



UNIVERSITY OF ICELAND

# Is Thatcherism Conservatism?

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World-Historical Figures





Three who  
Made a  
Difference





## The Critics are Right that ...

- Thatcherism is the support of strong state and free market
- Programme is transfer of decisions from state to market
- It is also about control of the state
- Thatcherism, unlike e.g. American libertarianism, not hostile to the state



# The Critics are Wrong that ...

- There is something anti-democratic to it
- Democracy is not government by the people: it is the regular opportunity to change your rulers peacefully if you are unhappy with them
- Market is not a force, or an entity, or an agent: it is the way in which people resolve their affairs by voluntary transactions
- Transfer from state to market not transfer from people to capitalists: it is transfer from bureaucrats and politicians to taxpayers and consumers

# Thatcherism was a Success

- Cambridge economists: Size of government same in 1990 as in 1979
- Response: Yes, but this was success, stopping the expansion of government
- Cambridge economists: Rate of economic growth no greater than in other periods
- Response: Main point that 1982–2008 healthy economic growth (save two years) and relative decline of the UK stopped
- Faster economic growth in the UK than in Germany, France, or the US



# Strong State, but Limited, Protecting Liberties





# Patriotism and Economic Freedom





# Burke's words of wisdom

- 'A state without the means of some change is without the means of its conservation. Without such means it might even risk the loss of that part of the constitution which it wished the most religiously to preserve.'
- Thatcher implemented great changes. But she did so in order to preserve traditional liberties, not to reconstruct society on ideological lines







They won the Cold War



# Summing up

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Thatcher was not a high Tory, but she was not only a Gladstonian liberal but also a traditional conservative

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Conservatives should recognise and celebrate spontaneous evolution of institutions and traditions

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The market, or rather individual choice, may erode communities, but it also forms new communities

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Excessive government is the enemy of traditions

