected Europe within the party.

In his first year Major was combating a number of problems at home and abroad. The first was a recession that saw unemployment numbers rise increasingly as time went on. In addition Major was actively working with then United States President George H. W. Bush on matters pertaining to the Gulf War which Britain was instrumental in helping to win. Major called Margaret Thatcher to his office in the House of Commons to brief her on issues pertaining to her previously enacted policy but what resulted would be a warning to Major. In the document was Thatchers suggests to Major that should cut interest rates or risk financial ruin just as Churchill had done when he tried to link the pound to gold at an overvalued measure. Major would dismiss these claims made by

Thatcher as not even remotely similar to the situation they currently found themselves in. To Major there was no cause for concern as he planned to cut interest rates as part of his plan when he was elected.

As the days treaded on the pound was inching ever closer to the bottom of the ERM and on September 15, 1992 it was dangerously close to the ERM. Soros' Quantum Fund headed by George Soros would begin a massive sell off effort that would take place the next day as the trading day had ended already. What would follow the next day would be sheer chaos. According to the language of the agreement, under the ERM, The Bank of England was required to accept any offer to sell pounds if requested. Seeing this Major's cabinet members Chancellor of the Exchequer Norman Lamont and the Governor of the Bank of England Robin Leigh-Pemberton hatched a plan to prop up the currency by buying British pounds in two separate orders of 300 million each but the sell off was so great it was outstripping the rate in which the government could buy. They tried to raise the interest rates to an astronomical 12 percent to attract investors and slow the sell off but it was too late, the damage had been done. Total bill for the buybacks and government incompetence, £3.4 billion. By that night Norman Lamont was forced to pull the pound from the ERM never again to return to the market<sup>32</sup>.

This would be a massive blow for the conservatives as the economy crumbled around them. The market was still in a recession that was only deepened by the shortcomings of the ERM. Though pulling the currency would serve to be the best

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<sup>32</sup> Johnston, Philip. "Black Wednesday: The Day That Britain Went over the Edge." The Telegraph. September 10, 2012. Accessed May 01, 2018. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/currency/9533474/Black-Wednesday-The-day-that-Britain-went-over-the-edge.html>.



move made by the administration the haste to which the interest rate was moved was what ultimately destroyed all rapport with the public. This would also have the effect of tanking the Tory party's support and losing the next election to Labour.

Black Wednesday served as a defining moment in the UK-EU relationship for a couple of reasons. The first was it served as real reminder to official that getting entrenched in the EU can have overarching effects on domestic politics as well. Prior to Major, no Prime Minister had any connection to the EU that could produce this level of political ruin. Ultimately due of the collapse and his involvement from the beginning with Black Wednesday would serve to disgrace Major earning him a spot among the worst Prime Ministers in history(20). Secondly, it served as the first severing point to UK-EU relations. By removing the pound from the ERM the British government had removed another source of control from the EU that would have been leveraged against them in the face of a swelling Brexit campaign. Had this not taken place the pound would have still been linked to the ERM, making it a much more difficult decision to leave and would have likely shifted the vote to remain, rather than leave and face possible financial collapse. Britain is the only original member of the EU community whose currency is not linked to the Euro and doesn't use the Euro as their main form of currency making a clean break much easier than for any other country. Lastly, the crash would produce a rebound effect that served to set in motion the effects of Brexit but more on this in the next chapter.

## **Tony Blair-The New Face from New Labour**

With the former government crumbling under Major and losing the last 4 elections the opposition Labour party was looking to win big in the 1997 General Election. The Labour Party decided to undergo a rebranding in what was deemed “New Labour.” Starting in 1996 with the publishing of *New Labour, New Life For Britain* a political manifesto intended to promote new interest in party after many years of the same. Contained within in it was a pledge card that expressly named the 5 things the new party would accomplish if it were selected these were,

1. Cut class sizes to 30 or under for 5, 6 and 7-year-olds by using money from the assisted places scheme.
2. Fast-track punishment for persistent young offenders by halving the time from arrest to sentencing.
3. Cut NHS waiting lists by treating an extra 100,000 patients as a first step by releasing £100,000,000 saved from NHS red tape.
4. Get 250,000 under-25s off benefits and into work by using money from a windfall levy on the privatized utilities.
5. No rise in income tax rates, cut VAT on heating to 5% and inflation and interest rates as low as possible.

These policies would be spearheaded by a couple of new up and coming politicians Tony Blair and Gordon Brown. From inside the party these two worked perpetually to turn the tide

of the party from old guard to the “modernists” as they were commonly called. The argument they had formed was that Labour had become outdated was in need of reform to harness power in the face of a failing Conservative party. Disaster would strike in May of 1994 with Labour leader John Smith unexpectedly dying of a heart attack. This would send shockwaves down the party as New Labour was now able to become the permanent face of the party going forward but the question of leadership was still in the air, would it be Gordon or Blair?

