

CONTENTS

List of Illustrations xi

Abbreviations xiii

Preface xv

Prospectus xix

1	Our Crumbling Country	1
	<i>The Decay of Public Provision</i>	2
	<i>From Public Service to Private Profit: The Decline of Community</i>	8
	<i>The Changing Character of the State</i>	11
	<i>From Inequality to Destitution</i>	17
	<i>A Disunited Kingdom?</i>	25
	<i>Conclusion: Signposts to the Past</i>	27
2	‘The Condition of England Question’	29
	<i>Three Nineteenth-Century Revolutions</i>	30
	<i>The First Establishment</i>	33
	<i>National Identities</i>	42
	<i>Crises We Have Known</i>	45
	<i>Conclusion: Continuity Amid Change</i>	54
3	A Brave New World	56
	<i>A Golden Age</i>	57
	<i>Consensus or Compromise?</i>	64

	<i>The City of London and Sterling</i>	68
	<i>Britain's Wider World</i>	72
	<i>Changing Course</i>	77
	<i>From Empire to Europe</i>	78
	<i>The Governing Elite and National Identity</i>	82
	<i>Conclusion: The Record of Britain's Social Democracy</i>	86
4	Margaret Thatcher's Counter-Revolution	89
	<i>The Turbulent 1970s</i>	90
	<i>Margaret Thatcher's Ideological Revolution</i>	93
	<i>The Policy Record</i>	96
	<i>The Renaissance of the City of London</i>	103
	<i>The Wider World</i>	109
	<i>Political Power and National Identity</i>	116
	<i>Conclusion: Losing an Empire and Finding a Role</i>	123
5	Sons of Thatcher	126
	<i>From Moderation to Excess</i>	127
	<i>Major or Minor?</i>	134
	<i>In 'The Thick of It'</i>	139
	<i>The Wider World</i>	144
	<i>Political Power and National Identity</i>	148
	<i>Conclusion: On the Eve of the Storm</i>	155
6	The Deluge and Its Consequences	158
	<i>The Shock of 2008</i>	159
	<i>Austerity: Intervening in the Market</i>	163
	<i>Saving Capitalism from Itself—Again</i>	166
	<i>The Road to Brexit</i>	171
	<i>The Brexiteers Take Power</i>	176

CONTENTS ix

	<i>Political Power and National Identity</i>	182
	<i>Conclusion: The End of the Affair?</i>	188
7	The Reckoning	190
	<i>How We Got from There to Here</i>	193
	<i>'What Is to Be Done?'</i>	202
	<i>Conclusion: Two Nations or One?</i>	219
	<i>References</i>	221
	<i>Index</i>	243

1

Our Crumbling Country

THIS BOOK is about a country that is failing its citizens. Although Britain is not technically a fragile state, in 2022 it was rated with Poland, Spain, and Italy as one of the countries in Western Europe that merited a ‘warning’ on the global index of fragile states.¹ In 2024, Britain had fallen behind these countries and was also ranked beneath Costa Rica and Mauritius.² The UK is far, far ahead of Somalia, which has moved from fragility to collapse, but below its conventional comparators in Western Europe. The risk of fragility increased following the banking crisis of 2008, the consequences of austerity, and the decision to leave the European Union. Unsurprisingly, there has been almost no discussion of the ranking in Parliament or the press.

Although there is no need, not yet anyway, to get on a plane to Norway, the least fragile state on the planet, it is salutary to reflect on Britain’s descent to its present undistinguished level. In 1833, Thomas Macaulay declared that the British were ‘a people blessed with far more than an ordinary measure of political liberty and of intellectual light’.³ However reasonable the claim might have been then, when Britain had triumphed in the long wars with France and was assembling the mightiest of modern empires, it is clearly inapplicable today, when the country’s economic performance and modest standing in the world

1. Fund for Peace, ‘Fragile States Index 2022’. For definitions, see Crisis States Workshop, LSE, ‘Crisis, Fragile, and Failed States’.

2. Fund for Peace, ‘Fragile States Index 2024’.

3. Macaulay, ‘Government of India’, 13d, 12a.

call for humility and self-appraisal rather than pretensions that seek to mask reality.

The Decay of Public Provision

The evidence of the decay that accompanies decline is visible and most apparent in the near collapse of public services. Anyone in doubt will be jolted into unhappy reality by driving on our roads. The UK is the pothole capital of Europe.⁴ In this matter, if in no other, continental countries are unable to challenge our supremacy. Consequently, our neighbours have failed to gain from the boost given to insurance companies, garages, and suppliers of spare parts in Britain. This unique way of making Britain ‘great again’ may also benefit the tourist industry. In due course, the largest potholes may qualify for Grade II status and thereby become attractions for curious foreign visitors.

If your tyres and suspension survive, and many have not, you may reach one of our once beautiful towns, which now sport bent railings, rampant weeds, broken public seats, and peeling paint. Visit any German town and you will return ashamed of the state we find ourselves in. The shabby appearance of our cities is the result of the stringent financial cuts the central government has imposed on local authorities. At the time of writing, at least seven of England’s largest local authorities have effectively declared bankruptcy and sixty more are heading in that direction.⁵

Different hazards await if you decide to travel by train, a choice that offers all the excitements of uncertainty. Work to replace ancient rolling stock causes delays; privatisation has produced a medley of ill-co-ordinated companies, impenetrable sets of tariffs, and sudden cancellations. Long-running labour disputes have added to the misery of luckless travellers. How miraculous it was to travel from Amsterdam to Leiden recently on a train that was stable, clean, and on time. I looked around in amazement as fellow travellers treated their exceptional good fortune as normality.

4. RAC, ‘Foreign Roads Put UK’s to Shame’.

5. ITV News, 5 March 2024; Butler, ‘One in 10 Biggest Councils Risk Bankruptcy’.

The brave and fortunate who complete their train journeys in Britain face further difficulties on reaching their destinations. Only eight (15 per cent) of Britain's largest cities provide trams, underground (metro), or light transport.⁶ This figure places us far behind the rest of Europe. The equivalent figure in Denmark is 100 per cent; in Germany it is 80 per cent; in Poland it is 60 per cent. Buses in Britain rarely have their own lanes and usually crawl along with the rest of the dense traffic. Taxis are unaffordable for many citizens. Inefficient transport systems inhibit improvements in productivity and incur social costs by constraining the movement of people—for pleasure as well as for business.

Anyone whose journey takes them to a school, hospital, or prison will be confronted by the legacy of Victorian architecture that still dominates many of our public buildings. Location scouts have no difficulty finding appropriate sites for films of nineteenth-century life. If Dickens ever reappears as himself, he would be at home in many parts of London today.

The state of the legal system, and of criminal cases in particular, is a depressing example of what passes for modern social policy. Successive Home Secretaries satisfy their audiences by promising to 'get tough on crime', demonstrating once again that the intellectual is no match for the visceral. Yet the system is now dysfunctional. Successive cuts in funding have led to acute shortages of courtrooms, judges, and barristers.⁷ The backlog of criminal cases, which now stands at 73,000 and is still rising, has infused new life into the system Dickens parodied in the protracted case of *Jarndyce v Jarndyce*.⁸ Those who are eventually convicted contribute to the highest rate of incarceration in Western Europe, suffer gross overcrowding, and have minimal chances of rehabilitation. The current remedy, which subverts the system, is to release prisoners early. The result is a bizarre example of prison reform. The suicide and homicide rate in the prison system is now the highest it has been for at least twenty-five years.⁹ Few, if any, of Boris Johnson's prophecies about Britain's 'world

6. Burn-Murdoch, 'Twitter Post', 25 Aug. 2020.

7. Duggan, 'Lives on Hold'.

8. Dickens, *Bleak House*; Casciani, 'Record Backlog as Victims Wait for Justice'.

9. DPG Law, 'JR Claim Issued Challenging the Alarming High Rate of Self-Inflicted Deaths'.

beating performance' have materialised. Woodhill Prison, Milton Keynes, which tops the league table of suicides, might be one, though it has the substance of tragedy.

Crumbling hospitals symbolise Britain's inadequate provision of public health and the long delays for treatment resulting from persistent underfunding. The National Health Service (NHS) is now on its knees.¹⁰ At the end of 2023, nearly 8 million prospective patients were awaiting hospital beds. In this situation, British citizens have very strong motives for staying healthy. The notion of the survival of the fittest and its fortifying complement, the idea that hardship and pain build character, is another long-standing British belief that our continental neighbours have yet to assimilate.

Perhaps they do not need to. Continental European countries spend far more on health care than we do. Both capital and day-to-day expenditure on health are markedly higher in an average of fourteen countries in the European Union than they are in Britain.¹¹ These countries also provide more doctors, nurses, and hospital beds per capita than Britain does. Britain has 2.9 doctors per 1,000 citizens; Germany has 4.3. Britain has 2.4 beds per 1,000 citizens; Germany has 7.8. Of greater concern for those whose health depends on hospital treatment is that the number of NHS hospital beds has been cut by half during the past thirty years, even though the population has grown. Some patients who fail the test of character go to private sources of health care; others go abroad for treatment; others go to the wall. Yet, adequate health care ought to be a fundamental right. Without it, many citizens are denied a fulfilling life, and the economy is denied its full potential. Could it be that countries on the continent of Europe have perceived a truth that has eluded us?

10. See the damning report by the distinguished surgeon, Lord Darzi, 'Independent Investigation of the National Health Service in England'.

11. Icaro Rebolledo and Anita Charlesworth, 'How Does UK Health Spending Compare Across Europe Over the Past Decade?', <https://health.org.uk/news-and-comment/charts-and-infographics>, 16 Nov. 2022; Anandaciva, 'How Does the NHS Compare to Health Systems of Other Countries?'; Ewbank et al., 'NHS Hospital Bed Numbers'; BMA, 'NHS Hospital Beds Numbers Data'.

Neglect and underfunding also apply, inexcusably, to more recent public buildings. In June 2023, the National Audit Office reported that a total of 156 schools and 42 hospitals were among the buildings identified as being in a dangerous condition.¹² They had been constructed with an inferior form of pseudo-concrete and also contained asbestos. Most of the construction using these materials took place between 1950 and 1980. It was known at the time that the ‘concrete’ had a life of about thirty years. Government circles became fully aware of the risks in the 1990s; warnings from other authorities have been issued at various times since then. This problem is part of an even larger one. In 2023, the Public Accounts Committee estimated that 700,000 children were being taught in schools that needed major refurbishment and that 38 per cent of all school buildings were beyond their estimated life span.¹³

Austerity measures imposed since 2008 magnified the problem by reducing the money available for maintenance and rebuilding. The issue achieved wide publicity in 2023 following the collapse of a school roof and the realisation that other potentially disastrous incidents could soon follow. The government is now burdened with a massive bill; many children have had their schooling disrupted; many teachers and parents face difficulties and inconvenience. This example illustrates one of the central principles of modern government: immediate issues are given priority; long-term problems are pushed aside.

Given the presence of disintegrating old buildings and dangerous new ones, it is remarkable that Britain’s schools have performed as well as they have. Underpaid but dedicated teachers have made the difference. International rankings of educational performance must be handled with care because different measures produce different results and can vary widely from year to year.¹⁴ It is safe to say that Britain’s performance is rated as average, though some assessments are more

12. See also the update given in *BBC News*, 16 Oct. 2023; and Goodier, ‘Schools, Hospitals and Prisons Among England’s Crumbling Public Buildings’.

13. House of Commons Public Accounts Committee Report, *The Condition of School Buildings* (2023).

14. Sylvester, ‘Britain’s Educational System Only “Average”’.

generous. It is telling, however, to find that a clutch of Asian countries ranks higher than Britain, as do a number of well-provided European countries. The chances of Britain joining the leaders are minimal: unsatisfactory conditions and uncompetitive salaries are driving some young teachers abroad and others out of the profession.¹⁵ Evidently, some countries attach more importance to funding their schools than Britain does. They appreciate, as it seems we do not, that high-quality education is vital if the next generation is to acquire the skills the ‘knowledge economy’ needs and gain the ability to appraise and value the world around them.

