

Conservative Party Strategy, 1997-2001: Nation and  
National Identity

A dissertation submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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## Summary of Dissertation

This research is a detailed analysis of the Conservative Party leadership's understanding of British nationhood and national identity and its use of those concepts as part of its strategy during the 1997-2001 parliament.

The evolution of Hague's strategy will be examined and both the leadership's conception of British nationhood and national identity and its utilisation of those concepts as part of its strategy will be analysed. Why did Hague use those concepts and why did he believe an appeal to the electorate's sense of national identity was an important part of his overall strategy? Was the leadership united in its understanding of nationhood and national identity and in agreement as to the role that those concepts should play within the party's strategy? Did the strategic role played by those concepts change during the parliament? Why did those concepts fail to adapt the party to being in Opposition and enable it to maximise its electoral support?

Amongst the most important findings is that when conceptualising national identity, the leadership can be split into two groups, modernisers and traditionalists and both believed they were appealing to the majority of British people. As the 2001 General Election approached, Hague abandoned a long-term modernising approach to party renewal and emphasised policies which he believed would shore up the party's core support base, whilst also broadening its support. The politics of nationhood were central to this traditionalist approach. The issues that Hague emphasised were not salient and succeeded only in deepening, not broadening, the party's support.

## **Hypotheses**

During the 1997-2001 parliament:

- The concepts of British nationhood and British national identity were understood differently within the party leadership.
- The Conservative Party employed the concepts of British nationhood and British national identity within its strategy to adapt to being in Opposition and to maximise its electoral support.
- The Conservative Party's strategy and its use of the concepts of British nationhood and British national identity within that strategy, failed to maximise electoral support.
- The party leadership was not in agreement as to the optimum vote-maximising strategy available to it.

## Abbreviations

CRE	Commission for Racial Equality
CSR	Common Sense Revolution
ERM	Exchange Rate Mechanism
EMU	European Monetary Union
EU	European Union
CCO	Conservative Central Office
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
CMO	Conceding and Moving On
CPS	Centre for Policy Studies
CV	Core Vote
CVP	Core Vote Plus
JIL	Junior Imperial League
KTC	Kitchen Table Conservatism
NHS	National Health Service
SEA	Single European Act
SMF	Social Market Foundation
TCS	Time for Common Sense
TORCHE	Tory Campaign for Homosexual Equality
QMV	Qualified Majority Voting

## Interviewees

Unless otherwise stated, all interviews were conducted face-to-face, were recorded by Dictaphone and were 'on-the-record'.

Ancram QC MP, The Rt Hon Michael	House of Commons, 14.01.2004
Body, Sir Richard	conducted by telephone, 19.01.2004
Cooper, Andrew	Malmaison Hotel, London, 17.02.2004
Finkelstein, Danny	Times House, 19.04.2004
Fowler, The Rt Hon The Lord	House of Lords, 29.03.2004
Garnier QC MP, Edward	House of Commons, 04.12.2003
Gooderham, Malcolm	Weber Shandwick HQ, London, 26.02.2004
Hague MP, William The Rt Hon	Portcullis House, 14.01.2004
Hannan MEP, Daniel	European Parliament London Office, 12.05.2004
Heathcoat-Amory MP, The Rt Hon	House of Commons, 02.12.2003
Hendry MP, Charles	House of Commons, 11.12.2003
Henley, The Lord	House of Lords, 03.12.2003
Johnson MP, Boris	Private address, 23.01.2004
Lansley OBE MP, Andrew (anon)	Portcullis House, 20.04.2004
Lilley MP, The Rt Hon Peter	House of Commons, 03.12.2003
Massow, Ivan	Private address, 03.02.2004
Norman MP, Archie	Portcullis House, 09.12.2003
Nye, Rick	Malmaison Hotel, London, 17.02.2004
Osborne MP, George	House of Commons, 04.12.2003
Spicer MP, Sir Michael	House of Commons, 02.12.2003

Strathclyde, The Rt Hon The Lord	House of Lords, 10.12.2003
Taylor of Warwick, The Lord	House of Lords, 20.01.2004
Tebbit CH, The Rt Hon The Lord	House of Lords, 27.01.2004
Townend, John	Willerby Manor Hotel, Hull, 18.12.2003
Wood, Nick (anon)	Atrium restaurant, 4 Millbank, 05.04.2004
Woodward MP, Shaun	Portcullis House, 13.01.2004

## Chapter One

### The Conservative Party, the Nation and National Identity

#### 1.1 Introduction

The focus of this research is William Hague's leadership of the Conservative Party throughout the 1997-2001 parliament and the utilisation of British nationhood and British national identity as part of the party's electoral strategy under his leadership.<sup>1</sup> This chapter introduces the concepts of nationhood and national identity by exploring the literature surrounding them and by establishing definitions for their use within the thesis. Only by defining these concepts can the Conservative Party's understanding of British nationhood and British national identity during the 1997-2001 parliament be fully appreciated. Similarly, only by making these definitions can Hague's use of the politics of nationhood and identity be understood.

The party leadership appealed to the national identity of the electorate as part of its attempts to adapt the party to being in Opposition, in a political environment dominated by the Labour party and to maximise its electoral support. The themes of adaptability, forming strategies to maximise support and appealing to national identity have played a significant role in the party's historic electoral success and are discussed in a review of existing literature. The place of this research is located within that literature.

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<sup>1</sup> The national politics of Northern Ireland and questions of national identity within Northern Ireland are not considered. Issues of territorial politics, race, immigration and asylum will be focused entirely on England, Scotland and Wales. As the research is narrowly focused on the strategic decision making of the leadership of the Conservative Party, 1997-2001, it is reasonable to assert that the politics of nationhood and identity in Northern Ireland deserve separate and lengthy attention.

The chapter provides an historic background to the party's conceptualisation and strategic utilisation of these concepts. Highlighting the examples of Benjamin Disraeli, Stanley Baldwin and Enoch Powell, it will explore the party's historic understanding of British nationhood and national identity and how it has appealed to national identity as part of broader strategies to adapt the party to an evolving British society and political environment and to maximise electoral support.

## 1.2 Nationhood and National Identity

I am 'driven to the conclusion that no "scientific definition" of a nation can be devised'  
(Hugh Seton Watson in Poole, 1999, p.16).

The nation and national identity are concepts central to this research. To understand the Conservative Party's strategic use of these concepts during the 1997-2001 parliament it is necessary to review the literature surrounding them and provide definitions for their use within the dissertation. An investigation of the literature will also explain why members of the Conservative leadership during that parliament held contrasting conceptions of what is the British nation and what it means to be British and therefore why they disagreed as to the strategic use of these concepts. Nationhood and national identity are essentially contested concepts, there is no agreed definition of either. However, they have played a significant role in Conservative Party electoral strategy. It is therefore vital not only to provide a clear definition of each concept for the purposes of this dissertation but also to understand how individuals, even from the same political party, can hold such differing views as to what is British national identity.

In the literature on nationhood and national identity a number of criteria for nationhood repeatedly appear. They range from an awareness of shared identity, ownership of territory, claims to a territory or homeland, shared language, literature, music and arts, shared history, memories, traditions and customs and shared ancestry. Theorists may reject some or many of these criteria and will emphasise a particular criterion or criteria in their definition. However, what is important here is to examine some definitions of nationhood, in order to provide a concise definition of the nation and national identity, for the purposes of this dissertation.

There is undeniably a political dimension to nationhood, most notably the possession of claims to a territory and the ability to organise and control members of the nation once based in this land. Weber defines the nation through power and prestige, particularly the ability of members to pass this power onto subsequent generations (Weber in Hutchinson and Smith, 1994, pp.21-25). The nation is not simple to classify and as Weber describes, states may contain more than one nation, nations are not identical to communities speaking the same language and nations do not even have to share the same language. Similarly, members of the same nation do not have to share the same religion or common blood and cannot be defined through shared customs, traditions, arts or literature. The defining factor is that a nation is based on the values of its members, particularly when displaying solidarity against other bodies of people. Weber concludes,

In so far as there is at all a common object lying behind the obviously ambiguous term 'nation', it is apparently located in the field of politics. One might well define the concept of the nation in the following way: a nation is a community of sentiment which would adequately manifest itself in a state of its own; hence, a nation is a community which normally tends to produce a state of its own  
(Weber in Hutchinson and Smith, 1994, p.25).

Similarly, when setting out his definition of the nation, Deutsch states 'it is now clear why all the usual descriptions of a people in terms of a community of languages, or character, or memories, or past history, are open to exception'. Instead he offers a more 'functional definition of nationality' (Deutsch, 1953, p.71). He believes that a 'people' is primarily defined by its ability to communicate their memories, symbols and habits. Those who do this effectively and pass them on to subsequent generations truly constitute a people. Members of the same people are able to communicate more effectively and efficiently with one another. The defining factor, however, is when the people desire and then achieve the power to compel this 'earlier cohesiveness and attachment to group symbols' (Deutsch, 1953, p.78). Once achieved, the people becomes a nation.

These definitions neglect the significance of emotional, psychological and cultural connections that people have to their nations and co-nationals. Weber asserts that the nation is a community that shares the same values and Deutsch suggests that the communication of a shared culture is paramount to a people achieving nationhood. However, for these theorists it is not the values or the culture that are *key* to forming a nation; the key is power. For Weber, the power to organise the nation in a state and for Deutsch, the power to compel an attachment to the nation's symbols.

Other scholars place more emphasis on the psychological and emotional aspects of nationhood. Occupying a territory is not vital and similarly, there is no need to compel an attachment to national symbols. Renan states that central to nationhood are 'the past and the present'. The 'past' is concerned with the shared memories of national history and the glories of shared ancestors. The 'present' is concerned with the desire to continue to

cherish this heritage. He says this pride and ambition 'is worth more than common taxes and frontiers conforming to ideas of strategy' (Renan in Hutchinson and Smith, 1994, p.17). It is the community, not the territory that is crucial to Renan who defines the nation as,

A great aggregation of men, with a healthy spirit and warmth of heart [which] creates a moral conscience which is called a nation. When this moral conscience proves its strength by sacrifices that demand abdication of the individual for the benefit of the community, and it has a right to exist (Renan in Hutchinson and Smith, 1994, p.18).

Hastings places his emphasis on language. He believes that ethnic groups, whom he describes as sharing a cultural identity and language and who may live within a nation or as the major part of a pre-national society, evolve into nations through the development of their language. Hastings states that a nation is a community with its own language and literature, comprised of one or more ethnic groups but which is more self-conscious than an ethnic group. It has claims to or possession of its own political identity, autonomy and territory. Hastings poses the question: why do some but not all ethnic groups evolve into nations? The crucial factor is language, specifically when a community develops its own vernacular literature, including, most importantly a translation of the Bible. This consolidates the community and the ethnic group becomes a nation (Hastings, 1997, pp.1-13).

There is however, a theory of nationhood that takes into consideration the most extreme differences in definition. Smith says the nation is a political community which includes common institutions, a single code of rights and duties, a definite social space and a demarcated and bounded territory to which members feel they belong and identify with.

Smith admits that this is a definition of the nation based on Western experience but he does state that the territorial nation did first emerge in the West. However, these civic criteria are grounded upon a common national culture which was consolidated through education and the media: 'In the Western model of national identity, nations were seen as culture communities, whose members were united, if not made homogenous, by common historical memories, myths, symbols and traditions' (Smith, 1991, p.11).

Smith also provides an alternative conception of the nation that emerged in Eastern Europe and Asia. The Western definition is civic in nature but the alternative is based on ethnic criteria. An individual cannot choose their nation because nations are based on descent, rather than a demarcated territory or homeland. It is the people, not the system of laws and institutions that are the object of 'nationalist aspirations'. In the Asian ethnic conception of the nation, national culture, based strongly on language and customs, 'takes the place of law in the Western civic model' (Smith, 1991, p.12).

However, Smith describes how, irrespective of the emphasis placed on each criterion, the rival conceptions of nationhood share certain common criteria and this allows a definition of the nation to be established. The nation 'can therefore be defined as a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members' (Smith, 1991, p.14). This definition is broad, in that it includes cultural and emotional and psychological elements, such as myths, memories and a shared culture and also political elements, such as a territory, economy and rights and duties. It emphasises neither political nor cultural criteria over the other and because it is easy to identify existing nations, including Britain, that share these criteria, it is relevant to the period of study of this

dissertation. It is also significant that it does not preclude nationhood to those nations that, for example, are multi-lingual (Switzerland) or share a language with other nations (Ireland and Britain). It is easy to place too much emphasis on individual elements, such as language, religion or descent too closely and deny communities nationhood on pedantic grounds. As this section's opening statement from Hugh Seton Watson suggests, this definition is not generally accepted. It may lack emphasis or fail to include a particular criterion but it is concise and will therefore be used as the definition of the nation in this dissertation.

If the nation as a body of people can be so defined, what is national identity? Weight says 'National identity is how people define themselves in accordance with the nation they feel they belong to, whether or not it exists territorially' (Weight, 2002, p.17). This simple definition is appealing because it removes the need for a nation to occupy its own land in order to exist or to enable its members to identify with one another. Examples such as the Palestinians or Kurds demonstrate that occupation of a homeland is not a prerequisite of national identification. Weight's explanation also covers Smith's civic, ethnic and overarching definitions of nationhood and can therefore be used to explain why people throughout the world feel an attachment to their nation.

National identity is how people define *themselves* in relation to their nation. It is a form of consciousness and because each individual takes part in this process of identification, it is subjective. Members of the same nation, who share an attachment to that nation, may not define it in the same terms. They may place emphasis on ethnic or civic elements of their nation but despite identifying with it differently, they still share an identity to the same nation. Poole says 'what is important is not so much that everyone imagines the same

nation, but that they imagine that they imagine the same nation` (Poole. 1999, p.16). Symbols, such as flags, music, traditions, ceremonies, literature consolidate this shared identity, despite differences in interpretation.

Poole believes that language and culture are crucial in the development of identity, national or otherwise. They allow individuals to gather an idea of self but also of 'other'. Individuals may define themselves in relation to their nations differently but because they share an attachment to the same nation, they have a sense of the existence of 'others'. This allows relationships to be formed between those who regard each other as sharing the same nation. The relationships and shared identity can be strengthened through the symbols mentioned above and also through, for example, shared sporting or scientific achievements (Poole, 1999, pp.68-71).

When individuals define themselves differently in relation to the same nation they will often take a different approach to the politics of nationhood, even if they are members of the same political party. But what is the politics of nationhood? In 'The Politics of Nationhood: Sovereignty, Britishness and Conservative Politics', Lynch states that the Conservative Party's 'appropriation of the politics of nationhood occurred under Disraeli's leadership, when the Conservatives became identified as the patriotic party supporting national institutions, the Union and Empire' (Lynch, 1999, p.1). Lynch suggests that the politics of nationhood concerns policy that directly affects national identity and national sovereignty. His study concerns the leaderships of Margaret Thatcher and John Major and the politics of nationhood is specifically taken to include European integration, territorial politics and immigration and race as these are issues that affect British national identity, the territorial integrity of Britain and British sovereignty. However, the politics of nationhood

can change over time. The Empire was central to the politics of nationhood in. for example, the late nineteenth and early twentieth century but over the decades, as the process of decolonisation neared its completion, Europe and European integration came to dominate the politics of nationhood in Britain.

The lack of scholarly agreement over what constitutes a nation and the variations in interpretation of national identity that members of the same nation may feel, suggests how members of the parliamentary Conservative Party and party leadership during the 1997-2001 parliament could understand British national identity differently and therefore disagree over its strategic usage. Conservative parliamentarians may emphasise civic or ethnic criteria when defining British nationhood and British national identity and this means that although discussing attachment to the same nation, they see themselves differently in respect to that nation.

### 1.3 The Conservative Party, Nationhood and National Identity

Conservative politicians have realised the benefits of appealing to the national identity of the British people since the beginning of mass democracy. They have used the concepts of British nationhood and British national identity to adapt their party to a changing British society and political environment and to maximise their electoral support. They have also realised that their conception of British nationhood and national identity similarly needed to be adapted and updated to be relevant to the Britain of the time. Lynch states:

The nation and nation-state have had a central place in British Conservative politics for more than a century, the Conservative Party's status as the patriotic party defending the constitution, Union and Empire being at the heart of party statecraft and a key factor in its political success (Lynch, 1999, p.xi).

This is not to say that nationhood and national identity have not caused great problems for the party in the past, the wranglings over Europe that contributed to Thatcher's removal from office and dominated Major's leadership are testament to that. These concepts are important to investigate because they have been used so often, successfully *or* unsuccessfully.

### **National Identity**

This research is primarily an examination of the development of strategy by the Conservative Party during the 1997-2001 parliament. However, because it is focused on the leadership's conception of British nationhood and national identity and its utilisation of these concepts, it has a place in the literature on national identity in the late twentieth, early twenty-first century. This literature can be divided into that of the New Left and the New Right, with the former focussing on fostering British multiculturalism. In 'Who do we Think we are?: Imagining the New Britain' and 'Muddled Leaders and the Future of British National Identity', Alibhai-Brown gives both a factual account of life in Britain for ethnic minorities and a normative analysis of how Britain can be rebranded to create real, workable and believed-in multiculturalism (Alibhai-Brown, 2000 and 2001). The 'Parekh Report' that resulted from the Runnymede Trust's Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain gives seven sources of change that have had implications for British national identity and multi-ethnicity in the late twentieth century. These sources: globalisation, decline in position as a world power, European integration, devolution, end of the Empire, social pluralism and post-war migration, also have implications for the Conservative Party during the leadership of Hague (Parekh, 2000b, pp.23-26). This research tracks and explains the evolution of strategy under Hague's leadership and reveals how during the first

half of his tenure as Leader, Hague realised that the party had to adapt its conception of British nationhood and national identity and adapt its approach to the politics of nationhood to take into consideration the changes that Parekh had also identified. He appeared to embrace New Left theory on contemporary British national identity and spoke out about the need to create a harmonious multicultural Britain. He made attempts, such as visiting the Notting Hill carnival in the summer of 1997, to extend the party's appeal to all Britons, irrespective of ethnic origins.

In the latter half of Hague's leadership, the party began a more traditionally conservative appeal to the national identity of the electorate. The political effects of European integration and European Monetary Union (EMU) and the consequences of an unreformed asylum and immigration system became the focus of many of his speeches and campaigns. Redwood in 'The Death of Britain?: The UK's Constitutional Crisis' and Peter Hitchens, 'The Abolition of Britain: The British Cultural Revolution from Lady Chatterley to Tony Blair' shared Hague's belief that British nationhood and national identity was being threatened by intensifying European integration, devolution and constitutional reform (Redwood, 1999) (Hitchens, 1999). However, Hague did not go as far as to advocate England leaving the British Union and ultimately restoring full national sovereignty. Simon Heffer, in 'Nor shall my Sword: The Reinvention of England' and Richard Body in 'England for the English' describe how a consciously constructed British national identity borrows heavily from Englishness (Heffer, 1999) (Body, 2001). Advocating England leaving the British Union, both authors discuss how a fully independent England would not, therefore, have to create its own new identity. Although both authors place the Conservative Party in the position of natural party of the English, the Hague leadership

rejected this idea, placing more emphasis on appealing to all Britons and maintaining the British Union, despite proposals for widespread devolution.

Since the emergence of mass democracy in Britain, the Conservative Party has tended to rely on a conception of British national identity based on patriotic sentiment, national greatness, especially centred on the Empire, unique national values and principles, British sovereignty and defence of the British Union. Conservative leaders can assure themselves that this is the conception favoured by the party's core support and that has contributed to the party's electoral success in previous generations.

Two studies in particular examine the Conservative Party's historic appeals to the national identity of the electorate to extend its support and its approach to the politics of nationhood. The first is Gamble's 'The Conservative Nation' which discusses how the Conservative Party has always been aware that their support, beyond that from the propertied elite, was not guaranteed and has therefore sought to extend its appeal 'outside the existing Conservative nation' (Gamble, 1974, p.204). He analyses the party's ability to adapt, including Benjamin Disraeli's use of national identity in the nineteenth century and the party's reinvention between 1945 and 1951 and also its ability to retain working class support in the post-war era. Gamble states that the book is a study of 'opinion in the Conservative Party' and 'the manner in which leading Conservatives perceived and adjusted to political reality'. However, he also states that it is not a study 'of how particular decisions were taken, nor does it describe in any detail how party policy developed' (Gamble, 1974, p.vii). This dissertation follows on from the analysis undertaken by Gamble.

The second study which examines the party's appeals to British national identity and to which this research will join in the literature furthering the understanding and use of the Conservative Party's conception of British nationhood and national identity, is Lynch's 'The Politics of Nationhood: Sovereignty, Britishness and Conservative Politics' (Lynch, 1999). Lynch argues that the politics of nationhood was central to Margaret Thatcher's 'statecraft' and her appeals to the national identity of the electorate were crucial in her attempts to maximise electoral support especially, for example, after the Falklands conflict. However, Lynch also analyses the contradictions in her approach to European integration, the British Union and asylum and immigration brought about through the tensions between the social conservative and economic liberal components of Thatcherism. Despite her outspoken pride in the British nation, Thatcher's desire for economic progress often meant the adoption of policies perceived to be detrimental to British sovereignty, such as her acceptance of the Single European Act (SEA). Tensions between the two elements of Thatcherism boiled over under the leadership of John Major and the party was wracked by disputes over Europe.

### **Adaptability and Maximisation of Support**

Adaptability is a theme central to this research and there have been many studies tracing the party's historic ability to adapt and reinvent itself. Seldon and Ball refer to the party as a 'remarkably enduring and adaptable political institution' (Seldon and Ball, 1994, p.1). Their study charts a 'Conservative Century' throughout which the party had to adapt to survive. However, although there are a number of studies which analyse the longevity of the party, such as Blake's 'The Conservative Party from Peel to Major' and Evans and Taylor's 'From Salisbury to Major: Continuity and Change in Conservative Politics', this research will more specifically compliment the literature on the Conservative Party's recent

demise (Blake, 1997) (Evans and Taylor, 1996). Significant studies in this area include Julian Critchley and Morrison Halcrow's 'Collapse of Stout Party: The Decline and Fall of the Tories,' (Critchley and Morrison, 1998), 'Whatever Happened to the Tories: The Conservative Party since 1945' by Ian Gilmour and Mark Garnett (Gilmour and Garnett, 1997) and Mark Garnett and Philip Lynch's 'The Conservatives in Crisis' (Garnett and Lynch, 2003). Hague's strategy evolved from 'reaching out' and embracing multiculturalism to being focused much more explicitly on negative speeches and writing on European integration and asylum. The leadership knew that the party had to adapt and yet their strategy was unsuccessful. This research will contribute to the literature on the party's demise by explaining why they failed to adapt and maximise their support with a strategy which included appeals to the electorate's national identity.

### **Development of Strategy, 1997-2001**

There is a limited literature in this area but two studies that are specifically linked to this research are Walters' 'Tory Wars' and Kelly's 'Conservatism Under Hague: The Fatal Dilemma' (Kelly, 2001) (Walters, 2001). Walters' book investigates the friction between the modernisers and traditionalists within the Conservative Party leadership during the 1997-2001 parliament. Through the use of interviews he details the internal conflict and suggests that it impeded the production of a coherent strategy to transform the party into a credible opposition to the Labour government and to increase its electoral support. He points the finger of blame at the modernisers and questions whether they and their advisors were working for the good of their party or simply trying to promote their own cause at all costs. Walters' study provides an insight into the party leadership. However, it is focused on the people behind the decision making, their relationships and personal conflicts. This dissertation, although using similar research methods, will not focus on the personalities

but on the leadership's understanding of certain concepts and why and how they were used in an evolving party strategy.

Kelly also focuses on Hague's strategy throughout the 1997-2001 parliament. He examines the change in Hague's strategy mentioned above. The first half of his leadership Kelly entitles Hague 'Mark 1' that is, a modern, inclusive, progressive Hague who realised the party had to adapt to the Britain of the late 1990s and who made direct appeals to single parents, members of ethnic minorities and homosexuals. The second half was a much more traditionally focused Hague 'Mark 2' where the emphasis was on promoting the family, law and order, saving the pound and a tougher stance on asylum and immigration. This research also studies the apparent change in strategy but specifically asks what role did the themes of British nationhood and British national identity – concepts which have been central to the Conservative Party since at least Disraeli's leadership – play in this change?

#### 1.4 The Historic Significance of the Nation and National Identity to the Conservative Party

This section briefly examines three influential Conservative politicians who have each used the concepts of nationhood and national identity to help adapt their party to a changing social and political environment and to maximise its electoral support. Benjamin Disraeli was widely acknowledged to have made the Conservative Party the 'national party' and to have adapted it to the age of mass democracy. As suffrage reached universality, Stanley Baldwin continued this adaptation through the continuation of Disraeli's 'One Nation' ideology and the encouragement of the country's pride in its Empire. Enoch Powell articulated his vision for adapting the Conservative Party to the Britain of the 1960s and 1970s. He recognised it had to clearly define its understanding of British nationhood and

British national identity before it could represent the national interest and the British people.

