

Preparing for Power: Margaret Thatcher as Leader of the Opposition

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Abstract

This thesis attempts to explore Margaret Thatcher's years as Leader of the Opposition, by examining how this period helped to shape her as a credible leader and future Prime Minister. Specifically, this research analyses the idea of 'soft power', demonstrating that domestic and foreign politics are essentially the same thing - the global economy and the internationalization of politics was seen to be of great significance during the mid-late 1970s. The impact of economic declinism will also be assessed: post-1945 Britain enjoyed relative prosperity up until the late sixties, but then stalled during the seventies under the leadership of Edward Heath. Thus, this research seeks to uncover how 'real' declinism during this period actually was. Additionally, this thesis will examine the policymaking process that took place within the Conservative Party between 1975 and 1979, assessing how far the role of neo-liberal economic ideas played a part in the Party's economic design. Lastly, this thesis will analyse the impact of the General Election of 1979, asking whether this was won by chance or design.

Using manuscript sources from the UK National Archives and the Margaret Thatcher Foundation, as well as oral interviews, this thesis will conclude that the ideology of Thatcherism is far more complex than previously thought. By exploring Thatcher's visits abroad as Leader of the Opposition, as well as the themes of policymaking, gender and the role that chance plays in politics, this thesis will demonstrate that, rather than being a specific, logical ideology, Thatcherism was actually both distinct and complex, involving compromises between a mix of different thoughts, perspectives and approaches that came together as one.

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I

Introduction

In an interview conducted as part of the research for this thesis, Peter Jay (British Ambassador to the US, 1977-79, who was also James Callaghan's son-in-law), recalled an event with the then Leader of the Opposition, Margaret Thatcher, at his US residence in 1977:

Thatcher got into a furious argument in my drawing room with the British press, who tried to tell her how superior they considered the American press briefing system compared to the Downing Street system of "off-the-record" lobby briefings. She became fiercely defensive of "our system" and finally stormed out. As her official host, I followed her out to one of my libraries, whereby I found her on her knees in a storm of angry tears. I quickly tried to soothe her with a Gin & Tonic. I remember being very surprised at how incredibly fragile she appeared to be at this stage in opposition.¹

According to Neil Kinnock (Leader of the Labour Party, 1983-1992), the position of Leader of the Opposition, 'can be hell... but the lessons you learn while you're there

¹ Interview with Peter Jay, 6 May 2019.

are hugely important'.² While there were clearly times when the role took its toll on Thatcher, the job has also proved testing for other more recent Leaders of the Opposition, for instance, Ed Miliband (Leader of the Labour Party, 2010-2015), who, in 2014, locked himself in a hotel room after forgetting to mention the UK's deficit – the most significant issue that had arisen in Parliament for the previous four years. 'He was off his game,' an advisor recalled. 'He was really upset. He pushes himself very hard – he was very, very angry with himself.'³ Although leading the government's Official Opposition has its challenges, especially to an individual who has been newly elected into the position, it is crucial to the learning, evolution and making of a future Prime Minister, as was the case for Margaret Thatcher.

As a result of her time in office, academics researching Thatcher's legacy have largely focused on her work and achievements as Prime Minister, for instance, her close relationship with President Ronald Reagan, particularly in their partnership as Cold Warriors who together marked a reheating of the Cold War and the advent of the New Right.⁴ However, aside from analysing the domestic history of Conservatism, in order to gain a clearer understanding of Thatcherism there is now an emergent revisionist way of looking at Thatcher through her years as Leader of the Opposition.⁵ At present, there is no comprehensive study of Thatcher as Opposition Leader, which

² Andrew Sparrow, "Kinnock warns Labour against self-conflicted wounds," 13 January 2010, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/blog/2010/jan/13/kinnock-warns-labour-self-inflicted-wounds> (accessed 2/4/2020).

³ Patrick Wintour, "The Undoing of Ed Miliband – and how Labour lost the election," *The Guardian*, 3 June 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/jun/03/undoing-of-ed-miliband-and-how-labour-lost-election> (accessed 2/4/2020).

⁴ For more on the Reagan-Thatcher relationship see, for instance: James Cooper, *Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan: A Very Political Special Relationship* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Richard Aldous, *Reagan & Thatcher: The Difficult Relationship* (London: Arrow Books, 2012).

⁵ See, for instance: Timothy Heppell (ed.), *Leaders of the Opposition from Churchill to Cameron* (London: Macmillan, 2012); Grégoire Webber, "Loyal opposition and the political constitution," *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies* 37 (2017): 357-382.

is surprising given that this area reveals a great deal about the development of her political awareness as a relatively inexperienced politician. Indeed, aside from her tenure as Secretary of State for Education and Science (1970-74), Thatcher possessed no major experience in government or any obvious gravitas in foreign affairs. Nevertheless, after 1975 she was seeking to become Prime Minister. This thesis seeks to demonstrate how essential the process of learning was to Thatcher in her position as Leader of the Opposition, for instance, how she was influenced and guided by a group of senior mentors and experienced Cabinet Conservatives, and continuously briefed by think tanks and academic advisors who collectively assisted in preparing her for office. During these years Thatcher also utilized trips abroad in order to widen her political experience, an important factor in her preparation for power, which has so far been relatively unexplored. Given the briefings and polishing that went on between 1975 and 1979, it is clear that the Thatcher Opposition were meticulous in orchestrating and planning their quest to hold office. This research explores this period and reveals much about the fragility and vulnerability of Thatcher during her early years as Leader of the Opposition - a new dimension of the woman who eventually became the 'Iron Lady' of the 1980s.

Aim of this research

There are a number of academics currently exploring aspects of Thatcher's opposition years, which demonstrates that there is a great deal of interest in this field. For example, Hugh Pemberton, James Freeman and Aled Davies have reassessed the nature of Thatcherism itself, and argue that Thatcher's socio-economic agenda during

the late 1970s was a ‘dynamic, agile, political project’ shaped by (though not entirely composed of), neoliberal ideas and intellectual traditions.⁶ Similarly, Dean Blackburn has recently researched ‘middle-way’ Conservatism, using the influence of key intellectuals as a way of explaining Thatcher’s New Right economic approach.⁷ While Thatcher’s domestic approach as Leader of the Opposition has been researched widely, her visits abroad during these years have remained largely unexplored, enjoying fleeting references in biographical studies and historical works about Thatcherism.⁸ The only studies that have specifically focused on this topic are Giles Scott-Smith in “‘Her Rather Ambitious Washington Program’: Margaret Thatcher’s International Visitor Program Visit to the United States in 1967’, and James Cooper’s article, ‘The Foreign Politics of Opposition: Margaret Thatcher and the Transatlantic Relationship before Power’, which explores Thatcher’s visit to the United States in 1975.⁹

Concerning foreign policy questions during this period, the historiography of this topic is dominated by the domestic policies and foreign politics of the United States, however, the United Kingdom warrants further attention given that there is

⁶ Aled Davies, James Freeman and Hugh Pemberton, “‘Everyman a Capitalist’ or ‘Free to Choose’? Exploring the tensions within Thatcherite Individualism,” *The Historical Journal* (2017): 1-25. Davies, Freeman and Pemberton are currently working on an AHRC-funded project that analyses the impact of Thatcher’s pension reforms during the 1980s. See: [https://research-information.bristol.ac.uk/en/projects/the-thatcherite-pension-reforms\(7864a977-11fb-4ea5-ac78-5f0fb4d253ad\).html](https://research-information.bristol.ac.uk/en/projects/the-thatcherite-pension-reforms(7864a977-11fb-4ea5-ac78-5f0fb4d253ad).html).

⁷ Dean Blackburn, “Reassessing Britain’s ‘Post-war consensus’: the politics of reason 1945–1979,” *British Politics* 13:2 (2017): 195-214.

⁸ For example: Charles Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: The Authorized Biography: Volume One: Not For Turning* (London: Penguin, 2013); Jonathan Aitken, *Margaret Thatcher: Power and Personality* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

⁹ Giles Scott-Smith, “‘Her Rather Ambitious Washington Program’: Margaret Thatcher’s International Visitor Program Visit to the United States in 1967,” *Contemporary British History* 17 (2003): 65-86; James Cooper, “The Foreign Politics of Opposition: Margaret Thatcher and the Transatlantic Relationship before Power,” *Contemporary British History* 24 (2010): 23-42.

limited available material on the British case.¹⁰ In line with the international aspect of this thesis, Martin Farr is also concerned with the internationalization of Thatcherism and will be releasing his work in the forthcoming book, *Margaret Thatcher's World*, due to be published in 2021. Within this field, this research serves as a unique and distinctive addition to the historiographical debate about the relationship between domestic politics and foreign policy, as well as the emerging historiography of Opposition.¹¹

Historiography

The literature within the field of Thatcherism is extensive, including works by biographers, historians, political scientists, and studies on the Conservative Party's evolution throughout the twentieth century. Early works on Thatcherism initially began by focusing on its most evident impacts on Conservatism nationally and by analysing British domestic policies, as well as social and economic change.¹² However, in recent years Thatcher scholarship has evolved considerably due to the distance of time and the new perspectives lent by new political conjunctures and

¹⁰ For more on the British historiography see, for instance: Nicholas Crowson, *The Conservative Party and European Integration since 1945: At the Heart of Europe?* (London: Routledge, 2006).

¹¹ For recent examples on the relationship between foreign policy and domestic politics see, for instance: Julian Zelizer, *Arsenals of Democracy: The Politics of National Security – from World War II to the War on Terrorism* (New York: Basic Books, 2010); Thomas Schwartz, “‘Henry,... Winning an Election Is Terribly Important’: Partisan Politics in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations,” *Diplomatic History* 33 (2009): 173-190; Campbell Craig and Fredrik Logevall, *America's Cold War: The Politics of Insecurity* (Cambridge and Mass: Harvard University Press, 2009); Dominic Sandbrook, “Salesmanship and Substance: The Influence of Domestic Policy and Watergate,” in *Nixon in the World: American Foreign Relations, 1969-1977*, ed. Andrew Preston and Fredrik Logevall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 85-106; Jussi Hanhimäki, “Global Visions and Parochial Politics: the Persistent Dilemma of the American Century,” *Diplomatic History* 27 (2003): 423-447; Alexander DeConde, *Ethnicity, Race, and American Foreign Policy* (Boston and Mass: Northeastern University Press, 1992).

¹² For more on this see, for instance: Adrian Williamson, *Conservative Economic Policymaking and the Birth of Thatcherism, 1964-1979* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2016); Eric Caines, *Heath and Thatcher in Opposition* (London: Macmillan, 2017).

dynamics. The publication of new material on Thatcher's legacy over recent years has enabled researchers to connect the internationalization of foreign and domestic agendas on a global scale, linking the foreign policies of various countries to other respective agendas.¹³ Such material has enabled researchers to connect Conservative policies with other countries, shedding new light on the relationship between foreign and domestic politics in the global context.¹⁴ Views of the period from 1976-1989 have also evolved due to the changing contemporary political/economic scene. Since there is now more information available for researchers to analyse, historians have capitalized on the opportunity to deploy new information, which has led to a growth in the development of literature concerning Thatcherism. Indeed, some politicians in the modern age have adopted elements of Thatcher's ideology, keeping her political rhetoric in the present.

The purpose of this chapter is to assess the previous literature on Thatcherism, and to evaluate how far Thatcher's position as Leader of the Opposition helped to shape a new political agenda for Conservative thinking. The argument of this thesis will also be situated among previous works, by demonstrating how Thatcher's years in opposition helped to shape her political vision and strategy. As has often been the case for newly elected leaders, Thatcher did not have long to form a credible

¹³ The key texts in this area include: Shirley Letwin, *The Anatomy of Thatcherism* (USA: Fontana, 1992); Richard Vinen, *Thatcher's Britain: The Politics and Social Upheaval of the Thatcher Era* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2009); John MacInnes, *Thatcherism at Work: Industrial Relations and Economic Change* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1987); Martin Holmes, *Thatcherism: Scope and Limits, 1983-87* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989); E. H. H. Green, *Ideologies of Conservatism: Conservative Political Ideas in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Kenneth Minogue and Michael Biddiss (eds), *Thatcherism: Personality and Politics* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987); Dennis Kavanagh, *Thatcherism and British Politics: The End of Consensus?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987); John Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher: Volume One: The Grocer's Daughter* (London: Vintage, 2011).

¹⁴ The greatest resource for historians researching Thatcher's career can be found at *The Thatcher Papers*, held at Churchill College in Cambridge:
<https://www.chu.cam.ac.uk/archives/collections/thatcher-papers>.

Opposition team. Between 1975 and 1979, she was shaped by an insightful team of colleagues and outside advisers, who significantly revitalized Conservative Party policy (this will be explored in depth in Chapter Four of this thesis). This research contributes to the historiography of Thatcherism by focusing on an element that has been overlooked by academics researching the Thatcher years: her considerable political inexperience and naivety when she first took up the Conservative leadership in 1975.

In light of her underdeveloped political awareness, this thesis will demonstrate how Thatcher utilized visits abroad during her time as Opposition Leader, using the international stage as a way of expressing her political vision and promoting herself as a Prime Minister-in-waiting. Later chapters of this thesis will assess how themes such as gender, class, electoral campaigning and new media techniques came into play, eventually enabling Thatcher to emerge as a credible Prime Minister in 1979. In doing so, this research will open up a new way of looking at 'Opposition' through the use of oral history (among those willing to be interviewed), and new sources that have emerged over the passage of time following Thatcher's premiership, especially those concerning the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO), who, contrary to popular belief, were interested in her and wanted to work closely with her as Leader of the Opposition. This thesis explores Thatcher as a learner and a policy actor (not as the PM of the 1980s) - someone who gained much from the rich experience she learned as Leader of the Opposition, someone who begins as a fragile figure, far from the persona she projected by the late 1980s. Thus, the role of Leader of the Opposition was critical to the development of Thatcher as a politician. Her learning via visits abroad and her understanding of policy construction was needed in order for her to

emerge as a successful Opposition Leader, one who would one day be in the position to credibly challenge for Office.

In terms of the current literature concerning opposition studies, Grégoire Webber has explored the relative neglect of Official Opposition parties in public law thought, and has sought to rehabilitate the place of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition in political and constitutional theory.¹⁵ Essentially, Webber argues that the government's Official Opposition is a 'critical function' of parliament, which is 'channelled, facilitated, and complicated by its pursuit of office'.¹⁶ Similarly, Nigel Fletcher has explored how significant the period of opposition is to a political party looking to gain power, and considers the challenges and difficulties that are involved in holding government to account, while forming a new and successful policy programme.¹⁷ From a different perspective, Peter Bull has analysed whether Parliament's weekly Prime Minister's Questions serve a function beyond 'political point scoring and one-upmanship'.¹⁸ He concludes that PMQs serves as 'a unique degree of political accountability', whereby the Prime Minister can be challenged by the Leader of the Opposition, which plays an important role in bringing the government to political accountability.¹⁹

¹⁵ Webber, "Loyal opposition and the political constitution," 357-382. See, also: Ashley Lavelle, *Opposition vanishing: The Australian Labor Party and the crisis in elite politics* (New York: Springer, 2018).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 357.

¹⁷ Nigel Fletcher (ed.), *How to be in Opposition: Life in the political shadows* (London: Biteback, 2011).

¹⁸ Peter Bull, "The role of adversarial discourse in political opposition: Prime Minister's questions and the British phone-hacking scandal," *Language and Dialogue* 3:2 (2013): 254-72.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 269.

Another historian who has demonstrated that Opposition is a significant and emerging field is Phil Begley, who has explored the Conservatives in Opposition from a policymaking perspective. In his book, *The Making of Thatcherism: The Conservative Party in Opposition: 1974-1979*, he considers the development of Conservative policymaking during these years, and urges that, in order to understand the political period of the seventies, one must explore short-term political contexts, arguing that Conservative policymaking did not change as much as some have suggested.²⁰ Given that the government's Official Opposition is essential to the functioning of an effective parliament, it is crucial to explore Thatcher's years as Leader of the Opposition in greater detail, since they not only reveal how Conservative policy was shaped between 1975 and 1979, enabling the Party to effectively regain power, but they also demonstrate how Thatcher herself evolved as a politician.

Given the scope of British politics in the twenty-first century and the great controversies of the time, including those of the 1980s, the historiography of Thatcherism is framed around a very ideologically charged, polarizing view of Thatcher and of her politics. Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki and Steve Smith demonstrate that there is debate among historians and social scientists when it comes to assessing the political nature of the 1970s, given that there is inevitably disagreement between theoretical and empirical perspectives when it comes to assessing Thatcher's political agenda during the decade.²¹ The historian Richard Vinen observes that the term 'Thatcherism' was widely used in a 'flippant' context before 1979, however, he

²⁰ Phil Begley, *The Making of Thatcherism: The Conservative Party in Opposition: 1974-1979* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020).

²¹ Tim Dunne (ed.), *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*, revised edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 16.

argues that the term was not a 'platonic absolute of ideological purity' that dismissed past political ideologies.²² Similarly, Eric Evans views Thatcherism as 'a series of interconnected political attitudes' possessing 'no new insights', which thus did not represent a coherent ideology.²³ John MacInnes has argued that the term 'represents the recrudescence of fundamental forces in British economy and society, which date back to at least the eighteenth century', stressing that there was nothing new about the politics of Thatcherism and that it was 'certainly not a cure for the British disease'.²⁴ Instead, for MacInnes, rather than offering a new ideology, Thatcherism was 'the latest manifestation of the disease itself', and 'an attempt to preserve an older one riddled by economic weakness from attempts to reform and modernize it'.²⁵

However, historians on the Right argue that the emergence of Thatcherism did unveil a new political ideology, and while it was never a single set of plans, it did form a coherent worldview. For instance, Martin Holmes argues that Thatcherism 'does depart radically from the post-war consensus in a way that Mr Heath's Selsdon Man never did, or Mr Callaghan's monetarist experiment didn't'.²⁶ Following this view, Samuel Finer believes that Thatcher 'introduced a wholly new economic theory and practice and pursued them with obduracy and consistence', highlighting that the actual practice of Thatcherism does represent a 'radical ideology'.²⁷ These differences are understandable, even inevitable. Every political ideology is complex to a certain extent, bringing different views and approaches to bear on any problem. Thatcherism

²² Vinen, *Thatcher's Britain*, 4.

²³ Eric Evans, *Thatcher and Thatcherism* (London: Routledge, 2013), 2.

²⁴ MacInnes, *Thatcherism at Work*, 6.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁶ Holmes, *Thatcherism*, 8.

²⁷ Minogue and Biddiss, *Thatcherism: Personality and Politics*, 17.

is no different to ‘neoliberalism’ or ‘social democracy’ from this perspective, and inevitably political terms continue to be reconsidered in the modern age.

Aside from the two different standpoints that view Thatcherite ideas from a praise/blame perspective, the nuances of Thatcherism need to be analysed in further detail in order to highlight new dimensions. This research seeks to demonstrate that, contrary to the views of some academics on the Left, Thatcher as an individual was actually very sophisticated and pragmatic, not a driven, ideologically motivated politician. In attempting to understand the roots of Thatcherism, E.H.H. Green has demonstrated how the term has long divided academics. Green observes that there has been limited material written on Conservative ideas during the twentieth century, given that some historians have tended to think of the Party as ‘a political institution’, instead of focusing on how Tory ideas were received by the electorate.²⁸

Past political scientists and philosophers argue that Thatcherism cannot be seen as a single, internally consistent, even ‘simple’ ideology, and have instead assessed it via ‘the logic of the situation it faced’, rather than through an analysis of party policy.²⁹ Such views are seen in the work of Dennis Kavanagh, a political scientist who argues that a shift in the political climate between 1960 and 1980 reshaped policy within Labour as well as the Conservative Party. For instance, radical approaches to policy and ‘a language of crisis’, was used by the left and right respectively, though the focus on socialism dominated Labour against the

²⁸ Green, *Ideologies of Conservatism*, 2.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

Conservatives' 'politics of conviction' message.³⁰ In contrast to MacInnes and Kavanagh, Green demonstrates that following Thatcher's emergence as Leader of the Opposition, a significant development in the nature of Thatcherism occurred which saw the term classed as an ideology, as witnessed by Thatcher's own views: 'As the Labour Party had an ideology, the Conservatives needed one too'.³¹ Indeed, Green believes that 'ideology is central to the history of the Conservative Party', suggesting that new ideas can be revealed by looking at past speeches, exchanges, and by analysing 'the construction and response to legislation'.³²

Writing from a political theorist's perspective, Charles Lockwood demonstrates how, from the late 1950s onwards, Conservative policy thinkers 'underwent a conscious intellectual adjustment', which had a significant impact on the relations between politicians and the public after 1965.³³ From Lockwood's point of view, the underlying consensus of the 1960s was a change in the way in which political parties viewed public opinion - as reactive to economic changes and to on-going unemployment and inflation, one that Heath recognised and reshaped the Conservatives into marking 'a new style of government'.³⁴ Andrew Gamble agrees with this view, highlighting how the 'politics of support' and the 'politics of power', which believed administration, rather than debate, was the overriding influence on voting behaviour.³⁵ Essentially, the Conservatives desired to convert to a type of

³⁰ Kavanagh, *Thatcherism*, 21.

³¹ Green, *Ideologies of Conservatism*, 4.

³² Ibid. See, also: E. H. H. Green, *Thatcher* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006).

³³ Charles Lockwood, "'Action Not Words' The Conservative Party, Public Opinion and 'Scientific' Politics, c.1945-70," *Twentieth Century British History* (2019): 1-17.

³⁴ Ibid., 3.

³⁵ Andrew Gamble, *The Conservative Nation* (London: Routledge, 1974), 3-11. See, also: John Ramsden, *An Appetite for Power: A New History of the Conservative Party* (London: HarperCollins, 1998).

consensus politics, accepting the view that voting was about ‘valence’ (or competence) issues – particularly the success or otherwise of the national economy. Their view appeared to be that, if you kept inflation and unemployment low, you would win. If you did not, you would lose. From the field of economic history and economic policy, Jim Tomlinson and David Edgerton have also analysed how the Conservatives embraced a sense of modernization from the early 1960s, in order to establish new socio-economic policies that would appeal to a wider electorate, which represented a departure from years gone before.³⁶ Thus, rather than representing post-war reformism, Conservative rhetoric post-1965 represented a departure from the ideas of old, meaning that instead of viewing Thatcherite policy as a long-standing trend from the past, it should be viewed as a ‘reaction to the profound intellectual divergence of the 1960s’.³⁷

Having written extensively on the emergence of Thatcherism in *Thatcher’s Britain: The Politics and Social Upheaval of the 1980s*, Vinen argues that, in order to understand Thatcherism in a broader political context as opposed to a socio-economic one, it is necessary to consider the ministers and personalities influencing politics at the time. He asserts that Thatcherism was best performed through dramatic events, rather than through public speeches – for instance the 1981 Budget or the Falklands War in 1982.³⁸ The idea of Thatcherism as ‘performative’ is illuminating in terms of Thatcher as Leader of the Opposition since, between 1975 and 1979, she was actively

³⁶ Jim Tomlinson, “Conservative Modernisation, 1960-64: Too Little, Too Late?” *Contemporary British History* 3 (1997): 18-38. See, also: David Edgerton, *Warfare State: Britain, 1920-1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

³⁷ Lockwood, “‘Action Not Words,’” 4.

³⁸ Vinen, *Thatcher’s Britain*, 5.

looking for new ways in which to present herself and her politics in the best possible light.

In addition to works by historians and political scientists, biographers of Thatcher have also written extensively about Thatcherism and explored what it represented in the late twentieth century. Following Campbell, Charles Moore, a former national newspaper editor and journalist, has enjoyed access to newly released, previously classified documents in his position as the official biographer of Thatcher. This has been a valuable asset to his research in considering a broader range of ideas, influences and circumstances. Moore illuminates Thatcher's early life in much greater detail than has been done before. Unlike some of her biographers, who write as if her reign was almost inevitable, Moore suggests that, in many ways, Thatcher's rise to power happened by chance, noting how she surprised many sceptics in surpassing Edward Heath (Conservative Prime Minister, 1970-74), as Conservative Leader. Indeed, years later, had James Callaghan (Labour Prime Minister, 1976-79), who publicly underestimated Thatcher, not refrained from calling a General Election in the autumn of 1978, before the Winter of Discontent, she might well have only ever fought one election and lost it (this area will be explored in Chapter Five of this thesis). Moore places appropriate emphasis on her ideological uncertainties in her rise to the top, while also acknowledging her insecurities in getting there. In *Volume One: Not For Turning* and *Volume Two: Everything She Wants*, published in 2014 and 2015, Moore suggests that, although policies such as privatization and more owner-

occupation in the housing sector were first discussed under Heath's premiership, it was Thatcher who ultimately saw them implemented as party policy.³⁹

In addition to Moore, in *Margaret Thatcher: Volume One: The Grocer's Daughter*, John Campbell considers Thatcher's childhood, and observes that her lower middle-class upbringing, which focused on hard work and 'Victorian values', along with her Nonconformity in a dedication to the Christian faith, may have contributed to her attitudes and mature convictions as a politician.⁴⁰ Robin Harris (who was closely involved in the writing of Thatcher's own memoirs), also adds in his biography how Thatcher was essentially a creature of her background and upbringing, hugely shaped by her childhood, which thus influenced her morals and political beliefs:

Margaret Thatcher was made what she was by her upbringing, and she knew it. She never forgot her origins or early life. Even the oldest scars remained painfully sensitive.⁴¹

In line with Harris' comments, in an interview for this research, Lord Tebbit (Secretary of State for Employment, 1981-83), observed:

³⁹ See: Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: Volume One*.

⁴⁰ See: Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher*.

⁴¹ Robin Harris, *Not For Turning: The Life of Margaret Thatcher* (London: Bantam Press, 2013), 7.

To understand Margaret, particularly in the early days, you have to remember that she was the daughter of a shopkeeper in Middle England. She was a devout Christian and a scientist. You had to think which of these personalities is going to be dominant in this particular circumstance... Very often you could feel the ‘daughter of a shopkeeper’ coming through, being just a bit weary of a very male, very separate, old Tory establishment.⁴²

Thatcher’s humble upbringing was also a way of ‘selling’ her to the electorate, given that, as an Oxford graduate with a professional career, she also fell into the category of a traditional Tory. Indeed, Shirley Letwin believes that, central to 1970s Thatcherite rhetoric was the belief that individual virtues and social values should be ‘transmitted by the family’, in order for Britain to ‘flourish’ into a universally respected global power.⁴³ In contrast, Campbell argues that Thatcher initially sought to distance herself from the lessons she learned during her upbringing, until she recognised that the morals she harboured could work to her political advantage in 1975.⁴⁴

However, beyond the rather parochial material about Thatcher’s background and the milieu in which she was raised, one should also look to wider trends and consider Thatcherism in a more global context – especially by analysing new material

⁴² Interview with Lord Tebbit, 15 October 2015. This thesis has benefitted greatly from a number of oral interviews with former colleagues who served under Thatcher, as well as outsiders who were advising the Conservative Party at the time. These interviews have provided an illuminating insight into Thatcher as a person as well as a politician, and have helped shed light on how policy came together during her years as Leader of the Opposition.

⁴³ Letwin, *The Anatomy of Thatcherism*, 36-37.

⁴⁴ Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher: Volume One*, 30.

that considers the internationalization of different foreign and domestic agendas. For instance, in *Reagan and Thatcher: The Difficult Relationship*, Richard Aldous challenges the historic notion of the ‘special relationship’ between Britain and America and the well-known political friendship shared by Thatcher and Reagan, by recognising a ‘difficult’ aspect to their political partnership.⁴⁵

James Cooper is another historian who has researched the political nature of the Reagan and Thatcher administrations. In his text, *Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan: A Very Political Special Relationship*, Cooper argues that, in contrast to some academics on the Right, the ideas that emerged from the Thatcher-Reagan epoch did not equal to what some historians believe was ‘a Conservative revolution’.⁴⁶ Nile Gardiner and Stephen Thompson argue that it was only after she left office that Thatcher publicly expressed what she believed ‘Thatcherism’ specifically represented. Her comments came in September 1992, where she gave a public speech in South Korea, describing herself as a ‘Conservative revolutionary’⁴⁷:

You have asked me to speak about Thatcherism. And that is a great honour. “Thatcherism” goes even further to the heart of what politics and economics are — or ought to be — about. This is because I didn’t invent it: My colleagues and I rediscovered it. The values, ideas and beliefs which I was privileged to be able to put into effect in Britain, in

⁴⁵ See: Aldous, *Reagan and Thatcher: The Difficult Relationship*.

⁴⁶ See: Cooper, *Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan*. For more on the interaction between domestic politics and foreign affairs, see: James Cooper, “The Foreign Politics of Opposition: Margaret Thatcher and the Transatlantic Relationship before Power,” *Contemporary British History* 24 (2010): 23-42.

⁴⁷ Nile Gardiner and Stephen Thompson, *Margaret Thatcher on Leadership: Lessons for American Conservatives Today* (Washington: Regnery, 2013), 18.

the eleven and a half years of my Prime Ministership, were rooted in the experience of the past and reinforced by events in my lifetime.⁴⁸

The current historiography of Thatcherism establishes some half-truths or even ‘myths’ about Thatcher: for instance, the image of her as a conviction politician and an ever-dominant figure on the world stage. However, there is scope for revising and even challenging some of these assumptions by tracing the evolution of Thatcher as Leader of the Conservative Party during her time in opposition, and the learning processes that were part of this, for instance, long-standing Conservative traditions, Conservative statecraft and policymaking, as well as Thatcher’s presentation and sense of herself as a leader and Prime Minister-in-waiting. This period shows that Thatcher was actually far from certain about herself and even the ideas she believed in, which is contrary to the popular image of Thatcher as a strident, dogmatic and confident leader. Therefore, this thesis will seek to ascertain how her thinking as a political leader evolved during her opposition years, to become closer to the Thatcher that we commonly know of by 1979. In doing so, this thesis will seek to answer the following research questions.

Firstly, who was advising Thatcher at the time of each foreign visit and how were Thatcher’s foreign trips received at home and internationally? Chapters Two and Three of this thesis explore the key issues that were discussed with foreign leaders, and suggest how far these meetings were harbingers for future relationships. They also demonstrate how Thatcher’s trips abroad relate to the developments in domestic

⁴⁸ “Speech in Korea: ‘The Principles of Thatcherism’,” *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 3 September 1992, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/108302> (accessed 08/07/2016).

politics during her time in opposition. Further questions that this thesis seeks to uncover are: How successful were the visits in establishing Thatcher as a credible candidate for Prime Minister, and did her proponents and opponents at home utilize positive or negative receptions? Did discussions offer any signals for the policies of her premiership? Finally, what was Thatcher's 'imaginative geography' and how did she view or imagine other nations? For example, Thatcher's imaginative geography of the US evoked tropes from early dynamism, entrepreneurial spirit and its 'can do' attitude, now being stymied by the post-war settlement and slowdown from the later 1960s onwards. Thatcher imagined the US under Carter as a nation that was potentially humanity's only real hope in the face of Soviet aggression, but was being held back by cowardice, inflation, and wishful thinking, particularly in terms of Détente and an over-mighty government that was well-intentioned but incapable.⁴⁹ The current historiography of Thatcherism has not addressed these specific questions head on, given that Thatcher scholars have tended to focus on Thatcher's years in power. However, in order to better understand Thatcher as Prime Minister, it is crucial to explore her period in opposition since her trips abroad reveal a great deal about her development as a new political leader.

Methodology

This thesis is largely a source-based study of Thatcher's years as Leader of the Opposition, and uses a variety of primary and secondary sources in order to uncover

⁴⁹ For more on imaginative geography and political visions of other nations, see: Mark Bassin, "Inventing Siberia: visions of the Russian East in the early nineteenth century," *American Historical Review* (1991): 763-794; Derek Gregory, "Between the book and the lamp: imaginative geographies of Egypt, 1849-50," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* (1995): 29-57.

new perspectives of this era. It considers a broad range of secondary sources in outlining the history of the topic and the views and arguments of authors and historians who have previously contributed to the field of Thatcherism. Additionally, an extensive range of primary source material has been used to explore Thatcher's opposition years in greater detail. Firstly, documents held at the UK National Archives have helped to uncover the story behind Thatcher's international travel between 1975 and 1979, discovering how essential it was for her to be briefed and guided as much as possible in advance of her foreign visits. TNA documents are those of the government and in this case specifically of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, supporting Thatcher as Leader of the Opposition overseas. Complementing these, documents available at the Conservative Party Archive held at the Bodleian Library have also helped to uncover new knowledge of the period, especially in relation to the development of Conservative policy. The Margaret Thatcher Foundation has also been a useful resource for this thesis since many documents relating to both Thatcher in opposition and in government are readily available and have undoubtedly added strength to this research.

Along with newspaper extracts and personal memoirs, one of the most interesting aspects of this thesis is its engagement with oral history, in particular, MPs, Lords and former colleagues of Thatcher. By unveiling new insights from individuals who were able to offer exclusive commentary on their recollections of Thatcher's personality and competence as Leader of the Opposition, these reflections have uniquely contributed to the study of Thatcherism, and have also provided an insight into the development of party policy and the role and activities of Leaders of

the Opposition. There were naturally some challenges with this part of the research, for instance, many interviewees were elderly, had a limited memory of the mid-late 1970s, and in some instances preferred to discuss their own careers or their preferred memories, rather than the period that this thesis sought to analyse. However, even with these limitations, the use of oral history has greatly benefitted this research since for some individuals this was their last chance of contributing to new historical research on Thatcherism, and thus enabled them to give new and original evidence that may have otherwise gone unheard.

Themes of the thesis

The key themes to this thesis, which are very much concerned with the practice of being Leader of the Opposition, cover four distinct areas, and will be explored and further analysed in the chapters that follow. The first considers the idea of ‘soft power’: during Thatcher’s international visits as Leader of the Opposition she continuously sought to promote Britain abroad (for instance, in her North American tour in 1975 and her Commonwealth tour in 1976), highlighting that the apparent gloom of Britain’s socio-economic state during the mid-late seventies had been overdone. While abroad, Thatcher as Opposition Leader tended to highlight how foreign and domestic politics are essentially the same (this was especially evident in her talks with President Ford, which will be analysed in Chapter Two). The idea of the global economy being under threat and the internationalization of politics is seen to be bigger than domestic politics on both sides of the Anglo-American relationship in 1975.

Secondly, the awareness of a widespread political culture of declinism is a significant topic, which needs to be addressed in and of itself. Although there are debates among historians about how ‘real’ or not ‘decline’ actually was, there is clearly a story to be told of how post-1945 Britain enjoyed relative prosperity up until the late sixties, which then stalled during the seventies under the leadership of Heath. Chapter Four of this thesis will explore Conservative policymaking between 1975 and 1979, and will assess how far neoliberal economic ideas played a role in Thatcher’s economic design. While Thatcher was clearly influenced by supposedly neoliberal ideas (particularly those of Hayek and Friedman), this thesis will argue that she was not a fully committed neoliberal. Instead, she picked out various thoughts and ideas she liked, and mixed them into her own, very distinct agenda, which incorporated a new approach to tackling inflation. This thesis aims to uncover how policy learning worked at the time, by moving away from the history of ideas and into the history of ideas in *practise*.

The third theme of this thesis relates to the impact of Thatcher’s gender, which she used to her advantage as Leader of the Opposition. At home, Thatcher presented herself a capable working mother who could inspire housewives to believe that women could have a high profile career as well as a family, and she utilized this image while abroad, for instance, in her 1975 North American tour where the press noted her impact on the wives of senior businessmen (this will be explored in further detail in the chapters that follow). The final theme of this research explores the suspicion or distrust between Thatcher’s office and the civil servants of Callaghan’s

government during her years as Opposition Leader. Specifically, in relation to her visit to the US in 1975, there is an evident sense of conflict. The FCO appear to believe that Thatcher's opposition office alone are ill prepared to plan and equip her with the necessary information needed in order to execute a successful international trip abroad. Gordon Lennox (British Ambassador to Spain, 1984-1989), concluded that the plans made by Thatcher's office were 'rather vague', and that this 'reflects the fact that Mrs Thatcher's staff do not know much about the United States and will therefore be leaning on us rather heavily for advice'.⁵⁰ However, on the other side of the equation, it should be noted that Callaghan was running a minority government during the mid-late 1970s, and civil servants were thus well aware that they might well have to work with Thatcher if she were to take office in the near future.

Collectively, these themes have been relatively unexplored in research concerning Thatcherism. Areas such as social class and welfare have often taken priority in previous works. Thus, this thesis fills a gap in the literature by exploring themes that are relevant to the field, for instance, Thatcher as a conscious learner, which are new to the literature and add light to the early shaping of Thatcher as a political leader. The established view is that Thatcher was a Hayekian, and she gained a deeper understanding of Hayekian influences through Keith Joseph. However, at the same time she was her own thinker, and she actively rearranged neoliberal ideas in her own way in order to develop a new economic agenda. The current historiography has underestimated her in this way, since Thatcher was actually far more pragmatic

⁵⁰ UKNA FCO 82/488, Gordon Lennox to Russell, 1 May 1975.

during the mid-late 1970s in comparison to her somewhat more dogmatic years as the ‘Iron Lady’ of the 1980s.

In terms of how this thesis has been structured, it begins with an analysis of Thatcher’s US and Commonwealth visits between 1975-1977 in Chapters Two and Three, before exploring the development of policymaking within the Conservative Party in Chapter Four, and lastly the impact of the 1979 General Election in Chapter Five. The reason that this research has been organised in this way is predominantly because looking at Thatcher from an international perspective is the original contribution to knowledge, and an aspect that is missing in the current literature. Given the length of her time in office, Thatcher’s years as Leader of the Opposition have been relatively understudied, and no one has analysed how she utilized international visits during 1975-79 in order to demonstrate her political narrative, learn the nuances of foreign affairs, and promote herself on the international stage as a Prime Minister-in-waiting. In addition, this thesis will reveal how the FCO supported Thatcher in her international visits, in a way in which is fairly surprising to the naïve reader.

The evolution of policymaking, which is analysed in Chapter Four, is necessary to explore since, while it appears that Thatcher was largely absent from the process, it shows how she was both connected and disconnected, playing a role in indicating the direction that the Party was going in. Looking at the evolution of policymaking helps us to better understand the development of Thatcher as Leader of the Opposition, since the evolution of Thatcherism went wider than the individual

herself. Chapter Five of this thesis moves from an analytical category to an event, and explores the impact and outcome of the 1979 General Election, given that this particular election was so important to the formation, fate and image of ‘Thatcherism’. While this has been analysed in detail before, this research has uncovered new material from the Conservative Party Archive in order to critically assess to what extent chance played a role in leading the Conservatives to victory, and how far a winning electoral strategy and a revived Conservative rhetoric were the alternative reasons behind the Party’s historic success.

Economic Declinism

The notion of declinism is important to consider when analysing the politics of the 1970s since some historians view the period as one of significant economic decline, particularly following Edward Heath’s poor handling of the economy between 1970-74. Jim Tomlinson has long observed how Britain experienced the politics of relative decline from the 1880s onwards, since its absolute growth had fallen in comparison to the rest of the world.⁵¹ After 1945, Britain apparently ‘failed’ to sustain its pace of industrial expansion in comparison to its Western European partners, and was thus constantly in a process of playing ‘catch up’ during the second half of the nineteenth century.⁵² As Tomlinson states: ‘The assumption that Britain’s economic performance was inferior to its competitors, and that this was both a symptom of secular malaise, dominated much of both popular and academic discussion’ during the mid-late 1970s,

⁵¹ Jim Tomlinson, “Thrice Denied: ‘Declinism’ as a Recurrent Theme in British History in the Long Twentieth Century,” *Contemporary British History* 20 (2009): 227-251.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 236.

though in reality, ‘modern Britain had to recognise that for most of the century it was an unusually internationalized or “globalized” economy and society’.⁵³

In highlighting this point, Tomlinson demonstrates that there was much more to ‘relative decline’ than supposedly left-wing economic and social policy – it was more an issue of structural elements rooted in the disadvantages of an economic lead. Britain’s industrial structure was far ahead of most others in Europe in 1945, and inevitably its subsequent rate of economic growth was lower than those states that could ‘catch up’.⁵⁴ The post-1945 ‘golden age’ of rising living standards and a generous welfare state was, however, coming to an end in Britain by the mid-1970s, and as a result this period reflected emotions of decline, given that it was the first time in post-war history that Britain had faced such a crisis. By this period, the country’s troubles had become more acute and were to some extent more ‘absolute’ rather than ‘relative’.

In *The Politics of Decline: Understanding Postwar Britain*, Tomlinson further identifies that there are two different strands to the concept of decline. The first kind that constitutes ‘declineology’ places a focus on the place of individual states in the world, their ‘global strategic and political capacity relative to others that measures rise and decline’.⁵⁵ Rather than being linked to economic strength, this concept of decline relates to ‘a country’s ability to make itself felt in world politics that is the key

⁵³ Tomlinson, “Inventing ‘decline,’” 754. Tomlinson, “Thrice Denied,” 250.

⁵⁴ For more on this see: Moses Abramovitz, “Catch-up and convergence in the postwar growth boom and after,” in *Convergence of productivity: Cross-national studies and historical evidence*, ed. William Baumol, Richard Nelson and Edward Wolff (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 86-125.

⁵⁵ Jim Tomlinson, *The Politics of Decline: Understanding Postwar Britain* (Oxon & New York: Routledge, 2014), 1.

measure of performance'.⁵⁶ However, there is a separate literature which exists that equates declinism specifically to *economic* decline, treating perceived failure of performance as a problem in its own right, not usually attaching much significance to why economic performance should be regarded as significant.⁵⁷ This kind of work seeks to explain why Britain has at various times in the late nineteenth century fallen short of the economic achievements of other nations, particularly the immediate years following the Second World War.⁵⁸

Andrew Gamble has argued that decline is 'politically constructed and needs to be understood through the political debates which have taken place on its dimensions, its causes and its remedies', and similarly Tomlinson states that declinism 'has been a major influence on post-war British politics; not only an idea widely accepted, but one that has motivated a great deal of political programme making and political action'.⁵⁹ For some historians, 'decline in world power and relative economic decline in economic performance are inextricably linked'.⁶⁰ Therefore, when assessing British politics during the 1970s, it is necessary to explore how this latter concept of decline influenced both politics and policy, particularly given Britain's fragile economic position during the period.

Although Britain was relatively economically stable during the early 1970s, its relatively low growth compared to that of Italy, France and other European nations,

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 3.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Andrew Gamble, *Britain in Decline: Economic Policy, Political Strategy and the British State*, Revised edition (London: Macmillan, 1994), xi.

who had experienced a golden era of economic growth from 1950 to 1970, made decision makers feel as if they were inexorably slipping backwards – whatever the reality of the situation. Tomlinson observes that one of the problems was that Britain's 'economic also-ran' perception was largely more imagined than true to the reality of the situation. In 'Inventing "decline": the falling behind of the British economy in the post-war years', Tomlinson argues that from the late-1950s onwards, 'declinism' was 'reinvented' to suit the idea that Britain was 'lagging behind' other Western European countries in terms of living standards and economic growth.⁶¹

Given Britain's socio-economic climate at the time, in *Reassessing 1970s Britain*, Lawrence Black, Hugh Pemberton and Pat Thane argue that by 1970, 'expectation of the capabilities of government had risen to an extent that any government would have found hard to meet', particularly during a period of high inflation and deep recession.⁶² Following the post-war boom, economic difficulties thus 'came as a shock' after a long period of relative 'economic growth and rising affluence'.⁶³ The problem of inflation was indeed one of the biggest factors in the UK's economic troubles at the time. In 1975, inflation reached a rate 'not seen since the Napoleonic Wars', and unemployment doubled between 1975 and 1977, with 1976 being characterized as a year when public spending was perceived to be 'out of control'.⁶⁴ However, it should be noted that for most people during the 1970s, the period felt far better than that of Thatcher's first term in power (1979-83). For the majority of workers, real wages for the most part rose between 1970-75, as

⁶¹ Jim Tomlinson, "Inventing 'decline': the falling behind of the British economy in the postwar years," *The Economic History Review* 49 (1996): 731-757.

⁶² Lawrence Black, Hugh Pemberton and Pat Thane (eds), *Reassessing 1970s Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 8.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

demonstrated by Stephen Clarke and Paul Gregg.⁶⁵ Indeed, given that unemployment was fairly low during the mid-1970s, with inequality falling to an all-time low by 1979, the sense of socio-economic ‘panic’ was in many ways overdone, and did not accurately reflect the circumstances of the time.

Some historians of the 1970s seek to strip away this atmosphere of ‘social panic’, though others do argue that the decade did signal the dawn of ‘ideological polarization’ as a result of ineffective governance.⁶⁶ James E. Alt describes the 1970s as a ‘watershed decade’, where many of the policies of the past 30-40 years ‘went into reverse or at least became exhausted’.⁶⁷ In contrast, Tomlinson asserts that the idea of Britain in decline and searching for a new consensus was ‘constructed rather than formed in fact’, and believes Alt’s ideas are ‘embedded in certain contemporary assumptions’, which historians of the time should now ‘maintain some critical distance’ from.⁶⁸ In an attack on ‘declinist’ accounts of the 1970s, Tomlinson argues that Britain’s ‘real’ economy ‘did not suffer a sustained collapse’ in the 1970s, alluding to the fact that unemployment, though rising, was relatively low, peaking at 6% in 1976.⁶⁹ Although Tomlinson accepts that the failure of interest rates to keep pace with the rise in inflation produced problems for savers, he maintains that the redistribution was ‘limited’ and far from the assertions of ‘apocalypse now’ academics.⁷⁰ Tomlinson’s argument is logical in that he effectively demonstrates how

⁶⁵ Stephen Clarke and Paul Gregg, ‘Count the pennies: Explaining a decade of lost pay growth’: Figure 1: The last decade has been the worst for real earnings for over a hundred years (October 2018), p.12 <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/app/uploads/2018/10/Count-the-Pennies-report.pdf> (accessed 30/10/2019).

⁶⁶ Black, Pemberton and Thane, *Reassessing*, 10.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 47.

the ‘golden age’ of the post-1945 era saw the country stuck on a ‘hedonic treadmill’, meaning that any slowdown in the economy would have been viewed as ‘traumatic’.⁷¹ Unlike Alt who conflates the themes of inflation and decline to conclude that the 1970s saw a considerable socio-economic decline, Tomlinson, as an economic historian, suggests that in perspective Britain was not in a serious economic decline compared to other Western nations.

When researching this period, it is also important to consider that the electoral foundations of British politics had transformed considerably by the mid-1970s. For instance, during the post-war era support for the major parties between 1950-1955 were ‘relatively uniform’ across the country, and the lack of regional divisions in voting behaviour ensured the stability of one-party governments.⁷² However, Pippa Norris observes a destabilization in the British system of two-party parliaments over the last half century, which has left the Westminster model of government on ‘flimsy and insecure foundations’.⁷³ In addition to the long-term decline of support for Labour since the late 1960s, a further reason for this transformation is due to the willingness of voters to favour minor parties at a sub-national level, rejecting Labour or the Conservatives following their experiences of past government failures. Although the British political system has historically remained in place, the development of ‘erratic and unstable tsunamis’ of support for centre and nationalist parties at the electoral level has changed patterns of voting behaviour considerably, giving the emerging minor parties greater powers to influence mainstream government policy.⁷⁴ Therefore, since the 1970s, the weakening of the two-party system has resulted in ‘rickety and

⁷¹ Ibid., 52.

⁷² Pippa Norris, *Electoral Change in Britain since 1945* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 23.

⁷³ Ibid., 35.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 53.

narrow' foundations of support for successive Labour and Conservative administrations, and questioned the capacities of one-party governments.⁷⁵

Interpretations of the Heath government, 1970-74

During his time in office, Edward Heath, Thatcher's predecessor, created a poor impression in his attempts to rescue Britain's faltering economy. Gamble argues that the Heath government was the 'first attempt to introduce a Thatcherite programme', which abandoned the objectives of the 'post-war accumulation strategy' that had been the focus of modernization regimes in the 1960s, and proposed a radical agenda to revitalize Britain.⁷⁶ To some degree, Heath recognised the disenchantment that voters felt in following Labour policies, which promoted a wish to loosen ties between the state and the economy and to lower support for trade union involvement in economic management. One example of this was the failure of the 1969 White Paper 'In Place of Strife', which sought to reduce the power of trade unions, but was never passed as official legislation. Memories of industrial problems along with rising inflation inevitably led some voters to reconsider their alliance towards the Labour Party. Thus, in 1971, Heath's predominant focus was to revolutionize trade union law by regulating the actions of employers in order to escape further financial chaos and 'stop-go policies'.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Ibid., 3-4.

⁷⁶ Andrew Gamble, *The Free Economy and the Strong State: The Political Economy of Thatcherism* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), 73.

⁷⁷ MacInnes, *Thatcherism at Work*, 27.

His emphasis on ‘competitiveness and efficiency’ was linked to his desire for Britain to join the European Economic Community (EEC), believing that Europe was ‘an essential part of the bid to modernize the British economy’, which would produce a ‘new and challenging environment in which British industrial practices would be shaken up’.⁷⁸ Heath promoted what might be thought of as a neo-corporatist approach that stressed the role of national champions in a more efficient but directed form of capitalism, which was an emphasis to become much less prevalent in Conservative thinking under ‘Thatcherism’. In articulating his affection towards Europe, Heath distanced himself considerably from the United States, rejecting the idea that Britain had a ‘special relationship’ with America, a move which characterized him as ‘the least Atlanticist British premier since the war’.⁷⁹ Significantly, this stance was in contrast to the Thatcherite view during the 1980s, which stressed a strong commitment to the Anglo-American alliance.

While the rhetoric of Heath’s agenda did not save Britain’s socio-economic reality, Heathite thought can be seen as a type of ‘proto-Thatcherism’ in that it had a free market emphasis, though in less small-scale and individualist terms than Thatcher’s. However, although Heath’s programme contained many elements of what would later be seen as ‘Thatcherism’, it is important to note that it had a significantly different approach. For instance, due to his affection for the EEC, Heath was far more interested in helping large-scale corporate Britain rather than the entrepreneurs and small businesses that Thatcher focused on.

⁷⁸ Gamble, *The Free Economy*, 74.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 74.

Entering government in June 1970, Heath walked into an ‘economic strait-jacket’, with inflation at a record high and stagflation hindering the British economy.⁸⁰ Heath’s initial plan of cutting back public expenditure in order to reduce ‘waste’ and ‘misdirection’ was designed to cause a ‘psychological shock’, which would see the dawn of a ‘stand on your own two feet’ era.⁸¹ Andrew Roth notes that Heath ‘deliberately fractured the cosy consensus’ and issued a ‘shock treatment’, as preparation for a larger role for Britain abroad in his quest to create a West-European Superpower.⁸² However, the Conservatives’ Industrial Relations Bill, implemented in January 1971, was met with broad resentment and opposition from trade unions and the industrial sector. Heath’s plan of imposing statutory controls on incomes and prices and rationing electricity to three days a week, whilst simultaneously increasing the flow of money into the economy backfired, resulting in mass inflation and rising unemployment with multiple strike action from 1972 onwards. Britain’s poor economic climate during the Heath years was recalled by Lord Lamont (Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1990-93), in an interview for this research:

Inflation was badly out of control. Unemployment was massively high. Britain was known as “the sick man of Europe” - it was legendary the poor performance of the British economy. During Heath’s period we’d had the appalling Miners’ Strike and electricity to business was rationed to three days a week...

⁸⁰ Andrew Roth, *Heath and the Heathmen* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), 216.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 217.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 219.

I mean, the government held an election with electricity supplies being curtailed, rationed, and then Heath managed to lose it, despite the fact that people thought the public would blame the miners...

There were two General Elections in 1974 and Heath lost them both. He only just lost the first time and people thought, “well, there has to be another election... hang on”, but he lost decisively the second time and so all this chaos was blamed on Heath. When you combine that with the general stagnation of the economy, people felt he’d gone badly wrong and had pursued exactly the wrong policy.⁸³

Gamble describes the Heath years as ‘a period of great turbulence’ and views him as ‘an image of a failure’, who left behind ‘a country coming to seem ungovernable’.⁸⁴ Given Heath’s poor record in power, by early 1975 a challenge to his leadership seemed inevitable.

The Conservative New Right

Within the study of Thatcher as Leader of the Opposition, one needs to differentiate between Thatcher (as a person), and Thatcherism (as an ideology). For instance, Gamble observes the problems in equating Thatcherism to Thatcher herself, recognising the difference between style and substance within the term: ‘Thatcherism

⁸³ Interview with Lord Lamont of Lerwick, 19 November 2015.

⁸⁴ Gamble, *The Free Economy*, 78.

cannot be reduced to the personal project of a single individual because it was not created by one person'.⁸⁵ Additionally, he notes that there is 'an enormous gulf between rhetoric and achievement', and suggests that the impact of Thatcherism did not amount to some of the beliefs held by academics on the Right.⁸⁶

Instead, Gamble argues that Thatcher 'identified herself with the ideas and the causes of the New Right and used her position to promote the spread of ideas in a manner that was highly unusual for a Conservative Leader'.⁸⁷ However, as Gamble observes, New Right thinkers in the 1970s needed to obtain 'a mandate for reform and implement it through the political institutions which have been responsible for the destruction of the market order', under the restriction of 'that same interventionist state'.⁸⁸ Furthermore, in view of the rise of Soviet expansionism following 1945, a new ideology seeking to establish itself in the 1970s needed to recognise the need to consider both external as well as internal threats to the maintenance of social order. The rise and influence of the New Right is significant to the literature here, since it has been seen as a forerunner of public policy since the late seventies, not only in the UK but also across the world.

In 'At the Origins of Neo-Liberalism: The Free Economy and the Strong State, 1930-1947', Ben Jackson analyses the strand of political thought known as neo-liberalism, which initially emerged during the 1930s. The ideas of mid-twentieth century neo-liberals rejected the argument that the welfare state represented a suitable

⁸⁵ Ibid., 22.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 21.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 22-23.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 32.

midway between capitalism and socialism. However, although the difference between Left-liberal socialist and neo-liberal ideas appears vast, the gap between free market liberals and the moderate left actually narrowed between 1930 and 1940.⁸⁹ Jackson demonstrates how some moderate socialists were willing to recognise the importance of individual liberties and economic efficiency, while neo-liberals understood the need for some wealth taxes and greater protection for workers in order to establish a just and fair society. In this way, Jackson argues that neo-liberalism during the late 1940s was not a ‘fully formed, coherent and total critique’ of all forms of laissez-faire ideas, but rather an ideology that developed following the ‘immense pessimism, uncertainty and crisis’ of an unsettled post-war era that threatened Western freedoms.⁹⁰

Similarly, Otto Saumarez Smith has assessed how far new policy ideas during the mid-late 1970s really amounted to a particularly Thatcherite or neoliberal agenda, or whether it was more a sense of returning to the ‘admixture of dirigisme and deregulation’ that had once been at the heart of Conservative rhetoric, but with a revamped styling via new terminologies.⁹¹ While neoliberal ideas were ‘approved of and discussed’ by many Conservatives, Smith argues that in terms of how these ideas played out in policy terms, it is ‘messier’ to decipher.⁹² From Smith’s perspective, most aspects of Thatcher’s early policy involved an expansion of the state, while diminishing the power of local authorities.⁹³ Smith accepts that a ‘defined and

⁸⁹ Ben Jackson, “At the origins of Neo-liberalism: The Free Economy and the Strong State, 1930-1947,” *The Historical Journal* 51 (2010): 129-151.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 150.

⁹¹ Otto Saumarez Smith, “Action for Cities: the Thatcher government and inner-city policy,” *Urban History* (2019): 1-18.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 20.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

frequently enunciated neoliberal philosophy' was widespread among Conservative circles, however, he asserts that historians should be wary about seeing the Thatcherite narrative as a purely neoliberal agenda: 'Neoliberal ideas were far from being enacted, and the approach to the issue remained much more piecemeal'.⁹⁴ Both Jackson and Smith highlight that neoliberalism is, and has always been, very indistinct and vague – subjecting itself to the shifting political realities of the moment. Following this view, Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite argues that while the Conservatives took an interest in neoliberal ideas, between 1975-79 their overall vision was 'a moral (and, secondarily, economic) rejuvenation of Britain': 'They attempted to marginalize the importance of state welfare for the middle classes, to re-invigorate the "bourgeois virtues" which had flourished in Victorian Britain'.⁹⁵ Such individualism, as Sutcliffe-Braithwaite outlines, is not fully congruent with that of neoliberal ideas. Rather than being categorized as a purely neoliberal agenda, Thatcherism can be seen as its own coherent ideology: one that was driven by 'home-grown traditions and discourses, plundering neo-liberalism when it suited them'.⁹⁶

Indeed, it appears that while Thatcher was influenced by the thoughts of Friedrich von Hayek, she disregarded or played down the ideas of other neoliberal thinkers, for instance, Milton Friedman, since they did not fit with her vision of social policy.⁹⁷ Sutcliffe-Braithwaite demonstrates how the focus on individualism 'allowed Thatcher and her allies to reject paternalism, and reconcile a free economy and

⁹⁴ Ibid., 25.

⁹⁵ Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, "Neo-liberalism and Morality in the making of Thatcherite Social Policy," *The Historical Journal* 55 (2012): 497-520.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 520.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 499.

traditional values’.⁹⁸ From this perspective, it can be seen that Thatcherism was actually a complex process of compromises and engagements during the mid-late seventies, involving a cluster of forces that inspired and influenced Conservative rhetoric. Evidently, there is much debate among academics on whether the British economy truly was in a state of ‘decline’ in the mid-1970s. However, the idea that the country was economically struggling became politically significant and a weapon utilized by the Conservative Party under Thatcher once she emerged as Leader of the Opposition in 1975.

At the time of her appointment a change in the British political climate had become evident, where a consensus emerged that believed welfare policies, having been necessary post-1945, were significantly damaging the nation’s economy. This view was confirmed by Lord Carrington (Foreign Secretary, 1979-82), in his memoirs: ‘Thatcher had the mood of the country increasingly with her... an excellent mind, she felt we needed a new direction’.⁹⁹ However, rather than Thatcher, it was initially Keith Joseph who became the first front-bench critic of the policies made by the Heath government and the overall direction of post-war economic policy. Joseph believed (extremely controversially at the time and since), that the welfare state was threatening the British economy by undermining Britons’ morality and self-restraint.¹⁰⁰ Joseph had first benefitted from Thatcher’s assistance during her time as a junior minister for pensions (1961-64), where they ‘worked very quickly in harness’

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Peter Carrington, *Reflect On Things Past: The Memoirs of Lord Carrington* (London: Collins, 1988), 275.

