Margaret Thatcher's nation

LUISS GUIDO CARLI

Dipartimento di Scienze Politiche

European institutional history

Antonio Fabrizi
Candidato Matricola 633552

Relatore: prof. Giovanni Orsina

Correlatore: prof.ssa Vera Capperucci

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Introduction

In order to introduce this thesis it is necessary to highlight two elements. First, what is Thatcherism. Second, its background: the decolonisation. In this regard, Thatcherism is not just economics ("Economics are the method" said Margaret Thatcher "the object is to change heart and souls"), but is a certain idea of nation, whose pride does not consist anymore in possessing a great empire, but in pursuing freedom conceived both as the freedom of the individual from the state and as the autonomy of the nation in the international context. In Thatcher's view, the United Kingdom could not and should no longer be at the head of an empire nor of a club of states, but a nation-state that on the one hand was open to trade and on the other hand was able to defend its sovereignty and its identity[1]. Consequently, it was not to welcome within its borders those who considered incompatible with its founding values, it was not to accept anything could undermine its unity nor any external interference in its domestic policy. Ideologically, Thatcher was a British nationalist[2]. Although she knew that Britain was constituted of multiple nations, she believed she could found a British nation capable of surviving beyond the Empire. The decolonisation had had in fact significant repercussions in the internal politics of the United Kingdom, especially in the relationship between its four nations (English, Scottish, Welsh, Irish). Anyway, Thatcher felt no regret for past glory of the Empire. On the contrary, not only she accepted its end, but she understood the political unsustainability of the overlap between being British and being Commonwealth citizens, given the fear of the British towards coloured immigration, even from the countries of the Commonwealth. With the Nationality Act of 1981 she tried to redefine the boundaries of the community by making them coincide with those of the United Kingdom alone. Rolling back the frontiers of the state she believed she could strengthen them, on the one hand by preventing the entry of immigrants whose presence would have undermined the stability of the Kingdom and "swamped"[3] its identity, on the other by keeping together the British nationalities. At the same time, she faced the challenge of European integration. In this regard, Thatcher was not against the British stay in the European Economic Community. On the contrary, she saw the creation of the Single Market as the external stimulus necessary for the United Kingdom to return to being economically strong. Hence her support for the Single European Act in 1986. However, she was strenuously hostile to the evolution of the Community into a federal state, since it would have meant the end of Britain as an independent nation. Hence her opposition to the Maastricht Treaty in 1990s. Her unionist feelings at home and anti-federalists towards Europe were inextricably linked. In her vision, there was only one decisional centre for what

[1] "It will not be given to this generation of our countrymen to create a great Empire. But it is given to us to demand an end to decline and to make a stand against what Churchill described as the 'long dismal drawling tides of drift and surrender, of wrong measurements and feeble impulses' ". Margaret Thatcher Foundation. Speech to the Conservative Political Centre Summer School ("The Renewal of Britain"). July 6 1979, Friday.

[2] Torrance, D. (2009). *"We in Scotland" Thatcherism in a Cold Climate*. Birlinn Limited. Edinburgh, p. 10.

[3] Margaret Thatcher, *TV Interview for Granada World in Action ("rather swamped")*, January 27 1978. "Thatcher foundation".

regarded the British people's fate: Westminster. No transfer of powers to regional level or to supra-national level. One parliament for one nation-state. And that nation should have been the British one. The problem was the absence of a true British national identity, which merged all four nations which constitute the United Kingdom into a single identity. British Unionism, in particular that between Scotland and England, had in fact fed on "popular imperialism"[4]. Little had been done to make the two peoples merge into one destiny community. Anyway, Margaret Thatcher's anti-federalism did not prevent her Britain from playing a starring role in Europe as it had never done in the past, dominating the negotiations for the drafting of the Single European Act, obtaining a vast liberalization of the European market, of which Great Britain, in particular the City of London, would have profited. However, once again, economic issues represented only part of Margaret Thatcher's overall design. In fact, she intended to integrate the United Kingdom not simply in a market, but above all in an area, the Western one, that went beyond the borders of the European Economic Community[5]. In this regard, she stressed the importance of the cooperation with the USA in foreign and military policy, as well as the role of the United Kingdom within NATO. To some extent, it can be said that Margaret Thatcher replaced the past imperial vocation with the necessity to "win" the Cold War against the Communist enemy. While defending British sovereignty in the European context, she cultivated the "special relationship" of the United Kingdom with the United States, favoured in this by the election of Ronald Regan, with whom she shared liberal-conservative ideals at home and anticommunism in foreign policy. To be honest, her path had already traced, at least in part. In the first place, some authors argue that, in a certain meaning, there was a sort of "Thatcherism before Thatcher"[6] in the person of Enoch Powell. Indeed, Powell anticipated her with his acceptance of decolonization and his attitude towards immigration. He first realized that British identity had to be rebuilt on bases marked by the borders of the United Kingdom, abandoning the imperial or global ambitions. Moreover, he was a staunch unionist[7]. Secondly, the events that took place before her experience of government seem to have really traced a path without alternatives. Indeed, before her, the Harold Macmillan's government had already accepted the decolonization process and made the first attempts to enter European Economic Community, as well as it had already been driven by the Suez Crisis to take care of the "special relationship" with the United States[8]. As we will see, what made the difference between Suez and the Falklands War was the international context,

[4] See: Glass B. S. (2014), *The Scottish Nation at Empire's End*. Palgrave Macmillan. Basingstoke.

[5] As emphasized in the so-called "Bruges Speech": "The European Community is one manifestation of that European identity, but it is not the only one. We must never forget that east of the Iron Curtain, people who once enjoyed a full share of European culture, freedom and identity have been cut off from their roots. We shall always look on Warsaw, Prague and Budapest as great European cities. Nor should we forget that European values have helped to make the United States of America into the valiant defender of freedom which she has become". Margaret Thatcher Foundation. Speech to the College of Europe ("The Bruges Speech"). On September 20 1988, Tuesday.

[6] See: Vinen R. (2010). *Thatcher's Britain The Politics and Social Upheaval of the Thatcher Era*. Pocket Books. London, p. 43

[7] *Ivi*, pp.56-57

[8] See: Ashton, N. J. (2005). *Harold Macmillan and the "Golden Days" of Anglo-American relations revisited*, 1957-63. Diplomatic History. Backwell publishing. Oxford, pp. 691-723

on the one hand the neutrality of the USSR, and on the other, the support of the USA. In this regard, Thatcher well understood the Suez's great lesson, that is that the United Kingdom could not move without the US support. Furthermore, the Suez Crisis had also shown how weak the link with the Commonwealth actually was, as Canada and Australia refused their support for the motherland [9], alongside India. As already mentioned, Thatcher assumed the responsibility to officially end these ties, with the Nationality Act of 1981, while her predecessors were limited to a simple regulation of migratory flows. Furthermore, she managed for a long time, and largely defined for most of the following years, the way in which the United Kingdom dealt with Europe, supporting the need to be part of it but rejecting any evolution in a federalist direction. Where past governments had limited themselves to managing the British identity crisis, she governed with a clear political line, following a path which she saw as obliged. After all, the end of the Empire was factual, as was the passage from the United Kingdom to the United States in Western world domination. Finally, Thatcher is the one who represented British Unionism in government more than anyone else. Not only because of her intransigence towards Northern Irish terrorism or her obstinacy in refusing the Scottish devolution, but above all because she had "the face of the enemy". Her education, her accent, her lifestyle made her hateful for an electorate who, at least in Scotland, would have been identified as "Conservative", but who saw in her an Anglo-centric view of the whole Kingdom [10]. In the following chapters, I will deepen all these elements that have characterized Margaret Thatcher's idea of nation in thought and action. I will begin with the background of her political experience, which has influenced her vision of the world so much, namely the end of the British Empire and the substantial failure of the Commonwealth as its surrogate. I will continue by exposing the desire for closure that decolonization brought into the hearts and minds of the British, especially with regard to immigration. There were two crucial points in this transition, both marked by the Thatcher's government: the aforementioned Nationality Act of 1981 and the Falklands War. Not so much its victorious outcome, rather the great expectations that this outcome aroused in that part of the British people, largely non-English, who still trusted in a British global (and imperial) revival. After having addressed the issue of nationalities, I will dedicate myself to the relationship of Thatcher's Britain with Europe and the USA. In the conclusion, I will show how all these different elements had to contribute to the Margaret Thatcher's project of nation and to what extent she succeed.

[9] Eayrs, G. J. (1964). *The Commonwealth and Suez: A Documentary Survey*. Oxford University Press.

[10] Torrance, D. (2009). *"We in Scotland" Thatcherism in a Cold Climate*. Birlinn Limited. Edinburgh, p. 9 See also: Dickson T., *The peculiarities of the Scottish: national culture and political action*. "The Political Quarterly" (July-September 1988), p. 3: "The public persona of Margaret Thatcher appears to many Scots to capture all the worst elements of their caricature detested English-uncaring, arrogant, always convinced of their own rightness ('there is no alternative'), possessed of an accent that grates on Scottish ears, and affluent enough to afford a retirement home costing around £500,000 [Mrs Thatcher had recently purchased one in Dulwich]. She is also associated with the conspicuously 'yuppie'/affluent South-East, and the City. There are bitter images for Scots, well aware of stark contrast offered in Scotland by high unemployment, pockets of appalling deprivation in the major urban areas, and reared in a culture where Scottish Protestantism, while not denigrating the accumulation of wealth, has always emphasised its distaste for the flouting of its manifestations".

Chapter I

"Thatcherism before Thatcher"

1.1 *The end of an era: the decolonization*

Almost immediately after the end of the Second World War the British Empire began to crumble. On 15 August 1947 India was recognized as an independent nation. On April 18, 1949, the Free State of Ireland also became an independent republic. In the same years, Britain withdrew its troops from Palestine, leaving the United Nations to solve the Israeli-Palestinian problem. At the beginning of 1947, Britain also withdrew from Greece, where it supported the anti-communist forces in the Greek civil war, passing on these commitments to the USA. In 1949 it also withdrew from its area of occupation in West Germany, again letting the USA take over. The imposition by the US government of the withdrawal from Suez in March 1957 made clear the passage between Britain and the United States in the leadership of the world, or at least of the Western world. In the same year, the Malay Federation obtained independence. The Suez Crisis also highlighted the critical issues of the Commonwealth. The British intervention in Egypt was in fact criticized by the Prime Ministers of India, Canada and Australia. This fact proved that Britain's hope of maintaining a role as global power through the Commonwealth had been vain, since the former colonies had no interest in this. However, Britain did not immediately draw the consequences, but continued to bet on its privileged relationship with the Commonwealth nations for a long time. After Suez, while France, also forced to withdraw by the US intervention, deepened its role of protagonist in the process of European integration, in Britain governments, parties and public opinion looked with suspicion on the European Economic Community founded precisely in the March of 1957. The British ruling class not only considered membership of the European Economic Community dangerous for national sovereignty and not convenient from an economic point of view, given the costs of the Common Agricultural Policy, but above all it knew that this membership meant to cut off ties with the imperial past, abandoning any hope of re-launching on a global scale. This last point represented the very heart of this issue. Historically, in fact, the Empire had represented for Britain something more than a pool of resources to be exploited. Over the centuries, the imperial dimension had shaped British identity until the end of the Second World War. For this reason, Britain can be described as an "imperial nation" [11]. Colonies and Dominions had represented lands of opportunities for many Britons, support for the motherland in times of difficulty (of whose the two world wars provide an example emblematic) and a means of relieving tensions between the dominant nationality, the English one, and the others, Welsh, Irish but above all the Scottish one, providing a common cause. Being British essentially meant supporting the common cause of the Empire, or at least, of a surrogate of it,

[11] See: Carracciolo L. (2019). *Be British Boys!* (Limes. Rivista Italiana di Geopolitica). Gedi Gruppo Editoriale SpA.

the Commonwealth. However, between the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, several factors seemed to lead to a reconsideration of this issue. First, the economy. Beginning in the 1960s, the British economy had entered a phase of substantial stagnation. In addition, the balance of payments was in deficit and inflation was beginning to constitute a structural problem. Precisely the economic problems pushed the Conservative government of Harold Macmillan to reconsider the European issue up to formally apply for membership to the European Economic Community in 1961. This decision was due to the belief that, by not joining the European Economic Community, Britain had excluded itself from the prosperous continental market, thus triggering its economic decline, not being adequately stimulated by competition. Also for this reason, the Macmillan's government had collaborated with Austria, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland to establish the European Free Trade Area (EFTA), an area of free trade parallel and to some extent opposed to the European Economic Community, having characteristics in line with British sensibility, since it was conceived as a free trade area for the industrial products of the member countries, excluding agriculture and fishing, and maintaining the right of the member states to regulate themselves independently in customs matters towards non-member states. Unfortunately, the EFTA proved be ineffective, lacking the German support, since the Federal Republic preferred to privilege the construction of an axis with France, considered a priority to be readmitted into the international community. In the meantime, ties with the rest of the world had been loosened. Harold Macmillan believed that if the cost for keeping a territory outweighed the benefits then it had to be abandoned. This approach accelerated the decolonization process. Nigeria, the Southern Cameroons and British Somaliland were granted independence in 1960, Sierra Leone and Tanganyika in 1961, Trinidad and Tobago and Uganda in 1962, and Kenya in 1963. Although the commercial ties had remained important, in particular for the importation of cheap food, from a political point of view, the acceleration of the decolonization process went in the direction of a departure from the dream of a global revival for Britain. Secondly, the approach of British public opinion towards Commonwealth immigration imposed a reflection about how to redefine the identity of a post-imperial Britain. Through this aspect we can see even better that, if on the one hand the redefinition of the British identity as a European-type nation-state represented a difficult process, on the other, the revival of a "global Britain" appeared to be unrealistic, not only for economic and geopolitical reasons, but also for the unwillingness of Britons to receive the Commonwealth at home. Despite in the intentions of its founders the Commonwealth had to be the re-proposition on a global scale of British values, in which all the citizens of this club of nations recognized themselves, thus making the Britishness and Commonwealth citizenship concepts overlapping, in daily practice the majority of Britons did not recognize, or no longer recognized, Commonwealth immigrants as part of their community, but perceived them as outsiders, not unlike other immigrant groups.

1.2 *Immigration in the post-imperial Britain*

In 1948, the Labour government of Clement Attlee approved a Nationality Act which transformed all colonial British subjects, as well as the Commonwealth citizens, into "Citizens of United Kingdom and Colonies" with the right to abode in the United Kingdom enjoying all social, political and economic rights[12]. In practice, they were all allowed to live and work in the United Kingdom without a visa. Those were the years of post-war reconstruction and the British economy needed many skilled and unskilled workers to fill gaps in the British labour market, including in public services such as the newly created National Health Service and London Transport[13]. This open-door policy, together with the good performance of the British economy up until the early 1960s, favoured a significant growth in immigration. If in 1953 immigration from the Commonwealth counted only 3,000 arrivals, in 1956 these arrived at 46,800, reaching 136,400 in 1961[14]. Precisely because of Nationality Act of 1948, these immigrants were legally regarded as citizens once they settled in the United Kingdom. Therefore, they could not be considered "guest workers" making clear the permanent nature of the Commonwealth immigration from the beginning. Consequently, the British population soon began to worry both for reasons of inter-ethnic coexistence and for the competition that these new arrivals could represent for the jobs and the enjoyment of the welfare state, making the issue of immigration acquire a national relevance for the policy of the United Kingdom much earlier than in other countries. In 1958 episodes of violence exploded in London and Nottingham against West Indians[15] (people from the British territories in the Caribbean) represented for the government a spy of the problems of coexistence that this open-door policy brought with it. Furthermore, opinion polls showed that most Britons wanted to introduce controls and restrictions on the Commonwealth immigration[16]. In response to these pressures of the public opinion, in a context of slow economic growth and in the midst of the last phase of the decolonization process, the Conservative majority that supported the second Macmillan's government approved the Commonwealth Immigrants Act in 1962. The act applied to all Commonwealth immigrants after 1962 and required to be in possession of an employment voucher to be admitted in the United Kingdom. Since these vouchers were issued by the British government according to the needs of the economy, the government provided itself of an effective instrument for regulating entry into the country. Only the family reunification of wives and children under the age of 16 were not affected by this act, as well as those born in the United Kingdom or that they were in possession of a British passport. In general, all governments, between 1962 and 1997, intended on the one hand to control and restrict access, but on the

[12] See: British Nationality Act of 1948, Part I, Section 1,2 and 3 and Part II, Section 4 and 5.

[13] Glennie A. & Chappell L. (2010). *Jamaica: From Diverse Beginning to Diaspora in the Developed World*. Migration Policy Institute *;* The National Archive. *Windrush settlers.*

[14] HC Debate 19 March 2003 Vol. 401 cc270-94WH.

[15] HL Debate 19 November 1958 Vol. 212 cc632-724.