Disraeli, Baldwin and Powell will be discussed because they, along with others, continue to influence the contemporary party, the 'Renewing One Nation' group and John Major's Baldwinian appeals to Englishness, for example. Powell's understanding of Britishness still influences many Conservatives but it is the fact that he sought to adapt the party's conception of British nationhood and British national identity in order to adapt the party to the same social and political changes that affected the Conservative Party, thirty or so years later during the 1997-2001 parliament, that is significant for this research. As with Powell, Hague's conceptualisation of British nationhood and British national identity influenced his approach to the politics of nationhood.

### **Benjamin Disraeli**

The 1867 Reform Act extended the right to vote to urban males over the age of twenty-one, owning or renting property valued at ten pounds or more. The electorate now contained a large proportion of working class voters and most towns had a working class majority. Those new voters were unlikely to find the policies that had made the Conservatives the traditional party of the landed gentry attractive. Without adapting to this new electorate and extending its appeal beyond its traditional support base, the party would be unlikely to experience further electoral success (Norton, 1996, p.29). When he became Leader of the Conservative Party in February 1868, Benjamin Disraeli sought to promote the Conservatives as the national party, the party that transcended class barriers and appealed to the interests of all voters. To do this he utilised a concept that had featured in his earlier writings, the nation.

His strategic use of British nationhood and national identity to both adapt the party and extend its appeal, had two dimensions. The first was social. He wanted to appeal to all British people, irrespective of class, to eradicate the Conservative Party's image of solely representing the interests of the landed gentry through its apparent acceptance of the need for social reform and the desire to create 'One Nation'. A party with a history based on maintaining the social status quo and defending the privileges of the landed elite would be unlikely to do well in an electorate increasingly composed of the working and middle classes. It would also need to consider that increased suffrage was possible and that could only mean further increases in the number of working class voters. Disraeli introduced legislation that would have appealed to the working class electorate, including the 1874 Factory Act, the 1875 Public Health Act and the 1876 Education Act.

The second dimension was spatial. Disraeli wanted to appeal to every part of Britain. If the Conservative Party could be portrayed as the patriotic party, dedicated to protecting Britain's interests at home and abroad, the entire country could be united behind it. In particular this meant engendering pride in the British Empire and the Monarchy. Disraeli's ultimate fear was that issues of class and class politics would dominate and this would not be in the party's favour. If it could link itself with symbols of national identity and national pride, such as the Empire and the Monarchy, and also emphasise these symbols to engender greater pride and a strengthened feeling of shared identity, it could only be beneficial and go some way to eradicating their sectional status.

Disraeli's utilisation of the Empire and the national pride included strategic opportunism. As Blake describes, as late as 1866 Disraeli was referring to the colonies as 'millstones

around our neck' and asking 'what is the use of these colonial deadweights which we do not govern?' (Blake, 1997, pp.125-6). A conversion took place however, when Disraeli realised that he needed a strategy to appeal to the working and middle class and unite them behind the Conservative Party:

The middle class was susceptible to one appeal which also affected the working class. The patriotic card which Palmerston had played with such effect was played no less effectively by Disraeli. It had the great advantage over social questions that it involved no conflict of interest, and fitted into the whole concept of 'one nation', that repudiation of class warfare which was one of Disraeli's great themes. No one can prove it for certain, but, apart from straight conservatism – and we should never underestimate its strength in all classes – this was probably the most effective vote-winner for Disraeli and perhaps his most notable long term contribution to the future of the Conservative Party  
(Blake, 1997, p.124).

In 1867 Disraeli stated that 'the national party is supported by the fervour of patriotism...I have always considered that the Tory Party was the national party of England' (Davies, 1995, p.349).<sup>2</sup> In June 1872 Disraeli made a speech to the London Conference of the National Union at the Crystal Palace. In it he detailed the three main objectives of the Conservative Party – to maintain 'the institutions of the country', 'uphold the Empire of England' and ensure 'the elevation of the condition of the people' (Kebbel, 1882, pp.525-531). The first of these objectives, as mentioned above appealed to the middle class, the second to all classes and the third specifically to the working class. In both the social and spatial senses mentioned above, this speech sought to make the Conservative Party the national party. Blake describes this conversion as 'adaptability', a quality vital throughout the party's history for it to survive. He says Disraeli 'managed, with remarkable prescience

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<sup>2</sup> Disraeli and Baldwin (see below) used England and Britain interchangeably. This demonstrated the dominance of England and traditional English values within the Union and within British national identity. This phenomenon deserves separate and more specific attention and space than is available here. It must, however, be acknowledged that such interchangeable usage was common by contemporary British statesmen.

and no small degree of adaptability, to acquire for the Conservatives a monopoly in the partisan expression of a new *Zeitgeist* – the inchoate, half-romantic, half-predatory emotions and ideas inspired by the idea of empire during the last quarter of the nineteenth century’ (Blake, 1997, p.128).

This discussion of Disraeli’s use of British nationhood highlights the party’s willingness to use the idea of nation when electorally beneficial in order to adapt and extend the party’s appeal. Pride in the Empire and patriotism did not always serve the Disraelian Conservative Party well, for example, many in the middle classes believed too much was spent gaining Suez Canal shares and on the imperial wars in South Africa. The important factor is that Disraeli managed to give the party the credibility of being a party once more fit for government, an alternative to the Liberal Party and this was achieved in spite of an electorate increasingly composed of the middle and working classes. As Blake concluded: ‘that, then, is Disraeli’s most lasting contribution to the success of his party. He made it the ‘national party’ (Blake, 1997, p.130).

### **Stanley Baldwin**

When Baldwin became Leader on 28th May 1923 he had to adapt the Conservative Party to an electorate increased by the 1918 Representation of the People Act. It was now composed of twenty-one million people, including 8.4 million women and there was an even greater proportion of working class voters than after the 1867 reforms. Baldwin had to extend his party’s appeal to this enlarged electorate but, ‘Baldwin’s appeal to a wide spectrum of support was...based on an unrepresentative and partisan political structure, the

Conservative Party' (Evans and Taylor, 1996, p.34). What role did British nationhood and British national identity play in his strategy?

Baldwin's use of nationhood and national identity shared the same dimensions as Disraeli's: the social and spatial. In respect of the former, he said the Conservative Party stood 'for the union of those two nations of which Disraeli spoke two generations ago; union among our own people to make one nation of our people at home, which if secured, nothing else matters in the world' (Evans and Taylor, 1996, p. 38). Baldwin was aware that he had to appeal to the working class and change the image of the Conservative Party as simply representing the interests of the rich, whether they be landowners, industrialists or businessmen. Willetts and Forsdyke argue that One Nationism was actually more attributable to Baldwin than Disraeli because the former did more to articulate it as an ideology. However, they do concede that although he laid out a comprehensive One Nation vision, he did not actually legislate upon it. One Nation-inspired social reform did not occur until Neville Chamberlain's premiership (Willetts and Forsdyke, 1999, pp.33-6).

The strengthening Labour Party and Trade Unions appealed directly to the working class. Baldwin understood this threat and continued the attempts commenced by Disraeli to remove the Conservatives' sectional status and to make them the 'national' party representing all British people. British national identity was used in propaganda against socialism, communism and fascism. Baldwin said 'native tolerance, brotherliness, love of freedom and constitutionalism gave immunity to class conflict, revolution, and dictatorship (Quoted in Williamson, 1999, p.256). If the Conservative Party shared the same values as the British people, anything that was non-Conservative, such as socialism and industrial unrest was, by definition, non-British and unpatriotic.

The spatial element of Baldwin's strategic utilisation of nationhood was to unite the whole nation behind the Conservative Party and he did this by appealing to people's national identity. Baldwin is renowned for his evocation of a traditional, rural, idyllic English way of life and his belief in a strong English national identity:

The sounds of England, the tinkle of the hammer on the anvil in the country smithy, the corncrake on a dewy morning, the sound of the scythe against the whetstone, and the sight of a plough team coming over the brow of a hill, the sight that has been seen in England since England was a land, and may be seen in England long after the Empire has perished, and every works in England has ceased to function. For centuries, the one eternal sight of England

(Quoted in Davies, 1995, p.350-1).

He was aware that he was conjuring images of a 'vanished England' and one that was 'being urbanised fast' (Williamson, 1999, pp.249-51). His motivation was to employ the myth of England's past, to exaggerate and appeal to the national identity of those living in urban and suburban areas, dealing with the uncertainties of industrial life. In particular, this appeal was to the working class in towns and cities. 'Baldwin assumed that rural themes supplied some of the spiritual and imaginative material which might help soothe away the sores of class politics and industrial conflict' (Williamson, 1999, p.246). Like Disraeli, Baldwin was fearful that the issue of class would dominate British politics and he emphasised the nation to prevent this occurring.

Baldwin did not just address English national identity or aim his appeal exclusively to the working class. Williamson notes that 'if Baldwin shared the conventional tendency to say England when he meant Britain, and if occasionally laboured the confusion, he nevertheless spoke frequently of Britain and the British'. He wanted to unite the British nation behind

the Conservative Party and emphasised the shared, British 'national character'. As Williamson describes, he spoke of a 'common stock that makes up the character of the British race'. He often highlighted values and characteristics that were indicative of this 'stock', independence, realism, truthfulness, honour, love of freedom, decency, belief in justice and fair play and law and order, pacifism yet the ability to fight and be ruthless and finally, neighbourliness (Williamson, 1999, p.252). Baldwin was able to make this flattering and positive appeal to all British people. He emphasised a shared and glorious identity and then linked his party to the values inherent in that identity, shared by British people in every social class and geographical region. The Conservative Party was the 'British' party, the 'national party' and the 'patriotic party' and it stood up for the interests of the British people. A belief in these innate British characteristics would facilitate the acceptance of the traditional Conservative values of a stable social order, law and order and individualism.

Central to Baldwin's conception of British national identity was pride in the Empire. He referred to it as 'our greatest heritage' and 'infinitely precious' and in 1935 declared that 'the greatest days of the empire still lay ahead'. He contrasted the British Empire with that of the Romans, Germany and Austria and said that unlike those, it was the natural expression of the 'national character'. Baldwin was really referring to the self-governing white Dominions when he spoke about the Empire. They were, he said 'the areas of British emigration the most capable of attracting interest across all the classes, just as they appealed to his own sense of idealism' (Williamson, 1999, pp.261-272).

The concepts of the nation and national identity were used in other ways in the 1920s and 1930s to benefit the party. Various Conservative groups were established that were centred

around the British nation and celebrated British national identity. They became an important way for the party to attract and maintain cross-class support and consolidate the Conservative nation. The Primrose League, was not officially part of the Conservative Party but was organised after Disraeli's death with the purpose of uniting members of all classes behind concepts central to the Conservative Party – the Monarchy, the British nation, the Church and the Empire. The Junior Imperial League (JIL) and the Young Britons were important vehicles for introducing people to the Conservative Party and the concepts central to it, at an early age. If children could be encouraged to feel patriotic and part of the Conservative community they would grow up with the Conservatives as their instinctive party of choice – the only party able to preserve the greatness of Britain, its traditions and its Empire. This inculcation was facilitated by the organisation of the annual Young Briton's Empire Day celebrations which included rallies and pageants (McCrillis, 1998, p.106).

Baldwin's use of nationhood and national identity was not always successful. The future imperial status of India became a divisive issue in Conservative politics after 1929. However, at every General Election during his leadership, the Conservative Party won a larger share of the vote than any of its rivals and this included the Labour Party who appealed directly to working class voters (Crowson, 2001, p.45).<sup>3</sup> Appeals to British nationhood and national identity played an important role, alongside anti-socialism and anti-Labour rhetoric, in adapting the party and extending its appeal to an enlarged and substantially working class electorate.

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<sup>3</sup> Including the 1929 General Election when the Labour Party won a plurality of seats: 287 (37.1%) to the Conservatives' 260 (38.1%) and the Liberal Party's 59 (23.5%).

## **Enoch Powell**

By the 1960s, Britain was experiencing the end of its Empire, increased immigration from former colonies, a steadily integrating EEC and strengthening nationalisms in Scotland and Wales. The Conservative understanding of British nationhood and British national identity, based on imperial greatness, national sovereignty and the Union between England, Wales and Scotland was in need of renewal. Enoch Powell recognised this and articulated both his own conception of British national identity and his approach to the politics of nationhood. He realised that the Conservative Party had to adapt its understanding of Britain and Britishness so that it could truly represent the country and the people of Britain. Without adapting, it could not truly represent them or the interests of the country. It would also be unable to maintain and extend its support base throughout the country if it was thought to be out of date and out of touch. Powell continued to appeal to the national identity of the British people but sought to update his party's understanding of what that identity was.

Powell continued the social and spatial dimensions of previous Conservatives' strategic use of the nation. He did not target any particular section of society but broadened his appeal to all British people, in particular the urban working class. His approach to the politics of nationhood was universal in its appeal and did succeed in increasing his support throughout the country, even if this did not always transfer directly as support for the Conservative Party. His approach to two issues that were affecting Britain in the 1960s and 1970s, mass immigration and the end of the empire, demonstrate his understanding of the British national identity and his appeals to the British people on the basis of their identity.

In 1965 Powell spoke out against the increasing number of Kenyan Asians settling in Britain as a consequence of their persecution by the newly independent Kenyan government. He believed that such large-scale immigration would make the peaceful co-existence of races in Britain impossible. Race relations legislation, as favoured by his party Leader, Edward Heath, was useless unless immigration could be drastically reduced and a policy of repatriation installed. To Powell, even British-born children of immigrants were unable to be truly British and loyal to the monarch,

The West Indian or Asian does not, by being born in England become an Englishman. In law he may become a United Kingdom citizen by birth; in fact he is a West Indian or Asian still. Unless he be one of the small minority [who had successfully integrated]...he will by the very nature of things have lost one country without acquiring a new one. Time is running against us and them. With the lapse of a generation or so we shall at last have succeeded – to the benefit of nobody - in reproducing ‘in England’s Green and Pleasant Land’ the haunting tragedy of the United States of America (Speech given to the Annual Conference of the Rotary Club of London, Eastbourne, 16.11.1968, quoted in Powell, 1992, pp.184-5).

Heath sacked him from the shadow cabinet after the particularly well-publicised ‘Rivers of Blood’ speech which warned about the dangers of continued immigration. He prophesied that ‘in this country in fifteen or twenty years’ time the black man will have the whip hand over the white man’ (Speech given to the West Midlands Area Conservative Political Centre, 20.04.1968, quoted in Powell, 1992, p.162).

It was the inflammatory and racist tone and language of his appeals to truly British people, rather than the actual policies (tighter controls and voluntary repatriation assistance was Conservative Party policy) that led to Powell’s departure from the shadow cabinet. However, Powell’s popularity increased. He claimed to have received four thousand favourable letters and only six unfavourable, in less than four days after making the speech

(Roth, 1970, p.360). A Gallup poll at the end of April concluded that 74% of respondents supported Powell's stance, compared to 15% who disagreed and 69% who said that Heath had been wrong to remove him (Quoted in Heffer, 1998, p.467).

Powell knew that it was no longer economically or electorally viable for the Conservative Party to remain committed to the Empire and accepted the need for an end to Britain's overseas commitment. He believed that notions of British imperial greatness were myths (Schoen, 1977, pp.10-11). As a consequence, British national identity was unrealistically based on Britain as a great imperial power and the 'workshop of the world' and this led to the post-war period, marked by decolonisation, being erroneously viewed as a period of unprecedented economic crisis and national decline. He disagreed that Britain's future role lay in the EEC as he believed that the ultimate objectives of the six original members were political and economic union. The effects of this upon sovereignty and upon attempts to redefine British national identity would outweigh economic benefits. Instead, he advocated that the British people should move on from the myths of British imperial greatness and become aware of their true national identity (Gamble, 1974, p.120). To Powell, this would mean that the party and the country had truly adapted to the political situation of the 1960s and 1970s, it could move on without constantly looking back to the halcyon days of the Empire.

Instead of joining and focusing entirely on the EEC, Powell argued that Britain should assert her independence through an independent foreign policy. Concentrating on relations with her immediate neighbours, Europe and the 'eastern Atlantic' and economic powers such as Japan, Britain should reduce her military involvement overseas, especially commitment to foreign aid. Instead of spreading its involvement thinly throughout the

globe, Britain should focus its efforts in particular areas and only consider exporting capitalist doctrine as opposed to aid (Heffer, 1998, p.350). The culmination of Powell's anti-Europeanism was his resignation as a Conservative MP on 27<sup>th</sup> February 1974 and his subsequent encouragement of the electorate to vote Labour as it was the only party committed to both the renegotiation of the Treaty of Rome and a referendum on Britain's continuation of membership of the EEC. Voting Labour was the only way to protect Britain's national sovereignty and identity.

To Powell, the nation was the most important form of human community and each nation is defined by its people (Heffer, 1998, p.353). A culturally and ethnically homogenous people, with characteristics such as a shared heritage, traditions and language make each nation unique. Vital to the British national identity were state institutions and principles such as the Monarchy, the Church, the constitution and parliamentary sovereignty. As Lynch states, to Powell 'the Westminster parliament was...central to Britain's constitutional development and represented national homogeneity in the sense of common allegiance to a single sovereign' (Lynch, 1999, p.39). For this reason, he was passionate about the preservation of the British Union, against British involvement in European integration and against the immigration of visible ethnic minority 'aliens' who could never be loyal to the British sovereign.

Powell recognised the need for the Conservative Party to update its conception of British national identity. If the party did not adapt to the political situation of the 1960s and 1970s, especially the end of the Empire, membership of the EEC and increased immigration, it would appear outmoded. He also realised the power of appealing to the identity of the British people, whether in protest at the flow of immigration or loss of national sovereignty.

If his methods of articulating his beliefs did not always serve his political career well, he developed a support base that spanned Britain and all sections of British society. Powell influenced Conservative understanding of the British nation and British national identity in his own generation and those that followed.

Disraeli, Baldwin and Powell reveal how the Conservative Party has appealed to the national identity of the British people to both extend their support and adapt the Party to a Britain that has been evolving both socially and politically since 1867. All three show that this strategic use of national identity has not always proved successful for the Conservative Party but it is a strategy that has been employed by the party throughout its involvement in mass democracy. It has also played a role in the party's historical ability to adapt to new social and political situations and it is beyond doubt that without this ability the party would have faded into insignificance.

Under Hague the party continued to appeal to the national identity of the British people, as part of its overall strategy to adapt the party to the social and political situation in Britain after the 1997 General Election. The party needed to adapt to being in Opposition and opposing a strong and popular Labour government. It also had to develop a strategy to maximise its electoral support before the next General Election. Just as Powell's conception of British national identity influenced his approach to mass immigration, the end of the Empire and Britain's membership of the EEC, so too did the Conservative Party leadership's conception influence the way it developed strategy and tackled the politics of race, European integration and devolution.

## 1.5 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the key concepts in this research, the nation and national identity. It has been established that national identity is how people define themselves in relation to their nation and this being a subjective exercise means that members of the same nation, not to mention the same political party, may base their national identity on very different criteria. This explains why the Conservative Party leadership may have differing conceptions of British national identity, may disagree over the role it should play in party strategy and may also have differing approaches to the politics of nationhood.

Also established are the key themes of this research: adaptability, maximisation of support and appeals to national identity. Since the emergence of the political market, Conservative politicians have appealed to the electorate's sense of Britishness to adapt the party and widen their support base. They have also understood the need to adapt their own conception of British nationhood and national identity to the changing times. In the post-war era the Conservative Party has tended to rely on an understanding of Britishness based upon patriotic sentiment, imperialism (when relevant), national greatness, unique national values and principles, British sovereignty and defence of the British Union. When he first became Leader of the Conservative Party, Hague placed his emphasis on Britain's multiculturalism and multi-ethnicity but during his leadership this emphasis dissipated and he reverted to the more traditionalist rhetoric. This research seeks to explain why the leadership made attempts to adapt the party's conceptions and why these attempts proved short-lived. The next chapter, as detailed below, establishes the state of the party that Hague inherited in 1997 and which prompted his realisation that the party needed to develop a strategy to adapt the party to contemporary British society and the political environment and maximise its electoral support before the next General election.

## 1.6 Chapter Outlines

### **Chapter Two – The Conservative Party and Britain, 1997**

This chapter will give a significantly more detailed overview than that given above of the situation that Hague found himself when he became Leader of the Conservative Party on 19<sup>th</sup> June 1997. It will introduce the party that Hague inherited, by briefly describing how Major understood the concepts introduced in the first chapter, British nationhood and British national identity. How did he appeal to the electorate's sense of national identity to maximise the Conservative Party's electoral support and to adapt it to fighting a new and strong opposition? The second chapter will also examine the implications of the 1997 General Election defeat and the need for the party to take stock and understand why it had lost so convincingly. Without doing this, the party could not hope to be returned to power. The party that referred to itself as the 'national' party had to come to terms with having no seats in Scotland and Wales or many large English cities. Its disunity over the issue of EMU and European integration more generally will be examined, as will its apparent inability to persuade the British people that Labour's proposed legislative devolution of power to Scotland and Wales would inevitably lead to the break-up of the Union of England with those two nations. In short, the Conservatives were seen as divided, extreme, old-fashioned, sleazy and tired and 70% of those who voted had wanted change. Hague had to develop a strategy to begin the party's adaptation to its new circumstances and to begin its return to power.

### **Chapter Three – The Conservative Nation, 1997 - 2001**

The Conservative Party is a broad church. It attracts support from voters and activists with varying political opinions and the parliamentary Conservative Party is similarly diverse, the

divisions over European integration which blighted the party in all its echelons during John Major's premiership stand testament to this. Parliamentarians' views on British nationhood and British national identity are equally broad and this chapter asks how did the parliamentary party in the 1997-2001 parliament, perceive nationhood and national identity? How did the parliamentary Conservative Party, with specific emphasis on the leadership of the party, understand the concepts of British nationhood and British national identity during the 1997-2001 parliament? The chapter will use speeches and articles written by members of the party's leadership throughout the parliament but more crucial will be interviews conducted with members of the party's leadership and other Conservative parliamentarians, which deal specifically with their conception of British nationhood and British national identity. Two groups will be identified, the traditionalists and the modernisers. An understanding of this division will be necessary to appreciate the development of Hague's strategy which will be analysed in subsequent chapters.

#### **Chapter Four – Nationhood and Strategy, June 1997 – June 1999 European Elections**

Chapter four will begin the analysis of the first half of the 1997-2001 parliament by examining the Conservative Party's development of strategy and the leadership's approach to the politics of nationhood in the form of devolution policy. Along with chapter five, it will analyse Hague's goals and whether the leadership were united in support for his approach to the politics of nationhood and his strategic decision making. Hague explicitly 'reached out' to sections of society that were not traditional Conservative voters, such as the gay and ethnic communities, to broaden the party's support base. At the same time the Fresh Future was launched and, along with other related reforms, Hague set out to bring the party to terms with being in Opposition, to demonstrate that it was moving on from the past and to place it in the best position to develop and promote new policies. Hague made it

clear that this was the start of a long process. The Conservative Party under Hague, accepted devolution but also remained a Unionist party. The English votes on English laws policy was developed to prevent the break-up of the British Union and the party constantly appealed to the Britishness of the electorate.

## **Chapter Five – Nationhood and Strategy, June 1997 – June 1999 European Elections, Part II**

This chapter will continue to examine the first half of Hague's tenure as Leader but focuses on the development of the party's European policy and the creation and implementation of its first formal strategy initiative, 'Kitchen Table Conservatism' (KTC). Hague used the issue of Europe to demonstrate that the party had moved on from the Major years by apologising for the ERM debacle and he also halted the domination of the issue by imposing a clear policy which was consolidated by the support of the membership, demonstrated by an internal ballot. Hague appealed to the Britishness of the electorate, claiming that the Conservatives were the only party protecting British identity, nationhood and prosperity in the face of European integration. Hague adopted KTC simply because the party required a strategy. Neither the Shadow Cabinet nor Hague engaged with the strategy and it was abandoned when it failed to yield positive results.

## **Chapter Six – Nationhood and Strategy, June 1999 European Elections – 2001 General Election**

Chapter six will begin the analysis of the second half of Hague's leadership by examining the Conservative Party's approach to the politics of nationhood, in the form of race relations, including asylum and immigration. It will also investigate the policy document

Common Sense Revolution (CSR), which marked the start of the party's preparation for the 2001 General Election and dominated the party's agenda from the Autumn of 1999. This and the next chapter will examine Hague's goals throughout the period and whether the leadership were united in support of the Hague's approach to the politics of nationhood and his strategic decision-making. Hague encouraged race relations to become a major issue before the 2001 General Election believing it would appeal to the party's core support and disaffected former Labour voters. His tone and language became increasingly strident but he always attempted to 'reach out' to voters from ethnic communities. This was demonstrated within CSR but the message was submerged by Hague's appeal to the 'mainstream majority' who he believed shared his 'commonsense' values.