Higher education is struggling as well. Britain is almost the only country in Europe to charge fees for higher education. The ‘market model’ copied from the United States was first applied in 1998 and expanded in 2011. Successive prime ministers like to boast about our ‘world beating’ universities, implying that some of the credit is their own. The reality is that nearly 40 per cent of British universities are heading into debt, courses are being withdrawn, and redundancies are multiplying.¹⁶ Salaries remain uncompetitive: US universities pay at least twice the salary for less than half the work. The result is a threat to ‘quality’ and ‘international standing’ and the prospect of ‘irreversible decline’ unless funding is increased.¹⁷ This example of semi-privatisation shows how the lack of joined-up thinking produces contradictory, dysfunctional policies. When tuition fees were frozen for home students in 2017, universities turned increasingly to foreign students to fill the gap. When restrictions on immigration were tightened in 2023, universities were caught without constructive options. Semi-privatisation is a model of how not to run higher education. As Oliver Hardy complained to Stan Laurel: ‘here’s another nice mess you’ve gotten me into’.

No example of the decay of public provision, however, can quite match that of the Palace of Westminster, which houses the Lords and

15. Henry, ‘Newly-Qualified Teachers Out of UK’.

16. PWC, ‘UK Higher Education Financial Stability Report’.

17. The quotations are taken from the source in n.14 except the last one, which is from Evans, ‘Universities Face “Irreversible Decline”’, commenting on the QS ‘Annual Ranking of World Universities’, 2024.

the Commons. This symbol of British history, democracy, and global standing is also an emblem of the indecision that has characterised so much political thought, or thoughtlessness, in a system that is incapable of dealing with long-term issues. The buildings that house Parliament date from medieval times; the structure is vulnerable, especially to fire. Disaster has struck on several occasions; necessity has compelled reconstruction. The present building is the outcome of a fire in 1834 that destroyed most of the complex.

Fast forward to today. The Houses of Parliament have not yet burned to the ground but are in imminent danger of doing so.¹⁸ The risk of conflagration remains the most important of the many hazards the building now presents. Forty-four ‘fire incidents’ were reported between 2016 and 2023 alone. Leaking sewage, concealed asbestos, and exposed and entangled electricity cables extend the list of defects and make a congenial home for rats and mice, providing they can avoid falling masonry. Not even the most committed estate agent could get away with a description of the building that was confined to the phrase ‘would repay improvement by an imaginative owner’.

The last substantial reconstruction occurred shortly after World War II, when bomb damage in 1941 required the restoration of the entire chamber of the Commons. Since then, and in default of comprehensive renovation, the expense of maintaining the structure has risen even as the building continues to crumble, and is now costing about £100 million a year, which is a lot of money for sticking plaster. An official estimate suggested that full renovation would cost between £7 billion and £13 billion and would take between nineteen and twenty-eight years, providing members and staff moved to alternative accommodation, which they are reluctant to do.

Decades of agreement on the need for thorough-going renovation have been matched by what the Public Accounts Committee calls ‘years of procrastination.’¹⁹ Decisions have been reconsidered and overturned. The House of Commons Committee charged with investigating the

18. House of Commons Report, ‘Restoration and Renewal of the Palace of Westminster’.

19. House of Commons Report, ‘Restoration and Renewal of the Palace of Westminster’.

issue reported in 2023 that, five years after the House determined that decisive action was needed, it was ‘incredible’ that key questions about the design of the restored Palace and the plan for undertaking the work remained unanswered. The complexity of the issue is certainly daunting. Yet prevarication might succeed where Guy Fawkes failed. The roof of the building is particularly vulnerable. A fire there could bring the edifice down and immolate those beneath it. Fiddling while Britain, once known as the new Rome, burns would achieve the same result, if slightly less dramatically.

From Public Service to Private Profit: The Decline of Community

The state of Britain’s public buildings reflects the condition of those who work in them. Until the 1980s, occupations in public service were respected and honourable; no one doubted that they made an essential contribution to national welfare. Thereafter, the idea took hold that state employment was a form of indoor (and outdoor) relief for an army of unproductive drones. Status fell, so did salaries. Neither has recovered. Staff vacancies are mounting in the sectors that need them most.

Those who examined the looking glass found that everything had been reversed. What at first seemed an implausible illusion had become an everyday reality and a new normality. When nurses, doctors, teachers, firemen, and many others went on strike in 2023 and 2024, in some cases for the first time, the new ethos had become firmly embedded. The government and its outlets claimed that the strikers were ‘putting the public at risk’. The welfare consequences were the responsibility of those who had chosen work that entailed substandard conditions and low salaries. In this topsy-turvy order, those who maintained essential public services, including educating the young and saving lives, had become the new ‘underpeople’, while those who made millions had earned the right to rule the world. We can clap for the nurses but still fail to pay them what they deserve. In a free society, self-exploitation for the public good is perfectly legal and, being economical, wholly desirable, at least from the perspective of the Treasury.

The degradation of the public sector and the low priority now attached to public welfare have their corollary in the elevation of the private sector. As public salaries and status fell, the dramatic innovation in 1986 that became known as Big Bang opened the City of London to a new generation of young men (women appeared later) whose earnings outstripped anything public service could offer. Status became associated with wealth rather than with service. The privatisation of public industries that followed was intended to jump start Britain's supposedly somnolent economy. Individualism, the cutting edge of capitalism, would ensure that Britain's great days lay, not in the past, but in the future. The reality has been rather different. Privatisation has created a chain of semi-monopolies loosely overseen by lenient 'regulators'. Salaries of executives have risen; performance has not been commensurate. Some companies have struggled to raise the investment needed to remedy decades of neglect; others, like the misconceived privatisation of the probation service, turned out to be disastrous and had to be scrapped.²⁰

Water services are a prime example of the distribution of costs and benefits under privatisation.²¹ In 1989, the state-owned water companies were sold to private owners. The outcome has produced a bonanza for everyone except the public: handsome salaries for executives; creamy dividends for shareholders. In 2022, it was estimated that more than 70 per cent of all the water companies in England were owned by international investment funds, private equity, and members of the 'super-rich'. The commitment of this medley to public welfare is at best dubious, given that a large proportion of investors are not British nationals. Their commitment to dividends, however, shines brightly. Huge dividend payments have been made over a long period, even though the water companies have failed to upgrade the leaky Victorian pipework that discharges sewage into rivers and oceans.

Thames Water, the UK's largest supplier and largest leaker, also has the worst financial performance of all the water companies.²² The bad

20. Grierson, 'Probation Services to Return to Public Control'.

21. Laville and Leach, 'Water Firms' Debts Since Privatisation'; Plimmer, 'UK Water Company Dividends Jump'.

22. Race, 'Regulator Reveals Water Firms with Worst Finances'.

news has multiplied. Under the limp hand of the regulator, dividends are funded by customers, who pay about 20 per cent of their water bills towards debt service and dividends. An inspired plan has been devised to settle the substantial debts that have been incurred by paying dividends rather than funding investment: increased bills will ensure that customers carry the load.²³ Truly, privatisation is a gift that keeps on giving.

The privatisation of Royal Mail between 2013 and 2015, after five hundred years of government control, is a different but equally depressing story of greed and incompetence. Despite the confident assurances given by the government in 2013, the record attests to the progressive run-down of services, muddled official oversight, defective management, and poor industrial relations.²⁴ As in the case of the water companies, the decision delivered a prize-winning bonus to the banks that benefitted from the decision to float the company at a price that greatly undervalued its assets and promoted shareholders over the company's investment needs. Fortunately, at the time of writing, no one has yet proposed merging Royal Mail and Thames Water.

As practised in Britain, deregulation has encouraged cost-cutting at the expense of service and sometimes safety. It has also degraded the concept of democratic control. Public agencies are ultimately accountable to the public; private companies are accountable to shareholders. The larger the company, the more difficult it is for individual consumers to secure accountability or sometimes even an answer to queries and complaints. Today's Big Brother is not the eroded state but the impenetrable conglomerates that control large swathes of the economy. An indulgent tax regime allows the already rich to shield their wealth; those who are British citizens can even receive honours for doing so. The consequences of privatisation have not 'trickled down.' The tide that lifts a few boats has sunk many others.

23. The plan was implemented in April 2024, despite opposition. See Lawson, 'Water Firms in England and Wales Urged to Invest Profits in Cutting Bills'.

24. The reassurances provide ironic reading today: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 'Royal Mail Myth-Busters'.

The Changing Character of the State

The fragility of a state is also measured by the efficiency and moral standards of its central government and the degree of political unity it commands. Britain is struggling on both counts. Formally, the political system remains much the same as it was in 1945. The first-past-the-post voting system is still in place, as are the two main political parties who gain the most from it. In practice, however, a good deal has changed. The Labour government has sidelined its socialist ambitions and manoeuvred carefully to the political centre; the Conservative Party has effectively abandoned One Nation Toryism and moved assertively to the right. The increase in the number of women and ethnic minorities who have entered Parliament is a positive development that has added to the diversity of the House of Commons. The rise of careerist politicians who represent their own interests, however, has diluted the commitment to principles that relate to the community as a whole.

These changes partly disguise another fundamental continuity: the alliance between privilege and power is one that has survived all other changes. The backgrounds of MPs are markedly different from those they represent.²⁵ Broadly speaking, members of Parliament are relatively affluent and have received university education; only 7 per cent have working-class origins. Given that policy decisions reflect the interests of a privileged group rather than of the country as a whole, it is unsurprising that the needs of the poor and less well educated do not reach the top of the agenda.

The key change, however, is in the ethos of the new elite, which has discarded paternalism without adopting an alternative sense of obligation. In 1945, privilege was still linked to duty; today, it has become an entitlement. This generalisation, of course, requires qualification. The present is not to be compared to an assumed golden age. Nepotism, corruption, and incompetence are not twenty-first-century inventions. All this, and much more, can be conceded. Nevertheless, the Commons

25. Patel, *Who Decides?*.

has become a place for advancement to a greater extent than used to be the case, if only because the majority of members in the past were already advanced in wealth and status. This change reflects a broader shift in attitudes towards the state. The institutions of government are now seen as resources to be mobilised for the benefit of MPs. Rights have trumped obligations. In this matter, as in so much else, Britain has followed the route charted by the United States.²⁶

The link between privilege and power has been strengthened in recent years. The introduction of unelected special advisors has inserted a wedge between civil servants and ministers and increased the influence of political appointees over policy-making. The appearance of privately funded ‘think tanks’ and associated lobbyists has created a novel and effective source of influence and policy-making. The largest 10 per cent of donations provide more than half of all the funds received by the main political parties in Britain today. Many MPs benefit from contributions made by large companies. The well-oiled ‘revolving door’ that enables members of Parliament (and civil servants) to transfer smoothly from public service to private employment ensures that connections between the two sectors remain close.

One revered British tradition, the disbursement of honours as recompense for political services, has escaped reform effortlessly. Its unrivalled value as a costless and effective means of securing and rewarding loyalty guarantees that it will survive far longer than the crumbling structure of the Palace of Westminster. Moreover, merit, like so much else, has settled comfortably in London and the south-east of England, which received more than 61 per cent of the most prestigious honours in 2024.²⁷ Only 6 per cent went to the midlands and the north and only 4 per cent to recipients who came from working-class backgrounds. Some commentators might see the distribution as proof that merit is

26. Geoghegan, ‘Labour and the Lobbyists’, provides a depressing account of the success think tanks and lobbyists have had in destroying probity.

27. Coughlan and Cuffe, ‘Are Top Honours Winners Too Posh and Too Southern?’. The most prestigious honours are the Companion of Honour, the Order of the Bath, CBE, knighthoods, and damehoods.

geographically determined. Others might think that the uneven distribution is evidence of an acute southern bias arising from ignorance of the world beyond the home counties.