¹⁰⁰ See, for instance: Richard Hayton (ed.), *Conservative Orators from Baldwin to Cameron* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016); John Welshman, *From transmitted deprivation to social exclusion* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2007).

in producing a pension policy for the 1966 General Election.¹⁰¹ Andrew Denham observes that although economic gloom had overshadowed much of the 1960s, the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) ‘refused to succumb to the wide-spread sense of malaise’, and joining the IEA offices in 1964, Joseph viewed such attitudes as ‘fashionable thinking’.¹⁰² ‘An obsessive consumer of political tracts’, Joseph was quick to notice IEA publications and ‘studied them earnestly’, enabling him to develop a policy review for the Conservatives during the mid-1960s.¹⁰³

Joseph’s first initiative within the Conservative high command came when he approached Heath for his approval in setting up a research body ‘to examine the reasons for West Germany’s economic miracle’.¹⁰⁴ As Mark Spicka notes, most Germans experienced significant economic hardship following the Second World War. Indeed, the country’s economy appeared to have collapsed. However, 1948 came to be viewed as ‘a crucial year for the resurgence of the German economy’ due to the reform of German currency (the UK, US and France intervened to stabilize the German economy, and introduced the Deutsche Mark).¹⁰⁵ Spicka argues that this currency reform and the subsequent economic ‘liberalization’ of markets and materials were the most significant in restoring growth in the German economy.¹⁰⁶ While German ordoliberalism was and is by no means a right-wing formation, it has remained part of Germany’s economic policy ever since. Joseph was specifically interested in the economic thinkers (for instance, Ludwig Erhard, the chief economic

¹⁰¹ Andrew Denham and Mark Garnett, *Keith Joseph* (Durham: Acumen Publishing, 2001), 147.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 137.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 138.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 239.

¹⁰⁵ Mark Spicka, *Selling the Economic Miracle: Economic Reconstruction and Politics in West Germany, 1949-1957* (London: Berghahn Books, 2007).

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

administrator of the American Bizone), who had introduced the economic foundation of a 'market economy', and was thus keen to see how their ideas could influence Conservative economic policy.¹⁰⁷

Heath, though suspicious, approved the reformation of the Conservative Research Department (CRD), and allowed Joseph and Thatcher to hold dinner-meetings with industrialists, with Lord Carrington and James Prior in attendance 'to keep an eye on things'.¹⁰⁸ Although the Conservatives were back in government in 1970, there was a clear sense of unhappiness within the Party. Denham states that 'Heath's team is often hailed as the best-prepared Shadow Cabinet in history'.¹⁰⁹ However, he argues that this perception only reflected time spent on policy-making, observing that there was no evidence of 'a practical programme behind which everyone was united'.¹¹⁰ Essentially, the Conservatives were seeking ways to make the market economy work better, in some senses to save it from itself along post-war German lines.¹¹¹

As Chapter Four of this thesis will demonstrate, policy learning was of significant importance to Thatcher during her years as Leader of the Opposition. Peter Hall has researched widely on the different types of policy learning that took place between 1970 and 1989. In his article, 'Policy Paradigms, Social Learning, and the state: The Case of Economic Policymaking in Britain', Hall describes the elements of

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 28.

¹⁰⁸ Denham and Garnett, *Keith Joseph*, 239-240.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 186.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ For more on this see, for instance: John Ramsden, *The Making of Conservative Party Policy: The Conservative Research Department Since 1929* (Longman, 1980); Martin Daunton, *Just Taxes: The Politics of Taxation in Britain: 1914-1979* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

first-order change, which took place every year (and sometimes more often than once a year) between 1970 and 1989. In a response to the consequences of past policy and new political developments, Hall observes this stage of change as an ‘analytical process’, where ‘the settings of fiscal and monetary instruments were adjusted to attain specific macroeconomic targets’.¹¹² Similarly, second-order change, from Hall’s view, allowed governments to alter ‘the instruments of macroeconomic policy without radically altering the hierarchy of goals behind policy’.¹¹³ For Hall, these changes in policy were primarily in response to ‘dissatisfaction with past policy rather than in response to new economic events alone’.¹¹⁴ In these stages of change, officials, rather than politicians, played the most central role in each instance of social learning.

However, Hall argues that the most important transformation in policy learning during the period of 1970-89 came via third-order change, which signalled the most intense break in policy development in modern times and served as the object for better goal attainment by governments.¹¹⁵ For Hall, third-order change is different from first and second order change in that it reflects the movement from a Keynesian mode of policymaking to one based on monetarist economic theory, which Thatcherites endorsed. Hall demonstrates that when monetarism replaced Keynesian as the template guiding policy, ‘there was a radical shift in the hierarchy of goals guiding policy... and macroeconomic efforts to reduce unemployment were rejected

¹¹² Peter Hall, “Policy Paradigms, Social Learning and the State: The Case of Economic Policy Making in Britain,” *Comparative Politics* 25:3 (1993): 275-96.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 281.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 283.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

in favour of balanced budgets and direct tax reductions'.¹¹⁶ During the rise and ascent of Thatcherism, third-order change saw inflation replacing unemployment as the primary concern of government, and 'macroeconomic efforts to reduce unemployment were rejected in favour of balanced budgets and direct tax reductions'.¹¹⁷ According to Hall, these changes were 'accompanied by substantial changes in the discourse employed by policymakers and in the analysis of the economy on which policy was based'.¹¹⁸ Thus, from the Conservative perspective, policymaking during the late 1970s was reoriented towards fixed targets for the rate of monetary growth, and monetary policy replaced fiscal policy as the 'principal macroeconomic instrument'.¹¹⁹

In contrast to Hall, Hugh Heclo suggests that policy learning is 'a less conscious activity, often occurring as a governmental response to some kind of societal or environmental stimulus'.¹²⁰ What Heclo terms 'political learning' is seen as 'an activity undertaken by policymakers as a reaction to changes in external policy environments'.¹²¹ In a similar view, Diane Stone views policy process as a 'conveyor belt': 'Pressures from society are turned into inputs (demands and supports) for the political system, within which politicians authoritatively order and translate the societal pressures and requests into problems to be processed by policymakers'.¹²² For

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 287.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 283.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 288. For a more qualified analysis of Hall's model, see: Michael J. Oliver and Hugh Pemberton, "Learning and Change in 20th Century British Economic Policy," *Governance* 17:3 (2004): 415-41.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 283.

¹²⁰ Colin J. Bennett and Michael Howlett, "The Lessons of Learning: Reconciling Theories of Policy Learning and Policy Change," *Political Sciences* 25 (1992): 275-94. See, also: Frank R. Baumgartner, "Ideas and Policy Change," *Governance* 26:2 (2013): 239-58.

¹²¹ Ibid., 276.

¹²² John Grin, and Anne Loeber, "Theories of Policy Learning: Agency, Structure, and Change," in *Handbook of Public Policy Analysis*, ed. Frank Fischer, Gerald J. Miller and Mara S. Sidney (Boca

Stone, the system's latter task is to transform these into policies that 'yield policy outputs that resolve the problems as experienced'.¹²³ Given the socio-economic climate of the 1970s, and in particular the poor policy initiatives implemented under Heath, Conservative policymakers in the mid-late 1970s were keen to develop a new approach to policy, one that appeared to follow Hall's model of diverting from a Keynesian mode of policymaking to a monetarist approach.

The views from Thatcher's own colleagues on her style of leadership upon taking on the role of Leader of the Opposition are divided. For instance, Nigel Lawson (Financial Secretary to the Treasury, 1979-81. Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1983-89), states in his memoirs that Thatcherism is 'a particular constellation of policies and values... a mixture of free markets, financial discipline, Victorian values, privatization and a dash of populism'.¹²⁴ In contrast with Thatcher's sympathizers, Francis Pym (Shadow Foreign Secretary, 1978-79. Defence Secretary, 1979-81) - one of the leaders of the 'wets' who reflected the views of the Tory Left at the time - regards the Thatcherites as 'a narrow and dynamic faction', and believed Thatcher to be: 'An absolutist who likes everything to be clear cut, absolutely in favour of one thing, absolutely against another... It is the opposite of my approach'.¹²⁵ However, Letwin argues that although Thatcher's opponents dismissed her philosophy as a 'ragbag of ideas', Thatcherism was 'flexible in its response to changing circumstance' and did offer a 'coherent political attitude'.¹²⁶

Raton, Fl: Routledge, 2006), Ch. 15. For more on this, see: James I. Walsh, "When Do Ideas Matter? Explaining the Successes and Failures of Thatcherite Ideas," *Comparative Political Studies* 33:4 (2000): 483-516.

¹²³ Ibid., 201.

¹²⁴ Nigel Lawson, *The View From No 11: Memoirs of a Tory Radical* (London: Bantam, 1992), 64.

¹²⁵ Francis Pym, *Politics of Consent* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1984), 18-19.

¹²⁶ Letwin, *The Anatomy of Thatcherism*, 28-30.

Many observers, both at the time and since, have agreed with this more flexible interpretation of events. In his memoirs, Lord Hailsham (Lord Chancellor, 1979-87), states that although there had been an element of ‘surprise’ within the Conservative Party after Thatcher emerged victorious in 1975, he observes that she had ‘held the Education portfolio with distinction’, which had brought her ‘universal respect’.¹²⁷ The structure of the electorate also seemed to be changing, and Thatcher was more than able to tailor her views to what they might want – or be thought to want. Kavanagh observes that the British electorate became more conservative after 1974, and notes how Thatcher ‘attracted a particular electoral constituency’: middle-class, self-employed businessmen and the ‘petit bourgeois’ who ‘turned strongly to the party’ following her election as leader.¹²⁸ Similar to Harold Macmillan (Conservative Prime Minister, 1957-63), who stated during his premiership that ‘a dramatic programme, calculated to stir the imagination and to seize the political initiative’ was necessary in order to win a General Election, Thatcher presented a different approach to politics that seemed radical for the time.¹²⁹

Thatcher’s economic approach as Leader of the Opposition was, to some extent, rooted in pre-First World War Liberal thinking and orientated towards the free market, free trade perspective, aiming to release individuals from an overreliance on the state whilst minimizing the overall role of government. Harvey observes that Thatcher and Joseph also took inspiration from the ‘Chicago school’ in revitalizing

¹²⁷ Lord Hailsham, *A Sparrow’s Flight: Memoirs* (London: Collins, 1990), 406.

¹²⁸ Kavanagh, *Thatcherism*, 299-300.

¹²⁹ John Turner, “A Land Fit for Tories to Live in: The Political Ecology of the British Conservative Party, 1944-94,” *Contemporary European History* 4 (1995): 189-208.

Conservative economic policy, an American line of thought that advised governments to keep control over the money supply in order to reduce inflation, an approach that was also used in the US by President Ford in 1975.¹³⁰ John Gray demonstrates that the role of a limited government, which Thatcher saw as ethical in terms of promoting human liberty and dignity, is to act to ‘confer resources and opportunities on those who have hitherto had few assets or options’.¹³¹ A market economy, from the Conservative point of view, enabled individuals of different traditions and values to live in ‘peaceful co-existence’, and allowed for ‘innovation and novelty in thought and practice’ in a way that classical liberalism did not.¹³² Thus, Thatcher’s vision of a Conservative limited government was ‘not the pursuit of indefinite betterment, but the staving off of ever-present evils’.¹³³ Her economic approach aimed to ‘prepare people for responsible life in a market economy by using the institutions of the market itself’, and sought to dismantle the reliance on the welfare state.¹³⁴ Although Thatcher offered a different stance on socio-economic policy at the time, the difference between believing that the economy could be managed (even if only via monetary policy), and the concept that the true conservative should seek to fend off constitutional change (to some extent one of the divides between Friedman and Hayek), was ever present.

Brian Harrison argues that the Thatcherite impulse was ‘over-rationalistic’ in seeking to break down institutional structures in its attempt to separate the political

¹³⁰ Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 18-35.

¹³¹ John Gray, *Beyond the New Right: Markets, Government and the Common Environment* (London: Routledge, 1993), 16.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 15.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 48.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 16.

from the economic.¹³⁵ However, it is worth noting that although Thatcher talked extensively of her political philosophy, her policies in opposition lacked detail. Although Joseph had gained knowledge of monetarism through his research, policies such as privatization were not fully thought through as policy until Thatcher was elected as Prime Minister in 1979. Nevertheless, as Conservative Leader, Thatcher sought to represent ‘her people’: the lower-middle class who desired social reform and ‘needed a Champion’ to speak on their behalf.¹³⁶ As a result of her upbringing, she forcefully believed in individual rights, strong leadership, private enterprise, low taxation, and breaking down barriers of exclusion from attainment, all articulated through a clear sense of patriotism. However, as Evans demonstrates, the ideas she brought to her Shadow Cabinet in 1975 were far from new. For instance, William Gladstone (Conservative Prime Minister, 1880-85 & 1868-74), had fought the General Election of 1874 to ‘abolish income tax’, and both Benjamin Disraeli (Conservative Prime Minister, 1874-80), and Salisbury (Conservative Prime Minister, 1886-92 & 1895-1902), in the last third of the nineteenth century exploited patriotism.¹³⁷ Similarly, Vinen observes that the Thatcherism of the 1970s was ‘rooted in a specific time’, and believes that its emergence first became apparent following the late 1960s in the midst of debates over declinism and economic modernization.¹³⁸ In retrospect, it seems extraordinary that a leader who was to become famous for her ideological commitment should, early on, appear to have no ideological programme at all. However, while Thatcher’s ideas did not amount to a newfound ideology, they were substantial in the way in which her policies operated.

¹³⁵ Brian Harrison, “Mrs Thatcher and the Intellectuals,” *Twentieth Century British History* 5 (1994): 206-45. For a discussion of old ideological roots see, also: E.H.H. Green, *Ideologies of Conservatism: Conservative Political Ideas in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

¹³⁶ Evans, *Thatcher and Thatcherism*, 6.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹³⁸ Vinen, *Thatcher’s Britain*, 7.

Under Heath, many Conservatives had begun to recognise the need for a new strategy given that the Party was in a state of ‘disarray’ and demoralization following defeat in both 1974 General Elections, and there was a clear sense of ‘widespread gloom in the party between 1974-75 about the party’s future prospects’.¹³⁹ For the Conservatives, Thatcher’s election as Conservative Leader did therefore herald a significant change of approach, offering Britain a break with the political rhetoric of the 1960s. Indeed, Harrison notes that as a politician, Thatcher was ‘quick and assiduous in assimilating facts and powerful in recalling them’, making her a ‘magnificent manager of information’.¹⁴⁰

However, it is significant that despite Thatcher’s emergence, there was ‘no stream of ideological speeches from her, nor had she opposed any of the policies of the government while she had been in Cabinet’, and she often took advice by ‘playing off one advisor against another’.¹⁴¹ Indeed, in addition to Thatcher’s lack of political awareness, her cautious impression of ‘wanting to fit in’ presented her as a political outsider.¹⁴² She did, however, succeed in utilizing her stance as a ‘conviction politician’, and developed ‘a genius for presenting her own attitudes and values as if they shone out as beacons of common sense’.¹⁴³ Although Thatcher had few enemies at the time of her election, her forceful manner and desire to ‘blow apart’ the notions of consensus by developing her own political structures demonstrated that she did not

¹³⁹ Gamble, *The Free Economy*, 83.

¹⁴⁰ Harrison, “Mrs Thatcher and the Intellectuals,” 208.

¹⁴¹ Gamble, *The Free Economy*, 82; Harrison, “Mrs Thatcher and the Intellectuals,” 208.

¹⁴² Evans, *Thatcher and Thatcherism*, 6-8.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 6.

seek to ‘absorb’ the hierarchy of government, but rather acted to ‘dismantle’ it.¹⁴⁴ Letwin notes the views of another Conservative sceptic: ‘She loved to talk of her “philosophy” and hobnob with Conservative dons, but what she garnished from them was hodgepodge from which she drew whatever came to hand’.¹⁴⁵ Furthermore, Harrison observes that Thatcher ‘did not want to be liked’ and had a style that was ‘deeply resented by many who saw tolerance and compromise as central to British political life, and who thought that these were secure and did not need safeguarding through any radical change of political direction’.¹⁴⁶ Thus, from this perspective, the *practice* of Opposition via advice, presentation and gender can be seen to be just as important (and perhaps even more so), than ideology.

The change from ‘compromise and consensus’ to ‘conviction and confrontation’ was a stance far from that of many One Nation Conservatives, which had a significant effect on Thatcher’s perception within the Party.¹⁴⁷ For instance, many traditional Conservatives prided themselves on ‘their intelligence, their flexibility and their pragmatism’, which clashed with Thatcher’s ‘abrasive, direct style’, which stripped away such ideas and ‘threw the devotees of the Tory political class into panic’.¹⁴⁸ In addition, MacInnes notes the view of a former Conservative minister, who described Thatcher’s takeover as a ‘coup d’état’ that equated it to the ‘hijacking of a political party’.¹⁴⁹ In Thatcher’s view, such individuals were ‘well intentioned but timid and backward-looking people, clinging to failed corporatist

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 47.

¹⁴⁵ Letwin, *The Anatomy of Thatcherism*, 18.

¹⁴⁶ Harrison, “Mrs Thatcher and the Intellectuals,” 225.

¹⁴⁷ Evans, *Thatcher and Thatcherism*, 47.

¹⁴⁸ Gamble, *The Free Economy*, 85.

¹⁴⁹ MacInnes, *Thatcherism at Work*, 50.

policies'.¹⁵⁰ Whether experienced or not, here was a Leader of the Opposition who was at least confident enough in herself to take on those who questioned her ability, and who used her gender to her advantage in order to prove that she was worthy and capable of the role.

Foreign Affairs

While Thatcher was keen to learn as a newly elected Leader of the Conservative Party, as a backbench MP she displayed a limited political awareness of the world outside the UK's borders, as described by a former colleague: 'She didn't have a foreign affairs background like all other Conservative Prime Ministers and when she arrived, she didn't have much political luggage, just patriotism and an anti-Soviet rhetoric'.¹⁵¹ Evans observes that she possessed none of the 'breadth of vision' that her Conservative predecessors had previously enjoyed, and 'tended to be suspicious of foreigners', which characterized her as 'a little Englander'.¹⁵² Indeed, Thatcher's reliance on experienced advisors and her need for guidance became prominent after she officially took up the Conservative leadership – particularly on foreign affairs. For instance, although she 'had been no rebel' in Heath's Cabinet, Thatcher was 'more a consumer of ideas produced by others, and far less energetic than Joseph in seeking them out'.¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ Harrison, "Mrs Thatcher and the Intellectuals," 226.

¹⁵¹ Holmes, *Thatcherism*, 71.

¹⁵² Evans, *Thatcher and Thatcherism*, 84.

¹⁵³ Harrison, "Mrs Thatcher and the Intellectuals," 211.

Additionally, as Harrison observes: ‘Joseph articulated ideas, Howe formulated policies, and Mrs Thatcher was the essential conduit from one to the other’.¹⁵⁴ Interestingly, in addition to her shadow cabinet, Thatcher also sought the advice of twenty-six outsiders, including economists and academics: ‘New ideas, new procedures, were the order of the day’.¹⁵⁵ This again highlights how important the influence of experts, experienced Cabinet Conservatives and the guidance of think tanks were to Thatcher in her early days in learning the nuances of policy. Highlighting that foreign affairs was clearly a weakness for Thatcher, shortly after her election as Leader of the Opposition, the *BBC* challenged her on whether she was worried about her lack of experience on the international stage. In response, she commented: ‘Er, not unduly. Er, one would have preferred more. But you can’t have experience at everything in politics.’¹⁵⁶ When it came to the Foreign Office, Thatcher resolutely distrusted the department and opposed their stance, methods and at times their worldview. This was acknowledged by Lord Powell (Private Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 1983-1991), in an interview for this research:

As far as the Foreign Office was concerned, she was George Brown in a skirt – someone who was all too likely to make gaffs. Politics can be quite toffee-nosed - some found it hard to deal with a woman who could be quite shrill and had rather strong views. Basically the FCO

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 214-215.

¹⁵⁶ “Radio Interview for BBC (after winning Conservative leadership),” *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 11 February 1975, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/102486> (accessed 20/12/2015).

takes the view that it should be writing foreign policy, not the Leader/Prime Minister, and she didn't entirely agree.¹⁵⁷

Although Thatcher was highly suspicious of the FCO, it is interesting that she was still happy to take advice from one of the most traditional Whig Tories of all, Peter Carrington, demonstrating her commitment to policy learning:

Carrington took day-to-day charge. She worked well with him and was content to leave much of it to him. The relationship with Carrington was a rather special one - they disagreed on almost everything. Peter came from the Left of the Party and she was on the Right, but he had enormous charm, she liked him very much and he was terribly kind to her later and was much more supportive of her than some of her Cabinet colleagues during her time in government. So she had great confidence in him.¹⁵⁸

However, Thatcher was aware that her heightened position as Leader of the Opposition exposed her inexperience: 'I know nothing about diplomacy, but I just know and believe that I want certain things for Britain'.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ Interview with Lord Powell of Bayswater, 18 November 2015.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. The FCO's role as well as Carrington's influence on Thatcher, especially during her trips abroad, will be explored in greater detail in chapters two and three of this thesis.

¹⁵⁹ Evans, *Thatcher and Thatcherism*, 87.

Carrington, who later served as Thatcher's first Foreign Secretary, also recognised this tendency in her when it came to foreign affairs: 'Thatcher evinced at times a distrust of the Foreign Office, a determined attitude that it didn't stick up for Britain and was softly conciliatory where the reverse was needed... I found this sentiment was never far from the surface, and could erupt in impatient hostility unless ably countered'.¹⁶⁰ Indeed, reluctant to follow FCO advice, Evans states that in matters concerning foreign policy Thatcher was prone to 'shoot from the hip' and eventually 'acted as her own foreign secretary'.¹⁶¹ In the 1970s, Thatcher appeared to leave foreign policy detail in the hands of her advisors, giving her the opportunity to utilize her uniqueness as a female leader by articulating her narrative, which later helped to seal her image as the 'Iron Lady'.

In regards to her foreign policy objectives, while not vastly far from Callaghan's rhetoric, Thatcher offered a differentiation from his approach. Her strategy from the beginning of her entry into the Conservative leadership had generally been to promote Britain as a 'leading power that had nuclear weapons and a seat on the Security Council of the United Nations', and to pursue a close alliance with the US.¹⁶² In line with Western thinking, the prospect of a 'non-nuclear Europe – let alone a non-nuclear world – filled her with dread'.¹⁶³ She was to show this in her reluctance to let Reagan negotiate on this unilaterally with the Soviets in the mid-1980s, given that she believed the president had acted naïvely on the issue. Surprisingly for a Conservative Leader in a nation with a history of strong links with its Empire and Commonwealth, Holmes notes that Thatcher's political rhetoric in

¹⁶⁰ Carrington, *Reflect On Things Past*, 285.

¹⁶¹ Evans, *Thatcher and Thatcherism*, 86-87.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 87.

¹⁶³ Holmes, *Thatcherism*, 85.

foreign affairs ‘led to friction’ within the Commonwealth - ‘an international body of largely Third World orientation for which Mrs T showed little affection’ – for instance, over the issue of imposing sanctions on the Apartheid regime in South Africa.¹⁶⁴

It is evident that Thatcher felt she lacked experience in foreign affairs, though during her trips abroad she was sure not to reveal this in public. The rest of the Conservative leadership shared this view. In March 1977, Lord Hailsham noted Lord Carrington’s concerns with the Party leadership and his fears for the 1979 General Election, after he asked: ‘What are we going to do if she gets in?’¹⁶⁵ In response, Hailsham commented: ‘All we can do is see that she is surrounded by adequate advisors’, highlighting that Thatcher’s leadership alone would not be sufficient enough to lead the country.¹⁶⁶ Indeed, it is evident from Thatcher’s US tours in 1977 and 1979 that Carrington played a key role in advising Thatcher on matters concerning foreign policy.¹⁶⁷ However, in using foreign visits to her advantage, Thatcher intelligently recognised that whilst abroad she at least appeared classless, and could thus overcome her sense of displacement at home. Thatcher made an intelligent calculation in utilizing international visits to her advantage since, paradoxically, behind her outside image was a sense of fragility and insecurity that went largely unnoticed by the outside world.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 85-86.

¹⁶⁵ “Hailsham diary,” *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 29 March 1977.
<http://www.margaretthatcher.org/archive/displaydocument.asp?docid=111182> (accessed 28/02/2015).

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Nicholas Henderson, “MT visit to Washington,” *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 23 December 1979, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/110591> (accessed 28/02/2015).

While there has been extensive coverage of Thatcher and her style of government in the international press over the past two decades, this thesis reveals a new dimension in Thatcher's character by demonstrating how she astutely used visits abroad in opposition to cultivate a new persona, which she was aware would be reported on back home, helping to increase her domestic standing. In addition to the new archival material available, by using oral history this research will demonstrate that behind her 'steely' image and exterior, as Leader of the Opposition Thatcher actually felt a great sense of inadequacy, and therefore sought to create a strategy for presenting herself abroad as an international statesperson. Personal diaries and memoirs will also be considered in this research to highlight Thatcher's insecurity, partly due to the fact that she was a woman in a male dominated world, but more significantly because she was not from the traditional Conservative ruling classes.

The first female leader of a political party: Thatcher's election as Leader of the Conservative Party, February 1975

Although Thatcher's husband, Denis, was known to have been a source of unconditional support throughout her career, when told of her decision to run for the Conservative leadership, he told her: 'You must be out of your mind. You haven't got a hope.'¹⁶⁸ Moore notes that his own version of the moment is more coloured: 'I did suck my teeth a bit. "Heath will murder you," I told her.'¹⁶⁹ However, in an interview with the *Daily Mail* shortly after her election, Thatcher stated: 'After ten years in which our vote had slumped and we had become a losing party there HAD to be a

¹⁶⁸ Margaret Thatcher, *The Path To Power* (London: Harper Press, 2011), 269.

¹⁶⁹ Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: Volume One*, 275.

change. At the very beginning I had considerable doubts about my chances but the speed with which the thing gathered force was quite astonishing'.¹⁷⁰ The paper, which later supported her campaign in the 1979 General Election four years later, noted at the time: 'Power, however, fascinates her. At every stage of the climb up the political ladder she has looked swiftly to the next stage'.¹⁷¹

Thatcher's election as Conservative Leader on 11th February 1975 inevitably stunned many of her colleagues, especially those loyal to Heath. Lord Hailsham commented in his memoirs: 'To be elected leader of a party without having held any of the senior offices in the Cabinet must be regarded as astonishing'.¹⁷² In an interview for this research, Lord Heseltine (Shadow Secretary of State for Industry, 1976-79. Defence Secretary, 1983-86), recalled: 'It was certainly a surprise and a mixed response. Many people had their doubts. She represented one wing of the Conservative Party, not the whole of the Party, and that was bound to influence her standing and undoubtedly she saw the Party move closer to her own perceptions of politics'.¹⁷³ Lord King of Bridgwater (Defence Secretary, 1989-92), shared a similar view: 'There was a fair sense of astonishment, amazement. She attracted a lot of people who were anti-Heath. She was an outsider from the start – the gentlemanly hierarchy of the Tory Party wasn't entirely her scene but it was a new departure – she was good'.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁰ Anthony Shrimley, "After three weeks of campaigning and celebration, now she has time to talk. And, of course, she talks to the Mail," *Daily Mail*, 14 February 1975.

¹⁷¹ "Margaret Thatcher Interview for *Daily Mail*," *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 17 February 1975, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/102494> (accessed 20/12/2015).

¹⁷² Hailsham, *A Sparrow's Flight*, 406.

¹⁷³ Interview with Lord Heseltine, 8 October 2015.

¹⁷⁴ Interview with Lord King of Bridgwater, 3 November 2015.

There is no doubt that the male dominance of the Conservative Party was a significant challenge that Thatcher had to tackle in order to gain victory over Heath. Speaking in 2015, Shirley Williams (President of the Social Democratic Party, 1982-87), recalled the issue of gender within Parliament, and added that even in the modern age there is still some way to go before women are seen as equal to men in politics: ‘When I first entered parliament in 1964 there were 23 women out of 650... We were treated with huge patronage. Men looked at us as “nice little things”... There was an attitude of protecting women, but not taking them very seriously.’¹⁷⁵ In her memoir *Climbing the Bookshelves*, Williams notes the difficulty she found in living two lives - one as a professional woman, the other as a traditional wife and mother: ‘Every working mother knows this pain... I suppose it is the price we pay for demanding equality between men and women’.¹⁷⁶

From Beatrix Campbell’s perspective, Thatcher’s approach to gender was as ‘a brittle traditionalist’, and since the primary importance for female voters at the time revolved around the themes of social support, health and welfare, Thatcher had the opportunity to gain significant and further proportions of the female vote given that her free market values represented the type of economy that many female voters were keen to support.¹⁷⁷ Indeed, Laura Beers notes that women continued to choose the Conservatives over Labour in far greater numbers than their male counterparts, perhaps due to the greater exposure to pressure on their household budget and their declining tolerance for inflation/lower trade unionization, and the very ‘masculine’,

¹⁷⁵ Interview with Shirley Williams, ITV: *Lorraine*, 5 May 2015
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xbj2ZZ11y14> (accessed 4/9/2019).

¹⁷⁶ Shirley Williams, *Climbing the Bookshelves: The Autobiography of Shirley Williams* (London: Virago, 2009).

¹⁷⁷ Beatrix Campbell, *The Iron Ladies: Why women vote Tory* (London: Virago, 1987), 2.

workerist culture of the Labour Party.¹⁷⁸ According to one MORI poll, data revealed that: ‘Women were more likely to vote Conservative because of personal support for Margaret Thatcher; they were more likely to share Thatcher’s economic worldview; and they were more likely both to accord a high importance to education, and to support Thatcher’s education policies’.¹⁷⁹ Thus, Thatcher was a leader who, given her gender, had the ability to attract female supporters who had originally been sceptical of the Party’s former stance under her predecessors.¹⁸⁰

Along with having to prove herself as a woman in politics, Thatcher’s biggest weakness at the time of her election was her inexperience, as observed by Robin Harris:

In truth, she was very inexperienced by the standards of the time. This was an era when statesmanship, and thus leadership, was traditionally associated with foreign affairs, on which she had strong views but no proven pedigree or depth of knowledge...

In practice, her inexperience was manifest in humdrum ways rather than in high policy. In matters of man management, she was, by

¹⁷⁸ Laura Beers, “Thatcher and the Women’s Vote,” in *Making Thatcher’s Britain*, ed. Ben Jackson and Robert Saunders (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 113-131. See, also: Jane Pilcher, “The gender significance of women in power: British women talking about Margaret Thatcher,” *European Journal of Women’s Studies* 2:4 (1995): 493-508.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 114.

¹⁸⁰ Beers, “Thatcher and the Women’s Vote,” 117-119.

common contest, hopeless – alternately chaotic and domineering, timid and abrasive. She was a notoriously bad Chairman.¹⁸¹

Although Thatcher's election raised concern among some Conservatives, for instance, Michael Heseltine, Jim Prior (Secretary of State for Employment, 1979-81) and Francis Pym (Defence Secretary, 1979-81), she clearly represented a new direction for the Party, one that her colleagues were intrigued to see develop.

When interviewed for this research, Lord Powell highlighted just how much she had to prove in her new position: 'She had never been anyone's first choice. She only emerged because the first choices fell by the wayside and cancelled each other out. She was well aware of that and she didn't really have a broad base of support in the Party – she had only got there by default, really.'¹⁸² Walking into the Conservative leadership as a woman in the male dominated arena of politics was a further challenge:

At that time, the culture of the Party was, like the national electorate at large, muddled and confused. The grassroots membership and the Central Office secretariat were amazed at the action of the Parliamentary Party in electing a woman leader... Heath's Shadow Cabinet colleagues were mostly simply outraged.¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ Harris, *Not For Turning*, 118.

¹⁸² Interview with Lord Powell of Bayswater, 18 November 2015.

¹⁸³ Norman Tebbit, "On the inner culture of the Tories," in *Margaret Thatcher's Revolution: How it happened and what it meant*, ed. Subroto Roy and John Clarke (London: Continuum, 2005), 15.

Lord Powell further recognised how Thatcher had to work harder in proving herself due to her gender:

The other thing she had to prove was being a woman, which was such an extraordinary thing to be at the top of British politics. She was constantly dogged by the thought that she'd had to get to the top entirely by her own efforts whilst the rest of them were sniggering behind her back a lot of the time – the “blue boys in the smoking room.”¹⁸⁴

To win, however, Thatcher needed ‘the blue boys in the smoking room’, particularly Airey Neave (Shadow Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, 1974-79), who skilfully managed her election campaign. When interviewed for this research, Lord Tebbit revealed that it was Neave who initially persuaded him to back Thatcher for the leadership: ‘I was in Airey’s group because it was Airey who first persuaded me that we should elect Margaret as Leader. His team had a big hill to climb to persuade my colleagues that she was “the best man of the bunch.”’¹⁸⁵ Speaking years later on his involvement with Neave in Thatcher’s leadership campaign, Tebbit told the BBC: ‘We resorted to all sorts of tactics.’¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁴ Interview with Lord Powell of Bayswater, 18 November 2015.

¹⁸⁵ Interview with Lord Tebbit, 15 October 2015.

¹⁸⁶ BBC, ‘Thatcher: A Very British Revolution’, Series 1: Episode 1, 20 May 2019 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m0005br9/thatcher-a-very-british-revolution-series-1-1-making-margaret> (accessed 17/09/2019).

An element often overlooked in Thatcher's early career is her position as a front bench treasury spokesman, a significant part of her role in Heath's government, which Lord Heseltine stressed was an asset to her campaign: 'Margaret had made a success of shadowing the Shadow Chancellor, Robert Carr, during the 1974 Budget (she had also impressed on the Front Bench as part of the Shadow Treasury team in the 1960s). She created an impact on those on the Treasury Committee and on the floor of the House at the first stage, which gave her the opening to become the favourite of the Right wing of the Party.'¹⁸⁷ Lord Lamont shared this view: 'She did a brilliant job in that post. I think that was one of the things that helped her to win the election.'¹⁸⁸ Harris appears to agree: 'What made Mrs Thatcher's parliamentary performances so notable, however, was her mastery of detail, and her marshalling of facts and figures within a clear framework of argument'.¹⁸⁹ However, he also notes that Thatcher's early speeches 'were notable for their lack of subtlety or restraint. As a very junior member of the Government she chided, bossed and bullied, and shamelessly exhibited her abilities, in a manner which would not have been tolerated from a man, nor perhaps a less attractive woman'.¹⁹⁰

Speaking off the record to the journalist Hugo Young in April 1975, Ian Gilmour (Shadow Secretary of State for Defence, 1976-79), did not have a high opinion of the new Leader of the Opposition:

¹⁸⁷ Interview with Lord Heseltine, 8 October 2015.

¹⁸⁸ Interview with Lord Lamont of Lerwick, 19 November 2015. In particular, Thatcher shone during a House of Commons debate on the alteration of income tax rates in January 1975. It was her rhetoric and confidence during this debate that Lord Lamont's comments allude to: "HC Committee (Finance Bill)," *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 15 January 1975, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/102588> (accessed 11/09/2016).

¹⁸⁹ Harris, *Not For Turning*, 58.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 59.

Not clear who she listens to except Keith Joseph. Her own attachment to ideology is unclear. She has no ideas, not even views I think. She just has some strong prejudices... She has not made her mark in the country. She has the Party behind her solid, unassailable position. But outside she remains curiously blurred. This is partly because she has said little, and partly because she has said support is so strong. That is a bad message.¹⁹¹

Although there was a clear divide within the Conservative Party between those who backed Thatcher and others who favoured Heath's disposition, the *Daily Express* surprised readers the day after Thatcher's victory with the headline: 'We'll back her, say losers'.¹⁹² In their feature, they reported the words of William Whitelaw (Chairman of the Conservative Party, 1974-75), one of Heath's closest aides: 'My colleagues have made their decision... She will have my full support and I am sure the Party will unite behind her'.¹⁹³ Additionally, John Peyton (Shadow Leader of the House of Commons, 1974-76), who also ran against Thatcher coming bottom of the poll, added: 'I wish her nothing but well'.¹⁹⁴

Philip Cowley and Matthew Bailey quote Julian Critchley (MP for Aldershot, 1970-1997), in demonstrating how she emerged as Conservative Leader:

¹⁹¹ Ion Trewin (ed.), *The Hugo Young Papers: Thirty Years of British Politics – Off The Record* (London: Penguin, 2008), 49.

¹⁹² *Daily Express*, "We'll Back Her, say Losers," 12 February 1975.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

‘The party did not vote for Margaret, they voted against Ted Heath’.¹⁹⁵ Here, it can be interpreted that in electing a female leader, it was more a reactive rather than a positive move – they didn’t particularly want a female leader, but it was a potentially successful way of advancing on from the Heath years. Indeed, Cowley and Bailey state that her election was purely the ‘unintended consequence of removing Edward Heath’, given that no other candidate was prepared to run against him, having ‘ruled themselves out, shot themselves in the foot, or both’.¹⁹⁶

Additionally, assisting Airey Neave’s team further, Cowley and Bailey observe that unlike the strategic planning of Thatcher’s campaign, Heath’s, by contrast, was ‘inept in the extreme... it is difficult to determine who was in charge’.¹⁹⁷ Such poor planning enabled Thatcher’s team to recruit new allies, who, having experienced the failures of the Heath government, were lured over to the Right of the Party, as stated by an anonymous Conservative MP: ‘My vote is a typical example of Edward Heath losing his support... His whole style and manner continued to irritate me. I was courted by Thatcher’s campaigning team and fell for it’.¹⁹⁸ Writing to a colleague shortly after her election, Thatcher herself confessed: ‘Even now, I am not quite sure how it all happened’.¹⁹⁹ Revealingly, Cowley and Bailey further note that Thatcher’s own sense of insecurity led to her ‘harbouring doubts about the legitimacy of victory’, and ‘for a long time the existence of such doubts vitiated her leadership’.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁵ Philip Cowley and Matthew Bailey, “Peasants’ Uprising or Religious War? Re-examining the 1975 Conservative Leadership Contest,” *British Journal of Political Science* 30 (2000): 599-629.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 600.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 602.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 600.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 628.

Given her surprising victory and relative political inexperience, Thatcher's reliance on her experienced advisors, coupled with her constant need for guidance, became prominent soon after she emerged as Leader of the Opposition. These new figures were akin to 'the utilitarian's of the 1930s: the essential men who in a crisis could translate policy into action'.²⁰¹ Interestingly, Harrison observes that these outsiders had initially been recruited by Thatcher's team in 1974, before the Conservative leadership election, and remained part of her supervisory network up until her election as Prime Minister in 1979.

Commenting on Thatcher's election as Conservative Leader in an interview for this research, Lord Howe of Aberavon recalled:

She was a novelty of sorts, which she perhaps didn't realise at the time. She certainly recognised the need of mobilizing the troops that were available to her. She did have leadership qualities, so the best thing she could do was exploit the people more experienced than herself... make the most of what she'd got. And that made a difference.²⁰²

While she later remained behind Callaghan in the polls in the lead up to the 1979 General Election, Campbell observes how in her early years as Leader of the Opposition Thatcher benefitted from being perceived as a 'novelty', something that

²⁰¹ Ibid., 214.

²⁰² Interview with Lord Howe of Aberavon, 26 February 2015.

he alludes she continued to benefit from throughout her years in office: ‘A woman leader was something different in the grey-suited soap opera of British politics. Whatever she did was news, and she was inexhaustibly photogenic’.²⁰³ Campbell further adds that Thatcher’s background helped her gain support: ‘There was undisguised admiration for her rise from humble roots and her unflinching seizure of her opportunity. This was the period when the legend of the corner shop suddenly gained currency’.²⁰⁴ Even so, Campbell recognises that Thatcher’s years as Leader of the Opposition ‘were a particularly difficult and ambiguous time... she was very conscious of the weakness of her political position, a little frightened of her own inexperience and the heavy responsibility which had suddenly been thrown upon her’.²⁰⁵

Within the Conservative Party, Keith Joseph was an extremely significant figure in in Thatcher’s early days Opposition Leader. Since 1974, he had begun developing a ‘free market and monetarist programme’, proclaiming that the Conservative Party needed to ‘rediscover its principles’ by cutting public spending and reducing the reliance on the state.²⁰⁶ Launching a significant critique of the ‘middle way’ of collectivism, Joseph stressed that high tax rates, borrowing and public spending had produced an excess of socialism that had ‘overburdened the economy’.²⁰⁷ Harold Wilson (Labour Prime Minister, 1974-76), identified Joseph as the Conservative ‘who would provide the greatest leadership challenge to Labour’,

²⁰³ Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher: Volume One*, 315.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 364.

²⁰⁶ Gamble, *The Free Economy*, 80.

²⁰⁷ Kavanagh, *Thatcherism*, 116-117.

adding that he was ‘standing at the top of a powerful-looking pyramid of the next generation’.²⁰⁸

Joseph’s problem, however, was that he relied on ‘reflection’ rather than ‘action’ and ‘couldn’t distinguish the small from the large print’, which made him a weak candidate for the Conservative leadership.²⁰⁹ Lord Tebbit recognised this view in an interview for this research: ‘Keith had a very powerful intellect and Margaret was very fond of him. His problem was that he looked closely at every side of a question and found it difficult to come to a final decision.’²¹⁰ Joseph’s influence on Thatcher prior to her election as Opposition Leader, however, cannot be underestimated, as highlighted by Lord Lamont:

The greatest influence on her intellectually without any doubt was Keith Joseph – he was enormously important. She frequently said later that without him, none of it would have been possible. Joseph had originally intended to stand for the leadership, but he came to the conclusion (a shrewd piece of self-assessment), that he wasn’t the best candidate and that he wouldn’t be a good Prime Minister, so he decided to back her. He had made a lot of the arguments, such as the arguments against prices and incomes control and how to deal with inflation. He led the way and she followed. All the arguments for

²⁰⁸ Denham, *Keith Joseph*, 184-185.

²⁰⁹ Gamble, *The Free Economy*, 10.

²¹⁰ Interview with Lord Tebbit, 15 October 2015.

privatization and a market economy – all these were made by Joseph.

He was the biggest influence on her, I would say.²¹¹

While Joseph made a considerable impact on Conservative policy pre-1975, Chapter Four of this thesis will highlight how, in actual fact, it was more a variety of outsiders (including academics and intellectuals), as well as a well-informed group of Conservative insiders (with Adam Ridley at the forefront), who were the masterminds in creating a renewed Conservative socio-economic agenda between 1975 and 1979. It was this level of planning that made the Party ready for government prior to Thatcher's election as Prime Minister in 1979.

The focus on Thatcher's visits abroad during her years as Leader of the Opposition helps to add new light on the relationship between foreign and domestic politics during the 1970s and the internationalization of policy, while uncovering how Thatcher utilized the international stage as a way of presenting herself as a capable female leader who had the potential to one day hold office. By exploring the themes of soft power and the presence of declinism and neoliberalism within the British economy during the period, this thesis will highlight how Conservative policymaking was shaped between 1975-79, and consider whether the Party's victory in 1979 was the result of chance or design. More broadly, this research will contribute to the emerging historiography regarding Opposition studies, and will serve as a unique insight into how a largely inexperienced and untested Leader of the Opposition used these years as an 'apprenticeship to power'. Thatcher turned that apprenticeship to her

²¹¹ Interview with Lord Lamont of Lerwick, 19 November 2015.

advantage by learning the nuances of foreign and domestic politics, which enabled her to go on to become one of the longest serving Prime Ministers that the UK has ever known.

II

Thatcher and the United States

(North American Tour, 1975. Tour of the United States, 1977)

As highlighted in the Introduction, there is a link between domestic politics and foreign policy, which has been relatively neglected in the historiography of Thatcherism. Thatcher actively looked towards the US as a source of political inspiration, imagining that Britain could become as prosperous as America.¹ This chapter will explore the relationship between foreign and domestic policy by analysing Thatcher's North American tour to the United States and Canada in September 1975, along with her 1977 US visit to meet with President Carter. Specifically, it will examine the extent to which Thatcher used these visits as a way of establishing herself as the new leader of the Conservative Party, utilizing her presence abroad in order to portray herself as a credible alternative Prime Minister. Notably, Thatcher also used these visits as a way of learning about US approaches to policy, which in turn helped to influence her political rhetoric. In terms of the theme of 'soft power', this chapter will demonstrate how Thatcher sought to promote Britain while abroad, proclaiming to her foreign audiences that Britain's apparent economic gloom had been overdone. This chapter will also explore relations between the FCO and Thatcher's opposition office, and observe whether there was an active sense of distrust within the relationship.

¹ NAUK FCO 82/490 (Part C), Speech to the National Press Club, Washington, 19 September 1975.

In Thatcher's conversations with the Carter administration, there is a link between domestic politics and foreign policy since both leaders wanted international approval on their political agendas. In order to be seen as competent in their positions, both Thatcher and Carter used foreign affairs to their domestic advantage: Carter believed that focussing on foreign rather than domestic policy would strengthen his position, and Thatcher saw foreign affairs as a way of establishing her authority as a new and untried Leader of the Opposition, and this element has been overlooked in the current literature. This chapter will therefore explore how the internationalization of policy during the mid-1970s went some way in strengthening both sides of the 'Special Relationship', and helped Thatcher assert herself as the new Conservative Leader.

The nature of Anglo-American relations during the 1970s will firstly be outlined before an analysis of the US part of Thatcher's North American tour. Secondly, this chapter will present an overview of Anglo-Canadian relations at the time of Thatcher's visit to Canada, which will be followed by an analysis of how her first North American tour as Leader of the Opposition was received overall. James Cooper has previously written on Thatcher's 1975 US visit, however, this research is the first to offer an analysis of the Canadian part of her tour.² It is particularly surprising that this visit has been left unexplored by academics given that Thatcher was not well received in Canada, which in addition to her inexperience reveals an evident strain in Anglo-Canadian relations during the period. Lastly, this section will analyse Thatcher's visit to the US in 1977, and consider the nature of Anglo-American relations under Jimmy Carter's presidency. This will be followed by an

² See: Cooper, "The Foreign Politics of Opposition."

evaluation of how Thatcher's second US trip as Leader of the Opposition was received overall by the British and American press.

According to Michael Keating, policy learning, whether domestically or internationally, 'should properly be confined to voluntary adoption and adaptation of ideas from elsewhere'.³ In line with this, Diane Stone observes that 'global policy processes have emerged with governments, international organizations, and nonstate actors, which has helped specifically in responding to "simultaneous problems" of nations experiencing similar problems in areas of education, health, welfare, urbanization, and population growth'.⁴ Essentially, in a sentence: 'Policy process under globalization would appear to be that "policy transfer" is on the increase'.⁵ From Stone's perspective, policy transfer 'is a process whereby knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements or institutions in one place is used across time or space in the development of policy elsewhere'.⁶ Stone also notes the emergence of 'transnational policy professionals' - a diverse community of consultants, foundation officers, business leaders, scientific experts, think tank pundits... who are growing in number, policy reach, and professionalism'.⁷ In an ever growing international scene, Stone highlights that there is greater pressure on parliamentarians to cooperate and

³ Michael Keating, Paul Cairney and Eve Hepburn, "Policy convergence, transfer and learning in the UK under devolution," *Regional & Federal Studies* 22 (2012): 289-307.

⁴ Diane Stone, "Global public policy, transnational policy communities, and their networks," *Policy Studies Journal* 36 (2008): 19-38. See, also: Eva Kolinsky (ed.), *Opposition in Western Europe* (Routledge, 2016). Transnational history focuses on the global linkages between the nation and the state. For more on this topic see, for instance: A. Iriye and P. Saunier (eds), *The Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 943; C. A. Bayly et al., "AHR Conversation: On Transnational History," *American Historical Review* 111: 5 (2006), 1441-64; Michael McGerr, "The Price of the 'New Transnational History'," *The American Historical Review*, 96 (1991), 1056-1067 and Thomas Bender (ed.), *Rethinking American History in a Global Age* (Berkeley, California and London: University of California Press, 2002).

⁵ Ibid., 26.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., 30-31.

engage with their foreign counterparts: a distinct global arena is evolving with different sets of networks, global public–private partnerships, and multilateral initiatives. These global policy processes are distinguishable from national and intergovernmental processes but remain interconnected.⁸

Overseas, Thatcher recognised the advantages that could be gained by learning from her foreign counterparts in terms of policymaking, and she simultaneously sought to gain a positive reception from her public engagements and private meetings, knowing that the international media’s perception of her would be reported on in the British press. Going beyond Stone’s definition, in examining how transnational policy learning projects back into the domestic policy sphere, it is interesting to observe that these visits gave Thatcher the chance to gain experience in foreign affairs, while also giving her the opportunity to present herself and her vision as a relatively unknown political figure at the time. The media attention that surrounded Thatcher during her trips abroad is particularly significant to her development as Leader of the Opposition, as international coverage enabled her to assert her ground and raise her profile at home.

As this thesis has outlined, Thatcher’s political inexperience was clearly her biggest weakness at the time of her election as Leader of the Opposition. Speaking to the BBC in 2019, Ken Clarke (Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1993-97), recalled: ‘She had real problems establishing her authority... The other thing was, when she became

⁸ Ibid., 33-34.

leader, frankly, she wasn't any good at it.'⁹ Michael Dobbs, however, sympathized: '... but she worked incredibly hard at it. And she really did plot and plan and be very self critical.'¹⁰ Nevertheless, foreign affairs was evidently the area that Thatcher needed greater experience in upon coming into the Conservative leadership, as observed by Carrington who, in an interview with Charles Moore remarked: 'She hardly knew where Calais was.'¹¹ While this could be perceived as a classic patrician comment (and, indeed, a rather arrogant one), it does appear to be true that Thatcher's inexperience in foreign affairs was a serious concern for senior Conservatives. For instance, Lord Tebbit shared this view of Thatcher's inexperience of international affairs when interviewed for this research:

She really knew nothing of foreign affairs... She was on an enormous learning path to widen her knowledge in every way. She had a group of senior people who had been in government who she wisely took into the Shadow Cabinet... She really did lean on the older members.¹²

Lord Lamont also revealed that Thatcher's main weakness lay in matters concerning foreign affairs: 'I think she was probably very shaky on foreign affairs. She trod very carefully on matters to do with the EC – she was conscious that her predecessor had been very strongly pro and still lurking around, and she wanted to keep the Party

⁹ BBC, 'Thatcher: A Very British Revolution', Series 1: Episode 1, 20 May 2019 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m0005br9/thatcher-a-very-british-revolution-series-1-1-making-margaret> (accessed 17/09/2019).

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: Volume One*, 365.

¹² Interview with Lord Tebbit, 15 October 2015.

together.’¹³ Clearly, Thatcher was aware that her heightened position exposed her inexperience: ‘I know nothing about diplomacy, but I just know and believe that I want certain things for Britain’.¹⁴ The desire to prove herself as a credible leader was, therefore, the overriding reason why she embarked on an ambitious schedule with numerous international visits during her years as Leader of the Opposition.

Commenting on Thatcher two months after her election, Ian Gilmour stated in an off-the-record meeting with Hugo Young in April 1975: ‘She has not made a mark in the country. She has the party solid behind her, unassailable position. But outside she remains curiously blurred’.¹⁵ Also speaking off-the-record with Young, Adam Ridley (Special Advisor to the Treasury, 1979-84), observed: ‘The policy groups have grown ridiculously. They are said to be seventy-five’.¹⁶ Her inexperience, also, had been evident from day one of her election: ‘She is conscious of having to do a lot of self-education. Thus the foreign trips. The American trip was a very self-conscious exercise in advertisement. But the Australian trip is more a matter of genuine interest and fact-finding’ (these visits will be explored in greater detail in this chapter and in Chapter Three of this thesis).¹⁷ While he accepted that Thatcher ‘has strong instincts at a high and general level’, he added that ‘once she works down through the layers of argument to the detail she will not be intransigent’.¹⁸

¹³ Interview with Lord Lamont of Lerwick, 19 November 2015.

¹⁴ Evans, *Thatcher and Thatcherism*, 87.

¹⁵ Ion Trewin, *The Hugo Young Papers*, 50.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 96-97.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 97.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 96.

Seeking to prove herself on the world stage as the new Leader of the Opposition, Young notes that ‘a crash course in world travel’ therefore followed Thatcher’s election as Conservative Leader.¹⁹ Cooper observes that, while ‘carrying little weight at home’, in September 1975 Thatcher was determined to be ‘heard in the wider world’, and so ventured out to the US on her first trip abroad as Leader of the Opposition.²⁰ It is evident that prominent members of Heath’s former government were concerned about her innocence of foreign affairs and recognised the necessity of her gaining experience overseas, demonstrated in a comment made by one of the Party’s chief foreign policy experts: ‘Can you imagine her at a summit conference?’²¹ Nile Gardiner and Stephen Thompson observe that those loyal to Heath viewed Thatcher ‘with unmasked suspicion because she was a conviction politician unwilling to bow before them’.²² Reflecting back on the attitude of her sceptics, Thatcher stated in her memoirs: ‘It showed many people from modest backgrounds like mine how close to the surface the Tory grandees lay an ugly streak of contempt for those they considered voting fodder’.²³ Revealingly, she added: ‘At the time, however, I was bitterly upset by it. Sometimes I was close to tears. Sometimes I was shaking with anger. But as I told Bill Shelton, the MP for Streatham and a friend: “I saw how they destroyed Keith (Joseph). Well, they’re not going to destroy me.”’²⁴ Therefore, possessing a sense of insecurity during her early days as Conservative Leader, Thatcher tactically saw visits to the US as a way of increasing her political standing at home as well as abroad, recognising that by gaining favourable press coverage across the Atlantic, she could promote herself as a credible candidate for Prime Minister.

¹⁹ Hugo Young, *One of Us* (London: Pan Macmillan, 2013), 120.

²⁰ Cooper, “The Foreign Politics of Opposition,” 26.

²¹ Young, *One of Us*, 120.

²² Gardiner and Thompson, *Margaret Thatcher on Leadership*, 61.

²³ Thatcher, *Path to Power*, 269.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

Anglo-American Relations, 1969-1975

Although Britain and the US had fought two world wars together, by the early 1960s the transatlantic relationship had become less important in global terms, given that Britain's relative economic decline diminished the nation's role in international affairs.²⁵ Indeed, Alan Dobson argues that by the end of the 1960s the special relationship was less special than any time since the late 1920s, highlighting that the post-war framework, which had initially strengthened the alliance, was crumbling.²⁶ For instance, in order to uphold Britain's global interests and to manage difficult international circumstances, in the late 1960s Harold Wilson looked towards membership of the EEC, as observed by Helen Parr: 'Wilson was driven not exclusively by domestic political considerations, but by strategic concerns'.²⁷ While Wilson's policy was internationalist in its approach, Parr asserts that 'his approach was founded upon understandable assumptions and articulated the constant objective of accession to the "right sort" of Europe'.²⁸

²⁵ Evans, *Thatcher and Thatcherism*, 90-91.

²⁶ Alan Dobson, *Anglo-American Relations in the Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge, 1995), 137. For more on Anglo-American relations see, for instance: Christopher Bartlett, *The Special Relationship: A Political History of Anglo-American Relations Since 1945* (London: Longman, 1992); John Dickie, *Special No More: Anglo-American Relations: Rhetoric and Reality* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1994); Alan Dobson and Steve Marsh (eds), *Anglo-American Relations: Contemporary Perspectives* (Oxon: Routledge, 2013); Ritchie Ovendale, *Anglo-American Relations in the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998); Stephen Spender, *Love-hate Relations: A Study of Anglo-American Sensibilities* (London: Hamilton, 1974).

²⁷ Helen Parr, *Britain's Policy Towards the European Community: Harold Wilson and Britain's World Role, 1964-1967* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 15. See, also: Glen O'Hara and Helen Parr (eds), *The Wilson Governments 1964-1970 Reconsidered* (Oxon: Routledge, 2006); Helen Parr, "Britain, America, East of Suez and the EEC: finding a role in British foreign policy, 1964-67," *Contemporary British History* 20:3 (2006): 403-421.

²⁸ Parr, *Britain's Policy Towards the European Community*, 15.

Economically, both Britain and America were experiencing more and more economic obstacles by the end of the 1960s as pressure on the dollar increased and sterling was devalued.²⁹ Therefore, much of the economic and defence structures that had underpinned the special relationship following 1945 progressively weakened, with Britain and the US focusing their attention on domestic matters instead. A significant reason for the loss of this defence framework was due to that fact that Britain had become more preoccupied with European affairs, a factor that enabled the US to drift away from Britain, as they believed that Europe had little in terms of constructive policy.³⁰ It was the global upheaval of the post-war years that made it difficult for the special relationship to prosper, however, as Dobson suggests, both sides did begin to adjust to international circumstances by the late 1970s.³¹

In the historiography of Conservative policy during the early 1970s, it is widely acknowledged that Heath focused his attention on developing relations with Europe, rather than with the US. Indeed, Robb highlights that Heath did not accept that an Anglo-American alliance was beneficial to British interests and instead turned his focus onto European matters, believing that Britain could ‘shape a new Europe’, an action which fundamentally altered Anglo-American dynamics.³² Dobson further observes that Heath ‘kept his distance metaphorically and geographically’ from America, and based his policy towards the US on a ‘cool calculation of interest’.³³

²⁹ Dobson, *Relations*, 137-138.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 138.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 140.

³² Robb, *Strained Partnership?* 49.

³³ Dobson, *Relations*, 141. For more on the Nixon-Heath relationship see, for instance: Andrew Scott, *Allies Apart: Heath, Nixon and the Anglo-American Relationship* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

Indeed, on Heath's attitude towards the Anglo-American alliance, Henry Kissinger (US National Security Advisor, 1969-75), later wrote in his memoirs:

He was the only British leader I encountered who not only failed to cultivate the "special relationship" with the United States but also actively sought to downgrade it and to give Europe pride of place in British policy. All of this made for an unprecedented period of strain in Anglo-American relations.³⁴

However, there is work that contradicts this view, seen in *Heath, Nixon and the Rebirth of the Special Relationship: Britain, the US and the EC, 1969-74*, by Niklas Roszbach. Roszbach argues that between 1969 and 1974 Heath and President Nixon 'unintentionally gave new life to the Anglo-American Special Relationship', in light of their own individual interests.³⁵ In Roszbach's view, instead of threatening the Anglo-American alliance, the combination of Heath's desire to reverse Britain's decline and Nixon's attempts to reposition the international stance of the US prompted an unintended 'rebirth' of the special relationship.³⁶ Although it can be argued that Heath's focus on European affairs revolved around his intention to restore British prosperity, rather than a specific distaste of US affairs, his stance undoubtedly created tension within the Anglo-American partnership during his premiership.

³⁴ Henry Kissinger, *Years of Renewal* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999), 603.