## **Chapter Seven – Nationhood and Strategy, June 1999 Elections – 2001 General Election, Part II**

This chapter will analyse Hague's approach to the issue of European integration, in particular the single currency and also the party's development and implementation of strategy. Hague continued to appeal to the Britishness of the electorate and unite the people behind a common enemy, the EU. This was in an attempt to broaden the party's support by attracting those who may have voted for the Labour Party in 1997 but did not want to join a European single currency. However, the prominence of the European policy and also the focus on constitutional and political, rather than economic reasons for rejecting EMU, was resented by some members of the Conservative leadership and parliamentary party. The issue was neutralised electorally after Blair's promise of a referendum on joining the Euro and it failed to determine the votes of individuals at the 2001 General Election. The second half of Hague's leadership was not dominated by a coherent strategy such as KTC but was instead focused on raising the prominence of issues such as asylum and the single currency.

which Hague believed would appeal both to the Conservative Party's traditional core support base and disaffected Labour voters. This approach was not supported by the modernisers within the party leadership and although some traditionalists were supportive, others did not agree with the prominence given to issues such as asylum and Europe.

## **Chapter Eight – Conclusions**

This chapter discusses the conclusions of the research including the fact that the four research hypotheses, detailed in the 'summary of dissertation', were proven. Amongst the most important findings were that when conceptualising national identity, the leadership can be split into two groups, modernisers and traditionalists. Both groups believed that they were appealing to the majority of British people. As the 2001 General Election approached, Hague abandoned a long-term modernising approach to party renewal and emphasised policies which he believed would shore up the party's core support base, whilst also broadening its support. The politics of nationhood were central to this traditionalist approach. The issues that Hague emphasised were not salient and succeeded only in deepening, not broadening, the party's support.

## Chapter Two

### The Conservative Party and Britain, 1997

#### 2.1 Introduction

To understand Hague's strategic decision-making, it is necessary to examine the party that he took control of on 19th June 1997. The previous chapter identified the Conservative Party's historic conceptualisation and strategic utilisation of national identity and nationhood and investigated how the party leadership has appealed to the national identity of voters as part of seeking to adapt the party to an evolving society and to maximise its electoral support. By briefly identifying Major's understanding of those concepts and how he used them to attempt to maximise support for the Conservative Party, we can appreciate the party's understanding of nationhood and national identity when Hague, himself, became Leader.

It is also necessary to discuss the state of the Conservative Party after its defeat in May 1997. By examining the scale of that defeat, the financial status of the party, its membership levels, the unity of Conservative parliamentarians and perceptions of both the Labour government and the Conservative Party, it is possible to understand the situation that Hague found himself in as a new leader. He had to take stock and then develop a strategy which would adapt his party to opposing a strong and popular government and would allow it to represent the interests of the British electorate in the late-1990s, therefore maximising its electoral support before the next General Election.

When Hague first became Leader, he made it clear that the Conservative Party was at the start of a long process of renewal and return to power. It had suffered a substantial defeat

at the hands of a very popular Labour Party. Hague had to decide how he was going to manage the process of returning the party to power, however long it took. The options available to Hague included shoring up the party's core support base by focusing on traditional Conservative policies such as a tough line on law and order and immigration and defence of the Union and British sovereignty. Alternatively, he could choose to oppose the Labour government on the centre ground of British politics, emphasising issues such as social inclusion and the public services.

## 2.2 John Major, Nationhood and National Identity

Major became Leader of the Conservative Party on 27<sup>th</sup> November 1990 and remained so until the party's defeat at the General Election of May 1997. When formulating strategy, Hague would have taken into consideration his predecessor's approach to the politics of nationhood, his utilisation of nationhood and national identity and the success or otherwise of the role that they played within his statecraft and within his strategy to maximise support for the Conservatives and to successfully oppose the Labour Party. To appreciate Hague's strategic decision making, it is therefore important to understand how Major conceptualised nationhood and national identity throughout his leadership and the role that those concepts played within his strategy. Major's approach towards the issues of European integration and legislative devolution to Scotland and Wales will be examined.

### **Major's Approach to European Integration**

Fifty years from now Britain will still be the country of long shadows on county grounds, warm beer, invincible green suburbs, dog lovers and - as George Orwell said - old maids cycling to Holy Communion through the morning mist. And - if we get our way - Shakespeare will still be read - even in school. Britain will survive unamendable in all essentials.

(Speech given to the Conservative Group for Europe, 22.04.1993 in Major, 1999, p.376).

The Conservative Party is a broad church and includes pro-Europeans who believe European integration is an opportunity for member states, including Britain, to pool their sovereignty and therefore collectively have more of an impact on global economics and politics than they would as autonomous states and also those who are more sceptic about the opportunities integration provides Britain. In varying degrees, the Euro-sceptics regard integration as increasingly threatening Britain's sovereignty and therefore, its very nationhood. They cite the supremacy of European law within Britain and threats to the country's ability to control its own borders, immigration policy, tax system, judicial system and even its own currency as threatening Britain's status as an independent and influential nation on the world stage. The identity of the British people is also threatened as their unique political and social culture is increasingly subsumed by a European and therefore foreign, way of life. Despite having the prime ministerial responsibility to respond to events as they arose, Major's European policy was central to his general approach to the politics of nationhood and indicative of both his conceptualisation of nationhood and national identity and his utilisation of these concepts as part of his appeal to the electorate.

Holmes describes Major's European policy as being split into three distinct phases: from November 1990 until the 1992 General Election victory, Major sought compromise to prevent his party becoming irreversibly split on the issue. After the General Election until September 1993 Major's approach was one of 'Euro-enthusiasm' buoyed by his support for Britain's membership of the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) and the ratification of the Treaty on the European Union (Maastricht Treaty) in August 1993. Finally, from September 1993 until the 1997 General Election, Major struggled to compromise between

the demands of the Euro-enthusiasts and the increasingly sceptic Euro-sceptics within his parliamentary party (Holmes, 1998 and 1999).

Major's approach may have appeared to change as circumstances such as Black Wednesday occurred but his underlying philosophy on European integration did not. The above quotation from a speech given to the Conservative Group for Europe on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1993 is often used to demonstrate Major's attempts to appeal to the electorate through an out-moded, irrelevant and somewhat Baldwinian assessment of national identity. However, Major stated that the passage, which was seized upon by the press, distorted a 'forward-thinking and optimistic' speech. He was not arguing for the kind of Britain he wanted to create, that is, one looking back to the past. Instead, he was articulating his belief that European co-operation does not mean a loss of national identity, whether real or imagined (Major, 1999, p.376). This was a direct appeal to the Conservative traditionalists, concerned about European integration. He understood that Britain was no longer an imperial power and instead of longing for the past, he embraced Britain's present: 'change isn't just coming, it's here. I want Britain to mould that change, to lead that change in our own national interest' (Major, 1992).

Major's rhetoric on Europe was most certainly based on his own conceptualisation of nationhood and how he believed European integration could benefit Britain, in particular its economy. However, his use of nationhood and national identity when referring to Europe and also his attitude towards other European leaders, particularly at meetings of European heads of state, was a direct reaction to the stridency and attitude and perceived failings of his predecessor, Margaret Thatcher.

In Bonn on 11<sup>th</sup> March, 1991, Major said ‘My aims for Britain in the Community can be simply stated. I want us to be where we belong. At the very heart of Europe. Working with our partners in building the future’ (Quoted in Hogg and Hill, 1995, p.79). In a direct response to Thatcher’s stridency, he believed that Britain’s interests could be maintained more successfully if the government made clear that it wanted to work constructively with its European partners. As Hogg and Hill discuss, the speech was often misinterpreted as an acceptance of a European federalist agenda (Hogg and Hill, 1995, p.79). In his autobiography, however, Major makes it clear that he ‘was not an integrationist or a federalist’ (Major, 1999, p.698). He realised the advantages of Britain’s membership of Europe but also of the unique position that the country held as being the US’s gateway to the continent. Although many Conservatives advocated the development of Britain’s relationship with the US, Major acknowledged that ‘the US did not want a fifty-first state. As successive American ambassadors made clear to us, the United States wanted Britain to be a strong voice in Europe, as geography, economics and common values suggested we should be’ (Major, 1999, p.578).

My policy on Europe was to take the advantages that flowed from our membership. For me that meant consensus, yes; shared sovereignty where logic dictated it, yes. I was a convinced advocate of enlargement as a historic obligation to nations we had left on the wrong side of the Iron Curtain. But I did not relish changes that diminished the prerogative of the British parliament. I knew that sometimes they would, and that we would have to swallow our pride, but I always looked for compensating advantages. I was a pragmatist, not an idealist, and a cautious pragmatist too. To me, the European Union was far more than a trading relationship, but I did not want to see it become a federation  
(Major, 1999, p.581).

Major therefore acknowledged that as Prime Minister, he may, on occasions, have to act pragmatically and compromise British sovereignty and make decisions that did not always

*directly* serve the national interest. This, he demonstrated with his willingness to compromise on the issue of increasing the Qualified Majority Voting (QMV) 'blocking minority' during the early months of 1994.

However, there were limitations to his approach, particularly as indicated above, when the 'prerogative of the British parliament' was threatened or other member states made explicit moves to widen and deepen political or social union. His desire to obtain 'compensating advantages' was evident in his approach to the Maastricht Treaty. Although Major 'signed a Treaty which proclaimed that EMU was an irreversible goal of the Community and would happen by 1999 for states meeting the convergence criteria' he fought for an 'opt-out' which stated that the British parliament must agree to Britain's membership of the single currency (Lynch, 1999, p.72). The opt-out was promoted to the British people not only as safe-guarding parliamentary sovereignty but also as the Conservative government protecting the British national interest and the British way of life. After pressure from Britain, the other member states also signed a separate 'Social Agreement' that allowed Britain to remain outside of future social legislation that had been agreed via an extension of QMV.

His main objective was to work pro-actively within Europe to secure the advantages of membership for Britain. He said 'I was proud of the social and economic benefits Britain gained from membership' and he took every opportunity to further the Conservative Party's economic agenda (Major, 1999, p.698). The 'no' result of the Danish referendum on the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty signalled to Major that the European federalist agenda had been negated. His approach to Europe was now increasingly based upon economic co-operation, liberalisation and deregulation. He spoke against political union and instead

advocated a flexible 'multi-track, multi-speed, multi-layered' Europe (Lynch, 1999, p.75). Indicative of his belief in the economic basis of Europe and the potential benefits that Britain could receive was his continued refusal to abandon his 'wait and see' policy on Britain's membership of the single currency. He said 'above all I was not prepared to bury my head in the sand and rule out membership of the single currency for all time. I made my doubts about the project clear, guaranteed a referendum, but disagreed with the premature and narrow-minded certainty with which some in the Conservative Party sought to bind us' (Major, 1999, p.698).

At a press conference during the 1997 General Election campaign, Major spoke directly to the British electorate on the issue of the single currency. He explained that he would not reject British entry forever and neither would he guarantee it. This was not a matter of party politics but what was best for the British nation and he declared, 'Like me or loath, do not bind my hands when I am negotiating on behalf of the British nation' (Major, 1999, p. 715). Major appealed to the electorate on the basis that he was standing up for the British nation, acting in its best interests and not necessarily that of the Conservative Party.

However, throughout his leadership, events challenged Major's own positive approach towards Britain's role in a non-federal Europe and his attempts for the British public to absorb some of that positivity. Holmes suggests that from September 1993, Major was forced to manage the conflicting demands of the Euro-enthusiasts and sceptics within his parliamentary party. Major acknowledged that the Conservative Party's majority of twenty-one after the 1992 General Election already gave the sceptics added momentum: they knew that there were more than twenty-one Conservative MPs less than enthusiastic about continued European integration (Major, 1999, p.346). The 'no' result of the Danish

referendum on the Maastricht Treaty on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1992 and then the 16<sup>th</sup> September 1992

Black Wednesday debacle further fuelled the sceptics:

For a few of my parliamentary colleagues, Black Wednesday awoke the instincts that turn a profound love of one's own country into a nationalism or insularity that encompasses a distaste for any other. In a short, a small minority became not only pro-British, but anti-foreigner. For those like me who believed in a tolerant, pragmatic, outward-looking Conservatism, the transformation was deeply disturbing (Major, 1999, p.352).

Senior Conservatives such as Kenneth Baker, Norman Tebbit and Margaret Thatcher were outspoken in their disapproval of the Maastricht Treaty and rebel MPs did their utmost to prevent its ratification. On 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1993 they almost succeeded when Major was forced to introduce an emergency Motion of Confidence after the government lost a vote on the Treaty by eight. The Motion was won by thirty-nine votes and the treaty ratified but the Prime Minister had been forced to threaten Conservative rebels with the prospect of the dissolution of parliament and a subsequent General Election (Major, 1999, p.342). The issue portrayed Major as the weak Leader of a divided and predominantly Euro-sceptic party.

The impression of disunity was augmented by the sceptics' well publicised belief that Major was prevented from ruling out Britain's membership of the single currency now and in any future Conservative administration by Michael Heseltine, Kenneth Clarke and John Gummer's intransigent support for EMU. Major's own inadvertently broadcast declaration to Michael Brunson that the Cabinet contained a number of 'bastards' who had been disloyal in their approach to the government's European policy further set back his attempts to display unity.

In 1996 Major was forced to publicly acknowledge that the European Union (EU) did not always operate in Britain's interests, economic or otherwise. He demonstrated that he was prepared to isolate Britain within Europe if he believed Britain's national interest was unfairly threatened. On 25<sup>th</sup> March, the EU Standing Veterinary Committee imposed a worldwide ban on the exportation of British beef after evidence of a link between Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy and Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease was discovered. The Euro-sceptics within the Conservative Party and the press made the most of the EU's supposed anti-Britishness when member states stalled the lifting of the ban. Major imposed a policy of British non-co-operation vis-à-vis decision-making that required unanimity. The beef ban was sent to the top of the agenda at the June 1996 EU summit and by the seventeenth of that month an agreement to lift it had been agreed. It was not until August 1999 that the ban truly came to an end and Major was left looking weak and ineffective. However, during the phase of non-co-operation, Major demonstrated that he was not afraid to isolate Britain in his attempts to redress the unfairness that he believed was directed towards it. The issue did little to promote enthusiasm for Europe throughout the country.

The Conservative Party under Major had appealed to the electorate as the party that would look after Britain's interests in Europe. However, they simply appeared divided and obsessed and he was viewed as a weak leader with an understanding of modern Britain that was not dissimilar to Baldwin's. As Major acknowledged, the damage done to the party's 1997 General Election campaign when ministers and MPs gave election addresses explicitly opposing the single currency was 'incalculable' (Major, 1999, p.714). Referring to the domination of Europe during that campaign, Major stated 'the notion that Britain in 1997 was racked by anxiety over Europe is pure nonsense. Conservative politicians were.

The electorate were not' (Major, 1999, p.697). It may have been true that a post-election survey revealed that 25% of voters mentioned Europe as 'very important' issue but a Gallup poll found that 44% of voters felt that the Labour Party was best able to manage Britain's relations with the EU, compared with 32% for the Conservative Party (Quoted by Lynch, 1999, p.90-1).

### **Major's Approach to Devolution**

The United Kingdom is in danger. Wake up, my fellow countrymen!  
Wake up now before it is too late!  
(Speech given at election rally, Wembley, 05.04.1992, quoted by Barry Jones in Dorey, 1999, p.135).

As Hogg and Hill discuss, Major 'cared deeply' about the preservation of the British Union: it was something that he could speak about with 'feeling and passion' (Hogg and Hill, 1995, p.248). There were, however, two elements to his belief: that the Union should be maintained as a matter of principle and also that economically and politically, the status quo was the optimum situation for Britain.

Electurally speaking, the preservation of the Union was not profitable for the Conservative Party. Since the Second World War the party had declined in Scotland, from a high of receiving 50.1% of the vote in 1955 to a low of 24.0% in 1987 (Crowson, 2001, p.171). This decline was enormously significant for the party, both electorally and in terms of its self-awarded status as the 'national party' and the party of the Union. As Major led the party into the 1992 General Election, the Conservatives held only nine out of seventy-two Scottish seats. Scottish independence or the establishment of a federal Britain would have better served the Conservative Party's interests however, Major spoke about the

Conservative Party's inherent belief in the Union at the Scottish Candidates Conference several months before the 1992 General Election. He said,

It is not the Conservative Party that gains – or has gained – most from the ties between Scotland and England. And yet it is our party that supports the Union. Not because it's always been good for us, but because it's always seemed *right* to us. Not always in our political interest, but always in that of our kingdom and the countries in it  
(Speech given to the Scottish Candidates Conference, Glasgow, 22.02.1992, quoted by Hogg and Hill, 1995, p.248).

As Barry Jones argues, Major's belief in the Union and his reforms to the existing system of administrative devolution, were 'consistent with the preservation of parliamentary sovereignty' (Barry Jones in Dorey, 1999, p.144). If the integrity of the Union was threatened, parliamentary sovereignty, a core Conservative principle, would also be challenged. The Conservative Party's 1997 manifesto warned against hasty reform to the Constitution which itself embodies 'the wisdom of the ages' and 'is a seamless web providing a flexible basis upon which our nation has prospered'. Anything other than evolutionary change would 'threaten stability' (Quoted by Barry Jones in Dorey, 1999, p.144). That is not to say, however, that Major believed that the organisation of the Union should stay fixed. Major's government made specific reforms to the existing system of administrative devolution and these are discussed below but to Major, the Union still had 'enormous moral and political relevance' in the last decade of the twentieth century. He believed 'that the case for the Union needed to be put in a way that would make it relevant to the future as well as the past' (Major, 1999, p.421).

On a less emotional level, Major believed that the maintenance of the status quo would work best for England, Scotland and Wales. In his autobiography Major argued, 'Scotland

mattered to me. From the moment I became Prime Minister I could see the danger of it sliding away to independence through the half-way house of devolution. I believed this would be damaging for the UK, and bad for Scotland' (Major, 1999, p.415). Major discussed the scenario that he envisaged resulting from legislative devolution to Scotland and Wales. Not only would it create another tier of bureaucracy but it would also create tension between England, Scotland and Wales. For example English MPs would raise the unanswered West Lothian Question and Wales would object to their assembly's lack of powers compared to the Scottish parliament's. The inevitable result would be the break-up of Britain (Major, 1999, p.418-420). This would not be beneficial to any part of Britain, including England because central to Conservative Unionism is the belief that the Union is fundamentally greater than the sum of its parts (Lynch, 1999, p.111).

Major used the issue of devolution and the likelihood that it would lead to the break-up of Britain, to attack the Labour Party who, throughout his premiership was strengthening as an Opposition to the Conservative government. In response to the Labour Party's advocacy of legislative devolution to Scotland and Wales, Major articulated his belief in administrative devolution to the Scottish and Welsh Offices. He said that 'Scotland is voluntarily part of the Union, and as part of the Union we must continue to recognise its distinctiveness, its own nationhood, its own sovereignty, if you wish to use that word' (Major, 1999, p.109). However, he also desired devolution of power to local authorities and schools and hospitals, which ultimately bypassed politicians. He said: 'this last step was too radical a step for many devolutionists: they wanted Scottish *institutions* to have power, not Scottish *individuals* (Major, 1999, p.423). A vote for the Conservative Party would be a vote for devolution but it would be to the family and the individual, not parliaments and assemblies.

In the run up to the 1992 General Election, Major feared that the Conservative Party might lose all its seats in Scotland, which if it was returned to power, would mean it would have no person able to lead the Scottish Office. 'Devolution would have become inevitable, and I would have had to introduce it. The thought repelled me, and I was determined to make the preservation of the Union a centrepiece of our appeal to Scotland in the General Election to come' (Major, 1999, p.417). Shortly before the election, he made a speech at Wembley in which as an attempt to maximise support for his party, he appealed to the British national identity of the electorate. It included the lines quoted above: 'The United Kingdom is in danger. Wake up, my fellow countrymen! Wake up now before it is too late!'. As Hogg and Hill acknowledge 'there was quite a lot of anecdotal evidence that people decided in the last week of the campaign to vote Conservative because they were more patriotic' (Hogg and Hill, 1995, p.248). It is, of course, impossible to attribute results to any one issue or campaign speech but supporting Hogg and Hill's analysis is that the Conservative Party's gained two seats and their share of the Scottish vote increased by 1.6%. This may seem an insignificant proportion but their support fell in other areas of Britain, including southern England (Lynch, 1999, p.109).

There was little equality between Major's approach to Welsh and Scottish affairs. He allowed David Hunt, his first Secretary for Wales to continue with a 'hands off' approach established under Thatcher's premiership. Major remained relatively distant from Welsh policy and Hunt had the autonomy to intervene in Welsh affairs as he saw fit, renewing its industry and actively increasing inward investment (Barry Jones in Dorey, 1999, p.132). However, reforms were made in Westminster, to the system of administrative devolution to Wales. The powers of the Welsh Grand Committee were enhanced and the 1993 Welsh

Language Act gave Welsh equal status with English within Wales. As Barry Jones states, that piece of legislation was 'precisely the form of territorial management of the UK which Major could apply without qualms. It coincided with the Conservative Party's constitutional principles and its political interests' (Barry Jones in Dorey, 1999, p.135). Major was able to appeal to the Welsh identity of the people of Wales without threatening the integrity of the British nation and its national identity.

Major actively worked to make the Union seem as relevant to Scotland as possible and to demonstrate that the Scottish people had their own autonomy, their own distinctive education, judicial and legal systems and their own identity within the existing system. Both the 1993 White Paper 'Scotland in the Union' and Michael Forsyth's response to the Constitutional Convention's final report enhanced the role of the Scottish Grand Committee. A significant non-legislative concession to the Scottish people, which was meant to indicate an understanding and respect to the Scottish national identity, was the return on Saint Andrew's day, 1996, of the Stone of Destiny to Scotland. Together with the aforementioned reforms, this was to demonstrate to the Scottish people that any concerns they had with Westminster could be managed within the Union and that legislative devolution was unnecessary. Both Major and Forsyth promoted the shared British national identity of Scotland and England in an attempt to maximise the Conservative Party's support north of the border. In 1996, Forsyth referred to British people's experiences during the Second World War, 'when survival was the issue, there were no doubts about our British identity then. When bombs rained indiscriminately on Coventry and Clydebank, we knew we were one nation. We are one nation still' (Quoted by Barry Jones in Dorey, 1999, p.142).

Despite treating Scotland and Wales differently, Major felt able to criticise the Labour Party for its own unequal plans for legislative devolution should it win the 1997 General Election. Major said that unequal arrangements, such as Scotland receiving tax raising powers, would increase tension and damage relations between England, Scotland and Wales. However, Conservative policy for Scotland and Wales was similarly not exempt from criticism. In the run up to the 1997 General Election the poll tax debacle was far from forgotten and the indiscriminate drawing of unitary authority boundaries and the growth in the number of quangos were called into question.

At the 1997 General Election, the Conservative vote in Scotland was reduced to 17.5% (down 8.2%) and the party lost all its seats. In Wales, it was reduced to 19.6% (down 9%) and the party failed to win any seats (Lynch, 1999, pp.114-116). Why did the Conservative Party experience such oblivion? Before the 1992 General Election, some Scottish Conservatives publicly advised Major to accept the need for legislative devolution. Without making this concession, a constitutional crisis would be sparked and the party would lose support. Major continued to believe that such a degree of devolution would inevitably lead to Scottish independence and at that election decided to target the 26% of Scottish voters who, opinion polls indicated, supported the maintenance of the status quo. Although constitutional issues were low on the list of the Scottish electorate's priorities, Major believed that that 26% would vote Conservative because they were the party of the Union, irrespective of their other policies (Major, 1999, p.418). He took the modest gains the Conservative Party made during the election as vindication of his strategy. However, his intransigent opposition to legislative devolution to both Scotland and Wales alienated many voters and an opinion poll conducted in Scotland, shortly before the 1997 General

Election reported that of those who supported the status quo (30%), only 43% intended to vote for the Conservative Party (Lynch, 1999, p.114).

Major continued with a number of Thatcher's policies that increased this feeling of alienation in both Scotland and Wales. The continuation of privatisation, the closure of the Ravenscraig steelworks in Scotland, the increasing numbers of quangos and local government reforms that failed to acknowledge local identities, all added to many Welsh and Scottish voters' belief that the Conservative Party was England-centric and that the system of administrative devolution was inadequate in dealing with their needs and acknowledging their identities. In Wales, where demands for independence and legislative devolution were less vociferous than in Scotland, many people finally came to believe in the need for legislative devolution when John Redwood managed to push his unpopular local government reforms through the legislative process by replacing the Welsh Parliamentary Committee with an ordinary standing committee, a majority of whose members were English Conservative MPs (Lynch, 1999, pp.132-9).

