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An examination of the internal party debate over the need for ‘modernisation’ within the Conservative Party 1997-2015.

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## **Abstract**

When Conservative MPs took their seats on the opposition benches in 1997 the Party stood at a crossroads. The Party had spent eighteen years in government, relying on the successes of its neo-liberal economic policies as a way to garner support. However, the rise of Tony Blair and New Labour's adoption of Conservative policies appeared to mean that the Conservative Party had to 'modernise' if it wanted to present itself as a government in waiting. This was not a simple task. Following the resignation of Margaret Thatcher in 1990 the party's factions grew further apart and more restless. Some on the right of the party wanted to stay true to the principles that had made them the dominant party of British politics in the 1980's, others wanted to see the party pursue a modern set of policies.

In this dissertation, I argue that throughout this period the term 'modernisation' was used by successive leaders of the Conservative Party as political rhetoric in an attempt to solve the internal divisions that had prevented the Party making ground on the successes of New Labour. The conflict brought into question the relationship the Parliamentary Party had with the membership with the reforms that resulted in Ian Duncan Smith's victory in 2001. It was not until David Cameron assume the leadership in 2005 that there were successful strides towards modernising the Party. Up until the hiring of Lynton Crosby the political language and policies showed that Cameron prioritised social reform and wanted to break the perception that the Conservatives were the 'nasty party'. This dissertation will examine the impact Cameron had in constructing the coalition programme and the reasons why Crosby forced Cameron to back down on modernisation and focus on economic issues and the promise of a European referendum.

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## **Introduction**

The 2015 election campaign was expected to result in a hung parliament. The opinion polls, such as those published by independent pollsters such as YouGov,<sup>1</sup> had suggested that the Conservative Party would hold the largest number of seats in the House of Commons but fall short of a majority of 326 seats by some margin. Yet as the night of 7 May progressed, it came to suggest that David Cameron would be the first Conservative leader since John Major in 1992 to lead the Conservatives to an election victory.

The impact that the result of the 2015 election will have on the United Kingdom is yet to be clear. Cameron's leadership of the Conservative Party will be scrutinised heavily following the decision to leave the European Union in 2016. Critics such as the Labour Party and those within the remain campaign will argue that Cameron risked the national interest to benefit his standing in the party and this ultimately failed and that his arrogance would ultimately lead to his downfall. Rather the focus of this discussion will be on the progression that the Conservative Party has made from the end of the turbulent Major years, which saw political infighting and weak leadership, due in part to the public perception that the government had lost its economic credibility. Furthermore, the Conservative government lost the trust of the public by pushing through a domestic agenda that punished groups of society, such as section 28 which became law in 1987, that prohibited the discussion of homosexuality in schools. Crucially this dissertation will aim to show the transition towards the centre ground by comparing these policies to those which followed the election of David Cameron to the leadership of the party. Policies that were based on the promise that he would pursue a more compassionate approach, moving away from the stigma that the Conservative Party was the 'nasty party' that had above everything else not abandoned its free market principles.

The leadership of David Cameron prior and during the coalition years has been considered a success: culturally, economically and politically by author Tim Bale in his book 'from Thatcher to Cameron and by the pollsters who showed that Cameron enjoyed long periods ahead of Labour in the polls. This resulted in the development of policies such as the marriage equality act which was an attempt by Cameron to shift the ethos of the Conservative Party to a more modernised belief system, an attempt by the Chancellor to update the Conservatives economic policy to one based on fiscal responsibility, as these are factors that attributed to his success and winning the outright majority at the election 2015. Scholars such as Tim Bale suggest that under Cameron the party had transformed from a party that was 'hopelessly detached from an electorate who were contented with new Labour

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<sup>1</sup> Wells, Anthony. "The 2010 Election in hindsight" 2011.

and its leader's style'.<sup>2</sup> Yet during his leadership it is evident that Cameron became mired in problems that had previously undermined his predecessors. As a result, the language that the Conservative party used following the coalition government in 2010, such as the promise of an EU referendum, showed the Conservative Party making an apparent shift towards the right and reignites old flames that had caused the Conservative party to divide into factions, and ultimately lead to their demise in 1997. This led to the barren years, in which The Conservative Party can be considered a weak opposition, and failed to portray themselves as an effective alternative to Tony Blair.

The outcome of the referendum that saw the British electorate vote for the United Kingdom to leave the European Union, it brought down the premiership of David Cameron because the Prime Minister believed that as a prominent remain politician throughout the campaign, he would be unable to complete his social and economic reforms whilst negotiation the country's exit from the EU stating: 'I think it's right that this new prime minister takes the decision about when to trigger Article 50 and start the formal and legal process of leaving the EU.'<sup>3</sup> It is evident that following Cameron's resignation, the language surrounding the issue of the UK's exit from the EU suggests that it will be a complete split from the continental bloc. With Theresa May stating 'Brexit means Brexit' and Boris Johnson lauding the victory as Britain's 'Independence Day'.

Throughout this dissertation there will be reference to Tim Bale's published work on the Conservative party, most notably his book from Thatcher to Cameron.<sup>4</sup> It provided an in-depth analysis to the inner turmoil that plagued the Conservative Party following Margaret Thatcher's downfall in 1990. Bale's argument is that the Party's message was more important than the 'messenger' and that this is evident due to high turnover of leaders in such a short period of time. This differs from the main argument of this dissertation that will demonstrate that the two were interdependent. An example of this would be Ian Duncan Smith. His leadership can be deemed a failure because he struggled to engage the electorate with the Party's message. It was not until Cameron, who was touted to be the 'heir to Blair' that there was an internal shift within the Conservatives that gave equal weight to the perception of the Party leader and its overall message. This idea is supported by other scholars such as Antony Seldon and Peter Snow who argue that Cameron was a master at political spin. Yet, due to the lack of the support from the media, most notably the broadsheet newspapers such as the Guardian and the Telegraph meant that Cameron could not effectively disseminate his ideas until after the hiring of his chief strategist Lynton Crosby. The impact of the media outlets will be examined throughout all of this period as the printed media

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<sup>2</sup> Jenkins, Simon. "The Conservative Party: From Thatcher to Cameron by Tim Bale | Book Review." The Guardian. 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Cameron, David 'Cameron announces his resignation' Telegraph. 24<sup>th</sup> June 2016. Pg.1.

<sup>4</sup> Bale Tim. 'From Thatcher to Cameron.' 2011.

provided intense scrutiny to the Conservative Party as it struggled to adapt to life on the opposition benches.

The opening chapter will assess the impact John Major had on the growing divisions within the Conservative Party, analysing key decisions that he took throughout his premiership from Black Wednesday, leading up to the 1997 election campaign. The chapter will aim to build on the theory put forward by Tim Bale who argued that the failure of Major to refresh the themes on a smaller welfare state, a mixed economy that shifted the emphasis from the public sector towards the private sector and bring the party together on the issue of Europe. This coupled with the rise Tony Blair and his adoption of Conservative principles helped create an image that the Conservatives had become complacent whilst in government and this helped erode the public's trust in the party. Tony Blair took inspiration from Bill Clinton's policy the strategy of triangulation. 'The term "triangulation," politically speaking, dates back to the days after President Bill Clinton lost control of Congress in 1994'.<sup>5</sup> This theory suggests that the governing party, both in the US and the UK presents itself as above or in between the political left and the political right. It will set the stage for the development of the idea that the Party's core message could not be separate from the messenger, that the era of top-down party governance was over and it was the leader's personality and the ability to spin the political message to the public that would ultimately see the Conservative Party return to power.

Chapter Two will examine the impact of William Hague in bringing the Party together after the crushing electoral defeat, and the path towards modernisation. It will examine the impact internal reforms, such as the way in which the Party elected its leader, by giving the membership the opportunity to participate in the selection process. Hague's policy decision will be examined to determine whether his true ambition was to modernise the Party or an attempt to rebrand the Party's image in the media. The majority of the sources will derive from Newspapers and how Hague's policies were presented to the public, and the extent the media played in forcing Hague to retreat to the Conservative base as the election grew nearer.

Chapter three will consider the impact Ian Duncan Smith had on the path towards modernisation. It is easy to regard his time as leader as a complete failure because during his tenure as leader there was a growing divide between the Parliamentary Party and the membership. There will be an attempt to show that under his leadership there were small successes such as the local elections and a push towards modernisation with the party's first openly gay member of parliament, for the Conservatives, and the first female chairperson of the party. In addition, Smith attempted to bring issues such as mental health to the forefront of the Conservative Party's policies but ultimately failed in part to Smith's lack of judgement; this meant he was unable to build on the successes that had been made under Hague and stood down after two years after giving his ultimatum to the party.

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<sup>5</sup> Bai, Matt. *'Obama and the Question of Triangulation'* -Website title: Nytimes.com. 2010.

Chapter four will critically analyse the decisions made by David Cameron in between the years 2005-2008. This was the period in which it can be argued that the Party's pursuit for modernisation was most achievable with publications being made on environmental issues and a focus on social issues which brought about the big society. Bale suggests that Cameron differed from his predecessors because he presented himself as an electable politician and the focus shifted from policies that appealed to the Conservative base to a strategy that helped develop the Conservative brand in areas that were considered Labour heartlands.

Chapter five will address the circumstances in which Cameron took the Conservatives into coalition with the Liberal Democrats and attempt to pin point when Cameron's attempt for modernisation ceased. This dissertation will reach the conclusion that the pursuit for modernisation stopped the moment the Party hired Lynton Crosby to be their chief strategist and this view is shared by authors such as Tim Bale, Antony Seldon and Peter Snowden. By referencing their work, it will become apparent that from 2013 onwards Cameron and his leadership team shifted the focus of their messages from social policy to the mess that they inherited and how they had managed to steer the country away from an economic depression. The language points towards the Conservatives creating a sense of distrust amongst the public towards the major opposition party which helped Cameron lead the Party to its first majority government of the new millennia.

The final chapter will assess the impact Cameron's term in office, the transition from the opposition to government and the compromises he had to make in order to make his ideas a reality. The coalition programme set out the main objectives but it is evident that in the first few years the leadership lacked direction as they stumbled from policy to policy. The raising of tuition fees, cuts to public services and division between the two governing parties, suggested that Cameron would be a one term Prime Minister. However, the hiring of Crosby shows the shift from a disorganised cabinet, to a well drilled political machine. The transition in language is also interesting as we see the transition towards a negative campaign where the core message attacked Labour's lack of economic credibility and the prospect of a Labour-SNP coalition that would be five years of economic uncertainty which could not be risked after steering the country away from the recession. Cameron had prided himself on the gay marriage act but this was not a key point to the campaign, Crosby believed it would alienate the Conservative base as the passage of the bill saw major rebellions against the leadership from the parliamentary party and the activists.

## Chapter One: John Major The road to disaster

To start the examination into why the Conservative Party needed to modernise following 18 years of government, the purpose of this chapter will be to analyse the impact of John Major on the Conservative Party as both the Prime Minister and as leader of a political party. The first event that determined the need for the Conservative Party to re-define itself occurred on 22 November 1990. Margaret Thatcher who had governed the United Kingdom for over a decade had resigned following the loss of support from members of her cabinet and a leadership challenge from Michael Heseltine. Thus, Margaret Thatcher endorsed John Major as her successor and was able to manipulate some support to ensure that she was succeeded by someone who would secure her legacy. Richard Vinen, supports this trail of thought arguing that Thatcher's support for Major was down to various reasons such as the desire to 'secure the survival of Thatcherism'<sup>6</sup>, although John Major himself contradict such claims by stating that he believed that the Conservative Party under Margaret Thatcher had excluded 'so many minorities and those left outside the race for prosperity.'<sup>7</sup> The language, of the new leader's comments, suggests that John Major understood that he had to distance himself from his predecessor in order to secure his leadership and be able to convince the British electorate that his party was still the only credible option to govern the United Kingdom at the next election.

Yet it is important to also consider that the need for modernisation also began on the 16<sup>th</sup> September 1992, commonly known as Black Wednesday and entrenched the leadership of John Major against the many factions that began to form within the Conservative Party, most notably the growing influence of the Eurosceptic action within the Conservative Party. Throughout the Thatcher era, the government had prided itself on its economic creditability, moving away from a state controlled economy in favour of a rebalanced economy that shifted economic policy from investment in the public sector towards the private. The consequences that Black Wednesday had on the Conservative Party was that, in opinion polls such as Gallup, the Party went from 43 percent to 29 percent of the vote, in the weeks following the government's decision.<sup>8</sup> This suggested that the Labour Party under John Smith had begun to present a strong alternative to the Conservative government and policies that seemed to offer hope in a time of economic uncertainty.

Therefore, it is important to examine the extent John Major modernised the Conservative Party and the country when the British electorate went to the polls in 1997. With regards to his premiership, John Major had achieved some of his economic and social ambitions. By 1997, employment was rising, the deficit was under control and the British economy had stable growth. This meant that when the conservatives were elected out of office the new chancellor, as the Telegraph argues, 'inherited the

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<sup>6</sup> Vinen, Richard. *Thatcher's Britain: The Politics and Social Upheaval of the Thatcher Era*. 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Major, John '*John Major the autobiography*' 2000, p.201

<sup>8</sup> Hayton, R. (2012). *Reconstructing conservatism?*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. 2012. P. 23.

most benign economic scenario for any British government<sup>9</sup>. Yet, the economic successes of Major's government did not result in electoral gains, the result saw a landslide victory for Tony Blair and New Labour. This can be attributed to several reasons. Throughout his leadership of the Labour Party Tony Blair, perception by the public was that he was a moderniser, as he had successfully re-written clause IV, which outlined the philosophical guidelines of the Labour Party and was part of the foundation on which the Labour Party in decades gone by had stood. It is argued that Tony Blair believed clause IV handed 'ammunition to the enemy'<sup>10</sup> as it had been misinterpreted by portion of the British electorate as a manifesto, which Labour, would take inspiration from if they went on to form a government in 1997. This shift to the right by the Labour Party, which started under the leadership of Neil Kinnock, meant that they had learnt the lessons from the election in 1983 which had been considered the longest suicide note in history and that the new leadership of Tony Blair, Gordon Brown and Peter Mandelson knew that by moving towards the centre ground of politics they would be able to tempt away disaffected Conservative voters as well as appeal to Liberal voters and their own base.

This rebranding by the Labour Party would play a major part in the Conservative Party's need for modernisation during this period as Labour had tapped into the electorate's belief that there should be investment and there be a compromise between issues such as social justice, economic growth and investment in the NHS. The 1996 budget, delivered by the chancellor Kenneth Clark, proposed that the Conservative Party was merely focused on economic growth, and reinforced the mantra that the Conservative believed that delivering economic stability was the main factor behind winning general elections. The chancellor stated, 'The lasting health of the British economy might win elections, that is true, but my first aim is the lasting health of the British economy'<sup>11</sup>. This economic message by the Conservatives in which they claimed that they were the only party who could be trusted to manage the country's finances had been drilled into the British electorate since the general election of 1951, where the party had campaigned on the issue that under Labour the standard of living had decreased due to rationing and rebuilding Britain after the Second World War. 'The attempt to impose a doctrinaire Socialism upon an Island which has grown great and famous by free enterprise has inflicted serious injury upon our strength and prosperity'.<sup>12</sup> This repetitive economic argument, coupled with the rise of Tony Blair suggests the Labour Party had effectively 'neutralised, at least until 2007, the classic conservative argument that Labour's heart might have been in the right place...'<sup>13</sup> However when reflecting on the 1996 budget in his memoirs John Major puts forward the idea that the Chancellor was not going to take any risks and that the budget had 'disappointed those

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<sup>9</sup> Osborne, Peter. *'It's time to give John Major the credit we so cruelly denied him'* Guardian. 2012.

<sup>10</sup> Sopel, J. *"Tony Blair the moderniser"* 1995. p.267

<sup>11</sup> Clarke, Kenneth *'Text of the 1996 Budget'* 1996.

<sup>12</sup> Churchill, W. *'The 1951 Conservative Manifesto.'* 1951. P.1

<sup>13</sup> Bale, Tim. *The Conservative Party: From Thatcher to Cameron.* 2011.p.5

on our backbenches who were hoping for a pre-election bonanza'<sup>14</sup>, but it reinforced the healthy state of the economy. 'Good economics is good politics' remained the Chancellor's mantra. However, when examining the Conservative Party's policies on other areas of government such as education and health it is apparent that the British electorate became detached from the government and believed such policies to be old fashioned. These policies will be examined in detail when looking at the 1997 election and the rise of William Hague to the party leadership.

Consequently, when analysing the impact of Major's economics, it is apparent that he was unwilling to take economic risks. The exit from the European Exchange Rate Mechanism in September 1992 prompted a significant rebalancing of macroeconomic policy. Looser monetary policy – lower interest rates and a weaker exchange rate – was accompanied by a big fiscal tightening. Therefore, it is important to question why Major is considered a weak leader. Newspapers such as the Telegraph had played a crucial role in portraying John Major as a weak leader as they interpreted his leadership as lacking 'personal presence, possessed an unbecoming petulance, and had no gift for language'.<sup>15</sup> This comparison can be considered unfair when you contemplate that Major inherited a political party still trying to redefine itself after the Margaret Thatcher leadership in which it was clear who wielded all the power. This coupled with the silent modernisation which had been happening within the Labour party, which had resulted in the Labour Party moving away from their traditional policies to a political machine which appealed to traditional Conservative voters in middle England. However, it can be argued that Major was not as weak as the media portrayed him. He had survived a leadership challenge in 1995 and had been given a clear mandate to lead the party with 66 percent of the vote. Mainstream media like BBC argued that 'Mr Major's victory represented support from two-thirds of the parliamentary party - more than enough to win the contest outright in the first round.'<sup>16</sup> it can be inferred that Major was a strong political operative within the Party as he had managed to overturn the internal struggles that had plagued the Party following the removal of Margaret Thatcher in 1991.

Therefore, the stage had been set for the election of 1997, the fiscal conservatives headed by a leader with a fresh mandate against a new Labour party aiming to break away from its 'socialist' past. The remainder of this chapter will focus on the impact the Conservative Party had in government regarding cultural changes, economic changes and the social changes to the United Kingdom, with policies that had been passed during their time in government. The major contributor to why the Conservative leadership began to highlight its successes in government was because the party had to convince enough of the electorate to allow them to form the next government, which it would not achieve until the general election of 2010.

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<sup>14</sup> Major, John '*John Major - The Autobiography*' 2000, page 689

<sup>15</sup> Osborne, Peter. 'It's time to give John Major the credit we so cruelly denied him' Guardian. 2012.p.1

<sup>16</sup> Politics 97. 'Conservative Party Leadership Election 1995' 1997. BBC online

The general election of 1997 pitted the record of a Conservative government, alongside the legacy of Thatcherism that had dominated the politics of the 1980's, which claimed it had 'created a better Britain'<sup>17</sup> for all people in the UK. Against an alternative administration under Blair that claimed a vote for Labour would result in a government that would build on the successes made by the Conservative party over the past eighteen years, whilst presenting a united front to foreign affairs such as relations with Europe that had undermined Major's government throughout his tenure as Prime Minister.

One area that will be focused on throughout the period will be education. The Conservative Party in 1997 decided to build its policy on education around the success made under the Thatcher governments. John Major explained in the Conservative manifesto of 1997 that spending in education both at primary and secondary schools had increased during his premiership and that it was important 'to test children and publish the results'<sup>18</sup> which allowed standards to be measured and exposed. The Conservatives had hoped to persuade parents that by publishing the results they would have a greater role in their children's education. The language defines the Conservatives education policy as based on competition, this shows that they had not manoeuvred away from the legacy of Thatcher and suggests that the party under Major had failed in attempts to modernise. This had a direct impact on the election because the way in which the party presented the facts surrounding their education policy reinforced the image that the Labour party portrayed. This was that the Conservative party was the nasty party and did not have the country's best interests at heart, merely the desire to cling on to power, by representing narrow sections of society such as the middle class and business owners.

An example of this would be in the manifesto itself in which the party claimed that the lowest achieving schools were in Labour run local authorities. Even the language used in the Conservative manifesto suggests that the leadership did not understand the political shift within the British electorate. Sweeping statements about how education is every child's birth right and how it was essential for teachers to understand the importance of the tests in evaluating the child's performance over an academic year. The language that the Conservative and Labour parties had used in their manifestos and from their leader's speeches appear to highlight the contrast between the leadership styles of John Major and his opponent. Within the Labour manifesto, it talks about the rejection of monolithic comprehensive schools. It can be argued that statements such as this would resonate with the voters more as they set out the Labour party's intentions and why they were choosing to move away from decisions made under consecutive Conservative administrations. Tony Blair did want to present a similar narrative in his manifesto, as the Conservative party's manifesto had to be lecturing the electorate about the importance of electing them to office and how they could build the moral

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<sup>17</sup> The Conservative Party 'You can only be sure with the Conservatives' 1997 foreward. P.1

<sup>18</sup> IBID p.5

society that they promised on the basis of neo-liberalism and policies that had foundation in the Margaret Thatcher governments of the 1980's.

Another policy that reflects this idea that the party was entrenched in disputes amongst factions within the party was the Conservative party policy on Europe. As mentioned throughout this introduction on John Major and his leadership the one issue that he struggled to unite his party on was on the UK's relationship within the European Union. The manifesto claimed that the Conservative government had been at the forefront of 'leadership in Europe, internationally on environmental issues,'<sup>19</sup> however further examination of the Conservative manifesto shows to amalgamate the issue of Europe with events happening on the international stage. One can infer from this that the Conservative leadership did not want the electorate to focus on the European issue as it had played a major part in Conservative policies throughout John Major's leadership. The issue even resulted in John Redwood, a well-known euro-sceptic, receiving 20 percent of the vote in the 1995 leadership election. 'In the event, the Prime Minister scored a convincing victory, polling 218 votes (66%) against Mr Redwood's 89 (27%)'<sup>20</sup> John Major even stated that 'Just think it through from my perspective. You are the Prime Minister, with a majority of 18... Where do you think most of the poison is coming from? From the dispossessed and the never-possessed'<sup>21</sup> This suggests that John Major knew that in order to achieve anything as Prime Minister, even have a chance of winning the 1997 election he needed to shift the public eye from the disputes on Europe to his successes on foreign policy. The damage had been done by the years of infighting, which had been highlighted by the media.