Unsurprisingly, affluent and educated citizens who own their own homes have greater trust in Parliament and are more inclined to vote than those who are poorly paid, less well educated, and more likely to rent their accommodation. In the 1960s, the turnout rate at elections was similar in both groups; today there is a wide gap between them. Membership of the two main political parties has also fallen. In 1948, each party had more than 1 million members; today the figure is less than 250,000 for each case. The decline in active participation allows special interests more scope to exert influence. The disadvantaged and the young have become progressively alienated from a political system that has failed to deal with their problems. Alienation may be permanent; it also provides a basis for populist movements. Those 'left behind' were among the supporters of Brexit, which offered a unique chance for them to express their frustration.

Democracy ought to mean more than one person, one vote. It requires that each vote carries equal weight in decision-making if the interests of the community as a whole are to be served. In the eighteenth century, the unenfranchised were said to be 'virtually represented' by those who were elected as members of Parliament. Although all adults are now entitled to vote, the voices of the majority count less than those that speak loudest. Our democracy remains incomplete. In this respect, it cannot be said to be even a 'work in progress'.

Self-preservation also suppresses public duty beyond Parliament. Disgraceful stories of injustice abound. The scandal of using contaminated blood in transfusions has only recently been acknowledged, forty years after the event. The fate of sub-postmasters, who were wrongly imprisoned to save the face of the Post Office and the jobs of senior management, became known only in 2024, after years of obfuscation and denial. The regulatory powers of the Environmental Agency have been shredded to the point where illegal activity continues unchecked. As the chief executive of the Agency admitted recently, his officials 'bury' Freedom of Information requests because they are

‘worried about revealing the true state of what is going on.’²⁸ This epiphany summarises the way rampant individualism has been allowed to trample on public responsibility.

The causes of the disastrous fire that gutted Grenfell Tower in 2017 and killed seventy-two of its inhabitants provide the best possible summation of the consequences of the morality that deifies profit and suppresses a sense of responsibility to the community. The final report of the Commission of Inquiry, published in 2024, left no room for doubt and no escape for those who had caused the tragedy.²⁹ The disaster was ‘avoidable’ and the result of ‘decades of failure’ by all concerned—from the government and its agencies to firms supplying materials, including the ‘casual’ attitude of the architects and the poor preparedness of the London Fire Brigade.

The ‘relentless focus on cost’ led to ‘systematic dishonesty’ and exploitation of UK’s ‘weak regulatory system.’³⁰ Arconic, the US conglomerate that supplied most of the substandard cladding, ‘deliberately and dishonestly’ concealed the true condition of its product. The once prestigious Building Research Establishment, privatised in 1997, had become open to ‘manipulation’ by private companies and issued ‘misleading’ certificates. David Cameron’s government, in particular, had internalised an anti-regulatory ethos that allowed legitimate concerns to be waved aside instead of being investigated. Oscar Wilde famously remarked that ‘a cynic is someone who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing’. The culture of cynicism has now become an orthodoxy that is challenged only by those who stand outside the circle of power.

The performance of the Conservative governments that held office between 2016 and 2024 reached new lows of probity and competence.³¹ The promotion of dedicated Brexiteers to the offices of state greatly limited the pool of available talent. Casual attitudes towards parliamentary

28. Philip Duffy, speaking at the UK River Summit in London, May 2024. Quoted in Horton, ‘Environment Agency Chief Admits Regulator Buries Freedom of Information Requests’.

29. Grenfell Tower Inquiry, Phases 1 and 2 (2024).

30. The quotations are from the report on the Grenfell Tower Inquiry cited in n. 29.

31. The government’s management of the COVID crisis, which is relevant to this paragraph, is treated in chapter 6.

conventions and behaviour lowered Parliament's standing in the eyes of the public. Even Mark Sedwill, Boris Johnson's former Cabinet Secretary, judged the government to be 'brutal and useless'.³² Several ministers acquired unflattering nicknames. Christopher Grayling became known as 'Failing Grayling' after accumulating an unblemished record of disasters in several ministries; Jacob Rees-Mogg's antique style and attitudes made him 'the honourable member for the eighteenth century'. Nadine (Mad Nad) Dorries was promoted, unbelievably, to the post of Secretary of State for Culture. Gavin Williamson, the struggling Secretary of State for Education, was called Private Pike (after the ineffective character in a television sitcom) and was duly rewarded with a knighthood.

Behaviour and probity are not easily measured. Nevertheless, the evidence points in one direction. Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index shows that there has been a significant decline in probity since 2012.³³ In 2023, Britain was ranked behind all of its European comparators, though ahead of the United States. Detailed analyses confirm this finding. In 2022, the Centre of Corruption at the University of Sussex concluded that Boris Johnson's government was the worst in this respect since World War II.³⁴ In 2023, a complementary calculation found that since 2019 more MPs have been suspended by the House or been obliged to resign their seats than at any time in British history.³⁵ The message that one MP gave to his interlocutors in 2023 was that 'he was corrupt and "for sale", and so were many other Members of the House'.³⁶ This refreshingly rare example of self-criticism is confirmed by analyses of public attitudes towards politicians, which show that levels of trust in members of Parliament and dissatisfaction with the way Britain is governed have reached unprecedentedly low levels.³⁷

32. Walker, 'Covid Inquiry Hears More Testimony'.

33. Transparency International, 'Corruption Perceptions Index'.

34. Stone, 'Corruption Experts Warn that Britain's Government Is the Worst since WWII'.

35. Cited in Adonis, 'Is This the Worst Parliament in History?'.

36. House of Commons, *Report of the Committee on Standards: Scott Benton* (2023), para 59.

37. Curtice et al., 'Damaged Politics?'.

Given that behaviour is conditioned by political structures as well as by personal preferences, there is no guarantee that a new government would be able to change the bias favouring self-advancement, even if it wanted to. New Labour's record in this respect matched that of the Conservatives. Both lived down to their own expectations. An optimist, it might be said, is someone who believes that the government in power has reached rock bottom. Sometimes, even lower depths lie ahead.³⁸

Today's MPs are likely to deny or evade allegations of impropriety. If found out, they feel no obligation to seek redemption through good works but slide easily into lucrative employment as television celebrities, join the lecture circuit, or find comfortable places on the boards of substantial companies. The word 'honour' is rarely invoked in public life today. When heard, it suggests an antique quaintness that is irrelevant to the fast-moving, forward-looking present. This medley of neglect, self-advancement, and incompetence, joined to priorities that favour the private over the public and the immediate over the long term, has produced a government that is failing its citizens in essential needs of health, education, access to the law, and even basic provision of housing and food.

The indulgent attitude of MPs towards their own behaviour has been accompanied by an increasingly harsh and unforgiving approach towards others. In 2023, Suella Braverman, then Home Secretary, delivered the latest thinking of the Marie Antoinette school of social policy when she declared that living in a tent on the streets was a 'lifestyle choice'.³⁹ The principle of One Nation no longer circulates, even as token currency. On the contrary, whether inspired by ignorance or guided by principle, ministers are eager to return us to the nineteenth century and to the *Two Nations* described by Benjamin Disraeli in 1845.⁴⁰ The difference, however, is that Disraeli wanted to close the divide, whereas today it is treated as an endemic condition that is beyond human control.

38. Shortly after writing this sentence, Labour's first scandal hit the headlines, when it emerged that Keir Starmer and his wife had accepted substantial sums of money for their personal use. Geoghegan, 'Donor and Starmer's Suits'.

39. Malrick, 'Homeless People in Tents Make a Lifestyle Choice'.

40. Disraeli, *Sybil*.

From Inequality to Destitution

Measures of poverty and welfare are complicated and imperfect. A distinction needs to be drawn between absolute low income, which is fixed in real terms, and relative low income, which measures household incomes that are 60 per cent lower than the median for the base year.⁴¹ Indices that incorporate expenditure as well as income are necessary to ensure that cross-country comparisons and changes over time are reliable. The generally agreed mechanism for doing so establishes what is known as purchasing power parity (PPP). Fortunately, the present study depends on approximations rather than decimal points. Different sources vary in detail but agree on the central conclusion: poverty in Britain is increasing and has reached levels that ought to be unacceptable.

Per capita gross domestic product (GDP) has undoubtedly been on a rising trend since the end of World War II, as it has been in most Western countries.⁴² In general terms, living standards have improved during this period. GDP, however, is not an adequate proxy for welfare. It says nothing about the distribution of gains (and losses) either socially or regionally. Nor does it measure productivity. An economy can grow without commensurate increases in productivity. Accordingly, an account of the benefits of growth needs to incorporate considerations of welfare that are not captured by GDP.

The policy failings described here have been felt throughout Britain. There was a sharp fall in GDP from 2007 to 2020–21, after which a modest recovery began. By 2023, however, Britain's relative economic performance had slumped. The growth in productivity in Britain since 2008 has been half that of the twenty-five richest OECD countries; the

41. Francis-Devine, 'Poverty in the UK'.

42. Adjusted to incorporate purchasing power and expressed in constant US dollars. I am obliged to follow the standard practice in economics of using GDP as a measure of growth, despite the numerous criticisms it has attracted. GDP was devised primarily to measure output in manufacturing economies. It has difficulty capturing some financial and other services, public goods (like education), the informal economy, and non-market activities, and is not a proxy for welfare. See Fioramonti, *The Gross Domestic Problem*; Coyle, *GDP: A Brief But Affectionate History*; Philippsen, *The Little Big Number*; Pilling, *The Growth Delusion*.



***If they just added texting to how they calculate GDP,
this economy would be growing by 20%.***

FIGURE 1.1. Cartoon by Doug Pike Suggesting How GDP Might Be Recalculated. Permission from Cartoon Stock ID CS438443, www.cartoonstock.com.

gap between Britain and the United States, Germany, and France has doubled in the same period.⁴³ By 2023, per capita GDP in these countries, as well as in the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, and Finland, was also higher than in Britain. Middle-income families in Britain were 20 per cent poorer than in Germany and 9 per cent poorer than in France; low-income families in Britain were 27 per cent poorer than in Germany and France. Only the rich could equal their peers on the continent of Europe.

Unflattering comparisons with Britain's neighbours are matched by evidence of growing inequality at home.⁴⁴ In the 1970s, the distribution

43. Rowntree Foundation and Centre for Economic Performance and London School of Economics, *Ending Stagnation: A New Economic Strategy for Britain* (Rowntree Foundation, 2023).

44. Simon Szreter, *The History of Inequality*; Equality Trust, 'Billionaire Britain, 2022'; Hill, 'UK Spends More Financing Inequality in Favour of the Rich'. Issues of inequality received

of incomes placed Britain among the more equal of the developed countries. Today, it has the highest degree of income inequality in Europe. Inequality of net household incomes has grown significantly since the 1980s, which has also seen the percentage of income and wealth attributed to the top 1 per cent of the population double.⁴⁵ Only one country in the developed world, our model and mentor, the United States, has a greater degree of inequality. An analysis of total assets has shown that half of all wealth in Britain is owned by one tenth of the population and is held principally in the south-east.⁴⁶ By contrast, nearly one quarter of the population has liabilities that exceed assets. Women and racial minorities suffer disproportionately. What has been termed ‘asset poverty’ strains family relations and affects children’s well-being and development.

A striking feature of inequality is the exceptional regional contrasts that distinguish Britain from other developed countries.⁴⁷ London accounts for no less than 14 per cent of Britain’s per capita GDP, which is far greater than in other highly productive centres. If Amsterdam were excised from the Netherlands, per capita GDP would fall by 5 per cent; if the wealthy San Francisco Bay area were eliminated from the United States, the loss would be 4 per cent; if Munich, Germany’s most productive city, were subtracted from the Federal Republic, the reduction in per capita GDP would amount to no more than 1 per cent. Without London, per capita GDP in Britain would rank behind Mississippi, the poorest state in the United States. This conclusion has been confirmed by work that has emphasised the poor performance of cities outside London when compared to similar centres in the G7.⁴⁸ Taken together, these findings provide a striking illustration of the unique degree to which the uneven development of the British economy has been driven by the exceptional power of London.

greater visibility and enhanced attention following the publication of Pikety’s book, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, in 2013.