Throughout Major's premiership, Scottish and Welsh voters turned away from the Conservative Party and towards the idea of legislative devolution but the English seemed to disregard the issue. Major spoke often about the unanswered West Lothian Question, the costs of establishing a Scottish parliament and a Welsh assembly, the overrepresentation of Scotland in Westminster and the additional tier of bureaucracy but the issue failed to climb the political agenda in England. This lack of interest did little to counter Labour and the national parties' arguments for legislative devolution. The Labour Party also managed to reduce the saliency of Major's concerns by promising a referendum on devolution after the General Election and any advances that the Conservatives may have made through fears of

the potential tax raising powers of a Scottish parliament were negated through Labour's pledge of a specific tax-raising question in that promised referendum. Scottish and Welsh voters felt that they could have their say in the referendum and therefore the issue fell down the agenda during the election.

After the 1997 General Election, the Conservative Party, the self-styled national party, did not have any MPs in Scotland or Wales. The party had failed 'to win issue hegemony on devolution' and this was something that it was going to have to come to terms with. Appeals to Scottish and Welsh voters' British national identity had failed to resonate. However, as much hostility as there was towards the Conservative Party during the 1992-1997 parliament and particularly among Scottish voters, it is true to say that it did not become an English nationalist party. Preferential public spending in Scotland continued, as did the over-representation of Scotland at Westminster and as discussed above, even though it would have been electorally beneficial for the Conservative Party if Scotland obtained its independence or a federal Britain was established, the party and its Leader continued to support the preservation of the British Union (Lynch, 1999, p.129).

### 2.3 The State of the Conservative Party after the 1997 General Election

Understanding Hague's strategic decision-making requires some comprehension of the situation that he found himself in as the new Leader of the Conservative Party. Pertinent to Hague's situation is the morale of the party's remaining parliamentarians, membership numbers and the financial status of the party. Hague needed to understand his situation and then develop a strategy which would renew and invigorate his party, making it a credible Opposition and future government and which would also maximise its electoral support before the next election.

The Conservative Party secured only 165 seats during the 1997 General Election. It received 9.6 million votes (30.7%) which was 4.5 million less than in the 1992 General Election (Crowson, 2001, pp.51-2). This percentage of the vote was the party's lowest since 1832 and its total number of seats was the lowest since 1906 (Morgan, 2001, p.5). In contrast, Labour secured 13.5 million votes (43.2%) which gave them a total of 418 seats and a formidable majority of 179 (Crowson, 2001 pp.51-2).

The landslide victory for Blair's Labour Party obviously meant catastrophic defeat for the Conservatives. Those who lost their seats included Malcolm Rifkind, the Foreign Secretary; Michael Portillo, the Defence Secretary; Ian Lang, the Trade and Industry Secretary; Michael Forsyth, the Scottish Secretary; Tony Newton, Leader of the Commons; William Waldegrave, Chief Secretary to the Treasury; Roger Freeman, Duchy of Lancaster; Sir Marcus Fox, who until shortly before the election had been Chairman of the 1922 Committee and former Chancellor of the Exchequer, Norman Lamont. This reduced the pool of talent and experience available to Hague from which he could choose his shadow cabinet.

John Major resigned as Leader of the Conservative Party on 2<sup>nd</sup> May. Major had decided to resign immediately following the election result because he wanted the party to have a fresh start, rather than being dominated by speculation and the launch of election campaigns by hopeful, yet premature, successors (Major, 1999, p.721). In his resignation speech he stated:

The economy is booming, interest rates and inflation are low and unemployment is falling. The growth pattern is well set, the health service is expanding, the education service is improving and the crime statistics are falling. The incoming government – to whom I repeat my warm congratulations upon their success – will inherit the most benevolent set of economic statistics since before the First World War. I hope very much in the interests of the whole British nation that they are successful. I have been a Member of Parliament for eighteen years, of the government of fourteen years, of the Cabinet for ten years, and Prime Minister since 1990. When the curtain falls, it is time to get off the stage, and that I propose to do. I shall advise my parliamentary colleagues to select a new leader of the Conservative Party  
(Major, 1999, p.726).

Why did the Conservative Party suffer such a devastating defeat? There have been a myriad explanations provided by journalists, politicians and academics but a number of factors are common: the economy, perceptions of the Conservative and Labour parties and their leaders, internal Conservative Party politics, the modernisation of the Labour Party, the election campaign and the attitudes of the press.

As Major stated in his resignation speech, quoted above, the economy had improved significantly since the recession of the early 1990s yet this did not prevent the Conservative government from being decisively removed from power. Daniel Hannan, Conservative MEP described how the party had lost its reputation for economic competence. He said ‘the period of government immediately up to 1997 was, I think, a period of lamentable failure for us. We won the 1992 election promising to cut tax and end the recession and we then prolonged the recession, stayed in the ERM, signed the Maastricht Treaty and inflicted twenty-two tax rises on people!’ (Hannan Interview, 12.05.2004). To illustrate the change in the public’s perceptions of the Conservative and Labour parties’ ability to manage the economy, Kellner compares data from the 1992 and 1997 BBC exit polls. In the former, the two parties were equally matched when respondents were asked which they most

trusted to make the right decisions about the economy (42% and 44% correspondingly).<sup>4</sup> This had changed significantly by 1997 when the Labour Party polled 53% compared to the Conservatives' 33%. In 1992, when respondents were asked who they trusted to make the right decisions on income tax, the Conservative Party led Labour by 22%. However, in 1997, the tables had turned and Labour led the Conservatives by 8% (Kellner, 1997). Kellner concludes that in the 1997 General Election, despite the positive economic situation 'the economy did matter: memories of the recession of the early nineties proved more important than the subsequent recovery in shaping attitudes'.

Heath, Jowell and Curtice describe how the leadership of the Labour Party under Blair, adopted many Thatcherite policies. 'Rather remarkably, however, Tony Blair's version of Thatcherism was much more favourably evaluated by the electorate than was the Thatcherism of John Major'. They attribute this as being 'a consequence of a New Labour 'halo' effect or conversely of a Conservative 'forked tail' effect' (Heath, Jowell and Curtice, 2001, p.120). During the 1992-1997 parliament, the electorate developed perceptions, however accurate, of the Conservative and Labour parties and their leaders, which influenced how they voted. The BBC's 1997 exit poll revealed that 68% thought that the Conservative Party were good for just one class, compared to just 32% who believed they were good for all classes. In contrast, the Labour Party were regarded by 69% as being good for all classes and by 31% as being good for just one (Kellner, 1997). Hilton charts the change in perception of both parties. From 1979 until 1992, the Conservatives were regarded as 'efficient but uncaring' and the Labour Party as 'caring but incompetent'. During the 1992-1997 parliament the image of economic competence was taken from the Conservatives by Labour, who also managed to retain their reputation for

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<sup>4</sup> Exit poll of 2,356 voters who completed questionnaires outside polling stations.

‘caring’. In short, in 1997 much of the electorate felt they had a choice between an uncaring and incompetent Conservative Party and a competent and caring Labour Party and they voted accordingly (Hilton in Crewe, Gosschalk and Bartle, 1998, pp.48-9).

A factor that was beyond the control of both party Leaders was that in 1997 much of the electorate quite simply felt that it was time for change. Edward Garnier said ‘the party was not destined to be successful in 1997...We’d been in office for eighteen years and in the last term of office, that’s to say from 1992 to 1997, we fell apart and whether we had chimed with the electorate on a number of issues we weren’t going to be elected’ (Garnier Interview, 04.12.2003). Major acknowledged that ‘there was a feeling that the Conservatives had been in power for too long, and that it was time to move on’ and that this feeling outweighed ‘any surge of enthusiasm for the alternative’. He also conceded that the longer a party is in power, the longer the list of ‘failures’ that is attached to them and the greater the number of people that have ‘lost out’ as a result of those failures (Major, 1999, pp.692-3). Finkelstein summed up the situation on 1<sup>st</sup> May, 1997 when he described how, ‘they saw us as arrogant, smug, sleazy, weak, incompetent and divided. They desperately wanted a change’. Discussed above was the electorate’s general acceptance of Blair’s Thatcherite approach to the economy and its rejection of a similar approach from Major. Finkelstein concluded that, in 1997 the electorate were voting against the Conservative Party itself, not the conservatism that it stood for (Finkelstein in Crewe, Gosschalk and Bartle, 1998, p.13).

The disunity that Finkelstein alluded to was certainly a major factor in the Conservative Party’s downfall. Section 2.2 of this chapter discussed the disunity that dominated the parliamentary Conservative Party particularly after the 1992 General Election and

particularly over the issue of European integration. Kellner's exit poll data can shed some light on the electorate's perception of party unity: in 1997 84% saw the Conservative Party as divided yet 66% saw the Labour Party as united (Kellner, 1997). Not only does disunity question a party's cohesion and ability to govern a country, it also makes it more difficult for voters to determine its policies. Heath, Jowell and Curtice use data to show that during the 1992-1997 parliament the electorate became increasingly Euro-sceptic. For example, in 1992 10% believed that Britain should leave the EU. In 1997 this had increased to 17%. During the same period the number of respondents believing the powers of the EU should be increased fell from 29% to just 10%. However, the authors state that this trend did not work in the Conservative Party's favour and nor did it damage the essentially pro-European Labour Party. This was because the electorate were so confused over Conservative European policy that: 'Eurosceptics tended to see the Tories as being some way to their left, whereas Europhiles saw them as being some way to their right' (Heath, Jowell and Curtice, 2001, p.112). Public infighting had not only damaged the electorate's opinion of the Conservative Party itself but it had also prevented much of the public from understanding Conservative Party policy.

Discussed throughout subsequent chapters is the fact that significant proportions of the electorate supported the Conservative Party on the politics of nationhood, in particular its approach to European integration and immigration and asylum, and yet the Conservatives did not maximise their electoral support at the 2001 General Election. The problem for the Conservative Party was that those issues did not determine voting behaviour. The issues that did determine how people voted were those that the Labour Party were seen as having a lead over the Conservatives, namely, the public services.

An insight into the state of the Conservative Party in May 1997 and its predicament after the General Election, leads to Hilton's assessment that, 'over eighteen years the Conservative Party changed the culture of our country. But the party itself failed to adapt to those changes. So by 1997, as William Hague has [subsequently] said, the party 'had lost touch with some of the people we always said we represented' displaying 'more than a hint of arrogance and conceit' (Hilton in Crewe, Gosschalk and Bartle, 1998, p.49). Shaun Woodward, the Conservative MP who defected to Labour on December 18<sup>th</sup> 1999, after calling Hague's policies 'bigoted' described how much of the electorate did not believe that the Conservative Party represented its interests, whether they be economic or concerning national identity: 'what was perfectly clear in 1997 was however much Margaret Thatcher and the Conservatives may have understood large sections of Britain in 1979, by 1997 it was completely out of touch and the voters had dramatically thrown it out of being in power, all over the country, except for a limited area of rural Britain' (Woodward Interview, 13.01.2004).

The electorate's assessment of the Labour Party was not similar and as Kellner stated, 'Labour managed to neutralise the negative factors that lost it the 1992 election' (Kellner, 1997). This can be demonstrated with the previously quoted exit poll data as to which party, the Conservatives or Labour, the public viewed as most likely to make the best economic and taxation decisions. Malcolm Gooderham also described how Blair 'managed to get the right-wing press, even *The Daily Mail*, to believe he was just as conservative on the nation as John Major, by expressing and stating his small 'c' conservative fears and that works electorally' (Gooderham Interview, 26.02.2004). In 1997, in contrast to the Conservatives, Labour was a *new* party and Rick Nye suggested that central to Blair's appeal was his claim that, 'I've modernised and transformed my party and now I'm going

to modernise and transform the country' (Nye Interview, 17.02.2004). 'New Labour, New Britain' was the slogan and crucially, Clause 4 had been significantly altered. The party had decided to 'concede and move on' and now focused on themes of social inclusion, community, one nation patriotism and renewal (Gould in Crewe, Gosschalk and Bartle, 1998, p.6-9). Compared to the Conservatives, the Labour Party was regarded by many as fresh, young, united, trustworthy, competent, caring and best able to defend the interests of the country.

The Conservative Party was also affected by mistakes in its extended General Election campaign. Towards the end of 1996, the party's message was that although the economy was now booming, it understood that the measures it had had to impose to end the recession of the early 1990s had had disastrous consequences for many people – 'It hurt but it worked'. Gould concluded that this was just the right campaign for the party but it failed to reach the voters because it lasted for only a couple of weeks (Gould in Crewe, Gosschalk and Bartle, 1998, p.9). This brevity was a result of the perilous state of the Party's finances. However, other campaigning mistakes were the fault of party strategists, not consequences of a lack of funding. On occasions the party contradicted itself, alternating between accusing the Labour Party of not having changed at all and then accusing it of stealing their policies (Butler and Kavanagh, 1997, p.34). This contradictory analysis did little to reassure the electorate about the Conservative Party's governing competence.

On May 2<sup>nd</sup> 1997, the morale of the Conservative Party throughout the country and in parliament had been shattered and the number of senior members of the parliamentary party had been depleted. The Conservatives were regarded as unfit to manage the economy and defend the interests of the country and were also considered divided, outmoded, sleaze-

ridden, uncaring and tired. Reflecting on the Party's defeat, some traditionalist Conservative parliamentarians and strategists believed that the party had not done enough to promote itself as the only party able to defend the interests of the country. They believed, for example, that because an increasing proportion of the electorate was Euro-sceptical, the Conservative Party should emphasise its own scepticism and highlight why its approach to the politics of nationhood was the only approach that could protect the country.<sup>5</sup> This would, they believed, allow the party to be regarded as relevant and a credible Opposition to the Labour government, therefore maximising the party's electoral support. However, the previous discussion on Major's approach to the politics of nationhood in the form of European and devolution policies, did not suggest that these issues determined voting behaviour, however much the electorate supported the Conservative Party's policies. Far more salient were the public services and economic issues. Before a strategy could be developed, however, the party needed a new leader to succeed Major.

### **Major's Successor: William Hague**

On 19<sup>th</sup> June 1997, William Hague succeeded Major as Leader of the Conservative Party. His success can be attributed to many factors, perhaps the most important of which was that Michael Portillo was not eligible to stand. Portillo had been tipped to succeed Major in what was seen before the General Election as an inevitable contest (Garnett in Garnett and Lynch, 2003, p.52). In comparison to Major, Hague's campaign was boosted by his ability to attract support from across the parliamentary party. He had been reluctant to join party factions and had managed not to alienate large sections of the party as Clarke and Redwood could be considered to have done, namely over the issue of Europe.

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<sup>5</sup> This strategic approach and others will be discussed more fully in subsequent chapter.

Hague also benefited from a campaign team which included talented and informed political minds including, management consultants, public relations experts, lobbyists and Conservative Central Office (CCO) staffers to name but a few and this enabled him to launch a slick and modern campaign. He also had the support of prominent and influential Conservative parliamentarians, namely Michael Trend, the party's deputy chairman and Andrew Mackay, a deputy whip. These individuals, whose positions demanded public neutrality, could gain an accurate assessment of Hague's popularity within the party in the Commons which would facilitate the formulation of a successful campaign strategy (Nadler, 2000, p.8). Other significant supporters included Michael Ancram, Archie Norman and Lord Parkinson.

Other personalities to boost Hague's campaign included his opponents. Irrespective of his other policies and personal qualities, some Euro-sceptic Conservative MPs could never have voted for the Euro-enthusiast, Ken Clarke. Michael Howard's chances of success were dashed by Ann Widdecombe's assault on his character and previous record, Peter Lilley's attempts to gain support were considered by some to be unconvincing and John Redwood, despite impressive performances, could not shake off a rather negative, voter-unfriendly image (Nadler, 2000, p.34). The latter also managed to lose some Euro-sceptic support after the second ballot by joining forces with Clarke (see below).

What did Hague offer the party as a potential leader? After the crumbling of party unity that took place during Major's leadership, Hague's ability to gain support across the spectrum of the Conservative Party, was an attractive prospect. Although Major had also gained support across the party during his election as Leader. throughout his campaign

Hague vowed to heal the rift that had developed over the issue of Europe. Alienating some Euro-enthusiasts and others who objected to his dictatorial approach, Hague stated that if he became leader his shadow cabinet would have to agree to his line on the single currency, that is, the Conservative Party would not support Britain's entry into the 'Euro' in that or the next parliament. Hague had demonstrated his desire to bring to an end the party's wranglings by avoiding Major's over-consensual style of leadership.

Hague also offered youth, enthusiasm, energy and a 'Fresh Start' (his campaign slogan) for the Conservative Party. His campaign was modern in style and he toured the country outlining his strategy for renewing the party, rather than remaining fixed in Westminster. He openly praised Labour's campaigning and polling methods during the 1997 General Election and promised to renew the Conservatives' own campaigning procedure. His campaign was focused on reforming and invigorating the party's organisation and Archie Norman's public endorsement was indicative of the seriousness of his intentions. Similarly, he promised to rid the party of the sleaze that had dogged it during the Major years.

The result of the first ballot saw Clarke receive 49 votes; Hague, 41; Redwood, 27; Lilley, 24 and Howard, 23. Howard and Lilley, as the rules demanded, withdrew from the contest and chose to endorse Hague's campaign as they believed he was the only candidate who could prevent a victory for the pro-European Clarke. The second ballot saw Hague remaining second place to Clarke with 62 and 64 votes respectively and Redwood eventually withdrawing after receiving 38 votes. The latter endorsed and joined Clarke's campaign. When Portillo and Thatcher realised that Redwood, had made a deal with Clarke, they publicly gave their support to Hague. Portillo's endorsement was a boost to

Hague's campaign but whether Thatcher's support transferred many votes to Hague or indeed lost him a number, the final result left Hague victorious, securing 92 votes to Clarke's 70.

Hague was now Leader of a party that, as discussed above, had suffered devastating defeat, was lacking in unity and popularity and was widely regarded as sleaze-ridden, economically incompetent, uncaring and out-of-touch. However, the extent of Hague's problems stretched much further and into the day-to-day running of the Conservatives as a political party. 'Throughout the Thatcher years the popularity of the government had given rise to a myth about the brilliant party machine at Conservative Central Office and in the country...[but] it was creaking, inefficient and poorly resourced by the time of the 1997 election' (Nadler, 2000, p.182). Not being a centralised party, there were no official membership figures but estimates for after the 1997 General Election have not exceeded 400,000 (Nadler, 2000, p.201) (Kelly in Garnett and Lynch, 2003, p.84) (Quayle, 1999, p.3). This can be compared to 2.75 million at the beginning of the 1950s and 750,000 at the beginning of the 1990s (Quayle, 1999, p.3). Hague's 'Our Party: Blueprint for Change' summed up the Conservatives' membership situation and the need for the party to recruit more young members to carry out the essential organisational, economic and electoral functions of a modern political party's membership:

As our membership has declined in size its average age has risen, reflecting our failure to recruit enough new younger members. Our youth groups too have seen a decline in membership. In 1979 there were approximately 20,000 members of the Young Conservatives and 14,000 members in the students' organisation. Today the Young Conservatives and students have fewer than 10,000 voters between them' (Quoted in Peele, 1998, p.144).

The party's membership levels had implications for the party's finances which were in an equally dire state. By autumn 1996, CCO received only £1,077,936 towards a target of £2,747,659 from individual constituency associations, 131 contributing nothing at all (Quayle, 1999, p.3). After the 1997 General Election, bankruptcy was a real possibility for the party, with the new treasurer Michael Ashcroft calculating that it was in debt by £10 million.

When Hague took control of the party, not only did he have to address matters of membership and finance, he also had to take into consideration how his parliamentary party was coming to terms with defeat. Shaun Woodward said:

my recollection, when I became Member of Parliament in 1997, in what was considered to be a relatively safe seat in Witney, was of wandering around the House of Commons and the tea room and bumping into members of the Conservative Party who had been Members of Parliament in the previous parliament and it looked like the kind of scene that people describe the Somme being like. There was just a complete collapse of identity, morale, purposeness, a complete bewilderment, a shattering experience – especially for those who had been here before where more than half of their colleagues had just been wiped out' (Woodward Interview, 13.01.2004).

Sir Michael Spicer, elected Chairman of the 1922 Committee in September 2001, recalled that 'at that very time people were disorientated, particularly MPs were disorientated, that came out at my predecessor. He made a speech at the first party conference after 1997 and was booed! People were shocked at that point and I was one of them' (Spicer Interview, 02.12.2003). The parliamentary Conservative Party needed a period of time to adjust to their new position as the party of Opposition. Hague needed to take this into consideration as part of his assessment of the state of his party in June 1997. He needed to take stock, understand reasons for its defeat and carefully develop and implement a strategy that would

fully adapt the party to its new role in Opposition and would enable it to maximise its electoral support before the next General Election.

#### 2.4 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined John Major's conceptualisation of British nationhood and national identity and the role they played in his strategy to maximise the Conservative Party's electoral support before the 1997 General Election. To understand Hague's own strategic decision-making, it is crucial to understand the party that Hague inherited and the approach it had taken in its recent history to the politics of nationhood. It is also necessary to understand the state of the party that he took control of in June 1997. The chapter detailed the scale of the Conservatives' defeat and some of the significant reasons for it. It also briefly examined the internal state of the party, its declining membership, poor financial status and also the morale of it remaining parliamentary party because as Shaun Woodward stated 'all that is very important scene-setting for what happened because in order to understand what the Conservative Party became about in Opposition between 1997 and 2001, you have to get to grips with that sense of decimation' (Woodward Interview, 13.01.2004). These factors, in combination, influenced and restricted Hague's strategic decision-making throughout the 1997-2001 parliament. The next chapter investigates how the parliamentary party and specifically the leadership of the Conservative Party under William Hague, understood British nationhood and national identity.

## Chapter Three

### The Conservative Nation, 1997-2001

For Conservatives, Britishness has the delicacy of a Faberge egg or, better, a Wedgwood figurine. It's an infinitely precious thing, of which they are the only reliable custodians. They polish it, place it behind glass, check it daily for violations. As a party, they've lived off their unique stewardship of this display-piece for many decades: the party of crown, constitution, nation and Union Jack, ranged against the party of the people, the international and the Red Flag (Young, 2000).

#### 3.1 Introduction

To understand the development of strategy under Hague's leadership and the role that British nationhood and national identity played within it, the previous chapter identified Major's understanding of national identity and nationhood and how he used those concepts to attempt to maximise support for the Conservative Party. It also examined the state of the Conservative Party after its General Election defeat in May 1997. Similarly, this chapter seeks to facilitate understanding of Britishness by examining the speeches, articles and interviews of Conservative parliamentarians and their closest advisors. This chapter asks: how did members of the parliamentary Conservative Party and in particular the leadership, conceptualise the British nation and its identity? Was the parliamentary party united in its understanding of these concepts and did the leadership's understanding change throughout the parliament?

## **The Conservative Party: A Broad Church**

Despite being members of the same party, Conservative parliamentarians hold diverse views on many issues. The distinction Thatcher made between the economic ‘wets’ and ‘dries’ or the wranglings between the Euro-sceptics and pro-Europeans which blighted Major’s leadership are testament to that. Hague said of the Conservative Party,

‘like any strong family, we share a common purpose and a common loyalty; but like any family, we have different opinions. In a country where there are 55 million different views and only three main political parties, the Conservative Party has been successful because it has always been a broad church. It remains so’  
(Hague, 2000a).

The party is bound together by a number of principles that are commonly perceived to be shared by all Conservatives. These principles, although agreed upon and defined enough to bind members of the party together are also broad, in that they allow difference of opinion as to how they are best followed and applied.<sup>6</sup> Seldon and Snowden give ‘seven core Conservative tenets that have constantly influenced Conservative thinkers and statesmen since the eighteenth century’. These are, firstly, a belief in the imperfection of human nature and the limits to the power of reason; second, an acceptance of an organic theory of society and a desire for orderly change; third, a conviction that liberty must be safeguarded by the rule of law; fourth, a desire for a strong but limited state; fifth, a belief in the need to maintain a prosperous economy; sixth, a respect for property and finally, a deep attachment to the nation (Seldon and Snowden, 2001, pp.17-25).

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<sup>6</sup> The principles that underpin the Conservative Party have been the subject of much debate and discussion (see Gilmour, 1978; Norton and Aughey, 1981 and Norton, 1996), it is therefore impossible to include a definitive list. It is also impossible to do justice to the debate in the limited space available here. The principles that are detailed will undoubtedly fail to satisfy every Conservative or political commentator but can be considered to be commonly accepted as principles central to the Conservative Party.

