

Blame the Tories? The Deeper Roots of Britain's Decline

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Since the election, it's become a predictable chant: "*14 years of Conservative misrule!*" Every pothole, hospital delay, housing shortage or social division is laid squarely at the feet of the Tories. But this is political theatre, not serious analysis. While the Conservatives are certainly culpable for many recent failures, Britain's decline didn't begin in 2010. Much of what ails this country has deeper roots — some planted under New Labour, and others even further back.

Let's look at a few examples where long-term decline began well before the Cameron-Clegg coalition took power.

1. Equality Act 2010: A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing?

Passed in the final days of Gordon Brown's Labour government, the Equality Act 2010 aimed to streamline anti-discrimination law and promote fairness. But in doing so, it enshrined vague definitions of harassment and indirect discrimination that now underpin a culture of censorship and overreach. It gave activist HR departments and legal campaigners unprecedented influence over workplace conduct and institutional values. What began as protection from discrimination has morphed into compelled speech and ideological conformity.

Blair/Brown legacy: The *Equality Act 2010* was passed by the outgoing Labour government and consolidated numerous anti-discrimination laws. While its intentions were noble — to promote fairness and protect minority rights — the Act has led to unintended consequences.

Impact: Vague definitions of "harassment" and "indirect discrimination" have created a climate of fear and compliance, especially in workplaces, institutions, and universities. It has arguably encouraged *positive discrimination* and *ideological overreach* under the banner of equality.

Long-term effects: Fuels cultural division, leads to self-censorship, and gives excessive power to HR departments and activist lawyers.

2. Mass Immigration Without Infrastructure

Under Tony Blair, Labour oversaw an unprecedented rise in immigration, particularly after the 2004 EU enlargement. The rationale? Partly economic, partly ideological — with one adviser later admitting it was intended to “rub the Right’s nose in diversity.” But this rapid demographic shift was not matched by investment in housing, schools, or healthcare. Local services were left overwhelmed, while concerns about integration were dismissed as bigotry. This was a powder keg long before the Tories took over.

Blair-era policy shift: In the early 2000s, Labour dramatically loosened immigration controls, particularly from new EU member states (2004 enlargement). Internal government emails released later revealed this was done in part to “rub the Right’s nose in diversity.”

Impact: Large-scale migration helped grow the economy but placed massive strain on public services (housing, NHS, schools) — without adequate infrastructure expansion.

Long-term effects: Subsequent governments have struggled to regain control or even speak frankly about immigration without accusations of racism.

3. The Broken Housing System

The UK’s housing crisis is often blamed on Conservative inaction, but the rot started much earlier. Labour’s regional planning frameworks centralised control and alienated local communities, making it harder to get homes built. The failure to invest in social housing during the boom years has left a legacy of shortage and unaffordability. While successive Tory governments failed to reverse this, they didn’t create the problem — they inherited it.

Historical failure: The roots of the housing shortage trace back decades. Labour's changes to planning in the early 2000s, including **Regional Spatial Strategies**, centralised planning decisions and often alienated local communities.

Impact: Undersupply of homes, especially social housing, started under Labour and worsened under the Tories. Successive governments have failed to reform the planning system or stimulate building at the needed pace.

Long-term effects: Skyrocketing house prices, intergenerational inequality, and growing homelessness.

4. The Uni-Industrial Complex

Tony Blair famously pledged to get 50% of young people into university. He succeeded — but at a cost. The result was degree inflation, spiralling student debt, and a decline in vocational skills. Too many graduates now emerge with expensive but low-value degrees, while industries struggle to recruit electricians, engineers, and carers. Labour created a culture where university was the only acceptable route — and the economy is paying the price.

Blair's pledge: “50% of young people into higher education” was achieved — but at what cost?

Impact: Led to degree inflation, devaluation of vocational training, and thousands of young people taking on huge debts for low-value degrees.

Long-term effects: Skills shortages in critical sectors (e.g. engineering, construction, care), a bloated university sector focused more on ideology than employability.

5. Managerialism and Public Sector Paralysis

Under New Labour, performance targets and managerialism took root in the public sector. Teachers, doctors, and police officers were buried in box-ticking

bureaucracy, robbing professionals of discretion and sapping morale. Meanwhile, layers of middle management and quangos proliferated, making services more expensive but not necessarily better. The Tory years brought cuts — but the bloated structure was Labour's doing.

New Labour governance style: Emphasis on targets, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and box-ticking bureaucracies.

Impact: Created layers of management and quangos, removed discretion and local judgment from professionals (teachers, doctors, police).

Long-term effects: Expensive, inefficient services; decline in public trust and morale among front-line workers.

6. The Financial Crash: A Labour-Era Hangover

When the 2008 financial crash hit, Gordon Brown was Chancellor-turned-Prime Minister. His government's loose regulation of banks, combined with over-reliance on debt-fuelled growth, left Britain badly exposed. While the bank bailouts were arguably necessary, they created a debt legacy that constrained public spending for years. Austerity may have been a political choice — but the crisis that necessitated it wasn't.

Timeline: The 2008 financial crash took place on Labour's watch. Brown's bank bailouts were necessary, but left a debt legacy that shaped Tory austerity post-2010.

Impact: Arguments rage about whether austerity went too far, but the crisis itself — and the light-touch regulation that preceded it — occurred under Labour's economic stewardship.

Long-term effects: Years of low growth, squeezed public services, and the political environment that led to Brexit and populist sentiment.

7. Sovereignty and Supranational Law

Labour's Human Rights Act 1998 embedded the European Convention on Human Rights into domestic law, giving judges the power to reinterpret UK legislation. Alongside deeper integration into EU legal frameworks, this marked a shift away from parliamentary supremacy. Today, controversies over deportations, border control and free speech often trace their legal complications to this era.

Labour's role: Deepening ties with the EU and embedding the *European Convention on Human Rights* into domestic law through the *Human Rights Act 1998*.

Impact: UK courts increasingly constrained by Strasbourg jurisprudence, with Parliament's supremacy diluted.

Long-term effects: Ongoing tensions between domestic law and international obligations, especially around deportations, immigration control, and free speech.

Conclusion: Stop the Amnesia

While the Conservatives undoubtedly deserve criticism for failures on delivery, broken promises, and internal chaos, we must not let the political Left rewrite history. Many of the UK's current structural problems — from housing and immigration to education and law — have their origins in New Labour's ideology-driven reforms or in even earlier technocratic trends.

To blame only "14 years of Tory misrule" is to overlook a much longer arc of systemic mismanagement, short-termism, and ideological overreach. Fixing Britain will require honesty about that history — and the political courage to challenge orthodoxies from both sides.

It's easy to pin everything on the Tory government — and much of the criticism is deserved. But serious political reform requires serious memory. The roots of Britain's decline are deep and bipartisan. From housing to immigration to the erosion of sovereignty, many of today's crises have origins that predate 2010.

If we want a better future, we need an honest reckoning with the past — not just

cheap slogans from the opposition benches.