Therefore, the examination into the events that followed the fall of Margaret Thatcher in 1990 to the landslide victory for Labour in 1997 there appears to suggest that the Conservative party paved the way for its own electoral humiliation. John Major had ascended to the leadership on the promises of moving away from authoritarian leadership of his predecessor. However, John Major failed to unite his party. Margaret Thatcher manoeuvred herself carefully during her early years as leader until the day came in which she could pursue her economic policies with a strong mandate from the British people. John Major on the other hand attempted to use his morality and differences from his predecessor to secure his leadership. Although John Major had electoral success in 1992 much to the surprise of the pundits and many within his party, the honeymoon period did not last long as events such as black Wednesday obliterated the argument that the Conservative party was the only political party that could be trusted with the British economy. It could even be argued that as a post war Prime minister John Major deserves some credit in stabilising the British economy after black Wednesday, policies that attempted to move away from the aggressive programmes of the past but politically much

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<sup>19</sup> IBID

<sup>20</sup> BBC Politics 97: 'Conservative Party Leadership Election 1995' 1995. P.1

<sup>21</sup> Brunson Michael 'Three in Cabinet are Bastards' interview with John Major,' 1993.

of his leadership of the Conservative party can be considered a failure. A divided party over Europe, disagreements between members of the cabinet and himself meant that that John Major was constantly entrenched fighting against member of his own party on many issues. The lasting impact of John Major's leadership was that it began an era in which the Conservative Party would sit in opposition with no real opportunity to oppose the Labour governments under Tony Blair until the election of 2005. Furthermore, it can be argued that John Major's leadership de-stabilised the position of leader of the party, as three leaders would be elected to the position of leader during the years 1997-2005, not lasting longer than a few years until resigning due to the conflicts on major issues.

## **Chapter Two: New Leader: Fresh start or same old problems?**

The impact that the 1997 election would have on the Conservative Party cannot be under stated. As the Guardian stated, incoming Prime Minister Tony Blair had won a 'Crushing Triumph'.<sup>22</sup> The Conservative Party which now found itself on the opposition benches for the first time in eighteen years could only put up a mediocre resistance to the majority which had been won by Labour. The party started to search within itself and needed to project a new image to the British electorate. They turned to the youthful candidate of William Hague. The situation that the Conservatives had found themselves in following the 1997 election meant that Conservatives members were willing to support the idea of 'skipping a generation'<sup>23</sup>. Furthermore, Hague had positioned himself wisely over the course of the leadership election, appearing to be more compassionate than the Thatcher administrations but also sticking to key conservative principles on issues such as crime and the economy. One argument for this was that Hague 'suffered from structural constraints that would limit his room for manoeuvre in the four years running up to the 2001 general election.'<sup>24</sup> One example of Hague's constraint is that Hague supported the minimum wage and supported the independence of the Bank of England after it became apparent that he could be challenged by other members of his party. The motives behind the reverse in Conservative policy was to cement his position as leader as his shadow cabinet became filled with members of parliament who were determined to modernise the party such as Michael Portillo who was portrayed as a potential successor to Hague if he did bring about reforms and electoral success. Furthermore, it was impossible to challenge a government that enjoyed a large majority in the House of Commons and would be seen as a weak opposition until the next general election.

This will be highlighted throughout the chapter as there will be an examination of some of the key decisions and policies taken throughout Hague's leadership of the Conservative Party. The leadership campaign highlighted the division amongst the party with fellow candidate John Redwood and his followers stating that, Hague was simply a 'soulless careerist'<sup>25</sup> whose arguments that the Conservative Party needed to modernise were merely an attempt to distract the party and the electorate from the ongoing issue of Europe that needed to be settled. Hague's problems began from the moment he took up his position, inheriting a party with several significant divisions and political agendas. The 'Fresh Start' policy attempted to unite the party once again 'a new direction of policy which hands back to individuals and families the ability to shape their own lives'<sup>26</sup> by working together they could propel the party from its electoral obliteration to a position where it could regain

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<sup>22</sup> White, Michael. 'Blair's Crushing triumph.' The Guardian. 1997. P.1.

<sup>23</sup> Alderman, Keith. 'The Conservative Leadership Election of 2001'. 2002. p.5

<sup>24</sup> Hill, Michael. 'The Parliamentary Conservative Party: The Leadership Elections of William Hague and Iain Duncan Smith.' 2007. p.45

<sup>25</sup> Bale, Tim. 'The Conservative Party: From Thatcher to Cameron'. 2011.p.69

<sup>26</sup> Hague, William. 'Hague: A fresh start for Britain.' 2001.

power at the next general election or build a foundation on which the Conservative Party could regain momentum in the 2001 election and later push on to win the 2005 election. Many MP's and councillors felt that this was a bold statement to make, when it is considered that the Conservative Party had splintered in too many warring factions and would need to be unified to present to the public that they were fit to form the next government. Furthermore, polls suggested that the perception of Hague was that he would say anything to make himself electable, 'The April Guardian/ICM poll published today shows that the Tory leader's personal support among Conservative voters has fallen 11 points since the end of March'<sup>27</sup> so it shows that the Conservative party struggled to break the image that they were out of touch with what the electorate wanted.

Nevertheless, they understood that the message the Conservative Party needed to get out to the public was that they had elected a new leader and he had already begun the process of unifying the party. This unifying process had been made easier due to the 1997 election because many Europhile members of parliament had lost their seat and thus were unable to undermine the new leader and his policies. This reinforces the idea that although the Conservative Party had wanted to move on from the troubles of the 1990's it would be the same problems which would take up most the leader's time throughout the Parliaments term.

However, his leadership soon became subject to dissent after a publicity visit to a theme park with colleagues. This was an attempt by the Conservative leadership to show that he was in touch with the voters, although many, even within his own party saw the visit to the theme park as a pathetic attempt to seem young, leading to MPs suggesting that he was 'juvenile'. Furthermore, the visit became engraved on the minds of the British public due to Hague's choice of headwear. The selection of the baseball cap appeared to present William Hague as awkward and out of touch, especially in comparison with the then Prime Minister Tony Blair who presented himself as a statesman in the political arena but as a Newcastle United loving fan when he was off duty. A subsequent visit to the Notting Hill Carnival, the biggest ethnic festival in Europe, was meant to show that the Conservative party was not just Oxbridge-educated Caucasians, but many commentators instead suggested that the visit brought this fact to public attention. Commentators such as the BBC highlighted that these publicity stunts merely glossed over the inner turmoil that was occurring within the party. 'The incident did not mark the end of Mr Hague's honeymoon period as party leader, however, because there had never been much of a honeymoon period to end'<sup>28</sup> Such conclusions appear to suggest that the leadership of William Hague would have followed the same pattern as his predecessor John Major unless he took action to unite a fiercely divided party.

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<sup>27</sup> Travis Alan. 'Poll shows Tory voters' faith in Hague is slipping' 2001. p.1

<sup>28</sup> BBC 'First 100 days: William Hague' 2001.

Continuing, on from these attempts by Hague to reinvent the party the Conservative leadership in attempt to re-energise the party, decided to 'invest' £250,000 on a campaign called 'Listening to Britain' This policy was intended to rebuild the party internally focusing on ideals such as freedom and liberty, to understand why the party had been so heavily defeated at the polls but to develop ideas to the issues that the British public wanted to see their representatives prioritise. 'Tory sources say Mr Hague is to be relaunched as a "normal guy who gets on with people likes children and enjoys relaxing with his wife'.<sup>29</sup> It was a foundation to his speech at the 1998 Conservative convention in Bournemouth in which William Hague stated that if the Conservative Party was not in touch with the identity and values of the British people, then it 'cannot be authentically Conservative.'<sup>30</sup>and that under his leadership the Conservative Party would be able to counter the third way of new Labour. The reason for this pursuit for modernization within the party was that Hague and his allies that 'conservatism appeared redundant or outmoded'<sup>31</sup>for Blair had managed during his tenure as leader of the Labour party to transition from policies that adhered to an era which had seen the left marginalized in politics by the policies of Margaret Thatcher and the tough policies that had reshaped Britain economically and socially.

Labour had managed to combine 'so much of the Conservative agenda'<sup>32</sup> for example the issues of privatization and property ownership. This is evident in Blair's first administration as Labour promised it would focus on education, setting up a minimum wage. By focusing on issues such as these the Labour party managed to broaden its appeal to middle class voters, who had been traditionally conservative. Even the most 'hard-headed estimate'<sup>33</sup> suggested that the election would be at worse a 90-seat majority to Labour. This shows the extent to which a fresh leader was needed because the result showed how out of touch the Conservative Party and its central office with the electorate.

William Hague was left in a position in which he needed to build on the successes of previous Conservative administrations but to reinvent the image. Margaret Thatcher had been a divisive leader throughout the country but had been admired for her no-nonsense approach to politics and world affairs. John Major had been perceived as a weak Prime Minister but won plaudits for how his administration had successfully steered the economy following Black Wednesday. However, this presented a tough situation for Hague. The Party had not recovered from the leadership of John Major. The turbulence following the removal of Margaret Thatcher was still engraved in the party's and the public's psyche. The philosophy of individualism which had been a corner stone to the philosophy of Thatcherism had impacted the Parliamentary Conservative Party by creating a sense of

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<sup>29</sup> BBC. 'The all new William Hague' 2001.

<sup>30</sup> Hague, William '*leaders conference speech*' 1998.

<sup>31</sup> Kelly, Richard. '*Conservatism Under Hague: The Fatal Dilemma*' 2001.

<sup>32</sup> IBID

<sup>33</sup> Bale, Tim. *The Conservative Party: From Thatcher to Cameron*. 2011.p66

loyalty only to one's self rather than to the leader and the party. Over the course of seven years there had been three leadership elections and three different leaders of the conservative party between 1990-1997. This coupled with statistics that showed that under Conservative governments there had been a rise in poverty within Britain. The millennium survey found that the economic restructuring of the 1980's had led to 'both widening inequality and rapid rises in poverty.'<sup>34</sup> It can be inferred that publications such as these showed the political tightrope that Hague had found himself on. On the one hand, he had to show his colleagues in the parliamentary party that he was the right man to lead and on the other show the public that the party was transitioning away from the policies of the 1980's which had seen the rise of inequality and poverty.

This can be contrasted with previous Conservative leaders such as Heath and Baldwin managed to survive as leader following election defeat, due in part to the support they had from the Party's grandees. The process in which the leader was selected changed dramatically over the course of the twentieth century. In the time of Baldwin, the party used an 'uncodified process of consultation'<sup>35</sup> which meant that party elites discussed who would become leader and thus it was difficult to remove a leader from their position because they enjoyed the support of the Party establishment. It was the election of Edward Heath in 1965 that we see the Conservatives abandon the uncodified processes for a semi democratic system which oversaw a cultural revolution within the party and led to the 1998 reforms which gave party members the chance to choose their leader. Although this was after the parliamentary party had decided which two candidates they felt should stand. For the new leader, this would have been seen as his number one priority as Hague would need to cement his position as leader if he was to have any chance of presenting an effective opposition to the Labour Party of Tony Blair. Hague would struggle to unite the party, in doing so he would revert to trying to strengthen his core vote through economic rhetoric and policies that focused on social justice and prison reform.

Yet what is interesting about the policy of listening to Britain was that it tries to tackle too many problems and offers very few solutions. For example, as mentioned above Hague argued that if the Conservative Party did not identify with British values, then it cannot be authentically Conservative. One could question what did William Hague define as a conservative? The philosophical answer points to the idea that 'Conservative prescriptions are based on what they regard as experience rather than reason; for them, the ideal and the practical are inseparable. Most commentators regard conservatism as a modern political philosophy, even though it exhibits the standpoint of paternalism or authority, rather than freedom'<sup>36</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> Pantazis, C, et al. 'Poverty and Social Exclusion in Britain: The Millennium Survey' 2006. P.1

<sup>35</sup> Heppell, S. 'Choosing the Tory Leader: Conservative Party Leadership Elections from Heath to Cameron.' 2007. P.2

<sup>36</sup> Hamilton, Andy. "Conservatism." 2015.

Furthermore, studying the political context of that statement over the course of the twentieth century the Conservative Party had evolved from one nation Conservatism to Free Market Conservatism. This is epitomised in the philosophy of Thatcherism which wanted to create an image that ‘the Thatcherite staff of conviction would be waved against the evils of consensus.’<sup>37</sup> Even in his speech to the party conference William Hague comes out in favour of compassionate conservatism and idea that had been generated in the United States by the then Texas Governor George W. Bush. Compassionate Conservatism combines the philosophical creeds of one nation conservatism and neo-liberal conservatism, ‘Conservatism must be the creed of hope. The creed that promotes social progress through individual change.’<sup>38</sup> So, it is apparent that William Hague is using phrases such as compassionate conservatism to rebrand the Conservative image. Yet trying to define compassionate conservatism as the authentic strand of conservatism could have had a negative effect on his core vote.

Listening to Britain would set the common trend for Hague’s leadership. For every initiative, programme and policy that Hague would put forward to the British people to move away from the nasty party politics of the Thatcher-Major era would ultimately fail because he was moving away from policies that had been adopted by the Labour government and much of the free world. However, some sitting members of parliament believed that Hague was brave for bringing in these internal reforms. Sir Roger Gale stated that ‘William Hague was the right man at wrong time’<sup>39</sup> and that if he had followed Ian Duncan Smith rather than preceded him as leader things might have been different for the Conservative party at the 2005 election. The evidence in this chapter suggests that William Hague guided the metaphorical ship that was the Conservative Party back to calmer waters and could instigate reforms rather than be caught in the crossfire of the factions within the Conservative party.

Moreover, the reforms put forward by Hague in terms of how the party selected its leader through one member one vote led to the election of Ian Duncan Smith as Hague’s successor. Internal changes made it easier for factions of the party to rally around candidates that they felt best represented their views. The winner of the leadership contest would then have a clear mandate to guide the party until the election. In this respect this policy of internal democratisation of the party can be seen as a foundation that helped propel the Conservative Party back to power in 2010 under David Cameron. Furthermore, it can be argued that by bringing in internal reforms Hague helped cement his own position as leader of the party and the reforms had a direct impact on the election of the next leader Ian Duncan Smith.

As mentioned earlier the focus of the New Labour's 1997 election manifesto had been the importance the party had placed on social issues such as education and justice. The Conservatives had

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<sup>37</sup> Kerr, Peter. ‘Postwar British Politics: From Conflict to Consensus’. 2001. p.6

<sup>38</sup> Olasky, Marvin N. ‘*Compassionate Conservatism: What It Is, What It Does, and How It Can Transform America.*’2000

<sup>39</sup> Gale, Roger. *Interview with Sir Roger Gale.* September 2015. (personal notes)

appeared to be old fashioned sticking to the tried and tested means of the Thatcher governments policies of the 1980's. The electorate had dismissed these ideas and it was up to William Hague to begin the process of developing policies that would appeal to his base voters. This comprised of: parents, victims of crime, and business leaders, whilst appealing to others such as: ethnic minorities, working class voters in the north, the devolved countries and certain parts of London, which were considered the traditional Labour voters. However, Tim Bale argues that the stresses of the leadership meant that by 1999 Hague had positioned himself so that he fought the government to a draw on 'traditional Labour issues'<sup>40</sup> and focus the electorate on the issues that had worked for the party in the past.

It can be argued that the reasons why William Hague decided to move the Conservative Party's focus from the economy to social matters was because: firstly, the Conservative party had always been the fiscally responsible party with an obsession with how the economy was being managed. Secondly that due to black Wednesday the Labour Party had spent the first few years in office, through the propaganda machine of Alastair Campbell, that the Conservative Party had left the new government with a 'large structural fiscal deficit.'<sup>41</sup> Therefore, to avoid being forced into a debate with Labour over the economy, as he knew it was a battle he could not win. A major contribution to this decision was that a new government, upon election, announces large number of reforms on different issues, however scholars such as Florence King argue that this is an illusion. That 'innovations are often assemblages of existing programmes'<sup>42</sup>, thus Labour had managed to construct an economic message that they had accomplished to strengthen the economy, without highlighting that the decisions that the chancellor had taken upon assuming office were made on the basis of the strengthening economy he had inherited from the Conservative government.

The Conservative Party's policy on education focused on the ideas that head teachers should have the freedom to manage their own school affairs, but also allow parents of students from failing schools to change management. 'These reforms will lead to schools of the sort parents want - schools with high standards'.<sup>43</sup> This shows that under William Hague there were still aspects of neo-liberal thinking when it came to education as taking away the power from the local authorities and giving it to the head teachers and parents would allow schools to flourish and develop. Rather than impose targets and other regulation to prevent teachers from developing the minds of students. However, when analysing this period, it is important to understand that the period a political party spends in opposition allows them to analyse the mistakes they made in government and build a new policy that attracts support. Issues such as education can see partisanship as political parties argue over who should

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<sup>40</sup> Bale, Tim. *The Conservative Party: From Thatcher to Cameron*. 2011. p.102

<sup>41</sup> Robert Chote *'The Public Finances: 1997-2010'* 2010 p. 2.

<sup>42</sup> Faucher-King Florence. *'The New Labour Experiment Change and Reform Under Blair and Brown'* 2010.

<sup>43</sup> Hague, William. *'Time for Common Sense: 2001 Conservative Party General Election Manifesto'*. 2001. P.6

manage the school system. William Hague appears to have stuck to same hymn sheet as his predecessor John Major and that may have had a negative impact on his campaign. This change in political thinking and language highlights why the Conservative party would struggle to modernise in the years following their election defeat, for previous leaders such as Thatcher understood that in order to survive in opposition, a leader would need to adapt until they were in a strong enough position to weed out their internal opponents, an example being over the issue of privatisation in which Thatcher was only able to bring about because of her own landslide victory in 1983. In this respect Hague was given a blessing in disguise because the election had seen many MP's who had differing opinions than the leader lost their seats. As a direct consequence Hague was able to the gather more support for his polices and was able to present to the electorate a more united party that the one who had been crushed in 1997.

It is the same when it comes to William Hague's domestic policy, in what would later become the Conservative Party's manifesto for the 2001 election, William Hague promised to deliver more police officers on the streets, criminals to serve the sentence given to them by the courts and remove repeat young offenders of the streets. 'Labour have talked tough on law and order but they have failed to deliver. Police numbers have fallen, and violent crime is on the rise'.<sup>44</sup> This shift suggested that Hague had retreated to his political base once it became apparent that he would be unable to secure an outright majority at the next election. It can be argued that these policies would have been successful if William Hague was running in the 1980's or early 1990's. However, in the twenty-first century and after four years of New Labour, of which the Conservatives had emphasised that there had been a rehabilitation and pursuit of modernisation within the party. It can be argued that the public was not convinced by the progress that the Conservatives had claimed. William Hague may have started the process of modernisation within the Conservative Party, but had ultimately failed to break the public's perception that the Conservative party was the nasty party of British politics.

By retreating to the Conservative base, Hague had effectively given up on the idea that the Conservatives would form the next government in 2001. Consequently, Blair had taken up the centre ground politics and this ultimately undermined the Conservative policies under Hague. As mentioned earlier New Labour had created a golden economic legacy and this meant it was no longer considered a Conservative issue. The same could be argued with social issues such as crime, by being 'tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime' Blair had created a 'winning formula'<sup>45</sup> that would influence Home office thinking until the present day. The achievement of Blair and Brown to wrestle control of issues that had been previously thought as Conservative core issues, shows the extent of complacency the Conservative party had when in government. Hague had failed to modernise the language and policies of the party under his leadership and this was a major contributor to why he failed to

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<sup>44</sup> IBID.

<sup>45</sup> Coates, David. *'New Labour in Power'* 2000.

modernise the party whilst as leader. Furthermore, Jack Straw presented the case that statistics showed crime had fallen for the 'first time since 1953'<sup>46</sup> and this steady fall of crime during the Blair years would help strengthen Labour's case that they should be elected to a second term in office.

The final obstacle for the Conservatives during the period 1997-2001 was one that was entirely out of their control. Labour under Tony Blair had effectively governed and dismissed the theory that the Conservatives believed which was Labour could not govern without destroying the economy. Gordon Brown had managed to keep Britain out of the recession that had hit mainland Europe and Labour's effective campaign strategy had dismissed the Conservative economic policy as a right wing and that if elected the Conservatives would make cuts in the public sector to help fund their planned tax cuts. This campaign reinforced the idea that Conservatives had not moved on from 1990's despite all the rhetoric and media stunts. The same issues of Europe, immigration and tax had made the Conservative Party look like a sinking ship, and with a new captain and through effective strategy New Labour had managed to win a second general election in a row, something which had not been achieved since Harold Wilson in the 1960's and showed the public's shift in political thinking that they were willing to trust the Labour party with the governance of the UK.