As is to be expected and is demonstrated below, members of the parliamentary party, during the 1997-2001 parliament, understood the concepts of nationhood and national identity differently. As attitudes towards these concepts are to be analysed in isolation, that is without comparison with, for example, individual's economic or social perspectives, it is possible to simplify this analysis by placing individuals into two distinct categories. the 'traditionalists' and the 'modernisers'. Speeches, articles and interviews conducted for this research demonstrated that traditionalists tended to emphasise romantic views of a shared and unique culture and also myths, memories and stereotypes; attachment to political institutions; the retention of territorial integrity and sovereignty and sometimes, race. The modernists tended to be forward-looking, that is focusing on the present and future of British national identity and to emphasise and take pride in British multi-culturalism, diversity, tolerance, social justice and inclusion. However, there were some shared themes and also some differences in definition, which will be discussed below. A specific question was asked of all parliamentarians interviewed for this research: 'What does British nationhood and British national identity mean to you?' which makes it possible to analyse their understanding in isolation. A number of parliamentarians who declined to be interviewed recommended specific texts which outlined their views on national identity.<sup>7</sup>

As discussed in the first chapter, our understanding of nationhood and national identity is fundamental to our understanding of who we are as individuals and as a people.

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<sup>7</sup> John Redwood recommended: Redwood, John (2001) Stars and Strife: The Coming Conflicts between the USA and the European Union. Palgrave: Basingstoke and Redwood, John (2001) Just Say No!: 100 Arguments Against the Euro. Methuen Publishing: London. Michael Portillo recommended his website [www.michaelportillo.co.uk](http://www.michaelportillo.co.uk), which contains articles and speeches written by himself and that deal specifically with his understanding of British nationhood and national identity. The quotes attributed to Michael Howard are taken from an interview he conducted with Michael Grenfell: Grenfell, Michael (1999) 'When we have a Clear Message...we'll Win Elections: Interview with the Rt Hon Michael Howard QC MP.' Crossbow, Summer 1999 pp.27-31. The quotes attributed to Francis Maude are taken from his speech to the 1997 Conservative Party conference: Maude, Francis (1997) The 1997 Party Conference Lecture: One Nation Revisited. Centre for Policy Studies: London and an article he wrote for *The Spectator*: Maude, Francis (2002) 'Modernise or Die.' *The Spectator*, [www.francismaude.co.uk](http://www.francismaude.co.uk).

Consciously, or indeed subconsciously, this understanding also influences, for example, attitudes towards Britain's membership of the EU and the potential benefits or otherwise of continued European integration and also attitudes towards asylum and immigration policy. It is possible to make a distinction between Conservative parliamentarians, solely on the basis of their views on nationhood and national identity. To do so, does not make assumptions about their viewpoints on any other subject area.

### 3.2 The Traditionalists

Although this chapter categorises individuals and their understanding of certain concepts, each group itself contains viewpoints that are varied. The traditionalist conception of British nationhood and national identity during the 1997-2001 parliament, contains a number of themes which include: a shared culture, national stereotypes, territorial integrity and national sovereignty and institutions. Also evident was a strong belief that the Conservative Party was traditionally the national party and that it remained so. In fact, filtering through all the themes was a prevalent view that British national identity and nationhood was something that, if it did, it was slow to change and rightly so.

A shared culture featured prominently in many of the responses and it became clear that 'culture' essentially meant a commonality, particularly of values. Of national identity, Michael Ancram acknowledged the variety of contemporary Britain but said,

it means having a vision of a country which is not just Britain but the United Kingdom in all its variety, which has a common approach and a common personality. I've always believed that that is the secret of a cohesive society – that however many different groupings or factions that may be within it, if at the end of it they have a sense of a common national identity that is a strength' (Ancram Interview, 20.01.2004).

Daniel Hannan described national identity as being based on a people who,

define themselves because they will feel enough in common with one another to accept government from each others' hands. Usually this is based on a common language but obviously not always...in the British Isles you have two states with a clear national identity even though there is a common language. There are all sorts of factors but the bottom line is that they feel enough in common  
(Hannan Interview, 12.05.2004).

With somewhat more brevity, Edward Garnier described national identity as having 'something to do with ethnicity but also something to do with culture and the history of a country as an entity over many hundreds of years' (Garnier Interview, 04.12.2003). Not only does this response reflect a belief in an ethnic component to national identity, it also sums up the historical component of the traditionalist viewpoint. 'Culture' may have a vague definition but what is crucial is that this commonality or culture has developed over centuries. Other interviewees were more specific in the significance of 'culture' to national identity although they too used it without a clear definition. Lord Tebbit stated 'as far as national identity is concerned, race does not matter, culture does' (Tebbit Interview, 27.01.2004). Similarly, John Townend said 'the absolute antithesis of nationhood in my view is multiculturalism...multiculturalism destroys the idea of nationhood and if we have any chance of a safe, peaceful and happy country we have to have monoculturalism'. Again, 'culture' appears to be a commonality of values and 'approach', as Ancram discussed. Townend went on to explain 'People make the difference between multicultural and *multicolour*. If we have a monoculture we should be colour blind, that's what I say. You're English, whether you are black, yellow, pink, whatever' (Townend Interview, 18.12.2003).

Tebbit and Townend, unlike any other respondents, connected their belief in a single national culture, to the dangers of immigration. Tebbit stated 'the British nation has been hit by large-scale immigration' and Townend said of people who had recently voted for the National Front, 'these people aren't racist but they object to our country being changed to accommodate foreigners...people come here and they want to set up a 'Little India' or Pakistan'. Both stated that it is not race itself that matters but that immigrants or individuals from ethnic communities fail to adopt the British culture. Townend makes reference to the assimilation of Jewish immigrants: 'Jews didn't disappear, they've got their religion, but the Jews became English'. Other ethnic communities, such as the Muslims and Pakistanis 'don't want to integrate' and to Townend, integration meant adopting the British culture.

Other interviewees made specific reference to shared national values which they linked with institutions. Lord Strathclyde said,

Nationhood is pretty fundamental to being a Conservative: it's part of our DNA...For me, British identity is primarily about the institutions of Britain: monarchy, parliament, Church, judiciary, armed services. These are the great institutions that bind the British national identity. There are also values to Britishness, they are more arbitrary and subjective but they include things like fair play, the rule of law, determination. These are the values that people regard as being British, something like tolerance, tolerance is a great British virtue  
(Strathclyde Interview, 10.12.2003).

Peter Lilley's sole theme for British national identity was the nation's political institutions. He said 'that identity is very much bound up with our political institutions. Italians maybe have their identity bound up in their music, Germans with their race, or at least until

recently and the French with their civilising mission but to us it's our institutions, parliament above all: parliament, common law, monarchy' (Lilley Interview, 03.12.2003).

The national culture that Boris Johnson preferred to emphasise was not based on political institutions or values but rather on the romantic and somewhat out-dated myths surrounding Britishness,

It means Cornish pasties and Reading station and that funny smell you get in any British consulate or embassy around the world and it's the universal British public service ethos that you pick up as soon as you enter wherever you are. I suppose national identity is really the result of an inherited conglomerate of memories and assumptions and British national identity is very largely bound up in various British myths, like the myth of our great natural sense of humour, sense of self-deprecation, sense of irony, politeness, our sort of 'after you, Claude' heroic failure quality...the importance of not trying too hard to keep up with the Jones (Johnson Interview, 20.02.2004).

This historical and myth-based conceptualisation is strikingly similar to that which Major is undeservedly connected with since his speech to the Conservative Group for Europe in April 1993 (see previous chapter) and it is unlikely that many Britons during the 1997-2001 parliament would have shared this assessment of their national identity. However, it must be remembered that this romanticism *is* a reflection of the views of a minority of people both within the Conservative Party and in the wider population. Comparisons between this and the average moderniser's conceptualisation will demonstrate just how broad a church the Conservative Party really is.

John Redwood developed Johnson's conceptualisation further. He says a 'country has a past, present and a future. You can only hope to understand the present and forecast the future if you have first visited the past'. He described how Britain is often defined by the

values it demonstrated during the imperial era: ‘a sense of fair play, honest administration, impartial justice, commercial acumen, industrial enterprise, sporting enthusiasm and military prowess’. However, he expands on this: ‘the imperial process was a two-way process’ and subsequent Commonwealth immigration has made Britain ‘a more tolerant, multiracial and more colourful society...The word ‘British’ is now the healing word, the word that tries to bring together, or keep together, divergent peoples of the United Kingdom islands’ (Redwood, 2001a, pp.29-32).

It is apparent that within the traditionalist group, conceptualisations of national identity are based either on a sole factor, such as Lilley’s focus on institutions or that one theme is specifically emphasised. A number of parliamentarians focused on national territorial integrity and sovereignty. Norman Fowler answered the question ‘what does British national identity mean to you?’ quite simply. He said ‘above all the right of a country to make its own decisions, it comes down to sovereignty. The kind of Europe that I would believe in would be the kind of Europe where the very maximum is devolved to the nation-state’ (Fowler Interview, 29.03.2004). Michael Howard pointed out that the Conservative and Labour parties are,

divided on the whole question of a sense of nationhood. The Present government are taking a series of steps which are going a large way towards destroying the nationhood of this country. If you look at the range of issues encompassing the extent to which they have given power away to the European Union, taking power away from Westminster in that respect but also taking power away from Westminster by creating the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly and encouraging regional government in England – this is eroding our very sense of nationhood (Howard in Grenfell, 1999, p.28).

Lord Henley spoke at length on British national identity but his conceptualisation was based on just two factors, the British Union and sovereignty,

The Union as a concept is very important, to me and to us as a party...The other part of national identity is the question of our relations with Europe. During our years in government, I think a great many of us became increasingly Euro-sceptic, partly because we felt we didn't like it as an institution, it was institutionally corrupt and partly because of a deep frustration that we were being pushed around in things that were far better being decided by ourselves. I think just in terms of emotional national identity, again this feeling that there was a weakening of our national identity' (Henley Interview, 03.12.2003).

Although individuals emphasised specific factors, for the traditionalists, British national identity is based on a commonality: of culture and institutions, which have necessarily developed over centuries. They recognise that Britain is a modern and diverse nation containing many separate identities but feel that its culture and institutions should remain constant, as should its sovereignty and its territorial integrity, irrespective of immigration, European integration or the Labour government's programme of constitutional reform.

### 3.3 The Modernisers

Within the modernisers, there is less variation in the factors involved in each individual's understanding of British national identity. The themes that are common include a forward-looking understanding, a belief and a pride in Britain's multiculturalism and multiracialism and a belief in the existence of a number of shared values that enable such a multicultural nation to function harmoniously. Although an attachment to the nation and a belief that the Conservative Party is traditionally the national party is shared by all Conservatives, debate among the modernisers is more open as to whether the party deserved that label during the parliament in question.

There are factors associated with British national identity that are shared by both groups: a recognition of Britain's diversity, whether that be racial diversity or the existence of English, Welsh and Scottish identities; a belief in a number of national values such as fair play, tolerance, democracy, social justice and the rule of law and finally the acceptance of a number of stereotypical national characteristics. Archie Norman mentioned a number of these characteristics such as 'not being overly expressive about things, being resolute in the face of adversity...working hard' but he also summed up a significant difference between the traditionalists and the modernisers when he said,

parliamentary Conservatives have become over-consumed with institutions. Some people here, think that Britishness is to do with parliament, the monarchy, the House of Lords, the BBC. These are emblems of something deeper but of course for many people they are emblems that time has passed by. I think a lot of Conservative politicians tend to cling to the emblems because they somehow reflect the world that's gone and they would like to bring back  
(Norman Interview, 09.12.2003).

In contrast to the traditionalists, the modernisers were more forward-thinking in their understanding of British national identity during the 1997-2001 parliament. They see that identity as being fluid, constantly evolving. Andrew Cooper said 'it's something that has manifestly changed over the last few years and it's also clear that younger people in Britain have a very different sense of what nationality and national identity is than older people' (Cooper Interview, 17.02.2004). Lord Taylor of Warwick said 'it isn't fixed because Britain has changed, I think, quite dramatically especially over the last decade to fifteen years. For me it's about being a multiracial, multicultural nation, it's no longer a white man with a bowler hat, which it may have been perhaps in the 1950s' (Taylor Interview, 20.01.2004).

‘Culture’ featured as prominently in the conceptualisations of the modernisers as it did in more traditionalist perspectives. However, as the above quote from Taylor suggests, *multiculturalism* in particular, was a positive theme of contemporary British national identity. Although generally more forward-thinking, there is also an appreciation of the historical background to Britain’s multiculturalism. Archie Norman stated that ‘I think [national identity] draws on the very intertwined and long traditions of the different countries and cultures that make up the United Kingdom’ (Norman Interview, 09.12.2003). George Osborne concurred when he said,

British national identity is a complicated thing because it has built up over time. It has built up through a series of waves of immigration in my mind, into this island, starting two thousand years ago...I would like to think now that it also represents an idea about various things like a multicultural society and a sort of tolerance of different lifestyles and a sort of diversity which is not matched in many other European cultures (Osborne Interview, 04.12.2003).

To the traditionalists, Britain’s culture *was* its national identity, it was a commonality, particularly of shared values and a common ‘approach’ which all true Brits subscribed to. To Conservatives such as John Townend and Lord Tebbit, multiculturalism threatened British nationhood because it meant the introduction of competing values and rival approaches: a lack of commonality. They feared that immigrants would refuse to integrate and adopt the British culture, whilst at the same time they would be introducing their own cultures into Britain.

It is apparent that to the modernisers, culture has a different meaning. It includes lifestyle, history, religion, food, art, language, music. Britain is multicultural because it is an

overarching identity for other multiple identities, whether they be Scottish, Welsh or English, or those of British ethnic communities. Andrew Cooper said 'when people from different cultures and races come into a country there has to be some glue that holds the whole thing together' and that is what national identity is (Cooper Interview, 17.02.2004). Multiculturalism and multiracialism are a significant part of contemporary British national identity but there are other factors that allow that to be the case. Taylor says,

for me it's about a set of principles really because they talk about Britain as being the seat of democracy, this was the first parliament, the mother of all parliaments, so I would like to think that that it is still a leader when it comes to ethical leadership...I still think that in many other countries' eyes Britain is still a country that they look to as a beacon of democracy, fair play, I wouldn't say equality but certainly democracy and fair play...I think that Britain is more inclusive than America  
(Taylor Interview, 20.01.2004).

Other modernists share this belief in a set of values that allow Britain to be a modern, multicultural and multiracial nation, although the values included vary. Norman said these included,

a notion of people being obliged to lead responsible lives, to make the most of their God-given talents and to have a sense of fairness and justice but above all an obligation, particularly as a Conservative, to make the most of who you are and be all you can be, to help others flourish, that the individual and individual morality is more important than the state and the state is made up of individuals who came together out of free will in a collective identity. With that a sense of democratic tradition – I think British people think of themselves as very democratic  
(Norman Interview, 09.12.2003).

Demonstrating just how much contemporary Britain has embraced its diversity, Ivan Massow likened the British nation to a maturing person. He said,

I see Britain now, from a cultural perspective, as being in that collective late middle-age almost, where its burning ambition to have a prominent place on the world stage has diminished...What it wants to do is spend its wealth enjoying cultures, experiences and art. I don't think that's some kind of dream!...I think on the whole people don't even see colour anymore really. I'm sure that people don't walk down the road and see a black person, they just see a person. Even a gay person, if they can identify them I don't think they would care, on every single level!' (Massow Interview, 03.02.2003).

In the Centre for Policy Studies Lecture at the 1997 Conservative Party Conference, Francis Maude established a single value significant in British national identity: freedom. He said 'freedom is woven into the fabric of our national identity. When we are the party of freedom, we are also the party of the nation'. However, even though he took pride in Britain's national identity, he clearly did not believe that the Conservatives had yet embraced it and become the party of freedom and the nation because he continued: 'And when we find that again, as we surely shall, that elusive rhythm of our countrymen's heartbeat, then too shall our fortunes turn' (Maude, 1997, p.16).

In an article in *The Spectator* in March 2002, which was starkly entitled 'Modernise or Die', Maude decided to offer his party some advice on how to maximise its electoral support in the future: 'we must again become a genuinely national party, as Disraeli insisted.' He wanted the Conservative Party to learn to understand contemporary Britain and contemporary British identity. 'We must show real respect for all: male and female, rich and poor, old and young, black and white, gay and straight. This is not about 'pandering to minorities'. It is about being a decent party' (Maude, 2002a). He obviously did not believe that the Conservative Party had achieved this since his warning in 1997.

Other modernisers shared a similar view of the Conservative Party during the 1997-2001 parliament. Taylor said ‘they didn’t keep pace with a changing Britain. They became too insular’ (Taylor Interview, 20.01.2004). Shaun Woodward, who defected from the Conservatives to the Labour Party in December 1999, said that the party had ‘almost become an anachronism within Britain at the end of the twenty-first century...what the Conservative Party stood for was at fault and what Conservative MPs represented in modern twenty-first century Britain was at fault’. Those problems started long before the 1997 General Election and Woodward attributed this to the policies of successive Conservative governments. Referring to Britain’s changing identity, Woodward argued,

we remain British but we’re actually a nation of many identities happily working together and the resistance to those different identities in the social field, as opposed to a positive encouragement of those identities in the commercial and entrepreneurial fields, is also to be located within the problem of the Conservative Party in 1997  
(Woodward Interview, 13.01.2004).

However, Michael Portillo had concluded in his conference speech in 2000 that the party had actually rediscovered its understanding of contemporary Britain. He said ‘my period out of parliament was a chance to connect with the Britain of today’. With this insight, he was able to establish that ‘Britain has changed and the Conservatives have changed with it...we are for all Britons: black Britons, British Asians, white Britons. Britain is a country of rich diversity...We are for people whatever their sexual orientation. The Conservative Party isn’t merely a party of tolerance: it’s a party willing to accord every one of our citizens with respect’ (Portillo, 2000). Portillo believed in a Britain and a Conservative Party that demonstrated and demanded diversity and not just tolerance, but respect. That two prominent Conservatives, who shared a similar understanding of contemporary Britishness, could make such differing conclusions on the outlook of the Conservative

Party during the 1997-2001 parliament is indicative of the fact that not only are the concepts involved highly emotive and subjective but also politicians can utilise them for their or their party's benefit as and when they view it as beneficial. This strategic utilisation will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

The modernisers demonstrated a remarkable consistency in the factors which contributed to their conceptualisation of British national identity. There was a forward-thinking understanding of modern Britishness and they recognised that Britain is a multicultural and multiracial nation. Although there were differences in emphasis, interviewees shared a belief in the existence of national values which allowed Britain's multiculturalism to flourish and these included tolerance, diversity, fairness, social justice and democracy.

#### 3.4 Hague's Conservative Nation

How did Hague conceptualise the nation and national identity throughout his years as Leader of the Conservative Party? In an interview conducted with Hague at the beginning of 2004 he suggested that his understanding of national identity could be summarised within a speech he gave to the Centre for Policy Studies (CPS) in January 1999, entitled 'Identity and the British Way' (Hague, 1999a). The speech outlined Hague's understanding of contemporary Britain and what it meant to be British at the turn of the millennium. He also described how the Conservative Party could only rediscover its own identity by once again being in touch with the identity and values of contemporary British people. Did Hague, throughout his leadership, articulate a coherent conception of nationhood and national identity? Did his understanding of nationhood and national identity evolve throughout his tenure as Leader?

## **Identity and the British Way**

If, as Hague suggested, 'Identity and the British Way' can be taken to summarise his understanding of Britain and Britishness during the 1997-2001 parliament, it can be concluded that Hague's was a forward-looking and inclusive view. He began by stating that 'this speech is about our future; not a nostalgic ramble through our past' and warned that the Conservatives 'must never be the nostalgia party'. Instead Conservatives must be in tune with the values and identity of the people: 'to know what it means to be Conservative in the future, then you have to know what it means to be British'. In contrast to Major's undeserved reputation of believing in a mythical Britain of 'warm beer' and 'old maids cycling to Holy Communion through the morning mist', Hague spoke about Britain as being 'bustling cities, ambitious businesses, new technologies, vigorous politics, exciting arts, a Britain at the centre of global financial markets and at the heart of an English speaking world' (Major, 1999, p.376).

During the speech, which demonstrates the centrality of the nation and specifically the *British* nation, to contemporary Conservatism, Hague posed the question: what is it that is distinct about British identity? In answer, he identified four factors that combine to make Britishness unique. First, the British nation is comprised of 'individuals and small, close-knit families...perhaps because most of the British people escaped the clutches of serfdom and a caste society many centuries ago, there is a strong British feeling that it is up to each one of us to stand on our own two feet'. Second, contemporary British people share a spirit of enterprise. Hague described how the Industrial Revolution commenced in Britain because a market society was already in existence and not vice versa. This distinguished Britain from economies on the European mainland. Third, Britain has, Hague argued, an

‘open and mobile society’ and finally, ‘large numbers of us are involved in charities, local institutions, voluntary clubs and church groups’ (Hague, 1999a).

The third factor, an ‘open and mobile society,’ is particularly revealing about Hague’s understanding of Britain. He speaks with pride about the opportunity offered to every British person,

people from all backgrounds are welcomed into positions of influence within our society with much greater ease than many other supposedly less class-ridden countries. Since 1965, the leaders of the Conservative Party have been the son of a building craftsman, a grocer’s daughter from Grantham, a grammar school boy from Brixton, and I myself went to a comprehensive in Rotherham (Hague, 1999a).

Throughout his leadership, Hague increasingly faced criticism for being racist and bigoted, particularly with reference to his party’s asylum policy. However, his belief in the nature of British society does not reflect an inherent racism. To Hague, opportunity for all literally extends to *all* British people, whatever their ethnic origin. He told his party that they need to ‘win the battles over generosity, charity, compassion, tolerance, fairness, social institutions, community’ to prove to the electorate that they are in touch with contemporary British society. To kick-start this process, Hague outlined his own understanding of contemporary British society and demonstrated that he embraced its multi-ethnic nature,

British people make their own way in the world and in society, much as we always have done. And we have welcomed other peoples from different lands to our shores. America may have its ‘huddled masses’ but we have our Celts, Picts, Saxons, Angles, Normans, Jews, Huguenots, Indians, Pakistanis, Afro-Caribbeans, Bengalis, Chinese and countless others. These are British people, all of them. Successive waves of immigrants have enriched our culture. our

language and thank God, our cuisine  
(Hague, 1999a).

Hague appreciated that Britain is historically a nation built on immigration and whether immigrants are white or non-white, they are not only welcomed to Britain but become British. He used positive and warm language, for example, the ‘welcoming’ of immigrants and their ‘enrichment’ of British culture, to demonstrate that his approach to contemporary British society was compassionate, tolerant and fair.

In addition to the four factors mentioned above, Hague also described other aspects of British identity, ranging from the stereotypical view of British people as having a strong sense of humour, being animal lovers and being obsessed with weather forecasts, to the significance of political institutions. Tourists in London visit Big Ben, the Houses of Parliament and Buckingham Palace and ‘that is because they are the symbols of Britain. They actually shape our national identity. They are central to what it means to be British. British values such as tolerance, fair play, the notion that our home is our castle derive from the mainspring of democracy in this country, namely that government is accountable, through our Westminster Parliament, to the people and not the other way around’. All British people are ‘united by a shared history, monarchy, parliament and language’ (Hague, 1999a).

The language that Hague used not only demonstrated his commitment to a diverse British society, it also revealed the strength of his feeling towards Britain and British identity. Referring to English, Scottish and Welsh identities, Hague stated that however strong they are, and he believed they were strong, ‘each of these are only part of British identity, and British identity is more than the sum of its parts...the idea of what it means to be British

has existed for hundreds of years and has sunk deep roots into all our consciousness. It represents something much bigger than being English or Scottish or Welsh, and something much stronger than being European' (Hague, 1999a). However, can Hague's conceptualisation of British identity articulated in 'Identity and the British Way' be taken to reflect his understanding throughout his time as Leader? Was the language used by Hague to describe Britain's diversity equally positive throughout the 1997-2001 parliament?