[16] Collins M. (2019) *Immigration and opinion polls in postwar Britain*. Loughborough University.

other they tried to favour integration processes. In this regard, in 1965 a new Nationality Act recognized citizenship to the wives of those who already had citizenship, as well as to stateless children registered in the territory of the United Kingdom. The issue of immigration was intertwined with that of decolonization and the consequences that this brought. Some of these consequences would have had a significant impact on immigration and its management by British governments of any political colour. In fact, following independence, regimes with strong nationalist traits were established in Kenya and Uganda. In Kenya, President Jomo Kenyatta decided by the midnight of November 30, 1967 that all those who were not citizens of Kenya and who were not in possession of an "entry certificate" had to leave the country, even if they were born there. More than 200,000 Asians resident in Kenya since the colonial period realized they were no longer safe. In fact, this decision was part of the more general project of "Africanization" through the expulsion of those who were perceived as foreigners. Many of these Asians, perhaps guessing what the disastrous consequences of decolonization would be for them or simply feeling sincerely British (after all, they had actively contributed to the construction of the Empire, living outside their homeland for generations), had chosen to keep the British passport at the time of independence. Starting from the decision of Kenyatta, therefore, they decided to use it to move to the United Kingdom, of which, after all, they were citizens. By the end of 1967, over 1,000 Asians per month came to Britain from Kenya. To these will soon be added those from Uganda, since, starting in 1969, President Milton Obote also began a policy aimed at the destruction of the Indian bourgeoisie, also residing there since the colonial age. Also in this case it was people with a British passport, citizens of the United Kingdom, therefore, educated within a British culture by virtue of the imperial context in which they had lived until decolonization. However, this did not stop the Labour government of Harold Wilson from taking measures in order to stop this flow of immigration even clashing with international legality. On March 1, 1968 the Commonwealth Immigrants Act was amended to establish that immigrants from East Africa, even if in possession of a regular British passport, should have also a special entry voucher. Those born in the United Kingdom or those who had at least one parent or grandparent born in the United Kingdom were excluded from this obligation. In the House of Commons, the decision was criticized by both the left-backbenchers of the Labour Party and part of the Conservative Party. The provision was approved through a convergence between parts of the majority and the opposition. The criticisms of the provision were of different types, even if connected. The measure was judged as racist, since it treated coloured people as foreigners despite having a British passport, while it excluded from further obligations those who had parents or grandparents already citizens or born in the United Kingdom, maintaining open a channel only for returning to the motherland to the white settlers. In addition, in doing so, the United Kingdom betrayed its word given five years earlier at the time of independence of the East Africa, when it had negotiated access to the British passport by the Asians who lived there in the moment of

the independence. Emblematic example of this betrayal was the negotiator of the agreement, Duncan Sandys, Secretary of State for Relations with the Commonwealth in 1963 who, five years later, was among the supporters Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1968, which hindered entry into the United Kingdom for those who had a British passport as a result to an agreement he had negotiated[17]. This way of acting confirmed the prevalence in the United Kingdom of the opinion that it was necessary to sever ties with the colonial past, if not even to disregard that past, even as if the Empire had never existed. The new Commonwealth Immigrants Act was adopted in a context of general hostility towards coloured immigration. On April 20, 1968, Enoch Powell, member of the Conservative Shadow Cabinet, delivered his most famous speech, the "Rivers of Blood" speech, to a meeting of the Conservative Political Centre in Birmingham. To tell the truth, the expression "rivers of blood" does not appear during the speech, being instead an allusion to a verse by Virgil in the Aeneid that Powell quoted on that occasion: "as I look ahead, I am filled with foreboding; like the Roman, I seem to see the River Tiber foaming with much blood"[18]. And indeed, it would be reductive to consider this speech purely in terms of racism and demagogy. In fact, unlike Duncan Sandys, Enoch Powell had abandoned his previous imperialist convictions already in 1947 following the independence of India, becoming sincerely convinced that the fate of the Empire was marked and that, if Britain wanted to survive as a united nation, it had to, among others things, to defend its borders from coloured mass immigration like a little European nation, which essentially was destined to become[19]. Even if this belief could be considered as racist it certainly was a true conviction, not an instrumental stance adopted only to follow the popular mood. Furthermore, the core of Powell's political discourse on immigration concerned the fear, more or less founded, of a colonization by the coloured peoples. Citing a letter from an voter of his constituency, Powell stated: "In this country in 15- or 20 -years' time the black man will have the whip hand over the white man"[20]. Quoting this letter, Powell gave voice to a widespread popular feeling, very far from imperial pride, which instead persisted in the Conservative Party and which had contributed so much to the unity of the United Kingdom until then. On the contrary, most of the British now feared that world had once dominated and felt threatened its identity and its survival. Assuming that the concept of Britishness still made sense, this could not be in adhering to a system of values that even involved a quarter of the emerged lands and that, in practice, gave freedom to so many people, coloured and not born in the United Kingdom, to settle in their land as citizens on a par with those born and raised there. Even if both nativist and racist feelings had their role in this story, it was a different racism, and to some extent radically opposed to what had characterized the nineteenth century and part of the twentieth, since it was no longer the

[17] Mark Lattimer. *When Labour played the racist card*. NewStatesman. 22 January 1999.
[18] Heffer, S. (1999). *Like the Roman: The Life of Enoch Powell*. Orion. London, p. 449.
[19] Vinen, R. (2010). *Thatcher's Britain The Politics and Social Upheaval of the Thatcher Era*. Pocket Books. London, pp.53- 56
[20] Quoted by Powell, E. (1969). *Freedom and Reality*. Elliot Right Way Books. Kingswood, p.282.

myth of the white man's burden, a superior race with the duty to civilize through the conquest the inferior peoples, but of the fear of having become the land of conquest of the black man from whom the white "natives" had to defend themselves. Powell was in tune with this feeling, continuing his speech by quoting a letter from a woman of Northumberland about an elderly woman living on a Wolverhampton Street where she was the only white resident. According to Powell, this woman complained that once immigrants had moved into the street in which she lived, her white lodgers left. In addition, he connected this feeling of being invaded with the defence of property and the right of the owner on how to dispose of it. In the course of his speech, in fact, Powell claimed that the same aged woman from Wolverhampton Street had asked for a lower tax rate on her home at local offices. The latter had replied that she could rent the empty rooms and when the woman had said that it was not possible to have white tenants, she was told that there was no place for racial discrimination in the country[21]. In practice, Powell also attacked the anti-discriminatory legislation (in 1968 a new Race Relations Act had been approved, amending the previous of 1965) as well as the traditionally non-discriminatory administrative culture. On the one hand, Powell considered it a restriction to the right to freedom of speech and partly to the property of British citizens, on the other, he claimed that it prevented raising the issue of immigration in the United Kingdom and therefore taking appropriate actions before it was too late. In this regard, quoting Virgil rhetorically, Powell expressed the widespread fear in the British population that the urban suburbs of the United Kingdom, particularly of England, developed an interracial violence similar to that of the cities of the United States of those times[22]. He especially criticized family reunification, raising the fear that it would multiply the growth of the immigrant population by replacing the local population [23] and in the meantime entering into competition with the British not only for jobs, but also for services, since the Race Relations Act of 1968 made it illegal to refuse housing, employment, or public services to a person on the grounds of colour, race, ethnic or national origins in Great Britain (but not in the autonomous Northern Ireland, at least until 1972 when the "direct rule" of London was restored due to the "Troubles"). This speech had important consequences for Enoch Powell's political career. Edward Heath, then leader of the Conservative opposition, expelled him from his Shadow Cabinet and shortly thereafter, Powell left the Conservative Party, being elected as Unionist in Northern Ireland until

[21] "She went to apply for a rate reduction and was seen by a young girl, who on hearing she had a seven-roomed house, suggested she should let part of it. When she said the only people she could get were Negroes, the girl said, "Racial prejudice won't get you anywhere in this country ". So she went home". Quoted by Powell's *'Rivers of Blood' speech.* telegraph.co.uk.

[22] "Like the Roman, I seem to see 'the River Tiber foaming with much blood'. That tragic and intractable phenomenon which we watch with horror on the other side of the Atlantic but which there is interwoven with the history and existence of the States itself, is coming upon us here by our own volition and our own neglect. Indeed, it has all but come. In numerical terms, it will be of American proportions long before the end of the century". Quoted by Powell, E. (1969). *Freedom and Reality*. Elliot Right Way Books. Kingswood, pp. 289–90

[23] "It almost passes belief that at this moment 20 or 30 additional immigrant children are arriving from overseas in Wolverhampton alone every week - and that means 15 or 20 additional families a decade or two hence. […] We must be mad, literally mad, as a nation to be permitting the annual inflow of some 50,000 dependants, who are for the most part the material of the future growth of the immigrant-descended population". Quoted by Powell's *'Rivers of Blood' speech*. telegraph.co.uk.

the 1987 general election, when he lost his seat against the Irish Nationalist Eddie McGrady, probably because of the demographic changes in the area, which saw Catholics to overtake Protestants in that constituency[24]. Despite the outraged reactions to Powell's speech, successive governments, both Conservatives and Labour, further restricted immigration. However, they affected mainly primary immigration. After all, restrictions to the family reunification had already been introduced with the Commonwealth Immigration Act of 1962, which, as mentioned, left this channel of entry open to the wives and children under 16 years old only. Since then, family reunification represented an increasing share in the total number of legal accesses, until becoming, in 1971, the main access channel[25]. The Immigration Act of 1971 gave the right to freely enter only to those with direct ties to British citizens, making general what was already established in the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1968 concerning people from East Africa alone[26]. However, those who had a British passport were allowed to freely access the United Kingdom, since, in the following years, several international courts declared the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1968 not in accordance with international rules, as a state cannot deny its own citizens access within its territory [27]. Probably, the obligation to receive, as legacy of the Empire and the following decolonization, so many people because of their British passports (to which was added the imposition of further openings to the European workers after the entry into force of the Single European Act in 1987 [28]) pushed British governments to restrict access to everyone else as much as possible. Furthermore, we must not forget that Great Britain was going through a difficult period also from an economic point of view. As already mentioned, still in 1978, Margaret Thatcher would have interpreted this fear of the British of being culturally "swamped" by immigration. In this regard, her government intervened another time on family reunification, even if not in such an incisive way. Basically, the only restriction to family reunification introduced by her Immigration Act of 1988 was limiting family reunification to a single wife, denying it to anyone already had a wife in the United Kingdom, in order to prevent the surreptitious introduction of polygamy [29]. The Nationality Act of 1981 was of greater importance, since, with it, Thatcher cut the last ties with the Commonwealth, as Powell had hoped to do eleven years before.

[24] Noteworthy is his response to an interviewer's question asking him to explain the reasons for his defeat: "My opponent polled more votes than me" quoted by Simon Heffer in his *Like the Roman: The Life of Enoch Powell*.

[25] See: Berkeley R. , Khan O. and Ambikaipaker M (2006) *What's new about new immigrants in twenty-first century Britain?*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation. York, p. 23: "Since immigration controls had limited primary-entry immigration, the main avenue of entry was through claiming dependant status on legally resident immigrants".

[26] Mark Lattimer. *When Labour played the racist card*. NewStatesman. 22 January 1999.

[27] *Ibidem*.

[28] The Section 7 of the Immigration Act of 1988 carried out this practice.

[29] Immigration Act 1988, Section 2.

Chapter II

Re-founding Britain

2.1 *Thatcher and immigration*

During the TV interview for Granada World in Action on January 27 1978, one year before her first electoral victory, Margaret Thatcher explained quite clearly her vision of immigration to the United Kingdom. The first question from the interviewer, Gordon Burns, focused on this very topic. She stated that without new measures, there would be 4 million immigrants from the New Commonwealth or Pakistan at the end of the century, since the entry flows estimated per year were between 50,000 and 45,000 admissions, the equivalent, in her view, of two new towns. According to her, this projection was somewhat worrying and that meant that people were really afraid that the United Kingdom might be "rather swamped" by people with a different culture. She attributed the hostility of the British population to the fear arouse by these considerable flows of entry. Consequently, she considered a very strong reduction in entry flows necessary (even "an end to immigration") to have good race relations. Such position can also be explained by the obligation to welcome those in possession of a British passport, although living outside the United Kingdom, nor being born there. A legacy of the lost Empire and decolonization. As mentioned, there were 200,000 only in Kenya. And East Africa was the example Thatcher provided in her interview when she mentioned the "United Kingdom passports holders". Alongside these, whose, as already mentioned, the United Kingdom was obliged to accept by the judgments of the international courts, Thatcher stated that she wanted to admit only "compassionate cases". In practice, she took a restrictive approach even in these latter cases, as the example of the "boat people" shows. In 1989, approximately 57,000 Vietnamese "boat people" arrived in Hong Kong, then still under the British rule. Margaret Thatcher's government ordered the repatriation of 40,000 of these, considering them not entitled to political asylum. On that occasion, Thatcher defended her decision even against the opinion of the United States government, then no longer kept by Ronald Regan, but by George H. W. Bush, worried about the fate of the "boat people" repatriated to the country from which they fled. Although she had always been alongside the United States of America in the struggle for the triumph of the "Free World" over Communism, as well as for the expansion of the market economy globally, Thatcher did not like the position of the US government in this question, considering immigration policy a matter of national sovereignty to be pursued in the interest of the citizens of her country. Even of Hong Kong, as long as Hong Kong remained under British jurisdiction. After all, she said in this circumstance, the US administration also deported illegal immigrants from Mexico or Haiti, going so far as

to accuse the US government of "double standards" [30]. Ignoring, in the name of the "interests of the people of Hong Kong", the difference in political regime between Mexico and Haiti on the one hand and Vietnam on the other. It was not the first time that Margaret Thatcher had to deal with the "boat people" issue. Ten years earlier, at the beginning of her experience as Prime Minister, more than 60,000 were in camps in Hong Kong, both from Vietnam and Cambodia, and they were arriving at the rate of 500 a month. In that occasion, she had said that the acceptance of Vietnamese "boat people" had to be matched with a reduction of immigrants from British Dependent Territories (which, as we will see soon, were territories still under British jurisdiction, such as Hong Kong too, but whose citizens were not necessarily British citizens and which therefore were subject to immigration laws, in particular the aforementioned Immigration Act of 1971). She had fewer objections to refugees from Rhodesia, Poland or Hungary, as she believed they could be more easily assimilated [31]. Furthermore, in the case of Rhodesian whites, they were often legally recognized as British citizens by descent. Regarding the "boat people", the quota that the United Nations intended to allocate to Great Britain was 10,000 people [32]. The apparently contained number was actually problematic, because these people had lost everything and therefore represented, at least at the beginning, a cost for public finances, which, in the context of the economic difficulties that Britain faced then, was charged with particular symbolic meaning. Furthermore, the echo of Enoch Powell's speech still resounded in the country. In this regard, the hostility of the population towards non-white immigration made Margaret Thatcher fear street riots (such as those against the West Indians in the late 1950s), especially at the time when these immigrants were offered several services paid by taxpayers, primarily council housing. Eventually, the government negotiated an agreement that diluted the entry flow of the 10,000 fixing the entry of 3,000 per year [33]. Although in the private sphere she often expressed beliefs similar to those of Enoch Powell, Margaret Thatcher's governments never questioned the anti-discrimination laws. Nevertheless, according to her, the obligation to treat new arrivals in the same way as citizens (for example in the enjoyment of services and council housing) made even more necessary to tighten upstream on arrivals, since it was precisely from this equality of treatment that part of the anxiety towards a consistent immigration derived [34]. However, it should be remembered that the immigration laws were already stringent, and this was also pointed out to her during the 1978 interview mentioned above [35]. Margaret Thatcher made this legislation even more stringent in 1988 with a new Immigration Act, which, in addition to not allowing

[30] Margaret Thatcher Foundation. *Cold War: "Thatcher stands firm on boat people" (MT & Bush reported clash at Camp David). Commentary (Sunday Times)* by David Hughes and Jon Swain. On November 26 1989, Sunday.

[31] Alan Travis. *Margaret Thatcher reluctant to give boat people refuge in Britain*. The Guardian. Wednesday 30 December 2009.

[32] *Ibidem*.

[33] *Ibidem*.

[34] Margaret Thatcher, *TV Interview for Granada World in Action ("rather swamped")*, January 27 1978. "Thatcher foundation".

[35] *Ibidem*.

the family reunification of polygamous immigrants for more than one wife (therefore denying it if there was already a wife resident in the United Kingdom)[36], limited the right of appeal against deportation, especially for those who belonged to the family of a person who had been ordered to be expelled [37]. In this regard, Margaret Thatcher had already rejected the principle of pure *ius soli* for the recognition of British citizenship with the Nationality Act of 1981, recognizing citizenship for those born in the United Kingdom, but with "settled" parents, that is, regular immigrants and residents permanently. In this way, she gave to the government full accessibility to deport irregular immigrants, unlike, for example, what happened, and still happens, in the USA, when in a family of irregular immigrants there is a child born on its territory (therefore, automatically, a citizen of the United States, by definition non-deportable and who, being a minor, cannot be divided from his parents). Her Nationality Act of 1981 was a really significant change, since it is not constituted a mere restriction of the admissions, but a precise definition of who was British and who was not, on the one hand specifying the boundaries of the national community, and on the other by responding to the political necessity to allow to the descendants of the British settlers to return home. According to the British common sense, in fact, once closed the chapter on decolonization, the door had to be kept open to those who still had "ties of blood" with Britain. In a context, as we have seen, of a general withdrawal from the world, many of these people needed help like other refugees or immigrants, but having more of the these latter the fact of being considered part of the nation. Rhodian whites in particular claimed to flee a dictatorial degeneration triggered by Robert Mugabe. In this regard, they used to say that they did not run away from the blacks, but from the Communists [38]. The same could have been said of the "boat people", but for the citizens of the United Kingdom the descendants of the British colonists were their compatriots towards whom they had solidarity duties which they did not feel to have towards the other "foreigners". A similar sentiment, as we shall see, would have been at the origin of another very important event in the definition of Margaret Thatcher's nation, that is the Falklands War. A feeling that no government could ignore and least of all the Margaret Thatcher's government, to whom both supporters and detractors have always recognized a particularly strong and almost innate connection with the country's deep feeling on these issues. A connection that had certainly played an important role in her rise, helping her to become leader before of the Conservative Party and then of the United Kingdom, despite being an outsider, winning three elections and without losing even one.

[36] Immigration Act, 1988. Section 2.
[37] *Ivi*. Section 5.
[38] Joseph Lelyveld. *TO WHITE EXILES, THERE'LL ALWAYS BE A RHODESIA*. Special To the New York Times. 15 January 1982.

2.2 *The Nationality Act of 1981*

Since the British Nationality Act of 1981 put an end to the application of the pure *ius soli* and excluded from British nationality those who did not live in the United Kingdom, except those who had direct British ancestors or were in possession of a British passport, Thatcher was often accused of wanting to re-found British identity on the "ties of blood", abandoning that tradition of inclusion that had made Britishness not a question of "race" but of sharing common values of which the Commonwealth was the main manifestation[39]. However, in light of a non-superficial reading of the British Nationality Act of 1981, this interpretation should be rejected. In fact, at the time of rewriting the terms within which an individual is recognized as a British or foreign citizen, the Conservative majority she led did not adopt exclusively a blood criterion, but it had also identified some criteria to connect as closely as possible citizenship with a real link with the territory. In this regard, even if a principle of pure *ius soli* was abandoned, citizenship was recognized to the children of the regular immigrants identified as "settled" (which means with a permanent residence permit)[40]. In addition, citizenship was also attributed to children at least ten years old residing in the country from birth, trying to individuate a criterion to be sure of the link of that child with the land of the United Kingdom. This criterion consisted in imposing a limit of stay outside the United Kingdom of no more than 90 days for each year of the ten years from birth[41]. Furthermore, in order to avoid an excessively rigid interpretation of this criterion, the next section attributed to the Secretary of State the power to recognize the citizenship also to those who had not respected this limit due to particular circumstances[42]. Citizenship continued to be attributed automatically to orphans and foundlings found in the United Kingdom and also to those adopted by United Kingdom citizens, even if the adoption had been cancelled later[43]. Therefore, the Thatcher's government preserved the element of territoriality, typically Anglo-Saxon, according to which those who live in a given territory and therefore undergoing the decisions taken for that territory, first of all fiscal ones, have the right to vote, to be therefore citizens, regardless of the origin, ethnicity or colour of the skin. The point was to establish where this sharing of one's destiny with the rest of the community originated. In this regard, the abolition of the definition of "British Citizen and Colonies" and its substitution with a clear distinction between "British Citizen", "Commonwealth Citizen" and "Citizen of Dependent Territories" rolled back the frontiers of the British community. No longer those of the vast British Empire nor of its heir, the Commonwealth, but simply those of the small United Kingdom. Therefore, considering this act as the final break between Britishness and the Commonwealth is right. The importance the

[39] Radhika Natarajan, *Ties of blood: how Thatcher altered "British".* "Open Democracy". 17 April 2013.
[40] British Nationality Act 1981, Section 1.
[41] *Ibidem*.
[42] *Ibidem*.
[43] *Ibidem.*

Commonwealth had had in keeping British identity alive had held back the predecessors of Margaret Thatcher from taking this step. Evidently, the time was now ripe for an attempt to do what Enoch Powell had proposed some years before, that is to close the imperial chapter forever, reinventing itself as a nation-state. Many observers have pointed out that in reality the British Nationality Act of 1981 did not have significant effects on the acquisition of citizenship. Still today, in fact, the vast majority of children born in the United Kingdom acquire British nationality at birth. This is not surprising. After all, the children of permanently resident immigrants continued to be admitted as citizens and this, together with the other access channels, maintained the conditions of admission to citizenship quite generous. Theoretically, only the children of irregular, or regular immigrants but temporally resident, would not have had access to citizenship[44]. Evidently they were a small minority[45]. However, the absence of a pure *ius soli* eliminated at the root any potential controversy over possible anchor-babies (the aforementioned children born in a territory, such as the USA, where there is a principle of pure *ius soli*), giving to the government a complete margin of manoeuvre to expel families of irregular immigrants, a not insignificant element considering the importance given in that phase to the control of migratory flows by the public opinion. Anyway, regardless of the real impact on the acquisition of citizenship and migration flows, this act has had a very strong symbolic meaning. With it, the Thatcher's government intended to mark the beginning of a new course for Britain as a nation-state with defined borders, focused on the care of its own internal affairs, defending its national interests dealing with the other European nations, far from solitary adventures around the world. This intention appears even more clear if we remember that the "Citizen of Dependent Territories" category was the result of lobbying in Parliament by those who did not want to sever identity ties with those territories still under British control. Originally the distinction between Britain and the rest had to be even clearer[46]. Nevertheless, the line that Margaret Thatcher had made her, that the overlap of Britishness and Commonwealth membership was not politically sustainable, had won. Indeed, the advent of Margaret Thatcher's leadership was driven not only by the economic interests of the new middle class, intolerant of excessive government interference in the economy, but also by a new and more "islander" nationalism, characterized by the fear of seeing its own identity "swamped" by immigration and engulfed by a federal Europe. With the imperial era closed forever, these people felt comfortable living in a new "Little Britain"

[44] See also: Sawyer C. & Wray H. (2014). *Country Report: United Kingdom*, for the European University Institute, Florence, the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies and the EUDO Citizenship Observatory.