The election in 2001 brought an end to The Hague leadership and his legacy as leader will be one that can be examined in two ways. Firstly, William Hague had overseen a large reorganisation in the Conservative party, such as the 'Fresh future reforms'<sup>47</sup> which focused on bringing together the voluntary, parliamentary and professional aspects of the party together made it harder for the members of parliament to dispose the leader in attempt to bring stability to the party and provide continuity up until the election of 2001. However, if we examine the Hague leadership in terms of an effective opposition and its ability to articulate and persuade voters that they were a government in waiting. Then we can conclude that Hague was not a strong leader, he only added one seat in real terms to the Conservative Party in Parliament. One could postulate that this was due to advice given to William Hague, that when central office realised that they could not win a majority or win a substantial number of seats from the Labour Party because the 'government continued to reap the benefits'<sup>48</sup> of a healthy economy and thus were able to prove that to a larger proportion of the population that Labour was the best choice in the leading the nation for the next four years. This resulted in Hague and the Conservative party retreating to their base and the policies that they put forward in the 2001 election merely appealed to their core vote.

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<sup>46</sup> Straw Jack. 'Speech to the Labour Conference 1997' 1997.

<sup>47</sup> Bale, Tim. The Conservative Party: From Thatcher to Cameron. 2011.p.74

<sup>48</sup> Evans, Geoffrey. 'European integration, party politics and voting in the 2001 election'. 2007. P.1

### **Chapter Three: The Fight between the membership and the Parliamentary Party**

Following the inability of the Conservative Party to make inroads into the Labour government's majority at the general election of 2001. William Hague resigned as the leader of the party, with a leadership election being called under the new reforms that Hague had introduced during his tenure as leader. Five candidates stepped forward to run for leader: the former Chancellor Kenneth Clarke, Michael Portillo, who was a moderniser within the party arguing that the party should 'be prepared to learn lessons from others'<sup>49</sup> in order to have a reasonable chance of reducing Labour's majority at the next general election, David Davis, Michael Ancram and Ian Duncan Smith. Early in the leadership contest Portillo appeared to be the favourite, winning both the first and second ballot. Portillo argued for a 'overhaul of party policy'<sup>50</sup> or face another humiliating defeat at the next election, this resonated with his Conservative colleagues as newspapers such as the Guardian published that Portillo had '45 public pledges. May creep to 50 in the first round.'<sup>51</sup> However, one major flaw with the new reforms which Hague had introduced was that members of Parliament could tactically vote to present the Conservative membership with candidates that they wanted rather than for the candidate who was best suited for the role. When the party presented its candidates to the membership, Ian Duncan Smith and Kenneth Clarke it was noted that it would be a struggle for either man to unite the party and neither had the majority backing of the party's Membership Elected.

This chapter will examine whether Ian Duncan Smith inherited a party in turmoil, or if his inability to organise and control the party ultimately lead to his downfall. Tim Bale, Timothy Heppell and others offer a damning analysis of the leadership of Duncan Smith, stating that the period in which Duncan Smith lead the party had 'descended into institutional chaos'<sup>52</sup>. The key argument that this chapter will present is that Duncan's Smith's ambition was to modernise the party, but he ultimately failed because he relied too heavily on a shadow cabinet that was he appointed mainly from the right of the party. Furthermore, that he lacked the desire and coherent approach to successfully achieve his ambition. Finally, this chapter will attempt to explain why there was a clear divide between the Conservative parliamentary party at Westminster, who opposed Duncan Smith at every possible opportunity and the Conservative base who elected him to the leadership with a clear majority and mandate.

Ian Duncan Smith would win the leadership election by 55,000 votes but it was clear from the start that his inexperience would constantly undermine his leadership and ultimately led to his removal as leader just two years after being elected. Smith had served under Hague as the Party's spokesperson

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<sup>49</sup> Portillo, Michael. 'Remarks by Michael Portillo at the launch of his leadership campaign on Thursday 21 June 2001 (based on press handout)' 2001.

<sup>50</sup> Watt, Nicholas. 'Candidates and their pitches'. The Guardian. 2001.

<sup>51</sup> IBID.

<sup>52</sup> Heppell, T. '*Leaders of the opposition: From Churchill to Cameron*' 2012.

on defence and published the Conservative policies on the security and defence of the UK. He stated in 2001 that he believed a 'strategic defence and security review'<sup>53</sup> was needed and that this review would need to be led from the foreign office. It becomes apparent that from his published work, Smith presents an argument to the electorate that is based on facts and statistics. Stating that under New Labour defence spending had fallen by '2.4 per cent'<sup>54</sup> which was the lowest level of spending by the department since the 1930's. This could be interpreted by the membership as a strength because Smith would be able to effectively break down the political spin and policy of Tony Blair and New Labour.

Nevertheless, Ian Duncan Smith prior to his victory was still fixated on the idea of Europe. The idea that during the Tony Blair premiership, during the multiple summits that occurred over this period the Labour government appeared to be leading the UK to the creation of EU based army angered the new leader. Once again we note how the Conservative Party failed to get a grip on the idea of Europe because on the one side there was Ian Duncan Smith who would later campaign for the UK to leave the European Union in the referendum of 2016. Who was arguing that the defence policy was 'unrealistic'<sup>55</sup> against Kenneth Clarke who had been noted throughout the 1990's as a staunch supporter of being a member of the European Union. Ian Duncan Smith although effective at breaking down the facts and figures struggled to present himself as a passionate leader of the Conservative Party. His acceptance speech as leader showed the language of a man who cared about the electorate and wanted to use the Party as a means in which the electorate could get their opinions voiced in a parliament dominated by Labour. 'The party I want to lead will be an effective opposition to this government. It will campaign on the issues that matter to people'<sup>56</sup> however this language appeared to only appear to the core base as many considered the election of Ian Duncan Smith to be an 'unmitigated disaster'<sup>57</sup> and Blair and New Labour believed it was like 'getting into a boxing ring and finding there was no opponent'<sup>58</sup>. This shows the extent to which Ian Duncan Smith was assumed as ineffective as leader of the party. Throughout the period as leader there appears to be two narratives. The first narrative is from the Conservative language. The idea that under William Hague the party had 'given us firm foundations on which to build.'<sup>59</sup> The language presents the idea that the party was ready to move forward and begin challenging Labour party leading up to the election of 2005. However, it is impossible to state whether people within the party believed this was achievable, especially under the leadership of Ian Duncan Smith. The second narrative as shown is the Labour narrative which was that the election of 2005 will be another huge majority for Labour as the

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<sup>53</sup> Smith, Ian Duncan. *'The Security and defence policies of the Conservative Party.'* 2008.

<sup>54</sup> IBID

<sup>55</sup> IBID

<sup>56</sup> Smith, Ian Duncan. *'Ian Duncan Smith full acceptance speech'* Guardian 2001.

<sup>57</sup> Bale, Tim. *The Conservative Party: From Thatcher to Cameron.* 2011 p134

<sup>58</sup> Seldon, Anthony, Peter Snowdon, and Daniel Collings. *'Blair Unbound'.* 2008.

<sup>59</sup> Bale, Tim. *The Conservative Party: From Thatcher to Cameron.* 2011.p.135

Conservative party could easily be portrayed to the public as weak and ineffective. The Conservative party had completely transformed from successful party of the 1980's. Thatcher's victory in 1979 was taken as a 'marking a decisive shift in the national mood'<sup>60</sup>the party would completely redefine itself and create an effective government and election winning machine. This is a trend that is seen throughout the life of the Conservative Party. Even during the crisis of conservatism that saw the party banished to the opposition benches for the early part of the twentieth century. The Conservative party had always managed to fight back and between 1881-1990 the party had won 'sixteen out of twenty-eight general elections'<sup>61</sup> no other political party could claim to have that similar record of success and it was easy to see why some believed that the Conservative party was the natural party of government of the UK. Yet under Ian Duncan Smith, this was not the case. The party looked exhausted after years of political infighting over issues such as Europe. The party lacked the charisma and organisation that had made the party an election winning machine and natural choice of government, like the party had been under the leadership of Margaret Thatcher, Harold Macmillan and Stanley Baldwin.

So it can be easy to argue that the leadership of Ian Duncan Smith was a complete failure, but there were successes under his leadership. On 2 May 2002, 174 local authorities held local elections. The Conservatives won approximately 34 percent of the vote compared to Labour's 32 percent and on average, 'the turnout was higher than recent local elections at around 34 percent.'<sup>62</sup> The party had managed to gain nine councils and an extra 238 councillors. This showed that Labour under Tony Blair could be defeated and that the Party could reduce the majority in the House of Commons. Furthermore, the internal structure of the Conservative party saw major advances under the leadership of Ian Duncan Smith. He appointed Theresa May, who would later become the Prime Minister in 2016, as chairperson of the Party. The first female to ever hold the role and backed the first openly homosexual Conservative MP Alan Duncan. Such successes cannot be undermined as these advancements can be considered major advances in the modernisation of the party as the party had been portrayed as only serving a select few and by actively supporting the rise of politicians, which was due to their ability rather than their gender and sexual orientation.

A year on from his election as leader of the party, Ian Duncan Smith addressed his party at the party's conference. In his speech, which became notable for Ian Duncan Smith declaring himself the 'quiet man of politics'<sup>63</sup>. The speech focused on building the future of the UK on the successes of the past. 'Millions more people own their own homes, but fear to walk down their own street'<sup>64</sup> statements such as these show that the language within the Conservative party had not changed. The statement

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<sup>60</sup> Adonis, Andrew and Hanes, Tim. 'A conservative revolution' 1994, p.1

<sup>61</sup> Green, E.H.H. 'The crisis of conservatism' 1995 p.1

<sup>62</sup> Mellows, Facer and Young Ross. 'Local Elections in England: 2 May 2002' House of Commons Library. 2002. p.7.

<sup>63</sup> Smith, Ian Duncan. 'Ian Duncan Smith full acceptance speech' Guardian 2001.

<sup>64</sup> IBID

focuses on that right to buy scheme which had been a huge success under the Thatcher governments was still a key policy of the Conservative Party but the fear of walking down the street is a statement that focuses to reassure their core vote that the Conservative Party is still the party of Law and Order and that they are the only party that can be trusted to ensure that people are safe when walking in their neighbourhoods. On the other hand, Ian Duncan Smith relinquished the idea that the Conservative Party was the only party that could successfully manage the nation's finances when he states that Britain has a successful economy. This could have both positive and negative effects on the chances of lowering the Labour majority in the next election. It can be considered a positive idea because it would be near on impossible to convince the electorate that Labour could not be trusted with the economy when Tony Blair and Gordon Brown had overseen a period of growth and prosperity. Yet in one simple statement Ian Duncan Smith had handed a major election point over to his rival by accepting that New Labour had succeeded in steering the economy from the turmoil of the 1990's. If Ian Duncan Smith had focused on the idea that between 1997-1999 Gordon Brown had committed himself to the same spending that had been ring fenced by the outgoing chancellor Kenneth Clarke, perhaps he would have had a greater impact on economic matters. The main failure of the speech was that the language appeared to criticise the party for taking the electorate for granted. It's one thing stating that the party needed to rebuild but by criticising those who would be supporting him the next election it could have undermined his leadership.

Bale presents the idea that Ian Duncan Smith lacked 'individual judgement and his increasingly apparent inability to pursue a consistent strategy.'<sup>65</sup> Thus, Ian Duncan Smith began to lose support from influential members of the old guard who were a gateway to the successes the party had achieved in the past. Within the Conservative Party, there has always been a link between the past and the present. During leadership elections, it was important to have the backing of those who had previously served or been prominent members of past Conservative administrations. In contrast to Labour who rarely relied on the old guard with the exceptions of Tony Benn. Michael Heseltine, who had served in multiple departments under Margaret Thatcher, led the charge to dethrone her and served as deputy Prime Minister under John Major, declared that the Conservative Party had not got a 'ghost of a chance of winning the next general election'<sup>66</sup> because during this period the Conservative had struggled to cut into Labour's lead in the polls but had seen a rise in the polls by the liberal democrats who if the trend continued could have overtaken the Conservatives.

This was an outrage to the rank and file of the Conservative party which had prided itself on being the most successful party in British politics. This forced Ian Duncan Smith to take action and gave the party an ultimatum 'My message is simple and stark, unite or die'<sup>67</sup>. This infighting was the

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<sup>65</sup> Bale, Tim. *The Conservative Party: From Thatcher to Cameron*, 2011.p.156

<sup>66</sup> Leader, A. '*Jungle Drums*' *Guardian*, 2002.

<sup>67</sup> Smith, Ian Duncan. '*Ian Duncan's Smith Statement*' *Guardian*, 2002.

representation of the Ian Duncan Smith leadership as it highlighted the lack of direction within the party. Ian Duncan Smith had tried to continue his predecessor's idea of compassionate conservatism which had been a pillar to the success of the then U-S President George. Bush. Ian Duncan Smith had attempted to do this through publications and visits which focused on social issues, the economy and mental health. He appointed a full-time organiser to arrange an effective schedule so that he could tour around the country to meet people and to formulate policy. Throughout his leadership he visited 'police stations, drug rehabilitation centres, prisoner re-offending organisations, mental health charities'<sup>68</sup>This appointment was an attempt by Duncan Smith to organise his daily routine more effectively, which would mean he could focus on redefining the Conservative Party and move his agenda along so that he could prepare for the Party conference and later on a general election.

Furthermore, Ian Duncan Smith attempted to rebrand the party and move on from the days of the nasty party. Which had led to demise of the previous three leaders. For example, on the issue of mental health Ian Duncan Smith and the party produced a report that outlined that 'marital breakdown was the prime cause of children's problems'<sup>69</sup>. This again reflects how the party could not fully understand what it meant to modernise. A political party does not simply modernise by simply introducing several internal reforms, but by appealing to sections of society that would not associate themselves with conservative values. This report highlights the need for a strong family unit, whilst highlighting the extent that party was divided along philosophical lines. Family values is closely associated with one nation conservatism but this undermined Ian Duncan Smith, for this report goes against much of his parliamentary party as over 60% of his MP's associated themselves with Margaret Thatcher's neo-liberal conservatism. Therefore, if Ian Duncan Smith wanted to pursue modernisation, he could have taken ideas from the man who opposed him at the dispatch box Tony Blair. Who had spent his time in opposition developing policies based on the ideas of previous Labour leaders in John Smith and Neil Kinnock to create a new brand of socialism. This New Labour would be able to appeal not only to his core vote but to people who traditionally would have voted either for the Conservatives or the Liberal Democrats. Duncan Smith would need to take inspiration from his political opponent if he wanted to make the Conservative Party an electable force in British politics.

By the summer of 2003, it appeared as if the leadership of Ian Duncan Smith was a target for internal threats determined to bring him down. One disaster after another continued to chisel down the support the leader had within the party. It was the leader himself who determined his own fate by stating that his critics should 'put up or shut up'<sup>70</sup> two days later 25 MPS presented the Chairman of the party a petition calling for the vote of no confidence and by 90 votes to 75 Ian Duncan Smith had been ousted as leader of the party. The reign of Ian Duncan Smith as leader highlighted a debate that

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<sup>68</sup> The Committee on Standards and Privileges. 'Conduct of Ian Duncan Smith' 2004. P.27

<sup>69</sup> Rutter, Michael 'Much to be done to improve the mental health of young people' 2007.

<sup>70</sup> Smith, Ian Duncan. 'Put Up or Shut Up' Telegraph, 2003.

has recently been brought up during the leadership elections of Labour in both 2015 and 2016: does the parliamentary party have to adhere to the wishes of the membership? Ian Duncan Smith rose to the leadership due to the huge amount of support he had within the membership. Yet his entire tenure as leader had seen him undermined by the rank and file of those who were supposed to support him in Westminster. It is evident that a leader must have the support of much of the party to have any chance to bring about change. Thatcher, Major, Hague and Ian Duncan Smith learnt this the hard way by being undermined by people within the parliamentary party. Ian Duncan Smith departed achieving no major changes to the party, the Conservative Party now embarked on their fourth leadership election in eight years and rather than a contest which many people expected. The Conservative party oversaw a coronation of a man who had been at the forefront of Conservative politics for over a decade and served four leaders. This man was Michael Howard and for the new leader it would be damage limitation rather than leading the party to victory in the general election of 2005.

## The rise of David Cameron 2005- 2008

Much of this dissertation has focused on the personality of the men who had been elected to the leadership of the Conservative Party. The reason this is the case is because the evidence suggests that the previous leaders believed in masking their philosophical beliefs in rebranded policies that offered no alternative to those that had been put forward by previous Conservative governments. The term modernisation is defined as the ‘process of adapting something to modern needs or habits’<sup>71</sup> previous leaders had failed in this ambition as they feared a backlash from the Conservative base, this is evident in the U-turns that had been taken by William Hague in the later days of his leadership. John Major with his back to basics Conservative policies and even in the early days of the Thatcher government when she was unwilling to risk her position by following monetarist policies. The purpose of the remaining chapters of this dissertation will argue that David Cameron developed policies, during his time as leader that differed from his predecessors in a variety of ways. First his personality differed from previous leaders because he was an effective communicator who used the media to present himself and the party as a government in waiting, secondly he changed the language of policies that showed a transition from previous Conservative policies. Cameron developed these skills whilst serving under Michael Howard, who manoeuvred reformers such as Cameron and Osborne to key positions within the shadow cabinet and guided the party into a position in which they could challenge New Labour after the 2005 election.

In this respect, the leadership of Michael Howard can be considered a period of consolidation. For the party, had seen itself in opposition for eight years which was a remarkable feat considering that the Conservative Party throughout history had been viewed as an election winning machine, capable of regrouping after internal struggles to form strong and effective governments. These are apparent in the rise of Churchill during World War Two, the crisis of unemployment during Margaret Thatcher’s first term and the surprising success of John Major during the 1992 general election. However, the crisis that the Conservative Party faced at the start of the millennium was the greatest for a generation. Previous rifts had focused on free trade; and the concept of privatisation but by the end of the 2005 election cycle, it appeared that the new leadership contest would focus on old wounds. At the start it appeared that, David Davis, a staunch euro-sceptic, would take over with other notable names such as Liam Fox and Kenneth Clarke, a staunch pro-European, throwing their names into the contest. Some commentators noted that if Michael Howard had not resigned the weekend following the election he would have faced a leadership challenge as supporters of David Davis ‘were beginning to collect the signatures that would trigger a parliamentary vote of no-confidence.’<sup>72</sup> This period of 1997-2005 showed that the Conservative lacked a unifying figure who could recreate the past glories of the party.

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<sup>71</sup> Oxford online Dictionary

<sup>72</sup> Conservative Home. ‘How Cameron won... and Davis Lost.’ 2005.

The lack of control by the Conservative leaders during this period is reminiscent of Julius Caesar who appeared to wield all the power in the Roman Empire but was ultimately undone by a plot by his senators. 'The influence of Julius Caesar was crucially important in this enterprise given the dictator was presented in humanist interpretations as both restorer of Roman justice and triumphator.'<sup>73</sup> Consequently, Michael Howard proved to be a thorn in the side of David Davis deciding to prolong the leadership election to ensure that it would not be a coronation that he had overseen just two years earlier. The leadership election of 2005 epitomised the great divides within the conservative party. Liam Fox was the darling of the right, Kenneth Clarke the left and that left little room to negotiate a majority with over candidates in the race. Yet it was the upcoming star of the party, Shadow education secretary, David Cameron who would use this to his advantage. David Cameron offered the party a fresh perspective whilst not abandoning the value of the party. This was known as the 'and theory of Conservatism' or commonly known as Compassionate Conservatism. The idea that the Conservative party could stick to their traditional beliefs but still offer a broad appeal to the voters. Cameron offered to provide tax relief for millions of UK citizens whilst still investing in public services. Therefore, Conservatives in the UK had decided to follow the road that had been taken in the United States by George W Bush. However, one flaw with compassionate conservatism is that it appears to focus on helping people economically. Others such as Peter Murrell argue that compassionate conservatism does not focus on it as economics 'social science, especially economics, does not centre its efforts on the processes of socio-economic change'<sup>74</sup>. This would be a challenge for the new leader to overcome as he would need to broaden the appeal of people who would traditionally not be seen as conservative voters most notably younger voters and voters in the Labour heartlands of the north, Scotland and Wales.

David Cameron had promised at the conference to 'build together a new generation of Conservatives. Let's switch a new generation on to Conservative ideas. Let's dream a new generation of Conservative dreams.'<sup>75</sup> From the off we can see the pragmatism of a man who had the opportunity to push on from the consolidation period and the dark days of 1997. The new leader accepted that the party needed to change used his speech to highlight how divided the party had come. 'But let's not blame the electoral system. Let's not take comfort in solid but slow progress. Let's have the courage to say: they've failed - but so have we.'<sup>76</sup> The acceptance that the party had failed would provide the platform on which David Cameron could cement his leadership. By highlighting that the division in a non-confrontational way, unlike Ian Duncan Smith, and focusing on it from the start David Cameron had sent a bold message not to his political opponents but to his party that if the Conservatives were to take its rightful place as the party of government in the United Kingdom the trivial arguments had to

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<sup>73</sup> Wyke, Maria. 'Julius Caesar in western culture.' 2006. p.116.

<sup>74</sup> Murrell, Peter. '*Conservative Political Philosophy and the strategy of Economic transition*' 1992.

<sup>75</sup> Blogger, Staff. '*David Cameron, 2005.*' New Statesman. 2010.

<sup>76</sup> Cameron, Dave. '*2005 Conference speech: full text*' Guardian. 2005

stop. The new leader during his maiden speech offered the Conservatives something that the previous leaders had not and that was the ability to stand up and provide a significant opposition to Tony Blair and Gordon Brown. David Cameron's ability to manipulate facts to suit his needs was equal to that of the Prime Minister. So one could infer that when David Cameron stated that the New Labour government which had swept to power on the promise of making education accessible to all and to improve the standards of education for everyone, had created a system in which '16% means a pass, where parents of children in failing schools have no redress and no way out.'<sup>77</sup> he offered to his party a way in which they could successfully challenge the government as well as weed out the internal problems.