### **The 1997-2001 Parliament**

Even before he became Leader of the Conservative Party, Hague was in a position which enabled him to publicly speak passionately about the Union. At the 1996 annual party conference, as Secretary of State for Wales, he said 'It is deep in the instincts of our party that where the flag of the union is in greatest danger we must fight as hard as we can...They can fly the white flag of surrender but we will fight for the Union Jack' (Quoted in Nadler, 2000, p.166). His passionate language, 'fighting' for the Union Jack when it is in 'danger', demonstrated that his defence of the Union was an instinctive and integral part of his political philosophy. This continued throughout his leadership. In 2001 he attacked the Labour government for its ill-thought out devolution policy,

But now we have a government that scorns and despises all the things that have made our country what it is. A government that holds Britishness cheap. You can see it in their failure to defend the Union of the United Kingdom. It is because we believe in the Union that we have accepted the wishes of the peoples of Scotland and Wales to have a Scottish Parliament and a Welsh Assembly. But there is a logical consequence, also vital to the survival of the Union. In the opening days of our administration, we will change the rules so that when matters that only affect England come before the House of Commons only MPs from England will vote.  
(Hague, 2001a)

Despite the Conservative Party's lack of Scottish or Welsh seats after the 1997 General Election and the 'yes' vote successes in the twin referendums, Hague remained committed to the cause of defending the Union. He adapted his party's policy on devolution in order to work with the new parliament and assembly because he believed this was the best means for the Conservative Party to work for the preservation of the Union. His consistent articulation of *British* national identity and his belief in *British* nationhood are a reflection of his continued belief that Britain was greater than the just the sum of its constituent parts. Hague also demonstrated that he was committed to the preservation of sub-state identities, not just those of ethnic communities but also of the English, Scottish and Welsh. In 1997 he said,

Each of us is proud to be Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or English – or Yorkshire. We have every right to be. I come from Yorkshire and I am marrying Wales. I am not one of those politicians who looks at the United Kingdom through a pair of binoculars from inside the M25  
(Hague, 1997b).

Hague's belief in the significance of political institutions to British identity, an historical Conservative trait, was in evidence throughout his leadership as he continuously attacked the Labour government's programme of constitutional reform. In February 1998, in a speech to the CPS Hague said that Conservatives supported the country's constitutional arrangements because they 'protect our freedoms precisely because they embody our history, traditions and identity as a people – what you might call our unique Britishness'. 'Labour's hotch-potch programme of constitutional reform threatens the central features of our constitution – limited and accountable government, the rule of law and the unitary state. Features which I earlier described as embodying our Britishness' (Hague, 1998a). This theme was continued in October 2000 when Hague spoke out again in article entitled 'Why

I am Sick of this Anti-British Disease'. Hague wrote 'look at the much more serious assault on our constitution and national independence – the weakening of the Union, the sidelining of Parliament, the gerrymandering of the House of Lords, the sell-out of our rights and powers to Europe, and the plans to abolish the pound' (Hague, 2000e).

Hague's conceptualisation of British identity remained forward-looking. He acknowledged that 'it's a changing, moving thing. It's changed in recent years because of the assertion of Scottish and Welsh nationality' (Hague Interview, 14.01.2004). However, in perhaps his most infamous speech, Hague's forward-thinking can only be described as negative in tone. At the Conservative Party's 2001 Spring Forum in Harrogate, Hague took his audience 'on a journey to a foreign land'. Although prophesising what will happen after a second term of a Labour government and not describing the current state of British national identity, gone is the optimistic, proud description of contemporary Britishness. The tone has been transformed to something much more sinister and fear-ridden,

The Royal Mint melting down pound coins as the Euro notes start to circulate.  
Our currency gone forever. The Chancellor returning from Brussels carrying  
instructions to raise taxes still further. Control over our economy given away.  
The jail doors opening as thousands of serious criminals walk out early to  
offend again. Police morale at a new low  
(Hague, 2001a).

He does, however, speak of Britain's national achievements and its identity but this is focused on the past, something which in 'Identity and the British Way' he said the Conservative Party should never do,

No country has contributed as we have to the freedom of mankind. Through the centuries, we have aligned ourselves to the cause of nationhood everywhere. In the nineteenth century we sponsored the independence of Italy

and Greece and Hungary, and we nurtured the freedom of the South American Republics. In the twentieth century we twice fought for the cause of all nations against tyranny. We introduced the world to free trade. We carried law and freedom to new continents. These were our achievements as a sovereign and united country. And they are achievements that we should be proud to teach in our schools  
(Hague, 2001a).

This is not to say that by March 2001 Hague's conceptualisation of British identity had changed. Rather the way that he chose to utilise it had altered since he made his 'Identity and the British way' speech.<sup>8</sup> The tone and motivation may have changed but his understanding of Britishness remained the same. This is reflected in his consistent belief in Britain as a land of opportunity for all and a country that has been enriched by its multi-ethnicity. Hague believed that opportunity was a significant component of British national identity: 'if you look at London now and the number of people from abroad who work here and are making their home here – the hundreds of thousands, without which the economy of London could not function. It is clearly a welcoming place, it is a place of opportunity' (Hague Interview, 14.01.2004).

The positive language with which Hague described the inclusive nature of British national identity in 'Identity and the British Way' was also a feature of his musings on the subject throughout the 1997-2001 parliament. In his first conference speech as Leader, Hague stated that,

I am proud to be British. I believe in the United Kingdom and so do hundreds of thousands of British Blacks and British Asians. I want to see men and women from our ethnic minorities playing a full part in the mainstream of our national life, accepting both the rights and responsibilities which go with that. Look around at what is actually going on in this country. You will see Black and Asian people contributing positively to British life in business, the

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<sup>8</sup> The reasons for this change will be explored further in subsequent chapters.

professions, the arts, sport and – yes – in politics too. I want to see Black and Asian MPs sitting on Conservative benches in the House of Commons (Hague, 1997b, p.22).

The continuity of Hague's belief in inclusion was demonstrated in an article in October 2000 where he repeated verbatim his statement, first made in 'Identity and the British Way' almost two years before, that Britain is a nation of immigrants: 'Celts, Picts, Saxons, Angles, Normans, Jews, Huguenots, Indians, Pakistanis, Afro-Caribbeans, Bengalis, Chinese and countless others. These are the British people, all of them' (Hague, 2000e). Not only was Hague proud of Britain and the British but whilst Leader he clearly believed that the Conservative Party was the national party,

The society we live in has profoundly changed too. Prejudice and bigotry are finding fewer and fewer places to hide. Pluralism in our culture is celebrated where once it was suppressed. The Conservative Party I feel at home in is the Party of One Nation, reflecting the whole nation. We are that One Nation Party today. We are made up of women and men, of the old and the young, of people of different ethnic backgrounds, and different sexual orientations, who came together because we are all part of the same Tory family (Hague, 2000a).

Hague reiterated this belief when referring retrospectively to the 1997-2001 parliament. He said 'we remained the party of the nation' and 'obviously the policies we adopted reflected that' (Hague Interview, 14.01.2004).

Hague's conceptualisation of British national identity was criticised for its contradictory nature and for being nostalgic. In particular, Hugo Young writing in *The Guardian* attacked Hague's viewpoint (Young, 2000). He rightly points out the contradiction of Hague's belief in a strong and unique British identity running along side his belief that that identity and uniqueness was being destroyed by constitutional reform and European

integration. How can something so strong be so easily threatened? In 'Identity and the British Way' Hague states that, 'the idea of what it means to be British has existed for hundreds of years and has sunk deep roots into all our consciousness', and 'the British people are four nations in one, but we have a long established identity of our own'. When he mentions that 'according to current wisdom, [we] are unsure of our own identity and uncertain of our future,' he concludes 'I absolutely disagree' (Hague, 1999a). However, in April 2001, for example, he stated that 'I and my colleagues will not be discouraged or bullied from making the case that we can make Britain a nation to be proud of again' (Hague, 2001b). A month later at the launch of the Conservative Party's manifesto, Hague pledged to 'restore our self belief as a nation' (Hague, 2001c). In a little over two years, British national identity had been so attacked that the people of Britain needed the Conservative Party to restore their belief in it.

However, Hague's conceptualisation of British national identity did not change throughout the 1997-2001 parliament. Hague continued to believe in an energetic, positive, inclusive Britain but instead of emphasising this as part of Britain's future, he chose to play on the negative consequences to Britishness of a second term of a Labour government. Similarly, the contradiction highlighted by Young did exist but only because Hague changed how and why he chose to utilise identity, not because he changed his conceptualisation of British national identity. In 'Identity and the British Way' Hague focused on the potential consequences of Labour's constitutional reform programme and the Conservatives' plans to ameliorate any damage caused. He says 'people will wake up and find themselves living in what feels to be a different country. Without knowing quite how, some of the things that really matter to us and help shape our sense of what it is to be British will have been lost' (Hague, 1999a). In 2001, Hague chose to speak as if those consequences had already come

into fruition and that only a future Conservative government could resuscitate British national identity. There is clearly a change in the strategic utilisation of national identity and this change occurred as a General Election was increasingly seen as imminent. How and why the Conservative Party utilised national identity throughout the parliament and during the General Election campaign and why it ultimately failed to maximise the party's electoral support will be examined in subsequent chapters.

### 3.5 Conclusion

Traditionalists and modernisers shared a number of themes in their understanding of national identity, the occasional use of stereotypical national characteristics or the importance of history in defining contemporary Britishness, for example. However, the differences are more significant than the similarities. The traditionalists tended to emphasise specific factors such as national sovereignty or national institutions and in this respect there was a great deal of variation within the group. The modernisers, however, were significantly more likely to discuss common factors, in particular multiculturalism, multiracialism and national values that led to a diverse, yet cohesive society.

Modernisers did not mention national sovereignty or territorial integrity at all and although they were unable or unlikely to discuss *every* component of their understanding of British national identity within an interview of limited time, these interviews were extensive and wide ranging and the omission of those concepts is significant. This is in stark contrast to the traditionalists who, if they mentioned sovereignty or the Union, usually placed it at the top of their list of components of British national identity.

This difference between the two groups is indicative of a deeper schism. When defining Britishness, the modernisers focused on the diverse peoples who make up Britain and the shared values that bind them together to constitute a nation with its own identity. The emphasis is on contemporary Britons and how their shared values enable a multicultural and multiracial nation to not only have its own overarching identity but also to function harmoniously. National identity is therefore constantly evolving. In contrast, traditionalists hold a more conservative conceptualisation and focus on a nation that is defined by long-established and often political, institutions and a traditional national culture which has developed organically over centuries. It is the nation that binds together the diverse peoples of Britain and gives them an identity. Concomitant to this viewpoint is the belief that because the nation defines its people, it should remain sovereign and territorially intact. Any threat to the status quo inherently attacks British nationhood and national identity. National sovereignty and territorial integrity are not emphasised by modernisers because it is the people and their shared values that define the nation and its identity, the nation is not defined by its political institutions or its domestic power arrangements. Conservative parliamentarians' attitudes to British nationhood and national identity are being analysed in isolation. It is therefore impossible to conclude that because modernisers do not focus on national sovereignty or territorial integrity that they are pro-Europeans or seek the federalisation of Britain. There is simply a fundamental difference in conceptualisation of national identity and therefore a clear distinction of emphasis between the modernisers and their traditionalist counterparts.

Another significant difference between the two groups was their use and understanding of 'culture'. The modernisers focused on and welcomed Britain's multiculturalism and its diversity. As discussed above, to the modernisers, culture meant festivals, music, religions

etc and Britain's identity has been enriched by the different cultures of immigrants. They also focused on national values that enabled Britain to be harmoniously multicultural and those values were Britain's national identity. Hague stated,

Together, we have created one of the most exciting, diverse, prosperous, democratic and tolerant nations on earth, with a history of standing up to tyranny and genocide of which we can be proud. Is that the same as saying we are a multicultural society? Yes, if by that we mean that we celebrate the fact that Britain is made up of many different people and faiths and language groups – as I am constantly reminded when Ffion speaks to me in Welsh (Hague, 2000e).

However, 'culture' to the traditionalists meant common values. Those values were often the rule of law, tolerance, fair play, democracy and social justice. Diversity in race, religion and lifestyle was something to be welcomed, or possibly tolerated, provided that Britain retained its unique culture. Multiculturalism was often regarded as a threat to traditionalists because they regarded it as threatening Britain's national values by introducing foreign values. As Townend said 'multiculturalism destroys the idea of nationhood and if we have any chance of a safe, peaceful and happy country we have to have monoculturalism' (Townend Interview, 18.12.2003).

There were significant differences between the traditionalists and the modernisers within the Conservative Party at that time, such as the formers' focus on myths and memories, political institutions, territorial integrity and national sovereignty and the latter's emphasis on the present and future of Britishness and its overt pride in Britain's racial diversity. The similarities include a belief in a number of British national values such as fair play, tolerance and social justice . These differences and similarities extend to the party's leadership and to those individuals who were particularly close to it. Of those in the party

leadership that were interviewed specifically on the issue of national identity or who recommended texts to consult, Michael Ancram, Peter Lilley, Norman Fowler, Edward Garnier, Lord Strathclyde, Lord Henley and Daniel Hannan can be described as traditionalists in varying degrees. Michael Portillo, Francis Maude, Archie Norman, George Osborne and Andrew Cooper can be described as modernisers. Hague's conceptualisation of national identity places him firmly in the moderniser group. Osborne said 'William was always keen to portray our Euro-scepticism or our promotion of British identity as a forward-looking thing' (Osborne Interview, 04.12.2003). Hague may have championed the Union, Britain's national sovereignty and its political institutions, however he demonstrated that he was unafraid of change and the conceptualisation of identity that he articulated in his speeches and articles remained forward-looking, in praise of multiculturalism and multiracialism and proud of Britain offering opportunity to all Britons. Cooper concluded that 'William ended up stuck, speaking to the older generation, to a view of national identity that younger voters didn't really understand' (Cooper Interview, 17.02.2004). The difference between Osborne and Cooper's assessment can be attributed to the change in how national identity was utilised strategically throughout Hague's leadership and how he was received by the media and this will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

The parliamentary party and its leadership were not united in their conceptualisations which had direct repercussions on the development of strategy under Hague's leadership and in particular on the role of nationhood and national identity. The following chapters investigate the role that these concepts played within the development and implementation of strategy during the 1997-2001 parliament.

## Chapter Four

### Nationhood and Strategy, June 1997 – June 1999 European Elections

Wanted: from May 2<sup>nd</sup>, a leader for the Conservative Party. Must be of Eurosceptical disposition, but not so Eurosceptical as to split the party; conservative but not so conservative as to resist genuinely radical policy ideas. Membership of the House of Commons essential; top-level debating experience an advantage; campaigning skills and understanding of the party vital

(*The Economist*, 13.03.1997).

#### 4.1 Introduction

To facilitate understanding of the development and implementation of strategy, and in particular the role that British nationhood and national identity played within it, the previous chapter asked how Conservative parliamentarians, especially the leadership, understood those concepts during the 1997-2001 parliament. Two groups were identified, the traditionalists and modernisers, which indicated a schism within the parliamentary party. Despite this lack of unity, Hague's own understanding of Britain and contemporary Britishness remained consistent throughout the parliament.

However, when Hague made reference to these concepts it became apparent that his tone changed as the parliament progressed. This change is a crucial factor within this research and from the third chapter the evolution of Hague's tone is charted. The full metamorphosis can only be analysed when the 1997-2001 parliament in its entirety, has been examined.

This chapter and the following three, investigate the implications of a leadership divided in its understanding of contemporary Britishness and on the role that nationhood and national identity played within the party's strategic decision making. After the Conservatives' catastrophic defeat in the May 1997 General Election, Hague needed to develop and implement a strategy to adapt the party to being in Opposition in a political environment dominated by the Labour Party and also to maximise its electoral support before the next General Election. How and why did Hague utilise nationhood and national identity within his strategy for the 1997-2001 parliament and why did these concepts ultimately fail to maximise the Conservative Party's electoral support?

Using archive and interview material, speeches and articles written by the Conservative leadership, parliamentarians, advisors and strategists, this and the next chapter, will examine the party's approach towards the politics of nationhood, the development of strategy and the role that nationhood and national identity played within it, from when Hague succeeded John Major as Leader of the Conservative Party until the party's success in the June 1999 European elections. In particular, the formal strategy initiative, Kitchen Table Conservatives will be examined and it will be asked, what role did the concepts of nationhood and national identity play within it?

The two chapters will also examine the party's approach to the politics of nationhood, in the form of policy on devolution and Europe. These two policy areas are central to ascertaining how the party understood British nationhood and national identity throughout the 1997-2001 parliament. Legislative devolution to Scotland and Wales fundamentally changed Britain's parliamentary sovereignty, transferring power from Westminster to the

new institutions.<sup>9</sup> This process emphasised the co-existence of multiple identities, English, Scottish and Welsh within Britain and raised issues such as the West Lothian Question (see below), Scottish independence and rising English nationalism. European integration and in particular the creation of a single currency, significantly affects British sovereignty. To many people, irrespective of their political allegiance, this was symbolised in the possibility of Sterling being replaced by the Euro. This raised further issues that concerned British nationhood and national identity and which were affected by policy developed by the EU, including the ability of the government to control interest rates, the judicial system, British borders and immigration policy.

### **A Parliament of Two Halves?**

The 1997-2001 parliament is commonly perceived to be split into two distinct strategic phases. The first phase is regarded as modernising, with Hague attempting to ‘reach out’ and broaden the party’s appeal, whereas the second is characterised by Hague pursuing a more traditional agenda to appeal to the party’s core support base. There is disagreement within the parliamentary Conservative Party over whether Hague’s leadership can be broken down in this way. David Heathcoat-Amory argued this analysis ‘is in danger of becoming an established wisdom, with not a huge amount to support it’ (Heathcoat-Amory Interview, 02.12.2003). However, Sir Michael Spicer, when asked whether he believed the parliament was divided in this way said,

‘I think so, certainly there was more prominence given to, if you like, traditional Conservative issues, tax and Europe, for example, in the second phase. Whether that is reality it was certainly the perception and I was part of that perception’  
(Spicer Interview, 02.12.2003).

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<sup>9</sup> Although central government at Westminster could bring an end to devolved government in Scotland and Wales, this would be a technically difficult process and can reasonably be considered unlikely to happen.

The 1999 European elections serve as an ideal conclusion to the analysis of the first part of Hague's leadership, as they were mentioned by all interviewees as a defining moment in Hague's strategic decision-making, whether they believed that the parliament could be divided into two distinct phases or that Hague merely changed his tone throughout his leadership.<sup>10</sup>

It is not just politicians who subscribe to the idea that there was a distinct change of emphasis mid-way during the 1997-2001 parliament. In 'Conservatism under Hague: The Fatal Dilemma', Kelly labels the first phase as 'Hague Mark 1: 'Fresh Conservatism'' and describes how it was characterised by calls for a more 'pluralistic' and 'inclusive' Conservatism, concerned with 'reaching out' and broadening the party's appeal (Kelly, 2001, pp.197-203). Hague spoke about the need to champion the freedom of the individual, reduce the power of the state, renew the party's belief in free market economics and extend it into the arena of social policy. Unswerving opposition to Britain joining the single currency was also at the forefront of his Conservatism. Kelly tracks the Leader's metamorphosis into 'Hague Mark 2: 'Common-Sense Conservatism'' and believes it began with his public support of National Marriage Day in March 1998 (Kelly, 2001, pp.197-203). Hague declared that he was concerned about the array of relationships that were evident in Britain at the end of the twentieth century and stated that married couples nearly always raised children the most successfully. Although Hague retained his faith in free-market economics and continued to oppose Britain's involvement in EMU, his belief in extending the former to social policy fell by the wayside and Kelly illustrates this with

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<sup>10</sup> The significance of the 1999 elections will be discussed more fully below.

Hague's intransigent opposition to the repeal of Section 28 of the 1998 Local Government Act. As Kelly states, Common Sense Conservatism was 'a brand of Conservatism that proved more orthodox and much less radical' (Kelly, 2001, pp.197-203).

Kelly describes Hague's Conservatism as an odyssey, which, although triggered by the party's continued flatlining in the opinion polls and a lack of morale within the ranks of the party, was not because of blatant opportunism but because of a 'serious flaw at the heart of modern Conservatism'. The serious flaw is the party's unwillingness to extend its free market ideals into the social arena. Hague attempted this in the first few months of his leadership but then it was forgotten because of the 'party's innate character' and he reverted to a traditional social and cultural approach. The result is a party unable to 'propound their social and cultural ideals convincingly, for fear of indicting their economic strategy, and...unable to propound their economic strategy convincingly, for fear of belying their social and cultural ideals' (Kelly, 2001, pp.197-203).

The cessation of Hague's attempts to extend his free market ideals from economics to social politics can be analysed by investigating his approach to the politics of nationhood and his use of national identity as part of his strategy. The politics of nationhood and the concept of national identity span both economics, for example, policy towards the EU and in particular his approach to the single currency and also social politics, for example, asylum and immigration policy and the party's approach towards race relations. Examination of the development of strategy and the Conservative Party's approach towards the politics of nationhood, will indicate whether Hague's leadership can indeed be split into these two distinct phases.

## 4.2 Early Strategy

Taking control of a party that had suffered a devastating defeat at the hands of the electorate, it was crucial that Hague developed and implemented a strategy that would adapt the Conservative Party to being in Opposition in the political environment of the late 1990s and would enable it to maximise its electoral support before the next General Election. The party had to pick itself up, rise to the new challenges of Opposition and begin its fight to return to power. After all, as chapter two demonstrated, the future of the Conservative Party on May 2<sup>nd</sup> 1997 was by no means guaranteed: the parliamentary party was literally tearing itself apart over the issue of Europe, party membership was rapidly dwindling and it was on the brink of bankruptcy. In January 1998, Hague recognised that when they went to the polls in May 1997, much of the electorate wanted *any* other party in government than the Conservatives: ‘it is no use ignoring that mood. We have to respond to it, by changing and reinvigorating the Conservative Party so that it can respond to new challenges, and I will do so in two ways’. Those two ways were ‘organisational reform’ and ‘internal democratisation’ (Quoted by Anderson, 1998). This early response to the situation of the party was confirmed when Hague stated that the first eighteen months or so of the parliament was concerned with ‘necessarily dealing with party organisation and just trying to show after an election defeat that we were still alive and people could still join us’ (Hague Interview, 14.01.2004). So at this time Hague employed a survival strategy. Before attention could be turned to policy development, his goals were to reform party organisation, improve its financial situation, increase membership numbers and the party’s support within the electorate and neutralise the issue of Europe.

Organisational reform, finances and membership will be discussed below, as will the crucial factor of Europe but what of Hague's early attempts to broaden the party's support base? During his speech to the party conference in October 1997, Hague said,

Today I'd like to tell you about an open Conservatism, that is tolerant, that believes freedom is about much more than economics, that believes freedom doesn't stop at the shop counter. I'd like to tell you about a democratic, popular Conservatism that listens, that has compassion at its core. I want to tell you about a changing Conservatism that acknowledges its mistakes (Hague, 1997b).

Hague was attempting to demonstrate that his party was moving on from its recent past and was strong enough to recognise and admit to its previous failings. In the early months of his leadership, Hague was keen to promote his party as tolerant of diversity and working towards extending its free market ideals beyond economics (Kelly, 2001, pp.197-203).

This was reiterated in his speech to the party's conference in March 1998. He said,

If we are to win, we will have to make it clear that our One Nation Conservatism is not just an economic doctrine. We will have to draw on our history as the party of strong local institutions, community and family – the party that stresses duty rather than rights, that understands the difference between collective action and state action and that is proud of our national identity rather than ashamed of it (Hague, 1998b, p.104).

The speech to the October 1997 party conference continued Hague's description of contemporary Conservatism by specifically stating that not only does he 'want to see men and women from our ethnic minorities playing their full part in the mainstream of our national life', he also wants 'to see black and Asian MPs sitting on the Conservative benches in the House of Commons' (Hague, 1997b). Not only was the modern

Conservative Party tolerant of ethnic diversity, it was actively encouraging members of British ethnic communities to join its highest echelon.

Specifically mentioning, for example, his desire for members of ethnic minorities to play a significant role within British society and the Conservative Party is one method by which Hague could attempt to broaden his party's appeal. Hague also sought to maximise its support by promoting the Conservatives as a party assured enough in its political convictions and its desire and ability to do the right thing for Britain, to not feel compelled to oppose for opposition's sake. Hague said that Labour 'do not believe in anything except their own political success'. In contrast to this gimmickry,

Conservatives care about right and wrong. I care about right and wrong. I believe that only a party that is able to distinguish between right and wrong and is prepared to stand up for what it believes – and looks to the long term future of the country not to its own short term political advantage – is able to offer Britain that strong and principled government which it will need for this new century  
(Hague, 1997b).

In conclusion, he stated 'we leave [the conference] as a party ready to earn once more the trust of the nation we love' (Hague, 1997b). This positive and forward looking statement signifies that Hague was not only aware that he would have to regain the trust of the British people but also that this would not be an automatic end-result: he would have to strive towards it, it would have to be earned. It also suggested that Hague was aware that regaining this trust and returning the Conservative Party to power was a process and as such, would not be concluded overnight. The party was, however, ready for the challenge.

Hague continued to speak about the contemporary Conservative Party's tolerance of diversity in British society. In January 1998, in a speech to the Social Market Foundation reaffirming the party's support of marriage and the family, Hague stated that its 'watchwords...will be openness and tolerance'. Although marriage was the optimum situation for successful family life, Hague recognised that in the late twentieth century many parents may not be married and that many families may be headed by a single parent but that they are no less loving. He said, 'I have no desire as a politician to judge on such individual cases' and even went on to say that 'we should not rush, either, to make judgements on people's sexuality. I welcome our more tolerant attitude towards homosexuality'. He concluded by reminding his audience that he had personally voted in favour of lowering the homosexual age of consent (Hague, 1998b, pp.60-61).