[45] See: Berkeley R. , Khan O. and Ambikaipaker M (2006)*What's new about new immigrants in twenty-first century Britain?*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation. York, p. 23: "In 1971 there seems to have been little irregular immigration to Britain, or at least relatively little concern about it. Two figures support this conclusion: the small number of deportations (usually no more than 200 to 300 per year) and the relatively small number of applications following an amnesty in 1974 (only 1,990 in two years)". On the contrary illegal immigration is increased during 2000s: *Ivi*, p. 30: "the evidence suggests that there is a large amount of irregular immigration in Britain" (the paper was published in 2006).

[46] In fact, the Green Paper *Who Do We Think We Are?* produced by a study group chaired by Edward Garner (who was also a barrister) in 1980 originally proposed two categories of British nationality, British citizenship and British Overseas citizenship. However, the British Dependent Territory governments successfully lobbied for an additional category of nationality.

which, while open to free trade, kept its sovereignty and cultural identity intact. In this regard, it is fundamental to emphasize that, although sometimes she could use economic and social arguments, immigration for Thatcher was above all a political issue, strongly connected with the need to protect Britain's identity at a very delicate moment in its history. Nevertheless, this new nationalism had its enemies firstly within the British borders, rather than outside, since "Little Britain" was mainly an English ideal. In Scotland, in fact, British Unionism had always fed on the opportunity given to the Scots to participate in the enrichment process of the colonial adventure. This crack in British Unionism was destined to become problematic for the Thatcher's nation. As well as, in perspective, for the unity of the Kingdom.

2.3 *The Falklands War: "Great Expectations"*

The importance of the Falklands War lies both in its causes and in its consequences, both strongly intertwined with the politics of Margaret Thatcher and in particular with her attempt to re-found the British nation by overcoming the imperial past. The causes include both the Nationality Act of 1981 and the revision of military spending put in place to reduce costs, by safeguarding only the commitments with NATO. In the consequences not only the electoral victory of the Conservatives in 1983, but also the disappointment (or disillusionment) that the second Thatcher's government represented for the British non-English electorate, particularly in Scotland, disappointment which emerged in the general election of 1987; in which the Conservative and Unionist Party of the United Kingdom, despite being its undisputed winner, lost its "British" connotation (English, Scottish and Welsh)[47], assuming, in spite of itself, the appearance of a sort of English national party, which identified the interests and ideals of the English people with the interests and ideals of the whole British people, a result that will mark the beginning of the crisis of the British Unionism. In order to better understand the meaning of this war, we can start by saying that, contrary to what some claim, it was far from being a colonial war. In fact, not only did the United Kingdom defend itself from an attack on its possession, but above all it fought to defend the right to self-determination of the inhabitants of the Falklands, who wanted to continue living under British jurisdiction, not, as had been typical of colonial wars, to safeguard its interests by trampling on the rights of indigenous peoples[48]. Secondly, it can be said that the Argentine attack was also the result of a double misunderstanding: on the one hand the British government was convinced that Argentina would never attempt to seize the Falklands by force, on the other the Military Junta of Argentina was convinced that the United Kingdom would never seriously commit itself to defend its possession. Both had well-founded reasons for these beliefs. The British

[47] Torrance, D. (2009). *"We in Scotland" Thatcherism in a Cold Climate*. Birlinn Limited. Edinburgh, pp.157-158

[48] "Although Argentina presented the Falklands as an example of colonialism, the Islands remained British because of the principle that had animated the anti-colonial movement…self-determination" Quoted by Fry, G. K. (2008). The Politics of the Thatcher Revolution An interpretation of British Politics, 1979-1990. Palgrave Macmillan. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York, p.190

on the one hand considered an Argentine attack irrational, as the demographic decline of the Falklands would relatively quickly solve the problem of the opposition of its population to any transfer agreement[49], the Argentines on the other hand witnessed the dismantling of the "Endurance", the ship placed to protect the Islands[50]. The latter decision, strongly criticized by the Labour opposition led by James Callaghan, the former Prime Minister defeated in 1979 by Margaret Thatcher, had been due to a program of defence cuts in all areas not related to NATO commitments.[51] However, Thatcher could say in good faith that the "Endurance" was an obsolete ship, which could not seriously defend the Falklands. Nonetheless, Callaghan could confidently retort that its dismantling could mean in the eyes of the Argentine government a sign of disengagement from the British government in defending the Islands[52]. Callaghan, for his part, could also appear in good faith. In 1977, in fact, he had faced a possible Argentine threat maintaining there a covert task force, including a nuclear submarine[53] (however, it was later known that Argentina did not know about this move, consequently even at the time there had been no real deterrence)[54]. To all this must be added the failure of British intelligence, which did not notice the mobilization of the Argentine armed forces[55]. Anyway, before the outbreak of the war, the British government's position was to find a compromise with the Argentine government. In this regard, Peter Carrington, Foreign Secretary and Minister for Overseas Development in the first Thatcher's government, pushed for an agreement to transfer sovereignty to Argentina in exchange for a one hundred-years lease to the United Kingdom, the so-called "leaseback agreement", which Argentina would probably have accepted[56]. However, in this situation the Prime Minister's position was not to sign any agreement without the consent of the inhabitants of the Falklands[57]. Formally to respect their right of self-determination, in practice not to antagonize a public opinion lined up on the side of the inhabitants of the Falklands, both for reasons of national pride and a feeling of ethnic

[49] *Ibidem*.

[50] *Ivi*, p.189 and p.192. See also: Childs, D. (2012). *Britain since 1945 A political history*. Routledge. Seventh Edition. Abingdon, Oxon and New York, p. 227 and Carr, F. (1990). *Foreign and Defence Policy: The impact of Thatcherism*. Public Policy Under Thatcher. Edited by Stephen P. Savage and Lynton Robins. The Macmillan Press. Houndmills, Basinstoke, Hampshire and London.

[51] Carr, F. (1990). *Foreign and Defence Policy: The impact of Thatcherism*. Public Policy Under Thatcher. Edited by Stephen P. Savage and Lynton Robins. The Macmillan Press. Houndmills, Basinstoke, Hampshire and London. See: Moore, C. (2013). *Margaret Thatcher The Authorised Biography Volume One: Not for turning*. Penguin Books. London, p. 660: "[…] because Britain had made promises to NATO commitment, cuts could not come in Europe but had to be found elsewhere in the defence budget […] Because non-NATO cuts were easier to make in the navy than in the other services, this is what happened."

[52] Childs, D. (2012). *Britain since 1945 A political history*. Routledge. Seventh Edition. Abingdon, Oxon and New York, p.227

[53] Fry, G. K. (2008). *The Politics of the Thatcher Revolution An interpretation of British Politics, 1979-1990*. Palgrave Macmillan. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York, p.189

[54] *Ibidem*. See also: Moore, C. (2013). *Margaret Thatcher The Authorised Biography Volume One: Not for turning*. Penguin Books. London, p.664

[55] Moore, C. (2013). *Margaret Thatcher The Authorised Biography Volume One: Not for turning*. Penguin Books. London, p.664

[56] Fry, G. K. (2008). *The Politics of the Thatcher Revolution An interpretation of British Politics, 1979-1990*. Palgrave Macmillan. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York, p.191

[57] Moore, C. (2013*). Margaret Thatcher The Authorised Biography Volume One: Not for turning*. Penguin Books. London, p. 659

affinity with them. On the one hand, the Labour Party accused the government of appeasement towards a "fascist" regime[58], on the other hand many Conservatives did not share the total abandonment of a "global" perspective for the United Kingdom. Finally, everyone believed the inhabitants of the Falklands to be British like them, even if the Nationality Act of 1981 had removed the right of abode in the United Kingdom for many Falklands inhabitants, classifying them as citizens of a Dependent Territory. In this regard, only those with direct British ancestry could automatically enter the United Kingdom, the rest was subject to immigration laws which became increasingly restrictive, as seen above. At that time, the Falklands had just under two thousand inhabitants. Of these, about 800 had lost the right of abode in the United Kingdom because of the Nationality Act of 1981. In practice, they were not, or were no longer, British citizens. This probably made the opposition of the inhabitants of the Falklands to any agreement to transfer their islands to Argentina even stronger. Their cohesion in protecting each member of their community regardless of his origin was remarkable; for them, passports did not count because everyone had lived in the shadow of the Union Jack and, as often happens, the distance from the motherland had strengthened the community and identity elements. In addition, the Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Nicholas Ridley, questioned by them on what the British government would have done in the event of an invasion by Argentina, answered that the British government would use its military forces to retrieve it[59]. A mistake, perhaps. Nevertheless, could he act differently? The British government did not expect an attack and had not instructed him on what to answer in the case of such a simple but fundamental question by the inhabitants of the Falklands. Perhaps the latter had perceived that this risk existed. After all, the British government was wrong to postulate that the Argentine Military Junta moved on the basis of rational considerations. On the contrary, the Argentine regime aimed not so much at the Falklands (whose population was declining at a steady pace) but at the prestige that would derive from their annexation, which would divert public opinion from its internal failures, particularly in the economic sphere. Anyway, the assurance of being defended in the event of an attack and of never being abandoned made the inhabitants of Falklands feel free to refuse any compromise, because any compromise would have meant the loss of any connection with what they considered their motherland, regardless of their passports and nationality and immigration laws. Furthermore, upon returning home, Ridley, and with him the Conservative government, had to deal with the fire of the Labour opposition and Conservative backbenchers, as well as a public opinion decidedly in favour of maintaining possession of the Falklands, despite the costs that it entailed. Knowing that they had allies in the motherland strengthened the inhabitants of the Falklands in their positions. In this story, Thatcher had

[58] Fry, G. K. (2008). *The Politics of the Thatcher Revolution An interpretation of British Politics, 1979-1990*. Palgrave Macmillan. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York, p.192

[59] "At a meeting at Port Stanley during his visit, Ridley was asked: 'If the Argentines invaded, what is Britain going to do about it?' Ridley replied: 'Kick them out!' " Quoted by Fry G. K. (2008) *The Politics of the Thatcher Revolution An interpretation of British Politics, 1979-1990*. Palgrave Macmillan. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York, p.191

stayed on the side-lines. On the one hand, not wanting an agreement with Argentina without the consent of the inhabitants of the Falklands, on the other leaving this issue to her Ministers, aware of the priorities dictated by being part of NATO in a problematic public budget context. However, this meant that the Falklands were actually poorly defended. While the realists of the Conservative Party and the pacifists of the Left followed, for different reasons, the line of the abandonment of any vestige of British imperialism, Thatcher, while understanding the reasons of the realists in general, in this specific case felt very well the wave of patriotism that, from Right to Left, crossed the country. Therefore, when the Argentine general Leopoldo Galtieri launched the offensive and occupation of the Falklands on April 2, 1982, regaining them became essential to avoid the fall of the government. However, there was no panic. Shaken by the event, the so-called "Suez syndrome" seemed out-dated, contrasted with rational arguments. In fact, Suez had not been a military defeat, but a political one, determined by the American intervention in the context of the Cold War. On the contrary, this war had nothing to do with Suez's dynamics and in fact saw the United States government as an ally and support. This time it was a matter of defending a British possession and with it of the honour of the nation. British nationalism strengthened beyond any difference. Maybe for the last time. In this sense, one could speak of the "last roar of the British lion". Nostalgic of the Empire or proponents of a "Little Britain", all of them were determined to fight against those who had dared to attack British people. The government proved to be up to the task. The enemy was never underestimated nor overrated. The forces needed to regain the Islands were well calculated and even the possible losses (even 3,000 according to Admiral Sir John Fieldhouse which in the end were far less, even though 253 British soldiers lost their life[60] for the Falklands). There was some forcing, given that the United Nations insisted on calling for a peaceful solution, but the attitude of the Argentine military regime actually made a solution that was not military impossible. In their best tradition, the British went to war with courage and determination, but without the exaltation of the jingoists. At that point, the Falklands had to be regained "Because if we don't, in a few months we will live in a different country whose word will count for nothing"[61], as said Sir Henry Leach, at the time First Lord of the Sea and Chief of General Staff of the Royal Navy. Thatcher could only agree. After all, it was not an impossible mission, only a long one, given the distance of those islands from the motherland. During the operations, the British air forces received the help of the Americans for satellite signals. The U.S. government also supplied equipment. In this regard, Thatcher later said: "Without the Sidewinder missile, supplied to us by US Defense Minister Caspar Weinberger, we could never have got back the Falklands"[62]. In addition to satellite photographs, NATO also offered intelligence information.

[60] Fry G. K. (2008) *The Politics of the Thatcher Revolution An interpretation of British Politics, 1979-1990*. Palgrave Macmillan. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York, p. 199

[61] Hastings, M. ; Jenkins, S. (1983). *Battle for the Falklands*. Pan Books. London, pp. 85-86

[62] Quoted by Paul Reynolds. *Obituary: Caspar Weinberger*. BBC News. Tuesday 28 March 2006.

However, the maintenance operations of the naval fleet were carried out thanks to the logistic ships of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary. Surely, having maintained naval bases from Gibraltar to Ascension Island (where the Americans rented a base that provided cooperation) proved to be instrumental in the successful outcome of the war. Probably this would have provided, in retrospect, an argument to those who did not want to give up the revival of Great Britain as a world power, while Thatcher and those who thought like her kept in mind the vital importance of the alliances, in particular with the United States. Furthermore, even if it wished for a peaceful solution, the United Nations Assembly had approved a resolution that ordered Argentina to withdraw from the Falklands. Not even the Soviet Union vetoed it (and actually there is no wonder, since the principles invoked by the Argentine Military Junta to justify its act of aggression, if recognized legitimate, would have called into question the territorial unity of many states of the world, including, probably, the Soviet one). In practice, the international context was, this time, largely in favour of the British. Operations started from Ascension Island, the base of the British fleet, to the South Georgia Islands. On April 25, 1982 they were recaptured. As is known, the bloodiest episode was the sinking of the cruiser General Belgrano, by the British nuclear submarine Conqueror, in which 368 Argentine soldiers died[63]. The fact was considered highly controversial as General Belgrano was in retreat and moreover 35 miles outside the Total Exclusion Zone around the Falklands declared by the British[64]. Nevertheless, the ship provided aircraft direction for the Argentine air force and it was equipped with modern missiles[65]. In addition, the British, who had violated the Armada Argentina codes, knew that the ship would reverse course to attack them with the favour of darkness[66]. The sinking of General Belgrano showed the low anti-submarine capacity of the Argentine ships, pushing the other naval units to retreat. However, the Argentines continued attacks on earth bases from the sky. The Royal Air Force instead bombed Port Stanley in seven raids. The meaning of these operations was twofold. On the one hand, destroy the enemy anti-aircraft defences and render the airport runway unusable (and therefore any counter-offensive impossible), on the other hand demonstrate to the Argentines that, if Port Stanley was within the reach of the bombers, Buenos Aires was even more so, hence forcing them to commit their air force to defend it. If the first goal was only partially successful, the second was fully achieved[67]. The British prevailed on the sea, but above all in the sky, thanks to the clear technological superiority of their aircraft, however vulnerable to the Argentine anti-aircraft. In addition, the sinking of seven ships by the Argentine air force, pushed the British not to underestimate this enemy force, which was certainly more backward in terms of means, but with capable and brave pilots. To prevent Argentine

[63] Childs, D. (2012). *Britain since 1945 A political history*. Routledge. Seventh Edition. Abingdon, Oxon and New York, p.229
[64] *Ibidem*.
[65] *Ibidem.*
[66] Peter Beaumont. *Belgrano crew 'trigger happy'*. The Guardian. 2003. Sunday 25 May 2003.
[67] Freedman, L. (2005). *The official history of the Falklands Campaign. Volume Two: War and Diplomacy*. Routledge, Abingdon, pp.285-286

airstrikes on their ships, the British launched special sabotage operations in May. The planned special operation of the Argentines in Gibraltar to sabotage the British warships instead failed, because the communications were intercepted by British intelligence. In the meantime, the landing of British troops had begun. The final assault was launched in Port Stanley, capital of the Falklands, on the night of June 11, after long and complex landing operations, bloody battles and strengthening of positions and bridgeheads, island by island. On 20 June 1982 the Falklands War ended with the British victory. As is known, the blow to the military dictatorship in Argentina was so strong that it was forced to accept free elections. Democracy was restored in Argentina. Meanwhile, in Britain, the military victory could only pave the way for an electoral triumph for the Conservatives led by Margaret Thatcher, because it dragged with it all the currents of British nationalism, from south to north of the border between Scotland and England. The general election of 1983 marked an excellent affirmation by the Conservatives not only in much of England, Cornwall and Wales (few areas remained in the hands of Labour, such as the "red wall" in north-east England, south Wales and some areas of London) but also in Scotland (even if the Labour had a good affirmation in the Lowlands), even in some constituencies of the West Coast, where the unemployment was higher. During the electoral campaign, the Scottish Unionists were able to find an excellent propaganda tool in the victory in the Falklands. In this occasion, Thatcher took the opportunity to advertise her vision of the United Kingdom as "One Nation": "Ever since I was given the trust to lead our Government it has been my purpose to set a course that both friend and foe may understand and that we may adhere to. And that purpose is the same at home as it is overseas. To uphold certain principles and values which some had thought that we could live without"[68]. If in the South, the ideal of a "Little Britain" considered the victory of the Falklands a source of pride for having emerged victorious against a foreign aggression by regaining its own territory and freeing those who were perceived as part of the same "blood" community, for the traditionalist societies of the North it represented something more, that is, a revival of Great Britain as a world power. By moving on this ambiguity, the Conservative and Unionist Party of the United Kingdom could use the lever of British nationalism to translate the different ideals of "Britannia" into electoral consensus. A far greater consensus than the 1979 election in terms of seats (+58). The Conservatives had therefore won the favour of different communities across the whole Kingdom thanks to the enthusiasm for this victory and the different meanings attributed to it. However, the contradictions could only emerge once the ballot box closed. In fact, although the Falklands had been secured (a military base was installed immediately after the end of the war) and its inhabitants had granted British citizenship with the Nationality Act of 1983, the Falklands War did not mark any re-launch on a global scale for the United Kingdom. And in fact, the United Kingdom did not return east of Suez until 1990, the year of the First Gulf War and in any case always alongside the Americans.