45. Patel, *Who Decides*.

46. Clark, ‘Wealth of Evidence’.

47. Burn-Murdoch, ‘Is Britain Really as Poor as Mississippi?’.

48. Centre for Cities, ‘Climbing the Summit’. The Group of Seven was formed by some of the wealthiest countries in 1973 to co-ordinate policies on global issues.

Britain's flagging economic performance since 2008 has had disproportionate consequences for those at the foot of society. In 2018, Philip Alston, the UN's special envoy on poverty and human rights, stated that 'much of the glue that has held British society together since World War II has been deliberately removed and replaced with a harsh and uncaring ethos.'⁴⁹ In 2017, four million people had incomes that were more than 50 per cent below the poverty line, and 1.5 million people were destitute. A measure that included costs such as housing and childcare showed that 14 million people were in poverty. Universal credit, though admirable in principle, had been implemented in ways that limited its effectiveness and had become, in Alston's words, 'universal discredit'. Unsurprisingly, the British government dismissed the report, claiming that it was fanciful and exaggerated.

In 2023, however, Olivier de Schutter, Alston's successor, confirmed his predecessor's findings, adding that 'matters had got worse.'⁵⁰ In 2021–22, 14.4 million people, about one-fifth of the population, were in relative poverty. Food banks, homelessness, and child poverty had become 'normalised'. Poverty levels, he concluded, had now reached the point where Britain was in violation of international law. The government rejected the report and its recommendation that welfare spending should be increased.

A House of Commons report showed that 8.9 million people (including 2.2 million children) were in absolute low-income poverty in 2021/22, before housing costs were included, and 11.4 million (including 3.3 million children) after these costs were added.⁵¹ Recent research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, the authority in the field, shows that in 2022, 3.8 million people (including one million children) could not afford to meet basic needs and qualified as being destitute.⁵² Rates of destitution have more than doubled during the last five years as a result of benefit cuts and increases in the cost of living. 'Rough sleeping' and

49. Alston, 'Statement on Visit to the United Kingdom'.

50. Booth, 'UK in Violation of International Law'.

51. Francis-Devine, 'Poverty in the UK'.

52. Fitzpatrick, 'Destitution in the United Kingdom'; also Barker et al., 'Preventing Destitution'.

homelessness have increased.⁵³ Food banks, which were invented in the United States in the 1960s, have multiplied in Britain during the last twenty years; even so, they often run out of supplies at times of exceptional need.⁵⁴ Food banks, one of Britain's notable growth industries, are examples of what might be called compulsory privatisation: they exist because public provision is inadequate.⁵⁵

An alternative approach to the problem of poverty, the minimum income standard (MIS), measures what people think is the minimum needed to live in dignity.⁵⁶ This broader index shows that 29 per cent of all individuals were below the MIS in 2020–21, a marked increase on the figure for 2008–09. The greatest increase was found in the north-east, where 36 per cent of the population (including 53 per cent of children) was living below the MIS. Despite denials from the British government, the UN's envoys correctly identified the acute problem of poverty in Britain.

The consequences of deprivation scar society. The United Kingdom ranks among the lowest European and OECD countries in providing statutory paid maternity leave, a record that affects poor families disproportionately.⁵⁷ Children in poor homes who were raised during conditions of austerity suffer from inadequate diets and limited access to health care.⁵⁸ The mantra of the 'nanny state' is invoked to justify the lack of action in curbing ultra-processed, fatty, sugary, and salty foods, which are now standard in families with low incomes. In 2022, about two-thirds of adults in England were overweight or obese and two out of five children leaving primary school were also overweight.⁵⁹ The average heights of five-year-olds in Britain have fallen since 1985 and are below not only countries in Western Europe but also Bulgaria,

53. Institute of Health and Equity, 'Health Equity in England'.

54. Brown, 'How Britain Became a Food Bank Nation'.

55. Trussell Trust, *Hunger in The UK*.

56. Padley and Stone, 'Households below the Minimum Income Standard'.

57. OECD, 'Parental Leave Systems'. Romania is among the European countries that offer two years' paid maternity leave.

58. Food Foundation, 'A Neglected Generation'.

59. Research by City University commissioned by the government and reported by Gregory, 'Hand to Mouth'.

Lithuania, and Montenegro.⁶⁰ In some deprived areas, malnutrition, scurvy, and rickets have reappeared.

The bad news gets worse. Even before the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic, Britain had the sixth highest rate of excess winter deaths among thirty countries in Europe.⁶¹ This was twice the rate in Finland, Iceland, and Slovakia, and translated into the deaths of an annual average of 35,000 people in the five years from 2013 to 2017. The causes are well known: ill-health resulting from poor housing and what is now termed ‘fuel poverty’. Britain has not only failed to build enough houses during the last fifty years but the houses it has built are also of low quality compared to most of Europe. Britain has the oldest and most expensive housing stock in Europe and the highest proportion of substandard houses, an achievement that even ranks below countries in Eastern Europe, such as Hungary, Poland, and Lithuania.⁶²

This appalling situation is not only the result of planning regulations, as the large construction companies claim. It is also the result of privatisation and the progressive deregulation of the building industry. There was more competition in the industry and greater control over standards in the 1960s than there is today. Far from increasing competition, privatisation has allowed the ten largest firms to control the industry. Deregulation has enabled them to dispense with checks from local authorities, cut quality, boost profits, and pay handsome salaries and dividends.⁶³ It is no coincidence that the building industry is the largest single donor to the Conservative Party. Shoddy building that has increased profits and damaged lives is not confined to the disaster of Grenfell Tower.⁶⁴

There is an even darker feature to this story of deprivation: the increasing rate of suicide, which began to rise after 2008 and reached its

60. Hill, ‘Children Raised under UK Austerity’.

61. Guertler, ‘UK Has the Sixth Highest Rate of Excess Winter Deaths in Europe’, tables 1–3. Excess deaths is a statistical measure that compares the number of deaths during the winter months (December to March inclusive) to the average number of deaths during the rest of the year.

62. House Builders’ Federation, ‘Housing Horizons: Examining UK Housing Stock in an International Context’, 2023.

63. Wainwright, ‘Cracked Tiles, Wonky Gutters’.

64. The inquiry into the Grenfell Tower disaster is considered in chapter 6.

highest level since 1999 in 2023, when 6,069 people in England and Wales took their own lives.⁶⁵ The pattern in Scotland is similar, though the rate there was slightly higher and the measure of well-being slightly lower.⁶⁶ In the United Kingdom as a whole, there was a strong correlation between the incidence of suicide and areas of deprivation.

The government, however, may have stumbled upon an unexpected solution to all these problems. In 2024, the fertility rate fell to 1.41 children per female, the lowest level since records were first taken in 1938.⁶⁷ Given that a reproduction rate of 2.1 is needed to maintain a stable population, the falling birth rate will eventually solve the problem of poverty. There are only two solutions to this impending crisis: to increase support for families of child-rearing age, or to allow immigration. The present government has cut back on the first option and has spent millions trying to prevent the second, while ignoring the fact that immigrants have been responsible for what little growth has taken place since 2010.⁶⁸ More votes can be garnered by playing on racial prejudice than by funding families. Worse still, official policy has failed even to recognise the urgency the issue of population demands. Schools are now closing; so will the United Kingdom if policy continues to privilege short-term advantage over long-term needs.

Disadvantaged children suffer from high rates of obesity, poor health, inferior education, and limited job opportunities. Disadvantage begins at birth: infant survival rates in Britain are far lower than those in comparable European countries.⁶⁹ It is unsurprising, though shaming, to find that the sense of well-being among Britain's teenagers is lower than it is in most other European countries, or that levels of unhappiness are correspondingly higher.⁷⁰ In 2022, those aged 15 in the UK had the

65. ONS, 'Suicide in England and Wales'.

66. National Records, Scotland, 'Increase in Deaths By Suicide'.

67. ONS, 'Births in England and Wales'.

68. Fry et al., 'Life in the Slow Lane'.

69. Academy of Medical Sciences, 'Urgent Action Needed on Failing Child Health'.

70. The Children's Society, *The Good Childhood Report*; also Wellbeing Research Centre, *World Happiness Report*. It should be noted that comparisons of this kind are very difficult. See Boztas, 'British Children the Least Happy in Europe'.

lowest average life satisfaction in the whole of Europe.⁷¹ One of the greatest casualties of deprivation is hope. Well-being is not helped by the lack of playgrounds, which are more numerous in European cities, still less by the sale of playing fields. Between 2015 and 2022, no fewer than ninety-four schools in England sold playing fields.⁷² Replacements have not been forthcoming. Public libraries have suffered similarly. The number of public libraries remained steady at about 3,600 between 1970 and 2012.⁷³ Between 2010 and 2019, nearly eight hundred libraries were closed, staff have been reduced, and hours shortened. We are silently squandering the future of the next generation.

Disadvantaged children who reach adulthood are unlikely to enjoy long lives. In the most deprived regions of the country (principally in the north), the life expectancy for men is 73.2 years; in the least deprived areas (mainly in the south), it is 83.2 years.⁷⁴ The figures for life expectancy place England below all developed countries, with the sole exception of the United States.⁷⁵ Children and adults suffer from delays in medical diagnosis and treatment, which have pushed survival rates from cancer (to cite just one example) below those of comparable countries. These reminders of the enduring presence of the Victorian world ought to be shaming, but only if governments recognise the concept of shame.

Unsurprisingly, the attainment gap is widening, not closing. Students at private schools in London and the south-east are twice as likely to achieve top grades at 'A' level as those in state schools in the north of the country.⁷⁶ To this extent, attainment, like low achievement, can be inherited. Once school-leavers take employment, they have greater difficulty finding housing than their comparators in other parts of the developed

71. The Children's Society, *The Good Childhood Report*.

72. London Playing Fields Foundation, 'Protecting Playing Fields'; The Pitch Inspection, 'Hundreds of School Playing Fields Sold Off by Last Government'.

73. UK Parliament, 'Library Closures'; Busby, 'Nearly 800 Public Libraries Closed'. Closures have continued since 2019.

74. Centre for Better Ageing, *Annual Report*, 2023.

75. Institute of Health and Equity, 'Health Equity in England'.

76. Helm, 'Private School Students in England'; Tuckett, 'Disadvantaged Students Have Poorer Grades'.

world do. Britain is one of the most expensive countries in Europe to buy or rent housing relative to income.⁷⁷ Since 1980, the rate of house-building in England has fallen far behind demand and the sale of council houses has removed a valuable option. Consequently, rents are correspondingly high. No wonder homelessness has increased.

Deprivation not only produces misery for individuals and families, but also prevents society from developing the potential of all its citizens. The future of Britain no longer rests on its natural resources, but on the skills of its people. This observation is so obvious that it ought to be redundant. But ideological commitment to a small state allied to the Victorian belief that poverty is an evil to be accepted rather than a problem to be solved continues to place the burden of guilt on the poor. Amelioration requires expenditure, which also conflicts with the erroneous but still popular distinction between the 'spending' and 'investing' departments of state. Wealth, however, is not like water; it does not trickle down. Adherence to these beliefs prevents us from seeing what other countries have seen and acted on: investing in people is the necessary precursor of a healthy society and a dynamic economy. Our achievement is to have recreated poverty last seen in Britain in 1900.⁷⁸

A Disunited Kingdom?

The question of national identity will be examined in subsequent chapters. For the present, it is sufficient to note that policies that have embedded regional and social inequality have also stoked political movements that have stretched the unity of the country. Scottish nationalists aim for independence; their Welsh counterparts hope for a greater degree of Home Rule; nationalists in Northern Ireland seek union with Ireland; their opponents cling to the Union Jack. Whether or not any of these ambitions will be realised is less important for present purposes than the fact that they have acquired far more substance and prominence than they had when the United Kingdom was also an imperial state.