However, as much as Hague recognised that this forward looking approach was necessary if the Conservative Party was to adapt to modern British society, maximise its electoral support and return to power, he also believed that there were certain elements of Conservatism that could not be altered,

there are things we had to change – and we have. Yet there are also things that will not change: the enduring Conservative belief in freedom and personal responsibility; in enterprise and prosperity; in family and marriage; in stability and order; in democracy and national identity. In contrast to the shallowness of New Labour and its gimmickry, we shall stand for enduring Conservative values: values and beliefs which are shared by the British people (Hague, 1998b, p.182).

Hague had to adapt these traditionally Conservative values and make them relevant to contemporary British society.

It was not just within speeches that Hague attempted to demonstrate the party's recent change in approach to Britain's social diversity. He sent a message of support to the Tory Campaign for Homosexual Equality (TORCHE) at the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Pride march held on July 5<sup>th</sup> 1997. As *The Economist* noted, Hague had also spoken tolerantly on the idea of gay marriage, something that neither of his two immediate predecessors would have done. In the same article Hague was praised for his speedy reproof of Lord Tebbit's public attack on multiculturalism. Without this action, Hague's attempts to promote the newfound tolerance of the party would have been seriously undermined (*The Economist*, 11.10.1997). At the same time, the new Leader demonstrated strength and a willingness to upset party elders in his quest to broaden its appeal. Andrew Cooper pointed to the personnel that were brought into CCO during the early months of Hague's leadership as indicative of the approach that the new Leader was taking. Archie Norman, the new Member of Parliament for Tunbridge Wells, was speedily appointed Vice-Chairman of the party with special responsibility for its organisational reform and then in July 1998 he was appointed Chief Executive of the party with a brief to modernise CCO. Hague was obviously hoping that he would have similar success in these ventures as he had done in the corporate world. Cooper said 'in 1998 one of the things Archie Norman did was to enlarge the senior team of staff – brought in Rick [Nye], brought in Ceri Evans. The basic plan was to bring in as many as possible who were able and agreed on the direction the party needed to go in' (Cooper Interview, 17.02.2004). The agreement was that the Conservative Party, if it was to survive and go on to future electoral success, had to modernise and adapt itself to twenty-first century Britain and broaden its support among the British electorate.

Hague was supported in his early attempts to broaden the party's support by colleagues, advisors and commentators. Shaun Woodward welcomed Hague's approach and said.

one of the features of William's early months, I think, were that, yes, there were a whole set of things that he personally, I believe, cared a lot about – one of which for example, was the issue around sexual politics and issues to do with being gay and opening up the party to those things'  
(Woodward Interview, 13.01.2004).

At the party's annual conference in 1997, Michael Portillo spoke about the need for the Conservative Party to renew itself and in agreement with Hague, find ways of expressing its 'enduring principles' so that they were relevant to contemporary British society. He believed those enduring principles of British Conservatism to be 'choice, aspiration, opportunity, duty and compassion' and that they should apply to all British people, whatever their social or ethnic background. Portillo said,

I believe that it is extremely important for the Conservative Party to deal with the world as it is now...this must apply also to our attitude to the personal relationships that people choose to enter. This is an area where we got into some bad scrapes when we were in office  
(Portillo, 1997).

Portillo went on to state the Conservative's continued support for the family and in particular families headed by two parents but he also recognised that,

Our society has changed. For good or ill, many people nowadays do not marry and yet head stable families with children...The Tory party is conservative and not given to political correctness. Still the party never rejects the world that is. Tolerance is a part of the Tory tradition. I believe that the Conservative Party in its quiet way is as capable as any other of comprehending the diversity of human nature  
(Portillo, 1997).

In sync with Hague's own speech at the 1997 conference, Portillo makes reference to the fact that the Conservative Party's return to power would be the conclusion of a lengthy process. Crucial to the success of this process was 'patience',

I read somewhere that there was frustration with William Hague for not yet coming up with the next big idea. I accord that remark the prize for the silliest thing said since the election. The public is not yet ready for such an innovation from us, even if a big idea were a thing to be conjured up at will. People need a rest from us, and we need time to reflect and listen and come to understand one another better than we have of late. We need to do a lot about ourselves. We need better and different organisation. We need a broad and stable financial base. We need to spread our appeal and attract different sorts of people: different ages, social types, ethnic groups and cultures...Principles we already have. Opportunities there will be. Our time will come again (Portillo, 1997).

In March 1998, Portillo reiterated his belief that the Conservative Party needed to broaden its support base and he praised Hague for his initial attempts to do this, in particular the fact that he 'has rightly begun a series of lectures to re-state the party's doctrinal base'. His praise was extended to Hague's obvious desire not to oppose the Labour government for opposition's sake,

In the new politics it would not be sensible, nor publicly acceptable, to say 'black' whenever the government says 'white'. People look to us to provide a constructive opposition. It is immensely encouraging to hear William Hague putting forward his positive ideas on the family, the constitution and the single currency, arguing from principle, based on the wish to propose rather than oppose (Portillo, 1998).

In *The Economist*, Bagehot also praised Hague's attempts to make the Conservatives more inclusive and his unwillingness to gratuitously oppose the Labour government. It commented that he had resisted the temptation to seek to put clear, blue water between the two parties because 'he knows that elections are won in the middle ground' (*The*

*Economist*, 04.10.1997). Francis Maude, in his 1997 Party Conference Lecture 'One Nation Revisited', warned the new Leader of the temptations of the 'Clear. Blue Water Fallacy'. He said,

In these circumstances [having a government with no other aim than remaining in power] it would be senseless for us to formulate policies just for the sake of being different. Labour has draped itself in modern Conservative ideas. How long it will wear them remains to be seen; but our task, surely, is to advocate policies because we believe them to be right, regardless of what others do. Our Conservative values – freedom, responsibility, personal compassion and nationhood – have not ceased to be true. Our challenge is to find new ways of making them relevant to our countrymen (Maude, 1997, p.7).

The fear of the party's new Leader embarking on a strategy of opposition for opposition's sake led to the Chairman of the Bow Group to write an open letter to Hague in the 1997 conference edition of *Crossbow*. He warned that 'Jack-in-the-box spokesman popping up everywhere with knee-jerk criticism of all government actions will not restore public confidence in us' (Green, 1997, p.5). Whether Hague heeded those warnings for the duration of the 1997-2001 parliament will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

However, Hague's endeavours to broaden the party's appeal were not always successful or met with universal praise. In the summer of 1997 a number of publicity events were organised to attempt to destroy his 'nerdy' 'political anorak' image. Unfortunately for Hague the resulting press coverage of his appearance at the Notting Hill carnival (to demonstrate his belief in multi-culturalism) and his baseball cap wearing water flume ride at a theme park was less than positive and only compounded his image. Similarly, Hague's response to the death of Diana, Princess of Wales on August 31<sup>st</sup>, 1997 was received as 'ill at ease, stiff and uncaring', rather than restrained and respectful as Hague intended. This

was also widely contrasted with the performance of Tony Blair who accurately responded to the mood and distress of much of the general public (Nadler, 2000, pp211-213).

Lord Henley stated that the aforementioned publicity stunts were ‘how William responded to Labour’s “young country” image’ (Henley Interview, 03.12.2003) and George Osborne was defensive of the approach taken to improve the Leader’s image,

We wanted to demonstrate a break with the eighteen years we had with the past and one of the ways of doing that was to say what is wrong with a Conservative Party leader going to the Notting Hill carnival? What is wrong with a Conservative Party leader talking about a bit of social liberalism and tolerance of homosexuality and so on and we were trying to demonstrate that the Conservative Party was changing and understood that the world had changed and you have to remember that at the time there was an enormous feeling of a sort of country – the Cool Britannia and a Prime Minister who wore jeans and played the guitar and all this sort of stuff which dominates – you look back in the newspapers in that period and, you know, the Prime Minister would turn up in jeans and there would be two pages in the newspaper about it...we wanted to demonstrate that we were in touch with that and that we hadn’t been left behind. Now what happened was we got zero credit for it basically – none of the media thought this was a particularly good idea, although we got some favourable editorials in *The Times*, early on. That was about the extent of it (Osborne Interview, 04.12.2003).

Charles Hendry explained in more detail the reasoning behind the publicity events that took place in August 1997,

The thing you have to bear in mind is that there was a very, very virulent media attitude towards William. One thing that I think it’s important to understand is how events change things. When I was William’s Chief of Staff, we had a policy running up to the party conference where August was going to be a light-hearted month and he was going to do things where he would meet people and do things like going down flume rides with baseball caps on and going to the Notting Hill carnival and a whole range of things that would show that this was a man who related to people in their own environments. We were then going to have an incredibly intensive month in September with the ‘ten thousand people, five thousand miles’ running up to

the party conference and where people would then. we hoped, by the time William arrived at the party conference would be ratified by the membership...On the first of September Diana was killed. Two things happened. Firstly we went into official mourning and secondly we had to cancel the first two weeks of September and so the first half of that major serious side was lost and also people didn't like the way he reacted [to Diana's death]...they saw someone who was immature in comparison to the Prime Minister...The press then said "OK, well who is this William Hague guy? He's the guy who went down the flume, he's not up to the job, he's too young, he's too immature"...A lot of the time after that was then spent playing catch-up to persuade them that he was a serious politician (Hendry Interview, 11.12.2003).

Whatever the reasoning behind it, the press had not taken favourably to Hague and in *The Economist*, Bagehot sums up the situation that Hague found himself in: 'whatever he says or does is interpreted through twit-tinted spectacles' (*The Economist*, 29.11.1997). Hague is affected by the 'twit' factor, he is not taken seriously and the leader's early attempts to woo the media only succeeded in cementing his twit-like image. Bagehot's advice to Hague was to engage in less frivolity and make philosophical speeches whilst waiting for Tony Blair's honeymoon period to end and also to strive to appear more serious and also more modern (*The Economist*, 29.11.1997).

The opinion polls also support the theory that the publicity flops of the summer of 1997 tarnished Hague's credibility and popularity. The July 1997 ICM poll registered 23% of respondents stating that they would vote Conservative if a General Election were to be held the next day (compared to 61% Labour and 12% Liberal Democrat). The August poll indicated that the Conservative share had increased to 29% (Labour falling to 55% and the Liberal Democrats remaining the same at 12%). However, the September poll, conducted after the publicity failures and Hague's response to the death of Diana, saw the Conservatives share fall back down to 24% (Labour back up to 60% and the Liberal

Democrats to 10%). It was not until November 1997 that the Conservatives regained their early increase to 30% (Labour 59%, the Liberal Democrats 13%).<sup>11</sup>

### 4.3 A Fresh Future

Hague made obvious attempts to broaden the Conservative Party's appeal and assure party members and the electorate that he would not oppose the Labour government for opposition's sake but how did Hague reform the Conservative Party's organisation in the early months of his leadership and what were his goals when he did so?<sup>12</sup> As Peele states, during the process to elect Major's successor 'Hague's own commitment to party reform...was one of his selling points and chimed well with his campaign to portray himself as a leader who would make a clean break with the past' (Peele, 1998 p.143). Having been defeated so convincingly on May 1<sup>st</sup> 1997, it was apparent to most Conservatives and political commentators that the party would have to reform its organisation in order to move on from the past.

When Hague became Leader his commitment to structural reform remained strong and on July 23<sup>rd</sup> at CCO, he announced that he aimed to 'guide the party towards a fresh and more modern organisation' (Hague, 1997a). The early organisational changes were as much to do with Hague laying the foundations for future policy generation than they were about restructuring and motivating a defeated and tired political party: 'the point was to redesign the party so that it once again would become the best delivery mechanism for Conservative ideas' (Nadler, 2000, p.192). The party needed to be overhauled before it could begin to

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<sup>11</sup> The ICM polls quoted within this dissertation were taken from [www.icmresearch.co.uk](http://www.icmresearch.co.uk) and as ICM clearly state, were taken across the country and weighted to the profile of all adults.

<sup>12</sup> This section of the chapter is not concerned with the debate over the merits or demerits of *The Fresh Future* and other related reforms. This would require vastly more space than is available here. Instead this section will briefly examine the reforms and focus on Hague's goals as far as the reforms are concerned and how they played a part in the party's early strategy.

develop a new policy programme and before it could then successfully sell this programme to the electorate. Hague,

feared tying his party to premature policy commitments, and believed that Conservatives could not compete with Mr. Blair's honeymoon for media coverage. In human terms as well the party was exhausted after the long haul of the general election and a divisive leadership campaign, and simply no match for the machine that New Labour had thrown behind its 'First 100 Days' campaign. However, Hague had already identified a common cause for his party [the need for reform] (Nadler, 2000 p.181).

Hague therefore saw organisational reform as a positive way in which to motivate the demoralised grassroots and move the whole party forward from its defeat. He also regarded the process as a fundamental necessity if the Conservatives were to adapt to being in Opposition and develop and successfully promote, a programme of policies that would maximise their electoral support before the next General Election. Internal reforms could be completed whilst the media were focused on the new government.

### ***The Fresh Future Reforms***

By announcing the key principles (see below) of the reform process and promising to put them and his position as Leader to the party membership in a ballot before the October 1997 conference, Hague set the ball rolling on a chain of events that would culminate in the confirmation of *The Fresh Future* white paper at the party's spring conference in March 1998. A committee was immediately established, membership of which included Archie Norman and Lord Parkinson and was charged with writing a 'green paper', later entitled *Blueprint for Change*, on organisational reform to be debated at the October conference. 80% of members polled endorsed Hague's leadership of the party and supported his reform

principles.<sup>13</sup> Buoyed by this success Parkinson organised twenty-six events which were held before the end of 1997 and at which members could make their views of the reform process heard. Finally, the white paper, *The Fresh Future*, was published in February 1998 and again, this was put before a ballot of all party members, the results of which were announced at the party's spring conference on March 28<sup>th</sup>. The reforms were overwhelmingly endorsed by 96% of those who voted.<sup>14</sup>

The six principles that Hague announced on July 23<sup>rd</sup> 1997 and around which the reforms would be based, also shed light on the motivation behind the process. They were: unity, democracy, involvement, decentralisation, integrity and openness. The first three principles in particular, were designed to make the party more attractive to new members and to recruit more women and members of ethnic minorities. Confirming *The Fresh Future* white paper on March 28<sup>th</sup> 1998, Hague said,

My objective is nothing less than to create the largest mass membership party in the Western World. I want these members to come from every part of our country. I want a mass membership in Scotland and Wales. I want members from ethnic minorities to feel at home with us...We are going to double our membership in two years – and I want half of the new members to be under the age of the new leader  
(Hague, 1998b, p.100).

He said 'these members will help us be a truly national party' (Hague, 1998b, p.101).

Membership of the Conservative Party is widely agreed to have been steadily falling over recent decades. Peele suggests that it 'is estimated to have fallen from an estimated one

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<sup>13</sup> 80.7% (142,299) of those balloted supported Hague and his six principles; 19.3% (34,092) failed to do so. However, only 44% of ballot papers were returned. This meant that 'among those who voted, almost one fifth rejected their new leader, with an apparent majority failing to vote at all' (Kelly in Garnett and Lynch, 2003, pp.87-8).

<sup>14</sup> 96.1% (110,165) of those balloted endorsed *The Fresh Future*; 3.9% (4,425) failed to do so. However, only 33% of ballot papers were returned. This means that only 31.7% of those eligible to vote actually endorsed the white paper.

million members in 1979 to “just a few hundred thousand” in 1997’ (Peele, 1998, p.144). Of course, when a party’s membership is decreasing, not only does it have less foot soldiers to promote its policies and maximise electoral support but funding also becomes a problem. The Conservatives’ dire financial status after the 1997 General Election demanded an improvement in membership levels. Pledging to improve the ‘unity’ of his party, Hague said ‘I shall achieve unity by making sure that the Conservative Party is a broad and tolerant party in the mainstream. I have no interest in leading a bunch of Blue Trotskyites in to the wilderness’ (Hague, 1998b, p.109). This would be practically achieved by making sure that ‘the historic division between our parliamentary party, our voluntary party and Central Office will become a thing of the past’ (Hague, 1998c).<sup>15</sup> As Peele describes, members of constituency associations had felt distanced from the party in Westminster and Hague was aware that this could be contributing to members leaving the party and potential recruits failing to join (Peele, 1998, p.145). To ameliorate this situation, *The Fresh Future* determined that the entire party would be united under one body, the National Convention, which would consist of eight hundred people, from all echelons of the party. Members of the Convention would be elected to the Party Board which would replace the outmoded National Union. Specifically attempting to recruit more young, female voters a ‘Women’s Network’ was established.

‘Democracy’ was also a crucial issue. Hague stated that ‘every member of our Party will get a vote in future leadership contests’, something that certain sections of the party, such as the ‘Campaign for Conservative Democracy’ had been demanding for years. This ‘One Member One Vote’ practice was established under *The Fresh Future*, for the final round of future elections of the Leader of the party and for the selection of candidates for

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<sup>15</sup> These principles are described in some detail in a posting by William Hague on constituency websites. This and following quotations are taken from: [www.scca.org.uk/hague](http://www.scca.org.uk/hague).

Westminster, European and regional elections. Hague also asserted that 'the Conservative Party will become the most democratic Party in British politics today' and this was crucial in the party's attempts to rival the Labour Party (Hague, 1998c). Nadler describes how Conservative members could not help but compare the democratisation of the Labour Party with their own organisation and that this was something that the Conservative Party should be and Hague was, aware of (Nadler, 2000, pp.182-3). Again, this is something that would frustrate current members, alienate potential members and also enhance negative images of the party that had been instilled in the minds of the electorate. To combat this, *The Fresh Future* established 'policy forums' where members could have an input in policy formulation. As Kelly notes, this was an idea which borrowed heavily from suggestions included in the Labour Party's 1997 'Partnership in Power' document (Kelly in Garnett and Lynch, 2003, p.96).

The third principle, 'involvement', was directly concerned with competing with the Labour Party as far as democratisation was concerned. A new national membership list would be established to keep members informed of what occurred at CCO and Hague announced that he intended to 'put the policies upon which we will fight the next election to a vote of all party members' (Hague, 1998c). Hague's leadership and the six reform principles and also *The Fresh Future* white paper were put to a ballot of all party members. As well as the draft manifesto ballot, members also voted to endorse the leadership's European policy in October 1998.<sup>16</sup>

Hague's fourth principle was 'decentralisation': 'decision-making in our Party will be handed down to a more streamlined area structure'. It was designed to promote the idea

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<sup>16</sup> This will be discussed in more detail below.

that not only would decision-making be sleeker and more efficient but constituency associations and therefore their members, would play a more significant part in the party's constitution. This was followed by 'integrity' which was included to tackle the sleaze which had haunted the Major government. Hague stated that 'we will establish a tough disciplinary and ethics committee' which, it was hoped, would prevent further occurrences of individuals, such as Neil Hamilton, being able to bring the party into disrepute by standing as candidates once charged or convicted of wrong doing (Nadler, 2000, pp.182-3). This was augmented by the sixth and final principle, 'openness'. Hague promised that 'the Conservative Party would in future disclose all donations received over £5,000 and would no longer accept foreign money' (Hague, 1998c). Hague was attempting to demonstrate that the party had nothing to hide and could and would be open about its funding.

### **Norman's Domain: Finance and Membership**

Apart from *The Fresh Future* reforms, the structure of the Conservative Party was altered in other ways in the early months of Hague's leadership. These changes were designed to revive a failing political party, in particular by, once again, attempting to increase its membership levels and also by boosting it financially. Hague appointed Archie Norman as the party's Chief Executive in July 1998 and was charged with the task of modernising CCO. Norman closely followed the Labour Party's tactics and even established a 'war room' in 32 Smith Square.

As far as the party's finances were concerned, Norman, with the full support of Hague, reduced the amount spent on CCO by £3 million, made 40% of staff redundant and closed a number of regional headquarters (Kelly in Garnett and Lynch, 2003, p.91). He had estimated that the party's income was £8 million per year and yet its annual expenditure

was £14 million. This situation was very obviously unsustainable and the ruthlessness in which he pursued his task of making the party financially viable was understandable when its debts were estimated to be in the region of £10 million (Nadler, 2000, p.204). Michael Ashcroft, a regular six-figure donor to the party was controversially appointed Treasurer in 1998 and both he and Norman soon agreed that all party expenditure over £250 was to be approved by the latter, another stringent measure felt necessary to bring the party back into the black. Ashcroft found other ways to boost revenue including expanding 'Team 100', a group of party donors who contributed a thousand pounds or more a year, from 120 members to eight hundred. Significantly, the number of those donating in excess of £10,000 was increased from ten to fifty-two (Nadler, 2000, pp.205-6). Norman also turned his attention to membership and along with the reforms outlined in *The Fresh Future*, which were designed to attract members by enhancing the unity and democracy of the party and also enhancing grassroots involvement, he established within CCO a 'Membership and Constituency Services Section'. This was the umbrella organisation to a number of groups, including 'Team 100' and the Women's Network, which were designed to attract new members by appealing to specific groups.

Summing up the process of developing *The Fresh Future* and other related reforms, Hague said,

There were those who doubted my determination to change the way we do business in our party. Not any more: we know we need to change. we have set about it and we *are* changing. Today we have demonstrated just what we can achieve when we work together for clear and principled goals (Hague, 1998b, p.97).

Hague also demonstrated his realisation that the Conservative Party was embarking on what would most definitely be a lengthy process of reinvigorating both membership levels and policy formulation, culminating in the party's return to power. He said,

Today is the realisation of a long held dream and the beginning of an historic journey: a journey to create a mass party which represents all the people: a journey to challenge bad ideas with traditional wisdom and new thinking: a journey to become the Party of One Nation, the Party of the Whole Nation...Our historic journey and our destination is to serve our country once more'

(Hague, 1998b, p.110).

#### 4.4 Devolution Policy

During the 1997 General Election campaign, the Labour Party promised referenda on legislative devolution to Scotland and Wales. The Conservative Party were openly against the idea believing that it would inevitably lead to the disintegration of the British Union and in particular the Union of Scotland with England and Wales. Instead the party favoured an extension of administrative devolution, the election manifesto stating,

While preserving the role of parliament at the centre of the Union, we have given new powers to the Scottish Grand Committee and Welsh Grand Committee – enabling Scottish and Welsh MPs to call Ministers to account and debate legislation which affects those countries – something that would be impossible with separate assemblies...we believe this is the right way to go (Quoted in Dale, 2000, pp.458-9).

The same document detailed the party's fears that the creation of new assemblies could strain the Union to such an extent that it would disintegrate. The new layer of government would desire as much power as possible which could result in rivalry between assemblies and between assemblies and central government at Westminster. The West Lothian

Question<sup>17</sup> was also raised, in addition to the consequences of the Scottish parliament's potential tax raising powers for the location of future investment within Britain (Quoted in Dale, 2000, p.459). The Conservative Party did not believe that legislative devolution would be beneficial to any region of Britain or that the Labour Party had adequately thought through its devolution policy.

After the General Election, the Conservative Party, the self-styled 'national party', was devoid of seats in both Scotland and Wales and faced the prospect of referenda on an issue which they perceived to be at the heart of the British constitution and which was crucial for the unity of the British nation. As part of a wider 'No campaign' the Conservative Party campaigned throughout Scotland and Wales against devolution. Hague repeatedly warned of the negative affects that legislative devolution would have for the whole of Britain, not just the areas that were to go to the polls. A vote in favour of a Scottish parliament holding tax-raising powers, he said, 'would be leaping towards higher taxation in Scotland than the rest of the United Kingdom and, quite possibly, in the long term to the break-up of the United Kingdom' (Quoted in [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk), 09.09.1997). Michael Ancram, the party's Constitutional Affairs spokesman directed his warnings to the people who would actually be casting a vote in the referenda. He warned of the inequalities which legislative devolution would cause *within* Scotland and Wales. Of the possibility of tax-raising powers being available to a Scottish parliament he said that the regions of Scotland would suffer in comparison to the more populated Central Belt. On the possibility of extra funding being available to a Scottish executive he stated, 'if it is Gordon or Glasgow that is going to

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<sup>17</sup> The issue of why MPs of Scottish constituencies are able to vote on legislation that affects England and Wales, whilst MPs of English and Welsh constituencies are unable to vote on similar matters that affect Scotland.

get the discretionary spending, it'll go to Glasgow' (Quoted in [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk), 27.08.1997).

The referenda were held in Scotland on September 11<sup>th</sup> 1997 and in Wales on September 18<sup>th</sup> and despite the enthusiasm with which members of the 'No campaign' put their case, both populations voted in favour of legislative devolution, with the former also accepting the ability of their new parliament to be able to vary tax rates.<sup>18</sup> Writing in *Crossbow*, Ormond warned the leadership that the Conservatives had to rescue what it could of the Union from the impact of devolution. She implored the leadership to make devolution in Scotland and Wales 'workable': 'the party must not lose sight of its Unionist legacy. Since the late Victorian era, Unionism has helped define Conservatism. Where 'New Labour' seeks to 'rebrand' Great Britain, Conservatives rightly take pride in its history and traditions' (Ormond, 1997, p.39).