³⁵ Niklas Roszbach, *Heath, Nixon and the Rebirth of the Special Relationship: Britain, the US and the EC, 1969-74* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2009), 1.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

In view of Heath's perceived anti-Atlanticist attitude, Thatcher was keen to renew the Anglo-American relationship, as confirmed by Lord Lamont:

Margaret was enormously pro the special relationship. Profoundly, she believed that the future of the world rested on the Anglo-American relationship and a rule of law combined with parliamentary democracy was what she thought America and Britain had given to the world. They were the two countries that understood it the most. Heath thought political relationships should be developed with Europe and probably thought that America, in the last analysis, was unreliable.³⁷

Economically, both Britain and the US continued to face similar problems during the 1970s. America's, however, were less severe in scale given that her economy was significantly larger, and the dollar still had the world's reserve currency. By the early 1970s, Britain had fallen behind its European competitors economically, noted by Sir Nicholas Henderson (British Ambassador to Washington, 1979-82): 'Poor productivity lies at the heart of our problem... We can no longer play our historic role. Today we are not only no longer a world power, but we are not in the first rank even as a European one...' ³⁸ Far from Britain's position as a great power during the early twentieth century being maintained, he added that the country was now 'poor and unproud'. ³⁹

³⁷ Interview with Lord Lamont of Lerwick, 19 November 2015.

³⁸ "Economy: The Henderson Dispatch (leaked 1979; declassified 2006)," *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 31 March 1979, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/110961> (accessed 08/07/2016).

³⁹ Ibid.

Thus, Britain's label as the 'sick man of Europe' was the overriding perception within the White House in 1975, revealed in a comment made by Henry Kissinger to President Ford: 'Britain is a tragedy – it has sunk to begging, borrowing, stealing... That Britain has become such a scrounger is a disgrace'.⁴⁰ Kavanagh notes that Britain was 'seen as a warning to other Western states', particularly in the US, evident in a statement made by President Ford in 1976: 'It would be tragic for this country if we went down the same path and ended up with the same problems that Great Britain has'.⁴¹ American weariness of the UK's economic position had been rising throughout the 1970s, in part due to sterling's decline, in part due to the fact that the US relied on Britain's ability to purchase exports from other nations, and to some extent due to the UK's retreat from overseas military spending. Expressing his concern, Alan Greenspan (Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors in Washington), wrote to Ford in April 1975:

Observe that the British economy appears to be at the point where they must accelerate the amount of governmental fiscal stimulus just to stand still. This is clearly a very dangerous situation. The frightening parallels, with a lag, between the financial policies of the U.S. and those of the UK's should give us considerable pause.⁴²

⁴⁰ "Kissinger conversation with President Ford," *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 8 January 1975, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/archive/displaydocument.asp?docid=110510> (accessed 11/12/2014).

⁴¹ Kavanagh, *Thatcherism*, 1.

⁴² Graeme Mount, *895 Days That Changed the World: The Presidency of Gerald R. Ford* (London: Black Rose, 2006), 14.

However, it is important to note that the US had economic problems of its own during the 1970s, as demonstrated in the work of Michael Heale.⁴³ For instance, following the Yom Kippur War in 1973, Arab countries cut off oil supplies to the US, an act that propelled their economies into decline, causing a dramatic crisis for the Ford administration.⁴⁴ The financial effect of the ‘oil shock’ was the curtailment of federal expenditure, high interest rates and price increases, prompting the worst American recession since the 1930s.⁴⁵ As a result of America’s fragile domestic economy, Ford was seen to be leading a ‘weak caretaker government’, and ‘moved cautiously’ by harmonizing with Congress to secure the nation’s recovery.⁴⁶ Mount states that the UK saw itself as ‘a junior partner’ in the special relationship during the 1970s - ‘a role that the Ford administration were happy to acknowledge’.⁴⁷ However, he observes that both Britain and the US were unable to offer full confidence in each other during the period, given that both relied upon the economic stability of the other.⁴⁸

There are several reasons why Thatcher initially looked to America rather than Europe as an ally and an example for political inspiration. Firstly, America’s economic position and prominent standing on the world stage mattered hugely to British interests, and the democratic glamour of the American constitution had long been an inspiration for past British leaders to follow. The historic significance of the special relationship was also of importance to Britain, as both nations had allied

⁴³ In contrast to the extensive array of works on British declinism, there is significantly less material available in the American historiography. However, key works include: Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of The Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (London: Fontana, 1989); Michael A. Bernstein and David E. Adler (eds), *Understanding American Economic Decline* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

⁴⁴ Michael Heale, *The United States in the Long Twentieth Century: Politics and Society since 1900*, Second edition (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 238-9.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Mount, *895 Days*, 3.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 3-18.

together during the Second World War, fighting against the rise of Nazi Germany. Furthermore, Thatcher was a child of the wartime alliance and had experienced the bleak socio-economic reality of life during war, which strengthened her instinct to work closely with the world's leading power in order to safeguard Anglo-American interests.⁴⁹ Having positioned herself on the Right of the Party, Thatcher was also a great admirer of the former wartime Prime Minister, Winston Churchill (Conservative Prime Minister, 1951-55), who led Britain during the aftermath of war and allied with America in the face of Soviet expansionism. In sync with her own line of thinking, Thatcher also believed that America had 'far more people with a practical business approach and fewer intellectuals and theorists who told her what was not possible'.⁵⁰ Indeed, *The Washington Post* later noted Thatcher's clear interest in American ways: 'It's the vigour, the risk-taking, the innovation that I admire in America...'⁵¹

More significantly, following the Conservative defeat in 1964, Giles Scott-Smith demonstrates how Thatcher was identified as a credible politician by William Galloway (the then first secretary and political officer of the US Embassy), when she took up the role of a junior spokeswoman for pensions that same year. Galloway had been impressed by Thatcher's 'tremendous self confidence', observing her as an 'outstanding lady in the House of Commons at that time' and 'a politician not seeking support for her own political advancement'.⁵² As a result of his interest, Thatcher was asked to participate in the State Department's International Visitor Program in 1967. Dean Mahin, Director of the Program, stated: 'The embassy clearly indicated that it

⁴⁹ Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher: Volume One*, 174.

⁵⁰ Evans, *Thatcher and Thatcherism*, 99.

⁵¹ Bernard Nossiter, "Margaret Thatcher Confident She Will Be Prime Minister," *The Washington Post*, 31 August 1977.

⁵² Scott-Smith, "'Her Rather Ambitious Washington Program'," 9-11.

was possible that she would become the first female PM for Britain. It is not the sort of thing that one would forget...'⁵³ Indeed, Thatcher herself saw this as a unique opportunity and outlined her objectives accordingly: 'To meet some women members of the Congress' and 'to gain impressions of the political atmosphere in various parts of the United States'.⁵⁴

During her six-week tour, Thatcher was seen to have had 'numerous personal contacts which included nearly every well-known English journalist in Washington', and her participation in the Program was viewed as 'a great success for both her and the Program's organisers'.⁵⁵ Scott-Smith notes that as a result of the Program, Thatcher had been granted access to key figures in Lyndon Johnson's administration as well as in Congress, and had the opportunity to meet 'several of the top economists who had an influence on her intellectually'.⁵⁶ Galloway remained an admirer of Thatcher and wrote to her following the Conservatives' third election victory in 1987. In response, Thatcher replied: 'It was marvellous to hear from you, especially as you masterminded my first visit to the United States... I have been eternally grateful for the wonderful experience it gave me'.⁵⁷ Given the successful outcome of her visit, Thatcher evidently felt comfortable in the presence of prestigious American figures and sought to capitalize on her earlier achievements by strengthening her connections with those close to the US administration. During an interview for this research, Nile Gardiner (Director of the Heritage Foundation, 2006-present), recalled that Thatcher had made an impression in Houston in 1967,

⁵³ Ibid., 13-14.

⁵⁴ Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: Volume One*, 320.

⁵⁵ Scott-Smith, "'Her Rather Ambitious Washington Program,'" 14, 20.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 22.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 60.

observing: ‘She cultivated ties abroad long before she became Prime Minister. Later on, she then had no fear of speaking her private views publicly’.⁵⁸ It is therefore unsurprising that Thatcher chose the US as the most appropriate nation to visit for her first official engagement as Leader of the Opposition.

Visit to the United States: New York, Washington D.C. and Chicago (13th – 22nd September, 1975)

In advance of Thatcher’s North American tour in September 1975, Derek Thomas from the North America Department of the FCO produced a briefing explicitly for the visit in order to dispel some of the gloom that had surrounded the British economy, in an attempt to lessen American fears. In relation to the theme of declinism that this thesis seeks to explore, it is clear that by the mid-1970s the US was concerned with the way in which inflation was proceeding to strain the British economy. Understandably, the FCO recognised that the ‘state of Britain’ was going to be a key topic up for discussion on Thatcher’s agenda: ‘Audiences will want to hear her affirm strongly that Britain is going to come through its current difficulties. The North American press has overdone the gloom’.⁵⁹

Thatcher therefore endeavoured to address this concern by stressing that the poor socio-economic outlook that Britain faced was temporary, and in doing so she highlighted herself and her Party as the saviours who would restore Britain’s

⁵⁸ Interview with Nile Gardiner, 31 March 2016.

⁵⁹ NAUK FCO 82/488 (Part A), FCO note to Mr Howe, 21 July 1975.

prosperity. Given that the Ford administration had been informed that Thatcher was ‘committed to British membership in the European Community’, the FCO advised that American audiences would ‘hope to hear that we see our membership of the European communities as complementing our transatlantic relationship, not as being in conflict with it’.⁶⁰⁶¹ In light of the fragility of the West’s economy, they added: ‘Audiences will welcome a strong affirmation that the spirit of private enterprise is still strongly alive in Britain. Free enterprise is the mainstay... part of the message ought to be that US investors can rely on this’.⁶² In light of the oil embargo imposed on the US by the Arab states, and following the perceived failures of past Keynesian approaches to economics, America and Britain were both searching for new economic ideas that could restore prosperity across their alliance.

In view of the failure of the ‘Year of Europe’ (1973-74)⁶³, the FCO further observed that Thatcher had expressed ‘a firm determination to put right the inheritance on the Conservative side of a bad relationship with Dr Kissinger’, which was one of the main purposes of her visit to Washington.⁶⁴ Helpfully, due to Thatcher’s participation in the State Department’s International Visitor Program, Evans notes that Thatcher had already formed ‘an instant rapport with Kissinger’.⁶⁵ Given that she had previous experience of dealing with Kissinger, Thatcher sought to cultivate her ties with the Washington elite during her first US tour as Leader of the Opposition. However, although the FCO recognised Kissinger’s reputation as ‘the

⁶⁰ USA: Gerald R Ford Library, WHCF CO 160, Box 56.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ For more on this, see: Thomas Robb, “Henry Kissinger, Great Britain and the ‘Year of Europe’: The ‘Tangled Skein,’” *Contemporary British History* 24 (2010): 297-318.

⁶⁴ USA: Gerald R Ford Library, WHCF CO 160, Box 56.

⁶⁵ Evans, *Thatcher and Thatcherism*, 87.

outstanding member and director of American foreign policy', they observed: 'He is not popular in Congress... There are rumours that Dr Kissinger wishes to leave public life'.⁶⁶ One explanation for this can be found in the papers of Henry Brandon, Washington Correspondent for *The Sunday Times* (1950-83), who noted in a diary entry: 'Donald Rumsfeld, Ford's top political advisor, has been eager to clip Kissinger's wings... He has become one of the most embattled, most criticized, most suspect secretaries. He has lost a lot of power'.⁶⁷

Reflecting back on this visit in his interview for this research, Peter Jay recalled: 'She believed in doing her homework and she wished to appear to be competent. She was eager to understand America and to be able to sound authoritative on foreign affairs. She was highly motivated and ambitious in wanting to show the world that she was up to the job'.⁶⁸ While a highly gendered comment, here Jay observes the taboo over women in politics - the awareness that females within the political arena often felt, (and still feel), obliged to go further than their male counterparts in proving that they are capable in holding positions of power. Indeed, in 2018 Margaret Beckett (Leader of the House of Commons, 1988-2001), reflected on the gender gap in politics, commenting: 'Although women have been allowed to stand for parliament for 100 years, it has been an uphill struggle for many women either to stand as candidates or – still more – to be elected. Today, women have held a wide variety of ministerial and shadow ministerial posts, including the great offices of state. But there is still further to go in encouraging diversity and equality'.⁶⁹ In

⁶⁶ NAUK FCO 82/490 (Part C), FCO brief on the US Administration, 15 September 1975.

⁶⁷ USA: Library of Congress, Henry Brandon Papers, Box 9.

⁶⁸ Interview with Peter Jay, 6 May 2019.

⁶⁹ Margaret Beckett, "This is what I've learned as Britain's longest-serving female MP," *The Guardian*, 12 November 2018.

seeking to promote herself as a credible leader and future Prime Minister, the media attention that surrounded Thatcher's tour was of prime significance. The FCO noted how Thatcher 'did not want to be too easily available to reporters... she felt this would cheapen her. Adequate time must be left between engagements for her to prepare... she did not want to go down as a scruffy female politician'.⁷⁰

The British Embassy in Washington, however, did not regard this as a wise move: 'No one wanting to get their views across in the United States can have too much exposure... In our view, Mrs Thatcher would be well served by taking on as much publicity as she feels capable of coping with: anything which the press have might construe as obvious holding back could be harmful'.⁷¹ Indeed, the US Information Department even offered their assistance in view of the considerable media attention they envisaged would surround Thatcher's presence: 'As Mrs Thatcher will be seeing the President and various other important people there will be considerable interest here in her activities... The Information Department here are also very willing to help out with the handling of press, radio and television'.⁷² On paper, the FCO appeared to be relatively helpful in advising Thatcher's team in advance of her tour, however, her aides later reported on the department's lack of support, highlighting tensions between Callaghan's government and the Conservative Opposition (this will be demonstrated in further detail later in this chapter).

⁷⁰ NAUK FCO 82/488 (Part A), FCO note on MT meeting, 3 July 1975.

⁷¹ NAUK FCO 82/489 (Part B), British Embassy note to FCO, 21 July 1975.

⁷² NAUK FCO 82/488 (Part A), British Embassy note to FCO, 24 June 1975.

In further meetings regarding Thatcher's US schedule, the FCO expressed surprise at the lack of competence displayed by Airey Neave (her then Chief of Staff), as well as her press advisor, Derek Howe: 'They had not yet consulted Mrs Thatcher in any but the most general terms. They themselves appear to have few contacts in the United States or Canada. All this is rather vague and reflects the fact that Mrs Thatcher's staff do not know much about the United States. They will therefore be leaning on us for advice'.⁷³ The sense revealed here that the Conservative Party in opposition was ill-advised and unprepared was confirmed by George Will, a Pulitzer Prize winning *Washington Post* commentator, in an interview for this research: 'In 1975 I was told I had to come over to London to meet this new "rising star". The Conservative opposition offices were shabby and Thatcher was clearly influenced by outsiders - Ralph Harris [economist] and Anthony Seldon [historian]'.⁷⁴ Thus, although there was an awareness that Thatcher had emerged as a relatively inexperienced leader, surprisingly, it appears that her advisers were not as well informed as one might have assumed.

Across the Atlantic, Ford had problems of his own in late 1975. Brandon's impression of American public opinion can be seen in his papers during mid-1975: 'People are undergoing a crisis of trust... The disaffected stretch across the political spectrum'.⁷⁵ On Ford, he added: 'There is little doubt that Mr Nixon has the more powerful intellect, the more profound knowledge of the world and foreign affairs... Mr Ford in this respect is still untried and untested. However, Mr Ford is outspoken

⁷³ NAUK FCO 82/488 (Part A), FCO note to British Embassy, 1 May 1975.

⁷⁴ Interview with George Will, 30 March 2016.

⁷⁵ USA: Library of Congress, Henry Brandon Papers, Box 9.

about the dangers of transatlantic relations'.⁷⁶ Interestingly, his papers from this time also contain a torn magazine article entitled, 'The View from Europe is of a Receding U.S.', which includes the report: 'European leaders have begun to question America's intentions around the world...'⁷⁷ In their briefings, the FCO noted that Ford had taken office during 'unique and difficult circumstances', adding: 'He has been criticized for lack of organization and leadership in the administration and failure to assert a coherent economic policy'.⁷⁸ However, they observed that, as a Congressman, Ford was 'hard working, earnest and single-minded' and an 'effective, if uninspiring, Minority Leader from 1965... His undoubted integrity and openness have restored public confidence in his administration and the office of the Presidency – no small achievement after Watergate'.⁷⁹

Given that the overriding aim of Thatcher's tour was to promote herself on the international stage while outlining her political narrative, Sir Peter Ramsbotham (British Ambassador to the US, 1974-77), suggested in a memo: 'If Mrs Thatcher were alone, it would be easier to take maximum advantage of her presence in building up her image'.⁸⁰ Indeed, Evans observes that Thatcher 'wanted to learn abroad for herself', and was often likely to develop her own policies before consulting her Shadow Cabinet.⁸¹ Significantly, Ramsbotham also concluded that Reginald Maudling (Shadow Foreign Secretary, 1975-76), should not accompany her on the tour. This decision can be seen to reflect the strained relationship that Thatcher shared

⁷⁶ USA: Library of Congress, Henry Brandon Papers, Box 16.

⁷⁷ USA: Library of Congress, Henry Brandon Papers, Box 9 (providence unknown).

⁷⁸ NAUK FCO 82/490 (Part C), FCO brief on the US Administration, 15 September 1975.

⁷⁹ Ibid. For more on the Watergate Scandal, see: Fred Emery, *Watergate: The Corruption of American Politics and the Fall of Richard Nixon* (New York: Touchstone, 1995).

⁸⁰ NAUK FCO 82/488 (Part A), FCO note, 9 July 1975.

⁸¹ Evans, *Thatcher and Thatcherism*, 86.

with Maudling, as recalled in his memoirs: ‘The problem was that contact between us was very little. I asked to go with her on various visits overseas but I was courteously refused... What was more difficult still was her method of producing speeches on foreign affairs. I was not consulted in advance about whether she should make a speech on foreign affairs at any time’.⁸² The tension that became apparent between Thatcher and some of her shadow ministers demonstrates that, despite their superior experience, she clearly desired to be seen as a forthright leader who could make important decisions and conduct herself accordingly, without help by her side.

Although Maudling clashed with Thatcher given the nature of their personalities and politics, it is revealing that Maudling was no closer to Heath before 1975. Robert Shepherd states that in July 1965, Maudling ‘confidently expected to win the first leadership election in the Party’s history’, but lost to Heath, receiving 130 votes against Heath’s 150.⁸³ Shepherd adds that Conservative MPs were attracted to Heath’s ‘combative style of opposition, while Maudling’s accumulation of thirteen directorships since leaving office raised doubts about his commitment... Maudling was devastated and never recovered from his defeat’.⁸⁴ Furthermore, Richard Vinen states that in early 1975 Maudling ‘looked like the most dangerous opponent of Thatcher and her ideas in the shadow cabinet’.⁸⁵ However, he observes that ‘his interventions against Thatcher were too tactless to rally his colleagues’, highlighting that his vanity and idleness prevented him from gathering support.⁸⁶ Interestingly, Vinen further notes that Maudling was involved in corruption allegations in late 1975,

⁸² Reginald Maudling, *Memoirs* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1978), 225.

⁸³ Robert Shepherd, Reginald Maudling (1917-1979), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004).

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Vinen, *Thatcher’s Britain*, 94.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

which enabled Thatcher to replace him as shadow foreign secretary in November 1976. Lord Lamont also noted this factor in Maudling's downfall in his interview for this research: 'He got into various business scandals and problems – I think he dug his own grave, really.'⁸⁷ However, writing for *The Guardian*, Labour's Roy Hattersley (Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, 1974-76), offers a surprisingly warm recollection of his encounters with Maudling:

I saw Reggie Maudling on almost every Monday morning that the House of Commons met. He was Shadow Foreign Secretary and I, as Minister of State at the Foreign Office, "briefed" him about the state of Britain's relations with the rest of the world. Of course, I only told him what Jim Callaghan wanted him to know... Although he said very little, his rare interventions left me in no doubt about his remarkable ability... His mind was sharp and clear and he was certainly the intellectual equal of Iain Macleod (Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1965-70).⁸⁸

Despite Thatcher's inexperience in foreign affairs, a biography of the new Conservative Leader, held in Ford's presidential library, noted that as an MP she 'had displayed courage, deftness and determination', observing: 'She has stamina, is a prodigious, highly organized worker, and relies strongly on detail rather than principle. She is an effective and forceful debater. Her political philosophy is simple

⁸⁷ Interview with Lord Lamont of Lerwick, 19 November 2015.

⁸⁸ Roy Hattersley, "Lewis Baston's new biography of the unfortunate Reggie Maudling revels in scandal but fails to reflect his talent," *The Guardian*, 11 December 2004. See, also: Lewis Baston, *Reggie: The Life of Reginald Maudling* (The History Press Ltd, 2004).

and traditional'.⁸⁹ George Springsteen (Executive Secretary at the National Security Council), also commented on the positive impact of Thatcher's election, writing in a state department note: 'Mrs Thatcher's decisive victory shows a degree of unity within the Conservative Party that has not been visible since Heath's defeat by Harold Wilson... US-UK relations are unaffected'.⁹⁰ However, in a conversation between Ford, Kissinger and Elliot Richardson (Ambassador to the UK, 1975-76), Kissinger observed of Thatcher: 'She is a great gal, but she is not experienced at all in foreign policy'. Despite this, Richardson commented: 'She's very crisp and assertive'.⁹¹

Cooper notes that Thatcher demonstrated an 'optimism and determination' to work closely with the US, and acknowledging Britain's economic troubles head on appeared to be the main topic of discussion during her public engagements throughout her North American tour.⁹² It is evident that the thrust of US economic policy appealed to Thatcher and her advisers in 1975, particularly the ideas of lower taxes, fewer workplace controls and smaller trade union membership. Indeed, in his contemporary paper 'The Economic Prospect and the Party's Political Position', Geoffrey Howe (then Thatcher's Shadow Chancellor), observed that the Conservatives should aim to 'restore the dynamics of a free economy', 'relax price control', and 'avoid as far as possible a return to a legislative approach to union power over the next few years'.⁹³

⁸⁹ USA: Gerald R Ford Library, WHCF CO 160, Box 56.

⁹⁰ "Conservative Party: MT victory over Whitelaw," *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 11 February 1975, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/110508> (accessed 11/06/2016).

⁹¹ "Memorandum of Conversation: President Ford, Henry Kissinger, Elliot Richardson," Gerald R Ford Library (online archive), 27 February 1975. <https://fordlibrarymuseum.gov/LIBRARY/document/0314/1552967.pdf> (accessed 20/06/2017).

⁹² Cooper, "The Foreign Politics," 28.

⁹³ Conservative Party Archive, "The Economic Prospect and the Party's Political Position," Bodleian Library (Oxford), LCC/75/94. Not dated (hereafter ND), (1975?).

Furthermore, in his interview for this research, George Will also commented that Thatcher was of significance to America in 1975: ‘The UK was more important to the US back in 1975 than it is today - the special relationship was still real. There was a considerable interest in Conservative circles of Thatcher as Leader of the Opposition - in the Institute for Economic Affairs and in the rising but not yet ascendant Republican Party - she was on their radar.’⁹⁴ Despite an apparent decline in the importance of the special relationship, the curiosity demonstrated towards Thatcher among American Republicans and the interest in her as the first female leader of a Western political party confirms that historical ties were still visible in 1975.

On 10th September 1975, a week before her first tour of the US as Leader of the Opposition, Thatcher participated in a widely anticipated interview with the London correspondent of the Associated Press. During the interview, ‘carried by hundreds of American newspapers’, Thatcher talked of ‘Britain’s continuing role as a world power and her own determination to nurture the “Special Relationship”’, stressing: ‘The British are a phoenix-like people.’⁹⁵ On her remarks, the CIA briefed President Ford: ‘She left her questioner in no doubt that she herself feels buoyant about the country’s ability to make a strong comeback...’⁹⁶ Significantly, they added: ‘In news accounts, she is being introduced as “Britain’s alternative Prime

⁹⁴ Interview with George Will, 30 March 2016.

⁹⁵ CIA FOIA: CREST 25-Year Program Archive, 1975LONDON14959/10SEPT1975 <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/collection/crest-25-year-program-archive> (accessed 30/03/2016).

⁹⁶ Ibid.

Minister.’”⁹⁷ However, despite her outward image, Thatcher was much weaker when quizzed on her specific policy intentions: ‘She did not explain exactly how she foresees a restoration of British authority and influence in the world... nor did she suggest such a development will necessarily come under her leadership’.⁹⁸ Thatcher’s gender, however, was undoubtedly a reason why many Americans took a significant interest in her visit, particularly given that she was the first female leader of a British Opposition Party, who had the potential to emerge as Prime Minister: ‘Judging by the amount of attention American and Canadian newspapers and television networks have devoted to profiles of her, there is considerable North American interest in seeing at first hand this first woman leader of the Tories’.⁹⁹

The first stop on Thatcher’s US tour was New York, with her first high-profile engagement being a speech to the Institute for Socioeconomic Studies on September 15th. Although determined to address the topic of the West’s perceived economic decline, the FCO noted an additional attraction to the invitation, which she had previously declined: ‘The organizers will pay her a handsome fee... She would now like to do the speech for the money...’ a comment that alludes to the tension between the FCO and Thatcher’s team.¹⁰⁰ Given that the Thatchers were fairly wealthy, this point is particularly revealing and highlights the question of why earning a fee was a significant element in agreeing to participate in this type of function. In a press release before her speech the institute praised her ‘stunning victory over Edward Heath’, and briefed that the new Leader of the Opposition would ‘discuss the way the

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ NAUK FCO 82/488 (Part A), FCO note, 7 July 1975.

public welfare burden has brought both the national economy of Britain and the finances of New York City government to the brink of collapse'.¹⁰¹

Addressing her audience, Thatcher was forceful in her opening remarks, determined to contradict a line stated in the *Wall Street Journal*: 'Britain today offers a textbook case on how to ruin a country'.¹⁰² Responding to the quote, Thatcher argued that the 'morbid and fatalistic tone' of much of what had been written about Britain was 'misplaced'.¹⁰³ She therefore went out to 'set the record straight'.¹⁰⁴ On economic matters, Thatcher introduced what she saw as a 'vital new debate', one that questioned the role of government and the function of the welfare state.¹⁰⁵ In an attack on its 30-year legacy, Thatcher directly criticized the legitimacy of the welfare state, stressing that freedom comes from 'originality, skill, energy and thrift', in a society that should 'encourage rather than restrict the variety of human nature'.¹⁰⁶ 'Let our children grow tall – and some grow taller than others', was the quote that Thatcher wanted her audience to remember.¹⁰⁷ Essentially, in view of Britain's troubles, Thatcher sought to highlight herself as the leader who could reverse the nation's economic decline, and, by doing so, safeguard Anglo-American interests. Aware of her position, Thatcher reassured her listeners: 'Unless we have incentive and opportunity we shall not have the resources to do as much as we want to do. Having been Secretary of State for Education, I am the first to understand that.'¹⁰⁸

¹⁰¹ NAUK FCO 82/490 (Part C), Institute for Socioeconomic Studies: Press Release, 17 July 1975.

¹⁰² NAUK FCO 82/488 (Part A), Speech to the Institute for Socioeconomic Studies, NYC, 15 September 1975.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

Following the FCO's advice, Thatcher acknowledged the importance of private enterprise in helping to balance out the powers of the state: 'Private enterprise is by far the best method of harnessing the energy and ambition of the individual to increase the wealth of the nation'.¹⁰⁹ Giving another significant speech to the Pilgrims of the US group two days later, in a similar tone, Thatcher stated: 'We have been brought face to face with today's realities, and we must act now if we are to keep peace with tomorrow's world... but the ability, inventiveness and determination of our people are just as much there today as they were in the past. You can count on them for the future'.¹¹⁰

Ending on a memorable note, Thatcher finished: 'We are an 11th hour nation. But the 11th hour has struck. There is yet time to prepare for the morrow.'¹¹¹ There is a sense of urgency in Thatcher's last comment, which suggests that her victory in Britain's next General Election would be the result needed to restore the nation's decline. By engaging with American audiences, Thatcher showed that she understood that favourable US media attention endorsing her narrative would get reported on back home, highlighting her as a potential 'saviour'. The speech was evidently well received. John Campbell notes that 'by the time she moved on to Washington, she had captured the media's attention'.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher: Volume One*, 346.

Although Thatcher was visiting the US in an attempt to broaden her experience of foreign affairs, Britain's domestic policy was a key element in her visits abroad. Speaking at the National Press Club on September 19th, the economy, again, was the main topic on her agenda: 'Let me plunge in quickly... I am here to talk about Britain... The whole fabric of our society is under strain and attack.'¹¹³ The socio-economic crisis in Britain (essentially the crisis of inflation and the destruction of personal incentives of money and value), Thatcher believed, was actually the 'crisis of the West': 'It is the rediscovery of sense of purpose, of moral purpose... the period of high spending and slack thinking is over'.¹¹⁴ Observing how Thatcher was prepared to express her views over the fragility of Britain's socio-economic climate, *The Guardian* reported: 'She felt it proper, in the circumstances, to tell Americans that she felt Britain's ills stemmed from such Socialist practices as overspending on welfare... The message was going down "very well indeed" with most Americans she had met'.¹¹⁵

Interestingly, Thatcher talked of 'a turnaround' in British public opinion: 'I detect among my own people a deep feeling that hard work and sacrifice may not be such bad things. They don't want to suffocate in a soft society'.¹¹⁶ Indeed, the official voting-intention polling figures from a UK Polling Report show a significant rise in support for the Conservatives under Thatcher's leadership, jumping from 36.6% in October 1974 to 45.7% in September 1975.¹¹⁷ Given that the Conservatives' position had improved from a deficit of 7.1% to a lead of 4.9% in less than a year, there

¹¹³ NAUK FCO 82/490 (Part C), Speech to the National Press Club, Washington, 19 September 1975.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ *The Guardian*, "Thatcher dropped from TV show," 19 September 1975.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ <http://ukpollingreport.co.uk/voting-intention-1974-1979> (accessed 15/05/2016).

evidently was a symbolic turnaround in public opinion.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, a report by the Conservative Party Research Department in mid-1975, observed: ‘The Government have come through their first two years remarkably unscathed... This situation may be changing. There is some evidence to suggest that public opinion is starting to shift in our direction’.¹¹⁹ In particular, they noted that the electorate was far more ‘volatile’ than it once was in view of the rise of inflation, high taxation and the strength of the unions.¹²⁰ The report concluded that the Conservatives, therefore, needed to develop a ‘coherent intellectual alternative’, one that advocated cutting back on public expenditure and over-taxation in order to reduce the ‘poverty trap’ and give rise to individual freedoms.¹²¹ However, other than suggesting an alteration in the balance between the state and the private sector, any comment on what the Conservatives would do to counteract Britain’s decline was left unsaid. Indeed, Thatcher wondered aloud: ‘As I look at America, if this is failure, what in Heaven’s name is success?’¹²² Such a statement highlights the overall vagueness of her plans for actively restoring Britain’s prosperity.

Despite the topic resonating with her American audiences, what was absent in Thatcher’s key speeches was any sign of a specific alternative economic strategy. This weakness was revealed in a broadcast Thatcher took part in for the NBC’s ‘Today’ programme, which had the potential to reach four million viewers. Although

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Conservative Party Archive, “CRD brief”, Bodleian Library (Oxford), LCC/75/94. ND, (1975?).

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² NAUK FCO 82/490 (Part C), Speech to the National Press Club, Washington, 19 September 1975.

the show's presenters, Barbara Walters¹²³ and Jim Hartz, observed Thatcher's quest to expand her knowledge of foreign affairs by saying, 'one of the things that has been said is that you know very little about foreign policy... You seem to have made an effort to devote yourself more to that...' Thatcher's answers lacked substance.¹²⁴ For instance, on the fear of Soviet expansionism, Thatcher responded: 'We all want greater friendship between countries... movement towards peace and security', a comment devoid of any specific content.¹²⁵ Furthermore, when asked directly if she would stop government spending in favour of cutting taxes, Thatcher merely replied: 'I'm sorry, it is a bit much for so early in the morning, isn't it?' to which she was informed: 'We deal with a great deal early in the morning.'¹²⁶

It is evident that in sidestepping comments relating to an explicit political rhetoric, Thatcher instead sought to highlight her own personal will and drive as a political narrative to put in place of a more specific one. Given that the thinkers and policymakers who surrounded her in 1975 had yet to think of any definitive ideas, a strong will and determination was largely all she had to offer as a relatively new and inexperienced Leader of the Opposition. Duly observing her determination on the programme 'watched by millions', the *Evening Standard* reported: 'MT told Americans today she will be PM in under four years and is capable of forming a strong government'.¹²⁷

¹²³ Barbara Walters is a renowned American co-host and anchor who has won several Emmy Awards for her work. Following her position at NBC she moved to ABC, playing a key role in the 1976 US Presidential Election debate.

¹²⁴ NAUK FCO 82/488 (Part A), NBC 'Today' Programme: Interview with Barbara Walters, 16 September 1975.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ *Evening Standard*, "I'll be PM within four years – Maggie," 16 September 1975.

Although Thatcher's views lacked any form of coherent detail in her interviews and public speeches, it is important to recognise that her statements did represent a political philosophy of sorts and, ultimately, it was this broad rhetoric rather than a manifesto offering specific policy pledges that later brought the Conservatives into government in 1979. In line with the US thinking, Thatcher also talked of smaller government, lower taxes and a free market approach to tackling inflation. Peter Riddell notes that Thatcher's post-Heath strategy was a combination of 'provocative rhetoric and cautious practice', and she instinctively sought to 'dismantle the practices and assumptions that had underpinned the post-war consensus', launching a dramatic assault on the welfare state.¹²⁸ Significantly, her ideas represented a clear departure from Heath's failed agenda, reflecting her desire to lead the Conservative Party in a radically new direction. Recently, historians such as Richard Toye have re-emphasized the role of political rhetoric in public life, observing that while 'ideas cannot be separated from the language structures of which they are apart', 'technical excellence' in this area can make a politician more persuasive.¹²⁹ Clearly, Thatcher was trying to change the atmosphere at the time, without getting too bogged down in very detailed questions about policy choice, and chose to promote her rhetoric rather than the specifics of her agenda.¹³⁰

Inexperience aside, Thatcher's reputation had clearly reached her interviewers: 'We have done a lot of homework and some of the things that we have read about you... ruthlessly ambitious, the iron butterfly...'¹³¹ Thatcher made no apology for admitting to possessing 'a pretty strong will and determination', and she

¹²⁸ Peter Riddell, *The Thatcher Government* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 29.

¹²⁹ Richard Toye, *Rhetoric: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 316.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 108-111.

¹³¹ Riddell, *The Thatcher Government*, 29.

further admitted that her gender was a drawback in the male dominated arena of politics: 'Women aren't given as many chances to make mistakes as men. I have noticed that.'¹³² However, responding to the question on whether she believed she was going to emerge as Prime Minister, Thatcher was in no doubt: 'I think so. I believe so. I am very much encouraged. All leaders of the Conservative Party in opposition have become Prime Minister.'¹³³

In addition to media engagements, Thatcher also scheduled two formal meetings with the Washington elite. Before her official meeting with President Ford, Thatcher met with the House International Relations Committee on September 18th, a meeting intended, on their part, to decipher what the Thatcherite strategy truly was. On the economy, Thatcher was confident that the mood of Britain was open to tougher socio-economic measures, documented in the minutes of the meeting: 'The underlying sense of the people of Britain was unquestionably sound, and people were in a mood to make the necessary sacrifices to deal with our problems'.¹³⁴ Thatcher also confirmed that Britain had 'reached the end of the road as far as redistribution and the pursuit of equality were concerned, and we should now concentrate instead on increasing the size of the cake'.¹³⁵

However, once again, although the Leader of the Opposition assured the committee that the Conservatives had an 'alternative strategy' to restore Britain's prosperity, her outline lacked detail: 'The Conservative Party would have tackled

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ NAUK FCO 82/490 (Part C), Meeting between MT and House International Relations Committee, 18 September 1975.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

inflation earlier than the Government had done, would have held down public expenditure and would not favour further nationalization'.¹³⁶ Notably, Thatcher's offerings on the Conservatives' domestic policy demonstrated as much detail as the Party's election manifesto in 1979. In expressing the narrative of a broad political philosophy rather than outlining any specific pledges, it can be said that Thatcherism evolved following Thatcher's election in 1975, as argued by Martin Holmes and Samuel Finer.¹³⁷ This distinct reluctance from the Conservative Party to publicly offer specific proposals, highlights just how unstructured the making of Thatcherism was in the mid-1970s. It was still a process and a formation that was still very much in the making.

Despite privatization being a key feature later in Thatcher's premiership, this and Europe were two points that demonstrate an evolution in Thatcher's views in opposition and in government. This is highlighted more profoundly in the comments she made to the International Relations Committee over Europe, which revealingly contradict her later feelings over the nature of the Community: 'The Referendum was of great significance... The vote represented a defeat for the extremists who had campaigned against membership'.¹³⁸ The 'extremists' Thatcher referred to were specifically trade union leaders, another area that emerged as a key feature of Thatcher's agenda years later. Given Britain's commitment to the EU, Thatcher confirmed that 'Europe would now go steadily ahead', following Britain's clear decision to stay bound to their European allies.¹³⁹ By talking about her domestic

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ See: Holmes, *Thatcherism*; Minogue and Biddiss, *Thatcherism: Personality and Politics*.

¹³⁸ NAUK FCO 82/490 (Part C), Meeting between MT and House International Relations Committee, 18 September 1975.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

agenda, Thatcher was gaining experience in foreign affairs by engaging with influential US politicians.

Following the International Relations Committee meeting, President Ford and his Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs, Lt. General Brent Scowcroft, welcomed Thatcher and Ambassador Ramsbotham into the Oval Office. In similarity with Thatcher's own quietness over how her Party would tackle Britain's economic difficulties, the president also appeared unsure of what strategy to take in the US. On the American side, Ford revealed that inflation (which had acutely reduced in the US), was actually a bigger problem than unemployment: 'There hasn't been the pressure... the marches, etc. about unemployment'.¹⁴⁰ Ford's comments suggest that he felt he had time left to think of a sustainable economic plan, sidestepping any particular method. Surprisingly for two ambitious leaders, other than agreeing that the West should work with Western Europe over the global economic decline, Thatcher accepted Ford's argument that time was on their side: 'France and Germany are aware of the problems of inflation. It is good for the world economy that we aren't rushing for solutions. I am very strong on this'.¹⁴¹ Here it can be perceived that what Thatcher and Ford recognised was that there was room to combat price rises by international concert, which naturally involved de-emphasizing some of the wider talk about domestic deflationary policies. Whereas Thatcher was new to the challenges of leadership, Ford's uncertain socio-economic strategy reflects the earlier comment made by Henry Brandon on President Nixon's superior understanding of global affairs.

¹⁴⁰ "Cold War: MT-Ford Meeting at White House," *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 18 September 1975, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/110511> (accessed 9/03/2016).

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

When considering the importance of the special relationship during the mid-1970s, it is highly significant that during Thatcher's meeting with Ford, the global economy rather than foreign affairs was the key topic up for discussion. One reason for this was that, given her inexperience, Thatcher herself had little more knowledge to offer on matters other than the economy. More significantly, the importance placed on their discussion of economics demonstrates that globalization during the mid-1970s was not a new phenomenon. To a certain extent, the 1970s represented a period where world leaders focused on pursuing the internationalization of domestic policy within an interconnected world that relied on global allied cooperation.

However, although foreign affairs was a weakness for Thatcher, the subject naturally surfaced during the meeting. Following the tense political scenes occurring in the Middle East, Ford had been active in securing the signing of an agreement between Israel and Egypt in Geneva a week before Thatcher's visit, which ensured that the conflict between the two countries would be resolved by peaceful means. Both sides were forbidden to use force or impose blockades, however, the FCO noted that the agreement was 'only a step on the path to a lasting solution', confirming that the issue was unresolved.¹⁴² Indeed, the FCO further observed that the agreement had caused conflict within the US Congress: 'The Administration will ask Congress for up to \$2.5 billion in military and economic aid for this fiscal year... The US has undertaken to compensate Israel by \$300-350 million yearly for the additional cost of

¹⁴² NAUK FCO 82/490 147, FCO brief on US Administration/International Issues, 15 September 1975.

buying oil on the world market... there has been some opposition'.¹⁴³ Ford admitted to Thatcher: 'We have a problem that you don't have in that we have to induce Congress to go along'.¹⁴⁴ Thatcher sympathized: 'That must be very difficult', and on her opinion of the agreement, she added, rather weakly: 'We are very pleased with the progress'.¹⁴⁵ Although this would have been at the top of the president's agenda, without advice by her side, Thatcher obviously felt that she could not comment further on the issue, or hector Ford given her inexperience and limited credibility.¹⁴⁶

Towards the end of their meeting, the conversation became more informal. Commenting on the differences between their respective systems of government, Thatcher stated: 'The longer I am in politics, the more I realise the big problem is carrying public opinion along... politicians all need scapegoats', to which Ford responded: 'We have no party discipline to hide behind'.¹⁴⁷ Despite limited knowledge of the international negotiations surrounding Ford's administration, it is clear that Thatcher left an impression on the president, expressed in his final comment: 'Let me once again congratulate you on being the first woman head of a major Western Party... It may be a forerunner of a lady in the White House'.¹⁴⁸

Following her meeting with Ford, Thatcher made an effort to appeal to the American public, stressing that Britain under her leadership would be revived:

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ "Cold War: MT-Ford Meeting at White House," *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 18 September 1975, <http://www.margareththatcher.org/document/110511> (accessed 9/03/2016).

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Interestingly, in her meeting with Jimmy Carter in 1977 Thatcher was confident enough to 'lecture' the president on her attitudes towards foreign affairs, which highlights her development and confidence as Leader of the Opposition.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

We did not lose the Cold War. But we are losing the Thaw in a subtle and disturbing way. We are losing confidence in ourselves and in our case. We are losing the Thaw politically...

Slowly we are finding our way... A change is coming over us. I see some signs that our people are ready to make the tough choice, to follow the harder road... We may suffer from a British sickness now, but our constitution is sound and we have the heart and will to win through.¹⁴⁹

This direct address that offered ‘a combination of Churchill and Mrs Miniver went down a storm’, with ‘hard-nosed’ bankers declaring Thatcher as ‘quite a dame’.¹⁵⁰ Eric Severeid, an influential CBS commentator, stated that ‘Britons were looking for a break and she could be it’.¹⁵¹

On her final day in the US, Thatcher made her most compelling speech at Roosevelt University, Chicago, where she spoke at the Walter Heller International Finance Lecture. Cautiously opening with the line, ‘I am not by training an expert on international finance... I am first and foremost a politician’, she was quick to assure her audience of her academic background: ‘I have a certain knowledge of science and

¹⁴⁹ Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher: Volume One*, 346.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

the law'.¹⁵² Thatcher's argument was that economics had become too theoretical and mathematical, which, she believed, failed to address the underlying realities of the West's economy: 'Much of the teaching in the Western world has become divorced from practical politics... Now is the time, not only to take action to contain the threat, but to warn the man in the street what may happen next time around.'¹⁵³ The significance of Thatcher's speech, as noted by *The Times*, was the public display of praise she gave to Helmut Schmidt (Chancellor of Germany, 1974-82): 'In theory Helmut Schmidt is a socialist, and in theory I am a capitalist. Ironically enough we find our views on inflation almost identical... I wish sometimes I could sell them to the political opponents of mine and my country'.¹⁵⁴ *The Times* added that listeners had been 'astonished and delighted to hear her make common cause with Helmut Schmidt', and revealingly observed how she had 'captivated much of the business community and their wives': 'The word rang out that they were "absolutely thrilled" by her'.¹⁵⁵

Although Thatcher's inexperience was highlighted throughout the first part of her North American tour, the official view coming from London and Washington was that her performance in the US had largely been a success. An FCO note stated that Thatcher 'certainly seemed to get what she wanted out of the visit', in terms of both establishing herself as a credible political leader and in restoring American confidence in Britain's socio-economic position: 'It served as a useful non-partisan purpose in helping Americans to take a less pessimistic view of Britain than the one which they

¹⁵² "Speech at Roosevelt University," *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 22 September 1975, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/102465> (accessed 11/06/2016).

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Fred Emery, "Mrs Thatcher's surprise praise for Herr Schmidt," *The Times*, 24 September 1975.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

have been getting from their media... What was more important for her American audiences was her manifest confidence in Britain's future'.¹⁵⁶ Sharing this view, the British Embassy in Washington recognised that the 'punishing pace' of Thatcher's 'demanding schedule' had gone 'virtually without a hitch', adding that despite her tiredness she 'gave up no impression of a lack-lustre performance'.¹⁵⁷ Specifically, they reported that Americans were generally surprised at Heath's defeat in the Conservative leadership election and, therefore, 'wanted to know more about the politician who had succeeded in supplanting one of the two leading figures in British politics of the last decade'.¹⁵⁸ The fact that Thatcher was a woman who had the potential to emerge as the first female Prime Minister of a Western nation 'added spice to their curiosity'.¹⁵⁹

Despite Heath's defeat, just months before Thatcher's visit, *The Guardian* reported that the former Conservative Leader had also decided to visit America at the same time as the newly elected Leader of the Opposition. They observed that Heath had attended engagements in Washington and Yale University, though added: 'He stresses he is on a private visit and does not want to steal his Party Leader's thunder'.¹⁶⁰ Nevertheless, the timing of Heath's visit raised suspicion: 'The coincidence of the journeys, and the fact that both former and present Conservative leaders appeared on television screens in the "Today" programme within a week has provided, to say the very least, confusion among the small, interested audience'.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁶ NAUK FCO 82/488 (Part A), FCO note to British Embassy in Washington, 30 September 1975.

¹⁵⁷ NAUK FCO 82/491, British Embassy note to FCO, 25 September 1975.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ "Thatcher dropped from TV show."

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

Evidently still hurt by his failure to retain the Conservative leadership, Heath appeared to undermine Thatcher's attempts to establish herself on the world stage.

Securing one of her core objectives, Thatcher was praised by the British press back home following the US part of her tour. *The Sun* reported that Thatcher had 'wowed' American political leaders, adding that after her 'easy going' Oval Office meeting, Ford and Kissinger 'vied with each other to shower praise on her'.¹⁶² US Congressmen were also impressed, as seen in an anonymous comment made to the paper: 'Mrs Thatcher fits the image we in America have of the English people'.¹⁶³ Additionally, in a note to Ambassador Ramsbotham, another added: 'If it doesn't work out for her there, politically, we could use her here'.¹⁶⁴ *The Guardian*, however, published a more negative summary of Thatcher's visit. Responding to the decision of the American TV network CBS to drop Thatcher from an appearance in favour of the US Defence Secretary, James Schlesinger, they reported: 'Like it or not the American public is really not terribly interested in the relentless journeying of the lady leader... Press coverage has so far been more notable for sympathy than volume'.¹⁶⁵ From his observations as Ambassador to the US at the time, Peter Jay noted that there were certain elements of Thatcher's visit that did not go to plan:

She was very unfamiliar with Washington and sometimes she misread the place. For example, a strict social rule there requires that the senior guests at dinner parties (which were in those days a key part of political life), should start to leave at 11pm - NOT 11.05pm. And

¹⁶² *The Sun*, "Maggie Woos the top Americans," 19 September 1975.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ *The Guardian*, "Thatcher dropped from TV show."

everyone else would be gone by ten past. As a potential future Prime Minister, she often was the senior guest and, because she was enjoying herself arguing politics, didn't sometimes leave until approaching midnight. I received discreet hints from senior Americans that I should brief her on the local customs.¹⁶⁶

However, the British Embassy further observed that the Leader of the Opposition 'received coverage in the media on a scale normally given to major newsworthy figures... The *New York Times* and both Washington papers gave her a prominent write-up, though angled towards her personality as much her political beliefs'.¹⁶⁷ Thatcher's intention, in their eyes, was to 'charm commentators with her appearance and to win their approval for her skill and steadiness under questioning'.¹⁶⁸ Here the role of gender in politics becomes more obvious. It suggests that Thatcher recognised that as a female leader she felt obliged to prove herself at a greater level due to her gender, in order to demonstrate that she was competent in her position. Accomplishing her overriding objective, the embassy confirmed: 'If her aim was to get herself known and to put herself across as a serious political leader, she largely succeeded'.¹⁶⁹ They also recognised the effect that she had on other high-profile Americans: 'Mayor Daley described her as "very brilliant and very interesting."'¹⁷⁰ Daley's comment is particularly significant given his position as an Irish-American, who came from a working-class background and served as Mayor of Chicago for 21 years (1955-76).

¹⁶⁶ Interview with Peter Jay, 6 May 2019.

¹⁶⁷ NAUK FCO 82/491 (Part A), British Embassy report on US visit, 25 September 1975.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

Thatcher's inexperience, however, did not go unnoticed: 'Journalists we have talked to seemed less convinced that her ideas – although sympathetically received by many American audiences – provided the cure for what she described as the British sickness'.¹⁷¹ However, given that Thatcher aspired to increase her standing at home as well as abroad through frequent international travel, helpfully, the British press warmly reciprocated the praise, as seen in the *Daily Express*, who reported that her public addresses 'made American leaders sit up and take notice'.¹⁷² Following their earlier comments on the inexperience of Thatcher's staff, the FCO observed: 'Mrs Thatcher's staff were immensely grateful to all those in the missions she visited for their help and advice... without this there would have been a lot of mistakes and misunderstandings, which would have reflected badly on Britain'.¹⁷³ Evidently, therefore, the Washington elite recognised that it was relatively early days in the life of the new British opposition party, in terms of building a new and definitive political agenda that would capture the attention of the British electorate, and actively restore the nation's socio-economic problems.

Surprisingly, in light of Thatcher's inexperience on the world stage, Cooper notes a comment made by a prominent American Conservative, which confirms her appeal in late 1975: 'She left town after four days in a tough and cynical city, as a Presence', and was perceived as a 'visionary' and 'a strong woman with a clear vision

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Cooper, "The Foreign Politics," 29-32.

¹⁷³ NAUK FCO 82/488 (Part A), FCO report to British Embassy in Washington on MT visit, 30 September 1975.

for Britain'.¹⁷⁴ Campbell also notes that 'this first American trip marked the beginning of a love affair between Thatcher and the American press which lasted with ever-increasing enthusiasm for the next twenty years'.¹⁷⁵ Additionally, Young notes that Thatcher's official meeting with President Ford 'secured a high profile', with the Leader of the Opposition claiming herself: 'The very thing I was said to be weak in – international affairs – I've succeeded in.'¹⁷⁶ Indeed, Evans also observes Thatcher's confidence following her visit: 'I feel I have been accepted as a leader in the international sphere'.¹⁷⁷ Revealingly, however, this perception was not reciprocated in Canada, the final destination of Thatcher's North American tour.

Canada: Ottawa and Toronto (23rd – 25th September 1975)

Following her visit to the US, Thatcher moved on to Canada, completing her first North American tour as Leader of the Opposition. However, the 'specialness' found in Britain's alliance with the US was notably absent when it came to Anglo-Canadian relations. In 1966, John Holmes (President of the Canadian Institute of International Affairs, 1960-73), wrote of the Anglo-Canadian relationship:

Two countries closely associated for centuries, Britain and Canada, are drifting apart, and it is a pity. Few states in the world have so much in common; few states need each other more. Their histories are

¹⁷⁴ Cooper, "The Foreign Politics," 31-38.

¹⁷⁵ Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher: Volume One*, 347.

¹⁷⁶ Young, *One of Us*, 345-357.

¹⁷⁷ Evans, *Thatcher and Thatcherism*, 87.

entwined. The institutions of the younger grew from those of the older, and in partnership they created the Commonwealth. Although they grew ethnically dissimilar, they share one common language and a rich heritage.¹⁷⁸

In 2008, four decades later at a conference entitled ‘The Other Special Relationship: Anglo-Canadian Relations from the Churchill Era to the Present Day’, the *Toronto Star* reported on a discussion between Joe Clark (Prime Minister of Canada, 1979-80), Bill Graham (Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada, 2006) and former High Commissioner, James Wright:

Most acknowledged there is something slightly wrong, something slightly thin and colourless in dealings between Britain and Canada... There is a sense that we take each other for granted, as for both of us the United States looms so much larger, and that we don’t put enough energy into the relationship we do have... In many ways it is a love that dares not speak its name... We each admire the other country but find difficulty in justifying our friendship and affection in the context of the relationships we wish to develop (elsewhere).¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ Robert Boardman, “The Singular Case of the Disappearing Link: the economics of change and the politics of survival in Canada-UK relations,” in *Britain and Canada in the 1990s: Proceedings of a UK/Canada colloquium, Leeds Castle, Kent, England*, ed. David Keith Adams (Aldershot: Dartmouth Publishing, 1991), 27-42.

¹⁷⁹ Mitch Potter, “The Maple Leaf and Union Jack,” *Toronto Star*, 26 October 2008.

Britain's relationship with Canada is very different to the one it shares with the US. Although both countries are 'encrusted with residues of the past' as part of the Commonwealth, Anglo-Canadian relations have experienced tensions since 1945, following global changes and the ascent of new international circumstances since the end of the war.¹⁸⁰ Similarly, in his chapter, 'The Singular Case of the Disappearing Link: the economics of change and the politics of survival in Canada-UK relations', Robert Boardman demonstrates how changing patterns of migration and new multicultural influences 'reinforced a tendency towards mutual disinterest'.¹⁸¹

Writing in 1979, Boardman noted that relations with Canada received 'occasional treatment in Parliament', though far less so than the 'post-war peak of interest' (for example, Canadians were not included in the British Parliament's talks on issues such as devolution, on which Canadian experts might have advised).¹⁸² Indeed, in a letter to *The Times* in 1972, Alastair Buchan (Chairman of the 1971 Anglo-Canadian colloquium), argued that the British side of the partnership was largely to blame for the decline in Anglo-Canadian relations: 'The British, and successive governments in particular, have shown almost total indifference to Canada for the past generation', adding that the topic of Canadian studies 'raises yawns of boredom on the part of our political scientists and historians'.¹⁸³ Interestingly, within his letter, Buchan observes: 'Ottawa was a wayside halt for Prime Ministers travelling

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 27.

¹⁸¹ Boardman, "The Singular Case," 33.

¹⁸² Ibid., 33-36.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 35.

to or from Washington, other ministers rarely went', which raises the question of what the motives behind Thatcher's 1975 visit to Canada really were.¹⁸⁴

The 'prickly irritability of much Anglo-American diplomacy' was a further factor that caused 'roots of irritation' within Britain's relationship with Canada.¹⁸⁵ Prof. Jack Granatstein noted this at the 2008 conference, 'The Other Special Relationship': 'The Canadian military evolved to have a closer relationship with their American counterparts', largely due to the impact of NATO and the need for international security during the Cold War.¹⁸⁶ Indeed, Canada's strong move into the dollar area and their own 'special relationship' with Washington were both significant in the tensions between itself and the UK at the time. Furthermore, Canada had also opposed the invasion of the Suez Canal by Britain and France, and sought to distance Canadian troops from their counterparts.¹⁸⁷¹⁸⁸

As a result, Boardman observes that 'Canadian preoccupation with the US pushed Britain and Europe out of range'.¹⁸⁹ Sharing this view, Peter Lyon states: 'Given the strong Canadian desire to strengthen its extra-continental economic and cultural associations to relieve the pressures of North America, Britain, within the European context, may become the object of Canadian diplomatic and economic

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ 'The Other Special Relationship: Anglo-Canadian Relations from the Churchill Era to the Present Day', Cambridge, 21 October 2008, <http://www.bihg.ac.uk/Portals/55/library/past%20conferences/Anglo-Canadian%20Conference.pdf> (accessed 09/07/2016).

¹⁸⁷ For more on the Suez Crisis, see: Anthony Gorst and Saul Kelly (eds), *Whitehall and the Suez Crisis* (Oxon: Frank Cass Publishers, 2010).

¹⁸⁸ Interestingly, Lord Howe of Aberavon commented that the Commonwealth was 'a useful institution to apply pressure' on some matters concerning foreign affairs during the latter part of the twentieth century.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 27.

offensives'.¹⁹⁰ Indeed, Boardman observes that from 1973, Britain's membership of the EC 'marginalized Canada as a priority for attention', due to the UK's preferred trading interests, which was an aspect that caused considerable tensions within the relationship.¹⁹¹

In light of the US's position as the leading global power, Canada turned towards America rather than Britain in view of their own economic and geographical interests, seeking to benefit from their superior international trading links. Speaking at 'The Other Special Relationship', Roy MacLaren (Canadian High Commissioner to the UK, 1996-2000), talked on the significance of this change: 'Anglo-Canadian foreign policy became focused on the economic possibilities stemming from the USA, the war having confirmed Britain's replacement by the United States as Canada's chief trading partner and increasingly its major foreign investor', eluding to 'the inescapable fact of the rise of the United States and the decline of an increasingly war-exhausted and near bankrupt Britain'.¹⁹² Although Britain and Canada were tied to the Commonwealth, sharing a unique bond different to that of the US, it appears that the decline in relations post-1945 predominantly resulted from economic influences beyond their control, which allowed both sides to naturally drift apart. MacLaren's comments demonstrate that Britain's economic decline was a global concern, not just within the US. The fragility of the UK's economy was, therefore, a leading issue that Thatcher intended to address during her North American tour and,

¹⁹⁰ Peter Lyon, *Britain and Canada: Survey of a Changing Relationship (Studies in Commonwealth Politics and History)*, (Oxon: Routledge, 2013), 116.

¹⁹¹ Boardman, "The Singular Case," 32.

¹⁹² <http://www.bihg.ac.uk/Portals/55/library/past%20conferences/Anglo-Canadian%20Conference.pdf> (accessed 10/05/2016).

while doing so, she utilized the opportunity to present herself as the woman who could revive Britain's socio-economic reality.