[68] Speech to Scottish Conservative conference on May 14 1982 quoted by Torrance D. (2009). *"We in Scotland" Thatcherism in a Cold Climate*. Birlinn. Edinburgh, p. 91

Furthermore, Margaret Thatcher's economic policy, in particular the restructuring and privatization of state-owned industries, provoked a new wave of long-term unemployment in Scotland, soon alienating its sympathies[69]. Actually, unemployment remained higher in Northern England than in Scotland, but Northern England, however it might be hostile to the current government, did not have its own distinct identity which would call into question its membership in the United Kingdom. Not so Scotland, which had an history as an independent nation, with its own traditions, even with its own language and hence its own true nationalism, which the renunciation of any imperial dream and the end of state-owned companies was fuelling. Without Empire and without state-owned companies, ties with the London government had loosened a lot. In addition, large areas of the country, especially those of the Highlands and Western Isles, traditionally more conservative, suffered from great unemployment generated, directly and indirectly, by the progressive retreat of state intervention[70]. There, Scottish nationalism began to grow once again, in the more traditionalist sectors of society (the so-called "Tartan Tories"), which, profoundly disappointed by the Conservatives, would not have voted for Labour anyway. Furthermore, the Scottish Nationalists seemed to have the wind of history on their side, because the end of the Empire and the return to a "little homeland" dimension could more easily translate into a separation between Scotland and England rather than in a "Little Britain" without no history behind it. In conclusion, the Falklands War was a war in which the United Kingdom found itself dragged in, almost in spite of itself, but which had catalysed great expectations in its people (the ideal of leaving no one behind and the belief of being still a great nation that could afford not to leave anyone behind). Actually, it was a parenthesis, which, what is more, had the effect of generating a great disappointment, accelerating the crisis of the British national identity, already underway.

2.4 *The Scottish issue*

Between 1974 and 1979, Scottish nationalism experienced an unprecedented electoral growth. In the general election on October 1974 (the second of that year), with the 30.4 per cent of the votes, the Scottish National Party obtained 11 seats in the House of Commons. On February, it had obtained 7 seats with 21.9 per cent. However, a certain growth trend, albeit much more moderate, could already be observed starting from 1964, while "the winds of change" blew over Africa wiping out what remained of British colonialism. In that year, the Scottish National Party went from 0.5 per cent in 1959 to 2.4, almost tripling its votes in absolute terms (from 21.738 to 64.044). In 1966, it rose to 5 per cent. In 1970 it managed to elect its first representative to the House of Commons with 11.4 per cent of the votes[71]. Four years later, together with the

[69] Torrance, D. (2009). *"We in Scotland" Thatcherism in a Cold Climate*. Birlinn. Edinburgh, pp.130-133 ; p.167-168

[70] See: Gifford G. (2014). *The Making of Eurosceptic Britain.* Ashgate Publishing. Farnham, p.80: "Thatcherism was an aggressive post-imperial reassertion of a liberal conception of Britain as a free market society"

[71] Ishiyama J. T & Breuning M. (1998). *Ethnopolitics in the New Europe*.Lynne Rienner Publishers. Boulder, CO and London, p.141

Liberal Democratic Party, it became fundamental to the survival of the government led by the Labour James Callaghan, which would be the last Labour government until 1997. The short-term goal of the Scottish National Party was to obtain the so-called devolution to the Scotland. In practice, the establishment of an assembly to which to assign legislative powers for Scotland alone voted by the Scots only, breaking the centralized structure that had characterized Great Britain since 1707. Support for the government was subordinated precisely to obtaining this assembly. The electoral growth of Scottish nationalism was due to multiple factors. It had always existed as a cultural factor, since Scotland had its own legal tradition, its history as an independent kingdom and even its own language, in addition to English. Nonetheless, as already mentioned, the end of the Empire and the retreat of the British into a dimension of a little homeland had brought this identity feeling from a strictly cultural character to a political one. The discovery of oil in the North Sea gave utilitarian coverage to a phenomenon that actually had deeper roots, as did the economic crisis and the evident inability of traditional parties to cope with it. In fact, neither Harold Wilson's Labour nor Edward Heath's Conservatives, who took turns in government between 1964 and 1974, had managed to revive the fortunes of the British economy. In 1975, Margaret Thatcher became leader of the Conservative and Unionist Party of the United Kingdom. At the time, devolution was one of the central issues of the debate. A subject on which Margaret Thatcher was not at all comfortable, by her own admission: "As an instinctive Unionist" she wrote afterwards in her *The Path to Power* "I disliked the devolution commitment"[72], an uncomfortable legacy of Edward Heath with his "Declaration of Perth" on 18 May 1968. On the contrary, Thatcher believed the Scottish National Party should not be pandered with proposals for devolution. In this regard, the fact that the Heath's renewed devolution push had not saved the Party from a heavy defeat on February 1974, resulting in even fewer Scottish Conservative Members of Parliament, gave strength to her conviction. Furthermore, she was convinced that the problems facing Britain were substantially the same in the south as in the north. If Scottish voters turned to the Scottish National Party in increasing numbers, it was because, as already said, neither the Labour nor the Conservatives had until then managed to get the country out of the economic crisis. In this regard, she stated "I believe that the problem is the same as further south: people lost *faith* in us and our job is to restore it."[73] She shared the analysis of Nigel Lawson, who would have been her Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1983 to 1989, according to whom "the demand for devolution has come because governments have taken too much power themselves"[74]. Consequently, in Margaret Thatcher's view, what was needed was a reduction in public intervention across the country, not opening up to a constitutional reform that could have put at risk the Britain's unity. However, she had to live with the devolution commitment, at least at the beginning. Instead

[72] Quoted by Torrance, D. (2009). *"We in Scotland" Thatcherism in a Cold Climate*. Birlinn Limited. Edinburgh, p.13.
[73] *Ibidem*.
[74] *Ivi*,p.15

of a sudden break, she opted for a moving behind the scenes gathering the consent of the Scottish Tories who resulted "bitterly disagreed with their leaders"[75] who were all strongly devolutionist. This Scottish base could provide a sort of external support to the English Tories, who were overwhelming hostile to the prospective of establishing a Scottish Assembly. Political and ideal reasons came together with tactical ones. In fact, rejecting the proposal of a Scottish executive, Thatcher declared: "[this proposal] took us well into Labour territory" [76]. In other words, presenting the Conservative Party once again as the party of national unity, among other things by bringing it back into its traditional riverbed, would have reinvigorated it in view of the confrontation with the Labour Party (already in difficulty on the economic policy side), attracting voters hostile to devolution, which since 1968 had in fact lacked a party to turn to. Nevertheless, this change in the program pursued by the Conservative Party was carried out in stages. Still in May 1976 during the Scottish Tory conference she emphasized that devolution remained party policy and that there should have been a directly elected Scottish Assembly. However, in saying so, she specified that it was necessary: "responding to the wish of the Scottish people for less government from Westminster" [77]. In retrospect, it could be said that she hinted at the core of her policy in the years to come, that is more autonomy from London government, but not to the British nations but to the British individuals. In other words, she was convinced that the reduction of taxes, privatizations and in general the reduction of the role of the government in the economy would meet the expectations of the Scots. This must not suggest that Margaret Thatcher was hostile to the intermediate bodies between individuals and the state. On the contrary, she respected all intermediate bodies (even the Trade Unions[78], contrary to popular belief); nevertheless, she was a centralist because the devolution was claimed by those who had as a point of arrival the disintegration of the United Kingdom. In this regard, she wrote in her *The Path to Power* that, more closely she read the Labour government proposal, "the more dangerous it appeared to the Union" [79], she was sure that "the idea that it would appease those Scots who wanted independence was becoming ever more absurd" [80]. In addition, she feared that the establishment of a Scottish Assembly and Executive would lead to "maximum conflict, friction and arguments between Assemblies, government and Parliament" [81] and, what is worse, there would be "a massive extension of bureaucracy" [82] which, in her eyes, what was killing Britain's economy. The two objections were strictly connected, since the increase in bureaucracy and conflict could have more easily fomented, not calmed, the independence cause. Meanwhile, the line of action against the

[75] *Ibidem.*
[76] *Ibidem.*
[77] *Ivi*, p.17
[78] "Learn the Union rules as well as the Far Left know them, and remember this. If Parliamentary democracy dies, free Trade Unions die with it". Quoted by Margaret Thatcher, Speech to Conservative Party Conference on October 10, 1975.
[79] Torrance, D. (2009). *"We in Scotland" Thatcherism in a Cold Climate*. Birlinn Limited. Edinburgh, p.18
[80] *Ibidem*.
[81] *Ivi*, p. 17
[82] *Ibidem*.

Labour government's proposals was to "oppose any Bill based on their White Paper or which goes further than White Paper" [83]. While moving in Parliament, Margaret Thatcher tried to feel the moods of the country. After taking note of the disconnection of the Scottish Conservatives' establishment with their base, all to her advantage, she could further rejoice since, at least according to a private poll, Scottish public opinion was heavily fragmented on the issue of devolution. In fact, even if three quarters of the Scots agreed with some form of self-government, they disagreed on what form it should take [84]. Thatcher wanted to exploit this disagreement to her advantage and she would have done with unscrupulousness on the occasion of the referendum on devolution. It was December 1st 1976. At the time of the vote in Parliament on the proposal of James Callaghan's Labour government, Thatcher imposed to the Conservatives the contrary vote, specifying however that the Conservative Party's vote did not derive from an opposition to devolution as a principle, but only to that proposed by the government in office[85]. She continued to reassure the Scottish Conservative leaders that she remained committed to the establishment of a Scottish Assembly[86]. In reality, she was preparing the ground for its failure. Perhaps sensing this, some Scottish Conservative MPs (but also some English ones) did not support this line. The party was split. On the one hand, the majority of the English refused the devolution (in particular the backbenchers that Margaret Thatcher had satisfied, with whose, after all, she shared the final goal, even if not the methods to get there), on the other hand, most part of the Scottish did not share Thatcher's line. At the end, 42 Conservatives MPs abstained, five voted for the government proposal [87]. Also within the Labour Party there was a strong division towards devolution. In fact, 29 Labour MPs abstained and ten voted, with the Conservative opposition, against the government proposal [88]. Shrewdly, Margaret Thatcher did not step forward, but left the Conservative backbenchers free to forge alliances with anti-devolutionists. In this regard, the "Union Flag Group" which sought alliances with dissident Labour MPs is noteworthy [89]. In the end, the proposal was approved with 45 majority votes[90]. However, it was an ephemeral victory. In fact, in February 1977, the government lost an essential procedural vote, precisely because of the internal divisions of Labour that Thatcher had managed to take advantage of. In fact, even if apparently the party discipline within the Conservatives seemed to have weakened as much as within the Labour Party, being the backbenchers left free to act and a part of the Party in favour of devolution, all disavowing the official line, the Conservative Party of Margaret Thatcher was actually much

[83] *Ibidem.*
[84] Thatcher, *The Path to Power*, p. 324: "The opinion poll (dated 1/12/1976) found that the majority of electors in England favoured some form of self-government for Scotland, together with three-quarters of Scots, although there was disagreement as to what form this should take." Quoted by Torrance, D. (2009). *"We in Scotland" Thatcherism in a Cold Climate*. Birlinn Limited. Edinburgh, p. 18
[85] Torrance, D. (2009). *"We in Scotland" Thatcherism in a Cold Climate*. Birlinn Limited. Edinburgh, p.18
[86] *Ivi*, p.19
[87] *Ivi*, p.22
[88] *Ibidem.*
[89] *Ivi*, p.15
[90] *Ivi*, p. 22

more cohesive. After all, in the final vote the official line and that of the backbenchers had materialized in the same vote. In the following months, Thatcher felt "able to alter some policies" which she had inherited ("and to set out my own views more clearly on others") [91]. Finally, at the Scottish Conservative Party Conference in May 1977 (about an year after she had confirmed the Party's devolution commitment) she took the occasion "to jettison" the commitment of devolution, which, as she wrote in *The Path to Power*, "passed off remarkably quietly" [92]. Actually the ambiguity remained, albeit decidedly more attenuated. *De facto*, Margaret Thatcher had manoeuvred the Conservative Party from a position of support for devolution to one of opposition in all but name. She had also been helped in this by the difficulties of the Labour government, which had accelerated the process. Precisely from a Labour MP, George Cunningham, a Scottish-born English, an unexpected aid came, that is an amendment to the devolution proposal which required that at least 40 per cent of the electorate supported the establishment of the Assembly for Scotland (as well as Wales) in local referendums. The amendment passed despite the contrary opinion of the government [93], which clearly lacked a parliamentary majority since March 1977. As is known, difficulties in the government's economic management of the country had exploded in 1976 when the Prime Minister James Callaghan had been forced to negotiate a loan with the International Monetary Fund in exchange for significant cuts in public spending. The resulting strikes of the so-called "winter of discontent" were indirectly strengthening the Conservatives, in Scotland too. In the 1978 regional council elections they overtook the Scottish Nationalists and stood behind the Labour[94]. According to some, opposition to devolution, together with the economic situation, had shifted some Unionist votes from Labour to the Tories[95]. However, it was especially the Scottish nationalism that was declining [96]. This could only please the Conservatives and in particular their leader, the "instinctive unionist" Margaret Thatcher. Especially when the referendum for devolution was approaching. It would have been held on 1 March 1979. Not even the referendum campaign brought Thatcher out into the open. She still moved behind the scenes, leaving her party colleagues free to campaign for "yes" or "no", but continuing to pursue her plan, on the one hand saying to Conservatives in favour of devolution to vote "no" in order to obtain a "better devolution" and on the other approving those who voted "no" because they simply did not want any devolution. With the sum of "no and that's it!" and "no-but" she was counting on preventing the devolution and, at the same time, going to general election and winning it [97]. Yet, in a sense, she was sincere when she declared: "We in the Tory Party are advocates of what I would call true devolution. Not the bogus devolution which imposes yet more

[91] *Ibidem*.
[92] *Ibidem*.
[93] *Ivi*, p.29
[94] *Ibidem.*
[95] *Ibidem*.
[96] *Ibidem.*
[97] *Ivi*, pp. 29-30

layers of government. But devolution in the fundamental sense of dispersing power from government to the individual by returning choice and independence to him" [98]. In practice, Thatcher's revolution would itself be a substitute for devolution. At the end, the majority of the voters voted yes, but the abstentions were such that less than 40 per cent of the electorate approved the devolution. As Thatcher herself reported in her memoirs "devolution was dead." [99] Certainly the unpopularity of the government in office played an important role in determining the outcome. After all, everyone knew that the government stood on the support of Scottish Nationalists, and that defeat in the referendum would mean the end of the Labour government. However, the doubt that perhaps the majority of Scots at the time did not really want devolution was legitimate. In fact, in addition to a 36 per cent abstention, over 48 per cent of the votes cast had been against. On the Boundaries, in the Dumfries and Galloway region and in the Grampian region, the "no" had been majority with almost 60 per cent of the votes cast. In the Orkney Islands and Shetlands the "no" had touched 70 per cent [100]. In any case, Unionists like Thatcher had convenience believed it. In the vote of no confidence, Conservative votes were joined by those of the Scottish Nationalists. In this regard, Callaghan commented that it was the first time in history when turkeys were known to vote to anticipate Christmas [101]. In fact, the Conservative manifesto of the 1979 general election included a mild commitment to discussing a future government in Scotland, not mentioning in any way the establishment of an Assembly [102]. On May 3, 1979 the United Kingdom went to general election. Thatcher's era began. Devolution would not be in the government agenda until 1997. Moreover, as Thatcher herself predicted, the seats of the Scottish Nationalists "melted like snow in the sunshine" [103]. Of the previous eleven, only two were saved. Therefore, not only had Labour suffered a heavy defeat in the whole Kingdom (-50 seats) but the nationalist danger in Scotland seemed averted. In the following years, however, it would return fuelled by the increase in unemployment that characterized the 1980s in the United Kingdom, and in particular in Scotland. For the Scottish Nationalists (as well as for Labour), the blame for unemployment suffered by Scotland was attributable to the work of the government. Indeed, the rise in interest rates to contain inflation had led to a collapse in private investment (since the cost of money had increased) and consequently in job creation[104]. Nonetheless, it was a painful but necessary cure. Especially after the failure of the previous governments to moderate wages through agreements with Trade Unions. As for the state of the industry, it must be recognized that Margaret Thatcher was right when highlighting the structural problems of heavy industry and part of the

[98] *Ivi*, p.30
[99] *Ivi*, p.31
[100] Dewdney, R. (1997) *Results of Devolution Referendums (1979 & 1997)*. Social & General Statistics Section. House of Commons Library, p. 10
[101] Torrance, D. (2009). *"We in Scotland" Thatcherism in a Cold Climate*. Birlinn Limited. Edinburgh, p. 32
[102] *Ivi*, p.33
[103] *Ivi*, p. 35
[104] *Ivi*,p.83

manufacturing sector. Therefore, unemployment could not be attributed entirely to the government, but it had structural reasons, which the government was trying to remove. This speech, however, concerned the United Kingdom as a whole (in this regard Thatcher stated that "England is not the only country, nor Scotland, nor Wales, nor indeed the whole of Great Britain" [105] to indicate that the same problem extended even to other European states) but it was less true as far as Scotland was concerned. There, in fact, the decline in industrial production was quite more contained than in the rest of the country, yet unemployment affected more than in the south-east [106] (though less than in the northern England). In addition, some government decisions were rather cruel, such as cutting the unemployment benefit amount. It was motivated by arguing that the amount was excessive and induced laziness, and that it had led young people to believe that "living on benefit was an acceptable substitute for being in work" [107] as Thatcher stated in a speech in 1988. Actually, that the unemployed were lazy was all to prove, while it was clear that in many parts of Scotland, particularly in the south-west, vacant jobs were completely absent [108]. The government also cut spending on capital and housing construction provoking further unemployment [109]. What is worse, it also cut the funds provided to help unemployed to find work [110]. Moreover, the rise in unemployment proved contagious, because it caused a drop in domestic consumption, even affecting the production of food and drinks. In particular, many distilleries had to adopt short-time work or even shut down [111]. Certainly Scotland was not "the only country" to suffer the economic crisis and it is definitely true that in the 1980s many structural problems that previously ignored had exploded, but Margaret Thatcher was wrong to underestimate the political implications that such a situation meant for Scotland. As is known, she was used to repeat "There is no alternative", but for many Scots there was an alternative, even a constitutional alternative, in the form of independence or devolution. As already mentioned, it is true that in the North of England the situation was even worse than in Scotland, but the North of England would have voted the Labour Party at the most, while in Scotland the Thatcher government's action would have had lasting consequences over time, even for the unity of the Kingdom. Still in 1988, unemployment in Scotland counted 10.6 per cent of the workforce [112] (though in the Northern England was 11.1 [113]). In addition, the trend of a better economic performance but with higher unemployment strengthened. In fact, Scotland had a

[105] *Ivi*, p.84
[106] *Ibidem.*
[107] Speech to Scottish Conservative Conference on May 13 1988, Margaret Thatcher Foundation. Quoted by Torrance, D. (2009). *"We in Scotland" Thatcherism in a Cold Climate*. Birlinn Limited. Edinburgh, p.85
[108] Torrance, D. (2009). *"We in Scotland" Thatcherism in a Cold Climate*. Birlinn Limited. Edinburgh, p. 86
[109] *Ivi*, p.85
[110] *Ivi*, p.86
[111] *Ivi*, p.85
[112] *Ivi*, p.175
[113] *Ibidem*.