77. House Builders' Federation, 'Housing Horizons'.

78. Thane, 'Poverty in the Divided Kingdom'.

Although circumstances in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland are different, all three countries have lost faith in the central government in London, which has failed to show sufficient concern for their interests and aspirations, and in some cases has directly opposed them. Disaffection accelerated following the Brexit vote because Scotland and Northern Ireland were strongly in favour of remaining in the European Union; Wales voted to leave but only by a small margin and has since regretted its decision.⁷⁹ Constitutional reform in 1997 devolved specified powers to Scotland and Wales; Northern Ireland had already been granted its own Assembly. These concessions stopped far short of introducing federalism and in principle can be revoked. Conciliation was intended to blunt the edge of discontent in two of Britain's most distinctive regions. Far from producing contentment, however, limited home rule has increased the visibility of local leaders and allowed them to publicise their aspirations more effectively. The strategy has a long imperial history: it has led either to federalism or independence. These are outcomes that no British government wishes to contemplate and therefore tries to stall.

The ultimate act of decolonisation occurs when the centre loses control of its own peripheries. In doing so, it forces the residual unit, in this case England, to reconsider the basis of its own long-assumed unity. In his inaugural speech as prime minister in 2019, Boris Johnson pledged in the House of Commons to make Britain great again. Going all in, as was his custom, he added that he would make Britain 'the greatest place on earth.'⁸⁰ Johnson's special foresight enabled him to see 'sunlit uplands'; his Churchillian leadership would carry the wholly United Kingdom into the promised land. The unspoken assumption was that a nebulous claim to future greatness was enough to unite the nation. None of these fanciful promises has materialised. Greatness, however defined, eludes us; no one has been able to glimpse the sunlit uplands, even with the finest telescope. The irony of Brexit is that, in trying to

79. An explanation of the Welsh vote and the subsequent change of opinion is given in chapter 6.

80. Johnson, 'I'll Make Britain Great Again.'

make Britain great again, the government has alienated parts of the United Kingdom that are integral to its constitutional unity and may even hasten the time when England becomes small again. Telescopes will then be redundant.

Conclusion: Signposts to the Past

At this point, readers may wonder why UNICEF is not already helping Britain's destitute children, why Oxfam is not supplementing existing food supplies, and why Doctors Without Borders has not been called in to rescue our existing health services from the desperate situation brought about by government parsimony. The explanation, of course, is that the failings in public policy and disparities in wealth described in this chapter have arisen in a country that has the sixth largest economy in the world, as measured by nominal GDP.⁸¹ Even though Britain has failed to keep pace with its neighbours and ranks tenth in terms of real GDP, it remains among the wealthiest nations. Yet, our relatively prosperous country has produced a society that exemplifies, in J. K. Galbraith's celebrated phrase, 'private affluence and public squalor', and in doing so has created a dystopia for huge sections of the population.⁸²

The citation of Galbraith is apposite because part of the explanation is that Britain has followed the United States closely not only in foreign affairs but also in domestic policies. We have absorbed the ethos of unfettered individualism and accepted uncritically a definition of economics that studies growth but omits welfare. The unwarranted implication is that opportunities do not have to be created because they are already there for those with the energy to take them. Government remains a

81. National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR) GDP Tracker; World Bank Open Data, GDP; Bolt and van Zanden, 'The Long View of Economic Growth', ch. 2, summarise the most relevant information. GDP is measured in three ways: output, expenditure, and income. The Office of National Statistics (ONS) publishes a single measure, which amalgamates all three. Other countries may use different measures, which can make international comparisons difficult.

82. Galbraith, *The Affluent Society*, ch. 18. Galbraith's book was written about the United States, but the phrase has been applied to other developed countries.

potentially tyrannical agent of oppression and needs to be restrained to the point where it has only a limited role in providing a basis that gives all citizens a chance to prosper. Unsurprisingly, inequality is much greater in the United States than in any other developed country. Alienation from politics and indeed from society is widespread and growing, as addiction to opioids testifies.

American influences reinforce others that are home-grown. A form of liberal individualism has been built into British values for centuries but was also consistent with a role for the state, as Adam Smith himself made clear. The task of political philosophers was to determine the balance between the two interests; that of politicians was to act within the described boundaries. Out of this discussion came the principle of British compromise, which was once a commonplace but has now lost its position in political discourse.

The chapters that follow will move from the present to the past to show how we arrived at the state we now live in. The lamentable condition of Britain described here was not a result of the inexplicable action of Tyche, the goddess of fortune, nor was it caused by the hand of God, stretched out in retribution for past sins. It was produced by the hand of man. We did it to ourselves.

INDEX

- Abbott, Diane, 172
absolute low income, 17, 20. *See also* income
Adam Smith Institute, 93, 138
Aden, 80
Afghanistan, 146–47
Africa, 72, 73
African National Congress, 112
Age of Excess, 127–34, 188, 199
Age of Misery, 189, 200
age of moderation, 199
Age of Neoliberalism, 126
agriculture, 47
alcohol-related disease, 210
Alston, Philip, 20
Amazon, 131–32, 217
amelioration, 25
The American Invaders (McKenzie), 50
The Americanisation of the World (Stead), 50
American Revolution, 45
Amsterdam, 19
Anglo-American agreement, 75–76
Anglo-Irish Agreement, 122
Anglo-Saxon alliance, 81
Anglo-Saxon capitalism, 212–13
Anglo-South African War, 49
antecedents, 65
anti-austerity movements, 169–70
anti-colonial nationalism, 52
anti-imperialism, 49n40
Antony, Mark, 48
apartheid, 111
Arab Spring, 172
Arconic, 14
Argentina, 40, 111, 130
aristocracy, 34, 36
Aristotle, 41
Arnold, Thomas, 33
aspiration, values of, 118
Assad, Bashar al-, 172
asset wealth, 136, 155, 198–99
attainment gap, 24–25
attainments, 65
Attlee, Clement, 59, 60, 94
audit culture, 137
austerity, 167–68, 169, 171, 173, 188, 200
Australia, 79n66, 80, 113
Austria, 18, 218
Austro-Hungary, 31

Bahamas, 105
Baker, Kenneth, 135
Balfour, Arthur, 50
Bandung Conference, 77
banking, 96–97, 104, 128–29, 165
Bank of England, 69–70, 91–92, 104, 105–6, 140, 144, 154, 168
barbarians, 85
Barclays, 162
Baring, Edward, 130
Barings, 130–31, 155
basophobia, 41
Belgium, 18, 32, 218
Berlin Wall, 42, 112
Betjeman, John, 53
Beveridge Report, 60, 63
Bevin, Ernest, 73, 75
Big Bang, 9, 106–8, 198
Big Brother, 10
big business, 213–14
Bigglesworth, John, 51
big government, following World War II, 59–60
Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME), in Parliament, 116, 183
Blair, Tony: comparison of, 126, 135; David Cameron as compared to, 171–72;

- Blair, Tony (*continued*)
influence of United States on, 150–51;
Operation Iraqi Freedom and, 147, 148;
overview of, 139, 199–200; pledge of, 145;
policies of, 155–56; special advisors
(SPADS) of, 151–52; Third Way of, 126;
wars of choice and, 146
- Bolshevik Revolution, 34
- borrowing, 144
- Bosnia, 137
- Bradford & Bingley, 162, 163
- Brave New World* (Huxley), 53
- Braverman, Suella, 16
- Bregret, 187
- Bretton Woods Agreement, 58, 62, 70, 71, 88,
90, 103–5, 197
- Brexit: Bruges speech and, 115; cartoon
regarding, 179; consequences of, 179;
disaffection following, 26; discontent and,
175; effects of, 218–19; geographic analysis
of, 174, 184; irony of, 26–27; leadership in,
176–82; London and, 181–82; national
identity and, 184, 189; Northern Ireland
and, 184–85; overview of, 189, 201; public
opinion of, 178; road to, 171–75; support
for, 13, 174–75, 201; voting for, 174
- Britain: as Airstrip One, 54; burden of
empire in, 41; changing character of,
11–16; changing course by, 77–78; climax
of, 51; as early start country, 31; end of
empire of, 78–81; fragility of, 1; future of,
202–19; geographical protection of, 38;
global mission of, *xxi*, 73–74; government
transition in, 31; imperial strategy of,
74–75; influence of, 46; as liberal market
economy (LME), 213; low growth of, *xix*;
North-South divide in, 122–23; overseas
empires of, *xxi*; post-war recovery of, 72,
74; publications regarding, *xix–xx*, *xxi*;
sense of community in, 215–16; studies of,
xx; as superior, 39, 41, 46, 48, 49; United
States alliance with, 110, 113, 145; United
States as compared to, 27; victories of, 1;
wider world of, 72–77; as world power,
39, 72–77
- British Nationality Act, 85, 113
- British Navy, 46
- Britishness, *xx*, 84, 85, 219
- British Rail, 138
- Brown, Gordon, 143–44, 163–64, 166, 199
- Buffett, Warren, 130
- Building Act of 1984, 101
- building industry, 22, 205
- Building Research Establishment (BRE),
14, 214–15
- Building Society Act of 1986, 97
- Bulgaria, 21–22
- burden of empire, 41
- bureaucracies, 101
- Burke, Edmund, 45, 54
- Burmese Days* (Orwell), 53–54
- buses, 3
- Bush, George H. W., 112
- Bush, George W., 146, 147, 159
- Byron, Lord, 35
- Byzantine agreement, 184–85
- Cadburys, 217
- Cambridge University, 41, 43
- Cameron, David, 14, 138, 166, 167–68, 171–72
- Canada, 49, 79n66, 80
- capitalism, 42, 53, 67, 110, 128, 166–71, 210,
212–213
- Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*
(Schumpeter), 54
- Carlyle, Thomas, 29, 33, 43, 46, 48, 54
- Carnegie, Andrew, 51
- Carnegie, Dale, 167
- Carrington, Lord, 40
- central government, loss of faith in, 26
- Centre for Policy Studies, 93
- Centre of Corruption, 15
- chemical weapons, 172
- Chilcot Report, 147
- children, 21, 23, 24, 59, 199
- Chile, 111
- China, 77, 78, 80, 113, 128, 159, 172
- Chinese Revolution, 78
- Churchill, Winston, 59
- Church of England, 37, 43, 84, 119, 218
- Citizens' Charter, 137–38
- City of London: asset wealth in, 198–99;
austerity and, 168; Brexit and, 181–82;
collapse of gentlemanly City in, 130–31;
Euromarket in, 104; European Union
(EU) viewpoint in, 174; as financial
centre, 197–98; financial challenges of, 52,
88; as financing world development, 31;