Briefing Thatcher before her visit, the FCO stated: 'Canada has always been an important investment outlet for the UK, but her relative importance has declined slightly in recent years'.¹⁹³ Although the Conservative Party were attracted to American approaches towards economic policy, Canada sought to expand their economic influence, distancing themselves from Britain and the US: 'The main bilateral matter of concern to us under the economic heading is the impact on British firms of recent Canadian legislation concerning foreign investment'.¹⁹⁴ In particular, they expressed unease towards 'Canada's desires to slow the growth of US economic domination', and their plans to 'control new investment in Canada and the expansion into unrelated fields by existing foreign businesses'.¹⁹⁵

In addition, Derek Thomas of the FCO expressed further angst over the fact that the British Consul-General, Reginald 'Mac' Samples, would be on leave during Thatcher's visit. His concern was noted by Jack Johnston of the British High Commission in Ottawa, though his use of French phrasing suggests that some held a dubious view of Thatcher's visit: 'I take Derek Thomas's cosmetic point and understand his concern to show that we are all taking the visit au grande sérieux... It could be taken as something of a discourtesy if the Consul-General had not troubled to advance his return so as to be en poste for this first visit by the new Leader of the

¹⁹³ NAUK FCO 82/490 (Part C), FCO brief on Canadian political scene, 15 September 1975.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

Opposition’.¹⁹⁶ More notably, however, Johnston further observed the inexperience of the new British Opposition Leader: ‘Knowing that she has a very limited acquaintance with our ways, the Office are very anxious that we should create the best possible impression on this her first major adventure across the Atlantic’.¹⁹⁷ Revealingly, observing the inexperience of Thatcher’s aides, they added: ‘We know that Mrs Thatcher is new to the external side of Government business, and it appears that her Private Office are new to the game too’.¹⁹⁸ The absence of knowledgeable advisors by Thatcher’s side is highly surprising given that the Conservatives had put a significant emphasis on presenting their Party’s politics as an alternative strategy for government – but it was still a matter of concern to the FCO.

Boardman states that Canada had ‘possessed a spritely determination to avoid slipping back into the role of appendage to British interests’ since the 1920s and 1930s.¹⁹⁹ However, he notes that constitutional change and constant revaluations of British and Canadian citizenship rules led to some concerned figures exclaiming ‘enough is enough’ by the late 1960s, calling for a stop to slipping out of the UK’s interests.²⁰⁰ This attitude was particularly apparent during Thatcher’s encounters with the Canadian press. Specifically, her appearance on the Canadian radio programme ‘Question Period’ in Ottawa was pivotal in highlighting the strain within Anglo-Canadian relations. Hosted by Max Keeping of CJQH-TV, Thatcher was quizzed by Douglas Fisher (*Toronto Sun*), Gail Scott (CTV News) and Charles Lynch (Southam News Services). Opening the interview, the Leader of the Opposition was first forced

¹⁹⁶ NAUK FCO 82/489 (Part B), Letter from the British High Commission, Ottawa, 16 July 1975.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Boardman, “The Singular Case,” 28.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

to defend Canada's relevance in British affairs, when Lynch stated: 'We used to have a mother-daughter relationship between Britain and Canada and it has long since been replaced...' to which she replied: 'Britain is not indifferent about Canada in any way... there is a particular affection.'²⁰¹ When informed that 'nothing about Canada ever appears in British newspapers', Thatcher assured: 'The overseas sections of our newspapers do report overseas matters and they report them very well.'²⁰² She was, however, interrupted: 'Not on Canadian matters.'²⁰³ The issue clearly riled Lynch, who responded forcefully to Thatcher's further claim that Canada was included in the overseas sections of the British press: 'I'm amazed, I'm amazed... I don't believe you,' he hectored.²⁰⁴

In difference to American views, the British class system appeared to be a subject of controversy for Thatcher's Canadian interviewers. Douglas Fisher argued that much of the discontent among the British trade unions resulted from the attitude of the upper-middle class, who 'look down' on workers and seek to limit their freedoms. To this, Thatcher responded: 'Well, I've no chips on my shoulder. I accept people for what they are and I hope they accept me for what I am. Not your background, not where you are now but what kind of a person you are.'²⁰⁵ Again, she was interrupted: 'But how can you say that, Mrs Thatcher? When you say it you sound like Her Majesty the Queen. The tones are there, the voice is there, this is a class thing.'²⁰⁶ Although she objected to the comment, asserting: 'I have a very ordinary background', Lynch persevered: 'I understand that. Somehow that ordinary

²⁰¹ NAUK FCO 82/491 (Part D), 'Question Time', 24 September 1975.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

background isn't what comes through... The class comes through. You've got class and it really screams. How do you get over that when you're talking to the common man?'²⁰⁷ Even though Britain and Canada had drifted apart during the post-war decades, the tone taken by Thatcher's interviewers appears slightly aggressive given the circumstances, and far from the balanced, neutral stance taken by the US press.

Although Thatcher's interviewers were open and forthcoming in their initial remarks, her relatively fast rise through the Tory Party ranks did not go unnoticed. Asked if she had been hesitant about running for the Conservative leadership, she replied: 'It wasn't something that I'd always wanted to do but when the opportunity came I just didn't hesitate at all. The decision was taken in a flash and I've never questioned it and never hesitated since... I decided there had to be a contest and I decided I'd put my name forward.'²⁰⁸ Informed by Lynch that Canadians thought 'Englishmen treat English women shamefully', he asked Thatcher how she'd overcome the issue of her gender in politics, and whether she felt that male attitudes had 'softened' towards women.²⁰⁹ Thatcher responded: 'They've just recognised their very real abilities... It has been remarkable the way in which all of a sudden a woman has been accepted as a Leader of the Party... I've had no difficulty and no problems whatsoever. But then of course I have got both a scientific and legal background so one has been able to prove that one can argue with the staunchest of men.'²¹⁰

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

However, just as with her US visit, Thatcher's comments on her political agenda lacked any explicit detail, which again highlights the vagueness of her future policy plans. For instance, when questioned: 'There are some new directions that you want to lead the Conservative Party into, are there not?' her reply of 'I have very firm views, yes', did not satisfy Gail Scott, who pressed for further evidence.²¹¹ Accordingly, Thatcher added: 'There is only really one broad issue in British politics at the moment and that is whether you go very much further left towards much more state control... or whether you limit the power and control of the state and readdress the balance in favour of the citizen... that's the main broad divide.'²¹² Such a limited answer demonstrates again that although Thatcher was primarily touring the globe in order to boost her image at home and on the world stage, she also sought to gain experience by absorbing international policy and the methods used by others in power, which could later be translated into her own political agenda.

In a press conference held at the National Press Centre the same day in Ottawa, Thatcher dismissed the comment that Canadians perceived her as 'a Right-winger': 'To dub a person as Right-wing or Left-wing is misleading and I think does not give them an adequate chance to express their views... I would regard my views as being those which I think are the birth right of every British citizen.'²¹³ Once again, her reply lacked a specific narrative. Naturally, foreign affairs was a further topic that Thatcher struggled with under questioning: 'I have never read or heard your views on the Rhodesian situation and I would like to ask whether you belong to the Right or

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ NAUK FCO 82/491 (Part D), Press Conference: National Press Centre, Ottawa, 24 September 1975.

Left wing of the Party.’²¹⁴ Attempting to subvert the question, Thatcher replied: ‘Could you tell me which is the Right and which is the Left?’²¹⁵ It is surprising that given the importance the Conservative Party were placing on Thatcher’s first North American tour as Opposition Leader, and knowing that foreign policy was a weakness, she appeared to be heavily under briefed and unaware of prominent international affairs.

However, when Thatcher was asked directly what the aim of her visit to Canada was, her response confirmed the fact that as a relatively inexperienced leader, she needed to be seen abroad: ‘When you are a new Leader of a Party, you like to go on a “getting-to-know you” tour to other countries to meet other leaders and to discuss common problems with them.’²¹⁶ Representing Britain abroad, Thatcher played the role of an optimist when addressing Britain’s economic reality: ‘It is not half as bad as some of the reports indicate... Of course we have problems. And it would be foolish to ignore them. But then we are not the only nation in the world which has problems... I think they are nothing like as great as those we faced in the 1930s. They are of a different origin now. But we shall tackle them.’²¹⁷ Just *how* Britain could tackle them was left unsaid.

After her visit to Ottawa, Thatcher arrived in Toronto the following day, where she gave a highly anticipated speech to the Empire Club. Before her arrival there had been conflict between the FCO and their counterparts over the proposed

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

topic of Thatcher's speech. In a meeting between Airey Neave and Richard Ryder (Thatcher's Political Secretary, 1975-81), a month before the tour, it was observed: 'The Empire Club were not happy with a serious speech on relations with developing countries. They wanted a more exciting political speech'.²¹⁸ Meeting their requests, Thatcher addressed an audience of 1661 people (remarkably, Mac Samples later noted that '3000 other applicants had to be turned down'), in which she admitted the difficulty in capturing British public opinion: 'Politicians have a choice – they can do what is unpopular but advisable or what is popular but unwise'.²¹⁹ The 'essential task of a leader', Thatcher stressed, was 'not to follow public opinion from the back but to lead it from the front... We are all wired to those great freedoms which are at the heart of the Western ideal...'²²⁰

Referring specifically to Britain's troubles, she stated:

It is true that at present we have problems, serious problems, and it would be foolish of me to ignore them. You do not solve problems by ignoring them, but only by facing them, analysing their causes, propounding solutions... Our problems are similar in kind, but perhaps different in degree to those which other Western societies have experienced. They are inflation, unemployment, absence of growth and public expenditure beyond what the taxpayer can shoulder.²²¹

²¹⁸ NAUK FCO 82/489 (Part B), Meeting with Airey Neave and Richard Ryder, 21 August 1975.

²¹⁹ NAUK FCO 82/491 (Part D), Speech to The Empire Club, 24 September 1975.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Ibid.

Thatcher could clearly identify with Britain's problems, however, she had yet to develop an articulate response to how the Conservatives would solve them under her leadership.

Refraining from outlining any particular form of economic strategy, she continued: 'The actions we take may have to be stronger and go on longer than in those countries which prescribed the remedies at an earlier stage of the disease. But the problem will be dealt with - indeed we have no choice but to deal with it and deal with it firmly.'²²² Although she acknowledged the problems caused by the world recession, no official Conservative policy was offered, other than a broad vision of a smaller government-private enterprise inspired economy, which again highlights that having only held the Conservative leadership for little more than six months, she had much to learn and was unprepared to construct policy to suit her own political vision.

The official conclusions on the overall perception of Thatcher's first trip to Canada as Leader of the Opposition differ significantly. The British High Commission in Ottawa, who offered the most diplomatic summary of the visit, noted: 'As far as Ottawa is concerned the verdict has to be a mixed one... The official part of her programme was a bit thin... She had lunch with Mr Trudeau and Mr Stanfield (Canada's then Leader of the Opposition)... These went quite smoothly'.²²³ *The Times* observed that in lunching with Canada's Official Opposition (the Progressive Conservatives), Thatcher felt at ease given that 'progressive' was 'an attribute that

²²² Ibid.

²²³ NAUK FCO 82/492 (Part D), Note from British High Commission (Ottawa), 3 October 1975. (Neither the UKNA or The Thatcher Papers held at Churchill College in Cambridge have a record of what was discussed with either Trudeau or Stanfield).

Mrs Thatcher always attaches to the Tories'.²²⁴ The paper also noted the presence of shadow cabinet member, Flora MacDonald, 'who many here think will try emulating Mrs Thatcher'.²²⁵ However, the British High Commission observed that Thatcher's encounters with the press were 'less happy': 'The coverage the press gave her was not very great and although her press conference seemed to go smoothly it produced little in the way of headlines'.²²⁶ Interestingly, they suggested that given the vast media coverage that Thatcher had gained during her US visit, interest in the new Leader of the Opposition 'was a little stale' by the time she arrived in Canada.²²⁷ Furthermore, they accepted that the interviewers who quizzed her on 'Question Time' were 'untypically hostile' towards her, resulting in a performance that was 'not a great success'.²²⁸

Demonstrating her lack of leadership experience, the High Commission also reported: 'Mrs Thatcher did not come across as a natural for the relaxed, informal atmosphere of Canadian television, and once or twice came dangerously close to giving what seemed like a rather prim lecture to the questioners'.²²⁹ Additionally, they felt that the lack of advisors surrounding Thatcher put her at a considerable disadvantage, particularly in light of her inexperience on the world stage: 'Airey Neave did not accompany Mrs Thatcher, and it was evident that she was at a disadvantage with her only source of political advice a not particularly experienced or well-informed press officer, whose chief concern seemed to be her image at home'.²³⁰

²²⁴ "Mrs Thatcher's surprise praise for Herr Schmidt."

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ NAUK FCO 82/492 (Part D), Note from British High Commission (Ottawa), 3 October 1975.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Ibid.

Lastly, they added: ‘You will see from Mac Samples’ report that she did not make a very good impression in Toronto’.²³¹

Although Samples had not been present for the full duration of Thatcher’s visit, he was aware of concerns surrounding Gordon Reece, who at the time was a journalist, television producer and strategist, in charge of handling Thatcher’s media engagements: ‘Mr Reece had arranged for the British press to be present, but as far as I could see they did not have the opportunity of interviewing Mrs Thatcher... The local press representatives from *The Star* were brushed off rather similarly’.²³² He added: ‘Ron Baxter and I were dismayed at Mr Reece’s apparent lack of interest in the local press’, noting that he had commented to the *Toronto Star*: ‘The purpose of her visit to Washington, Chicago, Ottawa and Toronto was to show British people that she was recognised and accepted by leaders of the West’.²³³ Such a statement suggests that the Conservative leadership were more concerned with Thatcher’s image at home than abroad, particularly given that she had only recently emerged as Leader of the Opposition. It also demonstrates the inexperience of Thatcher’s own colleagues, particularly as engaging with international figures is fundamental to the development of political relationships.

On Thatcher’s speech at the Empire Club, Samples reported: ‘I have heard nothing but praise of it, even from those who went to the club in a sceptical mood; the latter came away persuaded that Mrs Thatcher herself was a strong and persuasive

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² NAUK FCO 82/491, British Consulate-General: Visit to Toronto of Margaret Thatcher, 1 October 1975.

²³³ Ibid.

political leader, who presented her thesis admirably and with confidence of rare forthrightness'.²³⁴ Furthermore, he added that the 'political content of the speech had wide appeal in its emphasis on the need for strong and courageous political leadership in the western world'.²³⁵ Following the standing ovation that Thatcher received after giving a speech that 'continues to be described as masterly, both in content and presentation', Samples concluded that her address 'was a refreshing reminder of Britain's ability to produce outstanding political figures'.²³⁶

Perhaps in an attempt to consolidate his partial absence, Samples reported that he had arranged for a 'last minute' meeting between Thatcher and the Chairman of the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto, Paul Godfrey. He reported that Godfrey's colleagues were 'clearly impressed both by Mrs Thatcher's knowledge of local government matters, and by her studying and perceptive interest in their affairs'.²³⁷ Samples' observation of Thatcher's studiousness underline the point that her North American tour was part of a wider objective. Here again Thatcher's commitment to 'doing her homework', to soaking up as much knowledge as she possibly could in preparation for trips abroad, is highlighted. This element of Thatcher was clearly part of her psychological make-up – a desire to be seen as capable, competent and effective in outlining her politics. In seeking to gain power, Thatcher used the world stage not only as a platform to promote her vision, but also as a way of learning the nuances of foreign affairs, which she would need in order to one day emerge as Prime Minister.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ibid.

Although Samples largely praised Thatcher's performance in Canada, her uneasy interactions with the Canadian press was not left unnoticed. Commenting on a press gathering during her visit to Toronto, he noted: 'Time had been set aside for Mrs Thatcher to meet with the local press, but I am afraid this turned out to be chaotic, much to Mrs Thatcher's irritation, and she dismissed the occasion in five minutes'.²³⁸ However, Samples believed that the erratic handling of her press engagement was due to the 'somewhat clumsy and unprofessional handling of the media by Mrs Thatcher's press officer, and the behaviour of some of the local reporters, which was far from impeccable'.²³⁹

In a striking contrast to the gracious tone of Sample's report, the FCO viewed Thatcher's presence in Canada rather differently. Far from the image of a 'masterly' address, as described by Samples, instead, the FCO bluntly stated that in her 'very short speech' the Leader of the Opposition 'said nothing controversial', adding that there was 'nothing of particular interest' in regards to her public appearances.²⁴⁰ Noting the lack of policy detail when addressing the media on her thoughts towards Britain's socio-economic reality, they reported: 'She was not particularly convincing when expanding on the relative merits of price control in isolation or price control connected with wage control'.²⁴¹ Additionally, they observed: 'She also showed some ignorance of the Canadian/EEC framework', confirming her lack of foreign experience which was not helped by the lack of

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ NAUK FCO 82/491, FCO: Mrs Thatcher in Canada, 7 October 1975.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

knowledgeable advisors surrounding her.²⁴² As expected given the tentative nature of Thatcher's appearance on 'Question Time', the FCO recognised the 'somewhat desperate exchange' during the interview, which became especially apparent 'when the talk turned to the fading mother/daughter (UK/Canada) relationship'.²⁴³ The official responses to Thatcher's North American tour in 1975 suggest that she felt slightly more at ease in the US compared to Canada. Therefore, she had high hopes of achieving success with influential US politicians two years later in her trip to meet with President Carter in 1977, and made an even greater effort to ensure that she was received well by the international press.

Visit to the United States: New York, Houston and Washington D.C. (6th – 14th September, 1977)

Having been advised to meet with Thatcher due to the 'real possibility that she may be Prime Minister', President Carter and his closest aides Zbigniew Brzezinski (National Security Advisor, 1977-81), Robert Hunter (member of the National Security Council) and Cyrus Vance (Secretary of State, 1977-80), paid a courtesy call on the Leader of the Opposition in May 1977, meeting at the US Ambassador's London residence.²⁴⁴ Despite Carter's presence, it was Brzezinski who Thatcher sought to charm, as observed by Hunter: 'Oh yes, Dr Brzezinski,' she purred, 'I spent all afternoon reading your books.'²⁴⁵ Naturally flattered, Brzezinski recalled: 'She impressed me as a shrewd and forceful politician. She amused me by mentioning a

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ "US: NSC memo (current events update)," *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 21 March 1977, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/124465> (accessed 11/06/2016).

²⁴⁵ Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: Volume One*, 766.

number of times that she had read several of my books... Perhaps she would have done better to have read Carter's book. She didn't mention this at all!²⁴⁶ Indeed, on Carter, Thatcher appeared unmoved. Jonathan Aitken states that she had been 'unimpressed' by Carter's thoughts after their talk, though added 'sometimes the job can make the man'.²⁴⁷ Thatcher's desire to convince the Washington elite that she was a Prime Minister-in-waiting was duly reported by the *New York Times* following Carter's brief visit to London: 'Brimming with self-confidence, she told Mr Carter that her Party would win the election no matter when it came'.²⁴⁸

Four months later in September 1977, Thatcher arrived in the US during the Carter administration's 'political honeymoon', a time when the president was perceived as 'an innocent and a skilled outsider untainted by the corruption in Washington'.²⁴⁹ John Farrell notes that Carter's election in 1976 had been 'a gift of fortune', following years of political turmoil after the failures of President Johnson's Great Society and the Watergate scandal, which had tainted Nixon's presidency.²⁵⁰ The FCO also noted Carter's relatively successful first year in the White House:

President Carter's phenomenal rise from Jimmy Who? to President was the result of meticulous planning and consistent hard work as well as a lot of luck. He is a complex man – tough, shrewd, intelligent, articulate and moralistic – who projects brilliantly in personal

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Aitken, *Margaret Thatcher*, 203.

²⁴⁸ Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: Volume One*, 766.

²⁴⁹ John Farrell, *Tip O'Neill: and the Democratic Century* (London: Little, Brown and Company, 2001), 440.

²⁵⁰ Farrell, *O'Neill*, 440.

contact... By his direct communication with the people and his emphasis on the idealistic/moralistic heritage of US foreign policy, President Carter has built up a powerful public constituency for himself and his policies.²⁵¹

In contrast to Thatcher's team, the advisors surrounding Carter were noted for their intellect, with Brzezinski being viewed as a 'conceptual thinker' and Vance a prominent figure who 'directs an active State Department'.²⁵² Despite their influence, the FCO added: 'Mr. Carter is, however, very much in charge. And he has imparted a new direction to US foreign policy'.²⁵³

As with Ford, the Carter administration also had their share of problems, particularly within the sphere of foreign affairs. In particular, one of Carter's most pressing concerns was his desire to enforce legislation that would limit the use of nuclear arms in order to halt the Soviet advance that had escalated during the 1960s and 1970s. However, his efforts had achieved little success. After briefing senators on his plans for a SALT treaty in May 1977, Carter sensed future problems: 'The Soviets have been adamant about not cutting back on their large missiles... The senators were supportive, but I doubt that their support will last...'²⁵⁴ On Carter's leadership in 1977, Brandon observed: 'He has an orderly mind, he goes out of the limits of his own knowledge... His knowledge is all over the lot, without any particular objective. What impressed me so far about this administration is its electric quality, the absence

²⁵¹ NAUK FCO 82/775, Brief No1: The Carter Administration, 2 September 1977.

²⁵² NAUK FCO 82/774, FCO Brief, 22 August 1977.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Jimmy Carter, *White House Diary* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010), 53.

of a larger strategy on anything... their interrelation is still very unclear'.²⁵⁵ Indeed, Europe appeared concerned with the leadership coming from the US, as demonstrated in Brandon's papers: 'Europeans are pleased with Carter's sense of leadership because, despite what they say publicly, they want the US to lead, they also appreciate his intelligence and command of the fact, but they wonder whether he has the wisdom, whether he gets the advice necessary and whether he can be trusted, because he tends to shift positions'.²⁵⁶

The FCO observed that while Carter had focused on domestic policy during his presidential campaign, once in office he drifted to take a more specific interest in foreign affairs, identifying the difficulties in the US constitution: 'The President has a genuine interest in foreign policy, and problems with Congress were less likely to occur in foreign policy'.²⁵⁷ Conflict between Carter and Congress became a prominent issue by October 1977, demonstrated in a comment made by Senator Frank Church: 'Carter created many of his own problems because Congress doesn't want to work at cross purposes with him. He tries to be as persuasive as he can, much more articulate than Nixon ever was, but what we complain about is substance. He is trying to be too comprehensive and that makes it incomprehensible'.²⁵⁸

It is interesting to note a connection between Carter and Thatcher on their attitude towards foreign affairs. In his memoir *A Full Life*, published in 2015, Carter recalls that before he publicly revealed his intention to run for the US presidency, in

²⁵⁵ USA: Library of Congress, Henry Brandon Papers, Box 10.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ NAUK FCO 82/774, FCO Brief, 22 August 1977.

²⁵⁸ USA: Library of Congress, Henry Brandon Papers, Box 10.

1972 he prepared for the role by learning the ways of foreign affairs, just as Thatcher did in opposition: 'I was asked to serve as a member of the Trilateral Trade Commission and learned as much as possible about international issues... I invited other presidential hopefuls to Atlanta... They were eager to talk about their own plans, and I asked them questions about important domestic and foreign issues'.²⁵⁹

Concerns over Carter's approach to foreign policy began to rise among senior Democrats in late 1977, seen in comments made by a former US foreign advisor to Brandon: 'Dick Holbrooke said today that the trouble with Carter's foreign policy is that it is developed by trial and error and fits and starts, that there is no one who has a concept, no one who can present policy in a coherent and simple way...'²⁶⁰ Brandon himself wrote in his diary: 'It would be so much better if Carter didn't know all the facts and instead acted or at least did something...'²⁶¹ Michael Heale agreed that the US were 'weary' of assuming too much international responsibility, seen in a comment made by Carter in 1977: 'The time for American intervention in all problems of the world is over'.²⁶² Thus, Carter's administration faced considerable international pressures at the time of Thatcher's visit. The FCO were also aware of the 'marked change of style in Mr. Carter's foreign policy': 'His preferred strategy is to reach out to the furthestmost limit of the intended solution and then withdraw slightly in the event of opposition'.²⁶³²⁶⁴

²⁵⁹ Jimmy Carter, *A Full Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015), 105.

²⁶⁰ USA: Library of Congress, Henry Brandon Papers, Box 10.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Heale, *The United States*, 429.

²⁶³ NAUK FCO 82/774, Brief on the economic scene, 22 August 1977.

²⁶⁴ NAUK FCO 82/775, Brief No1: The Carter Administration, 2 September 1977.

It is important to recognise that Thatcher's situation was considerably different when she arrived in the US in 1977, compared to her previous visit in 1975. Six months into the Conservative leadership, Thatcher was a relatively new figure on the British political scene when she visited President Ford, however, in 1977, she sought to build on her previous success by impressing the American elite due to her increased desire to succeed Callaghan. Whereas in her 1975 visit Thatcher was acting as part of the British state in her guise as Leader of the Opposition, her visit to the US in 1977 was more directly political. *The Washington Post* offered a favourable report on Thatcher, commenting on how her first two years as Leader of the Opposition had shaped her: 'As Tory leader, she has resisted media advice to soften her image as an immaculately groomed, 51-year-old suburban matron with her sensible shoes firmly planted on the right. She has made no concessions to conciliate moderate leaders in her own party... anything softer than hard line would not be congenial for her'.²⁶⁵ In terms of gender politics, it was being speculated that Thatcher did not want to be known as a mere housewife, or a female who used her looks as a way of gaining interest in her. Instead, she wanted to be seen as one of the men: strong, self-assured and capable at the pressures of leadership – able to one day hold the office of Prime Minister. On Thatcher's chances in a future General Election, they added: 'Her stance, moreover, arouses enthusiasm among Conservative Party workers, a seceded plus in any national contest'.²⁶⁶ Evidently, Thatcher had gained in confidence since her previous US tour in 1975, which was noted by *The Washington Post*, after she briefed American journalists in advance of her visit: 'I'm the next government... I think I should meet your cabinet'.²⁶⁷ They added that her '2 ½ years as Conservative

²⁶⁵ "Margaret Thatcher Confident She Will Be Prime Minister."

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

Party Leader have only increased Thatcher's confidence and self-assurance, qualities with which she was already well-endowed'.²⁶⁸

Despite having gained two years' experience as Opposition Leader, Thatcher's team took no chances when it came to ensuring the visit's successful outcome. *The Times* stated: 'She has been acting somewhat like an American political campaigner... She even sent an "advance man"... Her staff, for the most part, have been handling her press relations themselves, rather than using the British Information Service (BIS)'.²⁶⁹ Indeed, in a note to his US counterparts, Adam Butler (Thatcher's Parliamentary Private Secretary), stated: 'I am coming over to the States two days ahead of Mrs Thatcher... The main purpose of my coming over early is to talk with the various representatives of the media'.²⁷⁰ *The Times* observed advance reports of Thatcher's visit in the US media, noting that the *New York Times* and *The Washington Post* had described her as the 'iron butterfly', and approved of her 'blunt, no-nonsense conservative philosophy – her "well-groomed Tory gentility."'²⁷¹

As expected, the British press widely covered the fact that Thatcher's second visit to the US as Conservative Leader was 'designed to give her the look of a seasoned international politician'.²⁷² In all her trips abroad, the overriding aim was to expand Thatcher's political experience and boost her image on the world stage, an element observed by *The Guardian*: 'Mrs Thatcher's visit has apparently been designed to build up her image as a stateswoman by minimising touchy subjects...

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Times Correspondent, "Mrs Thatcher makes sure about her US publicity," *The Times*, 8 September 1977.

²⁷⁰ NAUK FCO 82/774, Butler note to US, 27 July 1977.

²⁷¹ "Mrs Thatcher makes sure about her US publicity."

²⁷² Ibid.

She wants to present herself as the inevitable next British Prime Minister'.²⁷³

Recognising her inexperience in foreign affairs, *The Times* reported: 'Foreign affairs has never been one of Mrs Thatcher's strong points and she is clearly hoping that the publicity surrounding her long tour will bolster her credibility in this sphere'.²⁷⁴

Despite the possibility of Thatcher emerging as a future Prime Minister, the Carter administration was not overly enthusiastic about the idea of meeting with Thatcher during her visit. Brzezinski advised Carter to 'plead a heavy schedule' and pass the Leader of the Opposition over to Vice-President Walter Mondale.²⁷⁵ Not one to settle for second best, after much deliberation, Thatcher got her meeting with the president, confirmed by a White House aide: 'It was due to the general closeness of the UK/US relationship that we agreed to see her. Peter Jay also intervened on her behalf and said, in effect, "you ought to get to know this lady."'²⁷⁶ Briefing Carter just days before Thatcher's arrival, Vance accurately observed the motives behind her visit: 'Mrs Thatcher will seek to: Maximize the political benefit at home from her meeting with you, Further her own relationship with you, Obtain your views on major issues'.²⁷⁷ He added: 'In all the cities, a heavy schedule of media activity – including two speeches – is designed to get across the Tory point of view in the US and get her maximum press play in the UK'.²⁷⁸ Given that the FCO were informed: 'The White House do not expect Mrs Thatcher to keep her meeting secret', and no press

²⁷³ Jonathan Steele, "Mrs Thatcher plays the stateswoman," *The Guardian*, 12 September 1977.

²⁷⁴ Times Correspondent, "Tory leader at White House today," *The Times*, 13 September 1977.

²⁷⁵ Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: Volume One*, 367.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Memorandum for The President, Department of State Archives, Released under FOIA, Case No.200502415. (Kindly made available to the author by Daniel J Collings, Director, US Research for Charles Moore's Authorized Biography of Margaret Thatcher).

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

photographs were to be allowed, it appeared that the Carter administration sought to keep the visit relatively low profile.²⁷⁹

Although foreign policy was an area of weakness for Thatcher, the issue of Rhodesia was one topic that she developed strong views on. Her controversial position regarding this in 1977 demonstrates that within two years her knowledge of global affairs had clearly broadened. By travelling abroad and witnessing the methods and workings of other countries, Thatcher demonstrated that she had a sounder insight in political policy than she had when she'd first taken up the position as Leader of the Opposition. Moore observes that Carter and Thatcher 'respected one another, but they did not particularly like one another, and they certainly did not agree on many of the key issues of the day', not least when it came to Rhodesia.²⁸⁰ Over a decade after the Rhodesian Prime Minister, Ian Smith, illegally declared independence from Britain, the two rival African parties (ZIPPA, led by Joshua Nkomo and ZANU by Robert Mugabe), had been involved in a violent civil war from their neighbouring South African regions.²⁸¹ Following the rejection of a peace plan issued by the US calling for a transition from Smith's white minority government to majority rule, it was argued in 1977 that Rhodesian security forces needed to be disbanded if a new legitimate government was to emerge on fair grounds. Thatcher was highly against the idea, conflicting with the intentions of the Carter administration. In view of Thatcher's position, Vance stated: 'We will be lucky if her US visit passes without further public acknowledgement on her part of strong opposition to key elements of

²⁷⁹ NAUK FCO 82/774, FCO note, 9 August 1977.

²⁸⁰ Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: Volume One*, 495.

²⁸¹ Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher: Volume One*, 69.

the UK-US plan'.²⁸² In his memoir, published almost a decade after the visit, Peter Carrington recalled that Rhodesia's prominence in international affairs 'soured' Britain's relations with other states, and had a 'distracting effect' on foreign policy negotiations.²⁸³ As a result, the issue 'disturbed relations, normally harmonious', with the US, who found the situation 'perplexing and tedious' as international negotiations continued (which they did following Thatcher's election as Prime Minister in 1979).²⁸⁴

If the FCO had been helpful in briefing Thatcher's team during her North American tour in 1975, Thatcher's office tried to suggest that they were deliberately less cooperative in advance of her visit to the US in 1977. Caroline Stevens (Thatcher's Diary Secretary), confirmed that there were tensions between the FCO and the Leader of the Opposition: 'There is no doubt about it... the FCO is hostile to MT... There is an obvious reason for this in that almost all the ones I know vote Socialist'.²⁸⁵ Demonstrating the FCO's scepticism, Ramsay Melhuish commented on the 'potentially delicate issue' of Thatcher's US visit: 'My ruling to my desk officers was to let the American Embassy make the running and not to initiate any contacts ourselves with Mrs Thatcher's office... I propose to continue to play this in a fairly low-key way while of course continuing to offer our courtesies'.²⁸⁶

²⁸² Memorandum for The President, Department of State Archives, Released under FOIA, Case No.200502415.

²⁸³ Carrington, *Reflect*, 281.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 295.

²⁸⁵ Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: Volume One*, 369.

²⁸⁶ NAUK FCO 82/774, FCO Note, 27 May 1977.

However, Mr Kerr (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State), stressed to the FCO that Thatcher's visit 'should be handled in accordance with the normal rules for assistance to the Opposition... The Embassy (and your department) should assist the Conservative Party in drawing up appropriate programmes....'²⁸⁷ In contrast to Thatcher's view that the FCO were unhelpful in offering their assistance, they did appear to be willing to help Thatcher's team, especially when it came to briefing her on the American economy: 'Mrs Thatcher has not asked for a brief on the US economic scene, but since she will be meeting a number of financiers and bankers in the US, we should like to provide her with a brief on this topic'.²⁸⁸ Going further in their assistance, Melhuish of the FCO later stated: 'I have arranged to call on Mrs Thatcher at 10am this Friday, for an oral briefing'.²⁸⁹

Following her successful visit to see Ford in 1975, it is clear that Thatcher's team held the same ambitions of securing favourable press coverage in 1977. However, in a note to the FCO, the British Embassy in Washington observed: 'I had noted in your earlier letter what Adam Butler had said about Mrs Thatcher wanting maximum publicity. If that is the case they are not going about it in quite the right way in Washington'.²⁹⁰ Therefore, although it would have been customary for Adam Butler to take the initiative in planning Thatcher's US schedule, he asked the British Embassy in Washington to take the lead, which confirms the earlier observation of the lack of experience among Thatcher's key advisors: 'Mr Butler said that he very much hoped that we could take over the planning of Mrs Thatcher's official calls in Washington since he had more confidence in our arrangements than in those of the

²⁸⁷ NAUK FCO 82/774, FCO Note, 10 June 1977.

²⁸⁸ NAUK FCO 82/774, Note to FCO from PUS, 15 June 1977.

²⁸⁹ NAUK FCO 82/775, FCO Note, 31 August 1977.

²⁹⁰ NAUK FCO 82/774, British Embassy Note to FCO, 14 July 1977.

State Department'.²⁹¹ Happy to cooperate, the Embassy stated: 'We shall certainly take on the task of making Mrs Thatcher's appointments in Washington as requested by Adam Butler and generally coordinating Mrs Thatcher's arrangements in the U.S. if that is what she and Butler would wish...'²⁹² However, they added: 'It is absolutely essential that her office should give us all details, otherwise the wires simply get crossed with consequent frustration all round'.²⁹³ Thus, although there was natural tension between Callaghan's government and the Conservatives, it appears that the FCO did go out of their way to assist Thatcher in advance of her visit.

On 6th September 1977, Thatcher briefly stopped in New York, before moving on to Houston and Washington D.C. Moore notes that the Leader of the Opposition chose to fly on the 'cut-price Laker Airways', rather than British Airways, in an attempt to highlight her commitment to free enterprise and private ownership.²⁹⁴ When interviewed for this research, Lord King of Bridgwater observed Thatcher's work ethic, recalling how she would yawn in cabinet meetings: 'She worked incredibly hard... She really did manage on just four hours sleep or something like that – it wasn't a joke.'²⁹⁵ Such characteristics can be seen in the way in which Thatcher handled her trips abroad. For example, on her first day in New York, having spent hours reading up on the US economic scene, Moore states that at a dinner given by the media network NBC, she 'nearly fainted because of a combination of heat and exhaustion'.²⁹⁶ Later that evening, Stevens wrote of her concerns after speaking with Butler: 'Butler and I discuss these bouts which are really quite serious and we have

²⁹¹ NAUK FCO 82/774, FCO note, 5 July 1977.

²⁹² NAUK FCO 82/774, Note from British Embassy in Washington, 6 July 1977.

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: Volume One*, 367.

²⁹⁵ Interview with Lord King of Bridgwater, 3 November 2015.

²⁹⁶ Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: Volume One*, 367.

decided that she should really play the grande dame more and demand to sit down if she feels faint. But she is too polite and socially insecure'.²⁹⁷ Although Thatcher was out to promote her image as a credible leader, it is clear that being well received and highly thought of within the US also mattered to her on a personal level.

In a letter to *The Times* the day before Thatcher landed in New York, one letter writer stressed:

I sincerely hope that she manages to convey to the people of America a much more realistic impression of Britain than the damaging message she dispensed on her last political foray... My message to Mrs Thatcher at this time is – “don’t make political capital by going to America to criticize us, be objective about the situation and tell them that we’re as good as the best” – she would earn greater respect by so doing from them and from us.²⁹⁸

Thatcher must have been listening. In her speech to the British American Chamber of Commerce in New York, cannily entitled ‘In this life we get nothing save by effort’ - a 1899 text by the former US president, Theodore Roosevelt (1901-09) - Thatcher surprisingly praised James Callaghan, clearly not intending to play party politics: ‘While some advisors recommend “reflation”, I would prefer the Prime Minister’s analysis’:

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 367-368.

²⁹⁸ Peter Kellard, “Letter to the Editor: Mrs Thatcher’s next US visit,” *The Times*, 8 September 1977.

We used to think that you could just spend your way out of a recession and increase employment by cutting taxes and boosting government spending... I tell you, in all candour, that this option no longer exists... It only worked by injecting bigger doses of inflation into the economy, followed by higher levels of unemployment.²⁹⁹

This, Thatcher believed, was ‘a much better interpretation of modern economic problems than that which is urged on us in Keynes’s name’.³⁰⁰ Thatcher stressed that Britain was entering a new phase in politics: ‘The post-war period has come to an end, the post-Socialist period is about to begin.’³⁰¹ Her speech identified what Thatcher saw as the four ‘fallacies’ of post-war thinking, which she affirmed were damaging the British economy and needed to be abandoned: ‘Fallacy One is that prosperity comes from government bureaucracy and controls. The reality is that resources are scarce and can be increased only by incentives for effort, investment and efficacy.’³⁰² Seeking to get her message across, each paragraph began with the words ‘The Fallacy’ and ended with ‘The reality’. In doing so, her audience (much like her confidence on the issue of Rhodesia), saw a confident, articulate leader, at ease in the limelight, even though she continued to refrain from offering any new specifics regarding Conservative policy.

²⁹⁹ “Speech to British American Chamber of Commerce,” *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 8 September 1977, <http://www.margareththatcher.org/document/103436> (accessed 11/06/2016).

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Ibid.

Following her address, *The Guardian* offered the most favourable assessment of her performance from the British media's point of view: 'Her audience of 550 were plainly impressed. They interrupted her three times to applaud'.³⁰³ The paper further noted the remarks made by an American executive: 'She has one hell of a head on her shoulders', observing that 'a group of others fervently agreed'.³⁰⁴ The *New York Times* reported on 'the other pillars of her economic program', highlighting 'the removal of restraints on business investment and firm control over public spending and the money supply'.³⁰⁵ 'Some may call my ideas reactionary', Thatcher commented to reporters following her speech, 'but everyone is reactionary on matters he knows something about'.³⁰⁶ Noting the internationalization of Anglo-American policy ideas, *The Times* observed: 'These points accord very much with the economic and social policies practised in the United States'.³⁰⁷ Thatcher's desire to soak up political ideas she observed abroad again reflects the interconnection between domestic policy and politics in different states - the ideas of one country influencing the agenda of another. This was observed by Stuart Butler, a Senior Fellow in Economic Studies at The Brookings Institute in Washington D.C., in an interview for this research: 'From 1965 to the end of the 1970s, there was a flow of policy ideas coming to and from the US – it was a counterculture of ideas. Questions of how economic systems functioned and of how government systems worked and operated

³⁰³ Jane Rosen "Thatcher in praise of effort," *The Guardian*, 9 September 1977.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ "Mrs. Thatcher Calls Tax Cuts Top Priority for Conservatives," *New York Times*, 9 September 1977.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Michael Leapman, "Mrs Thatcher believes in a post-socialist era," *The Times*, 9 September 1977.

were being discussed across different channels.’³⁰⁸ British affairs were evidently of interest to the US and their intrigue was, therefore, of great interest to Thatcher.³⁰⁹

Having briefly made the headlines in New York, Thatcher then travelled to Houston, Texas, to give a speech to the River Oaks Country Club, where she ‘hammered home her philosophy of free enterprise’ to an audience largely made up of ‘rich and Conservative sympathizers’.³¹⁰ Once again, here Thatcher deliberately referred to Britain’s crisis of inflation, recognising that the incentive to work had deteriorated significantly throughout the mid-late 1970s. The event, however, had not been organised to Thatcher’s standards, noted by Stevens:

No hairdresser for MT (as ordered). No one to press her dress (as ordered) and just to crown it MT got locked in the bathroom... These setbacks did not amuse MT and she became distinctly irritated... Chaos reigned for the remainder of the evening. There was no one to greet us... We entered unannounced as nobody recognised MT! However, she made a brilliant speech and got a standing ovation.³¹¹

Despite the setbacks, Thatcher gave a memorable address, opening with the line: ‘Our heritage is under attack... The basic values of a free society, a decent society, are

³⁰⁸ Interview with Stuart Butler, 31 March 2016.

³⁰⁹ James Cooper analyses the internationalization of Anglo-American politics further in his article: James Cooper, “‘Superior to anything I had seen in the States’: The ‘Thatcherisation’ of Republican Strategy in 1980 and 1984,” *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 11:1 (2013), 1-21.

³¹⁰ Michael White, “Thatcher slams the ‘wreckers’,” *The Guardian*, 10 September 1977.

³¹¹ Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: Volume One*, 368.

threatened.’³¹² She recognised the ‘common heritage’ of Anglo-American ideas, and warned that they were threatened: ‘Never have our basic values, the Christian values which rest on Hebrew and Hellenic foundations, been so menaced as they are today. Family life, the innocence of children, public decency, respect for the law, pride in good work, patriotism, democracy – are all under attack.’³¹³ ‘If they are overwhelmed,’ she continued, ‘the free market economy cannot survive.’³¹⁴ The use of the word ‘heritage’ in her address is a specific reference to the policies that Thatcher believed would ensure a prosperous future for Britain. In opposition, Thatcher sought to make her ideas known, specifically her desire of wanting to go back to the principles of the Victorian era, while deploying radical techniques to do so. In defence of such values, Thatcher argued that Britain needed to ‘defeat the wreckers’ who relied upon the state to provide and who were, in Thatcher’s eyes, ‘wholly destructive, impelled by the desire to vandalize and to defile’.³¹⁵ ‘This reflects the dark side of human nature,’ she added, ‘never far below the surface, ready to seep out when the conventions of society weaken.’³¹⁶

Thatcher’s desire was for Britain to become ‘the Texas of Europe’, economically efficient and advanced in industry. Appealing to US rednecks, she stated: ‘To renew is to conserve... We must turn over our moral capital once in every generation if we are to preserve its value.’³¹⁷ This point is particularly interesting in that the comparison revealed itself to be an apposite, given that Britain soon became

³¹² “Speech to the English Speaking Union in Houston,” *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 9 September 1977, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/103268> (accessed 11/06/2016).

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

an oil state herself. Recognising that she had a captive audience, Thatcher insisted on carrying on longer than her allotted time, exclaiming: ‘We’re all enjoying it!’³¹⁸ Her speech was clearly well received, more so than her efforts in New York. Roy Fox, the Consul-General in Houston, appeared highly impressed: ‘It was a glorious banquet with the new rising star in total control of her listeners for some 45-50 minutes – with hardly a note in front of her. She manifestly gained in confidence. They loved her more and more as the minutes ticked away. Her message could have been a bible for the Republican Party’.³¹⁹ It is evident that Thatcher was addressing a Conservative stronghold, who would naturally favour a free enterprise rhetoric over an extension of state resources, as an attendee commented to the press: ‘The members of this club are old money... That means they had money before 1920’.³²⁰ The British Embassy further observed that ‘there was a very good turn-out of top tycoons’, noting that David Rockefeller and other businessmen had been impressed.³²¹³²²

Back home, *The Times* continued the praise: ‘Mrs Thatcher came to Houston and found it her kind of town. Texas took a liking to her, for the political philosophy she is preaching here conforms closely with their practice of prosperity through individual enterprise and the minimum of government interference’.³²³ The paper noted that before her visit the Chairman of the Country Club had previously referred to the Leader of the Opposition as ‘one of the foremost ladies of the world’, and she duly gained the respect of the former head of the Central Intelligence Agency, George Bush, who later emerged as President of the United States himself (1989-1993): ‘She

³¹⁸ Michael Leapman, “Texas takes liking to Tory leader,” *The Times*, 11 September 1977.

³¹⁹ Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: Volume One*, 368.

³²⁰ “Texas takes liking to Tory leader.”

³²¹ NAUK FCO 82/774, Note from British Embassy: Visit to Houston, 8 October 1977.

³²² NAUK FCO 82/774, Note from British Embassy: Visit to Washington, 13 October 1977.

³²³ *Ibid.*

is bright,' he told 500 diners, 'She is frighteningly bright, as a matter of fact.'³²⁴ Interestingly, *The Times* stated that Adam Butler had previously briefed reporters that Thatcher's speech would focus on 'basic values and moral courage, family life, decency and patriotism', however, she later decided that the phrasing was 'too prim for a Texas audience, so she left most of it out'.³²⁵ Undoubtedly, her reworked speech struck a stronger chord with her audience.

The essence of Thatcher's message illustrated in her New York and Houston speeches essentially revolved around 'emphasizing her faith in free enterprise, with the implicit message that the Conservatives are more natural friends of America than Labour'.³²⁶ However, although Thatcher went down well in Houston, the British press were not blind to the fact that her free enterprise rhetoric lacked any new ideas, yet again highlighting her inexperience: 'The orthodox Conservative doctrine was designed to please her audience, and it did. But when questions came, it was apparent that she had not gone as far as some of them would have liked...'³²⁷

After Houston, Thatcher landed in Washington D.C., eager to mix with the political elite. However, as with Houston, her visit did not get off to the best start. Stevens noted: 'I got an explosion from MT while I was helping her to change: "This visit is going to be worse than I feared – P.J. (Ambassador Peter Jay) doing everything for his own self-aggrandizement. Cameras at the airport were for him not for me. Pointless briefings, they told me nothing new. I have better contacts than they

³²⁴ Ibid.

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ "Mrs Thatcher plays the stateswoman."

³²⁷ "Texas takes liking to Tory leader."

do. They are all socialist and hostile.”³²⁸ Naturally, there was conflict between the FCO and the Leader of the Opposition, however, given that the department had happily taken over the planning of Thatcher’s visit, they did appear to cooperate with the Conservatives in a politically correct manner.

A significant event for Thatcher was her appearance on the American television network ABC, where she met the legendary interviewer Barbara Walters for the second time as Leader of the Opposition. Refreshingly, Walters intended to step away from politics, seeking to reveal Thatcher’s personality. Asked if she ever found the time to go shopping given the pressures of balancing a career with family life, Thatcher said that she tried to get out shopping at least once a fortnight ‘so that I keep knowing the prices.’³²⁹ While she was clearly eager to ensure that she was aware of the everyday burdens on British households, Thatcher was also specifically reaching out to the female electorate, who she sought to inspire in her position as a woman who could do it all in terms of managing a career as well as a family. On her husband, *The Guardian* reported that he ‘handled her very well,’ adding: ‘If she became Prime Minister he could go on playing golf. “I am not a golf widow, I have something else to do.”’³³⁰ Opening up even further, Thatcher admitted that, two years in, she had become more relaxed in her role as Leader of the Opposition: ‘You know, when you’re tense, your voice rises and it can seem really rather artificial, so I think the whole of the last three years have really consisted in getting more relaxed about it.’³³¹ Her interview with Walters was key in portraying Thatcher from a new angle,

³²⁸ Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: Volume One*, 369.

³²⁹ Jonathan Steele, “Thatcher encounter with the million dollar woman,” *The Guardian*, 13 September 1977.

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ Ibid.

helping to present her as a working mother, capable of handling the pressures of leadership.

It is significant that although Thatcher's US visits enabled her to learn the nuances of international politics, in 1977 she was still relatively insecure when talks turned to foreign affairs. For instance, in advance of her trip the FCO wrote that Thatcher had been invited to address an international round table meeting at the Georgetown Centre for Strategic and International Studies, where she would need to speak 'on a foreign policy or security theme... Mrs Thatcher would be expected to speak for about 30 minutes, followed by a discussion'.³³² At this suggestion, Thatcher declined. Furthermore, Paul Gore-Booth offered Thatcher an additional invitation, asking if she would care to address the Calvin Bullock Forum in New York. Gore-Booth wrote that the forum 'attracts a personally invited and top-level financial and politically attuned audience, limited to 150... only the crème de la crème are invited to speak', and reassured Thatcher that her presentation to the forum 'could be much less formal' than a major speech.³³³ Although he urged, 'I recommend acceptance', Thatcher declined.³³⁴ Indeed, despite being briefed by the FCO on the US economic scene, the furthest Thatcher desired to go to was to attend an 'off-the-record' discussion with the Washington Institute for Foreign Affairs. However, the FCO reported that her audience were 'not up to the usual high standard', and observed how she had 'taken care not to publicize the meeting', ensuring it did not make headlines in the press.³³⁵ It is clear, therefore, that two years into her position leading the

³³² NAUK FCO82/774, FCO note to Stevens, 9 August 1977.

³³³ NAUK FCO82/774, Booth note to MT office, 2 August 1977.

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ NAUK FCO 82/774, Note from British Embassy: Visit to Washington, 13 October 1977. AUK FCO 82/775, FCO note: Mrs Thatcher, 19 September 1977.

Conservatives, Thatcher still lacked some of the qualities needed in order to serve as Prime Minister, though she astutely recognised that international travel was the surest way for her to develop.

Before her official meeting with Carter, Thatcher briefly met with Cyrus Vance. Following their talk, Vance briefed the president on Thatcher's stance on Rhodesia: 'Mrs. Thatcher was sceptical that our joint efforts will be successful. She is opposed to including any black "terrorists" in the Rhodesian army – which she likened to the British Army accepting elements of the Irish Republican Army'.³³⁶ Carter was evidently weary of Thatcher's position, commenting in the brief's margin: 'I hope they are not giving support to Smith'.³³⁷ Interestingly, Brzezinski had noted during their London meeting with Thatcher in May: 'The views on Africa expressed by Thatcher were not quite what we would have liked. She did not come right out and say it, but I formed the distinct impression that she was inclined to support the white position'.³³⁸ It should be noted, however, that whatever Thatcher's opinions on Rhodesia at the time, she did later ensure power sharing once in government.³³⁹

Moore notes that during Thatcher's meeting with Carter she 'spoke aggressively' whilst criticizing his plans to dismantle Rhodesia's security forces.³⁴⁰ This language highlights again the increase in Thatcher's self-confidence, given that she was being received well and was more confident in expressing long-held views of

³³⁶ "US: Vance minute to Carter," *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 12 September 1977, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/124469> (accessed 11/06/2016).

³³⁷ Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: Volume One*, 370.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, 366.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 371.

the key issues that were at the forefront of global affairs. Their talks, which ‘went on longer than the allotted time’, were described by the FCO as ‘very cordial’.³⁴¹ In a diary entry later that day, the president revealed his poor impression of the Conservative Leader: ‘She’s obviously an overbearing woman... thinks she can win easily if there is an election to be held’.³⁴² Contributing exclusively to this research, in a personal form of correspondence, Carter wrote of Thatcher:

An overwhelming impression was that Mrs Thatcher thought she knew more about American government than did any American. She was strong-willed and expressed her views without restraint. She was a good Prime Minister.³⁴³

Also revealing his true thoughts on the meeting, in a personal form of correspondence regarding this research, Walter Mondale (Vice-President of the United States, 1977-81), added:

It’s been many years since Carter and I met and dealt with Thatcher, so pardon my vagueness. I remember Thatcher, then the new Minority Conservative Leader, making a courtesy call on President Carter in the

³⁴¹ NAUK FCO 82/775, FCO note on visit, 13 October 1977.

³⁴² Carter, *White House*, 337. For more on Jimmy Carter’s presidency see, for instance: Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President* (USA: Bantam Books, 1995); Betty Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy* (USA: Cornell University Press, 2009); Kevin Mattson, *What the Heck Are You Up To, Mr. President?: Jimmy Carter, America’s “Malaise” and the Speech That Should Have Changed the Country* (USA, Bloomsbury, 2009); Robert Strong, *Working in the World: Jimmy Carter and the Making of American Foreign Policy* (USA: Louisiana State University Press, 2000); Timothy Maga, *The World of Jimmy Carter: U.S. Foreign Policy 1977-1981* (USA: University of New Haven Press, 1994).

³⁴³ Correspondence with President Carter, 10 July 2015.

White House. She was imperious, and I thought, almost insulting. Here was Carter, a seasoned President, being called to the mat by Thatcher. She wasn't listening. She was talking. Carter had generously granted her the interview. I thought she abused the courtesy. Carter showed her respect. She didn't reciprocate.³⁴⁴

Commenting on her nature as Prime Minister, he added:

I think her government was a good American ally, but I was amazed how she backed off doing anything to help when times got tough... Britain was always seen as a special ally, as it is today, even during tough times. Democratic, steeped in a shared culture and history, we worked together on most things, while remembering that Britain is independent... not a patsy.³⁴⁵

In a previous interview with Moore, noting the president's reaction to Thatcher's comments on Rhodesia, Mondale recalled: 'There was a blood vessel in his neck that used to throb when he got irritated. And when Margaret Thatcher got onto the subject of Rhodesia it throbbed with a vengeance. It wasn't the fact that she disagreed with him, but it was the way she did it...'³⁴⁶ Also observing the tension within the Oval Office and specifically her naivety over Carter's plans for a nuclear test ban treaty, Gregory Trevorton (NSC) revealed: 'It soon appeared that she had launched into a

³⁴⁴ Correspondence with Walter Mondale, 9 February 2016.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: Volume One*, 370.

campaign speech, rather as if she were addressing the Rotary Club... Mondale started to squirm... Finally Carter got a word in edgeways. Assuming she would be well versed in international issues he asked her: "What would your view be on the CTB?" There was silence. You could see Mrs Thatcher frantically rifling through her mental card file but to no avail'.³⁴⁷ When informed that CTB was a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, Thatcher remained unconvinced by the president's proposal, 'arguing for two thirds of their forty-five minute meeting that such a policy would be a huge mistake', given her belief in the need for a credible nuclear deterrent.³⁴⁸

In public, however, speaking to the press, Thatcher stated that Carter was 'a delightful person... very easy to get on with', adding that she was 'very happy to meet him'.³⁴⁹ 'Although (as an afterthought) she had, of course, already met him before', *The Times* observed.³⁵⁰ Noting Thatcher's lack of comments, they added: 'The Leader of the Opposition was less forthcoming about other aspects of her discussions with Mr Carter, telling reporters that she expected to be pressed for details but would decline to respond'.³⁵¹ On Rhodesia, she commented: 'The fact is that we all need South African help on Rhodesia... you don't select one nation out'.³⁵² *The Guardian* went further in investigating how the issue had gone down with the Carter administration: 'To judge from comments made by officials close to the talks, Mrs Thatcher has left them with an air of doubt and unease'.³⁵³ At best, they observed 'she has at least recognised the importance of Western solidarity in general', however, 'she

³⁴⁷ Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: Volume One*, 370.

³⁴⁸ Aitken, *Margaret Thatcher*, 197.

³⁴⁹ David Cross, "Thatcher pledge on defence," *The Times*, 14 September 1977.

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

³⁵¹ Ibid.

³⁵² Jonathan Steele, "Mrs Thatcher makes US uneasy," *The Guardian*, 15 September 1977, p1.

³⁵³ Ibid.

could not give any assurance that a Conservative Government would support the present Anglo-American proposals'.³⁵⁴ Thatcher's stance on Rhodesia can be seen as part of the Cold War politics still prevailing at the time, in addition to British hostility to liberalising movements in South Africa.³⁵⁵

In analysing Thatcher's second visit to the US as Leader of the Opposition, Butler rated the visit overall as 'a great success', and despite being 'thoroughly exhausted', the British Embassy reported that Thatcher 'appeared satisfied'.³⁵⁶³⁵⁷ However, Moore observes that although her presence in New York and Houston had been a success, she had not secured the same admiration in Washington: 'She had gone down well in New York, and a storm in Houston, but she knew that her Washington visit had not been particularly successful. In a world naturally hostile to opposition leaders, she was, if anything, more friendless than she had been two years earlier... she had reason to feel dispirited'.³⁵⁸

Having known Thatcher since her initial US experience in 1967, Henry Kissinger appeared to sympathize with her: 'She came to Washington and foolishly the Carter people did not receive her so I gave her dinner every night she was in Washington... It seemed to me she felt snubbed by the Carter administration but she

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ For more on the politics surrounding Rhodesia see, for instance: Sue Onslow (ed.), *Cold War in Southern Africa: White Power, Black Liberation* (Oxon: Routledge, 2009); Luise White, *Unpopular Sovereignty: Rhodesian Independence and African Decolonization* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 2015).

³⁵⁶ NAUK FCO 82/775, FCO note on visit, 13 October 1977.

³⁵⁷ NAUK FCO 82/774, Note from British Embassy: Visit to Washington, 13 October 1977.

³⁵⁸ Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: Volume One*, 372.

did not show her frustration'.³⁵⁹ Confirming Washington's overriding view of the Conservative Leader, *The Washington Post* stated that she 'was not taken terribly seriously' and seemed 'ill at ease, poorly informed and not yet ready for the world stage'.³⁶⁰ The British Embassy were aware that Thatcher 'had not gone down quite so well with *The Washington Post* editorial board', though they alluded this to the paper's political attitudes.³⁶¹ The *Financial Times* also observed Thatcher's disappointment: 'She was in no mood to receive the battery of reporters and photographers that met her at Heathrow Airport... A spokesman said: "Mrs Thatcher has absolutely nothing to say. She made a statement before leaving Washington, and I am afraid she has nothing to add."'”³⁶²

Despite the hostility between the FCO and the Conservative Party, it is evident that the department and the British Embassy in Washington did actively assist and guide Thatcher in planning her US visits as Leader of the Opposition. Briefings on political, economic and domestic policy in both the US and Canada were well outlined prior to her visit, and the FCO naturally advised Thatcher on what message she should send to her American audiences in helping to re-establish Britain as a credible power. However, following her North American tour, the British Right-wing magazine, *The Spectator*, reported that the FCO and British Embassy 'did nothing whatsoever to extend even the ordinary courtesies consisting of advice and assistance to a senior British politician'.³⁶³ Instead, 'by their press briefings and hints dropped to

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 371.

³⁶⁰ Leonard Downie, "Thatcher at Ease in New Job," *The Washington Post*, 16 December 1979.

³⁶¹ NAUK FCO 82/774, Note from British Embassy, 13 October 1977.

³⁶² Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: Volume One*, 371.

³⁶³ "Visit to US: Callaghan to MT," *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 17 October 1975, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/111710> (accessed 11/06/2016).