higher growth than England but there the total unemployment was 7.3 per cent of workforce [114]. Probably this was due to the decline in employment in industry, not compensated by the growth of tertiary sector, as happened in the southeast. Nonetheless, these territorial inequalities could only increase resentment towards Thatcher's government in the long term. However, the Falklands War in the middle had seemed to help Margaret Thatcher against her opponents and in particular against Scottish nationalism. As already mentioned, in symbolic terms, the Falklands meant a lot to the Scottish communities, particularly in the more traditionalist regions of the Highlands, and of the Isles too, which were precisely the places where the Scottish Nationalists pushed more to garner consensus. In this regard, even the Scottish National Party on that occasion found itself forced to lend its support to the government in the war against the Argentine aggressor[115]. Therefore, Falklands affair seemed to demonstrate that, in the end, British nationalism could be much more powerful than Scottish nationalism, and that the majority of Britons, including Scots, would remain faithful to the old motto "United we stand, divided we fall". In the public debate, devolution disappeared completely[116]. However, to tell all the truth, the so-called "Falklands Factor" did not manifest immediately. In fact, in the Scottish regional council elections, the Conservatives gained just over a quarter of the votes cast, losing councillors. In particular, on Lothian Region there was a tie between Labour and Conservatives at 22 seats each. Local Tories managed to get the control of the council thanks to an informal pact with the Alliance (Liberals plus Social-Democrats, born from a split in the Labour Party). This ruling coalition moved quickly to close local schools to save money, which would subsequently pay in electoral terms[117]. The election campaign for general election began on May 13, 1983 and would end on June 9. The Scottish National Party dropped from 17 per cent to 12[118], losing nearly 200,000 votes in absolute terms, although thanks to the British first-pass-the-post electoral system it managed to keep the two seats it already had. The Labour instead lost three seats in Scotland[119] (45 in the whole Kingdom). On the contrary, the Conservatives held the number of 21 Scottish seats (losing two and gaining two)[120]. Even if Margaret Thatcher did not share the jubilation of the Scottish Conservatives, every objective observer would have concluded that, given the unemployment levels, it was an excellent result[121]. Nevertheless, this meant that, even if there had been a certain "Falklands Factor", this had defended the Conservative majority from the repercussions of unemployment, but not it had not pushed it upwards. With this vote traditionalist Scotland wanted to give British Unionism one last chance. In other words, it wanted to believe that the victory in the

[114] *Ibidem*.
[115] *Ivi*, p.90
[116] *Ibidem*.
[117] *Ivi*, pp.90-91
[118] *Ivi*, p.97
[119] Ibidem.
[120] *Ibidem*.
[121] Torrance, D. (2009). *"We in Scotland" Thatcherism in a Cold Climate*. Birlinn. Edinburgh, p. 97

Falklands War meant that Britons could overcome the difficulties together, returning together to something similar to the past glory. Probably, many hoped that a revival of Britain in the world would lead to a revival of the military sector and therefore not only to a reawakening of national pride, but also in employment. Unfortunately for them, Margaret Thatcher was too realistic to cultivate imperialist dreams or nostalgia. On the other hand, it was evident that the vote in Scotland was not rewarding her policy. However, she went straight on her way. Four years later, her inability or unwillingness to mediate between the different souls of British Conservatism and Unionism brought to the surface those internal contradictions that the Falklands War and its victorious outcome had covered for a while. As already mentioned, Thatcherism was not simply an economic doctrine, but an idea of a nation, which certainly included the economics, but also above all the geopolitical position of the United Kingdom as well as its relations with national minorities. In this regard, the ideal of a liberal and conservative "Little Britain", European but jealous of its autonomy in internal affairs, and in whose alliance with the United States placed its safety, the English liked a lot, but did not seem to offer anything to the Scots. Already in the 1983 election campaign, the *New Statesman* observed: "The most remarkable feature of the campaign in Scotland is how similar it has been to that in England and Wales"[122]. Indeed, Margaret Thatcher had something more than the traditional Unionists: she was an assimilationist [123], a species never seen in Britain. In this regard, there was a well-founded suspicion that she wanted not only to deny devolution, but even to bring the decentralized administrations in Scotland back to London. Some of her policies that will be mentioned later supported this theory. This mix of facts and feelings gave credit to the accusation that her policy was an Anglo-centric policy, insensitive to the needs and differences of other British nations. Actually, she was not Anglo-centric, but she hoped to create "One Nation" where Scots, Welsh and English were merged together around those so-called "Victorian values", that so much electoral luck had given her. Still in a speech on May 22, 1989, she had tried to remember what tied Scotland and England together: "It was as a part of the United Kingdom Armed Forces that the Scots Guards fought and won at Tumbledown Mountain"[124]. Tumbledown Mountain was a place in the Falklands, but in 1989 the glory of the Falklands was now a distant memory, perhaps even painful, given the illusion it had aroused in many people. To this rhetoric the Scottish Nationalists could oppose emphasizing the stark reality of unemployment still too high in Scotland, of prosperity concentrated in the south-east (in 1989, in fact, "the number of Scots out of work was above 250,000, 70 per cent more than in May 1979. In the UK as a whole, the figure was generally 50 per cent higher"), as well as of an attack on the already existing autonomies. In fact, in 1988, the compulsory tendering for the Scottish National Health Service was introduced and implemented. In 1989, the same obligation was also extended to the Scottish local

[122] Quoted by Torrance, D. (2009). *"We in Scotland" Thatcherism in a Cold Climate*. Birlinn Limited. Edinburgh, p.96
[123] *Ivi*, p.35
[124] *Ivi*, p. 92

government. Two arguments were used against these measures. First, that they led to job losses and lower wages for both the working class and professionals. Second, largely used by the Nationalists, that they was the expression of the London government's will to further erode the autonomy of the Scottish local government[125]. The same was said when the government decided to centralize the housing sector by merging Scotland's five New Towns Development Corporation together with the Scottish Special Housing Association funding a new national agency for housing, Scottish Homes[126]. In addition, on 1st April 1989 the Community Charge came into force in Scotland, immediately renamed by its detractors "Poll Tax", like that Poll Tax which, in the distant 1381, had triggered the "Peasants' Revolt" in the Medieval England. The Nationalists (and the Labour with them) did not have scruples in stating that its introduction first in Scotland and only then in the rest of the Kingdom had been motivated by the Thatcher's desire to treat the Scots "as guinea pigs" almost to "punish" for having voted against her in the 1987 general election, in which the Labour Party had taken 42 per cent of the votes in Scotland, in marked contrast to the rest of the Great Britain[127]. Obviously this was not true. After all, the suffering of the so-called Scottish "guinea pigs" did not stop Thatcher's government to extend the Community Charge to England and Wales [128]. Probably its anticipation in Scotland was due to the fact that there the revaluation of the value of the properties had increased more than elsewhere, and with it the rates paid by property-owners[129], who Thatcher called "our people" [130]. As is known, in fact, the Community Charge had to replace the "rate support" system invented in the 1920s by John Maynard Keynes, in practice it was a tax on the value of both commercial and home properties[131] (and, as it known, Margaret Thatcher disliked property taxes). However, it is true that it was common opinion among Thatcher's supporters that to win in Scotland it was necessary to break the "dependency culture" that had made Adam Smith's birthplace the stronghold of British socialism. In other words, there was need of more, not less, Thatcherism[132]. It was a serious error of assessment, but responsibility cannot be attributed entirely to Thatcher. Nevertheless, it can be said with some certainty that the reason why Margaret Thatcher failed to convince the Scots to support her vision of a British nation-state was that she simply did not understand the true nature of the Scots. Actually, Adam Smith had been the exception, not the rule. Leaving aside the vote of the miners and blue-collars of the Lowlands, the truly "socialist" one, Scottish Toryism had nothing of the dynamism which, together with rigor, she expressed.

[125] *Ivi*, p.167
[126] *Ivi*, p. 166-167
[127] *Ivi*, pp. 156-157
[128] As noted by Torrance: *Ivi*, p.219
[129] See Moore, C. (2016). *Margaret Thatcher The Authorised Biography Volume Two: Everything She wants*. Penguin Books. London, p.356: "Because of its different legal framework, Scotland was now compelled to have a rating revaluation […] There would be a 170 per cent increase in domestic rateable values […] and 'only 20 per cent of Scottish householders were liable to pay full rates, and most of this small residue of householders were Conservatives'. "
[130] *Ivi*, p.344
[131] *Ibidem*.
[132] Torrance D. (2009). *"We in Scotland" Thatcherism in a Cold Climate*. Birlinn Limited. Edinburg.

The so-called "Tartan Tories" were actually "patrician, feudal, paternalistic" and "disdainful of her sort of southern stridency", as John Campbell, one of her biographer, wrote in his *The Grocer's Daughter* [133]. Of the general election of 1987, what should have to worry her, paradoxically, was not so much the result of the Labour, but that of the Nationalists, who went up from 11.7 to 14 per cent, earning an extra seat [134], despite the bulk of the strategic vote being concentrated on the Labour. What was more, the three seats won by the Scottish Nationalists were all gained from Tories, while, at the same time, the Labour gained two seats precisely from the Scottish National Party[135]. Therefore, it could be argued that those who voted for the Scottish Nationalists would never have voted for Labour (to the point of being willing to risk of "wasting" their vote), but had definitely turned their back on British Unionism. In it was the real Thatcher's defeat in Scotland. On the other hand, concentrating the anti-Thatcher vote on the Labour Party seemed reasonable to the majority of Scots once that it had decided to put the devolution on top of its program, as suggested by the Scottish Gordon Brown (future Chancellor of the Exchequer during Tony Blair's governments) who intended to give the Labour Party a consistently anti-Thatcher character [136]. This position would have led the Labour, ten years later, to an electoral victory, but to a political defeat [137], since the Nationalists, regardless its election results, returned to dictate the agenda. On the other side, Margaret Thatcher had now come out into the open with regards to devolution. In the aftermath of the 1987 general election, a great debate took place in the Conservative Party over the implications of that election. A proposal for devolution was re-presented, but at the conference the delegates voted overwhelmingly to reject it (300 against 11) [138]. Thatcher commented on the result stating: "I am delighted that at this conference you resoundingly rejected the prospect of a second-class Scotland cut off from the rest of the United Kingdom by tax barriers that would destroy economy" and she added: "As long as I am Leader of this Party, we shall defend the Union and reject legislative devolution unequivocally" [139]. In practice, a reverse of the Heath's devolution commitment in the Declaration of Perth twenty years before. During her conference speech, she repeated that the real devolution was that given to individuals, not to politicians and bureaucrats. And that this devolution was taking place through privatizations. However, in doing so, she was attacking the only thing that somehow tied many Scots to the London government after the end of the Empire, that is the presence of several nationalized industries, therefore managed by the London government, in which many Scots worked. Industries that Thatcher wanted to privatize, ignoring the political implications that this entailed for his Unionist project. After all, she underestimated the Scottish nationalism, considering it a political bubble that

[133] Quoted by Torrance D. (2009) *"We in Scotland" Thatcherism in a Cold Climate*. Birlinn Limited. Edinburg, p.9
[134] Rallings C. & Thrasher M. (1999), *British Parliamentary Election Results 1983–1997*.Ashgate. Aldershot.
[135] Torrance D. (2009). *"We in Scotland" Thatcherism in a Cold Climate*. Birlinn Limited. Edinburg, p. 158
[136] *Ivi*, p. 98
[137] Michael Settle, *SNP crush Labour in historic poll as Tories sweep to power*. The Herald. 8 May 2015.
[138] Torrance D. (2009). *"We in Scotland" Thatcherism in a Cold Climate*. Birlinn Limited. Edinburg, p.184
[139] *Ibidem*.

would eventually burst. In her *The Downing Street Years* she wrote: "The Union with Scotland was inevitably dominated by England by reason of its greater population. The Scots, being an historic nation with a proud past, will inevitably resent some expression of this fact from time to time" [140]. In practice, according to Margaret Thatcher, the Scots would have complained every now and then, but they would have hardly put the Union at risk. Therefore, she could go on with her policy without incurring a real danger. Between 1987 and 1988, the British Steel Corporation and the British Airports Authority (which included Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen Airports) were privatized [141]. Furthermore, despite the public intervention in the road building, such as the A9, A90 and A96 [142], and in urban regeneration in Glasgow's East End (started by the previous Labour government), in Leith and in Dundee, jobs created in the long run were too few[143]. The fact that the unemployment in Scotland was declining more slowly than in England[144] certainly did not play in favour of the Unionist cause. Anyway, Margaret Thatcher was not entirely to blame for the weakening of British Unionism in Scotland. After her resignation in 1990, the situation did not improve a lot for the Conservatives, who continued the path of privatization that she started, but abolished the Community Charge. If the first theme had a lot to do with the Unionist presence in Scotland, the second was a national theme and indeed opposition to it had been national. Actually, the whole Conservative Party did not know how to move around Scotland and, after all, the large majority of the Party followed her despite the Scottish electoral results. Probably, they also underestimated the nationalist danger. In the 1992 general election, while winners in the rest of the country, in Scotland they gained just two more seat (going from 9 to 11) and just 2.5 per cent more. Yet, expectations had been so low that the result looked like a triumph [145] .

2.5 *The Northern Ireland*

Although Ireland became an integral part of the United Kingdom on January 1, 1801, unlike the Scots, the Irish suffered British imperialism, rather than enjoying its fruits. Therefore, they have never been integrated as part of the Britishness. Consequently, at the first crack of the British Empire, they were the first to get out of it, first voting for the Nationalists, then taking up arms and rebelling. During these events, Northern Ireland emerged from the inability of Irish Nationalists to gain independence for the whole island. It never had a national tradition of its own, being no more than a geographical expression divided between two already structured nations, the British-Protestants, majority, and the Irish-Catholics, minority, albeit large enough to be considered as a threat. In the aftermath of the establishment of the Irish Free State as British

[140] Quoted by Torrance, D. (2009). *"We in Scotland" Thatcherism in a Cold Climate*. Birlinn Limited. Edinburgh , p.183
[141] *Ivi*, p. 175
[142] *Ivi*,p.177
[143] *Ivi*, p.166
[144] *Ivi*, p.159
[145] *Ivi*, p.246

dominion in 1922, the British majority of Northern Ireland, feeling threatened by recent developments in the rest of the island, took advantage of the autonomy granted by the Government of Ireland Act of 1920 to develop a regime that segregated the Irish, denying any representation to the latter and attributing to themselves the levers of power. In this regard, when the Irish Nationalists won control over many local government in 1920, the Unionist government of Northern Ireland reacted by suppressing the proportional representation for local government elections in 1922, adopting a first-pass-the-post system and re-drawing the electoral boundaries to give its supporters a majority also where they were actually a minority of voters (a technique well-known as gerrymandering). From their point of view, the threat of the establishment of a United Ireland justified this way of act. Keeping the levers of power, the Unionist government adopted preferential treatment for Protestants in housing and employment, excluding Catholics. In 1923, the Speaker of the House of Commons ruled that matters delegated to the Government of Northern Ireland could not be discussed at Westminster, in practice leaving in force the discriminatory Northern Irish legislation against Catholics until 1972, when the "direct rule" from London was restored. In 1929 proportional representation was abolished also for the election of the regional parliament. Although there were more moderate Unionists, such as Edward Carson[146], who warned that the exclusion and discrimination of Catholics would make the state of war in Northern Ireland permanent, they were ignored. In response to the revolts of the Irish-Catholics, the Unionist government introduced the Civil Authorities Act in 1922, giving extensive powers to police to intern suspects without trial and to administer corporal punishment to re-establish or preserve law and order [147]. The story of the Boundary Commission further worsened the situation. Many Catholics, in fact, hoped that it would result in the significant transfer of territory from the North to the Irish Free State. On the contrary, the Commission proposed that there should only be minor re-adjustments to the existing border. In this way, areas with a Catholic majority remained within a territory which, starting in 1934, was defined by its own ruling class "a Protestant State" [148]. Riots exploded in Belfast in the 1930s. They achieved their peak in 1935, on the occasion of the Orange Order marches on 12 July. In 1937, the introduction of a new Constitution in the Irish Free State, that paved the way for the republic in the South and claimed sovereignty over the entire island, further tightened the positions of the Unionists in the North. In 1939, the Irish Republican Army (IRA), already declared outlawed in 1931, launched a bombing campaign in Great Britain. It continued its war against the Unionist government even during the Second World War with attacks to which the government responded with internments and executions. In the 1950s, it launched the Border campaign. However, having failed to gain the support of the majority of the Irish, both North and South of the Border, the IRA leaders themselves stopped the campaign in 1962. Two years

[146] Edwards, D. & Edwards R. (2005). *Biography: Carson by Geoffrey Lewis*. The Times. Hambledon and London. Retrieved 2009.
[147] Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Act (Northern Ireland), 1922. CAIN Web Service.
[148] *Quotations on the topic of Discrimination*. CAIN Web Service.

later, the Campaign for Social Justice (CSJ) was born. It was the forerunner of the civil rights movement, setting out to try to draw attention to the condition of the Catholic community discriminated by the Unionist authorities. In this regard, in 1965, it published a document, "Londonderry: One Man, No Vote", in which discrimination against the Catholic community in Derry was described in the details. The civil rights movement was able, unlike terrorism, to gain support both in the Irish population and in the rest of the United Kingdom, even within the London government. Unlike the IRA, it did not aim at the reunification of the island, but simply at dismantling the discrimination system of Catholics. A much more realistic goal, which could more easily gain consensus and support. Therefore, it posed a much more serious danger to Protestant privileges. Feeling this danger much more concrete than in the past, the extremist wings of the Protestants organized themselves. Firstly, they contested the Northern Irish government at the time in the hands of the "moderates", secondly they established their own armed militia, the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF). In 1966, the UVF stated that "known IRA men will be executed mercilessly and without hesitation"[149]. The UVF was outlawed in the same year after its first murders. In the meantime, the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) was formed. The civil rights movement called for a number of reforms. In the first place, the implementation of the principle "one man, one vote", namely a universal franchise for local government elections, since in Northern Ireland only rate-payers were entitled to vote and additional votes were attributed to companies. In the second place, the association asked to end the gerrymandering of electoral boundaries. In third place, the repeal of the Civil Authorities Act, since it was considered an act that attributed such discretionary powers to the police force as to constitute a violation of the rule of law against the Catholic community. In this regard, the NICRA considered the Ulster Special Constabulary a reserve police force not neutral, since it was entirely Protestant in its composition. Consequently, it was asked its suppression and a reform of the police force, so that it could guarantee everyone's safety, regardless the sectarian membership. Finally, the association wanted the end to discrimination in the allocation of housing and appointments to public sector employment [150]. The tactics used by the NICRA were marches, sit-ins and roadblocks. It managed to mobilize large masses of people, applying passive resistance and not responding to the provocations of the police or Protestant sectarian formations [151]. The situation, however, deteriorated on the occasion of the march of Derry on October 5, 1968. Since the march had to pass inside the city centre, a Protestant bastion, traditionally denied to the events of the Catholics, it had been prohibited. The NICRA decided to proceed anyway. During the march, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) attempted to violently disperse the crowd. To avoid accidents, the organizers ordered the demonstrators to disperse. However, chaos erupted as demonstrators found

[149] Coogan, T. P. (2002). *The Troubles: Ireland's Ordeal and the Search for Peace*. Palgrave Macmillan. New York, p.58
[150] Tonge J. (2002). *Northern Ireland: Conflict and Change*. Pearson Longman. Harlow, pp. 37–38
[151] Devlin, B. (1969). *The Price of My Soul*. Pan Books Ltd. London.