Hague detailed his own reaction to the verdicts in his speech to the Conservative Party conference a month later. He began by restating his passion for the Union,

I know that Britain is more than the sum of its parts. I come from Yorkshire and I love Wales, but I call the United Kingdom my country. That is why I abhor the damage that this Labour Government is doing to our nation (Hague, 1997b).

He then went on to attack what he regarded as Labour's ill-thought out devolution policy.

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<sup>18</sup> In Wales 50.3% of the electorate (559,419) voted in favour of a Welsh assembly, with 49.7% (552,698) voting against. Turnout was 50.1%. In Scotland 74.3% of the electorate (1,775,045) voted in favour of a Scottish parliament, with 25.7% (614,400) voting against. 63.5% also voted for the new Scottish parliament to have tax varying powers, whilst 36.5% (870,263) opposed the idea. Turnout was 60.4%.

They are pitting one part of our nation against another. It is an abdication of leadership to lead the people in the casual destruction of our constitution and leave them with disillusionment and instability in the years to come. Moreover, for what purpose? Labour have no grand plan and no vision for our constitutional future: just a dog's breakfast of half-baked and incoherent devices which owe everything to gerrymandering and nothing to the stability and prosperity of our nation  
(Hague, 1997b).

Hague continued by stating his party's response to the Scottish and Welsh people's desire for devolution to their countries,

The fight is not over. We accept that the Scottish people have spoken, but we will contest seats for the future Scottish Parliament and we will strain every sinew to stop the separatists prising the United Kingdom apart. In Wales, where the referendum was so close, we will look carefully at the legislation which the Government brings before this parliament  
(Hague, 1997b).

Hague's conclusion was simple: the Conservative Party would accept the will of the Scottish and Welsh electorate and would work within the new system of devolved power to protect and preserve the Union. Hague's reaction was echoed by Michael Portillo in his own speech to the party conference. He said,

The Conservative Party is not an organisation for the turning back of clocks. For example, the Scots are to have a parliament. That is their choice, and we must accept it, unless and until experience leads them to a change of mood. Our interest and duty is clear. We must offer effective participation in the new chamber. We must ensure as best we can that the government of Scotland is carried on well. In particular, since Labour is creating extra tiers of government we must ensure that the new body does not suck towards itself responsibility for decisions that should be taken at local level. We must conduct ourselves in such a way as to make unattractive the plans of the nationalists who wish to use the new institutions to promote separatism and the dissolution of the Union  
(Portillo, 1997).

The Union played an important part in Hague's understanding of British national identity. He campaigned against legislative devolution to Scotland and Wales because he believed that it would inevitably spark the process of the disintegration of the Union. His certainty in this prediction was strengthened by what he saw as Labour's 'half-baked' approach to devolution. Contradictions such as the West Lothian Question were not tackled before devolution occurred, which could only lead to discord within the Union and speed up the process of its collapse. However, rather than rejecting the will of the people, intransigently opposing the new assembly and parliament and refusing to take part in the new tiers of government, Hague steered his party in the direction of working within the system to stop the snowball effect which he believed would result in Scotland or even Wales leaving the Union. Hague's approach was positive in that whilst he continued to oppose the government's motivation for and the technicalities of devolution to Scotland and Wales, he worked with the process, looking to the future and not promising to turn the clocks back as soon as a Conservative government was installed.

The Conservative Leader presented his response to the results of the referenda as the collective will of the party leadership and as mentioned above he and Portillo were certainly singing from the same song sheet. If not actually part of the Shadow Cabinet, Portillo was most definitely a senior member of the Conservative Party. However, the party's campaign against devolution was not without its critics. A leader in *The Spectator* entitled 'The Missing Voice' attacked the leadership of the Conservative Party for failing to both adequately publicise the implications of devolution for Great Britain and also for failing to adequately detail the contradictions it felt were inherent in the Labour government's devolution policy. It stated that the Conservatives should have started their critique of Labour's approach to devolution earlier, been more comprehensive in their

arguments and in essence, given devolution the same amount of attention as Hague's early publicity events,

So far, most people in Britain associate the new leader of the Conservative Party with his adventure on a water-slide in the West Country in a baseball cap, and a brief appearance with coconut and fiancée at the Notting Hill carnival  
(*The Spectator*, 13.09.1997).

Despite having a clear policy on devolution, *The Spectator* did not believe that the public were made aware of it enough to counteract the much maligned publicity opportunities. The party's devolution had certainly not made as much of an impact in the media as the aforementioned stunts.

Despite being a moderniser on the issue of British nationhood and national identity, the Union was a crucial factor in Hague's understanding of contemporary Britain. However, his response to the verdicts of the Scottish and Welsh people demonstrated that once it occurred, he embraced and worked with change. He was forward-thinking and positive in his response to the arrival of legislative devolution despite the fact that he believed it would be detrimental to Britain. As will be discussed below, he also took time to formulate Conservative policy on the future of devolution within Britain. He continued to visualise the maintenance of the British Union as significant in that future. There were a number of Conservative MPs who very quickly spoke out against the unfairness of devolution to England and who quickly championed the idea of an English parliament. They came from the 'Euro-sceptic right' of the party and were headed by Teresa Gorman. Gorman believed that the Conservative Party should fight for the rights of England and English identity, rather than striving to preserve the Union. In late 1997, supported by David Davis and Eric

Forth, Gorman launched a Private Member's Bill to give the English people the chance to vote in a referendum for an English parliament. It ultimately failed to make its way through parliament and did not gather much support. Michael Portillo stated.

There is a logical case for it [an English parliament]. But I am against it. I do not think it would be good for Scotland or Wales, and I do not believe England needs more government or MPs. It would start life in a spirit of resentment and nationalism, which would be unhealthy. It would further divide and weaken the United Kingdom, and I for one have not given up on the union  
(Portillo, 1998).

Ormond repeated her warning to the party leadership on its ultimate response to devolution,

There is also a danger here that if we turn our backs on those parts of the UK which rejected the Conservative Party in May [1997], and become a party of 'Little Englanders', we will lose the vestiges of our authority to speak for the whole of the UK, an authority which transcends electoral defeat  
(Ormond, 1997, p.39).

However, after Hague's initial reaction to the results of the referenda, what was the party leadership's ultimate response to the imposition of legislative devolution to Scotland and Wales?

On February 24<sup>th</sup> 1998, Hague made a keynote speech on the constitution to the CPS (Hague, 1998a). A significant proportion of the speech was dedicated to the party's response to the Labour government's devolution policy, however, Hague began by discussing his belief that the public were generally uninterested in the constitution. He said that when, in the party's recent past and now in its present, it had made attempts to defend Britain's constitutional status quo, it found 'that the public is at best bemused and at worst uninterested' (Hague, 1998a). He said 'some might argue that time spent thinking about

the constitution is time wasted...such a view is, I believe, wrong. Political institutions matter. National identity matters. Democratic accountability matters'. The Conservative Party understands 'that our country's constitutional arrangements protect our freedoms precisely because they embody our history, traditions and identity as a people – what you might call our unique Britishness...and that Britishness shapes the central features of our constitution' namely: the individualist British character, the rule of law, the British Union and accountable government (Hague, 1998a). Consequently, the Labour government's attack on the constitution was, in reality, an attack on Britishness, on the British nation's identity. So, arguing that the Conservative Party is the traditional defender of the constitutional status quo and therefore of British national identity and in response to the Labour government's programme of constitutional reform, he asked: 'what happens to the defenders of the status quo when the status quo itself disappears?' (Hague, 1998a).

In answer to his own question, Hague stated that it was impossible for the modern Conservative Party to blindly accept the changes and equally impossible for them to simply state that the next Conservative government would simply reverse them: 'attempting to return the constitution to its status quo ante would be a futile task. So I believe there is only one practical Conservative response to Labour's constitutional upheaval. We will adopt our own programme of constitutional reform' (Hague, 1998a). Hague conceded that between 1979 and 1997, Conservative governments had often ignored the need for evolutionary change to the constitution and this had, for example, contributed to the demands of the Scottish people for legislative devolution. If the unfairness of devolution to the English was not addressed in the short-term, nationalism beginning to bubble under the surface in England could boil over and prove to be the eventual catalyst in the break up of the Union. Now, the party would have to adapt itself to the political environment of the

late 1990s by embarking on its own reform programme. However, he added one caveat, 'Conservatives believe in reform that preserves the essential Britishness of our constitution...we will be guided by our historic principles of democratic accountability, the rule of law and the unitary kingdom' (Hague, 1998a). Whatever happened, under a Conservative government, the Union would be preserved.

Speaking specifically about devolution, Hague stated that although historically Scotland and Wales have both received a,

disproportionately larger share of public spending and political representation at Westminster than England, the fundamental principle underpinning the Union has until now remained intact: namely, that each part of the United Kingdom has its say over the affairs of all other parts of the UK, and that each part shares the problems of the whole and shares the resources required to meet them  
(Hague, 1998a).

However, this situation would necessarily be altered by devolution. After reiterating that the Conservative Party accepted the will of the Scottish and Welsh electorates, Hague went on to describe a number of unwelcome consequences of legislative devolution. Firstly, whilst the Scottish parliament had legislative power, Westminster still firmly controlled spending north of the border. Hague therefore prophesied political conflict which the nationalists would inevitably capitalise upon. Secondly, 'clear lines of democratic accountability' which have long existed between Scotland and Westminster would be lost, resulting in the former blaming any future failing public services on the latter and the latter, in return, accusing the former of spending resources unwisely (Hague, 1998a). The only result being that the Scottish electorate would not know who to hold accountable. Thirdly, it would only be a matter of time before the English refused to allow the West Lothian

Question to go unanswered and the Barnett formula to continue to be implemented without reform. Finally, nationalism, rather than benign patriotism, had already increased within Scotland and Wales and already signs of nascent nationalism in England had been detected. This could only increase over time (Hague, 1998a).

Hague rejected the Labour government's proposal of English regional assemblies to restore the imbalances brought about through devolution, stating that they would be based on regional identities that did not exist and that unless they were given primary legislative powers, they would fail to ameliorate the West Lothian Question. Instead, he provided four options that the Conservative Party would debate over the next couple of years in its attempts to find the 'least damaging answer to the West Lothian Question' (Hague, 1998a). This last quote indicating Hague's belief that this was a quest that his party would not have found it necessary to embark upon if the Labour government had provided a more comprehensive devolution policy. To the Conservative Party leadership it was a situation of damage limitation. The four potential solutions that Hague offered were firstly, 'the creation of an English Parliament with similar powers to those of the Scottish parliament'. Secondly, 'the withdrawal from Scottish MPs of their voting rights over all legislation that does not apply to Scotland'. Thirdly, a substantial reduction in the number of Scottish MPs and finally, 'a strengthening of English local government and a further devolution of decisions about English health and education away from Westminster and down to hospital trusts and schools' (Hague, 1998a).

Gorman's 1997 Private Member's Bill attempting to supply the English with a referendum on the establishment of an English parliament did not attract much support from within the Conservative Party in the House of Commons. Similarly, Hague's mooted of the idea in

his speech to the party conference on October 8<sup>th</sup> 1998 was quickly rejected on the very same day by Ann Widdecombe, Peter Lilley, Kenneth Clarke and Iain Duncan Smith who were all taking part in a fringe event. Widdecombe said ‘my own view is that we have always been the party of the United Kingdom. The Labour Party is breaking up the United Kingdom and I do not want to give them any assistance’. Clarke stated that the idea of an English parliament was the ‘least attractive’ of the four suggested by Hague, ‘not least because there is no demand for it in England’ (Quoted by Sparrow, 1998).

The lack of interest in the issue of devolution which Clarke mentioned is revealed in two ICM polls conducted for *The Guardian*. In September 1997, just before Scotland and Wales went to the polls in their respective referenda, respondents were asked: do you yourself oppose the setting up of a Scottish parliament? More than one quarter of respondents answered ‘don’t know’ which indicates that the issue had not made a sufficient enough impact upon them to form an opinion either way. The remainder were fairly equally distributed between the ‘opposers’ and the ‘supporters’ which indicated that the general population was not significantly skewed either in favour or against.<sup>19</sup> Such a survey cannot take into account individuals’ depth of opposition or support but it does indicate the proportion of respondents who were unable to express an opinion and the spread of those in favour or against. In April 1999, just before the elections to the Scottish parliament and Welsh assembly, ICM asked: ‘would you yourself support/oppose the idea of a fully independent Scotland?’ Almost one fifth of respondents replied that they didn’t know, whilst 53% were in favour and 30% were opposed. These figures reveal that the Union may have been central to the Conservative leadership’s understanding of British

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<sup>19</sup> 27% indicated that they did not have an opinion on the establishment of a Scottish parliament, whilst 42% were in favour and 31% were against. The same question was asked with regards to the establishment of a Welsh assembly and the responses were almost identical, 26% providing a response of ‘don’t know’, 41% being in favour and 32% opposing.

national identity and worthy of every attempt to save it from the consequences of the Labour government's devolution policy but almost 20% of the British population had no opinion on Scotland leaving the Union and just over 50% actually supported its departure. The British people were not as exercised over the preservation of the Union as the Conservative Party Leader.

The elections to the Scottish parliament and Welsh assembly took place on May 6<sup>th</sup> 1999. In the former, the Conservative Party won 18 seats as a result of the regional list component and none by the 'first past the post' component. This was out of a combined total of 129 seats. Similarly in Wales, the Conservative Party won a single constituency seat and 8 via the regional list component. This was out of a combined total of 60 seats. As a result of these and also local elections throughout Britain, *The Economist* concluded that the Conservative Party was ceasing to be the 'national party'. It said that its share of the vote in the Scottish and Welsh elections had been weak; since 1995 it had only made headway in the South of England and the Midlands; it did not have representatives elected to Sheffield, Newcastle, Liverpool or Manchester councils and it did not control any large metropolitan district or unitary councils in England or a single council in Scotland and Wales (*The Economist*, 13.05.1999). The Conservative Party had obviously failed to persuade the people of Scotland or Wales that it was best able to represent their interests in their parliament/assembly or that the future of the Union was best placed in their hands.

On July 15<sup>th</sup> in a speech to the CPS, Hague announced the Conservative Party's new policy on devolution (Hague, 1999b). He said that by giving the Conservative Party in Scotland and Wales the ability to choose their own candidates and policies 'I believe we have laid the foundation not just for a revival of the Unionist cause, and for turning the tide of

Scottish and Welsh nationalism that threatens the integrity of the United Kingdom'. He made it clear, however, that for the Union to survive, the consequences of devolution that had left England unfairly treated must be redressed. As discussed above, in his speech to the CPS in February 1998, Hague had mentioned four possible solutions to the inconsistencies which resulted from the Labour government's approach to devolution. The first, to strengthen English local government and further devolve power to schools and hospitals was rejected by Hague as an answer to the West Lothian Question because although the Conservative Party was already fleshing out these policies 'independent, accountable local Government and greater self government in the public services can never provide an adequate counter-balance to the considerable legislative powers of the Scottish parliament, nor will they realistically provide an outlet to the growing feelings of English identity'. Hague was aware of the fact that awareness of an English national identity was on the increase and that to preserve the Union after devolution, a solution had to be implemented which would allow Englishness to flourish alongside Scottish and Welsh identities, within an overarching British national identity (Hague, 1999b).

Hague also rejected the option of drastically reducing the number of Scottish MPs saying 'it deals with one unfairness, the under-representation of the English, by creating another, the under-representation of the Scots'. The third potential solution, the creation of an English parliament, was similarly rejected. Hague stated that,

the United Kingdom is not easily suited to the federal model because 83 per cent of the population live in one part of it, England...I am also concerned that by creating another Parliament, we would be creating more politicians and more bureaucracy, and could be confusing lines of democratic accountability in the process...there is also the danger that an English

Parliament could provide a focus point for a form of English nationalism that could hasten the break up of the United Kingdom rather than prevent it (Hague, 1999b).

As Hague stated this left the fourth option: ‘restricting the voting rights of Scottish MPs – what I shall call: English votes on English laws’ and this was the policy that was adopted by the Conservative Party.

Bills which related only to England would be debated on and voted on by English MPs only at all stages...There would not be an English executive initiating English legislation. Nor would this necessarily require special ‘English Days’ at Westminster, which might pose logistical problems for such things as emergency statements and select committees...Since the Welsh Assembly, unlike the Scottish Parliament, cannot pass primary legislation, the principle should be extended to include Welsh MPs for laws relating to England and Wales...Above all, this solution deals with the English [West Lothian] Question and makes the Union stronger – which is the principle any Conservative must start with (Hague, 1999b).

Hague acknowledged the potential problem of a government without a majority of English MPs being unable to guarantee the passing of English legislation. However Hague asserted that this would prevent such a government being able to force laws on the English people: ‘There would be some hard bargaining between the government and the English MPs, and the Government would have to choose between doing nothing and doing what England would accept’ (Hague, 1999b).

This policy attracted support throughout the parliamentary Conservative Party and Michael Ancram described how the party had to come to terms with the failure of its policy of opposition to devolution. If it did not do this it would be unable to adapt to the political environment of the late 1990s or to being in Opposition rather than government. He said,

When we started, for a year, we were fighting devolution and that was on a very strong national UK platform, in opposition to the break up of the United Kingdom and it was only after that that we had to politically understand that devolution had been voted for overwhelmingly in Scotland and largely in Wales and there was no political gain in us going on fighting the battles of the past. We had to learn to live with it and we had to try and get people elected to the Scottish Parliament and to the Welsh Assembly and so we had to tone down our feelings on devolution which had always been, if you like, our expression of our belief in the Union and the Union flag, against devolution (Ancram Interview, 20.01.2004).

The party realised that it could not go on intransigently opposing devolution but as far as possible solutions were concerned, Charles Hendry described how there was little support for a separate English parliament and that since the ‘English votes for English laws’ policy was announced it has become even more of an ideal solution to the party’s problems with devolution,

Most of my colleagues felt that they could adequately do the job [of representing their constituents]. There was no demand for a separate English identity as there was for a separate Scottish identity. It was a very, very different set of circumstances. I think where the party ended up, saying what we should have is that on a purely English measure the non-English MPs should not be allowed to vote was the right position to be in and which we are still in...especially because of the circumstances where the government can only get things through by getting Scottish MPs who can’t affect their own constituencies, foundation hospitals, things like that (Hendry Interview, 11.12.2003)

Lord Strathclyde described how the Conservative Party ‘fought the 1997 election along ‘save the Union’ lines...we lost. Not only did we lose the election but in Scotland and Wales we lost every single Conservative MP’. After the ‘yes’ verdicts in the referenda, he believed it was right to conclude that ‘the Tory narrative on the Union was seen to be defeated, so it is incredibly difficult to pick yourself up immediately from that’ (Strathclyde Interview, 10.12.2003). Instead of either hastily asserting that the Conservative Party would attempt to unscramble the devolution omelette, the leadership took time to develop a

policy which it believed would address the inconsistencies of devolution and move the party positively towards the future. Strathclyde believed that the idea of the Conservative Party supporting an English parliament was,

a bad idea, it doesn't work and won't work unless you break up the United Kingdom. The reason that it doesn't work is that you then create a new federal structure, a federal structure where England is over eighty percent of the whole – which is not a federal structure because what England wants, England would get and the beauty of the system that we had prior to devolution was that it was genuinely a United Kingdom built along common lines  
(Strathclyde Interview, 10.12.2003).

Ancram concurred when he stated that because England would be so dominant in a federal system it would be,

unworkable...you would have to skew everything in order to protect the minority components...which is unfair to England or, we let the dominance exist, which is unfair to Scotland and Wales and I just believe that in the end it was a recipe for the break-up of the United Kingdom. I believe the Conservative Party is the unionist party and that we should never do anything that actually remotely is going to undermine the Union  
(Ancram Interview, 20.01.2004).

On the issue of 'English votes on English Laws' Ancram stated that 'there is no contradiction about being unionist and devolutionist in those terms' (Ancram Interview, 20.01.2004). The Conservative Party devolved power to English MPs but at the same time, would be working to preserve the Union.

When asked whether there was much interest among the parliamentary party for the Conservatives to become the English nationalist party, Strathclyde stated that: 'no, absolutely not...a tiny minority. It is of no serious intellectual interest to Conservatives.

who are a United Kingdom party' (Strathclyde Interview, 10.12.2003). David Heathcoat-Amory said that 'playing the English card might have been the opportunistic thing to do...But we didn't pander to English nationalism because we believe in the United Kingdom' (Heathcoat-Amory Interview, 02.12.2003). Hague stated that the Conservative Party can be,

the party that stands up for England being treated fairly, which I suppose you could see as mobilising the support of the people who might feel nationalistic about England in the sense that England is not, now, getting a fair deal but I can't see the Conservative Party as ever standing for England being separated constitutionally and trying to widen that separation from England and Wales because there was a very strong feeling, deep in the history of the Conservative Party that believes in the United Kingdom' (Hague Interview, 14.01.2004).

Apart from the likes of Gorman, the Conservative Party remained a steadfastly unionist party.

#### 4.5 Conclusion

Hague's very early strategy had four main objectives: firstly, to bring the Conservative Party to terms with being in Opposition; secondly, to demonstrate to the electorate that the Conservative Party was moving on from the past; thirdly, to begin to broaden its support base and finally, to enable the party to begin a process of policy formulation and also to be in the best position to promote those new policies. *The Fresh Future* and other related reforms dominated the first eight months or so of Hague's leadership. He considered the reforming of the party's organisation as a positive means to achieve the above objectives. He made it clear that he and his party were at the start of a long process, reinvigorating the party and returning it to power would not be an overnight task and there were many factors, including structural reform, which would play a part in the process. It is relevant to note

that the reforms were led from within CCO, in particular by Hague, Norman, Parkinson and Ashcroft, rather than as a Shadow Cabinet inspired exercise.

The reform process was positive, not just because it demonstrated that the Conservatives were moving forward but also because it supplied the party with a task that occupied every echelon, overcoming the desolation experienced after such catastrophic defeat in May 1997 and also whilst media attention was wholly focused on the Labour government. This was preferable to the leadership announcing hasty policy initiatives or attempting to persuade the public that they had been foolish to oust the party in 1997. Nadler suggests that due to the party's focus on organisational reform 'attention was allowed to drift from clarifying a popular message' (Nadler, 2000, p.207). However, it is more likely that the electorate and the media would either have ignored hasty pronouncements or would have resented the party that had recently been ousted from government asserting that it now, amazingly, had 'the answer'. Much better to quietly reform the party organisation which would be required to operate efficiently when the party was ready to commence its fight to return to power.

Apart from the small contingent in support of Gorman's Private Member's Bill, the parliamentary Conservative Party was in support of the leadership's policy on devolution, subsequent to the outcomes of the 1999 referenda. Those that expressed public comments were either in a distinct minority such as Gorman, or were addressing particular solutions to the issue such as Widdecombe, Lilley, Clarke and Iain Duncan Smith and the idea of a separate English parliament. As Heathcoat-Amory and Strathclyde mentioned above, supporting the preservation of the Union was not the most beneficial course of action for the Conservative Party to take, considering that the vast majority of their support was located in England. However, true to their unionist rhetoric, the party did not take what

they perceived to be the most electorally beneficial course of action and they continued to champion the Union. Hague believed that he was providing a policy which would address the inconsistencies of the Labour government's devolution policy and which would supply the electorate with a clear and distinct policy from that of the Labour Party. Equally, Hague did not campaign for the revision of the Barnett formula and as chapter three described, he continued to defer to the British nation and the British people in his speeches.

The Union was clearly at the heart of the Conservative Party in the first half of Hague's leadership and Hague continued to promote it as *the* unionist party. Hague had campaigned to prevent the establishment of a Scottish parliament and a Welsh assembly before the referenda but had sought to adapt his party to the will of the Scottish and Welsh people. Hague repeated his desire to work within the new system to prevent the break-up of the United Kingdom and move away from the establishment of another tier of political institutions. The 'English Votes on English Laws' policy sought to redress the inconsistencies of the Labour government's devolution policy, whilst continuously appealing to the British national identity of the people, wherever they resided. However, it appeared from the polls and the results of the referenda, that the Conservative Party's devolution policies did not chime with that of the electorate at any stage of the first half of the 1997-2001 parliament.

The next chapter will continue this analysis of the first half of Hague's leadership of the Conservative Party, by examining Hague's approach to the politics of nationhood in the form of the party's European policy, in particular its response to the prospect of Britain's membership of a single currency. It will also investigate the formulation and implementation of the party's first formal strategy initiative, 'Kitchen Table Conservatism'.