American politicians' they 'did what was possible to undermine Mrs Thatcher's instinct'.³⁶⁴

Given how the British Embassy in particular had written to offer their assistance to Thatcher during her media engagements in New York, the article riled Callaghan. Writing to Thatcher himself and observing how a member of Thatcher's staff had telephoned to give their thanks to the FCO following their assistance, Callaghan demanded that Thatcher 'set the record straight' on the matter: 'I should appreciate your letting the Editor of *The Spectator* know that you regard as unfounded his statement that you had received less than the ordinary courtesy of advice and assistance...'³⁶⁵

As Adam Ridley noted earlier in this chapter, Thatcher's North American tour in 1975 and her visit to meet with Carter in 1977 were trips designed to make deliberate and conscious moves to demonstrate what the Conservative Party under Thatcher had to offer. While Thatcher clashed with Carter on various topics, they nevertheless sustained a working relationship, one that Thatcher knew was crucial to her position as a relatively untried and untested leader looking to establish herself on the world stage. Throughout both trips she effectively drew interest from American and Canadian audiences, and highlighted herself as a potential future prime minister by offering a new and revitalized Tory rhetoric from the established one of old. While abroad in the US and Canada, Thatcher was also able to learn the nuances of foreign affairs by observing and interrogating the methods and ways of other governments, all

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

of which helped to develop her understanding of international relations and inspired her own political agenda back home. Reflecting the theme of ‘soft power’, during these foreign visits Thatcher was eager to promote Britain abroad and was keen to dispel bleak perceptions of Britain’s economic climate. While in the US Thatcher tended to highlight how foreign and domestic politics are essentially the same, and believed that the internationalization of politics was a key aspect of in the future of the Anglo-American Special Relationship. Regarding the relationship between the FCO and Thatcher’s opposition office, it does appear that while there was a sense of conflict at times, the FCO were nevertheless happy and willing to offer advice and guidance during both her 1975 North American tour and her 1977 US visit. Having followed Thatcher’s travels in the US and North America, this thesis will now explore how the Commonwealth received Thatcher in her position as Britain’s new Leader of the Opposition.

III

Thatcher and the Commonwealth

(Far East Tour: India, Pakistan & Singapore, Australia & New Zealand, 1976)

In demonstrating further how Thatcher sought to promote herself abroad as Leader of the Opposition, while also learning the methods and approaches used in the policymaking of other countries, this chapter will focus on Thatcher's tour of the Far East in September 1976, during which she visited India, Pakistan, Australia and New Zealand. In similarity with her US trips in 1975 and 1977, it will examine how far Thatcher used this tour as a way of establishing herself as a credible leader and alternative Prime Minister. As a female politician looking to reach the heights of British politics, Thatcher was keen to meet the Indian Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, knowing that they shared similar positions as females in the predominantly male world that they had entered into. While their politics differed, both Thatcher and Gandhi were similar in seeking to assert themselves as credible leaders. Furthermore, the Commonwealth ties that bound Britain with India, Pakistan and, indeed, Australia and New Zealand, was also at the forefront of Thatcher's mind as she began this tour. She clearly recognised that she had much to gain by being seen to be actively engaging with the politics of the erstwhile Empire. While Thatcher's tour of the Commonwealth was largely designed to help her learn on the job and to promote herself as a new Opposition Leader, this chapter will also explore the nature of Commonwealth relations, finding that some counterparts felt that their ties to Britain were in question.

Although being seen abroad was fundamental in promoting Thatcher's image as a competent leader and future prime minister, her foreign visits were also crucial in helping her to learn the nuances of foreign affairs, and travelling widely enabled her to develop a greater understanding of the key international issues of the day. However, while advisors, such as Airey Neave and Adam Butler encouraged Thatcher to travel in an attempt to prepare her for power, her extensive trips abroad had begun to cause 'disconsolate rumblings from Party officials over her absence from the political scene', primarily among Tory backbenchers who wanted their leader to be seen leading at home, as observed by *The Guardian*: 'Conservative leaders were puzzled about her reasons for taking on so heavy an itinerary at the "wrong" end of the parliamentary recess'.¹ Aware that foreign affairs was a weakness for Thatcher, Tory backbenchers believed that the Far East tour was designed to 'belittle the frequently expressed criticism of Mrs Thatcher as a strictly domestic politician with little experience of foreign and Commonwealth affairs'.² Publicly, however, *The Guardian* reported that sympathetic colleagues regarded the tour as 'a flag showing' exercise, in which she could be seen as an active participant in foreign affairs'.³

India

Having declared a national 'state of emergency' in June 1975, Thatcher was visiting India at a particularly tense time in Indira Gandhi's premiership. Following a string of

¹ Ian Aitken, "Thatcher trip under fire," *The Guardian*, 4 September 1976, p. 18.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

criticisms aimed at her government, and in an attempt to still public controversy via a dictatorial approach to leadership, Gandhi immediately took control of the Indian press, forbidding reports relating to national as well as international news and, as Indu Singh notes, she further expelled several British and American foreign correspondents.⁴ Political pressure had been mounting on Gandhi's government from opposition parties on the Left, who had been fighting the corruption and economic turmoil that Gandhi had led her country into. Gandhi's rationale for restricting the freedom of the press was based upon the opinion that 'economic productivity and social justice are more important than civil liberties and freedom of expression', and given that radio and television were already government owned, restricting the print media was an easily achievable objective.⁵⁶

Observing the domestic issues that coincided with Thatcher's arrival in New Delhi, *The Guardian* reported on the imprisonment of the Indian Socialist leader, George Fernandes, 'an outspoken critic of the emergency' who had been 'charged with 24 others with conspiracy to "overawe" the Central Government by means of criminal force'.⁷ Asked about her views on the situation prior to her arrival in India, Thatcher responded: 'I come to learn and observe, not to comment on internal matters'.⁸

⁴ Indu Singh, "The Indian Mass Media System: Before, During and After the National Emergency," *Canadian Journal of Communication* 7 (1980): 38-49.

⁵ For more on Indira Gandhi's premiership see, for instance: Yogendra Malik and Dharendra Vajpeyi (eds), *India: The Years of Indira Gandhi* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1988); Varalakshmi Jnpathy, *Indira Gandhi: Woman of India's Destiny* (New Delhi: Kalpaz Publications, 2005); Anser Kidwai, *Indira Gandhi: Charisma and Crisis* (New Delhi: Siddhi Books, 1996).

⁶ For more on the 'State of Emergency', see: P. N. Dhar, *Indira Gandhi, the "emergency", and Indian Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Kuldip Nayar, *Emergency Retold* (India: Konark Publishers, 2013).

⁷ "India charges Left's leader," *The Guardian*, 25 September 1976, p. 3.

⁸ Ibid.

Briefing Thatcher and her team in advance of her visit, the FCO outlined India's foreign policy, noting that the country aimed to secure 'balanced relationships with the three superpowers, the United States, the Soviet Union and China', adding that their policy contained 'a distinct anti-western and pro-Soviet bias'.⁹ Given Britain's standing as a popular destination for foreigners seeking employment, immigration and the preservation of good race relations were high on the British political agenda in 1976, and was therefore an area of concern for the FCO at the time of Thatcher's tour:

Racial tension and conflict in this country are bound to affect not only our relations with the countries from which immigrants come, but also our standing generally in the world, and notably in the United Nations... If we do not handle immigration with confidence and success we cause problems for the Governments of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh; and in that event their response is bound to be unhelpful.¹⁰

Thatcher's own views on immigration in 1976 were, however, not as neutral as the FCO would have hoped. Speaking on the ITN's *News at Ten* in October 1976, she articulated her concern with Britain's rising levels of immigration: 'We're more highly populated than India or Pakistan. We've six per cent unemployment. We

⁹ NAUK FCO 37/1786 (Part A), FCO brief no.2: Indian Foreign Policy.

¹⁰ Ibid.

cannot go on taking people at the rate we have been.’¹¹ The British High Commission in New Delhi were therefore cautious about Thatcher’s visit:

We had hoped that she might not want to get involved in immigration matters, but note that she does... We are already somewhat concerned about the prospect of talking about immigration... The reason for our concern is that discussing immigration in any detail now poses very real problems.¹²

Randall Hansen argues that British immigration policy during the 1970s and 1980s ‘ended a centuries old tradition’ and became far more ‘restrictive’ following the end of open borders to the Commonwealth in 1962, and the halting of primary immigration in 1971 - this was a very live political matter at the time.¹³ A further example of Britain’s desire to protect its borders can be seen in the 1968 Commonwealth Immigrations Act, which essentially stripped Commonwealth Britons of their basic rights of citizenship.¹⁴ Aiming to place strict control on numbers, Hansen demonstrates how policy makers during the late 1960s, to some extent, achieved their ambition of ‘slamming the door’ on immigrants, which was achievable after the Labour government implemented the third Race Relations Act in 1976,

¹¹ “TV Interview for ITN’s *News at Ten*,” *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 4 October 1976, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/103104> (accessed 10/06/2017).

¹² NAUK FCO 37/1786 (Part A), Note from New Delhi to FCO: Immigration, 11 August 1976.

¹³ Randall Hansen, *Citizenship and immigration in Post-War Britain: the institutional origins of a multicultural nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 222. See, also: Kathleen Paul, *Whitewashing Britain: Race and Citizenship in the Postwar Era* (USA: Cornell University Press, 1997).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 241.

underpinning Britain's 'firm but fair' immigration agenda.¹⁵ However, while Thatcher's desire to curtail immigration played well in the UK, it did not in India. Therefore, in light of the government's latest legislation, the FCO were naturally cautious on how to advise Thatcher when it came to the subject of immigration.¹⁶

Worries over the prospect of potential talks with Indian government officials involving immigration had largely emerged following the leaking of the Hawley Report, in which the British diplomat, Donald Hawley, had noted the political and social dangers of mass immigration entering the UK, despite the fact that firm controls were already in place.¹⁷ Following the release of the report, the FCO stated that the government had 'clamped down' on questions relating to immigration, and even wondered whether Thatcher should be given access to the FCO's facts and figures on the subject.¹⁸ News of the report had clearly irritated some members of Gandhi's government, as observed by the British High Commission: 'If Mrs Thatcher is allowed to talk to the immigration staff she is likely to emerge with a somewhat different picture of the situation... We therefore need very clear instructions if we are not to run into trouble'.¹⁹

The overriding factor in the FCO's concerns over Thatcher's potential talks on immigration came from their awareness that South Asian countries placed a greater

¹⁵ Ibid., 225.

¹⁶ For more on British immigration policy during the twentieth century, see: Ian R.G. Spencer, *British immigration policy since 1939: the making of multi-racial Britain* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Panikos Panayi, *An immigration history of Britain: multicultural racism since 1800* (Harlow: Routledge, 2010).

¹⁷ John Solomos, *Race and Racism in Contemporary Britain* (London: Macmillan, 1989), 62.

¹⁸ NAUK FCO 37/1786 (Part A), Note from New Delhi to FCO: Immigration, 11 August 1976.

¹⁹ Ibid.

emphasis on how immigrants were treated in Britain, rather than on how many the UK were prepared to take in.²⁰ From the Indian government's point of view, race relations (which affected Indian's living in the UK) and immigration, (which affected potential immigrants from India and their families in the UK), was a cause of concern.²¹ The FCO, therefore, hoped that Thatcher would agree to 'gentle or even firm guidance' in an attempt to soften her approach, though having dealt with her in the lead up to her US tours, especially the second visit, it is clear that she preferred to maintain a certain distance from government officials.²²

By examining her views on immigration, Anna Marie Smith observes how, in a speech given in 1978, Thatcher 'pledged to respond to the natural concerns of the British about the "swamping" of their country by people from the "New Commonwealth" – a code phrase for blacks'.²³ Demonstrating the level of feeling within much of British society, the Conservative Party's position rose by nine points in the opinion polls, following the speech which clearly connected with the electorate at home.²⁴ Furthermore, two years after she emerged as Prime Minister, in 1981 Thatcher went further by introducing a new law on nationality, which accorded British citizenship to those 'who belong in the country and have close and continuing associations with Britain'.²⁵ In terms of Indian immigrants, giving a speech in April 1981, she added: 'When such large numbers are involved, a few people try to enter

²⁰ NAUK FCO 37/1786 (Part A), FCO brief no.2: Indian Foreign Policy.

²¹ Ibid.

²² "Newly declassified British Government archives from 1976," *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 29 December 2006, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/archive/1976-tna-releases.asp> (accessed 24/06/2017).

²³ Anna Marie Smith, *New Right Discourse on Race and Sexuality: Britain, 1968-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 5.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ "Speech to the Indian Parliament," *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 16 April 1981, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/104625> (accessed 10/06/2017).

illegally, and inevitably a few are therefore turned back. But the percentage of refusals is tiny – in the case of Indians, six in each thousand’, which not only demonstrates how her views on the subject developed over the years, but also highlights the critical importance that immigration policy played in British politics at the time.²⁶

Highlighting again the perception that Thatcher’s team were inexperienced in matters concerning foreign affairs, the High Commission commented to the FCO: ‘We do not want to snatch the direction of the visit into our own hands if others are already coping, but, as you know, quite often others are promising and not coping, and this means a last minute rush’.²⁷ However, one year into leading the opposition, Thatcher was keen to demonstrate her own views and opinions when it came to planning her foreign schedules, as the FCO duly noted: ‘Mrs Thatcher has decided that it would be best that she should not be accompanied by Heads of Mission during her calls on the Prime Ministers in India, Pakistan and Singapore... Mr Butler made it clear that it was particularly the Indian case which Mrs Thatcher had in mind’.²⁸ This line from Thatcher again demonstrates her growing confidence alongside her insistent position on Rhodesia, and shows her tenacity in expressing views she already held. Knowing Thatcher’s opinions on immigration prior to her visit to India, in a notable change of tone, an FCO diplomat briefed: ‘We all believe that Mrs Thatcher is too senior and experienced a politician to wish to make tendentious political points out of your briefing on immigration’, which indicates that although foreign affairs was a

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ NAUK FCO 37/1786 (Part A), British High Commission note to FCO, 16 July 1976.

²⁸ NAUK FCO 37/1786 (Part A), FCO brief: Mrs Thatcher’s Tour, 9 August 1976. Thatcher was naturally keen to meet with Gandhi alone given the similarities in their positions as two female leaders in the predominantly male world of politics.

weakness, Thatcher was informed and well practiced when it came to the Conservatives' domestic agenda.²⁹

Although she lacked the experience and attributes needed to lead as a Prime Minister during the mid-1970s, Thatcher's intelligence and awareness of the world was nevertheless recognised, as her former Private Secretary, Lord Powell, observed when interviewed for this research:

If you look at Thatcher's life, she had an intense interest in public affairs from a very early age. She was well informed about government politics and the world. She had experienced the rise of Nazi Germany and the Second World War as a schoolgirl and as a student in a household that was intensely political in terms of following the news. She took a steady interest ever thereafter.³⁰

Indeed, as an Oxford graduate and lawyer by training, it is important to recognise that although she had yet to be tested as a political leader, Thatcher was still an intelligent and astute individual, which the FCO at times dismissed given the nature of her gender.³¹

²⁹ NAUK FCO 37/1786 (Part A), FCO note to New Delhi, 18 August 1976.

³⁰ Interview with Lord Powell of Bayswater, 18 November 2015.

³¹ Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher: Volume One*, 45-49.

Since the overriding objective of Thatcher's extensive foreign travel was to promote herself on the international stage, she expressed some dismay at the prospect of restricted press coverage, as noted by the FCO: 'It appears that Mrs Thatcher is rather unsure about going to India... She expressed surprise (and I gather some dismay), that there would be no British press or TV coverage of her visit'.³² However, it is interesting to note that soon before Thatcher's arrival, Gandhi announced a relaxation of the restrictions on foreign correspondents, which the British High Commission in New Delhi believed was granted in view of the inevitable embarrassment that would have ensued during Thatcher's visit, though they saw the move as 'another step in the direction of a return to normal conditions'.³³ Although the FCO had written of Thatcher's seniority to the High Commission, they nevertheless continued to hold concerns over Thatcher's competence when it came to foreign policy: 'I rather get the impression that Mrs Thatcher is a little unsure about her trip and she seems to be not very well versed in foreign affairs... I think posts will need to know that they need not fear to give Mrs Thatcher firm guidance if she asks for it'.³⁴ Such a comment suggests that despite the merits of her earlier tours of America, by late 1976 Thatcher was still uncertain on the international stage and clearly needed to be guided in a number of areas.

The FCO were aware that Thatcher intended to focus on British domestic politics during her visit in an attempt to win over the electorate back home, and noted that she had little knowledge of the issues concerning South Asia: 'Our general

³² NAUK FCO 37/1787 (Part B), FCO minute: Mrs Thatcher's Visit to the Sub-Continent, 6 September 1976.

³³ NAUK FCO 37/1787 (Part B), British High Commission note: Mrs Thatcher's meeting with Chavan, 24 September 1976.

³⁴ NAUK FCO 37/1787 (Part B), FCO note to New Delhi, 2 September 1976.

impression was that Mrs Thatcher was very much feeling her way in foreign affairs... She did not appear to have formed strong views about the natural purpose of her visit to the sub-continent'.³⁵ Such a comment suggests that although Thatcher had grown in confidence and was more forthright in expressing her views, she was still in the process of learning the particulars and nuances of foreign affairs. In a further note, an FCO aide added: 'She has of course visited India before as a minister and I think is at a bit of a loss to know what to do in Delhi'.³⁶ As for what Denis Thatcher would do in India, ideas had not been forthcoming: 'Mr Thatcher. No progress. MFA are still thinking. Golf has been noted as a possible diversion'.³⁷ In assessing the comments made by the FCO in preparing for the tour, in similarity with her US tours, Thatcher's main focus was ultimately on her domestic political agenda and on how she could best promote her rhetoric in order to be seen as an able leader ready to take office.

Given that the subject of immigration was a cause of concern for the FCO, upon arriving in India on 22nd September 1976 Thatcher was briefed by the High Commission solely on this topic. At the meeting it was noted that she appeared 'more concerned to state her view of the problem rather than to elicit information', and more interested in the 'nuts and bolts' of the issue than with statistics.³⁸ From the High Commission's point of view, Thatcher had arrived with a 'somewhat black and white view that immigration had increased and should be stopped', though they observed that later she was 'much readier to discuss, listen and learn and increasingly appreciated the complexities'.³⁹ Again, given Thatcher's relative inexperience in

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ NAUK FCO 37/1787 (Part B), FCO note to New Delhi, 3 September 1976.

³⁷ NAUK FCO 37/1787 (Part B), FCO note on MT's itinerary, 3 September 1976.

³⁸ NAUK FCO 37/1787 (Part B), Note from Deputy High Commissioner, ND (1976?).

³⁹ Ibid.

international affairs, she demonstrated a willingness to learn and educate herself in areas that she was unaware or unfamiliar with, a natural impulse for any new party leader. As was often the way with Thatcher, she had a tendency to enter a discussion very strongly at first, quick to lay down her position, however, she would later soften her approach and change her stance if she believed others were in the right. Revealingly, the High Commission further observed that ‘she did not seem to be asking questions with a view to an alternative policy’, which suggests that they recognised Thatcher’s lack of experience, and further sensed that new policy ideas were not at the forefront of her mind in late 1976.⁴⁰

Following a ‘muted’ welcome, soon after arriving in India Thatcher addressed the country’s national State of Emergency and naturally offered her support: ‘It is sometimes difficult for us to appreciate the size and scale of your problems, and only those who know them from experience can prescribe the remedies... Like you, we look to a harmonious future...’⁴¹ The following day, in a meeting with the Indian Minister of External Affairs, Mr Yashwantrao Chavan commented that it was an appropriate time for her to be visiting ‘so that she could see what the realities of the situation here now were’.⁴³ During her discussion with Chavan, Thatcher learned that India’s relations with Pakistan were ‘developing satisfactorily’, unlike their relations with Bangladesh, which were ‘not so happy’ given that the leadership had developed an ‘anti-Indian bias’ following a dispute between the two countries over the division

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ “Muted Indian welcome for Mrs Thatcher,” *The Times*, 23 September 1976, p.6.

⁴² “Speech at Indian Foreign Minister’s Dinner,” *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 22 September 1976, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/102903> (accessed 24/06/2017).

⁴³ “Note by British High Commissioner (MT’s call on Indian Minister of External Affairs),” *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 22 September 1976, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/110928> (accessed 24/06/2017).

of waters at Farakka Barrage.⁴⁴ Although Thatcher was aware of Gandhi's forceful approach to governance, she nevertheless felt inclined to praise her rhetoric in front of Chavan. Referring to Gandhi's performance at a recent Non-Aligned conference in Colombo, she commented that she 'had read the speech very carefully and had been particularly interested in its even-handed approach to world problems'.⁴⁵ The fact that Thatcher had taken the time to research Gandhi's speeches not only demonstrates her capacity for hard work, but also illustrates how she actively engaged with foreign affairs in order to become as well versed as she could possibly be on the subject in which her experience was lacking.

In light of the sensitivity surrounding the issue of immigration, Thatcher met with only a few senior figures in India, though she did have the opportunity to meet the Minister of Defence, Bansi Lal. Reporting back to the FCO after the meeting, Michael Walker of the High Commission bluntly briefed: 'This was not a very rewarding meeting'.⁴⁶ The reason for this was ultimately down to the fact that Lal had been 'determined not to talk about Indian defence problems in any substantive way', and was 'equally adroit' in evading other matters that Thatcher brought up as a point of interest.⁴⁷ Surprisingly, Lal commented that questions concerning defence 'held a relatively low priority in the Indian scheme of things'.⁴⁸ A reason for this could be to do with the fact that India at the time was concentrating on its domestic economic development, and so immigration to the UK and, indeed, generally was therefore seen as a bigger issue than defence in terms of their domestic agenda: 'The main emphasis

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ NAUK FCO 37/1787 (Part B), Note to FCO: Mrs Thatcher's call on the Indian Minister of Defence, 24 September 1976.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

was rightly laid on development, on the improvement of the condition of poor people, and on the fulfilment of Mrs Gandhi's 20-point programme'.⁴⁹ Alluding to Gandhi's rigid programme, he revealed that despite the need to maintain the security of India's frontier, only 3.5% of Indian GNP was spent on defence.⁵⁰ With little to say or reveal, Walker concluded that the meeting had been 'a complete waste of time', adding: 'Nothing was learned... I doubt whether Mrs Thatcher found what he said to her in any way useful'.⁵¹ Responding to the suggestion that Lal possessed 'an inadequate command of English', Walker wrote: 'There was absolutely no sign at all of any such deficiency on this occasion. Indeed, Mr Bansi Lal spoke almost without stopping throughout the 40 minutes of the interview'.⁵²

Hugo Young notes that, for Thatcher, Gandhi was 'one of the few women by whom she has ever allowed herself to be impressed by', as a result of their unique positions being two female leaders in the predominantly male world of politics.⁵³ Indeed, in an interview for this research, Lord Powell, revealed: 'Thatcher and Indira Gandhi developed a sense of feminine solidarity, which was an important strand in their relationship and enabled them to get on well in private', though he added that despite their respect for one another, 'they disagreed on almost every aspect of policy one can think of.'⁵⁴ Speaking in a TV interview for ITN in 1975, Thatcher stated: 'You couldn't have had a country less likely to have a woman Prime Minister than

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Young, *One of Us*, 120.

⁵⁴ Interview with Lord Powell of Bayswater, 18 November 2015.

India... Indira Gandhi is a delightful person'.⁵⁵ Although there is no account of their meeting, during her visit Thatcher did meet privately with Gandhi, who later revealed to the *Daily Telegraph* that they had not talked of immigration.⁵⁶ Looking back on the meeting in her memoirs, Thatcher revealed: 'I found myself liking Mrs Gandhi herself. Perhaps I naturally sympathized with a women politician faced with huge strains and difficulties of governing a country as vast as India'.⁵⁷

While Thatcher and Gandhi had their differences, both were similar in their approach to relationships. In Thatcher's later political relationships, for instance, with François Mitterrand (President of France, 1981-1995) and Mikhail Gorbachev (General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, 1985-1991), she maintained good relations despite not seeing eye to eye with them politically. This was in part due to the fact that Thatcher was very much a politician who liked to face counterparts who were well briefed prior to meetings and willing to negotiate. Mitterrand and Gorbachev, along with Gandhi were certainly of the same agenda in this regard, and so we can see that despite personalities and politics, Thatcher's strong relations with leaders not of her political leaning are not as surprising as one may have thought. In regards to gender, Thatcher and Gandhi inevitably had a shared appreciation of each other knowing that they had both had to work that bit harder in establishing themselves as credible leaders.

⁵⁵ "TV Interview for ITN *First Report*," *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 28 January 1975, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/102597> (accessed 24/06/2017).

⁵⁶ NAUK FCO 37/1787 (Part B), British High Commission note to FCO, 29 September 1976.

⁵⁷ Thatcher, *Path to Power*, 385-386.

Observing this view, the High Commission briefed the FCO that Gandhi had told her staff that although they disagreed on a number of subjects, ‘she had been agreeably surprised by the positive and business-like nature of Thatcher’s approach, and the direct and no-nonsense way in which she put across her own views so that they could be easily understood’.⁵⁸ Demonstrating Thatcher’s desire and ambition to make it to the top of British politics, Young reveals how an Indian official present at the meeting between the two leaders later recalled seeing Thatcher ‘sitting at Mrs Gandhi’s feet, most earnestly asking her how she did it. How had she made it to the top? How had she stayed there?’⁵⁹ On Thatcher’s relationship with Gandhi, Caroline Slocock (the first female Private Secretary at Downing Street, who served Thatcher from 1989-91), commented: ‘Women in those days had so few female peers to turn to. They didn’t network in the way we do now partly because there were so few of them. Being a Leader is a lonely job in any case. Gandhi was perhaps the only woman she could talk to like that’.⁶⁰ Thatcher evidently warmed to Gandhi given the similarities of their positions and gender, which Young argues was a key step in Thatcher’s journey towards seeing herself as an international stateswoman.⁶¹

Reporting back to the FCO on their overall assessment of Thatcher’s visit to India, the High Commission observed: ‘Thatcher came across well in public. Her lightness earned her good marks even amongst those of opposing views’, and further revealed that Gandhi’s staff had commented: ‘While Mrs Thatcher was evidently seeking some personal prestige for domestic political purposes, the visit had been useful in the context of Indo-British relations and in terms of establishing a

⁵⁸ NAUK FCO 37/1787 (Part B), British High Commission note to FCO, 29 September 1976.

⁵⁹ Young, *One of Us*, 120.

⁶⁰ Interview with Caroline Slocock, 13 September 2018.

⁶¹ Young, *One of Us*, 120.

relationship between Mrs Thatcher and Mrs Gandhi'.⁶² Going further, they added that from the point of view of Gandhi's staff, 'it seemed to them that Mrs Thatcher was representative of a new generation of British politician, with no particular links or hang-ups about India', which the High Commission believed was a significant improvement in the nature of Indio-British relations.⁶³ Bearing no particular 'hang-ups' about India can be seen as a generational change that resulted from Thatcher's upbringing as a child of the post-World War One era, which characterized her as a post-imperial/post-colonial politician, and this evidently helped the nature of Indio-British relations during the mid-1970s.

Pakistan

Following India, Thatcher's 48-hour trip to Pakistan emphasized the fact that this part of her international travel was predominantly to enhance her knowledge of foreign affairs and the world, rather than a way of broadcasting potential policies that the Conservatives intended to implement in government. For instance, when asked at a press conference what she thought of Pakistan's economic prospects, Thatcher sidelined the question by responding: 'I have been trying to learn about Pakistan's problems – finance, agricultural yields, and about education. I have stayed almost entirely in Islamabad and Rawalpindi – haven't got out and about.'⁶⁴ Furthermore, although she met with the Finance and Education Ministers, the record of these conversations reveal only what the ministers in question wanted to say. Indeed, it was

⁶² NAUK FCO 37/1787 (Part B), British High Commission note to FCO, 29 September 1976.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ "Press Conference concluding Pakistan visit," *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 6 September 1976, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/102892> (accessed 24/06/2017).

observed by a British official that Thatcher ‘confined herself mainly to – asking questions, making appropriate comment and occasionally drawing comparisons with the United Kingdom’.⁶⁵

Rather than outlining her views on immigration or on the economic prospects for both Britain and Pakistan, Thatcher simply ‘gave her hosts the general line of being enormously impressed by developments in the country and its potential for future development’.⁶⁶ Noting that Thatcher was ‘accompanied by Adam Butler at all times’, the official report sent back to the FCO concluded: ‘I do not think that anything of significance occurred at these sessions’.⁶⁷ However, reporting back to the FCO on their impression of Thatcher’s visit, the British Embassy in Pakistan stated: ‘The general atmosphere was extremely flattering of her ego and Pakistani officialdom was much intrigued by the thought of a British woman P.M.’⁶⁸

New Zealand

Following India and Pakistan, Thatcher moved on to visit New Zealand, where the FCO briefed that ‘despite changing perspectives, the New Zealanders are still amongst our closest friends in the world’.⁶⁹ Following the victory of New Zealand’s National Party in the General Election of November 1975, Robert Muldoon (Prime Minister of New Zealand, 1975-84), appeared to be in favour of strong Anglo-New

⁶⁵ NAUK FCO 37/1787 (Part B), Minutes of MT’s calls in Pakistan, 7 September 1976.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ NAUK FCO 37/1787 (Part B), British Embassy Islamabad to FCO: Visit of Mrs Thatcher, 8. September 1976.

⁶⁹ NAUK FCO 24/2171, FCO brief: Mrs Thatcher’s Visit to New Zealand, 20 August 1976.

Zealand relations, having deliberately chosen to visit Britain for his first international trip as Prime Minister.⁷⁰ Although Muldoon had previously held the opinion that British exporters had been taking New Zealand for a ‘price ride’, the FCO noted how he had taken a far more favourable opinion of the UK due to British help in the EEC context - Europe being a profitable trading market which they were keen to be part of.⁷¹ Arriving in September 1976, Thatcher was visiting New Zealand during a period of industrial strife, which had ensued following government proposals to introduce new price and rent freezes. The tightening of industrial relations legislation ‘came as a complete surprise’ to the opposition, who criticised the measures that had been introduced in light of a worsening industrial relations situation that had continued due to union demands for wage increases.⁷² While the *Financial Times* reported that Wallace Rowling (New Zealand’s Leader of the Opposition, 1975-83), had warned unions and employers to ‘play it cool’ through the tensions, they revealed that a planned 24-hour strike was underway with the state of Victoria in Australia also taking up strike action.⁷³

Given how keen Thatcher was to partake in public speeches during her previous US tours, it is surprising to note that she appeared hesitant to engage in similar events during her trip to New Zealand, as observed by the FCO:

The MFA seem somewhat puzzled (irritated?) by a certain choosiness on the subject of a public platform. Denis McLean commented that he

⁷⁰ NAUK FCO 24/2171, FCO brief: Mrs Thatcher’s Visit to New Zealand, 20 August 1976.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² NAUK FCO 37/1787 (Part B), FCO brief: New Zealand Economic Policy and Industrial Relations, 19 August 1976.

⁷³ Dai Hayward, “Industrial chaos strikes Auckland,” *Financial Times*, 26 August 1976, p. 19.

found it difficult to understand why Mrs Thatcher appeared reluctant to give public speeches during her visit. This would be very welcome in New Zealand, and the New Zealanders could have arranged adequate publicity in the British press too.⁷⁴

Thatcher did, however, address the Auckland Chamber of Commerce, where she acknowledged the issues facing Britain and the challenges ahead in tackling inflation. Beginning by praising the ‘courage’, ‘tenacity’ and ‘sense of adventure’ that represented the peoples of both Britain and New Zealand, she continued by addressing the problems caused by excessive inflation: ‘Truth is seldom friend to any crowd’, she stated, adding that as painful as the process was, Britain needed to learn to live within its means.⁷⁵ Echoing the reasoning that would later become the backdrop for the 1981 Budget – one of the most controversial economic plans in modern history – Thatcher dismissed the ‘cynicism’ of politicians who ignored tough decisions, stating: ‘Tomorrow always comes, and it is far better to risk today’s unpopularity for tomorrow’s betterment than to duck every difficult decision.’⁷⁶ Although she refrained from commenting on the industrial chaos occurring in New Zealand, she did state that a lesson needed to be learned on the importance of industrial progress: ‘You cannot have a flourishing industry without good profits’, she revealed, in recognition of the fact that between 1960 and 1974 the real rate of return on capital in Britain fell from 12% to 4%, leaving profits insufficient to finance new investments.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ NAUK FCO 24/2171, FCO: Mrs Thatcher’s Visit, 13 July 1976.

⁷⁵ NAUK FCO 24/2172 (Part B), Speech to Auckland Chamber of Commerce, 8 September 1976.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

As with the majority of Thatcher's international speeches as Leader of the Opposition, her address to the Chamber of Commerce lacked any specific detail on what she would do to reverse the problems caused by excessive inflation, and she did not appear to offer any alternative ideas that could provide a cure for the socio-economic issues facing Britain. Always keen to learn from those in higher positions of power, Thatcher concluded her address by admitting that she would be seeking advice from Muldoon during her visit: 'Britain has all the ingredients of success. But it needs a good cook to bake the cake right. After I have received a few tips from Robert Muldoon (your new "chef"), I should be ready to face the heat in the kitchen!'⁷⁸ The High Commission in Wellington described Thatcher's speech as a 'well prepared address', noting that while she stressed the need to prioritize inflation and public expenditure, 'not surprisingly, the speech strongly reflected her own political philosophy'.⁷⁹ Revealingly, they added that over 1,000 attendees were present and many applicants had to be turned down – 'an indication of the intense interest here in hearing Mrs Thatcher'.⁸⁰

Following Auckland, two days later Thatcher gave a strongly worded address at a parliamentary lunch in Wellington, where she opened with compliments, stressing that the physical separation between Britain and New Zealand was 'virtually irrelevant': 'The advances of modern communications and transport have brought us

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ NAUK FCO 24/2172 (Part B), British High Commission report, 15 September 1976.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

closer together'.⁸¹ Given New Zealand's desire to play a part in the EEC's trading system, Europe was an area where Thatcher and Muldoon found common ground. Indeed, Thatcher acknowledged herself that this was a factor that brought both countries closer: 'The dominant factor in our minds has been the urgent need to draw the countries of Western Europe closer into a real partnership. We were – and still are – determined to secure the best possible terms for our friends, and we very much have in mind the particular concerns and interests of New Zealand.'⁸² Notably, this was one of the key points of Harold Wilson and James Callaghan's mid-1970s renegotiation of Britain's EEC membership, and, indeed, one in which they had gained some concessions on New Zealand produce.⁸³

Observing the tensions that resulted from Britain's entry into the EEC, Thatcher stated: 'If the price of entry had been our abandonment of our old and valued Commonwealth friends, I, for one, would never have supported it', though she stressed that the EEC as whole was 'on the right track' to finding a solution to the economic concerns arising within the EC network.⁸⁴ Acknowledging the fact that New Zealand was among the first female suffrage countries in the world, Thatcher went on to address the subject of women in politics where, unusually, she criticized the leadership of the former Conservative Prime Minister, Winston Churchill (1951-55): 'Churchill was one of the most implacable opponents of the granting of the vote

⁸¹ "Speech at Wellington Parliamentary lunch," *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 10 September 1976, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/103095> (accessed 02/03/2016).

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ <https://www.cvce.eu/en/collections/unit-content/-/unit/02bb76df-d066-4c08-a58a-d4686a3e68ff> (accessed 4/06/2020).

⁸⁴ "Speech at Wellington Parliamentary lunch," *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 10 September 1976, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/103095> (accessed 02/03/2016).

to women’.⁸⁵ However, she praised the strength of Churchill’s wife, who rejected the stance taken by her husband: ‘I do rejoice in the fact that, on this occasion, Lady Churchill did not share his views. She doubtless considered that the women of Britain had as much to contribute to the future of their nation as she had to the wonderful Churchill partnership’.⁸⁶ Such language helped Thatcher’s popularity back home given that, as a political leader and working mother, she was representing an image that many women found admirable.

Reflecting back on British history over the course of the twentieth century, Thatcher went on to state that the ‘grinding poverty and human misery’ that had eclipsed the 1920s and 1930s had largely been eliminated, commenting that Britons today were ‘better fed, better housed... are in better health, have better education and are more prosperous... We have no yearnings at all to return to the so-called “good old days.”’⁸⁷ However, while she recognised that British society was no longer divided into Benjamin Disraeli’s “Two Nations” of the rich and the poor, she observed that conflicts were still present within the UK’s class system, and stressed: ‘My purpose in politics is to reach towards the reconciliation of these interests, and the creation of a One Nation’.⁸⁸

Here, in line with her previous remarks on the impact of over governance, Thatcher took the opportunity to criticize the welfare state: ‘Increasingly, people are asking, “Why make the effort?” “Why work at all?” “Why bother?” Confidence is

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

being eroded, and it is not surprising that many of the best of our people are beginning to wonder whether they should take their talents elsewhere.’⁸⁹ Although she forthrightly stated that the British ‘have the ability, the resources, the experience, the education and the toughness to solve their problems and to embark on a new period of economic prosperity’, again, she did not comment on what policies she would do in government to bring about a fundamental change.⁹⁰ In place of policy, Thatcher instead used rhetoric: ‘What we have to do, to use an admirable American phrase, is “to get it together”. Nihilism is not the solution. Our approach – the approach of every individual in a free society – must be decisively positive and resolute. Cynicism and scepticism must be seen for what they are – debilitating, demeaning, and perilous to our future.’⁹¹ The tone of Thatcher’s address clearly demonstrated Tory values, which naturally resonated with Muldoon’s government and helped to seal her approval.

However, although she had been received ‘like royalty’ in New Zealand, *The Observer* reported that her assault on social policies had provoked a ‘barbed retort’ from New Zealand’s Leader of the Opposition, Wallace Rowling, who stated: ‘We feel politicking is the business of New Zealand politicians’.⁹² Speaking privately, Labour sources revealed that the atmosphere between Thatcher and Rowling had been ‘cool to frigid’, and revealed that the row had deepened later that day in a further ‘exchange of verbal salvos’.⁹³ Defending herself, Thatcher said that she was ‘absolutely amazed that in a free society there should be any attempt to criticize what

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ian Templeton, “Thatcher angers NZ Opposition,” *The Guardian*, 11 September 1976, p. 3.

⁹³ Ibid.

a party politician had said at a party political function.⁹⁴ Asked why she had spoken out so favourably for Muldoon's government, she responded: 'I was delighted with their victory and I still am. They believe many of the things I believe in.'⁹⁵ Indeed, *The Observer* recognised that Muldoon was 'in the forefront of Mrs. Thatcher's admirers', having offered some favourable comments towards her: 'I have always been impressed by her clarity of thought and her ability to define and concentrate on the essence of an issue or situation'.⁹⁶ *The Times* further observed that throughout all her speeches in New Zealand, Thatcher had 'merely expressed things she believed in. They could not be regarded as interference in the domestic political scene'.⁹⁷

Interestingly, while Thatcher appeared to get along with Muldoon during her visit in 1976, she later revealed a different opinion of him. Although she had felt 'very much at home' during her visit in 1976, on Muldoon, Thatcher reflected in her memoirs: 'He was a mixed grill of a politician: robust and no-nonsense in manner, but surprisingly confused in economic and political philosophy, and accordingly much more interventionist than the Labour Government which succeeded him eight years later. He was something of a bruiser'.⁹⁸ As Sean Goldfinch observes, Muldoon's government was more economically interventionist at the time, undertaking a number of 'capital intensive investments of doubtful commercial benefit known as Think Big'.⁹⁹ New Zealand's Think Big scheme involved heavily borrowing from foreign

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Times Correspondent, "Mrs Thatcher denies she was politicking," *The Times*, 11 September 1976, p. 5.

⁹⁸ Thatcher, *Path To Power*, 386-387.

⁹⁹ Shaun Goldfinch, "Paradigms, Economic Ideas and Institutions in Economic Policy Change: The Case of New Zealand," *Political Science* 52 (2000): 1-21. See, also: Barry Gustafson, *His way: a biography of Robert Muldoon* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2000). (Due to the impact of COVID-19, I was unable to access this text in person).

countries, running up a national deficit and using the funds for extensive industrial projects. While Muldoon's policies led to severe economic problems with later governments questioning his ideology, it is worth noting the differences between Britain and New Zealand at the time when it came to domestic policy. For instance, what is appropriate for a very small rural power not part of a regional trading bloc is quite different from what will suit a major industrial power, and one right next to one of the world's powerhouse economic regions, like the UK.

The overall impression of Thatcher's visit from the High Commission in Wellington was generally favourable, reporting that she had 'attracted widespread public attention' and had 'made it plain that she regarded the visit as a political occasion rather than just a fact finding mission'.¹⁰⁰ On the subject of Thatcher's so-called politicking, the High Commission commented that she had regarded the dinner as 'very much an occasion for the conservative faithful, and she pulled no punches in what she said... Admitting that she was looking hard at the formula for national success at the polls during her visit and losing no opportunity to compliment Mr. Muldoon'.¹⁰¹

Such a comment suggests that, as with her previous trips abroad, along with the desire to establish herself as a credible leader, Thatcher used every opportunity to learn from international leaders, which inevitably helped her own path to power. On the tension that had been apparent between Thatcher and Rowling, the High Commission observed: 'She handled him as she did those who challenged her on

¹⁰⁰ NAUK FCO 24/2172 (Part B), British High Commission report, 15 September 1976.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

public occasions by asking him to quote the words he took exception to. He had apparently not provided himself with any quotations'.¹⁰² Similarly, responding to comments made by the former Labour Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Moyle, who demonstrated concern that Thatcher had not addressed issues relating specifically to New Zealand, she pointed out that 'she had only spoken on political occasions and that she was sure New Zealanders, as would the British in similar circumstances, would prefer her to speak her mind'.¹⁰³

Commenting on Thatcher's other excursions, the High Commission reported that she had also made time to visit the Agricultural Research Institute at Ruakura, as well as a large dairy factory: 'As a scientist she clearly enjoys seeing round such establishments, but she had found that the staff had talked down to her and she would have liked the opportunity to see more of the detailed research work', to which they noted: 'There is perhaps a lesson here for other occasions'.¹⁰⁴ As had been previously noted, they further reported that 'she dislikes being televised when she is making public speeches. She finds the heat and arc lamps distracting and prefers it when she can have separate television interviews'.¹⁰⁵ In shying away from the public limelight during particular engagements, it is clear that Thatcher continuously felt conscious of how she came across when speaking abroad, and in demonstrating caution when it came to press exposure, she evidently sought to maximize success in every public address she gave. On her relationship with Muldoon, the High Commission assessed that their talks 'would have gone well given the very similar views which they both

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

share'.¹⁰⁶

Indeed, on the topic of the EEC, they observed how Thatcher had stressed that 'her Party had a policy of getting good returns through the Common Market for British farmers, but that they also sought a continuity of supply from New Zealand', demonstrating her desire to sustain a close working partnership.¹⁰⁷ Back in 1973, on entry into the EEC, the British had secured long-term transition arrangements for New Zealand farmers. Despite this, 'New Zealand farmers worried that in Britain they would be blamed for New Zealand's failure to increase meat exports'.¹⁰⁸ Thus, pressure was put on the New Zealand government (on behalf of their 'kinsfolk' in Britain), for 'financial incentives to increase production'.¹⁰⁹ A new programme for New Zealand farmers was soon put in place, demonstrating that there was common ground between both countries when it came to export policy.¹¹⁰

In seeking to ensure common ground in Britain's partnership with New Zealand, Thatcher assured Muldoon that the Conservatives 'would continue to seek access for New Zealand products to Britain if she became Prime Minister', once again flattering him whenever she saw the opportunity to do so.¹¹¹ Reflecting on her endurance and her aptitude for hard work, the High Commission wrote: 'Her stamina and unruffled appearance and demeanour also attracted admiring comment. It is

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ David Hall, *Emerging from an Entrenched Colonial Economy: New Zealand Primary Production, Britain and the EEC, 1945-1975* (Springer, 2017), 58.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 59.

¹¹⁰ See, also: Juliet Lodge, "Anxiety in the antipodes: New Zealand, Britain and the EEC," *The Round Table* 66 (1976): 396-404; William Loux, "The impact of global commodity prices on the Wilson government's attempted CAP reform, 1974-1975," *Agricultural History Review* 68 (2020): 86-108.

¹¹¹ NAUK FCO 24/2172 (Part B), British High Commission report, 15 September 1976.

indeed astonishing... Her husband told me that after she left me she worked until 0430am. She was up again at 0730am and had another very full day', which demonstrates her strong and almost moralising work ethic.¹¹²

Ending her visit in Christchurch, the High Commission observed how Thatcher had received criticism after addressing a women-only function, which had excluded Christchurch men. However, they recognised that 'such reports attract maximum attention and such publicity seldom does any harm', which would also have been the view of her own office, who were always keen to maximize her press exposure while she was abroad.¹¹³ Indeed, the High Commission stated that Thatcher 'should be well pleased with her visit as she attracted more publicity here than any other overseas visitor that we can recall in recent years, and even managed to vie successfully for television time with the late Chairman Mao'.¹¹⁴ As a Leader of the Opposition seeking to establish herself and her political philosophy internationally, Thatcher took risks in speaking strongly against socialism, and in forcefully putting forward her political school of thought. Given the interest in her and the favourable press coverage that she received, Thatcher's visit to New Zealand undoubtedly further extended her global status and confirmed her image as a driven, ambitious female determined to make it to the top of British politics.

Australia

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ NAUK FCO 24/2172 (Part B), British High Commission report, 15 September 1976.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

Following New Zealand, Thatcher completed her tour of the Far East by visiting Australia, a country which the FCO were keen to reaffirm relations: ‘We have already the makings of a mature up-to-date and mutually useful relationship. But we need to articulate and define it further, and by so doing to bring it into sharper focus’.¹¹⁵ Andrea Benvenuti observes that during the mid-1960s, Australian ministers had grown increasingly concerned that ‘in spite of assurances to the contrary, the British were secretly considering ways to disengage from Southeast Asia’, under Harold Wilson’s government.¹¹⁶ From the Second World War onwards, Benvenuti highlights that Canberra had sought closer defence ties with the US, however, she notes that ‘it still regarded a continuing British presence in Malaysia and Singapore as a sign of London’s enduring interest in the defence of Australia and New Zealand... as a stabilizing influence in a turbulent area of great strategic importance to Australia’.¹¹⁷ Wilson’s decision, then, to withdraw troops from Malaysia and Singapore was naturally met with ‘serious disappointment’: ‘After Wilson’s countless reassurances to the contrary, it was inevitable that the decision to withdraw would result in testy exchanges between London and Canberra...’¹¹⁸

Given the slight hostility between Australia and the EEC in previous post-war years, Piers Ludlow argues that it should come as no surprise that Australia was ‘one of many states to establish a mission to the European Communities in the early

¹¹⁵ NAUK FCO 24/2172 (Part B), FCO brief: Britain and Australia: Reciprocal Needs, 30 April 1976.

¹¹⁶ Andrea Benvenuti, “‘The British are ‘Taking to the Boat’: Australian Attempts to Forestall Britain’s Military Disengagement from Southeast Asia, 1965–1966,” *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 20:1 (2009): 86–106.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 87.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

1960s'.¹¹⁹ He details that 'a mere presence in Brussels was not enough to guarantee a reciprocal level of interest from either the Community institutions or the EEC member states', since the EEC was ultimately focused on its internal development 'and could hence be largely unresponsive to the interests of outside countries', particularly those that were 'geographically distant' and 'lacking in great political clout'.¹²⁰ It was only when Britain applied to join the EEC in 1961 that, Ludlow asserts, the interests of Australian exports began to arise on the Community agenda.¹²¹ However, even then, he concludes that Australia was 'of less concern' than other 'more deserving' Commonwealth states.¹²²

Thus, from Ludlow's perspective, the EEC's commercial policy during the 1960s was highly politicized, 'and subject to a wide variety of pressures that had little to do with a straightforward economic rationale': 'One of Australia's central problems was its lack of historical ties with the EEC, and the absence of an advocate within the Community which could systematically defend its interests'.¹²³ As a result of their history, relations between Britain and the Commonwealth during the mid-late 1970s were clearly strained, however, Thatcher, as a newly elected leader looking to promote a revitalized vision of Britain in 1976, utilized the Commonwealth relationship to her advantage in seeking to gain international support and appeal.

¹¹⁹ Piers Ludlow, "Too Far Away, Too High and Too Stable: The EEC and Trade with Australia during the 1960s," *Australian Economic History Review* 41:3 (2001): 267-86.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 268.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 285.

While the FCO commented that the days of Sir Robert Menzies (Prime Minister of Australia, 1939-41 & 1949-66), “British to the bootstraps” views were gone, and observed that in recent years Australia had ‘acquired a keener sense of its separate identity, value and importance’, they accepted that Anglo-Australian relations remained ‘close and friendly’.¹²⁴ David Goldsworthy observes that during the 1950s Britain still controlled the largest empire in the world. However, by the mid-1960s it had almost completely dissolved, a factor that naturally weakened Anglo-Australian relations.¹²⁵ Therefore, the Anglo-Australian relationship during the late 1960s was ‘a blend of continuity and change’.¹²⁶ While a formal post-imperial tie was still prevalent and with strong economic links that bound both countries closely, some Australians began to lose their sense of ‘Britishness’ following the collapse of the empire that had once politically tied them so closely with Britain.¹²⁷

Although Britain was suffering economically in 1976, socially and financially Australia may have been in an even weaker position at the time of Thatcher’s visit, since the Liberal-Country Party Coalition Government, led by Malcolm Fraser (Prime Minister of Australia, 1975-83), was in the process of undertaking major policy changes in order to end the country’s prolonged inflation and unemployment concerns. The FCO therefore calculated that allied help was clearly in need: ‘Without a revived mineral boom, an inflow of funds from overseas and a corresponding resurgence of industrial activity, a devaluation of the Australian dollar may be needed

¹²⁴ NAUK FCO 24/2172 (Part B), FCO brief: Britain and Australia: Reciprocal Needs, 30 April 1976.

¹²⁵ David Goldsworthy, *Losing the Blanket: Australia and the End of Britain's Empire* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1998), 4.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, For more on Anglo-Australian relations, see: Andrea Benvenuti, *Anglo-Australian Relations and the 'Turn to Europe', 1961-1972* (Suffolk: Royal Historical Society/Boydell Press, 2008); Allan Gyngell, *Fear of Abandonment: Australia in the world since 1942* (Carlton: La Trobe University Press, 2017).

to correct the low-growth economy'.¹²⁸ In light of Australia's relatively isolated standing in the world, they believed that Britain had the upper hand in having the ability to offer support, which would thus strengthen relations: 'It is in the interests of both countries to increase the flow of people and ideas... Britain has a lot to offer. In many fields Britain is Australia's major window on the world'.¹²⁹

Soon after arriving in Australia, Thatcher was unable to escape the negative comments made by Mr Rowling in New Zealand regarding her 'break with political protocol', and was forced to defend herself at a press conference in Sydney. Speaking frankly to the media, she insisted that she 'wouldn't be changing her style': 'I expect to say what I believe in, and to put that across fearlessly and firmly. That is what I always do.'¹³⁰ Again, Thatcher's growing confidence in herself and in her politics is clearly highlighted. In addition to Rowling's comments, Thatcher was also under pressure from a group of Conservative MPs at home. *The Times* reported that Nicholas Fairbairn (MP for Kinross and West Perthshire, 1974-83), had publicly commented that while the Party 'had an excellent and inspiring captain under Mrs Thatcher... nobody knew who the Party's leading spokesmen were, nor what any of them thought or said', stressing: 'There is no excuse for their anonymity. They must start shouting, or go. They must lead, or make way for those who will. The people want articulate leaders with whom they can identify'.¹³¹ Fairbairn's comments were followed by Robert McCrindle (MP for Brentwood and Ongar, 1974-92), who revealed to *The Times*: 'Twice since Mrs Thatcher took over as Party Leader I have

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ "Press conference in Australia," *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 13 September 1976, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/102897> (accessed 10/06/2017).

¹³¹ Times Correspondent, "Tory attack on 'anonymous' party leaders," *The Times*, 28 August 1976, p. 2.

called upon her to strengthen the Shadow Cabinet and get rid of some of the dead wood. On those two occasions I have seemed to be alone in my criticism but now support is coming from several corners of the Party'.¹³²

When questioned in Australia on the criticism of her leadership, *The Telegraph* observed how Thatcher's 'customary cool was temporarily shaken', as she defended: 'Lack of leadership? I have met four Prime Ministers, each in their own town, and heard what their problems were. There is no substitute for personal contact.'¹³³ Commenting that she had not seen the press reports on Conservative front bench criticism, Thatcher nevertheless reasoned that it was 'better to have a lively fighting team rather than an anodyne one'.¹³⁴ However, *The Australian* noted that the negative reports had shaken Thatcher's nerve: 'For the first time she appeared nervous... Mrs Thatcher demands perfection. She usually gets it. This one slip upset her'.¹³⁵ In an attempt to defend herself further against her Party's critics, the BBC reported that Thatcher believed her travels abroad were of clear importance: 'The knowledge she's gaining justifies the trip'.¹³⁶ While Thatcher obviously needed to gain experience in foreign affairs, *The Australian* assessed: 'Probably not until there is a General Election will it be known if that rather abstract aim of the tour has been a success'.¹³⁷

¹³² Times Correspondent, "Tory 'dead wood' must go, MP says," *The Times*, 7 September 1976, p. 2.

¹³³ Ann Morrow, "Question on leadership shakes Mrs Thatcher," *The Telegraph*, 18 September 1976.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Martin Beesley, "Twelve thousand mile run to Downing Street," *The Australian*, 21 September 1976, p. 15.

¹³⁶ "Press conference in Australia," *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 13 September 1976, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/102897> (accessed 10/06/2017).

¹³⁷ "Twelve thousand mile run to Downing Street."

Although she dismissed her critics, Thatcher clearly listened carefully to their arguments while she was in Australia. *The Observer* reported that Thatcher was ‘planning a reshuffle of her leading advisors in response to widespread criticism that the Shadow Cabinet has made little impact... Mrs Thatcher may be tempted to take immediate action on her return from her Far East tour next week’.¹³⁸ However, the paper noted that not all Tory MPs believed that changes to the Shadow Cabinet would improve the Party’s position, quoting an unnamed senior Conservative, who assessed: ‘I think the malaise is very deep’.¹³⁹

It is evident that not only did Thatcher have to defend herself as a politician travelling abroad in order to gain the experience she needed in order to govern, but as a woman, she was constantly having to try that little bit harder. Addressing a press conference in Sydney, Thatcher outlined the ‘prescription’ needed in order for a woman to make it to the height of modern politics: ‘She has to be very competent, very thoughtful, very capable, very persistent, very strong.’¹⁴⁰ Speaking in a ‘courtroom and assertive school mistress manner’, surprisingly for a politician she revealed that it was sometimes in the interests of the people not to speak the full truth in public: ‘You don’t tell deliberate lies, but sometimes you have to be evasive... Generally I am pretty straight, but I do know that, when the interest of my country requires me to, I give a reticent reply.’¹⁴¹ What can be gleaned here is that while abroad, the Leader of the Opposition inevitably feels the duty to not only represent

¹³⁸ Adam Raphael, “Mrs Thatcher changing team,” *The Observer*, 19 September 1976, p. 3.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ NAUK FCO 24/2172 (Part B), “Thatcher speaks of truth...” (Publication unknown), 14 September 1976.

their Party, but also their country, a balancing act in broadcasting their Party's standpoint, while also recognising the priorities of the UK government.

The impact of Thatcher's gender also made a considerable impression on the Australian *Daily Telegraph*, who reported: 'There are no women in the House of Representatives in Canberra... Australian men should also stop and think about this situation. Compared with most democratic parliamentary systems in the world, Australia rates poorly when it comes to equal rights'.¹⁴² Thatcher's visit was, therefore, seen as a welcoming attempt to inspire women into politics: 'If Mrs Thatcher's Australian visit does nothing else, it will provide a service to all electors if it makes them realise that there is no limit to what a woman can achieve in politics. She did not reach her present position on a women's lib platform'.¹⁴³ Highlighting further just how much of an impression Thatcher's arrival had on the Australian press, *The Guardian* praised Thatcher's first appearance. Commenting that the persistence of the Sydney press had 'driven more than one visiting celebrity to anger', they reported that Thatcher appeared 'unruffled', with her dominance leaving many journalists 'question-less, or gasping'.¹⁴⁴ Complementing her 'democratic' manner in which she accepted a question from every reporter, *The Guardian* also noted that Thatcher's gender was of key significance: 'The questioners, however, continually found her sex to be the most interesting topic and seemed particularly concerned about what household chores she performed'.¹⁴⁵ In achieving such positive press

¹⁴² NAUK FCO 24/2172 (Part B), "Petticoat government," *The Daily Telegraph*, 14 September 1976.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ NAUK FCO 24/2172 (Part B), "Mrs Thatcher dominates press," *The Guardian*, 14 September 1976.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

coverage, Thatcher undoubtedly identified with female voters both at home and abroad, which only added to people's interest and intrigue in her.¹⁴⁶

While Thatcher was forced to handle an array of pressing questions, the Australian press appeared highly impressed by her demeanour: 'Mrs Thatcher dealt with questions crisply and efficiently. She has been described as Dresden china and stainless steel... Her voice is beautifully modulated and she raised it only once'.¹⁴⁷ Indeed, *The Sydney Morning Herald* was particularly taken by her style: 'She began by sitting in a velvet chair... Within seconds she had risen to her feet, clasped her hands together and, leaning forward slightly, took up the position of an encouraging schoolmarm'.¹⁴⁸ In response to the question, 'What will you do when you become Prime Minister?' she replied: 'Run things rather better than they are at present. Next question'.¹⁴⁹ Recognising that Thatcher had experienced a number of hurdles in her quest to become Conservative Leader, the *Herald* observed: 'Anyone who attempted Thatcher-bashing – a popular British pass-time on both sides of the House in the early 1970s – fared badly'.¹⁵⁰ Although policy ideas appeared to be absent from her mind, by late 1976, Thatcher had clearly grown in confidence and was able to respond confidently to both positive and negative comments.

One factor in Thatcher's rise to becoming Conservative Leader that is often overlooked is the unconditional support she received from her husband, who *The*

¹⁴⁶ Ann Morrow, "Mrs. Thatcher wins approval of women," *The Daily Telegraph*, 17 September 1976.