This transition played a key part to David Cameron's strategy. The first major objective for David Cameron to break the public perception of the Conservative party and manoeuvre the party to the centre ground of the political spectrum. Polling data suggest that there were early successes for the new leader and his leadership team with polls suggesting that many voters considered David Cameron to be in the centre than his predecessor Michael Howard. YouGov in December showed that 32 percent of those surveyed stated that the Conservatives were 'more concerned for the interests of people'<sup>78</sup>. However, when compared to Tony Blair it was still an uphill battle. On the other hand, the same polling data offered an insight to the political future when the pollsters asked how David Cameron would fare up against Gordon Brown who had begun to shift the balance of power within the Labour Party with many postulating that Tony Blair's days were numbered. The conclusion was that 'figures suggest that the Brown vs Cameron contest will be seen as left vs right.'<sup>79</sup> This is a testament to how successful Tony Blair had been in the dominance of the centre ground politics. Consequently, although the figures showed that the Conservatives had begun to transition to the centre ground it would be some time before they could claim it for themselves and start to show, through policies that they had modernised and become attuned to what society wanted.

This transition to the centre ground meant focusing on policy areas that the Conservative party had sometimes neglected. No longer would the party just focus on the Tebbit trinity<sup>80</sup> of Taxes, immigration and Europe. But focus on issues such as social policy, and highlight the successes of their economic policy as an economic rethink was never at the forefront of the Cameron leadership as the party believed that 'Thatcher's economic interventions as one of her greatest successes'<sup>81</sup> but social policy was one area that the Conservative party could exploit. Rather than allow a misconstrued argument that 'there is no such thing as society'<sup>82</sup> David Cameron wanted to break the public image

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<sup>78</sup> Wells, Antony. 'YouGov, Daily Telegraph survey results.' 2006. p.4

<sup>79</sup> Wells, Antony. 'Are the Conservatives any Closer to the Centre ground' YouGov. 2006.

<sup>80</sup> Bale Tim. *From Thatcher to Cameron*. 2011. P.101.

<sup>81</sup> McEnhill, L. 'Radicalism or Retreat? The Conservative Party Under Cameron' 2015.

<sup>82</sup> Steele, G.R. 'There is no such thing as Society.' Institute of Economic Affairs. 2009.

that the Conservatives were hostile to public services, did not care for the disadvantaged or those who were living in society and create a narrative in which society could buy into and help create. Cameron argued that ‘I now think of the ultimate responsibility a prime minister has to make sure our public services are properly funded.’<sup>83</sup> This subtle step in the first months gave weight to the argument that David Cameron had made in his maiden speech as leader. Which was that under his leadership the Conservatives would not go through the same rebranding exercises that they had done under previous leaders that this was in fact a philosophical and political shift that would present the party as the party of government rather than as the so called nasty party of Margaret Thatcher.

The first area that the transition towards modernisation began with the policy towards social justice. In his early days as leader, David Cameron set up the Centre for Social Justice, chaired by the former leader Ian Duncan Smith, with the pretext to advise the new leadership team on how best they could tackle social issues. The reports varied from education to the breakdown of families and it is apparent that all reports adhere to traditional Conservative beliefs whilst constructing a policy that would appeal to millions of disadvantaged voters. One example, which was published in 2006 focused on education. The report argued that the ‘country is proud of its status as one of the best educators in the world. Our ancient and modern universities continue to attract the brightest and the best from across the globe while our unique approach has long been admired internationally.’<sup>84</sup> However, under the consecutive New Labour administrations the focus had been that the policy of ‘Education conducted in the media has concerned exam results. This paper focuses upon those who do not make the column inches. Government targets, such as the numbers attaining 5 A\*- C at GCSE and gaining university entrance, ignore our country’s most disadvantaged pupils.’<sup>85</sup> The think tank put forward the idea that the government through the media was merely highlighting the average success within schools not looking at ways in which they could help improve the standards of education for those who were in lower bands of attainment. A report shows the early stages of modernisation within the Conservative Party in a philosophical sense. It was Margaret Thatcher and her government who introduced the Education Act of 1988 which created the national curriculum and league tables to Britain, eighteen years later that Conservative party under David Cameron was looking at ways that they could create a fairer education system that stopped focusing on those who succeeded at school but rather to create an inclusive system that allows every child to succeed.

The report symbolises the importance of the compassionate conservatism theory to the new leadership. As aforementioned the theory compassionate conservatism focuses on traditional values and seeks to combine them with modern day society. The report on education highlights success made by previous conservative leaders dating back to the nineteenth century and argues that this is an area

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<sup>83</sup> Cameron, David. ‘Full text of Cameron’s speech.’ 2006.

<sup>84</sup> Smith, Ian Duncan. ‘*the state of the nation report: educational failure*’ Centre for Social Justice. 2006.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid

that should be considered a ‘natural tory ground.’<sup>86</sup> This highlights the renewed conviction of the Conservative party to win back the voters by highlighting that they were the party who had always prioritised education reform from acts such as the Factory Act of 1833 which guaranteed better working conditions for poor children who had been working in factories and provided children with two hours of schooling a week. ‘What made the 1833 Act so important was that it established a system to ensure that regulations were enforced.’<sup>87</sup> That the main objective for the party during the first few years under David Cameron should be to recapture the reforming spirit that had been so successful in the past. These small decisions made in the early days of his leadership showed that David Cameron was wholeheartedly committed to modernisation whilst he was leader of the opposition. For in his first few months he had achieved more in the pursuit for modernisations than the previous two leaders. The report into education concludes that the education system was not well designed and is unaware or unable to turnaround the under achievement that takes place in the schools of the UK. Of course, the report highlights the political aspect that New Labour had put all their efforts into driving up standards whilst forgetting those who struggle and are disadvantaged by the system. The report suggests that the Conservative policy should focus more on highlighting the children who are struggling and incorporating parents into the decision making and help influence their child whilst they are in education, rather than adopting the approach of New Labour which was to throw money at the situation and adopt a one size fits all mentality. This rhetoric would be crucial to the election campaigns in 2010 and 2015 when Lynton Crosby forced the Conservative leadership to accept that this was the best course of action to ensure that they would lead the party back into government.

This theme is continued in speeches, in the media and in political advertisements. David Cameron wanted to put out to the British people the core of the Conservative Party Values was that they were built to last. Cameron describes this approach, referencing the political past in Thatcher, by stating,

“The more we trust people, the stronger they and society become. We are all in this together... we have a shared responsibility for our shared future... There is such a thing as society; it is just not the same thing as the state. We will stand up for the victims of state failure and ensure that social justice and economic opportunity are achieved by empowering people and communities.”<sup>88</sup>

When examining the language, one notices the conviction David Cameron puts into the speech. He uses language as way to build a bridge between the party at Westminster to the average voter across the country the idea that together the country can achieve great things. The problem however is that many political commentators have expressed outright hostility to the idea of Cameron’s compassionate conservatism. Some such as the political commentators Mark Steyn and Simon Heffer see the theory

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid

<sup>87</sup> Parliament. ‘The 1833 Factory Act.’ 1833.

<sup>88</sup> Norman, Jesse ‘*Compassionate Conservatism: What it is and why we need it*’ Policy Exchange. 2006.

as ‘deeply flawed’<sup>89</sup> and that it is simply rhetoric aimed at covering up the political rebranding that was taking place under Cameron. The problem for David Cameron is that during his speeches he does not explain what the contrast is between the state and society and how does he develop policies that tackle the challenges that the country is facing. This would undermine David Cameron throughout his leadership even up to his resignation following the EU referendum and led to some criticising his leadership as crisis to crisis management. However, in his early speeches David Cameron focuses on addressing two issues that had distanced the average voter from those who sat in Westminster. David Cameron highlighted the growing distrust between voter and government and how he and the Conservative Party were going to keep the country safe in the war on Terror which had been announced by President Bush following the attacks on 11 September 2001. The voter now no longer prioritised the economy rather focused on how the government was going to keep them safe, there had been anger at the Tony Blair’s argument that Saddam Hussein’s Iraq posed a threat to Britain’s national security. This had an impact on the way people saw the UK-US special relationship with voter dissatisfaction that he had taken the country to war in Iraq over apparent weapons of mass destruction that had still not been found. It is argued that the road to war was based on ‘measured analysis of the threat, on the conviction that the continued containment of Iraq through sanctions was not effective or morally acceptable’<sup>90</sup> but fresh studies such as the Chilcot Inquiry show that the ‘severity of the threat posed by Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction were presented with a certainty that was not justified.’<sup>91</sup>

However, David Cameron was experiencing a slump at the polls by the end of 2006. Many voters did not see him as a Prime Minister in waiting and that he ‘remains marginally ahead of Tony Blair on the best leader question, his approval ratings have dropped markedly – down to +2 from +14 the last time YouGov asked the question in April.’<sup>92</sup> This shows that his message was not getting through. The party was struggling to show the voter that the Conservative Party was changing under his leadership. This reinforces the idea that there was a lack of trust between the voter and the political establishment and that the party had still not managed to break the image of being the nasty party. One can infer this to be the case because David Cameron was up against a Prime Minister who had his lowest approval ratings, recording levels last seen during the poll tax riots under Margaret Thatcher. Yet David Cameron could still not pull away in the polls. With pollsters remarking that other parties such as the Liberal Democrats being out of touch with the voter. Conservative grandees such as Lord Tebbit stated that the new leader had not impressed some within their core vote and this was worrying as it could result in many staying at home. This showed a distrust within the party as lord Tebbit

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid

<sup>90</sup> Bluth, Christoph. *The British road to war: Blair, Bush and the decision to invade Iraq.* Chatham House. 2004.

<sup>91</sup> Chilcot, Sir John. *The Iraq Inquiry* 2016.

<sup>92</sup> Wells, Antony. *The State of the Parties.* YouGov. 2006

disapproved of Cameron's 'reforming agenda'.<sup>93</sup> This was a defining time for the new leader as this was the best chance for the Conservative leader to drag his party into twenty first century and cemented his place as leader.

By 2007 the Conservative Party had not yet developed a modern perspective on Foreign policy. David Cameron had criticised the New Labour government for having an 'international community'<sup>94</sup> doctrine which had been used to justify previous interventions in Iraq, Sierra Leone and Kosovo. David Cameron wanted to adopt, or suggested that he preferred a more isolationist approach as Foreign policy deals with handling international security matters in the national interest. Ensuring that all citizens are safe and that the country had sustainable trade deals with other nations. However, as Clarke argues, 'Ideology is always difficult to translate into action, and foreign policy is an area that time and again blunts ideological fervour in favour of a more cautious pragmatism.'<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, David Cameron had been overwhelmed by the effectiveness of Gordon Brown on foreign policy 'For the Conservative leadership under David Cameron, Brown's forays into foreign policy provide little room for manoeuvre, especially in areas such as humanitarian intervention and the Anglo-American relationship'<sup>96</sup> this can be interpreted in two ways. First it can be inferred that even if the Conservatives were to win a snap general election, or an election later they would be committed to foreign commitments made by the Brown administration. This mirrored the situation New Labour faced when they won their electoral landslide in 1997, with Gordon Brown committing the government to the two years of spending that the Conservatives had outlined in the 1996 budget. Furthermore, the New Labour government under Tony Blair had controversially allied itself with the American administration of George Bush and the Conservatives under David Cameron would not have wanted to undermine the Anglo-American special relationship over a few commitments on the international stage. Secondly, it can be inferred that David Cameron could not seize the initiative on foreign policy because Gordon Brown had managed to present himself as an effective leader on this issue.

Looking forward it is interesting to note that after leading the Conservatives into coalition in 2010 it is thought-provoking that David Cameron distanced himself from his foreign policy of isolation and preferred to engage British forces in the Libya crisis and pushed for action in Syria. In a speech in parliament Cameron stated 'Britain has been at the forefront of the military operation to protect the Libyan people'<sup>97</sup> Thus, showing that with regards to foreign policy it is a matter for the

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<sup>93</sup> Brown, Colin. 'Conservatives hit back at Tebbit's criticism of Cameron leadership'. 2007.

<sup>94</sup> Daddow, Oliver. 'Liberal *intervention in the foreign policy thinking of Tony Blair and David Cameron*' Taylor and Francis Online. 2013.

<sup>95</sup> Clarke, M (1988) 'The policy-making process' in M Smith, S Smith and B White (eds) '*British foreign policy: tradition, change and transformation*' (London: Hyman), 71–95

<sup>96</sup> Dodds, Klaus. '*Thinking Ahead: David Cameron, the Henry Jackson Society and British Neo-conservatism*' BPJR. 2008.

<sup>97</sup> Cameron, David. 'Statement on Libya.' 2011.

governing party to act in the national interest rather than to enforcing their political dogma on the international stage. Although external factors such as the special relationship with the United States and with other European nations such as France would have been strained if Cameron had not intervened in the conflict. Furthermore, by not engaging with diplomatic allies would undermine his attempts to negotiate with Brussels. Both crises that David Cameron would face during his premiership and the EU referendum would receive major criticisms from all sides of the political spectrum and would later undermine the public's perception of David Cameron and would ultimately lead to his resignation.

By 2007, the Conservative party had struggled to build momentum following Tony Blair's announcement that he would resign the premiership and as leader of the Labour Party to be replaced by the Chancellor Gordon Brown after his coronation in the 2007 leadership election where he ran unopposed. The chancellor lacked the same charisma and composure as his predecessor and it appeared as if the Conservatives could seize the initiative that only they under David Cameron could form the next government. However, opinion polls suggested that the Conservatives only had a minor lead and at some points were behind Labour. 'Things stalled for the Conservatives when Gordon Brown became prime minister and by the end of September they had been forced down to 31% in two polls - MORI and Populus/Times (both sampled between 20-27 September).'<sup>98</sup> Brown had managed to present himself as a clear break from Blair and that appealed to some voters who had become disillusioned by the former Prime Minister's decision since coming to office in 1997. It became apparent to the Conservative leadership that they needed to highlight the changes they had made in little over two years since David Cameron became leader and the conference could not have come at a better time. After spending the opening minutes comparing the government of Gordon Brown to that of the Soviet Union, the Conservative leader became to roll off the changes he had asked the party to make when he took the stage asking Conservative members to back his leadership bid. 'Today just one in 10 of our members of Parliament are women but almost a third of our candidates are women. I didn't do that; you did that and you should be proud of what you've done.'<sup>99</sup> The importance of highlighting that the party was addressing gender inequality within the party was a political move to combat the criticism that the Conservative was a dominantly white, middle aged male party and that by including more women on the candidates list they would be able to broaden their appeal especially to female entrepreneurs, mothers and young women at university.

Furthermore, David Cameron highlighted that the Conservative Party had successfully campaigned on the environment which did not solely mean climate change. Cameron highlighted that the only way that the UK was to meet its Kyoto promise of reducing carbon emissions by eight percent by 2012 was to introduce 'three elements to a responsible environment policy: government leadership,

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<sup>98</sup> Cowling, David 'Poll Watch: Review of 2007.' BBC. 2007.

<sup>99</sup> Cameron David. '*speech to Conservative conference*' Guardian 2007.

tax-based incentives, and market solutions.’<sup>100</sup> This became a cornerstone in Cameron’s attempt to modernise the party prior to leading the Conservatives into coalition in 2010. No leader prior to Cameron had put so much emphasis into a coherent environment policy. Stating not only was creating a sustainable government needed to ensure that the UK needed to reduce carbon emissions but that climate change was an issue that should resonate with voters personally because the younger generation would have to live with the consequences if the government did not act now. Green policies would be an important part to David Cameron’s election manifesto in 2010 stating, ‘A Conservative government will cut carbon emissions and rebuild our energy security. We will make it easier for people to go green, with incentives for people to do the right thing.’<sup>101</sup>

This is not the only area in which the language coming from the leadership changed, during the party conference Osborne announced that he would reduce two taxes. The shadow chancellor announced that he would be tripling the threshold of inheritance tax from £300,000 to £1,000,000. The response from the media was that this was a positive move that repositioned the Conservatives as the party of lower taxes, it also took ‘nine million families from having to pay death duties.’<sup>102</sup> It can be argued that this political manoeuvre by the Conservatives prevented Prime Minister Brown from calling a snap general election. Similarly, policy changes such as the one on inheritance tax reinforces the idea that the Conservative had modelled itself on its American counterpart as the Republican party was the party of tax cuts and the party of families. In this respect, it can be argued that the ambition of the leadership was to rebrand itself based on the successes the Republican Party had made at the start of the millennium, rather than an intrinsic desire by Conservative lawmakers to develop a modern belief system that the electorate could rally behind and support.

This pragmatic approach shows the political insight to the Conservative leader. The Conservative Party had been transitioning over the course of this period, to a liberal-conservative approach. They did this by combining liberal ideas such as those on green issues whilst providing economic incentives to businesses and families. This would secure the Conservative core voters as it shows that they were still committed to representing the interests of business but shows the transition from the party of old. The last manifesto of the Thatcher government dedicated its environment policy to the growing importance of nuclear energy. ‘We intend to go on playing a leading role in the task of developing abundant, low-cost supplies of nuclear electricity, and managing the associated waste products.’<sup>103</sup> Although the neo-liberal Conservative approach noted that, it would not be sustainable to rely on fossil fuels they failed to realise two major factors. First, the government provided funding to scientific research but did not offer the voter incentives to lead a greener lifestyle and secondly the

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<sup>100</sup> Cameron, David. ‘*Speech on Liberal Consensus*’ UKPOL. 2007

<sup>101</sup> Cameron, David “*Invitation to join the government of Britain*” 2010.

<sup>102</sup> Helm, Toby, ‘*Tories To Hike Inheritance Tax*’ Telegraph. 2007.

<sup>103</sup> Thatcher, Margaret. ‘*The Next Move Forward*’. Conservative Manifesto. 1987.

government failed to produce a second plan if nuclear energy could not produce as abundantly as the government had hoped.

Political commentators, such as Neil Carter, note that the issue on the environment had been neglected by both parties prior to David Cameron election as leader. Some argue that David Cameron had created an ‘intense party political competition’<sup>104</sup> over the issue. In some respects, this is true, during most election cycles issues such as the economy, law and order, foreign policy and defence sit at the forefront of voter’s mind as they want to protect their interests whether it be their families, jobs, savings and freedom. Following an election issues such as the environment took a greater role in government thinking because political parties were more susceptible to environmental pressure groups. This translated in events such as Cameron’s trip to the artic, this was a ploy developed by Frank Luntz during the 2005 leadership election and adopted by Cameron throughout his leadership. Luntz ‘had organised a focus group of potential Conservative voters, clips of the five candidates speaking in public were presented to the audience and David Cameron got the most favourable response.’<sup>105</sup>Luntz had managed to take Cameron’s weaknesses and turned them into strengths such as his lack experience compared to his challengers and this managed to convince a room full of voters that he was the best choice. Therefore, by highlighting issues such as the environment, Cameron was able to shift the public’s attention away from the message of New Labour and focus it on issues that the public had become interested in.

This is also seen in the issue of devolution. The Conservative Party had opposed devolution in 1999, and had not truly embraced the idea until the election of David Cameron. The party had struggled in both Wales and Scotland. Devolved elections in 2007 provided the opportunity for the Conservative Party to challenge the notion that they did not take any interest in the matters of the Scottish and Welsh people. The 2007 Scottish Conservative manifesto promised to ‘We’d also expect local authorities to consider allocating budgets to community councils. Scotland has hundreds of flourishing community councils, and it makes sense to help them to act in the best interests of their fellow residents.’<sup>106</sup> This renewed focus on issues outside of Westminster could be a political masterstroke or disaster. The Conservatives had not presented an effective challenge in the devolved countries since the days when Margaret Thatcher had resided in Number 10. Since then the Conservatives had seen the share of the vote decrease, particularly in Scotland. David Cameron was targeting the Labour electoral heartlands and if he could make a significant dent or improve on previous elections it could be considered a success. The results of the 2007 Scottish election backfired on the Conservative leader with a loss of one seat in the parliament. It was the Scottish National Party

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<sup>104</sup> CARTER, N. 2009. Vote Blue, Go Green? Cameron’s Conservatives and the Environment. *The Political Quarterly*. 80(2), pp.233-242.

<sup>105</sup> Davis, Aeron. ‘Political Communication and Social Theory’. p.49

<sup>106</sup> Conservative Party. ‘*Scottish Conservative Manifesto, Scottish Parliament elections*’. 2007.

who had managed to derail the Labour dominance and this would be the case all the way up to the devolved elections in 2016 in which the Conservatives would remerge as the official opposition in the Scottish Parliament. Up to now the pursuit of modernisation appears to be more of a political manoeuvre, rather than an internal passion from the leader to pursue policies that benefit the national interest. This is a constant criticism that is thrown at David Cameron and his leadership team throughout his time as leader that he is only acting to enhance his political capital rather than acting in the nation's interest.

However, it can be argued that by pursuing more centrist policies in an attempt to modernise his party, it was not as easy as the leader had hoped in 2007. Fears that Gordon Brown could call a snap general election, forced David Cameron to reaffirm his core vote and as a direct consequence the issue of the environment became far less important when compared to the issue of law and order. Furthermore, figures on the right of his party such as Douglas Carswell and Mark Reckless had defected to the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) and this presented the first real internal problem for David Cameron and his leadership team. Conservative leaders following John Major had constantly been undermined by the political party, with in some cases blatant attempts by back benchers to create a motion of no confidence. Cameron had managed so far in his first two years to steer the Conservative ship slowly towards the centre ground. With external factors, such as the resignation of Tony Blair making the political shift more appealing to the party.