Brown was the senior and former shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer for the party and Blair was the shadow Home Secretary. When faced with the choice it seems the party couldn't decide on which person to select so a deal was struck. Known as the “Granita Pact” or the “Blair-Brown Deal” this gentleman agreement was hatched at the Granita Cafe in Islington, London. Details of the entire deal remain scarce as both men denied the deal had ever taken place. On June 6, 2003 *The Guardian* published the first written proof that a deal had been struck with a series of leaked documents. Contained within them was the “fairness agenda” or the master plan for the party going forward. In exchange for giving leadership control or what amounted to at the time, the Premiership to Blair, Brown would be able to implement his own economic and social agenda, which based its hallmarks in social justice, employment opportunities and skills, all while enjoying the Chancellor of the Exchequer position in the Blair ministry. While not confirmed in the documents but suspected was the suspicion that Blair would eventually step down and grant the premiership to Brown after an undisclosed amount of terms.( With the

agreement in place Tony Blair was set to become the new face of not just Labour but the entire United Kingdom.

With Blair at the helm and Gordon at his back New Labour began fundamentally overhauling the way in which the party thought. Their first step was to remove the infamous “Clause IV” and implementing the new pledge card they were sure they could win the election. Clause IV represented a very contentious platform for which Labor has stood for since its inception in the 1920’s, the nationalization of industry. Getting rid of this as a party platform would open them up to a whole new market of voters who began to see Blair as their final entrance ticket into full European Union integration. After years of Margaret Thatcher’s resistance and euro-skepticism the people had found a party that was willing to make a change but they still had to sell New Labour.

As a young relatively unproven MP who had just assumed control of the opposition Tony Blair was in a unique position. Just as Thatcher had done year prior Tony Blair would lead Labour through the overhaul it needed. Under Blair, Brown would announce as chancellor that if elected he pledged they wouldn’t raise the personal income tax in the first term and would not increase public spending in the first 2 years in office.<sup>33</sup> To get the full extent of reaction among the public I chose a quote from an article published in 1997 about the Blair and Brown revolution, “ With that statement, which took most of the party by surprise, nearly two decades of Labour attacks on “Tory cuts” and the “unfair Tory tax system” fell by the wayside, along with it more than four decades of socialist

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<sup>33</sup>Applebaum, Anne. "Tony Blair and the New Left." *Foreign Affairs* 76, no. 2 (1997): 45-60. doi:10.2307/20047936.

assumptions: Brown was telling not only voters, but the nursing, teaching, and public sector unions who support Labour that Labour governments top priority would not be spending. Hardly surprising, then, that last year, when their own polling revealed that most voters do indeed believe Tony Blair is different from his predecessors, even the Tories gave up trying to identify him with the party's socialist past."<sup>33</sup> This represented a fundamental break in New Labour and Old Labour. Much more than just simply removing the clause Blair and Brown had taken a step further and opened Labour up for all voters. Initially what turned away most of the public from voting Labour for was the increase in taxes that followed a Labour candidates election. Blair was different but he was the fundamental change the party needed and it would serve him well in the election.

The election went very well for Blair as the a weakened conservative party, lead by Major, crumbled in the face of New Labour. The voters were clearly out to make a change as Labour would sweep the elections going from 271 to 418 seats. The Liberal Democrats would also gain additional seating from 18 up to 41 seats. These seats would all come from the conservative party who saw their 322 seats plummet to a meager 165. I attribute this shift in voting to not just the politicians and situation but that the voter turnout decreasing by 7 percent from the previous election. This shift in voting pattern could explain a part of the large loss for the conservative party as they had angered many of their supporters with the financial fallout. Most important of all Britain had a new majority party and leader for the first time in nearly 20 years.

Blair would assume the premiership on May 2, 1997. His most pressing task once elected how to best handle the situation of Northern Ireland. Many British residents had

settled in this region and the population was overwhelmingly Protestant leading to conflict with the catholic majority in Ireland proper. After just 1 year in office Blair would negotiate and sign the Good Friday Agreement or the Belfast Agreement which gave control of Northern Ireland to the United Kingdom. 2 referendums were held in which the Irish population would vote to allow Northern Ireland to split. Northern Ireland would also vote in favor of the split. With all sides in agreement the negotiations proceeded and deal was settled on. Tony Blair had his first major victory negotiating foreign agreements.