¹⁴⁷ NAUK FCO 24/2172 (Part B), "The Thatcher plan for Britain: 'Run things rather better'," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 September 1976.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

Australian observed had a significant impact on her: ‘Mr Thatcher is both always present but never there... He is everything a dutiful husband should be – there when he is needed but determined not to steal the limelight or interfere with his wife’s chosen career, “I just keep my mouth shut and let Margaret get on with it”, he says’.¹⁵¹ Despite going ‘unnoticed’ and appearing ‘lost in the crowd’, the paper observed: ‘Mrs Thatcher depends on him. “He is my confidante,” she says, “The man I can turn to and depend on.”’¹⁵² Revealingly, *The Australian* further added that Denis also acted as one of her closest advisors: ‘Together they will have a Scotch each evening and talk over the day’s events. They will plan what Mrs Thatcher will say or how she should handle a situation’.¹⁵³ Such a comment reveals the fact that, although she was growing in confidence, her husband played a key role in assisting her rise to power. Robin Harris notes that Thatcher ‘never quite trusted anyone, even those she had known for years, not to short change her in some trivial regard’, which thus emphasizes the significance of Denis in terms of Thatcher’s political judgment:

He was particularly useful in helping her understand businessman and their priorities, broadening her horizons beyond her original limited perspective based on the experience and priorities of the small shopkeeper. His main strength lay, though, in his ability to judge character. Whereas she could be dazzled or flattered or charmed, and was capable of making some serious misjudgements about people, he was more earthy and more distrustful. He was particularly suspicious

¹⁵¹ NAUK FCO 24/2172 (Part B), “Behind every successful woman there’s a man,” *The Australian*, 14 September 1976.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

of those who claimed to be personally loyal while politically opposed.¹⁵⁴

Although Denis had a tendency to take a step back from the spotlight, he revealed to *The Australian* during the tour: 'I'm not here to be interviewed. Margaret answers the questions far better than I ever could.'¹⁵⁵ Commenting on the importance of her husband's support, Thatcher stated: 'I think the marvellous thing is that he gives me a sense of perspective. If I am upset or think I have done something silly, then we talk about it and he makes me see sense.'¹⁵⁶ While Denis was perceived to be a quiet character who avoided the media limelight, *The Telegraph* observed: 'It is interesting to see Mr Thatcher's growing confidence on the tour. At the beginning, he seemed slightly uncertain, but now he escorts his wife with his hands held behind his back, exactly like Prince Philip'.¹⁵⁷

In similarity with how she was received by businessmen in the US, *The Telegraph* observed how Thatcher's 'blend of femininity and good sense quite disarmed the Australian businessmen she addressed in Sydney... Australian men are not particularly noted for their susceptibility to career women, especially those in politics, but yesterday all signs of male chauvinism vanished'.¹⁵⁸ Speaking at a lunch hosted by the Institute of Directors in Sydney, Thatcher addressed Britain's economic troubles and launched a forceful attack on socialist government, claiming that private

¹⁵⁴ Harris, *Not For Turning*, 16, 44.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ann Morrow, "Mrs Thatcher pays tribute to husband," *The Telegraph*, 20 September 1976.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ann Morrow, "Mrs Thatcher's 'good sense' wins Australian praise," *The Daily Telegraph*, 16 September 1976.

enterprise could be the ‘only true creators of wealth’ in society.¹⁵⁹ Already known for her strong views about the welfare state, she stressed that government attempts to control the entire economic system had led to ‘a reduction in its efficiency... We need good active leadership all the way through society.’¹⁶⁰ Alongside a photograph of Thatcher looking fiercely serious and determined, *The Times* reported on her firm rhetoric: ‘Each one of us has his responsibility. Each one of us might well be guided by Harry Truman’s famous slogan “The buck stops here.”’¹⁶¹ While she continued to refrain from identifying any alternative financial measures that a future Conservative government would bring, her audience was left impressed, with two businessmen commenting: ‘She is world class’ and ‘She is a very great lady.’¹⁶² *The Australian* added that although Thatcher’s audience had greeted her with a ‘guarded welcome’, by the end of her speech the businessmen were ‘on their feet applauding loudly’, clearly impressed with her rhetoric.¹⁶³

Following her address, Thatcher attended a dinner at Parliament House in Melbourne, where she once again ‘charmed her audience of fairly rugged politicians’.¹⁶⁴ Highlighting the case that women were seen as inferior within the Australian political scene, *The Telegraph* noted that, in order to accommodate Thatcher, the House of Representatives had needed to pass a resolution in order to provide her with a seat. Revealingly, they also observed: ‘At difficult moments she smiled diplomatically at the gold leaf on the ceiling or occasionally caught her

¹⁵⁹ NAUK FCO 24/2172 (Part B), “Thatcher defends private enterprise,” *The Canberra Times*, 16 September 1976,

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ NAUK FCO 24/2172 (Part B), Cutting from *The Times*, 16 September 1976.

¹⁶² “Speech at Governor of Victoria’s Reception,” *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 16 September 1976, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/102899> (accessed 02/09/2017).

¹⁶³ “Twelve thousand mile run to Downing Street.”

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

husband's eye'.¹⁶⁵ Such a comment demonstrates that although she was confident in addressing audiences, Thatcher still experienced moments of insecurity in 1976, and evidently her husband was an advisor and a source of strength that helped to keep her going during her early years as Leader of the Opposition.

Thatcher's lengthy visits abroad in opposition gave her a platform to present herself as a future prime minister, however, they also enabled her to connect with female voters, who duly took inspiration from a woman making it in a man's world. Speaking to members of the Federal Women's Committee of the Liberal Party of Australia at a political rally in Melbourne, *The Telegraph* noted that speaking to 1,500 women from all parts of Australia 'made her slightly nervous', and observed 'as always her husband was close by'.¹⁶⁶ Demonstrating her work ethic, they added: 'She stayed up until 4.30am rewriting her speech so that it bore hardly any resemblance to the prepared address which journalists had been given'.¹⁶⁷ Indeed, Thatcher commented while on tour: 'If I am not happy with it, I just tear it apart and start all over again.'¹⁶⁸

Channelling the Conservative activist Mary Whitehouse, who campaigned against social liberalism and the mainstream British media (both of which she believed had contributed to a 'permissive society'), Thatcher spoke of the virtues of family life, the negative impact that television had on modern society, and how she naturally identified with her audience given that she personified the image of a

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ "Mrs. Thatcher wins approval of women."

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ "Mrs Thatcher pays tribute to husband."

capable, hard working mother. On TV, she proclaimed: 'It can isolate generations from generations as it becomes easier to turn on the TV set than to talk over the day's problems... It can turn neighbours into strangers. It can dominate our lives.'¹⁶⁹ Following her appearance, *The Telegraph* reported that Thatcher 'had won her audience... Her knack of looking at every corner of the room is one of her skills as a speaker'.¹⁷⁰ Furthermore, they recognised how Thatcher 'shrewdly assessed the solid Victorian values of Melbourne, which considers itself the repository of good taste, good families, good business sense...'¹⁷¹ By making a conscious effort to identify with the culture of the city she was speaking in, Thatcher was able to connect with audiences abroad, which undoubtedly increased her international appeal.

One outing that made big headlines during Thatcher's Australian visit was her visit to Broken Hill, described by *The Sun* as 'a rough, tough, dusty mining town' in the Australian Outback.¹⁷² Given that this area was seen as 'the most Socialist mining town in the Western world', with the local union leader, Joe Keenan, admitting that 'not even our political leaders come out here to see us', *The Sun* wondered: 'What was Margaret Thatcher doing in that desolate spot which has been called the Last Place on Earth?'¹⁷³ Clearly unearthing a key reason for Thatcher's lengthy visits abroad, the paper cannily calculated: 'She was busy campaigning... 12,000 miles from home, she was carefully paving a path to 10 Downing Street'.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁹ Jon Cox, "Margaret calls on Menzies," *The Sun*, 17 September 1976, p. 11.

¹⁷⁰ "Mrs. Thatcher wins approval of women."

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Martin Beesley, "Sheep shearers and politicians... Maggie wows 'em in Aussie," *The Sun*, 20 September 1976, p. 19.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

The High Commission in Canberra duly noted the impact of the visit on the local media: ‘The press the next day had front page pictures of her at the silver mine face wielding a heavy drill’.¹⁷⁵ Speaking to the press after visiting the Outback, they reported how Thatcher had stressed that ‘she must meet foreign leaders and know their problems if she is going to become Prime Minister’.¹⁷⁶ Although networking with leaders gave her an international platform to stand on, *The Sun* stressed: ‘There is more to it... not least in the publicity value. Her every step has been covered by television crews from the BBC and ITV’.¹⁷⁷ Revealingly, writing for *The Australian*, *The Sun*’s correspondent, Martin Beesley, went further by observing that foreign affairs was Thatcher’s biggest weakness in 1976: ‘She has little foreign affairs experience and she knows she must have that if she is to convince the electorate she will make a capable PM...’¹⁷⁸ Significantly, he observed:

She toured the United States last year. This tour was designed to fill in a few more gaps in her knowledge, but more importantly to convince the voters she is a “statesman”; a person recognised throughout the world as a political leader, a person of political statue.¹⁷⁹

Reflecting back on her visit to Broken Hill, noting the impact that trade unions had on Australian society, Thatcher wrote in her memoirs:

¹⁷⁵ NAUK FCO 24/2172 (Part B), British High Commission concluding report, 21 September 1976.

¹⁷⁶ “Sheep shearers and politicians... Maggie wows ‘em in Aussie.”

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ “Twelve thousand mile run to Downing Street.”

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

The union leaders were delighted and rather surprised to see me. They informed me proudly that no one could live or work in the town without being in the union. A bar in the town, which had recently challenged the rule, had simply been boycotted and forced to close down... I could not help wondering whether I had an insight into Britain's future.¹⁸⁰

Along with identifying that Thatcher's trips abroad were largely an attempt to win over the electorate back home, *The Sun* also commented on Thatcher's work ethic and on her desire to lead the next government:

Mrs Thatcher has worked relentlessly. The strain has shown on her staff. There have been tears and occasional division... The fact that none of it has been directed at the leader herself is a tribute to her ability to remain ever charming and in control. She works hard and demands hard work from her staff.¹⁸¹

Following her highly publicized visit to the Australian Outback, Thatcher went on to address the Liberal Federal Council, where she continued her attack on socialism and the problems of over-zealous government: 'The real difference between the Conservative Party and our socialist political opponents is that we believe that government should act to enlarge the freedom of the individual to live his own life,

¹⁸⁰ Thatcher, *Path to Power*, 387.

¹⁸¹ "Sheep shearers and politicians... Maggie wows 'em in Aussie."

whilst they believe that government should dismantle it...'¹⁸² Alluding to the problems seen in the Soviet Union, where people are 'miles behind the Western world in standards of living and quality of life,' Thatcher stressed:

The socialist concept that rights belong "collectively" to groups is extremely dangerous. It implies that some men, those in groups, are entitled to such rights, while others are not... "Socialist realism" has meant that neither artists nor writers have been free to express their own ideas. Anything that conflicts with the collectivist mystique is feared, and is accordingly condemned, and banned.¹⁸³

In her concluding remarks, Thatcher argued that freedom could not be guaranteed by parliamentary institutions, and stressed 'its survival rests on an unwritten moral law, on our belief in certain natural human rights... It is this code that maintains the rule of law.'¹⁸⁴

Assessing the impact of her address, demonstrating that she could win over a liberal audience, *The Canberra Times* reported that many delegates 'and most of their wives', 'loved the British Conservative Leader': 'She gave them what they wanted to hear'.¹⁸⁵ The paper observed Thatcher's concerns over the possible implications of the public sector having too much of a hold on the British economy, however, they noted

¹⁸² NAUK FCO 24/2172 (Part B), Speech to the Liberal Federal Council, Canberra, 20 September 1976.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Gay Davidson, "Mrs Thatcher tells the Liberals what they want to hear," *The Canberra Times*, 21 September 1976, p. 2.

that she did not offer any alternative ideas on what she would do to restore Britain's economic climate if she were to take office: 'Mrs Thatcher did not say how, in Government, she would deal with any of these matters. And nobody at the council meeting asked her'.¹⁸⁶ Indeed, they observed that while the delegates 'listened happily and uncritically to Mrs Thatcher', 'they wanted reassurance in a more immediate sense' of what international leaders would do to address the issues of inflation and continued unemployment.¹⁸⁷ Writing in her memoirs on her recollections of her address to the Council, Thatcher wrote:

I included in my speech some of the more philosophical assertions, which I always inserted in such speeches in Britain... The applause at the end was far from deafening, and from the subsequent comments it became clear to me that conservative-minded audiences in Australia were not used to this sort of unapologetic conservatism.¹⁸⁸

Thatcher clearly proved that she could captivate audiences of varying political leanings, and in doing so, she achieved one of the main objectives in her trips abroad; namely, to generate favourable press coverage in order to change her perceived image as an inexperienced politician in relation to the long-serving Callaghan. Additionally, the practice she gained by participating in Q&A sessions in different international environments naturally helped to increase her skill and confidence in addressing large audiences. However, the fact that Thatcher refused to offer any alternative policy

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Thatcher, *Path to Power*, 387.

ideas during her public speeches demonstrates that a key focus of her visits abroad was to use rhetoric rather than policy, in order to present herself as a credible alternative Prime Minister.

In achieving her ambition of meeting as many international leaders as possible during her years in opposition, Thatcher also met briefly with the Australian Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, who shared Thatcher's beliefs in private enterprise and freedom of the individual. *The Telegraph* observed that during the meeting 'they were like old friends sharing many common interests, as soon as they sat down together'.¹⁸⁹ One reason why Thatcher was able to find common ground with Fraser was because both had served as Ministers of Education in 1973. Meeting three years later, an aide at the British High Commission in Canberra noted that Thatcher thought Fraser had 'mellowed' since their last encounter.¹⁹⁰ However, writing years later in her memoirs, she revealed:

Although I was pleased to see a right-wing government in power in Australia as in New Zealand, I never struck up any real friendship with Malcolm Fraser. Our views and attitudes were too different. Neither Bob Muldoon nor Malcolm was committed to the reforms required to create an effective free-enterprise economy. They were both shaped by political cultures that for almost all of this century had been built upon protectionist economics and an advanced welfare state.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹ Ann Morrow, "Russia 'long way behind the West,'" *The Telegraph*, 20 September 1976, p. 19.

¹⁹⁰ NAUK FCO 24/2172 (Part B), British High Commission concluding report, 21 September 1976.

¹⁹¹ Thatcher, *Path To Power*, 386-387.

Despite the fact that Fraser was Prime Minister, it was Thatcher's meeting with the former Australian leader, Robert Menzies, which caught the most attention. After meeting at his home where they talked for over an hour, Thatcher stated: 'It was a wonderful talk. We got on very well.'¹⁹² Commenting in her memoirs, published in 1995 years after her time in office, Thatcher revealed how she 'treasured' her meeting with Menzies in 1976:

He was ailing and could no longer walk, but one saw immediately the power and strength of character of Australia's leading statesman... I was flattered when he revealed that he had read most of my recent speeches... I was reminded not for the last time that the political generation that had come to maturity when the British Empire was still a world power retained a global perspective that its more parochial successors lacked. When I found myself complimented by this remarkable man it strengthened me in my conviction that I was right, and that the Détente establishment was wrong.¹⁹³

Thatcher's meeting with Menzies demonstrates how she intentionally sought out advice from influential international figures in order to learn from their own experiences, and also to uncover future policy ideas that she could implement into her own political agenda. Recognising the prime reason for Thatcher's extensive tour, *The Sun* reported that her intention was 'to meet local leaders and discuss mutual

¹⁹² "Margaret calls on Menzies."

¹⁹³ Thatcher, *Path to Power*, 387-388.

problems’, but also ‘to make unusual visits which would prompt good media coverage’, as she did in the Australian Outback.¹⁹⁴ On her excursions within Australia, they reasoned: ‘The local press was impressed and the coverage was favourable and extensive’, adding: ‘Her briefing and strategy sessions covered every possibility. Nothing was left to chance and she faltered only once’ (on criticisms of her leadership).¹⁹⁵

Writing for *The Sun*, Martin Beesley went further by revealing: ‘The preparation is meticulous... *The Telegraph* reporter and I were asked about the Australian press, what questions they might ask, how she should respond...’ which demonstrates that Thatcher’s team sought advice wherever they could find it.¹⁹⁶ Indeed, *The Australian* observed: ‘Each day Mrs Thatcher receives a progress report on what coverage has been given to her tour. The success of it is being largely gauged in minutes and seconds of TV time and column inches’.¹⁹⁷ While the paper agreed with *The Sun* that press coverage of the tour both in Britain and Australia had been positive, they noted ‘but it has not been easy’, alluding to the effort put in by her office to ensure the tour’s success.¹⁹⁸ A key area where Thatcher received extensive praise was the impact she made during her public speeches. On this, *The Australian* reported: ‘It is hard for anyone not to be impressed when she speaks. Mrs Thatcher has an extraordinary ability to retain and quote facts on any subject... The reception when she has spoken to the converted at political rallies has been ecstatic. Political

¹⁹⁴ “Sheep shearers and politicians... Maggie wows ‘em in Aussie.”

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ “Twelve thousand mile run to Downing Street.”

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

leaders have said they are very impressed'.¹⁹⁹ Similarly, *The Sun* concluded: 'Nothing can rattle her when she is before an audience... The tour has been more successful than her advisors dreamed possible'.²⁰⁰

The official report from the British High Commission in Canberra echoed the tone of the press coverage. Recognising the controversies that had arisen in New Zealand following accusations that Thatcher had been politicking, they commented: 'Mrs Thatcher was anxious to be well prepared for any tricky questions which might arise. In the event she found the press and TV conference surprisingly straightforward and some of the questions put to her rather trivial. At all events she was well in command of the conference throughout'.²⁰¹ On the impression that Thatcher's address had on the Institute of Directors in Sydney, they reported that 'she and her message were rapturously received', though, as was evident throughout her public speeches, they observed that at the Liberal Women's Rally her talk had 'centred on conservative philosophy rather than policy'.²⁰² Generally, the High Commission noted how Thatcher was often cautious when planning what she chose to say in public:

Mrs Thatcher avoided specific issues of controversy in British party politics, and mentioned no names... Thatcher was able to expound her views with vigour and clarity without engaging (at least in public) in direct criticism of the British Government or its specific policies or personalities. In general, there was no cause for embarrassment, either

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ "Sheep shearers and politicians... Maggie wows 'em in Aussie."

²⁰¹ NAUK FCO 24/2172 (Part B), British High Commission concluding report, 21 September 1976.

²⁰² Ibid.

nationally, or governmentally, in anything Mrs Thatcher did or said in Australia.²⁰³

Similarly to her US visits, highlighting again the theme of ‘soft power’, Thatcher used her tour of Australia as a way of promoting Britain abroad, portraying herself and her Party as the remedy that was needed in order to resolve Britain’s socio-economic climate. The High Commission further observed how Thatcher had successfully won over liberal audiences while in Australia: ‘Mrs Thatcher impressed the Liberals with her energy, grasp and control, and also with the impeccable and even stylish fashion in which she delivered her philosophical address to the Federal Council’, adding that her style was very different to that of Malcolm Fraser, who was perhaps more moderate and less robust in carrying out his Party’s programme.²⁰⁴ While they recognised that, from Thatcher’s point of view, ‘the favourable publicity which she gained was presumably the main advantage of the visit’, they highlighted the fact that she and her team needed to be guided and advised: ‘I think she was also appreciative of the necessarily discreet and unobtrusive help we were able to give her. In general therefore I feel that the visit passed off as well as anyone - Mrs Thatcher, her hosts, or ourselves - could have expected’.²⁰⁵

The only negative comment made by the High Commission was their observation that ‘it had been a long time since a British Prime Minister had been to Australia’, which they wrote had been pointed out to Thatcher both publicly and

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

privately.²⁰⁶ Despite this, from the British point of view, the FCO appeared pleased with how Thatcher had been received:

From this end I think the great plus was that the visit made people here think once again of the Australian relationship and this is in itself a desirable result. I think also that the coverage of the extensive tour reminded the people of the size and diversity of Australia.²⁰⁷

The High Commission echoed the FCO in recognising how Thatcher's extensive tour could lead to better Anglo-Australian relations: 'The visit was good for Britain in that it confirmed British interest in Australia and attracted greater interest in Britain at the same time'.²⁰⁸

Overall, Thatcher's Commonwealth tour in 1976 was rewarding not only for herself as a rising Conservative Leader, but also for the nature of Commonwealth relations.²⁰⁹ Thatcher's visit to India helped to characterize her as a post-colonial politician interested in Indian affairs, and her time spent with Indira Gandhi highlights how both leaders were aware of the impact that their gender played in establishing their positions as credible political leaders. Similarly, Thatcher's brief appearance in Pakistan was met with praise and interest. However, even more significantly, Thatcher's visits to Australia and New Zealand brought her success on a different

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ NAUK FCO 24/2172 (Part B), FCO concluding report, 1 October 1976.

²⁰⁸ NAUK FCO 24/2172 (Part B), British High Commission concluding report, 21 September 1976.

²⁰⁹ For more on Commonwealth relation see, for instance: Robin Renwick, *A Journey with Margaret Thatcher: Foreign Policy Under the Iron Lady* (Birbeck, 2013); Krishnan Scinivasan, *The Rise, Decline and Future of the British Commonwealth* (Macmillan, 2006).

scale, with a high media circuit surrounding her public and private appearances. Although relations between Britain and New Zealand had a strained history, Thatcher's presence and rhetoric was met with a strong welcome, which continued during her tour of Australia, where the press presented her in a favourable light, helping again to influence her audiences abroad, as well as the British electorate back home. Reflecting on the theme discussed earlier in this thesis on the suspicion or distrust between Thatcher's opposition office and the FCO, this chapter, along with Chapter Two, has demonstrated that there was an evident sense of conflict between the two offices. The FCO appeared to believe that Thatcher's opposition office alone were ill prepared to plan and equip her with the necessary information needed in order to execute a successful international trip abroad. However, Thatcher's willingness to take advice from the FCO and the British Embassy during her international visits indicates her willingness to learn on the job, and highlights how eager she was in wanting to prove herself internationally. In completing this section of the research that has focused on the role that foreign travel plays in the shaping and development of a new Party leader, this thesis will now go on to explore how Thatcher's Opposition team went about designing a new approach to policymaking during her years as Leader of the Opposition.

IV

The Politics of Conservative Policy, 1975-79

Having assessed the impact of foreign travel that played a role in Thatcher's development as Leader of the Opposition, this thesis will now move on to explore the interaction between the Conservative leadership in order to explore the wider picture of policymaking, and will demonstrate how a wide range of experts including think tanks, economists, academics, and parliamentary colleagues all helped to shape Conservative policy between 1975-79. During a time of perceived national decline and crisis in the mid-1970s, Thatcher and her team were inspired by free market solutions to Britain's socio-economic malaise, and looked abroad for economic inspiration, specifically to the West German model of economics. This chapter will assess why the Conservatives under Thatcher believed that inflation was the overriding problem in Britain at the time, and will explore why free markets were the overarching key principle in tackling Britain's economy.

While this chapter demonstrates that Thatcher was disassociated from policymaking in her position as Leader of the Opposition, she and the development of Conservative policy are actually both connected and unconnected, and this is essential to explore. For instance, although the exact policy details were created by Conservative officials and other outside advisors, Thatcher still played a role in indicating the direction that the Party was going in: she was there on the outside (learning about leadership and overseeing the process of policymaking), but seemingly the elephant in the room on the inside. This thesis has illustrated that rather

than being a fully formed, capable leader, Thatcher was actually a highly uncertain personality while also quite sophisticated, which is contrary to the “myth” of Thatcher explored in the Introduction. Looking at the evolution of policymaking helps us to better understand Thatcher’s evolution as Leader of the Opposition since the development of Thatcherism was not just related to Thatcher herself. Instead, it was a revolt of many British voters against corporatism, inflation and very rapid social change, which those influencing Conservative policy were keen to address. Given this, we therefore need to explore this area further in terms of Thatcher scholarship.

While the Conservative Party differed in its views on how to approach the economy - for instance, some believed in the Hayekian political thought that Britain’s political crisis was the result of corporatism, which had begun to erode democracy, while others favoured the Friedman approach to economics, believing that by controlling the money supply, Britain would prosper financially. It was Thatcher’s argument that increasing levels of intervention in the economy reduced its efficiency, leading to a rise in inflation.¹ The Conservatives, therefore, began to form a radical new approach to the economy, taking inspiration and ideas from a multitude of different intellectual platforms. To some extent, the Conservatives looked back to post-war attitudes to the economy in order to tackle inflation, while some were influenced by the economic approaches seen abroad.

Speaking at the conference ‘Political Futures: Projects, Promises and Plans in the Twentieth Century’, Peter Sloman (University of Cambridge) recently observed

¹ NAUK FCO 82/488 (Part A), Speech to the Institute for Socioeconomic Studies, NYC, 15 September 1975.

that social relations between classes changed considerably in the latter part of the twentieth century, making it difficult for policymakers to conjure up a specific economic vision.² Up until the 1970s, economic policy essentially accepted a traditional view of industrial society (i.e. mostly comprising nuclear families with men working in manufacturing industry), and tried to make the economy work in a way that fitted with that view of social relations. From Thatcher onwards, governments essentially gave up doing that, and spent a lot of their time trying to persuade the public that that view of society was dead.³ However, by the 1970s, Sloman noted that the Conservatives began to turn to tropes such as ‘innovation’ and ‘globalisation’ (often associated with the 1990s and New Labour), highlighting that the way in which policymakers saw the role of the economy was somewhat different to how the general public viewed it.⁴ This was clearly a factor that the Conservatives recognised would need to be considered in their future economic plans.

In seeking to inspire the electorate, with a view to gaining power at the next General Election, Geoffrey Howe addressed his concerns with Britain’s domestic policy. In a paper entitled *The Economic Prospect and the Party’s Political Position*, Howe stated that the ‘prescription’ for transforming Britain’s economic climate was ‘the restoration of the dynamics of a free economy’, and stressed a rethinking of the management of the monetary supply.⁵ The Conservatives, he believed, needed to ‘present our economic strategy as a more “democratic” set of policies involving the

² Peter Sloman speaking at the conference ‘Political Futures: Projects, Promises and Plans in the Twentieth Century’, King’s College London, 9 July 2019.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ ‘The Economic Prospect and the Party’s Political Position’ (paper by Sir G. Howe), 1975, Conservative Party Archive Bodleian Library, LCC 1/3/9.

extension of “participation” by the citizens in union affairs, in fields currently dominated by Government, and in industry’.⁶ Unrealistically high income demands from unskilled workers forced up wages overall and also pressured skilled workers, since the higher rates for their level of skills was being relatively squeezed. This angered skilled workers since their relative income began to fall against the non-skilled on the factory floor. Under Labour, skilled individuals had been financially penalised, since their work efforts in industry had not matched their income. Even more broadly, some middle-class Conservative voters during the 1970s also felt indignant given that their working efforts were not being financially compensated. Thatcher, who believed that benefits were too high at the time, thought it moral to address this fundamental flaw in the nation’s socio-economic climate.⁷

Recognising that the Tories needed to reconnect with lost voters, the Conservative Research Department observed: ‘Labour’s position is not much healthier than ours. The electorate is much more volatile than it was. What goes down can just as easily, and rapidly, come up... We need to develop our coherent intellectual alternative to the policies being pursued by the Government’.⁸ Howe, along with his colleagues, was clearly influenced by West Germany’s approach to the economy, an emphasis which is rather missing in the current historiography, especially given Thatcher’s later Euro-scepticism and worries over German reunification. While ‘liberalism’ in Germany was far more collectivist in the 1960s and 1970s than the UK, and indeed more so than it was in the US at the time, Barry

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher: Volume One*, 365.

⁸ ‘The Political Prospect and Strategy’ (a background note by the Research Department), 1975, Conservative Party Archive, Bodleian Library, LCC 1/3/9.

Eichengreen and Albrecht Ritschl note that by the early 1960s, Germany had restored its status ‘as the largest and potentially most influential economic and financial power in Europe’, given its success in a rising GDP rate of nearly 8% per annum between 1950 and 1959.⁹ They highlight that Germany underwent a significant growth in productivity after World War Two, along with big changes in its socio-economic institutions.¹⁰ They further observe:

The German economy in fact remained tightly regulated, both absolutely and relative to more slowly growing economies like Britain. The post-war model of Rhenish capitalism drew heavily on a regulatory model established in the early and mid-1930s, complemented by an improved version of the corporatist model of collective wage bargaining that had prevailed in the Weimar Republic before 1933.¹¹

Howe and Adam Ridley were evidently interested in West Germany’s approach to the economy, as noted by Ridley in his interview for this research: ‘West Germany’s currency was appreciative, not depreciative. They displayed a positive image imbedded by a low rate of inflation to build a strong banking system. Geoffrey Howe and I were interested in their tricks and ideas in how to make sense of the monetary supply.’¹² Their aim was to create a system that could offer a way out of what many

⁹ Barry Eichengreen and Albrecht Ritschl, ‘Understanding West German Economic Growth in the 1950s,’ Working Papers No. 113/08, *London School of Economics*, December 2008, p. 1-53. <http://www.lse.ac.uk/Economic-History/Assets/Documents/WorkingPapers/Economic-History/2008/WP113.pdf> (accessed 29/01/2019).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹² Interview with Adam Ridley, 31 January 2018.

Conservatives saw as a false choice between industrial intervention and competition.¹³ In order for the Conservatives to identify with everyday voters, the Conservative Research Department were evidently aware that the media could provide a key platform for the Party to channel their political message: 'The main problem peculiar to the Conservative Party is probably the difficulty most people still find in identifying with it. This seems to have been true throughout most of the post-war period'.¹⁴ More specifically, they acknowledged that the Party needed to improve how they were articulating their message, noting: 'There was ample scope for improvement of our image as a Party on television, and members were urged to take advantage of the opportunities at Central Office for professional training in handling the media'.¹⁵ In seeking to establish a better outreach operation, it appears that the Conservatives in opposition had a sense that they could win hitherto-unreachable voters, for instance, working class labour workers whose wages had been hit badly by excessive inflation.

In her memoirs, Thatcher reflected that upon taking up the Conservative leadership, 'the foremost issue was how to deal with inflation'.¹⁶ Indeed, in 1974 Keith Joseph stated: 'Inflation is threatening to destroy our society... It will lead to catastrophe and the end of freedom'. Following the fluctuations in inflation levels during the late 1950s and 1960s and the devaluation of the British pound in 1967, under Heath the Tories attempted economic reorientation before announcing their famous 'U-turn' policy in 1972, which sought to boost economic prosperity by

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Thatcher, *Path to Power*, 208.

introducing a renewed incomes policy in order to avoid inflationary consequences.¹⁷ The Heathite economic reorientation was in some ways ‘proto-Thatcherite’, though only in terms of its insistence of the role of markets. For Heath, markets were to be more guided by the state than for Thatcher, one reason why he bolstered the central data, thinking and research-analytical elements of central government.¹⁸ His emphasis was more on the corporate, large-scale elements of the free market (not the small-to-medium sized enterprises that Thatcher emphasised), for ideological motives as well as reasons connected to the changing nature of the economy as it moved towards a more service-orientated future.¹⁹ However, Heath’s unconventional approach to the economy ended in disaster following the Miners’ Strike in November 1972. Feeling alienated in the race for higher wages, miners realised their power in calling for strike action – by refusing to work, there was serious potential of severe labour shortages. Reflecting back on the event, which helped to instigate his downfall, Heath reflected that the strike had been ‘the most vivid, direct and terrifying challenge to the rule of law that I could ever remember emerging from within our own economy’.²⁰

However, unlike Thatcher who as a new party leader was eager to learn and listen to guidance, Heath’s main fault was his inability to accept the advice of his Cabinet colleagues. For example, as Philip Ziegler observes, when Geoffrey Howe, at a ministerial meeting at Chequers, expressed some doubts about the proposed counter-inflationary policy, Heath said contemptuously ‘that he saw no need to waste

¹⁷ Ben Jackson and Robert Saunders (eds), *Making Thatcher’s Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 64. See, also: Adrian Williamson, *Conservative Economic Policymaking and the Birth of Thatcherism, 1964-1979* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2015).

¹⁸ Stuart Ball and Anthony Seldon, *The Heath Government 1970-74: A Reappraisal* (London & New York: Routledge, 1996), 140-144.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Philip Ziegler, *Edward Heath: The Authorised Biography* (London: HarperPress, 2010), 349-50.

time on the philosophical maunderings of the “Minister for keeping prices down.”²¹ Ziegler further notes that Heath had appointed a ‘lightweight Chancellor’ in the form of Robert Carr, and asserts that Heath had ‘no intention of standing back and leaving him to run the economy’.²² Indeed, although Carr himself feared the consequences of Heath’s desire to pump money into the economy, Heath refused to listen to his views and clearly had ‘no intention of leaving his Chancellor to himself’.²³ Ultimately, Heath’s attempts at restoring the British economy and the impact of the Miners’ Strike led to his defeat in 1974, after his renewed incomes policy failed, and propelled the country into a deeper crisis of inflation.

Speaking off the record to Hugo Young, Adam Ridley stressed that the issues of the day were far bigger in the 1970s than they were in the 50s and 60s, where they seemed relatively more simplistic:

Now they are huge... Can the UK economy survive? Does Thatcher have the aptitude for these at the right level? Probably not, but nobody else has either... But neither does she (Thatcher) have the time. Nor does anyone. Some of her very consciously anti-Heath tactics mean that she has very little time for big thinking. For example, she makes a point of always being available to see people – both MPs and businessmen.²⁴

²¹ Ibid., 327.

²² Ibid., 333.

²³ Ibid., 347.

²⁴ Trewin, *The Hugo Young Papers*: Adam Ridley, lunch. 9 September 1976, 96-97.

Ridley also agreed that incomes policies were ‘an open confession of pessimism and failure’, not helped by the anti-union hostility that had become a key issue within the Conservative leadership.²⁵ Highlighting Ridley’s influence and his economic vision for the future of the Conservatives, in his interview for this research, Peter Jay commented:

In 1975 the number one issue in the political battle was inflation. Adam Ridley thought that Heath had made a mistake with his U-turns in 1972/73. Heath had dropped his Selsdon Man agenda (the approach that he advocated in opposition before power), for a new ‘Dash for Growth’ policy, which in the end resulted in runaway inflation. Ridley’s team believed that they needed to bring back the Selsdon Man approach. They were worried about the money supply and felt a more traditional strategy was needed – lower taxes, less spending.²⁶²⁷

Conservative opposition towards incomes policies was largely due to the fact that, although useful in a crisis situation, they often lead to ‘catch up’ cycles, which makes the problem worse in the end, since governments will inevitably be drawn further into the economy. Indeed, Glen O’Hara notes the failure of government approaches to incomes policies back in the early 1960s: ‘Using direct intervention to combat wage rises and cost inflation would require the government to reach consensus with both sides of industry. Negotiations might conceivably have ranged over a range of issues

²⁵ Jackson and Saunders, *Making Thatcher’s Britain*, 70.

²⁶ Interview with Peter Jay, 6 May 2019.

²⁷ Speaking at the Friedman Conference at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford University on 26/08/2018, Peter Jay outlined his view of Milton Friedman’s influence on British economic policy in a paper entitled ‘Did Milton Friedman Change British Economic Policy after 1967?’

much wider than the wage levels of the immediate future... Without the surety of success, the government naturally hesitated and vacillated before spending precious time and political capital on such a venture... The very weaknesses that incomes policy was designed to solve helped to prevent its success'.²⁸ Incomes policies can also disorder the economy as they prevent normal conditions prevailing by suppressing wages, and therefore encouraging investment in labour and not capital/technology, which will lower productivity in the medium to long-term.²⁹ Furthermore, such policies can suppress wages, and will often simply be followed by 'catch-up' once the statutory restraints are eased - so wages will increase even faster once policies go back to 'normal'.³⁰

Rethinking economics in 1975, then, Thatcher first believed that, rather than blaming specific policy failings, it was essential to treat economic problems as 'symptoms of a profound, long-term malaise', and as Ben Jackson and Robert Saunders observe, she saw the consequences of hyperinflation not as either a 'contingent or transcendent problem', but as a policy difficulty subject to solution, albeit one that required a fundamental rethink of economic approaches.³¹ Keith Joseph believed that Britain's inflation crisis could be traced back to the beginning of the 'age of consensus' in the 1940s, a time where 'our lead and our national initiative began to falter'.³² In an interview for this research, Ridley acknowledged that there was 'definitely a general national "malaise"' during the mid-1970s', however, he

²⁸ Glen O'Hara, "'Intractable, Obscure and Baffling': The Incomes Policy of the Conservative Government, 1957-64," *Contemporary British History* 18:1 (2004): 25-53. See, also: Glen O'Hara, "'Planned Growth of Incomes' or 'Emergency Gimmick'? The Labour Party, The Social Party and Incomes Policy, 1964-70," *Labour History Review* 69 (2004): 59-81.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Jackson and Saunders, *Making Thatcher's Britain*, 63.

³² Ibid., 67-68.

added that there was doubt about whether this was the result of the collapse of the consensus (a method of government that advocated a mixed economy, welfare state and a commitment to the Keynesian techniques of economic management), or whether it was the structure of the consensus itself.³³ Indeed, addressing his thoughts in a paper for the Conservative Research Department, Ridley observed: ‘The first 22 years after the war were dismantled by an oppressive pursuit of a fixed and unrealistic parity for the pound which, when combined with a major overseas defence role, led inexorably to stop/go policies’.³⁴

In attempting to understand the cause of such widespread pessimism during the mid-1970s, Ridley noted in his interview for this research that higher expectations for both public spending and private income had led to an unsustainable economic policy, and that it was therefore up to the Conservatives to ‘create an orderly atmosphere to reconstruct respect for constitutional government’, which opened up a new way in the development of Conservative economic thinking.³⁵ Commenting on Ridley’s impact in his memoirs, Geoffrey Howe reflected: ‘Adam Ridley’s input across the whole field was even more important – and was successfully recognised as such. Perhaps his most important achievement was to function as a bridge between different economic ideologies, outside, as well as within the Tory Party’.³⁶

³³ Interview with Adam Ridley, 31 January 2018.

³⁴ ERG: ‘Economic Management – The Debate about “Fine-Tuning”’, Conservative Party Archive, Bodleian Library, CRD 4/4/26.

³⁵ Interview with Adam Ridley, 31 January 2018.

³⁶ Howe, *Conflict of Loyalty*, 113.

When examining Thatcherite economic policy, one of the biggest debates amongst academics is whether it can essentially be defined as economic ‘neoliberalism’. The overriding principles of neoliberalism largely focus on the need for ‘a strong state and a free economy’: a government capable of exercising control, but one that also encourages private ownership and the incentive to work.³⁷ From a broader economic context, David Harvey states that following the 1960s, the capitalist world ‘stumbled towards neoliberalization’ through a series of ‘chaotic experiments’, as established liberalism began to fracture the world economy.³⁸ From an economist’s point of view, Harvey observes that the emergence of Thatcherism in the 1970s came during a time of necessary economic change, and argues that an economic mandate for substantial change did not reveal itself again until the late 1990s under the leadership on Tony Blair (Labour Prime Minister, 1997-2007), and Bill Clinton (President of the United States, 1993-2001).³⁹ Thus, although some form of wide-ranging economic change was inevitable during the 1970s, it need not have looked quite like ‘Thatcherism’.

However, in line with Conservative New Right thinking, Thatcher strongly believed that the ‘post-war compromise was a major mistake and had to be reversed’, observing that the state had ‘expanded into areas that should be left to other institutions’, resulting in a drastic case of hyperinflation and economic recession.⁴⁰ While the liberal strand of New Right thinking campaigned for a ‘freer, more open, more stable economy’, during the 1970s, the Conservative strand aspired to restore

³⁷ Jackson, “At the Origins of Neo-Liberalism: The Free Economy and the Strong State, 1930–1947,” 134.

³⁸ David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 11-13.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 55.

socio-political order throughout the country.⁴¹ In his critique of the emergence of so-called ‘neoliberal’ ideas, Ben Jackson notes that early neo-liberals favoured the process of central policy planning over welfare policies, and placed a ‘strong state’, capable of controlling interest groups and a free economy, characterized by private ownership at the heart of their political narrative.⁴² Gamble also observes how Thatcher believed that the role of the state needed to be strong in law and order, with a robust military.⁴³ For Thatcher, neoliberal ideas influenced her early conviction that Britain’s socio-economic climate needed a fundamental change, however, her economic approach in opposition was not entirely neoliberal. While she assembled some aspects of neoliberalism, she rejected others, and indeed some initiatives such as reducing the size of the state were later dropped from her policy once in government. Thatcher clearly had a broad conviction that something had to change, but at this stage in opposition she seemed unsure of how to tackle it in policy terms.⁴⁴

Aled Davies, James Freeman and Hugh Pemberton define Thatcherism as ‘a *pathway* through the diverse array of neoliberal ideas’, many, though not all, of which were rooted in the Conservative Party’s intellectual traditions.⁴⁵ In terms of how neoliberal ideas entered British politics, Davies, Freeman and Pemberton demonstrate how well-established think tanks took inspiration from neoliberal thought in order to construct a ‘dynamic, agile, political project, whose real-world ideological expressions were not so much derived from stable principles’, but constructed by a modern team of politicians and intellectuals who ‘negotiated the profound

⁴¹ Gamble, *The Free Economy and the Strong State*, 29.

⁴² Jackson, “At the Origins of Neo-Liberalism,” 134.

⁴³ Gamble, *The Free Economy and the Strong State*, 94-95.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁴⁵ Davies, Freeman and Pemberton, “‘Everyman a Capitalist’ or ‘Free to Choose’? Exploring the tensions within Thatcherite Individualism,” 500.

contradictions they discovered within the underlying neoliberal ideas'.⁴⁶ From this perspective, Thatcher and her colleagues involved in reshaping party policy in the second half of the 1970s essentially trod a pathway through an array of neoliberal ideas some, though not all, of which were consistent with Conservative intellectual traditions.

Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite's work also demonstrates how the Conservatives under Thatcher explored neoliberal ideas and influences, some (though not all), were in line with Conservative intellectual traditions. For instance, Braithwaite illustrates how the Conservatives sought to 're-invigorate the "bourgeois virtues" which had flourished in Victorian Britain' and asserts that 'a family-centred, moralistic individualism underpinned Thatcherite policies', though she highlights that this individualism was not precisely consistent with that of neoliberal theorists.⁴⁷ While Thatcher was inspired by Hayekian thought, particularly the fear of socialist structures and a preference for minimal government, she was confident that 'the "vigorous virtues" of family-centred individualism would reassert themselves once socialism was smashed, that the culture of "dependency" was a by-product of socialist interventionism'.⁴⁸ Essentially, Braithwaite argues that although Thatcherites took ideas from diverse sources, their political project had a single guiding purpose: 'the moral (and, secondary, economic) rejuvenation of Britain... Thatcherites drew on a range of home-grown traditions and discourses, plundering neo-liberalism when it

⁴⁶ Ibid., 24-25.

⁴⁷ Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, "Neo-liberalism and morality in the making of Thatcherite social policy," *Historical Journal* 55 2 (2012): 497-520. For more on this, see: Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite. *Class, politics, and the decline of deference in England, 1968-2000*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 517.

suited them’.⁴⁹ Therefore, while neoliberal ideas influenced Conservative policy, their purpose was not a set of entirely ‘neoliberal’ goals.

John Gray states that the key task for the Conservatives in opposition was ‘not the pursuit of indefinite betterment but the starving off of ever-present evils’.⁵⁰ He further argues that the Conservatives became attracted to the idea of ‘limited government’, one that ‘prepares people for responsible life in a market economy by using the institutions of the market itself’ – market institutions being a ‘practical realization to the values of liberty and human dignity’.⁵¹ There was, therefore, a moral content to these concepts, not just an economic intent, as Thatcher herself repeatedly stressed. Evidently, the concepts of neoliberalism are complex. While Thatcher was attracted to some stems of its ideology, she did not seek to define herself as a committed neoliberal. Instead, she used influences and ideas behind its rhetoric and incorporated these into a new, revived Conservative economic agenda.

Highlighting that specific policy detail had yet to emerge during Thatcher’s early years in opposition, Saunders argues that in outlining new proposals, the Conservatives used ‘rhetoric over policy’, adding that Thatcherism during this period was ‘descriptive rather than prescriptive’.⁵² Significantly, however, he notes that during these years ‘a crucial role was played by Labour defectors, who were drawn to Thatcher in remarkable numbers’.⁵³ While some defectors simply wanted to transfer their dedication to a different rebel project, others were strong libertarians, who feared

⁴⁹ Ibid., 498, 520.

⁵⁰ Gray, *Beyond the New Right*, 48.

⁵¹ Ibid., 16, 46.

⁵² Saunders, “‘Crisis? What Crisis?’” 26.

⁵³ Ibid., 34.

that the increasing power of trade unions could become a threat to political freedom itself.⁵⁴ Although the Labour Party maintained a strong political position, it is clear that Thatcher's mission to tackle Labour's socialism was being heard by the British public. Where Labour favoured borrowing and spending, Thatcher was committed to the principles of incentives and saving. For Thatcher, this period was a moral crisis of effort and will: that the British had become complacent and lazy under Labour and that this needed reversing.

In his interview for this research, Ridley stressed that Thatcher's economic vision during her years in opposition did not match that of a radical neoliberal agenda and, indeed, revealed that he had never used the term 'neoliberalism' himself: 'What do people mean when they use the term neoliberalism? The concept of a "narrative" is incorrect – it suggests an all-encompassing, ideological worked through approach - it wasn't like that at all.'⁵⁵ In concert with Ridley's view, Shirley Letwin states:

Thatcherism has never been, or been based on, a theory... Although many genuine theorecians (especially F.A. Hayek and Milton Friedman) and their theories influenced Mrs Thatcher and her supporters, or were admired by them, none of them has ever seen himself or been seen by Thatcherites as a theorist of Thatcherism.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Interview with Adam Ridley, 31 January 2018.

⁵⁶ Letwin, *The Anatomy of Thatcherism*, 27.

Instead, Letwin argues that Thatcher believed in the teachings of morals and ‘vigorous virtues’, passed down to individuals via the family in order to remake British society and create self-sufficient, independent, energetic individuals:

If Thatcherism were, in essence, an economic policy, it would be reduced to the status of a technological programme... It could not be concerned to cultivate certain virtues in individuals, a certain attitude towards the family, a certain kind of society in Britain... Both its scope and its methods would be quite different.⁵⁷

Thus, while Thatcher identified herself with neoliberal ideas, her economic approach was not as radically neoliberal as previously believed. Rather, by incorporating neoliberal influences into her socio-economic agenda, it allowed Thatcher to mobilize her moral instincts, which were highly committed to promoting the values of saving, private ownership, prudence and the safeguarding of family values, all of which, as Letwin demonstrates, were deeply-held concepts than a mere set of theories.

Reflecting on Thatcher’s relative inexperience as Leader of the Opposition, when interviewed for this research Ridley added that Thatcher did not directly intervene when it came to policy during her opposition years. Instead, she ‘recognised the need to set up policy groups with a few significant, knowledgeable people heading them. For instance, there was Geoffrey Howe in the Treasury and Peter Carrington working in foreign affairs.’⁵⁸ David Marquand observes that, like Thatcher who used Peter Carrington’s expertise as Foreign Secretary to her advantage, Harold Wilson

⁵⁷ Ibid., 114.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

also utilised expertise by appointing Denis Healey as International Secretary of the Labour Party, before promoting him to Shadow Secretary of State for Defence in 1964.⁵⁹ Marquand further notes how Healey, like Carrington, was a specialist in foreign and defence affairs and became ‘a noted figure on the international conference circuit’.⁶⁰ To some extent Healy can be seen as the Carrington of the Thatcher years – a mastermind in international affairs who could build and utilize foreign relations.⁶¹ Furthermore, Hugo Young observes that after 1975, ‘Joseph articulated ideas, Howe formulated policies, and Mrs Thatcher was the essential conduit from one to the other’.⁶²

Given that Thatcher was a somewhat isolated figure during these years, Caroline Slocock revealed how Thatcher ‘created a family in Number Ten’ and ‘relied on her staff emotionally as well as intellectually’, often inviting them over for dinner and seeing her colleagues as a source of company.⁶³ Slocock added that, before her appointment in Number Ten, she’d been told that the then Principal Private Secretary (Nigel Wicks, PPS to Thatcher, 1985-88), had put the word out that no women should be put forward for the position because Thatcher wouldn’t accept a woman in this role. The Permanent Secretary of her department (Geoffrey Holland at the Department of Employment, who, amongst other things was in charge of equality issues), decided to ignore this. In the middle of the recruitment process, a new Principal Private Secretary (Andrew Turnbull, PPS to Thatcher, 1988-92), drew up a shortlist to be interviewed by the Prime Minister (who always made the final choice),

⁵⁹ Marquand, *Britain since 1918*, 199.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Young, *One of Us*, 107.

⁶³ Interview with Caroline Slocock, 13 September 2018.

and he put Slocock forward. He had known nothing about the earlier edict but was sufficiently nervous to consult two other Private Secretaries - one of whom had been there the longest said that Thatcher would never work with a woman, the other said that if Slocock was the best qualified for the position, then the decision should be left to Thatcher. In the one-to-one interview that followed, Thatcher agreed to take Slocock on.⁶⁴ Interestingly, an anonymous female aide who worked for the Conservative Party under Thatcher, noted: 'For many years no woman served as a civil service private secretary to Mrs Thatcher, and her Cabinets, with brief exception, were all men. She built no pipeline of female talent which meant that when John Major (Conservative Prime Minister, 1990-97), took over, there were no women with the necessary junior ministerial experience to put in his Cabinet'.⁶⁵ While Thatcher's gender was a cause of concern amongst some Conservative MPs, particularly those loyal to Heath, it appears that she was far more at ease working with men rather than women during her years as Leader of the Opposition.

Following Heath's failures in economic policy, there was clearly widespread recognition within the Conservative Party that a radically new economic strategy was required to win back power. Since observing the cost of what socialism under a reliant welfare state had done to the Conservatives' 'blue-collar' voters, the Party felt that a fairer, more stabilized approach to the economy was required. The focus on the economy was partly due to the Conservative desire to attract their core 'C2' voters, but it was also because of 'a probable irreversible breakdown in the consensus... A slide towards the disregard for the gentle and consensual, and towards a progressively more muscular exercise of economic and political power', as Ridley stated in his interview

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Interview with an Anonymous Interviewee, 15 December 2016.

for this research.⁶⁶ Traditional policy formation in politics begins with a problem, which is later spotted by think tanks and academics, who then report on their analysis. Once the issue has been recognised, parliament legislates and monitors it, before returning to the beginning of the sequence where future problems will inevitably arise.⁶⁷

Glenn Savage has considered policy ‘assemblage’, and defines it as an approach that ‘emphasizes the always moving and evolving nature of social formations’.⁶⁸ From Savage’s perspective, policy assemblage ‘can be understood as an arrangement of components in particular ways with the aim of governing conduct’.⁶⁹ O’Hara and Sue Brownhill have also researched policy assemblage in their joint text ‘From planning to opportunism? Re-examining the creation of the London Docklands Development Corporation’. As they suggest, it is necessary to assess the ‘intellectual, temporal and spatial contradictions, contestations and tensions’ that are inherent in policymaking, and as a key intellectual within the Conservatives, Keith Joseph observed where the Party needed to focus their attention.⁷⁰ Indeed, as Harrison observes, Joseph had ‘prepared himself with extensive reading’, in preparation for a future Conservative government, which included works by Friedman and Hayek as well as books recommended by the IEA.⁷¹ Quoting Ronald Butt in 1974, Harrison highlights how Joseph recognised where the Conservatives had been going wrong in their economic ideas: ‘The whole vocabulary of political and

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Policy Making in the Real World, Institute for Government, April 2011 <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/Policy%20making%20in%20the%20real%20world.pdf> (accessed 20/11/2020).

⁶⁸ Glenn Savage, “What is policy assemblage?” *Territory, Politics, Governance* 8 (2020): 319-335.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Sue Brownhill and Glen O’Hara, “From planning to opportunism? Re-examining the creation of the London Docklands Development Corporation,” *Planning Perspectives* 30 (2015): 537-570.

⁷¹ Harrison, “Mrs Thatcher and the Intellectuals,” 212.

social debate had been captured by the left, whose ideology has fundamentally remained unanswered by the Conservatives'.⁷² Consequently, Joseph began planning a counter-attack on liberal economics by visioning an economy that resembled an anti-enterprise climate, with new measures on tax, trade unions and the politics of industry.⁷³ Conservative policy formation during the mid-late 1970s, therefore, was seemingly forged in a rather ad hoc and unclear manner, with a multitude of ideas, influences and individuals collectively helping to draft new policy.⁷⁴

In addition to Joseph, Thatcher also created a network of twenty-six intellectual 'outsiders' between 1974 and 1979, who were 'the essential men who in a crisis could translate policy into action', many of whom worked with the Centre for Policy Studies on developing Conservative policy.⁷⁵ Established in 1974, the CPS was a significant organization, which Thatcher took inspiration from during her years in opposition. Brian Harrison describes the Centre as 'a sort of intellectual bazaar where unexpected combinations of people encountered unpredictable combinations of unfamiliar ideas'.⁷⁶ In *Thinking the Unthinkable: think-tanks and the Economic Counter-Revolution 1931-1983*, Richard Cockett describes how the Centre became the intellectual motor driving Thatcherism, noting how free market ideas of the 1930s were coming back into fashion, with the thoughts of Keynes being of interest to the Conservative Opposition.⁷⁷ Alfred Sherman, an LSE trained economist who co-founded the CPS along with Joseph and Thatcher, was a key individual in the

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ For more on policy assemblage see: Tom Baker and Pauline McGuirk, "Assemblage thinking as methodology: Commitments and practices for critical policy research," *Territory, Politics, Governance* 5 (2017): 425-442.

⁷⁵ Harrison, "Mrs Thatcher and the Intellectuals," 214.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 215.

⁷⁷ Richard Cockett, *Thinking the Unthinkable: Think-tanks and the Economic Counter-Revolution 1931-1983* (London: HarperCollins, 1995).

development of the Centre. Indeed, he revealed to Harrison in an interview in 1992 that collectively they ‘wanted to organize, to mobilize, the producers: to be able to choose them rather than they choose us’.⁷⁸

Writing in May 1976, Sherman outlined that the role of the CPS was to ‘act as a freestanding participant in the Conservative campaign of re-assessment and opinion forming. In a sense our chosen and agreed role is that of a trail-blazer’.⁷⁹ With only a number of small offices and meeting rooms, Sherman clearly viewed the Centre as a significant policy-building environment, commenting: ‘We ate our way to victory’, highlighting that the process had been a step by step approach, slow but effective in its achievements.⁸⁰ Harrison notes Sherman as a key individual who shaped the rhetoric produced by the CPS:

Sherman knew that the best way to influence the Conservative Party was to mould the public opinion to which the Party must later respond... He combined a scathing contempt for the left with an instinctive understanding of its culture and a sharp eye for its weak points. “Our success will depend upon our ability to identify the various microclimates of opinion and engage in dialogue with them,” he wrote in November 1974.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Harrison, “Mrs Thatcher and the Intellectuals,” 215-216.

⁷⁹ “Note on Role of CPS,” *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 20 May 1976, <https://www.margareththatcher.org/document/111927> (accessed 08/05/2018).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Harrison, “Mrs Thatcher and the Intellectuals,” 218.

The impact of outsiders was evidently significant to the development of the CPS. Writing to Thatcher in 1976, Joseph informed her of further individuals who had been recruited into the group. These included Norman Strauss, a ‘marketing expert’ of Unilever, whose skills included ‘the underlying psychological impact of words and phrases’, and Terry Price and John Hoskyns. Price was a scientist and former civil servant and Hoskyns a former soldier and successful businessman.⁸² Hoskyns and Price, Joseph believed, were ‘specialists in interaction’, who would ‘contribute ideas on substance and causability to the Group’.⁸³ Writing to Sherman in late 1975, Hoskyns revealed to Sherman that while he was not a committed Conservative, he ‘found that their approach (or perhaps particularly the CPS’s), view of an organic socio-economic system rather than a mechanical one corresponds more closely with the real world’.⁸⁴

Keen to state his view on how the Centre would develop, in late 1975 Norman Strauss outlined that the future of the group was to generate new ideas, while representing ‘an open mind appreciation of people: marketing/communication specialist, MP, business/city, journalist...’⁸⁵ Collectively, they would work together creating a strategy for government ‘to move the country back to prosperity and market place freedom’, by creating a ‘climate in which people would be happy to work again and create a situation where moderates would be in a position to refute the left

⁸² “Sir Keith Joseph notes (goals),” *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 6 August 1976, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/204741> (accessed 08/05/2018).

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ “John Hoskyns letter to Sherman (plans for further meeting),” *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 3 October 1975, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/111915> (accessed 08/05/2018).

⁸⁵ “Note of Hoskyns/Price/Strauss meeting at CPS,” *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 5 November 1975, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/111919> (accessed 08/05/2018).

wing'.⁸⁶ Their intention was 'to designate a society where myriad decision by individuals, firms, institutions, government and the wider world was harmonised', creating an economy that demonstrated 'greater rationality', by 'dispelling illusions and myths'.⁸⁷ In doing so, the emphasis lay on identifying the current failures in Labour's forecasting and planning, and highlighting the case for the market by offering suggestions for greater market freedom in areas such as coal, oil, and nuclear energy.⁸⁸

Strauss also stressed that it was essential that there be some feedback with the electorate: 'Policy makers must know how fast they can progress in what direction, what directions the electorate are moving in, and fit the two together'.⁸⁹ Instinctively, he observed: 'Unless policies are different and fit latent public needs now coming to the surface, they will fail', and commented that Thatcher and Joseph should be 'observers' of key meetings taking place at the CPS.⁹⁰ Given the time spent in recruiting experts from outside of politics, it is evident from the emergence of the CPS that policymaking during Thatcher's years as Leader of the Opposition was a highly complex process, which involved a mixture of thoughts, opinions and insights from a variety of different professional fields.

It is clear to see how the CPS shaped Joseph's thinking during the mid-1970s, since he was also concerned with the need to engage with, and shape public opinion

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ "Note on Role of the CPS."

⁸⁸ "Centre for Policy Studies minutes," *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 20 September 1977, <https://www.margarethatcher.org/document/117128> (accessed 08/05/2018).

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

to identify with a new approach to the economy. However, as a non-party organization, the CPS was ‘less directly preoccupied with the party machine’, and while it was concerned with strategy, it was not influenced by parliamentary tactics.⁹¹ Contributing to this research, Ridley argued that although the CPS was seen as Joseph’s ‘private office’, as an organization, they did not have a significant influence in terms of policy development: ‘The CPS existed explicitly as a machine to formulate new market oriented policies for the Conservatives. It shared many views with the IEA, but did not have its 20-plus year record of research, nor its intellectual standards... The CPS made almost no tangible policy contribution to the 1979 Manifesto, and little to the 1983 one either.’⁹² Rather, for Ridley, it was the IEA that became significant in compiling new ideas for the Conservative approach to the economy during the late 1970s.

In an interview for this research, Stuart Butler (Senior Fellow in Economic Studies, Brookings Institution), described the IEA as ‘the nucleus that drew in and distributed information through manuscripts which became influential’.⁹³ While Thatcher was going abroad in search of political inspiration, she was simultaneously getting ideas from think tanks, who were in turn being influenced by developments and ideas elsewhere. Describing the period as ‘a counterculture of ideas’ where a ‘refining and popularizing of academic ideas’ took place, Butler added that during the 1960s and 1970s, ‘questions of how economic systems functioned, and of how government systems worked and operated’ were initially the main issue of the day, and that it was later the IEA who were proactive in working out what these meant in

⁹¹ Harrison, “Mrs Thatcher and the Intellectuals,” 218.