Conversely, defections from the party showed that David Cameron had to balance the needs of his party, his core vote and his aspirations to achieve this end goal. By 2007 it is apparent that although the party had modernised in some areas it still appeared to the electorate as nothing more than a rebranding. One member of parliament stated that under David Cameron the party 'ceased collectively to believe in anything, or to stand for anything'<sup>107</sup>so this presents a picture that David Cameron had manipulated the party through smoke screening and failed to present to the party and people anything of substance that would make voters question the direction that New Labour had taken the country in their ten years of governance. In 2008 David Cameron, would have to convince his party, the nation and his critics that the shift towards the centre was essential if the Conservative party was to effectively modernise and be able to secure enough support to form the next government. One can postulate if Gordon Brown had called an early general election in 2007. David Cameron pursuit for modernisation would have failed and all his attempts would have been for nothing.

When reflecting on the first two years of David Cameron's leadership it is evident that there had been several significant positive changes that suggested to the electorate that the Conservative Party was ready to emerge from opposition and form a strong and effective government. Cameron had successfully managed to steer his party from the right of the political spectrum towards the centre

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<sup>107</sup> BBC. 'Conservative MP defects to Labour' 2007.

ground whilst consolidating his leadership. In this respect, he was a more successful leader than any of the previous leaders following the election landslide in 1997. Consequently David Cameron ensured that in the majority of his speeches he showed that under his leadership the Conservative would be committed to modernisation by first focusing on issues that previous Conservative leaders had neglected but by also taking the fight to the Labour government, which during the period 2005-2007 had become mired with political infighting between supporters of Tony Blair and those of Gordon Brown which mirrored the political infighting that been seen in the Conservative Party following the downfall of Margaret Thatcher all the way up to the election of David Cameron.

However, it is important to note that all the successes that David Cameron had achieved in this period had not all been engineered by him. There was some political fortune with the failure of Gordon Brown to call an early election when opinion polls suggested that he would keep a Labour majority. This would result in the next three years, until the election of 2010, a re-energised Conservative Party pursuing more modern policies and a continual shift to the centre. Yet it was one major event that occurred in 2008 that would enable to Conservatives to seize back that traditional issue that had been the foundation to so many of the Conservative Party's electoral successes and that was the economy. The party machine had masterminded the theory that the economic crash in 2008 had been in part due to the over spending of the Labour government. This accusation would undermine Labour's economic policies right up to the election of 2015. The Guardian argued that the economic downturn was 'a banking crisis pure and simple'<sup>108</sup> but the Conservative would entrust Lynton Crosby to drive home the message that the Labour party could not be trusted with the economy.

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<sup>108</sup> Wintour, Patrick. 'Labour overspending did not trigger financial crash, says senior civil servant' Guardian. 2015.

## **Chapter Five: Cameron's push for Modernisation and Victory: 2008-2015**

It is at this point that it will be argued that Cameron began to abandon his pursuit for modernisation. The activists did not want to focus on issues that were trivial when unemployment and debt were rising. Cameron needed to revert to the philosophy of neo-liberalism to safeguard his position as leader. The main factor had been due to the economic crash; however, from a political perspective Cameron could not alienate those outside of Parliament. Conservative Party headquarters gained more oversight and control under his leadership this included control over local authorities, party groups and this created distrust between Conservative headquarters, the leadership and local associations. This affected his leadership later on, as Cameron was unable to grasp the severity of this internal policy that it would undermine his authority as he sought a second mandate at the 2015 general election.

By 2009, it is evident that previous Conservative leaders had not prioritized modernisation because they would have struggled to persuade their membership and the electorate that it would be a worthwhile endeavour. Tim Bale suggests that this was due to the leaders 'upsetting an increasingly Thatcherite parliamentary party'<sup>109</sup> who would argue that the party should continue the policies that had the party successful during the 1980's rather than pursue modernisation. Furthermore, Bale argues that prior to Cameron the Conservative party had prioritised short-term gains and adhering to the same ideological beliefs that had made them the dominant political force in the twentieth century. The idea that the party needed to give the electorate what they supposedly needed rather than what the electorate said they wanted. Bale's argument focuses on two major issues that had undermined the Conservative party until the election of Cameron in 2005. First was the party's fixation with Tony Blair. Many Conservatives, along with Cameron and Osborne, admired the way he had engineered the 1997 election to inflict a damaging defeat on a party who had become complacent over eighteen years of governance. Many within the party considered Blair to be a master of political manoeuvring. Therefore, if the Conservatives wanted to be successful under David Cameron, they would have to adapt and accept that traditional Conservative policies would not guarantee electoral success. Secondly, the impact the media had on the political environment. Previous leaders had tried to avoid criticism from the media and this would an area in which Cameron would have to tackle head on if he wanted push the party towards modernisation.

Cameron leading up to the election of 2010 reminded Antony Seldon and Peter Snowden of Stanley Baldwin. Cameron was not a darling of the press; during the leadership campaign of 2005, Cameron 'did not have the support of a single broadsheet paper'<sup>110</sup> the right-wing tabloids would not entirely back Cameron until 2013. A criticism of Cameron that has followed him throughout his

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<sup>109</sup> Bale, Tim. *The Conservative Party: From Thatcher to Cameron*, 2011 p.365

<sup>110</sup> Seldon, Anthony and Snowden, Peter. *Cameron at 10: The Inside Story 2010-2015*, 2015 xxxvii

leadership was that he was reluctant to handle problems until the last minute. One issue was that he preferred short-term answers on Europe. During his leadership election, he had promised to pull the Conservative Party out of the EPP group within the European parliament. Cameron stated that the EPP group held 'federalist views which were at odds with Tory policy.'<sup>111</sup> Such promises had helped him secure victory but after 2005 he made little headway until promising a referendum on the UK's European membership in 2013 that can be argued was due to the gains UKIP had been making over the previous years and the successes they had in by-elections, Local election and in the European elections.

The image Cameron had portrayed was one of arrogance. He had committed himself to a detoxification of the Conservative brand upon his election in 2005 to abandon this pledge during the economic recession that took place in 2008. One area in which David Cameron focused his attention on what he called the 'big society', which at his heart saw a reinvented role for the state. 'I also want to argue that the re-imagined state should not stop at creating opportunities for people to take control of their lives. It must actively help people take advantage of this new freedom.'<sup>112</sup> With speeches like this Cameron reinforces Bales argument as he is producing speeches, policies and think tanks that look at issues that do not focus on traditional Conservative argument. However, Bale argues that when the moment came Cameron was able to reposition himself as a traditional Conservative once the economic crash happened, speeches like those which focus on the big society which became a key policy under his leadership argue against Bale's idea. There is a link between the failure of Cameron and his leadership team to unite the newspapers behind his new brand of Conservatism. The Institute of Economic Affairs and the media both attacked Cameron's big society initiative stating, 'This Big Society initiative is full of promising rhetoric, but still seems to be based largely on bigger government, not a bigger role for individuals.'<sup>113</sup>

The big society is an initiative that would continue after Cameron would form the coalition with the Liberal Democrats in 2010. However, Cameron avoided a political disaster with opposition to the big society being disjointed and sporadic. The left struggled to provide an alternative to the big society; Unison argued that it was a way for the Conservative party to justify their economic policy of austerity, which would bring the country finances under control. Unison officials argued that they must 'beat this big society nonsense.'<sup>114</sup> Labour argued it was an attempt by Cameron and his team to present Labour policies that had already been legislated through the House of Commons as new Conservative ideas. Finally, Mark Littlewood from the Institute of Economic Affairs argued that this was a way to explain a bigger role for the government and not empowering local people. The Institute

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<sup>111</sup> BBC. 'Tories leaving Europe's EPP group' 2009.

<sup>112</sup> Cameron, David. 'The Big Society' 2009.

<sup>113</sup> McSmith, Andy. 'Cameron's Big Society attacked as 'a cover for spending cuts' Guardian.2010.

<sup>114</sup> Jackson, Kevin. "Beat this big society nonsense' Unison. 2012.

of Economic Affairs looked at analysing ‘how the tax system can best raise the necessary funds for government expenditure without distorting the market.’<sup>115</sup>This fixation on the expenditure and deficits would become a major campaign point for the Conservatives, for the golden economic legacy that Labour had prided itself on had collapsed following the economic crash in 2008.

Cameron would have the perfect opportunity to put to the electorate all the promises and commitments he had made during his tenure as leader in 2010. This election would focus on an issue that for decades had been considered a cornerstone too many conservative electoral successes the economy. It was important for Cameron to make this election about the successes he had made as leader and what direction he would take the country if he had the opportunity to serve as Prime Minister. Cameron would also have to stress how his government would fix the economic crisis that had occurred under the stewardship of Labour. The Conservative propaganda machine would have to produce rhetoric and policy to persuade the electorate that this was all down to Labour's economic policy. Cameron understood the importance of undermining Labour on their economic policies. It was important for the Conservatives to stick to their message that Labour was responsible for the economic crash. The language of the criticism needed to combine the economic crash with Labour's overspending. However, Gordon Brown questioned the Conservative narrative stating that his intervention show that he had acted wisely in securing the banking sector which prevented Britain falling of what experts called the fiscal cliff. Gordon Brown believed that the banks ‘were deluding themselves that the problems would just disappear.’<sup>116</sup>with confidence in the banks decreasing and the fear of an economic crash Gordon Brown supported the tough decision of his chancellor to renationalise some of the banks.

The 2010 manifesto gave the perfect opportunity for Cameron to put all his rhetoric and political manoeuvring towards modernisation into practice. The foreword brought together the political past with the present, as there was a ‘mood afoot that the decline of Britain was inevitable’<sup>117</sup> Thatcher had won the election of 1979 by providing Britain an alternative to the consensus politics that had followed the Second World War. Yet in 2010, the political parties had all positioned themselves in the centre ground. The leaders of the three major political parties all claimed that their polices were radical and the only solution to the downturn the occurred due to banking crisis. Upon examining the manifesto, it is apparent that David Cameron places a high emphasis on the economy, which is not surprising because previous Conservative administrations had prided themselves on the management of the economy. David Cameron's vision blended this area of government with others, using the economy as a springboard on which his government would fight social problems and rather

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<sup>115</sup> Littlewood, Mark. *‘To create growth, taxes and government spending must be radically cut’* Institute of Economic Affairs. 2016.

<sup>116</sup> Brown, Gordon. *‘Beyond the Crash: Overcoming the First Crisis of Globalization’*. P.7

<sup>117</sup> Cameron, David. *‘Invitation to join the government of Britain’* 2010.

than giving families and individuals a hand out in benefits, they wanted to provide a hand up and create jobs.

The language of the manifesto highlighted the economic turmoil in the country. By 2010, the public service debt had tripled to £952 billion when compared the debt Labour took over when they won in 1997. 'After a painful and turbulent decade under the Tories, the public finances had finally been brought under control. But after four years in office Gordon Brown took out the country's credit card and let rip'<sup>118</sup> This painted the picture that Labour had lost its way and that Gordon Brown had forsaken his 'golden rule' and overseen an economic downturn that was like the great depression in the 1930's. Cameron stressed to the electorate that this would require a collective effort; it was important to reduce the amount the government spent and increase the governments revenue. Once the budget returned to a surplus, Cameron would be able to tackle the nation's debt. During the campaign Cameron argued that there was an 'absence of a credible plan to deal with our record budget deficit'<sup>119</sup> Cameron's economic strategy placed the importance of making savings in the government departments and then placing strict restrictions on the public sector. By making the tough decisions on the economy, Cameron would then be able to shrink the size of government, which had been a touchstone to many right-wing candidates across the globe.

The second aspect that would ensure that Cameron would secure a majority and form a new government would come down to campaigning. Cameron's rhetoric had showed that during his leadership he had tried to portray an image that the party had abandoned its traditional policies and favoured modernisation. Cameron understood that he would need to attract voters that would not commonly align with the party such as ethnic voters and working class families. A study by national council for voluntary organisations found that the 2010 election had ushered in a new form of campaigning. 'This new environment compels us as campaigners to rethink our strategies so they can engage with new and emerging policy agendas.'<sup>120</sup> Yet the argument that Snowden and Sheldon put forward that Cameron would become a crisis Prime Minister is evident in the campaigning of 2010. Cameron's hard-line approach to wasteful spending in the government departments meant that when his leadership team assumed their ministerial profiles it would be political fight for the Departments to ensure that the Treasury would not demand enormous spending cuts to their Departments.

Furthermore, in the United Kingdom, the electorate had changed so much that some analysis, like that carried out by Stephen Jirvaj, looked into the last conservative victory in 1992 and showed that John Major would not have won a majority if he ran the same campaign in 2010. In the ten years

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<sup>118</sup> Treasury Department. 'The UK's budget deficit'. UK Debt Bombshell. 2016.

<sup>119</sup> IBID

<sup>120</sup> Hadley, Philip. 'A new campaigning landscape? Implicationsofthe2010 General Election' National Council for Voluntary Organisations. 2011.

between 1991-2001 there had been a 2 percent increase in people who identified as non-white. ‘Mixed ethnic groups have grown faster than most other ethnic minority groups. The African ethnic group doubled in size during the 2000s to almost a million.’<sup>121</sup> This dissertation does not assume that all people who associated themselves with the Labour party but the perception of the Conservative party under Major was that it was out of touch and did not care for those who were on the lower end of the economic ladder. Therefore, it is possible to postulate that if the 1992 election had been rerun in 2010 Major would have lost. This lack of support by ethnic voters could have provided Cameron with the opportunity to show the British public and media, who had not yet endorsed Cameron, that the Conservative Party had modernised under his leadership. Encompassing groups of society that did not previously associate their political views with the Conservatives. However, it is evident that Cameron and his leadership team failed to utilise the campaign to convince non-white voters that the party had changed. Cameron needed to focus his efforts on areas that ‘The Conservative Party had historically struggled.’<sup>122</sup> This research by British Future, provided mixed results, it showed after the election, Cameron did make some ground gaining votes there was still a substantial ethnic gap and lack of appeal. Statistics showed, Cameron gained 36 percent of the vote nationwide but only 16 percent of that came from non-white voters. The research argued that it was the perception of the Conservative Party that persuaded non-white voters to cast their ballot for other parties. This supports the idea Bale put forward that the Conservatives’ had struggled to break away from the image that had been portrayed in the dying days of the Thatcher government and the political infighting that dogged down the Major premiership. It can be argued that Cameron would have to use his time in government to persuade ethnic voters to cast the ballot for the Conservative Party. Some opinion polls suggested that if Cameron could successfully bridge the ethnic gap they would enjoy a twelve-seat majority in the election of 2015.

The methodology of the research by British Future had both strengths and weaknesses. The major strength of the research was that it highlighted the extent to which Cameron had struggled to influence the political landscape in the devolved countries, as there were few Labour-Conservative marginal seats so much of the research focused on constituencies in England. It used the 1992 and 2011 census to show the electorate had changed over the decades. However, the research does not consider the impact of Cameron's perception and performance in the media. The 2010 election was the first to televise debates between the leaders of the three main parties. At the time, it was noted how this could benefit smaller parties like the Liberal Democrats as they had the opportunity to argue their policies on the national stage.

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<sup>121</sup> Jirvaj, Stephen. ‘How has ethnic diversity grown 1991-2001-2011’ Rowntree Foundation. 2011.

<sup>122</sup> Jefferson, Doug. ‘From Minority Vote to Majority Challenge’ British Future. 2011.

The electoral vote for the 2010 election showed that the Conservative vote rose by 5 percentage points but translated to a net gain of one seats in the House of Commons. This led to some parties most notably the Liberal Democrats calling for the voting system being changed from first past the post to proportional representation. Although they had risen to become the largest party the Conservatives had failed to win an outright majority and where faced with two credible options. The first option appeared to be the most likely which was David Cameron forming a minority government tasked with pushing through a Queen's speech, the risk of forming a minority government was that it dared the other parties in parliament to defy the speech and a subsequent return to the polls. However, it would have crossed Cameron's mind that if he had successfully pushed through a Queen's speech and could successfully legislate policies Cameron could call a snap election and benefit from his risk. The second option was to form a coalition government, which would have become the first peacetime coalition government since the 1930's. The major problem for Cameron was that there were major ideological differences between the Conservative Party and the other parties. It has been argued that the deal, which was reached between the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives, saw that 'in global terms we find that the agreement is nearer to the Liberal Democrats'<sup>123</sup> but when it came to domestic policies, it favoured the more centre right approach put forward by the Conservatives.

The twenty-first century from a political perspective was determined by two international events. The first was the terrorist attacks that took place in New York in September 2001. It forced western governments to acknowledge a new threat from radical Islamic militants. President Bush stated in his address to the nation 'These acts of mass murder were intended to frighten our nation into chaos and retreat'<sup>124</sup> by 2010, the UK was fighting two wars and becoming deeply concerned with the growing unrest and instability within the Middle East and Africa. The coalition agreement prevented Cameron from pursuing a more isolationist approach to international affairs and as his first term as Prime Minister progressed he pushed for intervention in Libya and Syria and began to pursue a more ideological foreign policy. The second factor that had dictated the political scene was the expansion of globalisation, the integration of markets had overseen developments in technology and the ability to trade freely opened large markets to the UK. Cameron entrusted Osborne to focus on the development of UK-Chinese relations hoping to bring about a 'golden decade'<sup>125</sup> in economic investment.

Therefore, international factors helped define the discussions that took place between the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats. Consequently, it was the parties' manifestos that could have prevented the formation of the coalition government. As mentioned there were enormous

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<sup>123</sup> Quinn, Thomas. *The UK Coalition Agreement of 2010: Who Won?* Taylor and Francis. 2011.

<sup>124</sup> Bush, George, W. *The text of President Bush's address Tuesday night, after terrorist attacks on New York and Washington.* CNN. 2001.

<sup>125</sup> Financial Times. *'Osborne hails 'golden decade' in Sino-British relations'* 2015.

ideological differences between the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats, with many liberal democrat activists preferring discussions taking place between Nick Clegg and Gordon Brown. It confirmed the trend that ‘Britain had returned to multi-party politics’<sup>126</sup> the agreement was spun as ‘historic document in British politics’<sup>127</sup> that it was important to put the national interest before ideological differences. The agreement cemented the idea that under Cameron the days of big government were over and that under his leadership there would be a policy that oversaw the distribution power to local authorities and people to help create a ‘more fair and responsible society.’<sup>128</sup> Cameron had developed an image that the Conservative Party was willing to share power if it was in the national interest. It can be inferred that Cameron would have preferred to govern alone but decisions like the coalition agreement showed that Cameron was willing to adapt to bring about change. His adaptability shows the extent he was willing to modernise the Conservative Party and British politics. Thatcher argued when she was the leader of the Conservative Party ‘what great cause would have been fought and won under the banner: ‘I stand for consensus?’<sup>129</sup> It was her ability to stand by her decisions during her later years as Prime Minister, regardless of the consequences, that earned the respect of her colleagues on all sides of the house, this ultimately led to her downfall once she refused to back down over the poll tax. Cameron showed that he was willing to move away from this idea when he opened dialogue with the Liberal Democrats, it was better to have a Conservative led government in Cameron’s eyes than to bring about months of uncertainty. This is another way Cameron had modernised, it has been noted that it was important for Cameron to break the perception that the Conservatives were the nasty party in British politics. Cameron wanted to change the perspective internally that the party and the leader were separate cogs in a machine. That they complemented each other and when needed worked with each other to bring about policy. Cameron wanted a strict structure that would make the Conservative Party a force to reckon with in British politics again.

The coalition document delved into all areas of government and society with comments on issues from banking, business, and culture to Europe. The document provides a unique opportunity to examine the extent that both parties were willing to compromise but also the opportunity to see how far the Conservative party had come since the landslide victory for Labour in 1997. The chapter on banking was heavily influenced by events that had preceded the election in 2010. Cameron and Clegg understood that their coalition had to be strong on bonuses that were being received by people who worked in the financial sector as well as build a strong foundation from which the UK economy could

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<sup>126</sup> Martin Pugh *‘State and society a social and political history of Britain since 1870’*. P. 386

<sup>127</sup> Cameron, David and Clegg, Nick. *‘The Coalition Programme.’* Parliament 2010.

<sup>128</sup> *ibid*

<sup>129</sup> Smith, Martin. *‘Margaret Thatcher’s rejection of consensus was symptomatic of an anti-democratic tendency in a political system dominated by the executive’* London School of Economics. 2013.

grow and create new jobs. Yet the chapter also focuses on issues such as ‘competition issues’<sup>130</sup> which would see the introduction of a level playing field between big retail companies and small. It is important not to devalue the importance of policies such as this because prior leader of the Conservative Party had always stood by the philosophy of competition, especially in the business sector. The 2010 policy allowed small businesses to have similar opportunities to their larger counterparts when it came to local government drawing up plans to shape the direction of their retail development. When coupled with the policy that aimed to award 25 percent of government contracts to small or medium sized businesses. Cameron was putting into practice policy that reinforced his idea of a big society. The government under Cameron would scale back its spending but would help entrepreneurs and small business to strengthen and increase profits.

The coalition programme was the philosophical basis on which the coalition would be led. However, it is important to examine one area that had undermined previous leaders of the Conservative Party and that was the issue of Europe. The document states that the British government would ensure that the country was ‘a positive participant in the EU’<sup>131</sup> but argued that there would be no further transfer of power between Westminster and Brussels. It can be inferred that this topic brought about tension between the two parties, the Liberal Democrats were pro-Europe, and the Conservatives were divided on the issues. The chapter on Europe only has nine key points, which is lower than many other chapters that saw major ideological differences between the parties. Cameron would not have wanted to alienate members of his party that were Eurosceptic because it would become difficult for him to pass meaningful legislation during his time in office. Cameron wanted to control the tone of the debate on Europe by trying to strike a balance that would see Britain remain an active member of the EU, especially when it came to issues such as crime and terrorism, but drew a red line on the issue of sovereignty. This poses the question of did Cameron truly deal with the issue of Europe? The answer is a categorical no. Cameron showed that the issue of Europe could still undermine or even overthrow a leader of the Conservative Party. This is evident in 2013 when forced by the rise of UKIP and some discontent amongst his own ranks, Cameron promised a referendum on the issue of the UK’s membership of the European Union and was the catalyst to his downfall.

