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### **Thatcher's Thoughts and the British Constitution: From their Lordships House to Statecraft**

Margaret Thatcher has been described in the literature as a 'instinctive constitutional conservative' but also as someone who lacked interest in the British constitution and its governing institutions. Moreover, it has been argued that Thatcher focused on the economy rather than on constitutional questions during her premiership. Nevertheless, Thatcher did have to deal with many constitutional questions throughout her political career as well as her time as Prime Minister, such as the passing of The European Communities (Amendment) Act 1986, which was a major constitutional moment. Thatcher demonstrated that she did take an interest in the constitution when she wrote in an article for *The European* on the 8th of October 1992 that like 'many of my fellow Tories, I too have a favourite quotation from Disraeli' and according to Thatcher, her favourite quotation was 'the programme of the Conservative Party is to maintain the Constitution of the country'. Thatcher then wrote that Conservative governments 'should have as its main priority the maintenance of our constitutional freedoms, our democratic institutions, and the accountability of Parliament to the people'.

After her time as Prime Minister Thatcher thought that under Blair the Labour Party had become *less* of an *economic* threat but *more* of a *constitutional* one. Therefore, Thatcher's thoughts and beliefs require analysing from a constitutional perspective and placed within a wider framework of Conservative thinking on the constitution.

The purpose of this paper is to analyse and draw out Thatcher's thoughts on the British constitution as well as the principles, arguments, ideas she used across her political career and to set them within a historical conservative thinking. Moreover, to assist with this analysis three interrelated questions will be explored: (1) what were the principles, arguments and ideas that Thatcher utilised? (2) What narratives, stories and historical figures did Thatcher use to communicate her position? And (3) how did these fit within the wider historical Conservative thinking on the British constitution?

**Keywords:** Margaret Thatcher, House of Lords, British Constitution, the European Union, Conservatism