

Mr Brown's candid self assessment

It was good to hear some candour from a former Prime Minister. The main reason of course that Mr Brown's tenure came to an abrupt end in a General Election was the failure of his economic policy, and the disaster of banking regulation by the FSA and the so called independent Bank of England. Mr Brown put the UK economy through a cruel boom/bust cycle. First they let the banks expand far too much, as many warned at the time including the Opposition parties. Next they collapsed the credit by withdrawing too much liquidity too quickly, leading to a deep and damaging recession as a few of us predicted.

In this he did on a larger scale what John Major did by adopting the European Exchange Rate Mechanism. They both achieved the same outcomes. They delivered a recession to UK households and businesses. People lost their jobs, and businesses closed down. This in turn led to huge and understandable unpopularity, and to the end of their respective parties in power for a long time. In John Major's case it kept the Conservatives out of power for 13 years, and without a majority for 18 years. In the case of Mr Brown it is 7 years out of power for Labour so far, and at least 12 years assuming this Parliament lasts the Statutory five years.

The second order issues of Mr Brown's handling of the social media, his attitude to the softer side of politics and communication, are minor in comparison to the economic damage. It is true he was no Tony Blair or David Cameron when it came to making a friendly presentation of what they were trying to do. Those two had a considerable amount in common.

Both Mr Blair and Mr Cameron were well presented, intelligent and articulate. They "looked the part" of PM. Mr Cameron came to the job with great self confidence born of apparently effortless success in his life to date. Mr Blair acquired great confidence from his large majority and from his ability to take to the corridors of power with enthusiasm. He especially seemed to enjoy the relationships with foreign leaders.

They both had a fixation about following the EU and avoiding disagreement with it. This led Mr Cameron into terminal trouble when he failed to stand up to the EU to negotiate any kind of good deal to stay in. Mr Blair got away with his feeble approach to new EU Treaties and aggressive accumulation of powers from the member states because most in his party did not want to fight him over EU matters and agreed with him to keep it all quiet and pretend the Nice, Amsterdam and Lisbon Treaties were unimportant.

Both wanted to use UK military power to intervene in a number of Arab states, and were impatient with critics in their own parties who thought such interventions ill judged or even illegal. Both liked disagreeing with their own parties in the hope that this would attract voters from other parts of the political spectrum. In the case of Tony Blair he did convert a number of Conservative voters to his cause in the first two elections. Mr Cameron remained stuck some 7% lower in the popular vote than Margaret Thatcher, and alienated a chunk of his voters by his pro EU stance.