This leads to the theory that Cameron wanted to achieve modernisation but the complexity and responsibility of government forced Cameron to adopt more traditional stances to issues. This would provide an early test to the new coalition government and that was university tuition fees. The coalition programme did not make any reference to a raise in academic fees stating that it was awaiting the publication of Lord Browne’s report on higher education funding but stated that the government’s main aim would be to ensure that universities remain essential for building a strong

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<sup>130</sup> Cameron, David and Clegg, Nick. ‘The Coalition Programme.’ Parliament 2010.

<sup>131</sup> IBID

society as well as being a cornerstone to the economic recovery. Upon assuming power, the coalition government continued to mention a black hole in the public finances meant that they would have to undertake tough decisions to lower the deficit. The government planned to raise the fees students paid from £3000 to £9000. Such an increase led to protests and the opposition arguing that such a policy would lead to a lack of social mobility. Cameron argued that his new system ‘would widen access to university’<sup>132</sup> and statistics that focused on the entirety of the coalition government showed that ‘the number of home applicants to UK universities fell after the increase in fees, but broadly the application rate of 18-year-olds has continued to increase.’<sup>133</sup> One possibility for this being the case is the economic recession, students were more likely to stay in full time education if there was little possibility of going into a full-time job. Statistics published by the Department for Business stated that ‘The provisional HEIPR estimate for the 2011/12 academic year was 49%, up by three percentage points compared with the estimate for 2010/11 of 46’<sup>134</sup> the conclusion that the report reached was that students were choosing not to defer their studies and this resulted in a 3 point increase in attendance over the course of one academic year.<sup>0</sup>

The policy gained much criticism with the institute of fiscal studies stating that ‘43p in every £1 of loans would not be repaid’<sup>135</sup> the plan set out by the Chancellor and the Education secretary was see a decrease in public spending on higher education, the most common way of analysing the effect the policy on tuition fees has had on public spending is to examine the amount the government borrowed to pay for all the student loans. The Treasury predicts that the cost could range as high as 2.2 percent above inflation, this estimate is to brace the economic markets if the government made substantial losses from this policy. Cameron in this respect did not modernise his party’s policy in education he wholeheartedly accepted the notion of competition that was at the heart of Margaret Thatcher’s 1988 education act. The government would actively support students who wanted the opportunity to go to universities but they wanted to reap a long-term benefit from doing so. There are scholars such as R. Dearing who argue that this was a purpose of the 1988 education act to create a system that benefited economic markets. Thus, Cameron was merely applying this mantra to universities. Was this policy successful? It is hard to state whether this policy was a success because there are arguments for both sides. The policy did see the government make savings in public spending, which was important for the government to do as the deficit was out of control. Secondly, the policy aimed to restructure the way students paid off their debts. From a political perspective, the policy on tuition fees undermined the coalition. Many Liberal Democrats and some Conservatives’ broke ranks and voted against the motion. It undermined the electability of the Liberal Democrats

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<sup>132</sup> Cameron, David. ‘Tuition fees rise is *'sustainable and fair'*’ Guardian. 2010.

<sup>133</sup> Hayes, Sam . ‘*Have the government's tuition fee reforms worked?*’ 2015.

<sup>134</sup> Department of Business. ‘PARTICIPATION RATES IN HIGHER EDUCATION: ACADEMIC YEARS 2006/2007 – 2011/2012 (Provisional)’ 2013. P.1

<sup>135</sup> *ibid*

who had campaigned on the pledge that there would be no increase on university fees and if it were proposed, they would actively oppose it. Cameron at this point began to experience an erosion of support from his own party that would trigger the long path to his downfall. The main reason for this conclusion is because Cameron had spent five years as leader presenting a softer brand of Conservatism, based on traditional principles but for modern day society. The moment he became Prime Minister he reverted to the public's stereotype of the Conservative Party. A party that was merely focused on the economy and disregarding the public services, mainly teachers, benefits, and notoriously the National Health Service. Cameron had promised to ring fence spending on the NHS but throughout his premiership it became a weapon that his political opponents used to undermine his push for internal reform. Cameron continued to drill home that the government had invested heavily and that there were 12,000 new nurses under his government. However, the UK Statistics Authority, 'concluded that spending on the NHS is actually lower in real terms now than it was in 2010'.<sup>136</sup> This is where it is evident that the political rhetoric did not match the statistics. Cameron would have wanted to present to the public that the NHS could be trusted in the hands of the Conservatives. This is paralleled with Labour in 1997 who wanted to prove that they could be trusted with managing the economy as the Conservatives had spent decades highlighting the failure of the Labour governments in the 1970's and the impact that the winter of discontent had on working class people.

On the other hand, one area in which Cameron can still be considered a moderniser is devolution. The Conservative Party had opposed the devolution bill when it was proposed by Tony Blair but Martin Pugh argues that Cameron deserves some plaudits for what he has done regarding the devolved governments. Pugh states 'Cameron surprised observers by adopting a conciliatory approach to Scottish nationalism'<sup>137</sup> granting them extra powers that allowed the Scottish Parliament to change their rates of income tax. However, it is postulated by Pugh that this was done out of fear, Cameron did not want to be the Prime Minister that oversaw the breakup of the United Kingdom. He was to acknowledge that his party did not appeal to many devolved voters with only one Scottish MP on the government benches at Westminster. It would have come as a shock when in 2011 the SNP won an outright majority gaining 69 seats out of 129 in the Scottish Parliament. This presented a realistic opportunity for the SNP to push for independence. Alex Salmond understood that there was a growing dissent amongst English voters who supported the idea of Scotland leaving the UK. In this area Cameron chose not to modernise, he wanted to fight tooth and nail to ensure that the UK would not be separated. Yet the coalition government legislated the Edinburgh agreement, which gave Scotland the opportunity to hold an independence referendum by the end of 2014. The agreement was a chance to 'deliver a fair test and a decisive expression of the views of people in Scotland and a result that

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<sup>136</sup> Department for Health. '*Statistics on NHS Hospital Activity*' UK Statistics Authority. 2012.

<sup>137</sup> Pugh, Martin. '*State and Society Fourth Edition: A Social and Political History of Britain Since 1870.*' Bloomsbury Academic, 2012.

everyone will respect.’<sup>138</sup> Cameron during his years as opposition leader had not faced major crisis in his leadership but in his first two years as Prime Minister he had seen protests to his policies, like those that plagued the Thatcher administrations. Riots across the country that highlighted that the cuts he had implemented were so severe that police lost control of some areas of the capital and there was talk of using rubber bullets and the army. Most importantly was the prospect of being the Prime Minister who would have to end over 300 years of union. This leads to Snowden and Bale stating that he was an essay crisis Prime Minister because he went from crisis to crisis and believed that he was always in a position of power. Cameron appeared as ‘a leader who has seemed dominant one moment, impotent the next, and then dominant again’<sup>139</sup> This would be seen in the referendum itself with Cameron believing that there would be overwhelming support for a no vote. As polling day approached and pollsters suggested that there was a chance of a yes victory Cameron and his leadership team sprang into action throwing everything they had into the campaign.

Throughout his time as leader of the party, Cameron had pursued modernisation internally. During his first two years in power, Cameron paved the way for constitutional changes to government. The first was the plan to introduce the fixed term parliament's bill. The bill aimed to ‘to make provision for the dissolution of Parliament and the determination of polling day’<sup>140</sup> the major benefits for enacting such legislation is it provided stability as political parties and the electorate knew when the next election was due to take place. It also enabled the government to prioritise their legislative programme because ‘the time available for the passage of the bills is more predictable.’<sup>141</sup> The road safety bill that the government introduced in November 2004 is a prime example of how effective the fixed term parliament act could be. The road safety bill went to the House of Lords in March 2005 but due to the dissolution of parliament and election in June 2005, it meant that the bill was lost in its entirety and had to be reintroduced by Tony Blair after his election victory. If the fixed term act had been in place during this period, it is apparent that the bill would have become ‘law first time around.’<sup>142</sup> On the other hand, Cameron faced scrutiny from the House of Commons political and constitutional reform committee, the committee believed that Cameron had rushed proposals in order to gain a political advantage over his opponents arguing that ‘we regret the way that the unnecessarily rushed way in which the bill is being proceeded with.’<sup>143</sup> It is evident that the committee agreed that the principle behind the introduction of the bill was justified as it prevented the Prime Minister calling a snap election in order to gain a larger majority in parliament. Yet the main concern for the

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<sup>138</sup> Salmond, Alex. *Agreement between the United Kingdom Government and the Scottish Government on a referendum on independence for Scotland* Edinburgh. 2012

<sup>139</sup> Colvile, Robert. ‘Cameron at 10 by Anthony Seldon and Peter Snowdon, review: ‘like a school report’’. Telegraph. 2015.

<sup>140</sup> Cameron, David. *Fixed Term Parliament’s act* Parliament.2011

<sup>141</sup> Parliament. *The impact of Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011 on Government* 2013.

<sup>142</sup> *ibid*

<sup>143</sup> House of Commons. *Fixed-term Parliaments Bill* 2010.

committee was the impact that the bill would have on parliament. It would oversee the abolishment of an executive power, the dissolution of parliament, but still allow the Prime Minister in extraordinary circumstances to still hold an early election. Bale supports the theory that Cameron merely used his position as leader of the Conservatives and later Prime Minister was to cement his hold on power. He states that upon forming the coalition Cameron's conservatives lack the 'wealth of experience'<sup>144</sup> in the House of Commons, coupled with the lack of support within the House of Lords which previous Conservative governments could rely on to pass their legislative agenda. The impact of the fixed parliament act is yet to be decided, the philosophy shows that Cameron was for modernising every aspect of society, even constitutional and political reform that would benefit all parties rather than just the government of the day.

The second way the coalition government attempted to modernise the political system in the UK was the promise to hold a referendum on the voting system. The Conservative party wanted the public to side against the alternative voting system, because it would result in the Conservative party having less chance of securing a majority in future elections and break up the two-party system. It can be argued as a pursuit of modernisation because it highlights the ability of the leadership to govern in coalition and to concede political ground to their coalition partners. The UK uses the first past the post system, which means the candidate with the most number of votes wins the seat, however the major flaw, with the first past the post system is that the party with the most amount votes does not necessarily win most of the seats in the House of Commons. This system has been criticised and not representing the views of the UK with the Conservatives receiving 36 per cent of the vote and receiving 306 seats in the commons. The Liberal Democrats had campaigned on changing the voting system to the alternate voting system believing that this would represent the views of the electorate, as seats in the commons would have been distributed based on a party's percentage of the vote. 'AV is a simple change that will make a big difference.'<sup>145</sup> This was an important factor to the coalition agreement and Cameron promised to campaign to keep the status quo. Cameron would not want to risk the chance to gain a majority in future elections and so this was one are of political reform that Cameron and the Conservatives did not want to support.

The agreement, which was forged between the two parties, was to 'bring forward a Referendum Bill on electoral reform, which includes provision for the introduction of the Alternative Vote in the event of a positive result in the referendum, as well as for the creation of fewer and more equal sized constituencies.'<sup>146</sup> This provides an insight into the political philosophy of Cameron. Cameron spent the early years of his leadership pushing through modern policies focusing on the NHS, social policy

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<sup>144</sup> Bale, Tim. *The Conservative Party: From Thatcher to Cameron*. 2011, p.389

<sup>145</sup> Wintour, Patrick. 'AV is a simple change that will make a big difference' *Guardian*. 2011

<sup>146</sup> BBC. 'Full Text: Conservative-Lib Dem deal' 2010.

and the environment. Instead of focusing on traditional issues such as defence, the economy and law and order. The coalition provided Cameron with the opportunity to actively pursue social change, claiming that it would be important if the coalition was going to see out its five-year term. This is a different approach that had been taken by his predecessors and one that makes Cameron appear as a leader that managed to change the course of the Conservative party. Margaret Thatcher had always stood by her convictions and that ultimately led to her downfall. Cameron on the other hand wanted to ensure that the Conservatives were not portrayed, as out of touch and to achieve this Cameron had to concede political ground to the Liberal Democrats. The referendum on the voting system allowed open discussion on how members of Parliament are elected; the vote overwhelmingly supported the Conservatives with over 60 percent voting against the motion. Research carried out following the election by Parliament found that ‘The No vote was in the majority in every region of the UK.’<sup>147</sup>

As previously stated, Cameron began to abandon his pursuit of modernisation in 2008, yet it is the decision to pass the gay marriage act that shows that this was not solely for his own political ambitions. Cameron's leadership of the party can be analysed as full of ambition for both the country and the party. It can be seen as a motive behind leading the Conservatives into coalition when many of his Member of Parliament wanted to form a minority government and activists who believed that the two political parties shared common ground. The successes of the coalition were brought about by Cameron surrounding himself with like-minded individuals, this had been part of the coalition agreement that members of the Liberal Democrats leadership would be given high ranking roles within government such as the deputy Prime Minister and Chief of the treasury. This would become known as the Quod and it comprised of George Osborne, Nick Clegg and Danny Alexander who all wanted to see through the coalition programme. It is important to note that David Laws was a key figure in bringing about the coalition agreement but failed to play a bigger role due to a controversy. It is apparent that Cameron did not have much choice in this as Clegg would have wanted to put people who supported the idea of a coalition government.

There was agreement between Cameron and Clegg that it was only a matter of time before the government introduced gay marriage but it was important to ensure that it happened under his leadership. [The coalition programme for government stated ‘We will use our relationships with other countries to push for unequivocal support for gay rights and for UK civil partnerships to be recognised internationally.’<sup>148</sup>The aim of the law was to make sure marriage between a couple of the same sex was ‘lawful.’<sup>149</sup> However, Cameron faced a fierce battle to ensure that the bill would be passed through the commons. The party leadership expected at least half of the sitting MP is to revolt

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<sup>147</sup> McGuinness, Fergal. ‘*Alternative Vote Referendum 2011*’ 2011.

<sup>148</sup> Cameron, Dave and Clegg, Nick. ‘*Coalition programme for government*’ 2010. P.18.

<sup>149</sup> Parliament. ‘*Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013*’ 2013.

against the proposal with Sir Roger Gale stating that the change was ‘Orwellian’<sup>150</sup> and that it was not for the government to introduce policy that redefines hundreds of years of history. It is apparent that Cameron was behind this policy and stated that ‘I do not support gay marriage despite being a conservative. I support gay marriage because I am a conservative’<sup>151</sup> he had moved the party away from policies such as section 28 that meant it was illegal to promote homosexual material. Cameron apologised for supporting such a policy but it showed that under his leadership Cameron wanted to address issues that effected many sections of society. Cameron understood the consequences of producing such a policy with critics from his own party, the church and from many who supported the idea that marriage was solely the union of a man and a woman. With the support of the Liberal Democrats, Cameron believed he would be able to push the gay marriage act through parliament. It is important to note that Cameron pushed through the gay marriage act before other western countries such as the United States who struggled to push through a gay marriage law until the Supreme Court acted, ‘The decision, which was the culmination of decades of litigation and activism, set off jubilation and tearful embraces across the country, the first same-sex marriages in several states, and resistance — or at least stalling — in others.’<sup>152</sup> The reason why this is considered important was because the Conservative party traditionally supported the notion that marriage was between a man and a woman but Cameron was determined to push for equality even if it resulted in a back bench rebellion and the alienation of the grass root base.

Seldon and Snowden share the conclusion that Cameron firmly believed in gay marriage. Highlighting the significance of the bill if it passed through the commons, ‘it will send out a message if we do this; and it will send out a message if we don’t.’<sup>153</sup> Cameron understood the risks of abandoning a policy that would have a significant effect on society. A few weeks’ prior his government had been heavily criticised for producing an ‘omnishambles budget.’<sup>154</sup> The budget appeared to reinforce Labour’s rhetoric that the coalition was incapable of governing for the working class as the budget saw taxes being introduced on food and other necessities. The media presented this as a battle within the coalition with prominent donors such as Lord Ashcroft stating that ‘the main problem is not so much that people think the Conservative Party is heading in the wrong direction, it is that they are not sure where it is heading.’<sup>155</sup> This pursuit of fiscal responsibility by Osborne again presented the party as out of touch and this is evident in the budget itself. The first chapter focus on how the government planned to lower the deficit and how it planned to restore investors’ confidence

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<sup>150</sup> Gale, Sir Roger. ‘*Gay marriage is ‘Orwellian’*’ BBC. 2013.

<sup>151</sup> Cameron, David. ‘*Conservative party conference speech in full*’ Guardian. 2011.

<sup>152</sup> Liptak, A. (2015). Supreme Court Ruling Makes Same-Sex Marriage a Right Nationwide. [online] Nytimes.com.

<sup>153</sup> Seldon, Anthony and Peter Snowden. ‘*Cameron at 10: The Inside Story 2010-2015,*’ 2015 p.279

<sup>154</sup> |BID

<sup>155</sup> Murphy, Joe. ‘*David Cameron blasted over Budget ‘omnishambles’*’ Evening Standard. 2012.

in the market stating ‘monetary activism supporting the recovery, focused on meeting the inflation target, increasing the availability of credit to businesses and encouraging private sector investment;’<sup>156</sup> It was at this point that the leadership understood there had to be a change in strategy, the coalition was struggling to prevent rebellions from their coalition partners and this created the image that the coalition government was weak. The Conservatives polled strongly on the issue of the economy but struggled to convince people that they were capable of investing in public services. This highlights that throughout the period the Conservatives had not been committed to modernisation, they had attempted to rebrand the party and ultimately failed. Cameron needed to shift his focus to the forthcoming election and the decision he would make would bring an end to the pursuit for modernisation.

Thus, the government shifted its commitment to ensuring that the bill passed successfully through the chamber. The implications of abandoning a social policy that extended benefits to a group in society would undermine the Prime Minister’s’ authority to govern. Cameron was aware of the splits that were forming within his party with opposition to the bill intensifying as the vote approached. International observers and media such as the New York Times noted, ‘Few Prime Ministers have faced such an extensive rebellion in their own ranks.’<sup>157</sup> The rebellion over gay marriage put a strain on Cameron’s relationship with the backbenchers with the 1922 committee arguing that the coalition did not have a mandate to legislate on the issue of gay marriage because it did not appear in the manifesto. It appeared to his critics that Cameron constructed the policy to attract voters and present a friendlier image of the Conservative Party. This policy would be defining moment of the coalition government; Cameron highlighted the significance of ‘leaders from across the political spectrum’<sup>158</sup> putting aside their ideological differences for equality.

Gay marriage had been a success for Cameron, yet the pursuit for modernisation within the Conservative Party effectively stopped when the party hired Lynton Crosby to be their chief strategist. Crosby constructed the ‘dog-whistle’<sup>159</sup> approach to election campaigning. Crosby’s strategy focused the campaigns on particular group of voters by appealing directly to them. This is apparent in the federal election in Australia in 2005, ‘It is not racist to impose limits on immigration’<sup>160</sup> by making the politicians address key issues and making it a recurring theme of the campaign, Crosby believed that such emphasis would result in a shifting of opinion polls. The 2005 federal election was a success for the Liberal Party in Australia, partly because Crosby focused the campaign message on five core

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<sup>156</sup> Osborne, George. *‘Budget 2012.’* HM Treasury. 2012

<sup>157</sup> Burns, John F. *‘British House of Commons Approves Gay Marriage’* New York times 2013

<sup>158</sup> Cameron, David. *‘When people’s love is divided by law, it is the law that needs to change’* Pink news. 2014

<sup>159</sup> Seawright, David. *“‘On A low road’: The 2005 Conservative Campaign.”* Journal of Marketing Management. 2005

<sup>160</sup> IBID

issues and forced the leadership to stick to these issues. However, Crosby understood the importance of playing on the electorate's fears. A current administration can reflect and present evidence of its successes of a course of a parliament, whereas the opposition has to present policies which shows that they are a government in waiting. Crosby forced the narrative of the campaign to be about the negative consequences of voting for the Labour party and this is the same approach that Crosby would take when he hired by the Conservative Party in the UK.

Crosby's influence on the Conservative Party began in 2013 when there was a shift between Cameron's pursuit for modernisation and adhering to a strict campaign message on the economy. Journalists point out that a key factor to the strategy would be to portray the Conservative Party as the 'most trustworthy on managing the economy.'<sup>161</sup> To achieve this Crosby pursued a campaign of negativity. Cameron's speeches on the economy shared a similar theme of criticism of Labour economic theory during their time in government. 'We saw the broken model of growth that was propelling our economy into an increasingly unsustainable position'<sup>162</sup> It is evident that early on the Conservative strategy leading up to the general election in 2015 was to present the Conservatives as working in the national interest. That Cameron and Osborne pursued an austerity programme due to the supposedly reckless management of the economy by the previous Labour government, and that the actions that had been taken by the coalition was needed if the country was to begin an economic recovery. The shift to traditional Conservative campaigning with emphasis on the core issues such as the economy and immigration provides insight into the thoughts of Crosby. He noted that Cameron had been 'fucking off the party big time'<sup>163</sup> on issues such as gay marriage and that if Cameron was to be successful in 2015 he would have to rely on his core voters for much of his support. Crosby wanted the party to understand the electorate's fears and concerns rather than 'plying them with positive ideas and optimistic visions.'<sup>164</sup>

Snowden and Seldon reinforces the idea that Crosby understood the failings of Cameron's leadership stating, 'Everything is too fragmented'<sup>165</sup> the sharp criticism shaped Cameron's final two years in the coalition government. Crosby presented a bleak picture to Cameron and his leadership team that outlined areas for Cameron to focus on. The first was the party's lack of appeal to ethnic voters. As previously stated, the Conservative Party polled 16 percent of the ethnic vote in 2010, coupled with the declining support of older voters. The Conservatives would need to win the 2015 election by seven-percentage point in order to gain a small majority in the commons. Polls suggested

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<sup>161</sup> Dinan, Will. *'Fattened pigs, dog whistles and dead cats: the menagerie of a Lynton Crosby campaign'* The Conversation. 2016.