themselves trapped between two lines of the RUC. At the end, the police drove the demonstrators across the river into the Catholic area of the Bogside, where "the original confrontation between marchers and the police had given way to a general battle between the police and young residents of the Bogside, most of whom had taken no part in the march" [152]. Maintaining its peaceful nature and control over its members, the civil rights movement nonetheless made a quantum leap, challenging the government's bans on its demonstrations. The trial of demonstrators arrested on 5 October began on 18 November. In response, civil rights activists went on a demonstration, disobeying the ban, and they were attacked by the police. Nonetheless, the demonstration continued thanks to the support of the 400 dockers and a thousand workers of a shirt factory. In January 1969, a "Long March" from Belfast to Derry was organised. It was an initiative outside the NICRA and quite criticized by it. This march was attacked repeatedly along the way, but as it continued it increased its supporters and participants. When the protesters were close to Derry, they were attacked by surprise by Unionist groups and members of the RUC. Once in Derry, the city exploded in riots. After a night of rioting, the RUC entered in Bogside, damaging a number of houses and attacking several people. In response, Bogside residents set up "vigilante" groups to defend the area[153]. These vigilantes formed the nucleus of a new Nationalist-Catholic militia, the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA). It arose from a split from the "Official" IRA, accused of not having been able to effectively defend Catholic quarters from the violence of the police and Protestant paramilitary groups[154]. During the first half of 1969, the NICRA resumed the initiative, with marches and protests. In response, the government banned civil-disobedience tactics such as sit-ins. However, the protests continued[155]. On 12 August, Bogside was again in the middle of a violent clash between the RUC and Catholic residents. Eventually, the men of the RUC were pushed back with stones and petrol bombs. The quarter had been totally surrounded by barricades that the RUC was unable to knock down. It then decided to call for reinforcement the Ulster Special Constabulary. At that point, the London government decided to intervene by sending troops as an interposing force between the RUC and the Bogside barricades. However, the relationship between the British Army and the Catholic population deteriorated quickly. In January 1972, the British soldiers attacked a peaceful demonstration, killing 13 civilians in what became known as the "Bloody Sunday". In the same year, London suspended the Northern Ireland parliament, restoring the "direct rule" with the intention to stop violence. Even if the "direct rule" would have had as a first consequence the dismantling of the discriminatory legislation towards the Irish-Catholics (extending the Race Relations Act to Northern Ireland, as well as the attached non-discriminatory administrative culture of the island of Great Britain), peace was

[152] Purdie, B. (1990). *Politics in the Streets: The origins of the Civil Rights Movement*. Blackstaff Press. Belfast, p.143
[153] O' Dochartaigh, F. (1994). *Ulster's White Negros: From civil rights to insurrection*. Ak Press. Edinburgh.
See also: Bishop P. and Mallie E. (1988). *The Provisional IRA*. Corgi Books. London, p.117
[154] Bishop P. and Mallie E. (1988). *The Provisional IRA*. Corgi Books. London, p. 108-112
[155] Devlin, B. (1969). *The Price of My Soul*. Pan Books Ltd. London, p. 169

not restored. On the contrary, it was the start of an escalation. The Army had in fact become too unpopular and it was easy for the PIRA to label it as an occupation force. The civil rights movement had come to end, and with it a wealth of grassroots democratic action practices, which aimed to dismantle the Northern Irish discriminatory legislation through a cultural revolution that wiped away the dominant sectarian mentality. Instead now, within the Catholic community, the PIRA had taken over, not only by reinforcing the spiral of violence, but above all by reviving the sectarian mentality that the movement wanted to break down. In this regard, contrary to the PIRA, the "Official" IRA had always been careful to prevent its struggle from escalating into sectarian conflict. Marxist in its approach, it pursued the goal of uniting the working class of Northern Ireland with a view to the ultimate goal of not only a united but also a socialist Ireland. In contrast, the PIRA did not care of being sucked into a sectarian conflict. On the one hand, its members wanted revenge for the dead of the "Bloody Sunday", on the other, they were convinced that they could provoke the collapse of the government of Northern Ireland in a short time by inflicting losses to the British Army such that the British government would have been forced by the public opinion to withdraw from Ireland[156]. This did not happen and in the following years the PIRA had to face a "Long War". In 1974, the Northern Ireland Act was introduced. Its provisions was made in such a way that there is no accountability to Northern Ireland nor, on most occasions, a debate of the policy in the House of Commons[157]. After all, neither the Protestants nor the Catholics had enough representation in Westminster that they raised governments' attention to the issues of their territory. For a while, the Unionists had been part of the Conservative parliamentary group, but in 1973 they withdrew their Members of Parliament, in disagreement with the Heath government which proposed a power-sharing agreement between the representatives of the two communities[158]. In this regard, it is clear that the sectarian division prevented making common cause for the interests of their land, which, among other things, was very poor, being severely affected by the crisis of the 1970s and deindustrialisation. This was the legacy that Margaret Thatcher was going to receive in the aftermath of the 1979 election. Unfortunately, at the time of her first election, she lacked a policy towards Northern Ireland, having also had little idea of the problem. In addition, she had serious difficulties in relating to local Unionists and, in general, found the representatives of both factions irritating, whether they were Irish Catholic Nationalists or British Protestant Unionists [159]. What was more, in the early months of her government, her attention was focused on other issues[160]. On the contrary, the PIRA was preparing for attacks that primarily aimed to

[156] O' Brien B. (1995) *The Long War – The IRA and Sinn Féin*. O'Brien Press, Dublin, p.107

[157] Lyons, F. (1990). *Beyond Political Stelemate: New Thinking on Northern Ireland*. Public Policy Under Thatcher. Edited by Stephen P. Savage and Lynton Robins. The Macmillan Press. Houndmills, Basinstoke, Hampshire and London.

[158] Dixon, P. (2001) *British policy towards Northern Ireland 1969–2000: continuity, tactical adjustment and consistent "inconsistencies".* British Journal of Politics and International Relations. University of London, pp. 340–368. See also: Caravalle, G. (2017) *A family of nations. Asimmetrie territoriali nel Regno Unito tra devolution e Brexit*. Jovene Editore. Napoli, p. 119

[159] Moore, C. (2013). Margaret Thatcher The Authorised Biography Volume One: Not for turning. Penguin Books. London, p.587

[160] *Ivi*, p.591

revenge the 13 dead of the "Bloody Sunday". On August 27, 1979, in the morning the PIRA blew up, in Mullaghmore (Republic of Ireland), the boat of Lord Louis Mountbatten, cousin of the Queen, killing him with 3 other people. In the afternoon, two close explosions killed 18 British soldiers in Warrenpoint, County Down. In the evening, in Belfast, along the Falls Road, the road artery which the Catholic quarters of West Belfast overlook, the writing "13 gone and not forgotten, we got 18 and Mountbatten" appeared. These facts imposed the issue of Northern Ireland on the Thatcher's agenda. The objectives to be set were three: to maintain Northern Ireland as part of British territory, to ensure peace between the two communities by ending sectarian discrimination, to defeat terrorism. Since the early years of her government, Thatcher made a commitment to make it clear that Northern Ireland was as much a part of the United Kingdom as any of its other territories (in this regard, on the occasion of her visit to Belfast, to reassure the Unionists on this point, she said: "Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom as much as my constituency is"[161]) and that therefore she would not tolerate any external interference in matters that related to it. Indeed, the eyes of the President of the United States were focused on the events in Northern Ireland. At the time, the Democratic Jimmy Carter (Regan would become President in 1981) was put under pressure by the Irish-American lobby, which even expressed the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Tip O'Neil. The latter wrote to the President, who promptly called Thatcher personally and asked her for a paper explaining the situation in Northern Ireland. Contrary to O'Neil's hopes, Thatcher produced a document that was cautious on the political approach, but harsh on the security side. Then, when New York Governor Hugh Carey tried to combine a meeting between the Irish Foreign Minister and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland of that time, Humphrey Atkins, to discuss a plan for the future of the area, Thatcher intervened to prevent it, telling Atkins he should not see Carey because "Northern Ireland was part of the United Kingdom and she herself would not think of discussing with President Carter, for example, US policy towards his black population."[162] The reason for such harshness lay in the need to secure control of Northern Ireland against the possibility of a United Ireland. This possibility was strongly opposed by Margaret Thatcher, not only for ideological (her convinced Unionism) and political reasons (the fact that the majority of the Northern Irish population was British) but also for geopolitical reasons. Northern Ireland, in fact, was the "back door" for the United Kingdom, a bridgehead for a possible invasion of the Kingdom and therefore to be kept under the control. In this regard, the last invasion attempt went back to the Second World War. In 1941, in fact, a plan elaborated by the Nazis in agreement with the Irish Republican Army for the occupation of the area, and the use of it as a base for the invasion of Great Britain, had been discovered [163]. Now, in the midst of the Cold War, the radical right thinking emanating from the pro-NATO Institute for Defence and Strategic Studies

[161] Moore, C. (2013). Margaret Thatcher The Authorised Biography Volume One: Not for turning. Penguin Books. London, p.618
[162] *Ivi*, p. 590
[163] Hull M. M. (2003), Irish Secrets. German Espionage in Wartime Ireland 1939–1945. Irish Academic Press. Newbridge.

argued the danger of Northern Ireland as Britain's undefended western frontier[164]. Added to this was the awareness of the socialist (if not Marxist) nature of Irish republicanism. Some within the Conservative Party believed that an integrationist policy should be pursued, not unlike that the Thatcher's government was trying to do in Scotland. However, the prevailing British orthodoxy was that Northern Ireland, although still under the Crown, was to be governed by different rules than those prevailing in Westminster[165]. Even Thatcher shared this orthodoxy, despite the fact that she was sceptical of the hypothesis of a devolved government of Northern Ireland, both for the effects it could have had in Scotland and because it had to be necessarily accompanied by a power-sharing between the two communities, which Protestants did not want[166]. In this regard, the political manifesto of the Conservative Party of the 1979 election declared: "In the absence of devolved government, we will seek to establish one or more elected regional council with a wide range of powers over local services."[167] This did not please the "moderate" Unionists of Northern Ireland, who instead would have gladly supported an integrationist path. Paradoxically, instead, the more radical components of the Unionists were the first to be opposed to the full integration of Northern Ireland into the United Kingdom, as this meant the loss of Protestant privileges. However, Thatcher did not share the motives of the latter. In fact, under her government, the British Parliament passed the New Fair Employment Act in 1989. This act required employers to monitor the composition of their workforce and review their methods of recruitment to ensure the fair participation by Protestants and Catholics. It established a commission which was empowered to advise what concrete actions to take when there was no fair participation and also to impose a time frame within which to remedy the under-representation. The legislation also provided for penalties for bad practice and cash compensation for victims of discrimination[168]. Despite such advanced legislation, the prevailing perception was that Thatcher still did not have a coherent strategy for the recovery of Northern Ireland and that the only thing that really interested her was the fight against terrorism. Undeniably, she had taken care to give herself an image of intransigence towards terrorism (although secretly the British government held talks with Irish terrorists), managing to cover the lack of a precise line of action on the political level. A classic example is provided by her behaviour during the second hunger strike of the PIRA prisoners in Long Kesh led by Bobby Sands. After the strike, the prisoners obtained a better prison regime, being allowed to wear civilian clothes (not the uniforms of prisoners) and maintain their military structure, thus managing to gain relative control of the

[164] Lyons, F. (1990). *Beyond Political Stelemate: New Thinking on Northern Ireland*. Public Policy Under Thatcher. Edited by Stephen P. Savage and Lynton Robins. The Macmillan Press. Houndmills, Basinstoke, Hampshire and London.

[165] Moore, C. (2013). *Margaret Thatcher The Authorised Biography Volume One: Not for turning*. Penguin Books. London, p. 588

[166] *Ivi*, p. 619

[167] *Ivi*, p. 589

[168] Lyons, F. (1990). *Beyond Political Stelemate: New Thinking on Northern Ireland*. Public Policy Under Thatcher. Edited by Stephen P. Savage and Lynton Robins. The Macmillan Press. Houndmills, Basinstoke, Hampshire and London.

prison [169]. During the strike, Booby Sands was candidate for election to the House of Commons and was elected. His death mobilized much of the Catholic community of Northern Ireland (100,000 people attended his funeral) [170] and riots broke out after each death among the strikers[171]. Margaret Thatcher achieved a symbolic victory, not accepting the restoring of the status of political prisoners to terrorists (but actually giving up on the rest), emphasizing the murderous nature of the organization to which Bobby Sands and his comrades belonged (in this regard, she said in occasion of his death: "Mr Sands was a convicted criminal. He chose to take his own life. It was a choice that his organization did not allow to many of its victims"[172]) and going to modify the Representation of the People Act to invalidate his election[173]. This line earned her the approval of the majority of Unionists, but ended up increasing the consensus of the Catholic community around the PIRA. On August 20, 1981, Owen Carron, who had been the Bobby Sands' election agent, was elected in the same constituency [174]. In the Northern Ireland Assembly election of 1982 (a failed attempt to restore Northern Ireland's the traditional autonomy) the Sinn Fein, the political arm of the PIRA, won 10 per cent of the vote, equal to a third of the Catholic community[175]. In addition, the 1988 "security package" contributed to increase the distrust of the Catholic community towards the London government. The package gave additional powers to the Royal Ulster Constabulary. In particular, it made permanent, and applied also in Britain, the Prevention of Terrorism Act, which gives police the power to stop, search and detain, without a warrant, anyone suspected of terrorist activities [176]. This decision was made ignoring the heavy discredit of the Northern Ireland police force, who often acted in mutual agreement with the Protestant groups and which had within it a reserve that had made Protestant sectarian membership a distinctive feature, the Ulster Special Constabulary. In addition, the Stalker-Sampson inquiry had revealed that the RUC had been operating in a non-accountable manner with tactics of "shoot-to-kill" in the early 1980s[177], a fact of which the population in Northern Ireland was already aware. In this regard, between 1982 and 1986 more than 30 people, including 18 unarmed, had been killed by security forces[178]. Even if a new code of conduct was introduced and some progress was made in the area of police and security, concentrating operations in limiting tensions during marches, the RUC members guilty of "shoot-to-kill" were never prosecuted[179].

[169] Moore, C. (2013). *Margaret Thatcher The Authorised Biography Volume One: Not for turning*. Penguin Books. London, p. 617
[170] *Ivi*, p.608
[171] *Ivi*, p.614
[172] Quoted by O'Leary, B. (2019). *A Treatise on Northern Ireland, Volume III: Consociation and Confederation*. Oxford University Press, p.73
[173] Macfarlane L. J. (1990) *Human Rights, Realities and Possibilities: Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, Yugoslavia and Hungary*. Springer. Berlin. p.62
[174] Moore, C. (2013). Margaret Thatcher The Authorised Biography Volume One: Not for turning. Penguin Books. London, p. 614
[175] *Ivi*, p. 622
[176] Lyons, F. (1990). *Beyond Political Stelemate: New Thinking on Northern Ireland*. Public Policy Under Thatcher. Edited by Stephen P. Savage and Lynton Robins. The Macmillan Press. Houndmills, Basinstoke, Hampshire and London.
[177] *Ibidem*.
[178] *Ibidem*.
[179] *Ibidem*.

Moreover, the package came to affect some fundamental guarantees of Anglo-Saxon law, as the right of defendants to silence was abolished in Northern Ireland (to be extended in the rest of the United Kingdom), paving the way for the courts to infer guilt from the silence of the accused[180]. Regarding trials, the inquiry revealed also that there was evidence of conspiracy to pervert the course of justice, as the cases of the so-called "Birmingham Six" and "Guildford Four" showed[181]. In practice, additional powers were being given to a police force which enjoyed impunity in the eyes of many Northern Irish, while an Irishman could be sentenced without evidence by a legal procedure exercised outside of practices and guarantees traditionally provided by common law. Furthermore, the burden of proof on the confiscation of money from suspects of terrorism was reversed, in other words the suspected had to prove the legitimacy of possession and not the public authority[182]. These measures, coupled with the failure to reform the police force (which had been one of the demands of the civil rights movement before the events of 1969) contributed to making it appear Margaret Thatcher's government as a government hostile to the Catholics of Northern Ireland and interested only in keeping the area under its control, in spite of the anti-discriminatory legislation which it had promoted. What was more, despite the commitments made in non-discrimination, the condition of the Catholic community of Northern Ireland did not improve, since not enough new jobs were created to be filled (and to whose applying the New Fair Employment Act)[183]. In this regard, the Thatcher's non-interventionist economic policy was not working in Northern Ireland. On the other hand, given the war situation, it was difficult to expect that Northern Ireland would be able to attract both private investment and the necessary skilled workforce for the driving sector of today's market, that is the high technology[184]. Ending the war would have helped, but the poverty of the Catholic community fuelled its resentment. In conclusion, it must be admitted that Margaret Thatcher did not manage to defeat the Irish Nationalist terrorism nor to improve relations between the Protestants and the Catholics. Furthermore, the latter continued to consider themselves as a population occupied by an invader, forced, by a foreign army, out of "their republic". However, it is also true that the escalation triggered during Thatcher's government had its origins primarily on the "Bloody Sunday", ten years before she became Prime Minister. It was in fact this event that marked the end of the civil rights movement and its anti-sectarian project. That event provoked the attacks of August 27, 1979, which, in turn, contributed to bring Thatcher to the rigid positions for which she remained known, in particular on the occasion of the second hunger strike in Long Kesh, whose tragic outcome contributed to increase the consensus towards the more radical wings of Irish nationalism.

[180] *Ibidem*.
[181] *Ibidem*.
[182] *Ibidem*.
[183] *Ibidem.*
[184] *Ibidem*.