On September 11, 2001 the United State would suffer the worst terrorist attack in it's history. Then President George Bush would act quickly condemning the attacks and announcing that the War on Terror had begun fundamentally shifting the focus of global politics directly to the Middle East. In an unwavering show of support the Blair ministry immediately backed the American president pledging his assistance in fighting the war. The war would be escalated when it was announced that dictator Saddam Hussain was in possession of weapons of mass destruction. The Bush administration and the Blair ministry began coordinating plans for an invasion that sought to remove Saddam and his weapons from the region by any means necessary. However, with support from the war unwavering in the US the British public was not as convinced. On February 16, 2003 an estimated 1 million Londoners engulfed the streets of the capital city demanding PM Blair halt his pending invasion of Iraq. Despite the protests and backlash Blair proceeded and the invasion took place on March 20, 2003.

The war would see some 461,000 Iraqi, US and British citizens killed as a result of intervention. These massive death tolls would have the effect of politically isolating Blair, forcing him to stand and answer on his own for his actions. Blair would be lampooned from every side including his own party and would see action reach as far as filing a grievance with the United Nations to have him tried as a war criminal in International Court of Human Rights for gross violations. Surprisingly in a 2017 poll “A third – 33 per cent – of those taking part in the survey chose “Mr Blair knowingly misled Parliament and the public and should be tried as a war criminal.”<sup>34</sup> However, he will not be tried as the UK and US did request permission from the UN before the invasion but this fact is also still up for debate as more documents come forward. Blair, once seen as the darling of the nation, was forced to abdicate his place on Downing Street on June 27, 2007 in favor of his longtime partner Gordon Brown who would finish out the term and fully step down in 2010.

By getting involved in the Iraq War Tony Blair destroyed much more than he ever could imagined. It would politically soil Blair who remains in the shadows of British politics to this day. These events would also bring to a close his record breaking 3 consecutive terms for a Labour Prime Minister. This misstep would abolish any trust and favor that the Labour party had accrued along the way even among its most ardent supporters, such as teachers and union workers. Finally, it served to boost the Tory's and

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<sup>34</sup> Farand, Chloe. "Third of British People Want to See Tony Blair Tried as a War Criminal over Iraq, Finds YouGov Poll." The Independent. August 01, 2017. Accessed May 01, 2018. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/tony-blair-war-criminal-iraq-trial-convicted-yougov-british-people-uk-prime-minister-wmds-dossier-a7870341.html>.

would be instrumental in helping Conservative David Cameron elected his bid for the Premiership and subsequently Theresa May as she completes the remainder of his term.



## **Theresa May**

As previously mentioned the David Cameron premiership was one of polarization, divisiveness and instability. Following his resignation Theresa May assumed the Premiership and immediately began focusing all her efforts on achieving the best result for her people just as Thatcher had done so many years prior. However, May faced a very arduous task of traversing the first exit deal for any nation but there existed 2 vastly different choices. These choices were referred to as a “hard” and “soft” Brexit.

A hard Brexit which was favored by the most ardent Brexiteers would see the UK completely withdraw all ties from the European Union. This means forfeiture of their seat on the European Council, no access to the common market, no customs union, no free movement of citizens, and possibly tariffs levied on goods going to EU countries. This sort of Brexit would essentially see Britain return back to its previous status before membership.

A soft Brexit is a bit more complicated as it can take many forms. Currently there are several states such as Norway, Switzerland and Canada all of whom enjoy varying access to the EU in different forms. Membership is defined by how each country negotiates the 5 requirements of member states, these are single market member, no tariffs, freedom of movement among citizens, inclusion into the customs union and making EU budget contributions. Norway for instance is in compliance with everything with the exception of the customs union. Canada is just the opposite declining all ties with the exception of a trade agreement which allows them reduced tariffs into EU countries. The problem with Britain is they are interested in keeping every tie with the

exception of freedom of movement due to EU immigration policy which they see as a check on their right to sovereignty.

On March 29, 2017 Theresa May took the first official step in the UK's exit by triggering Article 50 of the Treaty of Lisbon which gives any EU member state the right to renounce its membership and outlines the procedure for doing so. In addition, it gives the time frame of 2 years in which to negotiate an exit deal and once set in motion these events can only be stopped by unanimous consent of all member states.<sup>35</sup> This declaration from May was accompanied with a letter to EU President Donald Tusk.

The tone of the letter can best be described as firm but welcoming. May began her letter with, "As I have said before, that decision was no rejection of the values we share as fellow Europeans. Nor was it an attempt to do harm to the European Union or any of its remaining member states. On the contrary, the United Kingdom wants the European Union to succeed and prosper. Instead, the referendum was a vote to restore, as we see it, our national self-determination."<sup>36</sup> By penning this quote in the very opening paragraph May was making a statement to President Tusk that UK sovereignty is to be respected first and foremost. That is to say the chance the free movement being retained in the new deal was near zero. May acknowledged this when she wrote, "This is why the United

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<sup>35</sup> Midgley, James Rothwell; Robert. "What Is Article 50? The Only Explanation You Need to Read." The Telegraph. January 09, 2018. Accessed May 01, 2018. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/0/what-is-article-50-the-only-explanation-you-need-to-read/>

<sup>36</sup> Walker, Peter "May 'Cannot Guarantee Immigration Will Be Significantly Lower after Brexit" The Guardian. March 29, 2017. Accessed May 01, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/blog/live/2017/mar/29/brexit-theresa-may-triggers-article-50-politics-live?page=with:block-58dba1bae4b0a411e9ab99cf#block-58dba1bae4b0a411e9ab99cf>.