<sup>162</sup> Cameron, David. *'Economy speech delivered by David Cameron.'* 2013.

<sup>163</sup> Seldon, Anthony and Peter Snowdon. *Cameron at 10: The Inside Story 2010-2015*, 2015 p.280

<sup>164</sup> Financial Times *'Lynton Crosby is right about the 'politics of fear'* 2015.

<sup>165</sup> Seldon, Anthony and Peter Snowdon. *'Cameron at 10: The Inside Story 2010-2015'*, 2015 p. 285

that Labour had a comfortable lead over the Conservatives and this had an impact on the Party's morale. Cameron needed to recapture the personality of Thatcher during the early 1980's if he was to be successful in winning a majority in 2015; Crosby intended to create the perception that Cameron and Osborne saved the economy from Labour as Thatcher had done in 1979. An example of this would be the Coalition's attempt to introduce plain packaging for cigarettes. Crosby felt that this policy distracted the Conservative Party from its core message and pushed for the policy to be removed. Crosby received fierce criticism for he had 'extensive tobacco industry connections.'<sup>166</sup> Therefore, when the government abandoned its plans to introduce plain packaging it appeared as if he had lobbied the Prime Minister on their behalf. The government's official explanation was that it wanted to measure the 'emerging impact of the decision in Australia'<sup>167</sup> The significance of the UK adopting such a policy would have impacted the revenue made by the tobacco industry, for other countries would have followed the UK's lead.

Crosby also highlighted the difference between the Conservative Party in the cities and out in rural areas. Modernisation appeared 'socially liberal'<sup>168</sup> and it would be hard to unite voters who lived in rural areas to the campaign's message if it focused on a modernisation agenda. Crosby pushed for the focus of the campaign in government to be on issues that matter to much of the people: tax, immigration and Europe, which had been gaining momentum with the rise of UKIP in British politics. Nevertheless, the area on which Crosby made a lasting impact was the language and tone of Cameron's speeches. It was important to manipulate the language of the speeches to become 'personally relevant to voters'<sup>169</sup> and focus on issues that unite the party rather than divide it. It was important for Cameron to prioritise issues that the voters wanted him to focus on, rather than pursue policy that interested him such as modern slavery. It was 'scraping the barnacles of the boat'<sup>170</sup> and ensuring that Cameron and Osborne adhered to his strict plan. Crosby understood that time was against the Conservatives and if they had any chance of success they needed to have a sole leader of the campaign as this was a major downfall that prevented the Conservatives gaining an outright majority.

However, one criticism of Crosby's approach is that it heavily relied on the core vote. Previous leaders such as Hague and Howard abandoned their pursuit for modernisation and retreated to their base as the election drew closer. The dog whistle tactic that was constructed by Crosby was designed to bring 'focus'<sup>171</sup> to the campaign but it contradicted the hard work Cameron had put into

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<sup>166</sup> Doward, Jamie. *'Revealed: tobacco giant's secret plans to see off plain cigarette packets'* Observer. 2013.

<sup>167</sup> IBID.

<sup>168</sup> Seldon, Anthony and Peter Snowdon. *'Cameron at 10: The Inside Story 2010-2015'*, 2015 p.289

<sup>169</sup> IBID

<sup>170</sup> Watt, Nicholas. *'The Lynton Crosby effect: dog whistles and jewellery jokes'* Guardian. 2013.

<sup>171</sup> Lilleker, Darren. *'The Marketing of Political Parties: Political Marketing at the 2005 General Election.'* 2006.

modernising the party. As leader, he had successfully introduced internal reforms, such as the restructuring of the party. In government, he had introduced constitutional reform and social reform, Crosby expected Cameron and his leadership team to abandon their pursuit for further reform and focus on winning the next election. For Cameron, this would have been a difficult choice to make because he had achieved more as leader than his predecessors between 1997-2005. Furthermore, to avoid his government becoming fixated on the issue of Britain leaving the European Union in 2016, Cameron resigned because it was an issue that he felt so strongly about, but also because he had planned to implement more reforms over the course of his term.

The two speeches made by Cameron at the Conservative party conferences of 2012 and 2014 show the impact Crosby had on the political language of Conservative policies and the influence he had in shaping events leading up to the 2015 election campaign. The two openings of the speeches show the influence of Crosby on the Conservative Party. In 2012 Cameron presented himself as a politician who was out of touch arguing that he needed ‘To mend a broken society’<sup>172</sup> when compared to 2014 we see a more emotional, conviction led approach to Cameron like that of Thatcher. ‘Duck the fight and our union could have been taken apart bit by bit. Take it on and we had the chance to settle the question.’<sup>173</sup> in this respect Lynton Crosby forced Cameron to acknowledge the ideological differences between the coalition partners. In his 2012 speech Cameron focused on international events such as the Queens Diamond Jubilee and the 2012 Olympics rather than the stresses of government. ‘My best moment was putting the gold medal around the neck of Ellie Simmonds’<sup>174</sup> it was important for Cameron to acknowledge the successes of the early years in coalition, the Olympics and Paralympics provided an opportunity for Cameron to challenge stereotypes and stigmas that had attached themselves to society, most notably the disabled. Reflecting upon his own personal tragedy, Cameron demonstrated the principles behind the big society. For he had witnessed the suffering and torment of his own son and believed that society saw the wheelchair and not the person, but the Paralympics opened society’s eyes and Cameron firmly believed that as a result of Britain successes, more people would ‘see the boy and not the wheelchair.’<sup>175</sup> Crosby ushered Cameron back to traditional Conservative values, ‘families come first. They are the way you make a nation strong from the inside out.’<sup>176</sup> Prior to Crosby the Conservative party and its leadership was disjointed it lacked a credible plan to ensure that it would win a majority at the next election. Cameron and Osborne had preferred to produce policy that they felt would move Britain into the twenty-first century, even if this

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<sup>172</sup> Cameron, David. ‘*Conservative Party Conference 2012 in Birmingham: Full transcript of David Cameron's speech.*’ Independent. 2012

<sup>173</sup> Cameron, David. ‘*Speech to Conservative Party Conference 2014.*’ Conservatives.com. 2014.

<sup>174</sup> Cameron, David. ‘*Conservative Party Conference 2012 in Birmingham: Full transcript of David Cameron's speech.*’ Independent. 2012

<sup>175</sup> IBID

<sup>176</sup> Cameron, David. ‘*Speech to Conservative Party Conference 2014.*’ Conservatives.com. 2014.

meant alienating some members of his own parliamentary party, and members of the local associations. It was important to move away from this style of governing, and Crosby showed in the 2014 leader's speech to the conference what the Conservative party strategy would be. The first would be to distance Cameron from the perception that he was open to the idea of another coalition government. Instead Cameron would forcefully state that he wanted 'to be back here in October 2015, delivering Conservative policies based on conservative values and leading a Conservative majority government.'<sup>177</sup> The second, Crosby needed to create the perception that the only way to ensure that the economy would continue to grow, unemployment would go down and Britain was safer was with a Conservative government. Labour have lost its economic credibility following the crash of 2008 and that they were willing to govern with the support of parties who had attempted to undermine and destroy the United Kingdom. By playing at people's fear, and presenting Cameron as the only leader fit to govern, Crosby reassured many core voters who had become disillusioned at Cameron's leadership.

From a political perspective, Crosby ensured that Cameron would not be undermined by members of his own party as previous leaders had been. Between 1997 to 2013 all leaders of the Conservative party had attempted to re-define the meaning of conservatism. Major had attempted to distance himself from his predecessor by returning 'to core values'<sup>178</sup> however the power vacuum that had been created following the downfall of Margaret Thatcher in 1990 meant major could not fulfil his ambitions. Subsequent leaders up until Cameron had also failed in their attempt to redefine the party's philosophy. It is evident that the reason why so many leaders failed to introduce reform and modernisation was due to the lack of support amongst local activists. They had become disillusioned and angered by the party leadership, firstly because the leadership had abandoned its neoliberal beliefs and secondly due to the push for a more centralised head office. The Conservative party had been the most successful political party in Britain during the twentieth century, it had always led Britain through times of great difficulty. The Conservative party that emerged after the landslide victory of Tony Blair in 1997 was a shadow of the party's former glory. Crosby pulled Cameron and the Conservative party away from the possibility of losing the 2015 general election and steered the party away from modernisation. Leading up to the general election, there were few references by Cameron to policies he had pursued in the early years of his leadership.

This hard-line approach that Cameron adopted, partially stemmed from the rise of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) between 2010-2015. The party had been founded to fight against Britain's membership of the European Union, and in 1997 UKIP argued that the 'majority of

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<sup>177</sup> *ibid*

<sup>178</sup> Wintour, Patrick. *'Major goes back to the old values'* Guardian. 1993.

the people of this country boycott its elections'<sup>179</sup> that the European Union ruled its member states by degree and was filled with corruption. The Conservative Party and its leaders had been torn over the issue of Europe, however Cameron's tough stance on Europe began when the Lisbon treaty was ratified by all twenty-seven member states. Cameron argued that 'Never again should it be possible for a British government to transfer power to the EU without the say of the British people.'<sup>180</sup> The Lisbon treaty<sup>181</sup> oversaw the creation of a European president and foreign minister and for many Conservatives this undermined the sovereignty of Parliament as Britain now answered to an unelected official in Brussels. Therefore, it was important for Cameron to show that under his leadership and if he were to lead the conservative party to victory he would ensure that there would be no more transfers of power between London and Brussels. On the other hand, Nigel Farage leader of UKIP highlighted the weaknesses of the Conservative Party stating that Cameron did not want to focus on the issue of Europe because 'it is a debate Cameron does not want because of the huge divisions within his own party on the issue due to the horror of the clear majority of Conservative party members who think about country before party'<sup>182</sup> this issue shows the complexity of the British political system. The Conservative Party and Labour had to present themselves as the party best fit to form the next government, parties such as UKIP did not have the same restraint. Thus, it meant they could focus on issues such as Europe and argue the benefits of the UK leaving the EU.

The first test UKIP presented to Cameron was at the 2009 European elections. The election results across Europe showed a trend that voters were leaning towards right wing parties. In Britain UKIP managed to finish as the second largest party winning 13 seats. The Guardian argued that the successes were due to voter's discontent at the 'expenses scandal'<sup>183</sup> and that people distrusted the main parties and that this success was because people were protesting the Westminster elite. However, Farage countered these arguments by stating that the party's performance had been enhanced because people 'agree with us that we should be friendly with Europe, trade with Europe, be good neighbours, but not have our laws made there.'<sup>184</sup> For Cameron the European elections should have been a jubilant occasion as he had lead the party to 26 seats at the European parliament twice the size of both UKIP and Labour, however the elections posed questions to the Conservative leader as to why so many conservative voters had defected to UKIP.

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<sup>179</sup> Sked, Alan. 'UKIP 1997 Manifesto.' 1997.

<sup>180</sup> Cameron, David. 'Speech on the EU.' BBC. 2013

<sup>181</sup> Lisbon-treaty.org. (2009). The Lisbon Treaty. [online] Available at: <http://www.lisbon-treaty.org/wcm/the-lisbon-treaty/>

<sup>182</sup> Farage, Nigel. 'Our future in Irish hands' Guardian. 2009.

<sup>183</sup> Whitehead, Tom. 'European elections 2009: Ukip claims political breakthrough' Guardian. 2009.

<sup>184</sup> IBID

The Conservative party had underestimated the power of UKIP in persuading voters to support their cause ‘many of the party's traditional supporters, who switched to UKIP in the European poll, will come back.’<sup>185</sup> It is evident that Cameron and Osborne had focused their efforts in winning the local election as they provided a clearer indicator into the national mood than the European elections. However, the leadership’s failure to address voters’ discontent with the European Union with policies aimed to shore up the vote would strengthen Nigel Farage’s influence in British politics in the years to come. In some respects, the European elections shows Cameron’s arrogance as leader, as he is presented with an opportunity to address an issue that had torn his party apart since John Major and he believes that the voters protest was merely down to their lack of trust in the mainstream political parties, rather than a growing euro-scepticism towards the European Union. Therefore, Seldon and Snow argue that Cameron allowed situations to grow out of control before stepping in is correct as Cameron allowed voters discontent over Europe to grow until he was left with no choice but to call a referendum on the issue. ‘The history is a well-documented one of aloofness, vetoes and opt-outs, with a political and media debate that has been largely negative’<sup>186</sup> the pragmatic relationship between Britain and the EU had become strained but Cameron would ultimately failed to connect the issue of Europe to a wider set of issues. There were a few reasons to call the referendum but it can be argued that it was an attempt to ease tensions that had grown between the coalition partners.

Cameron also faced opposition internally on the issue of Europe. Boris Johnson who would later play a pivotal role in the European referendum in 2016 once stated that ‘the Tory party was a vast organism animated by a few vague principles’<sup>187</sup> but when it came to the issue of Europe the party simply ‘never got over it’<sup>188</sup> Cameron suffered from constant interference from previous government ministers who wanted to argue both sides of the argument over Europe. One of the most notable was former Chancellor Nigel Lawson who argued that as early as 1989 it was obvious that the European Union was a ‘political and not an economic project’<sup>189</sup> which had been designed to create an integrated Europe. Former Conservative ministers, especially those who had served under Margaret Thatcher would have considerable influence over local activists and members it was important for Cameron to outline a clear Conservative policy over Europe and it is evident he failed. Cameron had spent his opposition opposing the Lisbon treaty and proposing a referendum for the future transfer of powers to Brussels but he believed in the economic benefits that being a member of the EU brought. Yet he understood that it would be a matter of time before he was forced to address the issue head on.

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<sup>185</sup> Pierce, Andrew. ‘European elections 2009: David Cameron's victory tempered by Ukip surge’ Telegraph. 2009.

<sup>186</sup> Oliver, Tim. ‘To be or not to be in Europe: is that the question? Britain's European question and an in/out referendum’ International affairs. 2015.

<sup>187</sup> Johnson, Boris. ‘The Essential: Lend Me Your Ears’. London. 2003

<sup>188</sup> Ibid p.181

<sup>189</sup> Lawson, Nigel. ‘Memoirs of a Tory Radical.’ London. 2010. P.267

During the coalition years it would have been unthinkable for Cameron to announce any policy that appeared to be euro-sceptic, considering his coalition partners the Liberal Democrats were a pro-European party. Early on in the coalition discussions it is evident that it was an issue that neither party was willing to give ground. William Hague described his coalition partners as willing to ‘sign up for anything that has ever been on offer or proposed from the European Union’<sup>190</sup> for the Liberal Democrats understood that the European Union had made pointless decisions such as the definition of chocolate but pointed out the cooperation that had been made on the financial sector, terrorism and crime as initiatives that kept Britain safer.

However, for Cameron and the Conservative party there were two major factions during his leadership. The first were members who wanted the EU to reform and secondly those who wanted to leave the EU. Scholars such as Simon Hix argue that the EU had ‘pretended that there is no politics in Brussels’<sup>191</sup> that the organisation worked through politically neutral institutions who wanted to ensure that all member states cooperated with one another. Yet Hix continues to argue that this was a charade as behind the photos of the head of states at the quarterly meeting of the European leaders, there was a ferocious political battle over how quickly the European Union should integrate. This is evident in the Conservative party firmly opposing Britain joining the euro when William Hague was leader stating that the ‘Labour government is taking us down the road to a European super state.’<sup>192</sup> So it can be argued that Cameron enabled UKIP to take arguments the Conservatives had been making for years. It had been assumed that when the Conservative came to power, although shared with the Liberal Democrats, the new government would take a harder line on immigration. ‘The pledge had been widely criticised as impossible to guarantee because of free movement rights within the EU’<sup>193</sup> and during the coalition immigration rose. Originally under the coalition agreement there was no cap on immigration, but the government did introduce a cap on non-EU migrants entering the country and ensuring that illegal immigrants were being stopped through tougher checks.

UKIP under Nigel Farage, had progressed from a fringe euro-sceptic party to a party who rode on the current of voters’ ‘distaste for the political establishment. Arguing that the only way Britain could reclaim control of its national borders was by leaving the EU.’<sup>194</sup> This message resonated with some members of the Conservative Party with two members of Parliament defecting to UKIP. Douglas Carswell attacked Cameron by arguing that the Prime Minister was not ‘serious about the

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<sup>190</sup> Beckford, Martin. ‘Nick Clegg defends Liberal Democrat stance on Europe’ Guardian. 2010.

<sup>191</sup> Hix, Simon. ‘What’s Wrong with the European Union and How to Fix It.’ Malden, 2008.

<sup>192</sup> Hague, William. ‘Party Conference Speech 2000’. 2000.

<sup>193</sup> Dennison, James. ‘Immigration, Issue Ownership and the Rise of UKIP’ Oxford. 2015.

<sup>194</sup> Giannangeli, M. ‘Britain to Face New Immigrant’, accessed at <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/366693/Britain-to-face-new-immigrant-wave>

change we need in Europe.’<sup>195</sup> Carswell reinforced the idea that under Cameron’s leadership there had been a schism between the leadership and the local associations. Carswell believed that the leadership were not on the side of its members and that the only way he could bring about attention was to leave. This provided a political headache for Cameron because defeat at the by-election was real. Cameron could not allow the euro-sceptics in his party and in the Commons, harden their rhetoric and calls for a referendum and renegotiation on Britain’s membership. He had just fought a bitter campaign to keep the Union together and now he was faced with a bye-election which would focus on the issue of Europe.

Under his leadership, Cameron had allowed the right-wing to grow and fixate the public on the notion that the European Union had failed in its attempt to bring about what they called a European ‘super state’ an economic and political Union. This rise in populist politics and the successes UKIP had made between 2009-2014 forced Cameron to address the issue head on. In January 2013 Cameron outlined his plan to hold a referendum on the status of Britain’s membership of the EU. It was time in Cameron’s opinion for the ‘British people to have their say’<sup>196</sup> Critics attacked the Prime Minister for giving in to UKIP, who had seen their momentum in the polls continue and Cameron could not rely on traditional Conservative voters returning to party at the general elections. It is at this point that Cameron’s conservative party became consumed once again over the issue of Europe and it would be unlikely that he would be able to continue his pursuit to modernisation without the support of a united party behind him. The government published the European Union referendum bill and it labelled out the timetable that the government would stick to if the Conservatives won an outright majority at the next election. ‘The Secretary of State shall by order, and before 31 December 2016, appoint the day on which the referendum is to be held.’<sup>197</sup>

One success of calling a referendum was that it gave the people the chance to voice their opinions on Britain’s membership of the European Union. However, some of the Westminster parties such as Labour and the Liberal Democrats refused to hold a referendum if they were to form the next government in 2015. This gave Cameron the opportunity to present himself and the party as the only option to guarantee the chance to vote on Europe. ‘Ed Miliband effectively ruled out a referendum on Britain’s membership of the EU today, pledging that he would only hold one in the “unlikely” event that Westminster had to transfer more powers to Brussels.’<sup>198</sup> This opened the divide amongst the political parties, Labour and the Liberal Democrats were pro-European parties and UKIP were the only united party who were strongly opposed to the EU. The Conservatives who had given a cast iron

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<sup>195</sup> Watson, Ian. ‘Tory MP Douglas Carswell defects to UKIP and forces by-election’ BBC. 2014.

<sup>196</sup> Watson, Ian. ‘David Cameron promises in/out referendum on EU’ BBC. 2013

<sup>197</sup> House of Commons. ‘European Union (Referendum) Bill’ London. 2013.

<sup>198</sup> Miliband, Edward. ‘EU referendum is ‘unlikely’ under Labour’ ITV. 2014.

guarantee on the referendum who were split over the issue. Cameron had willingly given his party the chance to address the issue of Europe he wanted the government's position to be to negotiate reforms and then vote to stay in but gave backbenchers the opportunity to choose which side of the campaign they wanted to be on. Even William Hague who had been a euro-sceptic during his tenure as leader argued that the UK should remain a leading figure with the European Union and that the country should wait to see what concessions David Cameron could get from his European counterparts.

During the course of the coalition Cameron had prioritised the coalition programme to bring about social change. This is evident in the final few months of the coalition, it had been heralded as 'a brave new departure for British politics'<sup>199</sup> although it had been the first coalition that had been formed with no party commanding the confidence of the House of Commons. Both Cameron and Clegg understood that they had placed their own reputations on the line to ensure that the coalition worked. There had been a number of successes such as the economy, same sex marriage and finally stability. Many had assumed that the coalition would not see its full tenure and that a two-party government was able to see its full term helped secure the economy.

This led Cameron into the campaign of 2015. Crosby had ensured that the party would keep to two main messages, first was that Cameron took the bold step to enter a coalition and that under his and Osborne's leadership the economy had turned around and if people did not credit the recovery to the government, then the electorate would not want to risk the recovery by casting a vote for Labour. Secondly that if there was no party managed to secure a majority the Scottish Nationalists would prop up a Labour government and hold it to ransom. The BBC labelled this as the 'ransom argument'<sup>200</sup> it used the rising English nationalism to undermine Labour's argument that it would be an effective Government. The Manifesto published by the Conservatives argued that Britain had been on the brink with the outgoing Labour government stating that 'there is no money.'<sup>201</sup> Cameron argued that his economic plan reflected the values of the Conservative party, that a government should not be passing unaffordable levels of debt to the next generation. The first phase was to reduce government spending by 'one percent each year in real terms'<sup>202</sup> over the first two years of the next parliament. This approach was like that taken by the Thatcher government in 1979 when they took over following the winter of discontent. It was evident that by promoting fiscal responsibility they would be able to push the budget towards a surplus by 2018-2019. This was the second stage of the Conservative economic

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<sup>199</sup> Lee, Simon. "How Has the UK's Coalition Government Performed?" 2015.