⁹² Interview with Adam Ridley, 31 January 2018.

⁹³ Interview with Stuart Butler, 31 March 2016.

terms of policy.⁹⁴ Butler's insight here is significant since he was a senior policy analyst at The Heritage Foundation between 1979 and 2014 (his brother, Eamonn Butler, held a similar position after co-founding the Adam Smith Institute think tank in 1977). In producing pamphlets and forecasts, one way in which the IEA became highly influential was through their publications. Having identified that university books were generally dominated by 'left wing paper backs', Joseph identified a gap in the market for 'classic publications that advocated a free society', and stressed that the IEA and CPS should aim on filling it.⁹⁵ In doing so, the Conservatives were able to absorb the very latest in economic thinking between 1975 and 1979, which enabled them to assemble ideas that would later form their future economic agenda.

Supporting Ridley's comments, there is evidence to suggest that the IEA clashed with the ideas of Hayek and Friedman, which indicates that Conservative strategists may not have been as influenced by their ideas as some have previously believed. Outlining his position on the future of economics, Hayek wrote to Arthur Seldon (joint Founder President of the IEA with Ralph Harris) in early 1975: 'I knew of course that I would offend Keynes' admirers, but what am I now to do? I am firmly convinced that Keynes' knowledge not only of economics but also of modern economic history, particularly the 19th century, was somewhat limited'.⁹⁶ Writing to Hayek in mid-1975, Seldon, originally an admirer of Keynes' economics, outlined that the IEA's main purpose had been 'to apply to current and coming economic problems and policies the best economic thinking, which in our opinion comes from

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ "Sir Keith Joseph minute," *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 8 September 1975, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/117114> (accessed 08/05/2018).

⁹⁶ "Hayek to Arthur Seldon (Keynes)," *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 5 March 1976, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/114610> (accessed 08/05/2018).

economists’.⁹⁷ He added: ‘In this work we have certainly sponsored economists in new applications of economic theory, and I think we can claim even to have pioneered studies into neglected subjects... The work we have done has, especially in recent years, brought us increasing, if belated, recognition’.⁹⁸

Responding to Seldon, apologizing for giving the impression that he had regarded the IEA as ‘a mere popularizing propaganda institution’, Hayek wrote: ‘What I admire the IEA for is for sponsoring and doing original work of great importance’.⁹⁹ Thus, while policy makers evidently listened to a range of economists, intellectuals and outsiders, the development of policymaking during Thatcher’s opposition years did not favour one particular approach. Indeed, it appears that there was a clear divide between those who favoured the ideas of Hayek, believing that economic prosperity could only be achieved by restructuring a country’s political economy, compared to others who favoured a free market approach to economics (Joseph’s ideas, for instance, actually suggest elements of a social market approach, which he viewed as the best way forward in terms of managing the welfare state).

It should also be noted that the Conservative interest in libertarian or free market economic ideas were influenced by think tanks working in the US. Commenting on the influence of American economics, Stuart Butler stated: ‘From 1965 onwards there was a flow of policy ideas coming from the US... It is hard to underestimate the influence of liberal market ideas coming from America at the

⁹⁷ “Arthur Seldon to Hayek (role of IEA),” *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 28 August 1975, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/114608> (accessed 08/05/2018).

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ “Hayek to Arthur Seldon (role of IEA),” *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 7 September 1975, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/114609> (accessed 08/05/2018).

time... It was a real rethinking/redefining of individual liberty and freedoms.’¹⁰⁰ Interestingly, Butler observed that many influential EU/US economic thinkers came from well-known UK universities, where intellectual debate was encouraged and politics was discussed.¹⁰¹ Such individuals (including Hayek and Friedman), became members of the Mont Pelerin Society – a group of highly skilled economic strategists who foresaw the dangers of the expansion of government and of an overreliance on the welfare state.¹⁰² Butler revealed that, while the Conservatives looked to US ideas during the 1970s, the US looked towards the success of the UK’s economy during the mid-late 1980s, proving that there was communication and a sense of connection within the Anglo-American alliance, especially when it came to matters concerning the economy.¹⁰³ While the ideas of thinkers and theorists were considered, it appears that Conservative policy was not necessarily shaped by one singular economic theory. From this perspective, it seems that the development of Thatcherism during the mid-1970s essentially rested on a series of impulses, rather than any precise conclusions.

Although she had been Leader of the Opposition for a year, in mid-1976 the issue of Thatcher’s inexperience emerged during a television interview that Thatcher took part in for the London Weekend show *Weekend World*, conducted by Peter Jay. Recognising that Thatcher had been a member of the Cabinet under Heath, Jay asked whether Thatcher thought that the policies pursued by Heath’s government might have been the cause of inflation, rather than the failings of current Labour policies,

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Stuart Butler, 31 March 2016.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² <https://www.montpelerin.org> (accessed 10/01/2019). For more on this see, for instance: Ronald Hartwell, *A History of the Mont Pelerin Society* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1995); Philip Mirowski and Dieter Plehwe, *The Road from Mont Pelerin: The Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2015).

¹⁰³ Interview with Stuart Butler, 31 March 2016.

given that the money supply doubled in three and a half years under his leadership.¹⁰⁴ In a flustered, confused response, Thatcher replied: 'Money supply is important. If you've got an excess of it, it's going to come out somewhere in the economy. We're not fully conversant with the time lags...'¹⁰⁵ On Britain's budget deficit, asked explicitly: 'What would you do specifically and as concretely as you can reasonably say to make it smaller?' Thatcher's response on reducing subsidies on housing and food, and her opposition to expensive nationalization projects did not satisfy Jay, who persisted: 'You will want to be as clear as possible precisely of what you are recommending... So can we try and sum up now what would be your economic strategy? It would include a smaller budget deficit, which initially would be a little bit deflationary but also less expenditure and rather less taxes, is that right?' to which Thatcher responded: 'I think that is about right.'¹⁰⁶

Continued concern surrounding Thatcher's inexperience may have been a reason why Sherman recommended to Joseph in mid-1976 that a 'shadow advisory service' should be set up in the event of the Conservative Party winning the next General Election: 'An incoming Conservative Government will be in far greater need than its predecessor of a corps of special advisors to be taken into government service the very day the new government is set up'.¹⁰⁷ Such advisors, according to Sherman, would need an advance understanding of the job their minister would serve, and would need to have previously 'studied their own field and function'.¹⁰⁸ 'The advisors would be a corps,' Sherman added: 'They would meet shadows, committee officers

¹⁰⁴ "TV Interview for London Weekend Television *Weekend World*," *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 9 May 1976, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/102836> (accessed 08/05/2018).

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ "Sherman memorandum to Keith Joseph," *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 6 July 1976, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/111934> (accessed 08/05/2018).

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

etc...'¹⁰⁹ They would stay close to policy makers but 'would not depend on them for sources'.¹¹⁰ Instead, they would 'establish working relationships with the CRD, exchange information and views of character, but remain separate and establish their own liaison system'.¹¹¹

Sherman's advice clearly resonated since his comments reflect the opinions of Ridley, who previously in this chapter commented that experienced ministers and advisors were appointed to establish policy within their own individual departments, while Thatcher was kept briefed, but uninvolved in the specifics of policy development. 'She was a very good listener,' Sherman recalled. 'Where she knew she had to learn she was a very good pupil'.¹¹² The fact that Thatcher appeared to have a wide range of advisors surrounding her, who came from a number of points on the political spectrum, suggests that in her early years as Leader of the Opposition she was unsure herself, of whether her political ideology was the right approach to take, thus she was willing to listen and learn from others, regardless of their political leaning.

The establishment of the Economic Reconstruction Group was a further source of economic inspiration for Thatcher, which was created in order to 'establish an economic strategy for the Party both for the present and the future'.¹¹³ With Keith Joseph, Geoffrey Howe and Adam Ridley leading the Group's work, again the influence of outsiders appeared to be of great significance, and sought to: 'Establish

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher: Volume One*, 430.

¹¹³ "ERG – Interim Report," *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 24 July 1975, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/110217> (accessed 15/05/2018).

an economic strategy for the Party both for the present and the future'.¹¹⁴ Indeed, it was agreed: 'The Group would proceed with its own analysis, which it would then submit to outsiders for their comments...'¹¹⁵ Clearly seeking to use the advice of intellectuals to their advantage, in the minutes of the Group's first meeting, they established what questions they would intend to ask outsiders, which included: 'Where is the economy now? What is the state of the money supply? What is the outlook for world trade? What are the prospects for this level of demand and unemployment?'¹¹⁶

Meeting in July 1975, the ERG outlined four main problems in regards to Britain's economic circumstances: 'Inflation, imbalance in monetary policy, imbalance in the way national output is allocated, and defects of the labour market and collective bargaining', though the prime concern was inflation.¹¹⁷ In essence, the Group's philosophy mirrored the 'crowding out' concept, which believed in reducing overall consumption, given that public borrowing had discouraged private investment and had caused a dramatic rise in interest rates.¹¹⁸ Their belief was essentially that poor public spending was preventing productive government spending, which had caused a dramatic rise in interest rates. Here it can be inferred that there was a divide between monetarists and small state theorists, which, while not notable at the time, came to be important later. The ERG agreed that inflation was a result of a number of causes including the monopoly of the unions, excess demand, monetary policy and

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ "ERG – Minutes of Meeting 1," *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 20 June 1975, <https://www.margareththatcher.org/document/110213> (accessed 08/05/2018).

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ "Economic Reconstruction Group – Interim Report."

¹¹⁸ Jackson and Saunders, *Making Thatcher's Britain*, 73.

the size and growth of the public sector – clearly a Hayekian not Friedmanite position.¹¹⁹

Questioning past counter-inflation policies, the ERG observed: ‘We have got to be prepared to follow a more gradualist approach which will take most of the life of a Parliament...’¹²⁰ Evoking a ‘steady and contractionary growth in the money supply’, it was thought that such a programme would continue for four to five years, and would see a reduction of the increase in the money supply by setting a lower rate of increase than that of prices.¹²¹ From the ERG’s point of view, Conservative economic policy should ‘attack excess demand and inadequate supply by reducing the borrowing requirement with the emphasis on reduced public expenditure rather than increased taxation’.¹²² In order to increase supply, it was suggested that the Party needed to increase the production of goods and services, ‘moving resources from the public sector into industry and commerce and restoring incentives for the individual to work’.¹²³ Ridley outlined what he saw as an ‘ideal package’ for dealing with Britain’s economic pressures in the long-term.¹²⁴ His plans included: ‘A planned reduction in public spending over the next few years, in order to make way for personal consumption, exports and investment, tighter monetary control and labour market reforms...’¹²⁵ It was noted that in order to introduce such measures, the

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ ‘ERG: Notes on Shadow Cabinet Paper’, Conservative Party Archive, Bodleian Library, PG/10/75, CRD 4/4/26. ND, (1975?).

¹²¹ ‘ERG: Programme of Work’, Conservative Party Archive, Bodleian Library, PG/10/75/14, CRD 4/4/26. ND, (1975?).

¹²² ERG: ‘Notes on Shadow Cabinet Paper’, Conservative Party Archive, Bodleian Library, PG/10/75, CRD 4/4/26. ND, (1975?).

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ “ERG – Minutes of Meeting 4,” *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 8 July 1975, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/110216> (accessed 08/05/2018).

¹²⁵ Ibid.

Conservatives would need to take ‘direct action to reduce expectations’, which could be done when a wider array of policies were established.¹²⁶

The Group also acknowledged that abolishing price controls and enforcing a total wage freeze would create some initial consequences, such as a short-term deflation – for instance, six months of economic difficulties followed by a period of six months with almost zero inflation.¹²⁷ However, as Ridley noted, ‘how far one can rehabilitate the rather discredited, dog-eared management techniques which any Chancellor inherits when he assumes office’ was not yet known in late 1975.¹²⁸ Given the expertise of the individuals involved, there is no doubt that the ERG, together with the ideas and individuals circulating around the CPS and IEA, helped to determine the way in which Conservative policy developed between 1975 and 1979.

The influence of international approaches to economic circumstances also influenced the early development of Conservative thinking during the mid-1970s. Although West Germany was by far the most successful of the post-war economies, in terms of the imagery of economic policymaking, it had lacked influence up until the mid-1970s. However, the social market approach to the economy that Germany favoured at the time was a source of inspiration to the Conservatives. Recognising that Germany had implemented ‘a useful approach to counter-inflationary policy’, the ERG observed that their method of ‘Concerted Action’ was successful since it provided ‘an important part of a process of education’, by publicly outlining how and

¹²⁶ “Economic Reconstruction Group – Interim Report.”

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ ‘ERG: Economic Management – The Debate about “Fine-Tuning.”’

why tough economic measures would be implemented.¹²⁹ Using similar tactics to that of the Conservatives Party, on West Germany's approach to policymaking, the ERG noted: 'Each year a specially appointed and independent group of economic advisors submits to the Government and publishes a report on the current economic situation, the immediate prospect and how best to reconcile and achieve the four basic objectives known in Germany as the "magical quadrilateral" - these are: full employment, price stability, external balance and growth'.¹³⁰

Aware that 'the inner core of the Treasury keep as much as they can to themselves', the ERG recommended that, in similarity with the German approach, government transparency should be addressed: 'One should start from the premise that all the activities of Government should, ideally be transparent... The presumptions should be that the information is fit for the public eye... The positive actions of Open Government can and should be examined as part of the foundations of our economic policy'.¹³¹ Commenting on the influence of foreign approaches to government economics, contributing to this research, Ridley confirmed that he and Geoffrey Howe were interested in Germany's ideas on how to make sense of the monetary supply, and later influenced the Treasury when the Conservatives gained power in 1979.¹³² In particular, many in Britain were inspired by West Germany's adoption of an independent Central Bank that monitored inflation targets (which was central to ordoliberalism in post-war Germany), and were steps taken by the Conservatives under John Major in the early 1990s, and completed during Tony

¹²⁹ 'ERG: The Dangers of Secrecy', Conservative Party Archive, Bodleian Library, CRD 4/4/27. ND, (1977?).

¹³⁰ 'ERG: Economic Education. Proposals for "Concerted Action" and Counter-Inflationary Policy', Conservative Party Archive, Bodleian Library, CRD 4/4/27, 14 June 1977.

¹³¹ 'ERG: The Dangers of Secrecy', Conservative Party Archive, Bodleian Library, CRD 4/4/27. ND, (1977?).

¹³² Interview with Adam Ridley, 31 January 2018.

Blair's premiership.¹³³ The ERG's philosophy of contracting advisors for the handling of specific economic tasks later became part of post-Keynesian thought. Modern politics demonstrated that in certain circumstances politicians were the problem, not the solution. Thus, think tanks and experts came to realise that independent bodies (such as Germany's Bundesbank), were needed to advise politicians and to hold them in check.

The desire for greater government transparency was also seen in Major's government under the influence of Ken Clarke. In his memoirs, Major noted that Clarke was keen to 'improve the openness of government and enhance the transparency of policy-making'.¹³⁴ This was very much the German model of 'pre-commitment' – independence of monetary policy on purely monetary grounds, to increase confidence and prevent inflation – which shows that the German model has been influential in all sorts of ways across a very long lifetime. In an attempt to reduce the public consensus that monetary policy was 'political', Clarke announced in 1994 that he would publish the minutes of his team meetings with Edward George (Governor of the Bank of England, 1993-2003).¹³⁵ The Bank was also given permission to publish inflation reports without prior approval and without official guidance from the Treasury, highlighting that in an era of open reporting, such measures helped to secure the confidence of the electorate.¹³⁶

Indeed, Tony Blair commented in his memoirs on how important government transparency was during his time in office: 'The scrutiny is greater, the

¹³³ John Singleton, *Central Banking in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 124-5.

¹³⁴ John Major, *The Autobiography* (London: HarperCollins, 1999), 684.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

transparency expected is of an utterly different nature, the hysteria with which the issue is constantly debated is many multiples of decibels louder...¹³⁷ Furthermore, Andrew Blick and George Jones note that Blair had a close team of five around him, including Alistair Campbell (Downing Street Director of Communications and Strategy, 2000-2003) and Jonathan Powell (Downing Street Chief of Staff, 1997-2007), as confirmed by Clare Short (Secretary of State for International Development, 1997-2003): ‘That was the team, they were the ones who moved around together all the time... That was the in-group, that was the group that was in charge of policy’.¹³⁸ This shows that there was an evolution in the organisation of policy that endured, suggesting that Thatcher’s institutional style rightly captured the changing times. Blick and Jones further observe that during the early nineteenth century ‘public funding was made available for one then two secretaries’, noting how by the twentieth century a broader range of roles were introduced, including a No.10 Press Secretary as well as additional policy units, as seen during Harold Wilson’s premiership: ‘What changed was more the specific work undertaken rather than the general areas of operation, like media, policy, or party politics’.¹³⁹ These new characteristics of government have continued to emerge throughout the twenty-first century, which is evident since the growing trend for special advisors has continued to evolve since the early 1970s.

Moving on from the economics over to the political (electoral) side of the question, *The Times* observed that, having sensed ‘a turn of the electoral tide in favour of the political right’, the Conservative’s social policy document, *The Right*

¹³⁷ Tony Blair, *A Journey* (London: Arrow Books, 2000), 130.

¹³⁸ Andrew Blick and George Jones, *Premiership: The Development, Nature and Power of the Office of the British Prime Minister* (Exeter: Societas, 2010), 27.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 100.

Approach, was an effort to ‘strengthen the flow of that tide’.¹⁴⁰ The widely circulated document outlined that the task for the Conservatives was essentially to restore hope and confidence to a disenchanted nation. The Party’s aims and political strategy was simplified in the following statement:

To enable the country to live within its means, through the reduction and control of public expenditure and the re-building of a healthy and thriving mixed economy in which taxes can be lower and profits can fulfil their proper function. To strengthen Parliament and the rule of law, reducing the scale and powers of bureaucracy and providing better protection for the rights of the individual. To extend ownership, so that many more of our citizens have a stake in the community. To encourage self-help and family life, while making it possible for the strong to help the weak effectively. To improve educational standards, and to ensure that merit and initiative are encouraged and adequately rewarded. To maintain Britain’s security and interests, and to increase her influence abroad, not least through a whole-hearted contribution to the development of the European Community... The Conservative approach entails living within our means, paying our way in the world, mastering inflation, reviving the wealth-creating part of the economy and encouraging all those on whom it depends.¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ David Wood, “Mrs Thatcher sees a turn in the tide,” *The Times*, 4 October 1976, p. 11.

¹⁴¹ “The Right Approach (Conservative Policy Statement),” *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 4 October 1976, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/109439> (accessed 08/05/2018).

The Conservative offer, therefore, was based on ‘financial prudence, on restoring the profitability of industry, on encouraging responsible wage bargaining and on tax reform’.¹⁴² However, the document advised: ‘This strategy does not promise any quick cures or easy solutions. But it does give Britain the chance to get firmly back on the long road to national solvency and renewed prosperity for all our people’.¹⁴³ Indeed, a report by the ERG stressed that Britain needed to face the hard socio-economic reality of what the future held: ‘Our economic policies represent an unprecedented attempt to argue responsibly, to promise less than we believe might be achieved, to leave room for pleasant surprises rather than the humiliating changes of course which have afflicted almost every Government since the war... This recurrent tendency to believe in miracles is a grave danger to the future of the country (and our Party), and in our view is less justified than at any period since the war’.¹⁴⁴ Presented as an alternative method of government, the Conservatives sought to stress that difficult socio-economic circumstances would inevitably come before any signs of improvement, though it demonstrated why the Conservative Party believed that such action was the only way to ensure long-term financial prosperity. However, although ostensibly *The Right Approach* was a document about economics, its analysis was actually political, even moral. These were the elements that ‘Thatcherism’ wanted to change, far from the theories of Friedman or Hayek. In a sense, it was as though Britain had lost its moral will and needed to reassert it.

Following the publication of *The Right Approach*, at the end of 1976 Joseph distributed a paper among the Conservative Shadow Cabinet that aimed to establish

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ ‘ERG: Report of the Economic Reconstruction Group’, Conservative Party Archive, Bodleian Library, CRD 4/4/28.

‘our tone of voice and our tasks’, since he believed that the Party ‘have not over the years clearly enough asserted and given effect to our own beliefs’.¹⁴⁵ Recognising that the Conservatives had focused too much on the economic challenges that faced Britain, he instead stressed that greater attention should be put on non-economic issues, in order to make clear their ‘resolve to move in directions that are both justified and popular’.¹⁴⁶ In Hayekian terms, focusing on economic structure and the political economy, it appeared that issues of patriotism, violent crime, immigration, abuse and housing were at the centre of Joseph’s concern. For instance, he observed that to re-establish a sense of patriotism, the Party needed to advocate a ‘common identity’, which promoted a ‘renewed acceptance of right and wrong’.¹⁴⁷ In addition, he advised that the Conservatives needed ‘to create conditions in which private money is again invested in housing to rent’, by freeing new buildings from rent controls in order to make housing more affordable, and further commented on the need to introduce spending cuts in order to limit government borrowing, while admitting that ‘full economic vitality will take at least five years’.¹⁴⁸

In his memoirs, Nigel Lawson states that Thatcher and her colleagues were seeking not just to remove various controls and impositions, but to ‘change the entire culture of a nation’, aiming to free up market forces and restore the money supply – a complete break away from Keynesianism economics.¹⁴⁹ Keynesian policy - ‘the idea that any fundamental economic variable was veering away from its ideal state, the

¹⁴⁵ “Circulated Paper (Joseph “Our Tone of Voice & Our Tasks”),” *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 7 December 1976, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/110178> (accessed 08/05/2018).

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Lawson, *The View From No11: Memoirs of a Tory Radical*, 65.

government ought to take corrective action at once’ – was rejected by Thatcher.¹⁵⁰ Instead, in terms of a new approach to the economy, Thatcher appeared to favour the philosophy of Hayek over Friedman. From the Thatcherite perspective, it was believed that these conditions couldn’t be met since ‘Ministers and officials get their information about economic trends from statistics, and these statistics are notoriously unreliable’.¹⁵¹ For some years, early Thatcherite economic policy was widely identified with monetarism. However, Shirley Letwin argues that this identification has no benefits when attempting to understand the Conservative economic agenda:

If, in an attempt to show that Thatcherism is identifiable with monetarism, one were to move to a narrower definition of what it is to be a “monetarist”... For a full-blooded monetarist the attention of economic managers must be firmly focused on the monetary aggregates, which indicate the amount of money available at any given time to the citizenry, it becomes immediately apparent that Thatcherites do not believe very strongly in monetarism.¹⁵²

Indeed, highlighting the contradiction between the Hayek and Friedman approaches to the economy, Keith Joseph famously stated in his Stockton Lecture in 1976:

Monetarism is not enough. This is not intended as a counsel of despair, but a warning note. Government’s intention to contract the money supply is welcome and potentially beneficial to all. But it is not enough

¹⁵⁰ Letwin, *The Anatomy of Thatcherism*, 121.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 119.

unless there is also the essential reduction of the state sector and the essential encouragement of enterprise. We are over-governed, over-spent, over-taxed, over-borrowed and over-manned... We shall experience accelerated worsening of job prospects, the growing flight of those with professional skills, talent and ability to other countries, and an increase in the shabbiness and squalor of everyday lives.¹⁵³

Joseph, therefore, stressed that substantial cuts in taxes and public spending were crucial in order for Britain to restore its economic prosperity, and to give encouragement to ‘wealth creators’, whose efforts strengthened the country’s ability to survive the late 1970s economic slump, leading the way to greater prosperity.¹⁵⁴ While the Conservatives were influenced by the ideas of Hayek and Friedman, at the time they were assessing two very different approaches to the political economy. As John MacInnes notes, while Friedman advocated a strictly monetarist theory, believing that inflation was the result of an increasing money supply (which only led to greater public spending and a restriction of the money supply), Hayek, on the other hand, believed in some state intervention in order to maintain employment.¹⁵⁵ One view was clearly ‘structural’, while the other was evidently ‘financial’. What the Conservatives sought for in opposition was a policy rooted in developing the political economy, rather than standard economics. Although these two schools of thought were not directly related to policy debates until the Conservative 1979 General Election manifesto, they believed in both ideologies and indeed later implemented them in government.

¹⁵³ “Stockton Lecture,” *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 5 April 1976, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/110796> (accessed 29/01/2019).

¹⁵⁴ Letwin, *The Anatomy of Thatcherism*, 121.

¹⁵⁵ MacInnes, *Thatcherism at Work*, 47.

Although it is evident that a large number of intellectuals and academics were the masterminds behind the development of Conservative policy between 1975 and 1979, Joseph acknowledged the impact that Thatcher could make as Leader of the Party, suggesting: ‘Her tone should be increasingly national... She has abundantly demonstrated her combativeness... She manifests her warmth and humanity to her tours... Should not her speeches increasingly propound our themes and policies and the national need?’¹⁵⁶ Reporting on Thatcher’s position as Leader of the Opposition in late 1976, echoing Joseph’s comments, *The Times* reported:

Mrs Thatcher is no weakling, nor is she complacent. She is seen to be a person of courage, resolution and principle. She has made no mistake of importance and is to many the embodiment of several qualities not lately in vogue, but increasingly valued. Among them: independence, self-respect, self-reliance, personal endeavour. She has caught a governing mood. But she cannot be sure of ultimate success unless the Conservatives give their fullest support... What the Tories need to display at once is faith in their own elected leader, a lady of intelligence, capacity and immeasurable diligence.¹⁵⁷

Speaking at an event at the UK National Archives after the release of Thatcher’s 1980s government papers, Charles Moore (the official biographer of Thatcher), commented that Thatcher, as a female leader, didn’t want to be seen as ‘winging it’:

¹⁵⁶ “Circulated Paper (Joseph “Our Tone of Voice & Our Tasks”).”

¹⁵⁷ George Hutchinson, “The Tories must rally round Mrs Thatcher and prove they are fit to govern,” *The Times*, 2 October 1976, p. 12.

‘She wanted to learn everything, to be better than the men... She had a love of ideas and was fascinated by intellectuals’.¹⁵⁸ However, it appears that even three years into her position as Leader of the Opposition, there was still concern over Thatcher’s experience and competence, as demonstrated in a letter written by Keith Joseph to Thatcher in May 1978:

As you know, Angus and I meet every week with Chris Patten and Adam Ridley on policy co-ordination. At our last meeting, worry was expressed that you might be badgered, personally, to get involved with proposals for and contents of regional Manifestos... We would suggest that you should distance yourself from any such proposals and from the contents... Make no specific commitment and suggest that the proposals be sent to Angus and me.¹⁵⁹

Although it seems surprising that an Opposition Leader would be advised to distance themselves from the process of policymaking, when contributing to this research, Ridley confirmed that Thatcher did not participate in the detail of her Party’s policy development: ‘I think one must say that she did not exercise much direct influence on the policymaking process, or on the composition of Manifestos, come to that.’¹⁶⁰ This may be why it was suggested by the ERG that an independent body of ‘wise men’ should be set up, who would be useful in ‘explaining and analysing the issues of the day for the public and Parliament... Acting in effect as a kind of institutionalised

¹⁵⁸ Charles Moore, UK National Archives: Witness History, 13 September 2018.

¹⁵⁹ ‘Keith Joseph to Margaret Thatcher’, 22 May 1978, Conservative Party Archive, Keith Joseph Papers, Bodleian Library, KJ 8/22.

¹⁶⁰ Interview with Adam Ridley, 31 January 2018.

“second opinion.”¹⁶¹ The council’s functions would be to carry out policy related research, give long-term projections, comment on policy options and publicize facts and statistics for the benefit of the Party.¹⁶² It was noted at the time that the Group would be ‘headed by high quality professionals with no collective party identity’ and would see a ‘flexible interchange of staff with industry, academia and the official world’.¹⁶³

In line with the ERG’s thinking, within Keith Joseph’s papers at the Conservative Party Archive, a note on questions for Thatcher to consider in the event that she became Prime Minister suggests that advisors would be needed from her very first day in office: ‘Should there be one or two wise, mature, unambitious observers at Number 10 to keep Mrs Thatcher warned and informed? Should there be a few people “around” for specific functions who can generate the unplannable spark that illuminates?’¹⁶⁴ Stressing his point in a confidential letter to Thatcher, Joseph wrote:

There is a greater need than ever before for a small group of special advisors, not only to accompany Ministers into office from the very first day, but to have advanced understanding of the job they will be expected to carry out... The more the individuals can be identified and ear-marked in advance, the more they will be able to get a grip in

¹⁶¹ ‘ERG: A Council of Wise Men’, Conservative Party Archive, Bodleian Library, CRD 4/4/27.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ ‘Draft Questions for Mrs. Thatcher’, Conservative Party Archive, Keith Joseph Papers, Bodleian Library, KJ 8/22.

advance of the work of the department concerned and to prepare their thinking.¹⁶⁵

Replying to Joseph in May 1976, Thatcher was at ease in leaving policy proposals to others during her early opposition years: 'I would like each of the main Shadow Ministers involved to present to colleagues the proposals of all the policy groups for which he or she is responsible in a single paper... It should also state clearly which proposals will involve legislation and, where possible, give some indication of its possible scale and complexity... It will also be important to ensure that colleagues consult one another fully in areas of overlapping responsibility...'¹⁶⁶ The correspondence between Thatcher and Joseph, and the recommendation of the ERG to create an external body of 'wise men' highlights just how many individuals, institutions and select groups were involved in the process of policy design, and further demonstrates that it is not necessarily up to the leaders of political parties to formulate future policy ideas.

The shaping of Conservative policymaking between 1975-79 can evidently be seen as a complex process, which involved a multitude of different groups, arenas and ideas, helped with the insight of a large number of outside intellectual input who helped to form and construct stable, workable, political ideas. The overriding concern for the Conservative Party during these years appeared to revolve around how to solve the on-going issue of inflation. In doing so, the Party were influenced by New Right

¹⁶⁵ 'Keith Joseph to Margaret Thatcher', 22 May 1978, Conservative Party Archive, Keith Joseph Papers, Bodleian Library, KJ 8/22.

¹⁶⁶ 'Margaret Thatcher to Keith Joseph', 6 May 1976, Conservative Party Archive, Keith Joseph Papers, Bodleian Library, KJ 8/22.

ideology and neoliberal influences in an attempt to tackle Britain's relative decline, however, Conservative policy during these years was more than just a fully neoliberal approach. Rather, it was an incremental, mosaic and gradual process that took years to develop, and incorporated a range of different ideas and influences in order to create a new, revived economic agenda. In examining this area, it is illuminating just how many forces were at play in helping to shape a new political rhetoric, with the IEA, CRD, CPS along with past influences in the form of New Right and neoliberal ideas all playing a role in the process. While this chapter demonstrates that Thatcher herself was largely absent from policymaking, she still oversaw the process and developed as a politician as a result.

Looking at the evolution of policymaking helps us to better understand Thatcher's evolution as Leader of the Opposition since, as this thesis demonstrates, the development of Thatcherism was not just related to Thatcher herself. Instead, it was a complex ideology designed and shaped by a cluster of forces which came together as one. Given that the Conservatives undoubtedly worked to design a new approach to Britain's economy, the following chapter in this thesis will explore to what extent it was the work of design that brought the Conservatives to victory in the 1979 General Election, or whether the impact of chance was of greater significance in the election of Thatcher as Prime Minister in May 1979.

The 1979 General Election – A Victory by Chance or Design?

This chapter will focus on the 1979 General Election, and analyse how the Conservative Party emerged victorious on May 3rd 1979. Specifically, this section seeks to answer the broader questions regarding the circumstances of the time. For example: To what extent did the Thatcher Opposition influence what happened in 1979, and how far was this governed by the government's actions, and by chance (overwhelmingly, the Winter of Discontent)? Advisers, think tanks, the Conservatives' grasp of modern psephology, Thatcher's travels abroad (and throughout the UK), and indeed her own image all contributed to the Party's success. Thatcher's opposition team had undeniably worked out a viable strategy to win back power, though the impact of chance in the election remains a hotly debated topic today. The impact of the 1979 General Election has been strangely overlooked by many accounts of Thatcher's life and significance (and indeed of post-war Britain generally), perhaps in part because it formed a gateway to another era, rather than looking critically important in and of itself. To some extent historians have treated the election as though it were a historical inevitability, however, when we explore the election via newer and perhaps more positive views of the 1970s as a whole, we can draw new conclusions on how far the Winter of Discontent truly influenced the election, and how far a revived Conservative rhetoric helped to bring about a new dawn in British politics.

The traditional view of this historic election is that Callaghan hit unexpected political turmoil, leaving an unpopular Conservative Leader to take over.¹ It is arguable, however, as explored in Chapter Four, that the Conservative Party had in fact been working since the late 1960s on new and complex attitudes towards social democracy and liberalising policies, which finally paid off in 1978-79, as the work of John Ramsden also highlights.² The point here is that the Conservative Party's policies were actually far more interesting than simply an emphasis on the attractiveness of a free market approach to the economy. This, fused with the rejection of the years that the Party had in power between 1970-74, helped them emerge victorious once again, under a new leader who had been learning the nuances of global politics for the past four years. Having analysed how Thatcher's visits abroad contributed to her political experience, and how that in turn helped her choose appropriate advisors to shape policy, it is fitting to consider more specific questions about the election that brought her into office, questions that can address the debate on whether her victory emerged by chance or by design.

David Butler and Dennis Kavanagh demonstrate how changes in political behaviour, in political machinery and concerns over the state of the economy were linked to a growing feeling of national self-doubt, which made the 1979 General Election different to any other.³ Whereas the two contests in 1974 occurred in an atmosphere of sharper immediate crisis, the 1979 election took place against the

¹ David Butler and Dennis Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 1979* (London & Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1980), 340-344; Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: Volume One*, 402-403.

² See: John Ramsden, *The Making of Conservative Party Policy: The Conservative Research Department Since 1929* (New York: Longman, 1980).

³ Butler and Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 1979*, 1.

backdrop of a view of structural or even permanent decline, with a view that Britain was perhaps becoming ungovernable.⁴ The traditional certainties of a two-party system were in jeopardy during the 1970s and, as Butler and Kavanagh observe, in the 1960s politicians were in a position to offer political remedies with confidence, unlike the reality of the 1970s, where few knew the answer to solving a deteriorating national crisis.⁵ Between 1945 and the 1970s voters usually sided with their natural 'class' party, but the socio-economic climate of the early-to-mid 1970s resulted in a decline in class voting, which was particularly evident in the 1974 General Election, where there was a large rise in middle class support for the Labour Party.⁶ This change in political allegiance meant that election campaigns held a powerful impact in their ability to change votes, since short-term domestic factors, along with the personalities of political leaders, became more important to how people voted.⁷

Similarly, Bo Särilvik and Ivor Crewe note that class dealignment played a key role in the outcome of the election, observing that the Conservative share of the vote was well below that obtained in earlier elections during the twentieth century.⁸ In their assessment, they highlight that while Callaghan's government proposed a radical programme for social and political change, it faced two overriding problems that ultimately prevented them from fulfilling their promises. The first was its fragile parliamentary position (its majority over all other opposition parties was three, even

⁴ See, also: Anthony King, "Overload: Problems of Governing in the 1970s" *Political Studies* 23 (1975): 284-296; Wyn Grant and Alan Ware, "Anthony King: His Intellectual Legacy. Introduction," *The Political Quarterly* 89 (2018): 5-8.

⁵ Butler and Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 1979*, 2-3, 12. See, also: Pippa Norris, *Electoral Change since 1945* (London: Sage, 1997).

⁶ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Bo Särilvik and Ivor Crewe, *Decade of Dealignment: The Conservative Victory of 1979 and Electoral Trends in the 1970s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 5.

to begin with). The second factor was the state of the British economy, which inevitably made social and political policymaking much harder.⁹ Thus, while Thatcher's campaigning clearly helped to a significant degree, Särilvik and Crewe suggest that a change in voting behaviour and a change in class alignment enabled Thatcher to attract a greater following via the detachment of some working class Labour voters due to the socio-economic circumstances of the time.

As Chapter Four of this thesis demonstrates, Thatcher's opposition team had redesigned Conservative policy into a potentially winning strategy, as noted by Geoffrey Howe in his memoirs: 'For the twelve-month run-up to the 1979 election, we had been ready since the summer of 1978 – I kept our economic plans up to date with the help of a very compact group (the ERG)'.¹⁰ Unlike what has been seen in more recent General Elections in modern British history (for instance, the 2017 General Election, where the Conservatives failed to win a majority with an ill-judged manifesto not yet ready for implementation), Howe, in 1979, had produced a credible alternative economic policy via the help of a small, structured group that offered a coherence within its messaging. He further added that 'it was almost as important to build understanding with economic commentators... as to reconcile thinking within the Shadow Cabinet. Equally important were our links with academic thinkers', of which, along with the IEA, he alluded to the London Business School.¹¹ Such a comment proves that while chance is a factor in the outcome of General Elections, the Conservatives in opposition had clearly reshaped the Party's policy into a programme

⁹ Ibid., 8.

¹⁰ Geoffrey Howe, *Conflict of Loyalty* (London & Basingstoke: Pan Books, 1995), 112.

¹¹ Ibid., 113.

that could connect with disenchanted voters as they sought a way to restore Britain's relative prosperity.

To many, James Callaghan was seen as a credible Prime Minister, one that was respected on both sides of the house, as Lord Heseltine confirmed in his interview for this research: 'Oh (smiling), Jim. I think quite a few had some respect for Jim Callaghan – he was seen as a more reliable character than Harold Wilson. He had a wartime service background, which would've appealed to many Conservative MPs at that time, and he always seemed to treat the House of Commons in a rather avuncular straight way.'¹² 'A smooth operator, less waspish than Wilson but every bit as skilled and devious a politician behind the bonhomie', he was 'firm but avuncular, free from the "too clever by half" image of his predecessor and clear in his intention to be more than a caretaker'.¹³¹⁴ Before Callaghan entered No. 10, Peter Jay viewed Callaghan (who was also his father-in-law at the time), as the man who could lead the country in a very different direction. While walking with him just after Wilson had resigned, Jay recalled:

I realised that he relished the chance to be in every possible way unlike the two Harolds (Macmillan and Wilson, who, for twenty years, had, he felt, lowered the standards of public life and reduced politics to a cynical game of short-term trickery). He felt, he said, a bit like Moses: Setting out for a promised land, but unlikely to be able to reach it in his

¹² Interview with Lord Heseltine, 8 October 2015.

¹³ Ronald Millar, *A View from the Wings* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1993), 241.

¹⁴ Butler and Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 1979*, 31. See, also: Kevin Hickson and Anthony Seldon, *New Labour, Old Labour: The Wilson and Callaghan Governments, 1974-1979* (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2004).

own lifetime. He envisaged a world in which public and political life would have some integrity... Looking back, I cherish that moment when it seemed, at least to me, possible to believe that decent men of real integrity were sincerely trying to lead our country in a direction which could work – and need not plunge us all into bitter class warfare.¹⁵

With the economy in dire straits by 1976, seeking an emergency loan from the IMF was seen as a national humiliation to Callaghan's government. However, speaking on BBC's Radio 4 in 2019 for the programme *The Decade that Invented the Future*, Jay stated: 'The IMF had been set up to do exactly this: to help fund economies which were having problems with maintaining their exchange rates... If there should have been any shame it should have been for the crazy policies that had led to the crisis – Ted Heath's "Dash for Growth" in 1973-74 and Harold Wilson's dithering waffle about a social contract in 1974-76.'¹⁶ Defending Callaghan further, Jay added: 'I began to see how Callaghan's style was radically different. He involved the Cabinet very fully in the debates about the loan negotiations with the IMF... It would not have been the style of Harold Macmillan or Harold Wilson to involve the Cabinet very fully in this discussion.'¹⁷ While Jay believed that Callaghan had 'embraced a realistic economic policy, which engaged seriously with inflation and government spending', he noted his ultimate failure: 'He tried, without a majority, to move away from "the two Harolds."¹⁸

¹⁵ Interview with Peter Jay, 6 May 2019.

¹⁶ BBC Radio 4, 'The Decade that Invented the Future, 1976: Borrowing into the Future', <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0003zv6> (accessed 21/5/2019).

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Interview with Peter Jay, 6 May 2019.

Despite the Conservatives' efforts to promote and articulate policy, the Party's standings in the polls that year were poor, and their lead in the polls dropped to single figures in the final months of 1978.¹⁹ Indeed, in an off-the-record meeting with Hugo Young in June 1978, Tony Benn commented that Thatcher 'may sink like Goldwater, or else change Britain's course pretty drastically', adding: 'The Tory programme is a long one, capable of being destroyed in the short term'.²⁰ While party programmes and ideologies were seen as of prime significance at the time, party organization was also coming under scrutiny. John Golding (Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Department of Employment, 1976-79), reviews how the Labour Party lost coherence throughout this period, indicating that some within the Labour Cabinet unintentionally orchestrated its downfall:

In 1978, the Party was a shambles and in the years following it managed to get even worse. Wherever regional organisers, agents or experienced local Party officers met, whether in the tearoom of the House of Commons, at 10 Downing Street, or regional conferences – this was the verdict of the state of the Party. "It's a shambles," one of us would say and everyone else would agree.²¹

In his assessment, Golding places fault on the Labour Treasurer, Norman Atkinson, who was 'incapable of doing the job', and also on the General Secretary, 'who was

¹⁹ Butler and Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 1979*, 42.

²⁰ Trewin, *The Hugo Young Papers*, 130.

²¹ John Golding, *Hammer the Left* (London: Politico's Publishing, 2003), 57.

not only disloyal to Callaghan, but not up to his job. He was incapable of co-ordination and instilling any sense of direction'. As such:

Demoralisation was the order of the day. Our membership was falling, there were fewer and fewer agents and Head Office organization was a joke. Our popular vote meanwhile was dropping and by-election results were disastrous. To pile on the misery, the Party was facing a cash crisis and was grinding to a halt.²²

A key factor that led to Labour's downfall was disagreement over the government's White Paper on pay, 'Winning the Battle Against Inflation', published in July 1978. The document advocated a 5% pay norm, which would help to keep inflation under 10%, less than the amount the Party had inherited from Heath. Although seen as a key attraction to voters in an upcoming General Election, Callaghan at the time wanted to pursue a 'nil norm' policy to pay, though Golding writes that Dennis Healey, in supporting Callaghan at the time, stated it had been his biggest mistake, as it led to a continuation of hard left actions and union protests, which inevitably resulted in a divided Cabinet that could not agree on last minute financial policy.²³ Golding states that 'in setting out to give Callaghan and Healey a lesson', such actions not only 'destroyed the wages policy, but also the Labour government and, indeed, the Labour movement'.²⁴ Without such 'antics', Golding believes that Labour would have won the General Election.²⁵

²² Ibid., 58-59.

²³ Ibid., 64.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 66, 71. For more on this, see: Peter Dorey, "Should I stay or should I go?: James Callaghan's decision not to call an autumn 1978 General Election," *British Politics* 11 (2016): 95-118.

Throughout the late 1970s the Conservatives had, however, shaped their message to attract middle class, middle-income Britons who felt squeezed by inflation and resentful of the apparent chaos of a government falling apart. By the end of 1977, Conservative and Unionist Central Office had already begun researching the methods and measures that could be used in order to win over the electorate at the next General Election. Tom Hooson (MP for Brecon and Radnor, 1979-85), outlined for all Directors: 'It is very important to recognise that we must limit our activity to the really essential things if we are to do anything well... We need to ensure that Central Office is paying special attention to cultivating all radio and television stations and newspapers which cover the 95 Critical Seats'.²⁶

This report also established that the Party needed to address the fact that it spoke predominantly to the over 65 age range, highlighting why this was a considerable issue: 'In the October 1974 General Election almost 50% of the over 65 age group voted Conservative... 14% from the 25-34 group and 7% from the 18-24 group. It is our ageing vote that must be seen as one of the main long-term problems for the party'.²⁷ From Hooson's point of view, the Conservatives won in 1970 due to their greater competence, rather than by attracting voters by a 'deep-seated commitment' to their cause.²⁸ He further added, 'since votes at 18 were introduced before the 1970 election, our appeal to new voters has been very weak... probably for

²⁶ 'Publicity in the Critical Seats', General Director's Files, Correspondence with Chairman (1977-79), Conservative Party Archive, Bodleian Library, CRD/D/7/24.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

at least ten years', and, indeed, the statistics back this up.²⁹ In a poll outlining the voting behaviour of the electorate by age in the 1974 General Election, 24% of the 18-24 age range voted for the Conservatives, while 46% voted Labour.³⁰ From the other side of the spectrum, 49% of the 65+ category voted for the Conservatives, as opposed to 37% for Labour.³¹ Interestingly, however, in an Ipsos MORI poll that analysed voting intention in January 1979, the results show a swing towards the Conservatives with 52% of the 18-24 age group prepared to vote Conservative, with Labour only reaching 42%, though it was stressed by Hooson that this lead was probably only temporary.³² While both Labour and the Conservatives were suffering in 1978, to some extent the swing to the Right was due to the economic turmoil that Labour had presided over, and the frustrations that the electorate had with its impact on everyday life at the time.

In January 1978, the CRD calculated: 'If we lose the next election our Party organization may only know what it is like to win once in 20 years...'³³ Thus, they identified a number of areas that the Party needed to focus on in order to have a chance of winning the forthcoming election, and it seems they had been paying close attention to the results of opinion polls: 'ORC and many other polls show that detailed policies neither win nor lose elections. 80% could not recall a single Conservative or Labour policy of which they either approved or disapproved... 83%, however, do not

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ 'Publicity in the Critical Seats', General Director's Files, Correspondence with Chairman (1977-79), Conservative Party Archive, Bodleian Library, CRD/D/7/24.

believe that the Tories “care”. The kind of people we are and are believed to be is, therefore, more important than our policies’.³⁴

In order to address this, the CRD believed that it was critical for the Conservatives to present themselves as a favourable alternative to what the current Labour government had to offer:

As the public disenchantment with politicians and its belief that they can do virtually nothing effective grows, so do the opportunities for us to appear as champions of stability... What we need to do, therefore, is first to enumerate frequently and in easily understood terms the many benefits which life in this country still confers: the ability to change a government without violence, free Trade Unions etc., and then to point out how not only the extremist Left but, more worryingly, the well-intentioned idealistic Left are taking us to a position where none of this can survive.³⁵

This quote is vitally important in demonstrating how, rather than being attracted to individual and specific economic policies (which were also rather vague in the Conservatives’ 1979 General Election Manifesto), many people were instead drawn to the ‘mood’, ‘leadership’ or ‘stability’ that the Conservative approach to politics had to offer.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

From the CRD's point of view, presentation, therefore, needed to be addressed: 'At present we spend far too much time responding to Labour so that they are always picking the battlefield and the nature of the fight... If the 1922 Committee could agree over the next 6 months we could force Labour on to the defensive'.³⁶ Not only would this help the Party's performance as a whole, but also, as the CRD identified, it would help backbenchers in local campaigning, since far too many were reluctant to say anything new, aware that they were unlikely to make a big impact on national media coverage. From the CRD's view, if local issues could make national coverage, leaflet campaigns and broadcast initiations etc. 'would be much easier to mount'.³⁷

In June 1978, the CRD outlined the measures that needed to be taken in order for the Conservatives to win the General Election:

We hold 284 seats in the House and Labour 308. For an overall majority of 21, we would require to gain 44 seats... The latest Gallup poll published in the *Daily Telegraph* during May showed the Labour and Conservative parties with precisely equal support and represents a swing of approximately 1.7 per cent to the Conservatives from the October 1974 General Election, when, if duplicated in a General Election, would leave us far short of an overall majority in the House.³⁸

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ 'Strategy Paper: Background Material', Conservative Research Department, Conservative Party Archive, Bodleian Library, CRD/D/7/24. ND, (1978?).

Within their report, they observed: ‘A major movement of public opinion has taken place since November 1976’, which, indeed, it had.³⁹ In January 1978 a Gallup poll indicated that both Labour and the Conservatives were neck and neck holding 43.5% of electoral support.⁴⁰ By March, the Conservatives had increased their lead to 48%, compared to Labour at 39%, though by May 1978 both parties were back to being head to head with a share of 43.5% each.⁴¹ The key target group for the Conservatives, from the CRD’s point of view, was on attracting the Liberal vote. They observed: ‘The latest Gallup poll (May) shows the Liberals with 8.5% of the vote, compared with 18.3% in October 1974 – clearly how these ex-Liberals vote at the next election will be important’.⁴² More significantly, when asked, ‘Are you satisfied/dissatisfied with the way Mr Callaghan is doing his job as Prime Minister?’, in September 1978, 50% of the electorate indicated that they were satisfied, against 41% who were not.⁴³ In the same month, 42% expressed their satisfaction with Thatcher as Leader of the Opposition, against 45% who were not.⁴⁴ In April 1979, however, the numbers had changed considerably, with just 28% being satisfied with Callaghan’s government against 64% who were not, while 47% against 38% were satisfied with Thatcher in her position as Leader of the Opposition.⁴⁵

With the Liberals only holding 8.5% of the electorate in mid-1978, the Conservatives were evidently keen to analyse their findings further: ‘What evidence we have on current Liberal support is that it has fallen greatly... Some 5.3 million

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ ‘Political Monitor – Satisfaction Ratings 1977-1987’, Ipsos MORI, <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/political-monitor-satisfaction-ratings-1977-1987> (accessed 29/08/2019).

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

people voted Liberal at the last General Election, but today more than 2 million of them have forgotten, or say they voted for someone else' (MORI poll, September 1977).⁴⁶ Here it can be seen that the Conservatives in 1979 were seeking to supplement their vote from among ex-Liberals, rather than seeking a straight swing from Labour. Recognising that 'a considerable proportion of Liberal support in October 1974 came from ex-Conservative voters', the CRD outlined that the Conservatives needed to divide the electorate into those who were strong supporters of a political party and unlikely to change their voting behaviour, and those who were 'weak' supporters (i.e. those who could be swayed).⁴⁷ Specifically, they envisaged that in attracting ex-Liberal voters, they could also attract weak Labour supporters, and further noted another possible percentage of the electorate who could be won over: 'Groups who have lost out through Labour policies. For example, skilled manual workers whose differentials have been severely squeezed by Labour policies must be regarded as potential Conservative supporters'.⁴⁸ Linking back to Chapter Four, which outlined how the Conservatives appealed to such groups, it is clear that both the political economy analysis and the polling pointed to a new and sophisticated view of the economy and elections, which dovetailed together.

In helping to disenchant Liberal voters, Michal Heseltine wrote an article for the *News of the World*, directly appealing to this area of the electorate:

⁴⁶ 'Strategy Paper: Background Material', Conservative Research Department, Conservative Party Archive, Bodleian Library, CRD/D/7/24. ND, (1978?).

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

“The Liberals,” Lloyd George once remarked, were expected to be “the oxen to frag Labour over the rough roads of Parliament for two or three years, and at the end of the journey, when there is no further use for them, they are to be slaughtered”. But the Socialist knife is just as sharp. David Steel, of course, will claim that his mutual survival pact with Labour has saved the nation... That it has helped the economy to escape from disaster. Repeating nonsense doesn’t make it any the less absurd.⁴⁹

In entering government in an agreement with Labour, Heseltine stated that the Liberals were ‘thirteen frightened men acting out of sheer funk’, before broadcasting that it was, in fact, the electorate that had saved the day from the economic point of view: ‘It isn’t Liberal MPs who have prevented the worst excesses of socialism. It’s you, the electors - the people in the by-elections - who voted Conservative in traditional Labour seats. They are the real heroes of the year.’⁵⁰ Labour Governments ‘can never do enough’, he added, before tactically stating that it was in fact the Conservatives rather than Labour who truly stood for Liberal objectives: ‘We are the Party which stands today for Liberal principles. The Party that’s inherited the Liberal tradition. Fighting for individual freedom against State or union coercion. For incentives and choice. At the next election, Liberals will have to decide whether they really want a Socialist Britain... I don’t believe many will take that road.’⁵¹

⁴⁹ ‘Michael Heseltine for the *News of the World*’, General Director’s Files, Correspondence with Chairman (1977-79), Conservative Party Archive, Bodleian Library, CRD/D/7/24.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

During a Directors' meeting held on 31st January 1978, Lord Thorneycroft (Chairman of the Conservative Party, 1975-81), suggested that Willie Whitelaw, Jim Prior and Geoffrey Howe would be appropriate people to make speeches to win over the Liberals.⁵² Furthermore, it was reported that Professor Beloff (a prominent former Liberal), wanted to help the Party, and could potentially help the CRD, who had been further analysing the character of the Liberal vote in terms of how ex-supporters could be persuaded into voting Conservative.⁵³ During the same month, Thorneycroft outlined that the Party would be recruiting two additional officers 'to service the critical seats', who would 'support the Parliamentary Party in developing the themes that were initiated in the House of Commons, at Question Time, for example, and to make them relevant to the critical seats'.⁵⁴ They would also help candidates by 'supplying him with material that applied specifically to his constituency', in order to raise publicity within each specific seat.⁵⁵ While the economic climate in 1978 was largely dictating the changes in the polls, it is clear that, from 1977 onwards, the Conservatives were actively designing strategies that could help lead them to victory whenever a General Election was announced.

Themes that the Conservatives should focus on in the lead up to the General Election campaign were outlined in detail by Angus Maude (Paymaster General, 1979-81), one of Thatcher's close advisors during her opposition years. In a report to an exclusive team that included Nigel Lawson and Norman Tebbit, he stated: 'People are fed up with change, and with new systems that don't work. There is deep

⁵² 'Minutes of the Directors Meeting', 31 January 1978, Conservative Party Archive, Bodleian Library, CRD/D/7/23.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ 'Minutes of the Directors Meeting', 10 January 1978, Conservative Party Archive, Bodleian Library, CRD/D/7/23.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

nostalgia, in part for what is thought of as a comfortable past, but chiefly a settled, civilized life... Continuity is vital, and that is in tune with a Conservative approach'.⁵⁶ He cautioned, however, that 'we must be very careful how we handle 'Time for a Change' as a theme... Most people (we hope) want what we are seeking – a major change of trend and style of government – but not a great radical upheaval based on a promised Brave New World'.⁵⁷

Given the socio-economic problems that Britain faced in the late 1970s, Maude stressed: 'We must always appear forward-looking, never backward-looking... The "change" that people want today is much more a change back to known standards than a leap forward into the unknown'.⁵⁸ In Maude's view, the electorate needed to be inspired by the Conservative commitment 'to restore some of the valued things they have lost than by proposals of a vague, bright tomorrow'.⁵⁹ In order to implement this approach, then, the Tories needed to 'make clear the threat that under Labour still more will be lost... We have to destroy the Labour proposition that it is mild and moderate under benign Callaghan'.⁶⁰ During the pre-election period, Maude appeared to be one of the only key figures that highlighted how much of a threat Callaghan was, given the country's unpredictable financial circumstances: 'Callaghan is a temporary, expendable front-man... There is real danger that he (even if distrusted) may appear as a symbol of continuity, while our leader will seem new and untried by comparison. This needs to be worked at... Wherever there is

⁵⁶ 'Themes: Angus Maude to Rhodes Boyson, David Howell, Nigel Lawson, Norman Tebbit', 16 March 1978, Conservative Party Archive, Bodleian Library, CRD/D/7/2D.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

independence... a chance for the family... Labour and all its union allies will be down on it like a ton of bricks'.⁶¹

The idea that the Labour Party of old had long gone under Callaghan's leadership was a tactic that Thatcher played to her advantage wherever she could throughout her years in opposition. Speaking to the Conservative Party Conference in 1975, Thatcher stressed: 'Labour's failure to cope, to look at the nation's problems... has led to a loss of confidence and a sense of helplessness.'⁶² Using humour to stress her point, she stated: 'I sometimes think the Labour Party is like a pub where the mild is running out. If someone doesn't do something soon, all that's left will be bitter. And all that's bitter will be Left.'⁶³ In October 1978, Thatcher again highlighted the fact that the Labour Party was not what it used to be in terms of values and ideals: 'Many of us remember the Labour Party as it used to be. In the old days it was at least a party of ideals. You didn't have to agree with Labour to understand its appeal and respect its concern for the underdog.'⁶⁴ Campbell further demonstrates how, during the latter stages of her election campaign, Thatcher 'set out to pluck the heart strings of old Labour voters everywhere': 'There used to be, in this country, a Socialism, which valued people... It had dignity and warmth... But that old Socialism was a world away from the officious, jargon-filled intolerant Socialism practiced by Labour these last few years... I think that many traditional Labour supporters want the same things that we want, believe the same things that we believe, but they're somehow

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² "Speech to Conservative Party Conference," *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 10 October 1975, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/102777> (accessed 19/9/19).

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ "Speech to Conservative Party Conference," *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 13 October 1978, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/103764> (accessed 19/9/19).

held back by old loyalties and prejudices.’⁶⁵ By reaching out to Labour supporters at a time of severe economic malaise, Thatcher sought to gain ‘soft’ voters, who could potentially be swayed given the socio-economic climate that the country was in at the time.

When interviewed for this research, Peter Jay outlined the key issue that political parties needed to address in order to win the forthcoming General Election: ‘The number one issue of the General Election was the economy – you had to convince the electorate that you could crack it.’⁶⁶ Back in 1978, Thorneycroft appeared to agree with this view: ‘Unless we win the economic argument we shall find it very hard to win the Election... There is some evidence that the Labour Party remains ahead of us in the Polls on this issue. We need, therefore, to make special efforts to sharpen up both our arguments and our presentation... Rebuilding Britain as a free economy is a tremendous task and those who are not with us in that task, might be against us’.⁶⁷ Maude, too, was keen to stress: ‘We have to get them to the polls remembering the horrors of 1974-77 rather than any temporary improvement... At the same time, rub it in that Labour’s present “moderation”, tax cuts and so on are just the Election soft soap and that their own policies promise a return to 1974... They are trying to fight this Election on the opposite of their 1974 policies – in fact, our policies. But they don’t mean it. Labour wants to cover up. We believe in wide-open discussion of major issues which concern people’.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher: Volume One*, 432-433.

⁶⁶ Interview with Peter Jay, 6 May 2019.

⁶⁷ Lord Thorneycroft, ‘Skeleton for Strategy,’ Conservative Party Archive, Bodleian Library, CRD/D/7/24. ND, (1978?).

⁶⁸ ‘Themes: Angus Maude to Rhodes Boyson, David Howell, Nigel Lawson, Norman Tebbit’, 16 March 1978, Conservative Party Archive, Bodleian Library, CRD/D/7/2D.