Chapter III

Defending Britain

3.1 *Dealing with Europe: from the dream of the Single Market to the nightmare of the super-state*

"Europe will be stronger precisely because it has France as France, Spain as Spain, Britain as Britain, each with its own customs, traditions and identity. It would be folly to try to fit them into some sort of identikit European personality. Some of the founding fathers of the Community thought that the United States of America might be its model. But the whole history of America is quite different from Europe. People went there to get away from the intolerance and constraints of life in Europe. They sought liberty and opportunity; and their strong sense of purpose has, over two centuries, helped to create a new unity and pride in being American, just as our pride lies in being British or Belgian or Dutch or German. I am the first to say that on many great issues the countries of Europe should try to speak with a single voice. I want to see us work more closely on the things we can do better together than alone. Europe is stronger when we do so, whether it be in trade, in defence or in our relations with the rest of the world. But working more closely together does not require power to be centralised in Brussels or decisions to be taken by an appointed bureaucracy. Indeed, it is ironic that just when those countries such as the Soviet Union, which have tried to run everything from the centre, are learning that success depends on dispersing power and decisions away from the centre, there are some in the Community who seem to want to move in the opposite direction. We have not successfully rolled back the frontiers of the state in Britain, only to see them re-imposed at a European level with a European super-state exercising a new dominance from Brussels." with these words Margaret Thatcher turned to the College of Europe on September 20, 1988 on the occasion of her speech that would go down in history as "the Bruges Speech". Contrary to popular belief, Margaret Thatcher's view of integration has never really changed. She wanted it to be both a large market and the place of cooperation between sovereign states, which would proceed through intergovernmental agreements, yielding the minimum of sovereignty and only when strictly necessary. The transition from support (in contrast with the Labour) to hostility (again, paradoxically, in contrast with the Labour), derives from the fact that at the beginning European integration appeared as the opening of a free market area much more effective than the others, first of all the EFTA, while subsequently it revealed its true purpose, namely the establishment of a bureaucratic apparatus which would regulate at supranational level what had been deregulated at national level, changing from a free trade area to an extended protectionism, in particular for the economies of France and Germany, forcing Britain to adopt labour and welfare regulations that would have increased production costs and public spending (both targets against which Thatcher had struggled). What was worse, violating Westminster's sovereignty. This may explain why Conservatives were pro-European and Labour Euro-

sceptics in the first phase, while positions inverted in the second phase. Nonetheless, the vast majority of the British people, from Right to Left, would never have accepted to become part of a European super-state. In this regard, the leader of the Labour Party between 1955 and 1963, Hugh Gaitskell, speaking against the entry of Great Britain into the EEC in a television interview, had said that joining the EEC "means the end of Britain as an independent nation; we become no more than Texas and California in the United States of Europe"[185]. Thatcher saw the same risk in the moment of transition between the Single European Act and the Maastricht Treaty, immediately after the entry into force of the first on July 1, 1987. The three years between 1987 and 1990, already quite hard at home, they were equally so in Europe, marking the end of Margaret Thatcher's leadership. Anyway, to better understand the nature of the relationship between Thatcher and Europe, the best thing to do is to divide it into three periods. The first is that of the renegotiation of the British contribution to the European Economic Community, immortalized her famous phrase "I want my money back" on September 1979, a few weeks after her first general election victory. This issue had already been addressed by Harold Wilson, but the agreement reached had been disappointing in the outcome. In particular, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) mechanism continued to "punish" the United Kingdom for the efficiency of its small, but competitive agricultural sector, while rewarding French agriculture, large but at a loss. Germany had accepted it as a counterpart to the opening of the continental market to its industry and also because its agriculture would have benefited, albeit to a lesser extent. In addition, German economy was in good health. Not so that of the United Kingdom, which therefore suffered a double injustice. Furthermore, the CAP with its "Community preference" continued to impose duties on non-European agricultural products which increased the price of them, in order to protect European agriculture. This, however, harmed British consumers, since much of the food they ate was produced in the Commonwealth countries, at previously affordable prices, which rose after the entry into the European Economic Community. It is true that regional aids had been introduced in 1975 to compensate Britain for this imbalance (and it was especially the Labour constituencies that benefited), but in reality this was not enough to lighten the burden that the CAP imposed on it[186]. Consequently, once in office, Thatcher wanted to negotiate a better deal. Basically, she demanded that a certain percentage of restitution be set of what the British paid for the contribution to the Community. Eventually, a rebate of 66 per cent of the amount of the United Kingdom's contribution was fixed[187]. The common opinion is that Thatcher convinced the other members of the Community almost out of exhaustion. And it is quite true. After all, her battle lasted five

[185] Black, J. (2019). *Britain and Europe A short history*. C. Hurst & Co. (Publishers) Ltd. London, p.158
[186] *Ivi*, 165.
[187] Moore, C. (2016). Margaret Thatcher The Authorised Biography Volume Two: Everything She wants. Penguin Books. London, p. 377

years, since 1979 to 1984, imposing this theme as the dominant until its solution[188]. It is worth to say that the inefficiency of the organization of the CAP would have forced the member countries of the Community to talk about it again for a system reform. In this regard, Thatcher would have represented the United Kingdom in a number of negotiations for the reform of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade known as the "Uruguay Rounds", between 1986 (the same year as the signing of the Single European Act) and 1990 (the year of her resignation)[189]. However, the CAP reform would not have been achieved until 1994, four years after the end of her premiership. On that occasion she delivered a speech at the "Uruguay Rounds" conference in which, among other things, she invited the states present to go further the agreements reached in the name of free trade[190] of which Great Britain had always benefited, since the time of the abolition of the Corn Laws, in full Victorian age (the era when Britain had such a strong currency that it allowed it to import cheap raw materials, producing manufactured goods that it exported at highly competitive prices all over the world, benefiting twice from free trade[191], not by chance a golden age for Margaret Thatcher). However, at the beginning of her experience as Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher did not talk about a systemic reform of the CAP, focusing her action to a way to recover as much "British money" as possible. Critics argue that this attitude "run into the sands any hopes of, and ambitions for, a British leadership role within the Community"[192]. Yet, it is difficult to say whether Britain could really aspire to such a role. After all, the stability of the Community was based on the Franco-German axis with the approval of all the other member countries, which would hardly have given support to a United Kingdom challenging the Franco-German leadership. Surely, not as long as the "Iron Curtain" persisted. Not by chance Thatcher mentioned the Eastern European countries in her "Bruges Speech"[193]. In any case, it is certainly true that she needed, at her first government as Prime Minister, tangible results to present to her electorate. In this regard, solving the problem of the disproportionate size of Britain's net contribution to the Community was the perfect calling card for her. Furthermore, it is likely that without her intransigent and somewhat over the top behaviour, she would have not succeed[194]. The second period started in 1984 and ended in 1987. This was a more positive period. To some extent, the "*communautaire"* period of Thatcher's government[195]. This period was focused on enlargement and the Single Market. After all, in doing so, she continued over a path

[188] As declared by Roy Jenkins, quoted by Fry, G. K. (2008). *The Politics of the Thatcher Revolution An interpretation of British Politics, 1979-1990*. Palgrave Macmillan. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York, p. 214

[189] Magni, S. (2013). *This lady is not for turning I grandi discorsi di Margaret Thatcher*. IBL Libri. Torino, pp. 85-86

[190] Margaret Thatcher Foundation. *Speech to the World Trade After GATT Conference*. On March 3 1994, Thusday.

[191] See: Clarke, P. (1997). *Hope and Glory: Britain 1900-2000*. Penguin Books. London, pp. 7-39

[192] Roy Jenkins, quoted by Fry, G. K. (2008). *The Politics of the Thatcher Revolution An interpretation of British Politics, 1979-1990*. Palgrave Macmillan. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York, p. 214

[193] "We must never forget that east of the Iron Curtain, people who once enjoyed a full share of European culture, freedom and identity have been cut off from their roots. We shall always look on Warsaw, Prague and Budapest as great European cities".

[194] As declared by Percy Cradock, quoted by Fry, G. K. (2008). *The Politics of the Thatcher Revolution An interpretation of British Politics, 1979-1990*. Palgrave Macmillan. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York, p. 216

[195] *Ibidem*.

that the previous governments had already taken, but she did it even more consistently. Indeed, one of the reasons that had led Harold Macmillan's government to turn to Europe already in 1961 was the stark evidence that the British Keynesian Welfare State was not an internationally competitive social and economic order[196]. Now, Thatcher was carrying on that liberalization and openness that would restore the British economy and restore the ancient "Victorian values" of work, thrift, self-responsibility, not only in Europe, but also at home. Indeed, she wanted to do in Europe what she was already doing at home, particularly as concerning deregulation of services. In this regard, she had already abolished exchange controls in 1979, began liberalization of telecommunications services in 1981, committed her government to lower European air fares[197]. On 25 and 26 June 1984 the heads of the European governments (of state for France) met in Fontainebleau in a summit which would later give rise to the Single European Act. In the weeks leading to the summit, Thatcher circulated a paper entitled "Europe: The Future", in which her government's vision for re-launching Europe was exposed[198]. At the top of these proposals was, as was to be expected, the liberalization of the internal market, with very minimal common standards, concerning, as already mentioned, services, in particular insurance and transport. In addition, the British government called for the establishment of open public procurement. In this regard, British Foreign Minister Geoffrey Howe called for the removal of "all-and I mean all, economic barriers" (in other words, both customs and non-customs barriers) by 1990[199]. France supported the British position[200] (and this would suggest that perhaps Thatcher's action had not so much damaged the ability of the British to affect Europe) proving reliable in the desire to complete the Single Market, alongside with Germany. In fact, at the summit meeting in Saarbriicken shortly after Fontainebleau, the French President François Mitterrand and the German Chancellor Helmut Kohl entered into negotiations over the abolition not only of all the non-customs barriers on trade of goods (the customs union had already entered into force in 1968, abolishing the last customs duties on intra-Community trade), but also over the harmonization of the domestic veterinary and sanitary legislation and the adoption of common streamlined administrative procedures. In addition, they negotiated also over the free movement of people and the eventual accession to the Benelux customs union[201]. Other issues concerned the decision-making process. In this regard, there was already an important divergence between the British government and other European countries. In fact, while the British wanted to give as little as possible to opening to the qualified majority rule by maintaining the Luxembourg Compromise and

[196] Fry, G. K. (2008). *The Politics of the Thatcher Revolution An interpretation of British Politics, 1979-1990.* Palgrave Macmillan. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York, p.212

[197] Moravcsik A. (1991*). Negotiating the Single European Act: national interests and conventional statecraft in the European Community.* The World Peace Foundation and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

[198] *Ibidem*.

[199] *Ibidem*.

[200] *Ibidem*

[201] *Ibidem*.

even institutionalizing it, the other European countries were moving dangerously further[202]. As expected, the initiative started from France and Germany. They called for majority voting on internal market issues and for amendments to the Treaty. Italy, Ireland and the Benelux countries wanted to support this line. In addition, all these countries (seven of the ten) showed the intention of overcoming the Luxembourg Compromise, expanding qualified majority voting even regarding treaty changes[203]. Once again, the Franco-German axis proved capable of holding the helm of the European integration process firmly in hand. Only Greece and Denmark sided with Great Britain[204], which did not want to completely overcome the Luxembourg Compromise, not wanting to abdicate the sovereign prerogative of vetoing the modification of the Treaty. To do so, in fact, meant giving an almost "constitutional" value to the Treaty itself, placing an authentic supranational power above the United Kingdom. Nothing to do with the unanimous provision to grant powers, strong but limited, to a body, the Commission, to achieve what everyone had decided, namely completing the Single Market. What was more, as if to confirm British fears, "the seven" (France, Germany, Italy, Ireland, Benelux) also called for an intergovernmental conference to negotiate a draft treaty of an "European union". Meanwhile, it had come time to appoint a new Commission and, more important, a new President of the Commission. Jacques Delors, freed from the post of Minister of Finance just in time by a reshuffle in France, was proposed at the last minute by Mitterrand[205]. His stature as a politician with senior ministerial experience, his years as a member of the European Community Economic and Social Committee, and his reputation for sensible economic policymaker led Germany and Britain to give their immediate approval. On January 6 1985, he became President of the European Commission. Thatcher nonetheless took the precaution of naming Francis Arthur Cockfield as a liberal counterweight. However, despite she had approved his appointment, the presence of Delors at the top of the European Commission, in the following years, contributed significantly to crack relations between Thatcher and Europe. While on the front of the completion of the Single Market the British government could rejoice (having the Council supported the objective of completing it by 1992, more or less the time already indicated by Geoffrey Howe), on the decision-making front the situation was getting out of hand. Delors in fact linked internal liberalization to qualified majority voting. He stressed that the first was unreachable without the second and that the second was impossible without an intergovernmental conference to amend the Treaty of Rome [206]. The British government, feeling marginalized, counterattacked by proposing a "gentleman's agreements" which provided for voluntary restraint in invoking the Luxembourg Compromise on measures concerning the

[202] *Ibidem*.
[203] *Ibidem*.
[204] *Ibidem*.
[205] *Ibidem*.
[206] *Ibidem*.

liberalization of the market, without formally abolished it [207]. After all, they could rightly trust that there was a virtually unanimous consensus on the liberalization and completion of the Single Market. The differences on the contrary were on all other issues, about which it was very likely that Britain would find itself placed in the minority, thus being forced to accept decisions it had not shared, something unbearable for Margaret Thatcher, who had done of the sovereignty of Westminster in British affairs one of the pillars of her politics. At the Milan summit of 28-29 June 1985, however, the German Foreign Minister, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, in contrast to the British proposal, proposed the complete overcoming of the Luxembourg Compromise, meeting the support of the Italian Foreign Minister Giulio Andreotti, who was rather sceptical of mere declarations of intent and was anxious to avoid a failure under the Italian presidency. The British proposal was rejected. What was more, Italy called for a majority-vote on whether to convene an intergovernmental conference under Article 236. Germany and the Benelux countries immediately supported this measure, and France and Ireland hesitatingly joined them, leaving only Britain, Denmark, and Greece opposed. On procedural grounds, Britain protested the invocation of a majority-vote, but its protests were rejected and the conference was called. Thatcher returned from Milan furious, but in the following days she was convinced that the right thing to do was to attend the conference anyway[208]. In fact, she could reasonably hope to limit the qualified majority voting only to questions relating to the development of the Single Market. If successful, she would have kept Westminster's sovereignty intact in domestic policy, primarily in the tax area, secondly in the welfare area and thirdly in the area of immigration. At the same time, an overcoming of the Luxembourg Compromise limited only to Single Market matters could ensure its implementation more easily. In this regard, the British, however jealous of their independence, were sensitive to Delors' arguments. It was therefore necessary to be there to obtain the best possible reform. All the more so since the procedure to amend the Treaty under Article 236 required unanimity, unlike negotiating a new treaty. The rule of unanimity meant that the United Kingdom would not lose anything by attending the conference. On the contrary, not attending the conference could only temporarily block a new treaty. Therefore, in perspective, Thatcher's government would have ended up isolating the United Kingdom further, if it had refused to negotiate. A real risk, since Mitterrand continued to feed speculation about a two-tiered Europe, calling the decisions at Milan "a test of truth" for the British willingness to keep up with others[209]. After what happened in the years before her government, Thatcher was aware that Britain could not afford to be isolated in Europe. Moreover, it was not mandatory that the modification of the Treaty passed through the approval of the European Parliament, but only through that of the national parliaments. An intergovernmental procedure that bypassed supranational institutions, which could only please Thatcher and

[207] *Ibidem*.
[208] *Ibidem*.
[209] *Ibidem*.

most of the British. For all these reasons, Thatcher decided to attend the conference. And, apparently at least, she came out victorious. At the end, in fact, qualified majority triumphed in the areas where her government favoured reform, such as liberalization of service trade. Elsewhere it failed[210]. In practice, even if formally treaty revisions were made, an explicit revocation of the Luxembourg Compromise was avoided. When the negotiations started, a process of limiting the scope and intensity of reform was triggered. Britain could appreciated that the other member states, when it came to drafting a document in the details, revealed to be more jealous of their sovereignty than they had seemed to be at the Milan summit. British diplomacy worked on this, making all states converge on a minimalist agenda. After all, converging on the lowest common denominator was the safest way to continue on the path of European integration all together, and this was recognized even by the supporters of a "maximalist" program. Leveraging on both fronts, dressing its ideological view with pragmatism and realism, Thatcher's government managed to block significant reforms in the areas of cooperation not directly connected with the internal market issues and to obstruct the extension of the majority-vote even to issues that had something to do with the internal market, such as the aforementioned fiscal and social regulation, but which it considered sovereign prerogatives that had to remain in the hands of Westminster. Finally, it also managed to include so many exemptions and safeguards regarding the harmonization of internal legislation that the implicit suppression of the right of veto, which was to be the main purpose of the Treaty, was thwarted. Consequently, in all cases other than internal market policy, the lack of consensus among the major states could continue to easily block any cooperation or harmonization initiative[211]. The satisfaction for this victory can make us understand very well the reason for such a bad relation subsequently, since the Delors' Commission, from the signing of the Single European Act onwards, acted contrary to the "minimalist" spirit that should have characterized it. On 17 February 1986, the Single European Act was signed. As already said, it came into effect on 1 July 1987. In that year, the third and last period began, marked by the disputes between Europe and Margaret Thatcher and even within her government. In this regard, the first "betrayal" came from Arthur Cockfield, proposed by Thatcher to contain federalism with a socialist flavour of Delors, he soon became "a convert to the pro-European cause" [212]. As already mentioned, Thatcher did not want to accept any fiscal harmonization, since it would expropriate the British Parliament of its sovereign function *par excellence*, imposing a "foreign" will on Great Britain. To tell the truth, Cockfield's campaign for fiscal harmonization was limited to the Value Added Tax, which, in fact, can be used as a protectionist lever to discourage imports, since it applies to imported goods and not to those destined to the export. However, even if Margaret Thatcher was against

[210] *Ibidem*.
[211] *Ibidem*.
[212] Fry, G. K. (2008). *The Politics of the Thatcher Revolution An interpretation of British Politics*, 1979-1990. Palgrave Macmillan. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York, p. 216

protectionism, she was even more against the limitation of the sovereignty of the British Parliament, the pillar of the British Constitution. Alongside this principle, there was also the belief, not only that each country should be left free to make its choices in the area of fiscal and social regulation, but also that it was right that these systems could compete with each other. In the British case, Thatcher had chosen to shift the taxation from direct to indirect taxes, privileging efficiency and freedom, since indirect taxes are easier to collect and consumers are left free on what and how much to consume in the face of any price increase, while the government limits its taxation on the income earned "with the sweat of the forehead". She did not claim that the same solution (with the attached ideological framework) was adopted by other countries. However, she could not even tolerate that "a European super-state" imposed on her what to do. If then her Britain would have been more competitive, evidently it would have been because the model her Britain pursued was the best. To this theoretical position, Cockfield contrasted the crude reality of the Treaty, in particular article 99, which imposed the harmonization of indirect taxes. Having dared to openly contradict the Prime Minister, he ended up being replaced[213], at the beginning of 1989, by Leon Brittan, who had been a loyal, right-wing Thatcher's supporter, who had appreciated both his economic judgment as a former Treasury Minister and his tough stance as Home Secretary during the 1984 miners' strike. She assumed that he would have been at her side once again in the European Commission. On the contrary, once he was appointed, he revealed his strongly pro-European Union feelings, not failing to turn his contempt towards those, "whose vision (if vision it can be called) of Europe is that of little more than a glorified free trade area"[214]. However, the Thatcher's biggest mistake had been upstream. Fearing the isolation of Great Britain, she had come to the conference, negotiated and was convinced that she had obtained an agreement that would protect state sovereignty from the supranational authorities of the Community. In retrospect, she admitted that she had made two "understandable but undeniable"[215] mistakes: "The first was to assume that the increased powers given to the Commission would cease to be used to any great extent once the Single Market programme had been completed"[216]. She justified her naivety by arguing that: "After all, if one accepted that the whole purpose of the changes made was to establish a properly functioning market, there was no reason to imagine that the process would be anything other to be infinitive. True, one could hand back vetoes that had been removed as part of the Single European Act, because government might subvert the progress that had been made. But there was no reason to think the Commission would need to keep legislating at the same rate, let alone spread its legislative tentacles much wider"[217]. In this regard, many Britons, both in the population and in the ruling class, had trusted Delors, convinced, by his stringent

[213] *Ibidem*.
[214] *Ibidem*.
[215] *Ivi*, p.217
[216] *Ibidem*.
[217] *Ibidem*.