<sup>200</sup> Dymond, Jonny. 'Election result: How David Cameron's Conservatives won it' BBC. 2015.

<sup>201</sup> Cameron, David. 'Strong Leadership, A clear Economic Plan, A brighter, more secure future.' London. 2015.

<sup>202</sup> IBid

plan as it meant they could pay down the debt, and reducing the repayments on the interest. This would protect the economy from future economic vulnerabilities.

However, critics such as Nicola Sturgeon argued that the Conservatives had failed to bring about economic reform and built the economy on the foundations that had led to the economic crash. She attacked the 'most iniquitous policy since Thatcher's poll tax' and describes the PM as 'arrogant'.<sup>203</sup> It was believed that for three decades the economy had become unbalanced with the majority of the nation's wealth being made from the capital. 'Today our economy is heavily reliant on just a few industries and a few regions'<sup>204</sup> the UK had the highest economic imbalance amongst over European countries raising faster under the coalition government than it had under the Labour government. This economic failure reinforced the argument that the Conservative party only supported the wealthy and abandoned those in the remote regions of the country. This argument for economic efficiency focuses on the idea that economic national growth could be more sustainable if it benefited the whole country.

Osborne created the policy of the northern powerhouse. Between 2014-2015 the north grew faster than the south, the plan was for the treasury to invest '£13 billion pounds in transport'<sup>205</sup> for if the government could create a modern infrastructure they could increase the economic outputs of areas such as Newcastle and Manchester. The reason behind focusing on building a northern powerhouse was so the Conservatives could challenge Labour and potentially win enough swing seats to form a majority. Crosby ensured that Osborne reiterated that over the last year unemployment in the north had fell by 20 percent and that the government had done more than previous Labour governments in trying to secure the economic prosperity for the future. 'last autumn, across the political divide, we reached an absolutely ground-breaking devolution agreement with the elected leaders of Greater Manchester.'<sup>206</sup> By devolving powers and investing the Conservatives had hoped to see some gains politically. However, policies such as the northern powerhouse contradict Cameron's approach to leading his party, under the course of his government he had overseen the creation of elected police commissioners, mayors and guaranteed the concession of powers from Westminster to the devolved assemblies. Yet he had pushed for a more centralised central office who controlled the messages and campaigns rather than the local associations. It is apparent that Cameron during his time as leader and Prime Minister had his own unique style of governance. He presided over cabinet meetings like chairman of the board, allowing the departments to run themselves and reporting to him when he requested it. This decision to allow the departments to organise and run themselves ultimately led to the assumption that Cameron failed to understand the problems facing the UK.

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<sup>203</sup> : Green, C. (2015). Nicola Sturgeon has attacked the Tories over 'iniquitous' tax credit cuts. P.1

<sup>204</sup> Martin, Ron. '*Spatially Rebalancing the UK economy: the need for a new economic model.*' RSA. 2015.

<sup>205</sup> Cameron, David. 'Strong Leadership, A clear Economic Plan, A brighter, more secure future.' London. 2015.

<sup>206</sup> Osborne, George. '*Building a Northern Powerhouse*' HM Treasury. 2015.

It reinforces the perception that Cameron trusted his cabinet to fulfil their duties as the majority of speeches about the northern powerhouse had been made by the Chancellor and if we look back at policies such as the reorganisation of the NHS and the rise of University fees we see the secretary of education and health being the members giving the speeches and addressing the house during debates. The language of the manifesto also reinforces the idea that Cameron had simplified his message the first few chapters focus on the notion that the Conservatives had formed a government in the national interest rather than trying to form a minority government and achieve no change as a result. The Manifesto also focuses all major social reform through an economic perspective and uses Crosby's language as a way to reinforce the core vote but convince undecided voters to support Cameron. For example, the manifesto pledges to 'pass a new law so that nobody working 30 hours on the Minimum Wage pays Income Tax on what they earn'<sup>207</sup> Crosby argued that by highlighting that under Labour people had seen their taxes go into a welfare system that made it plausible for people to choose benefit over work, they could convince voters that only the Conservative party were committed to welfare reform and that Labour would merely let the issue spiral out of control and not tackle benefit fraud.

The 2015 election saw the return of statecraft, defined as the skill entailed in leading a country, mainly due to the influence of Crosby on Cameron and the party. For political historians, such as Seawright and Bale they argue that Cameron brought back the 'appetite for power'<sup>208</sup> within the party. For these historians statecraft is the methods on which the Conservatives seek to win back power. The coalition government showed that Cameron could govern the country competently and oversaw a stable government that brought about a number of social and economic reforms. There was one issue that Cameron faced a lot of criticism over was immigration. Cameron had pledged that during the coalition that the government would ensure that 'Net migration needs to come down radically from hundreds of thousands a year, to just tens of thousands.'<sup>209</sup> This pledge undermined Cameron's approach to modernisation because since 2007 Cameron had moved away from his reform agenda to rebalancing his political thought to traditional issues such as law and order, immigration and tax reform. As a result, Bale believed that this 'undermined Cameron's claims to have made a decisive shift'<sup>210</sup> to the centre ground of British politics. In real terms immigration leading up to the end of 2014 had risen up to '260,000 in the year ending June 2014, a statistically significant increase from

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<sup>207</sup> Cameron, David. 'Strong Leadership, A clear Economic Plan, A brighter, more secure future.' London. 2015.

<sup>208</sup> Heppell, Timothy and David Seawright, eds. *'Cameron and the Conservatives: The Transition to Coalition Government'*. Houndmills, 2012.

<sup>209</sup> Cameron, David. *'Speech on Immigration.'* London. 2013

<sup>210</sup> Bale, T. 'A bit less bunny-hugging and a bit more bunny-boiling'? Qualifying Conservative party change under David Cameron', *British Politics*. 2008. p279

182,000 in the previous 12 months.<sup>211</sup> The topic of immigration became a fierce topic of debate leading into the election with Labour reiterating Cameron's promise that if he failed to reduce net migration down to the tens of thousands the British public should 'vote us out.'<sup>212</sup> As a direct consequence of the fierce criticism from his political opponents and some aspects of the media such as the guardian, Cameron changed the language in the manifesto pledging that it was an ambition of the next Conservative government to 'delivering annual net migration in the tens of thousands, not the hundreds of thousands.'<sup>213</sup> They argued that they could achieve this by reforming welfare rules that affected controlled migration from the European Union and by clamping down on illegal immigration through a stronger border force. The Conservatives understood that if immigration is out of control it puts 'pressure on schools, hospitals and transport.'<sup>214</sup>

However, the public did not positively receive Cameron's argument on immigration because UKIP and Nigel Farage argued that the establishment had continually promised to reduce migration but regardless of political allegiance neither party was truly committed to immigration reform. UKIP argued that Cameron's promise had 'never been a genuine pledge'<sup>215</sup> because Britain's membership of the EU meant that they could not effectively stop EU migrants entering the country because all member states had signed up to the freedom of movement. It was important for the Conservatives during the campaign to separate the issue of immigration and Europe because they could not afford to be dragged into a debate that solely focused on the issue of Europe. Furthermore, the Conservatives had acted in lowering non-EU migration, the policy was 'designed to protect domestic workers from being undercut by foreign workers.'<sup>216</sup> For statistics, such as those from the migration observatory show that during the coalition immigration became one of the key issues that voters were concerned about. 'Majorities of respondents think that there are too many migrants, that fewer migrants should be let in to the country, and that legal restrictions on immigration should be tighter.'<sup>217</sup> It was an issue that Cameron could not afford to be perceived as weak with the rise of UKIP and the growing calls for a quick referendum.

Although Cameron had set in motion the referendum on Britain's membership they could not deviate from the core message on the economy and the possibility of a Labour-SNP alliance demolishing all the successes the coalition had made. Snow and Seldon argued that the party could

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<sup>211</sup> Nash, Andrew. *'Migration Statistics Quarterly Report: November 2014'* 2014.

<sup>212</sup> Silvera, Ian. *'Prime Minister's Questions: Miliband attacks Cameron over 'broken' immigration promise'* International Business times. 2014.

<sup>213</sup> Cameron, David. *'Strong Leadership, A clear Economic Plan, A brighter, more secure future.'* London. 2015.

<sup>214</sup> IBID

<sup>215</sup> BBC. *'Cameron accused of 'total failure' on immigration'* BBC.2014.

<sup>216</sup> Dathan, Matt. *'David Cameron announces new crackdown on non-EU immigration'* Independent. 2015.

<sup>217</sup> Blinder, Scott. *'UK Public Opinion toward Immigration: Overall Attitudes and Level of Concern'* Migration Observatory. 2016.

not understand the reason why the polls had not supported the reports the leadership were getting from the ground. 'We are getting such a good sense on the ground,'<sup>218</sup> however pollsters suggested that Cameron had been failing to get his message across to the voters, through flat speeches and the failure to answer questions, this resulted in the perception that Cameron did not care for the average voter and did not fight for the causes that affected the clear majority of the electorate such as the NHS, benefits, social mobility, the minimum wage and other social issues.

Vinen argues these failures from a philosophical standpoint, dating back to the governments of Thatcher stating that neo-liberalism was born out of a 'relative decline rather than about the extent to which people enjoyed the fruits of prosperity.'<sup>219</sup> Therefore Cameron would struggle to be perceived as sincere on these issues of social change because the Conservative economic policy was like the economic policies that had been undertaken by previous Conservative governments. It is at this point that Crosby changes the perception of the campaign, if the party could not convince the electorate that their policies would cement the economic recovery, the campaign shifted their attention to making the electorate see Cameron as the best choice for Prime Minister and comparing Cameron to Ed Miliband. Bale argues that Labour had an opportunity to win the 2015 election, the Conservative campaign had focused in reinforcing the idea that the economic crash in 2008 was Labour's fault and that they had failed to move on from their failed economic policies. This is similar to what happened to the Conservatives after the election in 1997, because Labour argued that they destroyed the myth that the Conservatives had a golden economic legacy. Yet Bale states that Labour had a chance at electoral success due in part to the political beliefs of most British voters the 'bulk of the electorate remains socially authoritarian and economically on the centre left.'<sup>220</sup>

Another way in which Cameron could convince voters that the Conservative party would build on the successes of the coalition years was through televised debates. The televised debates had been a success during the 2010 election as it allowed the Liberal Democrats to stand against the two main parties of British politics and it can be inferred that the televised debates helped the Liberal Democrats gain national exposure even if Clegg's performances had not translated into a gain in the number of seats in the House of Commons. The 2015 debates took a different structure to those that took place in 2010, there was a seven party debate between all the parties that held seats in the commons, Cameron against Miliband and finally a one to one interview with Jeremy Paxman. The Independent argued that Cameron had 'stuck rigidly to the Conservative party election play book'<sup>221</sup> and that this was apparent in all three of Cameron's televised appearances. Crosby and Tory

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<sup>218</sup> Seldon, Anthony and Peter Snowdon. 'Cameron at 10: The Inside Story 2010-2015', 2015 p. 285

<sup>219</sup> Vinen, Richard. '*Thatcher's Britain: The Politics and Social Upheaval of the Thatcher Era.*' London, 2010.

<sup>220</sup> Bale, Tim. '*The Conservative Party: From Thatcher to Cameron*' 2011'. p413

<sup>221</sup> Wraight, Oliver. '*General Election TV debates: How each leader performed in the ITV discussion*' ITV. 2015

strategists would have been happy that Cameron had continued to highlight the dangers Labour posed to the economy and that the only way to ensure sustainable economic growth was to vote for the Conservative Party. However, claims that Cameron had looked disinterested and passive continued to undermine the campaign. In his interview with Paxman Cameron had been labelled as ‘running away from his record’ on food banks and zero hour contracts. Cameron had become entrenched in a negative campaign it appeared as if he could not outline his vision for Britain if it were to elect a Conservative government. One aspect he drew fierce criticism was his inability to specify where the £10 billion of cuts were going to take place.

After weeks of campaigning and the possibility of a second hung parliament, the British voters went to the polls on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2015. Cameron had spent the whole campaign appealing to voters with a simple message that the only party fit to govern was the Conservative party and that Labour had abandoned its golden economic legacy and refused to accept responsibility for the crash of 2008. English nationalism also played a role in this election with the Conservatives playing on the fears that the SNP would prop up a Labour minority government in return for special privileges. Conservative strategists had hope for a tally of around 290 seats and were amazed that the party managed to win an outright majority. It is important to note that this was largely due to the influence of Crosby who upon arrival in 2013, organised the party to adhere to a strict message that it would not deviate from. Secondly he ended the hopes of the Conservative Party modernising under David Cameron, he had witnessed the chaos that had ensured within the party whilst the gay marriage act was being pushed through parliament and even if he supported gay marriage he did not want to present the image that the party had remained fractured.

Yet the Guardian said that the decision to run a negative campaign had a direct impact on the outcome stating that ‘the result was a vindication.’<sup>222</sup> It is obvious that Cameron entered his second term with great enthusiasm and belief that the first Conservative majority government since Major could build on the successes that had been made during the coalition years. However, Cameron would not see out his second term as Prime Minister, a year after winning the election Cameron oversaw the biggest split within the Conservative Party since the split over protectionism in the early twentieth century. Once again the party had open debate over the issue of Europe which saw notable resignations from the Cabinet and the breakup of Cameron’s leadership team with Ian Duncan Smith, Boris Johnson and Michael Gove opposing the Prime Minister on the issue. Cameron had been criticised for running a negative campaign on Europe and this backfired when fifty-two percent of the electorate voted to leave the European Union. Commentators such as Jeremy Paxman criticise Cameron for allowing the referendum to take place because in his opinion Cameron had put party

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<sup>222</sup> White, Michael. ‘British PM David Cameron confounds polls to win second term.’ Guardian. 2015.

over country stating ‘You look at the Brexit referendum - what Cameron did was to put the interests of his party above the interests of his country and that seems to me to be well-nigh unforgivable.’<sup>223</sup> Upon realising that he had lost in his bid to introduce meaningful reform to the EU, Cameron resigned as Prime Minister stating that ‘the British people made a different decision to take a different path. As such I think the country requires fresh leadership to take it in this direction,’ Cameron said.<sup>224</sup>

Analysing Cameron’s eleven-year leadership it is apparent that he assumed the position believing that the party needed to modernise and reform if it was to win the election in 2010. Cameron’s years in opposition showed that this remained a key goal with reforms and policies that did not focus on traditional Conservative issues most notably social reform and the NHS. It is evident that after the economic crash Cameron moved away from modernisation and focused on securing the economic recovery and taking tough decisions knowing that there could be consequences, such as the rise in tuition fees to fill the black hole in the public finances, cutting the number of public service workers and cutting back government spending. However, the argument for modernisation within the Conservative party effectively ended when Cameron hired Lynton Crosby to run his campaign. Lynton understood the importance of convincing the core voters that the party understood their traditional values and ran campaign that effectively portrayed the opposition as weak and indecisive when it came to the big issues. Cameron achieved many successes as Prime Minister most notably the passing of the gay marriage act but it came at a price, by the end of his leadership it appeared that Cameron was facing open rebellions within his party over Europe and that he could no longer control all the factions within his party. His resignation can be seen as Cameron giving up after 11 years of hard work but it can be inferred and will be suggested that Cameron did want his premiership to be overwhelmed over the issue of Brexit, he had planned for further social reforms but felt that he could not get these laws through the House of Commons until the government evoked article 50.

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<sup>223</sup> Blewett, Sam. ‘Unforgivable’ David Cameron put Tory interests first with referendum, says Jeremy Paxman’ Independent. 2016.

<sup>224</sup> Cameron, David. ‘David Cameron resigns after UK votes to leave European Union’ Guardian. 2016.

## **Conclusion.**

The premature resignation, following the decision by the British public to leave the European Union brought an end to the Conservative Party's pursuit for modernisation. His successor Theresa May has distanced herself from her predecessor's legacy and has shifted focus towards the negotiations with the commission and bringing together the divided nation. The purpose of this dissertation was to examine the extent the Conservative Party had modernised, throughout the years in opposition, the coalition years and finally the surprise majority in 2015. It is evident that, during this period, the party was divided between neo-liberal Conservatives, who follow the ideology of Thatcher and those who align themselves with compassionate conservatism which developed at the end of the twentieth century in the USA and was taken up by leaders like Hague and Cameron. It demonstrated the balancing act a leader had to face in order to survive in the post, as they could no longer rely on the support of the Party's grandees. By the mid 2000's the Party's head office distanced itself from the associations through centralised policies, that a leader had to rely on the power of language to enhance the chance of winning general elections.

It was the leadership of Hague that paved the way for the modernisation within the Conservative and it was his internal reforms help secure the leadership of future leaders such as Cameron. Hague understood that the party had become divided and that it had become complacent whilst in government, he began to pursue policies that appealed to outside the Conservative base but ultimately reverted to the base once it became apparent that he would not win the 2001 election. It can be argued that if Hague had followed Duncan Smith then perhaps the party would have done better in the 2005 election. The changing role of the leader had developed whilst in opposition, previous leaders had always been prepared for their role in government but the message had become stale leading up to the 1997 election. The leader needed to become a messenger for the party, between 1997-2005 it is apparent that the Party struggled to get its message across to the public. This was partly due to the effective governance of the country by New Labour. This was not the only factor, as Hague and Smith could not present the modernisation as nothing more than the party attempting to rebrand after having face the embarrassing defeat at the polls.

Much of this dissertation focused on the leadership of Cameron, he would spend 10 years at the helm of the party and it is evident in his early years that he was committed to the goal of modernisation. While he was outspoken in his early years to campaigns such as the environment, Cameron would later be punished for pursuing modern policies. His pursuit for gay marriage created conflict within the Party and his unwillingness to engage with the local associations meant that Cameron had left himself politically isolated. It would only take one failure and in Cameron's case the defeat in the referendum to ultimately erode the trust between the leader and the party. As mentioned, in the early years Cameron pushed his modern agenda, this is evident in policies such as the big

society and although this policy was not considered a success and Cameron would be ridiculed for the policy it shows that he wanted to be the man who led the Conservatives back into government. The opposition years did not offer much in policy because the successes of New Labour meant that the Conservative leadership was constantly changing their policy to present themselves as an alternative government. It is during the coalition years that policies reflect Cameron's desire to modernise, the gay marriage act, the Scottish and European referendum showed that Cameron listened to the concerns of the public, although critics would argue that he was merely pursuing these policies to enhance his political capital and ensuring that the coalition would see out its full term.

Yet the decision to hire Crosby spelt the end for the pursuit of modernisation. Crosby understood that if the Conservatives had a slim chance of securing a majority government in 2015 they would have to focus the campaign on key messages. First was the issue of the economy, the Conservatives had lost the trust of the public following Black Wednesday. This coupled with New Labour's effective management of the economy meant that the Conservatives had lost a key election issue to their opponents. Only when the economic crash of 2008 occurred were the Conservatives able to undermine the government and create the theory that it was Labour's overspending that caused the recession. This would be crucial in Cameron being able to secure the largest percentage of the vote in 2010, although it did not bring about a majority government it did allow the Conservatives to return into government as the largest partner of the coalition. The partnership Cameron had with the Chancellor George Osborne would be crucial in preventing New Labour from focusing on issues such as inequality and cuts to public services as the Conservatives message was that these were decisions that had to be made in light of the circumstances that they inherited a weak economy and tough decisions had to be made to see a return to economic growth.

Secondly the Conservatives constructed the narrative that Labour would form a coalition with the Scottish Nationalists. Crosby drilled into the leadership that this would undermine Cameron, especially after the hard-fought independence campaign as Labour would have to compromise in order to form a government and that the Conservatives and the public would not want to risk a second independence referendum. This was known as the 'dog-whistle' approach that Crosby had used to lethal effect in the Australian federal election in 2005, the language of the campaign needed to focus on the negatives of their opponents and in this case, it would be the prospect of a Labour-SNP coalition. This reinforced the dissertation's theory that the messenger and the message were intertwined as Labour after Blair had lost its way, in a similar fashion the Conservatives had after the resignation of Margaret Thatcher in 1990. Over the course of his leadership Cameron had focused on his modernisation agenda, and Labour had become complacent in government, the weak opposition meant that Cameron would be able to bring about social reforms. Early into the coalition there had

been some social successes but Cameron was unable to present them in a positive fashion to the public.

Cameron would ultimately be brought down by his desire to listen to the will of the people when on the 23 June the UK voted to leave the EU. The leadership of Cameron will be associated with this decision and it has impacted the early premiership of Theresa May his successor. She has distanced herself from his premiership by removing key figures within the cabinet such as Osborne and replaced them with her allies. It is evident that the Conservative Party has abandoned its plans to modernise whilst it is in government and with a weak opposition it will be interesting to see the changes the party will make, or if it will be like the premiership of Thatcher who led the Conservative to three consecutive victories in the 1980's. These victories were based on liberal economics but Conservative social policies, ideas that Tony Judt argued were the responsibility of a state to protect a nation's culture. He stated 'We are obsessed with money and have lost any sense of community. In the 30 years following the Second World War, there was a widespread belief that the state could do a better job than the unregulated market'<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> Judt, Tony. *Ill Fares the Land*. Newstatesman.com. (2010).

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