R.A. Orton (a CRD official), concurred with this view, commenting: ‘The point that MUST be brought home to the electorate is that it was the disastrous policies of this Labour Government since February 1974 that took the country to the very brink of complete collapse and bankruptcy’.⁶⁹ In doing so, he suggested ‘the analogy of the Doctor’: ‘After being called to attend the Patient in 1974, the Labour Doctors very nearly killed it... The Labour Doctors then performed a series of irrelevant and crippling operations on the sick Patient (Nationalization, reduction of armed forces...). The Patient falling fast, then had to go to the IMF for help’.⁷⁰ At present, ‘the Patient is far from fit and must now ask itself whether it would not be mad to allow, let alone to actually vote for, such an incompetent and irresponsible medical team to continue to be in charge of its health. The Conservative team of Doctors must keep reminding the Patient and leave him in no doubt about how sick he was as a result of the Labour treatment’.⁷¹

In helping to attract disenchanted voters, Maude also indicated phrases that wouldn’t ‘work’ with the electorate, for instance: ‘Patriotism is potentially a good line, but it needs a rather special Disraelian panache if it is not to sound hollow and ridiculous... The Nation has been damaged by the vandalizing of its so-called “bourgeois” culture, the mocking of its so-called “middle class” values’.⁷² While the Conservatives were gaining votes from previous Labour supporters who had become disenchanted with the Party, here, the Tories were directly appealing to their loyal

⁶⁹ ‘Note from R. A. Orton’, 28 September 1978, Conservative Party Archive, Bodleian Library, CRD/D/7/2D.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

middle-class voters, highlighting the dangers of a socialist society. In an attempt to avoid conventional Tory rhetoric, Maude advised: ““Capitalism” is not a good word... “More Choice” is better. “We chose to prosper and prosper to choose.””⁷³ ‘Incentives’, was also not thought to be a promising line to take, with Maude suggesting that ‘Make it worth while’, was more appropriate to the tone that the Party needed to take.⁷⁴ Essentially, Maude advocated a ‘common sense’ approach: ‘You know Labour Government doesn’t work. It doesn’t make sense. Look what has been lost. Let’s get back to common sense’.⁷⁵ Lastly, and significantly in terms of helping to portray the Conservatives in a different light, Maude stressed that the Party needed to ‘call our opponents “Labour”, not “Socialists”... Call ourselves “Conservatives”, rather than “Tories”, which is a dirty word with swinging voters in Labour areas’.⁷⁶

The CRD also highlighted two other areas, which they believed would be significant to the tone that the Party needed to take leading up to the election campaign. Perhaps surprisingly, they observed: ‘We have done far too little to defend the Heath government. This has three ill effects: It allows Labour to blame the Tories for nearly all its problems. It raises doubts as to whether a team containing many of the same figures is to be trusted. It still makes it hard for many Heath supporters in the Party to rally as enthusiastically as they would like to do behind Mrs Thatcher’.⁷⁷ The CRD, however, had been analysing Thatcher’s impact as Conservative Leader among the electorate between 1977-78, and revealed that, when asked, ‘Do you think Mrs Thatcher is proving a good leader of the Conservative Party?’ in May 1978, 40%

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ ‘Strategy Paper: Background Material’, Conservative Research Department, Conservative Party Archive, Bodleian Library, CRD/D/7/24. ND, (1978?).

of the electorate thought she was, with 58% believing that she was not, while 12% 'didn't know'.⁷⁸ More interestingly, is what the public thought of the image of Thatcher as a future Prime Minister:

58% of the electorate would expect a Conservative Government under Margaret Thatcher to be different from the last Conservative Government under Edward Heath... 34% likely to anticipate a change of style... The most frequent comment was that it would be stronger/more, definite/strong-willed/out-spoken... Other comments, made by one elector in ten were that Mrs Thatcher was more competent/more sensible (11%), that her government would be more right-wing/true blue (10%), that she understands housewives/rising prices (10%). The only critical comment made by any significant number was that Mrs Thatcher is less competent/not as good as Mr Heath (9%).⁷⁹

While the CRD noted that there was disagreement over the view that 'a woman could never stand up to the pressures the Prime Minister of this country has to face', seven out of ten electors rejected the view (Labour voters and older people were more likely to agree), while 75% of the public were even more empathetic in rejecting the view that 'no woman could ever make a good Prime Minister', (only 14% agreed).⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

On Callaghan's position in 1978, the figures are even more intriguing. While 37% agreed with the proposition that Thatcher was more in touch with voters (against 41% of the electorate who disagreed), in a Gallup poll that asked, 'Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with Mr Callaghan as Prime Minister?', 54% of the electorate indicated that they were satisfied, while 35% were not.⁸¹ When asked what the most important problems were that the government should do something about, unemployment (30%), rising prices/inflation (19%) and high taxation (16%), were among the highest - issues that probably weighed more heavily with the middle class and 1974 Liberal voters than with others - with the CRD observing that the respondents indicated that the Conservatives had 'a small (and in statistical terms, insignificant) lead on most issues'.⁸²

The CRD also found that, in their recent 'General Political Survey', their most significant finding was that 'the present Labour Government has handled the economy well in view of world conditions'.⁸³ While the CRD recognised that such findings were 'worrying', they also found that 41% of the electorate could not answer 'approve' to the question, 'Do you approve or disapprove of the Government's record to date?' with 40% disapproving against 19% who 'didn't know'.⁸⁴ Since the fragility of the British economy became even more evident to the electorate from mid-1978, the CRD acknowledged that 'the public are expecting the general economic situation to get better over the next 2 months... but that the electorate are still expecting the

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

number of the unemployed to increase'.⁸⁵ Thus, by the latter part of 1978, it seemed that the prospect of a General Election was still all to play for.

Interactions between Parties and the Media during the Election Campaign

In his paper, 'Skeleton for Strategy', Lord Thorneycroft further outlined how the Conservatives should approach the election campaign, firstly identifying where the electorate could potentially be won over: 'The Liberal vote has been breaking two to one in favour of the Conservatives... The Labour vote is also vulnerable. In a number of by-elections it has switched... The important factor here is that many of these voters do in fact hold views virtually identical to the Conservative Party but take time to identify with it to the point of actually casting their votes in its favour... Anyone who could remotely call themselves Conservative is almost certain to vote if organised to that end... This volatile additional vote is, however, necessary if an adequate majority is to be achieved'.⁸⁶ In order to attract voters who could be persuaded by the Conservatives' line, Thorneycroft stressed that 'sensitive areas' needed to be handled appropriately: 'It is arguable that we are likely to win the Election provided only that we do not lose it. We cannot therefore afford many losing themes'.⁸⁷ Among such themes were: 'An attack upon the Trade Union present attitudes, widespread breaking up of the public sector, large scale sacking of civil servants, unqualified assertions that the ruthless application of monetary techniques would provide an answer to our problems, and the elimination of all special

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Lord Thorneycroft, 'Skeleton for Strategy,' Conservative Party Archive, Bodleian Library, CRD/D/7/24. ND, (1978?).

⁸⁷ Ibid.

intervention to create employment'.⁸⁸ Thorneycroft believed it crucial to avoid making statements along these lines without clearance in the Shadow Cabinet, and further stressed that the Party need not be too concerned with policy detail, nor in outlining the specifics, but instead to identify and concentrate on policies upon which 'maximum concentration has been or should be placed'.⁸⁹

Indeed, James Cooper argues that the Conservatives' 1979 election campaign focused on 'emotions and values', rather than specific policies. In doing so, Thatcher 'expressed a belief in the ingenuity of the British people rather than the power of the State', which was highlighted through the 'Labour Isn't Working' poster (this will be expanded upon later in this chapter).⁹⁰ She also endeavoured to ensure that economic regeneration was central to her campaign, as evident in the Party's first Party Political Broadcast, aired on 19 April, which 'showed runners of different countries racing around a track with British runners lightly weighed down by tax/inflation burdens imposed by the Labour managers who were running the team that year'.⁹¹

Following Cooper's argument, Campbell observes that the Conservatives' 1979 manifesto was essentially a 'broad framework', which was 'unusually short and deliberately vague' - it did not even have a title.⁹² Instead, broad themes were seen as the basis of the Conservatives' vision: a government that would address tax/spending cuts, increase incentives, gain control of the money supply and reduce the power of

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Cooper, "'Superior to anything I had seen in the States,'" 5.

⁹¹ Tim Bell, 'The Conservatives' Advertising Campaign,' in *Political Communications: The General Election of 1979*, ed. Robert M. Worcester and Martin Harrop (London: Allen & Unwin, 1982), 24.

⁹² Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher: Volume One*, 430.

the state.⁹³ The idea of appealing to the electorate via rhetoric rather than policy is evident in Thatcher's introduction to the Party's manifesto:

For me, the heart of politics is not political theory; it is people and how they want to live their lives. No one who has lived in this country during the last five years can fail to be aware of how the balance of our society has been increasingly tilted in favour of the State at the expense of individual freedom... This election may be the last chance we have to reverse that process, to restore the balance of power in favour of the people. It is, therefore, the most crucial election since the war.⁹⁴

Going further into the detail of how to approach General Election campaigning, in a memorandum, Alan Howarth (Government Chief Whip, 1987-88), suggested that it would be worthwhile for the Party to include other 'large and effective' Conservative organisations, such as: the Students, the Trade Union Committees, Local Government Associations and Leaders, observing: 'At the last election, for instance, an effective meetings campaign was arranged at university centres... It was thought this was particularly beneficial in the critical university seats'.⁹⁵ On the Conservatives Strategy Group, Howarth added: 'I would have thought it was wise to have at least one woman on this in view of the fact that over half the electorate belongs to the female sex'.⁹⁶

His further comments demonstrate the fact that the Conservative Opposition office

⁹³ Cooper, "'Superior to anything I had seen in the States,'" 6.

⁹⁴ "Conservative General Election Manifesto 1979," *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 11 April 1979, <https://www.margareththatcher.org/document/110858> (accessed 19/9/19).

⁹⁵ 'Memorandum from Alan Howarth', 5 January 1978, Conservative Party Archive, Bodleian Library, CRD/D/7/23.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

was still very much a work in progress in 1978, hence he articulated the need to reduce potential issues when campaigning got under way: 'I would suggest that directors tried to meet on a regular basis... Many of the hiccups and difficulties, which have arisen in previous GE campaigns, have been due to ignorance of what one department is doing by the others'.⁹⁷ Further, he stressed: 'On the few occasions when the Leader is out of London for the Press Conference, we need to have a very good pre-arranged liaison system', concluding: 'I think it might be useful if two or three people capable of picking up new initiatives quickly and translating it into action could be asked to stand by for this purpose in addition to their normal election commitment. This would save a frantic dash round to find someone, anyone, who could do it at the last minute'.⁹⁸

The Conservatives' Directors' meetings were also the place where strategies for press and news conferences were designed. In January 1978, they observed: 'As we need to be the attacking side, it is preferable to go before Labour in order to set the tone...', while noting that it would be significant if the Party could occasionally hold Saturday conferences at Central Office, in order to 'provide fresh copy' for the Sunday papers.⁹⁹ In order to be seen as a Party ready for government, it was stressed that front bench spokesmen should be key features in campaigning, though they also cautioned that 'a confidential number with 10 lines should be available for Candidates and others to call for a recorded message on our policy initiatives', again, highlighting the slight inexperience of Thatcher's Opposition office.¹⁰⁰ Although the Conservative Party had planned, prepared and won General Elections many times before, it is

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

significant to note the extent to which they analysed press strategy for this particular election. The Directors' team stated: 'All national news and current affairs programmes will be monitored and sound tape recordings made at Central Office enabling the Duty Officer to deal with any queries... The News Room will be responsible for rapid alerting on any broadcast items, which may require a response'.¹⁰¹ They also revealed that 'a script writing team will work with the Research Department on the organization of these programmes. The Research Department will be responsible for the final checking for policy and fact'.¹⁰²

Additionally, a feature writing team was in the process of being built up, which would commission work 'from a number of journalists, to ensure that the "ghosts" develop considerable personal knowledge of the people for whom the articles are being prepared...' adding: 'We believe we will need to bring three of these writers into Central Office full-time in the Election period, while placing other tasks with outsiders'.¹⁰³ Just as was the case during the process of forming economic policy, as Chapter Four of this thesis demonstrates, it seems that the Conservatives were also keen to turn to a number of outsiders during the lead up to the imminent General Election.¹⁰⁴ Indeed, extra assistance, in any capacity, was encouraged: 'Additional help – largely volunteers – needs to be accommodated: temporary press officers and secretaries... Additional offices beyond those on the Third Floor will be necessary'.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

The hiring of the famous advertising company, Saatchi & Saatchi, by the Conservatives in the spring of 1978 had a big influence on the Party's election campaign. Charles Moore reveals that it was Gordon Reece who made sure that S&S secured the account for the advertising of Thatcher's campaign. The Saatchi brothers (Charles and Maurice), however, had 'no previous political involvement', and could not have been more outside of the Conservative Party at the time of their hiring.¹⁰⁶ Moore notes how, when the Saatchi brothers contacted their chairman, Tim Bell, about the opportunity, he thought it 'a bad idea', having himself worked for the Conservatives on advertising during the Macmillan era, and believed that running Thatcher's campaign wouldn't bring in any money for the company, and would instead cause 'a great deal of aggravation'.¹⁰⁷ Bell was swiftly overruled by the Saatchi brothers, and quickly formed a small, select team along with Reece, which 'unconstrained by the normal organizational structures', shared a common belief in 'the black arts of advertising and the most modern methods of image-management with a serious ideological commitment to radical Conservatism'.¹⁰⁸ Rather than encouraging over-televised media performances, Bell and his team sought to 'present an optimistic philosophy of freedom and national recovery', highlighting the idea that 'it was time for a change'.¹⁰⁹

S&S's campaign strategy revolved around four bold words: 'Challenge, Integrate, Saturate and Personalise'.¹¹⁰ Their main 'challenge' was to promote the line, 'Their philosophy cannot work. Ours does', while repeating: 'Don't hope for a

¹⁰⁶ Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: Volume One*, 384.

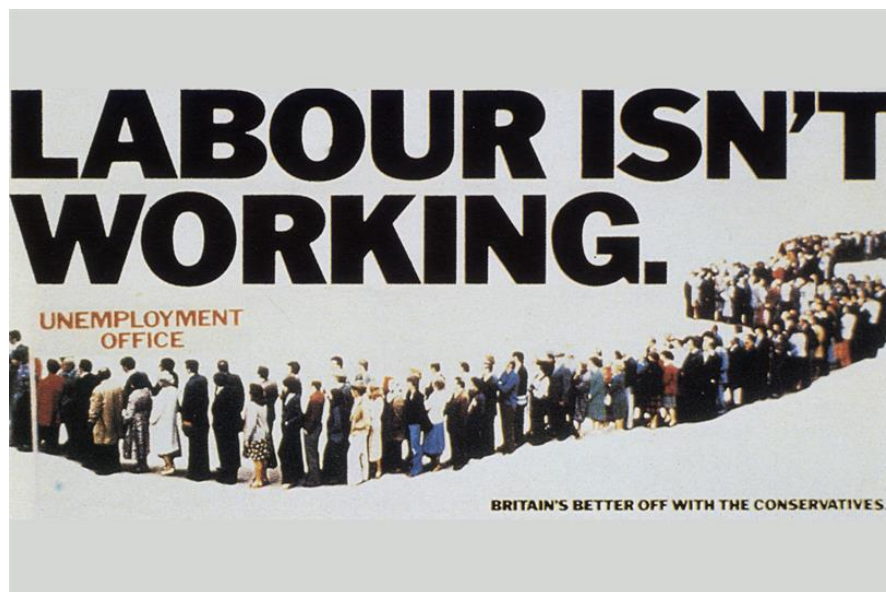
¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 385.

¹¹⁰ 'Creative Strategy', Saatchi & Saatchi, 1979, Conservative Party Archive, Bodleian Library, CRD/4/1/3.

better life. Vote for one'.¹¹¹ The strategy for the Conservatives, from S&S's point of view, was to follow a 'warm, competent, sympathetic, confident and credible' tone of voice, with a substance that spoke of: Prosperity, Freedom and Opportunity.¹¹² Narrowed down, the company advised that the Conservatives should portray themselves as a Party willing to carry out policies similar to those that had brought success to Germany, France and Japan, for instance: tax cuts, incentives to work, an end to government interference, improving standards in schools and encouraging new businesses in creating wealth and jobs.¹¹³ The biggest impact made by S&S was their insight into how to attack Labour via a number of key posters that effectively hit home with the electorate. The first, and most notorious at the time was the line, 'Labour Isn't Working'¹¹⁴.



Andrew Rutherford, one of S&S's creative staff, was the mastermind behind the slogan. In correspondence with the Conservatives' Central Office, S&S outlined that

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

discrediting Labour over their economic policy was the best way of ensuring greater support leading up to the election: ‘The Labour Government over the past four years has been responsible for the highest inflation since the Great plague. In that time they’ve managed to halve the value of the pound in your pocket... All the family essentials are up under Labour. Housing, clothing, fares, fuel and food... Electricity is up 16%. House prices are rocketing... But you can’t eat statistics – what all this means is that things we took for granted – bacon, coffee, beef, cheese – now seem like luxuries’.¹¹⁵ In collaboration with the Party, S&S also thought a key move would be to identify with the female electorate, and subsequently released advertisements headed: ‘Before you vote in the next election look in your purse... Your purse can tell you more about prices than any politician’.¹¹⁶

Stressing this point further, Sally Oppenheim (a PPS), stated: ‘Callaghan and his cohorts may have engineered a slightly rosier picture as a pre-election sweetener, but they cannot disguise the truth that food prices have doubled during this government’s term of office... These advertisements will hit home with shoppers. They know prices have increased astronomically and they will neither forgive, forget, nor trust a Labour Government again’.¹¹⁷ While the poster was ‘heavily trailed’ to a select few newspapers, including the *Daily Mail*, Moore demonstrates how it was the Labour Party itself who, in effect, raised the profile of the poster, helping it to really ‘take off’.¹¹⁸ Denis Healey (Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1974-79), known for his spontaneous bad temper, ‘raged against the poster’ and in doing so ‘ensured acres of

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ ‘Conservative prices advertisements for women readers’, 18 August 1978, Conservative Party Archive, Bodleian Library, CRD/4/1/2.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: Volume One*, 384.

free publicity'.¹¹⁹ Moore observes that credit is due to the power of the poster, since although there is a belief among some that it led to the election campaign of 1979, this was not actually the case. The poster did, however, 'mark the beginning of the Conservatives' rhetorical conquest of Labour... the poster found the right terms in which to mount the challenge'.¹²⁰

A second poster, released in the autumn of 1978, followed the impact of the first with the title: 'Life has been ten times better under the Conservatives than under Labour in the post-war period'.¹²¹ Comparing the record of the two parties since 1945, Gordon Reece commented: 'Our first poster has proved so powerful in alerting the public to the loss of jobs under this Government that we have decided to keep it during this second phase of the campaign'.¹²²

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ 'Ten times better under the Conservatives', 28 August 1978, Conservative Party Archive, Bodleian Library, CRD/4/1/2.

¹²² Ibid.



Although the second poster created less public impact, its sharp focus on wages was notable, and hit home with voters disenchanted with the failures of the Labour government. Strategically designed via the influence of Tim Bell, the posters were intended to promote ‘freedom, choice and minimum interference’.¹²³ Butler and Kavanagh observe how S&S commissioned extensive interviews with four specific groups that the Party wished to target in order to gain an understanding of their key concerns. The outcome was that while the Conservatives were seen to be better at addressing issues affecting people, Labour were classed higher when it came to matters concerning welfare and the state.¹²⁴

Labour were evidently concerned by the appointment of S&S, with a close aide revealing to Callaghan: ‘In appointing Saatchi & Saatchi, the Conservative Party have moved away from the more traditional, staid advertising agencies they have used in the past, and chosen an agency which has a reputation for being aggressive, publicly conscious, energetic and creative. Their work may even be considered

¹²³ Butler and Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 1979*, 139.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

controversial'.¹²⁵ Butler and Kavanagh go on to note how S&S were 'skilful in its use of gimmicks and sophisticated cinematic techniques', and did manage to distract Labour households and semi-skilled workers who were struggling to come to terms with the reality of their current socio-economic state of affairs.¹²⁶ Similarly, Martin Rosenbaum assesses that Thatcher's campaign was 'hard-hitting, well targeted and highly visible', thanks to a close relationship that Reece had with the Saatchi brothers at the time: 'All in all, it showed what could be achieved when a political party exploited the full resources of a top-class ad agency, involved it at the core of campaign planning, and gave it lots of scope and plenty of money'.¹²⁷

With the hiring of S&S, Cooper notes how Thatcher utilized modern marketing techniques, which to some extent were influenced by practice in the US. Previous chapters of this thesis have explored Thatcher in a transnational context in terms of her extensive foreign travel during her years in opposition, and it is clear that, to some extent, her methods, ideas and influences were admired by the US. Commenting from the American perspective on Thatcher's campaign strategies, Jennifer Lees-Marshment observed how she had 'followed careful use of political marketing... Thatcher recognised the need to apply marketing to not just the presentation but also the nature of the Party's product'.¹²⁸ Similarly, Bill Brock (Chairman of the Republican National Committee), commented at the time how the Republicans were keen to learn lessons from overseas. On Thatcher's campaign, he

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Martin Rosenbaum, *From Soapbox to Soundbite: Party Political Campaigning in Britain since 1945* (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1997), 15.

¹²⁸ Cooper, "'Superior to anything I had seen in the States,'" 6-7.

observed it to be ‘so superior to anything I have seen in the United States’.¹²⁹ Brock promptly made contact with S&S, and asked the architects of Thatcher’s campaign to create ‘an 80-minute film summary of the campaign and to discuss it with Republican politicians’.¹³⁰ The interest from the US on the strategy behind the Conservatives’ 1979 campaign is significant, since it demonstrates that Anglo-American links at the time were both fluid and open, with each side seeking the benefits in the transfer of ideas that both nations could offer each other.

A further factor that eventually became a winning gift for the Tories came in the form of the Winter of Discontent, where Labour’s incomes policy agreement with the unions to control pay increases essentially collapsed into a series of damaging industrial disputes. The winter of 1978-79 was one of the worst since the post-war era, with industrial strikes, ‘go-slows and work-to-rules’ in Britain making life impossible for workers who were forced to commute in hazardous conditions during a period of national rail strikes and terrible weather conditions.¹³¹ John Shepherd notes that ‘almost arctic weather’ and ‘industrial disorder’ enabled the tabloid press to ‘ensure the Winter of Discontent became etched in the national psyche’.¹³² Following a post-war ‘golden age’ where living standards had improved, ushering in an era of prosperity (though this had sometimes stalled in the inflation of the 70s), the winter of 1978-79 came as a fast and severe shock to Britons. Indeed, Shepherd observes that during 1978 there were ‘2,349 stoppages with 9.3 million working days lost,

¹²⁹ Ibid., 7.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Jack Shepherd, *Crisis? What Crisis? The Callaghan Government and the British Winter of Discontent* (Manchester and New York: Macmillan, 2013), 1.

¹³² Ibid., 2.

involving directly a total of 979,000 workers'.¹³³ In 1979, this increased to over 29 million days lost involving 5 million workers.¹³⁴

While some believe that it was the intransigence of the trade unions that led to the severe economic difficulties of that winter¹³⁵, Barbara Castle (Secretary of State for Health and Social Services, 1974-76), argued: 'It was not the unions that broke the social contract but the government, as it carried through the deflationary policy that Denis Healey had convinced himself was necessary'.¹³⁶ The 'social contract' that Castle spoke of was a counter-inflationary strategy that called for a new strategy between the 'political and industrial wings of the labour movement', which formed itself in the establishment of the Labour and Trade Union Liaison Committee in early 1972.¹³⁷ The contract aimed at outlining a credible programme for the future of industrial relations, however, by early 1978 the partnership between Labour and the TUC had started to break down, following Callaghan's plans to impose greater measures in wage restraint, along with an increasingly unpopular pay policy, measures which he had not discussed directly with the TUC.¹³⁸ Shepherd details how the 1978 TUC congress outlined its opposition to Callaghan's policy and instead 'displayed its support for a national minimum wage'.¹³⁹

A further factor that eventually led to the breakdown of relations between Labour and the TUC was Callaghan's decision to postpone the General Election.

¹³³ Ibid., 3.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Tara Martin López, *The Winter of Discontent: Myth, Memory and History* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014), 32-38. See, also: Christopher Kirkland, *The Political Economy of Britain in Crisis: Trade Unions and the Banking Sector* (London: Macmillan, 2017).

¹³⁶ Barbara Castle, *Fighting All The Way* (London: Macmillan, 1993), 498.

¹³⁷ Shepherd, *Crisis? What Crisis?*, 12.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 15.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 30.

Having initially been pencilled in for October 1978, Callaghan's change in tactics even surprised some of his closest confidants. Bernard Donoughue (Senior Adviser to James Callaghan, 1974-79) recalls: 'Callaghan did not show his hand... and did not consult his personal staff, Tom McNally, Tom McCaffrey and myself, and none of us knew his decision until the last moment'.¹⁴⁰ Commenting further on Callaghan's decision, in support, he added: 'He believed, perfectly sensibly, that a Prime Minister should dissolve for an early election only if he was confident of winning. Otherwise, he should soldier on and hope for a better opportunity'.¹⁴¹ The decision to delay, however, angered the TUC, forcing Callaghan to enter a new parliamentary term without its support: 'Government-union relations were placed in jeopardy and led to the collapse of Labour's social contract, which had by then become little more than out and out stringent wage restraint'.¹⁴²

Further to the point made in Chapter Four regarding the Conservative Party's emergent political economy/philosophy, James Thomas argues that 'the Conservatives in opposition sought to win popular support by presenting themselves as a centrist party, rather than one seeking to fundamentally shift the political consensus to the right'.¹⁴³ He further notes that the Tories were ahead in the polls throughout 1976 and 1977, though by the autumn of 1978 Labour had regained the lead, and might well have won a general election if, as expected, Callaghan had called one in October 1978'.¹⁴⁴ From this perspective, Thomas believes that the

¹⁴⁰ Bernard Donoughue, *The Heat of the Kitchen: An Autobiography* (London: Politico's, 2003), 258.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 260-1.

¹⁴² Shepherd, *Crisis? What Crisis?*, 27. For more on Labour's economic position during 1974-79, see: M. Artis and David Cobham, *Labour's Economic Policies, 1974-79* (Manchester: Manchester University Press); David Coates (eds), *A Study of the Labour Government, 1974-79* (London: Prentice Hall Press, 1980).

¹⁴³ James Thomas, "'Bound in By History': The Winter of Discontent in British politics, 1979-2004," *Media, Culture & Society* 29:2 (2007): 263-283.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

circumstances of the winter of 1978-79 were ‘less dramatic in effect or systemic in their implications for social democracy than is purported by the myths surrounding them’, even with the unavoidable socio-economic circumstances of the time.¹⁴⁵ Thus, it appears that the election had more to do with medium-term trends within the middle-class part of the electorate than simply being forged by the chaos of the Winter of Discontent. The effect of the crisis of 1978-79 was, therefore, to build on the deeper impressions that had been gained of social democracy – specifically, the idea that it was overloaded or ungovernable (as highlighted earlier in this chapter), and unlikely to succeed even in its own terms. While the narrative of the ‘good old days’ of post-war social democracy had been challenged by Thatcher’s rhetoric, from a Conservative perspective, Thomas suggests that the implications of the circumstances of the Winter of Discontent can be traced back to the post-war era:

The post-war economic regeneration was sacrificed in favour of the building of an expensive “New Jerusalem” of social welfare and the result was national decline, an “overloaded” state and an economically and morally degenerate dependency culture. Crippling strikes, heavy spending, massive taxation, weak political leadership, economic disaster and a law-and-order meltdown allegedly triggered a popular, right-wing revolt against an over-extended state.¹⁴⁶

Following this, Colin Hay argues that in many respects the Winter of Discontent was a ‘manufactured’ or ‘constructed’ crisis, for it was ‘lived, experienced and responded to through a very particular and particularly problematic construction of what was

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 267.

unfolding at the time'.¹⁴⁷ Rather than a crisis of national malaise, Hay believes that this period was recreated as a crisis of Keynesianism in addition to an 'overextended state' holding the Unions to 'ransom'.¹⁴⁸ From his perspective, it was Thatcherism in the form of a credible alternative programme that made the event as significant as it was:

Thatcherism's success was in enlisting the events of the Winter of Discontent into a compelling and ultimately convincing account of the economic and political pathologies of the existing Keynesian paradigm. To be successful, this crisis narrative did not need to be accurate, nor especially detailed. It merely needed to resonate with, and make sense of, the events and experiences of the winter of 1978–1979 as they unfolded, while unambiguously attributing causality and responsibility - to an overextended state, to the tyranny of the pickets, and so forth.¹⁴⁹

That said, if the Conservatives' intent was to emphasize a sense of national crisis, they certainly succeeded to some extent. The first stage in Callaghan's apparently inevitable downfall came when he lost a confidence vote in his leadership on March 28th 1979, making his government the first to have no say over the decision to dissolve.¹⁵⁰ Butler and Kavanagh note how, when it came to his colleagues, Callaghan had become 'slow to focus on their concerns and stratagems', since he had already

¹⁴⁷ Colin Hay, "Chronicles of a death foretold: The winter of discontent and construction of the crisis of British Keynesianism," *Parliamentary Affairs* 63:3 (2010): 446-470.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 464.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ Butler and Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 1979*, 127.

decided to 'let events take their course... If the government was to be defeated, so be it'.¹⁵¹ From this point on, throughout the campaign reporters following Callaghan observed his tone as 'elegiac', 'half-hearted', 'fastidious' and serious, and notably avoided any criticism of Thatcher.¹⁵² Speaking frankly in January 1979, it appears that Callaghan clearly foresaw the inevitable, feeling that there was little he could do to drastically change Labour's course: 'There are times, perhaps once every thirty years, when there is a sea-change in politics. It then does not matter what you say or what you do. There is a shift in what the public wants and what it approves of... I suspect there is now such a sea change and it is for Mrs Thatcher.'¹⁵³

The Winter of Discontent radically altered the status quo, with well-publicized accounts of public suffering, sporadic strike action and an unprecedented degree of economic hardship sweeping the nation. As public resentment against the government mounted, so did Thatcher's standing in the polls, and the press undoubtedly helped in Thatcher's quest to be seen as the more capable leader. Writing for the *New Statesman* in January 1979, Anna Coote highlighted how Thatcher's promise of revitalizing the economic reality of the country was 'a ray of sunshine to strike-torn Britain'.¹⁵⁴ She further noted how *The Sun* reported on how the current strike crisis had taken Britain 'to the brink of a disaster that will make Ted Heath's three day week seem like a golden age'.¹⁵⁵ Other headlines picked up by the *New Statesman*

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 126-127.

¹⁵² Ibid., 184.

¹⁵³ John Ranelagh, *Thatcher's People: An Insider's Account of the Politics, the Power and the Personalities* (London: HarperCollins, 1991), 170.

¹⁵⁴ Anna Coote, "Strike havoc probed," *New Statesman*, 26 January 1979, p. 106-7.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

included: 'FAMINE THREAT... 1,000 old people may die each day'; 'HELPLESS! 3 million face dole queue'.¹⁵⁶

The *Daily Express* also helped to publicise Thatcher's cause, publishing the headline 'MAGGIE'S WAR CRY': 'If someone is confronting our essential liberties, if someone is inflicting on-going harm – by God, I'll confront them'.¹⁵⁷ Speaking exclusively to the paper she insisted that she would be willing to 'take on militants hitting the elderly, the sick and children, or threatening law and liberty'.¹⁵⁸ The Tory-supporting press also intervened: 'WHAT THE BLOODY HELL IS GOING ON, JIM?' asked the *Daily Mail* in February 1979, which was closely followed by *The Sun*, who cried: 'IS ANYONE RUNNING BRITAIN?'¹⁵⁹ Clearly reaping the benefits of Callaghan's ill-judged tactics, Thatcher had all to gain in the early months of 1979.

Evidently under strain, Callaghan swiftly formed a select 'think tank' group (which included the then Editor of the *Daily Mirror*, Mike Molloy), who came together to devise strategy plans during gatherings that became known as 'White Drawing Room' meetings.¹⁶⁰ Butler and Kavanagh note how Callaghan wanted to focus on traditional ideals, such as a focus on work, welfare and trust in the Party's core values: 'We must have some Jerusalem,' he urged the committee, hoping to influence from a stance that highlighted Labour's ethics, rather than attacking the new

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ "MAGGIE'S WAR CRY," *Daily Express*, 1 February 1979, p.1.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ "WHAT THE BLOODY HELL IS GOING ON, JIM?" *Daily Mail*, 1 February 1979, p. 1; "IS ANYONE RUNNING BRITAIN?" *The Sun*, 7 February 1979, p. 1.

¹⁶⁰ Butler and Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 1979*, 132.

Conservative rhetoric coming from Thatcher.¹⁶¹ However, Labour's creative team had a difficult task ahead of them in the beginning of 1979: their original strategy plans had been designed for an earlier election, initially thought to be scheduled for the previous October. Callaghan's team had focused on emphasising Labour's record in tackling inflation, handling the unions, and went back to highlighting Heath's poor record in 1974. Following the Winter of Discontent, however, support for the Labour Party had dramatically declined. Worryingly for Labour, this decline in support was more marked among women, the young and the working class, once the backbone of the Party's grassroots and clearly the exact target of Conservative attempts to eat into Labour's vote.¹⁶²

A reassessment of party policy therefore sought to win back once loyal Labour voters who had strayed, by offering a revised plan for government that circled around welfare (pensions, family, health), jobs (creating and saving them), interests for the public sector, along with a renewed economic plan that incorporated new ideas on incomes policy, price and rent control.¹⁶³ These policies, it was urged, needed to be moulded into a programme that advocated 'FAIRNESS TO ALL', promoting the line 'Labour looks after the workers/the less well off'.¹⁶⁴ On the impact of the press on the Conservatives at the time, Robin Harris recalled: 'It was at this time that the *Daily Mail* and *The Sun* became devotees, with a profound effect on Thatcher's public image. But it was the content of her thinking, the passion and directness of her words, which were the source of her impact: 'She sold well because she had something fresh

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 133.

¹⁶² Ibid., 136.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 137.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

and exciting to sell... She was unusual at the time for being an optimist'.¹⁶⁵ Indeed, Thatcher herself knew how to utilize herself in regards to the press, identifying it as a key factor in her campaign: 'If you have a good thing to sell, use every single capacity you can to sell it. It is no earthly use having a good thing to sell and no one hearing about it'.¹⁶⁶

In addition to appealing to the right-wing media, Gordon Reece also arranged for Thatcher to appear on mass-audience radio programmes: 'Here she was in her element in talking directly to housewives between records, mixing glimpses of autobiography, fashion tips and recipes with flashes of her political mission and populist views on social questions where she did not have to toe the party line'.¹⁶⁷ In doing so, Thatcher was able to use her gender to her advantage, portraying herself again as a woman who understood the pressures on mothers, wives, and those in full time work attempting to also prioritise family commitments. Demonstrating Thatcher's influence on the female vote, an Ipsos MORI poll found that the female vote for the Conservatives went up to 47% in 1979, in comparison to 1974, where the female share of the Tory vote was just 39%.¹⁶⁸ Campbell further notes how Thatcher also made regular visits to newspaper offices 'to expose the whole senior staff to the force of her personality'.¹⁶⁹ At the *Daily Telegraph*, in particular, she 'made a great hit, where, knowing she was among friends, she arrived dressed to kill and charmed them with her femininity'.¹⁷⁰ While unusual at the time given Thatcher's upper hand

¹⁶⁵ Harris, *Not For Turning*, 131.

¹⁶⁶ Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher: Volume One*, 404-5.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 406.

¹⁶⁸ Ipsos MORI, 'How Britain Voted, 1974-2010' <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/how-britain-voted-october-1974> (accessed 9/10/2020).

¹⁶⁹ Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher: Volume One*, 407.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

as the only female leader of a political party, these media stints were widely noticed, and helped to highlight her position as a credible alternative to Callaghan, as Britain's socio-economic climate began to take a bigger toll on the electorate.

Butler and Kavanagh demonstrate how there was 'a marked professionalism about communications' in the lead up to the election.¹⁷¹ Less was seen to be more when it came to public addresses by both party leaders who were aware of the importance of 'concentrating on two or three themes, expressing themselves in few words, making sure they were the correct words, and then repeating them'.¹⁷² Significantly, given that the Party was backed by more resources and organizational support than their rivals, the Conservatives 'were able to outspend Labour on the broadcasts by two-to-one and had much more money for advertisements and private polls'.¹⁷³

One significant factor that made a radical difference to how Thatcher was viewed by the electorate was how she handled herself in televised party political broadcasts in the lead up to the election. Thatcher's broadcasts came at a time when Callaghan, who was governing without a majority with the support of the Liberals, was in danger of losing a vote of confidence given that inflation was at a record high and industrial strikes were escalating by the day. Ronald Millar recalls that as the country at least appeared to descend into chaos, it was the decision of civil servants to commence a series of one-day strikes that gave Thatcher the opportunity to win over

¹⁷¹ Butler and Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 1979*, 141.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

the trust of the nation via her televised addresses.¹⁷⁴ Given that ‘the Conservatives entered the campaign with the largest lead ever reported for any party in the opinion polls at this stage of an election’ Millar, along with Chris Patten (Chairman of the Conservative Party, 1990-92), believed that rather than aiming to denounce Callaghan as a poor leader incapable of restoring Britain’s prosperity, she should instead present herself as a national leader, one who understood the fears of the electorate, who were struggling to cope through a severe national crisis.¹⁷⁵ In his memoirs, Millar reflected:

An emotional appeal would take advantage of her being a woman, and her natural feminine sympathies could, if we found the words, have a powerful effect on the people. Above all, by offering to unite the country it would present her for the first time as a national, a distinct from a Party leader.¹⁷⁶

While Thatcher had originally preferred to use her broadcasts to attack Labour, she agreed with the advice and chose to present herself in a light that was different from how she had acted previously. The effect appeared to work, since after her first broadcast Millar notes how Callaghan had intuitively realised what she had done, admitting to Thatcher the following morning: ‘That was a damn good broadcast you did last night... I wish I’d said it... Well done.’¹⁷⁷ In an era that could capitalize on the possible benefits of reaching out to the electorate, Millar recalled how Thatcher’s broadcasts were a major factor in her victory over Callaghan:

¹⁷⁴ Millar, *A View from the Wings*, 246.

¹⁷⁵ Butler and Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 1979*, 141.

¹⁷⁶ Millar, *A View from the Wings*, 247.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 249.

There are those who believe that particular broadcast, in what became known as the Winter of Discontent, was a turning point, that it did more to swing the country in her favour than any subsequent speech before or during her election campaign. It certainly helped. It wasn't so much the words, it was the gesture of holding out the hand to the political enemy that grabbed the country. People who had no love for the Conservative Party warmed to this leader.¹⁷⁸

Harris revealed in his biography that there was a marked improvement in Thatcher's image and confidence by the time she began campaigning:

Fortunately, towards the end of her period in Opposition... There was a noticeable improvement in Mrs Thatcher's performance as Leader of the Opposition. She became more confident. She looked better... Her voice had improved... She fought to stop herself screeching over the hubbub in the House of Commons, which became more important electorally once Prime Minister's questions was broadcast over the radio from April 1978.¹⁷⁹

It is clear that, when advised to do so, Thatcher greatly enjoyed the benefits of broadcast appearances, believing that they would help portray her in the light she

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Harris, *Not For Turning*, 138.

wanted. For example, Speaking to the BBC just weeks before the election, Thatcher revealed that there were ‘at least three Mrs Thatcher’s: ‘There is a very logical one, there’s an instinctive one, and there’s just one at home.’¹⁸⁰ She further emphasized how she had needed to perfect everything during the campaign, since: ‘There’s only one chance for women. ‘Tis the law of life.’¹⁸¹ Gordon Reece also encouraged Thatcher ‘to be filmed doing every-day tasks like shopping and household work’, and each time ensured that there was a poll commissioned to assess audience reactions.¹⁸² This desire to make the most of Thatcher’s chance highlighted her flair, which differentiated her from Callaghan, who, while a good political performer, had little to prove in contrast.

Victory

It is often asserted that Callaghan’s timing in calling the 1979 General Election was the biggest factor of Labour’s downfall. While the Conservatives hoped for an early date, Callaghan left it until 3rd May 1979. Moore details how Callaghan had hoped that, by waiting, he could divert Labour’s problems on to the personality of Thatcher herself, ‘contrasting his own experience, moderation and reliability with what he thought were her shrillness and extremism’.¹⁸³ While his strategy was ill-judged at the time, he believed: ‘If we win, it will be because the people cannot take her’.¹⁸⁴ Labour’s biggest problem at the time was that, even with a delay, the public had not

¹⁸⁰ “TV Interview for BBC Campaign ’79,” *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 27 April 1979, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/103864> (accessed 8/8/2019).

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Butler and Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 1979*, 140.

¹⁸³ Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: Volume One*, 402.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

forgotten the dire state of the country during the Winter of Discontent. Indeed, unemployment was still rising, as Peter Jay recalled:

The Conservatives won not because of the signature policies which later became synonymous with ‘Thatcherism’, not mentioned in the 1979 campaign, but because the other side lost. They probably would not have won six months earlier, though we will never know. I think the ‘Labour Isn’t Working’ poster with the tail of unemployed people helped them win, and their main flagship advertising was to major on unemployment, criticizing the government for letting it happen. It rose to 1 million in 1979 (though rose even higher to 3.2 million 5 years later), but at the time 1 million seemed like the end of the world.¹⁸⁵

While timing clearly came into play, Jay highlighted how significant Thatcher’s victory was given that the odds had been against her throughout her campaign:

She could very easily have lost, for the odds were in many respects stacked against her. She was unable to count on the loyalty of most of her Shadow Cabinet. Her predecessor pursued a semi-public vendetta against her. She was viewed with suspicion or at least nervousness by a

¹⁸⁵ Interview with Peter Jay, 6 May 2019.

large section of her Party. She had been prevented from proposing openly the course she truly favoured.¹⁸⁶

Speaking at Somerville College (University of Oxford), for the conference ‘Margaret Thatcher: 40 Years On’, Jonathan Aitken echoed this sentiment:

If he (Callaghan) had called an election in September or October 1978, he probably would’ve won it. There was an underlying tone in the country that the Leader of the Opposition “is a bit shrill/steady as she goes.” That was the consensus of the electorate at the time. On the other hand, the biggest challenge to Thatcher was the real fear that a Margaret Thatcher government would be unable to govern. The questions in the constituencies revolved around: How will you be able to govern? How will you be able to cope with the unions? People were quite scared. The answer on the whole was: “Mmmm I’m not sure we will, kind of thing.” That was the mood in the autumn of 1978.¹⁸⁷

However, as noted by Jay, Aitken stressed that the Winter of Discontent was ultimately Thatcher’s winning card: ‘She was lucky in her enemies (Heath, Arthur Scargill), and she was lucky with the Winter of Discontent. The country really was lurching into chaos, everything was falling apart. And she looked, truly, for the first

¹⁸⁶ Harris, *Not For Turning*, 137.

¹⁸⁷ Jonathan Aitken speaking at the conference ‘Margaret Thatcher: 40 Years On’, Somerville College, University of Oxford, 15 June 2019.

time, Prime Ministerial.’¹⁸⁸ Nevertheless, Aitken noted how Thatcher’s insecurity was apparent throughout her years in opposition, and indeed even during the 1979 campaign: ‘All this time, the picture I saw of Thatcher was of an insecure, cautious, Leader of the Opposition. She really contained a deep sense of insecurity, uncertainty and lack of character, although the insecurity distilled very fast once she got inside Number Ten.’¹⁸⁹

The image of Thatcher as a fragile, insecure character is a theme that has been raised a number of times in interviews for this research. From Peter Jay’s comments on her tour of the US in 1977, to Lord Tebbit’s view of how she had been on a huge learning curve throughout her early years as Opposition Leader. However, despite the private doubts of the Conservatives’ inner circle, Thatcher had the capacity to hide this from the public when she travelled abroad, captivating audiences with her speeches and, ultimately, managed to convince the electorate that she had the capacity, credibility and authority to govern Britain. By the spring of 1979 she had gained the confidence to capitalize on the Winter of Discontent and won largely due to her poise at a critical time, along with her determination and belief in her Party’s capacity and readiness to govern.

While chance clearly played a leading role in Thatcher’s victory, speaking alongside Aitken at the conference ‘Margaret Thatcher: 40 Years On’, John Redwood (Downing Street Chief of Policy, 1982-87), stressed that the Conservatives had been operating a ‘shadow government’ throughout the mid-late 1970s, with the ideas and

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

initiative ready to take into government.¹⁹⁰ Indeed, as Chapter Four of this thesis outlines, the Conservatives had worked, changed and re-drafted the Party's policy, rethinking alternative economic strategies that would effectively tackle inflation and which could allow them to appeal to new types of voters.

Therefore, while the timing of the 1979 General Election perhaps made the biggest impact on the outcome, the Conservative Party were ready to take power, and had long been preparing a winning strategy to bring into government. When interviewed for this research, commenting on the outcome of Thatcher's emergence as Prime Minister, Lord Heseltine stated: 'The 1979 Cabinet was very much Mr Heath's government given a second chance - we were battle-hardened. We'd been through the experiences of 1974 and had learned from our mistakes. We were appalled by the social disintegration, which Labour presided upon until 1979, and we knew what we had to do. There was a complete unity of purpose.'¹⁹¹

The outcome of the election was a landmark that changed the course of British political history during the 1980s and 1990s, with the Conservatives governing for nearly two decades. Shepherd notes that 'the myths and realities' of the turbulent events of 1978-79 'continued to feature in subsequent Conservative election victories, in 1983, 1987 and 1992, as the electorate was reminded of the perils in store if Labour won at the polls'.¹⁹² While the Conservatives had undeniably worked for the past four years on creating a new political agenda fit for government, there were clearly longer

¹⁹⁰ John Redwood speaking at the conference 'Margaret Thatcher: 40 Years On', Somerville College, University of Oxford, 15 June 2019.

¹⁹¹ Interview with Lord Heseltine, 8 October 2015.

¹⁹² Shepherd, *Crisis? What Crisis?*, 27.

term factors that came into play, specifically, the failure of the Liberals to break through at the time and the structural rise in inflation and the timing of the election, which undeniably also played a significant role.

Overall, the move towards Thatcher and the Conservatives between late 1978 and early 1979 was largely the result of a spectacularly executed campaign under the guidance of Saatchi and Saatchi, who actively broadcasted the poor leadership of Callaghan and the decline of confidence in the Labour Party at the time. This was hugely helped by the impact of the Right-wing press, who portrayed Thatcher as the saviour who would unite Britain after the disastrous socio-economic impact of the winter of 1978. Whether due to the influence of the press, or because of Thatcher's public speeches and broadcasts during her campaign, it does appear that a greater percentage of women were attracted to the Conservative Party in 1979, in comparison to 1974, indicating that some wives and mothers viewed Thatcher as a role model who understood their positions as females looking to balance a career with family life. Additionally, the fact that the Conservatives had a viable, revived economic strategy ready to bring into government after years of meticulous planning also helped them win over the confidence of the British electorate, who were exhausted by Callaghan's flawed policies. These factors, along with the severe economic circumstances of the Winter of Discontent, helped to bring about a new dawn in British politics following Thatcher's election as Prime Minister on May 3rd 1979.

VI

Conclusion

In summary, this thesis has firstly explored the role of Leader of Opposition, a role that helps to prepare the holder for the challenges of office. It has also assessed the role that policymaking plays in the work of Shadow Cabinets, as well as the role that chance plays in politics, specifically, in this case, the Conservative victory in 1979. It has also looked at the role of gender in politics, which crucially has helped this research uncover the previously unseen image of Thatcher behind the Iron Lady. Rather than being an outspoken, dogmatic leader, Thatcher was in fact a highly sophisticated politician - a learner who took advice when she needed it, understood both sides of an argument, and got on well with both her shadow team as well as with members of Callaghan's government at the time.

By researching Thatcher's visits abroad as Opposition Leader, this thesis has also helped to demonstrate how such travel helped to shape Conservative foreign and domestic policy, by recognising the ways and methods of other international governments. In the case of the United States, it is clear that both sides of the special relationship learned something from one another in terms of policy between 1975 and 1979, thus helping to strengthen the alliance, which continues to this day. Politics, as well as policy, was often conducted in both an international and transnational manner.

What this thesis highlights in terms of the role of Leaders of the Opposition is that, as well as being a leader, the position also requires them to be a learner. In

addition to Thatcher, this has also been the case for previous Leaders of the Opposition, for example, Tony Blair. Blair recognised and explored the need for his Party to gain social Conservative votes, which can be seen in his highly publicised policy of being ‘tough on crime’.¹⁹³ Like Thatcher, Blair (as well as other Leaders of the Opposition, such as Harold Wilson), fused old political ideas together in order to translate them into a new language, one that resonated with the electorate at the time. Where Thatcher blended forms of post-war economic policy into her political agenda, Blair did the same on areas such as crime and social policy. Without this process of learning in opposition, of visualising where policy could be improved, of understanding how to win over the electorate, the Leader of the Opposition cannot lead effectively or bring their Party to power.

The case for utilizing visits abroad as Leader of the Opposition can also be seen in Blair’s time in the position. In seeking to gain back power, in similarity with Thatcher, Blair travelled to the US in 1996 in order to highlight himself as a Prime Minister-in-waiting. During the trip, *The Guardian* observed that Blair was ‘constantly looking for new allies in his quest for power’, adding: ‘He has become clearer than ever about the price he is willing to pay for success and about the direction in which he intends to take his party and, assuming victory, his government’.¹⁹⁴ In addition to presenting himself in a favourable light, Blair also directly stressed that the Labour Party was very different to the one of old: ‘Mr Blair made it very clear that it is a different Labour Party, a different generation. They are not going to revisit the controversies of the 1980s. They will look forward rather than

¹⁹³ Richard Carr, *March of the Moderates* (London: I.B Tauris, 2019), 26.

¹⁹⁴ *The Guardian*, “BLAIR IS THE BRIDE OF BILL,” 13 April 1996.

backwards... If there is a theme to this trip it was “Bond dealers of Wall Street: your dollars are safe with New Labour.””¹⁹⁵

As outlined in the Introduction, past works on Thatcherism have attempted to establish some half-truths or even ‘myths’ about Thatcher: for instance, the image of her as a conviction politician and an ever-dominant figure on the world stage. However, this thesis has demonstrated that there is scope for revising some of these assumptions by tracing the evolution of Thatcher as Leader of the Opposition, and analysing the learning processes that were part of this, for instance, long-standing traditions, Conservative statecraft and policymaking, as well as Thatcher’s presentation and sense of herself as a leader and Prime Minister-in-waiting. This thesis has shown that Thatcher was actually far from certain about herself and even the ideas she believed in, which is contrary to the popular image of Thatcher as a strident, dogmatic leader. As a result, this thesis has ascertained how her thinking and performance as a political leader evolved between 1975 and 1979, to become closer to the Thatcher that we commonly know of as Prime Minister.

In exploring Thatcher’s years as Leader of the Opposition, this thesis has answered the following research questions in relation to Thatcher’s tenure as Leader of the Opposition. Firstly, it has demonstrated who was advising Thatcher at the time of each of her foreign visits, and revealed how these visits were received at home and abroad. Chapters Two and Three of this thesis have explored the key issues that were discussed with foreign leaders, and also demonstrated how Thatcher’s trips abroad

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

relate to the developments in domestic politics during her time in opposition. This thesis has also demonstrated how successful each of Thatcher's foreign visits were in establishing herself as a credible candidate for Prime Minister, and it has also indicated the perceptions of these other nations that Thatcher gleaned ideas and influence from. In order to better understand Thatcher as Prime Minister this thesis has been crucial, since her trips abroad as Opposition Leader reveal a great deal about her development as a new political leader, and previous works on Thatcherism have not addressed these specific questions head on.

This research has explored Thatcher years as Leader of the Opposition in part because this area of her legacy has been relatively unexplored in comparison to her time in office. Looking at Thatcher from an international perspective during this period is the original contribution to knowledge and an aspect that is missing in the current literature. To date no one has analysed how she utilized international visits during 1975-79 in order to demonstrate her political narrative, learn the nuances of foreign affairs, and promote herself on the international stage as a Prime Minister-in-waiting. Additionally, this thesis has revealed the dynamics and at times distrust between the FCO and Thatcher's opposition office in a way in which is fairly surprising to the naïve reader. In relation to her visit to the US in 1975, there is an evident sense of conflict. The FCO appeared to believe that Thatcher's opposition office alone were ill prepared to plan and equip her with the necessary information needed in order to execute a successful international trip abroad. Chapters Two and Three of this thesis suggest that Callaghan's civil servants were actually very willing to help and guide Thatcher in her international visits, perhaps in light of the fact that

they felt a working relationship was necessary in the event of her one day becoming Prime Minister.

The evolution of policymaking, analysed in Chapter Four, was explored because Thatcher's influence and attention moved in and out of the policy process. Looking at the evolution of policymaking helps us to better understand the development of Thatcher as Leader of the Opposition, since the evolution of Thatcherism went wider than the individual herself. While the impact of the 1979 General Election has been analysed in detail before, this research has uncovered new material from the CPA in order to critically assess to what extent chance played a role in leading the Conservatives to victory, and how far a winning electoral strategy and a revived Conservative rhetoric were the alternative reasons behind the Party's historic success.

During Thatcher's international visits as Leader of the Opposition she continuously sought to promote Britain abroad, seen in Chapters Two and Three, which reflect the theme of 'soft power'. While on the international stage she was keen to stress that the apparent gloom of Britain's socio-economic state during the mid-late seventies had been overdone. The influence of neoliberalism on Conservative economic policy was similarly important to dissect, not least because the nature and conflicting perspectives of the term are both relevant but complex at the same time. While Thatcher was clearly influenced by supposedly neoliberal ideas, this thesis has argued that she was not a fully committed neoliberal. Instead, she picked out various thoughts and ideas she liked and mixed them into her own separate, unique agenda.

Given the uniqueness of a female holding the position of Leader of the Opposition and later Prime Minister, the theme of gender has been important to explore in terms of how Thatcher used this to her advantage. While Thatcher presented a strong front as Leader of the Opposition, her housewifery was another element of her that also appealed to some women during the 1970s. She was keen to highlight that she shopped and cooked for her own household, and aside from her career, was a wife and mother, like most other women in Britain at the time, as noted by Laura Beers: ‘Thatcher worked to valorise housewives in British society, and to facilitate, as she perceived it, a women’s ability to balance work and family. She appealed to women primarily as homemakers, often targeting women through media traditionally seen as outside the purview of politics – such as *Cosmopolitan* or *Women’s Own*, or mid-morning radios programmes, consumed primarily by housewives’.¹⁹⁶

By exploring Thatcher’s visits abroad as Leader of the Opposition, as well as the themes of policymaking, gender and the role that chance plays in politics, this thesis has demonstrated that rather than being a specific, logical ideology, Thatcherism was actually both distinct and complex, involving compromises between a mix of different thoughts, perspectives and approaches that came together as one. For instance, from a socio-economic perspective, Thatcher took ideas from post-war neoliberalism and the lessons learned from Heath’s economic failures, and even from the rhetoric and practice of Labour governments, thus blending old ideas into a new rhetoric.

¹⁹⁶ Laura Beers, “Thatcher and the Women’s Vote,” in *Making Thatcher’s Britain*, ed. Ben Jackson and Robert Saunders (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 113-131.

The idea that Thatcherism was an agenda compromised by the thoughts of Hayek and Friedman is both cramped and internally contradictory. Instead, it is an ideology that revolves around personal responsibility, the importance of saving and the rewards of hard work (ideas, which, in the mid-1970s helped her to win over the female vote). This research has also shown how Margaret Thatcher as a person was very different to 'Thatcherism' itself. Instead, she was far more sophisticated than her political image has led many to believe. She was an individual who took advice from those more experienced than herself, who listened to her advisors, who loved debates, but accepted when her argument was wrong and, who, to some extent, got on politically with her opponent, James Callaghan. Thatcher's unique position in being the first female leader of a political party was undoubtedly an advantage in her quest to emerge as Prime Minister. However, as this thesis has discovered, there were times where Thatcher's gender held her back, especially given that she was in an extraordinary position in a very male dominated arena.

The role of chance in politics is also a factor that considerably helped Thatcher's victory in 1979. Although she managed to charm most of the British press in the run up to the 1979 General Election, helping to promote both her image and politics, Callaghan was in a strong position in the latter part of 1978 and, as others have speculated, would have possibly won had he called the election in the autumn of that year. Instead, although Thatcher's popularity was ever growing in the run up to 1979, simple events played a significant role in leading her to victory, such as the Winter of Discontent. Whenever a socio-economic crisis hits a country to the extreme

extent in which it did to Britain during the winter of 1978, its political and emotional significance has a powerful effect on the electorate.

While naturally the press dramatized the situation, helping to strengthen Thatcher's position, the genuine severity of the crisis swayed voters to support the Conservatives over Labour at a time where Callaghan's agenda appeared to be collapsing. However, as Chapter Five of this thesis demonstrates, Thatcher appeared confident and impressive when interviewed by the media, and her poise and presentation naturally helped her gain more support. Indeed, whether home or abroad, throughout her time as Leader of the Opposition, Thatcher turned heads whenever she gave political speeches due to her confidence and assertiveness. Thus, while chance did play a role in leading her to power, she also helped herself in ensuring that she was projecting herself in the right manner.

In terms of future research in this field, there are other areas that academics should now look to explore in relation to studies concerning Conservatism and the Conservative Party. For instance, John Major's time as Prime Minister could benefit from further research, especially given that an anonymous former Cabinet minister revealed that his demeanour as Conservative Leader was extremely unsatisfactory: 'Major was awful, a slimy character, constantly scheming. Margaret, on the other hand, was lovely.'¹⁹⁷ Given this opinion, it would be interesting to uncover how far Major really cooperated with his Cabinet. Was his agenda similar or different to the core elements of Thatcherism, and how did he go about pursuing it? Additionally,

¹⁹⁷ Interview with an Anonymous Interviewee, 15 June 2019.

considering the events of recent years, the person behind the performance in the case of Theresa May (another female Prime Minister) and Boris Johnson is also worth exploring given their turbulent periods as leaders of the Conservative Party. While Johnson has always been in the limelight, his climb to power has been unconventional and is therefore of interest to academics researching the history of Conservatism.

The history of Thatcherism has been much discussed by historians and political scientists for the past decade and more. This research has contributed to the field by offering an assessment of previously under-emphasized elements of Thatcher's time as Leader of the Opposition, in order to highlight the person behind the Iron Lady. By exploring Thatcher's years as a learner in the world of politics, this thesis highlights the importance of leading a political party in opposition in preparation for government, and, in doing so, demonstrates just how complex the ideology of 'Thatcherism' really is.

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