- global finance and, 53; gross domestic product (GDP) of, 19; honours in, 12; information and technology services (ITS) in, 182; interests of, 57; overview of, 68–71; as principal financial centre, 182; reinvention of, 88; Renaissance of, 103–9; revival of, xxii, 158; as Rome revival, 35; tax havens and, 216–17; as trade and finance hub, 37; wealth in, 9
- City of London Corporation, 70
- CityUK, 168
- civic humanism, 35, 42
- civic society, active participation in, 35–36
- civic virtue, 35, 42
- civilisations, cycle of, 39, 41
- class division, xxii, 118
- class system, 38
- Clegg, Nick, 166, 167
- Clinton, Bill, 137, 139
- coal mining industry, 100, 120
- Cold War, 61, 68, 71, 72, 75, 79, 111, 112, 124
- collective identity, 44
- Colonial Development & Welfare Act, 53
- colonial nationalists, 79–80
- Commission of Inquiry, 14
- Common Agricultural Policy, 114
- commonality, nationality and, 32
- Common Market, 64
- Commonwealth, 81, 111–12, 113, 145
- communitarianism, xxii–xxiii
- community, sense of, 8–10, 215–16
- Companies Act of 1947, 63n19
- competition, 63, 68
- compulsory globalisation, xxi, xxii, 57, 64, 145, 159, 196
- conciliation, 26
- “The Condition of England Question” (Carlyle), 29, 43, 46
- consensus thesis, 64–68, 87
- Conservative government/Conservative Party: austerity of, 175, 200; Brexit effectiveness and, 189; building industry and, 22; Cameron’s version of, 167; challenges to, 134; characteristics of, 56, 62; consequences of, 14–15; co-operative approach of, 65; dash for growth by, 91; decline of, 120; defeat of, 189; demographics of, 116; education of, 148; election of, 167; on European Economic Community (EEC), 81; function of, 34; goal of, 87; London and, 69; loss of, 139; in the 1970s, 90; One Nation Tories and, xxi–xxii (*see also* One Nation Tories); priorities of, 72; reforms of, 65; statistics of, 148, 152; support for, 34; support for Thatcher in, 117; takeover of, 166; transition of, 11; underwriting commitment of, 76; unity of, 173; wealthy in, 83
- Constantinople, 35
- construction industry, 37, 205
- contraception, 118
- co-ordinated market economies (CMEs), 212–13, 214, 215, 216
- Corbyn, Jeremy, 172–73
- Corn Laws, 47
- corporations, 213–14
- corruption, 15, 40
- Corruption Perceptions Index, 15
- cosmopolitanism, 146
- Costa Rica, 1, 208
- council tax, 135–36
- COVID-19 pandemic, 176–77
- credit, 101, 132
- crime, 3
- crisis, 45–55, 92–93. *See also specific instances*
- Crosland, Anthony, 67
- cyclical theories, 39, 41
- cynicism, 14
- Cyprus, 80
- Darling, Alistair, 161
- Darwin, Charles, 126
- Data Protection Act, 143
- death rate, 22
- deaths of despair, 210
- debt, British, 40, 51–52, 61, 70, 75, 144
- decline, quote regarding, 39
- declinism, 57, 64
- decolonisation: completion of, 87–88; defined, xxii; detachment in, 85; development of, 41; effects of, 85, 196; financial, 88; as incentive, 197; independence of India and, 73; international exchange and, 159; loss of control in, 26; managed, 72; pressure from US regarding, 87; progress of, 79; significance of, xxi; trends of, 72; as world revolution, 78

- defence spending, 76
deference, xxii, 118
Defoe, Daniel, 40
de-globalisation, 52
deindustrialisation, xxiii, 99–100, 121, 152, 197
Delors, Jacques, 114–15
democracy, 13, 50
Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), 185
demos, 31, 33, 35, 191
Denmark, 3, 18, 216
deprivation, 23, 24, 25
deregulation: benefits of, 128; of building industry, 22; consequences of, 10; consistency of, 164; under David Cameron, 168; under Margaret Thatcher, 113, 164 (*see also* Thatcher, Margaret); New York Stock Exchange and, 108; open economy of, 109; as phase, 194; policies for, 96–97, 101; power of the City and, 133; principle of, 138; recommendations for, 113; in Scotland, 121; validation of, xxii; volatility and, 132
Deregulation Act, 168
derivatives, 129–30
destitution, 17–25
devolution, 120, 143, 153, 154, 155, 157, 199
Dickens, Charles, 46–47
Dilke, Charles, 49, 51, 54
discontent, 72
Disraeli, Benjamin, 16, 198, 200
disunity, 25–27
doctors, 4
dominions, 73–74, 79, 79n66, 80
Dorling, Danny, xix
Dorries, Nadine, 15
dot-com boom, 131–32, 155
drug overdoses, 210
Dublin, Ireland, 181
Dunn, Joan Hunter, 53
duplicity, 147
duty, 36, 157

'Eat Out to Help Out' policy, 177
economic crisis of the 1930s, 52
economic crisis of the 1990s, 130
economy: adversity of, 72; balance of payments in, 61–62; decline of, 19, 88; deregulation and, 109; global mission and, 74; government intervention in, 61; growth of, 57, 62–63, 64, 127; integration of, 159; managed, 60; mixed, 66; in the 1970s, 92; open, 109; policies for, 96–97; recovery of, 77; rehabilitation of, 78; as shaping morality, 95; siege, 62; stability of, 129; stop-go policies for, 70; welfare and, 66
Eden, Anthony, 97
Edgerton, David, xx1
education, 5–6, 24, 38
Education Act of 1944, 62, 195
Egremont, Charles, 190
elections, xxiii, 11, 13, 33, 93, 183–84, 218n58
elective globalisation, xxi, xxii, 57, 64, 145, 149, 196, 202
elites: changes to, 148; corruption of, 150; in the Establishment, 33–42, 55; ethos of, 11; as governing, 82–86; gradual evolution of, 149; in House of Commons, 150; institutional support for, 37; in Parliament, xxiii, 33; paternal principles of, 36; political, 37; power, 116; prejudice of, 95; as replacing authority of landowners, 33; taxation and, 135–36; world development view of, 34
Elizabeth (Queen of England), 84
Elizabethan Age, 84
Empire-Commonwealth, 78
Employment Relations Act, 143
England, 23, 42, 43. *See also specific locations*
English: as Brexiteers, 189; classes of, 36; elites as, 33; as falling behind, 154; gentleman, 40; identity of, xxiii, 42, 43, 45, 155, 174, 219; proletariat, 37; regions of, 199, 218; rule of, 54; selectors as, 44
English Defence League, 169–70
English gentleman, 36, 40
Enlightenment, 35, 39
Enron, 130
entitlement, 11, 157
Environmental Agency, 13–14
Equal Pay Act of 1970, 118
Establishment, 33–42, 55, 117
Ethiopia, 111
Eurobonds, 103, 104–5
Eurodollar, 71, 81, 103, 104–5, 197–98
Euromarket, 103, 104
Europe: as agricultural society, 31; British influence in, 46; hope in, 80; protectionist

- policies in, 49; upheavals in, 34.
See also specific locations
- European Economic Area (EEA), 181
- European Economic Community (EEC):
benefits of, 92; Britain's membership in, 57, 80–81, 88, 197; changes to, 136; export statistics and, 78; impacts of, 108; policies of, 114; productivity and, 101
- European Monetary Union (EMU), 180
- European Union (EU): austerity response of, 173; benefits to, 175; criticism of Britain's membership in, 172–73; leave campaign of, 175; origin of, 136; as principal investor, 109; public opinion regarding, 145–46; remain campaign of, 175; renegotiation of Britain's membership in, 173; Tony Blair and, 145. *See also* Brexit
- Eurocepticism, 136–37, 156, 173
- evangelical movement, 37
- Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM), 134
- exchange rates, 62
- exports: boost to, 75–76; from China, 159; decline of, 52, 80; to Empire-Commonwealth, 78; European Economic Community (EEC) control of, 114; replacement of, 88; statistics of, 74, 78; in Sterling Area, 74; of Wales, 187
- Factory Acts, 47
- fairness principle, 60
- Falkland Islands, 40, 111, 112–13
- family relations, 205
- Fascist government, 52
- Fawkes, Guy, 8
- Federal Reserve Bank, 144, 161
- fertility, 23
- 15-minute cities, 215–16
- Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), 215
- financial crash of 2008, 158, 159–63, 170–71, 193, 202
- financial crisis, 51, 132. *See also specific instances*
- financial sector/finance and services sector: decline of, in Britain, 40; deregulation and, 133; expansion of, 118; innovation of, 129–30; permanent position of, 126–27; Renaissance of, 103–9; shift to, xxi, xxii, 106; unregulation of, 155
- Financial Services Authority (FSA), 140, 165
- Finland, 18, 216
- fiscal unity, 32
- FitzGerald, Garret, 122
- flags, national, 32
- food banks, 21, 201
- foreign direct investment (FDI), 109
- foreign investment, 109
- fragility of state, 1
- France: Anglo-Saxon alliance and, 81; British defeat of, 46; gentlemen in, 36; gross domestic product (GDP) of, 18; investment in, 205; as late-start country, 31; productivity in, 102, 171, 198; protectionist policies of, 59; in Seven Years' War, 45; strikes and protests in, 91; taxation in, 216
- Freedom Index, 210
- Freedom of Information Act, 143
- Freedom of Information requests, 13–14
- free trade, 52, 53, 184–85
- French National Assembly, 145
- French Revolution, 30, 45
- The Future of Socialism* (Crosland), 67
- Gaddafi, Muammar, 172
- Galbraith, J. K., 27
- Galtieri, Leopoldo, 112
- Gandhi, Indira, 113
- Gandhi, Mahatma, 52
- Gaskell, Elizabeth, 47
- Gaulle, Charles de, 81
- gentlemen, characteristics of, 36
- Geoghegan, Peter, xx
- George, Lloyd, 120, 144
- George III, 45
- Germany: austerity in, 171; as co-ordinated market economy (CME), 213; doctors in, 4; Fascist government in, 52; as federation, 218; gross domestic product (GDP) of, 18, 19; health conditions in, 4; hospitals in, 4; inflation policies of, 91n5; investment in, 205; as late-start country, 31; productivity in, 102, 171, 198; protectionist policies of, 59; taxation in, 136, 216; trains in, 3; unification of, 115, 134; United States unification with, 48; welfare system in, 32

- Gershwin, George, 166
Gibbon, Edward, 34–35, 39, 45, 48
Gini coefficient, 118, 128, 204, 208
globalisation: compulsory to elective, xxi, xxii, 57, 64, 196; elective, 159, 202; financing of, 69; policy decisions from, 163; postcolonial, 77; post-imperial, 145; reverse trade and, 152; tax havens and, 217
glory, desire for, 52
Golden Age, xxii, 57–64, 86, 196
Good Friday Agreement, 122, 153, 184
Google, 131–32, 217
Gorbachev, Mikhail, 115–16
government: loss of faith in, 26; by oligarchy, 33; oppression from, 28; reforms of, 48; taxation return from, 32; transition of, 31
government-directed investment, 163
The Grapes of Wrath (Steinbeck), 54
Grayling, Christopher, 15
Great Britain, 42–43, 155
great divergence, 159
Greater Britain (Dilke), 49
Greater London Authority, 153
Great Moderation, 126, 127–34
Great Society (United States), 110, 214
Greece, 35
Greek classics, 34–35, 42
Greek language, 34–35
Greens, 187
Greenspan, Alan, 163
Grenada, 111
Grenfell Tower, 14, 22, 168, 214–15
gross domestic product (GDP): of Britain, 18; comparisons of, 18; in co-ordinated market economies (CMEs), 216; following Brexit, 179; growth of, 92, 103, 124, 127, 198; improvements in, 180; measurement of, 27n81; in the 1970s, 92; overview of, 211–12; payments as percentage of, 61–62; recalculation of, 18; rise of, 17; stabilisation of, 170
guardians, characteristics of, 55
Guernsey, 181
Gulf War, 137

Hammond, Philip, 142
happiness, 192n6
Hard Times (Dickens), 46–47

Hardy, Oliver, 6
Harris, Kamala, 210n35
Hayek, Frederick, 95–96
HBOS, 162, 165
health, 4, 21
health care, 171, 209
health insecurity, 210
Heath, Edward, 81, 83
Henty, G. A., 35, 51
heroism, 36
Heseltine, Michael, 135, 136
hierarchical society, xxii, 34
hierarchy, 36, 38
higher education, 6
Hillary, Edmund, 84
Homebuilders' Federation, 68n34
Home Countries, 198–99, 203
homelessness, 20–21, 201
home ownership, 13, 24–25, 129, 206
home rule, 120
Home Secretaries, 3
homicides, 3
Hong Kong, 113
honour, xxiii, 12–13, 16, 36, 42, 157, 189
honours, 10, 12
hope, 24
hospitals, 4, 5
House of Commons: advancement in, 11–12; changes to, 47, 82–83; corruption in, 15, 40, 150; diversity in, 11, 34; elites in, xxiii, 150; influence of, 45; Palace of Westminster of, 7–8; pressures on, 47; report from, 20. *See also* Parliament
House of Commons Committee, 7–8
House of Lords, 143. *See also* Parliament
housing: attainment gap in, 24–25; crisis of, in the United States, 160–61; decline of, 22; deregulation and, 101; income and, 204; investment in, 206; moderation in, 160; policies for, 97–98; statistics of, 204; subprime mortgages in, 161
Housing Act of 1980, 97, 129
HSBC, 162
hubris, 76–77
human capital, 207
Human Development Index (HDI), 211–12
Human Freedom Index, 210
Humberside, 171
Hungary, 22, 115