Kingdom does seek membership in the single market: we understand and respect the position of the four freedoms of the single market are indivisible and there can be no “cherry picking.” Here May is clearly outlined that the UK understands the circumstances of their decision and knows it will likely not be the first country to set the precedent of special treatment. But May would ease her tone on the back at the end of the letter writing, “As I have said, the Government of the United Kingdom wants to agree to a deep and special partnership between the UK and the EU, taking in both economic and security cooperation”<sup>36</sup> Here May was clearly suggesting that she wishes for a continued partnership between the two entities that serve the best interests of both parties. Lastly, this quote shows that May is committed to remaining close to the union but not of it.

The next major breakthrough came on March 19, 2018 when it was announced that a 21 month transitional deal had been struck between the two parties. Outlined within it was acceptance of the British provision that would allow the UK to begin making trade agreements with other countries during the transitional period provided they don’t take effect until March 29, 2019. In exchange the UK agreed to allow free movement until the that date and agreed to terms to avoid creating a physical border along the Northern Ireland/Ireland border, keeping the Belfast Agreement sound.

Just like the result, the response from the public was mixed. Many dissenters claimed they didn’t vote to leave just to accept two more years of EU supremacy. Many supporters applauded the agreement for its simplicity and avoiding disaster. As the whole situation has developed over time many citizens began to worry of the state of affairs falling into a chaotic, nasty breakup that would see both economies lose considerable

value. Under these terms British business is allowed to continue while the rest of the details are worked out making both parties better off than they likely would have been under a hard Brexit.

## **Conclusion**

To say that Britain voted to leave the European Union based on a shortsighted conclusion about immigration policy would be a disservice. The British population has a longstanding and proud tradition of nationalism/individualism to which each major leader has left a mark for better or worse on their storied history. The 4 B's of Brexit help to illustrate the traceable pattern of nationalism/exceptionalism leading to the joining and subsequent leaving of the European Union.

The first B stands for before. This time period is composed of the previously mentioned leaders and serves as narrative of traceable pattern of nationalism through the days of European conflict eventually culminating in Black Wednesday. From the earliest days of William Pitt and King George we find the roots of British national pride as the celebration of the monarch and tradition. From David Lloyd George the public learned that nationalism should encompass morality and just action for without those they are no better than the people they claimed to be saving. From Chamberlain the public learned that British prestige does not and should not waver in times of uncertainty. From Churchill the public derived strength and pride in their resilience to fight on with their backs against the wall while at the same time recognizing peace is essential to the British states success in helping to facilitate European activity. From Thatcher the public is introduced to the concept of euroscepticism which is quickly combined with nationalism to form a mixed narrative. Once combined in this period the two terms become almost indistinguishable from one another based on public usage. What one citizen perceives as euroscepticism could simply be that person taking pride in their historical British right to

national self determination. Each leader mentioned offered something unique to helping draft a working narrative of how and why Brexit came about.

The second B stands for Black Wednesday. As stated earlier this event served to fracture the financial systems between the British government and the European Union. Lead by the conservatives this day would remain in the minds of many Britons who would vote for Labour in the next election because of how poorly the Conservative party had handled the situation. After this event the UK would never again attempt to link its currency to the euro which served to isolate the isle from the rest of its mainland counterparts.

The third B stands for Blair. As one of the most iconic politicians of British 21st century politics Tony Blair was the seemingly permanent face of New Labour. After being elected to 3 straight terms many were wondering if or when he would ever lose. However, his undoing would come about as a result of his breach of public trust in the wake of the Iraq War revelations. Just as the public had done to Major, the Labour party was quickly removed in favor of someone looking to make a bigger change than Labour could ever promise, autonomy.

The last B stands for Brexit. All of the events listed above combined with EU supremacy would culminate simultaneously with the rise of David Cameron leading to the referendum. The pattern of nationalism through leaders and conflict weighs heavily in the backs of British nationals who see themselves as facilitators rather than participants. The British identity values prestige, autonomy and pride all of which seem to get lost under the all encompassing European identity so its no wonder why the public becomes

outraged when their forced to accept refugees or conform to a universal currency. The future of United Kingdom's involvement with the European Union going forward looks to interested but not absorbed only time will tell.