argument, of the need for an authority endowed with the effective powers necessary for the mission assigned to it. Indeed, to think that the Commission could create the Single Market without having the powers to overcome the obstructionism of the various states (driven by the interest groups within them) was rather naïve. Nonetheless, it had proved equally naïve to think that the Commission would stop using the powers assigned to it once its mission had ended. In this regard, it is strange that Margaret Thatcher, who had already known (and fought) the bureaucracy at home, did not realize that it was quite natural that a supranational bureaucracy had the same vices as a national one. The first of among all, that of "spreading its tentacles wider". She probably underestimated this risk, trusting that the bureaucratic power of the Commission would be kept limited in its areas by the Court of Justice, in accordance with the Treaty. After all, what are the courts for, if not to limit the power in the name of the Law? The English take this principle very seriously. The Civil War, which in the seventeenth century bloodied their country, culminating in the beheading of King Charles I, broke out precisely because the courts sided with the King and not with the Law. Although Thatcher, like all Conservatives, had always pretended that that war never took place, she could only share this spirit, which was the spirit of her people. Therefore, she could only perceive that same sense of injustice in the moment she realized that "the European Commission and the European Court of Justice worked together to explore, exploit, and widen every loophole"[218]. In other words, the Court of Justice gave an extensive, rather than restrictive, interpretation of the powers assigned to the Commission for the completion of the Single Market, including in those matters, such as immigration, health, conditions of employment, which, in a strict sense, had nothing to do with the Single Market, but which they nevertheless influence it. This is why the Commission wanted to appropriate them, as was to be expected. What Margaret Thatcher did not expect was that the Commission would find an ally rather than a restraint in the Court. At the popular level, this was seen, rather than the fruit of a mistake by the Thatcher's government, as a betrayal by those who had the mission of applying laws without worrying about anyone's political plans. Indeed, the extensive interpretation of the Treaty by the European Court of Justice seemed to show the latter's willingness to support, through its judgement, the federalist ideal. Margaret Thatcher had believed that other European nations would share her disappointment. After all, the idea that the judiciary power should contain and not expand the power of the executives (and what was the Commission if not the executive of the Community?) is not only British, but is at the basis of the liberal philosophy on which theoretically all western liberal democracies are founded. Instead, contrary to her expectations, the other countries, since they shared the Commission's objectives, were not worried about the fact that it moved beyond its prerogatives. If Thatcher's ideal was Adam Smith, the Mitterrand's France had as model Jean-Baptiste Colbert and the

[218] *Ivi*, p.218

Kohl's Germany the practice of the Prussian state [219] . They were therefore very happy that, to put it in Thatcher's words, "the provisions of the Single European Act were abused to push corporatist and collectivist social legislation by the back door" [220]. In fact, collectivism and corporatism were the basis of social relations in France and in Germany respectively. The French nation, since the time of its Revolution, founded its cohesion on a centralized and widespread state administration, not limited to the simple function of "the night-watchman", but constantly engaged in directing the choices of its citizens towards a common ideal, which is also the essence of *dirigisme*. Quite the opposite of the English tradition (imposed on the other three nations of the Kingdom), founded on the common law, which rejects the idea of a law subject to political objectives. As already mentioned, in England, popular rebellion erupted when the Law was enslaved to political power (and it is here, rather than in an alleged absence of bloodshed, the difference between the two revolutions on both sides of the Channel). Also because she believed in this tradition, Margaret Thatcher had made her "revolution" at home, limiting regulations and bureaucracy, trying to reduce spending and the tax burden. Regarding Germany, its social peace (of which it proudly boasted in contrast with Great Britain) stemmed from the exercise of co-management and consultation between employers and workers' representatives, which the government, of any political colour, encouraged, ensuring a strong currency and a social security network, against old age and illness, set up since the days of Bismarck, enjoying the trust of its citizens. A system that, in the pre-Thatcher period, British governments had tried to import, failing, and that Thatcher despised. In fact, she believed that the entrepreneur, that is the one who takes the risk of losing his money, should be free to act as he wishes, because he and no one else takes that risk, on his money and not on that of someone else. Alongside this declaration of principle, she believed that only in this way could there be innovation, the birth of new businesses and economic growth. In a word, progress. On the contrary, corporatism deprives both workers and entrepreneurs of responsability and promotes path-dependency and stagnation. If for Thatcher's Britain the European Community had to be the means by which to promote the greatest possible openness, stimulating individual commitment and intellect (since only through individuals, this believed Margaret Thatcher, a nation can thrive), for France and Germany, which had always led the development of European integration, the goal was to use the Community as a means of defending their model by imposing it on others. Through European regulation, they intended to create an umbrella that would protect them from global competition. And since the Commission shared their objectives, they did not pose the problem of limiting their powers, rather they supported it. In this regard, Thatcher said that "they viewed, and still view, policy as equivalent to politics, and politics as about power-and only power […] And the idea that these extra powers should be limited to

[219] *Ivi*, p. 217
[220] *Ibidem.*

the purpose for which they were actually being given probably never seriously occurred to them"[221]. What was inconceivable for the Thatcher's people was normal for them: to bend the law to their political goals. In complete disregard of the liberal principles, to which their constitutions were formally inspired, but which actually were little felt in the deep soul of their nations. How to react? The only possible way was to use the veto margins still available and then negotiate exemptions from the rules adopted by all the other member states. The most classic result of this way of acting is certainly the exemption from the European Monetary Union. The conservation of their currency has always been a source of pride for the British, symbolizing more than anything else the preservation of their sovereignty, even within of the new European Union, which replaced the previous Community, and to which Margaret Thatcher had so much opposed. In this regard, contrary to the other notables of the Conservative Party (including two of her close supporters, Geoffrey Howe, Secretary of Foreign and Commonwealth, and Nigel Lawson, Chancellor of the Exchequer[222]), who invited her to negotiate as it had been done for the Single European Act, Thatcher saw no room for negotiation for Maastricht, because, simply, she did not share the final goal, namely the United States of Europe. A short time later her resignation, she clarified her position in a speech in the House of Lords on June 7, 1993 (she had been appointed a member of the House in 1992): "You were either on a slow train or a fast train, but you were on the train to that destination—and if you do not want to go to that destination, it does not matter at what speed you go. You do not want to be on it at all. I suggest that we do not want to go any further on that train" [223]. Although theoretically indisputable, this approach would have led Britain in that isolation which, by participating in the negotiations for the Single European Act, Thatcher herself had hoped to avoid. The alternative, however, would have been even worse, namely the end of Westminster sovereignty, accompanied by the invasion of a legislative apparatus totally alien to the British national spirit. Eventually, her successor, John Major, managed to negotiate an agreement that allowed Britain to keep its own currency, while accepting the Maastricht Treaty. In practice, removing the most part of the danger, which theoretically it must have had, for the British sovereignty. The maintenance of the pound left the British government with all the monetary instruments useful to face the economic shocks (as the so-called "Black Wednesday" of 1992), such as the devaluation and the application of low interest rates, almost confirming the importance of defending the sovereignty both of the government and of the national parliament to maintain an effective democracy, albeit without isolating itself economically or politically. This line, after all, had been the Thatcher's line. She had only diverged from it when she felt the danger of losing British sovereignty by continuing to negotiate. Successive governments, instead, have maintained it, and successfully, at least until now.

[221] Fry, G. K. (2008) *The Politics of the Thatcher Revolution An interpretation of British Politics*, 1979-1990. Palgrave Macmillan. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York, pp. 217-218.

[222] As described by Childs, D. (2012) *Britain since 1945 A political History.* Routledge, Abington, Oxon, p. 265

[223] Margaret Thatcher, *HL S [European Communities (Amendment) Bill]*, June 7 1993."Thatcher Foundation".

3.2 *Stand for Liberty: win the Cold War*

Some could argue that Margaret Thatcher pursued, towards the USA, a way of act not dissimilar of that of her predecessors. In fact, after the Suez's Crisis, all British governments gave greater weight to the Atlantic alliance. However, compared to her predecessors, she distinguished herself, since, in the context of the Cold War, she supported a mode of action against the Soviet threat not limited to containment but that aimed at collapse of the Communist system, finding a viable shore on the other side of the Atlantic represented by Ronald Reagan (President of the USA from 1981 to 1989). In this regard, one must not think, as stated by Powell, that she turned Britain in "something horribly resembling to a satellite of United States"[224]. Both because she believed in the need to defeat Communism long before the Reagan Presidency (after all, the nickname "Iron Lady" was given to her by the Soviets in 1975, while Reagan became President in 1981) and because there was no lack of frictions with the US administration whenever the latter manifested even the slightest interference in the domestic affairs of the United Kingdom (as in the aforementioned cases of "boat people" or Northern Ireland). Margaret Thatcher shared with Reagan the way in which he led the Cold War because she shared the end, the collapse of Communism, and she knew that, at least at the beginning, an aggressive approach was needed to achieve this goal. In this regard, when Reagan inaugurated the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), Thatcher expressed her concern that this strategy of defensive shields would replace the principles of nuclear deterrence. Reagan reassured her, ensuring that SDI, on the contrary, would break traditional "balance of terror", founded on the fear of mutual destruction, brought the West ahead. This strategy probably influenced the internal balance of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, leading Mikhail Gorbachev to lead it. At that point, Thatcher suggested a more dialoguing approach. Reagan followed her advice, demonstrating that Britain was actually far from being "a satellite of the United States", but a significant ally. According to George Walden, formerly of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Cold War had become the "second Great Game" [225], namely something similar to that a silent confrontation between the Russian and the British Empire described by Kipling in the nineteenth century. The analogy became stronger with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. The difference was not so much that now it was the USA the power that opposed Russia, but that this time the breakthrough in the enemy camp would not lead simply to the hegemony of one country, but to the triumph of one way of organizing society. Anyway, Thatcher played this game not only for ideological conviction. By supporting the USA she proved to be quite foresighted, as the US support in the Falklands War would demonstrate [226]. As already said, this support was fundamental in winning that war. Therefore, in making sure that Britain did not become a

[224] Fry, G. K. (2008) *The Politics of the Thatcher Revolution An interpretation of British Politics*, 1979-1990. Palgrave Macmillan. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York, p.207

[225] *Ivi*, p. 206

[226] *Ibidem.*

country "whose word will count for nothing". In addition, contrary to what Powell thought (he was hostile both to NATO and the European Economic Community) [227], Britain could not afford an isolationist approach, because this would have meant greater vulnerability. First, without American support, it could not even have defended its possessions (and with them its position in the world). Secondly, its economy had developed interdependently with the rest of the world, from the Commonwealth (from which it imported food and raw materials) to Europe (where it exported its manufactures, as well as the City's financial services) [228]. Taking this into account, Margaret Thatcher's visceral anticommunism appears more understandable, since her Britain would have been much more comfortable in a world that resembled it politically and economically. However, the end of Communism did not bring the benefits to Britain that Thatcher hoped for. Britain in Europe remained isolated, for the former Communist countries in their transition to capitalism looked to reunified Germany rather than Britain as a model [229]. As a result, they could not form a reliable ally against the Brussels bureaucracy. After all, they needed Europe to restructure and revive their economies. Even the relationship with the USA cooled, as Thatcher said about Reagan's successor: "Bush felt the need to distance himself from his predecessor: turning his back fairly publicly on the special position I have enjoyed in the Reagan Administration's counsels and confidence was a way of doing that." [230] However, maybe the truth was simpler: the Cold War was over, the communist threat passed and isolationist feelings were returning in the United States. And for Great Britain too things were changing. The end of the Cold War in fact marked the end of the world in which Thatcher had lived and of which she had been part. The new generation of voters could not remember the conditions of Britain before her, while it blamed her of the persistence of old and new problems, such as the growth of the inequalities or the issue of nationalities, in the case of Northern Ireland very painful. She had managed to save Britain from a decline that seemed inevitable, but her inflexible character, which had allowed her to succeed where the others had failed, now it was bringing more problems than solutions, as in the aforementioned Northern Ireland, but especially in Europe, where Britain was once again risking isolation on the issue of the Maastricht Treaty. In general, it was no longer time for fighters, but for administrators. Perhaps, she also recognized this when, realizing that she could not anymore keep the leadership of the Conservative Party, she transferred her votes on John Major, who, while basically sharing her policy, however, had a more conciliatory attitude.

[227] Vinen, R. (2010). *Thatcher's Britain The Politics and Social Upheaval of the Thatcher Era*. Pocket Books. London, pp.53-57

[228] As Thatcher herself had reminded during the European Referendum Campaign in 1975: "*We rely on world imports for nearly all our industrial raw materials. We are the world's largest market for foodstuffs. To pay for both we need to export to the world goods and services currently representing one-fifth of the gross national product".* Quoted Margaret Thatcher Foundation, *Speech in Hendon (European Referendum campaign)*, May 19 1975, Monday.

[229] See: Cerami A. (2009) Mechanisms of Institutional Change in Central and Eastern European Welfare State Restructuring. Palgrave Macmillan. Basingstoke, p. 46: "The institutional incoherence that resulted from central planning opened up space in the cultivation of a new market-oriented social policy logic in which dormant latent institutions and policies have been both rediscovered and reactivated. This reactivation concerned the re-enforcement of Bismarckian characteristics already present during communism".

[230] Fry, G. K. (2008). *The Politics of the Thatcher Revolution An interpretation of British Politics, 1979-1990.* Palgrave Macmillan. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York, p.211

Conclusion

Margaret Thatcher's goal was to ensure Britain's survival beyond the Empire. To achieve this goal, she wanted to create a British nation-state, modelled on the other European countries. Therefore, she had to define the borders of this nation. In this regard, she cut away the ties of nationality with the Commonwealth, restricting the boundaries of the British nationality to the United Kingdom alone with the Nationality Act of 1981. Nonetheless, redefining immigration and nationality policy was not enough to create a British nation-state. She wanted also to merge the four British nations into one people. In order to achieve this goal, Margaret Thatcher had an assimilationist approach ("One Nation"). For this reason, she not only opposed the devolution to Scotland, but she went further, centralizing functions traditionally managed locally. However, she failed to stop the process triggered by decolonization. British Unionism had in fact developed within the framework of the Empire. Especially in Scotland, "popular imperialism" had been the main channel through which to keep the people loyal to the London government. In this context, the Falklands War took place. The importance of this war lies both in its reasons and in the expectations that it catalysed and in the subsequent disillusion. Firstly, the overwhelming majority of Britons, in all social classes and in all political affiliations, believed that it was necessary to help those whom they considered as compatriots. The Thatcher's government could therefore not avoid of fighting. Secondly, principally in Scotland, many wanted to see in this war, especially after the victory, the beginning of a global re-launch of the United Kingdom, since they had always seen British Unionism in "imperial" terms. On the contrary, in Thatcher's view, recovering the "imperial" connotation of the United Kingdom was impossible. The United Kingdom had in fact been able to win the Falklands War thanks to US support. Suez's lesson, therefore, remained intact. The disillusion reinforced Scottish nationalism. In addition, Thatcher's attack to the traditional local autonomies, which was perceived as an attack to Scottish self-determination, and her privatization policy, which loosened further the ties between the Scots and the London government, contributed to this outcome. In general, Scots disliked this ideal of a "Little Britain", matched with a recover of a free-market society, since it did not seem offer anything to them, in addition to erasing their identity. Anyway, despite her British nationalism, Thatcher was aware that the United Kingdom could not be self-sufficient. Consequently, she supported the permanence of the United Kingdom in the European Economic Community seeing in Europe an export area for British products. Nonetheless, she paid attention to prevent Britain from being annexed as part of an "European super-state". In the meantime, she was fighting at home to prevent the Scottish and Irish Nationalists from dismembering the United Kingdom. In this regard, she believed that, to guarantee the Kingdom's independence and unity, she had to protect the sovereignty of Westminster, both from the threat of a federal Europe and the internal nationalisms. In her view, Britain's survival was in danger. This feeling of danger made her somewhat harsh in dealing with the Northern Ireland issue. Keeping that territory in fact was

important not only because it was inhabited by a British majority, but also because it was essential to national safety (being in fact the "back door" of Britain). All the more so in the context of the Cold War. However, her approach, which was also marked by a substantial lack of understanding of the social and political issues that characterized the Northern Irish problem, further pushed the Catholic community to move away from the London government, strengthening those who aimed at reunification with the rest of Ireland. Regarding the Cold War, Margaret Thatcher believed that the defeat of Communism would give Britain not only wider market, but above all a greater room for action in the international context. Ronald Reagan's presidency made it possible to pursue the goal of "winning" the Cold War. In fact, their way of proceeding by mutual agreement, first with an aggressive approach, then, after the rise of Gorbachev as leader of the USSR, more dialoguing, proved successful. However, the end of the Cold War did not satisfied her expectations. In fact, Britain remained isolated in Europe and even the relationship with the United States was cooled, when Bush was elected after Reagan. Incidentally, the end of the Cold War also marked the end of Margaret Thatcher's premiership. In conclusion, Thatcher managed to redefine Britain's borders, but she failed to create a steady new national identity, which kept together the four "peoples" that constitute the United Kingdom. Furthermore, she managed to keep Britain in Europe maintaining a position of wide autonomy from Brussels, but she failed to secure greater role for Britain in the international context.

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Summary of the thesis

The purpose of this thesis is to explain Margaret Thatcher's attempt to redefine British identity after the end of the colonial empire. The imperial dimension of Great Britain had in fact constituted the glue of the national unity of this country. As a result, decolonization had triggered an identity crisis for the British people, favouring the re-emergence of tensions between the four nations (English, Welsh, Irish and Scottish), which historically have composed it, in particular those between England and Scotland. Margaret Thatcher's aim was to give Britain a national identity that would overcome these divisions by founding a British nation-state that could survive beyond the Empire. To this end, she worked on the following fronts: immigration and nationality, relations with non-English British nations, Europe and the United States. First of all, she continued an immigration restriction policy in continuity with her predecessors, but compared to them she took one more step, namely the reduction of British nationality to the United Kingdom alone. In fact, her Nationality Act of 1981 distinguished between British and Commonwealth citizens, excluding the latter from the scope of British nationality. In this regard, the vast majority of Britons did not consider the former colonized to belong to their own culture. The issue of "Britishness" was at the heart of the Falklands War. In fact, this war was fought because of the feeling of "ethnic affinity" that British public opinion felt towards the inhabitants of these islands, considered as compatriots. The consequences of this war were even more important, since in the following years it brought out the internal contradictions of British nationalism, split between an ideal of "Little Britain" pursued by Thatcher and widely shared by the English population and nostalgia for an "imperial" Great Britain of the British Unionists, especially in Scotland. The disappointment of the latter for the failure of Great Britain to recover an "imperial" profile, after a victory that had given hope for this, played a decisive role in strengthening Scottish nationalism, aggravating the danger of fragmentation of the United Kingdom. In fact, the unity between Scotland and England had always taken place in the Empire and in sharing the benefits derived from it. Without the Empire, many in Scotland saw no reason to preserve this union. Furthermore, Thatcher's privatizations further loosened the ties between Scotland and England. Moreover, her assimilationist policy, which attacked traditional local

autonomies, fuelled Scottish resentment. The situation in Northern Ireland was even more serious. In the context of a general withdrawal from the world by Great Britain, this area was to be held in British hands both because the majority of its population was British and because of the importance it had for the national safety. This made Margaret Thatcher's firmness against the terrorism of the most radical Irish nationalists even more necessary. While she defended the unity of the Kingdom from internal centrifugal pressures, Margaret Thatcher fought to prevent Britain from being incorporated into a federal Europe (the so-called "European super-state"). In fact, she wanted to take advantage of the European Single Market, which the British economy needed, but refused a federal evolution that would have cancelled Britain as an independent nation. Finally, she linked the "special relationship" with the United States to her will of "winning" the Cold War, defeating Communism, not limiting her policy to its containment. The ideological motivations were accompanied by both short and long term political considerations. On one hand, US support was essential to win the Falklands War, saving Britain's prestige in the world, on the other hand, a world without Communism could have offered Britain more economic opportunities and a wider scope for political action. The results of her policy were mixed. In fact, she managed to redefine the borders of the United Kingdom, but not to integrate the Scots and the Catholic community of Northern Ireland; she managed to keep Britain in Europe while maintaining a greater autonomy than the other member states, as well as seeing the collapse of Communism realized, but she failed to break the isolation of Great Britain in Europe nor did she manage to give it a greater role in the world.