- Hussein, Saddam, 147
Huxley, Aldous, 53
- Iceland, 171
ideal citizen, qualities of, 36
ideology, innovations of, xxiii
Ig Nobel Prize, 130
immorality, 95
imperialism, 49
imports, 146
improvement, 39
incarceration, 3, 4
income: absolute low, 17, 20; comparisons of, 18–19; decline of, 6, 20; distribution of, 18–19; equality, 117–18; of executives, 9; following Brexit, 179; in Golden Age, 58; growth of, 127, 129; housing prices and, 204; increase of, 102; inequality of, 19, 34, 118; minimum income standard (MIS), 21; minimum wage and, 142; policies for, 97; relative low, 17; statistics of, 205–6; in the United States, 208
India, 52, 72, 73, 77, 79n66, 113
individualism, xxii–xxiii, 9, 118, 157, 194
industrialisation, 49
industrial revolution, 31–32, 38
industry, impacts of, 31
inefficiency, 63
inequality: cartoon regarding, 107; damage from, 203–4; to destitution, 17–25; Gini coefficient of, 128; growth of, xxiii; health of society and, 192–93, 203–4; history of, 204; of incomes, 19, 34, 118; increase of, 128; productivity and, 205; regional, 128, 133; social, 133; taxation and, 136; in the United States, 28, 208, 211; of wealth, 34; widening, 194, 199
infant survival rates, 23
inflation, 58, 90, 91, 95
information and communications technology (ICT), 205
information and technology services (ITS), 182
infrastructure, 2–8
ING, 130
innovations, xxiii, 207
interest rates, 70, 91, 98–99, 132, 134, 161
internal colonialism, 43
international finance, 104
internationalism, 85
International Monetary Fund (IMF), 71, 92
interwar period, 40
investment: in British-registered companies, 138; derivatives in, 129–30; following Brexit, 180; in human capital, 207; lack of, 205–6; long-term, 207–8; overseas, 132; self-sufficiency and, 207; shortage in, 207; short-termism of, 207; statistics of, 127, 205
Iran, 80
Iraq, 147–48
Iraq War, 172
Ireland, 42, 44
Irish Free State, 79n66
Irish Republican Army (IRA), 121
iron law, 33
Isle of Man, 181
Italy, 31, 52
- Japan, 80
Jarndyce v Jarndyce, 3
Jersey, 181
Johnson, Boris: characteristics of, 178; corruption and, 15; COVID-19 pandemic and, 177; election of, 176; interests of, 42; leave campaign of, 173; mission of, 26; Parliament under, 201; promises of, 178; prophecies of, 3–4; support for, 178
Johnson, Lyndon, 110, 214
Joseph, Keith, 93–94, 95, 124, 197
Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 20
- Keeler, Christine, 40
Kerviel, Jérôme, 131
Keynes, John Maynard, 60–61, 110
Keynesianism, 70, 98–99, 109
Khmer Rouge, 111
Kingdom of Great Britain, 42
knowledge economy, 6
Korean War, 78
Kosovo, 145
Kuwait, 137
- labour force, decline of, 139
Labour government/Labour Party: acceptance of, 87; ambition of, 194; Bank of England and, 140; bank support of, 167; burden of empire of, 73; challenges

- Labour government/Labour Party
(*continued*)
of, 64; characteristics of, 87; demographics of, 116; desperation of, 154; devolution and, 154; disillusion of, 175; doubts of, 57; economic challenges of, 117; election manifesto of, 153; election of, 82, 139; on European Union (EU), 172–73; evolution of, 67; factions in, 117; in financial crash of 2008, 163–64; foundation of, 48; goal of, 87; growth of, 34; India and, 73; innovations of, 59; London and, 69; loss of support for, 148; manifesto of, 59; manufacturing plan of, 63; market model and, 128; middle class in, 83; moral economy of, 195; in the 1970s, 90, 91–92; priorities of, 72; productivity of, 170–71; radicalism of, 194; referendums of, 120; reforms of, 60, 65, 66–67; regional discontent and, 153; responsibilities of, 41; social democracy programme of, xxi, 194, 195; statistics of, 152; Thatcherite policies and, 140–41; transition of, 11; underwriting commitment of, 76; working class and, 195
- Land Compensation Act, 66, 97–98, 206
landed gentry, 33
landed interest, 46, 48
land ownership, 65–66
Latin America, 78
Latin language, 34–35, 41–42
Laurel, Stan, 6
Layard, Richard, 192n6
Leeson, Nick, 130, 131
legal system, 3–4
Lehman Brothers, 161
lending, 91, 96–97
Lenin, Vladimir, 202
Liberal Democrats, 166–67
liberal market economies (LMEs), 212–13, 215
Liberal Party, 34, 48, 195
liberty, 35
Libya, 111, 172
life expectancy, 24, 171, 201
limited franchise, 38
Lithuania, 21–22
Little Englanders, 201
Lloyds, 162, 163, 165
Local Government Finance Act, 97
London Fire Brigade, 14
London Stock Exchange (LSE), 108
London Stock Market, 132
London Underground, 141
Louisiana Purchase, 130
loyalty, 44
lumpers, 126
Lytton, Ord, 48
- Macaulay, Thomas, 1
Macmillan, Harold, 41, 63, 66, 80, 94, 97–98, 132–33
maintenance, lack of funding for, 5
Major, John, 126, 134–39, 155, 156, 199
Malaysia, 79–80
malnutrition, 22
Mandela, Nelson, 112
manual workers, 116, 149
manufacturing industry: decline of, in
 Britain, 40, 68, 101, 118, 124, 198;
 investment in, 207; in Northern Ireland,
 122; productivity in, 101–2; shift from,
 xxi, xxii, 106; statistics of, 127
market: mortgage, 97
market individualism, 113
market model of higher education, 6
markets: boom of, 129, 132; drivers of, 132;
 intervening in, 163–65; managed
 imperfection of, 192; principles of, 155; as
 unforgiving god, 42; volatility of, 128
Marshall Aid, 58, 71, 74, 76
Marx, Karl, xxiii, 32, 48, 88
maternity leave, 21
Mau Mau uprising, 80
Mauritius, 1
May, Theresa, 176
McGarvey, Darren, xx
McKenzie, Frederick Arthur, 50
mechanical age, spirit of, 29
Members of Parliament (MPs): benefits to,
 12; Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic
 (BAME) as, 183; in business, 149;
 corruption in, 15, 16; demographics of, 83,
 116, 148–49; diversity in, 149; education
 of, 83, 116, 148; indulgence of, 16; manual
 workers in, 82, 149; professional
 backgrounds of, 148–49; representation
 by, 13; in service sector, 149; statistics of,
 83, 149; women as, 83, 116, 149, 183;
 working class as, 83. *See also* Parliament

- mental illness, 201
merit, distribution of, 12–13
Michels, Robert, 33
middle class, 32, 33–34, 83, 118
Middle East, 73, 78, 88, 90, 147
The Middle Way (Macmillan), 66
migration, 180
Miliband, Ed, 172
military, resources for, 110–11
Mill, John Stuart, 33, 191
Mills, C. Wright, 116
minimalist state, 96
minimum income standard (MIS), 21
minimum wage, 142, 156
minorities, in Parliament, 116, 183
modernisation, 121
monarchy: allegiance to, 43; changing role of, 37; elevation, 37; importance of, 46; loosening of, 119–20; as national unity symbol, 37; popularity of, 84; symbolism of, 46; weakening of, 218
monetarism, 98–99
monetary policy, 134
monopolies, 54
Montenegro, 21–22
Montesquieu, 36, 52
moral economy, xxii, 60, 94, 149, 195, 198–99
moral hazard, 166
Morley, Stephen, 190
mortgage bonds, 159–60
mortgage market, 97
Mosca, Gaetano, 33
Mount Everest, 84
Munich, Germany, 19
Murdoch-Rothermere press, 146

Nairn, Tom, xx
nanny state, 21, 191
Napoleonic wars, 84
nation, defined, 84n77
National Assembly, 154
National Audit Office, 5
national flags, 32
National Health Service (NHS), 4, 62, 65, 195
national identity: current, 219; following Brexit, 182–88; nationalism and, 199; overview of, 42–45, 82–86; political power and, 116–23, 148–55, 182–88; as taken for granted, 44–45
nationalisation, 65–66, 67, 69–70, 140
nationalism: effects of, 199; of Margaret Thatcher, 89, 109, 112, 113, 120, 124, 199; movements of, 77; in Northern Ireland, 25, 85
Nationalists, 153, 154
nationality, commonality and, 32
National Life and Character (Pearson), 50
national security, 60
national unity, 56–57, 152, 157
natural resources, 74
nemesi, 76–77
neoliberalism, 42, 110, 110n69, 123, 126, 142, 156, 213
Netherlands, 18, 19, 32, 131
New Corruption, 191
New Deal (United States), 59–60, 109–10, 214
Newfoundland, 79n66
New Labour, 16, 133–34, 140, 142–43, 156
New Right, 96, 100
Newton, Scott, xxi
New York City, 53
New York Stock Exchange, 108
New Zealand, 79n66
Nice Work If You Can Get It (Gershwin), 166
Niskanen, William, 137
Nordic region, 216
North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), 72
North-East Region, 155
Northern Ireland: Brexit consequences in, 184–85, 201; Brexit viewpoint in, 26; constitutional reform and, 26; devolution and, 199; devolving power to, 153; European Union (EU) viewpoint in, 174, 184–85; Margaret Thatcher and, 121–22; National Assembly in, 154; nationalism of, 25, 85; Nationalists in, 154; transfer of power to, 218; Unionists in, 154; violence in, 153
Northern Ireland Assembly, 153, 185
Northern Ireland Protocol, 184
Northern Rock, 161–62, 163
North Pole, 51
North Sea oil, 92, 121, 153
Norway, 1
Nott, John, 40

- obesity, 21
obsolescence, 41
occupational change, 182–83
Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR), 179, 201
offshore funding, 105
oil, 90, 91, 92, 121, 153
Old Corruption, 47, 191
One Nation Conservative, 135
One Nation Tories: characteristics of, 56; Conservatives and, 65; convergence of, 195–96; eclipse of, 117; influence of, 83; in John Major's government, 156; promotion of, 135; support from, xxi–xxii; transition of, 11
Operation Enduring Freedom, 146–47
Operation Iraqi Freedom, 147–48
oppression, 55
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 154
Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), 78
Orwell, George, 53–54, 203
overseas investments, 69, 77–78
Oxbridge, 39, 116, 148, 182
Oxford University, 41, 43

Pakistan, 111
Palace of Westminster, 6–8
Pareto, Vilfredo, 33
Parliament: allegiance to, 43; corruption in, 40; demographics of, 83, 116, 156–57, 200; diversity in, 11; elites in, xxiii, 33; hierarchy in, 34; landed interest in, 46; middle-class in, 33–34; Palace of Westminster of, 7–8; political elite in, xxiii; public opinion of, 15, 152, 183, 201; purging of, 176; reputation of, 201. *See also* House of Commons; House of Lords; Members of Parliament (MPs)
Parliamentary Party, 176
paternalism, 11
patriotism, 36
peace settlement, 46
Pearson, Charles H., 50
Peel, Sir Robert, 47
personal allowances, 168
Pinochet, Augusto, 111
Plaid Cymru, 120, 187

Plato, 55
plutocracy, 191, 203
plutocrat, 36
Poland, 1, 3, 22
political activism, 152
political appointees, 151–52
political hierarchy, xxii, xxiii
political parties, 11, 13. *See also specific parties*
political power, 136, 148–55, 182–88, 218
political system, 11, 31
poll tax, 120, 135
populist nationalism, 191, 210
Portugal, 31, 32
postcolonial globalisation, 77–78
potholes, 2
poverty: burden of guilt of, 25; consequences of, 204; as endemic, 47; increase of, 118, 199; statistics of, 20, 192, 205–6; in the United States, 208, 211
Powell, Baden, 51
Powell, Enoch, 73, 85
power, 11, 12, 34
prison reform, 3
private enterprise, 101
Private Financial Initiative (PFI), 137–38, 141, 155, 207–8
private profit, 8–10
privatisation: of building industry, 22; consequences of, 9, 156; effects of, 208; as phase, 194; policies for, 101, 132–33; promotion of, xxiii; of public industries, 9; of Royal Mail, 10; undervalue in, 141; validation of, xxii; of water services, 9–10
privilege, 11, 12, 37
probity, 15
productivity: decline of, 198; gap of, 124, 170–71, 198; improvements in, 180; inequality and, 205; low, 138–39; statistics of, 101–2
Profumo, John, 40
progress, 39
proletariat, 37
property, 129, 132
property-owning democracy, 133
prosperity, 127
Protestantism, 46
protests, 91
Prussia, 31
Public Accounts Committee, 5, 7

- public buildings, neglect and underfunding for, 5
- public libraries, 24
- public morality, 40
- public provision, 2–8
- public schools, 5–6, 39, 43
- public sector/public service: comparison of treatment of, 215; competition in, 101; cuts to, 168; decline of, 8–10; investment in, 94; Members of Parliament (MPs) in, 149; paid holidays in, 143, 156, 209; policies for, 100–101; privatisation of, 141; reform of, 137; in Scotland, 121; statistics of, 127
- public transportation, 2–3
- purchasing power parity (PPP), 17
- quantitative easing, 168
- racism, 49
- rail industry, 138, 155
- Rates Act, 97
- rationing, 61–62
- Reagan, Ronald, 109–10, 122, 127–28
- Reaganomics, 198
- real household disposable incomes (RHDI), 92
- rebuilding, lack of funding for, 5
- Rees-Mogg, Jacob, 15, 184
- Regional Assemblies, 153, 154–55
- Regional Development Agencies, 153, 154–55
- relative low income, 17
- Renaissance, 35
- Renan, Ernest, 44, 219
- research, funding lack in, 207
- Research and Development (R&D), 205
- Resolution Foundation, xix
- retrenchment, 170
- revolutions, 30–33, 34
- Rhenish capitalism, 110, 212–213
- rickets, 22
- Roman Empire, 34–35
- Roosevelt, Franklin, 59–60, 109–10, 214
- rough sleeping, 20–21
- Royal Bank of Scotland, 162, 163, 165
- Royal Mail, 10
- Russia, 32, 202
- Russian Revolution, 30
- Salisbury, Lord, 48
- sanctions, 111, 112
- Sands, Bobby, 122
- San Francisco, 19
- Saxondom, 49, 50–51
- scandals, 13
- Scandinavia, 136
- Schumpeter, Joseph, 54, 60–61
- Schutter, Olivier de, 20
- Scotland: as accessory, 44; alienation of, xxiii; Brexit consequences in, 185–86, 201; Brexit viewpoint in, 26; constitutional reform and, 26; deindustrialisation in, 133; devolution and, 153, 199; discontent in, 153; divisions in, 85; economy of, 186–87; European Union (EU) viewpoint in, 174, 184; growth of, 37; Margaret Thatcher and, 120–21; nationalism of, 25, 219; Scottish National Party (SNP) in, 154; suicide in, 23; trade and, 186–87; transfer of power to, 218; union of, 42
- Scott, Walter, 35
- Scottish National Party (SNP), 121, 154, 186
- Scottish Parliament, 153, 186
- scurvy, 22
- Sedwill, Mark, 15
- self-exploitation, 8
- Self-Help* (Smiles), 35–36
- self-preservation, 13
- self-sacrifice, 36
- self-sufficiency, 207
- Selling the Georgian silver concept, 138
- semi-monopolies, 9
- semi-privatisation, 6
- Serbia, 137
- Seven Years' War, 38, 45
- Shakespeare, William, 42
- shares of employment, 99
- short-termism, 207
- Silicon Glen, 133
- single market, 114–15
- Single Market and Customs Union, 180
- Sinn Féin, 185
- Smiles, Samuel, 35–36
- Smith, Adam, 28
- social cohesion, 118
- social democracy, xxi, 55, 56, 66, 84, 86, 117, 194

- Social Democratic Party (SDP), 117
social improvement, 118
socialism, 38, 42, 67, 81, 94
Société Générale, 131
sociopolitical order, 34
Somalia, 1
South Africa, 72, 79n66, 112
Southeast Asia, 73
Soviet Union, 75, 79, 87, 117, 128, 134
Spain, 1, 31, 32, 52
special advisors (SPADS), 151–52
Spengler, Oswald, 41
spin doctors, 150–51
splitters, 126
Square Mile, 70
stagflation, 91
Stalin, Joseph, 79
Starmer, Keir, 16n38
Stead, William Thomas, 50
Stead forecast, 50
Steinbeck, John, 54
sterling: as convertible, 104; crisis of, 91–92, 99; decline of, 88; devaluation of, 75–76; overvalue of, 75; overview of, 68–71; relaunching of, 88
Sterling Area, 52, 62, 69; benefits of, 196; Cold War and, 75; disbanding of, 71, 88; exports in, 74; function of, 70; increase to, 76; maintenance of, 72; post-war recovery role of, 74; shrinking of, 80
stop-go policies, 70
strikes, 8, 91, 100, 120
Suez Canal, 80
suicide, 3, 4, 22–23, 171, 201, 210
Sunak, Rishi, 177, 216
Sweden, 18, 213
Swift, Dean, 180
Switzerland, 18, 213
Syria, 172

Taliban, 147
taxation: boom from, 134; in co-ordinated market economies (CMEs), 216; credits for, 156; cuts of, 168; dilemma regarding, 135–36; failure of, 48; favor in, 138; function of, 32; policies for, 101; poll, 120; progressive regime of, 62
tax havens, 105–6, 118, 133, 181, 216–17
taxis, 3

technology, improvements in, 62–63
teenagers, well-being of, 23–24
Tenzing, Sherpa, 84
terrorism, 148
‘Test and Trace’ policy, 177
Thatcher, Margaret: apartheid and, 111; background of, 95; Bruges speech of, 115; Cold War and, 111, 124; Commonwealth and, 111–12; consequences of, 198; criticism of, 132–33; deregulation and, 113, 164; election of, 197; European Economic Community (EEC) and, 114; finance and services sector and, 103–9; foreign policy of, 109, 111, 112, 113; on Germany, 115; ideological revolution of, 93–96; influence of, 126; influences to, 95; John Nott and, 40; Keith Joseph and, 93; legacy of, 56, 97, 134, 198; Mikhail Gorbachev and, 115–16; minimalism of, 117; nationalism of, 89, 109, 112, 113, 120, 124, 199; negotiations of, 114; New Labour and, 140; Northern Ireland and, 121–22; overview of, 123–25; policies of, 89, 96–103, 117–18, 121, 123, 124–25; principles of, 95, 99; property-owning democracy of, 133; rise to power by, xxii; sanctions and, 111; Scotland and, 120–21; single market and, 114–15; successes of, 123, 124–25, 127–28; support for, 96; unpopularity of, 120; Wales and, 120; wider world and, 109–16
Thatcherism, 93–96, 123, 126, 133
The Thick of It (TV show), 151
Third Way, 126
Thomas Water, 9–10
Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents (Burke), 45
Tocqueville, Alexis de, 33, 36
Town and Country Planning Act, 66
Toynbee, Arnold, 41
Toynbee Hall, 40
trade, 65, 77–78, 80, 179, 186–87
Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA), 181
trade unions, 101, 118
trains, 2–3
Transparency International, 15
transportation, hazards of, 2–3
triple lock, 168

- Troubles, 85
Truman Declaration, 75
Trump, Donald, xxiii, 178, 210n35
Truss, Liz, 177
tulip mania (Netherlands), 131
tyranny of the majority, 191
- unemployment: in Golden Age, 58;
immorality of, 95; interest rates and, 70;
in interwar years, 195; in manufacturing
industry, 101; policies for, 99–100, 101, 121;
prevention of, 61; rise of, 124; risks from,
171; statistics of, 170
- Unionists, 153, 154
unions, 100, 116
United Arab Emirates, 114
United Kingdom, 102, 184
United Kingdom Independence Party
(UKIP), 170, 173, 174, 188, 201
United Kingdom of Great Britain and
Ireland, 42
United Nations, 77
United Nations Development Programme,
211
United States: as agricultural society, 31;
anti-colonial policy of, 74–75; as arsenal
of democracy, 110; big business in,
213–14; Britain as compared to, 27;
British alliance with, 110, 113, 145; British
debt to, 40, 51–52, 61; British settlement
with, 46; Chinese capital in, 159;
concerns of, 92; cost concerns in, 208–9;
country links with, 80; deaths of despair
in, 210; deficits of, 159; distribution
problem in, 191; election demographics
in, 210n35; exports of, 52–53; financial
closeness with Britain and, 160; foreign
policy of, 111; German unification with,
48; as global power, 212; Great Society in,
110, 214; gross domestic product (GDP)
of, 18, 19; Gulf War and, 137; health care
in, 209; health insecurity in, 210; housing
market crisis in, 160–61; income in, 208;
inequality in, 28, 208, 211; influence of, 28,
110; job insecurity in, 210; junior ally of,
81; as late-start country, 31; as liberal
market economy (LME), 213; material
improvements by, 59; mortgage bonds of,
159–60; national security of, 60; New
Deal in, 59–60, 109–10, 214; paid holidays
in, 209; poverty in, 208, 211; as principal
investor, 109; productivity in, 102, 171;
protectionist policies in, 49, 59; public
service in, 211; reliance on Britain by, 46;
salaries in, 6; strikes and protests in, 91;
superiority of, 128; taxation in, 136; USSR
competition with, 79; Vietnam War cost
to, 103, 197; War on Terror and, 172; wars
of choice of, 146–47; welfare in, 211; as
world power, 195
- unity, 44, xxii
universal credit, 20
universities: comparison of, 6; fees of, 116,
141, 156, 167, 215; Members of Parliament
education in, 11, 148, 182
University of Sussex, 15
US dollar, 71, 90, 103, 159
- Versailles Treaty, 53
Vico, Giambattista, 39
Victoria (Queen of England), 37
Victorian Gothic style of churches, 37
Vietnam, 71
Vietnam War, 90, 103, 197
Villa Tories, 34
VIP Lane, 177
volatility, 132
- Wales: as accessory, 44; alienation of, xxiii;
Brexit consequences in, 187, 201; Brexit
viewpoint in, 26; constitutional reform
and, 26; devolution and, 199; devolution
in, 153; devolving power to, 153;
discontent in, 153; divisions in, 85;
European Union (EU) viewpoint in, 174;
exports of, 187; incorporation of, 42;
Margaret Thatcher and, 120; nationalism
of, 25, 219; referendum in, 154; suicide in,
23; transfer of power to, 218; Welsh
Assembly in, 154
- war, 38, 76, 146–47. *See also specific wars*
Ward, Stuart, xx
warfare state, defined, 76
War on Terror, 172
water services, privatisation of, 9–10
Wavell, Archibald, 53
wealth, 19, 34, 118, 136
Weber, Max, 32

- Weetabix, 217
- welfare/welfare system: consequences of, xix–xx, 8; cuts to, 171; economic policy and, 66; expansion of, 195; gross domestic product (GDP) and, 17; origin of, 32; popularity of, 62; reform of, 100; survival of, 65; transition to, 47; in the United States, 211
- well-being, 23–24, 217–18
- Welsh National Assembly, 153, 154
- West Germany, 91
- West Midlands, 174
- Wilde, Oscar, 14, 38
- Williamson, Gavin, 15
- Wilson, Harold, 67, 80, 81, 83, 121–22
- Windrush generation, 85
- Windsor Framework, 185
- winter of discontent, 92
- women, 83, 86, 116, 118, 149, 183
- Woodhill Prison, Milton Keynes, 4
- working class, 83, 118, 142–43, 156, 193, 195
- World Bank, 159
- world spirit, 41
- World War I, 51, 195
- World War II, 38, 53, 59, 84, 195
- World Wide Web, 131
- Yorkshire, 171